A PASSION FOR PRIVILEDGE:MERCY OTIS WARREN'S EXPRESSION OF EMOTION, 1769-1780

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ABSTRACT

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Scholars have long prized Mercy Otis Warren as a subject of historical study because of her extensive correspondence, which shows how elite women expressed their support of the American Revolution. In this thesis, I show that her letters reveal something more fundamental than her patriotic impulse – they show her fear of losing her elite position. I demonstrate this by applying the insights of the history of emotions to the letters Mercy Otis Warren wrote between 1769 and 1780. In these letters, Mercy Otis Warren expressed the emotions of "spirit" and "sentiment" towards her family members, her community of Plymouth, and the Revolutionary cause sweeping over New England. But she expressed herself most passionately about her family's elite status and cultural power. Her letters reveal that Mercy was a product of her time, her class, and her family. In today's terms, we would call her "entitled."

Methodologically, this thesis draws on insights from social history, gender history, and the history of emotions. I place Mercy's correspondence (roughly sixty letters written and received in the period under study) into the context of her relationships with family, friends, and community. She was passionate in her letters because she and her correspondents were facing the destruction of their privileged lives. I argue that understanding Mercy Otis Warren's emotions is critical to understanding her determination to maintain her elite status (chapter 2), her unquestioning acceptance of the gender expectations of a woman in her position (chapter 3), her firm support of the Revolutionary cause (chapter 4), and her attempts to shape the nation's memory of the Revolution afterwards (chapter 5). Historians have implicitly argued that Mercy challenged the gender expectations of her day, but I find that she did not. She simply followed the lead of her male kin, who were extremely well educated and politically powerful.

To Mercy Otis Warren, who gave me insight into history I never thought possible

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To my parents, thank you beyond measure for supporting me. You accepted the tears, the laughter, the anxiety, and all of the "ah-ha" moments with encouragement. I would not be who I am without you.

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CHAPTER I: MERCY OTIS WARREN AND HER HISTORIANS

"there is generally a wish to stand well in the opinion of those we most esteem."

--Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773[1]

Mercy Otis Warren (1728-1814) has long attracted the attention of historians. She produced an incredible number of letters, poems, and other works that constitute a rich base of documentary evidence. In an era when women wrote relatively few documents, Mercy stood out by leaving behind such a large archive in a woman's voice.[2] In addition, Mercy was a political insider during the founding era of the United States. Her writings include details about the lives of John Adams, George Washington, Alexander Hamilton, and other "Founding Fathers." She is an ideal subject for anyone interested in a woman's perspective on the Revolutionary Era. In the letter above, Mercy showed how important it was to have others think highly of her. As an elite woman with politically driven thoughts, she understood that her legacy would be shared with people long after her death. Mercy was passionate about her family's name and reputation which influenced many of her emotions.

In this thesis, I argue that Mercy Otis Warren did not challenge the prevailing expectations of women. Mercy was very much a product of her class and her time, and she did not question or avoid the responsibilities of elite women in Revolutionary Era New England. She consciously followed the lead of the politically powerful men in her family. Her driving passion was to protect and perpetuate her family's power, reputation, and political ideas – a passion she inherited from her father, practiced with her brother, and passed on to her sons.

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[1] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773. See Appendix A for full citations of each letter cited in this thesis. In this thesis, I reproduce Mercy Otis Warren's words exactly as she wrote them. I did not modernize her spelling or her grammar to conform to present-day standards. I wanted to preserve her original wording and enable readers to hear Mercy's voice and understand how elite women of her day expressed themselves.

[2] Throughout this thesis, I refer to Mercy Otis Warren either by her full name or by "Mercy." Referring to her as "Warren" can cause confusion, since many Warren relatives appear in her story. Similarly, I refer to her brother, father, and other relatives by their full name or first name, rather than as "Warren".

When I read her letters through the lens of her emotions, I see a woman who was heavily influenced by politically active men. It was unusual for women to express political opinions so openly and at such length during the Revolutionary Era, but Mercy's opinions were neither innovative nor controversial within her elite and political family. Though she did not attend college, she was richly educated by her male kin who graduated from Harvard and who conversed with her freely about politics and society. Her father trained her to be interested in politics and to study classical works that were essential reading for the political elite in Revolutionary America. Mercy was afforded the opportunity to speak her opinion freely because many of the male figures in her life spoke their opinions freely and did not tell her to do otherwise.

The perspective I offer in this thesis differs significantly from the long trail of existing scholarship that has stressed Mercy Otis Warren's exceptionality. Historians seeking examples of notable women in the American past have turned repeatedly to Mercy Otis Warren, the unusually articulate political insider. They note that Mercy grew up in an elite, politically active family (Otis) and joined another when she married (Warren). They note that her correspondents included famous women associated with the Founding Fathers: Abigail Adams, Catharine Macauley, and Hannah Winthrop. They stress how exceptional Mercy was – writing her political opinions so freely, and to such famous political persons in her day. Every generation of historians has found her an appealing and even irresistible subject. This fascination with Mercy as exceptional threads through the scholarship from the nineteenth century to the present day as the following discussion shows.

In one of the earliest full-length biographies of Mercy Otis Warren (1896), Alice Brown expressed this exceptionalism by disregarding Mercy's background and life before the

"picturesque events" of the Revolution. Brown wrote in a prefatory note that "it is impossible to trace her, step by step, through her eighty-six years" and found it "necessary to regard her through those picturesque events of the national welfare which touched her most nearly."[3] Mercy Otis Warren's letter book was not made available to researchers until 1942. Alice Brown had access to Mercy's published poems, her history of the Revolution, and scattered letters found in other published formats. But Brown's work suffers from significant lack of access to Mercy's words. For example, Brown believed Mercy also spelled her name as Marcia.[4] Historians with modern transcriptions and full access to Mercy's letters know that Marcia was a pen name Mercy used when writing to John and Abigail Adams.

Sixty years later, in her 1958 biography of Mercy Otis Warren, *First Lady of the Revolution*, Katharine Susan Anthony asserted Mercy's exceptionalism by stating that "Mercy's fame rests more on her powerful intellect and political influence than on the other talents and virtues which she displayed."[5] Anthony wrote during the infancy of historians' interest in women's lives, and she published other works on white women during the Revolutionary Era. She focused on the chronological events of Mercy's life and showed how they played a role in the Revolution. Anthony's publication brought Mercy Otis Warren fully into the light of public attention. At the time Anthony published her biography, there was little research on Mercy as a woman, revolutionary, and elite patriot. Anthony's work gave future historians a basic understanding of the primary documents that were available and the possibilities of research.

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[3] Alice Brown, *Mercy Warren: With Portrait* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1896), vii.
[4] Brown, 13.
[5] Katharine Susan Anthony, *First Lady of the Revolution: The Life of Mercy Otis Warren* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1958), 15.

In 1980, Lester Cohen published a journal article detailing Mercy Otis Warren's exceptional concern for her country.[6] He argued that when Mercy wrote her history of the Revolution, she did so to prevent corruption in the newly established United States. He argued that Mercy attempted to fuse ideology and ethics together in her publication. Her personal and political influences and expectations colored her views on the new government. Cohen argued that her published work on the Revolution was a mirror of her commitment to Republican ideals and her growing concerns for the present and future of the political realm. His work tapped into a new interest in ideology and ethics. He highlighted the tension between Mercy's personal and political aspirations. Cohen relied on the primary documents Mercy left and analyzed her life accordingly. His work created a foundation for later scholars who sought to understand Mercy's personal and political ideology.

Frederick Hollister Campbell published a PhD dissertation in 1993 highlighting the exceptional talent Mercy Otis Warren had in expressing her opinions in a male-dominated world.[7] Campbell focused fully on Mercy's political beliefs and her reasonings behind them. He argued that her political beliefs motivated her to communicate her opinions. Campbell argued that, though Mercy's movements were limited to Plymouth, Massachusetts, her knowledge regarding the world and the political sphere of government stretched far beyond that town.

In 2000, Gay Gibson Cima expanded the research on Mercy Otis Warren by discussing how white and black women had different strategies to gain attention in the public sphere.[8] Up to this point, historians had not discussed Mercy in the context of race. Further, Cima analyzed how

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[6] Lester H Cohen, "Explaining the Revolution: Ideology and Ethics in Mercy Otis Warren's Historical Theory," *The William and Mary Quarterly*, 37, no. 2 (1980): 200-18.
[7] Frederick Hollister Campbell, "Mrs. Warren's Revolution: Mercy Otis Warren's Perceptions of the American Revolution before, during and After the Event" (PhD Diss., University of Colorado at Boulder, 1993).
[8] Gay Gibson Cima, "Black and Unmarked: Phillis Wheatley, Mercy Otis Warren, and the Limits of Strategic Anonymity," *Theatre Journal*, 52, no. 4 (2000): 465-95.

black and white women established their identity, fought for their natural rights, and achieved status in their society. The identity of women often was concealed with "veils." Gender and race affected women's visibility and invisibility in their society. Cima argued that elite white women like Mercy had their work "protected" by male friends and family, which inhibited their independence.[9] According to Cima, Mercy waited to see the resolution of the Revolution before she published – under her own name – the political opinions she had expressed privately many years before. She wanted to make sure that her ideas had been accepted by a majority of her fellow Americans. Cima makes a critical argument about Mercy's ability to express herself as an elite woman. Cima provides a foundation for scholars to understand that being an elite both freed and restrained Mercy: she had a platform for her ideas that less privileged women did not, but the expectations of behavior for elite women prevented her from fully expressing those ideas. By stressing Mercy's constraints, Cima hints that Mercy was perhaps not as exceptional as others have claimed, an idea that I develop further in this thesis.

Martha J. King published an article in 2011 that analyzed the significance of Mercy Otis Warren's history of the Revolutionary war.[10] King argues that Mercy's published history tells historians about her personal beliefs but also gives insight into her interactions with the second and third presidents of the United States. King's article is a study of Mercy's political side. King analyzes Mercy's political desires and influences because she had politically active males surrounding her. Her concern about politics and the country were based on her husband's and sons' futures. King also portrays Mercy as a multi-faceted woman because many factors influenced her thinking. King's article is important because she shows Mercy Otis Warren as a

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[9] Cima, 472.
[10] Martha J. King "The "Pen of the Historian": Mercy Otis Warren's History of the American Revolution," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 72, no. 2 (2011): 520.

typical colonial individual following the expectations of her puritan, political, and background as a woman.

Three recent books about Mercy Otis Warren have been particularly valuable to this thesis project and have most influenced my thinking. Scholars Rosemarie Zagarri, Nancy Rubin Stuart, and Jeffrey Hacker have rigorously analyzed Mercy's life, each from a different perspective, and they have helped me hone my own argument that Mercy was exceptional in expressing her political opinions because the men in her life helped educate her and allowed her to speak on politics.

In 1995, Rosemarie Zagarri produced foundational work on the life of Mercy Otis Warren and her interactions with society in her book *A Woman's Dilemma*, which shows the paradox of Mercy's life as a woman and as a patriot.[11] Zagarri argues that since Mercy was educated and explained herself in an intellectual way, she had more authority to comment on politics and current events. Zagarri believes Mercy had to "overcome her sex in order to become a patriot."[12] This research challenged readers to consider Mercy's gender restrictions and successes. Further, as Zagarri states: "Her life thus demonstrates how an exceptional woman could manipulate existing gender roles with great success, but also how constricting those roles could ultimately be."[13] Zagarri drew on primary documents such as Mercy's letters and analyzed their significance for women's rights. She certainly showed that Mercy realized the expectations of men and women were "temporary distinctions" needed to preserve families in her society.[14] Mercy's situation was not the "everyday" life of most American colonists because her struggle

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[11] Rosemarie Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma: Mercy Otis Warren and the American Revolution* (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, 1995), xvii.
[12] Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma*, xvii.
[13] Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma,* xvii.
[14] Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma,* 171.

was against Great Britain and the limits of womanhood.[15] Zagarri's work is crucial to historical scholarship because she presents biographical information alongside Mercy's struggle as a woman in Revolutionary America.

In 2008, Nancy Rubin Stuart added significantly to Zagarri's work by researching the personal life of Mercy Otis Warren. Stuart states: "It was not my intention to focus upon the theoretical aspects of Mrs. Warren's long life, but rather paint an intimate picture of her life for the general reader."[16] Stuart showcases Mercy's personality and describes the ways she handled certain situations. Stuart shows that Mercy's accomplishments and opportunities were based upon her personal and moral perspective. Stuart states: "Mercy Otis Warren reveals herself as a perceptive, strong, and deeply caring individual, sometimes foolishly driven by emotions, at other times guided by cool rationality."[17] Stuart's research differs from other scholars by showing the complexity of Mercy Otis Warren from a personal perspective. Still using the primary documents Mercy left, Stuart portrays her as a complex woman who had a significant role as a "founding mother." Stuart's work emphasizes the importance of understanding an historical figure's personal struggles and accomplishments.

Jeffrey Hacker, in his 2021 work, takes Stuart's approach a step further by researching Mercy Otis Warren with the goal of better understanding how personal relationships impacted her life. Hacker specifically analyzed the relationship between Mercy and her brother, James Otis.[18] Hacker argues that Mercy's politically active brother was a major influence on her ideas and openly encouraged the discussion of politics. When James became ill, Mercy corresponded

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[15] Zagarri, *A Woman's Dilemma,* xvii.
[16] Nancy Rubin Stuart, *The Muse of the Revolution: The Secret Pen of Mercy Otis Warren and the Founding of a Nation* (Boston: Beacon Press. 2008), xi.
[17] Stuart, xii.
[18] Jeffrey H. Hacker, *Minds & Hearts: The Story of James Otis Jr. and Mercy Otis Warren* (Boston, MA: University of Massachusetts Press, 2021), 1.

on her brother's behalf with many important people. Hacker relies on Mercy's letters to contextualize her relationship and imagine the trials she faced during her brother's illness. Many of the early letters between Mercy and her brother were destroyed, but Hacker convincingly shows that Mercy was closer to her brother James than any of her other siblings and shared many of his political views. Hacker expands on previous research by pinpointing the political beliefs of Mercy and James. A significant aspect of his argument is that Mercy believed in "individual liberty and popular sovereignty," a testament to the ideological changes of the American Revolution.[19] The contributions of Mercy and James Otis aided the Revolutionary War and are an example of a strong sibling relationship. Further, Hacker's research shows how Mercy valued her family and how experiences with her brother opened opportunities for her in elite political society. Hacker places himself amongst the well-known researchers of Mercy because he identifies and analyzes the significant relationship between Mercy and James Otis.

Zagarri, Stuart, and Hacker each provide an in-depth look at Mercy Otis Warren as an exceptional woman of the Revolutionary Era. The differences in their focus suggest that the readers' interests expanded over time. When Rosemarie Zagarri published her work in 1995, readers wanted to know about Revolutionary Era women beyond the most famous names of presidents' wives – Abigail Adams and Martha Washington. Zagarri's book is a foundational piece of scholarship that argues for Mercy's significance in women's writing and highlights Mercy's ability to talk with men about her political opinions. When Nancy Rubin Stuart wrote about Mercy in 2009, she emphasized how Mercy's personal life impacted her writing and her decisions, suggesting that readers wanted to know about the connection between work and personal life of historical figures. While both Stuart and Zagarri focus on Mercy's contributions

[19] Hacker, 6.

to her community during the Revolutionary Era, Stuart expands on Zagarri's scholarship by examining the intimate side of Mercy and tries to understand many of her close relationships. Jeffrey Hacker's 2021 book focuses on the sibling bond between Mercy and her brother, suggesting that present-day readers want to know about family relationships of historical figures. According to Hacker, Mercy's relationship with her brother James gave her many political and social opportunities. Both siblings were dedicated to their country and to the cause of revolution. Hacker's insight into their sibling bond adds a much-needed new understanding of close family relationships. In Mercy's case, she wrote frequently to her brother, was involved in many of his personal struggles and was aware of his political opinions and discussions. She was closer to her brother James than many siblings were in her day. Further, her bond with her brother helps explain Mercy's tendency to adopt the views of male kin throughout her life.

This thesis differs from the work of Zagarri, Stuart, and Hacker in two ways: First, I analyze Mercy Otis Warren as an "emotional" individual, using the insights of the history of emotion. Second, I argue that Mercy was not exceptional, but typical: a product of her time, her class, and her family. Her letters show that she had significant social, political, and economic advantages. While some scholars have acknowledged her elite background, they have not assessed the significance her position had on her emotions and actions. Her long hours spent reading books, her never-ending supply of paper and ink, and her voluminous personal correspondence all indicate her status in society: she was a woman of letters. She did not write about traditional domestic labor of housekeeping, childcare, and nursing sick members of her household, even though these activities were an important part of her responsibilities as wife and mother. Her correspondents understood that Mercy, as a woman of wealth and status, had servants to carry out the daily work of keeping a household going and providing care for her five

sons. This left Mercy free to pursue reading and writing. Her understanding of the world came from classical works, her father's and brother's political discussions, and her conversations with a wide range of friends and acquaintances.

This thesis explores new territory by studying the emotions Mercy expressed in her letters. This project originated in one central question: How did Mercy Otis Warren convey her emotions in the letters she wrote in the 1770s? That central question led to a series of sub-questions. How did Mercy Otis Warren express herself emotionally towards men? How did she express herself emotionally towards women? Was there a difference? How did she express herself emotionally when discussing personal issues? How did she express herself emotionally when discussing political events? Why did she express herself so passionately about politics and her country? What did she have to gain by writing about her emotions? Was she simply behaving as an elite, well-connected white woman was expected to behave at this time?

This thesis concludes that Mercy Otis Warren's expression of emotion was tightly linked to her position in society. She was passionately concerned about her family's legacy and reputation, and this influenced the way she expressed emotion in her correspondence. Her educational and political status enhanced her opportunity to speak her opinions. Her ability to communicate with elite individuals such as John Adams was a direct result of her family's political power. She expressed the emotion of "spirit" that was so widespread among American revolutionaries because her elite lifestyle was at stake and those she communicated with were also facing the destruction of their privileged lives.

