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John Cabot University

Department of History and Humanities

Bachelor of Arts in History

Sacrifice in Revolution: Boston and Paris

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Abstract

This thesis attempts to answer the question of why the levels of violence in the cities of Boston and Paris during the respective American and French revolutions differed so greatly. First, it endeavors to provide a framework of social theory grounded in empirical psychological evidence, to show that humans tend to imitate each other and internalize desires and actions of others without their consent. It then provides a relatively standard rendition of the revolutionary periods of both Boston and Paris from the perspective of the crowd. Finally, it analyzes the differences between the accounts given, and alleges two reasons for why the level of violence differed in the light of these differences: (1) that the ideal governments of the two cities differed in the Arendtian sense of “labor” and “action”, and that the French Revolution in Paris was unable to close its liminal period due to its continual sacrifice. The conclusion provides a brief summary of the findings and their limitations and relates them to the larger world.

Dedication

To Courtney, who told me about John Cabot, and in doing so changed my future and its prospects.

To my parents, who have so graciously supported me throughout the turmoil of my education.

To Snelgrave, my enduring history major friends.

To Professor Ogle, who encourages students to question their preconceptions, and challenges students more than any other professor I have had at this university. He has mastered the art of challenging but never offending.

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1. Introduction: Social-Psychological Framework

Introduction

This thesis aims to provide an answer to the question of why the French Revolution differed greatly from the American Revolution in its functional social character. The framework which will be used to formulate an answer to this question will be somewhat standard historical evidence operationalized by a mix of empirical psychological theory and evidence, and social anthropological theory. I will use the empirical psychological evidence to provide grounding for the social theory that will follow, and in the last chapter, I will analyze the historical evidence presented considering the theories depicted and described here.

The behavior of interest in this thesis is imitation in crowd behavior, and the social-psychological principle which principally influences chaotic crowd behavior is social contagion. The essence of the theory is this: an idea will travel through a crowd of people very quickly and will be internalized by the individuals without the individuals consciously accepting the idea or adopting the associated attitudes. It also entails that the individual would act in a crowd, in a way that he would never act as a mere individual. This widely accepted theory in psychology can be used to explain crowd behavior, and pursuant to this thesis, can be used to explain and exemplify the differences in two historical events' outcomes.

The idea of social contagion as a behavioral principle originated in the late nineteenth century. Following a wave of suicides across Europe in the eighteenth century that seemed to have been caused by Johann von Goethe's story "The Sorrows of Young Werther", wherein the

main character commits suicide¹. The story was so strongly believed to have caused these suicides that “anxious authorities banned the book in several regions in Europe”², and behavioral analysts took notice. By the 1950s, empirical research on the new phenomenon had begun, and the conclusions were that it was “unequivocally established the fact of the social contagion phenomenon and has identified its operation in several areas of social life... the evidence suggests that under certain circumstances, mere 'touch' or 'contact' with culture appears to be a sufficient condition for social transmission to occur”³. This means that it is psychologically correct to say that an idea can pass through a group, which may or may not be in physical contact, and alter the group’s members’ behavior. This is how the behavioral pattern got its name; that it acts similarly to a biological pathogen in that it does not require the consent of the “infected” person and can infect a person without his knowledge.

Psychological Theory

Social contagion can be divided into two main groups: emotional and behavioral contagion. These two groups are distinct in their functions within the individual and their methods of “infection”; studies addressing emotional contagion measure the spread of mood or affect through a crowd or behavior whereas studies addressing behavioral contagion measure the spread of a behavior through a crowd. To truly understand the difference between the two, one must first understand the difference between mood and behavior and possess a basic understanding of the levels of cognition and how they impact internal and external events.

¹ Marsden, Paul. "Memetics & Social Contagion: Two Sides of the Same Coin?" *The Journal of Memetics: Evolutionary Models of Information Transmission* 2 (1998). 1998. Accessed November 21, 2017.

² Marsden, *ibid*

³ Marsden, *ibid*

Mood and behavior are related, but they are certainly different. Mood is “considered as a group of persisting feelings associated with evaluative and cognitive states which influence all the future evaluations, feelings and actions”⁴, whereas behavior is “[the] actions by which an organism adjusts to its environment”⁵. Through the discrepancies in the two definitions, one can see that inherently, mood is subjective, and behavior is objective; one cannot know objectively the internal persisting feelings of another person or group, but one can know objectively what actions the other person takes. In psychology, one can study mood by conducted reproduceable experiments which measure the conscious adaptations of certain moods and prolonged emotions which necessitate the subject having complete control over those moods. However, it is also possible to study moods in the subconscious sense, as when a psychologist studies the change in mood in someone who suffers from manic depression (bipolar disorder) or some other, more serious type of psychosis⁶. Often, these studies show that mood influences the behavior of the subjects, thereby giving the psychologists the opportunity to study the moods not only by subjective self-reporting but by observing objective behavior⁷. This naturally relates to the study of behavior; which psychologists can engage without explicit regard for the mood of the subjects⁸. By measuring behavior, an experimenter would be able to draw connections between and within groups exhibiting similar or identical behaviors, which would in turn suggest at least a correlational relationship between the originating behavior and the behaviors that followed in

⁴ Amado-Boccaro, I., D. Donnet, and JP Olié. "[The concept of mood in psychology]." *Encephale*, 22nd ser., 2, no. 117 (March & april 1993). Accessed December 4, 2017. <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pubmed/8275897>.

⁵ Gerrig, Richard G., and Philip Zimbardo. *Psychology and Life*. Pearson College Div, 2012.

⁶ Amado-Boccaro, I., D. Donnet, and JP Olié, *ibid*

⁷ Amado-Boccaro, I., D. Donnet, and JP Olié, *ibid*

⁸ The only independent variable which the psychologists measure are the observed behaviors. Mood is not measured, regardless of how it may impact behavior.

related subjects. The notion of social contagion seeks to move this correlational explanation to a causal one, through the examination of evidence.

One study emphasizes the difference in emotional and behavioral contagions. Nicholas Christakis and James Fowler reported findings of their social contagion research in 2013; the core of their study is as follows. Using a previously unused set of data called the Framingham Heart Study (“FHS”) which was unusual in that the social relationships within the data set were longitudinally observed, the researchers were able to reliably recreate social relationships and networks within the set⁹. The researchers observed changes in:

the ‘spread’ of obesity [14, 15], smoking [16], alcohol consumption [17], health screening [18], happiness [19], loneliness [20], depression [21], sleep [22], drug use [22], divorce [23], food consumption [24], cooperative behavior [6], influenza [4], sexuality and sexual orientation [25], and tastes in music, books, and movies [26]. We have also conducted experiments regarding the spread within networks of altruism [6, 7] and of political mobilization [3].¹⁰

The experiment measured the spread of both affect and behavior (happiness and obesity, respectively, for example) by social clustering¹¹ and by simple geographic proximity. They found that regarding social clustering, both the affects and the behaviors were spread among friend groups¹². The researchers also found that there was a difference in how affect was spread (emotional contagion) and how behavior was spread (behavioral contagion) regarding

⁹ Christakis, Nicholas A., and James Fowler. "Social contagion theory: examining dynamic social networks and human behavior." *Stat Med* 34, no. 4 (February 20, 2013). Accessed December 5, 2017.

<https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3830455/>.

¹⁰ *Ibid*

¹¹ This involves reconstructing the topology of social connections; essentially creating a web of positive and negative interpersonal connections between the subjects

¹² Christakis, Nicholas A., and James Fowler, *ibid*

geographic proximity¹³. They found that while there was no significant difference in behavioral transmission through social clustering and geographic proximity, there was a significant difference in these two methods regarding affect. In other words, “associations were only positive for friends and siblings who lived nearby (within a few miles)”¹⁴, which meant that affect was only directly and discernably transmitted between people who were both friends and/or siblings with each other and lived in close physical proximity. This study suggests that there may exist a relationship between emotional and behavioral contagion that is qualified or contingent on physical proximity for the former, where it is not for the latter.

