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Dissent and Discontent in the Confederate
South, 1861 – 1865.

B. Langley

PhD

2017

Dissent and Discontent in the Confederate
South, 1861 – 1865.

BRIAN LANGLEY

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of
the requirements of the University of
Northumbria at Newcastle for the degree
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Arts, Design and Social Sciences.

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Abstract

The thesis examines the complex nature of dissent and discontent across three Confederate states during the Civil War —South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. Drawing on a range of sources, including post-war claims for compensation, women's letters to the Confederate authorities and newspaper accounts of bread riots across the South, it broadens our understanding of the varied and often conservative nature of much Confederate dissent and discontent. Critically, the research distinguishes between southerners, who often asserted their loyalty to the Confederacy, but were profoundly unhappy with the impact of the war on their families, and other southerners implacably opposed to the Confederacy or completely indifferent to its calls on their allegiance. In the Confederate South, dissent was not the same as discontent and discontent did not always indicate disloyalty.

The focus of the research is on ordinary white southerners and the meaning that dissent and discontent had for them. Through a re-reading of women's letters and a detailed analysis of the southern bread riots, the research reappraises the meaning of women's protest and challenges the current scholarship viewing such protests and petitioning as a political awakening of poor white women seeking new entitlements from the state. Using Southern Claims Commission records, the dissertation also reconsiders the meaning of southern unionism, suggesting that such attachments were often highly subjective and essentially cultural in nature. Many southerners, including both men and women, may have shared a self-proclaimed attachment to the Union but understood the meaning of that loyalty in very different ways. Whilst dissenting southern unionists and women bread rioters may make unfamiliar bedfellows, together they illustrate the complicated but essentially conservative nature of much Confederate dissent and discontent often seeking the restoration of older and more stable arrangements in the face of the disruption of secession and the war.

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Declaration

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that the work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

Ethical clearance for the research presented in this thesis was approved on 19 March, 2013.

I declare the Word Count of this Thesis is 83,591 words including footnotes.

Name: Brian Langley

Signature:

Date: 26 October, 2017.

Introduction: The scope of Confederate dissent and discontent.

On the 18 March, 1863, in Salisbury, North Carolina, a group of forty to fifty women, described in the Confederate press as soldiers' wives, visited a number of city merchants forcibly taking flour and other goods. Before seizing the goods, the women had attempted to negotiate a lower price for the items they needed.¹

Unusually, one of the rioters, Mary C. Moore, subsequently wrote to the State Governor, Zebulon Vance, to explain the actions of the women.

Stern necessity compelled us to go in search of food to sustain life and some forty or more respectable but poor women started out backed by many citizens to get food we took our little money with us and offered to pay government prices for what we took but the speculators refused us anything or even admittance into their premises . . . We ask not charity we only as[k] for fair and reasonable prices.²

Salisbury was only one of a number of such instances involving women that were reported in the Confederate press between June 1862 and April 1864. Although recent scholarship has portrayed such 'riots' or 'raids', as they were described in contemporary newspaper accounts, as emblematic of women's violent resistance to the Confederacy, little about the Salisbury's rioters' behaviour supports such an argument.³ Ordinary southern women, whose families bore the brunt of Confederate conscription policies, and who often struggled to feed and clothe their families, may have been driven to seizing essential goods after enacting identical rituals of offering to pay a fair price for what they needed but bread riots were more

¹ *Carolina Watchman*, "A Female Raid", 23 March, 1863.

² Mary C. Moore to Governor Vance, 21 March, 1863.

<http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/compoundobject/collection/p15012coll8/id/11531/rec/4> Last visited 18 September, 2013.

³ Stephanie McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning: Power and Politics in the Civil War South* (Cambridge and Harvard, Harvard University Press, 2010), pp.178 – 217.

commonly characterised by their restraint rather than their violence and few riots involved confrontations between women and the Confederate state. Indeed, it is questionable whether women such as Mary C. Moore and other rioters, with husbands in the army, were in any way disloyal to the Confederate state despite their obvious discontents.

Confederate dissent and discontent was remarkably diverse and involved both men and women. Rioting women were only one aspect of disaffection in the Civil War South and the dissertation examines dissent and discontent across three Confederate states during the Civil War — South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia. Drawing on a range of sources, including post-war claims for compensation, women's letters to the Confederate authorities and newspaper accounts of bread riots across southern communities, this thesis broadens our understanding of the complex and essentially conservative nature of much Confederate dissent and discontent as a response to the often-catastrophic changes produced by secession and the war. Critically, the research distinguishes between southerners, who often asserted their loyalty to the Confederacy, but were profoundly unhappy with the impact of the war on their families, and other southerners implacably opposed to the Confederacy, or completely indifferent to its calls on their allegiance. Although there is seemingly little to connect southerners who, after the war, petitioned the government seeking compensation for wartime losses whilst claiming a continuing loyalty to the Union, with the many women who wrote to the Confederate authorities or took to the streets to seize bread and other essential goods, both illustrate different aspects of dissent and discontent. Many

southern unionists were indeed dissenters in that they actively rejected the legitimacy of secession or simply refused to believe in the new Confederate project of nation building. In contrast, most women petitioners and bread rioters demonstrated no such quarrel with the idea of the Confederacy and indeed continued to look to the Confederate authorities throughout the war as the source of remedy or redress. Rather than dissent, women's accounts of their hardships or protests over the price of bread were largely expressions of discontent with the failure of the authorities to provide for them and their families. Critically, dissent was not the same as discontent and discontent did not always indicate disloyalty.⁴ Having divided the Union, secessionists may have struggled to unite the Confederacy but it would be wrong to assume that all those who complained or protested were northern sympathisers or enemies of the new state.

The focus of the thesis is on ordinary white southerners and the meaning that dissent and discontent had for them, how they expressed themselves and the explanations they offered to justify their actions. Through a re-reading of women's letters and a detailed analysis of the southern bread riots, the research reappraises the meaning of women's wartime petitioning and protest and challenges the current scholarship arguing for such actions to be viewed as evidence of a political

⁴ Both terms can be used in a variety of ways but essentially dissent signifies a withholding of assent and is often used in a religious sense to indicate a difference in beliefs or doctrine. Discontent indicates dissatisfaction or having a grievance. J.A. Simpson and E.S.C. Weiner, (eds.), *The Oxford English Dictionary, Vol. IV* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989). Even within these broad groupings there certainly would have been a spectrum of views regarding the Confederacy and my dissertation follows the lead offered by Paul Quigley in his examination of southern nationalism. Quigley is highly critical of historical approaches that seek to define such allegiances in absolute terms allocating individuals to different "boxes" or categories. Paul Quigley, *Shifting Grounds: Nationalism and the American South 1848 – 1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), pp 5-6.

awakening of poor white women. Through the use of Southern Claims Commission records, the dissertation also reconsiders the meaning of southern unionism suggesting that such attachments were often highly subjective and often essentially cultural in nature. Many southerners may have shared a self-proclaimed attachment to the Union but understood the meaning of that loyalty in very different ways. This ranged from southerners who put their lives at risk in order to support deserters or escaped Federal prisoners, through to older men whose dissent appeared to amount to little more than remaining on their farms and refusing to lend their support to secession.

The research also illustrates the gendered nature of much of the dissent and discontent. Men and women experienced the war differently as the conflict disrupted the traditional gender relations of a southern society constructed around male mastery and a narrower, private world of women, largely defined by family and duty.⁵ Despite popular characterisations of the Civil War as a rich man's war and poor man's fight, women were also frequently on the front line of protest and resistance. Whilst both men and women wrote to the Confederate authorities during the war, it was women who were more likely to use their letters and petitions to express their discontents with the war, often reflecting their new wartime responsibilities for their families. Confederate bread riots also remained a distinctive form of women's protest. Unlike women, who could be empowered by the war, the experience of many southern men was more problematic often

⁵ Linda K. Kerber, "Separate Spheres, Female Worlds, Women's Place: The Rhetoric of Women's History", *The Journal of American History*, Vol. 75, No. 1 (Jun., 1988), pp. 9-39.

resulting in a loss of mastery as men were unable to protect their own families. Although some men appeared to compensate for their inability to protect their own sons from the demands of conscription by supporting other families in their neighbourhood, often the principal support for deserters and draft evaders was provided by women. Some women went further and found themselves in unfamiliar encounters with Confederate Home Guards and tax collectors when they came to call.

Many of the men and women who claimed a continuing loyalty to the Union in this study were predominately yeoman or tenant farmers although Southern Claims Commission petitioners also included substantial plantation owners, German and Irish immigrants and, because of its property base, many older men and widows. Most women who wrote to the state authorities were probably from similar farming backgrounds although by 1863, a number, like Mary C. Moore, may have been working in Confederate clothing factories to supplement their husbands' pay as soldiers. In a state where active military service was commonplace, many women letter writers and rioters, would have the wives, widows or mothers of soldiers. Although at times described by historians as poor white women, most were probably impoverished by the war rather than coming from a class of economically marginal, poor women.⁶

⁶ Although described by McCurry as "poor white rural women", how to refer to the women offers its own challenges and although many women were impoverished by the war, many appear to have come from self-sufficient yeoman backgrounds and were not poor as a class. Some appear to have been factory workers, as least for the duration of the war, rather than farm women. Although Bill Cecil-Fronsman's use of the term "common whites" has its advantages, his examples are essentially male property owners and his arguments relate to position in an economic hierarchy. To reflect the centrality of women in my study, who are both impoverished and without influence, I have

Within the shifting historiography of American Civil War studies, Confederate dissent and discontent remains a constant but undeveloped theme. Rarely studied in its own right, historical interest in dissent and discontent has largely centred on its role in undermining support for the Confederacy, its association with internal opposition to the Confederacy and its role in its eventual defeat. The vigour of the debate has been additionally enhanced in more recent years by the emergence of related studies examining the role of Confederate nationalism and the extent to which a sense of the new nation strengthened southerners' willingness to fight. Framed originally by a public memory of the Lost Cause, emphasising the sacrifice and nobility of the defeated Confederacy, early histories of the war were slow to challenge a narrative that had been so influential in enabling reconciliation between the North and the South. It was not until the 1930s, with the publication of Georgia Lee Tatum's *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* and Charles H. Wesley's *The Collapse of the Confederacy*, that structural causes for Confederate dissent, particularly conscription, impressments, taxation- in- kind and the like, began to be identified.⁷ With Wesley, a new language and conceptual framework also emerged centring around a progressive loss of the will to fight. By

followed Berlant's more modern usage of "ordinary" as in "ordinary citizens" who are "without wealth and structural access to brokers of power." Lauren Berlant, *The Queen of America Goes to Washington City: Essays on Sex and Citizenship* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1997), p.3. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p. 6, and Bill Cecil-Fronsman, *Common Whites: Class and Culture in Antebellum North Carolina* (ProQuest eBook Central: University Press of Kentucky, 2015), pp. 1- 8.

⁷ Georgia L. Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1934). Charles H Wesley, *The Collapse of the Confederacy* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2001). For useful overviews of the literature particularly regarding dissent and disaffection, see Gary W. Gallagher, "Disaffection, Persistence and Nation: Some Directions in Recent Scholarship on the Confederacy", *Civil War History*, Vol. 55, No.3 (2009), pp. 329 – 353 and Margaret M. Storey, "Southern Dissent", in Aaron Sheehan- Dean (ed.), *A Companion to the U.S. Civil War* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2014).

the 1990s, significant challenges were being made to this revisionist position by historians such as Gary Gallagher and James McPherson who questioned the contemporary focus on the more “analytical categories” of race, class and gender that had replaced a traditional emphasis on political and military leadership.⁸

Running through this debate is the problematic theme of Confederate nationalism. David Potter had, earlier in 1962, highlighted the difficulties for historians in attributing nationality to movements of which they disapproved. To have ascribed nationality to the South was risking validating the rights of a pro slavery movement.⁹ If these concerns seem less of an issue now, than in 1962, Confederate nationalism’s capacity to obscure appears even greater and, for some time now, debates about Confederate nationalism have become a proxy for debates about the war itself. Traditionally, coupled to the lack of will argument, the spurious or inadequate nature of Confederate nationalism is frequently seen as one of the principal factors in the defeat of the South.¹⁰ Unsurprisingly, historians arguing for Confederate resilience have adopted counter arguments emphasising how a growing sense of Confederate nationalism and language enabled troops to develop a view of the war that saw military service, even far away from home, and

⁸ Gary W. Gallagher, *The Confederate War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 1997) and James McPherson, “American Victory, American Defeat”, in Gabor S. Boritt (ed.), *Why the Confederacy Lost* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992). McPherson credits E Merton Coulter with developing the lack of will argument. See E. Merton Coulter, *The Confederate States of America, 1861- 1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1968). Margaret Storey has written of a shift in the scholarship away from the “high” politics of the southern home front towards a greater interest in the experiences of civilians, soldiers and slaves as part of a broader understanding of the war. Margaret M. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss: Alabama’s Unionists in the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2004), pp.3-4.

⁹ David M Potter, “The Historian’s Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa”, *The American Historical Review*, Vol.67, No. 4 (July, 1962), pp.924-950.

¹⁰ In particular, see Richard E. Beringer et al., *Why the South Lost the Civil War* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 1986).

defence of the family as being in harmony. The new citizen-soldiers of the Confederacy may have learnt new military habits and responsibilities but these never supplanted their base responsibilities as “citizens, fathers, husbands and sons.”¹¹

Such polarised debates add little to our understanding of the world of ordinary white southerners during the Civil War years or to decentre the discussion away from military outcomes. A more culturally focussed analysis of Confederate nationalism is found in Drew Gilpin Faust’s classic examination of how Confederate elites set about to construct a national identity to mobilise the nation for war. For Faust, the debate is not about the outcome of the war but about the nature of Confederate society and the culture of the Old South. Confederate nationalism was anything but spurious, it commanded the widespread involvement of groups previously not part of Southern polity and yet it contained its own contradictions. Designed to build popular support for a war, the dynamics of that war exposed inescapable conflicts that its national identity was unable to contain within a traditional model of *noblesse oblige*, Christian virtue and organic unity. Within this more culturally sensitive model it is possible to uncouple the beliefs and values of non-elite southerners, including the ordinary white women who wrote to the Confederate authorities or on occasion rioted, from separate issues about the outcome of the war.¹²

¹¹ Aaron C. Sheehan –Dean, *Why Confederates Fought: Family and Nation in Civil War Virginia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p.2. Also see, Anne S. Rubin, *A Shattered Nation: The Rise and Fall of the Confederacy, 1861- 1868* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

¹² Drew G. Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism: Ideology and Identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1988).

In general, existing scholarship does not distinguish between dissent and discontent but instead views the various forms of protest and resistance to the Confederacy as part of the same rising continuum of disloyalty.¹³ For some historians, such as David Williams, the central issue is class tension and conflict within the Confederacy where the South lost because southerners fought each other as much as the North. Building on earlier local studies, Williams offers an uncompromising class based account where planters led the South into a disastrous war, evaded service and chose to continue growing cotton and tobacco for profit so soldiers' families went hungry. Although there was initial enthusiasm for the war among common whites, following Lincoln's call for volunteers, this quickly declined particularly following the introduction of conscription in April, 1862, when the war increasingly became characterised by the popular trope of "a rich man's war, a poor man's fight." The Confederacy could have matched the Union man for man if so many had not deserted, evaded the draft or fought for the North.¹⁴

¹³ A rare exception is provided is provided by Chandra Manning's analysis of the various peace meetings, sparked by William Holden during 1863 and 1864 in North Carolina, which undoubtedly expressed dissatisfaction with the Confederacy but were not calling for a return to the Union. A disappointing Confederacy was seen as better than a reunited Union that would free the slaves. Chandra Manning, "The Order of Nature Would be Reversed: Soldiers, Slavery and the North Carolina Gubernatorial Election of 1864", in Paul D. Escott (ed.), *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War and Reconstruction* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2008). pp. 106 -108.

¹⁴ David Williams, *Bitterly Divided: The South's Inner War* (New York: New York Press, 2008). p. 7. Williams' monograph is unusual in recent scholarship in attempting to examine popular dissent across the Confederacy as a whole. William's core thesis of a divided nation at war with itself echoes earlier local studies particularly Paul D Escott's *Many Excellent People: Power and Privilege in North Carolina 1850 -1900* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985) and Victoria E. Bynum's *Unruly Women: The Politics of Social and Sexual Control in the Old South* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1992). Both Escott and Bynum also argue in terms of an inner or internal civil war. William Freehling argued in 2001 that the South was defeated because of the number of white Southerners who fought for the North at the start of the war and the number of black Southerners who supported the North towards the end of the war. Freehling's primary focus is on the role of the non-Confederate Border States of Missouri, Kentucky, Maryland and Delaware. William W. Freehling, *The South vs. The South: How Anti-Confederates*

Even in such otherwise sympathetic accounts the role of women can be obscured. The historiography of the Civil War might be seen as mirroring broader gender history, moving as it does from viewing the war as essentially a male affair, through to the exploring the world of women into more recent scholarship examining the gendered nature of the Old South and the impact of war on those gender relations. Traditionally debates about gender and the Civil War have been largely restricted to the well documented world of elite women. The key debate in the literature has largely centred on whether the Civil War significantly changed gender relationships in the South or whether the war should be seen as a temporary crisis in gender relations before the old hierarchies of race and class reasserted themselves.¹⁵ Studies of non-elite women as a category of enquiry in themselves are relatively rare. Other than George C. Rable and Victoria Bynum,

Shaped the Course of the Civil War (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001). Michael Honey's analysis of Southern Claims Commission records in North Carolina also supports the "war within a war" position arguing that by 1863 any sense of unity between plain folk and aristocracy and collapsed, at least in North Carolina. Michel K. Honey, "The War Within the Confederacy: The White Unionists of North Carolina, 1861- 1865", *Prologue, Journal of the National Archives*, 18.2 (1986), 75 – 93.

¹⁵ For the polarity of "Dixie's Daughters" versus "crisis in gender" arguments see Susan-Mary Grant, " 'To Bind Up a Nation's Wounds': Women and the American Civil War", in Susan- Mary Grant and Bruce H. Reid, eds., *Themes of the American Civil War: The War Between the States* (New York and London: Routledge, 2010), p.278. Caroline Janney and Karen Cox follow Anne Firor Scott in arguing that the Civil War enabled southern women — Dixie's Daughters — to take on new leading roles in the construction of the Lost Cause. Faust, Rable and Whites argue that, whilst the Civil War created a crisis in gender relations for the South, southern women quickly returned to their traditional role of supporting southern patriarchy. See Caroline E. Janney, *Burying the Dead but not the Past: Ladies' Memorial Associations and the Lost Cause* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), Karen L. Cox, *Dixie's Daughters: The United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Preservation of Confederate Culture* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2003), Anne F. Scott, *The Southern Lady: From Pedestal to Politics, 1830 – 1890* (Charlottesville: The University Press of Virginia, 1995), Drew G. Faust, *The Mothers Of Invention: Women of the Slaveholding South in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1996), George C. Rable, *Civil Wars :Women and the Crisis of Southern Nationalism* (Illini Books: University of Illinois Press, 1991), LeeAnn Whites, *The Civil War as a Crisis in Gender : Augusta, Georgia, 1860 – 1880* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1995). Whites is unusual in identifying the class tensions between elite women and other groups, such as soldiers' wives. For the foundation text see Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis", *The American History Review*, Vol. 91.5 (Dec., 1986), pp.1053-1075.

there appears to have been relatively little attention paid by historians to the role of ordinary, southern white women until Stephanie McCurry's *Confederate Reckoning*, published in 2010.¹⁶

Bynum and McCurry highlight an important gap in our understanding of the role of non-elite white women in the Confederacy. Bynum's *Unruly Women*, and her 2010 collection of essays, draw attention to the widespread disaffection of poor white women as part of the inner civil war in North Carolina.¹⁷ Whilst principally concerned to locate women's unrest as part of a broader continuum of female protest and defiance, Bynum's women most obviously display a sense of injustice or moral outrage at the inequities of the war and the behaviour of the Confederate state. By contrast, McCurry's concern is to see soldiers' wives as emerging political actors eventually forging a "politics of subsistence" to challenge the priorities of the Confederate State. Although the origins of their anger might lie in the broken contract between themselves and the Confederate state, this is not a story of women seeking the restoration of traditional protections but is a political history of the unfranchised who were seeking to challenge a reactionary slave republic of white men. For McCurry, the identity of soldiers' wives is unambiguously political

¹⁶ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*. Laura Edwards also challenges the historiography of the Civil War and Reconstruction as an essentially male affair and unusually examines the role of poor white women, as well as elite women and black women, before, during and after the Civil War. See Laura F. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore: Southern Women in the Civil War Era* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2000).

¹⁷ Victoria E. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War: Southern Dissent and Its Legacies* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

where empowered women are able to move beyond dependency to direct political action.¹⁸

Since Georgia Lee Tatum, yeoman farmers remain the group most frequently associated with disloyalty to the Confederacy. They also remain a group who have struggled to move beyond their initial stereotyping.¹⁹ Modern scholarship has done much to challenge earlier stereotypes of yeoman farmers and build a more substantial picture of their world. Key questions have centred on the nature of yeoman farms particularly in comparison with wealthier planters, the issue of slave ownership and critically the relationship of yeoman farmers with planter elites either as equal partners within an egalitarian *herrenvolk* or as a subordinate group within a reactionary social order.²⁰ Detailed local studies during the 1980s and 1990s

¹⁸ Bynum's unruly women appear to be predominately yeoman farmers and indeed Bynum suggests that it was their privileged status as married white farm women that emboldened them to behave as they did. By way of contrast, Bynum characterises the lawlessness of free black women and unmarried poor women as mostly unorganised and clandestine. Bynum, *Unruly Women*, p.129. McCurry's soldiers' wives are described as poor white rural women and her examples appear to be drawn from a mixture of poor white women and yeomanry. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, pp. 6-8.

¹⁹ Samuel Hyde has argued that yeoman remained the least studied sub-set of the southern population. Samuel C. Hyde, "Plain Folk Yeomanry in the Antebellum South", in John B. Boles (ed.), *A Companion to the American South* (Malden and Oxford: Wiley – Blackwell, 2007), p. 139. As a group, Charles Bolton describes them as being more characterised than studied, Charles C. Bolton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South: Tenants and Laborers in Central North Carolina and Northern Mississippi* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 1994), p. ix. Typically the stereotyping starts with Frederick Law Olmstead's unsympathetic portrayal of poor farmers living a degraded and marginal existence as a consequence of the South's slave economy. <http://docsouth.unc.edu/nc/olmsted/menu.html> (Last visited, 1 June 2014). More recent scholarship has begun to pay more attention to poor whites as a distinctive group separate from yeoman farmers. Such studies particularly focus on the significance of whiteness. See in particular, David Brown, "A Vagabond's Tale: Poor Whites, Herrenvolk Democracy, and the Value of Whiteness in the Late Antebellum South", *Journal of Southern History*, Vol. LXXIX, No.4 (November 2013). Most recently, Keri Leigh Merritt, *Masterless Men: Poor Whites and Slavery in the Antebellum South*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017) has examined the impact of slavery on poor whites unable to compete for jobs or living wages.

²⁰ The argument is framed by George M. Fredrickson, *Black Image in the White Mind: The Debate on Afro-American Character and Destiny, 1817-1914* (Wesleyan University Press, 1987), pp. 59 - 68. Insoe points to a "longstanding debate" about the nature of the Old South and whether this was characterised by underlying class distinctions and animosity or white solidarity based on

have done much to challenge the traditional stereotypes of Appalachian hill farmers and emphasise the diversity of farming practices. Far from being universally wedded to their older Union allegiances, many yeomen were enthusiastic supporters of secession and, despite their sometimes fractious relationship with planter elites, they were not as a group against slavery as an institution and certainly not ideological abolitionists.²¹ What is only beginning to emerge is a fuller understanding of yeoman culture and identity, centring on the primacy of white, male independence and self-reliance, which reflect inherited

shared racism and common heritage, John C. Inscoe, *Mountain Masters: Slavery and Sectional Crisis in Western North Carolina* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989), p.129. More recent studies seem to lean to the latter whilst recognising that underlying tensions were present which needed to be managed. By way of contrast, Escott's earlier *Many Excellent People* highlights the significant class conflict between an independent yeomanry and an entrepreneurial elite. McCurry acknowledges that planters and yeoman had common interests as a white propertied minority but this was an unequal relationship between two competing groups rather than a *herrenvolk* democracy. Stephanie McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds: Yeoman Households, Gender Relations and the Political Culture of the Antebellum South Carolina Low Country* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995). Inscoe, in *Mountain Masters*, also describes a shared commitment to white supremacy and a common country republican ideology and rhetoric. Chandra Manning uses Zebulon Vance's 1864 gubernatorial campaign, which explicitly exploited the racial fears of non-slaveholders, to argue that slavery underpinned both the social order and defined their identities as white men. See Chandra Manning, "The Order of Nature Would be Reversed".

²¹ Unsurprisingly, yeomen generally owned smaller farms, typically less than one to two hundred improved acres, and the land was less valuable and concentrated in poorer areas. Yeomen were generally subsistence farmers needing to pursue conservative, safety first farming practices and the precarious nature of yeoman independence was a constant concern. Recent studies have also re-affirmed Owsley's earlier assertion that yeoman farmers owning a handful of slaves were not untypical and the distinguishing feature of yeoman farms was not whether they owned slaves but the necessity of yeoman families to also work the land themselves. Since Vernon Burton's micro-study of Edgefield, the recent historiography of yeoman families in Georgia and the Carolinas is extensive. For South Carolina, see Orville Vernon Burton, *In My Father's House Are Many Mansions: Family and Community in Edgefield, South Carolina* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, Lacy C. Ford Jr., *Origins of Southern Radicalism: The South Carolina Upcountry* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988). For North Carolina see Escott, *Many Excellent People*, Boulton, *Poor Whites of the Antebellum South*, John C. Inscoe and Gordon B. McKinney, *The Heart of Confederate Appalachia: Western North Carolina in the Civil War* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), Martin Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War: Community and Society in the Appalachian South* (Charlottesville and London: University Press of Virginia, 2001). For Georgia, see Steven Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism: Yeoman Farmers and the Transformation of the Georgia Upcountry* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) and Mark V. Wetherington, *Plain Folks Fight: The Civil War and Reconstruction in Piney Woods Georgia* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005).

“country republican” values of equality and reciprocity. These traditional, republican values bolstered yeoman acceptance of planter hegemony in the belief that planters understood their needs and would protect their interests. It was the breakdown in some of these customary arrangements during the war years that contributed so much to yeoman dissent and discontent.²²

Given the importance of such finely balanced mechanisms in containing tension, it is surprising how little attention has been paid to how planter benevolence worked in practice, other than in a handful of studies.²³ Timothy Lockley’s 2007 study sets out the limitations and significance of planter paternalism. Never intended as a substitute for parish relief of the most indigent, an informal “credit network” of loans provided non-elite artisans and yeoman farmers with a stake in southern society through money trickling down from the rich. Lockley’s brief case study of Buncombe County in North Carolina shows how

²² For shared “country republican” values see Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, p. 50 and Wetherington, *Plain Folks’ Fight*, p.12. Ford and Wetherington both emphasise a yeoman culture based around traditional republican simplicity and self-sufficiency which shaped popular perceptions of what was legitimate and illegitimate in the market place.

²³ The principal studies remain Timothy J. Lockley, *Welfare and Charity in the Antebellum South* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2007) and Barbara L. Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slaveholders: Assisting the Poor in Charleston, 1670 – 1860* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1993). Only a limited number of actual examples of planter support for yeoman appear in the more general literature. Some of the most persuasive examples are provided by Ford who argues that planters often used their capital investments to benefit neighbouring farmers by grinding corn at nominal prices, ginning cotton and hauling goods to market. In the devastating drought of 1845 a York District plantation owner gave corn away to widows and destitute farmers. *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, pp. 53, 63- 65. Wetherington cites the example of the rich planter Joseph White fulfilling a traditional, paternalist role in supporting his yeoman neighbours as the wartime price of corn soared in the Macon market. *Plain Folk’s Fight* p. 171. Inscoc and McKinney argue that the mutual dependency between slave holders and non-slaveholders, including the exchange of slave labour, is only belatedly being recognised by historians. During the war, some local elites still exhibited a sense of *noblesse oblige* to their neighbours including landlord Joseph C Norwood allowing wives and widows of soldiers to cultivate patches of farm land without paying rent. Also quoted is a letter from Robert Vance, in 1861, to his elder brother. Governor Zebulon Vance of North Carolina, saying he had given bacon and flour to the destitute wife of a soldier, Newton Patton. Inscoc and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, pp. 20, 170, 79.

planter paternalism, in respect of neighbours, worked carefully within a southern honour system. Rather than gifts, benevolence often took the form of small loans and, although some debts were never repaid, recourse to court action was the exception rather than the rule and rarely ever involved near neighbours. Such arrangements fitted unobtrusively within the prevailing credit and debit arrangements in a southern society where access to ready cash was rare and, by restricting loans to household heads, they reinforced the traditional roles and responsibilities of white males.

Different arrangements appear to have prevailed in southern cities and Bellows' study of antebellum poor relief in Charleston illustrates some of the limits of southern *noblesse oblige*. Whilst Charleston maintained a "culture of benevolence" towards the poor and, where an aristocratic sense of duty remained, this benevolence was frequently exercised not through "mutual bonds and reciprocal duties" but through parish and city based institutions.²⁴ Bellows' typical pre-war philanthropist was not the benevolent planter caring for yeoman neighbours but Richard Yeadon, a wealthy Charleston lawyer, with the time to devote to charity work and who served as the city's Commissioner of the Poor for eleven years. He was also a trustee of several public institutions and president of a number of benevolent societies. Generally, whilst some planters undoubtedly accepted responsibilities in respect of their yeoman neighbours as part of the culture of the Old South, these were highly personalised arrangements bounded and limited by a tradition of male honour. When faced with the widespread

²⁴ Bellows, *Benevolence Among Slave Owners*, pp.20 and 69.

hardship and destitution of many women and their children from 1862 onwards, there was nothing in the traditions and ideologies of male benevolence that enabled the Confederate authorities to deal with the problem of needy women who were “outside the protective cope of the family.”²⁵

The failure of the Confederacy to act in response to the collapse of traditional benevolence under the weight of wartime pressure has contributed to the continuing debate about the divided nature of the new slave republic and its inability to respond adequately to the needs of ordinary southerners during the war. Drew Gilpin Faust has treated such failures as evidence of the essentially contradictory nature of Confederate nationalism in being unable to reconcile its elitist core with the need to maintain popular support. As the scale of need grew, and required the replacement of personalised help with more systematic relief measures, the Confederate state found itself unable to act to transfer traditional paternalist responsibilities to the state with legislation being blocked by planters seeing it as legal discrimination in favour of the poor against the rich.²⁶ Neither were the Confederate authorities able to breach the primacy of the free market place by imposing subsistence prices through market regulation. Unable to act centrally, the Confederacy fell back to looking towards state provision to provide support and whilst individual states did implement relief provision these were

²⁵ Ibid. p.88. Some southern cities, including Charleston, attempted to combine charitable *noblesse oblige* with municipal support through the establishment of free markets to distribute food to destitute families although it is likely that demand soon outstripped provision and too few families were helped. Rable, *Civil Wars*. p.106.

²⁶ Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, pp. 54- 57.

generally inadequate and often struggled to overcome problems of state bureaucracy, corruption and difficulties of supply.²⁷

In contrast with its difficulties in assuming responsibility for the needs of civilians, the new Confederate State had no such reluctance in extending its reach to mobilise resources for the war and to regulate the lives of its citizens in ways never seen previously. As Paul D. Escott has argued, the Confederacy quickly became a “shockingly, untraditional, un-southern experience.”²⁸ Nowhere could this be seen more clearly than in Confederate conscription policies and their impact on the lives of ordinary men and women. Even though, as Kenneth Noe has demonstrated, most Confederate soldiers were volunteers, the impact of

²⁷ See in particular, Peter Wallenstein’s detailed analysis of public policy in Georgia which argues that state authorities committed significant funds to the relief of the families of soldiers and took direct action to tackle critical shortages such as in salt production and cotton combs. By the end of the war Georgia spent more on wartime relief than military expenditure although this figure is distorted by military costs being increasingly absorbed by the Confederate state. Critically, it is also clear that most of this welfare provision dated only from late 1863 onwards and, although Wallenstein does not press the point, the impression is that states such as Georgia were struggling to keep up with the demands for assistance. Peter Wallenstein, *From Slave South to New South: Public Policy in Nineteenth Century Georgia* (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1987). Although McCurry credits the bread riots of 1863 as creating a welfare system in the image of the soldier’s wife, her argument recognises that the initial arrangements were frequently ad hoc, were local rather than national, and dated largely from 1864. McCurry *Confederate Reckoning*, pp 205 – 209. As early as 1952, Mary Elizabeth Massey observed that laws to aid destitute families of men in service were passed in all eleven Confederate states beginning with Alabama in November 1861. Elizabeth Jane Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy: Shortages and Substitutes on the Southern Homefront* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1993), p.47. James L. Roark’s 1998 essay also credits the seceding states with making significant efforts to provide debtor relief, welfare programmes and changes in agricultural production to tackle scarce provisions as early as 1863 but concludes that such provision was simply unequal to the task. He identifies, in particular, the efforts of North Carolina, Georgia and Virginia. The Confederate government, in contrast, saw its priorities as feeding soldiers not civilians. James L. Roark, “Confederate Economy and Society”, in James M. McPherson and William J. Cooper, Jr. (eds.), *Writing the Civil War: The Quest to Understand* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1998), pp.214-215. Escott also credits Confederate President Jefferson Davis with making efforts to deal with food and fuel shortages but being more concerned with the needs of the military and the “preferences” of planters. Paul D. Escott, *After Secession: Jefferson Davis and the Failure of Confederate Nationalism*, (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana State University Press, 1978). pp. 135- 154.

²⁸ Escott, *Many Excellent People*, p. 37.

conscription on dissent should not be underestimated.²⁹ The pivotal event was the Conscription Act of April, 1862, which for the first time forcibly enlisted citizens into nationally organised armed forces rather than requiring more limited service in state militias and “took enlistment out of the hands of private men and placed it in the hands of a public entity.”³⁰ The 1862 Act not only conscripted all able-bodied men between the ages of the eighteen and thirty-five, it unilaterally extended the time that existing volunteers had to serve and, most contentiously, introduced a number of exemptions that gave the appearance of favouring rich slave owners over ordinary southerners.³¹ With the introduction of conscription came the “evil of desertion.”³² Although the Confederacy was remarkably successful in getting men into the field, levels of desertion and draft evasion were high and became a significant cause of hardship and discontent in yeoman communities as a result of removing male labour from small, family farms.³³ The introduction of conscription

²⁹ Noe asserts that conscripts represented only 15 percent of all men who would eventually serve in Confederate armies during the war, roughly 120,000 soldiers. In addition, 9 percent of soldiers were substitutes, enlisting for payment on behalf of other southern men and 22.5 percent enlisted after 1861. These numbers suggest that majority of all southern men fighting on behalf of the Confederacy enlisted voluntarily in 1861. Kenneth W. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels: The Confederates Who Joined the Army after 1862* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p.2.

³⁰ Scott Reynolds Nelson, “Red Strings and Half Brothers: Civil Wars in Alamance County, North Carolina, 1861-1871”, in John C. Inscoe and Robert C. Kenzer (eds.), *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2001) p.47.

³¹ Further acts followed in September, 1862 and in February, 1864. Age ranges and categories of exemption changed with each act. The contentious Twenty Slave rule effectively exempting overseers and family members in larger plantations was not introduced until October 1862.

³² Ella Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War*, (Gloucester, Massachusetts: Peter Smith, 1966), p.106. Lonn’s early study, first published in 1926, recognised the complexity of Confederate desertion questioning whether love for the Union was a significant factor compared with the determination to avoid military service. The 1862 Act formalised desertion as a military offence. As Sheehan-Dean has observed in his study of Virginian soldiers and their families, there were already significant levels of absence in the first year of the conflict, not least because many of the eager volunteers of the Spring of 1861 were not anxious to fight a real war. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, p.40.

³³ Somewhere in the region of 850,000 – 900,000 fought for the Confederacy, an enlistment rate of between 75 and 85 percent of all eligible men. James McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom, The*

forced many ordinary men and their families to make a choice between service in the armed forces, draft evasion or desertion.³⁴ As a consequence, it potentially turned previously law-abiding citizens into active dissenters liable to arrest, imprisonment or worse. As the response of the Confederate authorities became increasingly forceful, measures to tackle desertion and draft evasion also turned individual dissent, in parts of the Confederacy, into organised resistance.

The willingness of the Confederate state to intervene in the lives of its citizens led Emory Thomas to emphasise the revolutionary nature of the Confederacy.³⁵ In particular, Thomas focuses on the role of the Davis government in creating a highly centralised national state that not only conscripted its men into a national army but introduced martial law, directly taxed its people and took control of the economy. Commentators have reflected on the contrast between the new Confederate state, with its range of powers, and the “old federal republic” where the national government rarely touched the average citizen except through

American Civil War (London: Penguin Books, 1990), p.306, n.41 and McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p. 323. Although Confederate desertion rates are difficult to calculate because of an official reluctance to always treat absence as desertion despite the 1862 Act, and because of reenlistments, McCurry has estimated that by May, 1863, almost one fifth of Confederate forces were absent without official leave, a figure that possibly rose to two –fifths by early 1865. Jefferson Davis is credited in saying publicly in October 1864 that two-thirds of Confederate forces were absent, most without official leave. Richard Nelson Current, *Lincoln’s Loyalists: Union Soldiers from the Confederacy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), p.175. Rable, *The Confederate Republic*, p. 274. Mark Weitz’s book-length study of Confederate desertion was unable to resolve the issue of numbers although he believes it higher than the official Confederate army figure of 103,400. Mark A Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter: Desertion in the Confederate Army* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), p. ix. The most convincing study of the pattern of Confederate desertion rates, or “permanent departures” from the Army, is provided by Sheehan –Dean who challenges the conventional wisdom that Confederate desertion rates rose gradually, year on year, as war weariness increased. Sheehan-Dean demonstrates that “permanent departures” peaked in 1862 following the introduction of conscription and in late 1864 when defeat seemed inevitable. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*. pp. 92 – 93.

³⁴ Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, p.57.

³⁵ Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1971).

the post office.³⁶ The impact on the lives of women was, in particular, unprecedented as the public world of politics and the private world of families collided. Women not only had to take on responsibility for the management of impoverished household economies but also for dealing with a new Confederate state that was conscripting their men, impressing and taxing their goods and failing to regulate markets fairly.³⁷ Women, who had long been absent from the public sphere and were most distant from government institutions and least versed in its language, suddenly had to find new ways to make themselves heard.³⁸ Whilst it was the men who “must see to the fighting”, it was the women who often bore the brunt of cajoling and confronting the Confederate authorities through their letters and petitions including, at times, the use of direct action by seizing bread and other scarce provisions and rebuffing its Enrolling Officers and tax collectors.³⁹

If the evidence for antebellum *noblesse oblige* seems at best patchy and suggestive of a continuing romantic vision of the Old South, by 1863, in parts of the

³⁶ McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, p 859. The argument is also developed forcibly by Jonathon Sarris with his portrayal of a “state-as-criminal” Confederacy that invaded private homes and violated the security of property and family. Jonathon D. Sarris, “Shot for being Bushwhackers,’ Guerrilla War and Extra-legal Violence in a North Georgia Community, 1862 – 1865”, in Daniel E. Sutherland (ed.), *Guerrilla Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), pp. 45 – 58.

³⁷ Even the normally supportive Governor of South Carolina, M.L. Bonham, was moved to write in June, 1864, to Secretary of War James Seddon to emphasise how in non-slave holding districts virtually no men between the ages of eighteen and forty-five remained. *O.R.* Ser.1, Vol. XXXV, pt. 11, 519. (Last viewed 12 June, 2014), Cited in Escott: *After Secession*, p 109. In his study of Virginia, Sheehan-Dean estimates that the majority of men who enlisted in Virginia were heads of households and most were in their mid-twenties. Sheehan-Dean: *Why Confederates Fought*, p.135.

³⁸ For arguments regarding the changing nature of the public sphere and the role of women during the Civil War see Mary P Ryan, “Gender and Public Access: Women’s Politics in Nineteenth-Century America”, in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge and London: MIT Press, 1992), pp 259 – 280.

³⁹ Hector’s line from Homer’s *Iliad* is cited by Drew Gilpin Faust, “Alters of Sacrifice: Confederate Women and the Narratives of War”, in *Southern Stories: Slaveholders in Peace and War* (Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press, 1992), p.113.

