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Discourses of Disappointment: The Betrayal of Women's Emancipation Following the French and Russian Revolutions

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**DISCOURSES OF DISAPPOINTMENT: THE BETRAYAL OF
WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION FOLLOWING THE FRENCH AND
RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS**

**Thesis submitted to
The Graduate College of
Marshall University**

**In partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts
Department of History**

by

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Marshall University

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ABSTRACT

“DISCOURSES OF DISAPPOINTMENT: THE BETRAYAL OF WOMEN’S EMANCIPATION FOLLOWING THE FRENCH AND RUSSIAN REVOLUTIONS”

By Crystal Denise Helton

Questions relating to gender are worth pursuing in order to more accurately discern the impact of the French and Russian Revolutions on society more broadly as opposed to just political leaders, well-known historical figures, or those predominately male citizens that comprised the upper echelons of their respective movements. A careful analysis of secondary sources, or the historiography on women’s place within the French and Russian Revolutions, reveals that, in spite of their use of egalitarian rhetoric, the revolutionary governments in France and Russia continued to view women based upon conventional standards. Discourses written by and about women before, during, and immediately following the French and Russian Revolutions provide direct discursive examples of both the struggle for women’s civil and legal rights and the entrenchment of patriarchal structures of inequality.

DEDICATION

I dedicate this thesis to my mother, Margaret Ann Helton. I am incredibly proud and blessed to have such an amazing mother. Her love for me has always been my saving grace. Her faith in me strengthens my resolve on a daily basis. Her resilience provides me with a model for how I want to approach my future. She is the hardest working, most determined, and friendliest person that I know. I am a reflection of my mother's love and for that I am exceptionally grateful.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

ABSTRACT	ii
DEDICATION	iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS	v
INTRODUCTION	1
CHAPTER I	33
<u>In the Shadow of Egalitarianism: Women and the French Revolution</u>	33
CHAPTER II	66
<u>Gender Equality or Adherence to Tradition?: Women and the Russian Revolution</u>	66
CHAPTER III	98
<u>Discourses Written by and about Women: Interpreting Culture as both a System and a Practice</u>	98
CONCLUSION	134
BIBLIOGRAPHY	143
CURRICULUM VITAE	158

INTRODUCTION

Political revolutions have often overthrown traditional forms of government, endorsed popular theories of equal rights subdued under the previous regime, and created new social conditions. In the particular case of the French Revolution in the late eighteenth century and the Russian Revolution at the start of the twentieth, revolutionaries sought to overthrow monarchical rule in order to develop a more representative governmental organization. In the attempt to create a system in which there would be greater levels of egalitarianism, the new leaderships of these revolutions felt compelled, at least during the apex of radical zeal and in order to garner support from the masses and establish a greater level of legitimacy, to address the issue of women's roles and rights in a post-revolutionary society. This thesis will deal with several questions relating to women and revolution. To what degree did women's social, political, and economic rights become a focal point for members of government institutions throughout the course of the French and Russian Revolutions? Did gender equality increase or deteriorate under the newly-established regimes? How do the discourses written by and about women in relation to these Revolutions help to explain the prospect, attempt, and subsequent failure to incorporate gender equality in post-revolutionary societies? The question of women's constitutional and civic rights in the aftermath of the French and Russian Revolutions, combined with the voices of individuals embroiled in the debate over such issues, imparts a clearer picture as to the ultimate demise of efforts to grant women equal status in post-revolutionary societies.

Questions relating to gender are worth pursuing in order to more accurately discern the impact of the French and Russian Revolutions on society more broadly as opposed to just political leaders, well-known historical figures, or those predominately male citizens that comprised the upper echelons of their respective movements. A careful analysis of secondary sources, or the historiography on women's place within the French and Russian Revolutions, reveals that, in spite of their use of egalitarian rhetoric, the revolutionary governments in France and Russia continued to view women based upon conventional standards. Discourses written by and about women before, during, and immediately following the French and Russian Revolutions provide direct discursive examples of both the struggle for women's civil and legal rights and the entrenchment of patriarchal structures of inequality. Despite the advocacy, petition, and involvement of women in both these Revolutions, the initial idealism of radical departures from one form of government to a dramatically dissimilar one was swept aside by the force of patriarchal values and governmental inattentiveness to the matter of women's rights. A quick return to familiar standards limited the advancement of women's social, economic, and legal rights after the French and Russian Revolutions. The Jacobins and the Bolsheviks, mired in patriarchal mindsets and indoctrinated by discursive ideologies that often considered the position of women in society only as an afterthought, either did not fully alter their views or eventually reverted to beliefs that limited women's complete integration into public life to the fullest extent. Indeed, the influence of patriarchy can be traced from the French to the Russian Revolution along parallel lines. Events in both movements followed a similar pattern. In each case, the inexorable endurance of

patriarchal mentalities, combined with the durability of long-standing gender divisions of labor, excluded women from full participation in public life in post-revolutionary society.

Chapter one of this thesis will center on the status of women's rights during and after the French Revolution. In France, a firm adherence to customary habits and an almost fanatical need for political control on the part of the Jacobins influenced governmental decisions regarding the rights of women after 1789. French women advocated for recognition of their rights but gained little governmental support since such issues were never a primary concern for the various revolutionary leadership factions in control of France after the 1789 Revolution. The National Assembly not only negatively targeted women supportive of the monarchy and established order – such as Marie Antoinette - but also those aligned with the cause put forth by the revolutionaries. The men in power viewed women as irrational and capable of fomenting a threat to the political stability of the new revolutionary government via their criticisms and demands. This was certainly the case in relation to women's participation in bread rioting, especially since women quite often combined political aims and goals with their petition for lower prices. In the earliest stages of the Revolution, government officials tried to limit the role of women by labeling them with the designation of non-citizen. Despite the fact that women gained a measure of rights under the Constitution of 1791 and formed political clubs to debate issues, the male leadership factions never allowed them political rights, equal employment opportunities, the power to influence policies, or even full citizenship rights as a result of the 1789 Revolution.

Scholars typically place more emphasis on conditions for women after the second phase of the Revolution in 1792 or as a consequence of the Napoleonic Code of 1804. Mary Durham Johnson, however, insists that during every phase of the Revolution, despite changes in governmental structures, women occupied the same basic position in French society as under the Old Regime.¹ Essentially, she says, women gained little from the revolutionary process in eighteenth century France. Other scholars do not concur with Johnson. Elisabeth G. Sledziewski believes that, although women did not acquire full participatory rights after 1789, their efforts certainly allowed for women's concerns to become a visible, public issue, influencing policies in the process.² Sledziewski contends that the 1789 Revolution effectively brought women into the modern era and placed the issue of women's rights at the forefront of debate. Lynn Hunt takes an intermediate position and claims that by the time of the king's execution in 1793, women's roles in political discussions or movements no longer warranted governmental attention because the Jacobins had by then decided that politics was the realm of men.³ In contrast, Bonnie G. Smith argues that French women did not lose a significant portion of their rights until the implementation of the Napoleonic Code in 1804, at which time patriarchal attitudes left all women legally subservient to the men in their lives, in effect restricting women again to the status of non-citizen.⁴ All these historians have failed to devote enough attention to women's losses directly after the French Revolution. They

¹ Mary Durham Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Institutional Changes for Women of the People During the French Revolution," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 107.

² Elisabeth G. Sledziewski, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point," in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 34.

³ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 109.

⁴ Bonnie G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1989), 120-21.

have ignored the fact that even during the earliest period of the Revolution, members of the National Assembly refused to grant women rights on any substantial basis, well before the closure of women's clubs in 1793 and the implementation of the Napoleonic Code in 1804. Government officials blatantly disregarded and neglected women's issues throughout the entire course of the Revolution, starting under the National Assembly in late 1789, and culminating with the Napoleonic Code.

Chapter two of this thesis will focus on women in connection with the Russian Revolution of 1917. In the case of Russia after the Revolution, economic concerns, far more than political matters, plagued the Bolsheviks and shaped policies toward women. The failure of War Communism, designed to alleviate food shortages, often through forced seizure from peasant holdings, and a policy advocating limited nationalization of resources, prompted Lenin to adopt the New Economic Policy in 1921. At first, the Bolshevik Party advocated an alternative to women's domestic responsibilities with the initial implementation of communal kitchens and daycare facilities. Yet the need to stabilize Russia's deteriorating economy soon engrossed the Bolsheviks and they reneged on their initial enthusiasm for women's equality in a socialist society. The state of the economy became the primary concern of the government and replaced such issues as communal daycares and dining halls and egalitarianism among men and women.

The majority of historians insist that the Bolsheviks' treatment of women deteriorated upon Stalin's ascension to power at the end of the 1920s but most do not fully discuss the effects of the New Economic Policy on the status of women's rights in post-Revolutionary Russia. Orlando Figes contends that "much of the history of the revolution has been written from the perspective of what happened inside Stalin's

Russia” and this holds true in regard to studies of conditions for Russian women after 1917.⁵ Historians often develop a teleological approach to the study of women’s rights in post-revolutionary Russia. Scholars devote attention to the early 1920s more as a mere precursor to Stalin’s reign, not as the true turning point in the government’s declining interest in the status of women’s roles in society. Yet Wendy Goldman considers the implementation of the New Economic Policy as the “first retreat” in the Bolsheviks’ policy of liberating women, in particular since the measure meant that a multitude of businesses closed and unemployment levels, always high amongst working women, rose as a result.⁶ Goldman primarily focuses on how the NEP affected working women. The policy also allowed the Bolsheviks to return to the conventional view of women in all matters since members of the government no longer had the time or resources to devote to women’s issues. Along more standard lines, Barbara Evans Clements affirms that, by the end of the 1920s, a reassertion of patriarchal values eclipsed the ideal of the liberated Soviet woman and the Bolsheviks proceeded in an increasingly more conservative manner in their dealings with women.⁷ Richard Stites agrees with Clements when he asserts that the egalitarian principles championed by the Bolsheviks in the 1920s met with a return to convention by the early 1930s.⁸ Yet, here too, historians often neglect the fact that the Bolsheviks treated the issue of women’s rights with inattentiveness and distaste beginning in the 1920s. As early as 1921, well before Stalin took command of the Soviet Union, the egalitarian promise of the first phase of the Revolution was broken.

⁵ Orlando Figes, *A People’s Tragedy: The Russian Revolution, 1891-1924* (New York: Penguin Books, 1996), 807.

⁶ Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 73.

⁷ Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 275.

⁸ Richard Stites, “Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia,” in *Becoming Visible*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 430.

Stalin's leadership, like that of Napoleon's, only exacerbated the problem. By the early 1920s, in spite of what the Bolsheviks initially granted women in the new Soviet Union, concern over the fate of the economy set off a process of growing governmental negligence in regard to women's rights.

The third chapter of this thesis will explore discourses written by and about women before, during, and after the French and Russian Revolutions in the pursuance of understanding William H. Sewell's theory of culture at the interaction of system and practice.⁹ Sewell contends that culture maintains no set or fixed pattern and can best be interpreted through the interaction of cultural systems with the practice of semiotic symbols and signs.¹⁰ Sewell also states that cultural systems are not static and can be contested and modified.¹¹ A comparative analysis of discourses written by and about women during the revolutionary process in France and Russia reveals the endurance and contestation of cultural systems that served as barriers to the reconstruction of gender roles in revolutionary society.

The prevailing semiotic system endorsed in pre-revolutionary France and Russia, and in the aftermath of the 1789 and 1917 Revolutions, rested on the assumption that women were inferior to men and that their appropriate role in society was to be the proprietress of the domestic realm. These texts, whether they were political in nature, works of fiction, or legal decrees, marginalized women by depicting them as subordinate to men. Discourses by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Napoleon Bonaparte, Leon Trotsky and the legal provisions of the 1804 Napoleonic Code

⁹ William H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 35-61.

¹⁰ *Ibid*, 47.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 49-50.

and the 1944 Soviet Family Law upheld and sanctioned conventional cultural systems of inequality and difference. Such discourses illustrate the power of patriarchal concepts to act as a deterrent to the quest for gender equality by women and reveal some of the obstacles to the overthrow of patriarchy as a result of revolutionary movements.

Dissenting discourses written by and about women in connection with the French and Russian Revolutions advocated for the restructuring of common cultural practices and the defeat of patriarchal systems of inequality. Discourses written by Mary Wollstonecraft, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Marquis de Condorcet, Olympe de Gouges, Etta Palm d'Aelders, Vladimir Lenin, and Alexandra Kollontai contested the established cultural systems of inequality. Such political treatises and pamphlets and works of fiction written by and about women challenged existing semiotic systems of inequality and demonstrated that cultural systems are not fixed or uncontested in nature. Although these writers sought to alter cultural practices that limited women's ability to advance into the public realm on the same basis as men, the retrenchment of patriarchal standards of inequality was the ultimate legacy of the French and Russian Revolutions. French and Russian revolutionaries failed to amend or transform society on a consistent or enduring basis. The revolutionaries' re-adherence to patriarchal systems of inequality impeded women's quest for gender equality and full participation in public life in post-revolutionary France and Russia.

In order to examine the abandonment of gender-equality rhetoric, one must consider larger interpretive questions about the French and Russian Revolutions themselves. Scholars who trace both the French and Russian Revolutions had adhered to

certain ideological frameworks that help to explain events and place them in their proper historical context. For the most part, historians have placed great emphasis on the actions of men, especially those that played major roles in each Revolution. A majority of scholars outline the causes and events of the French and Russian Revolutions according to theories that expound on the activities of men with some measure of power over the course of the Revolution in question. Whether historians view issues relating to class, economics, political ideologies, social unrest, or any number of other causes as mechanisms triggering the start of the French and Russian Revolutions, these scholars devote much of their attention to the men involved in the process, with the exception, of course, of recognition of women's bread rioting as influences in both rebellions. Yet scholars quite often only give minor consideration to women's motivation for protest and to the impact that bread rioting had on the course of the French and Russian Revolutions.

A majority of historians argue that the underlying origins of the French Revolution of 1789 resulted from a breakdown of Old Regime society stemming from conflicting class interests that were hastened forward by a financial crisis and crop failures. In the late eighteenth century, Old Regime France still separated individuals into three major groups known as estates. The First Estate included members of the clergy, the Second consisted of the aristocracy, and the Third constituted all other citizens - from the emerging bourgeoisie to the peasants. The dissimilarity between classes remained sharp enough to cause increased friction during times of emergency and that was exactly the case when France faced bankruptcy in the late 1780s.¹² Distinctions between classes had only worsened beginning in the 1770s as a series of bad harvests led to discontent among farmers and peasants. The government insisted upon the regulation

¹² Jeremy D. Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 12.

of grain, and bread prices increased dramatically as a result, thus further frustrating citizens.¹³ Yet the more significant catalyst that brought about the conditions necessary for a revolution involved the need to remedy the financial predicament that plagued France due to the country's involvement in a series of expensive wars. Georges Lefebvre contends that the financial predicament forced the king and his ministers to seek help from the nobles in order to solve the debt crisis.¹⁴ In so doing, the monarchy largely left itself vulnerable to attack.

Scholars differ in their opinions on the class group or circumstances responsible for the initial start of the Revolution. The orthodox theory, which originated mainly among French scholars in the 1930s, centers upon the idea that the nobility actually started the Revolution due to their disagreement with the manner in which the king and his royal minister, Charles Alexandre de Calonne, wished to solve the financial emergency. Popkin contends that Calonne insisted upon the implementation of a new land tax, one affecting all property owners regardless of rank, including members of the nobility and clergy usually exempted from such measures.¹⁵ In order to gather support for his policies, Calonne organized an Assembly of Notables to meet at Versailles in January 1787.

Scholars, such as Lefebvre, R. R. Palmer, and Joel Colton, insist that the aristocracy triggered the beginning of the Revolution in order to protect their position within society. The nobles, they say, effectively reached a point at which they refused to cooperate with the monarchy. Lefebvre argues that members of the elite refused to be

¹³ Ibid, 15.

¹⁴ Georges Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1947), 25-6.

¹⁵ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 23.

taxed on the grounds that such measures were illegal, which left the Assembly at a standstill.¹⁶ Members of the nobility announced that only the Estates General, which had last met in 1614, could decide on matters involving taxation. Although the king initially resisted, he acquiesced in July 1788 and agreed to convene the Estates General in May 1789. Palmer and Colton insist that the nobles “forced the summoning of the Estates General, and in this way the French nobility initiated the Revolution” as early as 1788.¹⁷ Lefebvre concurs that the aristocracy supported the Revolution in hopes of acquiring increased levels of governmental power so as to promote their own interests.¹⁸ According to this orthodox analysis, the nobility’s break with the monarchy accounted for the first stage of the Revolution.

Beginning in the 1960s, many historians, including William Doyle and George Taylor, began to reject the theory that the nobility was in danger of losing their rank and power within French society in the late eighteenth century. Doyle contends that when tracing the role of the nobility under the Old Regime it is crucial to understand that the eighteenth century was actually a time of continuity. He insists that there were no dramatic changes to disrupt social relations since the aristocracy did not lose their status in society and had no reason to rebel against the established order.¹⁹ The aristocracy, these scholars argue, continued to be the class group with the most influence and wealth under the Old Regime. Taylor insists that proprietary wealth, which centered upon the attainment of land, rents, or offices, remained the principal form of status in pre-

¹⁶ Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, 28.

¹⁷ R.R. Palmer and Joel Colton, *A History of the Modern World* (New York: McGraw-Hill, Inc., 1995), 363.

¹⁸ Lefebvre, *The Coming of the French Revolution*, 36.

¹⁹ William Doyle, “Was There an Aristocratic Reaction in Pre-Revolutionary France?,” *Past and Present* 57 (1972): 101.

revolutionary France. Taylor concludes that proprietary wealth rested with the aristocracy, thus the nobles were at no risk of losing their position in society at the end of the Old Regime when their primary forms of attaining and keeping their status remained viable and secure.²⁰ These historians who argue against the traditional interpretation assert that the aristocracy did not start the French Revolution because the middle and lower orders posed no threat to their standing in society prior to 1789.

Scholars such as Colin Lucas, who make a case against the traditional Marxist view of the French Revolution, also insist that the events of 1789 did not materialize solely from a class conflict between the aristocracy and the bourgeoisie. Lucas contends that the aristocracy and bourgeoisie shared common interests and concerns that bound them together, in effect preventing a class conflict between opposing groups.²¹ This view holds that in Old Regime France, there existed an overlap of interests between the nobles and bourgeoisie that prevented class conflict in which members of the Third Estate eventually defeated the aristocracy. Instead, Lucas asserts that members of the bourgeoisie wanted nothing more than to join the ranks of the landowning nobility. Problems existed, according to H.R. Trevor-Roper, in “the tug-of-war of opposite interests *within one body*,” constituting a conflict of concerns between groups that normally formed the same class network due to the convergence of their ideals and lifestyles.²² Lucas asserts that the calling of the Estates General reintroduced the artificial

²⁰ George V. Taylor, “Noncapitalist Wealth and the Origins of the French Revolution,” *American Historical Review* lxxix (1967): 471.

²¹ Colin Lucas, “Nobles, Bourgeois, and the Origins of the French Revolution,” in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, ed. by Gary Kates (London: Routledge, 1998), 47-8.

²² *Ibid*, 52.

boundary that separated the elite from the bourgeoisie.²³ Thus, the calling of the Estates General led to the crisis of 1789.

Some historians who do not adhere to any aspect of the Marxist interpretation of 1789 view the convocation of the Estates General as setting the stage for the actual inception of the Revolution. They focus on the fact that in September 1788, the Parlement of Paris announced that the Estates General must convene according to the standards of 1614. The clergy and nobility held majority control and stood to be in command of meetings against the wishes of the Third Estate.²⁴ Continued appeals from members of the Third Estate to unite with the clergy and nobility in a single assembly to vote as individuals, not solely by group affiliation, amounted to nothing. Members of the Third Estate obviously worried over the influence exerted by the two other orders and due to the fact that the nobility wished to exclude the bourgeoisie from their ranks.²⁵ Only after the delegates of the Third Estate realized that they could not reap the same benefits as the nobility did they decide in June 1789 to form a National Assembly in the attempt to rectify the situation. Palmer and Colton acknowledge the revolutionary aspect of this action since members of the Third Estate held no independent political power prior to that point.²⁶ Members of the Third Estate, aligned with the nobility in many economic and social matters, rebelled against the aristocracy when it appeared they would not be included in deciding on the course of France's future.

Neo-liberal historians, most notably Timothy Tackett and William Sewell, concentrate more on the social antecedents of the class break between the aristocracy and

²³ Ibid, 56.

²⁴ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 26.

²⁵ Ibid, 30.

²⁶ Palmer and Colton, *A History of the Modern World*, 368.

the Third Estate. Tackett insists that, although there was little economic divergence between the nobility and bourgeoisie, variations in status, location, and age led to the break between nobles and the Third Estate. Such deviations in what Tackett labels the “subjective element of status” persuaded the Third Estate to convene on a tennis court in June 1789, after being locked out of the assembly hall where they initially agreed to meet, in order to form the National Assembly and draft a new constitution for France.²⁷ Sewell argues that revisionists, such as William Doyle, George Taylor, and Colin Lucas, fail to center their descriptions of the French Revolution on social precursors and outcomes and instead mainly focus on politics and intellectual principles.²⁸ Sewell believes that the best way to illustrate the social aspects of the Revolution revolves upon the idea that the reading of texts holds no set meaning. Sewell notes that revolutionaries used Sieyès’s *What is the Third Estate?* to justify their revolt against the nobility but discarded his theories when they were no longer applicable to the current situation.²⁹ Neo-liberal historians focus less on the economic or political breach between nobles and bourgeoisie but they do acknowledge that class conflict existed between the two groups that originated more in the realm of social conditions and factors rather than economic ones. The relevant point here is that whether historians concentrate on the traditional, class based analysis of the French Revolution or insist that other causes played more of a role in the fracture between Estates in 1789, most scholars generally do not focus on women’s issues as pertinent to the overall narrative of their accounts.

²⁷ Timothy Tackett, “Nobles and the Third Estate in the Revolutionary Dynamic of the National Assembly, 1789-90,” in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, ed. by Gary Kates (London: Routledge, 1998), 220.

²⁸ William H. Sewell, “A Rhetoric of Bourgeois Revolution,” in *The French Revolution: Recent Debates and New Controversies*, ed. by Gary Kates (London: Routledge, 1998), 143-56.

²⁹ *Ibid*, 149-50.

As with accounts of the French Revolution, scholars focusing on the actual course of the Russian Revolution hold differing interpretations as to the exact cause and ultimate outcome of the upheavals of March and November 1917. Issues involving the actual impetus for the March and November Revolutions and the significance of various groups or individuals involved in the movements represent points of contention. One important distinction is that, unlike analyses of the French Revolution, historians focusing on the Russian Revolution, however hastily, do chronicle the activities of women rioters as key components to the start of the upheaval.

Scholars, including Shelia Fitzpatrick, Bertram D. Wolfe, and Jesse D. Clarkson, concur that factors contributing to the Russian Revolution primarily centered on citizens' growing lack of faith in an increasingly incompetent autocratic system of government. The Revolution of 1905 showed just how much discontent Russian citizens harbored against the monarch when a series of strikes and protests essentially paralyzed Petrograd for months. By 1917, Russia once more wavered on the verge of civil unrest due to the demands of industrialization and the chaos and destruction caused by World War I. Fitzpatrick contends that citizens failed to rally behind the Romanov dynasty when the war effort deadlocked into a series of defeats and huge losses for Russia.³⁰ According to Wolfe, government ineptness regarding minister appointments and the ever-present rumors concerning Rasputin and the "German" Tsarina Alexandra only intensified the growing disillusionment.³¹ Clarkson contends that "[t]he tsarist government was not destined to be overthrown by deliberate intent but to collapse of its own ineptitude" due

³⁰ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 38.

³¹ Bertram D. Wolfe, *An Ideology in Power: Reflections on the Russian Revolution* (New York: Stein and Day, 1969), 123.

to consistent bad decision making that alienated the citizenry.³² By March of 1917, the scene was again set for a popular revolt.

The origins of the March Revolution provide a point of debate for scholars. Historians differ in their argument over the importance of the many factions involved in the movement. Fitzpatrick asserts that the actual catalyst for the revolution was the International Women's Day march held, in part, to demonstrate against the rising cost of bread in Petrograd.³³ The efforts of women provided the incentive to bring more people to the streets in protest. Clarkson notes that women demanding the right to bread, not any other group or individual connected to revolutionary agendas, created the conditions necessary for a revolution.³⁴ Despite the participation of women, it is still common for historians to either dismiss their role in the march or to gloss over the subject as quickly as possible in favor of outlining the contribution of other groups involved in the upheaval. Parallel omissions are commonly the case with historical analyses of the French Revolution.

In large part, historians such as Woodford McClellan devote the bulk of their attention to the actions of workers who joined the women on the streets and also to those in opposition to the protests. These scholars graze the topic of the International Women's Day march and contend that the movement only gained importance when workers joined the expanding crowd on March 9th. McClellan believes that the demonstration only achieved revolutionary fervor when workers went out on strike and made their presence known throughout the capital, forcing Tsar Nicholas II, away from the capital at the front

³² Jesse D. Clarkson, *A History of Russia* (New York: Random House, 1964), 431.

³³ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 44.

³⁴ Clarkson, *A History of Russia*, 433.

and anxious to preserve power, to dissolve the Duma in the attempt to restore peace.³⁵ Daniel Orlovsky concurs that only after the inclusion of workers did authorities deem it necessary to call in troops and soldiers to put down the protest.³⁶ Wolfe considers the army's influence on events a major factor worth considering. Initially, troops entered the fracas to dispel the gathering, but Wolfe notes that the soldiers rather quickly and unpredictably joined the crowd instead of subduing the protestors.³⁷ Yet Clarkson contends that members of the military did not intend to mix with the crowd; however, the multitude of people simply engulfed the soldiers, who eventually capitulated and threw in their support with the revolutionaries.³⁸ Through the efforts of the protestors and the fact that the situation could not be controlled by anyone loyal to the autocracy, the Tsar abdicated before even returning to the capital. The Provisional Government replaced the monarchy as the official government of Russia in March 1917, though power increasingly rested in the Petrograd Soviet, which included the leading socialist factions in the country.