In addition to the differences between emotional and behavioral contagions, the latter group can be divided into several subgroups, which neatly outline specific types of behavior that are spread through a crowd or social network. These contagions are “hysterical contagions, deliberate self-harm contagions, contagions of aggression, rule violation contagions, consumer behaviour contagions, and financial contagions”¹⁵. To limit my discussion of behavioral contagions, I will only focus on the two subgroups that are of interest to this thesis: hysterical contagion and contagions of aggression¹⁶. A hysterical contagion is the spread of symptoms through a population where there exists no available basis for the symptoms¹⁷, which can best be exemplified by the “June Bug” incident of 1962. In a US textile factory in 1962, workers reported identical symptoms of an illness which, according to those interviewed, was caused by a bite from a poisonous beetle. However, upon further investigation there was no evidence of the mysterious bug being present at any time or interacting with any of the workers. Instead, it was

¹³ Christakis, Nicholas A., and James Fowler, *ibid*

¹⁴ Christakis, Nicholas A., and James Fowler, *ibid*

¹⁵ Marsden, *ibid*

¹⁶ Historical cases like the French and American Revolutions demonstrate both hysterical contagion and contagions of aggression. As the other ones do not relate to the purpose of my thesis, I will not discuss them here.

¹⁷ Marsden, *ibid*

clear that the workers had adapted the symptoms themselves after seeing their coworkers become “infected”¹⁸. This is not to say that the workers were “faking” however; it was clear that the people who believed themselves infected genuinely did believe they were infected and did show symptoms of nausea and vomiting, they just were not infected with any pathogen. These psychosomatic symptoms became the perfect case of hysterical contagion.

Social Theory

The psychological theory outlined thus far has shown that humans tend to imitate those around them, even without their own consent. However, this is not yet linked to instances of social upheaval, let alone a restructuring of the political order, the likes of which is seen in revolutions. For this, we must turn to social and political theory, specifically that of liminality and mimetic theory.

Bjorn Thomassen, perhaps one of the most influential scholars in recent years on the subject of liminality, illustrates the foundational work of Arnold Van Gennep and Victor Turner, and discusses its anthropological uses in his essay *The Uses and Meanings of Liminality*. Liminality is first and foremost a concept in the anthropology of (cultural or religious) rituals, illustrating a series of phases in which one goes through a transformation, beginning in one state, passing through a (brief) “liminal” state in which one is subjected to significant change, and ends in a post-liminal state a new person. Liminality, for Thomassen’s political focus of his essay, means the state of being in rapid social change in between the “old” and the “new”, specifically in reference to whole societies. With reference to whole societies, Thomassen explains that one

¹⁸ The June Bug: A Study of Hysterical Contagion.. *Ann Intern Med.* 1968;69:410. doi: 10.7326/0003-4819-69-2-410_1

must use liminality in conjunction with the axial stage of German philosopher Karl Jasper, and that “[his] famous description of the axial age bears every element of liminality: it [is] an in-between period between two structured world-views”¹⁹. Evidence for liminal states in whole societies can be revolutions generally, but also any significant rapid social change, in which the actors may have little control over the outcome, in the same way that one has little control over the outcome in a religious ritual if one is the subject; in both cases, the subject is essentially subjected to change and is not a participant that effects the nature of the change itself. Indeed, these episodes in history share much in common with individual rituals:

they can, for example, involve public confession by those held responsible for breaching the norms... also involve the opposite situation: public confession by or public execution of those held responsible of upholding the former social order, now considered unjust and illegitimate by a successful revolutionary movement or leadership²⁰

Clearly then, liminality is limited to a temporary state, and it must produce a result that is at some degree different from the beginning of the process which produced the liminal state. It is also true that those in the liminal state have little control over their own transformation, and that it is merely guided by imitation of others.

Social theorists provide some insight into imitation’s function in political revolutions, which bolsters the evidence produced by the psychologists. Indeed, mimetic theory, which deals with imitation in the context of political change, joins well with theories of liminality in the examination of the two revolutions covered in this thesis. The reason for this is that while liminality may explain why and how individuals in society find themselves in a period of rapid transition, mimetic theory can explain why and how that liminal stage is rapidly transferred

¹⁹ Thomassen, Bjorn. "The Uses and Meanings of Liminality." *International Political Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (2009). 2009. Accessed April 23, 2018. [http://www.moodlelvda.lt/moodle/pluginfile.php/2205/mod_resource/content/0/8 Thomassen - Uses and meanings of liminality.pdf](http://www.moodlelvda.lt/moodle/pluginfile.php/2205/mod_resource/content/0/8%20Thomassen%20-%20Uses%20and%20meanings%20of%20liminality.pdf).

²⁰ Thomassen, Bjørn. "Notes towards an Anthropology of Political Revolutions." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54, no. 03 (2012): 679-706. doi:10.1017/s0010417512000278.

across groups of people. Harald Wydra builds on the foundational work by René Girard, the founder of mimetic theory, and suggests that “mimetic theory offers a vision of human beings whose intentions and interests are moulded by reciprocity and emotional-instinctive relationships with others”²¹. A crucial part of this claim is a rejection of the idea that humans behave rationally, as is the assumption in capitalist societies and in capitalist economies generally²². Instead, proponents of mimetic theory argue, human desires are constantly changing and are interpersonal, so that one person’s desires are not entirely their own.

This is admittedly vague, so it must be given some specificity. Wydra argues that political mimetic theory may be interpreted through the lens of “reciprocity” and that political actors and crowds act and think in terms of reciprocity above most other things. In short, “one rival has the impression that the other attacked first”²³, thus giving the justification for (violent) political action in retaliation. Often, the process in which this is used is that of the “scapegoat mechanism”, which is the ostracization of a person or group in society while simultaneously blaming that person or group for the faults of society as a whole²⁴. The scapegoat assumes a pivotal role in the function of society, as it is simultaneously exerting a certain level of influence over the society and is forced to be outside it entirely by the members of society. In short, it is both the weakest and strongest member of society. The scapegoat mechanism also necessitates that the scapegoat be sacrificed, and its essence change with its sacrifice; “the victim is sacrificed in an act of collective violence but obtains a pacifying role once the unanimous act of murder or

²¹ Wydra, Harald. "Towards a New Anthropological Paradigm: The Challenge of Mimetic Theory." Accessed April 23, 2018.

https://www.academia.edu/4327355/Towards_a_New_Anthropological_Paradigm_The_Challenge_of_Mimetic_Theory.

²² Wydra, *ibid.*

²³ Wydra, *ibid.*

²⁴ Wydra, *ibid.*

expulsion is committed”²⁵. I will argue in part that it is the continual scapegoating of different political bodies and figures that prevents the revolution from closing its liminal stage.

This only effectively deals with the continuation of the liminal stage and the necessary chaos in violent revolutions however. It does not provide an insight into the differences in the ideological frameworks of each revolution or how to evaluate them. For this, Hannah Arendt provides a reasonable analysis in her book *The Human Condition*, in which she outlines a division of the *vita activa* into labor, work, and action. First, the *vita activa* is one of the two parts of “life” in ancient Greek philosophy, together with the *vita contemplativa*. For the purposes of this thesis, the focus will be on the former, because this thesis is not an examination of the cohesiveness of the political ideologies *per se*, but instead an examination of the actual (active) events of the revolutions, specifically with respect to crowds. In Arendt’s depiction of the “active life”, labor is defined as “the activity which corresponds to the biological process of the human body”, work is “the activity which corresponds to the unnaturalness of human existence...[which] is worldliness”, and action which is “plurality, to the fact than men, not Man, live on the earth and inhabit the world”²⁶. Another way of conceptualizing “action” is that which distinguishes one from another and makes a meaningful impact on the state of being for the whole of men in the community. An example of “action” which will be used in this thesis are examples from both the American and French revolutions to change the social-political structure, specifically laws and declarations promulgated by the social leaders. I will argue in part that the leaders of the revolutions’ level of focus on the different categories of the active life in the Arendtian sense could be leading to the level of violence they each displayed.

²⁵ Wydra, *ibid.*

²⁶ Arendt, Hannah, and Margaret Canovan. 1998. *The Human Condition*. 2Nd ed. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Going Forward

The psychological framework provides an empirical foundation on which the social theory can rest. The importance of the psychological framework is that it is proven through experiments that humans tend to imitate others' actions, speech, and even opinions, without their consent. The social theory operationalizes this and applies the social theoretical equivalent to instances in revolutions generally and interprets it in the light of beliefs of human nature.

The next two chapters in this thesis will give accounts of revolutionary Boston and Paris, as the two cities in which most of the influential mob action of the revolutions occurred, with some analysis. Chapter 4 of this thesis will apply the theories outlined in this chapter to the evidence presented in chapters 2 and 3. The last chapter will provide the conclusion. In short, this thesis will argue that the Parisian theatre of the French Revolution made higher use and continually changing use of the scapegoating mechanism and focused the revolutionary efforts more towards the "labor" needs of the people than did the Bostonian theatre of the American Revolution. Both Boston and Paris featured imitation, reciprocity, and liminal stages in crowd action.