South, there was a real and catastrophic collapse of a finely balanced yeoman economy based around independent, self-sufficient households. This collapse was accompanied by a sense of grievance and injustice fuelling discontent as traditional market arrangements and community obligations were destroyed by the pressures of the war. Whilst the failure of planter benevolence during the war years was one element of this broken compact between the state and some of its citizens, the greater breach lay elsewhere. Ordinary southerners may have been convinced of the need to protect their way of life from “Northern aggression” but they had not anticipated the danger from within; from a Confederate state that plunged so many into destitution by conscripting their men and taking their crops and farm animals and seemed indifferent to their hardships whilst continuing to protect the rights of planters, speculators and state functionaries using conscription law exemptions to avoid active service. In the many letters from discontented women complaining about the impact of the war on their families, it was often the inequity of sacrifice or the unwillingness to share the burdens of the war fairly that gave the greatest offence.

If the secession of states from the Union effectively ended the public expression of unionism in the Confederacy, the actions of the new state to vigorously pursue the war created and amplified new forms of dissent and discontent.⁴⁰ Although Union sentiments persisted, these became increasingly

⁴⁰ For the ending of public expression of unionism in South Carolina, see Steven A. Channing, *Crisis of Fear: Secession in South Carolina* (New York: The Norton Library, 1974), p.237. Thomas Dyer also writes of unionism being “muzzled” in post-secession Atlanta. Thomas G. Dyer, *Secret Yankees: The Union Circle in Confederate Atlanta* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), p.46. Ash argues that faced with government coercion and community threats the majority of unionists were quickly cowed and either stayed quiet or fled north. Stephen V. Ash, *When the Yankees Came: Conflict and Chaos in the Occupied South* (Chapel Hill:

muted and circumspect or took on new and more radical forms such as enlistment in Federal forces, membership of secret peace societies or, in parts of the South, open opposition to the Confederacy.⁴¹ Important as they are, such formalised acts of resistance tell only part of the story as many other southerners expressed their dissent in far more subjective ways reflecting personal circumstances and need.

In his seminal 1962 essay Potter challenged historians' tendency to view loyalty in absolute terms where citizens were seen as either simply loyal or disloyal, denying the validity of competing attachments such as loyalty to family, to church or to region.⁴² Possibly as a result of later developments in social and cultural history, more recent scholarship has concerned itself far more with such

University of North Carolina University Press, 1995 p. 11. The very real dangers that public expression of union sympathies could provoke was well recognised by the otherwise sceptical Southern Claims Commission who accepted that southern loyalists often needed to conceal their true sentiments. Second General Report of the Commissioners of Claims in General Reports of the Commissioners of Claims (under the Act of 3rd March, 1871). 10 pt. [Washington, 1871 – 80.] 1871, pp 4-5.

⁴¹ Tatum offers the most substantial overview of peace societies in the South, including the Heroes of America in North Carolina and on the borders of Virginia and Tennessee, but she also includes other secret societies operating in Georgia, Arkansas, Mississippi and Alabama. Tatum, *Disloyalty in the Confederacy*. Escott describes the Heroes of America, led by William Holden, as a secret, unionist order which co-ordinated various types of anti- Confederate activity including helping escaping union prisoners and aiding deserters. Whilst some of the Red Strings were highly political, others joined out of a generalised discontent over the war and a desire for peace. Escott. *Many Excellent People*, p.64. Manning, *The Order of Nature*, pp. 106- 108. Nelson describes the Heroes of America as an essentially conservative movement defending family and home. Nelson, "Red Strings and Half Brothers", pp. 40 -42. The standard work on white southerners fighting in Federal forces remains Current, *Lincoln's Loyalists*. All states in the Confederacy, apart from South Carolina, raised at least a battalion of white troops fighting with federal armies under the banner of their state. For "communities of dissent" see Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, p. 5. Such communal opposition involved both men and women and were not only evident in the North Carolina Piedmont but armed bands of deserters and draft evaders were found across the South, including the Georgia Pine Barrens, Kentucky, Missouri and Texas. Even in parts of South Carolina, there were armed and organised bands, working farms in common and fortifying their camps during the summer of 1863, in the Spartanburg, Greenville and Pickens districts. Charles E. Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005). For the original account see O.R. ser. IV, vol. 11, 771- 773 (Last viewed 2 May, 2014).

⁴² Potter, "The Historians Use of Nationalism and Vice Versa", pp. 925 – 927. Potter argues that nationalism should be seen as a tendency, an impulse or an attitude of mind rather than in absolute terms.

multiple and competing attachments particularly in balancing the political dimensions of unionism with the significance of family and community in determining loyalty. By the turn of the century, a new phase in the historiography was beginning to emerge, characterised by a new relativism and exemplified by Thomas Dyer's 1999 examination of the "pliant" nature of union allegiances in wartime Atlanta where such loyalty was rarely unconditional and frequently contingent and circumstantial.⁴³ By 2001 John Inscoe was writing in similar terms about the "slippery" nature of southern unionism which was often a matter of expediency and circumstance rather than commitment.⁴⁴ McKinney's 2005 analysis of amnesty appeals from Western North Carolina cautioned against conflating resistance with unionism and proposed a new analytical framework attempting to distinguish between the different layers of allegiance including those many ordinary southerners largely concerned with the non-ideological business of feeding and clothing their families and keeping their communities safe. Followed shortly by another North Carolina study by David Brown, this more recent scholarship has begun to highlight the ambivalent and equivalent nature of much southern loyalty, whether to the Confederacy or the Union. However, it is doubtful whether dissenting southern unionists, many of whom put their lives and the safety of their families at risk, would recognise such qualified descriptions of their loyalty.⁴⁵

⁴³ Dyer, *Secret Yankees*. Dyer's Atlanta loyalists were often northerners who had resettled. Storey suggests a number of other works exploring similar family and community themes all published in the same period. Storey, *Southern Dissent*. pp. 878 – 885.

⁴⁴ John C Inscoe and Robert C Kenzer, (eds.), *Enemies of the Country: New Perspectives on Unionists in the Civil War South* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2001). p 3.

⁴⁵ Gordon B. McKinney, "Layers of Loyalty: Confederate Nationalism and Amnesty Letters from Western North Carolina," *Civil War History*, Vol. 51.1 (March, 2005), pp. 5 -22. David Brown, "North Carolina Ambivalence: Rethinking Loyalty and Disaffection in the Civil War Piedmont", in Escott, *North Carolinians in the Era of the Civil War*. Gleeson has similarly characterised Irish immigrant

Whilst there is little to otherwise connect women bread rioters and southern unionists, together they illustrate the complicated and subjective nature of much Confederate dissent and discontent. The many southerners making representations to the Southern Claims Commission after the war may have shared a self-proclaimed attachment to the Union but appear to have understood that loyalty in very different ways. Few such claims suggest loyalty to the Confederacy but the nature of that dissent frequently took different and often very individual forms. The many discontented women who wrote to the Confederate authorities, or rioted in pursuit of bread and other essentials, claimed no such allegiance to the Union and arguably many remained loyal to the Confederacy even as they took to the streets or attempted to have their men discharged from Confederate service. There is little to suggest, however, that such women's actions were designed to challenge the Confederate state or to demand new political rights or entitlements. Taken together, such accounts offer a new perspective on the breadth and complexity of Confederate dissent and discontent in the Carolinas and Georgia which frequently manifested itself in unexpected and contradictory ways.

The thesis focuses on South Carolina, North Carolina and Georgia as three neighbouring states, all of whom had a particular significance within the Confederacy, and who together illustrate the diverse nature of Confederate dissent and discontent. North Carolina remains the Confederate state most associated with disloyalty, with its high levels of enlistment but also high levels of desertion and

loyalty to the Confederacy as ambivalent and equivocal. David T. Gleeson, *The Green and the Gray: The Irish in the Confederate States of America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013).

draft evasion. It was also one of the final states to secede. For much of the war, it was led by an independent minded and populist governor in Zebulon Vance to whom many North Carolinians looked to alleviate their hardships. As in Georgia, women from North Carolina were closely associated with the bread riots and many women from the two states wrote to the Confederate authorities during the war. By contrast, South Carolina had led the South out of the Union and was a Deep South state with a significant investment in slavery and state's politics remained dominated by a slave owning elite, despite its significant yeoman population. Conspicuously, unlike in the other two states, few South Carolingian women appeared to have rioted or have written to the authorities despite comparable levels of hardship. Georgia was an important, cotton producing Deep South state with a large slave population but also with significant industrial and logistical capacity critical to the Confederate war effort. Despite a significant slaveholder presence, the state also had a populist governor in Joseph Brown, from the Georgia upcountry, who enjoyed considerable support among yeoman communities. All three states were also connected at the end of the war by Sherman's March and southerners from all three states subsequently sought compensation from the Southern Claims Commission for property taken by Sherman's troops.

Chapter One of the dissertation makes use of the Southern Claims Commission records, compiled shortly after the war, to consider how self-proclaimed southern unionists described themselves and their loyalties. Unlike post-war constructions of steadfast unionism, such accounts suggest that

southerners often understood the meaning of their unionism in very different ways and such dissent involved women as much as men. Chapter Two continues to focus on southern unionism and looks in detail at support for draft evaders and deserters, including escaped Federal prisoners. Unlike southern unionist men, whose wartime experience frequently resulted in a loss of mastery, the war empowered many women often through the centrality of their role in the support of draft evaders and deserters. Chapter Three continues with the theme of gender and agency by examining the many letters and petitions sent by ordinary southern women, some barely literate, to the Confederate authorities during the war. Although recent scholarship has viewed such letters as a political awakening of poor white women, this reading suggests that although ordinary women asserted themselves in very new and public ways through their letters and petitions, their discontent should not be confused with disloyalty. Chapter Four looks at those women who turned their general discontent into direct action by taking to the streets in a series of bread riots. Drawing largely on contemporary newspaper accounts, the examination suggests that such riots followed a highly distinctive pattern. Unlike modern twenty first century riots, characterised by violent confrontations between the state and politically disaffected or alienated groups, Confederate bread riots were much closer in nature with traditional forms of popular protest by women

Unlike other examinations of disaffection and resistance in the Civil War South this thesis attempts to understand dissent and discontent on its own terms rather than as a judgement on the legitimacy of Confederate nationalism or the

viability of a new secessionist slave republic of white men. Through its emphasis on men and women's own accounts of their experiences, it analyses the meaning that dissent and discontent had for ordinary southerners and enables us to see how dissent was not the same as discontent and that discontent with the new state's conduct of the war did not necessarily imply disloyalty. Whilst dissenting southern unionists and women bread rioters may make unfamiliar bedfellows, together they illustrate the complicated but essentially conservative nature of much Confederate dissent and discontent often seeking the restoration of older and more stable arrangements in the face of the disruption of secession and the war.

Chapter 1. “I wanted to be as we were”: Southerners define the meaning of their dissent.

During the Civil War, John W. Coogler lived with his wife and young family, on a small thirty-five acre farm in the settlement of Dutch Fork in Lexington County, South Carolina. On 7 February, 1865, Federal troops of the 14th Army Corps passed through the settlement foraging for food. When two Federal soldiers came to Coogler’s farm they were met by his wife who explained that he was away hiding in the woods to avoid Confederate cavalry. They asked if she knew who they were and, when she said no, told her with some evident glee: “We are Yankees, we are the boys.” The troops subsequently took mules, hogs and other supplies from the farm. Following the war, John Coogler was one of over 20,000 southerners, claiming to be loyal to the Union, who petitioned the Southern Claims Commission for compensation for the goods taken by Federal armies as stores or supplies. There was no dispute about the taking of Coogler’s property, but his claim for \$589 was unsuccessful because the Commission questioned the nature of his loyalty, although his wife and other witnesses all described him as a loyal, Union man. He testified that he had sheltered deserters from the Confederate Army and provided them with food and water. He had himself deserted from the army in 1863: “he gave himself a furlough,” as he told his neighbour, Sherrod Meetze. Unfortunately for the outcome of his claim, in the previous year he had also successfully bid for a Confederate government contract to tan leather as a means of avoiding service in the army. Although the Commission accepted his difficulties, they viewed the taking of the contract as an act of disloyalty and rejected his claim.

That Coogler's claim was rejected on such grounds was not unusual. The Southern Claims Commission was established on the 3 March, 1871, to consider petitions from southerners, both black and white, who claimed that they had remained loyal to the Union during the war but had suffered losses as a result of Federal armies taking crops or other supplies. Most claims were heard locally by Special Petitioners and forwarded with a recommendation to Washington. Claims had to be submitted within two years although the Commission continued to adjudicate on claims until 1880. In terms of outcomes, probably around forty percent of claims were approved with awards typically equalling fifty percent of what was originally claimed, but there continue to be some disparities in the figures. Although offering near contemporary accounts of the experiences of ordinary southerners, who proclaimed a continuing loyalty to the Union throughout the war, Commission records are not a complete measure of southern unionism. The ability to claim was based on geography and circumstance, accounts were constructed some years after the war and because of the publicity surrounding claims there were disincentives as well as potential benefits. Because the claims process was based on property it also privileged older men and widows. The definition of loyalty taken by the commission was also narrow and its judgements often reflected its own racial and gendered boundaries. Despite their limitations commission records do offer a rare opportunity for the voices of ordinary southern

men and women who lived through the Civil War to be heard even when mediated through the formal processes of the Commission and its functionaries.⁴⁶

Secession and the subsequent war required many ordinary southerners, like John Coogler, as well as political leaders, to recalculate the value of the Union. Historians have observed how many southerners did not choose to live in a new Confederate slave republic but rather found the borders of the nation shifting around them. By literally setting the geographical boundaries of the new nation, secessionists not only defined their new state but also shaped the nature of much dissent.⁴⁷ Commission records from South Carolina, Georgia and North Carolina demonstrate that southerners opposed to the Confederacy came from a range of backgrounds and that their experiences of secession and the war were very

⁴⁶ Remarkably little has been written about the work of the Commission since Frank W. Klingberg's 1955 monograph: *The Southern Claims Commission*, (New York: Octagon Press, 1978) which restricts its analysis to claims of \$10,000 or more. Susannah Michelle Lee's 2014 publication, *Claiming the Union* consequently offers an important contribution in understanding the work of the Commission particularly as a post-war agency attempting to reconstruct U.S. citizenship following the divisions of the Civil War and grappling with the contested issue of loyalty. Susannah Michelle Lee, *Claiming the Union: Citizenship in the Post Civil War South* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014). Also of value is Sarah Lawson's introduction to the work of the Commission, on behalf of the National Archives, Sarah Lawson, "Records of the Southern Claims Commission", *Prologue, Journal of the National Archives*, 12, (Winter, 1980), pp. 207- 218. The only other significant contribution to understanding the role of the Commission is Margaret Storey's examination of wartime union loyalty in Alabama, Storey: *Loyalty and Loss*. With these exceptions, historians have generally used Commission records selectively to enhance local or regional studies, as in Thomas Dyer's study of wartime loyalties in Confederate Atlanta, Dyer: *Secret Yankees*. Southern Claims Commission petitions were judged either Approved or Disallowed although a number were also abandoned along the way. Each claim had its own unique reference number which in the case of John Coogler was 5773. In the dissertation, claims are referenced in the following format: Coogler, SCC Disallowed Claim, 5773. All quotations from Commission records follow original spellings and punctuation.

⁴⁷ Quigley, *Shifting Grounds*. Carl Degler had observed, as early as 1974, that it was secession that was "daring, disruptive and radical" and it was those who opposed the Confederacy who were the conservatives. Carl N. Degler, *The Other South: Union Dissenters in the Nineteenth Century* (Harper Torchbooks: New York and London, 1975), p.186. Degler was writing about elite southern politicians but the significance of dissent as a conservative impulse is also highlighted by Storey, who in similar fashion to Quigley, argues that the shifting sentiments of their secessionist neighbours that turned Alabama unionists into dissenters wanting stability and security. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, p. 35.

different.⁴⁸ Southerners united in their opposition to the Confederacy, expressed that opposition in many different ways and dissent frequently divided along lines of class and gender and attitudes to race. Such dissent was rarely straightforward and was often tempered by the competing demands of family and community. Although most proclaimed their attachment to the Union, the nature of that loyalty was intensely personal and, in contrast with the narrow and restrictive definition of loyalty required by the Commission, many southerners articulated a much looser and subjective concept of unionism whose boundaries were surprisingly fluid.⁴⁹

Such vernacular accounts of wartime union loyalty, expressed in the language and

⁴⁸ The research is based on a detailed examination of 320 digital records from the three states. In South Carolina, because of the low numbers, it was possible to examine all approved claims from white claimants before identifying a final sample of fifty-six claims. I also examined a small number of claims from former slaves and free persons of color for the purposes of comparison. A high number of “Barred and Disallowed” claims were abandoned before completion and were subsequently barred from consideration. I eventually identified 114 completed South Carolina claims that were considered by the Commission before being disallowed. I selected fifty-seven of these disallowed claims for closer examination giving a final South Carolina sample of 113. The final numbers included twenty-nine claims I identified as missing from the database which, which following correspondence with the National Records and Archives Administration were subsequently digitalised. In Georgia I intended to take a cross sample from all the counties included on the database but the poor quality of many digitalised records made this impractical and the final totals of fifty-one Approved Claims and fifty- three Disallowed Claims involved extensive preliminary screening. In North Carolina I again intended to cross sample but there were similar difficulties in legibility, which together with uneven numbers, again required a more selective approach to identify a final sample of fifty- seven Approved Claims and forty- six Disallowed Claims.

⁴⁹ This finding is consistent with a growing body of scholarship emphasising the circumstantial nature of much Union attachment but gives greater emphasis to the extent to which dissenting southerners determined their own definitions of loyalty. Although not part of her central argument, Suzanne Michelle Lee observes that scholars have neglected “vernacular” or self-defined citizenship in favour of official versions of loyalty promoted by post war institutions such as the Southern Claims Commission. My argument differs to Lee in that few southern unionists saw themselves as citizens in any modern sense of the term. Lee, *Claiming the Union*. Dyer in his study of wartime Atlanta refers to Union loyalty as a “pliant abstraction whose practical meaning depended wholly on circumstance”. Dyer, *Secret Yankees*, p. 4. Like Lee, Dyer emphasises how the nature of wartime loyalty was redefined by the Commission. Loyalty which had been seen in terms of ideology, politics and morality became almost entirely defined in financial and legal terms. From a different perspective examining Confederate nationalism, such arguments also support Quigley’s criticism of studies wanting to rigidly separate allegiances into different boxes or categories. Quigley, *Shifting Grounds*, pp.5- 6. Crofts in his earlier 1989 study classified Upper South unionists as either *unconditional*, *anticoercionists* or *extended ultimatumists* and some *fast ultimatumists*. Daniel W. Crofts, *Reluctant Confederates: Upper South Unionists in the Secession Crisis* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989).

words of ordinary southerners even as they were mediated by Commission functionaries and processes, indicate the contested nature of southern unionism.⁵⁰ Whilst some opponents of the Confederacy fitted a Reconstruction ideal of steadfast unionists, whose convictions never wavered during the war, the experiences of many was at variance with that post-war, northern construction. Although some men and women boldly opposed the Confederacy much dissent was characterised by caution and wariness as men, in particular, attempted to protect themselves and their homes and families. Other men chose to take work in reserved occupations in order to stay out of the war and continue to provide for their families in difficult times and some had no objection to serving in Confederate militias or other armed forces. Whilst southern unionist dissent took on many and at times unexpected forms, what is significant about these accounts is that they reflect the experiences of ordinary southerners who made their own judgements on the meaning and boundaries of loyalty before their histories were rewritten by northern functionaries after the war. In this sense, the stories they told, and the language they used, often reflected the values and assumptions of a disappearing, antebellum southern world caught in the turmoil of a civil war where both the North and the South were reformulating the meaning of statehood and citizenship. Unlike the new citizen soldiers of the Federal and Confederate armies, southern unionism

⁵⁰ In his discussion of the contested nature of American public memory and the Vietnam War, Bodnar distinguishes between “vernacular” accounts largely drawn from those who actually fought, or their friends and families, and a public memory reflecting a wider patriotism and needs of the nation. John Bodnar, *Remaking America: Public Memory, Commemoration and Patriotism in the Twentieth Century*, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

characterised by draft evasion and desertion, remained largely immune from such transformative changes.⁵¹

A self-proclaimed attachment to the Union framed much Confederate dissent: “I am a Union man” — or occasionally “Union woman” — was by far the most common formula adopted.⁵² Men, at times, reinforced this gendered version of loyalty through suitable qualifiers: a *strong* union man, a *firm* union man or, less commonly, a *violent* union man.⁵³ Women frequently deferred to gender expectations and defined their own loyalties in terms of those of their husbands or fathers. Some women simply accepted this dominant, masculine convention of Union loyalty. Sarah Louisa Emanuel, the daughter of Charles Brandt, a Barnwell farmer, explained the influence her father had had on the family’s beliefs: “He was

⁵¹ In terms of the war and citizenship, Quigley locates Confederate nationalism firmly with a nineteenth century model of emerging nation states often struggling against larger oppressors and where the state needed to establish control over its territory and population. Within this interpretation, enlistment and military service became the way that men reaffirmed their commitment to the preservation of the new state as citizen soldiers protecting home, family and country. Quigley, *Shifting Grounds*. For Federal armies and citizenship see Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge and London: Harvard University Press, 2011). For the impact of the war on citizenship and Irish Americans and African Americans see Christian G. Samito, *Becoming American Under Fire: Irish Americans, African Americans, and the Politics of Citizenship During the Civil War Era* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2009). For discussions on the nature of antebellum society see Ford, *The Origins of Southern Radicalism*, Wetherington, *Plain Folk’s Fight*, McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, Hahn, *The Roots of Southern Populism*.

⁵² Men and women who petitioned the Southern Claims Commission naturally had a financial interest in the outcome of their claims and it would have been strange if they did not attempt to put the best possible light on their claims. Many were also represented by attorneys who would have become accustomed to how the process worked but there is no evidence that the claim to be a Union man or women was an attempt to mirror the language of the Commission. Despite the lengthy *Standing Interrogatories*, or the standard questions adopted by Special Commissioners, the words Union man or Union woman simply do not appear but seem to be part of widespread cultural identity brought by claimants themselves. Even more curiously, although payments were authorised as “Claims of Loyal Citizens for Supplies furnished during the Rebellion”, very few claimants, in my sample, describe themselves in such terms. Three versions of the *Standing Interrogatories* were produced, in 1871, 1872 and 1874 with revisions designed to deal with earlier omissions. The different versions are reproduced in full in Lee, *Claiming the Union*, pp. 146 – 169.

⁵³ The expression *violent union man* in Commission records appears to suggest depth of feelings rather than actual physical violence.

a Union man, his wife and his daughters accepted his political gospel and were union men too, to the core.”⁵⁴ It is remarkable how prosaic, understated, and essentially conservative, many expressions of Union loyalty appeared to be. With the exception of war veterans, who frequently articulated a loyalty to the old flag or constitution, expressions of loyalty rarely moved beyond broad statements of general support or loosely defined constitutional principles. Petitioners believed that the Union should not have been broken, thought little good would result, and saw no legitimate constitutional reason for rebelling against an established government.⁵⁵ Critically, however, they also saw this loose, rather fluid concept of unionism as binding people together as part of a wider community in a way that enabled men or women to go to extraordinary lengths to support total strangers, such as escaped Federal soldiers, simply on the basis of what they saw as a shared Union identity. Far from being a statement of political allegiance, these expressions of southern unionism appear to reflect a broad, cultural attachment to the idea of Union that enabled a number of different and competing variants to exist side by side.⁵⁶

George Lavinder was typical of many in his understated opposition to the Confederacy. Describing himself as a poor fisherman and oysterman, living on the Georgia coast close to Isle of Hope in Chatham County, he was not political in any

⁵⁴ Brandt, SCC Approved Claim, 7998.

⁵⁵ The finding is consistent with Storey and the conservative nature of much dissent in Alabama. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*. pp. 20 -22.

⁵⁶ Gary Gallagher’s analysis of northern interpretations argues that recent war scholarship obscures the importance of Union for the wartime generation. Gary Gallagher, *The Union War* (Cambridge: Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2011). This reading of Southern Claims Commission records supports the primacy of the Union in the minds of many southerners who were opposed to the Confederacy and how it functioned as a bonding agent linking different strands of dissent together.

conventional sense but had his own views as to the legitimacy of secession. He also saw nothing wrong in serving as the Captain of the County Police from January, 1864, to avoid being sent into the Confederate Army but believed his state was wrong in seceding:

I was always opposed to secession. I felt that the war was unjust uncalled for and that the south would get the worst as she did. What influence I had was cast on the side of the Union. I did not have much I was a poor man. I did not vote on anything. After the ordinance of secession was adopted in my state I still held to the Union. I did not go with the state — I believed the state was wrong.

Despite his loose, constitutional objections to secession it seems unlikely that George Lavinder did anything to support either the Union or Confederate causes. He had known his neighbour Andrew Nelson since childhood and the two men eventually married two sisters. Nelson, and his nephew Edward Nelson, both spoke about Lavinder's sympathies. They believed him to be a Union man but neither knew of him doing anything to help the Union even though at one point Federal prisoners were being held in the area.⁵⁷

At a time when Americans were reformulating their understanding of citizenship and nation, as with Lavinder's reference to his state, the language used by some southerners indicates the traditional basis of much Confederate dissent. Such southerners asserted their loyalty to the Union, their support for the *government* of the United States or their attachment to the flag; very rarely did they refer to the United States as their nation or themselves as citizens. Many such

⁵⁷ Lavinder, SCC Disallowed Claim, 16029.

statements emphasised a wish for continuity over the disruption of secession. Thomas Ashford was a substantial slave owner from Richland County and a member of elite South Carolina society.⁵⁸ Despite their very different situations, like Lavinder, he also saw no legitimate cause to justify rebellion and, in a typical formulation, expressed his support for the established government of the country. He argued with his friends and family when he spoke his mind: “I thought the rebellion was wrong and unwise. I knew of no good reason for any rebellion against [the] US government.” Although owning forty-five slaves himself, he told Jack A. Finlay, his brother in law, who described himself as an “earnest adherent” of the Confederate cause and who served as a private in the Confederate armies, that there was no good excuse for the rebellion and that if it had not been for the “Big Fish”, or leading politicians, the South would not have seceded.⁵⁹ Henry Cook also expressed his loyalty to the established government and was one of those southerners who had not welcomed the change imposed by secession, telling the Commission: “I wanted to be as we were.” Although he sympathised with the Union he did not actively oppose the Confederacy and during the war he remained on his farm ten miles outside Savannah, Georgia, where he was never threatened or molested. He seems to have felt no obligation to do anything more and, although three of his sons served in the Confederate forces, there is little to suggest that he even considered the possibility of active opposition:

⁵⁸ Scarborough argues that elite slaveholders divided on wisdom on secession until the election of Lincoln but, even after Sumter, some continued to remain loyal to the Union. In South Carolina the majority of large slaveholders committed to secession: William Kauffman Scarborough, *Masters of the Big House: Elite slaveholders of the Nineteenth Century* (Baton Rouge: South Louisiana State University Press, 2003), pp. 276 -277.

⁵⁹ Ashford, SCC Approved Claim, 19137.

I never believed that the South would succeed, that I never did anything or offered or sought or attempted to do anything by word or deed to injure said cause or retard its success, that I never had any opportunity of helping the US, I never thought anything about it anyway, it never came into my mind, I didn't believe in any war on either side. I was in favour of the government as it stood.⁶⁰

Support for the existing government did not necessarily imply political commitment. Whilst an attachment to the Union framed much dissent, there was often a lack of evident engagement with any political process, not simply the politics of secession. Compared with the homely virtues of hard work and sturdy independence, little value seemed to be placed on political engagement. David Hunsucker was typical of other yeoman farmers who remained at home and had no apparent use for politics. A Catawba County farmer from North Carolina, already aged over sixty at the start of the war, he was opposed to secession and the war and never did anything to harm the union but otherwise simply tended to his own business:

I was against secession, opposed to the war, never took any part in politics. Had no use for such things. Do not remember that I voted at all. When the state went out, as they say, I was just what I had always been, a plain farmer and I remained at home tending to my own business. I never sympathised with the Rebellion . . . I cannot say that I had any decided feelings either way. I know that I never did anything to injure the cause of the union.

Friends and neighbours, who testified in support of claims, frequently described men as quiet, stay at home farmers who typically kept their opinions to themselves.

⁶⁰ Cook, SCC Disallowed Claim, 16869. Cook was aged sixty-one at the start of the war and would probably be viewed as a prosperous yeoman farmer whose land was valued in the 1860 U.S. Federal Census at \$3000. By the time of his claim being heard in 1872, his farm consisted of only around twenty acres of cultivated land, most of which was rented out to black tenants.

Certainly, Hunsucker was viewed as such by his neighbour Frederick Smith who using the conventional formulation described him as a “quiet, good citizen.”⁶¹

Even as the North and South fought to impose their view of the nation, few dissenting southerners saw themselves as citizens of a nation state. Although participation as citizen soldiers in Confederate and Federal armies can be seen as a critical point in the development of the nation, this was not the experience of men who opposed secession, served in Confederate armies only reluctantly and frequently deserted or evaded the draft often supported by their wives, mothers and sisters. With the exceptions of immigrant group who had sworn oaths of allegiance, men rarely referred to themselves as citizens. If men used the term at all, they did so in a far more traditional sense suggesting other free white men like themselves. George Seltzer from North Carolina was tricked by Federal forces after they took two of his horses when he was told if he went to their camp the horses would be returned. When his wife went the next day, the Federal troops had gone and all she found was “a large group of citizens” complaining about their stock being taken.⁶² J.W. Tuggle spoke approvingly of his neighbour, Leandrew Biffle from De Kalb County, Georgia, by describing him in such terms: “He has been a man of good standing all the time — a good citizen.”⁶³ Others used the term to distinguish between soldiers and civilians. Julia A. Jordan from Fulton County,

⁶¹ Hunsucker, SCC Disallowed Claim, 11525. This is not to deny the presence of politically active unionism in the Confederate South which was almost certainly silenced or driven out as a result of secession. Dyer, *Secret Yankees*, pp. 46 -52. Channing, *Crisis of Fear*, 237, n. 18. Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, p.11. The findings do suggest, however, that alongside more such conventional portrayals of steadfast unionism there also existed yeoman farmers, in particular, who were distrustful of any politics.

⁶² Seltzer, SCC Disallowed Claim, 7334.

⁶³ Biffle, SCC Approved Claim, 7565.

Georgia, was threatened by Texas Rangers and scouts with “some citizens among them”, whilst John B. Obannon, from Chattooga County, Georgia, told the Commission that he was never threatened by “any soldiers or citizens during the war.”⁶⁴

Such traditional use of language acts as a reminder that, by the time of the Civil War, barely two or three generations separated mid-nineteenth century Americans from the Revolutionary War, or Early Republic and such memories powerfully fuelled allegiances on either side of the conflict.⁶⁵ Whilst few dissenting southerners served in Confederate armies willingly, a number had previously served in U.S. forces in earlier wars and some claimed a direct family link with the Revolutionary War. Such connections provided a powerful attachment to the Union, frequently expressed through the traditional symbol of the national flag. Some of the strongest and emotive expressions of opposition to the Confederacy came from military veterans or their descendants. Joseph A. Dunbar was a veteran of the 1812 War and a government pensioner. At the start of the war, he was a tenant farmer in De Kalb County, Georgia where he tended the land and the farm’s owner provided the stock. In July, 1864, Federal troops arrived at his farm and he later described his encounter with the troops: “. . . they kept waving their flags at me and finally I said Gentleman you have no advantage of me. I have served under that flag long ago and never have loved any other. I am for the old stars and stripes.” Although the colonel in charge subsequently met and talked with him late

⁶⁴ Jordan, SCC Approved Claim, 18724. Obannon, SCC Disallowed Claim, 6681.

⁶⁵ For the Confederacy seeing itself as the legitimate heir of the Revolution and representing continuity not discontinuity, see Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, p.27.

into the night it did not prevent his troops from taking hogs, corn and other supplies.⁶⁶ William Brantley from Deep Creek, Chesterfield County, South Carolina, was also a veteran of the 1812 war when he served as an Orderly Sergeant, was wounded and still carried the musket ball in his chest. His father had also fought in the Revolutionary War and he felt “we and our children ought to stand up for the union.” When threatened by secessionist neighbours, because of how he talked, he refused to be quiet: “I was a free man and that I and my father before me had fought for the Union, and that I intended to say what I pleased.”⁶⁷ Ann Mew’s opposition to the Confederacy was also couched in terms of an emotional attachment to the flag as symbol. Her father had fought for seven years in the Revolutionary War and her husband had fought “under the flag” in the War of 1812. An elderly widow from South Carolina, she lived on an isolated hammock by the Coosawhatchie swamp in Beaufort County having inherited a sizeable 250-acre farm and eighteen slaves. She opposed secession and was glad when the war was over and the old flag restored: “I was for the Flag and stuck to it.” Unable to read or write and isolated by living on the swamp Mew claimed to know little about the war but held “the aristocracy of South Carolina” responsible for the potential ruin the war might bring. Despite her own considerable slave ownership, in common with many other South Carolina yeoman families, Mew saw no common *herrenvolk* solidarity with the rich planters of the state.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Dunbar, SCC Approved Claim, 5688.

⁶⁷ Brantley, SCC Approved Claim, 4087.

⁶⁸ Mew, SCC Approved Claim, 6659. For a more detailed discussion of Ann Mew’s case, see Joan Cashin, “Widow in a Swamp: Gender, Unionism, and Literacy in the Occupied South during the Civil War” in LeeAnn Whites and Alicia P. Long (eds.), *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009). According to

Whilst family history could fuel and sustain dissent, the need for caution could determine and limit its public expression. Running through many Commission accounts is how both men and women frequently needed to balance their instincts with the need for caution and opportunity and to also wait to see where their interests lay.⁶⁹ The choice was rarely between active dissent or uncompromising loyalty. Much dissent centred on the protection of home and family and men and women had to exercise their own judgements as to what was safe or possible. Men such as Charles Brandt were clear about the limits to which they were prepared to go in their public dissent. Brandt was a member of a German farming community in Barnwell County, South Carolina, whose allegiance to the Union was embedded in family and communal history. His caution was probably part of his immigrant legacy.⁷⁰ Near neighbour, James Kinnard described their community's German origins and their unionist culture:

We talked as everyone did for years about the prospect of a war and the prospect to separate from the Union. We agreed to stand by the union of the states, with the Old Union, through good and evil [*illegible*] we had inherited it from our fathers who are dead and gone and whose blood sealed our charter of liberty by the adoption of our Federal Constitution and establishing our Union. Our community here consists mostly of German

Cashin, Mew had two sons serving in the South Carolina cavalry. Given that a number of claimants such as Mew were old it interesting that Cashin identifies a lack of scholarship on the very old.

⁶⁹ There is an analogy here with slaves freeing themselves during the war. Du Bois was critical of arguments that overly simplified the slave experience as either being freed by Federal armies or immediately escaping their serfdom once the presence of Federal armies made it possible. Most instead needed: "to wait, look and listen and try to see where their interest lay." W.E.B Du Bois, *Black Reconstruction in America. An Essay Toward a History of the Part Which Black Folk Played in the Attempt to Reconstruct Democracy in America 1860-1880* (New York: Russell and Russell, 1963), p.57.

⁷⁰ There was significant German immigration to the South although many more Germans went to northern states. Although Germans who settled in the South were a diverse group, many were conservative and viewed secession as a threat to their personal situation. Anne Bailey, *Invisible Southerners: Ethnicity in the Civil War* (Athens and London: University of Georgia Press, 2006), pp.10-11.

people and we all our people are farmers and live at home making our living and preferred peace and harmony at home and abroad.

Although Charles Brandt's Union sympathies were not in doubt, his commitment had its self-imposed limits: "I was willing and ready to do what I could as far as my personal safety and that of my family would permit." Living in an isolated part of South Carolina, well away from the war until the arrival of Federal troops in February 1865, he never saw a prisoner from either side and never apparently contributed anything to the Union cause but remained at home, on his farm, and protected "my family and home."⁷¹

As with other southerners, prudence or careful calculations of the risks also played a part in William Airs' manipulation of Confederate conscription law. Such manipulations were not untypical as men balanced service in Confederate armies with periods at home, often to work on the family farm.⁷² Although owning at least one slave during the war, the Airs family were called "white niggers" by their secessionist neighbours for their Union sympathies and for being seen as "friends of the colored people."⁷³ Describing themselves as "self-working farmers", the Airs farmed on hammock land beside the Coosawhatchie swamp in Beaufort County,

⁷¹ Brandt, SCC Approved Claim, 7998. It is noticeable how both opponents of the Confederacy and its new citizen soldiers mirror each other's concern to protect home and family suggesting its significance within southern culture generally rather than as a feature of either side. For such mirroring, also see Wetherington, *Plain Folk's Fight*, p.84.

⁷² Mark Weitz locates Confederate desertion within a broader, agrarian context dating back to the Seven Years War when yeoman farmers could desert during harvest time but later return. Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter*, p.11.

⁷³ Being a friend of the coloured people was a common formulation used by former slaves to describe white people who they saw as sympathetic. In addition to Airs, see: Ross, SCC Disallowed Claim, 2057, Hemphill, SCC Approved Claim, 3312 and Long, SCC Approved Claim, 6657.

South Carolina. One of two sons, William Airs chose to volunteer in order to avoid being sent out of the state. He then came home on sick leave and remained on the family farm in order “to make a crop”, remaining at home until the authorities became “very troublesome” when he considered it prudent to re-enlist in a local company. When the opportunity finally arose, he then deserted and gave himself to the Federal forces when he was paroled and returned home.⁷⁴

As with William Airs’ decision to volunteer whilst planning to desert, white southerners made their own judgements on the public boundaries of loyalty to the Union.⁷⁵ Men and women who sheltered deserters and draft evaders or aided escaped Federal prisoners, and were consequently threatened by their secessionist neighbours and the Confederate Home Guard, tended to view such acts as far more significant than the nature of work they were obliged to follow in order to make a living or to keep their families safe. Some southerners masked their dissent though feigned compliance often enabling them to remain with their families but also stay in their communities where they helped deserters and Federal forces. Many men found work in reserved occupations exempting them from military service. John Coughlin was an “iron puddler” or furnace operator who worked in an Atlanta foundry that produced steel plate for the Confederacy.⁷⁶

⁷⁴ Airs, SCC Approved Claim, 9364.

⁷⁵ Current scholarly language about the various shades of unionism may have their origins in post war constructions and as a possible legacy of the Southern Claims Commission. Dissenting southerners did not refer to themselves as unconditional or conditional unionists, and certainly not as ambivalent or ambiguous, all of which suggest some absolute standard of unionism against which personal commitment can be measured.

⁷⁶ Although originally a backwoods town on Georgia’s northern borders, by 1860 Atlanta had become a major railway hub and industrial centre housing a major arsenal, flour mills and rolling mills. William A. Link, *Atlanta Cradle of the New South: Race and Remembering in the Civil War’s Aftermath* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), pp. 7-11.

Despite his choice of occupation, he was clearly seen as disloyal by the Confederate authorities and by his neighbours. He was twice arrested and imprisoned including being held by Atlanta's notorious provost marshal, George Washington Lee, before managing to bribe an officer and escape. He had been threatened with hanging by rebel scouts in December 1864, had given supplies to Federal troops, helped deserters through lines, and "rode a mile on a mule to advise union scouts of the approach of rebels." He took care of Federal wounded including carrying one "on his back" to his own house until he could be moved to the hospital at Cartersville. Like many other opponents of the Confederacy, he had moved to Nashville in February, 1864, to work for the US Government as a mechanic for eight weeks before then returning to Atlanta with Sherman's troops.⁷⁷

For men with young families, work in reserved occupations had obvious advantages. Friends and neighbours Samuel Harper and Thomas S. Smith both had families and choose to work in the Chattooga "ashery" or potash plant in Georgia in order to stay at home although they were aware that whose products of the ashery supported the Confederate war effort. Both also balanced their work in the potash plant with concealing Federal spies. Harper was determined not fight against the "Old Government" but had a wife and three small children and as consequence could not leave home or cross to the Federal lines. After the conscription act was passed, "I had to look around for something to keep me out of the rebel army." Thomas S. Smith was similarly motivated and told his neighbour Miles Harper that he could not escape to the North as "he could not leave his

⁷⁷ Coughlin, SCC Disallowed Claim, 3673.

family unprotected in this part of the country.” He was threatened by a rebel cousin and frequently fed Federal scouts who came to his property, including hiding three of them who had had dressed themselves in Confederate uniforms. In a similar way to William Airs and his manipulation of military service, his son, John Harper, explained how his father alternated factory work with looking after the family farm. His father would stay at the works when it was too dangerous to be at home but would come home whenever Federal troops occupied the area.⁷⁸

Despite the apparent paradox, men did not necessarily see holding office under the Confederacy as wrong or incompatible with their union sympathies as they lied for the good of the cause.⁷⁹ Such positions enabled men to conceal their sympathies but unlike Confederate office holders petitioning President Andrew Johnson for amnesties following the war, many such southern unionists balanced their taking posts in the Confederacy with actual acts of resistance.⁸⁰ John J. Monaghan was a naturalised Irishman and was a detective on the staff of the Confederate Provost Marshall’s Office in Charleston during the war. Despite this position, he described how he used the role to help escaping Federal prisoners and how he was arrested in 1864 and imprisoned for four months suspected of helping prisoners escape and being involved with the underground railroad. As assistant enrolling officer, he also enabled soldiers and citizens avoid service in the Confederate army: “I made an appearance of serving the Confederacy but did not

⁷⁸ Harper, SCC Disallowed Claim, 7384. Smith, SCC Disallowed Claim, 7388.