The primary sources for this project consist mainly of Mercy Otis Warren's letters. These letters are critical to the study of the Revolutionary period because they reflect the life of an elite woman who had much to lose if the newly established country failed. Her

correspondence spans thirty years, but this project focuses on roughly sixty letters that Mercy wrote and received between 1769-1780 (see Appendix). These critical years provide a unique glimpse of Mercy's thoughts and actions during the Revolutionary War crisis. The letters also provide immense detail about the lives of Revolutionary figures such as John and Abigail Adams, George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and Alexander Hamilton, Hannah Winthrop, and Catharine Macauley.

Mercy Otis Warren's letters reside at the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston. I accessed all of Mercy Otis Warren's letters digitally because the Massachusetts Historical Society was closed to in-person research due to COVID. On the MHS website, I viewed photographs of the original documents and modern transcriptions. I also accessed letters through the Founders Online website which is provided by the National Archives. This site does not provide photographs of the original documents, only transcriptions of the letters. Charles Warren, the great-great grandson of Mercy, published a transcription of her letters in 1942, but neither the MHS nor Founders Online provide clear descriptions of how or when the letters were transcribed, leaving open the question of the trustworthiness of the transcriptions.[20] Mercy's letters are found in other published formats. For example, the *Adams Family Correspondence* has several letters to and from Mercy.[21]

The challenge and excitement of Mercy Otis Warren's letters is that they remain in a letter book she created and eventually edited. Thanks to information provided by renowned

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[20] Mercy Otis Warren's letters are challenging for researchers because some are in letter book form which allowed for revisions see, See, *Mercy Otis Warren Papers*, edited by Charles Warren (Boston, MA.: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1942). Others are in different compilations such as the *Adams Family Papers.* While her letters are quite comprehensive, there is much left out or lost to history. An example from Founders Online published by the National Archives is: "MS (Adams Papers) in the hand of Mercy (Otis) Warren. This unsigned poem was doubtless an enclosure in a letter which has since been lost." The transcriptions through Massachusetts Historical Society at least give readers a chance to transcribe the letter themselves. There are missing words, or lost phrases because the writing is difficult to read.

[21] L.H. Butterfield, ed., *Adams Family Correspondence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

historian and scholar Dr. Mary Beth Norton, I now know that Mercy Otis Warren edited some of her letters, especially those written in the year 1774.[22] Knowing that Mercy edited certain letters, I read her correspondence with caution. Her revisions show that she thought critically about herself as an elite woman, about her legacy, and about Americans' memory of the Revolution. Founders Online Archives footnotes some of the changes, whereas the Massachusetts Historical Society does not. Mercy edited those letters from 1774 because at the time of editing (early 1800's) she was trying to write a history of the American Revolution that downplayed its radical character. Interestingly, in 1773, in a letter to Hannah Winthrop, Mercy wrote that "there is generally a wish to stand well in the opinion of those we most esteem."[23] Mercy desired to be viewed as a respectable and honorable person, and this helps explain her later revision of her letters. This research is even more fruitful because I studied her viewpoint during the years 1769-1780 and I saw how her perspective eventually changed. Further, I discovered that this project could encompass many more subjects and time. Due to the project's limits, I set boundaries for the letters and years I focused on.

The significance of Mercy Otis Warren's primary documents compared to others from her time is the number that have survived. Unlike other women who wrote during the Revolutionary Era, she penned numerous letters every year of her adult life, and this volume of correspondence helps historians understand her feelings, actions, and her life as a whole. Further, Mercy wrote letters before, during, and after the Revolutionary War. Mercy described her situation and interacted with several key individuals of the war. Her legacy survived because of her elite position as a white woman in her community. Her male family members were involved with the political and economic realm of Plymouth, Massachusetts, which gave her insight into

[22] Mary Beth Norton, email message to McKenna Essman, March 17, 2021.
[23] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773.

the major events of the Revolutionary period. Her ability to document her life to friends and family was a result of her elite position. She had writing skills, access to the materials, and time to write and publish poems and correspond with influential people.

Methodologically, this thesis draws on insights from social history, gender history, and the history of emotions. I placed Mercy's correspondence into the political and social context of her family, friends, and community during the years 1769-1780. The extensive scholarship on Barnstable and Plymouth, Massachusetts, and their environs enabled me to understand what was happening in her community that may have given rise to the emotions she expressed in certain letters. I asked how her community status, her family relations, and her gendered friendships influenced her expression of emotions. In the eighteenth-century, emotion was defined as the passion and feeling of an individual.[24] With the Enlightenment impacting many of the colonists, the study and thought of emotion became a popular topic. Thomas Paine addressed Americans with *Common Sense* and stated that "passions and feelings of mankind" created a foundation for natural rights.[25] In Mercy Otis Warren's letters, she expressed herself emotionally and wrote about her emotions. When I refer to Mercy's expressions, I detail a specific emotion that is evident in her letter.

While social and gender history are well established approaches, the history of emotions is still emerging. It is intertwined with psychohistory, an American phenomenon which emerged from psychoanalytic studies in the 1950s.[26] Scholars researching events consider a variety of social, economic, and political factors, and they consider multiple perspectives. William

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[24] Nicole Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution*, (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 2012), 3.
[25] Eustace, *Passion in the Gale,* 3. Thomas Paine. *Common Sense* [1776] (New York, NY: Skyhorse Publishing, 2012).
[26] Petteri Pietikainen and Juhani Ihanus, "On the Origins of Psychoanalytic Psychohistory," *History of Psychology,* 6:2 (2003), 171–194.

Langer was one of the first individuals to propose that historians analyze history in a psycho-historical way.[27] His ideas gained traction, but many historians did not follow his advice. Nonetheless, people were intrigued with the idea of psychohistory because it influenced the media, arts and culture of America.[28] The idea of psychohistory, for modern use, is to understand the human mind and behavior. This, then, could be applied to historical figures and events. Langer argued that psychohistory might help provide historical solutions to events and he encouraged professional training.[29] Those who practiced psychohistory focused on biographical studies. For instance, Erik Erikson's *Young Man Luther* (1958) merged theories of psychology and history.[30]

Although psychohistory showed promise, many historians have discredited it. The major concern is that psychohistory cannot draw clear conclusions about the past. In addition, historians have argued that psycho-historical studies have focused only on individuals instead of considering groups of people. Critics have further argued that psycho-historical evidence is riddled with unfounded assumptions and is, therefore, unconvincing. Ken Fuschman argues that psycho-historians fail to follow the agreed upon standards of historical analysis and have substituted different standards and outcomes.[31] The hypotheses of both historians and psycho-historians practicing this method have failed to provide valid evidence. Currently, there are no academic programs that train students in psychohistory.[32]

Despite the negative reaction to psychohistory, I believe it has merit. As an historian, I am aware of the bias of psychohistory and the lack of support from traditionally focused

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[27] William L. Langer, *Political and Social Upheaval: 1832-1852*, (New York: Harper & Row, 1969).
[28] Pietikainen and Ihanus, 187.
[29] Pietikainen and Ihanus, 172.
[30] Erik H. Erikson, *Young Man Luther: A Study in Psychoanalysis and History* (New York, NY: Norton, 1962).
[31] Ken Fuchsman, "The Dilemmas of Psychohistory," *Journal of Psychohistory,* 47:3 (2020): 210–31.
[32] Fuchsman, 214.

historians. Scholars using the history of emotions as a methodological approach need to understand the basic concepts of psychohistory to understand the historiographical transition to history of emotions.

The methodological challenge I faced in this project was to maintain high standards of historical evidence while also respecting the insights of psychohistory and history of emotions. I realized the distinction between history and psychology. I provided "logical rigor" that many historians believe psychohistory lacks.[33] I have tried to avoid the error of failing to provide substantial evidence. I openly discuss terminology and explain the impact of emotions in the following chapters. I present Mercy Otis Warren as a whole person -- an historical individual who revealed her status and expressed her emotions through her writing. I did not make assumptions regarding her psychological well-being or diagnose her with specific mental diseases. My intent is to place Mercy Otis Warren in an historical context that includes her emotions. My project contributes to the history of emotions by offering carefully documented research about this complex person.

One of the most prominent historians of emotion in the American Revolution is Nicole Eustace. Her project focuses specifically on eighteenth-century Pennsylvania, but her ideas apply to the other colonies.[34] Eustace shows that emotions apply not only to personal experiences; instead, they help explain social and political events. Sarah Knott also shows that the idea of social regeneration was popular among the revolutionaries.[35] During the American Revolution, natural equality and moral superiority became a conversation about expressing emotions – a conversation not yet fully discussed in the historical scholarship. Eustace argues that emotions

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[33] Pietikainen and Ihanus, 190.
[34] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 13.
[35] Sarah Knott, *Sensibility and the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: Omohundro Institute and University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 3.

were "a declaration of status" and they influenced politics.[36] People were interested in assessing themselves with self-perception. The Revolutionary War inspired people to consider themselves emotional and ethical beings. During the eighteenth century, Knott argues, "what made sensibility particular was how it eschewed traditional dichotomies of reason and feeling, mind and body by means of sensation and perception."[37]

For this project, I focus on sentiment and emotional spirit in Mercy Otis Warren's letters; these were two vital emotions to display. The Great Awakening spurred new emotions that were defined in the eighteenth century. The colonists changed emotionally as much as they changed politically, socially, and economically. A significant emotion in the American colonies was sentiment. This was "best understood as a brand of the emotion that owed something to the head as well as the heart and that kind of concern with refinement of feeling or nervous theories of emotion that came to characterize the culture of sensibility."[38] Mercy expressed and wrote about her sentiment towards personal and political situations. Spirit was defined as "a vehement brand of emotion that burnished the power of passion with the luster of classical virtue."[39] The Appendix provides detailed examples of the emotions in Mercy's letters.

This project draws on and contributes to several important scholarly conversations: elitism and status, women and gender, and emotion. Because of her extensive writings, Mercy Otis Warren provides an opportunity to see how these fields of study might benefit each other. I argue that Mercy Otis Warren was overwhelmingly influenced by her family's status, an influence discernable in her letters. Her family's elite status was wide-reaching and created economic, political, social, and cultural privilege for its members. The Otises traced their

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[36] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 7.
[37] Knott, 5.
[38] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale,* 485.
[39] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale,* 387.

genealogy back to the Mayflower (an important element of prestige in the community) and they still ruled Barnstable, a neighboring town to Plymouth, during the Revolutionary Era. The Warrens also were descended from the Mayflower and remained a powerful presence in Plymouth, Massachusetts. As a daughter, wife, and mother of the "first families" of Barnstable and Plymouth, Mercy Otis Warren felt enormous responsibility to carry forward – in an appropriately gendered way – the power, privilege, and reputation she had inherited. This responsibility she expressed in emotional terms in her letters. Historians have long prized Mercy Otis Warren because of her letters, which showed how an elite woman expressed her support of the revolution. But I suggest that those letters reveal something even more fundamental than her patriotic impulse – they show her fear of losing her elite position. That elite position gave her a platform to speak freely, revise her letters, and publish historical documents that told her version of the national narrative.

This thesis is organized to develop the elements of my argument about Mercy Otis Warren: her concern to protect her family's elite status, her acceptance of the prevailing gender expectations, and her support of the revolutionary cause to protect her way of life. In the second chapter, I provide political, social, and economic background information on Mercy to give insight into her actions and beliefs. This includes genealogical information on Mercy and a brief overview of Barnstable and Plymouth, Massachusetts. In this chapter, I also analyze the importance of Mercy's elite position in society, which gave her a unique perspective. She was a product of her ancestors and her elite upbringing. She was well-connected to her community and was influenced by other elite members. She did not mingle with lower-middle class people, but this was not uncommon for someone of her position. She spoke her mind about politics because her father, brother, and husband encouraged her to speak freely. While other women may have

been discouraged to engage in conversation, Mercy set herself apart by openly discussing politics. She was not stepping outside of her comfortability by speaking her mind. It is important to note that Mercy did not redefine her position as an elite woman or political advocate. The research I have conducted shows that, while she was complex, she was a product of her elite and politically active family.

The third chapter discusses Mercy's world as a woman and her response to gender expectations. I will provide examples in her letters where she discusses and reacts as a wife, mother, and friend to other women. This chapter shows Mercy as an elite woman who did not fight for women's rights. Her reactions and activities give insight into her world as a colonial woman. I give examples of her corresponding with men and women and I show how she changed her mode of communication, depending on the gender of her correspondent.

The fourth chapter discusses Mercy's expression of sentiment and emotional spirit during the Revolutionary Era. Expressing sentiment was significant to Mercy because her position as an elite woman was challenged by British rule. I also discuss Mercy's ability to express emotional spirit. Quite different from our understanding of spirit, emotional spirit was instrumental in the American cause during the Revolution. For Mercy to express emotional spirit was quite natural considering her brother and husband were active with the Sons of Liberty. Further, she read many of the Enlightenment texts which encouraged individuals to express spirit towards their country. Mercy wrote about and expressed emotional spirit to many correspondents. Her elite privileges included a classical education and awareness of political changes in her community. Further, her family was very politically driven, and it is only natural for her to follow suit. In her letters, her concern for the success of the Revolution reflects her concern for her legacy and position in society.

The fifth chapter reflects on Mercy's attitude towards the memory of the American Revolution. Mercy Otis Warren and many other elites were aware that future generations would judge their actions and decisions. From her perspective, rebellion against British authority had been acceptable during the era of protest and warfare but was unacceptable during the postwar era of nation building. As an elite woman with a vested interest in the success of the Revolution, Mercy tried to protect her family name and reputation when she memorialized the Revolution afterward.

CHAPTER II: MERCY OTIS WARREN AS AN ELITE WOMAN IN THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA

"to fix a sacred regard to Veracity in the Bosom of Youth the surest Gaurd to Virtue" – Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, July 25, 1773.[40]

In this letter, Mercy Otis Warren described the values she wanted to instill in her sons – reflecting what she, as woman and mother of the elite class, should pass on to her offspring. In this chapter, I will show that Mercy's position and influence in society positioned her not as a radical thinker, but as a preserver of privilege and status. She was a product of her elite upbringing in the mid-eighteenth century, which included being privately tutored, having family members attend Harvard, and having her portrait painted. Being an elite also meant following certain rules and codes of conduct, and Mercy's letters reveal that she tried to live by these rules. The research in this chapter analyzes Mercy's attitude towards her elite status in her Plymouth community and among other elites in Revolutionary America.

Very few other women wrote as frequently as Mercy Otis Warren. Her letters span from the 1750's to the early 1800's. While this study only focuses on the late 1760's to 1783, it is important to note that her letters continued before and after. She maintained a political voice in her community and was the first woman to publish a history of the American Revolution (in 1804). Mercy was an elite woman who was well-connected to elite politicians who shaped the founding of the United States. She was able to speak about politics because the most important men in her life – her father, brother, and husband – encouraged her to do so. While other women may have been discouraged from engaging in such conversation, Mercy openly discussed the state of political affairs.

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[40] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, July 25, 1773. See Appendix A for full citations of each letter cited in this thesis.

Mercy Otis Warren claimed Plymouth as her community. She grew up in Barnstable, Massachusetts, and as an adult moved to Plymouth. The heroic story of Plymouth began with the Mayflower. Colonists passed the stories of struggle down to their children and boasted about the honorable decisions of the Mayflower passengers. Disease and death riddled the passengers both on the boat and on land. Once they were landed, the struggle to establish the colony and maintain life became an obstacle. All were motivated by religious freedom which became an important value within the colonies. Plymouth considered itself to be founded by those who survived the adverse conditions of the voyage to New England and the first winter in a new climate. The origin story of the colony became the legacy for future colonists. Plymouth became the example for future colonies such as Salem.[41] Further, this established a regal sense of pride among Plymouth individuals. Other Massachusetts inhabitants sought to live up to the religious example of Plymouth as this colony maintained their desire to seek "further light" or more “godly” behavior.[42]

Prior to the Revolutionary War, Plymouth’s story was held in high regard as being the founding story for Massachusetts. Mercy Otis was descended from a man on the Mayflower and, no doubt, held the story as reason for the Otis family’s significance in her community. This allowed Mercy authority in her community because she connected her lineage to the founding of the New England colony. Though she lived in Barnstable as a child, her ties to neighboring Plymouth stretched back to the previous century. She was destined for power because her male family members worked endlessly for success before Mercy Otis was even born. Her status remained safe because of her established and rooted family name in the region. Her grandfather

[41] Francis Bremer, *One Small Candle: The Plymouth Puritans and the Beginning of English New England* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2020), 8.
[42] Bremer, 9.

was a successful farmer and her father inherited and invested his wealth.[43] Another factor that gave the Otis family authority was their success with raising families. Without having stable income and children to continue their legacy, the family would not have rooted themselves in the Barnstable community. Mercy's authority in decisions and her lifestyle was an example to others because she had a lineage stretching back to the beginning of Plymouth.

Mercy's family did not have great wealth when she was born, although they had long roots in the community. Her father, James Otis, inherited a farm in Barnstable. Although he worked as an attorney, he also labored on the farm throughout Mercy's childhood, and he called on his children to contribute labor to keep the farm going. Mercy's mother trained her in domestic arts, including soap-making and embroidery, but she also contributed basic labor to keep the farm going. [44]

Born in 1728, Mercy Otis was one of thirteen siblings. Only six lived to adulthood, and Mercy became particularly close to her older brother James. Her father was an attorney, and her brother was well educated. From a young age, Mercy was encouraged to read and write and talk about events of the day with them. Her family particularly valued the ideas of Enlightenment and classic Republicanism, as did many New England colonists of the time. As an attorney, Mercy's father dealt mostly with upper- and middle-class legal work involving property.[45] By learning to read and write at this level, Mercy established herself as an educated woman of letters.