2. Boston

Introduction

One cannot discuss the events that led to the American Revolution without providing some level of background, specifically the effects of the Seven Years' War on the American colonies; one scholar even claimed that without the Seven Years' War it is likely that America would not have fought a war for national independence until much later, if at all²⁷. Historian Fred Anderson conducted extensive research on the subject from the British perspective, in his book *Crucible of War*, and he concluded that the Seven Years' War erupted mainly due to the actions of the Iroquois Native American Confederacy in the Northeastern French and British colonies in the early 1750s. He claims that, in the disputes between the Iroquois and neighboring tribes, the Iroquois (particularly Tanaghrisson, the chief) developed a practice of pitting the two European powers against each other and benefiting from the deals that were struck between the Iroquois and each individual power to defeat the other²⁸. This Iroquois policy meant that both the French and the British would continuously ally with Native American tribes and attack the other to acquire more land, which also meant that both European powers sustained heavy losses, in terms of fortifications, wealth, and simple numbers. This high death toll carried a heavier weight on the Iroquois however, due to cultural reasons and due to their lack of resources and manpower compared to the European powers; this meant that they were far less willing to suffer

²⁷ Anderson, Fred, and Rogers D. Spotswood Collection. 2000. *Crucible of War : The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766*. 1st ed. New York: Alfred A. Knopf.

²⁸ Anderson, *ibid.*

casualties²⁹. Following from this, as disputes between the European powers escalated from skirmishes to full-scale war, the Iroquois were forced to choose a side, and they definitively chose the British, who succeeded in taking New France, ending the war³⁰.

As mentioned previously, the British incurred heavy losses from the Seven Years' War and from suppressing subsequent pan-Indian rebellions (which was ultimately settled with George III's Royal Proclamation of 1763)³¹, which meant that the Empire would seek compensation (or as the Empire saw it, the sharing of costs) from its subjects in the colonies. The first measure George III, George Grenville (the Prime Minister), and the English Parliament took was to implement a large standing army (moving from forty regiments to over eighty, in peacetime) by way of the American Duties Act (also called the Sugar Act) in 1764³². This bill was designed to provide the funds to pay for this large standing army by taxing an "extensive list of taxed items – foreign sugar, indigo, coffee, wine, and textiles of various types, - but Grenville's greatest hope for filling His Majesty's coffers was foreign molasses [sic]"³³. More specifically:

The Sugar Act empowered the Navy to search ships within six miles of shore. Penalties for violations ranged from forfeiting a bond to losing the ship and its cargo and incurring triple damages. Royal Navy ships split the proceeds with the Crown. At ports customs officials could expect a one-third share, the other two-thirds being divided between the governor of the province and the Crown. Should a merchant want to appeal a seizure of his ship and cargo, he had to pay sixty pounds just to go to court, and even then the burden was on him to prove his innocence. If the court determined that there had been probable cause for seizing a ship, though there had been no violation of the Act, the customs official faced no liability; the Sugar Act instructed juries to find all persons engaged in enforcing its provisions not guilty. Should the prosecutor choose an admiralty court rather than a common court, there would be no jury, only a crown appointed judge³⁴

²⁹ MacLeod, D. Peter. *The Canadian Iroquois and the Seven Years War*. Toronto: Dundurn, 2012.

³⁰ Anderson, *ibid*.

³¹ Anderson, *ibid*.

³² Archer, Richard. 2010. *As If an Enemy's Country : The British Occupation of Boston and the Origins of Revolution*. Pivotal Moments in American History. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

³³ Archer, *ibid*.

³⁴ Archer, *ibid*.

Effectively, the Sugar Act made it much more difficult to smuggle goods, and this placed a heavy financial burden on the colonists. The resulting sharp decline in colonial revenue, historian John Miller writes, played more of a role in forming notions of independence than the constitutional “taxation without representation” issues themselves, because the former were felt and recognized by the average person more so than simply those who understood the intricacies of the law³⁵. It also appears that without the foregoing economic problems, there would be no taxation to give rise to the constitutional issues in the first place, thereby proving Miller’s argument to be true, if perhaps for other reasons. Whatever the reason for unrest, it was undeniably clear that strong sentiments of distrust of England were brewing in the colonists’ minds.

Disproportionate Effects

Boston, Massachusetts, was hit the hardest of any city in the North American British colonies by the effects of the Sugar Act, primarily because of coincidental economic depression and its loss of status as the “premier urban center of British North America”³⁶, and because the Act targeted molasses, which was used to make rum, which was one of Boston’s more profitable exports³⁷. During the period of the Seven Years’ War, the rate of unemployment rose while the population decreased, making for a statistically massive economic problem for the city as well as its people as they could no longer make a profit from trading due to the implementation of the Sugar Act³⁸. Indeed, in 1761, the city of Boston was 150,000 pounds in debt from war expenses, and by the

³⁵ Miller, John Chester. 1943. *Origins of the American Revolution*. An Atlantic Monthly Press Book. Boston, Mass.: Little, Brown.

³⁶ Archer, *ibid.*

³⁷ Miller, *ibid.*

³⁸ Archer, *ibid.*

end of the war, the average Bostonian faced a tax increase of sixty percent, which was “higher than anywhere else in the British Empire”³⁹. This was prior to the implementation of the Sugar Act, and it is not surprising that when the Act was implemented, it would not be welcomed. The Sugar Act, when implemented, prompted the people to request that Parliament refrain from taxing them so harshly, which in turn prompted Parliament to feel as if the colonists were ungrateful for the Empire’s protection in the preceding war⁴⁰. Then came the Stamp Act, which ignited the riots of the American Revolution.

The Stamp Act required that all legal documents and several other documents and even playing cards, had to be accompanied by an official stamp for it to be valid or sold⁴¹. This exacerbated the financial struggles in Boston, such that Bostonians openly rioted, threatened, and assaulted representatives of the British government placed in Boston to sell stamps or otherwise enforce provisions of the Act. The first instance of this behavior in Boston was the hanging in effigy of Andrew Oliver on August 14, 1765, which served as a warning to the Stamp Act administrator that the citizens of Boston would sooner resort to violence than acquiesce to the orders of the Parliament⁴². Not heeding the warning, then-Lieutenant Governor Thomas Hutchinson ordered the effigy to be taken down, which, 12 days later, led to rioters targeting Hutchinson’s home and destroying it, while Hutchinson and his children narrowly escaped⁴³. Hutchinson writes: “I could not stand against this and withdrew with her to a neighbouring house where I had been but a few minutes before the hellish crew fell upon my house with the rage of

³⁹ Archer, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Archer, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Parliament. "Great Britain : Parliament - The Stamp Act, March 22, 1765." Avalon Project - Great Britain : Parliament - The Stamp Act, March 22, 1765. Accessed February 23, 2018. http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/stamp_act_1765.asp.

⁴² Archer, *ibid.*

⁴³ Kierner, Cynthia A. 2003. *Revolutionary America, 1750-1815 : Sources and Interpretation*. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

devils and in a moment with axes split down the doors and entered”⁴⁴. This event would influence British law enforcement, so much so that they were afraid to prosecute violations of the Stamp Act, for fear of retaliation by the colonists⁴⁵. A few months later, Oliver resigned at the same tree at which his effigy was hanged and a tax collector by the name of Samuel Adams would be elected into the House of Representatives.

Oliver’s resignation at the “Liberty Tree” is particularly important because the Sons of Liberty (the organization of which Samuel Adams was a part) caused it to happen. Oliver, who had been born in Boston, was part of a family of Loyalists (during the Revolutionary War) who never opposed British sovereignty. He had accepted the commission as Stamp collector and (though this could not have been a pleasant assignment) he was therefore tasked with carrying out his duties as a British tax collector. However, in December, when the Sons of Liberty declared that he would publicly resign at the “Liberty Tree” instead of at the Town Hall as he had wished, he immediately agreed and ultimately emphatically supported the Sons of Liberty during his resignation speech, saying that he had “an utter detestation of the Stamp Act”⁴⁶. This quick turnaround for Oliver demonstrated the strong influence the Sons of Liberty had over crowd actions of the time. This is not to say that the Sons of Liberty managed to honestly convert Oliver to their cause; instead it seems far more likely that Oliver conceded out of fear of the crowd, but still maintained his convictions internally. Even if the Sons of Liberty failed to truly convert Oliver to their cause, their superficial conversion still demonstrates their ability to forcibly gain supporters.

