During the late seventeenth & early eighteenth century in Colonial & English America, the roles men expected of women followed a strict guideline. Those guidelines kept women in certain boundaries. Women had no defined legal identity as an individual. Women grew to resent being repressed socially and legally with the constant law changes restricting the liberties permitted to their gender. Their only outlet was gossip, allowing them to have a degree of control over their own lives and the lives of others. The fine nuances found within idealistic womanhood could contribute to the tensions generating suspicions among the female gender.[1] Freedoms of speech permitted to women could be considered a catalyst of the Salem Witch trials in 1692. The results of the Salem trials proved the greatest preventive of any future outbreaks in the court system.[2] After Salem, the law realized the errors made during Salem, and pardoned the victims of the afflicted girls' cruelty. Evidence from various trials and writings of the time period during the late seventeenth century show a gender bias, due to the records being kept by men, and the legal proceedings being led by men. The authorities, judges, and jury were made up of males. It could be considered that that were very few writings which display the experiences of Colonial-era women.

Evidence from the writings of Samuel Sewall, Robert Calef, Thomas Hutchinson, and Deodat Lawson suggest that many writings in the seventeenth century, such as trial records, diaries, and testimonial transcripts have a gender bias. Most of the documents are written from the male point of view during the Salem trials[3]. Research seems to depend on assumptions which are accepted because they suit the researcher's prejudices of gender. [4] It can be expected to remain wary of trial transcripts; women were condemned whether or not they followed the 'script' according to the legal expectations society held for them. Governor Thomas Hutchinson agreed with Robert Calef's *More Wonders of the Invisible World*, where Calef blamed the outbreak in Salem on a "parcel of possessed, distracted, or lying wenches" and continued about bloodthirsty ministers and magistrates encouraged these liars with "bigoted zeal."[5] Hutchinson concluded that innocent people

[1] Garret, Clarke. Women & Witches: Patterns of Analysis. Signs, Winter 1977. pg 467.
[2] Roach, Marilynne K. "*The Salem Witch Trials: A day by day chronicle of a community under siege*" Pg. 572.
[3] Roach, Marilyene K.
[4] Holmes, Clive. "Women: Witnesses and Witches" Past and Present, No. 140, August 1993, pp. 145-78.
[5] Calef, Robert. *More wonders of the invisible world*. London: Nathaniel Hiller and Joseph Collier, 1700.

had died because of lying, self-indulgent girls, cowardly adults, afraid of accusation, and credulous judges and juries: "fraud from start to finish."[6] The authorities who were in charge of the prosecutions were men. Defenders of the accused were men, the judges were men, and the outcome was controlled by men. Even though the men seemed to be in charge, the men have been a neglected subject in analyses of witchcraft prosecutions.[7] After the trials, later generations found it easier to dismiss the unenlightened colonists of the seventeenth century who were stupid enough to even consider the possibility of harmful magic, while at the same time never believing the charges that they supposedly always lied about for material gain: land, prestige, or adulterous opportunity.[8]

Carol F Karlsen argues that an older view of women as a necessary evil had been only superficially outdated by a new view of women as a necessary good.[9] Edward Bever, Clarke Garrett, Karen Green and John Bigelow take a new approach by dissecting the role of women during the Salem trials. The role that gender in Salem played is an important one, depicting an unhealthy imbalance during the trials. Karen Green, John Bigelow, and Edward Bever argue that the idea of witch-prosecutions reflected a war between the sexes must be discounted, because the victims and witnesses were themselves as likely to be women as men. Due to their severe limitations, women utilized the only mouthpiece available: the courtroom.[10]

Gender has many definitions, but the main definition of gender in this case involves the meaning that a particular society and culture attach sexual difference. Gender can be integrated in legal, economic, and social interactions.[11] Those approaches are the main focus of what seems to be an answer to the age-old question of gender in colonial America. Court records depict the legal and social outlook on gender roles. Those legal documents provide a strong foundation on the gender roles expected of men and women by Puritans during the eighteenth century. Historians have learned that

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[6] The Hutchinson Papers, MHS collections, 3rd ser. 1(1825): 1-52.
[7] Green, Karen & Bigelow, John. "Does Science Persecute Women? The Case of the 16th-17th Century Witch-Hunts" Philosophy, vol. 73, No. 284, April 1998, pp. 195-217.
[8] Hale, John. *A modest enquiry into the Nature of Witchcraft*. Boston: Benjamin Eliot, 1702.
[9] Karlsen, Carol F. The Devil in the shape of a Woman: The Economic Basis of Witchcraft" Women's America, pg. 83.
[10] Kibbey, Ann. Mutations of the Supernatural: Witchcraft, Remarkable Providences, and the power of Puritan men. American Quarterly, pg. 128.
[11] DeHart, Jane Sherron & Kerber, Linda K. *"Gender and the New Women's History"* Women's America, pg 10.

gender is a social construction; at issue are not just personal identities of individuals but the larger social order. It seemed a threat to the social order if any changes were to happen, especially in the roles concerning gender.

In the late 1670s and 1680s, Gender roles had begun to diverge. The growth of the economy and trade had an impact on women. As the boundaries of the colonies grew, women's economic circumstances became more complex, and they became less involved and informed about economic matters. The contribution made by women in Salem's economic production was no longer needed. Salem became a bustling mercantile town, different from its beginning as a small farming community. The economy relied less on agriculture for substance, turning to the increasing demand for trade specialization. In this period of time, women began losing many of their traditionally separate spheres of labor. They continued to engage in production but increasingly fell under the supervision of men. Even though women could tend animals, produce or market food, harvest, spin, and assist husbands, their work continued to be generally unrecognized based on the slow economic changes, making it difficult to pinpoint a clear or sudden shift in the condition of women's' lives.[12] Attitudes that control martial behavior changed slowly as well, changing the marriage relationship in the same way that women's experiences changed in other spheres. During Salem's early years, if a woman was unhappy with her husband, she could fight back if he abused her. As time passed, women became more likely to appeal to the court or to friends than to fight back. The instances of martial misbehavior from the Essex country records displayed instances of greater female subjection and passivity during the later years of Salem. The imbalance in the gender ratio delayed the emergence of this pattern of diminished differentiation of roles. [13]

The gender system upheld strict sexual standards for women. Women were judged primarily by their interactions with men. Womanhood, in essence, was defined by what the greatest value in a wife was: sexuality and economic usefulness. A woman's sexual nature acquired more ideological prominence and women were accorded less respect than in societies where women were ranked in other ways. It was mainly women who were restricted by the high moral standards established by the social

[12] Hemphill, C. Dallett. Pg 173.
[13] Bloch, Ruth A. 244.

expectations of their time. As vessels of many biological mysteries such as menstruation and lactation, women were mistrusted as creatures of sexual passion. As mothers, women are trusted implicitly with the nurturing and preserving of society through their children and families.[14] There were also beliefs concerning their biology; the traditional view had been that the women had more difficulty controlling their irrational impulses and were prone to extreme behavior. Assertive and aggressive women challenged the patriarchal order of Puritan society. This theme can be seen through the witchcraft prosecutions.[15] Women in the seventeenth century were excluded from formal participation in public life.