Scholars, such as McClellan and Orlovsky, also place varying amounts of significance on the indecisiveness of the Provisional Government as contributing to the November Revolution. The desire of the Soviet to incorporate the demands of the workers clashed with the Provisional Government's attempt to stabilize conditions within the country. Wolfe claims that the Provisional Government never could maintain exclusive rights to govern because the members elected themselves and always

³⁵ Woodford McClellan, *Russia: The Soviet Period and After* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 6.

³⁶ Daniel Orlovsky, "Russia in War and Revolution, 1914-21," in *Russia: A History* ed. by Gregory L. Freeze (Oxford: University Press, 1997), 235.

³⁷ Wolfe, *An Ideology in Power*, 145.

³⁸ Clarkson, *A History of Russia*, 433.

acknowledged the temporary nature of their duties.³⁹ The exact character of the Provisional Government's duties often eluded even members of the committee. McClellan argues that members of the Provisional Government were eager to appease everyone; thus, they ended up vexing Russian citizens by not appearing firm on issues.⁴⁰ The Provisional Government certainly bore the burnt of Russia's internal and external problems. Orlovsky insists that too many concerns, such as continuing the war instead of seeking peace while also trying to remedy social and political issues, overwhelmed the Provisional Government.⁴¹ These scholars argue that, aside from exterior pressure provided by socialist groups within the Petrograd Soviet, the Provisional Government collapsed from within, allowing for the Bolshevik takeover in November.

Other historians, among them Fitzpatrick and Orlando Figes, maintain that the force of Vladimir Lenin's Bolshevik ideology was the main factor in bringing about the November Revolution. Lenin determined not to let such an opportunity to take control of Russia pass him by, as he felt he had in July when a series of strikes and food shortages had again become a serious problem in the country, and caused further distress among citizens. Fitzpatrick asserts that Lenin's appeal for swift action combined with his ability to convince his party and the working class to ignore the Marxist prerequisite for a bourgeois revolution to precede a proletarian revolt effectively launched the November Revolution.⁴² Wolfe argues that, although there was some confusion among Bolsheviks as to Lenin's exact philosophy and goals, Lenin used his sense of intuition and timing to

³⁹ Wolfe, *An Ideology in Power*, 147.

⁴⁰ McClellan, *Russia*, 7.

⁴¹ Orlovsky, "Russia in War and Revolution," 237.

⁴² Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 61.

his best advantage.⁴³ Lenin essentially took control of the situation for his own benefit but in the name of bringing peace and equality to Russian citizens. Figs asserts that “[w]ithout Lenin’s intervention it [the November Revolution] would probably never have happened at all.”⁴⁴ This places a great amount of importance on the character of one individual. With Lenin’s leadership, the Bolsheviks managed to seize command of the Winter Palace and disband what remained of the Provisional Government on the night of November 7th.

Most historians concur that the revolution continued into the early twenties due to the tenuous grip on authority that the Bolsheviks held after late 1917. Once in power, the Bolsheviks had to quickly address the major issues plaguing Russia, while also embroiled in fighting a Civil War to maintain control over the country. From 1918, through the early 1920s, the Bolshevik Red Army fought the White forces for control of Russia. Figs says that members of the Red Army “were the missionaries of the revolution,” keeping the vision of the revolutionaries alive on the front in order to secure control of Russia for the Bolsheviks.⁴⁵ The Whites primarily gained their support and manpower from former members of the Tsar’s Army, and other loyal monarchists, with additional assistance provided by foreign nations who also opposed Bolshevism. Yet the anti-Bolshevik forces proved to be far less organized than their foes and the majority of Russian citizens viewed the Communists as the lesser of two evils, leading to the victory of the Red Army.⁴⁶

⁴³ Wolfe, *An Ideology in Power*, 148.

⁴⁴ Figs, *A People’s Tragedy*, 456.

⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 602.

⁴⁶ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 78.

Scholars also debate over the actual ending point of the Russian Revolution. Orlovsky concludes that the Red Army's success in the Civil War effectively brought an end to the Revolution, even if not all elements of hostility within Russia ceased upon the conclusion of the Civil War.⁴⁷ Clarkson agrees with Orlovsky in his acknowledgment that, by 1921, the Bolsheviks proved successful in their attempt to gain complete authority over Russia.⁴⁸ Not all scholars concur that the Revolution ended in 1921. Figes instead argues that the Revolution did not officially end until Lenin's death in 1924 since, upon Stalin's rise to power, the revolutionary goals Lenin wished to implement evaporated.⁴⁹ Yet Fitzpatrick maintains that the Revolution extended uninterrupted from 1917 through Stalin's Great Purges of 1936.⁵⁰ Historians frequently dispute the actual stopping point of the Russian Revolution based on their observations as to the relevance of key characteristics or circumstances that possibly extended the timeframe of the movement past 1917. Whether historians argue that the Russian Revolution concluded in 1917 or continued beyond that point, they focus on the consolidation of the Bolshevik regime in such a way as to highlight the major issues that confronted the newly-established government. Among the concerns facing the new regime in Russia, which also affected the revolutionaries in 1789 France, was the topic of women's roles and rights in post-revolutionary society.

The revolutionaries in France during the late eighteenth century and in Russia at the start of the twentieth century espoused agendas of egalitarianism not advocated under previous regimes. The ultimate goal of the French revolutionaries centered upon

⁴⁷ Orlovsky, "Russia in War and Revolution," 255-258.

⁴⁸ Clarkson, *A History of Russia*, 530.

⁴⁹ Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, 807.

⁵⁰ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 148.

terminating divisions between classes that plagued France.⁵¹ The revolutionaries of 1789 wanted a civil government based on consent of the “general will” and political participation for those individuals with property rights to protect, regardless of status or class. The Bolshevik ideology included an end to class distinctions, nationalization of resources and public services, and government by means of a soviet designed to benefit the proletariat.⁵² Lenin conceded that the goal of socialism was to create a classless society of proletariats and subsequently establish equality for all Russians. In many ways, despite obvious differences in political ideology, the objectives of the French and Russian revolutionaries followed similar agendas. Thus, a closer examination of the French and Russian revolutionaries’ treatment of women during and after both revolutions is useful in seeking to better understand how far the new governments in France and Russia were willing to go to assure a larger share of equality for all members of society. The question remains one associated with how completely the cause of women’s rights factored into the debate for egalitarianism that the French and Russian Revolutions spawned and whether or not scholars have devoted serious enough consideration to the position of women in post-revolutionary society.

Studies of the French and Russian Revolutions often ignore the effects of the upheaval on the status of women. Even though women’s bread rioting essentially spurred the French Revolution forward and actually initiated the start of the Russian Revolution, most scholars only mention these actions as an aside. How, then, do the roles and expectations of women fit into the overall narrative of the French and Russian Revolutions? The study of women in post-revolutionary societies is crucial to the

⁵¹ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 38.

⁵² McClellan, *Russia*, 9.

understanding of how women participated in and responded to upheavals that reshaped their lives for better or ill. Thus, women involved in and affected by radical movements must be better integrated within the general narrative of the course of the French and Russian Revolutions.⁵³ By merely focusing on men involved in these revolutions, a great many historians ignore the significant roles women played during the same time period.

Certainly, the revolutionary goals of men often differed substantially from those that women advocated. The dissimilarities primarily stemmed from the socially ingrained expectations required of men and women in society. Olwen Hufton describes this component of gender roles as “constructed from beliefs, and [lying] at the core of any culture, determining in the case of each sex what was appropriate and what unfitting” in daily life.⁵⁴ The study of women in the French and Russian Revolutions showcases those women who went beyond “what was appropriate” in order to demand consideration of issues pertaining to their rights. Such studies also document the entrenched system of patriarchy that dominated women throughout the course of the French and Russian Revolutions. The unabated authority of men in post-revolutionary France and Russia reveals that male-leadership factions continued to segregate women in domestic arenas without allowing them to contribute to public affairs on any consistent or all-encompassing basis. Male-leadership factions in France and Russia utilized patriarchal standards that they never fully modified in order to marginalize women.

There are a few historians of the French and Russian Revolutions who have centered their analyses on women’s status after the initial stages of the rebellion ended. Instead of relegating the topic of women to the sidelines of the overall account, these

⁵³ Patricia Branca, *Women in Europe Since 1750* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1978), 10.

⁵⁴ Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 5.

scholars view the subject of women's status in post-revolutionary societies as vital to studies of the French and Russian Revolutions as a whole. Scholars, including Lynn Hunt, Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Branson Applewhite, and Dominique Godineau, explore the position of women in post-revolutionary France in order to determine the extent to which women's issues became a focal point for government officials. With respect to the Russian Revolution, historians such as Wendy Goldman, Richard Stites, and Barbara Evans Clements have sought to detail the point in time when the Bolsheviks reneged on their initial support for women's equality. These scholars focusing on topics relating to women's status throughout the French and Russian Revolutions have begun to create a narrative that includes the major events and principal characters of the upheavals while also incorporating the plight of women as key components.

With regard to the French Revolution, scholars who devote special attention to gendered examinations of the movement often focus on differing aspects of women's status as political participants or active citizens after the rebellion. Harriet Branson Applewhite and Darline Gay Levy insist that the Revolution included every French citizen as an equal, participating individual in an increasingly democratic society.⁵⁵ Yet other scholars reject the notion that women gained political authority in society as a result of the French Revolution. Joan Wallach Scott emphasizes the implicit paradox in the manner in which society viewed women during the time of the French Revolution. To be characterized as a political individual in eighteenth century French society, according to Scott, a person had to be endowed with the proper traits. Ironically, only males seemed to embody the appropriate requirements and distinctive nature to allow them full political

⁵⁵ Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. by Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), 28.

liberties.⁵⁶ Scholars, such as Barbara Corrado Pope and Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes, contend that women's goals after the French Revolution extended beyond merely attempting to gain influence as contributing, viable, political individuals. Pope argues that women advocated more for issues relating to the welfare of their families than for increased involvement as equal citizens in society.⁵⁷ In concurrence with Pope, Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes acknowledge that the outcome of upheavals such as the French Revolution often reflected "the nation's assumption of the husband's role in providing a family wage via payments to encourage women to pursue motherhood as a career" and not the pursuance of labor related activities outside of the home.⁵⁸ Historians who focus on women in the French Revolution differ in their interpretations as to the exact effects of the upheaval on the status of women.

Several scholars have also detailed the Bolsheviks' ongoing connection of women with domestic life instead of their acknowledgment of them as working, politically active individuals in the wake of the Russian Revolution. Richard Stites and Wendy Goldman concentrate their attention chiefly on women within the work force. Stites argues that the Bolshevik Party increasingly neglected women's needs as workers.⁵⁹ Goldman, however, illustrates how a male-dominated value system countered women's independence in the job market.⁶⁰ Both Anne E. Gorsuch and Barbara Evans Clements detail the role of women with regard to political participation. Gorsuch insists that the Bolsheviks did not

⁵⁶ Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Harvard: University Press, 1996), 6-8.

⁵⁷ Barbara Corrado Pope, "Revolution and Retreat: Upper-Class French Women After 1789," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. by Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 218.

⁵⁸ Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes, *Women in World History: Readings from 1500 to the Present* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 141.

⁵⁹ Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," 430.

⁶⁰ Wendy Z. Goldman, "Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women's Movement in the U.S.S.R.," *Slavic Review* 55 (Spring 1996).

encourage women to enter politics because their principal task in life was to learn to take care of the household.⁶¹ Clements centers her account on women aligned with the Bolshevik party and asserts that the leadership did not devote enough attention to the political aspirations of their female comrades.⁶² Most scholars agree that, for all the Bolsheviks pledged to women, their reliance on familiar values did not liberate women from patriarchal structures of political and economic inequality.

There are some scholars who concentrate less on the status of women after the French and Russian Revolutions and instead seek to explain why women took part in the uprisings or the manner in which they contributed. The general conclusion of these scholars is that during times of revolution, women frequently rebelled against patriarchal customs. It seems evident that patriarchal values certainly factored into the deliberation of women's rights after the French and Russian Revolutions. It is worthwhile, therefore, to reflect on how the ideology of patriarchy directly influenced the lives of women. Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks outlines the origins of patriarchy and how historians define and use the term in reference to the impact of patriarchal values in the writing of women's history. Wiesner-Hanks contends that the basis for patriarchal systems evolved from the construction of private property when men, in order to protect their interests, carefully monitored women's reproductive capabilities in order to ensure that their heirs inherited the land.⁶³ Gerda Lerner believes that men actually considered women the first form of

⁶¹ Anne E. Gorsuch, " 'A Woman is not a Man': The Culture of Gender and Generation in Soviet Russia, 1921-1928," *Slavic Review* 55 (Fall 1996): 641.

⁶² Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, 275.

⁶³ Merry E. Wiesner-Hanks, "Patriarchy," in *Encyclopedia of European Social History 1350 to 2000*, ed. by Peter N. Stearns, Volume 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Son's, 2001), 15-6. There is a range of interpretations on the origins and effects of patriarchy, including those offered by, among others, Gerda Lerner, Judith M. Bennett, Fredrick Engels, Julie Hardwick, Pavla Miller, and Margaret R. Sommerville.

private property.⁶⁴ Lerner insists that “[m]en learned to institute dominance and hierarchy over other people by their earlier practice of dominance of women of their own group.”⁶⁵ This occurred, Lerner says, prior to the development of city-states or class orders. As social and cultural concepts, patriarchal standards often provide for the exclusion of women from positions of influence and power through the authority of men over women’s lives and activities. The ideological constructs of patriarchy greatly affected women both before and after the French and Russian Revolutions since patriarchal standards largely influenced the decisions of men.

Scholars who focus on women and their roles in revolutions frequently attribute differing rationales for women’s reactions to such circumstances. Sheila Rowbotham insists that women in revolutions took one of two courses: they consented to male authority and remained dedicated to their customary position in society or they rebelled in defiance and organized their own movements for equality.⁶⁶ Rowbotham claims that women were left with the option of adopting the revolutionary ideals and views espoused by men or adopting a voice of resistance.⁶⁷ Mary Beard had also noted that women were left with roughly two options after revolutions. Beard acknowledged that opportunities for women ranged from endeavoring to enlist support for gender equality among the revolutionaries in power or accepting that domesticity stood to be women’s most noble and fulfilling task. This, Beard said, in effect left women in the same position they had

⁶⁴ Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986). Lerner articulates the traditional Marxist interpretation developed and conveyed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 9.

⁶⁶ Sheila Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972). Also see Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, “Orders and Liberties,” in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993), 1-8.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 11.

occupied prior to the revolution.⁶⁸ What defined those women who promoted the cause of gender equality after revolutions, Beard held, was their willingness to go against the norm and struggle for rights that threatened to reverse women's standard place in society.

Other scholars have documented women's motivations for participating in revolutionary activities with some focusing on women's protests against matters relating to subsistence. Bonnie G. Smith argues that women initially protested during revolutionary movements mainly in order to advocate for subsistence for their families.⁶⁹ This pattern reflects what Temma Kaplan labels the awareness of female consciousness, which "centers upon the rights of gender, on social concerns, on survival" and the protection of life.⁷⁰ In the particular case of the French and Russian Revolutions, women rallied against the increasing cost of bread, in both instances driving the revolt forward, since such conditions proved a threat to the well-being of their families. Women, disillusioned with the existing government, took to the streets themselves to insist on changes that benefited the needs of their family. Female consciousness has come to be recognized as something related to but distinct from feminist consciousness, which involves a broader and more generalized call for legal and political equality.

A number of scholars, such as Bonnie Smith, Carol R. Berkin, and Clara M. Lovett, concentrate on women's demands for equality after revolutions. Although many women at first rebelled in relation to familial and domestic concerns, many soon broadened their perspectives and aspirations. Smith insists that women often involved

⁶⁸ Mary Beard, *Woman as Force in History: A Study in Transitions and Realities* (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946), 2.

⁶⁹ Bonnie G. Smith, "The Development of Gender History," in *Encyclopedia of European Social History 1350 to 2000*, ed. by Peter N. Stearns, Volume 4 (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 2001), 6.

⁷⁰ Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," *Signs* VII (1982): 545.

themselves in revolutionary factions as a result of concerns that were feminist in orientation.⁷¹ Such revolutionary women concentrated more on the prospect of attaining the equal opportunities that radical groups seeking power seemed to advocate. Events moved women from issues connected solely with subsistence to the belief that they should be active citizens participating in the democratic opportunities offered by such movements.⁷² Revolutions on the scale and magnitude as those occurring in France and Russia engage women not just merely as passive observers but as a united group advocating for governmental acknowledgment of their legal and civic rights.⁷³ Women in revolutionary movements increasingly campaigned for issues beyond those relating to matters of subsistence and defined themselves as active citizens in pursuit of equality.

Scholars have also addressed the question of class in determining women's specific involvements in revolutionary movements. Class, most basically defined as the material differences separating individuals into divergent social groups, played a large role in determining women's relationship to revolution.⁷⁴ A woman's class position certainly directed the manner and method of her participation in activities connected to revolutionary upheavals. Women's goals for involvement in revolutions varied as a result of class affiliation. Gary Kelly defines class as "historically specific social identities based on perceived differences of interest, verging on conflict" that connects each individual within a larger group context.⁷⁵ Based upon Kelly's description of class, it appears that women from separate classes often did not share the same visions of what

⁷¹ Smith, "The Development of Gender History," 6.

⁷² Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett, *Women, War, and Revolution* (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980), 3.

⁷³ Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perot, *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1993), 1.

⁷⁴ For an overview of definitions of class and their relationship to the study of history, see Alan Munslow, "Class," in *The Routledge Companion to Historical Studies* (London: Routledge, 2000), 43-45.

⁷⁵ Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing and Revolution, 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1993), v.

revolutionary governments should provide for them. Patricia Branca also focuses on issues of class as an important construct in the placement of women in history. Branca maintains that class dictates the manner in which scholars examine women from a historical perspective. According to Branca, the differing patterns of women's lives, in regard to the areas of work, family, and participation in various political or social activities, directly relates to class distinctions.⁷⁶ Joan Scott elaborates on Branca's theories by stating that historians cannot examine class issues, and the subsequent connection to political movements, without factoring in perceptions of gender that define the experiences of women and men.⁷⁷ The level and manner of women's involvement in revolutionary upheavals can thus be defined by their class position.

A distinction must be made between the motives of women from the privileged classes and those from the lower orders in relation to their roles in the French and Russian Revolutions. Women of the upper classes frequently advocated for the more feminist minded ideals of gender equality. These were women with enough influence or status to make individual contributions – either through the medium of writing or direct involvement in revolutionary activities and governmental procedures. Berkin and Lovett acknowledge that studies of women in revolutions often concentrate on upper class individuals because “[t]hey served to rectify those sins of omission in traditional accounts of wars and revolutionary efforts” since, until fairly recently, historians tended to overlook women's contributions to revolutions.⁷⁸ Continued study of the participation of

⁷⁶ Branca, *Women in Europe Since 1750*, 13.

⁷⁷ Joan Wallach Scott, *Gender and the Politics of History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 66.

⁷⁸ Berkin and Lovett, *Women, War, and Revolution*, 3.

women from the privileged orders remains relevant today because they developed the feminist ideologies connected with each Revolution, especially via the use of writing and discourse.⁷⁹ Women from the upper classes brought their predominately feminist views to the forefront in the request for equality during revolutionary movements.

The involvement of women from the lower or middle orders also deserves attention in regard to these two revolutions. These women, often banded together in groups, petitioned the newly incorporated revolutionary governments for the rights of subsistence or improved working conditions. Such women primarily recognized themselves via class distinctions, not those based on sex, and that usually separated them from their upper class counterparts.⁸⁰ Women of the lower orders focused more on subsistence concerns. Kaplan maintains that “women with female consciousness demand[ed] the rights that their obligations entail[ed],” and in the case of women’s rioting in the French and Russian Revolutions, women expected the state to facilitate their access to bread in order to nourish their families.⁸¹ These women did not necessarily demand equal rights or opportunities on par with men in society. Lower class women demanded what they believed they deserved: food for their families and not necessarily equal political or legal rights.⁸² These women proved to be an organizational force as they protested and wrote pamphlets appealing to the government for consideration of special rights due their sex. Clearly, such actions allowed for women of the lower and middle classes to become more aware of their impact on the course of these revolutions.

⁷⁹ Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution*, vi.

⁸⁰ Berkin and Lovett, *Women, War, and Revolution*, 4.

⁸¹ Kaplan, “Female Consciousness and Collective Action,” 545.

⁸² Pope, “Revolution and Retreat,” 219.

Two types of gendered revolutionary consciousness can be discerned in connection with the French and Russian Revolutions. Discourses written by women of the upper orders reflected feminist causes that championed gender equality. Yet another important element of women's participation in the French and Russian Revolutions occurred among women of the lower classes. These women advocated for issues connected to the needs of their families and for matters relating to subsistence. Women of the lower classes used discourses to petition the government and gather support for their cause. Yet it also appears that women of all classes expected the newly established revolutionary governments to address a range of important issues important to them. Whether women wrote in order to promote gender equality or for the rights due their sex, what connected the discourses written by women of both the upper and lower echelons of society was their strong conviction in what they believed to be their rights as citizens.

The problem of women's rights after the French and Russian Revolutions is historically significant because it demonstrated how women after revolutionary movements have often remained trapped in subordinate roles. The initial idealism of radical departures from one form of government to another was swept aside by an upsurge in conventional modes of perceiving women that resulted from a continued dependence on patriarchal values. In both the French and Russian Revolutions, women's accomplishments, rights, desires for increasingly public roles, and needs never gained the full attention or support from male-dominated leadership factions. Although each revolution occurred in separate countries, over the course of differing centuries, and for varying reasons, a clear and similar outline emerges. After the French and Russian

Revolutions, women's needs did not secure sustained attention from the men in power, as evidenced by the quick departure of support for issues involving women. In France, politics and the fervent need for power and control convinced the men in command of the country to abandon the matter of women's rights in the earliest stages of the Revolution, whereas in Russia the failing economy took center stage to all other matters beginning in 1921.

The examination of discourses written by and about women reveals what Berkin and Lovett describe as “the resiliency of traditional roles and structures and to the fragility of egalitarian reform” after major revolutions.⁸³ Women used the printed word to advocate for equality or to insist upon changes designed to improve their daily lives. Men used the rhetoric incorporated in a variety of discourses to justify the continued subordination of women as both the fitting and natural course of social order. Women during revolutionary periods remained in the same place as their predecessors: mired in patriarchal standards upheld by men in positions of power.

⁸³ Berkin and Lovett, *Women, War, and Revolution*, 3.

CHAPTER I

In the Shadow of Egalitarianism: Women and the French Revolution

Most historians who examine issues pertaining to the position of women in French society after the 1789 Revolution focus on either women's losses as a result of the Napoleonic Code of 1804 or the setbacks that followed the Jacobins closing of women's political clubs in 1793. A number of scholars have pointed to the fact that the Napoleonic Code of 1804 stripped French women of their rights to act in an independent manner without attaining the consent of their husbands or fathers and were reflective of the depth of patriarchal values.¹ Yet these scholars largely ignore the fact that the Jacobins neglected the civil and legal rights of women even in the earliest stages of the Revolution. Other historians have centered their accounts on the government's decision to close women's political clubs in 1793 and the ways in which this negatively affected French women ability to participate in civic life.² Again, these scholars place emphasis on the failure of the Jacobin government to address women's constitutional rights in later stages of the Revolution without fully addressing the plight of women directly after the 1789 rupture. Still other historians claim that the first stages of the Revolution provided women with opportunities to promote their issues and concerns in an increasingly

¹ Barbara Corrado Pope, "Revolution and Retreat: Upper-Class French Women After 1789," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. by Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 215-36. Bonnie G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1989).

² Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins During the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

democratic forum.³ Only a few acknowledge that women never completely benefited from the French Revolution because they in no way gained full participatory or citizenship rights. Mary Durham Johnson and James F. McMillan insist that women acquired virtually nothing as a consequence of the Revolution. Johnson claims that women after the 1789 Revolution basically remained in the same subordinate position as they inhabited in Old Regime France.⁴ McMillan concurs in saying that at “no stage...did the revolutionaries think of including women within their definitions of citizenship” after 1789.⁵ Many scholars have concentrated on the status of women’s rights from 1793 to 1804. But most historians do not place enough emphasis on the condition of women in French society directly after the Revolution of 1789. The closing of political clubs, the neglect of women’s rights on the part of governmental leaders, and the influence of the Napoleonic Code all merely reflect an entrenched patriarchal mindset that the revolutionaries embraced with increasing regularity throughout the entire course of the Revolution.

Historians often fail to outline the integral relationship between the unabated patriarchal mindsets of government officials and the denial of women’s rights at each phase of the Revolution, which developed and expanded outward from the time of the National Assembly to the promulgation of the Napoleonic Code. Instead, they often pinpoint one particular incident or time period in which women lost civic and legal rights

³ Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, “Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris,” in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. by Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, 1980.) Elizabeth G. Sledziewski, “The French Revolution as the Turning Point,” in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 33-47.

⁴ Mary Durham Johnson, “Old Wine in New Bottles: The Institutional Changes for Women of the People During the French Revolution,” in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes & Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 107-44.

⁵ James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 16.

in post-revolutionary France without adequately noting that all of these circumstances built upon prior legislative measures and specific patriarchal patterns of viewing women's issues in existence during the entirety of the Revolution. Women did not just suffer the inadequacies of governmental disregard for their legal and civic status in French society during certain disconnected phases of the Revolution. Every separate occurrence relating to governmental refusal to address women's concerns related to prior incidents and created the context essential for such manifestations to reappear in the future. Certainly, the passage of the Napoleonic Code only served as one example among many of governmental restrictions on women's status as legal and active French citizens.