⁴⁴ Kierner, *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Archer, *ibid.*

⁴⁶ Archer, *ibid.*

Samuel Adams, who openly opposed the recent acts of Parliament, was the charismatic leader of the emerging popular party in Boston, and one of the leaders of the Sons of Liberty. He successfully led the Massachusetts legislature into open disagreement with the Governor of Massachusetts, Francis Bernard, specifically in the issue of parliamentary sovereignty. The legislature claimed that the Parliament had no constitutional right to levy taxes on the colonists, while they claimed allegiance to the King⁴⁷. This theoretically allowed the populist Massachusetts legislature to openly disregard acts of Parliament to which they disagreed while not being declared treasonous, in that they still swore fealty to the ruling monarch. This pattern may also have given more legitimacy to the Sons of Liberty, in that their actions need not be seen as necessarily rebellious; they could be merely advocating for the people's rights as British citizens, which certainly grants them political power and influence.

The Sons of Liberty

In late 1768, Governor Bernard would reveal in a letter stating that he felt he was subordinate to the crowd's whims; that in a climate of open opposition to the British authority, he could hardly enforce the law to its fullest extent⁴⁸. This was because, although the Sons of Liberty had faced mixed political successes and failures in the preceding two years, they had amassed a certain level of social support that allotted to them toasts in pubs and regular "Liberty Tree" celebrations and demands of public figures⁴⁹. Indeed, even with the closing of the House of Representatives in 1768, members of the Sons of Liberty (though under the auspices of legislature) successfully established the "Massachusetts Convention", a democratic but

⁴⁷ Archer, *ibid.*

⁴⁸ Archer, *ibid.*

⁴⁹ Archer, *ibid.*

illegitimate congregation of representatives from across Massachusetts's ninety-six towns and eight districts⁵⁰. This proved to be a legitimate nuisance for Bernard and must have given the Bostonian people a sense of comradery against their enemy, either the soon-to-be revolutionaries or those promulgating parliamentary authority.

Within the next year however, the House of Representatives was reopened (though the leaders of the Convention were prohibited from serving), British troops occupied the city (escalating tensions), and Bernard resigned. In addition, the Sons of Liberty became even more powerful. From the Stamp Act uprising to late 1769, the Sons of Liberty had become so mainstream that "nearly every well-to-do man who opposed the occupation, trade regulation, and Parliament instigated taxes was a member"⁵¹. The current Sons of Liberty wielded serious social power and successfully led violent mobs against those who even went so far as to notify the British authorities of unreported goods; the unfortunate George Galier was tarred and feathered for this "crime"⁵². Tarring and Feathering, as the name suggests, is a violent humiliation terroristic tactic the Sons of Liberty (and occasionally the British) used against individuals, that involved the pouring of hot tar over one's body and then covering it with feathers.

The violent conflict continued into the next year, culminating in the Boston Massacre, and its consequences. On March 5, 1770, British troops opened fire on Bostonian civilians, though it is disputed how that happened. Captain Preston's account (which he would also give at his murder trial, where he was acquitted) argues that the angry mob of Bostonians assaulted the totally innocent group of British soldiers, prompting one of the soldiers to mistakenly attack,

⁵⁰ Archer, *ibid.*

⁵¹ Archer, *ibid.*

⁵² Archer, *ibid.*

which prompted the others to do the same⁵³. The other account, supported by members of the Sons of Liberty, accused the British soldiers as abusing civilians as they walked by, and overreacting to snowballs thrown at them in retaliation by opening fire⁵⁴. These accounts differ in bias and it would seem as if the truth is somewhere between the two. However, whether one finds one more convincing than the other on its face, one still must admit that this event must have served as powerful propaganda for the Sons of Liberty's cause, given the series of events that led up to the Massacre.

The Boston Tea Party

The natural climax of the crowd action segment of the Boston Theatre of the American Revolution is the infamous Boston Tea Party, in which the Sons of the Liberty, dressed as Mohawk Indians. This event was in part a continuation of the period of deterioration of the relationship between Bostonians and the British Empire, and in part a direct result of the implementation of the Tea Act. The Tea Act, like other Acts outlined this far, imposed a higher financial burden on Boston, this time by establishing a tea monopoly for the East India Company, which was at the time, facing collapse⁵⁵. Unable to face the increased financial burden, and seeing this Act as setting a dangerous precedent⁵⁶, the Americans tossed the tea

⁵³ Kierner, *ibid.*

⁵⁴ Kierner, *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Copeland, David A. 2000. *Debating the Issues in Colonial Newspapers : Primary Documents on Events of the Period*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

⁵⁶ In general, according to Copeland, the Americans' position was that if Britain could establish a monopoly in one industry and mandate that its citizens only buy from one producer in tea, it could do that with any industry, which would be an undue burden on the liberty of the people.

overboard into the Boston Harbor, causing just under £10,000 worth of damages⁵⁷. Arguably more important than the act itself, however, is how it was received by spectators; this may tell us more about the beliefs of the general populous than would the Tea Party. This is because those who participated in the Tea Party were obviously a minority, so it follows that their beliefs were not necessarily those of the average Bostonian.

Copeland has compiled an array of news articles following the Tea Party, written both supporters of the action and dissenters. The pro-Tea Party writers varied widely, from outright supporting the action and declaring the Tea Act and the tea itself to be “accursed” and a symbol of the Americans’ loss of autonomy, to scare tactics of claiming the tea to be ridden with smallpox⁵⁸. One writer, writing under the pseudonym “Impartial Observer”, complimented the “native” actors of the Tea Party, saying that “[their expression of the] American virtue may defeat every attempt to enslave them, is the warmest wish of my heart”⁵⁹. This is especially important because up to this point, the Bostonians had become known (at least to Rhode Islanders) for being especially hostile towards native people, routinely scapegoating them for crimes committed and assigning responsibility to natives for public disturbances, like those seen at the Liberty Tree⁶⁰. Therefore, it seems odd that an “impartial observer” would see the “American Virtue” in native rioters, which suggests that this impartial observer was not in fact impartial.

Of course, the Tories (loyalists) were not impartial either. Most did not directly acknowledge the Tea Party at all in their writings, opting instead to appeal to the colonists’ sense

⁵⁷ Copeland, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Copeland, *ibid.*

⁵⁹ Copeland, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ Carp, Benjamin L. 2010. *Defiance of the Patriots : The Boston Tea Party & the Making of America*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

of loyalty to country, as one writer for the *Poplicola* put it: “you love your country, and this affection is your duty, your honour; but remember that not this, or any other province, is your country, but the whole British empire”⁶¹. The same writer criticized indirectly the Sons of Liberty (specifically the rebellious Massachusetts legislature) and its members for being the true oppressors of the colonists’ freedom, claiming that “our civil liberties [are] dependent on, the fluctuating and capricious decisions of a giddy cabal”⁶². Other writers simply argued that for the interests of free trade, those who destroyed the tea should pay recompense, and that the subjects of the king have a duty to oppose lawlessness regardless of the form⁶³

A few things are clear. First, it is highly probable that the writers knew that those who committed the act were not native people; if they were, it seems unlikely that they would be met with praise or arguments that appeal to loyalty to the king and empire. Second, Bostonians had developed a divide with the British Empire wide enough so that it was not only the Sons of Liberty acting or speaking affirmatively against the British, but a significant portion of the media. Lastly, and perhaps most importantly, the British were rapidly losing control over the city.

Conclusion

In the years following the Boston Tea Party, the British passed what the colonists would call “The Intolerable Acts”, which among other things, allowed for the quartering of troops inside the city of Boston and eventually in the homes of private citizens⁶⁴. Also included in the

⁶¹ Copeland, *ibid.*

⁶² Copeland, *ibid.*

⁶³ Copeland, *ibid.*

⁶⁴ Copeland, *ibid.*

acts was the requirement that any English official charged with a crime would stand trial in England and not in America⁶⁵. The Intolerable Acts “not only failed to bring Boston into line, they created sympathy for Boston throughout America”⁶⁶.

Throughout this period, the people of Boston exhibited ritualistic tendencies with the Liberty Tree, and the Sons of Liberty proved to be a powerful social force. There was certainly some physical violence against political dissidents, however many of the more influential acts were taken politically, to force people out of office rather than kill them. There also remained a free press, where directly opposing the revolution was allowed, if discouraged socially as it became less and less popular of a position throughout what would become the American Revolutionary War.