Women commanded a limited domain, but they were neither isolated nor self-sufficient. Women gained a benefit with their opportunities outside of the home, such as working in their husbands' or fathers' business establishments. In addition to the common household chores, women could take in others' laundry to earn some extra money or produce. Nursing and midwifery were considered "women's work" for the most part. Beyond their familiarity with economic affairs, court records show that it was acceptable for women to act for their husbands when they were away or busy with other matters.[16] The woman's environment was the family dwelling and the land surrounding it. Karlsen shows how the women of Salem knew about the property, contractual obligations, and financial ventures of their neighbors and others through gossip. If their daily experience did not lead women to feel that their character differed greatly from men's, the ideal for a submissive, dependent, and passive female behavior might seem particularly ill fitting. The disparity between the ideal behavior expected of women and their actual performance probably did cause frustration and possibly resulted in dissent within the gender system, since they were not the ones devising the system. Women couldn't have any rights unless they were married or had a male guardian; there were a lot of expectations for women that society placed on their shoulders.

Though "large politics" were closed to them, women formed their own weapons to utilize in order to maintain their social and political positions. Gossip was an essential tool for the female gender, advancing and protecting their interests. Whatever power

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[14] Garrett, Clarke. Women & Witches: Patterns of Analysis, Signs, 1977, vol3 no 2. pg 466

[15] Bloch, Ruth A *Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change,* Signs, 1978. Vol 4 No. 2 pg 241.

[16] Hemphill, C. Dallett. *Women in Court: Sex-role differentiation in Salem, Massachusetts, 1636-1683.* William and Mary Quarterly,

women exercised was confined to their domain: the home environment. It could be considered whatever power women had would be based on personal relationships formed outside the hierarchy of the village authority. By the 1650s, the most serious dissenters were women. During the 1670s, aggression methods did not differ between the sexes. In 1671, the Quarterly Court of Essex County, Maryland changed the law concerning defamation, limiting the charges to apply only to government officials or officers of the court. The new law denied defamed women access to the court system, giving women no forum to air their grievances or exercise what little legal and civil rights they held. The last two suits involving women were filed in 1673. [17]

The colonial community was male-dominated and corrupt in a few ways, as money bought freedom for many accused women. A woman, who had no male heirs, was particularly vulnerable to accusations once she became a widow or did not have a male in her household. The accused woman was from a wealthy family unless they were single or widowed. The targets were usually families with large estates or with a high place in society. Those wealthy women could be fairly confident that any accusations would be ignored by the authorities or deflected by their husbands through suits for slander against their accusers.[18] An example is made of the 1632 treatise in English on the legal status of women: *The Lawes Rosltions of Womens Rights* which explained: *It is seldome, almost never that ha marryed womean can have any action to use her writt onely in her owne name: her husband is her sterne, without whom she cannot doe much at home and lesse abroad."*[19] Under proper practice of the time, a married woman should not have appeared by and for herself alone in court, as either a plaintiff or a defendant; her husband should have joined her in the suit. Marriage afforded a defamed woman certain advantages. Women were successful in court simply because of their representation by their husbands.[20] Any independent woman was a threat to male domination, or the patriarchal structure of the Puritan society of New England. The Puritan community was

[17] Norton, Mary Beth. Gender & Defamation in seventeenth-century Maryland, William & Mary Quarterly, pg. 8.
[18] Karlsen, Carol F. *"The Devil in the shape of a woman: The Economic Basis of Witchcraft"* Women's America, p 84.
[19] The Lawes Resolutions of Women's Rights: (London, 1632) 204, 212.
[20] Norton, Mary Beth. Pg. 33

unforgiving to women, who failed to serve the needs of the men in their hierarchical community.

A woman with independence differed from the expectations of a standard Puritan household. Without a male presence, money and property immediately went to the woman, which was a situation men wanted to avoid. However varied their backgrounds and economic positions, as women without brothers or women without sons, they stood in the way of the orderly transmission of property from one generation of males to another.[21] All personal property, such as inheritances or possessions, a woman brought to the marriage became her husband's property. Income generated by married women belonged by law to their husbands.[22] Since married women were not allowed to own property, they could not make any legal decisions without their husband's permission until they became widows or died themselves[23]. No statue was more important to women than the laws protecting their claims to dower. Normally, courts were scrupulous about assigning the widow's portion, or "widow's third"; the right of a widow to use one third of the real estate and/or personal property her husband held after the debts were paid. As time passed and the economy became more complex, women's rights to dower was more laxly enforced, and women were put into an increasingly vulnerable position as Katherine Harrison found herself into.[24] People at the time didn't seem to like the idea of a woman becoming independent, with money to her name, since her position didn't mesh with the position "made" for a woman. The males of the community wanted to make certain they would take possession of her money and property as seen in the attempts in the courtroom.

Katherine Harrison was a Healer in Hartford, Connecticut. She was not formally accused of any witchcraft crimes until after her husband's death in 1666, which left her one of the wealthiest, if not THE wealthiest woman in town. Unlike many widows in colonial New England, Katherine Harrison chose not to remarry. Her neighbors said they suspected her of killing as well as curing, during 1668-69, when she was first tried as a witch. Clearly she was acquitted, since she was indicted in the Court of Assistants in

[21] Karlsen, Carol F. p. 94.
[22] Karlsen, Carol F, p 84.
[23] DeHart & Kerber, pg 13.
[24] An Act Concerning the Dowry of Widows, 1672.