The common assumption, shared by many historians, including Anne-Marie Kappeli, Sarah Shaver Hughes, and Brady Hughes, is that the Napoleonic Code served as the point in time when women lost their legal rights in post-revolutionary France. The Napoleonic legal codes most certainly denied women basic rights necessary for complete freedom and equality as fully participating citizens of the French Republic. Provisions of the Code denied women opportunities to act as active citizens in society and defined their relationship to the state through their husbands or fathers. The dictatorial nature of Napoleon's rule, coupled with the harshness of the Napoleonic Code's laws dealing with women, eroded women's attempts at liberation in the aftermath of the Revolution.⁶ The Code stripped women of their political identities and gave men unprecedented power over their lives. Still, throughout the entire course of the Revolution, women played a decidedly political role on an informal and unofficial basis without being granted constitutional rights. Women's public presence in protest and subsistence movements

⁶ Anne-Marie Kappeli, "Feminist Scenes," in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 484-85.

and active allegiance to the Revolution often held political connotations.⁷ Yet by the implementation of the Code in 1804, women had lost all legally sanctioned means to gain citizenship status.⁸ Napoleon's ascension to power in France marked a turning point but did not suddenly strip women of the fully inclusive rights they enjoyed prior to that time period. Women never benefited from the French Revolution on the same level as men. If anything, the significance of the Napoleonic Code lies in what Mary Durham Johnson noted: that is that it has been considered by historians as the true turning point in relation to the status of women's rights because it "restated the patriarchal values of French society with more precision on the inequality of male-female than any previous national legislation and established more proficient centralized means of keeping women in their place" than under any revolutionary government, certainly the Old Regime.⁹ The Napoleonic Code set guidelines for women's roles in society on a more comprehensive and explicit level than previous governmental measures designed to control and define the actions and participation of women in France. Still, the severity of the Code's laws relating to women did not constitute the only time that governmental measures severely restricted women's rights in post-revolutionary France. The adoption of the Napoleonic Code in France only mirrored governmental actions taken against women beginning well before Napoleon came to power in 1799. The Napoleonic Code represented a continuity in the much longer-term pattern in governmental restrictions aimed at controlling women's legal and civic rights in France.

⁷ McMillan, *France and Women*, 25.

⁸ Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes, *Women in World History: Readings from 1500 to the Present* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997), 143.

⁹ Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles," 131.

Each successive betrayal of women's rights on the part of the government built upon previous decrees that left women in limbo beginning even at the formation of the National Assembly. Women did not suddenly lose the greatest portion of what they gained from the Revolution of 1789 subsequent to 1804: the male dominated leadership factions in post-revolutionary France never at any time accorded them with adequate opportunities to express their concerns or participate as active citizens in French society. Every attempt on the part of the revolutionaries to impede the advancement of women's rights after 1789 reflected older standards of perceiving women, which the men in power made no attempt to modify or erase. The revolutionaries in power from 1789 onward relied upon patriarchal standards and often treated the subject of French women with indifference and contempt. Tracing the status of women's rights in France backwards from Napoleon's reign to the Revolution of 1789 reveals a consistent pattern of inattentiveness on the part of government leaders to address the concerns of French women. The Napoleonic Code simply provided the capstone for longer-term governmental disregard and neglect towards issues pertaining to women. The Code remains the ultimate legislative summation of women's lack of constitutional rights in post-revolutionary French society simply by firmly stating in a series of laws the well-entrenched belief, held by every ruling body in France prior to Napoleon's reign, that women could not be active citizens entitled to the same legal status as men.

The Napoleonic Code, known more generally as the Civil Code until 1807, resulted in one of the most significant and profound legislative measures to emerge from the French Revolution. The Napoleonic Code of 1804 consigned women completely to domestic life and left them under the control and at the whim of their husbands or the

male members of their family. The Napoleonic Code consisted of a fusion between the laws in place under the Old Regime and those implemented during the earlier periods of the Revolution.¹⁰ It served as the foundation for the entirety of the French system of regulations and policies and also influenced laws in other European countries. The Code upheld conservative visions of social relations in a comprehensive, all-inclusive manner in order to fit the quotidian realities of post-revolutionary France.¹¹ Napoleon, with the help of the lawyers who drafted the Code, instituted a system of legal edicts that defined the basic structure of French law, and accorded more power than ever to bourgeoisie property holders. Indeed, the Code's property and inheritance laws tended to favor the bourgeoisie more than any other class.¹² Essentially, the Code gave male, elite property owners complete control in French society. Women, on the other hand, suffered immensely due to the restrictions placed upon them in the Napoleonic Code.

The Napoleonic Code reduced women to an inferior status while at the same time it gave men greater rights. The Code defined women as individuals only through their husbands or male relatives. Napoleon insisted, and subsequently reiterated in the Code, that women were 'relative creatures' to be identified only via the men within the woman's family unit.¹³ Restrictions placed on married women's rights were comparably worse than those for other women, though not by much. Upon the completion of the Napoleonic Code, married women became legal minors under the law. After marriage, a woman's claims to citizenship were reliant upon her husband's relationship with the

¹⁰ Pope, "Revolution and Retreat," 220.

¹¹ Jeremy Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 120.

¹² Martyn Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 94.

¹³ McMillan, *France and Women*, 37.

nation and she had to obey her spouse in all matters.¹⁴ Married men controlled where their spouses resided and had to give permission before their wives could sign legal or business contracts.¹⁵ Women suffered more severe punishments for adultery than did men, which often meant an extended jail sentence or the payment of fines.¹⁶ Men managed their wives and daughters' finances. Provisions of the Code also relieved men of financial responsibility for illegitimate children. Under the Code divorce was once again rigorously restricted.¹⁷ The Code also specified that women could not serve as court witnesses or manage land or other forms of property. As a consequence of the Code, upper class women lost any authority to hold gatherings in salons to discuss politics. Barbara Corrado Pope argues that the "ensuing rationalization, bureaucratization, and centralization increasingly closed the kind of informal channels that some highly placed women" utilized in the salons prior to the Napoleonic Code.¹⁸ As a result of the Code, women endured severe limitations of their rights. The Napoleonic Code defined women's position in French society in very restrictive and narrow terms, regardless of class or profession.

Still, some historians, most notably James McMillan, Genevieve Fraisse, and Michelle Perrot, insist that the Napoleonic Code was not entirely unfavorable to women and did provide them with some gains. They argue that, in many cases, due to the often ambiguous nature of the Code, the power accorded to husbands proved more abstract

¹⁴ Smith, *Changing Lives*, 120.

¹⁵ The exception to this being merchant women since they played a vital role in commerce and the marketplace. Also, women's independence in the market was essential to their economic success. See Victoria Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace: Women and Men, Money and Politics in Paris, 1830-1870* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 9.

¹⁶ Lyons, *Napoleon Bonaparte and the Legacy of the French Revolution*, 102.

¹⁷ Pope, "Revolution and Retreat," 221.

¹⁸ *Ibid*, 220.

than concrete.¹⁹ And indeed there were certain clauses in the Code that did make equal opportunities available to women. Daughters received the same inheritance rights as sons as a result of the Napoleonic Code.²⁰ The Code also allowed women to compose a will without the authorization of their husband. And in other matters, a husband could not dispose of his wife's property without her prior permission and this gave married women a degree of control over their assets.²¹ Provisions in the Code also appear to have benefited women in the small market economy. The Code stipulated that women shopkeepers could employ themselves in public trading without the prior authorization of their husbands.²² Victoria Thompson declares that this law allowed "female merchants...an exceptional status, retaining the right to enter into contracts, to buy and sell at will, and to engage not only their assets, but those of their husbands" in the process.²³ The Code accorded merchant women special legal rights as long as they owned a business or shop independent of their husband's and did not simply work for him. Though the Napoleonic Code provided women with some advantages, these measures proved to be minimal and only applied to members of the petite bourgeoisie. Women from the lower orders, those responsible for initiating the bread riots in earlier stages of the Revolution, never benefited from the Code.

The Napoleonic Code, for the most part, upheld patriarchal standards to the detriment of women and reinforced strict divisions between public and private spheres.

¹⁹ McMillan, *France and Women*, 39.

²⁰ Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot, *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War* (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 12.

²¹ Nicole Arnaud-Duc, "The Law's Contradictions," in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 106.

²² Lisa DiCaprio and Merry E. Wiesner, *Lives and Voices: Sources in European Women's History* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 271.

²³ Thompson, *The Virtuous Marketplace*, 9.

The legal codes largely denied women the right of involvement in public affairs and instead defined women's roles as essentially domestic. One of the purposes of the Code was to return France to a state of relative stability through a structured series of laws and regulations. This also meant consigning women to domestic life and leaving men to govern the public realm. The restrictive and severe nature of the Napoleonic Code upheld the dominance of men over women in early nineteenth-century French society.²⁴ Men were to concentrate on public matters while women stayed in the home to act as faithful wives and dutiful mothers. The authors of the Napoleonic Code purposely attempted to draft laws that guaranteed women's fidelity to the home and domestic responsibilities.²⁵ Men, still convinced that women were unable to contribute to public life, used the Napoleonic Code as a way of keeping women inside the home. A key outcome of the Code was the husband's legal ability to govern over women and confine them to conventional and domestic roles in society.²⁶ The Napoleonic Code strengthened the family unit by restricting women to domestic functions and permitting men to essentially rule over their wives and daughters while no longer fearing women's impact in public life. Bonnie Smith insists that the Code "defined the space women would occupy in the new regime as marital, maternal, and domestic," while men played the role of active, public, and participating citizens.²⁷ A principle result of the French Revolution, then, was a resurgence of conventional attitudes towards women's rights that resulted in the Napoleonic Code's division of women and men into the differing realms of public and domestic.

²⁴ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 120.

²⁵ Pope, "Revolution and Retreat," 121.

²⁶ Arnaud-Duc, "The Law's Contradictions," 97.

²⁷ Smith, *Changing Lives*, 120.

Many scholars argue that the Napoleonic Code signified the point of time in post-revolutionary France when women officially lost legal and civic rights. The comprehensive and severe nature of the law codes contributes to this opinion. At no other stage of the Revolution did governmental concern over women's position in French society receive legal and constitutional attention on such a scale. The Code essentially relegated women's place in society to domestic matters and reinforced patriarchal presumptions that a woman's relationship to society depended upon her husband or father's rank. The Napoleonic Code suppressed women's chances for equality, subdued feminist challenges to patriarchal norms, and quelled any chances for women to garner citizenship status in post-revolutionary France.²⁸ Yet historians do not fully credit the fact that, throughout the entire course of the Revolution, government authorities systematically denied women legal rights and equal access to opportunities in public affairs.

Scholars often do not fully focus their attention on how governmental dependence on patriarchal values influenced decisions relating to women's place in post-revolutionary France under the Thermidorians, Jacobins, and members of the National Assembly. The Napoleonic Code contained specific and concrete articles defining women's sphere in France that merely reiterated, in a more detailed manner, the conventional view of women held by government officials throughout the course of the Revolution. From the first stages of the Revolution in the early 1790s, government officials denied women rights as equal, participating citizens in the new French Republic. By refusing women an official voice in politics, insisting that men were the rightful citizens of the Republic, urging women to serve the cause of the Revolution by being

²⁸ Pope, "Revolution and Retreat," 220.

compliant wives and mothers, and using symbols to designate the proper spheres for the sexes, government officials clearly set the framework for the future success of the Napoleonic Code. Indeed, the Code simply provided an apt conclusion to an ongoing process of governmental scorn and neglect for the issue of women's rights that began not upon Napoleon's accession to power but with the overthrow of the monarchy. The practice of disregarding or denying women legal rights and full citizenship status continued relatively unabated throughout the entire course of the Revolution. The Napoleonic Code certainly capitalized on existing ideals perpetuated by government officials in regard to the need to subdue women. Yet this proved to be a concern that plagued not just Napoleon but the Thermidorians and Jacobins as well.

The Napoleonic Code should be understood by historians as having set forth in a more explicit and thorough manner what the Thermidorians expanded upon in their denial of women's rights in the Constitution of 1795 and the Jacobin revolutionaries instigated in 1793, with the closure of women's political clubs amidst a more general attack on the influence of women in public affairs. The Thermidorians, reacting against the Terror of late 1793, wanted to restrict women in their attempt to stabilize conditions in France. By 1793, the Jacobins had come to rely on the assumption that women were incapable of contributing to public life and that their true vocation was to tend to domestic matters. In order to remain in control of the Revolution, the Thermidorians and Jacobins attempted to isolate women exclusively to domestic life so as to decrease women's influence in public affairs. Thus, the Napoleonic Code echoed the assault on women's rights initiated by the Thermidorians and Jacobins and only codified what members of the government set in motion during earlier stages of the French Revolution.

The implementation of the Napoleonic Code did not take from women rights they previously enjoyed, especially considering the deterioration of Thermidorian and Jacobin concern for women's issues in the early 1790s. The Napoleonic Code followed upon constitutional measures, such as the Constitution of 1795 and the closing of women's political clubs in 1793, which also severely limited the rights of French women.

The Thermidorians, countering the radical nature of the Jacobins and the Terror instigated by Robespierre, denied women rights on a similar scale as Napoleon. In 1795, women rebelled against the Thermidorians as a result of a famine that once again plagued France and because members of the government refused to enact the Constitution of 1793. Thermidorian government officials either ignored or reacted violently against the pleas of sans-culotte women who besieged the Convention for bread and democracy.²⁹ The Thermidorians, echoing the actions of other revolutionary governmental bodies in France, treated women as threats to the strength of their political authority. The Constitution of 1795 only reaffirmed the Thermidorians negative opinions of women. The drafters of the constitution designated men of propertied wealth and education as the proper governing officials of France, and this entitled women to no specific benefits or rights.³⁰ The 1795 Constitution effectively confirmed principles that Napoleon further defined nine years later with the Napoleonic Code. Both the 1795 Constitution and the Napoleonic Code favored men and left women in subordinate positions in society. Such an observation raises the question of whether there was ever a time, then, when women profited from their involvement in the French Revolution. In order to explore this one

²⁹ McMillan, *France and Women*, 25.

³⁰ Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles," 130.

must examine whether or not the Jacobins in control of France from roughly late 1789 to 1794 granted women civil or legal rights denied them under the Old Regime.

In fact, the period of 1791 to 1793 was the only stage in the Revolution when members of the government allowed women certain civil advancements denied them under the Old Regime. During these years, many women came to view themselves as individuals who deserved political rights and full citizenship status in post-revolutionary France. This emerging feminist consciousness on the part of women coincided with the point in time when governmental measures allowed for women's improved legal status.³¹ But by late 1793, the Jacobins came to consider women's expanding consciousness of their rights to constitute a threat to the nation's political stability. The Jacobins' insistence on granting women a measure of liberty must also be observed in the context of how quickly members of the government reasserted control over women's position in French society. Women briefly benefited from Jacobin rule in post-revolutionary France and those developments cannot be overlooked, though neither can the manner in which governmental officials once again relied upon patriarchal values to quickly renounce their support for women's rights as full citizens in French society.

Until late 1793, the Jacobins did allow women certain liberties denied them under the monarchy, although these freedoms proved to be brief and insufficient to granting women full rights as active, contributing citizens in France. Women never gained full citizenship status as a result and the measures proved to be too short-lived to effect any permanent changes. Yet the Jacobins did address the topic of women's roles in post-revolutionary France more so than any other governmental regime of their period. Directly after the initial stages of the Revolution, issues connected with women's rights

³¹ Sledziewski, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point," 37.

proved to be a pertinent and important topic for the Jacobins.³² The Jacobins provided women with a measure of equality, if not citizenship rights, in the new French state. The Constitution of 1791 characterized civil majority on equivalent terms for men and women in French society. Under the Jacobin regime, women gained the right to serve as witnesses to documents, enter into contracts, and to garner equal shares in collective property.³³ Women also benefited from Jacobin legislation upon the advent of new divorce laws in 1792. The laws permitted either party to file for divorce as a means to dissolve marriage, which granted women the same rights as men in this regard.³⁴ In some respects, then, Jacobin legislative decrees accorded women with rights unknown to them under the Old Regime. Women also took advantage of the revolutionary atmosphere engulfing France in the early 1790s to overtly and forcefully demand specific governmental attention to issues of significance to them.

Women's involvement in bread rioting during the French Revolution was one principal way in which they made public demands related to their concerns. As Temma Kaplan suggests, with respect to Spain in the early twentieth century, the symbolic implications of women's bread rioting in Revolutionary France centered upon the idea of female consciousness.³⁵ Women typically considered themselves to be the primary nurturers of their families. Women's recognition of themselves as the ones accountable for the provisioning needs of the family unit thus shaped the form of their protest.³⁶ In revolutionary France, a series of crop failures and bad harvests in the late 1700s

³² Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue*, 91.

³³ Sledziewski, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point," 36.

³⁴ Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, 43.

³⁵ Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," *Signs* VII (1982): 545.

³⁶ Lynne Taylor, "Food Riots Revisited," *Journal of Social History* 30 (Winter 1996): 487.

precipitated a shortage of the grain needed for bread making. Shortages of bread supplies led to growing dissatisfaction on the part of women because they could not properly meet what they presumed to be their familial responsibilities. Women demanded that the government eradicate the problem by instituting a series of cost reductions, thereby lowering the price of bread and making it more accessible to the public.³⁷ Women's expectations for governmental intervention in the bread market in revolutionary France relates to E.P. Thompson's theory of the "moral economy."³⁸ Thompson contends that through the early modern period most citizens in England presumed that, during periods of scarcity, the prices of necessary provisions should remain at a constant level.³⁹ This directly parallels women's appeals for a reduction in bread prices in revolutionary France. Women's roles in the bread riots of the 1790s allowed them to openly criticize the monarchy for not addressing their needs. French women often sided with the revolutionaries since the monarchical government failed to provide consumers with more abundant supplies of bread at lower costs. The Jacobins willingly granted women more accessibility to the public and political realm in part because of women's contribution to the success of the early stages of the Revolution through their challenging of the monarchy in the form of protest against the rising cost of bread.

Prior to late 1793, the Jacobin government permitted French women to listen to political debates, take part on an indirect basis in such dialogues, and form revolutionary clubs. Women often contributed to politics either in specific groups or alongside men in

³⁷ Louise A. Tilly, "The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1971): 50.

³⁸ E. P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century," *Past and Present* 50 (1971): 77-136.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 371-72.

unprecedented numbers and along equal lines during this period of the Revolution.⁴⁰ Such involvement on the part of women reflected the supposed egalitarian principles embraced by the Jacobins during the beginning phases of the French Revolution. Due to the radical fervor that gripped individuals in the midst of the Revolution, members of the government did not interfere when women joined in as onlookers during political discussions and debates or when they organized into groups for the same purposes. Simply by appearing at the gatherings, women gained political input on both a perceptible and symbolic level.⁴¹ French women's involvement at this juncture of the Revolution corresponds with Jurgen Habermas' concept of the bourgeois public sphere. Habermas claims that there were actually two distinct factions that formed the public sphere: citizens that occupied the political arena – namely property holders - and those encompassing the world of letters who often directed the course of public opinion.⁴² Increasingly, during the autocratic crisis of the 1790s, public considerations of both divisions merged and became a crucial factor in the internal dynamics of politics. The bourgeois public sphere voiced their judgment of the monarchy as a check against the actions of the government.⁴³ Habermas argues that although “[w]omen...were factually and legally excluded from the political public sphere...[they] often took a more active part in the literary public sphere.”⁴⁴ Thus, through the use of *cahiers de doléances* and as salon hostesses, French women gained access to the bourgeois public sphere and

⁴⁰ Harriet B. Applewhite and Darline G. Levy, “Women, Democracy, and Revolution in Paris, 1789-1794” in *French Women and the Age of Enlightenment*, ed. by Samia I. Spencer (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 75.

⁴¹ Dominique Godineau, “Daughters of Liberty and Revolutionary Citizens,” in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 19.

⁴² Jurgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1989), 30.

⁴³ *Ibid*, 52, 69.

⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 56.

impacted public opinion in the process. This particular phase of the Revolution witnessed the peak of upper class women's roles as salon hostesses, allowing privileged women free, though informal, expression of their political opinions. The salon hostesses, however, did not actively, and radically, advocate for rights as completely as members of the women's clubs formed through the 1790s. The more significant and profound manner in which women participated in the Revolution after 1789 was through the establishment of revolutionary clubs.

Political clubs intended exclusively for French women provided them with places to gather in collective units, not only to further the cause of the Revolution, but also to deliberate over ideas and issues connected to the advancement of women's rights. Women's political clubs served as focal points for republican causes in post-revolutionary France.⁴⁵ Yet such women's clubs served a variety of other purposes. Women, in an increasingly militant manner, met on a regular basis to debate questions of both a political and social nature and confer about events and circumstances connected to the Revolution.⁴⁶ In 1793, women of the popular classes involved in the political clubs often combined objectives. At this point in the Revolution, women connected subsistence demands with the appeal for legal rights.⁴⁷ Initially, the Jacobins supported women's clubs, especially since members of the government understood that the involvement of women in the Revolution helped to dismantle the monarch's claims to exclusive power in France when they forced the king to return to the capital in October 1789. A significant number of Jacobins fully understood that women helped to usher in

⁴⁵ Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 72.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 20.

⁴⁷ Levy and Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris," 27.

and sustain the revolution, thus they consented to the formation of women's clubs.⁴⁸ By 1793, women had founded roughly fifty clubs in thirty French cities. The most famous and prominent of these clubs was the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women.

Pauline Leon, a chocolate-maker by trade, and the actress Claire Lacombe established the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women in Paris in May 1793. Both women were active in past revolutionary movements and supporters of the *Enrages*, a group known for their radical politics. The Jacobins initially permitted the women an official place to meet. Although the Jacobins disbanded the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women roughly five months later, membership in the club often numbered into the hundreds.⁴⁹ The society provided for the organization of revolutionary women on a massive scale and served as an ally to the extremist Jacobins who initiated the Terror under the leadership of Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety.⁵⁰ The members of the club also advocated for passage of the 1793 Constitution. The original constitutional proposal allowed for equal expression of rights for every member of society and stood to benefit women as much as men, though the Jacobins suspended the Constitution in order to more fully concentrate on the war with Austria.⁵¹ The Revolutionary Republican women also criticized the more moderate members of the government known as the Girondins. When Jacobin support for the club wavered, the women escalated their protests against government price controls and continued a campaign against opponents of the Revolution, aptly illustrating the militant nature of the

⁴⁸ Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue*, 95.

⁴⁹ McMillan, *France and Women*, 23.

⁵⁰ Levy and Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris," 22.

⁵¹ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 80.

Revolutionary Republicans.⁵² The Society of Revolutionary Republican Women incorporated very precise and effective methods to accomplish their objectives. By employing such techniques as taunting, harassing, and protesting against the Girondins, the Revolutionary Republican women made themselves visible and their intentions quite evident.⁵³ Despite the organized, efficient nature of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women, and due in large part to the aggressive character of its members, the Jacobins turned against them and waged a campaign to close the club in October 1793.

The Jacobins, eager to stay in control of the Revolution, judged the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women a nuisance and a threat to the stability of their regime. The Jacobins loathed the negative critique of their policies that the Revolutionary Republican Women conducted in 1793.⁵⁴ The Jacobins considered the club to constitute a focal point of resistance towards the government. The Revolutionary Republican Women deplored the seeming hesitation on the part of the Jacobins to implement the Constitution of 1793. These women insistently rallied against the Jacobins' refusal to enact the new constitutional measures and they further demanded the use of force to keep the Revolution on the correct path, thus they represented a clear menace to the government.⁵⁵ The need for political control motivated the Jacobins to disband the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women. Upon complaints from market women who never combined forces or shared similar ideals with members of the club, the Jacobins used the opportunity to announce that women could join political groups already

⁵² McMillan, *France and Women*, 24.

⁵³ Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, 1500-1800* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1996), 483.

⁵⁴ McMillan, *France and Women*, 29.

⁵⁵ Levy and Applewhite, "Women of the Popular Classes in Revolutionary Paris," 23.

in existence but there were to be no separate organizations designed solely for them.⁵⁶ In October 1793, the Jacobins not only disbanded the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women but all other women's political clubs as well. The Jacobins feared the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women and considered the club to represent a viable threat to the government and banned the club from meeting. In the process, the Jacobins refused women a valuable method of expression and involvement in revolutionary France.

Aside from fearing the effect of the Society of Revolutionary Republican Women on the Jacobins' authority, members of the government also relied upon older patriarchal models of women's roles in society. To the Jacobins, women's place was inside the home, not on the streets demanding their rights or meeting in clubs to discuss public affairs in the same capacity as men in France. The Jacobins insisted that in their homes women could best profit from and be useful to the revolutionary cause, while conveniently forgetting that women's public involvement once helped the revolutionaries gain credibility.⁵⁷ Women who persisted in their quest to remain highly visible in public circles often found themselves victims of the guillotine. The Jacobins reverted to the well-established, conventional modes of perceiving women when they believed that the women's clubs interfered with their method of governing France. In order to combat the desire for public participation in political clubs, the Jacobins maintained that women's primary responsibility was to properly raise children to be proud and loyal republicans who valued liberty.⁵⁸ Efforts on the part of the government to discourage women from public contribution in women's clubs only reflected patriarchal norms that men generally both accepted and embraced. The Jacobins, like the monarchs before them and Napoleon

⁵⁶ Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles," 127.

⁵⁷ Sledziewski, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point," 40.

⁵⁸ Godineau, "Daughters of Liberty and Revolutionary Citizens," 29.

in the near future, judged women to be the occupants of domestic life and men the sole and proper proprietors of the public realm. The Jacobins used such patriarchal, misogynistic principles when women's dissent towards the government became especially annoying and also as a way to conceptualize a society in which women and men knew their appropriate places and did not overstep those boundaries.⁵⁹ The closure of women's political clubs in 1793 allowed the Jacobins to reassert their patriarchal control over women's roles in French society while at the same time reasserting their political authority.

By late 1793, French men again enjoyed far more rights than women.⁶⁰ Instead of supporting the revolutionary goals of women, the Jacobins turned against them.

Historians, including Joan Scott, Patrice Higonnet, and Joan Landes contend that the closing of women's political clubs in 1793 was the decisive point when women lost any chance of fracturing the typical patriarchal mindset of men and gaining rights in post-revolutionary France. The Jacobins quickly reneged on their claims to grant women a voice in French society upon the closing of political clubs and by 1793 women's rights certainly no longer commanded any significant attention by members of the government.⁶¹ The Jacobins contented themselves with the belief that women belonged at home and were both biologically and emotionally incapable of contributing to the public realm. Scott claims that "[a]lthough the issue of women's rights had come up many times in the course of the Revolution, it was repeatedly and directly addressed in 1793," at which point the Jacobins disparaged and consequently denied the presence of

⁵⁹ Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, 484.

⁶⁰ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 88.