⁶⁵ Copeland, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Copeland, *ibid.*

3. Paris

Introduction

A discussion of the crowds of Paris during the French Revolution must begin with the causes of the French Revolution itself, at least those that would be influential for the people who would make up the crowds. These causes remain hotly debated among historians, between those who argue that the social movements of the late 1780s and early 1790s were the inevitable ends of a people's uprising in the Marxist fashion, and those that claim the revolution was caused by larger international factors such as debt incurred by French aid to the American Revolution. These seem to be the two main camps of thought in this historiological debate, but the two are not mutually exclusive. In the spirit that the two are not distinctly separate and therefore incompatible, this chapter will suggest at the subsidiary level that the financial shortcomings of France at the international level certainly affected the people and their sense of necessity for a popular uprising. It seems natural to begin with the effects of the American Revolution.

As the French assisted the Americans in their war against the British both financially and in sending military personnel such as Marquis de Lafayette to assist Washington, the Americans had built up a significant debt. This was a debt that the budding nation could not repay in time, and this cost King Louis XVI dearly. Indeed, "France failed to gain the expected benefits: the liberated colonists continued to trade mainly with Britain and were slow to repay the French

loans”⁶⁷. Facing this dangerous financial crisis, Louis XVI, through his various financial representatives and advisors, instituted one failed solution after another. The first of which being attempting to finance the war through the issuing of bonds with interest rates of “8 percent or more”⁶⁸, which as noted by the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission, would lead to rapid devaluation of the bonds held by those who purchased them⁶⁹, which does explain the natural relationship between bonds and interest rates despite the modernity of the source. After this solution failed, Louis XVI attempted to “reform the entire taxation system”⁷⁰ to generate more revenue for the state, which would have imposed heavy taxes on land owned by nobles. Not surprisingly, the Assembly of Notables, which was the legal body composed of high ranking nobles of which the King consulted occasionally, “refused to cooperate”⁷¹. This failure to resolve the issue prompted the King to call the Estates General by May 1789 as he could no longer manage the continued deterioration of the French economy. This marked the beginning of the French Revolution.

These times were hard not only on the French government, but also on the common people. Soon after the agreement was struck with the King to call the Estates General, the price of bread began to rise, sharply, due to an unusually bad harvest and a hailstorm in July. Rudé writes “[on] 17 August, the price of the 4-lb. loaf, after long remaining at 9 *sous*, rose to [9.5] *sous*, on the 20th to 10 *sous*, on 2 September to [10.5] *sous*, and on 7 September to 11 *sous*... and

⁶⁷ Hunt, Jocelyn. *The French Revolution*, Taylor & Francis Group, 1998. ProQuest Ebook Central, <http://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/johncabot/detail.action?docID=242157>. Created from johncabot on 2018-03-12 07:36:13.

⁶⁸ Hunt, *ibid*.

⁶⁹ US Securities and Exchange Commission. "Interest rate risk — When Interest rates Go up, Prices of Fixed-rate Bonds Fall." *Investor Bulletin*. June 2013. Accessed March 12, 2018. https://www.sec.gov/files/ib_interestraterisk.pdf.

⁷⁰ Hunt, *ibid*.

⁷¹ Rudé George F. E. 1979. *The Crowd in the French Revolution*. Oxford Paperbacks, No. 129. London: Oxford University Press.

[this] changed their whole character”⁷². The people to which Rudé is referring are those he calls the *menu peuple* and the people who lived in *faubourgs*, which translates to “common people” and a suburb of Paris (from which one can infer Rudé meant the people residing in these suburbs). He notes that when these people joined in on the demonstrations organized by the upper classes, during the rising price of bread they became far more violent in nature, leaving guard posts on Pont Neuf and both sides of the Seine burned down and destroyed⁷³. On August 24, 1788, Rudé writes, a party of 600 demonstrators were fired upon by the Garde de Paris after supposedly being told to “meet force with force”⁷⁴. This event along with several others that autumn left the people of Paris with at least sixty casualties at the hands of the Paris Guard⁷⁵. To complicate things even further, the price of bread continued to rise during the winter because of a bad harvest, from 12 *sous* on November 8th to eventually 14.5 *sous* on February 1st⁷⁶. The price of bread had risen over 60% in a period of less than six months.

This hike in food prices helps to explain the continuing riots against Réveillon, a business owner that was deemed by the crowd to be hostile towards the starving working class. In late April of 1789, rioters destroyed the house of Réveillon, allegedly chanting “*vive le Tiers Etat*”, which would seem to reference the pamphlet circulated by Emmanuel-Joseph Sieyès, earlier that year. However, Rudé seems to doubt this, given the evidence that Réveillon himself was “a prominent figure in the local Third Estate”⁷⁷; for him the people were revolting against the rich instead of the privileged classes because they would not have destroyed the house of one of their own if this was an “Estate-oriented” endeavor. This seems well-reasoned, but it must be said that

⁷² Rudé, *ibid.*

⁷³ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁷⁴ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁷⁵ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁷⁷ Rudé, *ibid.*

the language of Sieyès's pamphlet itself could be read to encourage the actions seen in late April; "They have said to it: "Whatever may be your services, whatever may be your abilities, you shall go thus far; you may not pass beyond!" Certain rare exceptions, properly regarded, are but a mockery, and the terms which are indulged in on such occasions, one insult the more... therefore, what is the Third Estate? Everything; but an everything shackled and oppressed"⁷⁸. These words seem to allow for the (mis)interpretation by the angry crowd that would cast any person wealthy by comparison as not a true member of the Third Estate, whatever the title of the person in question. It seems natural that an angry starving crowd might come to this conclusion when confronted with a person that is not in the same hunger predicament. Whatever the underlying presuppositions of the crowd, the crowd was willing to turn on members of its own estate, which will be a trend that continues through the Revolution.

National Assembly

During the Estates-General's failure to produce solutions to France's problems, the National Assembly was born out of the dejected Third Estate. Indeed, "during the next two months, the Third Estate established itself as the true representative of the people by the simple strategy of refusing to do as the King ordered: declaring that they could not verify their membership except as one Assembly"⁷⁹. On June 17th, 1789, the Third Estate declared itself the National Assembly, thus claiming the power to rule on behalf of the people and the nation. And "on 9 July, Parisians learned that the Assembly, defying the King's wishes, had taken the title of 'Constituent

⁷⁸ Sieyes, Emmanuel-Joseph. "What is the Third Estate?" Sieyès, "What Is the Third Estate?" (1789). Accessed March 20, 2018. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/280/>.

⁷⁹ Hunt, *ibid*.

Assembly”⁸⁰. This term is crucial to the political aims of the group because it proffered that the group had direct political authority in contrast to the merely indirect authority the title of National Assembly bestowed. The reason for this is that the word “constituent” by all reasonable definitions implies the ability on the part of the body or person to elect or appoint, which could be extended to ruling generally. In addition to this metaphysical political advantage, the Constituent Assembly seemed to have gotten additional practical power via the Duke of Orleans; he held meetings of the Assembly at his Palais Royal and as Hunt speculates, may have provided them with resources for printing and publishing their propaganda; “The number of newspapers increased from four in 1788 to 184 in 1789 and 335 by the end of 1790”⁸¹. This suggests that at least in part, the revolutionary activities were aided and abetted by actual nobility and was not just the product of the *bourgeois*.

Riots

The controversy of the Constituent Assembly and the power it rapidly gained provides a decent backdrop against which to set the series of riots which led through the Terror. On July 11th, Parisians flooded the streets and burned 40 of the 54 customs posts in Paris, along with several other government offices and property; “one official of the *barrière du Trone* later claimed for the loss of property valued at 25,413 *livres*”⁸². It does seem significant that with this riot, the property of the Duke of Orleans was spared⁸³. Despite the possible control over the riots by the Assembly, the Assembly did feel it necessary to establish a “citizens militia” to prevent the

⁸⁰ Hunt, *ibid.*

⁸¹ Hunt, *ibid.*

⁸² Rudé, *ibid.*

⁸³ Rudé, *ibid.*

situation from devolving into chaos, more so than it already had. The goal for the militia was to regulate arms and the aims of the riots, so that each homeless person was not able to arm himself and do whatever he pleased. Unfortunately for the members of the Assembly, the die had already been cast, and on July 14th, angry citizens who desired arms had collectively agreed, possibly aided by symbolic thinking of the fortress which must have served as a symbol of the old regime's power and despotism, that they needed to storm the Bastille to recover armaments. Following a siege in which over 100 of the attackers were killed, the Bastille fell, and the people retrieved some weapons held inside⁸⁴. As Rudé notes, the clear majority of those who participated in the taking of the Bastille were “wage-earners” (meaning lower class; not “bourgeois”), and these people now held significant real power comparable to that of the Assembly itself, and perhaps the king. This seems to explain in part why the king, after having spent months in Versailles, ventured back into Paris on July 17th and “donned the red, white, and blue cockade of the revolution”⁸⁵. This seemed to prove a fortuitous political move, as the next notable uprising by most historians' standards was not until October 5th.