Mercy Otis Warren's birth family were prominent members of the Barnstable community and her husband's family were leaders in the Plymouth community. The Otises were known to

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[43] Much of the information on Mercy Otis Warren's childhood and upbringing is credited to John J. Waters, Jr, *The Otis Family: In Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1968), 64.
[44] Waters, 65.
[45] Waters, 69.

value "prudent marriages and careful husbandry."[46] It was not surprising that Mercy's husband came from a well-heeled family that was more than able to financially support her. In 1754, when she was 26 years old, Mercy married James Warren, a Harvard graduate. James and Mercy had five boys, but this did not slow her writing. Her political and social involvement only continued as she raised her sons to be active participants in their community. The Warren family, like the Otis family, gave Mercy financial, social, and political opportunities that most women did not have. She had access to newspapers, books, and politically prominent individuals, and she showcased her opinions by writing poetry, satires, and political plays. Mercy clearly was influenced politically by her father and husband, who encouraged her to speak her mind about the community and politics.

Mercy Otis Warren's life coincided with several key events in the shaping of the new United States. Further, her brother and her husband were active members of the Sons of Liberty. This encouraged her to publish and write about these momentous events in the creation of the new nation. As an adult, Mercy corresponded with people who are now closely associated with the founding of the United States. Of those, John and Abigail Adams, George Washington, and Thomas Jefferson were frequent correspondents. John Adams and Mercy frequently discussed current events and how they might shape the future of the country. As passionate patriots, John Adams and Mercy Otis Warren wrote vigorously about the British Empire's attempt to rule the colonies.

> The Venal System of the Administration appears to the Astonishment of Every Good man in the Corruption, Duplicity And meaness which Runs through Every Department, and while the faithless Gage will be Marked with Infamy for Breach of promiss (by the Impartial Historian) will not the unhappy Bostonians be Reproached with want of spirit in puting it out of their own power to Resent

[46] Waters, 63.

> Repeated injuries by giving these arms into the Hand which would have been better placed in the Heart of A Tyrant.[47]

Mercy wrote the letter quoted above to John Adams after Continental Congress voted to organize the Continental Army to defend the colonies against England. Mercy created a role for herself as a political advocate for (and as an historian of) the founding of the nation. Her close friend Hannah Winthrop also married a prominent man, John Winthrop (namesake and great-grandson of the founder of Massachusetts Bay colony), who taught at Harvard and actively engaged his wife in political and social conversations. Since Hannah was educated and aware of current events, she gave Mercy another woman of similar interests to correspond with. Mercy's husband and brother were Harvard graduates, and her son attended the same college during the Revolution. Her family's status allowed her children this extensive education, and it also gave her access to other elite families in Massachusetts. Not surprisingly, Mercy strongly objected to actions taken by Governor Hutchinson of Massachusetts, and she wrote about his poor leadership:

> I will only observe that I believe the grand pantomime in politics must get his strings retouched, and a new note added to the tune of passive obedience, before he will be able to lull the guardians of American liberty into an acquiescence to his measures, or an approbation of his laborious speeches to prove the people the property of arbitrary and distant Lords.[48]
> Mercy's reference to the "grand pantomime" indicates her low opinion of the governor.

One of her most famous plays, *The Adulator* (published anonymously in 1772), criticized the policies of Governor Hutchinson and royal authority.[49] At one point, she took over the

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[47] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, July 5, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

[48] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, April 1773, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[49] Debra Michals, "Mercy Otis Warren," National Women's History Museum, 2015, www.womenshistory.org/education-resources/biographies/mercy-otis-warren. An interesting point this publication raises is why did she publish it anonymously? She speaks very openly in her letters, but publishing her view was

correspondence of her brother to Catharine Macaulay, an elite English woman with an English perspective on the events unfolding in the colonies. A trusted bond developed between the two women and Mercy frequently sought support from Catharine after that initial correspondence.

Mercy's personal life was heavily influenced by being an active mother. As an elite parent, she hoped to instill in her children the value of reading, political conversations, and support of the family name. In many of her letters to her children, she gave advice about life and its chaotic moments. Mercy was concerned her sons were living in a vicious world. For example, Mercy wrote to her oldest son:

> Yet when I consider how easy the generallity of youth are misled, either by novel opinions or unprincipled companions and how easily they often glide into the path of folly and how imperceptibly led into the mazes of error; I tremble for my children.[50]

Mercy Otis Warren's children were nearly adults by the time of the Revolutionary War. All were educated and lived prosperous lives because of their family's financial status and involvement with the community. Since she only had sons, we do not know how she might have interacted with daughters. She valued her role as mother and as a society hostess. As an elite woman, she was fulfilling her duty to her husband and sons. In many letters, she described visitors, but of course, she did not tire herself in cleaning or cooking. Instead, she enjoyed the social side of life. In a letter to her husband, Warren discussed a visit with family and friends by stating: "but it being a very fine Day they came as far as Plimouth & after spending the afternoon & evening & Regaling several times on the finest strawberys I have seen left me this morning at

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anonymous. Was this a reflection of her family name? Was she worried someone may talk down about her family? When this was published, her brother and husband were still very politically active

[50] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, Jr., September 1772, as republished in Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris, eds., *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters* (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009) 7-8.

10 o clock."[51] Her statement reflected her ability to spend several hours socializing with people. Being social and hosting guests was a significant part of Mercy's life.

Mercy wrote to her husband in 1776 stating: "How much do I daily stand in need of your advice."[52] This letter shows her adoration of her husband, but also her sense of dependence on him. As a woman, she still relied on the advice and direction of her husband and male kin. Nonetheless, Mercy was a strong supporter of his actions and decisions. An opinionated but dutiful wife, Mercy expressed her opinion to her husband about current events and politics. At times, the opinions were bold and forward:

> How earnestly did I Ever Intreat my Dear mr Warren not to accept of an Appointment which my Intruding [?] Head Intimates would Involve me in the Depths of Distress. With my Eyes now swimming in tears do I Recollect How many Honorable, how many profitable & many useful Employments you have Refused & accepted of this one which when Ever it was Named was a Dager in my Bosom. For if you march to N york In your feeble state I do not imagine you can have much Expectation of Returning. You Can Never Endure a Winters Campaign.[53]

This quote shows a passionate Mercy concerned about her husband's well-being and questioning his decision-making. Her fear of widowhood overwhelmed any restraint on speaking out. Although Mercy almost always supported her husband's actions, in this one letter she spoke out in a way that could be interpreted as her stepping outside the gender boundaries of her class. It also shows her ambivalence about supporting the revolutionary cause if it put her family in danger. The letter reveals that she, like many other women of her day, struggled at times with gender and class expectations. Her overriding concern, however, was always the preservation of her class privilege and status.

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[51] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr, September 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, 7-8.
[52] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr, February 11, 1776, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 67-68.
[53] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr, September 15, 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, 77-78

Mercy Otis Warren was a product of her family lineage. Her ancestry gave her established roots in Massachusetts and authority in her community. Mercy hit all the important personal milestones for an elite woman of her era. Those milestones include marrying into a wealthy and productive family, having children, and completing domestic duties. Her goal, as a mother, was to raise her five boys as dutiful and active participants in their society. Mercy wrote from a political perspective because her family and close friends conversed about political events. The men surrounding her engaged in political and economic conversation, making Mercy naturally interested in the subjects herself. The male figures in her life ensured Mercy did not know financial hardship. They also encouraged her interest in reading and writing which became significant factors in Mercy's life. Her comfortable sphere of elite living was protected by the elite men in her life.

Elites in eighteenth-century America mimicked the lifestyles of their English counterparts. The laborers of a community were not considered gentlemen like those who worked with their minds.[54] Many of the common beliefs and values were like the English society. Even the fashion statements of women mirrored England. The interest in adorning oneself helped establish a binary gender system.[55] Women displayed pride in showing their wealth through clothing and accessories. A sense of empowerment was presented through fashion which allowed women to place themselves in the social order of society.[56] While men secured the wealth of a family, women showcased their ability to pay for expensive assets. The elites controlled the political and economic decisions of their community. Often, this included

[54] Tom Cutterham, *Gentleman Revolutionaries: Power and Justice in the New American Republic* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2017), 56.
[55] Kate Haulman, *The Politics of Fashion in Eighteenth-Century America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011), 51.
[56] Haulman, 51.

increase in commerce with England because it impacted the elites financially. Their ability to spend money was significant to their status. Also, their character and reputation played a role in their relationships with English merchants.[57] As time progressed, the colonial elites felt the burden of taxes and control from England. The Revolution gave them enhanced power because they did not have the competition of wealthy English businesses. As they became more self-sufficient with their commerce, colonists no longer needed the English support.

The elites of Revolutionary America also followed a strict set of morals. Most were Protestant and thought these religious beliefs should be instilled in society. They thought their status and wealth were examples for others in the community. For instance, John Adams wrote to Mercy: "Virtue and Simplicity of Manners, are indispensably necessary in a Republic, among all orders and Degrees of Men."[58] Mercy and her correspondents, no doubt, were aware of genteel living. Rules of civility, morals, and respectable attributes were all characteristics of being "genteel."[59] The "genteel" lifestyle was desired and embodied in many elite households. This included having portraits painted, clothing styled, and homes furnished with everything "genteel." The idea of "gentility borrowed heavily from Christianity for inventory of personal virtues."[60] Further, this type of lifestyle appealed to the wealthy. Each facet of their life had certain expectations that were evaluated by their guests and neighbors. Abigail Adams wrote Mercy after a visit:

> The kind reception I met with at your House, and the Hospitality with which you entertained me, demands my gratefull acknowledgment. By requesting a correspondence you have kindly given me an opportunity to thank you for the happy Hours I enjoyed whilst at your House.[61]

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[57] Cutterham, 3.
[58] John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, January 8, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[59] Richard Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992), 63.
[60] Bushman, 80.
[61] Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, July 16, 1773, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

This statement was a compliment of hospitality but also of Mercy's request to correspond. The morals of good conduct were significant to elite lifestyle. A sense of moral order influenced actions and emotions.[62] The moral conduct furthered political goals of elite men. In elite lives, the home and body were expected to impress others. Elite parents taught children morals and respect. Often, handbooks or conduct books were used as supplements. Further, in elite society, it was a sign of respectability to follow the rules and those that did not were thought of as lesser quality. The lower classes did not have the same leisure time to follow the standards of the elite. The elite believed that displaying moral character, proper hygiene, and conduct were critical to their success.

Conversation was essential to gentility. Historian Richard Bushman argues: "The ideal gentle mind was notable for vivacity, implying constant intellectual and emotional vitality."[63] Mercy's correspondence shows her ability to converse as an intellectual, but also as an emotionally concerned friend and family member. Further, people like Mercy knew that "conversational knowledge was acquired for social display and engagement."[64] This included writing letters and engaging in conversation with correspondents. Frequently writing letters was a sign of "genteel" life.[65] This allowed elites to detail their lifestyle and stay up to date on events. Communicating through letter writing was an intimate way to establish solid friendships and essential to elite individuals. It was almost expected of elite persons to correspond with each other about their daily activities or concerns. Letter writing was a self-conscious action that often was thought of as a "performance."[66] Elites spoke eloquently in their letters to display genteel

[62] Haulman, 118.
[63] Bushman, 84.
[64] Bushman, 88.
[65] Bushman, 93.
[66] Bushman, 91.

living. Bushman applauds Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams for their ability to dance "the genteel dance, offering opinions on books and politics, accompanied by deferrals to the other's superior judgment and protests of their own deficiencies."[67] The language and polite penmanship showed a person's ability to respectably correspond and engage with their elite friends and family. Participating in corresponding with friends and family was an elite activity that showed one's education, financial status, and thoughts on events surrounding them. Further, letters enhanced friendship, but also "presented a refined spirit in the act of revealing its sensibility, its vivacity, and its delicacy." [68] In many instances, Mercy wrote about her enjoyment of corresponding.

> My friend will not wonder if she discovers some warm emotions when she considers how nearly I am touched with the subject of my pen;- no one has at stake a larger share of domestic happiness than myself, and while I feel greatly concerned for the welfare of my country, my soul is not so far Romanized but that the apprehensions of the wife and mother are continually awake.[69]

The time and resources afforded to Mercy because of her position in society gave her the chance to place herself in the discussion of politics. Elite colonials wrote "gracefully turned phrases" as a way to confirm their sense of themselves "as ladies and gentlemen of fashion."[70] Mercy invited her friend Hannah Winthrop to correspond with her in which case Hannah replied: "I can make no manner of excuse for neglecting the kind invitation you gave me of conversing by Letter."[71]

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[67] Bushman, 91.

[68] Bushman, 92.

[69] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, August 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[70] Bushman, 92.

[71] Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, October 6, 1768, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Hosting friends and family indicated Mercy Otis Warren was "polished and refined," traits that were essential in genteel living.[72] Being a mother in Mercy's society meant teaching her children the genteel ways. Serving one's country was part of reputation and sacrifice. While many of the elites were not in the front lines, they served in other ways. For example, Mercy's husband, James, was a paymaster for George Washington. In a letter to Abigail Adams, Mercy expressed her fear that her children would face war:

> And shall I own to you that the Woman and the Mother daily arouse my fears and fill my Heart with anxious Concern for the decission of the Mighty Controversy between Great Britain and the Colonies. For if the sword must finally terminate the dispute besides the feelings of Humanity for the Complicated distress of the Comunity: no one has at stake a larger share of Domestic Felicity than myself. For not to mention my fears for him with whom I am most tenderly Connected: Methinks I see no Less than five sons who must Buckle on the Harness And perhaps fall a sacrifice to the Manes of Liberty Ere she again revives and spreads her Chearful Banner over this part of the Globe.[73]

Mercy's statement reveals her acknowledgement of "domestic" living. She knew her elite position afforded her the enjoyment of daily activities such as letter writing and visiting with friends. The exaggerated phrases highlight her knowledge of current events, ability to speak eloquently, while also displaying her elite authority. Mercy's words show her ability to follow elite expectations and care for her home and family.

Some elites like Mercy Otis Warren lived away from the commotion of the city. In a letter to Hannah Winthrop, Mercy set herself apart from city dwellers: "Returned from the noisy City and the hostile din of arms, and the still more harsh and grating sounds of the revilers

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[72] Bushman, 58.

[73] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, February 27, 1774, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

tongue whetted by party rage and shooting bitter arrows at the reputation of his neighbour."[74] Her choice of words showed her disdain for those who were not elites.

The lifestyle Mercy Otis Warren lived reflected her status in society. Like many other elite colonists, her wealth was inherited over two generations. She and her immediate family did not work towards a higher status. The politics, economics, and social structure of her family was created from established roots in her community. Even her marriage was a particular match because her husband was also of elite status. Early America had many elite men who valued financial success. Owning land gave power to the elites of because it established their family in a certain area.[75] Having land and power gave individuals the authority to make decisions for the community that many others could not. Since Mercy's family owned land and had established business in her community, she had more opportunities than those who did not. The revolutionaries' desires for freedom reflected their desire to keep their elite status. The choice of words in letters indicated elites felt they were the carriers of freedom. Mercy wrote to her friend Hannah Winthrop:

> the righteous cause in which the undaunted patriots of America have struggled for many years will finally succeed: it is true some may tremble at a speech from the throne, and others be appalled by the echo of a venal parliament; but we have much to hope from a meeting of the Delegates from all the Colonies. Who knows but that these modern Amphictions may be as renowned for their wisdom, fortitude, vigilance and virtue as were the ancients convened from the states of Greece? - But we must leave to the great arbiter of the universe the decision of events on which hangs the fate of both Great Britain and America.[76]

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[74] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, July 1773, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.

[75] Bushman, 12.

[76] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1775, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.

Mercy mentions the righteous and virtuous people because she identified socially and economically with them. They were not the small merchants, the farmers, or the poorer residents of her community. The elite lifestyle thrived on commerce and politics. For instance, taxes from Britain meant less money for the elites in North America. Mercy and her family believed their luxuries and freedoms were at stake with the war's outcome. Elites wanted power and control over their territory, and the Revolutionary War proved they outgrew the constant interference of England. The idea of inherited power and authority resonated with many elite individuals.

England threatened the social order of colonial elites with taxes and constraints. It is evident through Mercy's letters that her family and friends feared their lifestyles might change. Their privileged life was dependent on their economic prosperity. Mercy appeared less mindful of the poor and struggling families in her community because she did not discuss their issues or socially interact with them. Historian Cynthia Kierner offers insight into elites during the eighteenth century. Social homogeny shaped elite politicians in various colonies and states.[77] The ability to inspire community members to disagree with England was a direct result of politicians and elite business owners realizing their potential loss of commerce. Kierner states that a certain ethos of "morality, gentility, and philanthropy" influenced the eighteenth-century elites.[78] The strength of each component depended on the region, but most were related to Protestant values. Protestant ethic and aristocratic ideals shaped political elites in British America.[79] For many aspiring elites, kinship and connections were vital to success. Mercy Otis Warren was no different. Her father's family and her husband's family were deeply rooted in political affairs. The establishment of the Otis and Warren families in Massachusetts allowed

[77] Cynthia A Kierner, *Traders and Gentlefolk: The Livingstons of New York, 1675-1790* (Cornell University Press, 1992), 2.
[78] Kierner, 3.
[79] Kierner, 3.

Mercy to take her place among the elites. The generations before Mercy were committed to creating wealth and stability.

Mercy Otis Warren's elite status in her community motivated her to protect her family name. In many letters to her children and friends, Mercy discussed qualities associated with respect for family and reputation. Her status as an elite white woman was significant because her children would inherit her legacy. In a letter to Abigail Adams, Mercy stated:

> with such sentiments that if properly Cultivated when they go out of our hands they may become useful in their several departments on the present theatre of action, and happy forever when the immortal mind shall be introduced into more Enlarged and Glorious scenes.[80]

It was vital to Mercy that her sons developed integrity and respect for wealth and legacy. She considered it her duty to raise children who were loyal and honest in the community. As she saw it, the family name and reputation depended on her ability to raise productive members of society.