Hartford on May 25, 1669 on the same charge. A petition was filed by thirty-eight townsmen complaining about various issues they had with her, seemingly to want her put to death. One of the signers was one of the town's most prominent citizens, John Chester, who was involved in a legal controversy with Harrison concerning the vandalism of her estate since her husband's death. The Court of Assistants also seems to have been unsympathetic to another petition Harrison submitted in fall 1668, where she complained that the actions of the magistrates themselves were depleting her estate, when they fined her 40 pounds for slandering her neighbors, a fine greatly in excess of the normal punishment in such cases.[25] Harrison's petition was a peculiar mixture of justification for her actions, concession to the magistrates' insistence on deference in women, and desperation in attempt to salvage her estate for herself and her daughters. The experiences of Katherine Harrison are common for a woman found in her position during the late eighteenth century. [26]

It was not unusual for women like Katherine without male heirs to be accused of witchcraft shortly after the deaths of fathers, husbands, brothers, or sons.[27] The fact that accusations of witchcraft were rarely taken seriously by the community until the accused stopped bearing children, took on a special meaning when it was connected with the anomalous position of inheriting women or potentially inheriting women similar to Katherine Harrison in New England's social structure.[28] 'Woman' had to be defined as qualitatively different from men in order that any kind of social or political power would be kept out of women's reach.[29]

Laws were even established in New England requiring the placement of all single persons under the authority of a family head. Upon marriage, the wife would lose her civil identity that defined her as an individual. In the legal sense, the man and woman were understood to be one person. The old law of domestic relations began from the principle that after consummating the marriage, the husband controlled the physical body of the wife. If he controlled her body, then he could easily force her into agreement with

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[25] Karlsen, carol F. pg. 89
[26] Karlsen, Carol F. 88.
[27] Karlsen, Carol F. p. 93
[28] Karlsen, Carol F. p.92
[29] Harvey, Karen. *The century of Sex? Gender, bodies and sexuality in the Long eighteenth century*, The Historical Journal, 45, 4 2002. pg. 902

him on every other aspect of their lives. *Gender and Defamation in Seventeenth-Century Maryland* brings up the issue that married women were covered with her husband's legal identity for virtually all purposes except crime. When it came to crime, the women were essentially without the support of their spouse. It seems that men did not want to have a negative association with their name or reputation. .

A good example of a Puritan male trying to maintain a good reputation in spite of his family's misfortune is the experience of Thomas Putnam. Since Putnam made the accusations of witchcraft in his family, it suggests that important changes happened in the cultural experience of fathers and husbands in the late seventeenth century.[30] Changes seemed to make the doctrine of affliction so implausible that Putnam refused the self-interpretation it offered him. Instead, Putnam chose to defer to the older explanations of events as a sign of witchcraft. The assertion that his family members were "afflicted" by witchcraft was also an indirect confession of Putnam's own lack of power as a Puritan father. Perhaps that aspect of his accusation had something to do with the positive response he received from the legal authority. Using the "affliction" of his wife, daughter, and ward, it was possible for him to 'save face' and not seem as powerless as he imagined himself to be under the circumstances. He could disassociate himself by dehumanizing women, making it easier to prosecute them as witches. Using a witch as a scapegoat, he presented the idea that a witch was causing the problems in the family, and the witch should be dealt with. In the end, it was Ann Putnam the younger, Mercy Lewis, and Ann Carr Putnam who ended up with a negative reputation instead of Thomas Putnam himself.[31]

The Puritans viewed the household as a power base. The more children one had and the more property a male held, the higher the status that family held in the town. If any misfortune struck the family, the male head of the household was considered at fault, or a scapegoat was found. The laws from the seventeenth century show how few restrictions applied to white men. On the other hand, women had very few legal rights and liberties as individuals as well as heavy cultural expectations for their gender to fulfill. Women had no rights as individuals- they were not viewed as people, only as

[30] Kibbey, Ann. Pg 143.
[31] Kibbey, Ann. Pg. 147.

extensions of their husband's household. Such treatment would be a very good reason for a woman to feel powerless and oppressed.[32]

With the arrival of the eighteenth century, gender roles and expectations for the roles for each gender had been completely changed from a century earlier. Anxiety was present in gender identities of British North America's occupants during the late seventeenth century. The anxiety men had concerning their gender resulted in a strong Puritan masculine ideal. The Puritan man was encouraged to take up sporting activities such as walking riding, fishing, fowling, hawking, hunting, wrestling, shooting, etc. Womanly weakness and effeminacy were condemned in men who wore their hair long; in fact, in 1649 the Massachusetts General Court ordered church elders to ensure that men's hair was kept short; six years later Harvard enacted a similar restriction.[33] The Puritans objected to plays because of effeminizing effects of men playing women's parts. Men shared a profound fear of femininity in its various presentations, which resulted in an inherently anxious hyper masculine gender identity for men.[34] Changes in the law implemented by male authority figures divested women of many traditional sources of authority during the late seventeenth century. The goal seemed to be reducing the threat of a man losing his 'masculinity' by having a woman challenge his authority. Women were measured against the same standard as men, restricting them to a position one rung beneath a male, perhaps making women into lesser human beings.

Family roles were an important part of society in colonial America. Many people during that time period were dependent upon the structure of the household and their role in it. The English settlers of the seventeenth century viewed their households as a mirror to the gendered political and religious hierarchies of their communities. Men and women each had a place within the household, although boundaries could overlap.[35] In the traditional roles of gender that the English colonists brought to America, the male was understood to be the representative of their family in their dealings with the world. The Puritans based their hierarchy as found in their religion, with a patriarchal structure. The

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[32] Hemphill, C. Dallett. Women in Court: Sex-Role Differentiation in Salem, Massachusetts, 1636 to 1683 pg. 175.
[33] Talley, Colin L. pg. 404
[34] Talley, Colin L. *Male same-sex erotic behavior in British North America*, 404.
[35] Plane, Anne Marie. *Creating a Blended Household: Christian Indian women and English Domestic Life in Colonial Massachusetts.* Women's America, pg 29.

position required women to be submissive to the male in all worldly matters.

Ruth Bloch's writings have indicated that manhood in seventeenth century New England rested in large part on the social and political role of husband and head of household. The anxiety facing the construction of gender identity in Colonial America resulted in a puritan masculine ideal. In 17th-century America, Protestantism, combined with the conditions of the frontier, further emphasized the importance of family life and re-enforced the paternal role.[36] While the formal structure of most families remained nuclear, they were not at all "nuclear" in the sense we usually understand the term today.[37] Puritan men considered their family a source of their social power they held. Men believed that the state of their soul relied on their wives and children; behavior, health, education, and welfare. Every state their child or wife found themselves in was considered a reflection on the state of a Puritan male's soul.

Sewall, being an average upper-class pious Puritan man, realizes that his power lies within his family. Five years after 1692, he had several deaths in his family, a couple of them his own newborn children. Such events led him to believe that he had to do the most important thing in his life. In the context of events in a Puritan man's life, such as Sewall's, the death of his child became one more index to the state of his soul.[38] On January 14, 1697, Judge Samuel Sewall went to church as was the duty of a Puritan man. He handed a letter to the parish minister to read on his behalf, as he stood before the congregation. He desired to take the blame and shame of it, and his apology was by far earth-shattering. The Puritan had a tendency to support old English tradition by following the belief that God had ordained the class structure, which could be compared to the belief Puritan men held about their family being the source of their power. The class-structure beliefs meant that people should stay at approximately the level where God placed them at birth. A good example of this belief in practice is the case of Francis &

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[36] Bloch, Ruth A. pg 245

[37] Bloch, Ruth A. *Untangling the Roots of Modern Sex Roles: A Survey of Four Centuries of Change*, Signs, 1978. Vol 4 No. 2 pg. 243.