With the king back in Versailles and having not agreed to the Declaration of Rights of Man put forth by the Assembly, the people again became restless and discontent regarding their national confidence. And again, bread prices were high in Paris and elsewhere; in Versailles, “an angry crowd tried to hang a baker for selling good-quality loaves to his wealthier customers at 18 *sous* and poor-quality bread to the rest at a cheaper price”⁸⁶. This bread controversy seemed to lead directly to the events of October 5th, wherein a young girl “declaiming against the scarcity of bread”⁸⁷ amassed a massive crowd. The crowd, made up mostly of women, marched from

⁸⁴ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁸⁵ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Rudé, *ibid.*

Paris to Versailles in order to hold the king, Assembly, or some authority responsible for their food shortage. The marchers demanded food retributions and punishments for insulting the revolutionary cockade⁸⁸. In an apparent act of justice, the marchers demanded that the king move again back to Paris, of which the king acquiesced. Shortly thereafter, the Assembly instituted policies against social disturbances, which included the death penalty for “rebellion”, and the institution of martial law. It was clear that the Assembly was taking an increasingly authoritarian turn.

This trend would intensify in the ratifying of criminal penalties against “attacks against liberty or the Constitution”, in 1791. Organized by the Constituent Assembly, these laws encouraged citizens to make anonymous complaints against other citizens for supposedly endangering the goals of the revolution. These laws also showed implicitly that there existed a belief in the popular culture that there was a real conspiracy of anti-revolutionaries plotting to break down the revolution⁸⁹. As Tackett notes, this was a somewhat rational sentiment given the history of centralized power in France that acted without consent of the common people; the people who would have held this belief in 1791 would have been used to not understanding “the undisclosed actions of the powers that be”⁹⁰. However, as understandable as it is looking back on the period, for the people living in the moment, these conspiracy theories were a new phenomenon. Indeed, “of the thirty-two future Third Estate deputies who write pamphlets during the Pre-Revolutionary period, only one – Maximilien Robespierre – gave any indication of a paranoid style of analysis”⁹¹. It was not until the King’s flight to Varennes in this same year that

⁸⁸ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁸⁹ Tackett, Timothy. 2015. *The Coming of the Terror in the French Revolution*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. doi:10.4159/9780674425163.

⁹⁰ Tackett, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Tackett, *ibid.*

these beliefs became mainstream and commonly repeated by the crowd, where it was before largely episodic⁹². After the King's failed flight to Varennes, it was discovered by the Constituent Assembly that the King had written statements to foreign powers in his own hand, denouncing the revolution. To the Revolutionary leaders, this was hard evidence of the conspiracy which only some had been ardent believers, which demonstrated that a constitutional monarchy was impossible to maintain, that the king, the nobility, and the clergy, conspired against them, and that drastic action was necessary to ensure the constitution and seemingly republican ideals.

This even more drastic action began with the *de facto* overthrowing of the monarchy on August 10, 1792, and the arrest of Louis XVI. On this day the Assembly successfully infiltrated the Tuileries Palace and took the King and his family to the Temple fortress in Paris, signaling to the people of Paris that the Assembly was now in total control of the country. Shortly thereafter, the Assembly instituted laws ranging from "a remarkably liberal divorce law" to the redistribution of nobles' property to the banning of clerical robes in public to requiring each citizen to swear allegiance to "*liberté et égalité*" lest they be deported⁹³. It is clear then, that this change is radical and at some level ironic; the Assembly is requiring its citizens to swear allegiance to the ideal of liberty lest it face punishment. This is to show that the Assembly's radical authoritarian trends were intensifying along with its violence, both of which would culminate in the September Massacres and the infamous Reign of Terror.

⁹² Tackett, *ibid.*

⁹³ Tackett, *ibid.*

Terror

After the fall of the monarchy, Parisians' suspicions of counter-revolutionaries grew so severe as to suspect the prisoners being held across Paris were somehow plotting against the state. Their response to this fear was to kill the prisoners, though it appears that this did not necessarily happen as the result of premeditation on the part of the *sans-culottes* ("without breeches", referring to the lower working class; also synonymous with *menu peuple*). It is true that in August some pamphlets were written by bourgeois women in Paris detailing the dangers the prisoners posed to the nation and that posters were ordered by the Commune (a branch of the Assembly government) to be posted in Paris detailing the same⁹⁴. However, it was the citizens themselves – not the Assembly – that decided to "exercise a prompt justice on the spot"⁹⁵, and who attacked a transport of prisoners in Paris on September 2nd. After this initial attack, mob violence spread to most of the prisons in Paris, leaving somewhere between 1,100-1,400 people dead, most of whom were lower criminals (prostitutes, thieves, "vagrants")⁹⁶ which one can reasonably say probably had little to do with a noble or foreign conspiracy to retake France. This example of popular violence in conjunction with more sanctioned "official" violence up to this point shows the establishment of two bodies of mob force, with some relation to one another but no level of real control: The Assembly attempting to govern and perpetuating conspiracy theories, and the common people reacting violently to popular belief and the Assembly's conspiracy theories.

⁹⁴ Tackett, *ibid.*

⁹⁵ Tackett, *ibid.*

⁹⁶ Rudé, *ibid.*

These two forces would join with the alliance of the “Mountain” (the faction of the Jacobin party led by Robespierre) with the *sans-culottes*⁹⁷, and this would lead to the Terror⁹⁸. On September 5, 1793, fearing further counter-revolutionary conspirators, and in response to a series of international wars spawned by the overthrowing of the monarchy, which began to give the impression that the Republic would lose, Robespierre and the National Convention voted to declare that “Terror is the Order of the Day”, which meant that the revolutionary government would use secret police forces and capital punishment against its own citizens in order to protect against “enemies of the state”⁹⁹. Robespierre and the Committee of Public Safety argued the following:

Another class, as greedy and as criminal as the first, has seized control of [the supply of] basic necessities. You have dealt them a blow, but they were only dazed. They continue to plunder beneath the very nose of the law. You have passed wise laws, laws that promise happiness. But they have not been implemented because the power to do so is lacking. If you do not create that power quickly, these laws risk becoming obsolete almost at birth. At this very moment, the enemies of the state are raising their swords against it . . . swords already stained with the state’s own blood. You both possess and implement the needed skills which then, in republican hands, change metal into weapons capable of felling tyrants. But where are the hands that can drive these weapons into the traitors' breasts?¹⁰⁰

As can be seen from the excerpt, the call to excise domestic enemies continued into the new year and has exacerbated itself to cause the Convention (Assembly) itself to cause the violence directly, which is distinctly different from the events of the past few years wherein the common

⁹⁷ Rudé, *ibid.*

⁹⁸ For the purposes of this thesis on radical crowd action, the political dynamics of this alliance will not be discussed in detail. It need only be said that this alliance led to a strong centralization of power around the “Mountain” and Robespierre in particular.

⁹⁹ Robespierre, Maximilien. ""Terror Is the Order of the Day"." "Terror Is the Order of the Day". Accessed March 28, 2018. <http://chnm.gmu.edu/revolution/d/416/>.

¹⁰⁰ Robespierre, *ibid.*

people would be violent with occasional support from the Assembly. The Convention brought under their purview the regulation of grain distribution as well, instituting the death penalty for “hoarding grain” which seemed to target merchants as members of a counter-revolutionary conspiracy¹⁰¹. This would seem to the observer a play to the *sans-culottes* given that the bread prices drove much of the early revolutionary action, though it could be simply the targeting of the next highest “class” of people under the nobility and the clergy. It does seem however, that it would be strange for the latter to be the case given that those who promulgated these policies were themselves lawyers and members of the bourgeois class.

The Terror was also something new in its mandate that the people “first worship reason...then the Supreme Being”¹⁰². The Supreme Being was a state religion of sorts that filled the vacuum that was left after the targeting of the clergy by the revolutionaries; it was emblematic of their desire to throw off anything resembling the Old Regime (like the Revolutionary Calendar that replaced the Gregorian one). Despite this aggressive attack on the Christian tradition of France and the desire of the Assembly to create a new religion, “a section of the population took to atheism” instead of the new state religion¹⁰³. This shows that perhaps the religion of the Supreme Being was in some ways more radical for the former Christians than not believing in a higher power at all. Robespierre seemed to be aware of this on the festival of the Supreme Being in June of 1794; he burned an effigy of the “monster of atheism”¹⁰⁴.