Another major factor in Mercy Otis Warren's writings was the debate about how the new country would be ruled and by whom. Elites feared the changes in the new government would impact their lifestyle. Mercy's discussion of power and the new republic not only showed her knowledge of current issues but also reflected her elite status in her community. Throughout her letters, Mercy discussed issues that directly concerned her way of life and advocated for policies that would secure her lifestyle and opportunities.

Most women in the Revolutionary Era were directed to seek advice from their male kin instead of forming independent decisions based on their own reading.[81] Mercy Otis Warren is an

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[80] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, July 25, 1773, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[81] Mary Beth Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

excellent example of this idea. She had access to education through her father's and brother's book collections, but she remained in her "sphere" of womanhood because of her elite status. Social standing directly related to the amount of authority one had in and out of the household.[82] In the next chapter, I will discuss how gender shaped Mercy's opportunities and accomplishments.

Mercy Otis Warren's letters do not indicate that she concerned herself with people below her status. She appeared to empathize mainly with those ideas and events that directly impacted her reputation and standing. The contents of many of her letters regard situations occurring within her friend's lives or with political issues. Mercy and her correspondents did not discuss financial worries, food shortages, or the concerns of front-line fighting. They did not worry about the struggles of middle- and lower-class individuals. Mercy's husband James Warren ensured that Mercy did not have financial concerns. Mercy advocated for the freedoms she empathized with. Mercy's concern was not for the lack of tea, but for Governor Hutchinson's inability to lead and respond to England in a way that satisfied the expectations of her revolution-minded friends and family.

A letter in 1773 shows particularly well what Mercy Otis Warren, the privileged mother, wife, sister, and friend of influential people, considered to be the most important issues of life: veracity and emotional passion for family and community.

> I have ever thought a careful Attention to fix a sacred regard to Veracity in the Bosom of Youth the surest Gaurd to Virtue, and the most powerful Barrier against the sallies of Vice through Every future period of Life. I cannot but think it is of much the most importance of any single principle in the Early Culture, for when it has taken deep root it usually produces not only Generosity of mind but a train of other Exelent qualities. And when I find a heart that will on no terms deviate from the Law of truth I do not much fear its Course will Ever Run very Eccentrick from

[82] Norton, *Separated by their Sex: Women in Public and Private in the Colonial Atlantic World,* 2.

> the path of Rectitude, provided we can obtain any degree of that Childs Confidence: A point at which I think Every mother should aim.[83]

This letter, written to Abigail Adams on July 25, 1773, reveals the sentimental mind of Mercy Otis Warren. The reader is invited to see the values Mercy found most significant to instill in children. In this letter, Mercy responded to Abigail Adams' request for information and opinions on a recent publication regarding the values instilled in children. The publication is described in the letter as "Mrs. Seymour's Treatise on Education." Abigail asked for Mercy's opinion because Mercy had already raised her children to near adulthood. At this point in her life, her oldest son was in college and her other children were teenagers. Mercy was descended from a long line of patriots who displayed veracity in their actions. Being an honest individual not only protected the family name, but also reflected on the values of the parents. An important part of Mercy's life was making sure her children reflected their mother's and father's values and family name. She described the value of veracity to Abigail Adams to influence Abigail's mothering skills:

> a much more noble pleasure is the Conscious satisfaction of having Exerted our utmost Efforts to rear the tender plant and Early impress the youthful mind, with such sentiments that if properly Cultivated when they go out of our hands, they may become useful in their several departments on the present theatre of action, and happy forever when the immortal mind shall be introduced into more Enlarged and Glorious scenes.[84]

She reflected on the religious implication of veracity and how it engaged the mind in a life of purpose. It is fascinating that Mercy thought the original author of the pamphlet misunderstood the true value of veracity. Coming from an influential family, Mercy certainly trusted in her children to showcase veracity in their personal and professional lives. This was essential to keeping the family name as a stronghold in the community. If one business deal went wrong, the

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[83] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, July 25, 1773, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

[84] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, July 25, 1773, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

family's reputation might fall. Potentially, Mercy was more concerned about the longevity of her family name than the true value of veracity. In any case, she was very adamant that veracity would save people from falling victim to the vices of the world.

Mercy discussed veracity as a value that was critical to a productive life. By veracity, she meant consistent honesty. If one was honest throughout their life, they did not have to question their actions or words towards others. Also, it kept someone's reputation and family name safe. It was better to have an honest individual than someone who ruined the reputation of the family name. In his 1755 dictionary, Samuel Johnson defined "veracity" as "moral truth; honesty of report."[85] This definition was consistent with Mercy's thoughts on veracity. Honesty and morals were important to Mercy because she realized her family foundation and reputation were reliant on others knowing their values.

Abigail Adams was younger than Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail clearly respected Mercy's values regarding teaching children. When Mercy wrote the above-quoted letter in 1773, Abigail was still a young mother. Her oldest child was not quite ten years old. Interestingly, Mercy disagreed with Mrs. Seymour's treatise and believed that honesty and veracity were most valuable to instill in children. The disagreement is surprising because Mrs. Seymour was an educated person, particularly on this subject of raising children. Mercy explained why it was so important and honorable for a mother to instill veracity in her children. Her letter showcases the mothering skills Mercy found valuable. It was her hope that she would raise her children to become honest individuals because honesty leads to other "excellent qualities." In the beginning of this letter to Abigail Adams, Mercy humbly thanked Abigail for asking for her opinion. The

[85] Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language*, 1755, Edited by Beth Rapp Young, Jack Lynch, William Dorner, Amy Larner Giroux, Carmen Faye Mathes, and Abigail Moreshead, 2021. https://johnsonsdictionaryonline.com

letter shows that Abigail appeared to think of Mercy as a "godmother" who knew how children should be raised. Mercy Otis Warren described the value she found most important in herself. Mercy believed she maintained her longstanding position and reputation in society because she was honest. Part of this may indicate her status as an upstanding citizen in society. Her children's values would reflect the future of her family name. Also, she seemed to speak from experience. She had witnessed friends and loved ones entering a life of vice and dishonesty. To prevent her reputation from falling, she suggested showing veracity in every action. Because everyone in the community seemed to know what went on in elite families, Mercy's family might lose their reputation or financial connections if someone decided to be dishonest or fall into a life of vice.

In this letter to Abigail Adams in 1773, Mercy Otis Warren described the most important value to instill in children, but she also reinforced her desire to maintain her social position in society. She certainly did not want her children slandering the family name; to prevent this, she taught them the value of honesty. While she may genuinely have believed that veracity was key to a happy life, she was also looking out for her position in society and taking responsibility for her children's actions. In doing so, she prevented a life of vice as much as she could by instilling a powerful value in her children's lives.

Mercy Otis Warren gives us a glimpse into the life of an elite woman during the Revolutionary Era. She confined herself to the womanly roles of mother, wife, and friend, and she felt that adhering to those roles was significant to her legacy. Mercy dutifully followed the gender expectations of her as an elite white woman in the patriarchal society of New England in the Revolutionary Era.

CHAPTER III: MERCY OTIS WARREN AND GENDER EXPECTATIONS OF THE REVOLUTIONARY ERA

"the occurrences that have lately taken place are so alarming . . . as to command the attention of the mother and the wife who . . . may be called to weep over the manes of her beloved son.[86]

In this letter, Mercy Otis Warren wrote to her friend Hannah Winthrop, expressing her emotions as a wife and mother. She told Hannah that she did not want to talk about politics, but rather she wanted to share her anxiety and grief about what might happen to her family. In numerous letters of this time, Mercy described the revolutionary tensions that were building in terms of their direct effect on her family. She expected her family (her son, as she expressed in the letter above) to pay a steep price, and she wrote about this in dramatic and emotional terms. Her letters show a feverish, exaggerated language that emphasize her womanly suffering. This is consistent with the expectation that women of her class would express over their families.

In this chapter, I analyze Mercy Otis Warren's unquestioning acceptance of the gender expectations of a woman in her position. Gender goes far beyond the biological differences between the sexes.[87] Rather, it encompasses society's norms and expectations of behavior for men and women. These norms vary from one society to another, and they always intersect with other factors, such as race and class. Therefore, gender must be considered within a specific historical context.[88] During the Revolutionary Era, social standing and gender operated together to dictate the amount of authority a person had inside and outside the household.[89] Mercy

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[86] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, February 11, 1776. See Appendix A for full citations of each letter cited in this thesis.
[87] Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053–75; Joan W. Scott, "Unanswered Questions," *The American Historical Review* 113, no. 5 (2008): 1422–29.
[88] Scott, "Unanswered Questions," 1426.
[89] Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800* (New York: Cornell University, 1996), 2.

dutifully followed the gender expectations of her as an elite white woman in the patriarchal society of New England during the Revolutionary Era.

Mercy's actions and decisions flowed from her understanding of her gender role as much as they flowed from her understanding of her elite status. The world of an elite white American woman in eighteenth-century New England was far different from the male world, particularly because patriarchy gave authority to men in the household and in the community. Through her letters, Mercy created an image of elite privilege, but she also conveyed her awareness that as an elite woman, she had different responsibilities and duties than an elite man. Mercy was obliged to fulfill that role as she expressed loyalty and tender dedication as a wife and mother. One of her most notable privileges was that people took her writings seriously. Mercy's established family name as well as her husband's political prestige in Plymouth granted her an audience that other women did not have.

Mercy Otis Warren followed gender expectations and norms of elite white women of the Revolutionary Era in most respects. Over Mercy's lifetime, her gendered responsibilities shifted as she moved from being a daughter, to being a wife, to being a mother, and finally to being a widow. In each stage of life, her roles and responsibilities differed from those of middling or poor women. And even among elite women, Mercy stood out because she expressed herself politically – but only because the men in her elite family did so and encouraged her to do so. Mercy's opinions were subject to change or became altered depending on how men responded. At some points she openly shared her political beliefs with elite men; at other points, she asked for their approval of her ideas. For example, Mercy wrote to John Adams stating:

> I know not What May be your opinion of a Late Composition. But as it was so Readily ushered into Light and by A Gentleman of your Discernment offered to the publick Eye. You Cannot Wonder if I presume you thought it Might in some small degree be Beneficial to society. If so the Auther must be highly Gratified.

> And will be ever better pleased with picking some useful Flower from the foot of parnassces, than if she were Able to Ascend the utmost Heights: and Gather the Laurel or the Garland from its summit, when the Glowing Beauties have No tendency Either to Correct the Manners of others or to improve the Virtue of her own Heart. Your Critism or Countenance, your Approbation or Censure May in some perticulers serve to Regulate my future Conduct.[90]

Joan Scott's discussion of gender as a "useful" category of analysis has been foundational for historians.[91] Scott emphasizes the importance of understanding gender expectations, roles, and duties regarding women's experience. Starting in the mid to late 1980's, historians widened their research questions about women's experiences. The increased interest in social history encouraged many historians, especially women, to publish scholarship on the woman experience.

As Scott notes, the challenge in writing about gender is the lack of documentation left by women. In Mercy Otis Warren's case, scholars have evidence from an elite, privileged, white woman. Further, the documents that are most easily accessible tend to focus on elite, white women. The experience of women is hard to fully grasp because there are so many factors that need to be assessed. In Mercy's case, she was privileged with time and resources to write to friends and family. Her experience was vastly different from a woman of color or lower class.

In her 2005 book, Kate Davies analyzes the relationship of Mercy Otis Warren and Catherine Macaulay.[92] This study is a close examination of two specific individuals. Both women were political advocates in their communities, and each were strong in their beliefs. The women corresponded for nearly twenty years and influenced each other politically and personally. Further, "their radical edge of their republicanism in the debates over the American war and the constitutional formation of the United States also meant that their conservative or

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[90] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, January 30, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[91] Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," and Scott, "Unanswered Questions."
[92] Kate Davies, *Catherine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 305

federalist opponents might associate them with an insubordination thought equivalent to a sort of gender deviance."[93] They shared the ideologies of republican principles and intellectual conversations. The significance to Davies' argument is highlighting the women as they progressed in America and Britain. Each woman's cultural perception was different, Mercy and Catherine Macaulay were separated by the Atlantic, yet acted in similar ways in their society. This book argues why Warren and Macaulay saw themselves as women and as writers during a male dominated era.[94] Their elite position and geographical surroundings were major factors in their lives.

Davies looks at the correspondence and studies how each woman shaped the other's ideas. Mercy Otis Warren began writing Catherine Macaulay at a crucial moment in her life because the Revolutionary War had just begun. While other works have used this correspondence, Davies analyzes the women's letters from a gender and political standpoint. The actions of these two elite women were substantially different than women in middling and lower classes. Mercy had a sense of entitlement because of her elite status. Since Mercy had elite privileges, she was able to form a friendship with an individual like Catherine Macaulay. Davies' work adds to the historical scholarship because she analyzes two very politically driven and elite women. Her goal is to show how Mercy and Macaulay saw their republicanism, femininity, their politics, and their gender.[95] Davies not only adds to the scholarship on Mercy and Catherine Macaulay, but she also analyzes the gender expectations for each woman. Her work is influenced by Rosemarie Zagarri and Katharine Anthony, both leading scholars on the life of Mercy Otis Warren. A significant point Davies looks at is the private, social, and domestic influences of

[93] Davies, 305
[94] Davies, 3.
[95] Davies, 304.

gender. Davies' work is based on the correspondence of the women which is different than a simple biographical sketch. Her work is critical to gender studies because she explores why and how gender influenced two specific women's political actions.

In her 2006 book, Clare A. Lyons wrote about the city of Philadelphia during the years 1730-1830 and how the ideas of gender roles and expectations changed throughout that period.[96] As the nation grew, expectations of gender were challenged by many groups of individuals. Lyons argues that because of the Enlightenment influence, gender, power, and sex changed among colonists.[97] For the purpose of this project, the discussion of the newly established nation and how the colonists nurtured the traditional gender system is vital to understand. Lyons shows the transformation of beliefs as the United States began to mature. She documents the sexual behavior patterns of the colonists and their corresponding moral codes.[98] Her work contributes to the history field by giving more context to the eighteenth-century gender expectations. The research found in this book is crucial to social and cultural historians who aim to understand gender relations among race and class. Many publications focus on the nineteenth century and do not give context to the beginning of the change in gender roles and expectations. Using such documents as court and church records and social agency records, Lyons reconstructs the expectations of gender in Philadelphia. While her work focuses on a specific region, she shows how gender roles did or did not change in the newly established country.

In 2019, Barbera Oberg published a book that surveys the scholarship about how the American Revolution influenced women.[99] Within the past half century, there has been an

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[96] Clare A. Lyons, *Sex among the Rabble: An Intimate History of Gender & Power in the Age of Revolution, Philadelphia, 1730-1830* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), 1.
[97] Lyons, 2.
[98] Lyons, 4.
[99]Barbara B. Oberg, *Women in the American Revolution: Gender, Politics, and the Domestic World* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press. 2019), 2.

increased interest in the role women held in the war and how their expectations changed. Oberg believes historians have yet to answer whether the war solidified their gender role or transformed their positions. The class, race, and political position in society was a major factor in women's lives. Much of the previous scholarship has looked at elite white women. Unfortunately, most of Oberg's primary documentation is from this select group of people. Oberg's argument looks at the increase in political activism. The book is organized into three parts: political identities, marriage and family, and economic relationships. Oberg's argument shows the increase in political activism from women and how this gave women a sense of independence. A significant factor of Oberg's research is her connection to other historical approaches.

Oberg places herself alongside previous scholarship by Mary Beth Norton and Rosemarie Zagarri who also focused their attention on women during the Revolutionary War. Like Norton, Oberg advocates for historians to reconsider and challenge previous understandings of women. She suggests that there is no single defining experience of women because every situation was different. Oberg focuses on the ordinary experiences of women. All women experienced the Revolutionary War differently because of their class, race, and geographic area. Oberg makes a point to place women at the forefront of the research because it changes the dynamics of the revolutionary war. It shows how the political world was intertwined with people and their communities. Oberg omits many of the experiences of elite women because their lives are typically well-known. For this project, her analysis of gender is significant because she reminds historians of how many factors of women's lives have not been explored. Oberg's work shows the contrast between a woman like Mercy Otis Warren and those who lived a less elite life.

While the concept of Republican motherhood (a term coined by historian Linda Kerber in 1976) did not fully emerge until after the Revolutionary War, many women such as Mercy Otis

Warren practiced elements of this concept before the war.[100] Republican motherhood has been debated since Kerber published her work.[101] For instance, Rosemarie Zagarri wrote: "What has been called "republican motherhood" was actually part of a broad, long-term, transatlantic reformulation of the role and status of women."[102] Zagarri also notes that: "viewing the family as an integral part of the political culture, the Scottish philosophers saw that the relationships and attitudes forged within the family directly shaped the public realm."[103] Zagarri argues that Mercy's family felt strongly about politics which influenced the community they lived in. While Republican motherhood was a social change, it was not an "equality" movement.

In addition to these studies of gender relations in Mercy Otis Warren's time, several scholars have examined the experience of women during the Revolutionary Era. One of the first of these scholars was Nancy F. Cott.[104] Her 1977 study focused on the years 1780-1835 in New England where she argues a great transformation in the occurred in the world of women. Cott's research was foundational because she relies on a significant number of primary documents to show the changes and the influence of women on history. Further, she argues women had a significant role that had yet to be analyzed. Part of her argument was bringing awareness to the social and personal work and lives of women. The framework of women's history allows historians to understand and contextualize the experience of women's experience during the specific time. Before Cott, few studies incorporated the numerous primary documents on women and their beliefs. Also, many of the publications before Cott were written by male scholars. Cott

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[100] Linda Kerber, "The Republican Mother: Women and the Enlightenment: An American Perspective," *American Quarterly* 28, no. 2 (1976): 187–205.
[101] Kerber, "The Republican Mother"; Linda K. Kerber, *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America* (Chapel Hill, NC: The University of North Carolina Press, 1980).
[102] Rosemarie Zagarri, "Morals, Manners, and the Republican Mother," *American Quarterly,* Vol. 44, No. 2 (1992): 193
[103] Zagarri, "Morals, Manners," 197.
[104] Nancy F. Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood: Woman's Sphere in New England, 1780-1835* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1977), 16.

changed the field of women's history because she tried to understand why women wrote. In looking at primary documents, Cott argued they offer great insight since they were not meant for the public eye.[105] The primary documents are raw and truthful about the experience of women. One significant aspect regarding Cott's work is she showcases the changes in womanhood through social movements. Before her work, most scholars focused on broader transformations of the country versus analyzing specific groups of people. Cott encompasses the moral, religious, and social sphere of women and how they experienced their own transformation. Still, Cott believed her work was only a framework for future historians to provide more detail.[106] Her chapters focus on specific segments of the experience of women such as work, religion, education, sisterhood, and domesticity. Nonetheless, the number of primary documents she analyzed paved the way for future scholars to dig deeper into the perspective of women and discover the transformations they experienced.