[38] Kibbey, Ann. Mutations of the Supernatural: Witchcraft, Remarkable Providences, and the power of Puritan men, American Quarterly, pg 140

Rebecca Nurse of Salem, Massachusetts.[39]

The Nurses' self-sufficiency was resented; the Nurses were considered "outsiders" who moved to Salem from Ipswich. After the Nurses bought property from Rev. James Allen in 1678, the property was still considered 'The Allen property" in 1692, with six years left on payments for the property. The Nurses had prospered, never defaulting on a payment; a clear sign of their eventual ownership. The Allens wanted the land back into their family, instead of selling it to strangers. The Allen's' reluctance made the purchase process difficult for the Nurses. The Allens still considered the property being Endicott property by right, through marriage to an Endicott woman. Talk spread among the residents that the Nurses were getting above themselves after a conflict incited by the Allens. In the Allen claim, they drove the Nurses off a small wood-lot, which the Nurses were still making payments on. The battle of the wood-lot, and the lawsuit resulting of the confrontation at the wood-lot, was old news by March 1692.[40]

. Due to the Nurses' self-reliance and success with the property they had bought from someone else's family, some people such as Thomas Putnam and the Allens resented the Nurses for taking the property out of its' "proper" hands, the hands of the Allens; such thinking can be shown in the way the community still called the Nurses' property "The Allen Place". Francis and Rebecca disrupted the community mentality, so they should make amends for their ability to move beyond their original station in life. The Nurses' suit brought suspicion upon the Allens, bringing suspicion upon the honesty and trustworthiness of their reputation in Salem.

Men seemed to be most concerned about slander attacking their honesty and trustworthiness in economic matters. If being a target for scandals was sign of one's importance in a society, there can be little doubt where that importance normally lay in colonial America: in the hands of men, and both genders knew it. [41] This setup of a male hierarchical control came with a tendency to blur many distinctions between the genders. Women had rights in the courtroom, although very limited, and men occasionally were admitted in the "woman's domain" of childbirth or nursing. Sex was another distinction that was not clearly defined in practice. The Puritans imposed requirements on the

[39] Starkey, Marion L.
[40] Roach, Mariyenne K.
[41] Norton, Mary Beth. *Gender and Defamation in Maryland.* William & M ary Quarterly.

sexuality of the marriage, requiring that all sexual acts performed must be in the missionary position and only for procreation.[42] The Colonists considered women essential in the seventeenth century for the perpetuation of the race.

Colin L. Talley's research in the publication *Journal of the History of Sexuality* suggests a change in attitude toward gender roles after the Salem trials. [43] Non-traditional gender roles were fairly common and distributed throughout diverse groups in colonial America during that time period. Non-traditional gender roles such as Sodomites (males), the Transgendered, Sapphists (females), and Hermaphrodites were generally accepted as long as it didn't disrupt the general structure or power base of the puritan society. Both genders led very segregated lives, only coming together sexually to procreate, as was decreed in the legal doctrines of the time, which were based on the religious beliefs of Puritans.[44] The males of the society seemed determined to preserve their hyper-masculine sense of gender identity that they permitted their own male gender to go forth unpunished, or receive less severe consequences based on physical gender. Even though a man would dress like a woman, or have sex with other men, he was still functionally a male. Expectations for either gender were crystal-clear. Regardless of behavior, Males were still Males, and Males were above Females.

Puritans strove to abolish all forms of homosexuality, at that point in time called sodomy. During the 17th century, sodomy was an aberration in the eyes of the religion of the Europeans. Upon the discovery that the natives in their region accepted and supported sodomy and same-sex marriage without any evidence of shame or self-consciousness, the Europeans made it their priority to abolish such vile acts in their point of view.[45] Even though Sodomites were referred to as "beastly", the characterization was rooted in the dominative structures of Colonial society.[46] Surprisingly, same-sex erotic behavior was much more common than what has been previously assumed. Society's reaction to it was muted because of local conditions and the particular way that power relationships of

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[42] Hurtado, Alfred L., pg 58
[43] Talley, Colin L. *"Gender and Male Same-Sex Erotic Behavior in British North America in the Seventeenth Century"* Journal of the History of Sexuality, Vol. 6, No. 3 (Jan., 1996), pp. 385-408
[44] Talley, Colin L. Pg. 397-398
[45] Hurtado, Alfred L. Pg 59.
[46] Talley, Colin L. pg. 400

gender conditioned sexual behavior and ideology.[47] A conflict presents itself in the power relationships of gender, men were considered dominant creatures, and there was a psychological danger present if any dominant was to be dominated himself.[48] In the colonies, same-sex behavior was a cultural and psychological threat to the dominant patriarchal ideology. The behavior wasn't considered a thereat to the social structure because of conditioning in the male gender of dominance. Due to that consideration, the behaviors of colonial men never reached the written record. In most societies in colonial America, it was rare to find an exclusively homosexual pattern; most of the males married and had children. Gender and sexuality were different to the colonists, and their ideal seemed to encourage the point of gender. A man following the expectations put on his gender by society, he would not be punished for his sexual behavior.

An example is the case of Nicholas Sension. On May 22, 1677 he was brought before the court in Windsor, Connecticut on a charge of sodomy. Court records revealed that he had a thirty-year history of seducing local males, and he had essentially received no punishment. Despite his well known reputation as a sodomite, he was finally only punished by being put on probation. Sension was behaving exactly the way one would expect a dominant patriarch to act in his trans-generational and trans-class sexual adventures. An explanation to the ambivalent societal reaction to Sension could be considered that his encounters were not a threat to the social structure or the presentation of a Puritan male. He did not divert from the role expected of him by his wealth and high status. There was an apparent reluctance after the 1660s to enforce the harsh penalty provided by their capital sodomy law as seen in the case of Nicholas Sension. [49] Sension fit the mold of the ideal colonial male, and the court did not want to punish him or take away his wealth and status. While Sension showed inconsiderate behavior of a male, he was still considered a male and still able to have the rights bestowed upon him by the community simply because of his gender.