⁷⁹ For “survival lying” see Michael Fellman, *Inside War: The Guerrilla Conflict in Missouri During the American Civil War* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), pp.48 -49.

⁸⁰ See McKinney, *Layers of Loyalty*. Many of McKinney’s examples held minor civil offices and, whilst a number claimed a continuing Union loyalty, few acted against the Confederacy in any way.

do so.” In his role in the Provost Marshall’s Office he was sent to investigate a complaint that a Julia Redding was harbouring escaped soldiers at her address in Charleston. Having discovered an escaped Federal prisoner at her house, he then made arrangements for him to be provided with Confederate clothing and helped to escape. He reported back to the Provost Marshall that people were making a fool of him with false allegations.⁸¹

Others claimed to put the needs of the community above their own principles. Alexander McAteer’s credentials as a politically active unionist were apparently impeccable. Farming in Lancaster County, he had been a member of the Union party of South Carolina since the Nullification Crisis in 1832, had refused to vote in the convention elections of 1860 because there were no Union candidates and following the war he was appointed a register of elections under Reconstruction. His Union principles guided how he brought up his family. After South Carolina seceded, he bought his eldest son a horse and sent him to North Carolina, which at that point had not seceded, in order to keep him out of a war he opposed. His son did not settle and eventually volunteered for the Confederacy when McAteer refused to help him in any way. When Lincoln called for a day of fasting and prayer at the start of the war, he observed the day and called the family together at night to pray for the success of the Union and as a consequence was warned that his neighbours were threatening to lynch him. Towards the end of the war he also agreed to become a Justice of the Peace, an action requiring him to

⁸¹ Redding, SCC Disallowed Claim, 16002. For a fuller discussion of the Redding case see pages 127 – 128.

take an oath of office to the Confederacy. Mediated through the words of Special Commissioner Witherspoon, he justified his actions in terms of the needs of his community:

That just before the war closed he was appointed a magistrate and acted as such for a short time. He did so for the reason that there were but few men at home and that the public peace and safety required that law and order should be protected and observed. He was in the bounds of the confederacy and could not get out, and whatever would render his situation better, he thought it best for him to do but he says that his adherence to the union was not lessened thereby.

With his otherwise impeccable Union credentials, Alexander McAteer made his own judgement as to what was best for his community and saw no conflict between his adherence to the Union cause and taking a public office under the Confederacy.⁸²

McAteer's patriarchal dominance of his family was unsurprising given the highly gendered nature of southern society. Whilst dissent took many forms, it also frequently divided along gendered lines. Unlike southern unionist men, whose wartime experience frequently resulted in a loss of mastery, the war empowered many women. Despite the popular characterisation of southern unionism as a largely male affair, women were often at the heart of Confederate dissent.⁸³ Many women extended their traditional nurturing role by sheltering deserters and draft

⁸² McAteer, SCC Approved Claim, 3469. McAteer was unusual in that relatively few claimants in this sample claimed membership of political parties. It is likely that he was claiming to be a Jacksonian Democrat. The response of the Commission was also unusual in that normally taking an oath to serve the Confederacy would be sufficient to disallow the claim.

⁸³ <http://cdn.loc.gov/service/pnp/cph/3c20000/3c27000/3c27400/3c27494r.jpg> (last accessed 28 June, 2017 via Library of Congress) *Harper's Weekly Magazine*, 4 August, 1866. The cartoon is used, amongst others, by Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, pp. 86- 87 and Quigley, *Shifting Grounds*, p. 178.

evaders as well as shielding escaped Federal prisoners. Women also often found themselves in unfamiliar public encounters with Confederate officials and scouts and needing to defend their households. Women who had traditionally been under the protection of men often found themselves being the protectors. The impact of the war on southern unionist men was more variable and determined by circumstance. Men who found themselves close to Federal forces could turn their dissent into active resistance by crossing the military lines and joining Federal regiments or by becoming part of the irregular war. Other men found their traditional role as protectors of their households undermined by the war when they were unable to prevent sons from being conscripted. At times, some men may have compensated for their inability to protect their sons by protecting others in their community.⁸⁴

Men in particular could find their inability to protect their families distressing and emasculating. Joseph Rozier's opposition to the war was compounded at his distress at the conscription and death of his son. A yeoman farmer from Beaufort County, South Carolina, he opposed slavery in principle and had been threatened by a vigilante committee for his abolitionist views and his support for a neighbour defending a free born coloured woman and her children. He had been a member of the union party before the war and had fought in the 1812 Florida war and bitterly resented the death of his son at Richmond in a war they both opposed. He had done all he come to keep his son out but "we were powerless and could not help

⁸⁴ For a fuller discussion of gender and its significance for support of draft evaders and deserters see Chapter 2.

ourselves.”⁸⁵ George W. Himment a tenant farmer on a small “one horse farm” in Johnstone County North Carolina told a very similar tale. Threatened for speaking bitterly against the war and feeding deserters, he complained about not having the power to do anything more for the Union cause and being unable to prevent the conscription of his son Claudius although “he was a union boy all the time. . .but we were all in terror.”⁸⁶

Men living in border counties close to army lines, particularly in Georgia and North Carolina, did have the opportunity to do more for the Union by joining in the war as military scouts. Thomas Runnions and Hugh Lambert both lived in Cherokee County, North Carolina, and became Federal scouts. Runnions joined the Tennessee Mounted Infantry in 1862 to become a scout and also sent two of his sons into service with the U.S. Government. As a consequence, his property was stolen and his family driven from their home when they were forced to camp out in winter until he took them all to Tennessee for protection in 1864. Hugh Lambert told a similar tale and, although over conscription age, acted as a scout and courier for the Federal army at Knoxville and also prevented his son from being conscripted by sending him across the military lines.⁸⁷ In Georgia, men such as Hugh Rutherford from Walker County, also took the opportunity to become part of the irregular war against the Confederacy as Federal forces advanced. Rutherford had always opposed secession and had spoken against it

⁸⁵ Rozier, SCC Approved Claim, 5671. McCurry uses Rozier’s farm as an example of yeoman farming communities in the South Carolina Low Country where farms were often situated on hammock land in between larger plantations. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, pp.24 – 25.

⁸⁶ Himment, SCC Disallowed Claim, 8322.

⁸⁷ Runnions, SCC Approved Claim, 18805. Lambert, SCC Approved Claim, 7908.

and, as a consequence, had at times: “to lie out to avoid to rebel outrages.” The advance of Federal forces gave him the opportunity to do more. After the Battle of Missionary Ridge in November, 1863, he was able to help men, some of them deserters from the Confederacy, to cross the Federal lines although he never took names or personal details as “it was dangerous to know too much.” He also carried news and information to Federal scouts who by then were based only eight miles away using tracks only known to locals.⁸⁸ Even away from border areas men could continue to assert themselves particularly when they had wealth and position. Thomas H. Watts was a Chesterfield County entrepreneur from South Carolina who owned twenty-five slaves, a mill and a store and he told a heroic tale of fighting with his secessionist neighbours, sheltering Federal prisoners and arguing with Confederate soldiers. He was prevented from speaking at a public meeting prior to secession because of wanting to speak on behalf of the Union and later refused to serve in the State Reserve who were being sent to Florence to guard union prisoners, telling other reservists that if they were willing to resist the Confederacy he would lead them. In support of his claim, he submitted a testimonial signed by the four Federal soldiers he had helped declaring that “Thomas H Watts is a good Union man and has hereby proved himself to be of the strongest sentiments. . .”⁸⁹

In contrast with the bold dissent of men such as Watts, the meaning of much women’s dissent continues to be debated in the literature particularly when

⁸⁸ Rutherford, SCC Approved Claim, 17824. For discussion of the role of guerrilla or irregular warfare, see Sutherland, *Guerrillas, Unionists, and Violence on the Confederate Home Front*, Bynum, *Long Shadow of the Civil War* and Fellman, *Inside War*.

⁸⁹ Watts, SCC Approved Claim, 19618.

it took the form of supporting male resistance.⁹⁰ In some instances women undoubtedly transgressed traditional boundaries to become “women warriors” in their own right.⁹¹ Mary Gordon from Lafayette, also in Walker County in Georgia was a spy employed by the Federal secret service who eventually had to be moved to accommodation in Chattanooga for her own safety.⁹² Louisa Styles also passed information to Federal spies or scouts on rebel movements and on which families could be trusted. Asked whether she had been molested or injured in any way she replied:

I do not exactly know how to answer but if the putting of ropes around the necks of some of my children with the threats that they should be hanged, the murder of a son and a husband at their hands in cold blood was giving me an injury, then I say yes sir, a thousand times.

Louisa Styles had moved to Tennessee at the end of the war, also for reasons of safety, but previously she remained all the time in Cherokee County, North

⁹⁰ The debate centres on how women’s role in the home front conflict should be treated and whether female dissent is viewed primarily as providing support for male resistance or also considered in its own terms, Storey, *Southern Dissent*, pp.882 – 883. There appears to be a growing body of work arguing for the independent nature of much female dissent, including Bynum, *Unruly Women*, McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning* and Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn’t Live Here Anymore*. Although rarely mentioned in the literature a small number of women did take part in the conventional military war as soldiers, concealing themselves in the ranks. Blanton and Cook estimate that there were around six hundred and fifty women in such roles, four hundred in Federal armies and two hundred and fifty in Confederate armies. Blanton and Cook suggest that there continues to be difficulties in dealing with women and conflict and they are critical of the popular notions of women in the Civil War which limits them to roles as “self-sacrificing nurses, romantic spies or brave ladies maintaining the home in the absence of their men.” DeAnne Blanton and Lauren M. Cook, *They Fought Like Demons: Women Soldiers and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2002), p.1. Margaret Ward writing from an earlier, feminist perspective noted that studies of women and conflict tended to confine women within the conventions of “confronting the bailiff, or providing shelter for the fugitive”. Margaret Ward, *The Missing Sex: Putting Women into Irish History* (Dublin: Attic Press, 1991), p.7. Both comments offer a cautionary note to a study of southern dissent where very few women did act as spies and many more confronted Confederate functionaries and sheltered draft evaders and deserters.

⁹¹ Grant argues that such ‘women warriors’ were very much isolated cases. Grant, “ ‘To bind up the Nation’s Wounds’ “.

⁹² Gordon, SCC Approved Claim, 16184.

Carolina. Her husband, Thomas Styles, had served as a volunteer in Knoxville but was shot and killed by a Confederate officer when visiting his home on furlough in December, 1864. Her son Silas Styles was also killed by the Confederate forces when serving with the Federal army.⁹³

Besides the few women like Gordon and Styles who became spies for the Federal army or the many women who supported draft evaders and deserters, other women found themselves involved in unwanted encounters with Confederate officials or irregular forces. Often such women were widows and heads of their own households. Margaret Bennett farmed in Marlboro County, South Carolina, and was furious when her four sons all entered Confederate service, two as conscripts and two as volunteers, despite her efforts to keep them out. Known to her neighbours as a loyal, Union women who spoke out boldly, she refused to pay her taxes until Confederate tax collector Jephtha Evans called at her farm when, “she rolled up her sleeves and popped her fists” and refused to pay.⁹⁴ Narcissa Thompson, a midwife and nurse from Chattooga County, lived in a dangerous part of Georgia where Federal and Confederate forces confronted one another. Following an unsuccessful Federal raid in 1863, she cooked food for the prisoners she knew would be passing her tenant farm on their way to being incarcerated in the county capital, Rome. She also confronted Texas Ranger, Sam Elliott, who came to her farm to threaten her because of how she talked and for her refusal to join neighbourhood women making clothes for Confederate soldiers: “. . . for a

⁹³ Styles, SCC Approved Claim, 5800.

⁹⁴ Bennett, SCC Approved Claim, 4095. Bennett later paid the taxes.

squeamish he would come and hang me. And I thought it best to put on a bold face and sent him word that to wait until my *webb* was out, and I would help him spin the thread to make the rope. I was watched and annoyed but not arrested.”⁹⁵

As with Margaret Bennett, family ties frequently fuelled Confederate dissent. As Margaret Storey has written of unionist settlements in North Alabama, community ties were often conterminous with kinship ties with support for the Union being part of family traditions passed down across generations.⁹⁶ Often dissent was less straightforward as families could themselves be divided among themselves or found themselves under attack from their secessionist neighbours. In Georgia and the Carolinas, some unionist families appear to live in self-contained communities. Like John Coogler from Dutch Forks, William McCoy came from a community closely related through birth and marriage and sharing a traditional identification with the Union. McCoy had refused to recognise the secession of his state and the newly imagined borders of the Confederacy: “I did not surrender with Georgia. I stayed in the Union all the time.” He was certainly supported in his intransigence by both family and community ties. Both he and his wife came from Union supporting families, as did all their settlement: “all our people

⁹⁵ Thompson, SCC Disallowed Claim, 7502.

⁹⁶ This is consistent with Croft’s argument that community and kinship ties could work in either direction to both support and punish what Croft describes as unionist sentiment. Croft, *Reluctant Confederates*, pp. 345- 346. Storey also emphasises the centrality of family and neighbourhood ties but, in contrast with my findings, her families of “unconditional Unionists” are far more solid in their loyalties as Union loyalty was passed down through generations. They also appear to be more likely to live among like-minded neighbours with community ties often being conterminous with kinship ties. Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*. pp. 37 – 44.

and connections were Union people.” They were subject to threats, but not from within their own settlement, but from conscription officers and rebel soldiers.⁹⁷

Other families were threatened by their neighbours but were also divided among themselves, often on generational lines. The Harvey family were “self-working” farmers who owned property on a hammock on the Cootsawhatchie Swamp in South Carolina and owned at least ten slaves. William Harvey described their neighbours as hostile and told of a pitched battle at a public meeting in a local mill between members of the Harvey family and supporters of secession. Although the family professed strong Union loyalties and were opposed to the Confederacy, William Harvey’s sons viewed the war differently and volunteered against his wishes for the Confederate army although they regretted their decision: “The boys took it as a frolic and did not know any better, but they soon got sick of it.” One of his sons, Jacob Harvey, talked about volunteering for the Confederate Army and how “after the war broke out the excitement among the young men was very great”. Although he subsequently regretted his decision, his sense of individual and family honour prevented him from deserting: “I was no time in the army before I had seen enough of it but I would not disgrace myself and my family by deserting.”⁹⁸

Few southern unionists in this study appear to have been abolitionists and, as with Joseph Rozier, those that held such views often provoked the hostility of

⁹⁷ McCoy, SCC Approved Claim, 4184. Numerous Commission accounts refer to threats, sometimes accusing Confederate forces and officials and sometimes accusing neighbours. Threats from neighbours tended to take the form of extra-judicial community punishments such as threats of hanging, burning down farms or riding men on a rail.

⁹⁸ Harvey SCC Approved Claim, 6794.

their neighbours because of their stance against slavery. Starling Proctor was a principled abolitionist who believed that the North was doing God's work punishing the South for the sin of slavery. He refused to change his Union views after secession and go with his state and as a consequence was regarded by his neighbours in "the war party" as being disloyal to the Confederacy. Living in a part of the Orange County, North Carolina, where there was only a "scattering" of Union man, he was regularly threatened. Proctor's daughter Nancy A. Woods told the Commission of her father's views on slavery in a rare example of dissent being linked to religious conviction:

Father was a hard shelled Baptist and always said that slavery was the cause of the war and the South would be *whipt* [for] certain for the sin in holding slaves and God would certainly punish them for it and then the South rebelled and he always said the North done right to whip them back into the Union. Father owned no slaves and said it was not right to own slaves.⁹⁹

Although James McPherson has claimed that Civil War armies were arguably the most religious in American history, it is noticeable that few southern unionists expressed their dissent in such terms, although from their language a number, not surprisingly, were familiar with their bible.¹⁰⁰

Women who held abolitionist views could also be ostracised and threatened within their communities. Sisters Ferriby Johnson and Harriet Vann came from an abolitionist family and were consequently abused by their neighbours and were

⁹⁹ Woods, SCC Approved Claim, 12504. Proctor's claim was filed by his son-in-law and executor, John M. Woods.

¹⁰⁰ McPherson, as cited in Mark. A Noll, *The Civil War as a Theological Crisis*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2006), p.10.

eventually advised not to remain in South Carolina after Federal forces left the district at the end of the war. Unlike Proctor, both expressed their abolitionism in secular terms. Ferriby Johnson had been widowed in 1862 but had continued to farm in Chesterfield County on land given to her by her father and robustly defended her claim for her losses after Federal troops came in March, 1865, strongly asserting the correctness of her claim and her yeoman credentials: “I cannot read or write but can count and judge quantities very well.” She argued with her own wider family and with her rebel neighbours over slavery: “I told them that the Union side was right, that a colored man should have his freedom like a white man.” She was abused by her neighbours both during and after the war and was either refused service at the local store or charged excessive prices for goods. Her sister, Harriet Vann also held strong abolitionist views: “Before the war I and all my family were opposed to slavery. I believed that every person was entitled to work for themselves —I never owned or hired any slaves and believed that the only object that southern people had in the rebellion was to continue slavery.” She feuded with Confederate neighbours who she believed hated her as much as she hated them. Like her sister, she was ostracised at her local store and was told that she should go north where her “comrades” were. Eventually when Federal forces came to her district in March, 1865, she was advised by them that it would not be safe for her to remain after they departed. Provided with a wagon by the Federal authorities, she then transported her mother, four sisters, two brothers, two nephews, her daughter, a niece and herself to New York and was then assisted to

travel to Indiana before returning to South Carolina six months after the end of the war.¹⁰¹

Other families were less united and, like the Harvey family, dissent and competing loyalties could also divide families as fathers tried to restrain sons attracted by the “frolic” or adventure of the war. Older men, perhaps because of their age, but also as a result of being property owners, often had a particular stake in the continuation of the Union or at least a desire to avoid the disruption of the war. Such men were also likely to be more restrained in how they expressed their dissent and men particularly towards the upper age limit for conscription, often simply stayed at home on their farms and refused to give their support to the Confederacy or have anything to do with it.¹⁰² William R. Tuten was from the Sand Hills settlement in Beaufort County, South Carolina, and described himself as a “self-working” farmer, who owned three families of slaves and “always worked with the negroes in the field as so did my children when they were old enough.” He was probably aged around forty-seven at the start of the war. Two sons had been conscripted into Confederate armies but had deserted and he himself had been arrested and held for two days after refusing to go into the militia: “I had served under the union flag in the Indian War in Florida and did not want the Union broken” Otherwise, he stayed at home and refused to give his support to the

¹⁰¹ Johnson, SCC Approved Claim, 17225. Vann, SCC Approved Claim, 17229.

¹⁰² The findings are consistent with Sutherland’s study of Culpepper County, Virginia, also making extensive use of Southern Claims Commission records. Sutherland found that the majority of dissenters in the county were settled, middle aged men, who were usually property owners with little appetite for rebellion. Daniel E. Sutherland, “The Absence of Violence: Confederates and Unionists in Culpeper County, Virginia”, in Sutherland (ed.), *Guerrillas, Unionists and Violence on the Confederate Home Front* (Fayetteville: University of Arkansas Press, 1999), pp. 79-80.

Confederacy: “I did not think it my business to be there. There were older men than me out there but I didn’t choose to go out. I thought I was more benefit to my family, my country and everyone else at home than in the service.”¹⁰³ Michael Shuping from Rowan County, North Carolina, had attempted to keep his three sons out of the Confederate forces but all three volunteered against his wishes with the eldest being killed at Petersburg. Local sheriff Charles F. Wagoner spoke about his bitter opposition to his sons going into the Confederate armies but as his neighbour Alexander Shoaf sadly reflected, it was the “old loyal men” who were opposed to the war and to secession.¹⁰⁴

In other instances, as with other civil wars, whole families were divided between and across generations. James Reynolds from Walker County in Georgia came from such a family and told the Commission in 1879, fourteen years after the war ended: “My father and one brother were in the rebel army. I had one brother in the union army. My father was very much offended at me because I was a Union man and has not got in a good humour with me yet.” Although twice conscripted, he failed to report to camp and then managed to successfully avoid the conscript officers until Federal troops arrived in 1864. He also sheltered a deserter from the Confederate Army and was threatened and beaten by Confederate Scouts.¹⁰⁵ Brothers and sisters could also be divided in their sympathies. Catherine Johnston

¹⁰³ Tuten, SCC Disallowed Claim, 5676.

¹⁰⁴ Shuping, SCC Approved Claim, 743. There are relatively few age specific studies of the war although one exception is Peter S. Carmichael, *Last Generation: Young Virginians in Peace, War and Reunion* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2005). For younger Confederate soldiers and their families, see Edmund L. Drago, *Confederate Phoenix: Rebel Children and their Families in South Carolina* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008).

¹⁰⁵ Reynolds, SCC Approved Claim, 6069.

travelled seven miles across upcountry roads to try to prevent her youngest brother from enlisting. A widow, with two dependent daughters, owning a small farm in Chattooga County, Georgia, she was unusual in being allowed to keep some stock after Federal troops took her horse, steer and sheep in October, 1864:

I had three brothers – two of them were union men and the youngest was for secession and sometime after the war began I heard that my youngest brother was about to go into the rebel army and I went seven miles to his house to try to persuade him not to go into the rebel army. I got him to come to my house and I did all I could to convince him it was wrong to fight against the union and to aid in breaking it up but I could not convince him nor persuade him to keep out of the rebel army. He went in against protestations and tears — and was killed in Maryland.

She was more successful in encouraging her elder brother who avoided conscription for as long as he could and then managed to desert after a short while and cross the Federal lines.¹⁰⁶

Like native born southerners, the experiences of immigrants also varied. Savannah had a large German immigrant community many of whom worked as market gardeners. Unlike some other immigrant groups, German immigrants appeared to have been relatively isolated and unable to establish themselves in local, municipal institutions or build up effective networks of support. Although exhibiting strong community attachments which were generally supportive of the Union, or at least not in favour of the Confederacy, such community ties often failed to protect Savannah Germans from the demands of the Confederate

¹⁰⁶ Johnston, SCC Approved Claim, 1639.

State.¹⁰⁷ Despite possessing a strong cultural identity and associations, German immigrants were often thrown back on their own resources with dissent often being characterised by individual acts of ineffective resistance rather than community collaboration.

Laurence Werm and Joseph Ohl illustrate the relatively weak position of German immigrants in Savannah in resisting Confederate conscription. Werm came to the United States in 1853 and worked as a market gardener. Although meeting with other German commercial gardeners regularly in the market place to discuss the war there is no evidence that he was able to draw on the support of fellow immigrants to help him avoid Confederate service. Conscripted in 1862, he failed to report but simply remained at home until he was arrested six days later. He then remained in the Confederate service for the next two years serving in Mississippi, Tennessee and at Chickamauga: "I had the will to skedaddle a good many times but did not know where to go. If I came home to my wife and children I would be recaptured." Fellow immigrant Rudolph Heart explained the difficulties for German immigrants facing conscription: "I was a union man. Most all Germans were, but we could not help ourselves, we were forced into the Confederate army. I had protection then about two years from the Prussian Consul but *Genl* Jackson sent him away and took us by force." Although regarding himself as a Union

¹⁰⁷ German support for the Confederacy may have at best been transient. Jones suggests that in the presidential election of 1860 most Savannah Irish and Germans were Douglas Democrats until in the excitement, following the election, they closed ranks with the remainder of the white population and supported secession, at least for a while. Jacqueline Jones, *Saving Savannah: The City in Crisis* (New York: Vintage, 2008), p.123. Bailey suggests that, certainly in Texas, many Germans chose to remain silent on the issue of slavery until secession forced them to make a choice. Bailey, *Invisible Southerners*, pp.4-5.

supporter, Werm was also perhaps typical of many German immigrants in resenting the disruption of the war but remaining isolated:

At the beginnings of the war my sympathies were with the union; my feelings were against the rebellion. I dare not say anything. I kept no friendships on this question I could not trust anybody. I did not vote at all, not in my life. When the state went out the union I felt "mighty sorry". I felt for the United States but "All the time I felt for myself." ¹⁰⁸

Joseph Ohl was also a German market gardener cultivating a small plot just outside the city limits. He was conscripted in 1862, having delayed as long as he could, and remained in the army until 1864 just prior to the arrival of Federal troops. Like most of the German community he was opposed to the Confederacy. Fellow market gardener, Rosa Munn, was clear how immigrant dissent was defined by opposition to the Confederacy: "His neighbours were all Germans, they were all really alike, nobody was for the confederates there." German immigrant and merchant, John B. Epstein described their collective weakness and how he resorted to bribery to keep out of the army: "We foreigners were all for the Union but we could not help ourselves. I suppose I was a union man because they could not get me in, it cost me twenty five or twenty eight hundred dollars to keep out." ¹⁰⁹

Where German immigrants had accumulated wealth, including slaves, they were more likely to be able to offer effective resistance to the Confederacy. Mary Geil had come to the United States from Germany in 1839 and, before his death in 1871, her husband, Jacob Geil owned a sizeable market garden on the outskirts of

¹⁰⁸ Werm, SCC Disallowed Claim, 14329.

¹⁰⁹ Ohl, SCC Disallowed Claim, 14328.

Savannah and a number of slaves. Fellow German, Jacob Klein confirmed Jacob Geil's typical expression of immigrant loyalty: "he had sworn in as a citizen of the United States and he never would go back that." Perhaps as important, was his statement to his wife about how long they had lived in their new country and how they had done well and "got along well enough." If he had any doubts as to where he belonged, his identification with the Union was almost certainly strengthened by his treatment at the hands of Confederate troops who "cursed him as a Yankee scoundrel" and also took his best horses and hogs and threatened to tar and feather him. Having helped Klein to get out of the Confederate army and eventually join the Federal army, the Geils also used their slaves to help escaped Federal prisoners. Their former slave, Lucky Geil, described how Mrs. Geil would cook for and feed prisoners who they would also allow to stay at the property. As with elsewhere in the South, slaves were often the first point of contact for Federal prisoners. Jacob Geil's former slave Schyler Blair described the process: "He fed the yankee soldiers whenever they came to his house. They used to come to us in the fields where we were at work and we were always at liberty to send them up to the house to get all they wanted from Mr and Mrs Geil."¹¹⁰

Unlike native born unionists, German immigrants such as Geil appeared more willing to collaborate with slaves to help escaped Federal prisoners. George Ott also came to the United States in the 1830s. As with the Geils it is probable

¹¹⁰ Geil, SCC Approved Claim, 15943. Jacob Geil's naturalisation papers state that he arrived in New York in 1836 and moved to Georgia in 1841 where he is listed on the 1860 census as a gardener and owner of eight slaves including three children.

that his length of stay in his new country facilitated the accumulation of wealth and his ability to support other immigrants and Federal prisoners. Although formally conscripted on three occasions, he failed to report until he was finally too old. Ott also sheltered other German immigrants hiding from the Confederates. Theodor Basch described how Ott sheltered his father during the war to prevent him from being conscripted and, in a rare insight from a child's perspective, how he and his mother would make family visits to see him. Charles Schwartz told of how after he was conscripted Ott was the only man he could trust because he knew he was a Union man and "there were a very few Germans who were not union men." Ott then helped him and seven other man escape from the Confederate army, when they were then "conducted by negroes" until they were able to reach Hilton Heads and travel North by sea. Ott owned a small number of slaves as did other members of his family. Katy Allen, a former house slave of a son-in law, told how the family used their slaves to help Federal prisoners who were being help close to the house some of whom would come to the house looking for food "when he used to tell me to give them the prisoners all they wanted when they came to the house." Although the Otts would collaborate with their slaves in order to support Federal prisoners, there was little other communication between the groups. Allen regarded Ott as a supporter of the "Yankee side" but explained "colored people did not 'concern' themselves about white people's business. We could hear but [were] not allowed to talk much 'no how'."¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Ott, SCC Approved Claim, 13877. Ott does not appear on the main 1860 census but is listed as owning three slaves on the separate slave schedule. He reappears on the main 1870 census as being born in Hessen-Darmstadt.

The individual nature of much German dissent is conspicuous with tales of bribery and trickery often featuring in Savannah immigrant stories. In addition to John Epstein's suggestions of bribery, it seems likely that Ott's son in law Francis Ruckart managed to avoid conscription by bribing Confederate enrolling officers and medical examiners. Christopher White, a Savannah store holder from Germany, suggested such arrangements were commonplace and that he had repeatedly bribed confederate surgeons to renew his medical exemption although it required him "paying pretty heavy for it." White saw nothing unusual about his experiences. He told the Commission that most Germans managed to stay out of Confederate service and they did so "the same way as I did".¹¹² Felix Spieldock, who was from "Russian Poland", and had come to Savannah in 1844 or 1845, offered his own candid account of the immigrant experience. Although conscripted, he had no intention of serving in the Confederate army and relied on his wits to negotiate his way through the dangers:

I got out of it by tricks and smartness. I didn't want to serve because I ran away from Europe to get into a free country. I said I was in 'America' and if they carried on war I didn't care. I shouldn't help them any. I got into the conscript office; for the very purpose of getting as many conscripts [out] as possible and so I kept out of the regular line of military. I kept out all the foreigners that were conscripted; they gave me money to keep them out and I gave it to the medical examiners and to the enrolling officers; that is the only chance I had to weaken the rebellion.

Despite his tricks and smartness, Spieldock was threatened for his failure to enlist and was abused as "a damned yankee – a jewish Yankee" and narrowly avoided being tarred and feathered, possibly as a consequence of being

¹¹² White, SCC Approved Claim, 13994.

Jewish. Subsequently elected an officer in the militia he died in 1875 leaving his widow with eight children and no money.¹¹³

Irish groups, particularly in Charleston, appear to have been much more established and well connected, offering them significant protection during the war.¹¹⁴ A number of Irish served with the Confederate Provost Marshall's Office or the city police whilst retaining their sympathies for the Union. Edward Reynolds was naturalised in 1855 and lived with his sister in Charleston during the war where he owned a livery stable. Too old to be conscripted, he remained a Union sympathiser and gave money, bread and tobacco to Federal prisoners and sheltered two soldiers from New York at Christmas in 1864 for over two months. When he was in danger of being discovered, he was warned of the raid in advance by John McPherson, a naturalised Irishman and a sergeant in the City Police and Union sympathiser. The raid of Reynolds house was led by another naturalised Irishman and secret Union supporter John J. Monaghan.¹¹⁵ Such connections survived even changes in the military control of the city. In February 1865, Reynolds' horses and wagons were taken by Federal forces a few days after they entered the city. The Federal troops were accompanied by a Frank Mitchell, a detective with the city force. Mitchell, born in South Carolina,

¹¹³ Spieldock, SCC Disallowed Claim, 14348.

¹¹⁴ Strickland estimates, that at the start of the war, fourteen percent of the white population in Charleston was Irish and nine percent German. Jeffrey Strickland, "How the Germans Became White Southerners: German Immigrants and African Americans in Charleston, South Carolina, 1860 – 18802", *Journal of American Ethnic History* (Fall, 2008) Volume 28, Number 1, pp.52- 69. Gleeson cites a figure of 3,263 Irish in Charleston in 1860. David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South 1815 -1877* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), p.35. Klingberg cites Ella Lonn's monograph *Foreigners in the Confederacy* which claimed that the foreign-born population of seaport and trade cities in 1860 represented thirty percent of the white population of Charleston and thirty-three percent in Savannah. Klingberg, *The Southern Claims Commission*, p.165, n.11.

¹¹⁵ See pages 44-45 for Monaghan.

had previously served as a sergeant in the Charleston police following secession and knew that Reynolds was suspected by the Confederate authorities of being a Union sympathiser and “a man to be watched”. Although he personally saw Reynolds giving money to the Union prisoners in Charleston he took no action. In February, 1865, he did however lead the Federal authorities, who were searching for replacement mounts, to Reynolds’ livery stable with Mitchell addressing Reynolds in a familiar fashion telling him: “Ned, we have got an order to clean you out.”¹¹⁶

Men such as Mitchell and Monaghan illustrated the very different nature of the Irish immigrant experience in Charleston and the extent to which Irish immigrants had successfully inserted themselves into local civic structures enabling them to look out for another. As further evidence of the pliant nature of much Irish support for the Confederacy, men such as Mitchell and Monaghan wore such loyalties lightly.¹¹⁷ Besides shielding union supporters, Monaghan also helped Federal soldiers to escape even as he served with in the Confederate Provost Marshall’s Office. In the last year of the war Monaghan was sent to investigate Julia D. Redding when she was accused of harbouring a Federal soldier at her address. Having discovered the prisoner, he did not arrest him or Redding but instead made arrangements for the prisoner to be provided with Confederate clothing and sent him to report to Bennett’s Mill, on the wharf in Charleston, and to ask for a Sergeant Edward Ryan of the South Carolina Artillery, based at Fort

¹¹⁶ Reynolds, SCC Approved Claim, 13354.

¹¹⁷ For the equivocal and shallow nature of Irish support for the Confederacy, see Gleeson, *The Green and the Gray*.

Sumter, who was helping a group of Federal prisoners escape. He reported back to the Provost Marshall that people were making a fool of him with such false allegations. Michael McNamara was also protected and helped by his contacts in the Provost Marshall's Office. McNamara was a naturalised Irishman who claimed it was the duty of all foreigners to remain loyal to the United States who had given them protection and made free men of them. Before the war he had been an officer in an Irish Militia company, the Montgomery Guard, where every member, other than the Captain, was Irish. He claimed the company disbanded at the start of war because they would not break their oath of loyalty to the United States. Although a Union sympathiser, he remained friendly with the Confederate Provost Marshall and Deputy, possibly as a result of his militia connections. When arrested by Confederate troops, on suspicion of avoiding the draft, and taken before the Provost Marshall, "who was an acquaintance of mine", he was released on medical grounds and allowed to go home. With German friends, he also arranged for fresh water to be provided to Federal prisoners being held at the Charleston race track, provided others with money and clothing and when three prisoners escaped he was able to obtain passes from the Captain Gaynor, the Provost Marshall and helped them leave Charleston. His claim was supported by Patrick J. Coogan from Ireland who at the time of his testimony in 1872 was City Treasurer of Charleston.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁸ McNamara, SCC Approved Claim, 15366. Commission records indicate considerable support within the Charleston Irish community for Federal prisoners either whilst they were being held in custody or to assist them to escape. In addition to Reynolds, Monaghan and McNamara, William Green also sheltered prisoners at his house and William Moran and Daniel McSwinney fed prisoners and gave money for their support: Green, SCC approved Claim, 17661, Moran, SCC Disallowed Claim, 18457 and McSwinney, SCC Disallowed Claim, 17035. Despite this significant

Dissent within Irish and German groups was very much framed by the immigrant experience. For immigrants, secession politics, the risk of conscription, the reduced opportunities for work and the heightened likelihood of military depredation were all dangers and obstacles to be overcome, negotiated or reluctantly accepted. Many American-born, white southerners took a less measured view of the dangers to their lives and their livelihoods and some of the bitterest expressions of dissent were framed by class antagonism particularly where it intersected, as in South Carolina, with race fear.

Antagonism to rich planters was evident across all three states often reflecting the contemporary characterisation of the war as a rich man's war and a poor man's fight. Alexander Blackwood was a poor, tenant farmer in Orange County, North Carolina, who was unable to keep his four sons out of the Confederate Army: "I was poor man and there was no way in the world for them to stay out." His neighbour Hugh B Guthrie, who by the time of his testimony in 1872 was working for the U.S. Internal Revenue Service and was the mayor of Chapel Hill, spoke candidly to Blackwood's view of the war:

I have often heard the claimant say that it was a rich man's war and a poor man's fight. He said his younger sons should not go in if he could help it. He said he was opposed to secession and would not vote for any man who was in favour of it. He was bitterly opposed to the Confederacy. He told me many a time that he believed if they got a Confederacy that a poor man could not stay in it. He was mightily free to talk when he got a little liquor on board.

support for Federal prisoners, Gleeson rejects the idea of the Charleston Irish community acting as a Unionist fifth column. Gleeson, *The Green and the Gray*, pp.146 and 192-195.

Blackwood rowed so badly with his oldest son about his volunteering that his son would not stay with him when on home on furlough. Two of his younger sons subsequently deserted and joined the Federal army.¹¹⁹ Daniel McCoy, an illiterate tenant farmer and mechanic from Baldwin County, Georgia, was an old soldier who had fought in the Florida war and was typical of many when cursed the Confederacy and a “few big folks” for causing the war he thought would be the ruin of them all.¹²⁰ Poor women also resented the rich farmers. Emeline Condon was a single woman who had lived on an isolated farm on the pine barrens in Beaufort County, South Carolina, where she and her single female slave worked together in the fields. For Condon, the war was about class: “We lived among the self working farmers who were all against the war, but the rich folk would not have it and we could not help it.”¹²¹

For non-slaveholders, class resentment was often expressed in terms of slave ownership. Men who did not own slaves often saw the war as a defence of slave owner privilege. Jacob Maynard from Guilford County, North Carolina, was one who refused to fight for rich slaveholders. Aged about twenty-one at the start of the war he managed to avoid conscription by carrying the mail between High Point and Ashboro in North Carolina. He fed Federal prisoners who were passing through High Point in transit to Wilmington and had one brother conscripted into the Confederate army who later deserted. For Maynard, the Confederacy was

¹¹⁹ Blackwood, SCC Disallowed Claim, 8787. Blackwood did not own slaves or land and his personal wealth was recorded on the 1860 Census as only \$300.

¹²⁰ McCoy, SCC Disallowed Claim, 4185.

¹²¹ Condon, SCC Approved Claim, 9371.

synonymous with slavery and having no slaves himself he would not support it. Confederate supporter William Barber confirmed that Maynard was always bitterly opposed to the war and he “always said that he had no negroes to fight for and he did not intend to fight for slavery.” Manly Jarrell, who had bribed his way out of being conscripted, was equally clear about Maynard’s view of the war and how “he would not fight the Yankees for the rich people who had negroes.”¹²²

Some of the most bitter expressions of dissent arose, particularly in South Carolina, when class antagonism intersected with race fear threatening men’s mastery and their status as free white men. Although conventional scholarship emphasises the country republicanism that bound planters and yeoman farmers together, this reading of Southern Claim Commission records suggests considerable underlying antagonism.¹²³ In an honour based male society, white yeoman farmers often resented their treatment at the hands of rich plantation owners and believed that an established slave republic would deprive them of their cherished independence and respect leaving them no better off than slaves in the fields.¹²⁴ The language of such yeoman farmers is highly illustrative, never

¹²² Maynard, SCC Disallowed Claim, 14381.

¹²³ In particular, see Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*. McCurry suggests that considerable underlying tensions remained as her account of the fight between Ralph Elliott and the yeoman Price illustrates, McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*. The debate is about whether race identity was more important than class, binding planters and yeoman together in a common, egalitarian *herrenvolk*. See Frederickson, *Black Image in the White Mind*. Morgan traces these themes back to colonial Virginia and argues that republican equality rested on slavery. Small and large farmers were equal because neither was a slave. Edmund S. Morgan, *American Slavery, American Freedom: The Ordeal of Colonial Virginia* (New York and London: Norton, 2003), pp. 363 – 387.

¹²⁴ Southern Claims Commission records, of course, were not contemporary accounts but were compiled after the South had been defeated and Reconstruction implemented. To this extent, the records may reflect the changed post-war world of white farmers some of whom may well have felt in the 1870s that they were little better off than former slaves and that rich planters had indeed taken them into a ruinous war. Although such antagonism in South Carolina was largely expressed

describing themselves as slaveholders but invariably referring to themselves as independent self-working farmers who worked in the fields alongside their slaves.¹²⁵ For such southerners, it was the willingness to labour, not the keeping of slaves, which separated them from the idle rich.

Fears for the future were not confined to non-slaveholders and Jacob Harvey reflected the precarious nature of yeoman independence in South Carolina. Harvey came from a slave owning yeoman family and set out their fears regarding their future as free white men if the slave owners successfully established their new republic.

I was very glad that the war was over when Lee surrendered and I believe that it is best that it happened so, for if the Slaveholding Aristocracy had succeeded in breaking up the Union and setting up a Government of their own, we white man could not have lived in this country. A poor white man before the war was even worse off than a slave and if a Government of Slaveowners had been established, there would have been no living for him in the country.¹²⁶

Hugh Belk farmed seventy acres of cultivated land in Lancaster County and owned four slaves. Described by a relative as an out and out Union man, he also had two brothers who served as lieutenants in the Confederate Army and another who served as a private. A fourth brother was conscripted but deserted before he did any duty. Belk was exempted from conscription through a disability which

as loss of white mastery, it can also be read as a defence of family where men feared for their ability to provide.

¹²⁵ Neither did they use the term yeoman farmer. The preferred self-description is almost always as self-working farmers and, as McCurry argues, it was the willingness to work in the fields themselves that distinguished them from rich planters, not the owning of slaves. McCurry, *Masters of Small Worlds*, p.50.