While Cott produced a framework for the social history of women, Linda Kerber argued that the role of women and their experiences influenced the Revolutionary era.[107] Cott focused more on the years after the war and tried to understand the transformation of women's experience. Kerber argued that women's roles changed because the men were absent from the home during the Revolutionary War. Further, their experiences allowed them new opportunities such as becoming political advocates and tending to their homes. These roles challenged women to think differently about their ideas and beliefs because they were not used to having an independent role in society. Kerber also argued that in previous research, scholars had neglected to consider the impact of Revolutionary ideas and promises for women.[108] The Republican

[105] Cott, 16.
[106] Cott, 17.
[107] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, xii.
[108] Kerber, *Women of the Republic*, xii.

ideology shifted during the Revolutionary War as colonists considered the political role and educational status of women.

The American Revolution provided new opportunities for women in the colonies. In their 1984 book, Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel, Jr., show how Mary Fish Silliman, an elite Connecticut woman whose extensive correspondence has survived, demonstrates the expectations of her role in society.[109] Elite women in Colonial America were allowed more leisure time which, in turn, allowed them to actively participate in their communities. Mary Fish Silliman was able to gain authority through the figures around her. The primary documents she left offer an insight into the private and public spheres. Mary Fish Silliman was afforded privilege because of her elite status. Additionally, she was quite religious, which gave her "a powerful force for the transmission of traditional values across the gulf."[110] Buel and Buel argue the societal movements of women were changing during the war. At a time when women's history was relatively new, the authors challenged scholars to consider the patterns of everyday life and how women shaped their own experience. Still focused on elite primary documents, they lack the total understanding of other women of lower class. This publication is significant to the research of Mercy Otis Warren because there are many similarities between the two women and how their legacy was maintained.

Mary Beth Norton has been instrumental in expanding historians' understanding of women during the Revolutionary era. In 1980, Norton published *Liberty's Daughters*, which focused on the Revolutionary experience of women.[111] She showcased the familial realm of women and looked at over 450 families' primary documents. Norton's scholarly strengths

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[109] Joy Day Buel and Richard Buel, Jr., *The Way of Duty: A Woman and Her Family in Revolutionary America* (New York, NY: W. W. Norton & Company, 1984), xvii.
[110] Buel and Buel, xv.
[111] Mary Beth Norton, *Liberty's Daughters: The Revolutionary Experience of American Women, 1750-1800,* xix.

include her precise examination of the experiences of her research subjects. She expanded on previous scholars' assumptions and conclusions by including multiple voices of women from many different backgrounds. She argued that the experience of women cannot be drawn only from politics and law, as previous scholars indicated.[112] Norton's argument expanded the field by interpreting the transformation of women's lives in the Revolutionary Era as a steppingstone for future equality. Further, she argued that the "duty" of women gave them a role in the public and private sphere. This argument differed from previous historians because Norton looked at both the public and private experience of women.

In her 2007 book, Rosemarie Zagarri questioned the political contributions of women during the Revolutionary War.[113] Through primary documents, she analyzes the influence of women in political situations and how it impacted the transformation of gender. She argues that women's influence on the American Revolution started the women's rights movement and invoked courage in women to see their value in their communities. While their political freedom was short lived during the American Revolution, the poems, speeches, and discussions women made during the war enabled them to become political participants in society. Having the opportunity to become involved in the community gave women a sense of pride and unity among other women. Zagarri looks at primary documents from both men and women. She believes that scholars can find the role of women by examining documents written by men. Her work is essential in understanding that women held a role in politics even if in an indirect way. Zagarri shows their contributions and influences towards their male counterparts. She argues that women were essential to social progress and the Revolutionary period motivated women towards

[112] Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, xix.
[113] Rosemarie Zagarri, *Revolutionary Backlash: Women and Politics in the Early American Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007), 1.

actively seeking women's rights. Part of the strength in her argument is her belief that women and men were equal parts in the narrative. Often, historians separate men and women into two distinct categories instead of finding common ground.

The Enlightenment Era began a transition of gender roles and expectations. In the seventeenth century, women were largely left out of historical documents. Enlightenment writings specified "men" in several sections and did not refer to women. Works like *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* by Adam Smith in 1759 certainly influenced Mercy's world.[114] Mercy might have considered her duty as a woman to read the Enlightenment texts and place herself among those privileged enough to have access to them. The ability to reference Enlightenment works was an expectation of the elite and educated. Enlightenment writers such as Rousseau encouraged the idea of "the ruler and the ruled."[115] Women were among the ruled meaning they were already "included." Rousseau believed that women could only relate to their mothers and not to political or male figures. Some Enlightenment writers challenged Rousseau's theories and invented a specific place for women. The Republican ideology that developed during the Enlightenment encouraged women to fulfill their role as a dutiful wife.[116]

Mercy Otis Warren was raised on Enlightenment era ideas and texts. Many of the texts that influenced her elite lifestyle also influenced her idea on gender expectations. Since she had access to books and political discourse, her role as a woman was based on her ability to adhere to Enlightenment Era beliefs. Her elite life was centered around the politics of her community which was, no doubt, influenced by the Enlightenment Era. Elites read and spoke about

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[114] Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by Knud Haakonssen (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002).
[115] Kerber, "The Republican Mother," 193; Jean Jacques Rousseau, *Emilius; or a Treatise of Education,* (Edinburgh: n.p., 1763).
[116] Kerber, "The Republican Mother," 2.

Enlightenment texts during the Revolution because they wanted to apply these ideas to a new government.

As an elite woman of the Revolutionary Era, Mercy Otis Warren was expected to adhere to religious beliefs and expectations in her community. As an elite woman in Plymouth specifically, it was vital that Mercy embraced the religious beliefs of a community which prided itself on their devout Puritan ancestors. Mercy's religious references are not overpowering, but they are frequent enough to show her beliefs. They show she was behaving in accordance with both gender expectations and elite status. For instance, Mercy stated:

> But in the enjoyment of this hour of contemplation, when solemn silence reigns, the mind is naturally led to ask itself if it is alone, or whether it is not in the presence of innumerable beings of a superior order, who with unceasing harmony adore the all pervading eye who at one view beholds the highest ranks of angels.[117]

In that same letter, Mercy wrote:

> But the great director of events, can make the machinations of the most polished courts, the intrigues of the civilized Statesman or the more simple and less barbarous savage wrapped in his fleecy garb and armed only with his Tomahawk, equally instruments of universal good when they have answered the purposes of chastisement.[118]

Mercy does not write directly about "God" but rather about higher beings in general. She ensured that her children had a religious background as well. In a letter to her son, Mercy referred to and reminded him of the "Great Guardian of Virtue."[119] Her duty as a mother and as an elite woman in her community was to ensure family and acquaintances were aware of her belief in a higher

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[117] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, July 1773, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[118] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, July 1773, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[119] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., September 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 7-8.

power. Religious beliefs were significant because many communities were founded by elites who held everyone to a religious standard.

Most women in Mercy Otis Warren's day were directed to seek advice from their male kin instead of being formally educated like their fathers and brothers.[120] Mercy, while not formally educated, did read the popular and classical materials of her era. Though she sought advice from her male kin, she also participated in discussions with them regarding current events. She had access to education through her father's and brother's book collections, but she remained in her womanly "sphere" in most ways, as was expected of elite women. In her letters, she referenced classical literature which showed her familiarity with educated works.

Elite marriage during the colonial period was an expected responsibility of two individuals. It was a serious commitment that often seemed a "duty" for the two involved. The importance of marriage was continuing the elite status and contributing to society as a couple. Women freely entered marriage knowing their destiny as a wife and producer of children. Further, "marriages drew such concentrated attention because of their crucial importance to the maintenance of social order."[121] Mercy's elite position did not change when she married her husband, who held political authority in Plymouth. White women who married in colonial America were not going from independence to dependence because they were already dependent on their parents.[122] Further, Mercy was never independent as an individual. She always had some form of dependence on a particular person. As a white, elite woman, she was expected to fulfill her duty as a wife and mother. There were few other options than marriage for women like

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[120] Norton, *Separated by their Sex*, 2.
[121] Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society* (New York: A.A. Knopf. 1996), 95.
[122] Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 43.

Mercy. Further, "marriage did fix white women's fates in a way that it did not affect men's."[123] Men's careers influenced and sustained the domestic activities. For Mercy, her social and domestic sphere included political discussions and visits from elite, political men. Men believed it was their duty to society to marry and produce children.[124] Especially in the case of elite men, their goal was to produce productive heirs of their family name and business. Women's service in marriage was the "price of an independent, subordinate role rather than the obligation of a dependent and subordinate one."[125]

Fortunately for Mercy Otis Warren, her husband believed her role involved more than producing children. Mercy contributed her opinion when many other women did not. Mercy's letters indicate that James and Mercy Warren enjoyed each other's company and collaborated on ideas together. For example, Mercy wrote to her husband: "There are few places that I have seen that I should not prefer to plimouth were it not the interest of the best of Husbands to reside there but when he is absent I find to Attach me to the place; a people Defective in Literacy & polite Education"[126] Each marriage's expectations depended on the patriarchal order of the household. The language found in the letters between Mercy and James Warren reflect the expected roles of elite married couples. She often replied to his letters using terms of endearment and wrote about her concerns for his safety.

Mercy Otis Warren was more privileged than other wives because her husband valued her opinion and respected her position as a wife and mother. Her language in letters towards her husband was different from the language she used with her friends and children because she looked to her husband for affection and approval. For instance, she wrote: "The fond and

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[123] Norton, *Liberty's Daughters,* 43.
[124] Norton, *Liberty's Daughters*, 43.
[125] Cott, *The Bonds of Womanhood*, 23.
[126] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 14, 1777, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 96.

affectionate friend of my heart tho absent but a day will doubtless think me inexcusable if I omit to let him know that I am as well as when he left me."[127] In many letters, she discussed the daily happenings while he was away and asked his opinion on several matters. She included him in the happenings of their home and community because he held significant power as a male politician. For instance: "Gardning goes on finely to day under the direction and assistance of your industrious son who refused to go to Barnstable."[128] As a wife, her duty was to maintain interest and concern in his involvements. Further, it was because of his business relations that they had success as elite individuals in their community.

Elite parenthood during the colonial era was based on the legacy of the family name. Parents, especially males, wanted their children educated, religious, and morally aware of their actions.[129] Elite children would carry on the legacy of their parents. Historian Lisa Wilson has argued that scholars have often described parenting in early New England as "more pragmatic than sentimental," although she found that pragmatism was often tempered with affection.[130] Authority was established with children from a young age. Mercy Otis Warren displayed authority and influence in her children by giving them advice on life situations.

Creating an identity in the community was also valuable. Mercy wanted to show her children the value of establishing a loyal and respectable reputation in society. For example, Mercy wrote: "The just ideas my Son imbibed of duty to his friends, to himself, to his country, and to his God, will, I trust, ever prevent giving pain."[131] Her words show her belief in their entitlement as elite people. In this letter, Mercy reminded her son of his duty to himself and those

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[127] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, April 22, 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 6-7.
[128] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, April 22, 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 6.
[129] Lisa Wilson, "'Ye Heart of a Father': Male Parenting in Colonial New England," *Journal of Family History,* vol. 24, no. 3 (1999), 255-274.
[130] Wilson, 255.
[131] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., June 1776, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 76.

around him after he had issues with depression. As Wilson has argued, a mark of love from parents included instruction towards education and a child's well-being.[132] This is apparent in many of the letters Mercy wrote to her son in college. For example, Mercy wrote: "Consider, my child, that though you may escape the danger so recently fatal to one of your classes, yet there are ten thousand avenues that lead down to death."[133] She frequently reminded him to improve his morals and learn to understand himself.

Civil engagement and attention to one's country were critical parenting points.[134] Elite parents were interested in the morals and dedication to their children because it showed their ability to properly parent. Mercy Otis Warren wrote to her son in 1776: "From your own reflection- from your sensibility and regard to character you stand in as little need of frequent admonitions against the insinuations of criminal pleasure as any one of your age; but who can pronounce himself safe?"[135] Raising elite, well-behaved children was a responsibility that elite parents took seriously. Mercy often was concerned about vice entering her son, James Warren Jr.'s life in college and warned him to watch out for the "flighty vagaries of the virulent and narrow-minded man."[136] Further, elite family members drew on their established and continuous involvement in the community as a form of respect. The patriotic discussions were natural forms of involvement in the community. Mercy wanted to maintain a sense of patriotic and political presence within her family. She knew the responsibility left to her sons would reflect her elite status and ability to raise children. In a letter to her husband, Mercy referred to their sons by writing: "May they all improve their opportunities in a manner worthy of the sons of a father

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[132] Wilson, 256.
[133] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., July 1773, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 17.
[134] James Marten, "Introduction," in *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 2.
[135] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., June 1776, *Mercy Otis Warren, Selected Letters,* 75.
[136] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr, September 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 3.

engaged in the Grand System of American politics and of a mother whose assuidity to guide them properly is quickened by Duty reflection & maternal pride."[137] As time progressed during and after the American Revolution, parents considered what it meant to be American and how their children should be raised. Elite parents defined childhood with their expectations of a wealthy, patriarchal legacy.

Parenting involved the concern of current events and the impact they might have on the children. In a letter her friend Hannah Winthrop, Mercy stated:

> But the occurrences that have lately taken place are so alarming and the subject so interwoven with the enjoyments of social and domestic life as to command the attention of the mother and the wife who before the contest is decided may be called to weep over the manes of her beloved son.[138]

Her duty as a mother and as a woman was to protect the legacy and reputation of her family and children. The social and domestic way of life was threatened during the Revolutionary war. As an elite woman, Mercy discussed these concerns as they directly impacted her world. Her friend Hannah Winthrop was also an elite wife whose husband was a professor at Harvard. Mercy highlighted her domestic situation in a letter by stating: “My heart has carried me beyond the limits I prescribed myself, which were only to announce my arrival at my own house, my happiness in the domestic line.”[139] The letters between these women were focused on the politics, economics, and domestic affairs of their country because the outcome of the war was critical to their survival as elites.

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[137] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, February 11, 1776, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 67.
[138] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, after January 1, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[139] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, after January 1, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.

In a 1993 article, Peter Stearns presented a significant argument about parenthood and the idea of emotional culture.[140] While his argument is focused on nineteenth century parenting norms, it is relevant to elite parenthood in the eighteenth century. His argument discusses emotional culture as a set of norms, not overtly stated, but followed by parents. It relates to gender because many of the behaviors of parents directly related to their cultural gender expectations. Elite parents followed a pragmatic approach to their children dependent on their future position in society. Emotional culture can be found in "how-to-act" articles. These pamphlets detailed the life of respectable gentility and how one should act. Elites were interested in these books because they gave insight into already established gender expectations. The difference in Stearns argument of the nineteenth century and the eighteenth century is that during the Era of the American Revolution, parents defined the idea of parenthood which they established with patriarchal values. Revolutionary elite parents concerned themselves with the longevity of their legacy. Mercy is an example of this argument because she was worried her children would live in a world of vice. The revolution was important to her because her elite lifestyle and that of her children faced threatening consequences if the resistance movement failed. If a new country was established, the parents wanted to ensure their children's stake in the founding and continuance of the nation.

A significant part of an elite woman's lifestyle was communicating with friends and family through letters. For Mercy, this included the concerns and changes in the country. Her letters show the expectations of being a woman and how Mercy responded to them. The communication was different depending on whom she was speaking to and the content of the letter. She acknowledged her position as a woman. For instance, writing to Hannah Winthrop she

[140] Peter N. Stearns, "Girls, Boys, and Emotions: Redefinitions and Historical Change," *The Journal of American History,* Vol. 80, No. 1 (1993): 36-74.

stated: “But my dear madam prone as are my sex (and indeed all mankind) to vanity: I never entertained so chimerical an idea as to suppose it in my power greatly to amuse;- much less to benefit the world by the unstudied composition of my leisure hours.”[141] This letter signifies a difference between men and women. Mercy also wrote a letter to Abigail Adams stating, “But as our weak and timid sex is only the Echo of the other, and like some pliant peace of Clock Work the springs of our souls move slow or more Rapidly.”[142] Again, she makes a distinction between genders. These examples show Mercy’s acknowledgment of her gender role. Even though she is passionate about politics, she is echoing the passion of the men in her life. Further, she does not believe that women are greater than men. Yet, there are times Mercy desires more equal thinking towards women. In a 1774 letter to Catherine Macaulay, Mercy stated:

> You see madam, I disregard the opinion that women make indifferent politicians ...When the observations are just do honor to the heart and character, I think it very immaterial whether they flow from a female lip in the soft whispers of private friendship or whether they are thundered in the senate in the bolder language of the other sex."[143]

This quote points to the idea that Mercy believed it was “immaterial” whether a man or woman was speaking about politics. At the end of the quote, she contradicts herself by saying the “other sex” has “bolder language.” She shifts between the expectations of her gender role and breaking free from them. These examples highlight her awareness of the role she had as a woman. The letters give insight into her beliefs and perspective as a friend, wife, and woman during the Revolutionary period.

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[141] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[142] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, January 19, 1774, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[143] Mercy Otis Warren to Catherine Macaulay, December 1774, As Reproduced in Kate Davies, *Catherine Macaulay and Mercy Otis Warren: The Revolutionary Atlantic and the Politics of Gender* (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2005), 1.