⁶¹ Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue*, 93.

women in public and political matters deemed the responsibility of men.⁶² Members of the government believed that women's contribution to public life only interfered with the stability of the nation. Women's growing involvement and supposed interference in political matters from 1789 onward resulted in a governmental crackdown over their public activities beginning in 1793.⁶³ The Jacobins also employed other methods to dissuade women from active participation in public affairs. In order to visually promote the cause of women's subordination, while at the same time heralding men as the true champions of the Revolution, the Jacobins often relied on symbols.

The use of symbols in the form of images facilitated the Jacobins quest to segregate women to domestic duties after the closing of women's political clubs in 1793. A method of power that governmental officials often employed was the use of symbolic representations as a visual manifestation of control.⁶⁴ The Jacobins used symbols to define women's place within the new framework of revolutionary society. Members of the Jacobin government frequently utilized symbols as a method of defining the roles of both men and women in France after the initial stages of the Revolution. The use of allegorical symbols as a political device consequently benefited those in power during the French Revolution.⁶⁵ In particular, beginning in 1793 upon the Jacobins closure of women's political clubs, allegorical figures depicting men replaced those representing women. Hercules replaced Marianne and Liberty as the definitive symbol of the French Republic. The Jacobins believed women looked to Marianne as an emblem of women's

⁶² Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, 47.

⁶³ Joan B. Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), 138.

⁶⁴ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 54.

⁶⁵ Doris Y. Kadish, *Politicizing Gender: Narrative Strategies in the Aftermath of the French Revolution* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1991), 16.

right to engage in public action. The incorporation of Hercules thus emphasized the inferior nature of women and their reliance on men.⁶⁶ The Jacobins utilized the figure of Hercules as an implicit visual declaration of men's superiority and a complicit reminder of women's suitable role in French society. Members of the government preferred images of women that stressed their familial and virtuous natures, such as figures of the Republican mother.⁶⁷ The Jacobins not only closed women's political clubs in 1793, which stripped women of a viable means of expressing their views and contributing to the public realm, but members of the government also employed symbols to illustrate that a woman's responsibility was to her home while men protected the victory gained during the French Revolution. The Jacobins' use of common semiotic symbols to reinforce patriarchal structures of inequality connects to Sewell's model of culture.⁶⁸ Due to the Jacobins' subsequent restrictions on women's roles in public, which they validated by the use of male allegorical figures in place of ones depicting women, many historians claim that 1793 marks the year when women lost any rights that they obtained during the French Revolution.

During the Jacobin phase of the Revolution in the early 1790s, women had acquired opportunities for public, active participation in French society on a scale comparable to that of men. Yet the life span for these advancements was brief and the

⁶⁶ Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution*, 104.

⁶⁷ Anne Higonnet, "Representations of Women," in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 308.

⁶⁸ Sophia Rosenfeld, however, looks less at semiotic symbols – or allegorical figures – in favor of studying epistemological alterations that led to new perceptions of language and its application to politics. Rosenfeld insists that such non-verbal modes of communication as the ballet, pantomime, and sign language formed part of the French revolutionaries endorsement of a "language of action" that was supposedly less deceptive than mere written or spoken linguistics. Rosenfeld stresses the function of language as a political tool. Essentially, the implications and practice of language was crucial to the political culture of the Revolution. See Sophia Rosenfeld, *A Revolution in Language: The Problem of Signs in Late Eighteenth-Century France* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001).

deterioration of women's status in France worsened considerably as a result. The Jacobins offered women prospects for legal and political equality by providing them civil liberties in the Constitution of 1791, equal access to divorce, and governmental sanction for the formation of women's clubs. Yet the Jacobins just as quickly retracted their support and attacked women's influence on public and political matters. The Jacobins' contradictory treatment of women provided a model utilized by other governmental bodies in control in post-revolutionary France. When women threatened the political stability of the regime with their demands – be they for subsistence or political equality – officials attempted to reduce women's involvement in the Revolution. The Jacobins gave women opportunities to advance their causes until they meddled too deeply in the workings of the political process. Government officials then essentially countered women's efforts by reiterating the belief that women needed only to concern themselves with being chaste, virtuous, domestic creatures and shunned any attempts by individuals to contradict this entrenched opinion, thus making it far easier for the Thermidorians and Napoleon to reinforce such gender systems of inequality in later years.⁶⁹ The Jacobins refused women rights as participating and active French citizens and every other governmental body in later years added to the precedents established during previous stages of the Revolution. Yet the Jacobins, too, found it easy to curtail the influence of women in public affairs. They simply followed the example of governmental treatment of women instituted during the initial revolutionary rupture from 1789 to 1791.

Despite the arguments of scholars who maintain that 1793 was the year when government support for the advancement of women's rights ceased, and notwithstanding the assertions of those historians who claim that the Napoleonic Code of 1804 marked the

⁶⁹ Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue*, 92-3.

real demise of women's rights, male leadership factions in post-revolutionary France nearly always consigned women to a subordinate status throughout the whole course of the French Revolution. Even at the beginning of the Revolution in 1789, members of the National Assembly refused to address the issue of French women's rights on an unambiguous, consistent, and inclusive basis. Inattentiveness on the part of government officials towards issues connected with women's rights began in earnest throughout the time of the National Assembly during the revolutionary upheaval of 1789 to 1791. The majority of historians agree that women lost rights throughout the course of the Revolution, though some point to 1793 and others to 1804 as the points of significant retreat. Although women undoubtedly suffered immeasurably as a consequence of the government's closure of women's political clubs in 1793 and especially due to the effects of the Napoleonic Code's provisions on women in 1804, women's rights remained an illusive subject that those in power failed to focus on even in the direct aftermath of the French Revolution. The National Assembly set the standard for governmental disregard towards women's issues. Governmental organizations in the future only mirrored the treatment accorded to women by members of the National Assembly. Ambivalence on the part of the National Assembly concerning women's status as equal, active citizens in post-revolutionary France made it far easier for future members of the government to justify their attempts to deny women legal and civic rights.

Members of the National Assembly certainly never considered the subject of women's rights to be an integral part of their overall revolutionary goals, designs, or policies. Women remained confined to a state of inferiority relative to men in French society for the entire duration of the Revolution. In fact, women, instead of progressively

losing rights from 1793 to 1804, really witnessed an increase in governmental restrictions on their impact in public affairs. At no stage of the Revolution did women attain sufficient rights or support from the government. Although various scholars applaud the Jacobins in the National and Legislative Assemblies for at least acknowledging women's issues in the 1791 Constitution and 1792 divorce laws, members of the government at no time allowed women rights as active, equal, participating citizens in post-revolutionary France. Government officials, in a common trend exploited by every other revolutionary regime in France after the Revolution, considered women unequal to men and undeserving of full rights outside of a domestic setting. The pattern of government negligence toward women's rights did not begin in 1793 or 1804 but during the early period of the Revolution when the National Assembly governed France. Members of the first revolutionary body in control of France denied women the prospect of becoming active citizens with equal rights and opportunities during the beginning stages of the Revolution, thus making it far easier for government officials to do the same at later periods of the movement. Members of the National Assembly set the precedent for every other governmental decision that denied women rights and an active role in post-revolutionary French society. Yet some historians challenge that women, due to their involvement in the initial stages of the French Revolution, acquired a keen knowledge of their rights to citizenship and equality in an increasingly modern, democratic era, despite the fact that members of the National Assembly consistently refused to acknowledge women's issues in any significant manner.

Scholars, most notably Darline Gay Levy, Harriet Applewhite, and Elizabeth Sledziewski, argue that women's increasing awareness of their public and political roles

during the Revolution offsets the fact that the National Assembly failed to accord them citizenship and equal rights after 1789. Levy and Applewhite contend that “the acts of women in the revolutionary capital – their political performances – cannot be dismissed simply because the implications of those words and deeds were not realized in French revolutionary politics” by members of the National Assembly.⁷⁰ Thus, women’s involvement in the Revolution should be measured more by their newfound impact and visibility in progressively more public arenas than any consequent denial of women’s rights on the part of the government. This position holds that, although women never obtained legal and constitutional rights as citizens, they gained recognition as independent and self-sustaining individuals in the new French Republic.⁷¹ Again, women’s involvement in the Revolution supposedly compensated for the government’s refusal to grant women the same rights as men, despite the egalitarian principles often evoked by the revolutionaries in the National Assembly.

Historians such as Levy, Applewhite, and Sledziewski assume that the legacy of the French Revolution for women rests on the supposition that their actions superseded the government’s lack of support for issues associated with women’s roles in post-revolutionary society. Although these historians concede that French women secured little in the way of actual rights, they argue that women’s constant public presence, and ensuing awareness of their impact on the course of the Revolution, provided them with some modicum of civil power in the new French nation.⁷² In many instances, as a result

⁷⁰ Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, “A Political Revolution for Women?: The Case of Paris,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 268.

⁷¹ Sledziewski, “The French Revolution as the Turning Point,” 37.

⁷² Clara Hesse, too, argues that French women benefited from the Revolution. Hesse contends that French women found autonomy via the mode of literature, most notably through the writing of novels. She argues that the Revolution was not entirely detrimental to women due to the significant increase in the publication

of the Revolution, women capitalized upon new political possibilities in order to advance their causes.⁷³ Although women may have stated their cases for rights more publicly and boldly during the French Revolution, members of the government failed to adequately respond. Even though women certainly gained a measure of visibility in the salons and consumer protests that corresponded with the Revolution, members of the National Assembly still insisted that women's place was in the home. Women proved they could affect the Revolution by their actions but such achievements did not lead to governmental recognition of women's rights. Women's consciousness of the impact of their involvement in the Revolution did not lead to the reward of being recognized by the government as citizens worthy of rights and opportunities on par with men. Members of the government virtually ignored women's requests and demands for acknowledgment of their rights and continued to refer to women as non-citizens in post-revolutionary France from 1789 onward. Governmental neglect of issues relating to women began during the National Assembly despite women's involvement in the Revolution.

The National Assembly never accorded women with citizenship or even focused on women's issues on a substantive basis. The debate over the position of women in the aftermath of the Revolution never ranked high on the list of governmental priorities. As a result of the deliberation over the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" in the fall of 1789 women never achieved full citizenship status in the new French republic. Even though the document characterized the new French society as one based on equal rights for every individual, women did not benefit from the egalitarian, democratic

of women's writings from 1789 to 1800. Hesse maintains that "despite their political and civil subordination, [women] used the cultural resources of modern commercial society" to attain identification as self-sufficient individuals in revolutionary France. See Carla Hesse, *The Other Enlightenment: How French Women Became Modern* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001), xv.

⁷³ McMillan, *Women and France*, 20.

sentiments inherent in the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.”⁷⁴ The fact that the Declaration seemed to indicate that all individuals acquired rights did not necessarily imply that women profited from the principles laid forth in the articles of the document.⁷⁵ By referring to individuals as “men” or “citizens” in the articles of the Declaration, members of the National Assembly prevented the provisions from applying to women because the language used to express the terms of the document were so specifically gendered. The Declaration also did not provide women with equality, legal and civil rights, citizenship, or the right to vote. Political authority and participation became the domain of men and women held no active legal role.⁷⁶

The National Assembly regarded women as passive citizens even though they had assumed a very public and effective role in the early course of the Revolution. The revolutionaries who espoused the themes of “liberty, equality, and fraternity” never included women in these ideals, only men with a stake in society – mainly those who owned property – benefited from the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.” Instead of including women in the active ranks of the new social order established by the revolutionaries, and despite their political affiliation, men agreed that women’s involvement in the October Days was atypical and led to disorder within the capital.⁷⁷ Government officials claimed that women needed to be relegated to domestic tasks in order to ascertain social and political stability. Women, demonstrating their worth as active participants in the Revolution in a myriad of ways that deservedly warranted merit from members of the National Assembly, found themselves denied rights of citizenship

⁷⁴ Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 38.

⁷⁵ Sledziewski, “The French Revolution as the Turning Point,” 36.

⁷⁶ Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer*, 8.

⁷⁷ Johnson, “Old Wine in New Bottles,” 117.

or even mention in the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen.” Government officials only repeated the offence against women with the Constitution of 1791.

The Jacobin Constitution of 1791 also failed to acknowledge women as citizens with rights on an equal basis with men. The Constitution accorded civic rights exclusively to men, which excluded women from legal privileges and citizenship.⁷⁸ Members of the government once again employed masculine terminology to denote who was to benefit from the provisions of the Constitution. The revolutionaries still referenced the differences between active and passive citizens. Citizenship extended to men who met certain property requirements, leaving women to the designation of passive civilians in the eyes of the state.⁷⁹ The Constitution of 1791, instead of granting women rights consistent with the democratic spirit of the Revolution, only allowed for women’s position in society to remain the same as under the Old Regime: subordinate and inferior. The Constitution reflected governmental disregard for women’s rights as self-sufficient, proficient members of society. By denying women civic and legal rights, the Jacobins perpetuated long-standing patriarchal constructs that lawmakers developed further in subsequent years with their continued refusal to grant women full citizenship status.⁸⁰ In essence, the men who came to power as a result of the French Revolution regarded women in the same fashion as the monarchs under the Old Regime. Members of the National Assembly, too, deemed women to be intrinsically inferior to men in society and government officials considered the subject of women’s rights a matter not worthy of

⁷⁸ D.H. Barry, “Community, Tradition and Memory among Rebel Working-Class Women of Paris, 1830, 1848, 1871,” *European Review of History* 7 (Autumn 2000), 263.

⁷⁹ McMillan, *France and Women*, 16.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

constitutional debate. Government officials in the National Assembly relied upon patriarchal standards just as fervently as any other governmental organization in France.

Instead of liberating women from the restraints of convention, members of the National Assembly never altered their patriarchal mindsets and still considered women's influence a threat to the stability of the nation. Government officials excluded women from both the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" in late 1789 and the Constitution of 1791. Patriarchal standards continued unabated after the Revolution despite the creation of a new political structure.⁸¹ Women who rebelled against these norms and protested in the streets or led debates in the salons only met with governmental scorn. Members of the government suppressed women's activities during the Revolution and sought to reinforce a vision of separate gender spheres as a part of their quest for political unity.⁸² Governmental officials sought to contain, not commend, women for their public actions because they went against the prescribed standards of the time period, consequently threatening the elite men in the new revolutionary government. Members of the National Assembly did not substantively modify their patriarchal beliefs. Nor did they attempt to include the theme of women's rights as part of their revolutionary agenda. The National Assembly preferred to marginalize women to the sidelines. They deemed women unsuited for public affairs, which established a pattern repeated by every governmental body or leader in post-revolutionary France, from the Thermidorians to Napoleon.

At every stage in the Revolution, government decrees merged with the patriarchal attitudes of officials to block women's access to legal, constitutional, civic, and equal

⁸¹ Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles," 117.

⁸² Barry, "Community, Tradition and Memory among Rebel Working-Class Women of Paris," 262.

rights in the French Republic. Although Napoleon exacerbated the problem, he did not create the conditions or precursors necessary for government neglect of women's legal rights in post-revolutionary France. Napoleon's opinions on women stemmed from a long-standing, innately patriarchal method of viewing women utilized by male dominated leadership factions throughout the entirety of the French Revolution. Revolutionaries before Napoleon believed that women were intrinsically unable to contribute to public life on the same scale as men. Napoleon visibly aligned his opinions on women with the predominate view in France, one which held that women should further the revolution by concentrating on familial concerns, not on active involvement.⁸³ In the early 1790s, the Thermidorian and Jacobin regimes deemed women's public involvement in the Revolution to constitute a visible threat to political order, thus members of the government sought to segregate women to domestic concerns. Yet the first denial of women's quest for constitutional and equal rights occurred under the National Assembly in the earliest period of the Revolution. Women never profited from either the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" or acquired full citizenship status as a result of the Constitution of 1791. A consistent lack of concern and consequent abandonment of women's issues remained a central outcome of the French Revolution during every major stage of the rebellion.

Women gained little as a result of the French Revolution. The democratic spirit that permeated France in the late eighteenth century did not extend outward to fully include women's demands to the government for equality or further consideration of their rights. Although the Revolution allowed women an increased awareness of their impact

⁸³ Shelia Rowbotham, *Women, Resistance and Revolution: A History of Women and Revolution in the Modern World* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1972), 40.

in public matters that did not mean that the government reacted in a favorable manner. Many historians argue that either the Jacobins' closure of women's political clubs in 1793 or the Napoleonic Code of 1804 was the true point in time when French women lost their rights in post-revolutionary France. Yet during the beginning stages of the Revolution, members of the National Assembly created the model for how every other governmental organization in France would view women. The National Assembly's disregard for women's issues made it far easier for succeeding revolutionary leaders to deny women rights in post-revolutionary France. In 1793, the Jacobins closed women's political clubs and firmly stated that women belonged in the home to aid the cause of the Revolution by being obedient wives and mothers. The Thermidorian Constitution of 1795, a precursor to the Napoleonic Code, denied women rights in favor of promoting the interests of men who owned property. Napoleon placed women in a subordinate position and gave them few rights. Revolutionary leaders never amended their patriarchal views of women's place in society and the cycle of indifference and disregard for the rights of women remained intact throughout the entire course of the French Revolution.

CHAPTER II

Gender Equality or Adherence to Tradition?: Women and the Russian Revolution

It is more than a mere coincidence that women's bread rioting triggered the start of the Russian Revolution in March of 1917. As was the case during the French Revolution in the eighteenth century, women's subsistence protests in revolutionary Russia appealed to – and consequently further awakened – the radical fervor of other citizens. Women's public demands for governmental acknowledgment of their subsistence needs connected their actions to the subsequent course of the French and Russian Revolutions. The ideological goals of each Revolution centered upon the egalitarian principles championed by the revolutionaries. Women, as they demonstrated in their protests, expected their concerns to be included in the revolutionary agendas. The question of women's roles in post-revolutionary French and Russian society thus became a key issue for the new government institutions to either address or ignore. In post-revolutionary Russia, the Bolsheviks vowed to provide women with equal opportunities and benefits in the newly instituted socialist state. Again, mirroring the plight of French women after 1789, governmental support for issues pertaining to women's position in post-revolutionary Russia quite rapidly proved illusory. Here, too, the issue of contention for scholars dealing with the topic of Russian women after 1917 lies in denoting the point at which – and to what degree and manner – government officials first reneged on their claims to grant women civic and legal rights and prospects for equality.

Most scholars agree that, for all the Bolsheviks pledged to women, their reliance on familiar values and gender roles did not liberate Russian women from patriarchal structures of inequality. Yet the majority of historians do not place enough emphasis on the effects of Lenin's New Economic Policy on the status of women's constitutional and civil rights in the Soviet Union. Scholars concur that the Bolsheviks promised women gender equality, but there was never complete egalitarianism between the sexes, or any substantial alteration of patriarchal values. As in the case of the French Revolution, here too, historians debate the exact time at which the Bolsheviks retracted their backing and assistance for women's issues in post-revolutionary Russia. Although some scholars contend that women's liberation continued relatively unabated as a result of the Russian Revolution, even under Stalin's repressive leadership, most historians argue otherwise.¹ The general narrative that historians frame, with respect to Russian women's roles in post-revolutionary society, details the improved conditions for women that came about as a result of the Bolshevik takeover of Russia. This is usually followed by documentation of the return to convention advocated by Stalin and the Politburo's closure of the Zhenotdel, the women's branch of the Central Committee, in 1930.² Within this historical construction, scholars in large part gloss over the NEP's impact on women. Most scholars maintain that women lost the greatest measure of legal rights and equal opportunities upon Stalin's takeover of the Soviet Union. These historians base their

¹ William Mandel, *Soviet Women* (Garden City: Anchor Books, 1975). Natalia Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History: From the Tenth to the Twentieth Century* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997).

² Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, "Love on the Tractor: Women in the Russian Revolution and After," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 370-99. Richard Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 417-38.

arguments on Stalin's emphasis on a return to conventional values in the late 1920s.³ Scholars insist that, in order to fit the needs of the Party and the nation, women's roles in society had to be restructured in a more conservative manner. As noted by Barbara Evans Clements, "a modernized patriarchy required that the Bolshevik vision of the emancipated woman be changed" under Stalin's leadership.⁴ Stalin's dictatorial control over the Soviet Union certainly reduced women's chances for advancement outside the sphere of domestic and familial affairs. In doing so, these historians fail to recognize that the initial renunciation on the part of the Bolsheviks concerning the subject of women's equality and advancement in a socialist society occurred as a result of Lenin's implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1921. The NEP not only cost women employment opportunities but it was also the point at which the Bolsheviks reasserted patriarchal standards when dealing with the question of women's roles in the Soviet Union. Few scholars detail the underlying connection between the NEP and the deterioration of women's rights in the Soviet Union. Wendy Goldman is one who does. She labels the NEP period as the "first retreat" of governmental consideration of women's issues and attributes this to the strengthening of the economy becoming the Bolsheviks main concern.⁵ Goldman chiefly concentrates on the role that the NEP played in reducing the number of jobs available to working women and upon the closure of communal facilities designed to lessen women's domestic concerns. The implementation of the New Economic Policy had another profound effect that extended beyond the

³ Shelia Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Barbara Evans Clements, "Later Developments: Trends in Soviet Women's History, 1930 to the Present," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 267-078.

⁴ Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997), 275.

⁵ Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 73.

economic impact associated with women being pushed out of the labor force. The Bolsheviks used the NEP as justification for devoting less attention to the subject of women's emancipation. The pressures involved in maintaining the economy diverted governmental attention away from women's issues. Beginning in the NEP era, the Bolsheviks increasingly relied upon patriarchal standards of women's roles in society as a means to limit and ultimately undermine their efforts to provide women full integration into the public realm.

Historians rarely focus in depth on the link between the emphasis the Bolsheviks placed on the New Economic Policy, their resurgence in patriarchal standards of perceiving women, and the subsequent decline in the status of women's rights in the Soviet Union. Most scholars typically concentrate on the general decline of Party support for women's rights throughout the mid 1920s, several years after the introduction of the NEP. The general opinion holds that the Bolsheviks' reliance on patriarchal attitudes steadily intensified in the 1920s and culminated with Stalin's concentrated effort to return the Soviet Union to a state dependent upon conventional standards of viewing women's roles in society. When historians mention the effect of the New Economic Policy on the position of Russian women, they nearly always do so in relation to women's status as workers. Perhaps this is the case because scholars and theorists often place so much importance on the crucial role of the proletariat in the economic and political framework of the socialist state developed under Lenin and the Bolsheviks. The Bolsheviks believed that only through participation in the labor force could women garner a true sense of equality in the Soviet Union since women's active participation in helping to control the means of production and consumption resulted in repositioning their roles in society from

the private to the public realm.⁶ Historians connect the Bolsheviks' attempt to stabilize the economy under the NEP with cutbacks in women's jobs and the closure of communal facilities that allowed for a lessening of their domestic responsibilities while at work. Scholars often only view the changes in women's status from an economic standpoint without entirely illustrating the broader implications of such a transformation of goals. The Bolsheviks underwent a shift in priorities from the creation of an egalitarian society to development of the industrial economy. Members of the government placed what they labeled as the 'common cause' above lesser issues, and that included the advancement of women's rights in post-revolutionary Russia.⁷ Such changes affected the majority of Soviet women, not just those in the work force, since members of the government never modified their patriarchal value system enough to affect women's emancipation in all spheres. The Bolsheviks justified their actions by upholding customary norms as a way to limit women's ability to participate in public affairs on an equal basis with men. The Bolsheviks' increasing lack of commitment to furthering the cause of women's liberation began during the NEP era and reflected the entrenchment of patriarchal standards of inequality that members of the government never completely altered.

The NEP period ushered in the first real setback to Soviet women's ability to move beyond the limitations of patriarchal standards that connected them with the home and domestic duties rather than perceiving them as politically and economically active participants in society. While women's equality in the Soviet Union became a key issue for the Bolsheviks upon their seizure of power, they were unwilling to amend their

⁶ Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, "Sexual Equality in Soviet Policy: A Developmental Perspective," in *Women in Russia*, ed. by Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 115.

⁷ Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," 423.

attitudes enough to allow women the fullest measure of liberation in post-revolutionary society. The economic crisis that precipitated the NEP forced the Bolsheviks to abandon their enthusiasm for the subject of women's liberation, which also allowed for members of the government to revert back to conventional standards of viewing women that they once had vowed to abolish. In the preceding years before the implementation of the NEP, though, the Bolsheviks did do much to improve women's status in Soviet society, especially since women played such a crucial role in the Russian Revolution.

Women participated in the Russian Revolution of 1917 on a very vocal, significant level. The actual catalyst for the March Revolution was the International Women's Day march held, in part, to demonstrate against the rising costs of bread in Petrograd.⁸ Women were often the principal providers for their families throughout Russia's involvement in World War I since so many men were gone from the country. Women, especially those of the lower and working classes, considered themselves responsible for the preservation of their families' basic needs, such as food and shelter, and the war effort in Russia limited women's ability to provide these essentials.⁹ This relates directly to Kaplan's theory of female consciousness in which women focused more on the protection and nurturance of life than on any other concern.¹⁰ A scarcity of bread and higher prices in 1917 constituted a serious threat to the well being of women's families, thus women reacted by protesting in the streets. Again, echoing the actions and motives of French women in 1789, Russian women held the government responsible for

⁸ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 38.

⁹ Barbara Alpern Engel, "Transformation versus Tradition," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 145.

¹⁰ Temma Kaplan, "Female Consciousness and Collective Action: The Case of Barcelona, 1910-1918," *Signs* VII (1982): 546.

lowering the price of bread. Russian women effectively propelled the Revolution forward and helped to overthrow the monarchy in the process. Alfred G. Meyer proclaims that the “inefficiency of the bureaucracy...helped discredit the existing system and go far in explaining the ease with which a seemingly minor food riot led to its rapid disappearance” in March of 1917.¹¹ The involvement of women in the preliminary stages of the Revolution brought far larger crowds into the streets, successfully escalating the movement forward. Although the food protest held on March 8th reflected women’s need to provide for their families, and had the fundamentally spontaneous result of helping to overthrow the monarchy, the Bolsheviks recognized the benefits of organizing women in the socialist movement.