¹²⁶ Harvey, SCC Approved Claim, 6794

probably also protected him when he made disparaging comments about the new Confederate flag. He had few illusions as to what would happen to men such as him if the new Confederate state succeeded in establishing itself:

The longer the war lasted the more I hated secession. I know that if the Confederacy was established no poor white man could live in it — the obstacles in the way of poor men were bad enough before the war, and I was satisfied that if the rebels succeeded poor white men would be little better off than slaves in the South.¹²⁷

Mary Tuten came from a well to do slave owning yeoman family and farmed in Beaufort County, South Carolina. Widowed in 1863, she was left with five children, one of whom was conscripted into the Confederate service against her will. Her husband had also briefly been conscripted into the state militia in 1862 but deserted after a month and came home. Like Belk, the Tutens feared what would happen if the Confederacy was successful. Neighbour Michael Deloach described their view of rich planters:

They were both dead against secession and the war. He said he did not believe in it at all. That it would not do. She said that if they gained their independence we the poor people could not live here. The rich aristocratic planters would overrun the poor people, as they were doing already. . . She was mightily opposed to her boy going into the war but she had no way to keep him out.

During the war, Isaac Smith had been a slave and had acted as the Tuten's foreman and also talked about his previous owner's view of rich plantation owners:

I heard him say him [say] the big rebels had threatened the poor white men and had abused them for not wanting to fight against the Union. My master said that the rich man had made the war and wanted the poor white man to

¹²⁷ Belk, SCC Approved Claim, 12944.

fight their battles and that was the reason why he did not want to go in and that if it had been left to him the war would never had commenced

As the owners of fifteen slaves and one hundred and fifty acres of cultivated land the Tutens were hardly poor in any conventional sense yet clearly saw a world of difference between themselves as smaller, independent farmers and the rich plantation owners and the threat they offered.¹²⁸

Neither William Seigler nor Robert Bouknight owned slaves but their views were indistinguishable from other South Carolina yeoman farmers who feared for their world if the rich planters of their state were successful in their war. Seiglar was probably a reluctant conscript but nevertheless served in the Confederate Army as a private soldier from 1863 to the end of the war during which time he saw action against Federal forces. Living and farming in the Spring Hill area of Lexington County, South Carolina, he saw himself as one of the poor people of the South who would lose their freedom to manage their own lives if the Confederacy succeeded. He had no sympathy for secession and saw no good reason for the rebellion. Perhaps more significantly, his account also illustrated the very personal nature of his dissent as he told about why he had not voted and his resentment at the potential threat to his honour: “a man could not vote as he pleased without

¹²⁸ Tuten, SCC Approved Claim, 9390. Mary Tuten’s claim was strongly supported by Special Commissioner Epping who, writing in January, 1875, from a Reconstruction perspective, also minimised the Tuten’s interest in slavery. Epping described them as being part of a “class of selfworking farmers” that included other families such as the Harveys and Deloachs: “They are hard working men and women. Owning considerable property and still but few of them can read and write. Education amounts to very little with them, and as they lived far from the Rail Road and water communication, what was passing in the rest of the world did not concern them. Having few or no slaves their natural sympathy was with the union. In fact, they hated the aristocrats and educated slaveholders and were looked down upon in turn.” The 1860 Slave Schedule records the family owning twelve slaves.

being insulted and I did not want to be insulted.” As with other South Carolina yeoman farmers, race fear as well as class antagonism, underpinned much of Seigler’s dissent, telling his neighbour James D. Amick that, if the South was victorious, “we would be treated worse than the niggers.”¹²⁹ Prior to the war William Bouknight had served his turn as captain of his local slave patrol in Dutch Forks to preserve order “among the colored people”. Conscripted late in the war, he then deserted when he hid out in the woods. He confided in his brother-in-law Solomon Koon:

He said he was opposed to secession, and gave as a reason for his opposition was that the slave owners were trying to take over the country and that if they succeeded in their rebellion he and others who did not own slaves would be treated as slaves. He said it was for the interests of the south to remain in the union, the north was necessary in many ways for her prosperity.

Both Koon and Bouknight were insulted by the secessionist neighbours for their views and told that they must have been “drinking ink, and our hearts had been made black and we were no better than niggers.”¹³⁰ The views of Seigler and Bouknight are of interest because of our limited understanding of the relationships between poor whites and blacks prior to post war Reconstruction.¹³¹ Although a

¹²⁹ Seigler, SCC Disallowed Claim, 6910.

¹³⁰ Bouknight, SCC Disallowed Claim, 7266. In terms of traditional roles and attitudes, George Lavinder’s brother-in-law Andrew Nelson had also served in slave patrols before the war “to keep the niggers from rising.” Nelson, Disallowed Claim, 14350. For Lavinder, see p.34.

¹³¹ The standard text on antebellum poor whites and blacks is Jeff Forret, *Race Relations at the Margins. Slaves and Poor Whites in the Antebellum Countryside* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2006). There are differences between Forret’s study and Southern Claims Commission records principally in his definition of poor whites who he describes as rarely owning property. His study also finishes in 1860. Forret suggests that there was considerable interaction between poor white and slaves although this was routed in convenience rather than any shared sense of both being oppressed. In contrast, yeoman studies tend to focus on the nature of self-

number of Southern Claims Commission petitioners owned slaves, and slaves and free people of colour appear as witnesses, the accounts they provide suggest that in many instances, social interactions between races were limited.¹³²

Although some whites and blacks crossed customary racial lines, most relationships appear at best guarded and carefully managed from both sides. In an early example of race etiquette, Sarah Ann Black spoke of how even sympathetic white southerners and slaves needed to carefully manage the distance between themselves to be safe. Black was the neighbour of Antonio Lewis and his family in Savannah, Georgia, and she supplied them with milk during the war. A former slave from South Carolina, she had bought her freedom before the war. In her testimony to the Commission taken in 1874, she offered an insight into relationships between whites and blacks during the conflict in Savannah. Unusually for a former slave she signed her testament herself, something that Antonio Lewis's younger daughter was unable to do, and used language and expressed sentiments very different from the guarded and formulaic testimonies usually attributed to other former slaves.¹³³ She spoke of how as she was black, her white neighbours could not talk openly to her about war without them being punished by

sufficient, yeoman farming and their relationship with planters rather than with slaves or free coloured people.

¹³² In terms of overall numbers, in 1850, over three hundred thousand southerners owned slaves. The majority owned five or fewer slaves and less than forty thousand owned twenty or more. Eric Foner, *Give Me Liberty! An American History*, Volume One (New York: Norton, 2009), p.383.

¹³³ Slave literacy was traditionally discouraged by slaveholders although freed people were particularly keen to educate themselves and their children. Schweiger argues that by 1850 the South had one of the highest rate of literacy in the world but that only around ten percent of slaves and free blacks could read compared with more than eighty percent of white southerners. Beth Barton Schweiger, "The Literate South: Reading before Emancipation." *Journal of the Civil War Era*, Volume 3, Number 3, September 2013, pp. 331 – 359. Schweiger also cautions against the reliability of nineteenth century census based, literacy statistics.

their community and how they dared not express their feelings openly. Anticipating the findings of modern scholarship, Black stated that the prominent unionists in Savannah had already left the state or learnt to stay quiet and viewed the Lewis family a poor people without much influence in their community.¹³⁴ In a remarkable role reversal of race characterisation, she nevertheless viewed them as friends and, for white people, reliable in their loyalties: “I believe they were just as good union people as could be found *any where* among the whites.”¹³⁵

Custom frequently dictated the guarded nature of white and black interactions, even among white southerners fiercely opposed to the Confederacy, suggesting little solidarity against a common oppressor. William McCoab was a Baldwin County merchant with a fearsome reputation for violence who had spoken boldly against secession. Robert Howard was a former slave and his wife had been the slave of the McCoab’s family and knew him from an early age. He described his relationship with McCoab as being that which existed “between a white man and a slave.” Howard often heard him expressing his views about the war and most of the conversations he overheard were with other “white men”. White southerners were more circumspect, however, about talking about each other when slaves were present. As Howard testified: “I do not think I know what his public reputation was for loyalty or disloyalty to the United States. Colored people did not talk much with white people on the subject or hear them express their views

¹³⁴ Ash, *When the Yankees Came*, p.11.

¹³⁵ Ross, SCC Disallowed Claim, 22153. Andrew Ross was the administrator of the estate of Antonio Lewis. Susan Ann Black’s use of language was highly unusual. Former slaves in this period rarely referred to *blacks* and *whites*; *colored people* and *white people* or *white folks* were the conventional expressions.

very freely.” Ezekial Reynolds had been a slave during the war and also overheard McCoab talking about his determination not to fight for the Confederacy:

I did not converse with the claimant about the war. I was a slave at that time; the claimant was the proprietor of a Livery Stable in Milledgeville. I heard him say to some other persons he was talking with that he would suffer death before he would go into the war; that he had nothing to do with bringing it on. I heard him make such remarks as these on several occasions but I cannot remember all he said. ¹³⁶

As in the Airs family, some white man and slaves did confide in one another, at times aided through a work connection. Joseph Rozier, who had complained about being powerless to help himself, had confided in a slave James Ruth at his bitterness at his son’s being conscripted into the Confederate army. Although vehemently against slavery, and refusing to own slaves, he had employed two slaves in their own time to help with his farm and spoke frequently with them about the war. Local mills often feature as places where like- minded men could legitimately meet. Joel Hall who farmed in Marlboro County, South Carolina, was unable to prevent his three sons going into the Confederate army as volunteers to avoid being conscripted but was able to help deserters from the community who would come to his house at night. He also spoke to slave Alexander Lewis about emancipation. Lewis worked at a local mill and he and Hall spoke frequently:

At all these times when at the Mill the burden of his conversation was the war. He always said he wanted the Union Cause to succeed. He said I would be freed. He was the first man who led me into the light of this great result. Others *came* to tell me the war was not about the negro. He said the

¹³⁶ McCoab, SCC Approved Claim, 500.

negro would be freed and he wanted them freed, that they ought to be freed.¹³⁷

Whilst Lewis's testimony may have helped Hall to receive compensation for his losses after the war, few Southern Claims Commission judgements can be relied upon as a dependable arbiter of southern unionism. The ability to claim was based on geography and circumstance, the definition of loyalty adopted by the Commission was narrow and its judgements frequently appear capricious. But Commission records do offer a rare opportunity for the voices of ordinary southern men and women who lived through the Civil War to be heard even when mediated through the formal processes of the Commission and its functionaries.

Despite the efforts of the Southern Claims Commission to redefine the meaning of loyalty, Commission records offer a distinctively vernacular account of the wartime experiences of ordinary southerners, expressed in their own words and in a language largely reflecting their rural world. Unlike the narrow and restrictive version of unionism constructed by the Commission, many southerners interpreted for themselves the meaning and nature of their unionism often articulating a much looser and more subjective version of wartime loyalty whose boundaries were surprisingly fluid. Such highly subjective attachments to the union were central to southern dissent and enabled southerners to share in a common union identity whilst behaving in entirely different ways. The assertion of being a Union man or woman may have been central to their understanding of themselves

¹³⁷ Hall, SCC Approved Claim, 1464.

as opponents of secession but most seemed to have used those terms to indicate a continuing sense of sense of belonging with their abandoned country rather than as statements of political belief. In these Commission records at least, there was often a lack of evident engagement with any political process not simply the politics of secession. In most instances, expressions of southern unionism from Commission records in Georgia and the Carolinas suggest a broader cultural attachment to the idea of the Union, binding people together as part of a shared union identity but permitting any manner of variation. Often deeply embedded in family and community history, such union identities were frequently remarkably resilient.

Southern unionism was characterised by a desire for continuity with the past rather than violent change. Southern unionists did not see themselves as part of a project to build a new nation but saw themselves as members of an existing polity with a legitimate government and established constitution. Unlike the citizen soldiers of Federal or Confederate armies, they did not conceive of themselves as citizens of a nation state but rather continued to use the term simply to describe themselves as free white men. At a time when both the North and the South were reformulating the meaning of statehood and citizen, few dissenting southerners were part of any such changes.

Confederate dissent was remarkably diverse in its scope including well-to-do planters as well as ordinary southerners, native born Americans and immigrants, slave owners and abolitionists. Whilst loyalty to the Union provided a common bond, southerners united in their opposition to the Confederacy,

expressed that opposition in many different ways. Because men and woman made their own judgements on how best to resist the Confederacy, dissent reflected individual circumstances, constraints and opportunities. Whilst some men and women were bold in their dissent, whilst other dissent was more cautious or masked as men, in particular, took on roles or work seeming supportive of the rebellion. Despite the popular portrayal of southern unionism as a predominately male affair, women were central to much Confederate dissent and a distinctive feature of property-based Commission records is the insights they offer into the role of widows as independent heads of their households. Unlike men who frequently experienced the war as a loss of mastery, such women could be empowered taking on new and public roles in confronting the new Confederate state seeking to intervene ever more into the lives of ordinary families. Whilst some southern unionist were supporters of slave emancipation, many more owned slaves and, in these records at least, there are relatively few examples of native born white Americans collaborating with slaves and others against a common oppressor.

If southern unionist dissent was often characterised by desire for continuity with the past, the actions of the Confederate state amplified much dissent often turning general dissatisfaction with secession and the war into active resistance. As the Confederate state intervened in unprecedented ways in the lives of its citizens, disrupting families and communities, particularly through its conscription acts, so much dissent and resistance crystallised around the widespread support of draft evaders and deserters. As the war progressed, and Confederate and Federal

armies clashed, dissenting southern men and women were able to extend such support to captured Federal soldiers and were able to embrace total strangers from far off northern states as part of a more widely imagined Union community.

Chapter Two: “I will be damned but you are against us”: The centrality of draft evasion and desertion.

Supporting draft evaders and deserters was the most common form of Confederate dissent. Although southerners could talk against secession and the war, there were limited opportunities to turn such disloyal sentiments into active dissent and resistance until the introduction of conscription. In the Carolinas and Georgia, supporting draft evaders and deserters was frequently a family affair. Although men and women often identified themselves as part of a broader imagined Union community, their principal attachment was often much closer to home as families helped husbands, sons and other family members avoid service. Whilst parts of North Carolina and Georgia were renowned for levels of desertion, independent yeoman farming families in areas of South Carolina, such as Marlboro County, also appeared to put themselves in the forefront of resistance against the Confederacy.¹³⁸ Philip L. Smith’s story, from Marlboro County, typifies the centrality of desertion to dissent and encapsulates much of the deserter experience, particularly the role of families. Unlike some other men who experienced the war as a loss of mastery, Smith appears to have had little difficulty in maintaining his status as a man within both his family and community. Despite *lying out* in the

¹³⁸ Special Commissioner Newton described parts of Marlboro County as being famous for high levels of desertion. Quick, SCC Approved Claim, 2794. For desertion in the North Carolina Quaker Belt, see Byrum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, pp.37- 58. Brown asserts that although North Carolina provided more troops than any other state than Virginia, it also had the highest number of deserters. Brown, *North Carolinian Ambivalence*, p. 20. Desertion in Georgia was concentrated in northern counties. Mark Weitz, *A Higher Duty: Desertion Among Georgia Troops During the Civil War*, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000). Whether North Carolina actually managed the distinction of providing the greatest number of volunteers, and the highest level of desertion, has been questioned by Vance’s biographer Joe Mobley. Although North Carolinians volunteered enthusiastically, actual levels of desertion remain unknown despite the eye-catching claim. (Personal communication, 17 October, 2015).

woods for much of the war, Smith remained an active participant in the conflict, helping men to desert, protecting other men in his community and extending that protection to escaped Federal prisoners. He also continued to direct the support of his family.

Smith would have been aged around twenty-eight at the start of the war and managed to avoid Confederate service until March, 1863, when he was finally conscripted. He attempted unsuccessfully to escape to the Federal lines and then deserted in July, 1864, bringing three other men with him, after which he hid in the woods close to his home until the end of the war, in the company of another deserter, neighbour Samuel Rainwater. As with many other deserters, the support of his family was critical and Smith co-ordinated a network of support spilling over into the wider community. Not only was Smith fed by an aunt, Annie Jane Smith, and his brother Edward, he also arranged for his family to care for Rainwater's family whilst they were both hiding in the woods, with Rainwater's wife and two children staying at his house for nine months.¹³⁹ His farm was managed, when he was away, by his wife with the help of his father, with near neighbour James Grant also telling how Smith's wife and father fed him and many other deserters.

When opportunities presented, family support for deserters could extend effortlessly into sheltering escaped Federal soldiers. Annie Smith, not only brought Smith and Rainwater food but, at the end of the war, also brought to his camp two escaped prisoners who remained for five to six days, until they were able to join up

¹³⁹ There is no evidence that the families were related at that time although Annie Jane Smith was later widowed and married a member of the Rainwater family.

with Sherman's army. Smith also protected deserters from his community by warning them of the movements of Confederate deserter hunter by talking to local slaves and getting information from them. The Confederate authorities correctly identified family support as the key to desertion and in the autumn, 1864, the Confederate Supporting Force arrested Smith's wife, his father and a disabled sister and forced them to march at night to the guardhouse in order to pressurise him into surrendering. On the same night, they also raided Smith's father's house and just failed to capture or kill Smith.¹⁴⁰

Because the scope of Confederate conscription was so wide, and eventually reached so deeply into communities, many families like the Smiths and the Rainwaters, found husbands, sons and others called into a war that they opposed. Unlike other forms of dissent, such as support for escaped Federal prisoners, its prevalence was not dependent on geography. Because support for draft evaders and deserters so frequently involved families, dissent was not restricted to men of conscription age but also involved older men and women, including widows. Whilst such support was underpinned by a broad attachment to the idea of the Union, its primary connection was through families and communities and was local, rather than national in its dimensions. Understanding support for draft evasion and desertion is so important because it became by far the most common way ordinary southerners, both men and women, would demonstrate their dissent from the idea of secession from the Union.

¹⁴⁰ Smith, SCC Approved Claim, 1318.

Conventional studies of Confederate draft evasion and desertion have typically focussed on its scale and prevalence and its impact on the war.¹⁴¹ Southern Claim Commission records offer a different perspective centred not just on the experiences of the men concerned but also of the families and communities that supported them. Whilst national studies have focussed principally on desertion itself, it is important to understand the relative importance of draft evasion also as many men *lay out* to avoid conscription into Confederate armies or reserves. Neither were acts of desertion and draft evasion solely the business of young men as successive extensions of Confederate conscription also made men aged up to fifty eligible for service in reserve regiments. Most strikingly, support for draft evaders and deserters was often highly gendered and how men and women took on different roles within families and communities offers further insights into the impact of the war on a southern society under pressure.

Support for draft evaders and deserters often extended naturally to support for escaped Federal prisoners.¹⁴² Unlike desertion and draft evasion which were so

¹⁴¹ Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War*, originally published in 1928 and Weitz, *More Damning Than Slaughter*, are the standard texts. Weitz places desertion within the context of an agrarian nation, relying on yeoman farmers for its defence during the Seven Years War, whose disappearance at harvest time was part of an “American Practice.” A different perspective is provided by Aaron Sheehan-Dean whose study of desertion in Virginia attempts to understand desertion within the context of how ordinary Confederates viewed the war and how military service became seen as a defence of family. Contrary to the conventional argument seeing growing levels of desertion as an indication of a Confederacy collapsing from within Sheehan-Dean demonstrates how, in Virginia, desertion peaked in 1862 with the introduction of conscription and again in late 1864 when defeat seemed inevitable. Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederate Fought*. Patrick J. Doyle considers loyalty rather than disloyalty in the South Carolina Upcountry and concludes that later levels of desertion were a consequence of conflict between loyalty to the Confederacy and loyalty to family. Patrick J. Doyle, (2013), *Carolinian Crucible: Class, Community and Loyalty in the South Carolina Upcountry, 1860 – 1865*. Unpublished PhD Thesis. (Manchester University, 2013).

¹⁴² There continues to be a significant gap on the literature concerning support for escaped Federal prisoners and particularly the roles of black and white communities in supporting prisoners.

prevalent across the Confederate South, the opportunity to shield escaped Federal prisoners was far more dependent on geography and the proximity of Confederate prisons or stockades such as the Race Course in Charleston or the prison at Salisbury, North Carolina. Men such as Charles Brandt, for example, who lived in an isolated part of South Carolina, went through the whole war without seeing prisoners from either side.¹⁴³ Indeed in some parts of the Carolinas and Georgia, southerners may not have seen Federal troops until after the end of hostilities, whereas in other parts of the South regular and irregular forces ranged backwards and forwards, plundering farms, gathering intelligence and intimidating their enemies. In such areas support for escaped prisoners quickly became part of the general war and indistinguishable from assisting Federal scouts or troops in the field.¹⁴⁴ Whilst accidents of geography were significant in distinguishing more selective support for prisoners from the more prevalent support for draft evaders and deserters, critically the nature of that support was also different. Whilst support for draft evaders and deserters principally involved support for family members or men from local communities, there was no such connection with Federal prisoners.

¹⁴³ For Brandt see page 33. For the significance of contingency, see Dyer who argues strongly for the contingent and circumstantial nature of Union loyalty in wartime Atlanta, Dyer, *Secret Yankees*, pp.267- 270.

¹⁴⁴ For the significance of irregular warfare see, Daniel E. Sutherland, *A Savage Conflict: The Decisive Role of Guerrillas in the American Civil War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Sunderland's core thesis is that guerrilla warfare was widespread and a decisive element in the war and not merely "a sideshow". <http://cwba.blogspot.co.uk/2009/11/author-q-daniel-e-sutherland.html> . (last visited 1st July, 2015). For the inner civil war in Lumpkin County, Georgia, see Sarris, "Shot for being bushwhackers". Sheehan-Dean argues that the war had much greater impact on southern communities compared with the North. Aaron Sheehan –Dean, "Southern Home Front," in Sheehan-Dean, *A companion to the U.S. Civil War*, pp.909-926. As with desertion, the irregular nature of warfare is as old as the nation itself with the Carolinas, in particular, being engaged in a form of warfare during the Revolutionary War where Americans fought Americans and where both sides relied on irregular troops in a struggle characterised by high levels of violence on both sides. John S. Pancake, *This Destructive War: The British Campaign in the Carolinas. 1780 – 1782* (Tuscaloosa and London: The University of Alabama Press, 2003).

Southerners who assisted complete strangers in Federal uniforms did so because of they recognised a shared affinity with such men as part of a wider, imagined Union community engaged in a common struggle.¹⁴⁵

Although the resilience and commitment of many Confederate troops in the face of continuing hardships was remarkable, high levels of desertion and draft evasion remained a problem for the Confederacy throughout the war.¹⁴⁶ Whilst numbers have been notoriously difficult to estimate as a consequence of poor and ambiguous record keeping, it is likely that by early 1865 the majority of Confederate forces were absent without authorisation.¹⁴⁷ As Emory Thomas has argued, in order to mobilise their new country to defend their revolution, Confederate politicians needed to create a “centralised nation state” including replacing a traditional dependence on state musters and militias with new military arrangements.¹⁴⁸ The Confederacy moved quickly to introduce conscription with the first Conscription Act passed in April, 1862, with further changes introduced in October that year and again in February, 1864. As a result of the 1864 changes all men between seventeen and fifty were liable for some form of military service,

¹⁴⁵ The concept of imagined communities is developed by Benedict Anderson to explain the rise of modern nations whose members, who may never meet, can still conceive of themselves as part of a “deep horizontal comradeship.” Anderson observes it is not so much the willingness to kill so much as a willingness to die for the nation that makes it remarkable. Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origins and Spread of Nationalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1996). pp. 6- 7.

¹⁴⁶ For a discussion of war time morale among Confederate troops see Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, pp. 173 -175. Noe suggests that most troops remained loyal to the cause despite increasing disillusionment.

¹⁴⁷ The official figure of Confederate desertion of 103,400 quoted by Lonon is generally held to be an underestimate. Lonon, *Desertion During the Civil War*, p.231. For estimates of Confederate desertion rates ranging between one-fifth and two-thirds of a total manpower of 850,00 – 900,000 men see McPherson, *Battle Cry of Freedom*, p. 306 n. 41, McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p.124, Rable, *The Confederate Republic*, p.274.

¹⁴⁸ Thomas, *The Confederacy as a Revolutionary Experience*, p.59.

including service in the state reserves.¹⁴⁹ Despite the reach of conscription, the majority of Confederate troops were volunteers but it is important not to assume too great a distinction between men who chose to volunteer and those who were conscripted. Some volunteers also felt forced to serve and the threat of conscription was an important element in a Confederate strategy of encouraging volunteers who were promised the likelihood of local service in contrast to conscripts who were more likely to be sent to distant theatres of war. Considerable resentment was also created through the widespread exemptions available to men in a wide range of occupations or roles, including notoriously for slave overseers, which added to a sense of the burden of fighting the war being shared unequally.¹⁵⁰ Attempts by the Confederacy to deal with the issue of draft evasion and desertion often amplified rather than suppressed dissent in communities unsympathetic to the new state.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Young men aged between seventeen and eighteen and men aged between forty-five and fifty became part of a state reserve for state defence and other duties.

¹⁵⁰ The October 1862 amendments extended exemptions to a long list of different “classes” such as men occupying various state positions or occupations such as tanning and shoemaking. More contentious exemptions included provisions for slave overseers on plantations with twenty or more field hands or allowing men, who could afford to pay, to avoid service by sending a substitute in their place. Although the substitute rule was abolished in late 1863 and the “twenty negro law” was amended, such provisions fed the “rich man’s war, poor man’s fight” portrayal of the war. Rable views the extensive list of exemptions insisted on by the Confederate Congress — “two and a half finely printed pages” —as indicative of divisions within the Confederate leadership where some feared that the new state would win the war “but lose the Republic” through its curtailment of traditional liberties. Rable, *The Confederate Republic*, pp. 155 - 158. For a detailed account of how exemptions worked in practice in South Carolina, including overseers, see Drago, *Confederate Phoenix*, pp. 75- 91. Despite widespread exemptions, Drago contends that South Carolina was broken long before Sherman’s arrival because of the drain from communities of doctors and skilled artisans.

¹⁵¹ In practice, there was considerable inconsistency in the treatment of deserters, ranging between leniency and harsh punishments, with the highest number of executions taking place in North Carolina, Weitz, *More Damning than Slaughter*, p. 287.

Confederate conscription laws changed the nature of the relationship between citizens and the state. For the first time in American history, men were required to serve in a national army and were recruited not by local worthies but by the state itself and where the failure to report became a felony punishable by imprisonment. Whilst many joined Confederate armies enthusiastically, conscription required men and their families to make a choice, regardless of their sympathies.¹⁵² Confederate authorities understood that in order to tackle desertion and draft evasion, they needed to eradicate support for deserters within families and communities. Georgia Governor Joseph E. Brown's proclamation on 17 January, 1863, was typical:

. . . And I also warn all disloyal citizens to cease to harbour deserters or encourage desertion or to commit further acts of disloyalty or hostility to this State or the Confederate States, as the law against treason will be strictly enforced against all who subject itself themselves to its penalties. . . And all persons hereafter encouraging desertion or harbouring deserters, or committing other acts of disloyalty, will be arrested and delivered to General Mercer, at Savannah or Colonel Lee, at Atlanta, to be dealt with as the Confederate authorities may direct under the laws of force; and the Rules and Articles of War.¹⁵³

In practice, action against the families of deserters and draft evaders was often far more informal and extrajudicial, involving threatened and actual violence including

¹⁵² Nelson, *Red Strings and Half Brothers*, p. 47. The core argument of conscription forcing men to make a choice between resistance and compromise is set out in Storey, *Loyalty and Loss*, p.57. For the importance of conscription in North Carolina, see Brown, *North Carolinian Ambivalence*, p.21.

¹⁵³ <https://archive.org/stream/proclamation00geor#page/n1/mode/2up> (Last viewed 30 July, 2015). Cited by Lonn, *Desertion During the Civil War*, pp.360 – 361. Similar proclamations were issued by Governor Vance in South Carolina. Vance and Governor McGrath of South Carolina also corresponded over the possibility of joint action against deserters in August 1863. Governor's Record Book, August, 1863, SCL.

the threat to burn properties. Most incidents described by southern unionists involved state Home Guard or Reserve units, irregular forces and neighbours.

A refusal to serve in the armed forces of the new state went to the heart of Confederate dissent. Little in this research suggests that desertion by southerners, who claimed a loyalty to the Union, was as a consequence of war weariness or a response to the horrors of battle. Most dissenting southerners who deserted, frequently evaded conscription for as long as they could and, if conscripted, appear to have deserted at the earliest opportunity. Such men had no intention of serving in Confederate armies. Both secessionists and dissenting southerners understood desertion and draft evasion as a conflict of loyalties between a new Confederate nation at war and older, more traditional constructions of loyalty to family and community and to an established Union and its institutions. As a consequence, men, and the families and communities that protected them, were abused, threatened and in some instances killed. Whilst men might be in greater danger, women were not immune from ill-treatment and the level of violence against women is striking with women being deliberately threatened and arrested as part of the campaign against desertion and draft evasion. Just as the introduction of conscription drove many southern unionist men into resisting the state, so the deliberate targeting of families propelled many women into face to face encounters with the Confederate state.

The Civil War disrupted the established gender relations of the antebellum South but arguably the impact was greater for women. Victoria Bynum has argued that women's crossing of gender boundaries, at times of social crisis in order to

protect husbands and sons persecuted by the authorities, long pre-dated the Civil War.¹⁵⁴ Examining support for draft evaders and deserters is so informative, not only because of its centrality to Confederate dissent, but also because of what it tells us about the impact of the war on ordinary southerners and how men and women adapted to the disruption of traditional southern gender roles caused by the war. Antebellum gender conventions typically portrayed men as the protectors of women and households and women as the nurturers of children and families and where the public sphere of politics and commerce remained the domain of men and women were traditionally confined to the private, family sphere.¹⁵⁵ The Civil War left few such distinctions intact as men and women struggled to adapt to their changing situation. Whilst many women were empowered by the war, men's wartime experience could be more problematic and contingent on circumstance.

The deliberate targeting of families by the Confederate authorities, and the response of the women, illustrates some of the challenges of interpretation.

LeeAnn Whites has written how, on the western border, Confederate women were drawn into being part of an irregular guerrilla war, re-provisioning and supplying male family members. Although it suited both Confederate and Union apologists to present such women as innocent victims of male violence, Whites argues that such women were part of a household-based war where women were the domestic

¹⁵⁴ Victoria E. Bynum, *The Free State of Jones: A True Story of Defiance During the American Civil War*, (London and New York: Duckworth, 2016), pp. 52 -53.

¹⁵⁵ Kerber, "Separate Sphere, Female Worlds, Women's Place", pp. 9-39 Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, pp. 10 – 11. LeeAnn Whites, "Forty Shirts and a Wagonload of Wheat: Women, the Domestic Supply Line, and the Civil War on the Western Border", *The Journal of the Civil War Era*, Vol.1, Number 1 (March 2011), pp. 56-78.

supply line, providing food and clothing.¹⁵⁶ Whilst there seems little doubt that women such as Annie Smith were also effectively acting as a domestic supply line supporting deserters and escaped Federal prisoners, the family context of her actions does not help in the continuing debate about whether female dissent should be viewed primarily as providing support for male resistance or also considered in its own terms.¹⁵⁷

Other instances unambiguously illustrate the independent nature of much resistance by women and a noticeable feature of such dissent is the prominent role of widows. Charlotte Grant, again from Marlboro County, exemplifies the autonomy of such women's dissent. Grant, who was widowed during the war, was one of a number of such independent women whose dissent owed nothing to male protection or dominance. Like the family of Philip Smith, Charlotte Grant supported and fed her first husband Thomas Smith, for two years, when he was resisting the draft as well as her brother who had deserted. Although the mother of five small children, she was then threatened with imprisonment by the Confederate authorities. By then she was clearly involved in supporting other local men and In August, 1864, a Captain Hawthorne of the Confederate Home guard came to her

¹⁵⁶ Whites, "Forty Shirts and a Wagonload of Wheat". Clothing was important in guerrilla warfare with distinctive over-shirts often being adopted by men. See also Beilein for male guerrilla dependence on the support of their households particularly sisters and mothers. Beilein argues that providing guerrilla shirts was simply an extension of women's peacetime domestic skills in clothing all their family. Joseph M. Beilein, "The Guerrilla Shirt: A Labour of Love and the Style of Rebellion in Civil War Missouri", *Civil War History*, Volume 58, Number 2 (June, 2012), pp.151 – 179. Kirsten Streater also adopts the argument of a female domestic supply line as women transferred traditionally private acts to the public domain of war support. Karen L. Streater, "'She- Rebels on the Supply Line: Gender Conventions in Civil War Kentucky'", in LeeAnn Whites and Alecia P. Long, eds.), *Occupied Women: Gender, Military Occupation and the American Civil War* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2009), pp. 89 - 92.

¹⁵⁷ Storey, *Southern Dissent*, pp.882 – 883.

farm looking for the two deserters, Philip Smith and Samuel Rainwater, and shot twice at another man Henry McGee in her farmyard.¹⁵⁸ Although threatened with having her farm and property destroyed leaving her and her children destitute, she stood her ground with Hawthorne as: “he sauced me and I sauced him.”

It is possible that Grant was emboldened by her experiences of confronting the Confederacy. Her first husband died shortly after being taken into service and, in March, 1865, Grant sheltered a complete stranger, Georgia conscript William D. Cornwall, whom she had encountered in the woodland surrounding her property. Although living alone with her children she took him to her home and cared for him. Before he left her farm, Cornwall set out an account of their meeting and told how he had been abandoned by his regiment, who were retreating before Sherman’s forces, because he was unwell and unable to march. Having discarded his gun and ammunition he encountered Grant who “seeing my helpless condition” took him to her farmhouse. Cornwall was himself a reluctant conscript and opposed to secession and the war and Grant recognised the need to extend the protection she had offered to her own family and community to a stranger in need who evidently shared her sympathies: “I protected him because he was a deserter.”¹⁵⁹

It is unclear to what extent becoming a widow encouraged Grant in her resistance to the Confederacy but significant numbers of women acting in such ways were widows. Such women were often the independent heads of households, owning property in their own right and owing no duties of loyalty or obedience to

¹⁵⁸ For Smith and Rainwater see pages 81 - 83.

¹⁵⁹ Grant, SCC Allowed Claim, 881.

male partners.¹⁶⁰ Unlike Grant, Elizabeth Jolly had been widowed many years before the war and managed her own small farm in Alexander County, North Carolina, where she brought up her family of three sons, all of whom eventually crossed through the Federal lines to the North. During the war she supported deserters, including one of her sons, and fed escaped prisoners. As a consequence, she was drawn into confrontations with Confederate forces and was threatened with arrest and had her property taken. The principal threat came from the Raleigh Guards who had been sent to the area to seek out deserters and those who protected them:

I was often threatened for my union sentiments particularly by the Raleigh Guard, they said they understood I was feeding deserters and conscripts belonging to the Rebel Army and said if they ever caught me at it they would shoot me, these threats were made chiefly during the last two years of the war. The Raleigh Guard was sent here as I understood to arrest deserters from the Rebel Army and to arrest conscripts . . . I was watched by the Rebels nearly day and night and they threatened to shoot and take my things as previously stated.

It is not surprising that Jolly was effectively viewed as an enemy of the state and watched night and day, even as a woman. As with many of other dissenting southerners, her union sentiments were fuelled by family loyalty. Describing her dismay at one son volunteering, she eventually persuaded him to desert when she concealed him in the woods for nearly two years until he was able to cross the Federal lines and escaped to Indiana. Like many dissenting southerners, support

¹⁶⁰ Property rights within southern states remained complex, however, and widows did not automatically inherit either all their deceased husband's wealth or indeed their debts. Byrum, *Unruly Women*, pp.62 – 67. Widows not untypically enjoyed a continuing possession of at least some of the property for the duration of their lifetime.

for family members extended naturally to support other members of local communities and, as opportunities presented themselves, to include escaped Federal soldiers.¹⁶¹

Eleanor Quick, again from Marlboro County, South Carolina, was also a widow losing her husband in 1861, just after the beginning of the war. Left with eleven children, she described how she and her family supported both deserters and escaped Federal prisoners. Typically, her resistance started when two sons went into the Confederate Army. She was able to secure the release of her elder son because he was a blacksmith and when her younger son deserted she hid him, and a number of other deserters, in the swamp where they were fed by her family. In a southern society characterised by accounts of patriarchal domination, her daughter, Nancy McPhatter described her mother's matriarchal control:

She fed deserters for seven months —I did nothing hardly for the whole 7 months but cook and carry to them and keep them posted about the hunters. My mother wanted me to do so. Some prisoners escaped from the Confederates . . . They were Yankee prisoners —got away and five of them came to our house. More came and were caught by the hunters and killed. I hid 5 in the swamp and fed them by my mother's orders for 3 or 4 weeks . . .

As a consequence, McPhatter was threatened by the Supporting Force. Although probably not yet twenty at the time of the threats, it was clear that the Confederate authorities viewed her as an active participant in the war between the Confederacy and its deserters: "Captain Hawthorne and B.F. Hamer of the Supporting Force pointed their guns right in my face and threatened to shoot me for feeding the

¹⁶¹ Jolly, SCC Approved Claim, 824.

deserters and concealing them. They saw me hiding the deserters' guns and blankets in the house. They shot at deserters nine times that day." The level of violence might differ but otherwise the Confederacy saw deserters and their female supporters as part of the same continuum of dissent and resistance.¹⁶²

As always, dissent took on different forms and other women suffered primarily because of their loyalty to their husbands or fathers. Tabitha Batson, although a mother of six small children, was threatened by Confederate troops for refusing to disclose where her husband was hiding although they were far more violent to him, returning to kill him at their small farm outside Milledgeville in Baldwin County, Georgia. Her husband, whom she described as a strong Union man and, as a Justice of the Peace, was someone of prominence in his community, was originally conscripted into the state militia but served for only four weeks before claiming to be ill and refused to return and would hide in the woods when Confederate forces came looking for him. In October, 1864, a group of twenty Confederate troops came to their farm looking for "the squire", and questioned her as to his whereabouts and, when she refused to say where he was, they threatened her by firing a gun. Shortly afterwards they returned to the property when Batson's husband was killed by a Confederate conscript officer although he was unarmed, they: "killed him in my presence — and while I could do nothing. I can only say he lost his life as a Union man and left me with six small children and little or no means to support them."

¹⁶² Quick, SCC Approved Claim, 2794. Hawthorne and Hamer also threatened Charlotte Grant. Grant, SCC Allowed Claim, 881.

It is highly likely that the Batsons were targeted because of his position in the community and because his refusal to serve, even in a state militia, was viewed by neighbours as an act of betrayal of the new nation. Only a month before his death he had rowed with a neighbour who had denounced him for being an enemy of the Confederacy: "I will be damned but you are against us . . ." ¹⁶³ The daughter and wife of Nicholas Bacon also suffered because of his apparent disloyalty. Bacon from Fulton County, Georgia, had kept his sons out of the Confederate army for as long as possible and supported other men hiding out from the Confederate authorities. When Federal troops captured Atlanta, he worked as a clerk in the Quartermaster's Department and then became the target of threats after Sherman's troops abandoned the city when he would go into the Federal picket lines for safety. Confederate troops would frequently visit his house, arrested his daughter as a spy and threatened to shoot his wife in their home. ¹⁶⁴

Whilst it was men such as Batson who were often the victims of Confederate violence, the testimonies of women such as McPhatter and men such as Bacon indicate that threats of violence against women were also commonplace. As with LeeAnn White's examination of Confederate women on the western border, such threats of violence were not casual outbursts but highly instrumental acts designed either to intimidate women into disclosing the whereabouts of family members who were hiding from the authorities or put pressure on their men to

¹⁶³ Batson. SCC Approved Claim, 4170. Batson was from Baldwin County, Georgia. Saris argues that in Lumpkin County, in the north of the state, Confederate forces deliberately targeted those thought to be disloyal and that threats of violence were common. Saris, "*Shot for Being Bushwhackers*", pp. 35 – 37.

¹⁶⁴ Bacon, SCC Approved Claim, 2406.

surrender themselves. Although frequently perpetrated by state functionaries, whole communities could also be involved as with Mahala Ramsey from Fulton County, Georgia.¹⁶⁵

Atlanta and the surrounding counties were particularly problematic for southern unionists. Having been taken by Federal forces after a prolonged siege in September 1864, most of the city's residents were then expelled by Sherman and forced to go either North or South depending on their sympathies. Sherman then left the city in November, 1864, to begin the "March to the Sea" leaving Confederate sympathisers free to return.¹⁶⁶ Mahala Ramsey, from Fulton County, suffered at the hands of her neighbours after Federal troops had left:

Some of my neighbours said I ought to be burnt out of house and home and that I ought to be burnt up too. This was on account of things I did for the union soldiers and for taking greenbacks and because my family was a union family. They said I would be court *martialed* if I did not quit taking greenbacks. A rebel soldier threatened to shoot my little boy and had his gun drawn on him but I begged and he did not shoot.