Lastly, the Terror was deadly beyond anything seen domestically thus far. In addition to killing the King and Queen, the revolutionary crowd also executed somewhere between 17,000-

¹⁰¹ Tackett, *ibid.*

¹⁰² Hunt, *ibid.*

¹⁰³ Hunt, *ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ Tackett, *ibid.*

40,000 people during the Terror (note that this number represents deaths in France in total, not only in Paris)¹⁰⁵. The deadliest period of the Terror was during the spring and early summer 1794, following the adoption of the Robespierre-supported “22 Prairial Law”, which mandated that all persons who “attacked the Convention, betrayed the Republic, interfered with provisioning, sheltered conspirators, spoke ill of patriotism, misled the people, spread false news, outraged morality, abused public office, or worked against the liberty and unity of the state”¹⁰⁶, would be put to death. This law led to “cartloads of people per day” being sent to the guillotine for execution and resulted in the execution of one of the Convention’s leaders, Georges Danton¹⁰⁷. Historians Philip Dwyer and Peter McPhee translated a letter by a contemporary Parisian named Nicolas Rault who described the judicial processes instituted by the 22 Prairial Law that sheds some light on the workings of the courts¹⁰⁸:

For the sake of appearances a few questions are asked of a few defendants who either reply or do not. The jury then deliberates in a small room where they remain about an hour talking among themselves, in order to do what they derisively call deliberate . They return to the hearing and declare on their honour and their conscience the defendants guilty. In two or three hours more than sixty to seventy people are thus condemned to death and executed the same day on the same scaffold¹⁰⁹

This excerpt shows how dangerous the tribunals of the time were by our modern standards, but also how dangerous they seemed to some people of the time; indeed, even if the account is exaggerated, the fact that someone recorded the tribunals at all with such strong condemnation of it showed that this was something drastic. Ironically, it also eventually led to the execution of

¹⁰⁵ Tackett, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁶ Tackett, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ Tackett, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁸ Though the translating historians note his account is a little exaggerated in what percentage of those accused were found guilty; the true percentage was around 50%.

¹⁰⁹ McPhee, Peter. 2002. *The French Revolution, 1789-1799*. Oxford England: Oxford University Press.

Robespierre himself after the Convention's members became wary that (since even Danton could be executed at Robespierre's direction) they could be targeted, and some others who worried that he was becoming too much of a tyrant or dictator¹¹⁰. On July 24, 1794, Robespierre was confronted in the Convention hall for being an enemy of the people, and in true revolutionary fashion, was denied a chance to defend himself. He was arrested and just days later, executed.

Conclusion

The period of the French revolution shows that at some level, the *sans-culottes* were more of the drivers of revolutionary action than those who probably thought themselves to be, the Assembly/Convention, possibly up to the period of the Terror, in which the bourgeois leaders sought to restore order through suspending “liberal” legal guarantees like due process (Sophie Wahnich would agree with this analysis)¹¹¹. To give credit to Rudé and the Marxist perspective, it seems reasonable to suggest that the revolution might not have been possible without the rising bread prices and worsening living conditions of the working class, and that the Assembly was forced to cater in some way to the same class throughout the years of the revolution. However, this is far from the revolution being primarily *caused by* the economic plight of the *sans-culottes*. Rudé himself seems to acknowledge this when he writes “without the impact of political ideas, mainly derived from the bourgeois leaders, such movements would have remained strangely purposeless and barren of result”¹¹². As no one seems to dispute the existence of both political-ideological causes and economic causes, the discrepancy arises in which causes have supremacy.

¹¹⁰ Hunt, *ibid.*

¹¹¹ Wahnich, Sophie, and David Fernbach. *In Defence of the Terror: Liberty or Death in the French Revolution*. London: Verso, 2015.

¹¹² Rudé, *ibid.*

A comparative analysis between the American and French cases can provide a methodological framework through which to solve this problem.

4. Analysis and Application of Framework

Through the examination of two centers of action of the American and French revolutions, respectively, the nature of the revolutions was different and produced different levels of violence. Notwithstanding the foregoing, I should acknowledge some other differences which one might bar my comparison on the grounds of the examples being so different that it renders them incomparable. It is true that the events in Boston existed outside of the nation against which the revolutionaries were protesting, which is not the case in Paris. It is true that the Parisian people experienced a far greater financial strain than did the Americans, and that the political changes in Paris promulgated changed the structure of the central government while the political changes promulgated for did not change the structure of the British government. This is all true, and there are innumerable differences between the cases of Boston and Paris, but this hardly makes them incomparable; they were both revolutions which fought for freedom and the rights of the people regardless of social class (except for slaves in America). The differences arise in how the two define their objectives and how the goals are manifested during the revolutionary process: the focus of the government revolutionary leaders advocated for in Boston was one that bestowed negative rights, whereas the government advocated for in Paris was designed to bestow positive rights. In other words, Bostonian leaders wanted freedom from government, while Parisian leaders wanted the government to create and enforce certain ideals¹¹³. Since the ideologies of the revolutionary leaders differed, it stands to reason that the

¹¹³ Holmes, Kim. "The Great Divide: The Ideological Legacies of the American and French Revolutions." The Heritage Foundation. Accessed April 24, 2018. <https://www.heritage.org/political-process/report/the-great-divide-the-ideological-legacies-the-american-and-french>.

crowds' views on the purpose of their actions did as well, as they were being directed in part by the leaders and in part by each other, like what is seen in experiments testing social contagion outlined in Chapter One. I will begin my analysis by examining the ideologies espoused and acted out by the leaders, through the lens of Arendt's social theory on the difference between "labor" and "action".

As mentioned previously, "labor" is that which one does for the sole need of survival and that makes no significant change in quality or essence of life. "Action" is that which distinguishes oneself and contributes to the larger community. In the context of the revolutions in Boston and Paris, the Boston events were more action-oriented whereas the Paris events were more labor-oriented. Labor-oriented events are the actions whose direct purpose is to solve the needs of hunger and low wages of a person or a group of people. This is to be distinguished from action-oriented events which may (and should ideally) assist with the "labor" or base needs of the people, but whose direct purpose is to further a metaphysical ideal.

I begin by acknowledging that the financial situation in both Paris and Boston was unsatisfactory prior to 1787 and 1763 respectively, due to causes rooted in foreign wars. This prompted the sovereigns to attempt to consolidate funds by taxing those in Boston and Paris that were already suffering under the weight of poor financial conditions. As previously stated, following the Seven Years' War, the citizens of Boston faced a tax increase of sixty percent on top of the £150,000 debt that was already owed, while the citizens of Paris experienced a sharp and rapid rise in bread prices, of over sixty percent in a period of six months. In both cases the financial toll was great, and thus the "labor" needs of the people were threatened; the question then becomes, how did each revolution seek to resolve these needs?

Perhaps unsurprisingly, leaders in Boston blamed England for imposing taxes and worsening the financial situation, artificially even. This seems to make sense, as the increased financial burden was literally the fault of the British Parliament, as it was they who imposed the burden onto the colonists; contrast this with Paris, where there was no analogous figure to blame for the rising in bread process. As the alleged perpetrator of the misfortune was England, and because Boston had been a profitable trading post before the Seven Years' War, it is understandable that the sole goal that developed was to detach from the British Empire. Certainly, there were individual targets in Boston, such as Thomas Hutchinson and Andrew Oliver, but they were always targeted for the same reason: for aligning themselves with Britain. This makes each target not so much a separate issue, but each symptoms of the same scapegoat mechanism. In the Boston case the scapegoat was the British Empire, and this was consistent throughout. This also meant that the goal of the revolutionary efforts was the separate from Britain for the betterment of the people, leading to an idea of government that was meant to secure freedom rather than solve necessity needs¹¹⁴¹¹⁵. This distinction is of utmost importance, as it made the purpose of government singular and focused on the importance of individual freedom, as opposed to ensuring economic equity or class equality, which requires a much larger, more powerful government.

This must be contrasted with the Parisian theatre of the French Revolution and the ideals it espoused. As the rise in bread prices were due to several reasons (hail storm in July, national debt, war expenses), there was not a clear scapegoat for the leaders or the crowd to choose. Evidence enough of this is that there already existed an angry crowd during the rise of the bread

¹¹⁴ Arendt, Hannah. 2006. *On Revolution*. New York: Penguin Books.