Unlike the revolutionaries in France during the French Revolution, the Bolsheviks aggressively and enthusiastically enlisted women in the proletarian cause. Even though Lenin believed the Bolshevik Party should be small and elite, it was vital for him to gain control of the bulk of the citizenry by the strong use of rhetoric.¹² Only through widespread support from the masses, including women, could Lenin expect the Bolsheviks to effectively rule in a country as large as Russia. As a tactic for furthering the revolutionaries’ cause, the Bolsheviks systematically mobilized women in support of their agenda. Lenin insisted that women center their efforts upon the proletarian revolution above all other matters and that the bourgeois value system unfairly constrained them solely to matters related to the domestic realm.¹³ The Bolsheviks

¹¹ Alfred G. Meyer, “The Impact of World War I on Russian Women’s Lives,” in *Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 223.

¹² Woodford McClellan, *Russia: The Soviet Period and After* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1998), 4.

¹³ Vladimir Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, ed. by Robert C. Tucker (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1975), 21.

encouraged women to support them as the only viable party to bring peace and equality to Russia and used women's equality to set themselves apart from other Marxist groups also vying for power, such as the Mensheviks or Social Democrats. Indeed, the Bolshevik ideology of an egalitarian society appealed to women, though many held misgivings about the Bolsheviks' desire to bring about the withering away of the family unit.¹⁴ During the months between the March and November Revolutions, the Bolsheviks arranged for women's rallies, coordinated women in the factories, and recruited them to promote the interests of the Party.¹⁵ The Bolsheviks explicitly sought women's help to further the Revolution. The inclusion of women in such plans illustrates the Party's initial commitment to women's involvement in the new socialist state and this certainly separated the Bolsheviks from their predecessors of 1789 France. Once in power, the Bolsheviks willingly set out to overcome what Leon Trotsky considered the problem and transformation of women's emancipation in all spheres.¹⁶ Such an essential concern begs the question of how members of the government conducted themselves in the arena of women's emancipation.

The Bolsheviks certainly should be credited for initially implementing innovative laws and programs designed to bring about women's emancipation. In the early years of the Soviet regime, women's concerns ranked high among issues the Bolsheviks considered of great importance. Lenin despised what he labeled as women's servitude to domestic tasks and he wished to alleviate this supposed impediment to women's

¹⁴ Richard Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia: Feminism, Nihilism, and Bolshevism 1860-1930* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1978), 329.

¹⁵ Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," 425.

¹⁶ Leon Trotsky, *Women and the Family* (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1970), 29.

advancement in public matters outside of the home.¹⁷ Women clearly acquired a certain amount of emancipation from patriarchy under the Bolshevik government. At no other time had women's status been as relatively equal to that of men in Russian society, nor had there ever been a period in Russian history so conducive to the participation of women in public affairs.¹⁸ The Bolsheviks accorded women equal status under the law and provided them with specific freedoms unknown under the tsarist regime.

Prior to the early years of the NEP period, the Bolsheviks afforded Russian women improvements in their daily lives and a degree of equal status in society. The Bolsheviks – particularly Lenin - truly believed that women were kept in a constant state of oppression by bourgeois society.¹⁹ Through the vehicle of socialism, members of the Bolshevik government hoped to relieve women of their inferior status in society, while they also advocated for the communalization of domestic tasks. The Bolsheviks thus implemented various progressive measures to advance women's equality in Russia during the beginning stages of their regime. The major achievements towards women's liberation advocated by the Bolshevik government occurred with respect to the standard concept of certain public practices, rights to a proper education, and equal job opportunities.²⁰ But members of the government first guaranteed women equal rights in connection to marriage and divorce.

The Bolsheviks passed new laws overturning the customary conceptions of the common practices of marriage, divorce, and abortion. In regard to marriage, the Civil Code of 1918 was highly progressive and beneficial in transforming women into equal

¹⁷ Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 426.

¹⁸ Mandel, *Soviet Women*, 55.

¹⁹ Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 696.

²⁰ Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 257-58.

citizens.²¹ The new marriage law primarily stated that women could freely choose their partner and retain their maiden name. Civil unions replaced religious ceremonies as the legal means of marriage in the Soviet Union. Upon registration of marriage, women also retained their full individual, property and economic rights separate from their spouse. The Code also made it far easier for women to file for divorce and also assured them equal rights to alimony.²² The Civil Code of 1918 effectively placed the Soviet Union ahead of Western nations in the commitment to the advancement of women's liberation.²³ Yet the Bolsheviks sought to further emancipate women in Soviet society beyond these provisions. The Bolsheviks extended rights to women in areas beyond equality in marriage and divorce, including dealing with such controversial topics as abortion, making the Soviet Union a progressive nation in this regard.

The Bolsheviks sought to give women more control over reproduction and childrearing. In December 1917, members of the government decreed that working women be allowed a two-month paid leave from their jobs upon the birth of their child and the Bolsheviks eliminated distinctions between legitimate and illegitimate children.²⁴ In 1920, Russia became the first country to legalize state provided abortion. Methods of birth control other than abortion were frequently unavailable to Russian women in the 1920s and the Bolsheviks did little to rectify this problem.²⁵ The Bolsheviks believed abortion was merely a temporary evil plaguing society, and that the number of abortions

²¹ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 51.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ Beatrice Brodsky Farnsworth, "Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family: The 1926 Marriage Law Debate," in *Women in Russia*, ed. by Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 140.

²⁴ Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 257-58.

²⁵ Wendy Goldman, "Women, Abortion, and the State," in *Russia's Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 245.

would drop upon the advent of collective childcare. But they also insisted that women be allowed a safe, legal way to terminate a pregnancy.²⁶ Members of the government adopted these measures in order to liberate women from dependence on men and enable them to move into the public arena unfettered. The Bolsheviks further extended support to women's rights in areas other than those dealing with marriage, divorce, and abortion.

The Bolsheviks also devoted attention to the issue of women's education.

Women profited from successful governmental campaigns to eradicate female illiteracy.²⁷

By the 1920s, there were roughly as many women as men involved in higher education.²⁸

Women increasingly participated in fields of study usually set aside for men, such as in law or medicine. Also, women educators far outnumbered men at both the high school

and college levels by the early 1920s.²⁹ The advancement of women in education

remained constant throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Even under the NEP women still attended schools and colleges in large numbers and there was no significant decrease in

these levels by the early 1930s.³⁰ The Bolsheviks, on a rather consistent, long-term basis,

granted women opportunities not only to develop basic skills but also to advance in

pursuit of higher education without constraint. But women did not only benefit from an

increase in educational opportunities. Under the new socialist state women also entered

the job market in unprecedented numbers.

Women gained a certain measure of visibility and equality in the workforce as a result of early Bolshevik policy endeavors. By 1923 there were roughly 416,900 female

²⁶ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 256-57.

²⁷ Daniel Orlovsky, "Russia in War and Revolution, 1914-1921," in *Russia: A History*, ed. by Gregory L. Freeze (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), 281.

²⁸ McClellan, *The Soviet Period and After*, 63.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 259. Rosenthal, "Love on the Tractor," 389. Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," 430.

workers in the factory system and that figure increased to 804,030 by the end of the decade.³¹ Women often constituted the majority of workers in certain industries, such as the medical profession, with 63% of those employed being female, and in textile factories where women formed 60% of the workforce.³² The Bolsheviks provided women with equivalent rights to labor opportunities and identical pay distribution as working men. In the early years of the Bolshevik regime more women also moved into professional fields than ever before. Women secured an active and expanding role in the labor force during the early 1920s. At first, the Bolsheviks certainly championed women's active participation in the workforce, which was consistent with their theme of proletarian control over the means of production and distribution. The Bolsheviks initially insisted on providing women with prospects – and governmental assistance - to advance as workers in the new socialist state. Indeed, members of the government sought to ease the dual responsibilities women faced as wives and mothers and workers through the implementation of communal kitchens and daycares.

Perhaps the most notable manner in which the Bolsheviks intended to fulfill their promise of incorporating women into a society based on socialism and egalitarianism was through the advent of these communal kitchens and daycares. This followed upon the Bolsheviks' conviction that socialism would eventually lead to the withering away of the family upon the communalization of common domestic tasks. Lenin himself advocated for the conversion of a bourgeois, capitalist economy into a system that corresponded with the ideals of socialism so that women could be released from dependency on men in

³¹ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 114.

³² *Ibid*, 110.

order to become active and autonomous participants in areas of production.³³ The Bolsheviks, as exemplified by Lenin, insisted that socialism would provide a transformation in household duties from woman to community.³⁴ Communal daycares and kitchens became the means through which the Bolsheviks sought to free women from a measure of their domestic tasks, allowing them to concentrate more on jobs and activities outside the home. The best example of a successful communalization project appeared in Moscow, where by 1921, roughly 93% of the population ate in public dining facilities.³⁵ The Bolsheviks – some more vaguely and generally than others – supported various forms of collective living where members of the community shared domestic responsibilities and chores on equal grounds as a result of the communalization of the family unit.³⁶ Yet the question remains: exactly how successful were the Bolsheviks at applying their theories of communalization to the realities of life in post-revolutionary Russia? Did Soviet women actually benefit from the Bolsheviks' insistence on providing them with communal services as a way to increase their chances of entering the workforce?

Although the Bolsheviks initially endeavored to communalize daycares and kitchens in the effort to furnish women with a certain degree of independence and economic equality in the Soviet Union, it appears that the attempt at collectivization of domestic tasks yielded little in the way of positive results. Goldman acknowledges that “while the Bolshevik ideology promoted the libertarian freedom of the individual, it also enlarged immeasurably the social role of the state by eliminating intermediary bodies like

³³ Beryl Williams, “Kollontai and After: Women in the Russian Revolution,” in *Women, State and Revolution*, ed. by Sian Reynolds (Amherst: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1987), 68.

³⁴ Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 485.

³⁵ Michael Pearson, *Lenin's Mistress: The Life of Inessa Armand* (New York: Random House, 2001), 216.

³⁶ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 265-66.

the family,” as a consequence of the policy championing communalization of household duties.³⁷ Yet the Bolsheviks never truly abandoned the idea of the family unit or allowed women to become fully free of their domestic burdens. Most communal facilities proved expensive to maintain, ineffective, and ultimately unconstructive in liberating women from domestic duties enough for them to successfully balance work with familial responsibilities.³⁸ Members of the Government never alleviated women’s domestic concerns enough to allow them to prosper as workers on an equal standard as men. In the 1920s, Soviet women still found themselves responsible for the majority of domestic tasks, even though they often worked long hours outside the home with little support from governmental agencies.³⁹ Women simply had to continue balancing between work and family. The rather sharp change from the government’s resolution to promote an improvement in women’s ability to become active contributors in post-revolutionary society, to the seeming abandonment of such support, suggests the existence of deep impediments to the Bolsheviks ideal of abandoning patriarchy.

The Bolsheviks seeming inconsistency towards the issue of communalization – after rather vocally and insistently promoting such measures – reflects larger concerns facing the party. Although communalization of common domestic duties met with some success in the early years of the Bolshevik regime, the burden of developing the economy occupied most of the Party’s attention to the detriment of according women with equal rights and opportunities in Soviet society. Whereas in 1922, there were 914 communal facilities available to women, a mere year later, the Bolsheviks had cut that number by

³⁷ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 12.

³⁸ Marceline Hutton, “Voices of Struggle: Soviet Women in the 1920s,” *Feminist Issues* 11 (Fall 1991), 70.

³⁹ *Ibid*, 67.

half.⁴⁰ Beginning in the early 1920s, under Lenin's New Economic Policy, the Bolsheviks placed more emphasis on the declining state of the economy than upon any other issue. Members of the government concerned themselves far more with the state of the economy than with communalization projects as the New Economic Policy went into effect.

Under the NEP, the Bolsheviks placed a great amount of strain on citizens to improve the economy, to the sacrifice of most other concerns in the Soviet Union. Lenin's earlier policy, commonly referred to as 'War Communism,' had failed as nationalization of economic resources and industry proved ineffective.⁴¹ The New Economic Policy essentially began with a more enhanced requisition of grain supplies, primarily through the tactics of forced seizure. The goal of the NEP was to return the economy to more secure conditions while at the same time pacifying non-proletarian citizens concerned with their role in the new socialist economic system.⁴² Strengthening the economy by boosting output, permitting farmers to sell goods for personal profit, and allowing for the return of a degree of private enterprise took up the greatest portion of governmental attention. Gone were the advances instigated under the early Soviet regime once NEP programs took effect and reinvigorating the economy became the Party's primary concern. The Bolsheviks' reversal from a socialist ideology in economic affairs, to one more in line with the previous system in place under the tsars, also precipitated a setback in their commitment towards women's emancipation. The most obvious manner in which women suffered setbacks in the NEP era was due to an increase in women's unemployment as a consequence of the restructuring of the economy.

⁴⁰ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 126.

⁴¹ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 95.

⁴² *Ibid*, 96.

Scholars who center their arguments on women's unemployment in the NEP era often do so in order to highlight a glaring contradiction in the Bolsheviks' socialist ideal. The Bolsheviks had connected women's emancipation with economic independence. Members of the government had sought to incorporate women within the labor force.⁴³ The Bolsheviks had assumed that as women became active in the proletarian movement to control the means of production then that guaranteed them liberation from a bourgeois, capitalistic value system. Women, they had believed, once freed from domestic servitude upon the withering away of the family and communalization of household duties, would become equal, self-sufficient citizens in the new Soviet state.⁴⁴ Yet this transformation never occurred in Soviet society. The NEP called for a redefinition of goals in order to strengthen the economy and women workers faced tremendous setbacks that reduced their chances for full emancipation. In fact, the influence of NEP policies on the status of Russian women in Soviet society was rather direct and instantaneous and the negative impact that the implementation of the NEP had on women's placement within the labor force should not be overlooked or underestimated by historians.

The Bolsheviks first alteration in their plan to grant women emancipation and equality began under the NEP policy when unemployment levels rose among working women in the early 1920s. Also, the Bolsheviks essentially abandoned their support for communal institutions that helped women to successfully enter the labor force by reducing their familial responsibilities. It must be noted that women – not men – were the primary group who lost their jobs during the NEP era. Women workers were

⁴³ Gail Warshofsky Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society: Equality, Development, and Social Change* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1978), 165.

⁴⁴ Wendy Z. Goldman, "Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women's Movement in the U.S.S.R.," *Slavic Review* 55 (Spring 1996): 52.

frequently the first fired and last hired upon the introduction of the NEP.⁴⁵ This constituted a reversal of women's emancipation under the Bolshevik regime since women no longer had equal access to employment on the same level as men. In fact, the return to a regulated free market system led to 70% of women losing their jobs.⁴⁶ Such circumstances essentially forced many women to redefine their relationship to the job market. Most women, limited in their ability to retain their jobs and provide for themselves on an independent basis, looked to stable and secure marriages to counter the effects of NEP policies.⁴⁷ An essential problem linked with unemployment that also restricted women's prospects of even entering the labor force during the NEP era was the lack of communal institutions promised by the Bolsheviks to relieve women of a certain portion of domestic responsibility.

The Bolshevik leadership sacrificed their belief that the introduction of day care centers and communal dining halls and kitchens stood to free women from domestic drudgery by failing to provide financial assistance for the development of such programs. In the NEP era, the government relied upon cost reduction and many of the services offered to women to lessen their domestic burden while they were on the job, or engaged in other public affairs outside the confines of the household, were effectively terminated.⁴⁸ Government funds no longer went to the construction and maintenance of communal institutions since the Bolsheviks redirected most resources towards industrialization and collectivization projects designed to build up the economy.⁴⁹ The institutions that remained in service were often so lacking in funds and staff that they

⁴⁵ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 114.

⁴⁶ Farnsworth, "Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family," 141.

⁴⁷ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 102.

⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 73.

⁴⁹ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 95.

proved counterproductive to helping women alleviate household and familial responsibilities. Yet a significant point to consider lies beyond merely noting the fact that women lost jobs and no longer had as much access to communal institutions during the NEP period. It is worthwhile to explore the underlying reasons for such a change in what had been the progressive nature of the Bolshevik government's stance on women's expansion into the public realm.

When the Bolsheviks accorded women many civic and legal rights, during the beginning stages of their regime, they essentially considered the problem of women's liberation to have been solved. Though members of the government bettered the lives of Soviet women in various important ways, this often masked underlying patriarchal assessments of women's issues. The Bolsheviks never completely recognized the need to reevaluate their conventional attitudes towards women. Although the Bolsheviks provided women with advantages unknown to them under the Romanov dynasty, women's emancipation remained a secondary or subsidiary objective on the part of government officials. Due to the strain of fixing the economic problems confronting the Soviet Union in the early 1920s, the Bolsheviks dealt less with the topic of women's liberation and they justified their reactions by endorsing and upholding patriarchal, customary views of women. The Bolsheviks continued to employ conventional methods of viewing women's position in society and this impacted women in all public pursuits – from access to jobs to infiltration into the political arena. The Bolsheviks increasingly came to believe that the apparent 'otherness' of women separated them from men and limited their upward mobility in society.⁵⁰ Despite revolutionary changes in the lives of

⁵⁰ Anne E. Gorsuch, "A Woman is not a Man: The Culture of Gender and Generation in Soviet Russia, 1921-1928," *Slavic Review* 55 (Fall 1996): 658.

Soviet women, the Bolsheviks continued to treat women not as equals but as lesser citizens. The Bolsheviks gave women rights but tempered that by never amending their views of what they regarded as women's proper role in society. The truest expression of the full force of patriarchal standards of inequality sponsored by the Bolsheviks took place upon the introduction of the New Economic Policy.

The implementation of the NEP severely restricted women's advancements in the Soviet Union, not only on an economic basis, but also as a result of a resurgence in patriarchal standards of perceiving women that were utilized by the government. The Bolsheviks, pressured by economic concerns, faltered in their commitment to improve conditions for women in Soviet society. The New Economic Policy led to an alteration in both Soviet life and the campaign for women's equality, as the Bolshevik government reneged on their commitment to the construction of an egalitarian society in favor of mending the state of the economy. The change in policy adopted by the Bolsheviks negatively influenced women in both the labor force and the political realm.

Women workers who retained their jobs in the NEP era faced discrimination perpetuated by the resurgence of a male-dominated, patriarchal value system in place under Soviet rule. Lenin acknowledged the problem by asserting that "we [the Bolshevik Party] are conscious of the privileged position of men, and that we hate – yes, hate – and want to remove whatever oppresses and harasses the working woman" in the Soviet economic system.⁵¹ Yet Lenin's appeal fell on deaf ears as patriarchal tradition proved to be a more powerful force than revolutionary rhetoric. Instead of encouraging women to develop as active members of the working class, men often criticized women who stepped beyond the boundaries of pre-revolutionary gender conventions. By the mid

⁵¹ Lenin, *The Lenin Anthology*, 697.

1920s, despite Bolshevik claims of equal pay distribution, women's salaries usually only reached 65% of that earned by men.⁵² The problem arose in two other pertinent areas as well: male workers harassment of female workers and the fact that members of the government never insisted that men take on more of a domestic role in order to increase women's capacity to participate in public affairs outside of the household.

Working women in the early 1920s often met with indifference, scorn, and neglect from their male co-workers. Evidence indicates that men repeatedly ridiculed women and belittled their abilities as competent workers. Women were the victims of the sexist behavior of men in the workplace. Some men simply refused to work in the factories alongside women, claiming them to be unqualified for employment in the labor force.⁵³ Union leaders compounded the problem by refusing to organize women or advance their skills as workers, decreasing women's chances of furthering their upward mobility within the job market. Women remained in subordinate positions to men within the labor force and their membership in unions stagnated at a paltry 22.2% in 1922, at the same time that the New Economic Policy began to take full effect in the effort to restore the economy.⁵⁴ Factory administrators also insisted that women did not possess the skills necessary for employment in trades with a higher salary base. This was especially relevant in the NEP period when men replaced women in labor intensive jobs related to fields of heavy industry. Consequently, in the NEP era, women's opportunities in the work place centered on what Goldman labels "the traditional, low-paid bastions of female

⁵² Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 122.

⁵³ Goldman, "Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women's Movement in the U.S.S.R.," 73.

⁵⁴ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 328.

labor,” not jobs guaranteeing high wages.⁵⁵ A patriarchal belief system upheld by male proletariats thus limited women’s prospects for equal treatment in the labor force and access to well-paying jobs. Members of the government intensified the problem by not altering their attitudes as to the function of men in the arena of household and familial affairs.

A consistent lack of governmental concern with changing men’s roles in society enough to help women advance in the labor force proved a detriment to women’s achievement of economic equality. The Bolsheviks’ never fathomed that, in order to bring about women’s equality, men should participate in domestic work to lessen the responsibilities placed entirely upon women.⁵⁶ Members of the government may have advocated women’s equality but this does not mean that they believed this required men to modify their roles in society. In the 1920s, Soviet women remained the principal caretakers of the domestic realm, even if they worked outside the home.⁵⁷ Despite the fact that women moved into public arenas – not only as workers but also as active participants in political and organizational networks - in large numbers, the traditional view connecting them with the needs of the home persisted unabated. Heidi Hartmann insists that, under a socialist system of government, men “benefited from not having to do housework...[and] they did not, therefore, recognize the vested interest men had in women’s continued subordination” in post-revolutionary society.⁵⁸ The Bolsheviks expected Soviet women to manage all areas of the domestic realm, while men remained

⁵⁵ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 123-24.

⁵⁶ Hutton, “Voices of Struggle,” 67.

⁵⁷ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 130.

⁵⁸ Heidi Hartmann, “The Unhappy Marriage of Marxism and Feminism: Towards a More Progressive Union,” in *Women and Revolution: A Discussion of Marxism and Feminism*, ed. by Lydia Sargent (Boston: South End Press, 1981), 5.

connected to the more public spheres of work and politics. Indeed, women who attempted to enter the political arena also found themselves victims of the persistence of patriarchal standards of inequality.

The Bolsheviks also reneged on their quest to further women's political aspirations in the Soviet state. Again, members of the government relied upon patriarchal values instead of advocating for a change in the typical conceptions of viewing women's relationship to politics. Despite the Bolsheviks' claims to the contrary, members of the government rarely devoted enough personal attention to encouraging their female comrades because they immersed themselves in other matters, most of them chiefly related to the industrialization of the economy.⁵⁹ The Bolsheviks continued to view men as the ones with political acumen, owing to their masculine nature, while women, due to their domestic qualities, did not gain wide acceptance for their political ambitions.⁶⁰ Some in the Bolshevik leadership also regarded women as too passive and fickle-minded to make an impact in the Party's political network.⁶¹ Male members of the Party usually looked at their female comrades with a mixture of ambivalence and negativity, and not as equal participants in the business of government. Consequently, there were almost no women in powerful political positions beyond the district level.⁶² Gorsuch argues that the Bolsheviks "relegated [women] to more marginal, and more traditionally female, roles" within the government.⁶³ Women had the greatest impact in Soviet politics through their involvement in the women's organization, the Zhenotodol. Yet in this arena, too, the Bolsheviks upheld patriarchal standards and concepts to the detriment of women.

⁵⁹ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 327.

⁶⁰ Gorsuch, " 'A Woman is not a Man,'" 641.

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² McClellan, *Russia*, 63. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 327.

⁶³ Gorsuch, " 'A Woman is not a Man,'" 652.

Governmental reactions to the women's political organization, the Zhentodol, also illustrate the Bolsheviks' return towards customary gender roles in the NEP era. The Bolsheviks established the Zhentodol in 1919 to increase women's awareness of, and participation in, the Bolshevik Party.⁶⁴ Zhentodol organizers enacted many reforms on behalf of women, key among them being a furtherance of women's education, a better system of food distribution, an increase in public health services, and a more productive childcare system.⁶⁵ At first, the Bolsheviks championed the efforts of the Zhentodol. Members of the government understood the need to educate women, not only to enhance their lives, but also to increase support for the Bolshevik Party. Yet governmental collaboration with the Zhentodol proved short-lived. Ultimately, the Bolsheviks rejected the attempt by Zhentodol organizers to encourage women to continue their quest for liberation in Soviet society.⁶⁶ Beginning during the early years of the New Economic Policy, the Bolsheviks adjusted their opinions of the Zhentodol and consequently undermined the objectives - and members - of the organization.

The Bolsheviks' conventional views of women's roles in society, magnified during the era of the New Economic Policy, often impeded the efforts of the Zhentodol. When the Party implemented NEP policies, the Zhentodol, already hampered by financial concerns, lost a significant amount of funds and staff members as the Bolsheviks reallocated resources from the organization into the faltering economy.⁶⁷ Members of the government had ceased to devote serious attention to the Zhentodol as a viable political

⁶⁴ Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 63.

⁶⁵ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 341.

⁶⁶ Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 71.

⁶⁷ Marie Marmo Mullaney, *Revolutionary Women: Gender and the Socialist Revolutionary Role* (New York: Praeger, 1983), 78. Goldman, "Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women's Movement in the U.S.S.R.," 52.

committee by the early 1920s. Goldman notes that the Bolsheviks “tended to disparage members of the Zhentodol, considering them ‘politically backward’” and unqualified.⁶⁸ The Bolsheviks were simply not willing to work with a separate women’s organization, especially during times of economic crisis that threatened the political stability of the government. The Bolsheviks considered it beneath their dignity to work with the Zhentodol and there was both a lack of enthusiasm and much prejudice among male members of the government towards the organization.⁶⁹ Members of the Party questioned, and subsequently belittled, the goals of the committee. Exacerbating the problem was the Bolsheviks’ conception of the exact function of the Zhentodel in relation to the stated goals of the organization.

Increasingly, the Bolsheviks came to resent the actions of Zhentodol members for attempting to enact worthwhile changes in the lives of women and believed such ‘separatist’ impulses should have been subordinated to garnering support for NEP programs. Members of the government criticized the Zhentodol for exclusively concentrating on women’s issues, even though such a concern was explicitly the purpose of the organization.⁷⁰ Herein lies the duplicitous nature of the Bolsheviks’ stance on women’s liberation. The Bolsheviks promoted the cause of women’s emancipation only until such ideals threatened the goals of the regime as a whole. The Party never intended for the Zhentodol to raise the question of women’s liberation to such an extent that it took time from the organization’s ability to mobilize women to the Bolsheviks’ cause.

⁶⁸ Goldman, “Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women’s Movement in the U.S.S.R.,” 48.

⁶⁹ Clements, *Bolshevik Women*, 170.

⁷⁰ Mullaney, *Revolutionary Women*, 78.