The suggestion of homosexual activity did not necessarily indicate exclusive homosexuality. Sodomy was associated only at times with a particular propensity for same-sex sexual desires. Sodomy in colonial America was understood to be more than

[47] Hemphill, C. Dallett.
[48] Talley, Colin L. Pg. 401
[49] Talley, Colin L, pg. 407

simply a sinful and illegal act if not a marker of modern sexual orientation. A sexual revolution produced a third gender- the new sodomites. Prior to 1700, there had been two genders of male and female. After 1700, there were now three genders; man, woman and sodomite.[50] Even if a person was considered a sodomite, he still had equal rights applicable to a male. The Puritans wanted more males in their society- so they allowed Sodomy to pass without punishment as long as it did not happen to be brought out in public, disrupting the 'natural' course of events in a village. If a man was "ousted" it made the other men seem weak, and brought a smear to the overall masculinity and virility of the male gender in the village. So naturally, Puritan men took it seriously when it came to proving their masculinity. A man would concern himself primarily with the judgments of other men.[51]

Mary Beth Norton brings up the role gender plays in seventeenth-century America in *Searchers Again Assembled,* concerning the interesting case of T. Hall, a hermaphrodite (or intersexed) individual. Christened and raised as a girl, Thomasine had a clear identity as a female and adopted that gender role in society during childhood. Upon reaching adulthood, Thomasine shed the gender role of a woman and adopted the gender role of Thomas in 1625, taking the place of a brother after his death in the army. Upon returning to Plymouth in 1627 after his service in France, Hall resumed his identity as Thomasine, supporting herself by using her needlework skills. Upon learning of a ship traveling to Virginia, Hall decided to become Thomas again for the journey to the Virginia colony as an indentured servant. A man named John Tyos took on the role of Thomas's master by December 1627/8, showing that Hall chose to continue his role as Thomas in Virginia. Although, court records show that Thomas chose to dress as a woman at some point in time during his stay in Virginia. The court records are not clear on the issue of whether or not Hall continued as a female after January 1628. John Tyos sold Hall, legally considered a maidservant named Thomasine to John Atkins around January 1628. The court records of T's trial do not answer the question of what happened to raise questions about T's sexual identity.[52] Court records show T's answer to the question about why T would wear women's clothing when he was a male to be: *"I goe in*

[50] Harvey, Karen.
[51] Norton, Mary Beth. Gender & Defamation in Maryland, pg. 37
[52] Norton, pg 70

weoman's apparel to get a bitt for my Catt."[53] In the seventeenth century, it was possible to interpret the remark made by T in crude sexual terms; T was dressing as a woman to get sex from men. It was not clear in the trial transcripts whether or not that the court chose to apply the sexualized meaning, or the literal meaning, to T's trial. Regardless of the context of T's "Catt", his behavior was considered disruptive to the community, so T had to be brought before court to explain himself.

Due to confusions about T. Hall's sexuality, he was brought to court in order to determine what role his gender played in society. His sexuality had no revelation to the court unless it threatened the ideals of gender the colonists held. The colonists wanted a clear definition of T's gender so T could be placed in the 'proper' category and become liable for his behaviors under whichever laws applied to his to be determined gender. T's situation brings to light that for the colonists, gender had two possible determinants; physical and cultural. Physical was determined by nature of one's genitalia, and cultural was the character of one's knowledge and one's manner of behaving. Gender was one of the two most basic determinants of role in the early modern world.[54] Men and Women each had their own role, complete with rules and expectations for their gender. A crucial identifier of a person's role in the society of seventeenth-century America would be their clothing. If one wore skirts and dresses, the person was clearly identified and put into the role of a woman. T. Hall makes liberal use of either role by his cross-dressing, thus bringing confusion to the community T was part of. The case record raises issues of sexuality rather than of biological sex or of gendered behavior.[55] T was stripped of any rights as a human being through the process. T could not 'belong' to either gendered group.

Gender was clearly physically and aesthetically defined in the seventeenth century. T. Hall acted like a woman and physically resembled a man; violating every possible concept concerning masculinity and feminity in the Puritan community. Confusion rose among the community as to what gender he was, and what role he played out in society based on the clash of the two ideals concerning gender. After several examinations of which probably violated T's privacy both physically and mentally, the

[53] Norton, pg. 71
[54] Norton, p. 73
[55] Norton, p. 75

court still couldn't come to amends regarding T's physical gender. To men, Thomasine was not a male due to the fact that her male organs didn't have the ability to function properly. Thomasine was sterile, unable to produce children, or get a woman pregnant. To the males of the town, T was in essence, a female, and considered to fit that role. Women were viewed as inferior to of men, and their sexual organs were regarded as internal versions of male genitalia. The women who examined T and were part of the trial concluded that Thomas was male based on the presence of male genitalia. For the women, the anatomy of T. Hall was more important than the feminine qualities presented. It is clear that different concepts concerning the biological aspect of gender drove a rift between the sexes during the trial.[56]

Throughout the trial of T Hall, many of the key questions about Hall were couched in terms of what clothing T should wear, men's or women's. The judges did not declare a clear identity of gender, only directed Hall on what apparel they expected T to wear. In a fundamental sense, seventeenth-century people's identity was expressed in their apparel. Virginia, where the trial was taking place, never went so far as Massachusetts, which passed laws regulating clothing. In an act for Regulating and Orderly Celebrating of Marriages written in 1640, with revisions made in 1672 and 1702, there is a passage depicting:.. *that if any man shall wear women's apparel, or if any woman shall wear men's apparel, and be thereof duly convicted; such offenders shall be corporally punished or fined at the discretion of the county court, not exceeding seventeen dollars.*[57] In light of this context, it is not much of a surprise that decisions about the sexual identity of T. Hall were stated in terms of clothing. Clothing was a sharp distinction of the gender of its wearer, and gender was one of the two mast basic determinants of role in the early modern world. People who wore skirts nurtured children; people who wore pants did not.

In the conclusion of the trial before the General Court of the colony of Virginia on April 8, 1629, it was surprising that the General Court accepted Hall's self-definition as both man and woman. The male judges demonstrated their ability to transcend the categories that determined the thinking of ordinary colonists. Due to their adamant need

[56] Karlsen, pg 73.
[57] The law of domestic relations: marriage, divorce, dower pg 56

to categorize T, they put him in his own category based on their own perceptions of both biological and behavioral characteristics of gender. T was finally stripped of his rights as either gender, and forced to wear both trousers and an apron, signifying the fact that he held elements of both the male and female.[58] The focus on clothing indicates that the colonists needed a visual symbol of what gender group this individual belonged to. In a belief system that hypothesized that women were inferior men, any inferior man; one who could not function in sexual terms, was a woman. Identity of individuals relied heavily on gender roles, and the judges couldn't find a better answer to the question concerning Hall's gender. The only reason Hall was brought to court was to determine Hall's gender and his rights as a member of the male or female gender. The court case shows the powerful role that gender and the colonial community could play in individuals' lives.[59]

The lives of individuals were thrown into a sense of uncertainty with the introduction of witchcraft into the court, which had a powerful role within the community. Clive Holmes shows how women who became involved in the legal process often held on to un-reported grievances and suspicions.[60] In some cases, the additional testimony offered by women deals with incidents so remote as to rouse the court's suspicions concerning the witness's motives in coming forward.[61] Such suspicious motives can be applied to the accusations concerning Rebecca Nurse. Rebecca was, in the eyes of those who knew her, the very essence of what a Puritan mother should be; deeply pious and a devoted mother.[62] Rebecca had a hearing loss, which frustrated her in interactions with her neighbors. A recent event bringing her under scrutiny happened when Rebecca had lost her temper over a misunderstanding with a neighbor, and the neighbor died soon after. The wife of the un-named neighbor couldn't stop talking about the argument as if there was a cause and effect involved in the death. The conflict prompted an interest in Rebecca, and it was not long until the Proctors brought her the news she had been accused as a witch by Ann Putnam the younger. The Proctors were