Mercy shows historians the gender expectations she faced through her letters and choice of words. She acknowledged being a woman. For instance, writing to Hannah Winthrop she stated: “But my dear madam prone as are my sex (and indeed all mankind) to vanity: I never entertained so chimerical an idea as to suppose it in my power greatly to amuse;- much less to benefit the world by the unstudied composition of my leisure hours.”[144] It was vital to separate the difference in speech because it gives insight into her duty as a friend, wife, and woman in colonial America.

Mercy carefully selected her words depending on whom she spoke with. In a letter to John Adams, she remained humble and less forward with her opinion. She stated: "I am not about to Charactarize those Respectable strangers which appear in our Capital. I am not Enough acquainted with their Language and Manners to judge with precission."[145] She spoke in a pleasing way towards her male friends because she wanted their recognition. Further, she ended her 1778 letter to John Adams by saying: "But when you look over the list of your Friends And Recollect their impatience to hear from you, you will not forget that few, very few, will be more Gratifyed with the Notices of your Welfare or the Intimations of your Regard, than Your sincere & Very Humble Servant."[146] Mercy exaggerated the end of her letters to male correspondents because she was fulfilling her role and expectation of a woman. Further, she was “serving” the men in her life.

As a woman, Mercy had an important duty to write and reflect on her friends’ lives. On many occasions, Mercy wrote about visits, health concerns, and daily activities she wished she could share with them. For example, in a 1773 letter to Abigail Adams, Mercy stated: “It Gives

[144] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[145] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, October 15, 1778, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[146] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, October 15, 1778, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

me no small satisfaction to be assured by you that your Late Visit was agreable and sincerely Wish it may be in such a degree as to induce you to repeat what will always give me pleasure.[147] Mercy wanted to ensure her guests had a pleasurable visit which was part of an expectation for women. She had to impress them with her hospitality. In many letters, Mercy was concerned about how others viewed her entertaining abilities.

When Mercy wrote to male acquaintances, she refrained from discussing domestic duties because it would not have been appropriate. The friendship she held with John Adams remained mostly political. To discuss domestic or social gossip with men was not proper etiquette. Her duty to respond in an emotional way to friends such as Hannah Winthrop showed she was capable of being a loyal and responsive woman. In a 1774 letter to Hannah, Mercy addressed the grief of a recent loss: "Friendships cannot stand by an idle spectator, but is ever ready to bear a part of the ills that light on the objects of her esteem, or at least to offer her officious arm to bring relief to the bleeding breast and to endeavour to smooth the brow of grief.[148] Her duty as a woman was to empathize with her friends' pain while acknowledging the tragedy of loss.

Women, as well as men, experienced an immense amount of change during the Revolutionary War. The newly established country questioned the role gender played in their society. The change in gender expectations also changed social values. Women were eager for freedom and liberty and, often, advocated for these ideals in their communities. Further, while they fought for freedom, some like Mercy, still adhered to the role of being a dutiful wife and mother. The expectations did not shift as far as total equality. Mercy reflected these ideals because she believed her role was to protect her children and legacy. She did not advocate for women's rights as other women might have argued. They also show that Mercy was not always

[147] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, July 25, 1773, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[148] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 11, 1774, Massachusetts Historical Society.

speaking on behalf of women, but rather she was following the gender expectations of her class and race and family.

CHAPTER IV: MERCY OTIS WARREN'S EXPRESSION OF SENTEIMENT AND SPIRIT DURING THE AMERICAN REVOLUTION

*"*Don't write anything for the sake of keeping up my spirit*"*

--Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 1775[149]

I have argued that Mercy Otis Warren's expression of emotion was greatly influenced by her elite status, her marriage to a politically prominent man, and her sense of duty to the people around her. In this chapter, I attempt to reconstruct Mercy's mindset about the Revolutionary War, particularly her emotion of sentiment and "spirit." In the 1775 letter quoted above, Mercy wrote to her husband asking him to tell her all the details he knew about recent military engagements. She asked him to not spare any details because she wanted to be involved with the resistance to tyranny. Mercy wanted to know the details because the outcome of the war would impact her way of living.

Mercy Otis Warren had the ability, resources, and time to express herself in writing. Her letters show the emotions of an elite person in a relatively small community during a time of great change. She expressed sentiment towards her family and friends and towards the revolutionary cause. This is not surprising, since her husband, father, and brother – whose lead Mercy followed – were politically active supporters of the Revolutionary effort. Mercy displayed sentiment towards her children as would be expected of a mother concerned about her sons' welfare during the upheaval of the Revolution. The sentiment Mercy displayed towards friends revealed her sense of responsibility to maintain her family's status and influence.

According to historian Mary Beth Norton, the events of 1774 were the catalyst for the American cause. Revolutionary leaders and civilians did not always agree with the radical

[149] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 1775. See Appendix A for full citations of each letter cited in this thesis.

behaviors of the era. For instance, George Washington thought the Boston Tea Party and the destruction of so much tea was unwise.[150] In the early years of the Revolution, communities, families, and political assemblies were divided about resisting England. The lack of unity created emotional, political, and social toil among many people. By the end of 1773 and the beginning of 1774, many colonists believed that war was inevitable.[151] Lord Dartmouth of Massachusetts helped to divide the colonists by sending to England the record of the first Provincial Congress meeting and suggesting that appointing militia members was treason.[152] In 1774, the term "loyalist" emerged which set the stage for division among people.[153] Once the division began to expand, loyalists and patriots created expectations for their community members. Those expectations included expressing "spirit" towards the Revolutionary cause.

I use “sentiment” and “spirit” as these concepts were understood in Mercy’s time. Nicole Eustace found that in the documents drafted to send to England, elites sought to find ways “to combine the civility and respectability attributed to refined feelings.”[154] Many of the founding fathers embraced this “genteel” way of living. Further, “patriot leaders found their solution in the notion of spirit, a vehement brand of emotion that burnished the power of passion with the luster of classical virtue.”[155] Spirit suddenly became an important feeling to express especially towards the Revolutionary cause. Eustace states that “for Revolutionaries, to display “spirit” was both to claim and explain one’s right to freedom.”[156] As colonists felt increasingly hampered by English control, political leaders began to encourage expressions of spirit towards the movement to resist English rule. Emotional rhetoric was used to encourage others to join the

[150] Mary Beth Norton, *1774: The Long Year of Revolution* (New York, NY: Vintage, 2020), xviii.
[151] Norton, *1774: The Long Year of Revolution*, xvii.
[152] Norton, *1774: The Long Year of Revolution*, 258.
[153] Norton, *1774: The Long Year of Revolution*, xvi.
[154] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 386.
[155] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 386.
[156] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 386.

resistance. Colonists read and listened to the speeches of rebel leaders. George Washington believed "that *thumos* or spirit, distinguished those with natural claims to liberty from those who were inherently slavish."[157] The divide in ideas and morals became apparent among the colonists. The expression and acknowledgement of spirit set patriots apart from loyalists to the English cause.[158] Important political and military figures began speaking against those loyal to England and encouraged patriots to stand firm in their morals and values.

Nicole Eustace argues that the ability to express "spirit" during the Revolutionary Era showed one's willingness and desire to fight for freedom and liberty.[159] The revolutionaries thought they had a specific connection to the "old Republics" (as defined in Greek texts) whose citizens fought for democracy and freedom of speech. The idea of refined feelings appealed to the elites of the colonies.[160] Further, many revolutionary leaders mentioned ancient texts which applied only to those who knew of the readings and understood their meaning. This limited the ideals to those who were educated. Eustace argues that during the Revolutionary Era, for the first time, "the language of feeling was widely spoken in the Atlantic world confronted by colonists opposed to the Stamp Act."[161] Those considered educated and proper discussed politics and current events with their friends and family members.

According to Eustace, the expression of emotion revealed a person's ability to respect liberty and freedom. Further, some colonials believed that those in human slavery had "an inborn condition" which hindered their ability to express emotions.[162] The reoccurring theme in much of the Revolutionary figures and ideas was based on an elite mindset. People like Mercy Otis

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[157] Eustace, *Passion Is the Gale*, 385.
[158] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 385.
[159] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 386.
[160] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 387.
[161] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 389.
[162] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 386.

Warren were privileged enough to correspond with each other about those ideas. Those who were advocating for freedom and liberty, often, were the elites in charge of their community. Their desire for freedom stemmed from the increasing control from Britain. The elites began losing their economic power because of the laws and regulations of the Crown. Further, their feelings exploded with fury and passion as they encouraged their fellow colonists to follow their lead.

A major challenge in the history of emotions is understanding what the research entails. The history of emotions traces back to ancient times and has intermittently surfaced in scholarly work until it received credibility in the late 1900s.[163] In a foundational essay published in 1985, Peter and Carol Stearns forced historians to seriously address the methodological approach by discussing the terminology of emotion and emotionology, clarifying the meanings of these words.[164] Stearns and Stearns believed historians' ability to assess emotions would give insight into actions and responses during historical events. They defined emotion as "a complex set of interactions among subjective and objective factors…which gives rise to feelings and also general cognitive processes towards appraising the experience."[165] There is a distinct difference in their research regarding the definitions of emotion and emotionology. Stearns and Stearns define emotionology as the attitudes and beliefs that a society has regarding basic emotions and

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[163] Human emotions have been written about for centuries, discernible as far back as the writings of Thucydides in the fifth century B.C. The ability to think about emotion and its influence reemerged strongly in the writings of nineteenth century philosophers. In 1941, Lucien Febvre published a key article entitled "Sensibility and History: How to Reconstitute the Emotional Life of the Past" which argued for the credibility of the history of emotions, see Peter Burke, ed., *A New Kind of History: From the Writings of Febvre* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), 12-26. Febvre believed that the emotional life flows into the intellectual life. Emotions are a part of each human being, therefore, the study of their actions and thoughts includes a history of emotions. An individual's emotions influence those around them and can influence historical events. Many of the emotions Febrve focused on were negative. Since his foundational work, the history of emotions has expanded. On the history of emotions after Febvre, see Barbara H. Rosenwein, "Worrying about Emotions in History," *The American Historical Review*, 107, no. 3 (2002): 821-45.

[164] Peter N Stearns and Carol Z. Stearns, "Emotionology: Clarifying the History of Emotions and Emotional Standards," *The American Historical Review* 90, no. 4 (1985): 813-36.

[165] Stearns and Stearns, 813.

their expressions.[166] The future of the history of emotions depends on historians' ability to draw connections between emotion and human societies. Stearns and Stearns stress the importance of cultures identifying a collective emotional past.[167]

Emotions shape a major part of human life. How emotions impact a person's thoughts and actions has intrigued people for generations. How can emotions impact a situation and potentially the history of an event? In the 1960s, scholars started exploring the impact of emotions on human culture. Psychohistory was tried but dismissed by professional historians, who concluded that there was insufficient data to support psychohistorical hypotheses. In recent years, however, historians have reconsidered the value of studying the impact of emotions on human behavior and have analyzed the emotional history of an event or a person. As it is still a new approach, the history of emotions requires more consideration.

Peter Stearns and Carol Stearns are foundational scholars in the history of emotions. They acknowledged the importance of emotions earlier than most by publishing a discussion of emotionology and the history of emotion in 1985.[168] Stearns and Stearns attempt to answer questions about why emotions are critical in historical studies. They argued that emotional standards changed with each generation which offers insight into the social and cultural influences of humankind.[169] Stearns and Stearns believe historians can move beyond psychological explanations of emotions and assess the emotional changes throughout various events and cultures. This type of study allows historians of emotion to contribute to multiple fields of study and see changes in major movements such as the Enlightenment period and the Revolutionary war. The history of emotions is critical to the discipline of history because it

[166] Stearns and Stearns, 813.
[167] Stearns and Stearns, 815.
[168] Stearns and Stearns, 813-36.
[169] Stearns and Stearns, 814.

contributes more factors to the analysis of human behavior and decisions. Without considering the individual or collective emotions of people in the past, historians fail to fully understand their subjects. Other scholars have built on Stearns and Stearns argument and have tested theories within the study of the history of emotions.

William Reddy contributed critical research on the history of emotion in 2001. In his book *The Navigation of Feeling*, Reddy approaches the history of emotions through case studies to understand what emotions really are. Reddy acknowledges that there is no "one human reality" which makes studying emotions challenging.[170] He argues that emotions change over time and are "largely (but not entirely) learned."[171] Society and culture are major influences on how emotions change, he asserts. Reddy looks at several key events such as the French Revolution and the American Revolution and finds the trends or important readings of the day to analyze emotions. He believes that emotions did drive the changes in the French Revolution and studies as such can be applied to other historical events.[172] Reddy does not believe that emotions are inherent or the same with generations. Reddy believes his work is not providing a new concept but building on many scholars such as Peter Stearns' research. His research is important to scholars because he uses a case study as a method to show and prove why emotions impact major events. Although Reddy claimed that emotions are learned and can change as people change, he did not analyze the emotions of specific people.

Jan Plamper's 2012 book, *History of Emotions*, provided a critical look at the history of emotions up to that time.[173] He argues that most historians are not trained in disciplines that may

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[170] William M. Reddy, *The Navigation of Feeling: A Framework for the History of Emotions* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2001), x.
[171] Reddy, xi.
[172] Reddy, xiii.
[173] Jan Plamper, *History of Emotions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012).

impact emotions. For instance, usually historians are not trained in psychology or neuroscience, but they draw on those fields for significant conclusions. This is a challenge for historians and helps explain why many scholars question the validity of psychohistorical study. Plamper synthesizes the work of historians of emotion and stresses the value of their studies.

In 2008, Nicole Eustace published an important study of the power of emotions in the American Revolutionary Era.[174] She believes historians can learn about social changes by examining people's emotional communication. Using primary documents such as family papers and letters, political pamphlets, and sermons, she showcases specific emotions expressed by the colonists and shows how these emotions influenced their communication. She argues that the verbal and written expression of emotion encouraged revolutionary ideas among people. Emotion and morality became blurred during the Revolution because people were so closely intertwined with each other. Eustace's argument is crucial to the study of the history of emotions because she analyzes a very significant event in American history and how emotions shaped the changes that occurred. Part of the reason for the American Revolution, Eustace argues, is that the moral sentiments of people were changing. She does not believe, like Reddy, that emotions are relatively universal, but they change and alter how a culture handles certain events. Communities defined themselves in various ways related to emotions and morals. The expectations of individuals were rooted in emotions.

Because of scholars such as Peter and Carol Stearns, William Reddy, and Nicole Eustace, the history of emotions has gained acceptance and credibility. An approach that once was dismissed is now considered significant to the historical field. Scholars are considering the impact of emotions and how a culture defines them. Every generation builds on the previous

[174] Nicole Eustace, *Passion is the Gale: Emotion, Power, and the Coming of the American Revolution*.

generation's ideas; might every generation also build and expand on the previous generation's emotions? The study of emotions in society and cultures is incredibly valuable because it enables historians to understand the experience of humans.

How does the study of emotion help us understand the Revolutionary Era in which Mercy Otis Warren wrote her passionate letters? As discussed above, Mary Beth Norton pinpoints the year 1774 as the defining year in which colonists began shifting their viewpoints away from the British empire. Due to the actions and words of the colonists, 1774 was a dynamic year for a shift in social changes and moral evaluations. The actions and words of the passionate revolutionaries helped create a shift in ideas. At the start of 1774, many people remained divided on key topics, but as the year progressed, people solidified their beliefs.

In her book *1774: The Long Year of Revolution*, Norton uses extensive, even exhaustive, primary sources. She examines the "published and unpublished correspondence of political leaders and ordinary folk alike; from pamphlets and broadsides; from the official records of colonial governments and their revolutionary successors; from newspapers with reports of local meetings and other activities, along with essays expressing a wide range of opinions."[175] In those primary sources, she discovered the significance and power of persuasion in the colonies. Norton's research shows that the colonies were not unified nor were the political advocates. She argues that in 1774, the transformation of opinions began. Drawing on her previous research in *Founding Mothers and Fathers* and *Liberty's Daughter's,* she expands on the notion that colonists' perspectives were different depending on their location and culture.[176] Most of Norton's publications focus on gender norms, but in *1774: The Long Year of Revolution,* she explains why the specific year was a turning point for Revolutionary ideas and the Revolutionary

[175] Norton, *1774: The Long Year of Revolution,* xvii.
[176] Mary Beth Norton, *Founding Mothers and Fathers: Gendered Power and the Forming of American Society*.

cause. Her work is in chronological order to show readers the building of tensions among people in the colonies and how they responded. This publication is important to research on Mercy Otis Warren because many of the events Norton discusses impacted Mercy's life and correspondence.

How does this scholarship on the history of emotions and the history of the Revolution help us understand Mercy Otis Warren's letters? Revolutionary War fueled a passionate spirit in those who felt England was taking away their liberties. Individuals like Mercy Otis Warren and her husband turned against the English rule because they believed their best interest lay in creating their own legacy in their community. Their duty as elite figures in the Plymouth community was to maintain their status and encourage others to fight for freedom. Their ancestors had established the colonies and they themselves were held in high regard as descendants of the Mayflower. The chance to create a legacy and maintain their social status depended on their reaction to the war. Mercy's passion for expressing "spirit" was evident in a letter to John Adams when she stated:

> If they suffer such terrors from the Name of a Worn out American Veteran what must be their Apprehensions from the Active Vigorous spirited Heros who are Riseing up from Every Corner of the united Colonies to oppose the Wicked system of politicks which has Long Governed a Corrupt Court.[177]

Mercy's choice of words shows a strong opposition to England and highlights the "heroes" who were fighting for her freedoms.