The economic crisis of the early 1920s, which prompted the implementation of the NEP, further encouraged an antagonistic attitude amongst the Bolsheviks towards the Zhentodol. The Bolsheviks wanted members of the Zhentodol to focus more on the needs of the Party, in particular those connected with the New Economic Policy, not ones dealing with improving the lives of Soviet women. The Bolsheviks directed their efforts towards economic progress and efficiency and away from the endeavors of the Zhentodol to expand the scope of women's emancipation.⁷¹ This attitude on the part of the Bolsheviks led to discussions concerning whether or not to liquidate the Zhentodol. The Bolsheviks, during various Party congresses in the early years of the 1920s, asserted that the Zhentodol centered too much on the 'the woman question' instead of maintaining the class struggle, abhorred the seemingly separatist tendencies of the committee, and complained of its deficiencies.⁷² The Bolsheviks begrudged Zhentodol organizers for concentrating specifically on women's emancipation, which they considered counterproductive to the overall goals of the Party. Instead of denoting the benefits of the Zhentodol's achievements, the Bolsheviks disapproved of the organization and never acknowledged the need to further define women's emancipation in post-revolutionary society. The precarious state of the Zhentodol hindered its progress throughout the 1920s and provided another example of the Bolsheviks' resistance to advancing the cause of women's right in the NEP period.

The fate of the Zhentodol reflected the general decline of Party support for women's concerns, beginning in the NEP era, and continuing relatively unabated throughout the 1920s. The status of women gradually declined in the mid 1920s, as

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 71. Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 343.

setbacks plagued women's chances to gain equality in Soviet society. The Family Code of 1926, though it made divorce proceedings far easier, essentially promoted a conservative model of marriage by upholding conventional standards of the roles of spouses. Upon the dissolution of de facto or unregistered marriages, women gained access to alimony payments for one year after divorce, though the same did not hold true for common law unions.⁷³ Prostitution levels remained on the rise in the 1920s, as many women considered this their only option due to the scarcity of jobs. By the beginning of Stalin's reign, women workers still only constituted 24% of the labor force.⁷⁴ Women did not fare much better in the political sector. Women involved in leadership positions in the Komsomol, the political youth organization, hovered at less than 10% in the 1920s, while women's membership in the Party only reached 8.2%, though those numbers rose steadily in subsequent years.⁷⁵ By the end of the 1920s, Soviet women witnessed a decline in their rights and a lessening of prospects to reverse the trend. Stalin merely followed the pattern of governmental negligence, in relation to the status of women's rights in the Soviet Union, adhered to by the Bolsheviks before him.

Stalin's accession to power in the late 1920s intensified the severity of restrictions placed upon Soviet women. Historians often judge the Stalinist period as the point at which women lost the greatest portion of rights gained during the preceding years of the Soviet regime. Stalin's tyrannical rule, combined with his purges of those he considered his enemies, marked the legacy of his time in power.⁷⁶ Certainly, Stalin's harsh, authoritarian method of ruling adversely affected all citizens, leading to the opinion

⁷³ Farnsworth, "Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family," 163.

⁷⁴ Rosenthal, "Love on the Tractor," 380.

⁷⁵ Gorsuch, "A Woman is Not a Man," 653. Rosenthal, "Love on the Tractor," 387.

⁷⁶ Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," 429.

among many scholars that his treatment of women proved far worse than that of any other Soviet leader. Although Stalin clearly did not create the problem, his attitudes towards women, as well as laws limiting their freedoms enacted under his leadership, exacerbated an issue already in contention. Ultimately, Stalin took many of the legal rights away from women that the government had granted them in the early stages of the Bolshevik regime.

Stalin firmly and ardently adhered to patriarchal standards of viewing women upheld by Bolsheviks throughout the 1920s. Such opinions of women and their proper role in society reflected Stalin's plan to strengthen the traditional family unit as a means to stabilize conditions in the Soviet Union along more conventional grounds.⁷⁷ Stalin debilitated the course of women's emancipation in the Soviet Union in two fundamental and significant ways. In order to return the Soviet Union to a more stable and conformist nation, Stalin enacted laws limiting opportunities for women outside of those in relation to the domestic realm. Stalin also abolished the Zhenotodol in 1930, eliminating the one organization sponsoring, promoting, and advancing the rights of women in Soviet society.

One of Stalin's primary concerns centered upon limiting the rights of women by reassigning them to the sphere of domestic affairs, most notably by promoting women's roles as mothers. Stalin wanted to return the Soviet Union to a state more inclined towards conservatism than one based on the egalitarian gender principles once espoused by the Bolsheviks during the early stages of their regime. Stalin more frequently praised women for their reproductive functions than for their production capabilities or political

⁷⁷ Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution*, 160.

aptitude.⁷⁸ Stalin depicted mothers as the true heroines of Soviet society. Accordingly, Stalin authorized laws that further defined his estimation of women's true role in society. Stites maintains that "[t]o promote family stability, protect women from male irresponsibility, and increase the population, the regime tightened the divorce laws and outlawed abortion" in the early 1930s.⁷⁹ Stalin attempted to strengthen conventional family values by upholding women as mothers, effectively denoting that women's appropriate position in society relegated them to familial matters. Despite these legal setbacks, women still remained a visible and industrious presence within the labor force in the 1930s.

Women workers in the late 1920s, and throughout the 1930s, once again struggled to seek a balance between their jobs and their familial tasks. Even though Stalin glorified women's roles as mothers, more so than for their contributions as workers, by 1930 women entered the labor force in unprecedented numbers, in order to fill the demand for labor caused by the Party's industrialization drive.⁸⁰ Many of these women, forced by economic pressures primarily stemming from Stalin's collectivization and industrialization campaign during the First Five-Year Plan, had to work in order to help support their families. Yet the renewed importance placed upon motherhood during the Stalinist era hindered women's upward mobility in the work place, as factory managers refused to train pregnant women and the government reduced the length of time permitted for women's maternity leave.⁸¹ Again, women worked in two arenas: the public and private, while only being rewarded publicly in government rhetoric for their

⁷⁸ Stites, "Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia," 430.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution*, 311.

⁸¹ Rosenthal, "Love on the Tractor," 389. Pushkareva, *Women in Russian History*, 261.

domestic qualities. The government provided little support for women who attempted to involve themselves in any field deemed unfit for their nature. Yet Stalin's disdain for women entailed more than just neglect for their needs as workers. Stalin's abolition of the Zhentodol in 1930 only worsened the situation for women.

The Politburo disbanded the Zhentodol in 1930, and thus eliminated the only political organization designed specifically and solely for the purpose of bettering the lives of Soviet women. Indeed, upon the termination of the Zhentodol, women involved in the organization lost an important opportunity to participate in governmental service that they once possessed due to their incorporation within the organization.⁸² But perhaps more importantly, the loss for women proved irreversible. Due in large part to Zhentodol policies, programs, and decrees, many Soviet women had acquired useful skills and increased education, which essentially made them more productive and independent citizens.⁸³ Stalin's liquidation of the Zhentodol left women without access to an autonomous governmental agency designed with their needs in mind. The government effectively assimilated women's issues into the broader framework of the Party. Again, women's emancipation took second place to the 'common cause,' which amply epitomizes the Bolsheviks' views on women from the NEP era through to Stalin's reign.

Despite the rather impressive changes in women's lives instigated by the Bolsheviks in post-revolutionary Russia, members of the Party never completely eradicated their deep-rooted, patriarchal perceptions of women. The Bolsheviks undoubtedly granted women rights not permitted to them under the tsarist regime. Yet the Bolsheviks failed to advance far beyond the preliminary stages of providing women

⁸² Lapidus, *Women in Soviet Society*, 71.

⁸³ Stites, *The Women's Liberation Movement in Russia*, 398.

with equality in the Soviet Union. Bolshevik leaders never viewed women as equal with men and there was an inherent duplicity between ideology and reality. What actually occurred during the early stages of the Bolshevik regime was not an adjustment in attitudes from patriarchal standards of inequality. Instead, members of the government accepted and adhered to the conventional standards of viewing women's roles in society set in place prior to the Revolution even those these were not conducive to the egalitarian principles that they seemingly advocated. Although the Bolshevik government stated that they wanted to remove the impediments keeping women from full equality and emancipation in society, they let other matters overwhelm them and take greater precedence. Members of the government found it far easier to simply revert back to a patriarchal belief system, which limited women's chances to gain full liberation in post-revolutionary Soviet society.

Beginning with Lenin's New Economic Policy in the early 1920s, concerns over the plummeting economy plagued the Bolsheviks and their pursuit of an egalitarian society ceased to be as relevant. The implementation of the NEP certainly had negative implications for working women, as unemployment levels rose considerably among this core group. The Bolsheviks also ceased to offer monetary assistance or support to communal institutions designed with the purpose of allowing women opportunities to decrease the amount of domestic labor required of them. Yet another consequence of the NEP era was an intensification on the part of the Bolshevik government in reverting back to patriarchal standards of viewing women that they once vowed to destroy. The NEP period witnessed a change on the part of the Bolsheviks' vision from an idealistic conception of women's roles in post-revolutionary society to an upsurge in conventional

modes of perceiving women. Women who kept their jobs during the NEP period faced discrimination from male co-workers and they were quite often marginalized to specifically female industries, signifying that attitudes about women's roles in the labor force had not changed. Certainly, the adherence to customary perceptions of women's roles in society concerned not only working women but also those attempting to infiltrate the political realm. The Bolsheviks, more intent on fixing the economy, devoted virtually no attention to women in the Party after the implementation of the NEP, proclaiming them to be too emotional or backward to be viable contributors to politics. Indeed, members of the government openly attacked the women's governmental organization, the Zhentodol, in the NEP era and took funds from the committee and funneled them into projects designed to boost economic recovery. The Bolsheviks derided members of the Zhentodol and accused them of putting the needs of women above those of the Party. Instead of acknowledging the need for an organization to continue addressing women's concerns in post-revolutionary society, the Bolsheviks increasingly considered the Zhentodol unnecessary.

The strength and durability of patriarchal attitudes limited women's abilities to broaden the scope of their liberation throughout the 1920s. Stalin, far from creating the problem, merely followed the trend of governmental disregard for the advancement of women's rights in the Soviet Union. Stalin magnified the problem by taking legal rights from women, such as eliminating easy access to divorce and banning abortion. Stalin considered women's roles as dutiful mothers to be their most honorable way to serve the state. Stalin also abolished the Zhentodol in 1930, taking from women the only organization aimed at increasing women's emancipation in Soviet society. Beginning in

the NEP era and extending through Stalin's reign, women in the Soviet Union experienced not an expansion of rights and opportunities but a withdrawal of governmental support for issues connected to their needs. Women in the Soviet Union gained much from the Russian Revolution. Yet the Bolsheviks ultimately did little to erase or even modify patriarchal structures of inequality that could have guaranteed women full emancipation in the Soviet Union.

CHAPTER III

Discourses Written by and about Women: Interpreting Culture as both a System and a Practice

Thus far this thesis has explored the social, political, and economic impediments to women's full emancipation in the aftermath of the French and Russian Revolutions. Although the revolutionaries in eighteenth century France and twentieth century Russia adopted an egalitarian philosophy toward social relations, those principles did not extend to all citizens. Members of the government in post-revolutionary France and Russia quite explicitly excluded women's legal, civic, political, and economic rights from their definitions of equality because they deemed other matters to be of greater importance. In eighteenth century France, the need to retain political control over both the course of the Revolution and internal conditions within the country consumed government officials to the fullest extent. The Jacobins increasingly considered the influence of women in public affairs to constitute a threat to their regime and to the stability of the nation. In the case of post-revolutionary Russia, the stagnant state of the economy caused the Bolsheviks to reevaluate their initial progressive stance on women's rights and to reassert customary perceptions of the proper role of women in society. In both cases, the revolutionary leaderships relied upon or reacted to patriarchal belief systems in conceptualizing what revolution should and could mean.

Indeed, French and Russian revolutionaries made use of certain cultural concepts, connected with the ideology of patriarchy. One of the most significant manners in which

men and women either contested or upheld patriarchal systems of inequality was through modes of discourse.¹ A comparative analysis of political tracts, works of fiction, and legal documents written in the time periods preceding, during, and after the French and Russian Revolutions reveal the intricate manner in which cultural discourses and revolutionary processes in France and Russia interacted. An examination of such texts demonstrates that the durability of the patriarchal cultural system, though contested in practice by the political, fictional, and legal discourses of both men and women, was a function of the strength of discursive structures to re-affirm long-standing gender ideology.

The study of the relationship between culture and discourse provides for the reconnection of standard social categories, as associated with the broader analysis of societal relations, to the recognition that these concepts are often reliant upon cultural principles.² William H. Sewell has written about the two main ways that scholars have conceptualized culture: as a set of practices and as a system of symbols and signs.³ Sewell contends that the best way to study culture and its impact is through the interaction of system and practice. Sewell's model of cultural studies is a helpful lens through which to carry out a comparative analysis of the condition of women's rights

¹ For the purposes of this chapter, the focus will be on political treatises, literature, and legal documents. It should be noted that broader definitions of discourses include various other forms of written language and images.

² For a more detailed account of the need for a reanalysis of the role of cultural studies in historical accounts, see Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt, "Introduction," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 1-34.

³ William H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 47. Sewell's conception of culture as the interaction of system and practice reacts to the theories of structuralism and post-structuralism. The structuralist movement emerged in the early twentieth century and related to Ferdinand de Saussure's theory that language was a fixed system of signifiers – or words - and their subsequent meanings, known as the signified. The post-structuralists, such as Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida, though in no way completely rejecting structuralism, insist that language can be deconstructed as a set of symbols and signs that convey abstract, subjective meanings.

during and after the French and Russian Revolutions. One manner in which government officials illustrated their adherence to patriarchal standards was via their use of certain cultural symbols that held particular meanings. These symbols reinforced the manner in which members of the government in France and Russia treated women. Yet Sewell also maintains that the practice of culture holds no set semiotic pattern, should not be viewed by scholars as static, and can be altered in numerous ways.⁴ Sewell argues that, as a result of the ambiguous nature of cultural systems, dissenting opinions emerge, often based upon disparities in class, race, or gender.⁵ Some of these sorts of cultural dynamics are evidenced in the experiences of French and Russian women through the post-revolutionary process and after.

Discourses written by and about women either reinforced or contested the prevailing cultural system connected to firmly established structures of patriarchal inequality. These discourses – whether legal documents, political treatises, or works of fiction - can be broken into two major categories. A number of discourses reinforced fundamental patriarchal notions while others sought to redefine or overthrow patriarchy. Authors that typically upheld patriarchal standards insisted that women were intellectually inferior to men and naturally and biologically suited for the domestic realm. Discourses written by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Napoleon Bonaparte, and Leon Trotsky, as well as the legal texts of the Napoleonic Code of 1804 and the Soviet Family Law of 1944 upheld the customary cultural or semiotic

⁴ Ibid, 49-50.

⁵ Ibid, 54.

system that legitimized patriarchal models of gender relations.⁶ Such discourses provide examples of the cultural system that acted as a powerful impediment to the redefinition of gender roles and the defeat of patriarchy as part of the revolutionary process.

Other writers sought to use their discourses to challenge cultural systems that constituted the basis of social inequality for women. A number of discourses written by and about women disputed culturally imbedded patriarchal standards and proved that cultural systems are not static. Discourses written by Mary Wollstonecraft, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Marquis de Condorcet, Olympe de Gouges, Etta Palm d'Aelders, Vladimir Lenin, and Alexandra Kollontai challenged patriarchal systems of inequality. These discourses are evidence of the fact that cultures are not closed and uncontested systems and that discourses have the potential to restructure cultural practice. Yet these documents also reflect a certain measure of idealism not entirely consistent with the endurance of patriarchal customs in the aftermath of the French and Russian Revolutions. The typical governmental stance on women's roles in post-revolutionary France and Russia reinforced the view of women as inferior to men and best suited to domestic tasks and not involvement in the public realm that was in place prior to the French and Russian Revolutions.

Discourses that espoused customary norms served to reinforce the dominance of the institution of patriarchy that was characteristic of pre-revolutionary French and Russian society. Men's typical perception of women, preceding the French and Russian Revolutions, adamantly maintained that women were fundamentally inferior to men and thus only suited for domestic tasks. Since the beginning of written history men have

⁶ Trotsky challenged patriarchal standards of inequality. Yet he validated the cultural practice of denoting that women's concerns were not as important as other issues. Thus, Trotsky's discourse provides an example of the retrenchment of patriarchy during the NEP era in Soviet society.

defined women as profoundly different from men and as more passive, fickle, and emotional creatures best suited for domestic and familial duties.⁷ Men embraced the same perspectives in pre-revolutionary France and Russia. Illustrative examples of men's views of women as subordinate members in society are clearly visible in the discourses written by well-known French and Russian authors. Jean-Jacques Rousseau greatly influenced French citizens with his political and social treatises and Leo Tolstoy's and Fyodor Dostoevsky's novels had similar effects in Russia. These writers viewed women in terms of their domestic qualities and not as citizens worthy of the same rights and opportunities as men. Rousseau maintained that the purpose of women's education was to better prepare them to provide for the needs of men by serving as productive wives and mothers.⁸ Tolstoy and Dostoevsky also applauded women for their domestic qualities and submissive natures.⁹ Other writers renounced such oppressive and negative perceptions of women. Mary Wollstonecraft rejected Rousseau's patriarchal conception of women's roles in society. Instead, she advocated for women's rights to education beyond the basic forms of instruction that emphasized their domestic obligations. Later on in the nineteenth century, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels criticized the bourgeois suppression of women. They claimed that the advent of socialism would emancipate women from capitalistic oppression and were the key points of inspiration, along with Lenin, of course, of the Russian Revolution. Collectively, these writers had a profound impact on French and Russian society.

⁷ Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen, *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 3.

⁸ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, "Emile," in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 43-49.

⁹ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (New York: Signet Classic, 1961). Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981).

In eighteenth century France, Rousseau's treatises and novels roused the political consciousness of many people. French revolutionaries molded their political opinions around ideas set forth by Rousseau. Rousseau shaped the course of the French Revolution through his concept of what constituted a just and apt governmental structure, which ultimately was in sharp contradiction to the monarchical system in France. Yet Rousseau's attitudes toward women were consistent with established customs. Rousseau connected women with domestic responsibilities and familial tasks and deemed men the sole proprietors of public affairs.¹⁰ This estimation of women as second-rate in relation to men and thus deserving of lesser rights and prospects that Rousseau advanced in the years prior to the French Revolution reveals the duplicitous nature of his conception of just government.

Rousseau's misogynistic opinions of women now appear incongruous with his concept of the ideal form of government. Rousseau maintained in *The Social Contract*, published in 1762, that the general will of the people afforded the basis for the correct form of governmental institutions.¹¹ Rousseau believed that, through the social contract, individuals exchanged their natural independence in society for the benefits of citizenship.¹² The general will reflected the social contract when citizens developed a vested interest in the welfare of the state and its laws. Although the general will supposedly rested upon the universal assent of the population, the role of women in the social contract was absent from Rousseau's writing. Rousseau referred to the political connotations of the social contract in gendered terms. At no point in *The Social Contract* were women specifically mentioned as having a stake in the general will. Rousseau did

¹⁰ Rousseau, "Emile," 44.

¹¹ Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract* (London: Penguin Classics, 1968), 142.

¹² *Ibid*, 50.

not consider women to be ideally suited for tasks outside of the domestic realm, thus they did not warrant mention in the political schema represented in *The Social Contract*. In Rousseau's conception of a model governmental structure, only those who directly contributed to the political realm deserved citizenship status. Women had no legal means of acquiring citizenship, thus Rousseau ignored the question of women's relationship to the application of the general will. Rousseau's failure to conceptualize women as part of the social contract reinforced longstanding cultural practices that marginalized women from politics.

Rousseau expounds on his attitude toward women – and their proper place in society - in the 1762 novel *Emile*. In *Emile*, Rousseau emphasized the appropriate forms of education for men and women. The protagonist, Emile, symbolizes Rousseau's estimation of the ideal man, while the character of Sophie personifies the model woman in pre-revolutionary French society. Sophie's subservience to the dominance of her husband suggested that Rousseau considered women's dispositions to balance those of men. Upon her marriage to Emile, Sophie consigned herself to being the archetypal wife since the responsibility of women was to defer to their husband as a master. Rousseau in fact insisted that women's educational pursuits should be formulated in relation to their distinctive dispositions.¹³

In book five of *Emile*, Rousseau maintained that women, owing to biological sex differences, should be educated for the sole purpose of pleasing men.¹⁴ According to Rousseau's conception of women's education, women were “at the mercy of men's judgments,” thus they were dependent on the estimation of men for their worth in

¹³ Rousseau, “Emile,” 43.

¹⁴ Ibid, 44.

society.¹⁵ Women had the obligation to learn proper modes of behavior and morals worthy of their sex. For Rousseau, women “ought to learn many things, but only those which it becomes them to know,” without addressing the possibility that women desired more progressive forms of education.¹⁶ Rousseau insisted that limits should be placed upon women’s education so that they learned only what befitted them most: feminine charms, domesticity, and obedience. The purpose of a woman’s education related to her capacity to gain the respect of men by being useful to them as dutiful wives and mothers.¹⁷ The example of *Emile* indicates that Rousseau assumed that women were incapable of contributing to public affairs. Women’s main purpose in life was to satisfy men by being loyal, competent, and respectable wives and mothers. In Rousseau’s view, women’s aspirations for inclusion in the public realm signaled deviance from their true character. Many women willingly accepted Rousseau’s educational model because it reinforced patriarchal structures of inequality. In *Emile*, Rousseau characterized the main female protagonist, Sophie, in accordance with the prevailing pre-revolutionary system of cultural symbols. In this system, women’s discursive characterization was one that stood in stark opposition to man’s. Yet dissenting voices emerged. One such woman who vehemently disagreed with Rousseau’s views of women was Mary Wollstonecraft.

Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* served as a pioneering text for the advancement of women’s rights.¹⁸ Although published in 1792, at the height of the French Revolution, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* addressed the pre-revolutionary concept of women as unequal to men. Wollstonecraft did not allude

¹⁵ Ibid, 49.

¹⁶ Ibid, 44.

¹⁷ Ibid, 49.

¹⁸ Mary Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (Amherst: Prometheus Books, 1989).

directly to the impact that the French Revolution had on women. Instead, Wollstonecraft was one of a few women in the eighteenth century who openly defied Rousseau's conventional belief of women's inferiority and subservient nature. Wollstonecraft argued that men subjected women to unreasonable and repressive standards due to the fact that they deprived them of the very constitutional rights and educational opportunities that could reverse this trend. Wollstonecraft attacked Rousseau for depicting women as "more artificial, weak characters, than they would otherwise have been; and consequently, more useless members of society" as a result.¹⁹ The argument put forth by Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* centered on the conviction that women should be entitled to the same educational benefits granted to men and defied the predominate cultural assumptions of the pre-revolutionary era.

Wollstonecraft's discourse advocated for women's equal education with men. Unlike Rousseau, Wollstonecraft emphasized the need for women and men to be taught the same subjects. Wollstonecraft asserted that women were the slaves of men's view of them as inherently unsuited for education on equivalent terms as they enjoyed.²⁰ Wollstonecraft contended that a woman's education would prevent her from "submit[ting], right or wrong, to her husband, or patiently to the social laws which make a nonentity of a wife."²¹ According to Wollstonecraft, only through education that strengthened women's minds – instead of merely teaching them strictly feminine attributes - could women fully develop as enlightened and knowledgeable individuals.²² For Wollstonecraft, women's natures were not what deprived them of a high-quality

¹⁹ Wollstonecraft, *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*, 32.

²⁰ Ibid, 179.

²¹ Ibid, 188.

²² Ibid, 185.

education, it was men's insistence of their superiority over women that consigned them to an inferior position in society. Wollstonecraft's appeal for a standardization of education for men and women largely went unheeded by the revolutionaries. Rousseau's educational model proved more persuasive in bourgeoisie society even in the aftermath of the French Revolution. The proper form of education for women in the eighteenth-century still revolved upon the idea that they were to be respectable wives and mothers whose supreme role in society was the caretaker of domestic tasks. Wollstonecraft's narrative in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* demonstrates the unclosed, unfixed, contested nature of cultural systems reinforcing women's subordination. Writers in pre-revolutionary Russia also subjected women to similar assessments of what constituted their appropriate place in society. Still, other writers contested these patriarchal systems of inequality through various dissuasive statements.

The bourgeois culture in late nineteenth century Russia connected women to the cult of domesticity. As in much of the West, bourgeois women in Russia were to be virtuous, domestic, submissive, and pure. In the discourses that explicitly treated gender relations, women's rejection of these traits usually led to their downfall in society. Tolstoy's 1877 novel *Anna Karenina* imparts a key example of the consequences faced by one woman when she refused to adhere to bourgeois gender expectations.²³ Anna leaves her husband, Karenin, and small child, Seryozha, in order to live with her lover, Vronsky. Anna's abandonment of her domestic sphere and responsibilities ultimately leaves her disillusioned when her relationship with Vronsky sours. Anna's dissatisfaction with life precipitates her suicide. Tolstoy compares Anna's death with the closing of a

²³ Leo Tolstoy, *Anna Karenina* (New York: Signet Classic, 1961).

book, one “filled with anxieties, deceits, grief, and evil.”²⁴ Tolstoy’s description of Anna’s life as deceitful and evil alludes to his opinion that women who stepped beyond the boundaries of their domestic roles were deviant and destined for a tragic and untimely demise.²⁵ Here, too, we can see how novelists’ depictions of women’s proper domestic roles could reflect and reinforce common cultural practices among the bourgeoisie.

The depiction of Sonia in Dostoevsky’s 1866 novel *Crime and Punishment* represents the opposite of Tolstoy’s character of Anna because she represents the epitome of a virtuous woman. Sonia, despite all of the obstacles before her, never abandons her domestic and submissive qualities. Sonia’s father, Marmeladov, is an incurable alcoholic who sells his family’s possessions in order to buy alcohol.²⁶ Yet Sonia remains loyal to him, and in order to provide for her family, she becomes a prostitute. Although society deemed prostitution an immoral profession, Dostoevsky upholds Sonia’s actions. Sonia, instead of abandoning her familial obligations like Anna Karenina, resorts to prostitution as the sole means of keeping her family unit intact. Sonia’s allegiance to her lover Raskolnikov also suggests that she met the qualifications of the ideal woman in pre-revolutionary Russia. Upon Raskolnikov’s conviction of the murder of a pawnbroker, Sonia willingly follows him to the Siberian prison camp where he must serve his seven-year sentence.²⁷ Sonia willingly leaves her family and home and risked certain illness and seclusion in order to be with Raskolnikov. Yet at the conclusion of the novel, Dostoevsky describes Sonia when “a light of infinite happiness came into her eyes...