[58] Norton, Mary Beth.
[59] Norton, Mary Beth. Searchers Again Assembled, pg 69.
[60] Holmes, Clive. Women: Witnesses and witches, Past & Present, number 140, pg 55.
[61] Holmes, Clive, pg 56.
[62] Starkey, Marion L. "The Devil in Massachusetts" 1949, pg 78.

deeply moved by the reaction of Rebecca. The Proctors began asking what God had found in her, why she had to be punished in her old age and infirmity. Even if a woman like Rebecca Nurse followed every expectation made by Puritan men, conforming to the image of a perfect Puritan woman, she was not entirely safe from the courts.[63]

The role of village witch could bestow real power a suspected witch could gain considerable deference by scaring people. The suspicions, rumors, and small trials focused on a particular type of woman and specific forms of behavior, and everyone knew who and what was suspect of such behavior. The dual focus meant that one type of female suffered endless persecution, while other type of woman lived in danger that the small ways in which they acted might lead to ostracism, jail, the torture chamber, or even the stake. The power moved to the hands of the accusers, and the accused would do anything to preserve their own lives as well as the lives of their family members.

A diabolic, sexualized image of the witch was a staple of American witchcraft trials. This typical emphasis placed on the symbolic female witch has made it easy to overlook the significance of the most obvious fact of witchcraft prosecution: those men were responsible for the public articulation of the concept of the symbolic witch and for the social fact of widespread prosecution and execution. Accusers could be women as well as men, but since the suspects were overwhelmingly female, on balance the trials served to diminish women's power and strengthen men's power.[64] In New England, adolescent girls preponderate among "possessed" accusers. The degree of involvement of these girls, who in their testimony reinforced academic theory, are discussed as examples of how the Salem trials can be a catalyst of the limits the female gender faced during their lives.[65]

The author, John Putnam Demos, outlines a composite figure of the typical witch through a long exercise in prosopography: studying a group of people, their appearances and personalities within a historical context. The typical witch was a middle-aged female. She would be of English and Puritan background, married with a few children, or childless. She would be frequently involved in trouble and conflicts with family

[63] Starkey, Marion L.
[64] Bever, Edward. *Witchcraft, Female aggression, and Power in the early modern community.* Journal of Social History Summer, 2002.
[65] Holmes, Clive, pg. 60

members. She might have had a previous record of accusations, usually theft, slander, or forceful speech. She would have been in the medical profession, either a midwife or an informal nurse. Her social position would be relatively low. Lastly, she would be abrasive in style, contentious in character, and stubbornly resilient in the face of adversity.[66] All in all, the composite set up by Demos fits one person perfectly, and that woman is Martha Cory.

This woman was not a typical cowed Puritan woman. She faced the magistrates on March 21, 1692 with an air of confidence, taking advantage of the opportunity to express her opinion about current events.[67] When the Reverend Nicholas Noyes had opened the meeting with a prayer, Martha asked permission to pray; a ploy for airing her opinion.[68] The Magistrates saw what her plan was, and declined her opportunity to express herself. Hawthorne immediately went to the point of the examination, simply asking why she [Martha] afflicted them. Martha replied in the negative, denying that she afflicted the children. Hawthorne continued, asking who the cause of the girls' misfortunes was. Martha, her self-righteousness asserting itself, stated that what they accused her of would be impossible to her status as a gospel woman. Martha also remarked succinctly, "We must not believe all that these distracted children say."[69] The dry reasonableness of the remark affronted Hawthorne. "What's the harm in it?"[70] asked Martha when the girls ordered her to stop biting her lips. Outspoken as Martha was, she had not been liked; yet until now few had connected her with witchcraft. "You can't prove me a witch!" cried Martha before she was led away to prison to be held for trial.[71] But such a statement was beside the point. What she couldn't prove, what no one at all accused of such a thing could prove, was that she wasn't. Gospel woman to the last, she defiantly ignored the common prejudice against women and public speaking, "concluded her life with an eminent prayer." [72]

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[66] Demos, John. "Entertaining Satan" 1964. pp. 94
[67] Roach, Marianne K. "The Salem Witch Trials" pp 44.
[68] Starkey, Marion L. "A Devil in Massachusetts" pg. 72.
[69] Roach, Marienne K. pg. 45
[70] Roach, Marienne. Pg. 47
[71] Lawson, Deodat. "A Brief and True Narrative of Some Remarkable Passages Relating to Sundry Persons Afflicted by Witchcraft, at Salem Village which Happened from the Nineteenth of March, to the fifth of April, 1692" pg. 3
[72] Roach, Marianne K. "The Salem Witch Trials" pp. 300

A few examples are well defined in Boyer & Nissenbaum's *Salem Possessed*, elaborating the perilous position some people found themselves into during 1692. There were vulnerable villagers whose arrival or presence had a disruptive social impact. The first three women to be accused could be seen as "deviants" or "outcasts" in their community, the kinds of people who are deemed by scholars to be privy to such accusations.[73] This pattern can be found among the accused of Salem Village, but the variety of forms can be revealed in Sarah Osborne's case, a bedridden old woman, yet better-off than the usual puritan woman.[74]

Sarah Osborne was born Sarah Warren, who married a Salem villager named Robert Prince in 1662. Robert Prince had purchased a 150 acre farm next to Captain John Putnam, his sister's husband. Upon the death of Robert Prince in 1674, he left his land in a trust to his wife with the stipulation that it eventually be left to their two sons when they came of age. To the Puritans, an 'outsider' disrupted what would otherwise have been the uneventful transfer of land from one generation to the next. Soon after her bereavement, the widow Prince brought into the village a hired man named Alexander Osborne, who quickly moved into her barn and later, her own bed. When the two were married, they began to gain full and permanent legal control of the Prince lands, in direct defiance of Robert Prince's will. The meaning of Sarah Osborne's death in Boston prison on May 10, 1692 becomes clearer upon considering the idea of how Sarah Osborne must have been viewed in Salem. The crucial issue was the way she and her second husband had threatened established patterns of land tenure and inheritance. Significantly, it was Sarah, accused in the light of being an insider, who betrayed her own sons and in the process, the structure of the village itself.