¹⁶⁵ Violence against dissenting white women was very different to the often daily violence perpetrated against slave women. For many slave women, random and at times extreme violence, was commonplace often for minor transgressions, or indeed for no transgressions at all. Glymph argues that, despite the persistence of the idea of white female gentility in the South, it was often slave owning women, rather than men, who were the principal instigators of such violence. Thavolia Glymph, *Out of the House of Bondage: The Transformation of the Plantation Household* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 18 – 37. Male slave owners posed a different threat and the fear of rape constantly reminded many slave women of their vulnerability as women and slaves including at times as mothers unable to protect their daughters. Marli F. Weiner, *Mistresses and Slaves: Plantation Women in South Carolina 1830 – 80* (Urbana and Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1998), pp. 135 – 136. African- American women also suffered sexual violence at the hands of advancing Federal forces. Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North*, p.48. In contrast, there is no indication from Claims Commission records that sexual violence was a feature of disloyal white women's experiences. Whilst this is consistent with other accounts of violence against women in the Confederate South, such as Bynum's *Unruly Women*, as Bynum herself suggests it is possible that deeply embedded notions of shame and honour may have been factors suppressing public disclosure. *Ibid*, p.118.

¹⁶⁶ Link, *Atlanta, Cradle of the New South* pp. 30 -49.

Ramsey would certainly have been viewed as disloyal by her neighbours having unusually married a Federal soldier after being widowed in 1863. She had supported her first husband after he deserted and had been threatened by a Confederate officer.¹⁶⁷ Although community ties could sustain dissent for some southern unionists such as the Smiths, others like Ramsey were surrounded by hostile neighbours. Whilst conscription officers and Home Guards figure prominently in the attacks on southern unionists, communities frequently took the law into the own hands as with Ramsey.¹⁶⁸

If resistance of women such as Grant and Jolly indicate the transformative impact of the war on ordinary southern women as they protected their families and confronted the Confederate authorities, other women's dissent was more firmly based in traditional roles of women as nurturers and carers. Mary Stanley farmed in the Greensboro District of Guilford County in North Carolina and typified the continuing importance of domestic activities in female dissent. Although claiming, as a woman, she was unable to do anything but talk she also took great pride in enabling her sons and other men avoid service in Confederate armies by being part of a domestic supply line of provisioning:

I sent four sons and a son in law through the lines, filled them up to go. The Confederate authorities seized the last and youngest son and when he came home sick on furlough I filled him up and sent him through the lines. I also fed the union boys who were hiding out to keep out of the army.

¹⁶⁷ Ramsey, SCC Approved Claim, 1645.

¹⁶⁸ For the tradition of community punishments in the Old South see Bertram Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honour: Ethics and Behaviour in the Old South* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982). pp. 435 – 461.

After a deserter was found at their farm, both she and her husband were punished by being expelled from their home. Her husband was jailed, and later died, and she was ordered off her family farm and their property destroyed or taken, although she returned in time for Federal troops also to take a horse from her in April, 1865.¹⁶⁹

Women such as Grant and Jolly appear to have been emboldened as result of their encounters with the Confederacy. Not all female dissent was so confident. Some women struggled to escape their traditional, gendered boundaries and indeed some gave no indication that they wanted to break with the ties of family protection. Undoubtedly, some women would have been intimidated by Confederate terror and others simply lived in part of the South where family life was relatively undisturbed for much of the war with no transformative encounters with the Confederate state. Like Charles Brandt's daughter Sarah, from Barnwell County, some younger women remained within the protective mantle of their family.¹⁷⁰ The daughters of Antonio Lewis remained in Savannah during the war. Although the family was described by their black neighbour Sarah Ann Black as "good union people", there otherwise appeared to have either no opportunity, or inclination, to actively oppose the Confederacy.¹⁷¹ Until Federal troops removed timber and other materials to build hospital huts on 22 December, 1864, there is no indication that the family had any contact with Federal troops or Confederate deserters. The family appeared to have been relatively poor. Lewis worked as a carpenter, and his elder daughter Johannah Hick took work during the war working

¹⁶⁹ Stanley, SCC Approved Claim, 3653.

¹⁷⁰ For Brandt, see page 33.

¹⁷¹ For Black, see pages 75 – 76.

as a seamstress making Confederate uniforms explaining: "I did not work for them because I liked their cause but it was the only way I could make my living at that time." Although her father supported the Union, she took no side:" I was a woman and had to remain *nutrel*." Her younger sister, Ann Elizabeth Lewis, did remain at home with her father looking after him and the house and seemingly never feeling in need of additional protection from either Confederate or Federal troops: ". . .my father was all the protection I wanted."¹⁷²

Although women such as Lewis, relatively unaffected by the war, continued to reflect the traditional gender relations of the antebellum South, many other women were empowered by the war often assuming new and unfamiliar roles often previously the provenance of men. As well as empowering women, the war also disrupted traditional male roles although the mid- century was already a time when American masculinity was being refashioned.¹⁷³ In terms of conventional scholarship, Brian Craig Miller has argued that the two pillars of southern manhood were mastery and honour and that southern men defined their manhood through the control of women, slaves and their household.¹⁷⁴ Debates about southern honour have long been dominated by the "belligerent self-regarding manhood" of

¹⁷² Ross, SCC Disallowed Claim, 14207. Ross was the trustee of Lewis's estate. Johannah Hick's home circumstances during the war are unclear. Although married at that time and later widowed in 1871, it is not clear whether she remained in the family home but women's labour became increasingly important within southern households as the war continued. Drago, *Confederate Phoenix*, p.26.

¹⁷³ Amy S. Greenberg argues that by the 1850s there was no single ideal of masculinity that prevailed in the United States but that there were a range of different practices of manhood competing for attention. In addition to a model of *martial manhood* emphasising male aggression and mastery, *restrained manhood* valued hard work, domesticity and sobriety. Amy. S. Greenberg, *Manifest Manhood: The Antebellum American Empire* (Cambridge and London: Cambridge University Press, 2005), pp. 10-13.

¹⁷⁴ Brian Craig Miller, "Manhood", in Aaron Sheehan-Dean (ed.), *A Companion to the American Civil War* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2014), p.798.

Bertram Wyatt-Brown's *Old South* with its emphasis on outward appearance, displays of chivalry and above all else a fierce, and at times violent, defence of family and personal reputation.¹⁷⁵ It is interesting how accounts from southern dissenters, many of whom were yeoman farmers, compare with Wyatt-Brown's elite formulation of honour. Whilst many continue to reflect the centrality of family and the importance of reputation, there is little in the way of the self-regarding belligerence of Wyatt-Brown's elite southerners and many yeoman farmers appear instead to invoke other forms of masculinity emphasising self-reliance and the virtues of hard work and raising a family.¹⁷⁶ Although men appeared to respect roles within the community, such as justice of the peace, it is noticeable how little value appears to be placed on public roles as such. Curiously, within the gender conventions of public and private spheres, the most common form of respect, provided by neighbours and acquaintances, was often more private rather than public, and commended quiet, stay at home men, largely keeping their own counsel.¹⁷⁷

¹⁷⁵ Wyatt Brown, *Southern Honour*.

¹⁷⁶ It is noticeable how many testimonies reflect a model of restrained manhood. As one example only, Mary Shumpert testified to her husband's qualities: "The claimant is a sober industrious man and provides for his family." (Shumpert, SCC Approved Claim, 15413).

¹⁷⁷ John All describes his German neighbour, Charles Brandt, as "an honest home staying man and an industrious citizen. Brandt, SCC Approved Claim, 7998. Store keeper Anthony Mira was also seen by his neighbour William Adams as "an industrious, hard working man, just a man as would hardly be spoken of with regard to his politics," Mira, SCC Disallowed Claim, 14207. Rather than reflecting Wyatt-Brown, there appears to be a far greater resonance with William J Cash's 1941 portrayal of yeoman farmers as being characterised by a sense of independence, individualism and resentment against higher forms of authority. Whilst Cash, with his caricature of dirt eating back countrymen and fanciful Doric knights, appears very much a product of his age, there may yet be a kernel of truth that may go some way to explain the determination of some southern men to refuse to be drafted into a war not of their making. William J. Cash, *The Mind of the South* (London: Thames and Hudson, 1971) originally published 1941. Cited by Miller, "Manhood", p.796.

Whilst recent scholarship has emphasised the centrality of family and the protection of families in the creation of Confederate identity, the protection of family and home was not simply a product of the South's demand for home rule but was part of a shared southern identity.¹⁷⁸ Yeoman farmers as well as plantation elites both shared a common concern for mastery which in the absence of slaves translated into an independence based on the ownership of property and the power to control wives and children. Whilst Confederates fought to preserve the sanctity of the home against a northern invader, southerners opposed to the Confederacy faced similar threats from the enemy within in the form of a Confederate state determined to deprive homes of their men and men of their mastery over those homes. Whilst many men opposed the breaking of traditional ties, through the act of secession, the demands of a Confederate state also transgressed deeply ingrained southern traditions of what it was to be a man.

Southern unionist men in general found the war more difficult either because conscription threatened their own independence or challenged their ability to protect their families. War threatened the mastery of free white southern men used to exercising the power of command. Although men like Philip Smith appeared to have had little difficulty in maintaining his status as a man, within both his family and community, despite having to hide from Confederate forces in the woods as a deserter, others found the war more problematic. More so than women, men's

¹⁷⁸ For the centrality of family to Confederate identity see Sheehan-Dean, *Why Confederates Fought*, pp.4-7. Rubin, *A Shattered Nation*, pp. 31-32 and 83-86. Quigley, *Shifting Grounds*, p.192. Nina Silber, *Gender and the Sectional Conflict* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), p.14.

ability to adapt successfully to the war was often dependent on circumstances. Men who found themselves close to military lines could protect their male identity by inventing new wartime roles for themselves either assisting other men to escape to the North or in directly supporting Federal troops. More problematic for many men, including those living close to military lines, was their inability to protect their own sons from being conscripted into a war they both opposed. Unable to protect their own sons, such men often seemed to have found a compensatory role in supporting other men's sons from within their communities to avoid service. Although the scope of Confederate conscription was wide, most deserters and draft evaders pursued by the authorities were younger and it is noticeable that in parts of the Confederate South it was often older men who were the principal supporters of younger men from within their communities. Communities were frequently central to Confederate dissent through support for deserters and draft evaders. In some instances, such as the unionist enclave in Bethania in North Carolina, the protection of the community was itself the principal concern as men banded together for self-protection. The gendered nature of much dissent can be seen most clearly in support for escaped Federal prisoners. Although women such as Annie Smith also helped escape prisoners, such women were often dependent on men to provide the necessary networks to enable such men to escape to safety. Whereas the advance of Federal armies provided opportunities to men to play a fuller part in the war, such military advances offered women different opportunities more consistent with conventional roles but no less disloyal.

Whilst men such as Philip Smith successfully found ways to resist the Confederacy, many men did not. Men such as Charlotte Grant's husband resisted the draft for as long as they could before they were forced into service. Men frequently described their efforts to avoid conscription and were often at pains to emphasise, even if conscripted, how they took on no positions of authority within the Confederate services but remained as a private soldier. Men faced with conscription at least had choices, either to resist for as long as possible, to desert or bow to the inevitable. Far more constrained was the position of fathers who were unable to prevent the conscription of sons. Men frequently told the Commission of how they did everything they could to prevent sons from entering Confederate service and men such as Joseph Rozier described their powerlessness to protect their sons from being forcibly conscripted or intimidated into becoming reluctant volunteers and complained of their inability to help themselves.¹⁷⁹

In other parts of the Confederate South men did help themselves, supporting one another and assisting Federal troops. One key determinant was proximity to military lines. Men living in the border counties of Georgia and North Carolina could attempt to cross the Federal lines and escape to the North and were frequently helped by others in their community or through informal networks of sympathisers. Other parts of the Confederate South, particularly in South Carolina, experienced little by way of either formal or irregular warfare until the final months of the war and dissent was shaped by deep animosity to the Confederacy and

¹⁷⁹ For Rozier, see page 48.

characterised primarily by communal support for deserters and draft evaders.¹⁸⁰

Some parts of the South were more divided and dangerous and in localities such as the Bethania Community in Forsyth County, North Carolina, local unionists considered themselves under such levels of threats that men banded together to protect themselves and their community.

If Confederate dissent in Bethania was primarily defensive, elsewhere in the South men exploited their situation to become active participants in the conflict. Men living in the vicinity of Lookout Mountain on the borders of Georgia, Alabama and Tennessee had ample opportunities to demonstrate their dissent by supporting deserters and draft evaders and, later in the war, Federal scouts. Particularly following the fall of a Chattanooga in November, 1863, areas such as Chattooga County in Georgia effectively became part of an irregular front line in the war with Federal and Confederate scouts and guerrilla bands criss-crossing the area, intimidating local populations and seeking supplies and information. The proximity of the Federal border defined the nature of much dissent because it meant that men seeking to evade conscription no longer simply hid out in the woods but often sought to escape the Confederacy completely by crossing the lines to the North. In doing so, men escaping to the North faced difficult dilemmas of how they would then discharge their responsibilities to their families who remained behind. For this reason, men such as Elias Carnell and Peter Carrel not only helped other men

¹⁸⁰ The exceptions in South Carolina were the Sea Islands, and coastal counties such as Beaufort, occupied early in the war, and attempts by Federal forces to take Charleston from 1863 onwards.

from within their community to escape but often then assumed responsibilities for men's families until they could reunite them.

Escape to the North often entailed travel on unfamiliar paths known only to locals or travel across dangerous territory patrolled by enemy forces. Both these factors encouraged the development of informal networks so that men could be guided across state borders and have access to good information about the movement of Confederate forces. Such arrangements were often complex with men both supporting one another and being supported in turn. During the war David Murdock remained on his sixty-acre farm until 1864 when, following harassment by Confederate irregular forces led by *desperado* Captain John Gatewood, he crossed the Federal lines to the North. When travelling north he took another nine men with him including two of his sons and the son in law of a neighbour. After Murdock travelled north, his family was then cared for by another neighbour Elias Carnell who would mill corn for them and the like. Murdock continued travel back home to see his family and to escort other neighbours across the lines when he would again be helped by Carnell who, if things were difficult and too dangerous, would bring him provisions when he hid in the woods. Murdock also relied on other neighbours William and Elizabeth Bullard, who lived on remote farm at the foot of Lookout Mountain, where he would stay on occasion and who would advise him whether it was safe or not to return home. William Bullard's farm was regularly passed by men escaping North because of its isolated position. Bullard

and his wife would feed the men and pass on information to them and, if it was safe, let them stay for a night.¹⁸¹

Carnell had himself been active in helping the families of local draft evaders since early in the war including a neighbour Martin Laurener who crossed through the Federal lines to avoid the new conscription laws. After he left, Carnell then supported Laurener's family by hauling wood and providing other support. As Federal lines then became closer he would help deserter's families, such as the Laureners, to become reunited by taking them across the lines on a wagon. As a consequence, he was also threatened by *desperados*. Another neighbour Andrew Lawrence told how he had managed to avoid conscription by hiding out at the house of a man William Tapp before he was eventually able to cross the lines and join the Kansas militia.¹⁸² Neighbour Elizabeth Bullard told how Carnell had earlier protected Tapp, in his turn, by moving him to his own farm when he was avoiding conscription and was being harassed by his neighbours. Unlike much other dissent, which focussed on immediate family, the beneficiaries of Carnell's support were neighbours: "None of the families I aided were my relations. But I aided them because they were union men and for the sake of the union cause." In another sense however Carnell's dissent remained a defence of home and family as he not only helped men to escape but then cared for their families. Unable to leave himself because of a young family, he recognised that to help men leave, he

¹⁸¹ Murdock. SCC Allowed Claim, 7387. Carnell, SCC Allowed Claim, 16077. Bullard, SCC Allowed Claim, 15757. Elizabeth Bullard was widowed in 1873.

¹⁸² Tapp, SCC Allowed Claim, 15713.

needed to take on some of the men's responsibilities to their families by milling corn, hauling wood and eventually reuniting them.

Such concerns for draft evaders' families were not confined to Carnell. Laurener and Murdock were also helped by another neighbour, Peter Carrel. After Laurener had crossed the lines and gone north, Carrel acted as the go-between between him and his family. He also met with Murdock to reassure him that his family would be taken care of, in his absence, by other Union men. Unusually they also exchanged hard-to obtain domestic essentials, Carrel gave him cotton thread and Murdock gave him cotton cards in return. Carrel, like Carnell, recognised that if men were to be helped to leave, then attention needed to be paid to their domestic responsibilities. Men needed to communicate with their wives, needed reassurance that their wives would be protected and even provided with the means to acquire household essentials. Even more so than Carnell, Carrel had every reason to understand these needs because of the nature of his own responsibilities towards women who were dependent on him:

I know the claimant could not leave home to go through the lines for he had the care of a feeble aged mother 85 years old and [an]other four females, on hand of his own except [as well as?] another family of a distressed women and two small children.

Almost as an alternative underground railroad, Carrel was clearly part of an informal network of Union sympathisers helping others to cross military lines to the North to avoid conscription. In 1864, he was approached by a deserter sent to him by another Union man who wanted to cross to the North and reach Missouri. Carrel provided him with directions that would take him through fields and woods until he

reached the house of a third man, James Thomas, on Lookout Mountain who would help him cross the lines. As an indication of the permeable nature of Confederate military lines on the Georgia-Tennessee border regularly exploited by unionist sympathisers towards the end of the war, and where crossings almost became routine, Carrel was also approached by a Miss Mary Sturtevant who had been visiting her father in Chattanooga where he had escaped as a Union supporter. Her father had directed her to Thomas's house and then to make her way to Carrel so he could escort her to her friends in Summersville in order to avoid detection by Confederate forces. Effectively acting *in loco parentis*, Carrel then accompanied her overnight on the five-mile journey on foot to her friends.¹⁸³

Despite their vigour in protecting other men and their families, men such as Carrell had struggled to protect their own families. Carrell had successfully avoided being called into the Confederate reserves by taking the office of Justice of the Peace but was unable to prevent his own son from being intimidated into volunteering. Murdock was driven to leave his family through the action of Confederate irregulars, William Bullard was unable to help his sons escape to the North and Tapp's son reluctantly enlisted against his father's wishes and was later killed. Even Elias Carnell, who had no sons of conscription age, spoke of his inability to protect two nephews who he had tried to keep out of Confederate service.

¹⁸³ Carrel, SCC Allowed Claim, 1615.

In Marlboro County, South Carolina, men such as Matthew Driggers and Joel Hall also protected others in their community having failed to protect their own sons. In contrast to Chattooga County, where the proximity of Federal lines encouraged men and later their families to cross the military lines, men in South Carolina had few opportunities to find friendly Federal forces. Draft evaders and deserters in Marlboro County appear to have been predominately local men who were resolved to stay out of the reach of the Confederate authorities for as long as possible by hiding out in the woods.

Driggers and Hall were both subsistence farmers from the Sand Hills settlement in Marlboro County. Driggers was just over sixty years old at the start of the war and farmed sixty acres of cultivated land. Three of his sons were conscripted into the Confederate Army, despite his efforts to keep them out of Confederate service, with him telling the Commission: "I did all I could to keep them out, I talked and tried every means I could." Already in trouble with his secessionist neighbours who refused to sell him corn because of his unionist sympathies, he then helped and fed deserters from the Confederate Army including Philip Smith, who was a near neighbour, and who had known him for thirty years or more. Besides feeding deserters, either when they were hiding out or at his house at night, he also warned them of the activities of the Confederate "deserter hunters". The majority of those he helped, appear to be near neighbours of his and some may also have been part of a broader kinship grouping although, in an indication of the breadth of such kinship ties, Driggers explained none was

closer “than third or fourth cousin”, suggesting family ties, in some instances, going back four or five generations.¹⁸⁴

Like Eleanor Quick’s family, the spur to supporting deserters could start with the need to support sons who had deserted. Joel Hall also lived in Marlboro County and was over fifty at the start of the war and owned a small farm consisting of fifty acres of cultivated land. Hall had three sons in the Confederate Army, all of whom volunteered against his wishes in order to avoid being drafted and sent on distant service although: “I did all in my power against their going ...” His youngest son, William Hall, later deserted in 1864 and returned home to lie out when his father fed and concealed him until the end of the war. Hall also described how there were high numbers of deserters in his Sand Hills settlement who he supported: “There were a good many deserters in the Sand Hills where I live and then lived. They came to my house often at night and I fed them and protected them.” As a consequence of his supporting deserters Hall was arrested by the Supporting Force but escaped as he was being escorted to North Carolina.¹⁸⁵

¹⁸⁴ Driggers, SCC Approved Claim, 1854. The US Federal Census of 1860 gives his age as sixty and values his property at \$1000. Of the seven deserters named by Driggers, at least four were probably neighbours and certainly resided in the same Bennettville District of Marlboro County. They include Philip Smith (Smith, SCC Approved Claim, 1318), Aaron Quick, son of Eleanor Quick (Quick, SCC Approved Claim, 2794), David Williams (recorded in the 1860 US Federal Census as being aged 24 and a farmer) and James Turner (recorded in the 1860 US Federal Census as being aged 18 and a labourer). Two others — Andrew Turner and Andrew Parker — appear in other Southern Claims Commission documents as deserters hiding out in Marlboro County but with no other information as to residence.

¹⁸⁵ Hall, SCC Approved Claim, 1464. The US Federal Census of 1860 gives his age as fifty-two and values his property at \$1000. For Hall and slave Alexander Lewis see page 77. Although the deserters were hiding out close to Hall’s farm, it has not been possible able to trace where they previously lived.

Both Driggers and Hall had struggled unsuccessfully to keep their sons out of Confederate service. Men could feel their family responsibilities in other ways besides. John Herndon was a poor tenant farmer and probably a neighbour of Driggers. Although he had no sons of conscription age, he had been threatened for his Union views and warned that he and his family would be driven out of the state. According to his friend, James Beverly, he was determined that neither he, nor his young sons, would have anything to do with the war. He had one brother who was conscripted and then deserted when Herndon assisted him and another deserter Thomas Hubbard. He also encouraged other local deserters to come to his house where they would be fed and, from 1864, looked after his brother's family whilst he was lying out. Like many others, from South Carolina, opposed to the Confederacy, Herndon was another South Carolinian whose dissent was underpinned his antagonism to the "rich men" of the state who caused the war and then left the poor men to fight it.¹⁸⁶

That Herndon cared for his brother's family is not remarkable but it does point to the particular role of older southerners in Confederate dissent.¹⁸⁷ In a scholarship dominated by men of military age or soldier's wives, the role of older men and women, many who were widows, remains largely unexplored. Aged forty-one at the time of the 1860 census, under the terms of the 1862 Amendment Act Herndon would have been eligible for service in the reserves until his forty fifth

¹⁸⁶ Herndon, SCC Approved Claim, 267. Herndon also lived in the Bennettsville district. In 1860, Herndon was aged forty-one with seven children, including four under the age of nine.

¹⁸⁷ The term is relative. The critical factor was whether men were eligible for conscription by virtue of their age under the various Confederate acts.

birthday. The later 1864 act extended the upper age limit to the age of fifty although enforcement of its requirements appears to have been lax with men in their forties who often appear to have occupied a rather ambiguous space, susceptible to manipulation.

In contrast to the ferocity that the Confederate authorities employed against younger draft evaders and deserters, the response to older men appeared far more tokenistic. Herndon himself was arrested for failing to serve in the reserves in August, 1863. Not untypically, he was then released on condition that he reported for duty at the local camp the following day. Herndon reported to Fort Finger on the Pee Dee River but left after two days and returned home when little effort was seemingly spent pursuing him. The experiences of William Tuten, from Beaufort County in South Carolina, were similar. Aged around forty-eight at the start of the war he was arrested at one point in the war, held for two days and then released when he went home and was apparently not troubled again.¹⁸⁸ Even in Georgia, in 1864, after Governor Brown had called out the militia in the defence of Atlanta, Miles Mosley easily avoided conscription in the Home Guard. Having failed to answer a summons to report in Autumn, 1864, he was then arrested at his farm by a Captain McGuire but remained only for three or four days before leaving.¹⁸⁹

Older men had a particular stake in the continuation of the Union. William Tuten, when asked who were the best-known unionists in his vicinity during the war, identified a number of local families such as the Tutens, Peebles and

¹⁸⁸ For Tuten, see pages 57 – 58.

¹⁸⁹ Mosley, SCC Disallowed Claim, 6218. Mosley was probably born in 1814 and would very much have been on the cusp of eligibility for conscription under the 1864 act.

Stanleys, adding tellingly: “In fact, all the settled men of the Sandhill settlement that had anything to lose.”¹⁹⁰ Tuten, like a number of older men, was also a veteran of an earlier war: “I served under the union flag in the Indian war in Florida and did not want the union to be broken”. Within this construction, loyal union men, unlike feckless aristocratic secessionists, were the property-owning yeomanry who, like their fathers before them, were the backbone of the republic.¹⁹¹

In parts of the Confederate South, older men were often the principal supporters of draft evaders and deserters from their community. During the war, Nicholas Bacon lived in a particularly dangerous part of Georgia in Fulton County where, after Atlanta was abandoned by Federal troops, men who had collaborated with the occupying troops were penalised by Confederate forces. Not only did Bacon need to hide out in Federal lines but his wife was threatened with violence and his daughter arrested as a spy. Born in 1801, he was too old for military service although his eldest son was eventually conscripted but deserted once Federal troops took possession of Atlanta. Bacon otherwise counselled men against joining the Confederate army and supported men who were “laying out”, including a grandson, who would come to him for food and information until they were able to take their opportunity to cross to the Federal lines.¹⁹² Henry Ledbetter from Guilford County in North Carolina’s Quaker Belt, was also an older man who was active in supporting deserters from his community. As with Carnell and Carrell,

¹⁹⁰ This was a standard question put to all claimants from 1874 onwards: “Who were the leading and best known Unionists of your vicinity during the war? Are any of them called to testify to your loyalty; and if not, why not?”

¹⁹¹ See Sutherland, “The Absence of Violence” pp 79-80.

¹⁹² For Bacon, see page 96.

Ledbetter extended his support for deserters to include their families. Unlike many others involved in supporting deserters, he appears to have had no personal connections to the men he concealed in his barns and outhouses and fed: "Not one of the deserters that was in the woods was related to me in any way. I done it because I thought it was right." More unusually, he claimed to have helped another man to escape from the Confederacy by buying his farm from him and then caring for his family

I aided a Union man to get out of the Confederacy by buying his land and paying him for it and getting him through the lines and taking care of his family during most of the war and then sent his family to him in the West, his name is BJ Thornton who now lives near Nights Town, [sic] Indiana, he was not related to me in any way but was a good Union man and would not fight for the Confederacy.

Ledbetter was not a wealthy man so the extent of his commitment is all the more remarkable although the circumstances suggest that Thornton would have been a near neighbour known to him. Although living in a strongly Quaker area, he was not a Quaker himself although principles of what was right and what was wrong clearly underpinned his support for men from his community including assisting and reuniting families where necessary.¹⁹³

At times men banded together to protect their families and their community.

The small settlement of Bethania was originally founded as a Moravian community,

¹⁹³ Ledbetter, SCC Approved Claim, 10394. The 1860 U.S. Federal Census gives his age as 50 and lists one son, Alphius Ledbetter aged 26, but it has not been possible to trace any other records of the son. The census valued his property at \$1000 and his personal estate at \$800.

situated just north-west of Salem.¹⁹⁴ Although Bethania's residents helped deserters and escaped prisoners, their principal concern was self-protection.

William E Lehman explained their concerns:

Well we were all threatened in Bethania to be hung. There was an advertisement stuck up on a tree that all the union men in that town were to be hung. All in the town were union men but four. They threatened to burn the town, and we had to guard the town for several nights. I stood guard myself. This threat was made by a man named Jim [surname indecipherable] who was a soldier in the C.S Army. This was in [18] 63.

As a Union enclave within a contested part of North Carolina the community was threatened with extra judicial punishment by their secessionist neighbours. Samuel Strup, a close neighbour of Lehman's, was one of the men who stood guard: "me and Lehman watched together to prevent the rebels from burning the town". The cause of their offence was their unionist sympathies and indeed Union men in Bethania appear to have quite open about their loyalties. Unlike in other instances, when men talked about the need to be guarded about their sympathies and only meet privately, Union men in Bethania had their own designated meeting place. Joseph Transou, another close neighbour of Lehman's explained: "Every day we used to meet every night at an office that we union men had there in Bethania and talk over matters about the war." He also spoke about the constant nature of the threats made against them because of their unionist sympathies.¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Bailey traces Moravian emigration to North Carolina as part of a wider eighteenth century pattern of emigration from Germany, which was often religious in nature, but unlike later nineteenth century emigration did not result in distinctive German- American communities as in Texas. Bailey, *Invisible Southerners*, pp.1 -2.

¹⁹⁵ Lehman, SCC Disallowed Claim, 15083.

Dissent in Bethania extended beyond sympathising with the Union cause and talking about the war and the community also helped deserters and escaped Federal prisoners. Lehman's own son was arrested in 1864 for trying to avoid being conscripted although Lehman was able to get him and a nephew through the military lines. Martha Transon and her first husband Noaman Rich, until he died in 1871, fed deserters whenever they could, as did Lehman. Possibly as result of Federal prisoners being held at Salisbury and needing to be transported, Bethania also assisted escaped Federal prisoners including two soldiers who escaped from the train at High Point and were assisted to cross to the Federal lines by Rich and Lehman. Solomon Tise also spoke about helping a Federal spy who had escaped from Raleigh and for whom a reward of \$2000 had been offered for his recapture by the Confederate authorities: "I gave him directions where to go and who to go to and how to escape the soldiers who were in the country. I helped him through the lines to the union side."¹⁹⁶

Although seeing themselves as Union men, and threatened by their secessionist neighbours for their beliefs, Bethania's residents otherwise defined for themselves the meaning of their unionism. Lehman himself remained in the state militia during the war until 1864 when he was enrolled in the Senior Reserve. He also made and sold shoes to men in the Confederate army whose company was

¹⁹⁶ The intensely close-knit nature of the Bethania community is indicated through testimonies to the Southern Claims Commission. Strupe and Transon (possibly the same family as Transon) gave evidence for Lehman, and Elias Shaub and Lehman testified for Tise. Lehman, Shaub and Lizzie Strupe (Martha Transon's daughter) gave evidence for Transon. Tise and Transon testified for William A. Strupe. The union office was in Shaub's house and Shaub was also a witness to Rich's will. A number of families lived next door to one another including members of the Rich family (spelt Reich in the 1860 Census), as well as Shaubs, Strups, Transous and Lehmans.

stationed at Bethania for a period. Solomon Tise, who had also been threatened with being ridden on a rail, besides helping a Federal spy also remained in the militia during the war and eventually became a lieutenant in the Senior Reserve at the end of the war.¹⁹⁷ Noaman Rich, the first husband of Martha Transon, worked in the Confederate hospital in Greensboro for six months.¹⁹⁸ None of these acts seemed to dilute their dissent in any way as they defended their community and did what they could to help deserters and Federal prisoners. Typically, many of these men were again older; Lehman had turned fifty in 1864, Strup would have been aged fifty-five at the start of the war and Transon probably aged fifty-four.¹⁹⁹ With the exception of Lehman, none appeared to have sons of conscription age. Their principal motivation for opposing the Confederacy, as they did, was a sense of their common identity as Union men which enabled them not simply to support local deserters and family members but also to reach out to total strangers with whom they recognised an affinity and shared identity.

Helping escaped Federal prisoners was frequently an extension of supporting draft evaders and deserters. Men and women, accustomed to defying the Confederacy to help members of their own family or community evade conscription or to desert, appeared to adapt naturally to also assisting Federal prisoners even though they had no personal or community ties with the strangers they helped. Indeed, as the Federal troops who announced themselves as

¹⁹⁷ Tise, SCC Disallowed Claim, 15083.

¹⁹⁸ Transon, SCC Disallowed Claim, 21977.

¹⁹⁹ 1860 United States Federal Census.

Yankees when coming to John Coogler's farm, these were men from another, distant world. The lack of geographical mobility of many southerners is noticeable. Men and women described how they had lived in their neighbourhood all their lives or, as in the case of many Georgia claimants, had migrated from another state many years ago, had settled and did not move again. And yet, their identity as Union men and women, however loosely defined, enabled them, at great risk to themselves, to shelter Federal prisoners from unfamiliar states such as Indiana and Ohio. Whilst Union identity was fluid and intensely subjective, there appears to have been an easy recognition of a shared affinity with such strangers as part of a wider, Union community, temporarily fractured by secession.

When told that his father was sheltering two Federal prisoners, Joseph Shumpert from Lexington County, South Carolina, walked ten miles to shake their hands. It is probable that he was curious to meet unfamiliar Federal troops but what shines through his account of the encounter is the strong affinity he felt to them. Shumpert came from a family of deserters. Two brothers, Daniel and Noah had been conscripted and then deserted and hid with him in the swamp — “my swamp”, as he described it —and a third brother was conscripted into the “Old Reserves” but he too deserted. Shumpert himself hid out for four months with six or eight other men to avoid being forced into the Confederate army and was hiding in the swamp when his brother Noah came to him to say there were two escaped Federal prisoners at his father's house:

My brother Noah came to me when I was hiding from the rebels and said that there were two (2) escaped union prisoners at my father's farm about ten miles from my farm — My brother told me to come and see the Union

soldiers — I suppose his reason for telling me was that they were union men, and we were all union men and he thought I would like to meet them . . .

Shumpert described his meeting almost as a happy reunion: “I spoke to the soldiers and shook hands with them, we were very glad to see each other and I talked with them 3 or 4 hours . . .” Shumpert shared provisions he had brought from his own hideout in the swamp and gave them directions on how to get reach Federal troops at Augusta, about fifty or sixty miles away, significantly cautioning them against talking to other white southerners: “. . .and I advised them not to take advice from white people on the way there. I told them to depend on colored people for all they wanted.” Critically both Shumpert and the Federal soldiers recognised their shared identity as union people. Before leaving, the two soldiers signed a testimonial to the family:

To whom it may concern greetings. We the undersigned officers of the U.S. Army (escaped prisoners of war) pray that you show all favour and protection . . . and family for they are and always have been union people, and they are deserving of your sympathy

Secession may have divided the nation but for men such as Shumpert and the escaped prisoners, their Union identity remained intact.²⁰⁰

²⁰⁰Shumpert, SCC Allowed Claim, 15413. The letter was signed by two Federal officers, Joseph Houston and Seth Wheaton, both junior lieutenants. The middle section of the letter has been damaged, or at least folded, so the names are not visible. The Commission were highly suspicious of Shumpert’s claim not least because there was a dispute as whether a flag with thirteen stars found as his property was an old militia flag he had rescued, as he claimed, or a Confederate flag. The Commission sent Houston and Wheaton’s letter to the army asking if the signatures were genuine. It appears they were.

The opportunity to support escaped prisoners was highly dependent on geography. Whilst all communities would have had their share of draft evaders and the deserters to varying degrees, the opportunity to help escaped prisoners was far more limited. Most opportunities arose where Federal troops were being held in prisons or stockades such as in Charleston or Salisbury or were being moved from one location to another. After escaping, they could then be helped by sympathisers along the way who, like Shumpert, provided both food and advice on where to go and who to trust. Although there are some limited examples of whites collaborating with slaves and others jointly to support escaped prisoners, Shumpert was not typical in his advice and in general there is little evidence from these accounts of white and black southerners collaborating to support Federal prisoners. More so than desertion and draft evasion, support for escaped Federal prisoners was also highly gendered in its application. Both men and women fed escaped prisoners but men were also more likely to be involved in community based networks of support, not accessible to women, which enabled escaped prisoners to be passed onto safety. Whilst helping escaped prisoners was often an extension of support for draft evaders and deserters, it could also quickly evolve into a more direct action and in some parts of the South, such as Georgia and North Carolina border counties, support for escaped prisoners became indistinguishable from general support for Federal troops and scouts.

Supporting escaped Federal prisoners enabled men to play an active part in the war. John Fink was a Carbarus County physician, from North Carolina and a member of the Heroes of America peace movement. He and his patients assisted

escaped Federal prisoners from Salisbury prison who were often directed to their houses, where they were fed and given directions to find friendly Federal troops. In one instance, Fink assisted a prisoner by the name of Abercrombie who Fink provided with \$100 and a guide to take him to another friend living in the mountains of Western North Carolina, approximately one hundred miles away.²⁰¹ As Federal armies advanced, support for escaped prisoners merged with other forms of military assistance. George M. Misenheimer was also a patient of Fink's and also a member of the Heroes of America. An officer in the state militia prior to the war, he continued in the role during the war because of the protection it gave him from being conscripted. Although helping the occasional escaped prisoner, Misenheimer's main opportunity to act positively came at the end of the war when Federal armies were advancing and a group of men became detached from the main force. Directed to his property by a unionist sympathiser, Misenheimer then provided them with a map and directions to enable them to avoid Confederate scouts.²⁰² The advance of Federal troops changed the nature of much Confederate dissent and drew some men into the military war effectively as a fifth column within the Confederacy. John Carson from Alexander County in North Carolina used his

²⁰¹ Fink, SCC Approved Claim, 10651. A number of claimants, particularly from North Carolina identify themselves as being members of the Heroes of America but all say very little about the activities of the organisation supporting Scott Reynolds Nelson's observation about the constraints of research into what were, by definition, *secret* societies. Nelson views the Heroes of America, or Red Strings, as an essentially conservative society defending family and home against a "Destructionist" Confederacy. Nelson *Red strings and Half Brothers*, pp. 40-42. Inscoc and McKinney challenge the stereotype that all southern highlanders in Western North Carolina were predominately unionist but that the sacrifices of the war and the demands of the Confederate state led to "disaffection and disillusionment" revitalising Union sentiment. Inscoc and McKinney, *Heart of Confederate Appalachia*, pp. 86- 87. Martin Crawford's study of Ashe County also questions whether communities were universally loyal to the Union. Crawford, *Ashe County's Civil War*.

²⁰² Misenheimer, SCC Approved Claim, 16527.

professional skills as a physician to tend to injured and dying Union men in Alexander County's inner civil war including a William Campbell who later became a lieutenant in the Federal Army. He also looked after deserters and provided them with medicine and helped escaped Federal prisoners from Salisbury including one group to whom he sent provisions secretly via one of his slaves. Campbell subsequently returned to Alexander County accompanied by other Federal troops to confer secretly with Carson about a potential military raid on the area.²⁰³

Although Carson used his slave to conceal his support for escaped Federal prisoners, there is otherwise relatively little evidence from these accounts of whites and blacks collaborating together to support escaped prisoners. Certainly Shumpert advised his escaped prisoners to seek help only from the "colored people" and more prosperous German immigrants in Savannah, such as the Geils and Otts, worked with their slaves to create networks of support but these appear the exceptions not the rule.²⁰⁴ The slaves of Michael Williams, from Wilkes County, North Carolina, fed escaped prisoners from Salisbury, apparently with his knowledge and consent, but he otherwise had no involvement with them.²⁰⁵ Similarly, Abel Quick's single slave brought five prisoners from the stockade at Florence to his property in Marlboro County, South Carolina, when he fed them but did not invite them to stay.²⁰⁶ In most instances, white support for escaped prisoners was more often, like with Carson, part of a broader opposition to the

²⁰³ Carson, SCC Approved Claim, 20185. Carson owned two slaves in 1860.

²⁰⁴ Thomas Anderson from Fairfield County, South Carolina, also supported escaped prisoners, directing some to the property of a "colored man" where they would be safe but Anderson was a northern migrant born in either Pennsylvania or Delaware. Anderson, SCC Approved Claim, 7596.

²⁰⁵ Williams, SCC Disallowed Claims, 19063. Williams owned eight slaves.

²⁰⁶ Quick, SCC Approved Claim, 4157.

Confederacy or an extension of family support for draft evaders and deserters rather than an opportunity to collaborate with slaves and others against a common enemy.

The role of women with escaped Federal prisoners could also be limited except when part of such family support for draft evaders and deserters. In contrast to men, few women had the opportunity to step outside the family to engage in informal networks of support. Some women indeed found little opportunity to demonstrate their dissent until the arrival of Federal armies who took their supplies but also needed their care. Other women did act independently to support Federal prisoners although their lack of social and political connections limited the scope of their dissent.