Mercy frequently discussed the men fighting against England as if she had a connection to them. Many colonial elites seemed to believe they understood the struggle of fighting. Most of Mercy's information simply came from her husband or from gossip in her community. Her elite friends encouraged her spirit in letters because they had similar interests. For instance, in a strongly worded letter, Hannah Winthrop wrote to Mercy: "O America you have reason to

[177] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, September 4, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

tremble & Arouse if we of this side of the Atlantic are not able to say to this Royal Vengance, hitherto shallt thou go & no further, here shall thy proud Waves be stayd."[178]

The emotional spirit that developed among the colonial elite sparked passionate responses and concern for the future of the country. Mercy Otis Warren frequently wrote to her friends and family about her concerns regarding the war. For the elite, there was much at stake. Their social and domestic lifestyles depended on the commerce of their community. Her friends empathized with her concerns because they faced similar situations. Most of Mercy's correspondents were elite individuals who had political aspirations or influences.

Mercy Otis Warren wrote to Hannah Winthrop and questioned the moral realm of her country. She stated: "Has the moral sovereign that used to preside in every breast, laid aside his sceptre in theirs, and left their minds in a state of anarchy and darkness, without one friendly ray to lead them back to the paths of duty and patriotism?[179]

Mercy Otis Warren displayed sentiment in two different ways. As an elite woman, she was expected to show sentiment towards her family and children. Her role as an elite mother created a significant dedication to motherhood. She had five healthy sons who carried on her legacy and her rooted foundation in Plymouth. To her husband, she was expected to show sentiment and interest in his affairs. Since he was a leading figure in the resistance against England, it seems natural that Mercy displayed political aspirations. The community looked to the Warren family and to those families that influenced the decisions of the town. Mercy's position gave her more power than other women in her community. She was able to speak openly about politics because her husband, father, and brother encouraged her to do so. Another

[178] Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, January 4, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society.
[179] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society.

reason she discussed politics without criticism was her husband was a major political figure in her community. People would have thought less of Mercy if she had not supported, discussed, and encouraged her husband's affiliations.

Mercy Otis Warren's display of sentiment towards her family was especially clear. She often wrote to her children with advice and expressing her concerns. Mercy showed sentiment towards her children because it was her duty to properly prepare them for elite society. Their actions reflected her parenting skills. She was concerned when her first born son went to Harvard. Warren's husband and brother attended Harvard and her son had an expectation to fulfill the elite legacy. As with any parent, the lack of control and constant supervision added to her anxiety. The elite status she held was essential to her family name and legacy. She wrote to her son James Jr. in college and displayed sentiment towards his affairs because the affairs impacted society's view on her. While her emotion to care had to be natural, there was a distinct concern for his actions and their consequences. An example of her sentiment towards her son James? is found in a letter written in July of 1773.

> At the same time that I feel truly sympathetic sorrow for the afflicted parents who are know morning the sudden death of one of your young companions, my heart overflows with gratitude to the great preserver of man, that he has thus far protected you from the unforeseen evils that continually await us.[180]

Mercy expressed sentiment in this letter by saying how grateful she was that "the preserver of man" protected her son. Her sentiment towards her son and his health overrode her grief for the victim. In this example, Mercy reflected the "genteel" status and beliefs. Her expression showed her belief that her son may be spared because of his status. Her ability to show sentiment was typical of a caring mother towards her child. Throughout the rest of the letter, she reminded

[180] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., July 1773, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 17.

James that life moves quickly and bad can come about before one realizes it. Mercy's sentiment is evident because she warned her son of ill activities that could ruin his reputation and legacy.

Mercy Otis Warren exhibited sentiment towards her five boys as a mother and as influenced by her elitist mindset. The significance of Mercy's words towards her children were to not only ensure improvement in character, but also to continue the respect of the family name. The social identity of the Warren family extended to the five boys. Wealthy colonial families kept a network of wealthy friends to aid in the growth of their children.[181] In a letter to her son, Warren expressed interest in "his fellow student" and hoped they would "repel every temptation to folly."[182] Her sentiment was towards her son and his friend only because their actions reflected the Warren name. Of course, she did not wish harm on her children, but their classmates and friends also influence the legacy of her family name.

The emotional expressions Mercy showed in her letters are intertwined with the public and private sphere of her life. Many of the emotions she expressed towards her family related to political or economic events occurring in her community. Further, Mercy showed sentiment towards her beliefs as an expression of patriotic duty. The opportunities afforded to Mercy had the potential to be ripped away if the resistance failed. Her political and sentimental expressions only escalated as the tensions grew in her community. Mercy had always been at the center of political discussion because she had such passionate family members. Sentiment was an emotion she displayed toward the resistance because it was her duty as an elite woman to be informed of events surrounding her community. The lack of communication through newspapers and letters agonized people like Mercy who felt their livelihoods slipping away. She informed her husband

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[181] Darcy R. Fryer, "'Improved' and 'Very Promising Children': Growing Up Rich in Eighteenth-Century South Carolina," in *Children in Colonial America*, ed. James Marten (New York: New York University Press, 2007), 105.
[182] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., September 1772, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,*7-8.

on the local gossip and, often, requested his knowledge. She described her emotions of worry towards those fighting and the inhumane treatment of the British. Mercy's expression of sentiment intertwined with her passion towards the resistance movement. A best friend and fellow elite woman, Hannah Winthrop held similar views to Mercy Otis Warren. In a letter in February 1773, Mercy discussed the rising tensions of the country. She stated:

> Tired of surveying the depravity of human nature, let us reverse the medal. When we have seen the splendid wretch, for the elevation of an hour sacrificing the rights of posterity, sickned by his ambition and avarice; let us contrast it with the rational satisfaction of the good man, who exerts all his talents for the benefit of society.[183]

Mercy Otis Warren was particularly interested in the moral ambitions of individuals involved in the current political conflicts. The sentiment in this letter to Hannah Winthrop shows her desire to return the country to a state of normalcy. Mercy also wanted the country to be built on morally conscious individuals who were concerned with the well-being of their communities. The quote mentions the "good man" who "exerted all of his talents" for society. In this statement, Mercy refers to her family's position in their community. Their obligation as elites was to maintain the community and overpower the "depravity of human nature." Further, the elite are important to the transformation of the future. As an elite woman, Mercy may have felt it was her duty to uphold the moral standards of society. Her actions and responses towards her community reflected her elite status and commitment to maintaining the traditional values of Plymouth. Since she and her husband spoke voraciously about political situations, her sentiment showed her desire to return to the "founding" ways of her community.

In June of 1775, Mercy expressed strong emotions when wrote to her husband about the state of things in her community:

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[183] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society.

> We hear that Vengeance insolence & Rage marks the brow of the British soldiery while their officers laugh at the idea of a repulse. Need I know say what my Apprehensions my feelings & my fears. I am not under the presence of a sudden panic nor do I in the least Despair of the success of the arms of New England yet my nerves tremble & my heart faints within me at the Thought of the many suffering individuals around while perhaps I must make as great sacrifice myself as any in this generation.[184]

At the time of this letter, Mercy had published political satires and was aware of the growing tensions in the community. Her expression of sentiment for her country was also one of worry. Her position and reputation in society was reliant on the colonies winning the war. Her elite status was based on the foundation of her family. If British rule were to win, her life and her children's life would change. Further, she was vocal about her concerns about changes the British might make in the colonies. When she wrote to her husband and other political figures, she displayed sentiment because many of the issues were hotly contested. She wanted her husband to explain in full the details of what he knew because of his position. She described the British as treacherous individuals who could ruin her lifestyle if they gained the power. Mercy showed sentiment towards her country because she was loyal to the traditions she was raised on. Her elite status in society allowed her knowledge that many others may not have. Her husband worked and traveled with the Continental Army as paymaster general. His position enabled him freedom from the frontline and access to important information.

Mercy Otis Warren displayed sentiment towards her country to other individuals such as John Adams. This sentiment was still rooted in the concern for her well-being and her political expression. In a letter to John Adams March 10, 1776, Mercy displayed sentiment towards the political construction of the colonies.

> I have Long been an Admirer of A Republican form of Goverment, And was Convinced Even before I saw the Advantages Deliniated in so Clear and Concise A Manner by your Masterly pen, that if Established upon the Genuine principles

[184] Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 1775, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 53.

> of Equal Liberty, it was A Form productive of Many Excellent qualities, and Heroic Virtues in Human Nature, which often Lie Dormant for want of opportunity for Exertions, And the Heavenly Spark is smothered in the Corruption of Courts, or its Lustre obscurr'd in the Pompous Glare of Regal pageantry.[185]

In this letter she detailed her desire for a Republican form of government. This reflected her political views and her sentiment toward the potential new country. Her sentiment followed her desire to maintain her status and her reputation. She mentioned the idea of equal liberty but spoke from a naive perspective. Her notion of equality was very different from other individuals of lower status. She followed her position of authority by writing to friends about the forming of a new government. Those on the front lines or working in the town had no extra time to discuss the outcome of the war. For Mercy, the war possessed a dangerous threat of elite extinction. The more England controlled, the less authority her husband had in the community. Mercy described the heroic virtues which instill a republican form of government.

As the war drew on, Mercy expressed her disdain for England's change in attitude. In a letter to Dorothy Quincy Hancock, Mercy expressed sentiment towards the elite men of the country by stating: "The men who amidst the elegancies of affluence quits the delights of domestic felicity, and from the noblest principles engages in defence of his country and through all the fatigues and horrors of war appears with peculiar dignity."[186] This quote reflected elite mentality, but also the sentiment towards the resistance against England. Her sentiment focused on the elite men fighting. Further, her letter indicated her belief that many men were giving up the "delights" of domestic living. Most of the soldiers who fought were young and inexperienced. Her lack of knowledge of those on the front line is certainly found in this letter of sentiment.

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[185] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, March 10, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives.
[186] Mercy Otis Warren to Dorothy Quincy Hancock, April 1776, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 72-74.

The expression of sentiment towards her family and country are similar because they deal with Mercy's concern for the anticipated outcome. Mercy, as an elite mother, raised her children accordingly and expressed sentiment towards her country. The outcome of the war impacted her financially. Businessmen and elite individuals no longer wanted financial control from another country. Her sentiment motivated her actions in her public and private sphere of living. Her status as an elite and politically driven woman swayed many of her thoughts. The political activism Mercy displayed was from her standpoint as an elite woman. Sentiment was an emotion Mercy demonstrated in many letters and decisions she encountered because of her position in society.

Mercy's emotions were impacted by many factors in her life. Her emotions were affected by political and elite conversations that surrounded her. When she showed spirit, she was following the political patriotic movement many of her friends and family members were involved in. When she displayed sentiment, it was often in context of her desires for elite founders to succeed. Her correspondence gives scholars a great deal of insight into how an elite woman dealt with her emotions, what influenced them, and how she acted on them. Mercy's memory of the Revolution and legacy were created through her emotions. She reflected on the passionate letters that drove her emotions during a terrible time in her life. Suddenly, those raw emotions were not as significant to her. The changes she made to her letters were a transition in emotions because her surroundings changed. While still elite, she did not fear another rebellion. Mercy maintained her legacy for future generations by instilling the "elite" mindset in her children. Her descendants found worth in her writings and kept them as a reminder of the patriotic obstacles Mercy overcame. For Mercy, the Revolutionary War created emotions that were intense because potential changes in society challenged her way of living.

CHAPTER V: MERCY OTIS WARREN'S MEMORY AND LEGACY

"This is a mark of bold ambition. —Thus as usual, human vanity prompts to raise expectation high.—If disappointed, your candour will lend a veil, to cover the presumption."[187]

Mercy Otis Warren to Thomas Jefferson, January 5, 1805

Shared memory and national identity were direct results of the political elites' push for freedom. Many letters Mercy wrote after the Revolution were revised or altered to place a veil over the radical events. In the quote above, Mercy ironically still discussed the value of honesty even though she was altering or adding sentences to letters she had written earlier, during the Revolutionary War. After the Revolutionary War, the "patriots" needed support from those who were loyal or indecisive about England. Also, the soldiers of the war needed to understand fighting was unacceptable in the new republic. This chapter focuses on Mercy's "memory" and legacy as it entered the historical field. Mercy's elite position gave her insight into the created identity of the newly established American society. The politicians and elites feared rebellion or another revolution. The citizens of the new country lived during a radical time. No longer were they British subjects, but their decisions and actions could quickly change their independence. Their duty was then to form a coherent and unified society. The scholarship in this chapter pertains to memory, national identity, and the reasonings behind American nationalism.

Mercy Otis Warren fought tirelessly for freedom from England. Her livelihood depended on the establishment of a new government. Mercy's efforts to help the founding fathers create a new government was also a personal concern. Her five sons would live in the United States of America, and she worried about their prosperity. She was surrounded by political patriots advocating for various forms of government. Her husband was politically active and influenced

[187] Mercy Otis Warren to Thomas Jefferson, January 5, 1805. See Appendix A for full citations of each letter cited in this thesis.

other elites around him. As an elite woman, Warren took her place alongside her ancestors by making a respectable legacy for herself. During the American Revolution, Mercy published plays and satires that started her literary career.

Many “patriots” sought to establish unity and a sense of nationalism in the newly established country. No longer under British rule, it was essential the elite voices changed their views on radical movements. The new country could not afford rebellions or revolutions to overthrow the changed system. The patriotic politicians produced a new form of government that was dependent on the acceptance of its people. The founding of American nationalism was essential to creating a cohesive government. The country could not sustain "loyalist" and "patriot" views because the country could not move forward. The elites that had once spoken so passionately about tyranny and resistance realized the harm in a divergence of beliefs. The new goal was to create a lasting “memory” of the Revolution, where the patriots were the heroes. The rebellion was no longer against the British parliament and crown which meant “rebelling” was no longer acceptable. Those who had been furious patriots needed to learn to become Americans with the best intentions for the country. Disobedience could not be tolerated as it was during the American Revolution. The country relied on the people to follow their decisions regarding the government.

Mercy Otis Warren expected her legacy to be preserved because of her authority and voice in her community. Many other political leaders believed their voices would be heard in the years to come. The patriots of the revolution accepted their new government but feared rebellion might become an acceptable act. The patriots' new endeavor was to create a form of nationalism and pride in the newly established country. Mercy also wanted a patriotic society. The founding voices understood the potential danger of allowing constant rebellions to occur. The elite power

overruled the English during the Revolution, but what might happen the next time? The political voices that worked to create the new government wanted to establish a sense of coherency and unity. Leaders wanted to create a "shared history" that invoked emotion and pride for the country's accomplishments.[188] In contrast, the shared history many leaders and founders believed and wrote about produced less accurate history of the events. Further, the historical memory they created has lasted until present day.[189] The unique circumstances of "patriots" overpowering a major worldwide power helped establish the nationalism in America. Still, the attempt to shy away from British history imperialism still crept into the formation of the American government.[190] Scholars have argued whether the push for a national identity was beneficial or a hindrance to the history of the United States.

Mercy Otis Warren and her political correspondents were involved with creating the historical memory and legacy that has dominated the history books. The perspectives that are available to historians are those of the elite and politically driven. Their time, influence, and ability to create a printed legacy enabled them the chance to write history. Further, Mercy believed the success of the war was part of the Divine plan.[191] Her puritan roots and established ancestry in Massachusetts gave her a different perspective than others. The duty of Mercy Otis Warren as a mother, wife, and friend was to, to her best ability, ensure the success of the nation. If the new nation failed, her name and reputation was attached to that failure.

Once the war ended, Mercy focused her attention on her legacy. She described her morals and beliefs in her literature because she wanted people to know her stance on various topics.[192]

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[188] Michael D. Hattem, *Past and Prologue: Politics and Memory in the American Revolution* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2020), 211.
[189] Hattem, 212.
[190] Hattem, 212.
[191] Martha J. King, "The “Pen of the Historian”: Mercy Otis Warren's History of the American Revolution," *The Princeton University Library Chronicle* 72, no. 2 (2011): 520.
[192] King, 520.

In corresponding, Mercy added to the historical narrative by describing the type of government she wanted and how she thought the politicians should act. She and individuals like John Adams imagined a life without British rule and the type of leadership they desired. Without realizing the future of her words, Mercy and others began to establish a sense of unity and political history. In a letter to John Adams in 1775, Mercy wrote:

> As I feel myself as much interested in the welfare and happiness of the community, and the honour of my country, as any individual of either sex, I cannot but express some part of my concern, that any thing should take place among ourselves, which may give our vindictive foes just cause to unbraid us, as being actuated by the same narrow and principles, we have so loudly borne testimony against.[193]

Mercy Otis Warren and John Adams frequently discussed the future of the country and the concern each had for the government. The future of the country, their elite status, and their society was dependent on those in power. Historians find it difficult to understand the intensity and passion of the Revolution. Their decisions formed the government and they worried about how future events might transpire. Mercy and John Adams were concerned about the power and authority given to a new government and the men in charge.

Mercy Otis Warren also corresponded about her political beliefs with individuals like Thomas Jefferson. In a letter to President Jefferson in 1801, Mercy remarked:

> The servility and danger of this Country have been mourned in silence, by one who now rejoices with a large majority of its inhabitants, at the prospect when principle and ability will secure the republican system, harmonize society, and fix the ark of peace in safety upon the revivified mountains of Liberty.[194]

At this point, Mercy and her fellow Americans wanted to make their “revolutionary” words less radical. Her words "harmonize society" and "ark of peace" are significant points the

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[193] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, October 1775, *Founders Online,* National Archives. Founders Online Archive.
[194] Mercy Otis Warren to Thomas Jefferson, May 31, 1801, *Founders Online,* National Archives.

revolutionaries wanted to maintain. She eventually sent Thomas Jefferson a draft of her history of the Revolution in hopes of gaining his support.