Events causing any deviation in the family structure tended to be attributed to witchcraft. The witchcraft-possession diagnosis, explaining odd behavior or deaths, was eagerly embraced by family members.[75] The cases concerning George Burroughs and John Proctor show the mirror image in negative form of the powers of Puritan fathers and husbands. Burroughs was a particularly apt example to project the power attributed to

[73] Boyer & Nissenbaum, p 31.
[74] Boyer & Nissenbaum. *Salem Possessed* 1974. Pg.194
[75] Holmes, Clive, pg. 62

adult men by the deity of remarkable providences. John Proctor's case implies a punishment or revenge, for expressing disdain of the power the court held over the people. After Burroughs was charged, accusations increased rapidly. These cases seem to focus on the power of adult men in relation to the deaths of family dependents. However, many men such as Sewall may have believed that the deaths of their dependents were the intentional consequences of their own sins; within a secular view, it was impossible for such a thing to actually occur. Life changes through circumstance, in the course of lives characterized by economic flux.[76] An example is made of John Proctor, who was hanged August 19, 1692. His mistake was bringing attention to the troubles of the Putnam family, and he paid for it with his life.

John Proctor and his family held a high place in the esteem of the community. John Proctor first came into Salem in 1666, establishing himself in one of the largest farms in the area. His interests diversified upon the death of his father, when he inherited the standard one-third share in an estate, allowing him to gain a notable level of prosperity. Significantly, in 1668, when he was first granted his tavern license, his name was not prefixed either by the sparingly used honorific of "Mr." or the militia rank "Captain," showing his status as a rising aspirant not yet fully accepted into the social elite of Salem. [77]

John Proctor gave voice to some very strong and very public remarks about the "afflicted" girls. "They should be at the whipping-post!" he said. "If they are let alone we should all be devils and witches." In his eyes the wrong people were being called to the stand. If one must have witches forsooth, look for them not among decent women of good reputations but among the obviously bedeviled, the girls themselves. "Hang them! Hang them!" shouted honest John Proctor.[78] You can't say things like that. Not in public, not in Salem Village of 1692. Proctor's reasoning was like blasphemy to the magistrates. It was logic, admitting of only one reality, the affliction of these girls and their testimony as to its cause.

On April 4, 1692, Judge Samuel Sewall became directly involved with the Salem

[76] Boyer & Nissenbaum, 199.
[77] Starkey, Marion L.
[78] Starkey, Marion L. "The Devil in Massachusetts" pg. 87.

trials when the arrest warrant was issued that day for Rebecca Nurse's sister, Sarah Cloyse, and Elizabeth Proctor, the wife of John Proctor. Elizabeth Proctor held a distinct position in the community as the wife of a substantial property owner in the district. During a trial, one of the accusers didn't recognize her 'perpetrator' by appearance and had to be prompted by a man who was propping her up as she writhed 'in pain.' She said, "the man told her so."[79] The girl's confession can show that the man holding up the girl was prompting her, giving her instructions. Instead of dealing firmly with this admission of bad faith, the magistrates sent everyone outside while they consulted privately. The situation caused deep unease to Sewall, who was recently appointed to the tribunal. Sewall wrote in his diary afterward that "'twas awful to see how the afflicted persons were agitated." In the margin he wrote, "Vae, Vae, Vae, [Woe, woe, woe,] Witchcraft." [80]Shortly after that entry was made, an interesting occurrence comes to light during the trial of Elizabeth Proctor.

One of the 'afflicted' girls became a victim of her peers. Mary Warren was pushed out of the safe camp of self-professed witchcraft victims by her furious master. The question was put to her: "You were a little while ago an Afflicted person, now you are an Afflicter: How comes this to pass?" It is no surprise that her response was so schizophrenic, given the fact she had been on both sides of the divide. This was not an explanation that could be accepted at this stage by the authorities. The accused were liars; if not, their accusers were would-be killers. Mary Warren could not remain both an accuser and the accused; even if her mental anguish gave light to the double role she played yielded the real secrets of the terrible tragedy that was overtaking the community. Mary was left to resolve her problem alone. She resumed her role as an accuser, incriminating everyone she could, bearing witness against seven people, who were eventually executed. She had confessed to avoid torture and hanging. Her choice to confess freed her from prison and saved her from the rope.[81]

Accusation in 1692 was not limited to people who had been beneficiaries of a changing market. By March that year, a new pattern began to emerge. By the end of

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[79] Ibid, 144.
[80] The Diary of Samuel Sewall, ed. M. Halsey Thomas, 2 vols. (New York: Farrar straus & Giroux, 1973), pg289.
[81] Starkey, Marion L, pg 102

summer, some of the most prominent people in Massachusetts and their close kin had been accused if not officially charged. None of these persons of quality was ever brought to trial, much less executed. Nevertheless, the overall upward direction of the accusations remains clear. It seems that the accusations were orchestrated through the 'afflicted' and spread like wildfire through Salem, inciting some doubt among certain people of the community such as Judge Samuel Sewall, upon the accusation of a man of the cloth, George Burroughs. It was a daring display of the fact that now, no one was safe.

The reverend George Burroughs was accused of witchcraft, and if he were to be convicted, it would preserve the Putnam name within the community. Unfortunately, the community was more than aware of the circumstances caused by Putnam that brought Burroughs back to Salem. If the charge of witchcraft was proved, they would be exposed as those most responsible for bringing witchcraft to the village. The information about the witchcraft charges came from Ann Putnam the younger, the niece of the vindictive John Putnam. Burroughs was accused of causing deaths in the town where he currently resided, and the deaths of his two wives, of both who were only visible to Ann Putnam, who went into convulsions upon the 'appearance' of the 'wives' and had to be carried out of the courthouse. One of the witnesses was Mercy Lewis; a girl who Burroughs and his first wife had took in during their stay in Salem. Mercy was a sly girl who would listen at doorjambs and gather information through nefarious means for a puritan girl. Burroughs had left her with the Putnams; Mercy was gifted at spying, and kept it up while Burroughs was gone.[82] From her actions in the courtroom, she was influenced by the Putnams.

The accusation of George Burroughs was similar to another event occurring in 1683 upon Burroughs's departure of the pulpit at Salem. The warrant under which John Putnam had Burroughs arrested upon his departure was connected with the death of Burroughs's wife, though the charge had been no more serious than failure to settle incidental expenses connected with the funeral. Fortunately, Deacon Ingersoll had come forward with proof that Burroughs had paid the fine, making the Putnams appear ridiculous.[83] Clearly, it was the wrong thing to do to a Putnam. Burroughs' return would

[82] Starkey, Marion L. A devil in Massachusetts, pg. 127.
[83] Starkey, Marion L. The devil in Massachusetts, pg. 125

establish the witchcraft outbreak as a social and political threat. The magistrates were so reluctant to add a man of the cloth to the list of the accused; they waited two weeks after Ann Putnam's accusation to bring in Burroughs for a trial.