Dissent by some women could reflect their relative lack of power or connections and often took the form of everyday behaviours applied in ways that were disloyal to the Confederacy. Unlike men, who had the freedom to act publicly to support escaped Federal prisoners, women who lacked strong family or community connections had to remain far more circumspect in their support for Federal troops. Susan Arendell, Sarah Philips and Nancy Cash were all poor white women who lived in vicinity of Atlanta during the war. None of the women appeared to be part of a wider family network able to support them. Arendell, and Philips were both married to invalid husbands, who would die shortly after the war, and Cash was either unmarried or widowed and managing a farm with the help of her younger sisters. All three women appear to have been illiterate. Despite claiming to be sympathetic to the Union, none had any opportunity to do anything

until the arrival of Federal troops in July, 1864, and even then, their actions were constrained by circumstance. Susan Arendell would have been aged around sixty at the start of the war and had a son and son in law conscripted into the Confederate armies. There seems no doubt as to her and her husband's loyalties. Her neighbour Hiram Casey described both as Union people, adding with a telling disregard for grammatical niceties: "the old lady was a stronger union man if anything than the old man." Despite the apparent strength of her convictions she had no opportunity to do anything until Federal troops camped next to her farm when she fed them and took soldiers who were sick into her house. Sarah Philips fed Federal soldiers and drew water for them, even as they were taking her property, and covered a wounded man with a quilt from her house as he was being taken away in her buggy. Phillips was also relatively isolated and lived on a farm with an invalid husband and two dependent children and, in the absence of other family, appears to have been reliant on employing a day labourer to help manage the farm. Nancy Cash would also have been vulnerable. Described as being from a Union family and whose grandfather fought in the Revolutionary War, it is unclear whether she was widowed but, by 1864, she was living on her farm with her two sisters. She also had two brothers but both had been conscripted and were away. Although her neighbour John Fain spoke of her opposition to secession and the war he otherwise dismissed her as an "ignorant creature" who knew little about politics and thought that only thing she would have done to aid the Union was "to wash and mend for the soldiers while the army was around."

Despite their union sympathies, as relatively isolated and illiterate farm women without obvious family or community ties, the women would have had few opportunities to turn their discontent into active resistance. But the arrival of Federal armies changed the nature of much male and female dissent. Not only were some men able to extent their support for escaped prisoners into becoming part of the military war but the arrival of Federal troops as part of a liberating army also changed the position of women such as Arendell, Philips and Cash. They too could now support Federal soldiers and the support they offered followed the most traditional tasks of mid-century farm women; they fed the men, drew water for them, washed and mended clothing and cared for the wounded. Despite their neighbour John Fain's scornful dismissal of their behaviour and as domestic as such activities might be, they also amounted, quite literally, to acts of treason as the women gave aid and comfort to the enemy.²⁰⁷

²⁰⁷ Arendell, SCC Disallowed Claim, 9157, Philips, SCC Disallowed Claim, 11382 and Cash, SCC Disallowed Claim, 8618. Other than for Philips, the census records are ambiguous. Philips' husband was a Polish immigrant and she was German by birth. Cash's application to have her claim heard by a Special Commissioner in 1872 described her as poor widow although she described herself as unmarried. The impact of their illiteracy on their lives is not known. Rable draws on 1850 census data to suggest that estimated literacy rates for southern white females ranged from a high of eighty six percent in Mississippi through to a low of 64 percent in North Carolina. Generally female literacy was between four and sixteen percentage points lower than for men and compared unfavourably with rates for Mid-Atlantic and New England states which were in excess of ninety percent. Rable, *Civil Wars*, p.18. Using 1840 census data Howe identifies similar patterns pointing out that even when African Americans were included, on overall level of illiteracy for the United States of around twenty-two percent compared favourably with the forty-one percent illiteracy in England and Wales. Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815- 1848*, (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2007) p.455. Literacy levels for yeoman women, as such, appear not to be available although the education of elite women was certainly widespread in the antebellum period and was often linked to the role of women within the tradition of republican motherhood. Elizabeth Fox- Genovese, *Within the Plantation Household: Black and White Women of the Old South*, (Chapel Hill and London: University of North Carolina Press, 1988), p. 46. Bynum suggests that similar traditions prevailed in the North Carolina Piedmont amongst yeoman women: Byrum, *Unruly Women*, p.169. n. 50. Most recently Schweiger has cautioned against estimates of southern literacy levels arguing that there is a difficulty in accepting the idea of a literate slave society because of our equating literacy and modernism. Schweiger, "The Literate South". p. 337. A number of southerners in this study, both male and female, were unable to sign their own names.

Without the support of family, even independent women with resources of their own needed external assistance in order to support escaped prisoners. Julia Redding, who rescued a New York soldier being pursued by a Charleston mob and sheltered him at her house, needed protection for herself from John Monaghan from the local Provost Marshall's Office.²⁰⁸ Her account of caring for feeding Federal prisoners being held at Charleston in harsh conditions again demonstrates the traditional form of some female dissent, centred on caring for the wounded and feeding the hungry. Redding provided a remarkable account of her life citing a prosperous English father who left her considerable wealth enabling her to purchase a large property in Charleston. After the fall of Fort Wagner in 1863, a number of wounded Federal soldiers were brought to Charleston and she joined nuns from the Sisters of Mercy who were dispensing water to them when she was threatened by a Confederate Officer with a drawn sword. Despite her treatment she and some of her friends subsequently started visiting the Charleston Race Course, where Federal prisoners were being held, to distribute food. Her account was supported by her friend Maria Easterby who told of how the two women would bake biscuits and make pickles for the prisoners. In the final year of the war she sheltered the New York soldier, James Dodderson, whom she hid in her cellar, helped by a female friend and a female slave. Almost discovered after she was reported, she was then protected by Monaghan, a Union sympathiser working for

Even though being illiterate seems to have been common enough amongst Confederate farm women, it did not in itself prevent women from managing farms as Ferriby Johnson's assertion confirmed: "I cannot read or write but can judge quantities very well". Johnson, SCC Approved Claim, 17225.

²⁰⁸ See page 46 for Monaghan's account of how he protected Redding and the prisoner Dodderson.

the Confederate authorities. Monaghan subsequently arranged for Dodderson to be provided with Confederate clothing and directed him to a Sergeant Edward Ryan, from the South Carolina Artillery, based at Fort Sumter, who was helping groups of Federal prisoners escape. Although Redding explained her support for Federal soldiers in terms of her Union sympathies, as a woman she remained politically and socially isolated. Unlike Monaghan and Ryan who were part of an underground network of men assisting Federal prisoners, Redding had no such connections. Although seemingly an independent and wealthy woman, her friendships and associations were largely restricted to other women and slaves, inevitably limiting the scope of her dissent. Whilst support for escaped Federal prisoners depended on the ability to imagine a broader comradeship with strangers from the North, its effectiveness remained dependent on family and community connections, however broadly defined. In 1864, despite her apparent wealth and individual capacity, Julia Redding had few such resources.²⁰⁹

Unlike valiant men and grieving mothers, deserters and draft evaders form no part of the public memory of the war of either side. Although part of the established literature of the Civil War, scholarly interest has largely been to consider desertion — draft evasion hardly merits a mention — within the context of whether the Confederacy essentially collapsed from within. The accounts of

²⁰⁹ Redding, SCC Disallowed Claim, 16002. Running throughout her claim, and offering perhaps some explanation for the level of hostility she encountered, were allegations that she had previously been a slave. Besides being threatened by a Confederate officer she was also assaulted by a Confederate soldier. The 1870 census credited her with personal property worth \$21,000, in addition to her husband's property. Redding claimed her mother was Spanish and Bynum suggests that claims of Indian, Iberian or Mediterranean ancestry was a common defence of whiteness against antebellum race-based laws and social harassment. Bynum, *The Free State of Jones*, pp. 42 -43.

dissenting southerners offer a very different perspective enabling us to see desertion and draft evasion in a far more differentiated way. Men and women who supported draft evaders, deserters and Federal prisoners may have been inspired by similar impulses but such widespread acts of dissent took on many different and at times complex forms.

Supporting draft evaders and deserters was the most common way for ordinary southerners, opposed or indifferent to the Confederacy, to turn their disaffection into active dissent. Although framed by an attachment to the Union, its associations were intensely local and support for draft evaders and deserters was firmly anchored in family and community ties. Such support took many different forms, actively involved both men and women and was as much concerned with draft evasion as actual desertion and frequently extended effortlessly to support for escaped Federal prisoners. The detailed nature of the study into records from Georgia and the Carolinas also enables the roles of men and women to be more clearly differentiated, highlights the critical nature of the support from older men and women, particularly widows, and again illustrates the depth of yeoman disaffection and hostility to the Confederacy in parts of South Carolina. Unlike support for draft evaders and deserters which was grounded in local family and community ties, no such ties extended to escaped prisoners. Men and women helped escaped prisoners, who they did not know, because they recognised a shared identity and affinity as part of a wider imagined Union community. As subjective and pliant as Union identities might be, they were sufficiently resilient to enable men and women, often intensely parochial in their life experience, to bridge

the gap caused by secession. The nature of that support also suggests that although both white and black southerners could be involved in assisting Federal prisoners, collaboration between native born white southerners and slaves or free people of colour against a common enemy was the exception not the rule.

Support for draft evaders, deserters and Federal prisoners was also a highly gendered form of dissent and illustrates how southern men and women often responded differently to the gender disruption of the war. Many women were empowered by the war, at least for its duration. Whilst the support offered by some women might be seen as essentially extensions of traditional domestic roles in caring for men or feeding them, as dangerous as those activities might be in the time of war, other changes in role were more transformative. In some instances, women who traditionally had been under the protective domination of men then became the protectors of men and of their own households. As dissenting women were targeted by the Confederate authorities, women became drawn into unfamiliar and public encounters with the Confederate state in defence of those households. The role of widows is of particular interest, and in the continuing debate about whether women's dissent should be viewed primarily as providing support for male resistance or also considered in its own terms, the role of widows acting as independent household heads, appears to suggest that women's dissent was capable of assuming either form. In acting as they did, however, hiding and protecting men, and in fending off the Confederate authorities, such women essentially put themselves at the heart of desertion and resistance to the Confederacy.

Southern unionist men could find the war more difficult, essentially because they had more to lose in a southern society constructed around male independence and mastery. Some men were able to adapt and men such as Philip Smith, although hiding out in the woods, continued to direct his family, protected other men in his community and engaged in the war on his own terms. Men unable to protect their own families, particularly sons from being conscripted, appeared to have found the war much harder although some have some measure of consolation in supporting the sons and families of other men from within their communities. Other male dissent, particularly in assisting deserters and their families to cross military lines or the opportunity to become more involved in the war, was often dependent on geography. Men also had advantages not shared by women, particularly in terms of access to wider networks, enabling them to be more effective in moving men such as escaped Federal prisoners to safety. The accounts of such men also suggest that models of masculinity in the South were perhaps more diverse than always portrayed and whilst reputation and family was important, for many ordinary southerners so was self-reliance and the virtues of hard work and raising a family, none of which were made any easier by opposing the war.

Support for draft evaders and deserters drew ordinary white women out of their domestic sphere into unfamiliar public encounters with the Confederate state. Chapters four and five will examine how the collapse of traditional market arrangements in the Confederate South, brought other discontented women, some of whom were barely literate, to write to state governors and national office holders,

including the President Jefferson Davis, petitioning for favours or seeking redress for their grievances. Some groups of women were even bolder and literally took matters into their own hands seizing bread and other food that they could no longer afford to buy. Unlike women who sheltered draft evaders and deserters, and who were frequently at the heart of resistance and opposition to the new secessionist state, such Confederate women rarely hinted at any such disloyalty even as they set out their discontents and dissatisfactions with the impact of the war on their families and the inequality of their sacrifice.

Chapter 3. “I take my pen in hand . . .” : Speaking truth to power in the Confederate South.

Margaret Arrowood from McDowell County, North Carolina, took her pen in hand to write to state Governor Zebulon Vance in November, 1863, and told an increasingly familiar tale of the impact of the war on women and their families. Supported by thirty-five other women, all of whom she lists in her letter, Arrowood told Vance how the war had taken virtually all their men and how the women were unable to get corn, leather, cotton thread or wool because “them that has got provision[s] wont let us have it”. Complaining of the speculation in corn in particular — a bushel of corn cost the equivalent of a Confederate soldier’s monthly wage — Arrowood asked Vance to reduce its price to one that the women could afford.²¹⁰ During the war, many other southern men and women also picked up their pens to write to populist governors such as Zebulon Vance in North Carolina and Joe Brown in Georgia during the Civil War, as well as to national office holders such as the Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his Secretaries of War.²¹¹ Although

²¹⁰ Margaret Arrowood to Vance, 26 November, 1863. Box 171, Governors’ Papers, State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina. (GP NCDAH). Arrowood’s letter is typical of many such letters, with poor handwriting and idiosyncratic spellings, acting as a reminder that, for many women, these were unfamiliar activities.

²¹¹ Governors’ papers and the Confederate Secretary of War correspondence contain a mix of wartime business correspondence as well as letters and petitions from ordinary southerners. Even allowing for the loss of many papers from the war, the surviving records are extensive including 151 microfilm reels of letters received by the Confederate Secretaries of State and 25 boxes of letters received by Governor Zebulon Vance in North Carolina. Northern women also wrote to state governors including making requests for relief. For an examination of the experiences of poor, northern women including letters to governors and applications to county relief committees see Judith Giesberg, *Army at Home: Women and the Civil War on the Northern Home Front*, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009). Whilst there are many similarities in the letters of poor rural women both North and South, Giesberg’s other examples which include African-American women challenging segregated public transport in San Francisco as well as the role of immigrant women in the New York draft riots, illustrate differences in northern and southern societies and women’s experience of the war. Both Brown and Vance are typically described as populist state governors often at odds with the Davis administration and both cultivated reputations

much of the correspondence, particularly from men, was essentially transactional and concerned with the business of war, many letters and petitions from women described in great detail the hardships suffered by ordinary families. Despite a prevailing tendency to view such correspondence as indicative of widespread disaffection with the new Confederate state such a perspective ignores the essential loyalty of the majority of correspondents. Even allowing for the formulaic traditions of petitions that shaped most of the correspondence, it is also striking that, despite the extent of the suffering, most men and women still looked to the traditional authorities for redress. Whilst many women emphasised their position as the wives, widows and mothers of soldiers, far from making new demands on the Confederate state as a new constituency of soldiers' wives, most were looking for the redress of grievances, exemptions from conscription and an end to speculation and market manipulation.²¹²

The Civil War propelled ordinary southern women into new roles and responsibilities in order to protect and sustain their families and households ravaged by the demands of war. As many women assumed unfamiliar responsibilities for dealing with the Confederate state, they wrote extensively to the

as the friend of soldiers and their families. By way of illustration for Vance, see Joe A. Mobley, *War Governor of the South: North Carolina's Zeb Vance in the Confederacy* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2005), pp.148 – 167. For Brown see

<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/government-politics/joseph-e-brown-1821-1894> (last visited 25 July, 2017). Unlike Confederate Secretaries of War, both Brown and Vance were diligent in responding to women's letters, right until the end of the war.

²¹² In the past twenty-five years, a number of major studies have examined such correspondence largely viewing them as letters of protest reflecting a wider inner war within the Confederacy, the political awakening of women or as part of a continuum of female oppression and resistance. See in order: Williams, *Bitterly Divided*, McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning* and Bynum, *Unruly Women*. McCurry, in particular, views letters from poor, rural white women as part of a determined resistance to the Confederacy as women forged for themselves a new political identity as soldiers' wives demanding their entitlements from the state. *Ibid.* pp.133 – 177.

authorities to set out the nature of their discontents. The sheer volume of such letters and petitions offer particular insights into the world of ordinary white women impoverished by the war, expressed in their own words and relatively unmediated by others. A close reading of such letters and petitions, and the many petitions from communities, indicates the complex nature of much Confederate discontent, often defying simple classification or binary reductions into loyal and disloyal. Underpinning many letters was a deep sense of unfairness or injustice but, rather than speaking the language of entitlement, many sought greater fairness in the organisation of the war effort or looked for protection. Although many women signed themselves as soldiers' wives, women used that term in very different ways, including to seek the discharge of slave owning husbands. Despite their many grievances, few letters hint at disloyalty to the Confederacy. Women may have resented the impact of the war on themselves and their families and grown weary of the constant demands for further sacrifice, but few used their letters to attack the Confederacy and even fewer to demand peace.²¹³

Untutored, ordinary southern women, with little or no background in the art of political persuasion, did not always speak with a single voice as they entered into unfamiliar exchanges with the Confederate authorities. Some women undoubtedly challenged the authorities but others struggled to move beyond their traditional, patriarchal dependency. Other women learnt how to subvert the male

²¹³ Jacqueline Campbell has argued that southern discontent could be too quickly confused with disloyalty. Sherman misread southern unionist traditions in North Carolina and failed to understand that "discontent with their government did not equate to lack of faith in the Confederate nation" and was often more concerned with the equity of sacrifice. Jacqueline Glass Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea: Resistance on the Confederate Home Front* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003), p.76.

preserves of letters and petitions in attempts to manipulate men with power to act on their behalf. Significantly some women also sought to persuade a Confederate state, already interfering in unprecedented ways in the lives of its citizens, to reach even deeper through the regulation of prices and markets. By adapting the traditional male world of letters and petitions to their own purposes, and by seeking the fixing of fair market prices, women unambiguously inserted themselves into the world of Confederate politics but in doing so through such conventional means, their actions suggest more continuity than rupture with the past. Whilst ordinary southern women found new ways to assert themselves during the Civil War they did so in ways not always suggested by recent research.²¹⁴

Across the Confederacy the main elements of discontent about the war quickly emerged. Although much of the earliest correspondence came from men seeking official positions or commissions, gradually both men and women wrote to raise their concerns. Correspondents were keen to inform Confederate officials about the impact of conscription on their families and communities but many of the

²¹⁴ The chapter is based on a sampling of letters received by the Confederate Secretary of War and state governors in North Carolina, Georgia and South Carolina. The sampling included sixteen microfilm reels of the Letters Received by the Confederate Secretary of War (LRCSW), RG 109 (M437) with a particular focus on the three states. I also examined thirteen boxes of the Governors Papers held in the state archives in Raleigh, North Carolina. For Georgia, I relied primarily on the Telamon Cuyler Collection, held by the Hargrett Library, University of Georgia and available online at: <http://hmfa.libs.uga.edu/hmfa/view?docId=ead/ms1170.series1-ead.xml>

I enhanced the Cuyler collection with a limited search of Governor Brown's papers now available via Ancestry.Com. There was no comparable, comprehensive collection of governor's papers in South Carolina. For the purposes of the study I examined the Lewis Malone Ayers, Jr. papers held on microfilm M.11 R1069K as well as the Calendar Book of Microfilm Collections in the South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, 1979. The university library also holds original copies of correspondence from Governors Bonham and Magrath. In the South Carolina state archives, I examined original copies of letters received by Governor Bonham dating from January, 1862 and microfilm copies of Governor Magrath's letter book from 30 January, 1864, (11 MS Folder).

fiercest complaints were about speculation in essential commodities.²¹⁵ Unlike southerners who petitioned the U.S. government after the war on the basis of their continuing loyalty to the Union, and who frequently sought to evade conscription or deserted from Confederate armies, most men and women who wrote to state governors, such as Vance and Brown, or the Confederate President Jefferson Davis and his Secretaries of War, offered no criticism of conscription as a general policy even as they sought exemptions in their particular cases. Speculation, by contrast, was universally reviled as being unjust, un-southern and unpatriotic. As early as November, 1861, A.P. Burn from Spalding County, Georgia, the father of three volunteers, wrote to Brown to criticise the “heartless speculators” from Confederate cities such as Atlanta and Macon who bought up the produce of interior towns which they then sold at prices “beyond the ability of the poor and especially the poor families of absent soldiers to obtain.” “Is there no remedy for this evil,” he pleaded? Deploring the degeneracy of those “who seek to make this war for Southern Independence a source of profit and speculation” he warned of the “evils that will flow from the system of oppression unless nipped in the bud.”²¹⁶ In a remarkably prescient letter, dated February, 1862, J.T. Bennett from Dawson County also wrote to Brown, warning of a “great calamity” coming over “our country” as speculators, particularly distillers, were buying up all the grain. Unless

²¹⁵ As early as 1952, Massey argued that more southerners complained about speculation than any other war evil. Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, p.17.

²¹⁶ Telamon Cuyler collection, MS 1170: Series 1. Historical Manuscripts. Hargrett Rare Book and Manuscript Library, University of Georgia Libraries. A.P. Burn to Governor Brown, 26 November, 1861. Box 56, Folder 7, page 86. (hereafter: Cuyler: Box 56. 7. 86).

Brown acted, he predicted: “The men in all probability will be called up and the women and children left to starve.”²¹⁷

Across the Confederate South, many women and children did indeed come close to starvation and certainly suffered greatly as women, in particular, struggled to clothe and feed their families.²¹⁸ In Alabama, Margaret E. Adam’s wrote to the Confederate Secretary of War in June, 1862, describing her desperate situation trying to feed and clothe her “eight little helpless children.” Having already twice approached the state governor, she was advised that she needed to write to the Secretary of War in order to secure the discharge of her husband from the Confederate Army. Little about her letter suggested any complaint with the Confederate authorities but simply the desperation of her situation: “if you could just see me and my children you would say go home and feed your family.”²¹⁹ Many described the loss of a husband as a loss of protection. In one of the more frequently cited Civil War letters, Almira Acors from Virginia wrote to Confederate President Jefferson Davis in March 1862 about her husband, a book and shoemaker who, “was ordered into the army and left me and my poor little children with no protection.” As long as her husband was with her, she wanted for nothing but now she was “left alone with my poor little children with no one to give them a mouthful of bread to sustain life or to cut a stick of wood.” Unlike Margaret Adams, Acors did complain, particularly about the unfairness of wartime sacrifice, and

²¹⁷ J.T Bennett to Brown, 16 February, 1862. Cuyler: Box 57. 2. 112.

²¹⁸ Faust describes reports of civilian deaths from starvation in Alabama in 1864, Faust, *Altars of Sacrifice*, p.125.

²¹⁹ Margaret E. Adams to Secretary of War Randolph, 10 June, 1862, LRCSW, Roll 29.

wrote angrily about the rich people who turned their backs and refused to help and the unfairness of Confederate conscription laws that allowed “widow ladies overseers” to be discharged but would not release a “poor man to his suffering family.”²²⁰

Writing of the relationship of subordinate groups to powerful elites, James C. Scott has warned about assuming anything about beliefs and attitudes solely on the basis of outward forms of conformity. In speaking truth to power, the weak more commonly dissemble and truth is frequently disguised and hidden within an apparent deference.²²¹ Interpretation of Confederate discontent is further masked by long standing conventions shaping the form and language of petitions. Early English colonists viewed the right to petition as part of a jealously protected colonial patrimony and the ability to petition the government remained the primary means for ordinary people to make their voices heard following independence. Conventions dictated the style of petitions including the necessity that petitions were framed in a decent and respectful manner.²²²

²²⁰ Almira P. Acors to President Davis, 23 March, 1862, LRCSW, Roll 29. It was not uncommon for Davis to remit such letters to the Secretary of War. Acors is one of the more commonly cited letters, including Rable, *Civil Wars*, p. 106, Faust, *Altars of Sacrifice*, p.136 and McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p.163 – 165. Both Rable and Faust read the letter as indicative of the breakdown of southern paternalism whilst McCurry views it as illustrating women’s growing empowerment in making their own demands on the Confederate state.

²²¹ James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1990). Morgan has argued that such deceptions flowed both ways and petitions could also be manipulated by elites. Morgan draws on examples from eighteenth-century Britain when MPs would draw up petitions themselves and then circulate them for signature in order to then present their own demands as the demands of the people. For such “acts of ventriloquism” see Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1988), p.230.

²²² This much-reduced summary of early petitions draws heavily on two volumes of the John Hopkins histories. Bickford and Bowling et al., *Petition Histories and Nonlegislative Official Documents, Volume VII* (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), p. xi.

Confederate petitions show a remarkable similarity to Early Republic petitions, not just in their standardised openings and complimentary closings, but also in their language and tone. Petitioners typically apologised for interrupting the work of busy men but excused this on the grounds of necessity. Many hoped for redress of grievances or relief of hardship and often framed their petitions as a plea for justice.²²³ Women did petition although most, like Catherine Greene, widow of Revolutionary General Nathanael Greene, who petitioned successfully for the state to assume responsibility for a wartime debt to a military supplier, did so as widows pursuing causes, often financial, on behalf of deceased husbands.²²⁴ Prior to the Civil War petitioning remained a largely male preserve and most petitions submitted to Congress between 1789 and 1830 were primarily political or economic involving issues such as the establishment of new postal routes or the financing of local projects.²²⁵ By the 1840s, some women, were also beginning to seek assistance on behalf of their families. Petitions and personal appeals came from both elite and non- elite women and again show a remarkable similarity to later Confederate appeals, in that they frequently started with an apology, often cited their despair or desperation as a justification, and were invariably deferential

Bickford and Bowling et al., *Petition Histories and Nonlegislative Official Documents, Volume VIII* (Baltimore and London: John Hopkins University Press, 1998), pp. xviii- xx.

²²³ For examples, see James Easton, pp. 195 – 196, Ebenezer A. Smith, pp.132, William B. Gould, pp. 326 -326, Robert Connelly, pp. 356 – 357 and Ann Baylor, pp. 545 -547. All volume VII. Traditional petitions were frequently written in the third party.

²²⁴ *ibid*, pp. 493 – 542.

²²⁵ Alise Portnoy argues that female petitions remained far more local in scope and involved issues, such as orphanages or female education, that could be viewed as extensions of their domestic roles. It was not until 1830 with the first petition was submitted by women to Congress on an issue of national policy at the beginning of a campaign against Native American removal and involved women from prominent families. Alise Portnoy, “Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard’: Negotiating Female Decorum, United States Politics, and Political Agency, 1829- 1831”, *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 23, No. 4 (Winter, 2003), pp. 573- 610.

in tone. Although antebellum petitions often sought employment on behalf of male family members, others requested money both for their families and themselves.²²⁶ Such petitions continued to be highly formulaic and, as with Civil War petitions, when women transgressed the established boundaries public mockery could follow as with the women of Wilmington, Delaware, who in 1839 petitioned the state legislature in support of the abolition of slavery in the state. Criticising the women for their attempted interference in political matters, the assembly members advised the women that if they wished to confer real benefit upon society they should confine “their attention to matters of a domestic nature and would be more solicitous to mend the garments of their husbands and children, than to patch the breaches of the laws and Constitution.”²²⁷

Letters and petitions to the Confederate authorities from Georgia and the Carolinas, between 1861 and 1865, not only described the suffering of families but also of whole communities stripped of skilled artisans and professionals by the demands of the war. Although recent scholarship has tended to focus on the impact of the war on ordinary families, some of the greatest hardship and distress lay within whole settlements bereft of physicians, skilled blacksmiths, shoemakers

²²⁶ Richard C. Rohrs observes that, as with Confederate petitions, it was not uncommon for women to claim that their husband did not know of their request and asked that their approach remained confidential. As with Confederate petitions a number also described their men as weak. Rohrs argues that women appeared to be seeking employment on behalf of their men in order to restore their male role as family provider. Richard C. Rohrs, “Public Attention for . . . Essentially Private Matters’: Women seeking Assistance from President James K. Polk”, *Journal of the Early Republic*, Vol. 24, No. 1 (Spring, 2004), pp. 107 – 123. In contrast, Gregory Downs has argued that in the Civil War period, at least in North Carolina, both men and women began emphasise their weakness in order to obtain state help as part of a wider politics of dependence. Gregory P. Downs, *Declarations of Dependence: The Long Reconstruction of Popular Politics in the South, 1861 – 1908* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

²²⁷ *Savannah Telegraph*, February, 1839 cited in J.S. Buckingham, *A Journey Through the Slave Slates of North America* (Charleston: Nonesuch Publishing, 2006), p.79.

and others essential to the viability and wellbeing of small, often isolated communities.²²⁸ Despite the hardships endured, few such community petitions even hint at any disloyalty. Whilst requests for exemptions, discharges or details were frequently highly formulaic, petitions could spell out for Confederate officials what the absence of named individuals meant for their communities as with a barely legible petition about shoes from forty-two women in Rowan County, North Carolina.²²⁹ Petitioning for the exemption of their local shoemaker the women spelt out the nature of their discontent as they pleaded that, without shoes, they would be unable to sow their fields, harvest their crop or mill their corn: “But we beg you for our sakes, our children sakes to have morsy [mercy] upon us Poor Wimin and children and have the said RD Douman left at home to make our shoes and mend our shoes for we cant gather our corne, sow our wheat get our wood do our milling

²²⁸ A rare exception to this is Drago’s detailed study of South Carolina which argues that the state had effectively collapsed from within, long before the arrival of Sherman, because of the drain of skilled artisans and professionals such as doctors. Drago, *Confederate Phoenix*.

²²⁹ Although many southerners petitioned their state governors about discharges, only the Confederate President or the Secretary of War had the power to exempt or discharge men from Confederate armed forces. Men could also be detailed to work in other war related work. The powers of Governors were restricted to state militias. Amy Murrell has reported on how the Confederate Congress attempted to establish guidelines for discharges in a series of laws from 1862 onwards based on “justice, equity, and necessity “or when justified by the public interest. In Murrell’s sample of 205 petitions to the President or the Confederate Secretary of War, only seven percent were successful. Initially few petitions were even answered although by 1864 the vast majority of petitions did receive replies. Murrell takes the view that petitions seeking the discharge of family members did not indicate any lessening of commitment to the Confederate cause but should be viewed as “narratives of negotiation rather than protest”. Amy E. Murrell, “Of Necessity and Public Benefit: Southern Families and Their Appeals for Protection”, in Catherine Clinton (ed.), *Southern Families at War: Loyalty and Conflict in the Civil War South* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). The power to detail enabled the Confederate President to transfer a soldier to another role whilst retaining control of him. W. Buck Yearns and John G. Barrett (eds.), *North Carolina Civil War Documentary* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), pp. 140 -141. The consequence of reserving power to Jefferson Davis and the various Secretaries of War meant that they received many petitions seeking such exemptions, discharges or details most of which were refused on the grounds that the exigencies of the services could not justify it. “Denied, for the usual reasons”, was the typical endorsement.

barefoot.”²³⁰ Many petitions concerned blacksmiths as with Spartanburg blacksmith Henry McDowell whose neighbours also spelt out the impact of his continuing absence on their local farm economy. McDowell had volunteered as early as April 1861 and as a consequence his blacksmith’s shop had closed the following year. Faced with the conscription of the only other local smith, in February, 1864, his neighbours petitioned James Seddon, Secretary of War, for his detail back to his trade in Spartanburg, warning that otherwise “there will be no chance for us to get our agricultural implements made or repaired.”²³¹ What is evident from these many requests sent to Davis or his Secretaries of War is that the critical shortage of skilled trades or professions was not simply a consequence of conscription. Whilst conscription undoubtedly compounded the problem, men such as McDowell had volunteered, possibly in his instance, at the first available opportunity.²³² In contrast with the emotive pleas of many individual letters, the mundane nature of such petitions is noticeable. Whilst opposition to the Confederacy undoubtedly existed in different parts of the South, there is little in the many such community petitions to suggest any hint of disloyalty to the Confederate cause despite their evident distress. Indeed a number of such petitions, such as the appeal of forty-six men

²³⁰ Petitioners for R.A. Douman to Vance 3 September, 1864, Box 181 GP NCDAH. Massey observes that problems with clothes and shoes emerged gradually during the war, as clothing wore out. Conscription of shoemakers and state control of factories compounded the problem for civilian populations. Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, p.79. There are numerous examples of such community petitions in the archives.

²³¹ Citizens of Spartanburg District to Secretary of War Seddon, 24 February, 1864, LRCSW Roll 135. McDowell’s petitioners embellished their case by reminding Seddon that they lived in a thickly settled neighbourhood with many soldiers’ families to be supported. The petition ends with standard formula that they believed his services, meeting their “pressing necessities” would be of more benefit to the country than in the army.

²³² This finding is consistent with Noe’s study of 320 “late enlisters”, or men who volunteered after 1861, where many of those who volunteered were professional men such as doctors and teachers or skilled workers such as blacksmiths. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, p.18.

and seventy-one women from Marion County, South Carolina, seeking the detailing back home of spinning wheel and reel maker James Turner, “a faithful soldier” who had never flinched from duty, make no attempt to protest their loyalty but clearly expect it to be taken as read.²³³

Many community petitions also reflected the racial underpinning of southern society as men and women petitioned to express their fears, real or imagined, about slavery and public safety. Recent historiography has perhaps been less than sympathetic to women seeking the discharge of men to provide protection from slaves, or *negroes*, suspecting they represented the wives and mothers, not of ordinary foot soldiers but, of a white, slave owning elite.²³⁴ Whilst it is highly probably that some fears were exaggerated, other petitions appear to reflect what men and women saw as the breakdown of their established racial order. The moral compass of the white male residents of Barnwell District in South Carolina may have reflected the broader beliefs of their slave owning society, but the nature of their discontent is clear enough as they petitioned Governor Bonham, in 1863, for a replacement magistrate to restore order in the face of a perceived legal and moral collapse: “The country around here is without exaggeration in a desperate condition. Negroes are uppermost, openly keeping white, some very pretty girls and getting children by them. They do not conceal that they steal corn, meat and

²³³ Citizens of Marion County to Secretary of War Seddon, 22 November, 1863. Roll 114. Petitions from South Carolina are either signed by men or by men and women but, unlike Georgia and North Carolina, there are no petitions signed only by women and few individual letters from women.

²³⁴ McCurry distinguishes petitions from elite women who were concerned about protection from slaves and those from soldiers’ wives who sought entitlements. *Confederate Reckoning*, pp. 146 – 149. Whilst certainly many such elite petitions exist, some petitions from non-slave owning women also express similar concerns.

everything to support the fathers, mothers of their sweethearts.” Thirteen men sign the petition, with the principal signature being that of a J.H.Hammond.²³⁵

Significantly, not all petitions seeking the discharge of men to control slaves were from elite groups and the petition of twenty women from Fayette County, Georgia, for the detail of David Dreisman, back to their neighbourhood, in February, 1864, suggests no such elite associations. Claiming that there were large numbers of slaves in their district and fearing that future drafts will deplete the neighbourhood of “male whites”, the women petitioned for the return of Dreisman “to controll the slaves” and supervise their businesses and do so on behalf of the soldiers’ families. All the women sign in uneducated hands, with one of the two principal authors of the petition, Lucinda Banks, unable to sign her own name.²³⁶

Confederate discontent with the impact of the war should not be confused with disloyalty. Even as women and men regaled the Confederate authorities with accounts of their hardships at the hands of speculators and of the inequalities in sacrifice, they affirmed their loyalty to the Confederacy, however, formulaic such

²³⁵ Bates petition to Governor Bonham, [undated] September, 1863. Bonham Folder. SCL. J.H. Hammond from Silverton will almost certainly have been James Henry Hammond, a major slave holder and apologist, and previous governor of the state. The Barnwell petition is a rare example of a male petition complaining about the lack of supervision of slaves. Such petitions are normally from women and are expressed in terms of protection whereas the Barnwell petition reflects anxieties about male power and privilege.

²³⁶ Lucinda Banks and others to Secretary of War Seddon, 11 February, 1864. LRCSW, roll 125. Banks signed with an X. Although described as “married ladies” by the Justice of the Peace who drafted the petition, and making their plea on behalf of soldiers’ families, the status of the women who signed otherwise remains unclear although the other principal author Ann Tarpley appears to be the wife of a tenant farmer. Compared with Barnwell, the slave population of Fayette County was relatively modest at 28.7 percent of the state population, compared with 57.7 percent in Barnwell. Source: The Slave Population of the Southern States of the United States, 1861 <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3861e.cw0013200/> (last visited 9 June, 2016).

assertions might have been at times.²³⁷ Unlike the unremitting hostility or indifference to the Confederacy of southerners who petitioned the Federal government after the war asserting their continuing loyalty to the Union, few Confederate letters suggest any such disloyalty and direct criticism was rare. There were certainly bitter complaints from locations such as Randolph County and Wilkes County in North Carolina about the depredations of Confederate troops or the brutalities of campaigns against deserters and their families, but these were complaints from within communities well known for their opposition to the Confederacy.²³⁸ Many more letters and petitions affirmed a loyalty to the Confederate cause. In October 1862, the “women of Bartow County” wrote to Governor Brown complaining of the “destitution” of Confederate soldiers in Virginia: “They are our husbands, sons, brothers and friends. We suffer when we know they suffer.” In a petition containing over one hundred and fifty names, the women complained of the actions of the “stony hearted” owners of factories refusing to allow them to obtain cotton and wool to make clothing for the troops, arguing that Georgia should seize the factories for the public good: “If we had those materials, more than fifty thousand pairs of hands working day and nights would soon defend

²³⁷ This is not to deny that there was opposition and disaffection within the Confederacy, merely that relatively few letters were written by those opposed to the regime, perhaps for obvious reasons.

²³⁸ Examples include Clarinda Hulin from Randolph County, the wife of a soldier who complained of her treatment at the hands of North Carolina troops. Hulin to Vance, 20 November, 1863. Box 171 GP NCDAH. In January, 1864, older men, over the age of conscription, wrote to complain about the actions of troops under the command of General Hoke sent into the area to arrest deserters but who preyed on the local community, often killing men “in cold blood” even when they surrendered. Wilkes County petition to Vance, 25 January, 1864. Box 173 GP NCDAH. The fullest account of the inner civil war in parts of North Carolina is provided by Bynum in both *Unruly Women* and *The Long Shadow of the Civil War* including a discussion of Clarinda Crook Hulin. *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, pp. 47 – 48.

our brave soldiers from cold and rain.”²³⁹ In a similar fashion, in Cobb County, Georgia, where, “large numbers of mothers and children are suffering” for want of a physician, twenty-one men and women petitioned Confederate Secretary of State Randolph, in September 1862, for the discharge of their doctor who had volunteered the previous year and had been wounded: “let the mothers wives and children of our neighbourhood whose sons husbands and fathers are battling for our liberties have back their physician.”²⁴⁰ Undoubtedly, as the war dragged on, some enthusiasms waned but even later letters often remain loyal in their assertions.²⁴¹ An anonymous letter to Jefferson Davis in September 1864 urged a fresh offensive against the North even as the letter wrote about growing

²³⁹ Women of Bartow County to Brown, 10 October, 1862. Cuyler: Box 58. 1. 43. All the women sign as Mrs or Miss. The petition is written in neat copperplate, with some proxy signatures, suggesting some measure of organisation. Destitution is a common term in wartime letters implying general hardship rather than financial status.

²⁴⁰ Cobb County petition to Secretary of War Randolph, 24 September, 1862. LRCSW, Roll 53. At times, even such apparently loyal petitions suggest there were limits to the degree of sacrifice that could be tolerated. The residents of Coweta County who had given up their husbands, brothers and sons, effectively saw surrendering their physician as a step too far. Citizens of Haralson to Brown, 27 July, 1863. Governor’s Incoming Correspondence, Governor Joseph E. Brown: Georgia State Archives, Morrow, Georgia. (hereafter, GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/>), (last visited 2 June, 2016). The men and women from Dawson County in Georgia, who petitioned for the discharge of John Palmour, recognised the value of his service but insisted that his family now needed him bac: “they need his help now”. As a sergeant who had fought in all his regiment’s battles for almost two years, Palmour would have been a valuable asset to the Confederacy and the request was refused “for the usual reasons.” Dawson County petition to Secretary of War Seddon, 22 January, 1864. LRCSW Roll 137. Instances such as Palmour indicate the tensions between public duty and private need.

²⁴¹ For a discussion of women’s gradual disaffection, see Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, 239 – 244. Faust argues that elite women initially supported the war enthusiastically but became increasingly disillusioned after the military defeats of 1863 and by the following year their capacity to endure further suffering began to disappear. From early in the war loyal Confederate women struggled to balance patriotism and sacrifice and both Faust and Murrell cite the same case of Margaret A. Easterling from Marlborough, South Carolina to illustrate the dilemmas facing loyal Confederate supporters. Easterling, an elderly widow and slave holder, with two sons in the army, had written to Jefferson Davis in December, 1862, seeking the discharge of her oldest boy. Faust, *Mothers of Invention*, p.241 and Murrell, “Of Necessity and Public Benefit, pp 77- 78 At the end of the war, women and particularly non-elite women were encouraging men to desert. For an example, see the letter of Martha Revis who asks that her husband return home. Cited in Years and Barrett, *North Carolina Civil War Documentary*, p. 97.

disaffection among rank of file soldiers, “in the ditches”, because of the exploitation of their families and the unwillingness of the “negro aristocracy” to share in the burdens of the war.²⁴² Even as late as February, 1865 Mary Lane from Greenville, Georgia, who wrote to Brown seeking assistance on behalf of herself and her seven children, was keen to reassure him of her continuing loyalty and that of her husband, who was fighting at Petersburg: “I want him to do all for his country he can”. Pointedly, Lane seeks assistance and not her husband’s discharge or redeployment back home.²⁴³

At times, Confederate discontent wrapped itself in the Confederate flag as southerners, such as A. P. Burn, not only asserted their own loyalty, but attacked others for their lack of patriotism.²⁴⁴ A common theme in Confederate discontent was that of the inequality of sacrifice and, in another early letter, Sarah S. Wright, from Houston County, Georgia, wrote to Brown in May, 1861, “with every patriotic heart” to complain that many of the rich slave holders, who were most in favour of secession, were the most reluctant to volunteer: “It appears that the poor from here has gone and the rich remains who has the slaves.”²⁴⁵ In a rare, anonymous letter, signed only *Sallie B. E.*, a woman from Macon wrote to Brown to complain about the lack of patriotic sacrifice by those who sought to evade service in the Confederate armies. In contrast to the many women who wrote seeking exemptions on behalf of their men, she told Brown she had feely given up her

²⁴² “Many Soldiers” to Jefferson Davis, 7 September, 1864, LRCSW Roll 118.