In a letter to John Adams, Mercy described the type of government she wanted to see in the new country. Her words are passionate and descriptive about the qualities and characteristics of a "republican" government. Further, in that letter she stated:

> I have Long been an Admirer of A Republican form of Goverment, And was Convinced Even before I saw the Advantages Deliniated in so Clear and Concise A Manner by your Masterly pen, that if Established upon the Genuine principles of Equal Liberty, it was A Form productive of Many Excellent qualities, and Heroic Virtues in Human Nature, which often Lie Dormant for want of opportunity for Exertions.[195]

The words Mercy used to describe and connect the current government to the new government is significant because she wanted to leave her voice behind. Mercy acknowledged the duty patriotism and loyalty to country of her generation and future generations. Further she stated to John Adams in the same letter that:

> But we will hope the present period will Leave one to posterity, and that the American Republic will Come as Near the standard of perfection as the state of Humanity will Admit, and that Listning to the Dictates of *Common sense* the Amphyctionic Body will not be Obliged to yeald to the Violence of party or to the Blindness of private, or provincial prejudices, and Leave the Work half Finished. Shall the Fabrick which they now have the power of Compleating with a Facility which may never again take place be Left tottering under Its own Weight, to be showered up and Cemented with the Blood of Succeding Generations.[196]

The first woman's publication on the history of the American Revolution was created by Mercy Otis Warren.[197] The publication was significant because an elite woman published an historical account of a major event in American history. In attempt to set her own record straight for future generations, Mercy collected personal reminisces and correspondence on events

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[195] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, March 10, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[196] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, March 10, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[197] Mercy Otis Warren, *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution*. 3 vols (Boston: Manning and Loring, 1805). Rare Book and Special Collections Division, Library of Congress.

surrounding the American Revolution. Again, her position of political power and elite status gave her access to documents others could not obtain.[198] She also had the support of political figures like her husband, John Adams, and others she corresponded with. Further, Adams encouraged her to characterize important people she met in their letters.[199] When Warren wrote her History of the Revolution, she had letters to remember her thoughts and actions about certain people. Her unique ability to be both observer and participant in the publication was a significant feat.

To establish a legacy and respectable reputation, Mercy and many others revised some of their letters and publications. After the Revolutionary war, many believed their words contained too much passion or encouraged rebellious actions. Mercy specifically revised letters to John Adams. For instance, the original letter dated October 15, 1778, had a sentence stating:

> And I have still a Further Demand upon you. You May Recollect six years ago, at a Certain Fire side, where many Political plans were Laid, Discussed, and Digested, you said it was your Opinion, the Contest Between Britain and America would not be setled till your sons, and my sons, were able to Visit, and Negotiate at the Different Courts of Europe.[200]

At some point, Mercy revised the above sentence to be:

> I claim it as my right, doubtless you will accede to the validity of the claim, when you recollect that six years ago, by the Plymouth fire side, where many plans originated, and were discussed and digested, you observed in a moment of dispondency that you Must do this Work yourselves. And that she Expected from you, a pleasing Naration of the Different Customs Manners, Genius, and Taste of Nations with whom we were little acquainted.[201]

Another significant example of her revision is her addition to the letter. Warren stated:

> You have been absent almost a year, and None are yet arrived. You Must Remember sir, that when we are Descending a precipice, the Velocity is much

[198] King, 515.
[199] King, 516.
[200] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, October 15, 1778, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.
[201] Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, October 15, 1778, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives.

> more Rapid than when we Mount: Though Expectation points us to the summit, and hope spreads her Wings to accelerate our Motion."

A sentence was added after the paragraph: “Thus time in advance is beheld with rapture by youth, while age looks back with regret on the past.” Mercy’s added sentence reflected her feelings post the revolution. Once the passion and fury of the patriots died down and the founding of the country was well under way, Mercy might have felt less radical. The memory of the Revolution was not as concerning. The addition to her letter is significant because Warren wanted readers to see her differently.

There are many reasons why Warren and others may have changed their words. The revolutionaries may have feared another rebellion. Warren’s revisions likely were completed when she was writing her History of the Revolution. The patriotic winners wanted to create an identity that showed heroism and unity. Some of these changes caused friction among Americans. Further, friendships had deteriorated over the years for Mercy, specifically with John Adams.[202] Mercy did not always agree with his political decisions post-revolutionary.

Mercy wrote a history of the Revolution for herself and for the future of America. Her personal aspirations of becoming a published writer were certainly a motivating part of her life. Further, Mercy, an elite white woman who was politically driven, helped establish American national identity. No longer British or a colonist, Mercy identified as an American citizen. Her writings became a legacy that shaped the American national identity. Scholars would take interest in her decisions, letters, and ideas about the Revolution. She placed herself in the shared memory of the past. Whether she realized her influence or not, her letters, publications, and elite opportunities gave her a patriotic legacy.

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[202] King, 518.

In his 1997 book, David Waldstreicher traces American nationalism "through specific events like the parades of 1788."[203] He argues that part of the American identity comes from engagements in political culture. After the victory of the Revolution, Americans began participating in a shared identity. Because of this shared identity, many people began reconsidering their words during the Revolution. For instance, Mercy revised letters to portray herself and others in a more positive light. Under nationalism, political practices and decisions became accepted. Of course, the Revolutionaries tapped into this mindset because of their desire to create a unified patriotic country. Waldstreicher shows that national identity changes over time and evolves with each generation. He is especially aware of the historiographical trends over several decades that show the interest in nationalism. Historians have attempted to define, categorize, and change the idea of nationalism. Nationalism is a multi-faceted subject. Interest from psychologists, anthropologists, politicians, and historians all aiming to understand why and how Americans created such a unique idea of nationalism. Waldstreicher believes conflict and contest among people has created the American ideology of nationalism.[204] He approached the subject in a positive light whereas many historians argue whether nationalism hinders the country's ability to progress. He questioned how historians can give justice to an imaginary yet grounded idea that is significant to many groups of people.[205] Written documents such as orations, ballads, plays, newspapers, and personal accounts of Revolutionary individuals are examined to identify nationalism's beginning. Waldstreicher provides crucial information in his

[203] David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776-1820* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 3.
[204] Waldstreicher, 9.
[205] Waldstreicher, 9.

analysis of the importance of nationalism to American history. He believes "the practices of nationalism are political practices" and their importance should not be ignored.[206]

Alfred F. Young took Waldstreicher's approach one step further in a 1999 book that examined a specific event and analyzed how it shaped national memory.[207] He challenges scholars to think about memory and its ability to shape the historical narrative. By examining a man named George Robert Twelve Hewes, who was present at many major events of the Revolutionary war, Young argues that memory allows historians and scholars to rethink the historical process of remembering and forgetting. Other primary sources he assesses include newspapers that were written directly after the Boston Tea party and then decades after the event to see how the memory changed. After the Revolutionary War, patriots wanted the war to be remembered for home rule, but not for who ruled the country. This led to deradicalizing the events of the Revolutionary War. Radicals and conservatives argued about how the war should be remembered and how it may influence the newly established country. Young's work is essential in studying Mercy Otis Warren because she, too, altered her letters to sound less radical. Further, Young's research provides a reminder for historians to consider the memory of those after an event.

In her 2002 book, Sarah J. Purcell argues that the violence of the Revolutionary War created a set memory for many colonists.[208] The sermons, newspapers, books, articles and any format that was showcased as remembering the sacrifice of the Revolutionary War aided Colonists in unifying their memory. Much like Mercy Otis Warren and her community, they

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[206] Waldstreicher, 14.
[207] Alfred F. Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1999).
[208] Sarah J. Purcell, *Sealed with Blood: War, Sacrifice, and Memory in Revolutionary America*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002), 1.

were involved with radical and passionate writings to portray their resistance. This experience shaped the way those living during the Revolutionary war remembered the events. Purcell accesses these primary documents to uncover the process of creating a national identity. The loss and grief during the Revolution created the "heroic" memory after the war ended. The "winners" or the patriots of the war shared their stories as leaders and fighters. Commemorations downplayed the violence of the war and, instead, created American memories of sacrifice and honor.[209] Purcell focuses on the shared memories and the select martyrs of the Revolution which enabled colonists to justify the war. She argues that colonists created "stable memories" to create stable nationalism.[210] The commemoration of republican ideology and the elite leaders helped establish the American memory of the Revolutionary war in the early days of the country. Purcell sets her scholarship apart from others because she examines public memory and how colonists created memories for a cohesive government. Further, her work "defines nationalism both as an imaginative process and a political practice."[211] Many colonists changed or elaborated on their memories because they sought heroic status. Through the contested memories of each group of people, the nation eventually created a set shared memory that formed a national identity.

Michael Hattem's 2020 book argues that "Americans of the revolutionary era did indeed begin creating for themselves a sense of a 'collective past' and previous common history as a nation, which were crucial to the origins and development of early American nationalism."[212] He believes the Revolution made the past more important to Americans than other country's

[209] Purcell, 4.
[210] Purcell, 6.
[211] Purcell, 7.
[212] Hattem, 4.

revolutions. The political and cultural changes in society were a direct result of the American Revolution. National identity was established after the war. Further, Hattem argues:

> Changes in Americans' historical understandings of a variety of shared pasts both shaped and were shaped by the political and cultural developments of the Revolution. Therefore, understanding the interrelationship between history, culture, and politics in this period is crucial to understanding why the Revolution came about and why it played out as it did.[213]

Hattem shows that after the American Revolution, the United States created their own identity that was no longer British. This shaped the political and cultural transformations that were the origins of American identity. Hattem is aware of the methodological challenge to this topic. Historical memory was not a practiced field during the eighteenth century so historians and social scientists cannot place modern social and cultural beliefs on the past. Further, historians and social scientists cannot expect people to have acted the same in the eighteenth century as modern society does. What exactly is a historical memory and how does a historian define historical memory? Hattem approaches the research through primary documents that were printed during and after the Revolution. His research furthers the history field because he shows how Americans created their own history and shared past. Deciding what should be memorialized, changed, or reviewed is a concept the Revolutionaries started. The very idea that modern Americans debate or rethink the past in various ways proves the influence of change from the American Revolution.

The scholarship of Waldstreicher, Young, Purcell, and Hattem helps us understand Mercy Otis Warren's state of mind after the Revolutionary War. Her life after the Revolutionary was filled with new decisions regarding her status and maintaining her legacy. Mercy strived to have others view her in a respectable way which influenced her memory of events. Future projects and

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[213] Hattem, 2.

research will allow me to dive deeper into Mercy's memory and how this impacted her passion to maintain her elite lifestyle.

Mercy Otis Warren's life involved many factors that shaped her ideas, expressions, and legacy. The rich primary documents she left for historians gave insight into an emotional being that created a legacy because of her position in society. The legacy she helped create falls in line with the shared memory formed by the revolutionaries. Following her role as an elite woman, she knew the revisions in her letters and the political parading changed the passionate fury of the Revolution. While she did not forget her desire for freedom and independence from a monarchy, she attempted to shelter her radical words. The revolutionaries wanted their story told and predicted the events of the Revolution would shape society for generations.

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APPENDIX A: LETTERS WRITTEN AND RECEIVED BY MERCY OTIS WARREN CONSIDERED FOR THIS THESIS

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2. Mercy Otis Warren to James Otis Jr., c. September 10, 1769, in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, ed. By Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 3-5.
3. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, April 29, 1769, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3321?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
4. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, November 5, 1771, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3323?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
5. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, January 1, 1772, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3324?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
6. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, April 22, 1772, Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters, 6-7.
7. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, June 22, 1772, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3325?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
8. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, August 14, 1772, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3326?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
9. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr, September 1772, , in Mercy Otis Warren*: Selected Letters*, ed. By Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 7-8.
10. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr, September 15, 1772, in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, ed. By Jeffrey H. RichardsHarris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 77-78.
11. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, January 1, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3330?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
12. Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1773, Massachusetts Historical Society,

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25. Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, January 19, 1774, The Adams Papers*, Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=9&sr=.
26. Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 11, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3372?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.
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30. Mercy Otis Warren to John and Abigail Adams, May 17, 1774, The Adams Papers*, Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=12&sr=.
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32. Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, August 9, 1774, The Adams Papers*, Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=14&sr=https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=14&sr=.
33. Hannah Winthrop to Mercy Otis Warren, September 27, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/514?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1
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40. Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, January 30, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=19&sr=.
41. Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, February 1775, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3375?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1
42. Abigail Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, February 3, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=20&sr=
43. John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, March 15, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=22&sr=
44. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 1775, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, 53.
45. Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, July 5, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=27&sr=
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47. Mercy Otis Warren to Harriet Shirley Temple, July 30, 1775, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, 57-58.
48. John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, August 26, 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives,

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51. John Adams to Mercy Otis Warren, January 8, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=53&sr=.
52. Mercy Otis Warren to John Thomas, January 10, 1776, in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* ed. By Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009*),* 61-62.
53. Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, February 7, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Correspondent%3A%22Warren%2C%20Mercy%20Otis%22%20Correspondent%3A%22Adams%2C%20Abigail%22&s=1111311111&r=24.
54. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, February 11, 1776, *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* 67.
55. Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, March 10, 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=56&sr=
56. Mercy Otis Warren to Dorothy Quincy Hancock, April 1776, in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* ed. By Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 72-74.
57. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren Jr., June 1776, in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters,* ed. By Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 76.
58. Mercy Otis Warren to James Warren, June 14, 1777*,* in *Mercy Otis Warren: Selected Letters*, ed. By Jeffrey H. Richards and Sharon M. Harris (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 96.
59. Mercy Otis Warren to John Adams, October 15, 1778, *The Adams Papers, Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Correspondent%3A%22Warren%2C%20Mercy%20Otis%22&s=1111311111&r=62.
60. Mercy Otis Warren to Thomas Jefferson, May 31, 1801, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Correspondent%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22%20Correspondent%3A%22Warren%2C%20Mercy%20Otis%22&s=1111311111&r=3.
61. Mercy Otis Warren to Thomas Jefferson, January 5, 1805, *Founders Online*, National Archives,

https://founders.archives.gov/?q=Correspondent%3A%22Warren%2C%20Mercy%20Otis%22%20Correspondent%3A%22Jefferson%2C%20Thomas%22&s=1111311111&r=4.

APPENDIX B: EXAMPLES OF EMOTION EXPRESSED IN MERCY OTIS WARREN'S LETTERS

The Emotion of Sentiment:

In a letter to Hannah Winthrop in January of 1774, Mercy Otis Warren showcased sentiment when she stated: "I tremble for the event of the present commotions; - there must be a noble struggle to recover the expiring liberties of our injured country; we must re-purchase them at the expence of blood, or tamely acquiesce, and embrace the hand that holds out the chain to us and our children. Much interested in the success of the conflict — I feel myself unequal to the combat yet hope the women will never get the better of that disinterested regard to universal happiness which ought to actuate the benevolent mind."[214] Mercy expressed sentiment because her words not only sought moral judgement on behalf of her friend, but she spoke her mind and heart on a topic she felt deeply about.

The Emotion of Spirit:

Mercy expressed emotional spirit when she wrote to Abigail Adams:

> For not to mention my fears for him with whom I am most tenderly Connected: Methinks I see no Less than five sons who must Buckle on the Harness And perhaps fall a sacrifice to the Manes of Liberty Ere she again revives and spreads her Chearful Banner over this part of the Globe. But I quit the painful Revire and desire to Leave all my Cares in his Hand who wills the universal Happiness of his Creatures, and who I trust if we Look to him in the Manner we ought will, while he secures the Welfare of the upright individual, Restore to the society our judges as at the first and our Councelers as at the beginning.[215]

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[214] Mercy Otis Warren to Hannah Winthrop, after January 1, 1774, Correspondence of Mercy Otis Warren and Hannah Winthrop, Massachusetts Historical Society, https://www.masshist.org/database/3373?ft=Correspondence%20of%20Mercy%20Otis%20Warren%20and%20Hannah%20Winthrop&from=/features/warren-winthrop&noalt=1.

[215] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, August 9, 1774, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online*, National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=14&sr=https://founders.archives.gov/?q=mercy%20otis%20warren&s=1111311111&sa=&r=14&sr=.

The emotion of spirit was encouraged and discussed by colonists who referred to classical texts. The idea of "shared emotionality" shaped many of the colonists' emotional expressions during the Revolutionary era.[216] Mercy was influenced by the classical texts and political figures, therefore, she also expressed the spirit of emotion.

During the Revolution, Mercy Otis Warren and Abigail Adams created pseudo names for each other so they could write in secret code. Their names Portia and Marica allowed them to communicate information that might be controversial. Mercy wrote in a letter to Abigail Adams in 1776:

> Mean time Let me have an Explanation of that source of uneasiness you hint at, in yours. Follow my Example and set Down Immediatly and write and I will Ensure you a safe Conveyance by a Gentleman who I hope will Call on you on saterday on his way to pay a Visit to his Marcia. You may trust him with your Letter though Ever so important, and anything Else you will Venture to Communicate. I Want to know if Certain Intercepted Letters had any Consequences at Philadelphia. Was any umbrage taken by any Genius Great or small.[217]

This quote exemplifies Mercy's emotional spirit because she was concerned about her words to Abigail Adams and the ramifications they might have brought. Mercy displayed emotional spirit by setting up safeguards for the correspondence.

Towards John Adams, Mercy Otis Warren spoke of politics and often gave her opinion on the current situation. In a 1775 letter to John Adams, Mercy wrote:

> You will permit me to go on and give my opinion of several other distinguished characters, who have an active and important part to exhibit in the American cause. From their high rank in life, their names will be handed down to future generations and I hope with deserved applause.[218]

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[216] Eustace, *Passion is the Gale*, 388.
[217] Mercy Otis Warren to Abigail Adams, 7 February 1776, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/04-01-02-0226.
[218] John Adams from Mercy Otis Warren, October 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-03-02-0142.

This quote displays both sentiment and emotional spirit because Mercy was vulnerable, in the sense that she was giving her opinion on leaders of the country and was expressing her loyalty to the American cause. In another letter to John Adams in 1775, she wrote:

> The troops in Boston lie on their arms every night, in expectation that the Americans will attempt to enter. I wish we had possession of the town, yet, I fear it will be a bloody scene whenever it takes place. I will breath one wish more, and that is for the restoration of peace; peace I mean on equitable terms; for pusillanimous and feeble as I am, I cannot wish to see the sword quietly put up in the scabbard, until justice is done to America: the principles both of honour and humanity forbid it.[219]

[219] John Adams from Mercy Otis Warren, October 1775, The Adams Papers, *Founders Online,* National Archives, https://founders.archives.gov/documents/Adams/06-03-02-0142.