¹¹⁵ Necessity needs, as used by Arendt in the cited work, can be used as a synonym for labor needs otherwise mentioned.

prices in mid-1788, and the crowd seemed to target groups of people at random: first guard posts (which one could interpret as anger towards the government as an institution) and then in early 1789 quasi-wealthy businessmen who seemed not sufficiently sympathetic to their plight. This is put into words succinctly by Sieyès himself, declaring implicitly that anyone who is not shackled and oppressed is not a member of the Third Estate (which is technically false, as many of the leaders of the Third Estate themselves were not at all shackled and oppressed by comparison to the working-class rioters), thereby scapegoating that wide margin of people. In the following years, following the execution of the king, the leaders of the Parisian revolution expanded on this, stating that anyone who opposed the revolution was now an enemy of the state, which would include political dissidents into the scapegoat group, and by extension, anyone whom the leaders deemed as politically dissident. As a result, the “action” of the leaders was unclear; what was it that they were advocating for exactly? It cannot have been freedom in the American sense, or else people would have been at least on paper free to be political dissidents. Instead, it was a government whose role was to establish “positive freedoms”, which meant freedom from internal constraints such as poverty, sexism, or classism¹¹⁶. This is radically different from negative freedom; instead of advocating freedom from government intervention, it advocates for a government to impose a social order and resolve issues like inequality. This is clearly the point of the riots leading up to the Women’s March of October 5, 1789, the capital criminalization of “attacks against liberty” in 1791, the capital punishment for “hoarding grain” in 1793, and the institution of the Supreme Being that which shortly followed; the government’s role was not to relinquish control over grain distribution, it was to take control of grain distribution; the government’s role was not to allow freedom of speech or religion, it was to criminalize anything

¹¹⁶ Oakes, J. 1996. “What's Wrong with ‘Negative Liberty.’” *Law and Social Inquiry* 21 (1): 79–82.

other than absolute agreement with the proscribed political ideas and belief in a deity other than the Supreme Being (22 Prailial). The Assembly and the Convention proclaimed they took these actions in the name of liberty, and it was positive liberty that they meant, not negative liberty. In other words, they meant “freedom from inequality, not freedom from government-imposed inequality”, which meant that the government’s role is directly to ensure “labor” equality.

Is that not a form of action in itself? Is the desire to form a government whose purpose is to enforce equality not a form of political philosophy which would qualify as “action” just as the American ideal would? The answer is no; the two are fundamentally different, because one allows for the “action” of its citizens and the other does not. First, it must be acknowledged that the ultimate purpose of both governments was assumedly to ensure prosperity, which would probably follow from reduced inequality in both cities and nations. This one fact being the case does not mean the two ideals are equivalent however; in the American example the labor needs are connected indirectly and the “action needs” (ability of the people to contribute to the political body even if they disagree)¹¹⁷ are not compromised. One might contest this by positing that the mob actions in Boston did in fact inhibit the action needs of the people, and I would concede that this most certainly caused a chilling effect on controversial speech. However, these events are altogether different from a government explicitly forbidding a great degree of speech and punishing dissenters with the death penalty *en masse* without a trial, as occurred in the Terror. Indeed, it seems that the Assembly/Convention sacrificed “action” to resolve issues of “labor” (bread shortages by “anti-hoarding laws”, and punishing disagreement), and this is not something that was done by the Sons of Liberty even when they exerted strong influence over the Massachusetts legislature. To quote Arendt, the direction of the French Revolution “was

¹¹⁷ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, *ibid.*

determined by the exigencies of liberation not from tyranny but from necessity”¹¹⁸ I posit that this difference in the meaning of “freedom” and the different ideals of government that were promulgated by the revolutionary leaders in Boston and Paris contributed in part to the higher level of violence in general, and specifically state-sponsored violence, between the two cities.

What else contributed? I do not want to give the impression that the leaders in both cities had anything close to absolute control over the events that took place, and I hope I have not given that impression thus far. Instead, I argue that liminality and the scapegoat mechanism supported by social contagion gave the crowd a certain level of control over the events that rivaled the influence of the revolutionary leaders. As previously mentioned, the liminal stages of a revolution are those which resemble rituals, where the old order has been dismantled but the new has not yet been established. In the way of rituals in Boston, the Liberty Tree is a clear example; the Sons of Liberty first hung an effigy of Oliver there and the Tree became a symbol of the resistance to Britain for crowds and mobs that followed, even serving as the only spot at which the crowds would accept resignations of positions. Similarly, the guillotine became the (albeit much darker) ritualistic symbol for the revolution after the execution of Louis XVI, as it “socially [disincorporated] an old political theology of the state—in this case the monarchy of divine right—and [reincorporated] it within new political boundaries”¹¹⁹¹²⁰. Indeed, the *sans-culottes* routinely conducted mass killings of prisoners and political dissidents following the

¹¹⁸ Arendt, *On Revolution*, *ibid.*

¹¹⁹ Roman, Camil. "Liminality, the Execution of Louis XVI, and the Rise of Terror during the French Revolution." *Breaking Boundaries: Varieties of Liminality*, Eds. Agnes Horvath, Bjorn Thomasson, Harald Wydra. Accessed April 25, 2018. https://www.academia.edu/31530425/Liminality_the_Execution_of_Louis_XVI_and_the_Rise_of_Terror_during_the_French_Revolution.

¹²⁰ Roman refers not to the guillotine specifically but to the trial and execution of Louis XVI, though my reasons for choosing the guillotine and his for choosing the whole affair seem to be similar if not identical. Whether the instrument or the affair, the core of the issue is that the guillotine/execution served as the symbol for the dismantling of the social order of the old regime.

execution (especially during the Terror), theoretically consistent with their idea that the killing machine is the process by which the state will be transformed and freed from negative influences just as it was freed from the negative influence of the monarchy. One might contest that the Supreme Being serves as a more appropriate example of a symbol of the revolution; to that I would highlight that it seemed even to Robespierre that the Supreme Being was not genuinely believed in by the masses, which required him to burn an effigy of atheism, to which a segment of the population was “converting”. This highlights another difference in the two cities: the symbol of revolution in Boston was the Liberty Tree (a symbol of conversion to the cause through political resigning of office), whereas the symbol of the revolution was the guillotine which represented death as a process of transformation for the nation.

The revolutionary leaders in Paris seemed to think that if they put all the negative influences through the guillotine, the country would be transformed. The question was, who and what were those influences? In other words, who were the scapegoats chosen? As previously explained, the Bostonians chose one scapegoat: Britain. The Parisians could not decide on their scapegoat(s). First, it seemed to be those nobles who possessed more, though this excluded those nobles that professed to agree with the cause (the Duke of Orleans for example). Then, it was the King, after it was discovered that he did not support the revolution. After they killed the King, it became those merchants who “hoarded grain”, and after them it became generally those who did not support liberty, atheists (meaning those who did not profess faith in the Supreme Being), and even the leaders of the Convention. This continually changing scapegoat in effect made it impossible for the revolution to close its liminal stage; for every time one scapegoat was killed, another would take its place. Because of this process of continually changing scapegoats, the revolutionary events in Paris lacked a clear purpose; they wanted to free France from oppressive

influences, but those influences that were thought to be oppressive continued to change. This was not the same in Boston, as the oppressive body and the scapegoats were those who sympathized with the British Acts of Parliament. I posit that this difference in scapegoats led in part to the differences between the levels of violence in the two cities in the time periods examined.

5. Conclusions

I chose to research this because collectivism and the violence it seems to beget have always troubled and interested me. Specifically, I wanted to know why two cities influential cities in two revolutions who seemed to proclaim the same ideas of freedom and equality, ended in drastically different ways. I endeavored to show that those ideas carried very different meanings in Boston and Paris, and that this in conjunction with the continually changing scapegoats, fueled by the human tendency to imitate and internalize the ideas around them, led to increased violence in Paris compared to Boston.

There may be other explanations of the differences between the two, which I have not considered or tried to explain. I have not addressed the wars in which revolutionary France was involved, and how those wars continued to influence Parisian crowds. Secondly, I have not conducted a legal-historical analysis of the how the notions of negative and positive freedom were consciously in the minds of the leaders and crowds, or how those ideas preceded the events of the revolutions in either nation. I would have enjoyed delving into these areas of study if I had more time or space available, as I believe them to be meaningful topics that deserve explanation.

From the research that I have conducted, it certainly seems that collectivism was present in both cities, but far more severe and ever-changing in Paris. It is a long-established fact in psychology that people tend to imitate and internalize the desires of others around them, and this seems to fuel the violence of collective condemnation; the continual change in the groups that are condemned seems to exacerbate this.

In short, although natural, we should avoid collectivism in our political dialogue if possible. It will prevent our meaningful engagement in ideas and will at worst lead to collective violence.

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