The day George Burroughs and John Proctor were executed at Salem on 19 August 1692, Sewall made an entry in his diary for the day from the observations of Cotton Mather, since Sewall was in another town. In the margin, at the beginning of the entry where he named the executed, Sewall wrote, *"Dolefull! Witchcraft."*[84] From that entry, it seems that the seed of doubt was planted into Sewall's mind about the Salem trials. Sewall concluded the entry with the fact that Burroughs' speech, prayer, protestation of his innocence, did move everyone: *"which occasions their speaking hardly concerning his being executed"*[85] During the events surrounding Giles Corey, Sewall seemed to become anguished in his diary entry: *"…but all in vain"* [86] relating to Giles Corey calling the bluff to their threat of *peine forte et dure*, piling heavy stones on a condemned man while he lay prone upon the ground until he couldn't breathe. Such a punishment guaranteed death, if not by suffocation, by internal injuries from the weight on the victim's chest.

A very influential person in Salem seemed to notice the problems Sewall was having with his conscience during the trial of Giles Corey, and that person was Thomas Putnam. Thomas was the father and husband of the two chief accusers: Ann Carr Putnam and Ann Putnam the younger. Thomas chose to send Sewall a letter the day after Giles Corey was pressed to death, the second time he had directly intervened with the witchcraft courts. He explained that on the eve of the execution, his daughter Ann was being tormented by witches, who were threatening to press her to death in the manner Giles Corey had been. Ann was next visited by a man who stated that Corey had murdered him. Putnam pretended to grapple with the mystery of why this past record had not previously come to light. Putnam's effort might have gone to waste if he had not recalled that in 1675 Giles Corey had beaten his servant, who died a few days later without incriminating Corey for his death, and Corey was only charged with abuse and

[84] Diary, 295.
[85] Diary, 295.
[86] Diary, 295.

fined. Putnam knew that if he brought it directly to the judges' attention, his own vindictiveness would be clear. Dressing it up with the special torments of his daughter and modifying them to fit the recent events, he could use the information to keep Sewall in line; reassuring him the punishment was appropriate.

Putnam was giving Sewall what he needed, and Sewall swallowed the whole lie, so eager to alleviate his conscience, he misread Putnam's letter where the specter of a non-witch gave the 'information' to the younger Ann Putnam. Such an event can implicate a foundation of doubt which led Sewall to write an apology for his participation in the unfortunate events of Salem during 1692. Through his marginal notes, he displays a growing sense of disquiet with events surrounding him. He applies that disquiet into his personal life, and he comes to a conclusion that he has to apologize for his involvement with the Salem trials to gain forgiveness and regain his status in the community. There had been apologies before his, but in 1706 the last confession was made by the then- 27 year old Ann Putnam [junior]. Ann's apology was the last in a long healing process. Ann was careful to put emphasis on her youth, her status as a member of the Putnam family, and to the religious belief that the Devil had fooled her into making the accusations.

The accusations made by the girls at Salem didn't solely concern those considered as "outsiders," disrupting the perceived structure of life in New England. Gender came into play as well, as the figures shown by John Putnam Demos[87]. The ratio of accused was roughly four women to one man. Even using these figures, of the twenty-two men accused, eleven were associated with a woman. Going deeper into the figures, it is shown that nine of those eleven were the spouses of accused witches, and the other two were religious associates. Judging from the pattern of accusations and figures shown by Demos, it is only by guilt of association, or reckless behavior, that men had come under the microscope of the community. Of the rest of the eleven men, five were young men prone to 'reckless and boastful talk of boastful power.'[88] Four other cases brought against men of witchcraft were implicated in part due to a quarrel or grievance someone had against them. Twenty of the male witches were rendered suspect either by association with an accused woman or else in a distinctly limited way as part of a larger sequence of

[87] Demos, John. "Entertaining Satan" 1964.
[88] Demos, John. Entertaining Satan. 1964. pg. 60.

hostilities. In a sense the charges against all of these men were secondary.

The rule in early New England was: witches were women. The threat of being charged as a witch could be a constraining factor in the behavior of women. Those who asserted themselves too openly or forcibly could expect a summons to court, risking the ultimate sanction of death itself. Hence the dominance of men could be underscored in both symbolic and practical terms. Male dominance was the assumed principle in traditional society in New England. Certainly the uneven distribution of witchcraft accusations and their special bearing on the lives of women were consistent with gender roles in general. Gender roles in Salem seem to conform to a traditional, patriarchal configuration. They were also indistinct in relation to the ownership and control of property. A large portion of witchcraft charges were brought against women by other women. It could be determined that due to the restrictions put upon the female gender in puritan society, the women took the opportunity of the Salem witch trials to have some control over their lives and the lives of others within the community. "It was for sport" one of the afflicted girls had admitted to the Proctors.[89] The situation ignited skepticism and doubt in onlookers to the episode between the Proctors and an unidentified 'afflicted' girl. Onlookers accused the girl of lying, and her reply was the same: "It was for sport."[90] The statements indicate that the girls are using their present status as "the afflicted" to maintain a status level within the community that they ordinarily could have not had.

The girls were a pack of undisciplined children who had somehow beguiled an entire community into playing a wicked game with them.[91] The Salem Witch trials came along as an opportunity for the often-overlooked female gender to express themselves, and such an event got out of hand. A few women such as Mary Warren and the 27-year old Ann Putnam [junior] forward with apologies for their part in the trials. Mary Warren's sense of interchangeable views was corroborated by the reversal of legal opinion in 1711, when the legislature formally exonerated most of those who had been convicted in 1692. By the declaration of the Legislature, the official authority changed sides and decided to put the responsibility of Salem on the principal accusers and

[89] Starkey, Marion L. "The Devil in Massachusetts" pg. 92
[90] ibid.
[91] Starkey, Marion L.

witnesses who caused a prosecution to be had of persons of known and good reputations.[92]

People still did not agree on what to make of the Salem Trials. Massachusetts courts handled only a few suits brought by widows, in distant areas from Salem, against gossiping neighbors. The Salem witch trials have been remembered not as a historical event, but as a stereotype and symbol.[93] Without accepting a literal reality of what they studied, some scholars concluded that beliefs about witchcraft had been quite useful to preserve social order. Others viewed witch-beliefs as the projection of a society's own deepest fears and forbidden desires upon innocent scapegoats. The Salem outbreak can be described as a society's reaction with repressive authority. Men feared the women suspects because of economic envy or because of religious anxiety. Through all of the trials and tribulations surrounding the Salem witch trials, it all comes down to the conclusion that the suppression of the female gender led to the chaos during the Salem witch trials, and innocents paid with their lives for the amusement of bored village girls experimenting with their sudden authority in the community.

[92] Kibbey, Ann. Pg 126
[93] Roach, Marilynne K. Pg. 578.

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