²⁴³ Mary Lane to Brown, 27 February 1865. Cuyler: Box 59 15 57.

²⁴⁴ For Burn, see page 137.

²⁴⁵ Sarah S. Wright to Brown, 27 May, 1861. GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016)

husband to “whip the Yankees.” Complaining of the hypocrisy of rich women who rode in fine carriages but kept their husbands out of the war, she included in her complaint editors who lectured others but did not fight themselves and the many able-bodied men who used their roles, such as being firemen to evade active service: “poor patriots they.”²⁴⁶

Whilst southerners complained about the inequality of sacrifice, few saw this as a reason to demand an end of the war and indeed the absence of such demands is one of the most remarkable feature of wartime letters. Despite the hardships caused by conscription and the war itself only a handful of letters move beyond personal concerns into broader policy areas. The undated “petition from the women of North Carolina” remains unusual as a rare example of a peace petition and was signed by over five hundred women. Whilst large numbers of women signed, the petition appears to have been orchestrated by the influential Mendenhall family from Guilford County, North Carolina. At least two separate versions of the petition were circulated for signature with the women signing in three separate columns: firstly, as soldiers’ widows and mothers, then as wives, daughters and sisters and finally as friends. Whilst it may well be that the women who signed did indeed want peace, the construction of the petition suggests that the public expression of such sentiments benefitted from the protection of elite, well connected families.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁶ Sallie E.B. to Brown, 12 July, 1864 Cuyler: Box 59. 7. 28.

²⁴⁷ A prominent signature on one version of the petition is that of a D.E. Mendenhall and other Mendenhalls also signed. A Delphina E. Mendenhall, a slave owning Quaker, wrote to Vance in October, 1863, taunting him for his ineffectiveness, comparing him unfavourably with her dead husband and citing, among others, “her kinsman”, Jonathon Worth. Although opposed to secession,

Direct criticism of the Confederate authorities was rare although some writers did hold the Confederate authorities responsible for allowing wartime abuses to continue.²⁴⁸ Like complaints against the “big men and their negroes”, some letters tapped into underlying class resentments and the belief that men with influence were able to avoid their patriotic service. Remarkably few letters were anonymous although anonymity clearly allowed more critical opinions to be expressed. In September, 1864, a “humble citizen” from South Carolina wrote anonymously to Jefferson Davis to complain about the “healthy looking young men walking the streets and lounging about.” Contrasting the situation of sick and wounded soldiers with “these young men with kid gloves, cane in hand and segar [cigar] in the mouth . . .” he warned that soldiers would become disgusted not just with the men but also with the government that allowed them to avoid active service: “I believe we are fast conquering ourselves.”²⁴⁹ Others took more sectional positions. In one of the most direct criticisms of the Confederacy, the anonymous wife of a farmer from Walton County, wrote to Brown in August, 1863, on consecutive days, to give voice to an angry disenchantment with the war and, in particular, the loss of liberties suffered by farmers. Railing against the “swollen

Worth acted as State Treasurer for much of the war and was later elected governor. The petition itself is written in neat copperplate but some signatures are written in the same hand and others in different hands. Some signature pages are pasted together. Although complaining of broken promises, the petition is otherwise highly deferential and formulaic in tone as it sought an end to the war: “Let this horrid war end. Let blood cease to flow”. A petition from the women of North Carolina to Vance, undated. Box 184 GP NCDAAH. For the Mendenhall letter see Box 170 GP NCDAAH. Such letters or peace petitions appear rare although Edwards cites two examples of women writing to state governors begging for peace although one was written as late as January, 1865, and the other is undated. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, pp. 85 – 90.

²⁴⁸ Mobley observes that, in North Carolina, women tended to view Confederate leaders as the sources of their salvation rather than the causes of their problems. Mobley, *War Governor*, p.157.

²⁴⁹ Anonymous to Jefferson Davis, 30 September, 1864. LRCSW Roll 118. The writer's son had apparently been killed in the war. In my sampling of the Secretary of War's letters and the governors' papers, only a tiny percentage of letters are anonymous.

headed fools” who treated people so unequally, she wanted both the speculators and the “placemen”, who hid behind the excuse of being government agents, sent to the front. Having lost her only son “in this wretched war for liberty”, she regretted her original support for the Confederacy and now waited for the day when the Confederacy would be overthrown.²⁵⁰

At times, discontented women could be stung into making direct threats as a result of their abuse at the hands of state functionaries and the actions of speculators. Nancy Magnum, who was both a soldier’s wife and the sister of a soldier, wrote to Vance from Guilford County, in a widely cited letter, to complain about the actions of speculators and how she and other women had been put in the local jail when they went to Greensboro in an attempt to buy bread and cotton thread. In a catalogue of complaints including the women’s detention in jail, threats of violence made against the women, the failure of the county to distribute relief funds properly and the actions of speculators, Magnum was clear about the repercussions if Vance failed to act to stop the abuse. Naming the men who had mistreated her, including the merchant Jim Slone who had refused to sell her cotton yarn and reminding Vance that her brother and husband were both serving in the Confederate army, she told him: “if you don’t take thes yankys a way from greenesbough we wemen will write for our husbans to come. . . home and help us.” Although such direct threats were rare, ordinary Confederate women, such as

²⁵⁰ Anonymous to Brown, 26 and 27 August, 1863. Cuyler: Box 58. 12. 97 – 108.

Magnum and the other Greensboro women, had few options other than to threaten to write to their men.²⁵¹

Such expressions of open hostility were rare in Confederate correspondence and generally both men and women drew on established conventions to avoid giving offence. How women, at times barely literate, and who typically are portrayed as having little or no public role prior to the war, learnt such conventions remains unclear but the formulaic nature of many letters go beyond common courtesies often displaying considerable ingenuity. The sheer volume of such carefully constructed letters suggests that many ordinary rural, southern women may have learnt more about the male world of petitions than is commonly supposed. Even more significantly, women not only continued to rely on the protection afforded by the formulaic conventions of petitions but adapted and developed them to find new ways to influence the authorities. In both individual letters and petitions, many initial greetings, and the final anticipation of gratitude for favours granted, followed the established rules and deferential language of earlier eighteenth century petitions. Typical of many, was Mary E. Edwards who, having been denied help by her local relief committee in Lenoir County, North Carolina, began her letter using the common formulation: "Necessity obliges me to apply to

²⁵¹ Magnum to Vance, 9 April 1863 cited in Yearns and Barrett, *North Carolina Civil War Documentary*, pp.220 – 221. The naming of speculators was a feature of some women's letters. For Magnum, see also Faust, *Southern Stories*, p.136 and Bynum, *Unruly Women*, p. 146. Although Bynum places Magnum's actions within the context of women's participation in North Carolina's "Inner Civil War" with its widespread resistance to the Confederacy, Magnum's choice of "yankys" as her preferred term of abuse suggests that despite her obvious anger at her treatment, any discontent did not extend to support for the North. For a disappointing Confederacy being seen as better than a reunited Union that would free the slaves, see Manning, *The Order of Nature*, pp. 106-108.

you for help.” Apologising for disturbing Vance, Edwards excused herself on the grounds that, “I have tried every means in my power to keep from trobblin you.”²⁵² As with earlier American petitions, requests were typically portrayed as a sharing of information. The desperate situation of Sarah A. Lunsford from Georgia, with six children at home and a husband in the war, drove her to write directly to the Confederate President, Jefferson Davis in December 1863: “Being plast in avary presesing situation [Being placed in a very pressing situation] I have concluded to rite you a few lines in which I will give you a statement of my condishon . . .”²⁵³ Innocent openings of this nature were then invariably followed by the details of the wrongdoing or hardship that formed the heart of the petition. The purpose of such formulations was clear enough. When Lunsford wrote to Davis, she was re-enacting the traditional fiction that her misfortune was due to those in authority being kept in ignorance of the true state of affairs by corrupt or incompetent officials. Once made aware of the real position, it was assumed that men such as Davis would want to act to remedy the situation or end the abuse.²⁵⁴

Lacking power or influence, ordinary southern women adopted three main strategies to have their voices heard; they shamelessly exploited the public personas of Confederate politicians, they mobilised the resources of their local communities and they emphasised their status as the wives and mothers of soldiers. In writing letters to state governors and Confederate officials, women

²⁵² Edwards to Vance, 19 August, 1863. Box 168 GP NCDAH.

²⁵³ Sarah A. Lunsford to Davis, 20 December, 1863, LRCSW, roll 132.

²⁵⁴ Scott characterises the pretence that authorities are unaware of injustices or misfortune as “naïve monarchism” or a deliberate fiction designed to avoid direct criticism and make it easier for remedial action to be taken. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*, pp.96 – 100.

commonly exploited the traditional language of petitions for their own purposes. Petitions conventionally flattered the recipient and highlighted the weak and needy position of supplicants but many Confederate women also deliberately reflected the well-known personas of populist governors, such as Brown and Vance, and many women's letters attempted to exploit contemporary gender conventions and the paternalist assumptions of governors and officials.²⁵⁵ In Georgia, it became almost formulaic to refer to Brown in correspondence as the well-known friend of soldiers' families and others in need. Just as governors pretended to be the friends of soldiers and their families, so the wives of soldiers pretended to believe that governors were indeed their friends.²⁵⁶ When the soldiers' wives, Jemima Clements and Isabella Herendon, wrote to Brown, in October, 1863, seeking relief, they entering into such a pretence when they claimed they were appealing to him because "the crys of the orphans and the distressed soldiers wives have always found sympathy at your Bosom".²⁵⁷ In similar fashion in November 1863, Emma Cullens was "emboldened" to seek Brown's help in obtaining cotton cards, because of his "well known sympathy for soldiers families."²⁵⁸

Many such letters were exercises in persuasion and manipulation often attempting to exploit gender conventions to advantage. Such letters were

²⁵⁵ This argument closely follows Scott in understanding the need for less powerful groups to observe the outward forms of conformity so as to not breach the etiquette of power relations. My argument differs from Scott in that he argues petitions invariably contained concealed or implied threats. Whilst many southern women were undoubtedly the victims of Confederate wartime policies, few petitions or letters contained threats, open or concealed. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance*.

²⁵⁶ Downs has coined the phrase "fictive friends" to describe such political relationships masquerading as real friendships Downs, *Declarations of Dependence*, p.4.

²⁵⁷ Jemima Clements and Isabella Herendon to Brown, 8 October, 1863. Cuyler: Box 58. 14. 21.

²⁵⁸ Emma Cullens to Brown, 18 November, 1863.GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016).

widespread and not confined to the wives or mothers of soldiers. When Lizzie Batchelor a school teacher from Fort Gaines in Georgia wrote to Brown in November, 1864, seeking his assistance, she was essentially complaining about the well-known shortages in cotton thread and cotton cards but little about her letter reads as a complaint or an expression of discontent. Instead her letter carefully exploits Brown's public persona to pretend that his well-known kind heartedness has enabled her to overcome her natural feminine delicacy in order to ask his advice on how she might clothe herself: "I am, one of the many in these troubled times, who are sorely puzzled by the question, 'wherewith shall you be clothed'?" She finishes not by thanking him for herself but in the name of all those who have been inspired by him: "who is now laboring in the holy warfare, to which in every age, in peace or strife, God calls the noble of mankind."²⁵⁹

In North Carolina, Vance's populist rhetoric provided even more opportunities for women seeking to exploit his public statements. In particular, women seized on Vance's 1862 election campaign which had made much of his role as the "soldiers' friend" who would protect them and their families.²⁶⁰ Women, distressed by the absence of husbands, sons and brothers often conscripted

²⁵⁹ Lizzie Batchelor to Brown, 22 November, 1864, GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016). Batchelor wanted cotton cards but rather than asking directly for them described herself as being perplexed as to how to obtain them and, by twice referencing her delicacy, along with her potential nakedness, was unashamedly exploiting gender conventions.

²⁶⁰ Prior to his 1862 election, Vance appears to have made few public statements himself but relied on statements of support from others, particularly William Holden's *North Carolina's Standard*. For references to Vance as a friend to the soldier see, by way of examples, the editions of the 30 July, 1862, "The Governor" and the 2 July, 1862, "Col. Vance is not a Partizan", This is consistent with Gordon McKinney's view that having chosen to announce his candidature in the *Fayetteville Observer* on 19 June, Vance then made no public announcements until after his election. Gordon B. McKinney *Zeb Vance North Carolina's Civil War Governor*, (Chapel Hill: North Carolina University Press, 2005), p 102.

against their will and having to leave families to suffer, recognised in the words a safe and compelling way to frame their requests for exemptions and re-deployments. Cornelia Daniel, who petitioned Vance, in February 1863, to exempt a younger brother, as the only remaining male relative across an extended family, not only reminded him of his words but also personalised them back to herself. Just as Vance had personalised his promise, so she made her claim on it equally personal, reminding him how he had “promised to be a father to the fatherless and a husband to the widows of which I am both.”²⁶¹ Catherine Hunt, from Randolph County and who, in a clear statement of intent, endorsed her letter with the inscription “Nothing like tring”, wrote seeking to have her husband Zebedee Hunt, a cooper, exempted from conscription. Again, playing on Vance’s public persona and self- image, and employing her own rhetorical devices, she wrote in unusually assertive tones to ask her favour. In a similar fashion to Cornelia Daniel, Hunt accepted, or pretended to accept, that Vance was indeed her friend: “I have herd sed that you was as good a man as ever lived or died and I hant afraid to ask a favor of you. I have herd sed that you was Husban to the widows Fathers to the olpant [orphans] and the poor man friend. I want you to reliase my husband if you plese sir, I want you to send me a letter.”²⁶²

Although many letters were from the wives of soldiers, mothers also wrote.

The layered construction of some women’s letters is extraordinary as with

²⁶¹ Cornelia Daniel to Vance, 9 February, 1863. Box 162 GP NCDAAH. It has not been possible to trace Vance’s speech or proclamation when he quoted the words which were almost certainly biblical in origin and probably taken from Psalms 68.5. Vance would probably have been most familiar with the King James Bible which gives the verse as: “A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widows, *is* God in his holy habitation”.

²⁶² Catherine Hunt to Vance, 15 January, 1863. Box 161 GP NCDAAH.

Temperance Tise's letter to Vance in August, 1863, from Forsyth County, seeking the discharge of her only son from the army largely on the grounds of his supposed inadequacies as a southern man. Tise began her letter, seeking to use Vance's public persona to her advantage, by claiming to believe that he was indeed a "true friend to the Soldiers, their wives and mothers." Pointing out that she was "a Widdow and a Mother of a Soldier" herself, she earnestly begged a favour which, she had no doubt that he would grant. She guarded against any suspicions that her letter was nothing other than a mother's plea by placing her request within the context of southern patriotism to demonstrate her son's unsuitability because of his inadequacy as a man. She was herself "a true friend of the Southern cause," and would normally have given up her son willingly to protect their homes from "a merciless foe" were he not so weak: ". . . my Son in plain words is not a man and he is not able to stand the hardships of war." In a final vengeful finesse, and "knowing the Confederacy wants Men, and men that are robust and healthy", she pointedly suggested that Vance enlisted, in place of her son, a local speculator, Cavine Hine, "a hale, healthy robust man", who refused to sell her leather even though she was barefoot. Mocking Hine's pretence to be a friend to the Southern cause or a friend to the soldiers, including crippled veterans, Tise by implication drew the comparison with Vance's supposedly genuine patriotism and compassion for soldiers and their families.²⁶³

²⁶³ Temperance Tise to Vance, 22 August, 1863. Box 168 GP NCDAH. It was not unusual for letters and petitions to portray men as weak, particularly in terms of their unsuitability for active service but normally such weakness was expressed in terms of health. The degree of overt feminisation of her son in Tise's letter is rare. The 1860 census records place her in Salem, Forsyth County.

Other women attempted to mobilise the resources of their communities through the organisation of petitions. By far the greatest number of letters and petitions concerned the exemption, discharge or detail of men back to their communities. The sheer volume of such petitions reflected the scale of wartime enlistments in the South and the all-encompassing nature of Confederate conscription which by the end of the war had effectively ordered into service all white males between the ages of seventeen and fifty, unless they had already volunteered. Although privileged groups or individuals could exploit the many loopholes in such legislation to avoid service, many ordinary southerners loyal to the Confederacy had few such options. As with the family of James Myers, from Glynn County in Georgia, conscription often relentlessly worked its way through the male members of even loyal families. Myers petitioned Brown in February, 1862, as “one of his willing subjects and supporters”, seeking the exemption of his youngest son as his only help in his old age, telling Brown that six older sons were already serving in the Confederate army.²⁶⁴ From early in the war, women were also writing seeking exemptions and discharges on behalf of their men, either on their own or as part of wider community petitions. Mary Malory from Telfair County in Georgia, was typical of many when she wrote to Brown, also in February, 1862, seeking the exemption of her blacksmith husband from the state militia. In an early example of a style of petition that became increasingly formulaic, Malory carefully

²⁶⁴ James Myers to Brown, Undated. Cuyler: Box 57. 2. 281 - 282. The letter is not dated but is included in the February 1862 folder. The conscription act of 16 April, 1862 made all able-bodied men between the ages of eighteen and thirty-five liable for conscription so it seems likely that Myers was anticipating his youngest son's conscription. If his older sons were indeed in the army, they must have all volunteered in the first year of the war, putting the loyalty of the family beyond doubt.

weaved together the various components of her plea emphasising the needs of his family, his value to the community and pointedly, his lack of usefulness as a soldier. In a style of letter typical of many, Malory described herself as “afflicted” with asthma and unable to care for their six young children. As the only remaining blacksmith in the county her husband’s services were essential to the community and everyone said they would not know what to do without him. He himself suffered from rheumatism and could only walk with the aid of crutches and was of no value as a soldier. In such petitions children were inevitably described as young and unable to help their mothers either around the house or with farm work.²⁶⁵ Countless other letters along similar lines were sent to the Confederate authorities during the war and, in Georgia at least, some women went further and initiated community petitions specifically on behalf of their husbands and sons. In June, 1864, twenty-four women, all identifying themselves as soldiers’ wives or widows, signed a petition from Randolph County, Georgia, seeking the release of a private B.F. Brooks from the Confederate army. The petition pointedly reminded Brown that they lived a part of Randolph County, Georgia, where “nearly all the men have gone to the war and negroes are newmous [numerous] and we want the said soldier released from service for the Protection of ourselves and our little children.” Not only does it seem likely that the petition was organised by Julia Brooks, the

²⁶⁵ Mary Malory to Brown, 28 February, 1862. Cuyler: Box 57. 2. 253 – 254. Many letters and petitions followed a similar formula. Malory’s letter emphasising the physical disability of her husband is consistent with Downs’ argument about men and women, in North Carolina, exploiting the dependency as a deliberate strategy. Downs, *Declarations of Dependence*. Murrell suggests that emphasising a man’s usefulness to the community was in part designed as to protect men against charges of “skulking” or shirking military duty. Murrell also argues that it may explain why so few men wrote on their own behalf. Murrell, “Of Necessity and Public Benefit”. p. 83.

wife of B.F. Brooks, but that the concerns about poorly supervised slaves was more immediate than the petition suggested and that Brooks himself, like many yeoman farmers, was a small-time slave owner. That a soldier's wife was married to a Georgia farmer who owned slaves is not in itself remarkable but the petition suggests that fears about the threats posed by poorly supervised slaves was not one confined to white men or elite ladies despite the recent scholarship.²⁶⁶

In August 1864, the wife of Robert S. Tisinger also organised a petition for the discharge of her husband although the petition itself studiously avoids making any reference to their relationship. Twenty-four "wives, widows of deceased soldiers, mothers of soldiers in the Confederate army" petitioned Brown for the detail of Confederate soldier Tisinger back to his community to help with the processing of their crop of sugar cane. Most of the women not only signed as soldier's wives or widows but, for added effect, also included the numbers of their children, over ninety in all. In contrast to Julia Brook's petitioners, they emphasised their reliance on "white labour", living as they in an isolated part of the county "ten or twelve miles" from the courthouse in a poor area containing few slaves able to with the harvesting or processing. Now that most of the men were in the army they were "without protection" and needed someone detailed to help or they would

²⁶⁶ Julia Brooks to Brown, 22 June, 1864. GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016). Julia Brooks is the first signature on the petition which appears to be written in her handwriting. The 1860 census identifies her as the wife of B.F. Brooks and the mother of two young children. B.F. Brooks is listed as a farmer whose property is valued at \$1800 suggesting a modest small holding. The 1860 Slave Schedule lists two slaves owned by Brooks, both male and aged eleven and sixty. The slave population of Randolph County was significant at 46.7 percent. <https://www.loc.gov/resource/g3861e.cw0013200/> (last visited 9 June, 2016). McCurry distinguishes between petitions from elite women, who were concerned about protection from slaves, and soldiers' wives who sought entitlements. Brook's petition indicates that this was not always the case. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*.

spend the rest of the year on “scanty rations of bread.” The first signature on the petition was Mary C. Tisinger, signing as a soldier’s wife with six children, and almost certainly, the wife of Robert Tisinger, the subject of the petition.²⁶⁷

As a final strategy, as with Brooks and Tisinger, women increasingly emphasised their status as the mothers and wives of soldiers. Unlike men, who largely continued to define themselves by their role or occupation, women invariably described themselves in terms of the service of husbands, sons or brothers. For many women, who otherwise had no public presence, and would have been unknown to state governors or officials, the military service of family members, and by implication their sacrifice, quickly became the principal way women laid claim to the attention of Confederate politicians. Some women went further and enhanced their signatures by referring to their status as wives, widows and mothers of soldiers in the same way that men embellished their signatures by adding their qualifications as doctors, military officers or justices of the peace. As early as May 1862, the only two women who signed an otherwise male petition from “many Citizens” in Meriwether County, North Carolina, seeking the exemption of a Dr. John Anthony from Confederate service in May of that year, described themselves as the “wife of a solduer in the servis “and as having “3 sons in the

²⁶⁷ Petition of Repson County to Brown, 15 August, 1864. GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016). The 1860 U.S. Federal Census lists a R.S Tysinger as a thirty-four year old Georgia farmer in a household including a thirty-six-year-old female, M.C. Tysinger, together with five young children. The petition is interesting on a number of counts not least because although the women sign as soldiers’ wives, the style and language of the petition are highly traditional including having the petitions countersigned by two Inferior Court justices. The petition also demonstrates the organisation and different structures of petitions with all the signatures, as in some other cases, being in the same relatively uneducated hand.

servis of the Confederacy”.²⁶⁸ In October, 1862, twenty men and women from Dadeville Alabama petitioned the Confederate Secretary of War for the discharge of teacher Henry Hancock with ten of the women signing themselves as soldiers’ wives.²⁶⁹ Even apparently elite women recognised the need to make the connection with the war through the service of their men. The “Ladies of Halifax County” in North Carolina who petitioned Governor Clark in July, 1862, possibly in a thinly disguised attempt to have an overseer discharged, all signed as Mrs or Miss but also listed their individual contributions to the war through the service of sons, husbands and brothers.²⁷⁰ As the war developed, women would continue to describe themselves in a variety of ways, but what is noticeable is how little women’s descriptions of themselves as soldiers’ wives told about the nature of their discontent. Too many women used the expression in too many ways, for the description to have any particular meaning associated with specific demands for entitlements. Many women undoubtedly recognised the advantages that their status as the wives or mothers of soldiers conferred but there is little evidence to suggest that the description as a soldier’s wife denoted a new and distinctive form of discontent.²⁷¹

²⁶⁸ Merryweather [sic] County petition to Secretary of War Randolph, 1 May, 1862. LRCSW, Roll 29.

²⁶⁹ Dadeville petition to Secretary of War Randolph, 27 October, 1862, LRCSW, Roll 53.

²⁷⁰ Ladies of Halifax County to Clark, 1 July, 1862. Box 159 GP NCDAAH. Although all sign as Mrs or Miss, the petition also sets out their individual connections as in “Mrs Gregory has given sons,” whilst the service of other brothers and husbands are also listed.

²⁷¹ The American Civil War was not the first to emphasise the sacrifice of soldiers’ wives and mothers. Olwen Hufton writes of the “mother heroine” of the French Revolutionary era carrying her banner declaring, “I have given a citizen to the Republic”. Olwen Hufton, “Women in Revolution 1789 – 1796”, *Past and Present*, Vol. 53 (Nov. 1971) pp. 90 -91.

At the heart of Stephanie McCurry's soldiers' wives thesis is how poor southern women quickly moved from being seen as dependents of their men into a new political constituency of soldiers' wives articulating their own demands on the Confederate state and turning the conventional ethic of sacrifice into grounds of entitlement. Whilst such letters are not commonplace, some women did indeed demonstrate a new common identity as soldiers' wives and looked beyond traditional protections into making new demands on the state and holding authorities to account for their actions. In February, 1863, three women from Wayne County petitioned North Carolina Governor Vance. Complaining, like many discontented women did, of the impact of speculation and inflation on their lives, their petition is both unusually insistent but also demonstrated a self-conscious, collective identity as soldiers' wives. Not only do the three women sign for themselves as soldiers' wives but they do so as the representatives of all the soldiers' families in the county.

Mr govner Vanc of north Carolina a few lines to you to the Regard of the Sufering of the Soldiers familys in wayn county Dudley Deasstrict . . . an without help wee must starv [.] an you our govner of north carolina has [promised] the Soldiers that there familys shod sher of the last an wee think it is hie time for us to get help in time of our need. . . we call upon you as our govner an friend to help us as we think it is your duty . . . for wee are in grate need of it wee have seen the time when wee [can] call our Littel children and our husband to our tables an hav a plenty an now wee hav becom e beggars and starvers . . . wee here by assign our names as all soldiers wives in Dudley Deasstrict

the Righters as sign there name

wee assign for our Selves an all the Soldiers familys By there request

The Wayne County petition is significant in that it manages to blend a new self-conscious identity as soldiers' wives with the traditional role of petitions in seeking remedy for their misfortune. Although the women ultimately appeal to Vance's sense of patriarchal duty, they do so effectively as the political representatives of soldiers' wives in their district. Rather than simply seeking traditional protections, the demands of the women are equally political as they remind Vance of his recent promise to soldiers and their families that they would be supported, telling him the time has come to turn his words into actions. The women remind him as well of his more traditional duty to help them in their misfortune; there was a time when they had plenty and now, as a result of speculation, they had been reduced to becoming beggars, unable to feed themselves. In such circumstances, it was his duty as governor and "friend" to help them in their time of need.²⁷² Significantly, these women were not paupers, habitually living in poverty, but women who had enjoyed prosperity and who had been impoverished by the war.²⁷³

Not all such women with husbands in the army signed themselves as soldiers' wives even as they challenged state governors over the meagre levels of

²⁷² Margaret Smith and others to Vance, 9 February, 1863. Box 162 GP NCDAH. The letter mirrors the words of Vance's January 1863 proclamation against deserters, offering a brief amnesty for men who surrendered but threatening that those who did not do so would be apprehended, and if convicted, executed. To balance the threats, Vance ended the proclamation by making a personal promise to serving soldiers to look after them and their families: "...as Chief Magistrate, I promise you that the wife and child of the soldiers who are in the army doing his duty shall share the last bushel of meal and pound of meat in the state." Proclamation, 26 January, 1863, GLB 50.1 Vance Papers NCDAH. The words are also quoted back to Vance by Michael Bollinger from Catawba County who wrote to complain about speculators. Bollinger to Vance, 3 March, 1863. Box 163 GP NCDAH.

²⁷³ A dramatic change in circumstances resulting from changes in customary market arrangements is at the heart of the moral economy paradigm. For a fuller discussion see Chapter 4.

provisions allowed to soldiers' families. In a highly assertive letter, dated April, 1864, Mary A. Clemmons from Taliaferro County in Georgia challenged state governor Brown over his failure to provide soldiers' families with what they needed. With a husband in the army and three children at home, she told Brown how badly she and other families locally were treated compared with those in neighbouring counties and questioned the actions of his administration: "I want to know what is the reason we soldiers families are not provided for like the soldiers families in Columbia County." Noting how there were abundant stores held locally, she told Brown: "We dont want no money we want provishion an you are the man that ought to apinte an Agent in this disetrick to attend to this business I want you to do your duty." Rhetorically asking how he expects "poor weakly women" to raise their children when their "helpmeets are in the battel feald fiteing [are in battlefield fighting] for your freedom", she finishes her letter with the terse injunction "I want to hear from you ... PS answer this as you get it if you plse."²⁷⁴

Despite her challenge to Brown, any threat in Clemmons' letter remains implied, although Brown would have been well aware, by 1864, of instances of women taking matters into their own hands when women rioters seized foodstuffs and other essentials in Georgia and other Confederate states. The soldiers' wife, Susan Sheerin was more direct in her letter to Vance in February, 1863, and even bolder in hinting at potential desertion only a matter of weeks after Vance's

²⁷⁴ Mary A. Clemmons to Brown, 17 April, 1864. Cuyler: Box 59. 4. 34-35. Clemmons signed in her own name without any additional embellishment. Brown instructed that the letter was copied to the Inferior Court and a report obtained. The report, also included in the Governor's papers, robustly rebutted the implied criticism and blamed the problem on too many promises being made by the Georgia authorities, particularly in the face of competing priorities. J.D. Hammock to Brown, 23 April, 1864. Cuyler: Box 59.4. 54.

previous month's proclamation against desertion. Signing as the wife of Thomas Shearin, and supported by five other women, Shearin criticised the apparent breakdown in state arrangements for the distribution of relief. Dispensing with any of the conventional initial courtesies, she went immediately to her challenge: "Mr gov, Vance if you please tell me what we poore soliers soldiers [sic] wives is to do that we are suffering for the want of something to eat . . . I never` have sufered so much as I have for the last three or four months for I have to go some time week with nothing but bread to eat." Sheehan concluded her letter by issuing a ultimatum: "My husband has been in the army nearly two years and they don't let him come home to see me much less provide any way for us to live[.] if you don't provide some way for us to live we will be compelled to take our little children and [go] to our husbands or they must come home to see us."²⁷⁵ In even hinting at the possibility of desertion, Sheerin was being remarkably bold although it is possible that her carefully crafted conclusion may well have been an attempt to shame the Confederate authorities into providing additional relief or at least granting her husband a period of leave, enabling him to return home.²⁷⁶

²⁷⁵ Susan Shearin to Vance, 17 February, 1863. All five women sign as Mrs. rather than as soldiers' wives.

²⁷⁶ Despite its negative formulation, Susan Sheerin's conclusion to her letter is an example of a classic negotiating position, offering the possibility of trading one concession for another —*if* you allow him to come home or give us more relief *then* our husbands will not desert. Direct threats are rare in Confederate letters. Amanda Barker, a poor widow with "aparsel of little children", was so incensed by Confederate taxation that she threatened to withhold her taxes until Brown wrote back to her. Amanda Barker to Brown, [undated] March 1865. Cuyler: Box 59 16 57. Some letters hinted at political consequences or implied obligations. Emma Cullens told Brown that her husband had always voted for him and sixty women from Iredell, Wilkes and Yadkin similarly petitioned Vance for relief, not as soldiers' wives but as the mothers, wives and daughters of men who had re-elected him the previous fall. Emma Cullens to Brown, 18 November, 1863. GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016). Petition of Iredell, Wilkes and Yadkin Counties to Vance, 27 January, 1863. Box 161 GP NCDAAH.

Not all letters from women signing as soldiers' wives were so assertive. The two illiterate soldiers' wives, Clements and Herendon, who had written to Brown as their friend, began their petition by emphasising their dependency on him: "Permit us lay our destitution before you." The women make no demands on Brown but, addressing him as their common friend and guardian, reminded him that their husbands are both, "in the war fighting for the independence of our common country" and trusted that he would not neglect them and leave them "with our poor families to perish."²⁷⁷ Other soldiers' wives also sought protection. The five women from Bladen County, North Carolina, who wrote desperately to Vance in January, 1863, in a barely literate letter to complain about the impact of speculation on their families' lives, struggled to say what they wanted him to do other than find a way to end the speculation. Adopting traditional language and demeanours and signing as soldiers' wives they studiously avoided making demands on Vance but wrote, they claimed, simply to inform him of their situation. They apologise for writing to him but excuse it on the grounds he is their protector. The women can propose no specific remedies but repeatedly emphasise their "hope" that Vance will do something for them and end the speculation in some way:

Dear Sir I wish to inform you of the condition of som[e] of the neighbourhood of Bladen there is som[e] of the soldiers familys are really surfern for bread them that has corn to sell wont let it go for no price the wage of the men that is in the servis wont support thear family I dont see what we are to do but I hope that you ma do something for us. . .pleas excuse me for being so bold to go writing to you as you are our protecture I take the liberty to write to you [not legible] to have our husbands in the war they only getting eleven dollars a month and the people all speculating on the poor soldiers I do hope you

²⁷⁷ Jemima Clements and Isabella Herendon to Brown, 8 October, 1863. Cuyler: Box 58. 14. 21. Neither woman is able to sign her name and the letter appears to have been scribed by a lawyer or clerk.

will put a stop to it if there is anyway in the world to do it yours very respectfully and we are all soldiers wife and wives of Bladen Co

Mary Elizabeth Long as author

Mary A Haggar [?]

Nancy J Long

Julia McLeod

Sarah McLeod.²⁷⁸

The traditional language and form of the Bladen letter was typical of many women's letters and petitions, including those from soldiers' wives. Despite an emphasis within recent scholarship on the importance of entitlement, it is significant that so few women themselves use the term. At a time when American concepts of citizenship and political rights were changing, but were not yet fully formed, many women continued to express themselves in traditional language of petitions, rather than in the language of rights and entitlements.²⁷⁹ When women do talk of their entitlements, they do so in a very narrow sense of complaining of their treatment by state officials, often in comparison with others, rather than the broader, more political sense of turning their wartime sacrifices into grounds of

²⁷⁸ Nancy C. Long to Vance, 20 January, 1863. Box 161 GP NCDAAH. Nancy Long is the third women to sign but the Confederate clerk chose reference the letter in her name, probably for reasons of legibility. The letter is a textbook example of *naive monarchism*; the women do not openly demand anything from Vance but write apologetically to him to inform him of their desperate condition in the hope that, once Vance knows of their distress, he will act to remedy the situation.

²⁷⁹ For a discussion of the changing nature of citizenship and its relationship to rights and entitlements in the South, see the introduction by William L. Link and David Brown in William Link et al (eds.), *Creating Citizenship in the Nineteenth Century South*, (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2013), pp.1 – 6. At the outbreak of the Civil War citizenship was still largely viewed in terms of states rather than nation with little discussion of rights and obligations. Emily West, writing in the same volume draws a distinction between white conceptions of citizenship in the 1850s, with its emphasis on liberal entitlements, and a southern black emphasis on the process of belonging to family, group and community. Emily West, "Free People of Color, Expulsion, and Enslavement in the Antebellum South", pp.64 – 65.

entitlement from the state.²⁸⁰ Although Brown and Vance were ‘war governors’, they were also the most senior representatives of local state government to whom men and women wrote to complain about the decisions or incompetence of more junior officials and many of the letters in the governor papers reflect these transactional concerns. These included a small number of complaints from women believing they had been incorrectly refused state relief to which they were entitled. Frances A. Dorris politely wrote to Brown in April, 1864, about the actions of the local court who were opposed to women drawing rations, to which they were “intitiled”, if there already had some provisions. “I don’t think court is doing justice,” Dorris wrote to Brown as she asked him to intervene on her behalf.²⁸¹ Mary Johnson, a mother of soldier, had also been refused help by local committee and appealed angrily to Vance: “I desire to know whether I am not entitled to my share of the money appropriated by the state for the relief of the indigent soldiers.” Apologising to Vance for troubling him, she ends her letter with the conventional justification frequently used by women letter writers to excuse their actions: “Necessity knows no law, and I learn our Governor is a good man, and will see that the poor have justice.”²⁸² Even allowing for the formulaic closing of Johnson’s

²⁸⁰ McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p.151. Within my own sampling only two women use the term, neither of whom describes herself as a soldiers’ wife. The term does not appear in any of the principal sources cited by McCurry including Almira Acors, the petition of Margaret Smith or the famous Regulators letter. As with all welfare systems, Confederate state welfare relied on local officials and management, dependent on accurate records, to assess need and exercise judgements as to eligibility and the equitable allocation of funds, all of which could be found wanting and some letters certainly complain about such decisions. In my limited sample, these included the wives of men who volunteered in another county, women whose husbands’ names were missing from official lists and the wives of substitutes.

²⁸¹ Frances A. Dorris to Brown, 19 April, 1864. Cuyler: Box 59.4. 40 -41.

²⁸² Mary Johnson to Vance, 5 May, 1863. Box 165 GP NCDAAH.

letter, it is apparent that rather than speaking the language of entitlements, Confederate women such as Dorris and Johnson speak far more about justice.²⁸³

Whilst many women continued to describe themselves as soldiers' wives until the end of the war, little can be read into the description as indicating a particular form of discontent. Some soldiers' wives were assertive in their letters but others were not and many other women chose not to use the description at all. Neither did the term always indicate a particular position against slavery and, in some instances as with Julia Brooks, soldiers' wives were themselves the partners of slaveholders. In practice, by 1863 or 1864, the term *soldier's wife*, or its variants as *widow* or *mother*, appears to have been adopted as convenient shorthand by many women to describe their status without being associated without any particular sets of demands and at times the term seems simply to have become synonymous with women generally. When the thirteen men and the twenty-eight women of Troup County formally petitioned the commanding officer of the 37th District Militia for the discharge of physician Dr. W. Gaulding, they signed in separate columns headed Men and Soldiers' Wives.²⁸⁴ In similar fashion, the men and women of Irwin County, Georgia, who petitioned Jefferson Davis for the discharge of John Sinclair, in a petition probably organised by his mother-in-law,

²⁸³ Faust links letters defining hardship as injustice with paternalistic assumptions about the nature of the state. Faust, *Altars of Sacrifice*, p.134. My argument is that whilst some women did accept remaining within such a paternalistic system, other women attempted to play that system to their advantage.

²⁸⁴ Troup County petition to Brown, 31 May, 1864. GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016). For a discussion of petitions where men and women sign in separate columns, see Portnoy, "*Female Petitioners Can Lawfully Be Heard*", pp. 591 – 592. Portnoy argues that it was not until the 1830s that Congressional petitions included both men and women's names, although by the time of antislavery petitions it was not uncommon.

they did so in the names “of the undersigned soldiers’ wives and sitzens.”²⁸⁵ Some women chose to emphasise the status of their husbands as volunteers rather than just as soldiers’ wives. Six women from Alexander County in North Carolina petitioned Vance in May 1863 to name local factory owner Wilson Jones who was refusing to sell them cotton thread under the pretence that unless he received bacon and corn in return he would be unable to feed his factory hands. Unable to cloth their families if the pretence continued, and describing themselves as citizens and “especially the wives of volunteers”, the six women petitioned Vance to act on their behalf: “we your humble applications apply to you for protection if it is within your power.”²⁸⁶

That the women of Alexander County couched their request to Vance in terms of protection was unexceptional and part of the established protocols of petitioning. The women may have claimed to be humbly seeking Vance’s protection but, in highlighting their status as the wives of volunteers, they also signalled that they were well aware that their concerns could not easily be ignored. More problematic is the apparent dependency displayed in many other letters with women appearing unable to move beyond the traditional gender stereotypes of weak women seeking the protection of powerful men raising the question of whether such positions were themselves strategic choices or simply gender bound? Gregory Downs, in particular, has argued forcefully for the former position

²⁸⁵ Sinclair petition to Jefferson Davis, [undated] LRCSW Roll 111, which dates the letter between April and July 1863. As with Brooks and Tisinger, the petition appears to have been organised by a family member, Mary. S. Sinclair, who was the mother-in-law of John Sinclair. Sinclair was a schoolteacher and shoemaker.

²⁸⁶ Alexander County petition to Vance, 21 May, 1863. Box 166 GP NCDAH.

suggesting that both men and women began to exploit dependency as a deliberate strategy during the war in North Carolina. Whether feigned or not, the language of helplessness of many letters, including those from soldiers' wives, is striking.

Whilst Amy Murell has argued that many wartime letters to Confederate Secretaries of War can be viewed as forms of negotiation rather than protest, often letters appear to be neither, perhaps because so few women had anything to negotiate with, and their position in respect of the Confederate state was so weak, despite the service of family members in the Confederate army. For such women, supplication was perhaps the only practical strategy, enabling desperate women to remain within familiar gender expectations whilst seeking to transfer to public men responsibility to resolve the private distress their war had caused.²⁸⁷

When Margaret Sheeps from Brunswick County, and with seven grandsons in the Confederate service, petitioned Vance for the discharge of one of her grandsons, Samuel Sheeps, in March, 1863, she had no threats or promises she could make other than the certainty of her family's continuing suffering. Begging that her grandson was returned, she told Vance "and if he dont nor cant be releast nore spaired back home we must famish and di[e]."²⁸⁸ In a rare example of a woman's letter from South Carolina, Lucy Harmon, an "old helpless widow", from Spartanburg, was essentially asking for a traditional favour or relief from hardship when she petitioned the Confederate Secretary of War in February, 1863, for the release of a son in law from the army. Supported by ten male neighbours, she told at length of her family's distress and loyal service and how six sons, and two sons-

²⁸⁷ Downs, *Declarations of Dependence*, Murrell, "Of Necessity and Public Benefit".