²⁴ Ibid, 760.

²⁵ For a rejection of Tolstoy’s view of women see Anton Chekhov, “The Darling,” in *Anton Chekhov’s Short Stories*, ed. by Ralph E. Matlaw (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1979), 211-220. Chekhov’s ironic portrayal of the protagonist, Olenka, a woman solely devoted to the wishes and whims of her husbands, reveals the author’s testament to the belief that societal norms and domesticity unfairly prevented women from attaining emancipation and equality.

²⁶ Fyodor Dostoevsky, *Crime and Punishment* (New York: Bantam Books, 1981), 13.

²⁷ Ibid, 495.

[since she was] renewed by love.’’²⁸ Dostoevsky rewards Sonia’s self-sacrificing nature and acquiescence to Raskolnikov. Unlike the adulterous Anna, whose life ended in misery and dissatisfaction, Sonia’s fate brought her happiness and love.²⁹ The contradiction between Anna and Sonia correlates with the basic principles of the cult of domesticity championed by the bourgeoisie in pre-revolutionary Russia. In *Crime and Punishment*, Dostoevsky reinforced the semiotic system connected to the cult of domesticity. Sonia’s chaste, pure, and obedient nature left her as a mere pawn to the men in her life, first her father, and later Raskolnikov. Yet Dostoevsky does not allude to the fact that Sonia was a victim of patriarchal systems of inequality. Instead, in his discourse, Dostoevsky utilized cultural symbols, in relation to the cult of domesticity, that championed Sonia’s virtuous and acquiescent character. Sonia acted as Dostoevsky’s model of an ideal woman simply because she consistently maintained her submissive nature. Dostoevsky’s discourse endorsed the bourgeois ideal of a proper woman in nineteenth century Russian society and reinforced patriarchal and cultural systems of inequality.

Although formulated well in advance of Tolstoy’s and Dostoevsky’s novels, the doctrine of socialism developed by Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels denounced the bourgeois principles later validated by Tolstoy and Dostoevsky for being excessively oppressive to women. The works of Marx and Engels represent discourses contesting bourgeois ideals of female subordination. Marx and Engels contended that only socialism could liberate women from the stifling bourgeois conception of females as property owned and controlled by males. In the *Communist Manifesto*, published in

²⁸ Ibid, 504.

²⁹ Ibid, 505.

1848, Marx and Engels asserted that bourgeois society equated women with “a mere instrument of production” that men utilized much in the same manner as any other tool in the advancement of a capitalistic endeavor.³⁰ Marx and Engels maintained that middle-class marriage constituted a form of prostitution since men freely and irrelevantly exploited their wives by considering them to be a form of property. Engels expanded upon this theme in 1848’s *The Origin of the Family*.³¹ Engels concluded that, upon the formation of private property, men deemed it necessary to control women’s reproduction in order to ensure proper birthright for their heirs.³² According to Engels, these were the origins of patriarchy.³³ Women’s reproductive capabilities made them a valued commodity in society, and in Engels’ view, led to their domination by men. Engels attacked the nineteenth century, bourgeois conception of marriage and family for exhibiting the same traits. He insisted that marriage was simply the legal means through which men gained dominion over women.³⁴ Engels compared women’s struggles with those of the proletariat. The bourgeoisie controlled the means of production, which exploited the working class and restrained women from advancing beyond the domestic realm.³⁵ Engels alleged that only when socialism brought about the cessation of private property and redefined the objectives of production could women expect to be emancipated from bourgeois entrapment. Marx and Engels’ discourses on the evils of

³⁰ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “The Communist Manifesto,” in *Women and Communism: Selections from the Writings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin*, ed. by Harry Pollitt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1950), 35.

³¹ Friedrich Engels, “The Origin of the Family,” in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 74-81. For one critique of Engels’ theories see the Origins chapter in Gerda Lerner, *The Creation of Patriarchy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 21-24.

³² Engels, “The Origin of the Family,” 80.

³³ Engels’ theories articulate the traditional Marxist position on the relation between property and patriarchy.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

bourgeois gender roles represented a challenge to the prevailing cultural system and the common social practices that subjugated women. Discourses written during the revolutionary period in France and Russia also questioned and contested established cultural concepts of women's roles in society.

Discourses written by and about women during the French and Russian Revolutions illustrate the unsuccessful attempt to incorporate women's rights into governmental agendas in revolutionary France compared to the rather enlightened opinion of women's roles adopted by the Bolsheviks in the new Soviet Union. Government officials in France aligned themselves with Rousseau's conception of women. Although the Jacobins permitted women informal political input in revolutionary clubs, they never altered their ingrained belief that women's true place was within the domestic realm. Members of the National Assembly drafted the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen" in such a manner that excluded any direct mention of women's rights. But a number of dissenting discourses stood in opposition to the prevailing gender system. The Marquis de Condorcet, a member of the French Legislative Assembly, considered women to possess the same natural rights as men. Condorcet petitioned government officials to rectify the omission of women's rights from their political agenda.³⁶ Olympe de Gouges, a playwright by trade, also addressed this concern in her rebuttal to the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen," which government officials drafted as a legislative decree in August 1789.³⁷ De Gouges proclaimed that men and women were equal, thus they deserved the same consideration

³⁶ Marquis de Condorcet, "Condorcet's Plea for the Citizenship of Women," in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 99-103.

³⁷ See Jeremy Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 39-40.

under the law. Etta Palm d'Aelders, a political activist and orator, assumed the same when she challenged the Jacobin government to repeal laws that unfavorably allowed men, not women, to file complaints against their spouses. Yet members of the revolutionary government in France generally ignored such appeals for gender equality, while the Bolsheviks championed such measures, at least at first. Vladimir Lenin expanded upon the model of socialism developed by Marx and Engels by insisting that, until women were brought into the public sector, no socialist state could prosper. Alexandra Kollontai, the Soviet Union's first Commissar of Social Welfare, initially praised the Bolsheviks for their commitment to women's issues. Kollontai expected the Russian Revolution to restructure society and substitute patriarchal standards for gender equality. Condorcet, de Gouges, and Palm d'Aelders assumed the same during the French Revolution. French revolutionaries espoused egalitarian themes which suggested that government was the reflection of the general will of the people. Condorcet, de Gouges, and Palm d'Aelders drew attention to the irony of denying women civic and legal rights within the context of the supposed egalitarian nature of the French Revolution.

Condorcet proved to be more progressive in his opinions of women than other members of the revolutionary government in France. In 1790, Condorcet published a treatise, "Condorcet's Plea for the Citizenship of Women," in which he criticized his countrymen for refusing to grant women constitutional rights.³⁸ Condorcet asked, "have they [government legislators] not every one violated the principle of equality...in excluding women from the right of citizenship?"³⁹ Condorcet contended that men

³⁸ Condorcet, "Condorcet's Plea for the Citizenship of Women," 99.

³⁹ Ibid.

unfairly assumed that women lacked adequate reason and intelligence and that their influence in civic affairs would be counterproductive. Instead, Condorcet reasoned that granting women citizenship status stood to better society. Women would then have more of an interest in the welfare of the state.⁴⁰ Condorcet also countered the conventional belief that women's involvement in public matters led them to neglect their domestic responsibilities. According to Condorcet, government officials should not prevent women's involvement in political matters and administration solely on the basis that this would take them away from their domestic duties. Condorcet argued that men did not spend their entire day engaged in political activities and the same would hold true for women. Women would simply balance domestic obligations with their political endeavors.⁴¹ Despite his progressive views of women, Condorcet never contended that men should alleviate a measure of women's familial burdens by taking over some of the domestic responsibilities themselves. Still, Condorcet believed that government officials owed French women citizenship status, and the legal right to contribute to public affairs, since they possessed the same natural rights as men. He based this conviction on the idea that no government institution should have the power to subvert women's inborn, natural rights as individuals. Condorcet's enlightened conception of women's legal rights in revolutionary France contested patriarchal systems of inequality. Yet government official's reluctance to grant women legal rights in the aftermath of the French Revolution reflected larger cultural forces. Patriarchy, as both a system and a set of practices, proved deeply imbedded and resistant to modification. But some individuals did produce discourses designed to challenge this system of inequality.

⁴⁰ Ibid, 102.

⁴¹ Ibid, 102.

Olympe de Gouges' appeal for women's legal and civic rights was similar to that of Condorcet. Olympe de Gouges, although a staunch royalist, demanded that the revolutionaries extend their egalitarian conception of society to the area of women's rights. In 1791, De Gouges openly criticized the ambivalent nature of the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen."⁴² Certainly, the gendered terminology that legislators incorporated in the Declaration appeared to indicate that only men who owned property benefited from the revolutionary process. In the "Declaration of the Rights of Woman," De Gouges vehemently condemned men for seeking "to command as a despot a sex which is in full possession of its intellectual faculties," and thus deserving of equal legal rights.⁴³ De Gouges offered a point-by-point rejoinder against the articles in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." She substituted the word woman, in place of man, in order to remind members of the National Assembly of their failure to include women in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man." De Gouges claimed that women deserved an active role in the manifestation of the general will, as well as governmental recognition of their liberties and duties as French citizens.⁴⁴ For De Gouges, a constitution was invalid if members of the government refused to honor these principles or upon their failure to obtain women's collaboration on constitutional measures.⁴⁵ In the postamble, De Gouges maintained that women achieved nothing as a result of the Revolution but a heightening of governmental neglect and contempt against them.⁴⁶ De Gouges appealed to women to

⁴² Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution*, 39-40.

⁴³ Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman," in *Lives and Voices: Sources in European Women's History*, ed. by Lisa DiCaprio and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 261.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 262. See Article VI.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 263. See Article XVI.

⁴⁶ Olympe de Gouges, "Declaration of the Rights of Woman," in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 107. The postamble is not included in *Lives and Voices*.

recognize this fact and consequently defeat the injustice that men subjected them to in revolutionary France. De Gouges rejected the customary cultural perception of women, and through her discourse, rejected the gendered language incorporated by male revolutionaries in “The Declaration of the Rights of Man.” De Gouges’ “Declaration of the Rights of Woman” challenged the conventional semiotic system that classified women as inferior and thus unworthy of constitutional rights on the same terms granted to men.

Etta Palm d’Aelders employed the same impassioned rhetoric in her criticism of law codes which stipulated that only men had the right to file a formal grievance against their spouse. D’Aelder insisted that, since the French Revolution emancipated men from tyranny, then members of the government should afford the same liberation to women. She particularly objected to Article XIII of the Police Code. This provision allowed men to file a civil complaint against their wives upon the charge of adultery. Women did not have legal access to the same privilege. In her 1791 address to the National Assembly, D’Aelder argued that such a law unfairly subjected women to the despotic tendencies of men, which contradicted the basic ideology of egalitarianism sponsored by the revolutionaries.⁴⁷ She beseeched government officials “not to leave women to suffer under an arbitrary authority...sanctioned by absurd laws” that called into question the true nature of the revolutionaries’ intentions towards women’s roles in post-revolutionary France.⁴⁸ D’Aelder stated that the function of marriage laws should be to create equilibrium between the sexes, with each spouse having an equal stake in the conjugal

⁴⁷ Etta Palm d’Aelders, “Address to the French National Assembly,” in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 103.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

partnership. But, of course, D'Aelder's discourse disputed the patriarchal notion that men should be permitted certain legal rights denied to women simply based on cultural systems of inequality and the belief that women were inferior and thus undeserving of an equal place in society. D'Aelders's petition, like those of Condorcet and de Gouges, failed to bring about any real change in governmental policies toward women. The Jacobins and subsequent revolutionary governments never accorded women with citizenship or complete equality in France. The Bolsheviks, on the other hand, were considerably more progressive in their approach to women's issues. There were a number of discourses from the revolutionary period of Russian history that helped to provide the ideological basis for governmental rejection of conventional attitudes towards women and that brought some real changes in cultural practices.

During the beginning stages of the Russian Revolution, Lenin espoused rhetoric that promoted the active, public involvement of women in the proletarian movement. Lenin, in numerous political tracts, affirmed that women must be brought out of the domestic realm and into the public arena in order for socialism to succeed. Lenin equated women's domestic obligations to a form of bourgeois slavery that would be eradicated only upon the implementation of socialism. He argued that women's emancipation hinged on equality with men in all spheres. In 1918, Lenin stated that "if we [the Bolsheviks] do not draw women into public activity...into political life...it is impossible even to build democracy, let alone socialism."⁴⁹ For Lenin, one of the goals of socialism was to release women from the dual burden that they had previously labored under in Russian society. Lenin maintained that a socialist state would free women both from the

⁴⁹ Vladimir Lenin, "There Can be No Socialist Revolution Unless Women Take Part in It," in *Women and Communism*, ed. by Harry Pollitt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1950), 42.

bourgeois impression of them as merely another form of capital and from the seclusion of domestic servitude.⁵⁰ Also, Lenin insisted in a 1920 political treatise that Russian women should be given political, economic, and legal equality in practice, and not just in theory.⁵¹ Indeed, women profited from early Bolshevik policy initiatives granting them legal emancipation and equal access to jobs and education. Such measures related to Lenin's insistence that women's liberation involved the transfer of their domestic duties into more beneficial communal, economic labor.⁵² Lenin vehemently believed that women stood to benefit from further inclusion in public and economic sectors under the new socialist system of government implemented in Russia. Lenin's political discourses on women rejected bourgeois cultural and patriarchal practices in which men treated women as their property. Lenin's discourses on women's emancipation thus contested the bourgeois semiotic system that defined women solely with the domestic and private realm.

Inspired by Lenin, Alexandra Kollontai through her work and her writing championed socialism as the system of government that could best liberate women from the curse of domestic drudgery. Kollontai's 1921 *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia* outlined the Bolsheviks' commitment to the advancement of women into the public arena.⁵³ Kollontai noted that the Bolsheviks recruited women into the proletarian movement for the promotion of the Soviet state.⁵⁴ Kollontai argued that what separated the Soviet Union from bourgeois nations was the number of women active in

⁵⁰ Vladimir Lenin, "The Road to Emancipation," in *Women and Communism*, ed. by Harry Pollitt (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1950), 46.

⁵¹ Vladimir Lenin, "On International Women's Day," in *The Emancipation of Women* (New York: International Publishers, 1978), 81.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Alexandra Kollontai, "The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia," in *Alexandra Kollontai: Selected Articles and Speeches* (New York: International Publishers, 1984), 162-179.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 166.

such fields as military service and the labor market. Kollontai remarked that women also played a significant role in the formation of new forms of social education, as a means to spread the principles of communism to the masses. She contended that bourgeois governments voluntarily assented to women's involvement in such public affairs only upon extenuating circumstances, most notably during times of war, and only for an immediate political gain.⁵⁵ Kollontai's description of women's inclusion in numerous sectors of the public realm in Soviet Russia illustrated the more enlightened nature of the Bolshevik regime in its early phases in comparison to the manner in which capitalist countries treated women. According to Kollontai, "[t]he bourgeoisie has always based itself on the view that the woman was and should remain the preserver of the home," while men's natures suited them more for protection of the household.⁵⁶ Kollontai maintained that the October Revolution in Russia had led to women's deliverance from bourgeois oppression. She stressed that the advent of socialism in the Soviet Union afforded women a secure foundation upon which to continue to pursue public endeavors unknown to them under the Old Regime.⁵⁷ Kollontai, like Lenin, discursively challenged the bourgeois practice of identifying women only with respect to their domestic and familial qualities by asserting that the socialist system of government stood to liberate women from patriarchal and cultural standards of inequality.

Yet, although Kollontai enthusiastically supported the Bolsheviks, she did briefly allude to how the decline of the economy stood to disrupt governmental attention away from matters of importance to women.⁵⁸ Still, Kollontai buried this critique of the

⁵⁵ Ibid, 168.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

⁵⁷ Ibid, 179.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 173.

Bolsheviks' priorities in a 1921 article that otherwise celebrated their support of the progression of women into the public sector. Kollontai wrote *The Woman Worker and Peasant in Soviet Russia* in 1921, the same year that Lenin implemented the New Economic Policy. Her criticism of the Bolshevik regime's waning assistance to women's issues would intensify in subsequent years, when NEP programs absorbed nearly all of the government's attention. During the NEP era, the Bolsheviks increasingly reverted back to a dependence on conventional modes of viewing women in order to validate the change in their policies on gender equality. The Bolsheviks' re-embrace of patriarchal standards of inequality, although occurring at a later stage in the revolutionary process than in France, certainly mirrored the Jacobin government's treatment of women after the French Revolution. The consequential return to patriarchal standards proved to be the decisive legacy of the French and Russian Revolutions for women. Here, too, a number of discourses written by and about women reinforced this patriarchal retrenchment.

Discourses written in post-revolutionary France and Russia reveal the firm entrenchment of patriarchal values even in the aftermath of major revolutions. The initial contestation of governmental disregard for women's constitutional rights occurred during the Jacobin phase of the French Revolution in the early 1790s. Yet these writers, such as Condorcet, de Gouges, and d'Aelders, suggested that there was still ample time for government officials to seize the opportunity to provide women with equal rights in revolutionary society. That was not to be the case upon Napoleon Bonaparte's rise to power in post-revolutionary France. Napoleon best articulated his stance on women with the Napoleonic Code of 1804. The Napoleonic Code restricted the rights of French women on an unprecedented scale. Unlike the "Declaration of the Rights of Man," which

simply did not mention women's rights in any concrete manner, the Napoleonic Code identified women, not as citizens, but in relation to their fathers and husbands. The Napoleonic Code provided the culmination of governmental neglect for women's legal and civic rights that began under the Jacobin leadership. Also, Napoleon's views on women mirrored those formulated by Rousseau, especially in connection with his opinions on women's education. Napoleon and Rousseau shared the belief that women did not warrant the same educational opportunities as men because of their inferior natures. Continued governmental repression of women's rights thus replaced the optimism apparent in appeals for gender equality espoused during the initial revolutionary rupture in France. Discourses of the post-revolutionary period of Russian history, including texts by Trotsky and Kollontai and the Soviet Family Law of 1944, reveal the change from support and praise for the Bolsheviks' quest to release women from the confines of domesticity to the realization that conventional standards still largely defined women's roles in Soviet society.

The Bolsheviks' retraction of governmental support for women's issues transpired only upon the implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1921. Although Leon Trotsky believed as late as 1923 that communalization projects would transfer domestic labor from individual women to the community, he readily admitted that the government was not yet in any position to extend their services to such designs. The Bolsheviks' subsequent inattention to the plight of women in the NEP era disillusioned Kollontai, causing her to reevaluate government officials' dedication to women's advancement under socialism. Kollontai's disappointment with the Bolsheviks' treatment of women's issues proved well-founded. After Joseph Stalin's ascension to power in the 1920s, he

increasingly equated – and commended – women for their roles as mothers rather than as active contributors to the public realm. The Soviet Family Law of 1944, following upon prior legislative decrees and aimed at restricting or redefining the position of women in society, exemplifies Stalin’s estimation of women’s proper role in post-revolutionary Russia. Stalin’s attitudes on women’s appropriate place in society, as evidenced by the Soviet Family Law, paralleled those endorsed by Napoleon in The Napoleonic Code of 1804.

The Napoleonic Code confined women to the status of legal minors dependent upon their husbands, who held complete authority over their wives. Chapter IV of the Code, entitled “Of the Respective Rights and Duties of Married Persons,” delineated women’s subservient status to men under the law. Article 213 of the Code stated that the husband’s responsibility was to protect his wife, while it was her duty to be obedient to him.⁵⁹ This essentially reaffirmed patriarchal standards of inequality since the Code stipulated that women were to be submissive and acquiescent but there were no such provisions affirming that men were to treat their wives in a similar manner. Indeed, Article 214 set forth that a woman was “to live with her husband, and to follow him to every place where he may judge it convenient to reside.”⁶⁰ The significance of this Article relates to the fact that the Code specified that women had no influence in their place of residence since these decisions were to be left to the husband’s discretion. The Code also prevented women from purchasing or selling property without the prior

⁵⁹ The Napoleonic Code, “Of the Respective Rights and Duties of Married Persons,” in *Lives and Voices: Sources in European Women’s History*, ed. by Lisa DiCaprio and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 2001), 270.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

authorization of their husbands.⁶¹ Again, the law required women to defer to their husband's authority. The same held true in regard to women's rights to sue another person in court.⁶² Here, too, a woman needed permission from her husband, even when the matter did not directly concern him. The only articles in the Napoleonic Code that benefited women concerned their ability to engage in public trading and to compose a will without the consent of their husbands.⁶³ These provisions provided for a slight modification in the semiotic practice of viewing women only in relation to their husbands and to some extent lessened patriarchal systems of inequality in post-revolutionary France for women of the petite bourgeoisie or lower middle class. Yet overall the Napoleonic Code strengthened men's authority over women in nineteenth century France. The Napoleonic Code afforded men the legal right to manage women's affairs, which consigned women to being the mere extension of their husband's wishes, not as individuals with an equal say in society. The legal discourse of the Napoleonic Code operated as a significant impediment to the redefinition of gender roles in French society by reinforcing cultural systems that upheld women's subordination to men. The legislators who drafted the Code, Napoleon included, officially sanctioned the bourgeois practice of conceptualizing women as the property of men. Napoleon thus played a significant role in controlling how patriarchy manifested itself in actual legal practice in nineteenth century French society.

Napoleon also set guidelines for women's education that reflected his negative stance on women. In 1807, Napoleon drafted a state letter in which he summarized his

⁶¹ Ibid. See Article 217.

⁶² Ibid, 270-271. See Article 215 and Article 221.

⁶³ Ibid, 271. See Article 220 and Article 226.

views on what he deemed to be the correct approach to women's education.⁶⁴ The purpose of Napoleon's letter was to stipulate the proper mode of women's education at the girl's school, Ecoeu, that he established several years after the completion of the Napoleonic Code. Napoleon, much like Rousseau, held that the "weakness of women's brains" relegated them suitable only for studies that emphasized "every sort of woman's work," which constituted typical domestic tasks, and religious lessons.⁶⁵ Napoleon insisted that the intent of women's education was to teach them skills that would prove useful to them upon marriage and motherhood. According to Napoleon, a woman should learn to manage the household, tend to the needs of her husband, and take care of their children.⁶⁶ He also concluded that women's minds must not be unduly stimulated. For instance, Napoleon argued that awards of merit for exceptional accomplishment only served to rouse women's vanity, which he regarded as "the most active passion of their sex" and were ultimately counterproductive to a woman's appropriate position in life.⁶⁷ Yet Napoleon maintained that men profited from such distinctions, since their public roles necessitated that they learn by example.⁶⁸ Napoleon's discourses, contained patriarchal perceptions of women, and led to governmental decrees that consigned women to a subordinate status in society. In Napoleon's view, women were to be subordinate to men. Napoleon's discourses on women validated and strengthened the prevailing semiotic system in which men considered women to be inferior and thus ideally suited for domestic pursuits alone. Although the Bolsheviks' stance on women's

⁶⁴ Napoleon Bonaparte, "Letter on the Establishment of Ecoeu," in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 94-96.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 95.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 96.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

issues did not initially coincide with those embraced by Napoleon, the struggling economy in Russia after 1921 caused members of the government to re-conceptualize their opinions on women during the NEP era. Trotsky, though still in support of women's emancipation in a socialist society, wrote in 1923 that the unstable economy prevented the Bolsheviks' from fully concentrating on the concerns of women.⁶⁹

Trotsky stated in a 1923 *Pravda* article that the conversion from the bourgeois conception of the family, which prevented women's emancipation outside the area of domestic affairs, to the communalization of the household unit, was still in an incomplete, transitory stage in post-revolutionary Russia.⁷⁰ Reminiscent of Engels' *Origin of the Family*, Trotsky's article, "From the Old Family to the New," traced the disintegration of the familial unit in socialist society.⁷¹ Trotsky considered the withering away of the family to be an inevitable result of socialism since new modes of living were to replace older forms in place prior to the Revolution.⁷² Trotsky conceded that conventional attitudes towards the family remained somewhat intact in Soviet Russia. In his view, only the further education of the working class and an improved economic environment in Russia could institute a change in family life.⁷³ Trotsky linked a strong economy to the success of women's liberation from the domestic realm during a time when economic concerns plagued government officials. He insisted that communal kitchens and daycare facilities would eventually replace the family unit, reducing women's domestic duties in the process. Yet Trotsky noted that "the time [was] not

⁶⁹ Leon Trotsky, "From the Old Family to the New," in *Women and the Family*, ed. by Caroline Lund (New York: Pathfinder Press, 1973), 26-28.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 20.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 21-23.

⁷² *Ibid*, 24-25.

⁷³ *Ibid*, 26.

ripe...from the point of view of the material resources of the state” to institute such collective ventures.⁷⁴ Trotsky thus alluded to the fact that the government was in no position to assist in the development of these projects in any significant manner. Instead, Trotsky advocated for local communities to build communal facilities, with no state aid, in order to inspire other districts to follow their example.⁷⁵ *Pravda* published Trotsky’s article in 1923, during the height of Lenin’s New Economic Policy. Trotsky remained optimistic that socialism would eventually bring about the withering away of the family. Yet he referred to such a transition in evolutionary, not revolutionary, terms.⁷⁶ For Trotsky by 1923, strengthening the economy took precedence over the concerns of women, even though the Bolsheviks had previously insisted that women’s emancipation was one of their highest priorities. Under the NEP, the few existing communal kitchens and daycares closed when the government reallocated funds from collectivization projects to economic development. Many Russian women thus remained immobilized by the burden of their domestic responsibilities. Trotsky believed that women’s advancement into the public realm coincided with communalization and the withering away of the family, but he asserted that such changes would take second place to the struggling Soviet economy. Although Trotsky contested the customary cultural perception of the family unit in “From the Old Family to the New,” he ultimately validated long-standing cultural practices that viewed women’s issues as being less important than other matters. Trotsky’s discourse stressed the importance of stabilizing the economy before concentrating on other matters, which prompted Kollontai to address

⁷⁴ Ibid, 28.

⁷⁵ Ibid, 27-28.

⁷⁶ Ibid, 28.

the ambiguous nature of gender equality and women's roles in Soviet society in the NEP era.

Kollontai's fictional tale "Vasilisa Malygina," included in her 1923 novel *Love of Worker Bees*, illustrates the plight of Soviet women in post-revolutionary Russia.⁷⁷

Through the fictional account of Vasilisa, Kollontai asserts that the Russian Revolution had not fully liberated Soviet women from conventional standards of inequality. At the beginning of the story, Vasilisa joins the Bolshevik Party and vows to crusade for women's equality, though her comrades insist that other issues were of more importance.⁷⁸ Later, Vasilisa depressingly observes, upon the collapse of her communal house, that "[n]obody seemed to realize how important it was to try and live collectively" in Soviet Russia.⁷⁹ Kollontai used the example of the disintegration of Vasilisa's communal house, amidst internal squabbles among the residents and the breakdown of organization, as a metaphor for the failure of other such collectivization experiments in Soviet Russia. Vasilisa, disheartened by her community's inability to restructure their lives around the principles of socialism, seeks to re-establish her relationship with her husband, Vladimir. Kollontai depicts Vasilisa's life with Vladimir as mundane and trivial, since domestic tasks occupied all of her time, due to her husband's insistence that the house be kept in "the proper style."⁸⁰ Here, Kollontai stressed that conventional gender constructs still hampered even the most active, politically involved women in post-revolutionary Russia. Vasilisa eventually leaves her husband due, in large part, to his infidelity, and she refuses to return to him even when she learns of her pregnancy.

⁷⁷ Alexandra Kollontai, "Vasilisa Malygina," in *Love of Worker Bees* (Chicago: Cassandra Editions, 1978), 21-181.

⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 22.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, 23.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 84.

Vasilisa vows to raise the child on her own, announcing that “[t]here was no reason for women to set up with husbands, in families if it merely tied them to the cooking and domestic chores.”⁸¹ Vasilisa’s story served as Kollontai’s discursive vehicle to condemn NEP constraints on women and to challenge the validity of newly re-emergence bourgeois gender practices.

In fact, the evidence shows that many women, unlike Vasilisa, stayed in conventional marriages because NEP policies led to their unemployment, thus increasing their dependence on husbands for survival. Vasilisa’s determination to remain true to the ideology of socialism was used by Kollontai’s to symbolize how government officials neglected to do the same. The Bolsheviks promised women freedom from convention and domestic drudgery but women’s roles in NEP Russia remained tied to the patriarchal, bourgeois conceptions of gender and family. Kollontai’s story challenged patriarchal systems of inequality that continued to be a detriment to the redefinition of conventional gender roles in Russia in the aftermath of the 1917 Revolution.

Stalin’s rise to power only worsened conditions for women in post-revolutionary Russia. Stalin consistently emphasized women’s roles as mothers, in an effort to re-establish pre-revolutionary conceptions of the family unit, as a means to strengthen the Soviet state. Stalin, though theoretically in defense of women’s equality, frequently alluded to women in connection to their roles as wives and mothers. The Marriage Law of 1926 guaranteed rights of alimony to unemployed spouses, irrespective of sex.⁸² This could be read as a real advantage for women that had not existed before. Yet in the NEP

⁸¹ Ibid, 175.

⁸² The Soviet Code on Marriage and Divorce, “Rights and Duties of Husband and Wife,” in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 400. See Article 14.

era, women, not men, lost jobs on an unprecedented level.⁸³ Thus, the implied intention of the Marriage Law was to reinforce women's reliance on their husbands for financial support.⁸⁴ Also, new laws, instituted under Stalin's leadership in 1936, banned abortion, which the Bolsheviks had legalized in 1920, and placed restrictions on divorce.⁸⁵ The purpose of these laws was to strengthen the family unit in society along more conventional lines. The shift in governmental policy towards women reflected Stalin's opinion on their appropriate position in Soviet society. Yet the Soviet Family Law of 1944 provides the clearest example of the Bolsheviks' abandonment of gender equality and the re-emergence of the customary cultural system that connected women with the domestic and private realm.

While the Napoleonic Code defined women's roles in society in relation to their husbands or male relatives, the Soviet Family Law defined women in relation to motherhood. Provisions of the Soviet Family Law of 1944 gave women improved maternity leave and also granted unmarried pregnant women monetary assistance from the state.⁸⁶ Yet the discourse of the Family Law stated that "[c]are for children...and the strengthening of the family have always been among the most important tasks of the Soviet State."⁸⁷ According to Lenin and Trotsky, the purpose of socialism was to emancipate women from domestic labor by incorporating them within the public sector and allowing for the withering away, not strengthening, of the family unit through

⁸³ Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 114.

⁸⁴ For further information, see Beatrice Brodsky Farnsworth, "Bolshevik Alternatives and the Soviet Family: The 1926 Marriage Debate," in *Women in Russia* ed. by Dorothy Atkinson, Alexander Dallin, and Gail Warshofsky Lapidus (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1977), 139-166.

⁸⁵ Sheila Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 160.

⁸⁶ The Soviet Family Law of 8 July 1944, in *Women, the Family, and Freedom: The Debate in Documents*, ed. by Susan Groag Bell and Karen M. Offen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1983), 408-409. See Article 3 and Article 6.

⁸⁷ *Ibid*, 407.

communalization of household tasks. The Family Law of 1944 stated the opposite. Instead, the objective of the Family Law was to praise women based on their roles as mothers. Women with large numbers of children warranted increased amounts of state aid, as well as special medals in recognition of their loyalty to the advancement of the Soviet state.⁸⁸ The government thus viewed women from a biological perspective without recognizing their concerns – and achievements - in any other field aside from motherhood. Gone were the advancements instituted in the aftermath of the Russian Revolution when women gained a measure of equality and governmental assistance for their inclusion within the public realm. The legal discourse of the Family Code effectively reinforced cultural practices that connected women primarily to their domestic and familial roles. The Family Code essentially placed women in Stalinist Russia in the same position as their French counterparts after the 1789 Revolution: hindered by patriarchal conceptions of their proper roles in society. The French and Russian revolutionaries never completely modified patriarchal structures of inequality in the aftermath of revolution.

Most of the perceptions of women, transmitted through the vehicle of discourse, followed general precedents that derived from pre-revolutionary models. The dominant social and cultural view of women, depicted in texts written prior to the French and Russian Revolutions, endorsed patriarchal belief systems by stressing women's inferior nature to men. Male leadership factions in revolutionary France adhered to Jean-Jacques Rousseau's political theories and his views on women. Rousseau maintained that women's foremost occupation in life was to be an obedient wife and mother, thus there was no place for them in the public arena. Rousseau held that the appropriate form of

⁸⁸ Ibid, 408-410. See Article 2 and Article 12.

women's education should focus on the goal of pleasing men. Mary Wollstonecraft contested Rousseau's model of education in her contention that women and men deserved equal educational opportunities. Pre-revolutionary opinions of women's roles in Russian society were akin to those in place in France. Leo Tolstoy utilized the character of Anna Karenina, a woman who abandoned her domestic responsibilities only to end her life disillusioned and unhappy, in order to provide an example of what women could expect if they disregarded their familial duties. Women who conformed to the Russian version of the cult of domesticity fared better, as illustrated by Sonia's happy ending in Fyodor Dostoevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, however, rejected the bourgeois estimation of women as a form of property. Instead, they insisted that only socialism would free women from the repressions of bourgeois capitalism. Pre-revolutionary views of women greatly influenced the French and Russian revolutionaries. These texts are relevant to a cultural analysis of discourses written by and about women in connection with the French and Russian Revolutions because they either upheld and reinforced or rejected and disputed cultural practices that marginalized women within patriarchal systems of inequality. Political theorists, novelists, and government officials during and after the French and Russian Revolutions alternately adhered to patriarchal standards or they attempted to overthrow cultural systems and practices that deemed women inferior to men and unworthy of legal and civil rights outside of the domestic realm. Though patriarchy endured it was certainly not a closed and fixed cultural system of gender inequality.

Within the context of the supposed egalitarian nature of the French and Russian Revolutions, men and women alike pushed to discredit the cultural impression of women

as warranting less rights and opportunities than men. Despite contesting voices, members of the revolutionary government in eighteenth century France never recognized women as being equal to men in French society. The Marquis de Condorcet petitioned the French government to accord women with citizenship by asserting that they possessed the same natural rights as men. Olympe de Gouges' argument mirrored Condorcet's in her belief that members of the revolutionary government in France owed women an equal place in society. De Gouges drafted the "Declaration of the Rights of Woman" in order to openly incorporate women within the definition of liberty and freedom espoused by the revolutionaries. Similarly, Etta Palm D'Aelder insisted that government officials reverse laws unfavorable to women as part of their plan to restructure society in a more egalitarian fashion. Still members of the government in revolutionary France immediately adopted Rousseau's views on government and women, as evidenced by their inclusion of the concept of the general will in the "Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen," and the exclusion of women's constitutional rights from the document itself. Unlike the Jacobins, the Bolsheviks' rather vociferously committed themselves to the plight of women after the Russian Revolution of 1917. The Bolsheviks adopted the principles of socialism advocated by Marx and Engels. Vladimir Lenin contended that the bourgeois enslavement of women kept them trapped in the domestic realm. Lenin maintained that socialism would emancipate women from domestic servitude and allow them equal prospects as productive members of the working class. Alexandra Kollontai commended Lenin and the Bolsheviks for their dedication to issues of importance to women. She asserted that the October Revolution led to women's liberation from the stifling bourgeois impression of women. Yet Kollontai quickly realized that women

largely remained constrained by conventional standards and patriarchal attitudes in post-revolutionary Russia, which also proved to be the case in France.

Instead of realigning cultural conventions to such an extent that altered customary perceptions of women, post-revolutionary discourses reveal the entrenchment of patriarchal standards of inequality in French and Russian society. Women in revolutionary France never gained citizenship status or equal opportunities for contribution in the public arena and the situation only worsened under Napoleon Bonaparte's leadership. The discourse of the Napoleonic Code of 1804 effectively relegated women to a subordinate status in society by giving men control over their wives and daughters. As a consequence of the Code, women were not free to make any major decisions without the consent of their husbands or fathers. Napoleon also adhered to Rousseau's views of women. Napoleon insisted that women's education be connected to the knowledge of domestic and familial tasks, not courses of study that could possibly challenge and expand their minds. Joseph Stalin's opinions of Soviet women's roles in society corresponded with those endorsed by Napoleon. In the direct aftermath of the Russian Revolution, the Bolsheviks denounced the oppressive view of women embraced by the bourgeoisie. Yet by the NEP era, women's issues became far less of a governmental concern for the Bolsheviks. Leon Trotsky admitted in 1923 that, though collectivization of common household duties would liberate women from domestic drudgery, the government could not extend monetary support to such ventures due to the unstable state of the economy. Kollontai reacted against increasing governmental disregard for women's issues in Soviet society in her story "Vasilisa Malygina." Through the character of Vailisa, Kollontai depicts the disparity between Bolshevik

ideology and actual conditions for Soviet women in the NEP era that reaffirmed conventional standards as opposed to changing them. As was the case in post-revolutionary France under Napoleon, Stalin exacerbated this problem. Stalin viewed women in connection with the domestic realm through legislation such as the Soviet Family Law of 1944 that praised and awarded women for their reproductive capabilities, not for their accomplishments as active contributors in public matters. Stalin, like Napoleon, upheld patriarchal standards of inequality. Though revolutionaries in France never entirely considered women's issues to be of vast importance, whereas the Bolsheviks reneged on their commitment to gender equality only upon the implementation of the NEP, the French and Russian revolutionaries did not accord women with equal civic, legal, or political rights.

Discourses written by and about women expressed the quintessential character of semiotic systems and strengthened or challenged existing cultural practices within the deeply imbedded structure of patriarchal standards in eighteenth century France and twentieth century Russia. Political, legal, or fictional discourses that endorsed and upheld semiotic systems of inequality proved to be a strong influence in society. Other writers sought to restructure cultural practices that subordinated women in society, thus proving that semiotic systems are neither closed nor uncontested. Perhaps most importantly, an examination of discourses written by and about women reveals that these revolutions proved to be less than revolutionary in regard to applying egalitarian principles to the question of women's proper role in society.

CONCLUSION

So we can see that the French and Russian Revolutions were far from revolutionary in regard to granting women civic and legal rights on any permanent basis. The revolutionaries in eighteenth century France and twentieth century Russia certainly espoused principles of egalitarianism and equality that restructured society in a multitude of ways. The Jacobins and Bolsheviks effectively realigned governmental structures in a more egalitarian fashion. Although the revolutionaries in France and Russia replaced monarchical rule with governmental systems based on equal involvement by members of society, not every citizen profited from these measures. The revolutionaries' commitment to issues of significance to women proved ambiguous and ultimately hollow. In the aftermath of the French and Russian Revolutions, women remained trapped by customary norms and patriarchal structures of inequality. Members of the revolutionary governments in France and Russia never eradicated or completely modified their conventional opinion of women's roles in society. Government officials in revolutionary France and Russia relied upon patriarchal standards to the detriment of women. Without an alteration in customary values and patriarchal attitudes, women could not fully benefit from the revolutionary atmosphere that enveloped France in the eighteenth century or Russia in the twentieth century.

Historians who focus on the impact of the 1789 Revolution on the lives of French women formulate theories that quite often reflect generational shifts in argument. Initially, scholars concentrated on the effect of the Napoleonic Code on conditions for

women in French society.¹ Provisions of the Code defined women in relation to their husbands or fathers without granting them citizenship status or constitutional rights separate from the male members of their family.² These scholars fail to directly address the issue of the Jacobins' disregard for women's civic and legal rights in the direct aftermath of 1789. A number of historians still consider the implementation of the Napoleonic Code to be the point at which French women lost rights as autonomous individuals in post-revolutionary France.³ In subsequent years, other historians began to look backwards to earlier phases of the Revolution in the attempt to determine the initial inception of governmental neglect of women's civil and legal rights.

Instead, these historians alleged that the government's closure of women's political clubs in 1793 was the true point at which women lost any chance to gain equality in French society.⁴ By 1793, the Jacobins no longer officially permitted or supported women's contribution to the political arena. This meant that women no longer had access to the informal – but highly effective – political networks designed to promote their interests and concerns. Although French women certainly lost a great measure of informal political autonomy upon the closure of women's clubs, historians do not fully link this with the Jacobins' lack of interest in promoting the rights of women in the years prior to 1793. Another competing historical trend of the 1990s concentrated less on the

¹ Bonnie G. Smith, *Changing Lives: Women in European History Since 1700* (Lexington: D.C. Heath, 1989). Barbara Corrado Pope, "Revolution and Retreat: Upper-Class French Women After 1789," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. by Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett (Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 215-36.

² James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 37.

³ Sarah Shaver Hughes and Brady Hughes, *Women in World History: Readings from 1500 to the Present* (Armonk: M.E. Sharpe, 1997). Anne-Marie Kappeli, "Feminist Scenes," in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 482-514.

⁴ Joan Wallach Scott, *Only Paradoxes to Offer: French Feminists and the Rights of Man* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1996). Patrice Higonnet, *Goodness beyond Virtue: Jacobins During the French Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

Jacobins' denial of women's political input in the new French nation in the attempt to clarify what women gained from their involvement in the revolutionary movement.

A small number of scholars insist that the revolutionary atmosphere that engulfed France in 1789 presented women with the prospect of vocally and visibly challenging customary norms. This perspective holds that women became better aware of their impact and influence in public affairs as a result of the egalitarian nature of the Revolution.⁵ Yet women's recognition of their active and contributory role in the Revolution must be balanced with the acknowledgment that government officials never granted women citizenship status or legal rights.

Most scholars overlook the relationship between the revolutionaries' disregard for women's legal and civic rights and the entrenchment of patriarchal systems of inequality never truly modified at any stage of the French Revolution. In the 1980s, Mary Durham Johnson asserted that women achieved virtually nothing as a result of the Revolution.⁶ Johnson was one of few historians in the 1980s or 1990s who noted that patriarchal attitudes clashed with women's quest for gender equality and legal rights in revolutionary France. Yet Johnson did not trace this development at each stage of the Revolution. Most recently, James McMillan outlined the effect of patriarchy on the plight of women

⁵ Darline Gay Levy and Harriet B. Applewhite, "A Political Revolution for Women?: The Case of Paris," in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard, and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 265-294. Elizabeth G. Sledziewski, "The French Revolution as the Turning Point," in *A History of Women: Emerging Feminism from Revolution to World War*, ed. by Genevieve Fraisse and Michelle Perrot (Cambridge: Belknap Press, 1995), 33-47.

⁶ Mary Durham Johnson, "Old Wine in New Bottles: The Institutional Changes for Women of the People During the French Revolution," in *Women, War, and Revolution*, ed. by Carol R. Beikin and Clara M. Lovett (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 107-144.

in revolutionary France.⁷ Still, a majority of historians do not focus on the status of women in French society directly after 1789.

Even at the height of the Revolution, women never acquired rights as active French citizens. For instance, the Jacobins drafted the “Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” in 1789 by employing gendered terminology.⁸ Also, the Constitution of 1791 applied to men but not women, especially due to the gendered language incorporated by the revolutionaries. The Constitution granted men with property the right to vote, as well as legal privileges and civic rights.⁹ Yet the Jacobins marginalized women to the status of passive citizens subordinate to men. This patriarchal view of women limited their ability to advance as equal citizens in the French Republic, occurring well before the Jacobins’ closure of women’s political clubs in 1793 or the promulgation of the Napoleonic Code in 1804.

As with analyses of the revolutionary process with respect to French women, scholars focusing on women’s roles during and after the Russian Revolution contest the time period when governmental support for gender equality ceased. Scholars typically document Russian women’s advancements throughout the 1920s, and the return to conventional standards promoted by Stalin upon his rise to power.¹⁰ Yet the initial point

⁷ James F. McMillan, *France and Women 1789-1914: Gender, Society and Politics* (London: Routledge, 2000).

⁸ Jeremy Popkin, *A Short History of the French Revolution* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2002), 38.

⁹ McMillan, *France and Women*, 16.

¹⁰ Bernice Glatzer Rosenthal, “Love on the Tractor: Women in the Russian Revolution and After,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal and Claudia Koonz (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1977), 370-99. Richard Stites, “Women and the Revolutionary Process in Russia,” in *Becoming Visible: Women in European History*, ed. by Renate Bridenthal, Susan Mosher Stuard and Merry E. Wiesner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1998), 417-38. Shelia Fitzpatrick, *The Russian Revolution* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994). Barbara Evans Clements, “Later Developments: Trends in Soviet Women’s History, 1930 to the Present,” in *Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, ed. by Barbara Evans Clements, Barbara Alpern Engel and Christine D. Worobec (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), 267-078. Barbara Evans Clements, *Bolshevik Women* (Cambridge: University Press, 1997).

at which the Bolsheviks reneged on their commitment to gender equality occurred upon the implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1921. Few historians examine the New Economic Policy's effect on women. Those who do, most notably Wendy Goldman, primarily center their argument on women's unemployment in the NEP era or the government's closure of communal kitchens and daycares intended to facilitate women as they entered the workforce.¹¹ Scholars often fail to adequately connect the impact of the New Economic Policy to the Bolsheviks' increasing lack of support for women's issues and the government's consequent return to conventional standards of viewing women.

Patriarchal conceptions of women's proper roles in the NEP era limited Russian women's ability to secure gender equality and opportunities for expansion into the public and political realms in post-revolutionary society. Women who kept their jobs in the NEP era dealt with patriarchal standards of inequality. Although the Bolsheviks asserted that men and women secured equal pay rates, women's income often averaged only 65% of that garnered by male workers.¹² Women workers also met with harassment from their male co-workers.¹³ The same held true for women's ability to contribute to the political arena in Soviet society. Government officials reinforced long-standing conceptions of women as too emotional and fickle to contribute to politics.¹⁴ This can most readily be seen in the Bolsheviks' reaction to the women's political organization, the Zhentodol. Government officials deemed Zhentodol organizers incompetent and lacking in political

¹¹ Wendy Goldman, *Women, the State and Revolution: Soviet Family Policy and Social Life, 1917-1936* (Cambridge: University Press, 1993), 73.

¹² *Ibid*, 122.

¹³ Wendy Z. Goldman, "Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women's Movement in the U.S.S.R.," *Slavic Review* 55 (Spring 1996): 73.

¹⁴ Anne E. Gorsuch, "'A Woman is not a Man': The Culture of Gender and Generation in Soviet Russia, 1921-1928," *Slavic Review* 55 (Fall 1996): 641.

skills.¹⁵ The implementation of the New Economic Policy in 1921 proved to be the point at which the Bolsheviks' reneged on their commitment to women's emancipation from bourgeois oppression. Indeed, the retrenchment of patriarchal systems of inequality proved to be the legacy of both the French and Russian Revolutions for women.

One of the most pertinent reasons for the French and Russian revolutionaries' failure to provide women with equal rights and opportunities relates to their adherence to particular cultural standards and values never completely amended as a result of either revolution. Members of the government in France and Russia continued to employ conventional gender constructs that defined the position of women within the domestic realm and as inferior to men, which subsequently limited their ability to attain equality in post-revolutionary French and Russian society. There was an underlying cultural basis for the retreat from revolutionary ideals and policy initiatives relating to gender equality that intersected with the social, political, and economic aspects of women's continued subordination in the aftermath of the French and Russian Revolutions. An examination of the cultural basis of governmental abandonment of women's civic and legal rights thus permits a fuller understanding of the reasons why women remained victims of patriarchal belief systems in post-revolutionary France and Russia.

Specific gendered cultural precepts provided the foundation for governmental negligence of women's rights in the aftermath of the French and Russian Revolutions. Such culturally-based ideas influenced government officials and underpinned governmental restrictions on women's advancement in the public realm. Members of the government in France and Russia endorsed the prevailing semiotic system in which

¹⁵ Goldman, "Industrial Politics, Peasant Rebellion and the Death of the Proletarian Women's Movement in the U.S.S.R.," 48.

women's truest and most noble responsibility was to attend to domestic and familial responsibilities. The conventional opinion of women's proper role in society remained essentially unchanged as a result of the French and Russian Revolutions. Yet many French and Russian citizens rejected the prescribed roles that patriarchal systems of inequality forced upon women. This created a conflict between what male leadership factions in France and Russia considered proper and acceptable behavior for women and the challenge to these cultural practices. The inherent tension between what members of the French and Russian governments deemed appropriate for women, and women and men's rebellion against those standards, illustrates the inherent contradictory nature of cultural values. These conflicts played out in numerous ways - especially in relation to the points in time, and to the ways in which, women lost legal rights and real prospects for political and economic advancement in the two revolutions in question. Another significant manner in which men and women in the time periods preceding, during, and after the revolutionary eras of French and Russian history defined and distinguished their differing opinions on women's roles and rights in society was through modes of discourse.

The intersection of culture as a system of symbols and a set of practices is revealed in a range of evidence that documents the transmission of cultural values via the medium of discourse.¹⁶ The language incorporated in discourses written by and about women before, during, and after the French and Russian Revolutions contains examples of a range of signs and symbols. A number of discourses reinforced the semiotic or

¹⁶ William H. Sewell, Jr., "The Concept(s) of Culture," in *Beyond the Cultural Turn: New Directions in the Study of Society and Culture*, ed. by Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1999), 35-61. This directly parallels Sewell's contention that scholars should examine culture and its influence at the interaction of system and practice.

symbolic classification of women as being inferior to men and thus ideally suited only for domestic and familial pursuits. The discourses of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Leo Tolstoy, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Napoleon Bonaparte, Leon Trotsky, and the Napoleonic Code of 1804 and Soviet Family Law of 1944 reinforced the long-standing cultural system that deemed women inferior to men. These discourses, be they explicitly political, ostensibly fictional, or legal in nature, upheld patriarchal systems of inequality and exemplified the entrenched nature of conventional norms to act as an obstacle to the restructuring of gender roles in revolutionary society.

Other writers challenged conventional gender meanings and patriarchal systems of inequality. Through the vehicle of discourse, a number of writers contested prevailing semiotic structures of inequality, thus demonstrating that cultural systems are not closed or fixed in nature. The discourses of Mary Wollstonecraft, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, the Marquis de Condorcet, Olympe de Gouges, Etta Palm d'Aelders, Vladimir Lenin, and Alexandra Kollontai attempted to restructure cultural practices and overthrow patriarchy. Yet patriarchal systems of inequality, though contested by both sexes, remained the established mode of perceiving women's roles in post-revolutionary France and Russia.

Discourses written by and about women thus illustrate the challenge to customary cultural systems and practices in revolutionary settings and the revolutionaries' continued dependence on patriarchal standards, both preceding the French and Russian Revolutions and in post-revolutionary society. These texts reveal a variance of opinions concerning the appropriate place of women in society. They also disclose a broader picture of the cultural meanings of gender, as conveyed in textual forms. Perhaps most importantly, an

examination of discourses written by and about women reveals the incongruity between egalitarian rhetoric and women's continued subjection to men in post-revolutionary France and Russia.¹⁷ Indeed, there was a re-articulation of conventional gender constructs based on a redefined post-revolutionary model of patriarchal inequality sponsored by members of the government in France and Russia.

The French and Russian revolutionaries were quite conventional when it came to the subject of gender roles in society. Male leadership factions in post-revolutionary France and Russia quickly reverted back to a dependence on patriarchal conventions. Essentially, this re-established the conventional mode of viewing women that was in place prior to the onset of the French and Russian Revolutions. The very men who claimed to denounce impediments to egalitarianism increasingly subjugated women by upholding patriarchal structures of inequality. Government officials' estimation of women frequently mirrored those championed in pre-revolutionary France and Russia. The force of cultural customs effectively superseded revolutionary rhetoric. French and Russian revolutionaries never completely considered women's issues to be of vital importance despite the otherwise egalitarian nature of the 1789 and 1917 Revolutions.

¹⁷ Carol R. Berkin and Clara M. Lovett, *Women, War, and Revolution* (New York: Holmes and Meier Publishers, Inc., 1980), 79.

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Psychometrician – Administered psychological and intelligence tests.
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