²⁸⁸ Margaret Sheeps to Vance, 6 March, 1863. Box 163 GP NCDAH.

in-law, all volunteered for service before two sons were killed at Sharpsburg, one leaving a wife and five helpless children. Although South Carolina women joined in community petitions seeking the discharge of skilled artisans and professionals, unlike in Georgia and North Carolina, few South Carolina women petitioned or wrote in their own names even towards the end of the war.²⁸⁹

Unlike Harmon, other women explicitly sought favours. The family of J.E. Anderson appear to have been refugees driven from their home by the “hateful invader”, losing all their property, and unable to support themselves. In September, 1864, Anderson’s wife wrote to Jefferson Davis from Cuthbert County, Georgia, telling Davis that her husband was in poor health but scorned to be exempted on medical grounds, possibly for fear of being seen as skulking. Instead she asked Davis to grant her a “great favor” by detailing him out of the army when “the prayers of a grateful heart will daily ascend to heaven for your eternal welfare.”²⁹⁰ Elizabeth Weeden, similarly wrote to Vance in North Carolina in March 1863 seeking the “great favour” of her sick husband being discharged, or at least furloughed home. Willing to get down on her knees to beg she told Vance: “I beg you to discharge him if you will I shall never forget your kindness.”²⁹¹ Although such women had family in the army or, like Clements and Herendon, described themselves as soldiers’ wives, rather than speaking the language of entitlements,

²⁸⁹ Lucy Harmon to Secretary of War, 2 February, 1863, LRCSW Roll 113. Harmon’s letter is addressed to “Secretary of War Cooper”. Harmon wrote on behalf of herself, although her letter is countersigned by her male neighbours. Particularly early in the war, petitions were predominately from men and many early Secretary of War petitions follow the format of men petitioning another man in respect of a third man. By 1863, letters from women were commonplace in Georgia and North Carolina but remained rare in South Carolina.

²⁹⁰ Anderson to Jefferson Davis, 20 September, 1864. LRCSW Roll 118.

²⁹¹ Elizabeth Weeden to Vance, 13 March, 1863, Box 163 GP NCDAAH.

all seemed to have decided that any hope of relief was through traditional gendered supplication.²⁹²

Letters from such women who sign as soldiers' wives but continued to express their discontent in such traditional language were not unusual. Although some women were assisted by clerks and court officials, the world of such women remained limited and there is no evidence to suggest that, other than access to Confederate newspapers, women had any wider network of support or association other than that arose within their own families and local settlements, congregations and market places.²⁹³ Rather than viewing their letters through the prism of twenty first century politics, women's letters should be seen principally in their own terms, as part of a fragmenting "small world" of largely subsistence farms, bounded by patriarchy, and with no history or culture of female political protest. Women writing to complain of their suffering and their sense of injustice were shaped and constrained by the world into which they were born. It is for this reason perhaps why there is such an apparent mismatch between the changing role of women during the war and the traditional language in which many expressed themselves. The Civil War, at least for its duration, did transform the lives of ordinary women, requiring many to assume hitherto male responsibilities for protecting their households, not simply raising their families, and for the first time to advocate

²⁹² Favours are part of the traditional language of petitions designed not to disrupt established power relations or challenge authority. Unlike rights, favours are individual acts of charity not establishing any general entitlement. As in these instances, favours are invariably gendered reflecting male power and female weakness.

²⁹³ Although we can no longer be sure what such women did read. In her discussion of southern literacy, Schweiger suggests that the role of post offices in distributing reading material even in the most remote areas has been underestimated. After 1825, the number of post offices grew exponentially and distributed a wide range of books and periodicals for the benefit of an often-self-taught readership. Schweiger, "The Literate South".

directly with the Confederate state. But with no previous role in the public sphere of male politics or history of having to engage directly with authorities, it is difficult to know how women would do other than rely on traditional language and demeanours as they regaled the authorities with their tales of discontent. Even as women wrote with their complaints, their accounts of injustices and the unfairness of the market place, their letters reflect the immediacy of their world as most sought individual favours, protections or relief from the speculation preventing them from clothing and feeding their families. Their letters and petitions may well have been carefully constructed but these are individual, vernacular accounts of their distress and discontent, often unmediated by other agencies, expressed in the words of the women themselves. The role of ordinary southern women may have been transformed by the war but far from this being a dramatic political mobilisation of poor white women, change was often far more individual and tentative.

Little is known as to the external influences on Confederate women's discontent. For women struggling to clothe and feed families, their experience of the market place must have been central and Olwen Hufton, examining women's bread riots in revolutionary France, has written of the significance of the marketplace and "the endless queues, each one a hotbed of discontent."²⁹⁴ Certainly Confederate women's letters refer frequently to the difficulties women encountered in marketplaces, and their mistreatment by traders, all of which must have fuelled a collective sense of injustice as evidenced by the many letters and petitions jointly signed by groups of women. For a "godly" southern society, the role

²⁹⁴ Hufton, "Women in Revolution 1789 – 1796", pp. 103- 104.

of churches and church congregations must also have been significant although surprisingly few letters use overt religious or biblical references as their central argument and there is little to suggest that discontented women understood their faith differently to other southerners. When such references are deployed, they are almost always part of the formulaic flattery as with N.J. Harrell's letter to Governor Brown in June, 1864, when, attempting to secure the detail home of a local militiaman, she told him: "For God will be sure to reward those that will assist the poor and afflicted."²⁹⁵ Rather than explicit religious references, what is far more significant in women's expressions of their discontent is a consistent underpinning theme of wanting justice, particularly social justice, in terms of being treated fairly. Although rarely expressed in biblical language such expressions of discontent suggest a view of a profoundly moral view of world, almost certainly in parts of North Carolina shaped and sustained by local religious traditions, but also reflecting a broader condemnation of extortion and usury widespread across the Confederacy.²⁹⁶

Implicit in the complaint of the Bladen women was the essential unfairness of speculation as the women described how the wives of soldiers were unable to

²⁹⁵ Miss. N.J. Harrell to Governor Brown, 18 June, 1864. GDAH accessed via <http://www.ancestry.com/> (last visited 2 June, 2016). Overt references to divine judgement were not common but, when used, were deployed on both sides of the argument. Some women, such as Harrell, used such references to flatter whereas other women used them to criticise, as with Almira Acors' letter to Davis in March 1862: "I do not see how God can give the South a victory when the cries of so many sufferin mothers and little children are constantly assending up to him." Almira P. Acors to President Davis, 23 March, 1862, LRCSW, roll 29. For southerners seeing themselves as the most godly of Americans, see Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, p.22.

²⁹⁶ Faust argues that whilst condemnation of extortion or speculation was part of a broader American tradition, it took on a particular meaning after 1861 as a means of resisting the incursion of market values and materialism into southern life and signalling the superior nature of southern society. *ibid*, pp.42 – 45.

feed their families on soldiers' pay of eleven dollars a month. In the North Carolina Piedmont, women were more explicit in their complaints and many women expressed their discontent in terms of injustice and an inequality of sacrifice. When Martha Coltrane of Randolph County wrote to complain about wealthy slaveholders often being exempted from conscription she did so in terms of justice. Writing to Vance in November 1862, Coltrane explained: "This is a great undertaking for me as I never wrote to a man of authority before [...] necessity requires it of me as we are nonslave owners in this section of the State [...] I hope you and our legislature will look to it and have justice done [by] our people as well as the slaveholders."²⁹⁷ A.E. Smith, from neighbouring Guilford County, wrote in very similar terms about the unfairness of wartime sacrifice. Describing herself as one of several women with husbands in the army and families to support, she complained to Vance of factories refusing to sell the women thread and the meagre nature of their rations, even though they were surrounded by plenty. Although from Guilford County, part of the Quaker Belt resistance to the Confederacy, nothing in Smith's letter suggests any disloyalty as she angrily compared the efforts of the women's husbands and sons, fighting in the war, with the slave owners and others who only thought of themselves: "let all sink or swim together and while the poor are sinking deep there are others swimming that have not felt the sting of this war only with fear that they will lose something or the yankees will get their slaves They ought to

²⁹⁷ Coltrane to Vance, 18 November, 1862, cited in Mobley, *War Governor*, pp. 150 – 151. In a rare example linking women's discontent to local religious beliefs and traditions, Bynum uses the example of the North Carolina Piedmont to illustrate the differences between the animated resistance of yeoman women from Randolph County, sustained by religious and class values and the poorer, more dependent women of nearby Orange County. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, pp.46 – 52.

think of independence. . . instead of speculation [.] how can we expect to prosper unless we do right.”²⁹⁸

Smith’s solution was for the Confederate authorities to take even more powers to control the abuses by directly distributing cotton thread to families or to reduce its price. As with Margaret Arrowood, who had taken her pen in hand to write to Governor Vance, many women wanted prices to be reduced to ones they could afford.²⁹⁹ In August, 1863, two soldiers’ wives, Margaret Guess and Betty Horner wrote to Vance to ask that he fixed the price at which cotton thread could be sold. Writing as a “solgers wife”, Horner described how her husband had been killed in the war, leaving her with six children. Although she complained that, like many other women, she had no meat or corn, the substance of her letter was about speculation in cotton thread by the local factory who refused to supply thread to local women by demanding wool, corn or meat in exchange and chose instead to send it to the local town of Hillsborough where they could sell it at a significant profit. As a consequence, the women were not only unable to clothe their families but crucially the women were denied the opportunity of making a living and supporting themselves. Complaining of the local factory’s speculation in cloth, Horner’s solution was for Vance to fix the price of cotton at a price soldiers’ wives could afford: “we see hard times and think the cotton ought to be fixed so that the soldiers wives could get some too for they are the ones that stands in need.”³⁰⁰

²⁹⁸ A.E. Smith to Vance, 29 January, 1864. Box 173 GP NCDAH.

²⁹⁹ For Arrowood, see page 133.

³⁰⁰ Betty Horner to Vance, 6 August, 1863. Box 168 GP NCDAH. Although signed by the two women, it is filed under Horner’s name and the style of the letter suggests it was written by only one of the two women. For a discussion of the role of the cotton mill in Orange County which attracted

In seeking to understand the social influences shaping women's discontent, the letter of Horner and Guess, together with that of Smith, indicates the importance of local factories as the principle spur for some women's discontent. Although many letters centred around the experiences and frustrations of the market place, other women told stories of being refused goods, often cotton, by local factories or mills or being required to barter in goods they did not have. An anonymous soldier's wife made similar complaints to Brown about the Troup Cotton Mill in Georgia who refused to sell cotton thread to women, asking: "How is a poor soldier's wife to clothe her children when she has no [cotton] cards. They have a lot of able bodied men detail[ed] to work in the Factory They make a great deal of thread but bale it up and sell it off at twelve and fourteen dollars." Suggesting that the men were sent into the war and their places taken by women and children, she also urged him to control the prices and make the factory sell the thread to soldiers' wives at a regulated price.³⁰¹ Some Georgia women felt that the state should seize all the cotton and wool factories in the state because of the behaviour of the "stony hearted owners" who had placed the materials beyond their reach. Combining their dramatic call to seize all the factories with a traditional plea for protection, over a hundred and fifty women from Bartow County, with

letters of complaint from a number of women, including Horner and Guess, see Bynum, *Unruly Women*, pp. 127 -128. Although Orange County was also part of the Quaker Belt, Bynum distinguishes between the strong sense of cultural solidarity empowering women in Randolph County with the more impoverished and fragmented nature of Orange County. Bynum, *The Long Shadow of the Civil War*, pp. 38 – 40. Horner was not the only woman to complain about not being able to support herself and her family through work. See also Mary A. Clemmons to Brown, 17 April, 1864. Cuyler: Box 59. 4. 34-35, and the soldiers' wives Quinn and Tony who wrote to Brown at the end of the war. G.L. Quinn to Brown, 12 March, 1865. Cuyler: Box 59. 3. 17 – 18. Within the literature, there is relatively little attention given to the role of work among Confederate women, as opposed to the issues of welfare.

³⁰¹ Anonymous to Brown, 8 August, 1863. Cuyler: Box 58. 12. 8-9.

“husbands, brothers and friends” in the Confederate army signed the petition: “We call upon you, our Governor, to protect us from this unnatural extortion by seizing the cotton and wool factories of the state, and working them for public benefits.”³⁰²

Whilst many women masked their discontent in the traditional language of protection, other women were very direct in their demands indeed. Probably the best-known example of a threat of direct action in North Carolina is the frequently cited Regulators letter sent anonymously to Vance in February, 1863, from Bladen County. Written in neat handwriting, it immediately commands attention with its opening assertion that “we the common people has to have bread or blood and we are bound both men and women to hav it or die in the attempt . . .”³⁰³ After the conventional complaints of being unable to buy corn, despite travelling for days, the letter also tellingly articulates deep seated fears that speculation and debt will only lead to loss of their homesteads and the fear that independent yeoman farmers will be reduced to becoming landless tenants. Unless there is action “we hoos [whose] sons brothers and husbands is now fighting for the big mans negro

³⁰² Women of Bartow County to Brown, 10 October, 1862. Cuyler: Box 58. 1. 43. Georgia was a major manufacturer of ordinance and textiles for the Confederacy. By 1863 the Confederate state had assumed direct responsibility for much ordnance and the production of uniforms. Emory M. Thomas, *The Confederate Nation: 1861 -1865* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1979), p.208.

³⁰³ Confederate women used the rhetorical threat of “Bread or Blood” throughout the Civil War and the words were reportedly carried on banners during the bread riots in Mobile in September, 1863, and may have been shouted during the April, 1863, Richmond riot. The phrase had certainly appeared in the North Carolina press in October 1861 when *The Daily Journal* in Wilmington warned of the consequence of the Union blockade for northern British mill towns when the cries of “Bread or Blood” would ring through the streets of Bolton and Manchester. *The Daily Journal*, 19 October, 1861. The phrase probably had its origins in early 19th century English, agricultural protests. <http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/oi/authority.20110803095525451> (last accessed 2 November, 2016). See also E.J Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (Woking and London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1969), p. 212. The authors claim that “bread or blood” was a traditional threat.

are determined to hav bread out of there barns and that at a price that we can pay or we will slaughter as we go.”

Despite the colourful language and threats, there is little evidence that discontented, Confederate women resorted to group violence. Confederate women were more commonly the victims rather than the perpetrators of violence. Rather than a precursor to bloody retaliation, the Regulators letter can also read as a forceful plea for Vance to act to correct the injustices which had reduced self-sufficient farms to penury, with the women bemoaning the loss of their traditional independence and self-sufficiency when they owned “a good little homestead and other things convenient for there well being.” Whilst their complaint is about speculation and the cost and availability of bread, their preferred solution is not violence but for Vance to take control of the situation and regulate, by proclamation, the price of bread: “perhaps it would be better for you to say [in] your proclamation that no man should sell in the state at more than \$2 p[e]r bushel.” Only if Vance fails to act, will they take matters into the own hands, and “make examples of all who refuse to open there barn doors and appoint other men over there farms who have perhaps will have better h[e]arts. . .”³⁰⁴

³⁰⁴ Regulators to Vance, 18 February, 1863. Box 162 GP NCDAH. Vance certainly understood the significance of the letter, marking it, “File carefully”. My disagreement with the historiography is not to dispute that the letter set out to threaten but in the nature of that threat. The letter is cited by both Bynum, *Unruly Women*, pp. 133- 134 and McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, pp. 175- 176. In contrast, David Brown views the letter essentially as a passionate defence of “home and hearth” rather than a decisive rejection of the Confederacy. Brown, “North Carolina Ambivalence”, p.27. Petitions emphasising the loss of self-sufficiency were not uncommon as in the petition from Mitchell County, signed mainly by men, who told Vance that farmers who used to have plenty were now unable to feed their own families. Citizens of Mitchell County to Vance, 29 November 1863, Box 171 GP NCDAH.

As with the Bladen Regulators, groups of women often wrote together. Women's letters had their origins in traditional petitions but women's wartime letters also frequently reflected a collective sense of injustice born of the market place and factory gates. In attempting to make sense of their new world where prices had soared and Confederate currency had become almost worthless, ordinary white women would have had few points of reference other than practical experience of the market place or largely self-sufficient, yeoman farms. In seeking to give form and meaning to their discontent, and in order to understand their inability to feed or clothe their families, women personalised their complaints on the "hard hearted speculators", as letter after letter told their stories of attempting to buy corn, cotton thread or leather, only to be rebuffed. Unlike men whose complaints were often about the general impact of speculation, women's complaints were not about distant, nameless businessmen but local traders and local factories. As with Temperance Tise, who named and accused Cavine Hine, and the women of Alexander County who accused Wilson Jones, these were often men known to them. Even as women struggled with their new roles of protecting their households and dealing with the Confederate state, so they understood the causes of their distress in the most obvious of ways which centred on the greed, duplicity and hard heartedness of local market traders and factory owners.

Some women went further and, like the soldiers' wives of Wayne County, claimed to be writing as designated representatives of other women locally but such letters are rare. By the end of the war many women certainly signed themselves as soldiers' wives but how women signed indicated little about the

nature of their discontent as with the petition of the soldier's wife Julia Brooks who sought the discharge from the Confederate army of her slave owning yeoman husband or the five soldiers' wives from Bladen county who desperately petitioned Vance as their "protecture" in January, 1863. Neither do many letters indicate disloyalty to the Confederacy. Other than in particular localities, the language of many women's letters and virtually all of the petitions from communities, despite the extent of the undoubted hardship, suggests a surprising and continuing loyalty to the Confederate cause or at least an antipathy towards northern aggression. Indeed, the principal driver of much discontent appears to go beyond simple hardship but was fuelled by the inequalities of sacrifice with the greatest resentments being expressed about speculators and factory owners who put profit before country and others who used their influence to evade military service. Rather than just continuing hardship, it was the injustice and unfairness that gave the greatest offence.

Ordinary southern women wrote to the authorities in unprecedented numbers during the Civil War. In entering into the unfamiliar world of public letters, women would have had few resources to draw on or guide them and many letters, with their poor handwriting and idiosyncratic spellings, indicate that for many women these were unfamiliar activities. Despite the unfamiliarity of the task, many letters demonstrate inventiveness and care in their construction as they attempted to persuade Confederate politicians to attend to their needs. Women's letters also remained highly formulaic, not just in their conventional language, but also in their scope. With few exceptions, women chose to remain focussed on their immediate

concerns and studiously avoided entering into wider, potentially more dangerous territories. Women wrote and petitioned to get their men home, obtain relief and to seek an end to speculation. Remarkably, virtually no letters questioned the legitimacy of the war or demanded its end. Women complained about rich planters and others who evaded service but women's letters were essentially pleas for individual exemptions not policy change. Few letters involved threats or challenge. Even as the war required women to assume new responsibilities and roles to protect their households and feed and clothe their families, not surprisingly, women remained bounded by patriarchy, perhaps particularly in South Carolina where few women wrote at all.

Whilst the Civil War, as least for its duration, transformed the role of many women, change remained an uneven and arduous process. At a time when concepts of citizenship and political rights were being refashioned but not yet fully formed, ordinary Confederate women, who lacked power or influence continued to look to the state. Whilst many appeals essentially sought individual favours or relief, other women pleaded with the authorities to find a solution to the speculation that was causing such destruction to their families. Whilst some women saw the solution in the conscription of speculators, others reached for the traditional remedy of seeking protection from speculation by the fixing of prices. In other places women went further, and in Salisbury, North Carolina and Savannah, Georgia, as well as other Confederate cities, women compensated for the failure of the authorities to act by taking direct action themselves to set their own prices for the essential household items they needed. In seeking such remedies,

Confederate women reached deep within their family and communal histories. The war may have transformed the lives of many women but in continuing to look to the state to control the price of bread and other essentials, or by taking the law into their own hands when the state failed to act, their actions suggests a remarkable degree of continuity with the past and earlier forms of discontent closely associated with women.

Chapter 4. “We ask not charity we only ask for fair and reasonable prices”: The moral economy of the Confederate Bread Riots

In June, 1862, the Atlanta based *Southern Confederacy* carried a brief report of an unusual incident at a local railway depot in Bartow County, Georgia. A group of women seized bales of cotton having previously attempted to negotiate over the price. Having failed to agree on a price, the women took the cotton anyway, possibly promising compensation:

A gentleman of Manassas who now and then indulges in little speculation, had a few bales of cotton at the depot, a part of which some wives of absent soldiers said they greatly needed. They proposed to the owner to purchase what they wanted, but as they did now wish so much as a bag, he declined to let them have it. They told him they would take it; and in compliance with promises thus made to him, they went to the depot, called for the Agent as a witness of their doings and cut the rope from one bale, took what they needed, and marched very quietly home with it. I believe they propose to pay the owner fair compensation.

The sympathetic tone of the *Confederacy's* coverage, in which it praised the resourcefulness of the women, suggests that the paper saw little significance in the incident. It was certainly not a matter of public concern.³⁰⁵ It is doubtful whether the *Confederacy* would have been quite so sanguine had it known that the Bartow County incident was the precursor of many such incidents involving women that broke out across the Confederacy over the next two years, including in the Georgia state capital of Milledgeville and in the capital of the Confederacy itself at

³⁰⁵ *Southern Confederacy*, 17 June, 1862. Although cited by Williams no mention is made to the proposal to pay fair compensation. Williams, *Bitterly Divided*, p.90.

Richmond, Virginia. Beginning in June, 1862, in Bartow County, reaching a peak in Spring, 1863, and continuing more infrequently and in various forms until at least April, 1864, bread “riots” or “raids”, as they were styled in the southern press, were a significant and highly public form of Confederate women’s discontent. Virginia, Alabama, North Carolina and Georgia all experienced major disturbances, as set out in Table 1, with other smaller incidents being reported in South Carolina and Tennessee.³⁰⁶

³⁰⁶ In terms of methodology, I examined all available newspaper collections for accounts of any incidents of groups of southern women seizing or taking goods during the Civil War. During the war, southern women were involved in a range of activities involving the theft or seizure of goods. For the sake of completeness, I have included all reports of groups of women seizing or stealing goods regardless of how their actions were viewed. There is nothing, in either the primary or secondary sources, to suggest that women rioted for any other reasons, other than to take foodstuffs or household essentials. There are also virtually no accounts of men rioting in the Confederacy, except in a small number of very specific instances, such as the attack by Georgia troops on the offices of the *Raleigh Standard* in September 1863. I discovered no reported incidents before June, 1862, and I subsequently disregarded any incidents after December, 1864, since these largely appeared to reflect a general breakdown of civil and military authority in parts of the South, as the war reached its conclusion. At the end of the war both men and women seem to have engaged in traditional plundering, as in Corinth, Alabama in February, 1865 where goods were taken possibly by a “mob of women with a black flag.” *O.R.*, ser.1, vol.46, pt.2, 475. Cited in Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), p.65. I have also excluded accounts of women raiding property as part of deserter networks as these represent a different aspect of women’s dissent, as discussed in earlier chapters. As with the earlier chapters, all the primary references are drawn from Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina except in instances such as Mobile, Alabama, which illustrate broader themes. The newspaper collections consulted are listed in the bibliography. Finally, in terms of language I have used the terms *riots*, *raids* or *incidents* interchangeably, as seemed most appropriate.

Table 1: Principal Confederate Bread Riots and Raids 1862 – 1864.

	Date	Place	Description
1	June, 1862.	Bartow County, Ga.	After failing to negotiate a sale, women seized bales of cotton from a railway depot.
2	December, 1862.	Greensboro, Ala.	Salt taken from railroad agent.
3	18 March, 1863.	Atlanta, Ga.	Market place riot involving wives and daughters of soldiers who failed to secure a reduction in the price of bacon.
4	18 March, 1863.	Salisbury, NC.	Market place riot by soldiers' wives demanding to buy goods at government prices.
5	23 or 24 March, 1863.	High Point, NC.	Seizure of molasses from store owned by William Welch, by soldiers' wives, after a dispute regarding the price.
6	1 April, 1863.	Macon, Ga.	Seizure of calico from store.
7	1 April, 1863.	Petersburg, Va.	Women seizing goods from stores.
8	2 April, 1863.	Richmond, Va.	Market place riot involving both city stores and warehouses. By far the largest riot and its location in the Confederate capital resulted in the involvement of senior politicians. Only recorded instance of southern women being imprisoned for rioting.
9	10 April, 1863.	Augusta, Ga.	Market place riot.
10	10 April, 1863.	Milledgeville, Ga.	Market place riot involving wives of soldiers seizing cloth and cotton yarn.
11	11 April, 1863.	Columbus, Ga.	Women from Columbus, and from neighbouring Girard, Alabama, attempting to seize cloth. Caricatured in the press as a "calico riot".

12	Mid-April, 1863.	Greensboro, NC.	Two groups of women attempting to break into stores.
13	17 April, 1863.	Monroe County Ga.	Highway robbery of cotton goods.
14	15 May, 1863.	Avery Creek, Buncombe County, NC *	Seizure of a wagon load of bacon after an apparent dispute over the price.
15	September, 1863.	Talladega, Ala.	Seizure of shoes from store.
16	4 September, 1863.	Mobile, Ala.	Market place riot with women carrying banners demanding "Bread or Blood" and "Bread and Peace".
17	Late 1863.	Thomas County, Ga.	Group of soldiers' wives threatened to break into commissary store.
18	February, 1864.	Bristol, Tenn.*	Raid on merchant's store by soldiers' wives dressed in militia uniforms who took cotton yarn.
19	February, 1864.	Davidson County, NC. *	Raid on tithe store with women, many of whom were soldiers' wives, carrying off barrels of flour and corn after offering to pay a fair price.
20	Early 1864.	Thomas County, Ga.	Group of women stole corn from wagon.
21	March, 1864.	Barnwell, SC.	Theft of corn from wagon by women. Only recorded riot or raid in South Carolina.
22	April. 1864.	Lowndes County, Ga.	Raids on a government tithe warehouse and a local store whose owner refused to accept Confederate money.

23	April, 1864.	Savannah Ga.	Market place riot unusual for one of the rioters handing out printed cards justifying the women's actions.
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* These appear to be new reports of incidents not previously cited in the secondary sources.

Given the selective nature of reports of riots in the Confederate press and gaps in the records, the list almost certainly incomplete. I have excluded a small number of locations cited in secondary sources where insufficient details are provided including isolated references to riots in Waco, Texas and Archer, Florida. I also chose to exclude accounts in the northern press of further rioting in Richmond in November, 1863, and October, 1864, which appear as gross propaganda pieces which included claims that women and children died and contained reports of slave insurrections and executions.

Although the largest and most dramatic of the Confederate bread riots occurred in Richmond, Virginia, in April, 1863, the majority of reported riots or raids by women took place in Georgia and North Carolina, including significant market place riots in Atlanta, Salisbury, Milledgeville and Savannah.³⁰⁷ As the single reported incident in South Carolina will show, such incidents were almost certainly underreported in the Confederate press but essentially the incidence of riots and raids broadly reflected the shortages in essential foodstuffs and household materials, together with the associated speculation, that formed the basis of so many petitions and letters from women in North Carolina and Georgia. That so little rioting, or indeed letter writing by women, took place in South Carolina, despite comparable levels of hardships, raises questions of its own about the particular political culture of the state but, in general, riots reflected shortages.³⁰⁸ As Thomas

³⁰⁷ Fifteen of the twenty-three incidents listed in Table 1 took place in Georgia or North Carolina.

³⁰⁸ Although I did not examine governors' papers in either Alabama or Virginia, my sampling of the Confederate Secretaries of War correspondence showed a high number of letters and petitions, particularly from Alabama and a number from Virginia, that talked about families' hardships and frequently complained about speculation.

has observed, wherever Southerners congregated in cities or towns or armies there was the threat of hunger. The winter of 1862 – 1863 was particularly bad because of the continuing overproduction of staples such as cotton and tobacco, the impact of enlistment on rural workforces and the demands of both Confederate and Federal armies with the latter occupying significant grain and livestock-producing areas in Virginia and Tennessee.³⁰⁹ In contrast, other parts of the Confederacy such as Florida and Texas experienced few shortages. The term ‘bread riots’ is, of course, a misnomer but acts as a convenient shorthand for direct action by women who seized not only bread, corn and bacon but also essential items such as cotton thread and cloth.

The meaning of Confederate bread riots continues to be contested in the literature, not least because of the opportunities provided by a slender and partial evidence base. Unlike the copious letters sent by southern women to state governors and other Confederate authorities, or the many petitions submitted after the war claiming loyalty to the Union, accounts of the Confederate bread riots remain limited. Our understanding of bread riots remains largely dependent on newspaper reports, produced in the middle of a highly partisan propaganda battle between a northern and southern press anxious to minimize their own problems and exaggerate those of the enemy and where papers often relied on copying one another stories.³¹⁰ Other than in a handful of cases, there are few statements by

³⁰⁹ Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, pp. 199- 201.

³¹⁰ For the role of southern newspapers in demonising the North in the Civil War see George C. Rable, *Damn Yankees: Demonization and Defiance in the Confederate South* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 2015). Prior to the war, there had been a significant expansion in southern newspapers and, with exception of South Carolina, most southern states saw a dramatic increase in both the numbers of newspapers, and copies in circulation, between 1850 and 1860.

individual women explaining or justifying their involvement in the riots. Even allowing for such limitations, the Confederate bread riots between 1862 and 1864 do appear to be very different from riots as commonly understood from a twenty-first century perspective. In attempting to understand the distinctive nature of the bread riots, and to see their significance as part of wider dissent and discontent within the Confederacy, it is remarkable how little our modern experiences of riots can offer with their images of widespread arson and looting, state violence and regime change.³¹¹

In seeking to understand riots led by women seeking bread and other household essentials at prices they could afford, where women frequently enacted identical rituals over the “fixing of the price” and where the use of violence was limited, it is necessary to look beyond modern experiences of riots to older traditions of Anglo-American popular protest. Whilst historians have largely viewed the Confederate riots as essentially political events where poor white women

Jonathon Daniel Wells, *The Origin of the Southern Middle Class 1800 – 1861* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), p. 176, Table 9. From 1862 onwards, southern newspapers then experienced significant problems in acquiring supplies of newsprint with most reducing the size of their papers and many ceasing publication altogether. Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, pp. 139 -143. Confederate papers also increasingly struggled with finding reliable sources of news, and in discussing the importance of rumour in the Confederacy, Jason Phillips claims, as an example, that only one telegraph service reporter accompanied Lee’s invasion of Pennsylvania in 1863 resulting in a plethora of reports, after Gettysburg, rejoicing in a major Confederate victory. Jason Phillips, “The Grapevine Telegraph: Rumour and Confederate Persistence”, *The Journal of Southern History*, Vol. 72, No. 4 (November, 2006), pp. 753-788. Both northern and southern newspapers freely copied from one another, effectively amplifying the impact of a small number of stories of the riots.

³¹¹ I began this research shortly after the 2011 English city riots characterised by looting and destruction of property resulting in widespread arrests. Alongside the English riots, there were also the series of political demonstrations and revolutions known as the Arab Spring and more recently there has again been extensive coverage in the media of civil disturbances following the shootings of African – American men by state functionaries or civilian vigilantes in North American cities. As Lynn Itagaki observes modern usage of riots implies anarchic, disorderly and random violence against persons and property. Lynn Mei Itagaki, *Civil Racism: The 1992 Los Angeles Rebellion and the Crisis of Racial Burnout* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016), p.4.

confronted an unsympathetic state, many aspects of the bread riots in Georgia and North Carolina, between 1862 and 1864, suggest that as with women's letters, women's riots appear to have been more concerned with the failure of the Confederate state to feed and clothe their families, than as a political awakening of poor white rural women.³¹² As an essentially conservative response to the crisis affecting many ordinary southern families, where women took the law into their own hands to seize for themselves the goods they needed, Confederate bread riots share more with similar women's protests in eighteenth and nineteenth century Europe and colonial America, than other forms of Civil War resistance or dissent.³¹³

³¹² For political readings of the riots see, in particular, McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning* and Williams, *Bitterly Divided*. In addition to William's 2008 publication, many of his arguments and examples were developed through earlier publications particularly Williams et al., *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War: Class and Dissent in Confederate Georgia* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2002) and Teresa Crisp Williams and David Williams, "The Women Rising': Cotton, Class, and Confederate Georgia's Rioting Women", *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol 88, Issue 1 (2002), pp.49 – 83. Many of the references to individual riots are to be found in the earlier works although significant sections are copied from one work to the next with frequent self-referencing. For studies viewing the riots as part of a broader resistance within communities to the Confederacy in North Carolina, see Bynum, *Unruly Women* and *The Long Shadow the Civil War*. The fullest mapping of riots across the Confederacy is still provided by Gates in his early 1965 work, Paul W. Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War* (New York: Knopf, 1965). The most recent examination of the Georgia bread riots is provided by Keith S. Bohannon, "' More Like Amazons than Starving People': Women's Urban Riots in Georgia in 1863", in Andrew L. Slap and Frank Towers (eds.), *Confederate Cities: the Urban South During the Civil War Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015). As early as 1982, Paul D. Lack had, in part, anticipated Bohannon by placing the Atlanta bread riot entirely within the context of rising crime levels within the city as a result of inward migration and overall expansion of the city as the Confederacy's principal transportation centre. Paul D. Lack, "Law and Disorder in Confederate Atlanta", *Georgia Historical Quarterly*, Vol 66.2 (Summer 1982), pp. 171- 195.

³¹³ Following on from E.P. Thompson, a number of works have viewed such early protests as a response by communities to dramatic increases in the prices of essential foodstuffs disrupting the *moral economy* or the traditional way markets were meant to work for benefit of the whole community. In such instances, it was often the break with customary arrangements, not simply the hardships, that triggered the protests, when women in particular would seize goods after attempting to buy the goods at a price they considered reasonable, a form of direct action often described as "the setting of the price" or *taxation populaire*. E.P. Thompson, "The Moral Economy of the Crowd in the Eighteenth Century", *Past and Present*, Vol. 50 (Feb. 1970), pp. 76- 136. Hobsbawm and Rudé *Captain Swing*, George Rudé, *The Crowd in the French Revolution* (Oxford and London, Oxford University Press, 1972). Charles Tilly, "Food Supply and Public Order in Modern Europe", in

Whilst there were political elements to some riots, the distinctive features of bread riots lay elsewhere, particularly in the ritualised nature of the protest and the limited role of violence. They were also uniquely women's affairs. Even in miniature, the Bartow County incident set out the typical contours of the Confederate bread riots as groups of southern women seized goods, doing so openly without any attempt at concealment, and often legitimising their actions by the offer to purchase the goods at a fair price determined by the women. Far from representing violent resistance to the Confederacy, bread riots were essentially encounters between women and market traders and merchants they believed to be speculators. With the exception of the Richmond riot, which was very much the exception because of its size and location, the role of the state was often reduced to that of a bystander or little more than a *gendarmerie* dispersing crowds and maintaining order on the streets. Most striking was the relative absence of violence. Although women frequently armed themselves, typically with domestic or farmyard implements, the role of violence was limited and unlike comparable

Charles Tilly (ed.), *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1975). James. C Scott, *The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and Subsistence in Southeast Asia* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1976). For the particular role of women and bread riots, see Hufton, "Women in Revolution 1789 – 1796", Olwen Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her: A History of Women in Western Europe, Volume One 1500 – 1800* (New York, Alfred Knoff, 1996), Cynthia A. Bouton, *The Flour War: Gender, Class and Community in Late Ancien Regime French Society* (Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University, 1993). For studies of popular protest in colonial America and the Early Republic, see Pauline Maier, *From Resistance to Revolution: Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765 – 1776* (New York and London: W.W. Norton, 1991), Edward Countrymen, "Social Protest and the Revolutionary Movement, 1765- 1776", in J.R. Pole and Jack. P. Greene (eds.), *A Companion to the American Revolution* (Hoboken: Wiley, 2008), Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalisation of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), Eric Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1976). For works connecting the Confederate bread riots with the moral economy thesis, see Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, pp.52- 55 and Paul D. Escott, "The Moral Economy of the Crowd in Confederate North Carolina", *Maryland Historian*, Vol. 122 (1982), pp. 1-17.

northern riots there was no widespread destruction of property or arson and no loss of life. Unlike in the North, bread riots were not used as the opportunity to attack other groups such as African Americans or immigrants. There is little to suggest that the bread riots were a public manifestation of opposition to the Confederacy and there is little to connect the women, many almost certainly with sons and husbands in the war, with disloyalty. Women may have been emboldened by their desperation on behalf of their families to turn their discontent into direct action but even a southern press, at times highly critical and quick to denigrate the role of the women, never accused them of disloyalty to the Confederate cause.³¹⁴ Remarkably, the Confederate bread rioters remained consistently focused on their core objective of obtaining bread and other household essential essentials and the riots were not used as a vehicle to pursue other wider discontents such as the inequities of conscription or indeed seek an end to the war. That women rioted at all must have appeared shocking to most southerners and, in a society constructed around racial and gendered stereotypes, in most instances the authorities struggled to know how to deal with such women often described in the press as unsexing themselves through their actions and often characterized as Amazons or *viragos*. Significantly, other than in Richmond, only a handful of women were arrested during the riots and, with the exception of Richmond, no women were actually imprisoned. As a form of popular protest long associated

³¹⁴ Press coverage of the riots in Confederate newspapers was mixed but, outside of Salisbury and Raleigh, was generally unsympathetic with some papers, such as the *Greensborough Patriot*, being consistently hostile. All papers, regardless of political hue, were also quick to use the riots as an opportunity to criticise or attack other targets such as speculators or the Richmond's government policy of impressing goods.

with women, the gendered nature of the riots shaped both the actions of the women and the response of the authorities.

Throughout 1863 and 1864, many features of the Bartow County incident would be repeated across the Confederacy as market place riots were interspersed with raids on supply depots or warehouses, as in December, 1862, when a group of women apparently “descended” on a railway agent in Greenville, Alabama, crying “Salt or Blood” and seized a quantity of salt.³¹⁵ Early riots were more commonly market place disturbances and in late March, 1863, major riots involving women broke out simultaneously in Atlanta, Georgia, and in Salisbury, North Carolina, both attracting considerable coverage in the Confederate and northern presses.³¹⁶ The targets of the new riots were city merchants and store holders and, on the 18 March, in Atlanta, women rioted taking provisions from at least one store, having seemingly failed to secure a reduction in the price of the goods.³¹⁷ A

³¹⁵ The sole reference is from Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War*, pp. 38-39. which cites the *Natchez Weekly Courier*, 11 December, 1862.

³¹⁶ Coverage of southern bread riots within the Confederate press was at best limited and at times suppressed. Following the April, 1863, Richmond riot, local editors were explicitly urged by the Confederate Assistant Adjutant-General Jonathon Withers, on behalf of the Secretary of War, to avoid all reference to the “unfortunate disturbance” to avoid giving encouragement to the enemy. *O.R.*, ser.1, vol. 18, 965. Although papers, such as the *Greensborough Patriot*, were critical of such attempts to censor the press, most Confederate papers appear to have exercised considerable self-censorship. *Greensborough Patriot*, 16 April, 1863. In contrast, southern editors enthusiastically reported northern riots, frequently emphasizing the racial tensions between northern *negroes* and others including Federal troops and Irish immigrant labourers, and extensive coverage was provided of the 1863 New York draft riots as well as riots in Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio and other northern states. As with northern papers relishing southern difficulties, the Confederate press delighted in accounts demonstrating how badly black men and women were treated in the abolitionist North compared with a paternalist South. In June 1863, the *Macon Daily Telegraph* carried an account of widespread destruction of black property and violence following a race riot in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania between white Federal soldiers and local black residents. Noting that, despite the violence and destruction, no action was taken against the soldiers concerned, the *Telegraph* told its readers: “This is fighting for the negro at [in] the South and fighting with negro at [in] the North.” *Macron Daily Telegraph*, 5 June, 1863.

³¹⁷ There is some confusion about dates with both McCurry and David and Theresa Williams dating the riot as 16 March, 1863. It is more likely to have occurred on the 18 March, 1863. The 19 March issue of the *Southern Confederacy*, in its article, “*Crinoline Imitations of the Habits of Confederate*

sympathetic *Atlanta Intelligencer* described the scene the following day, telling how a dozen or so women, all wives and daughters of soldiers, who had had little to eat, other than a small amount of bread, went into the city until they came to a “Provision Store” in White Hall Street:

They all entered it, being preceded by a tall lady on whose countenance rested care and determination. She asked the merchant the price of bacon. He replied stating it was \$1.00 per pound. She remonstrated with him, as the impossibility of females in their condition paying such prices for this necessary of life. He remained inexorable in his demands, this tall lady proceeded to draw from her bosom a long navy repeater, and at the same time ordered the others in the crowd to help themselves to what they liked, which they did accordingly, giving preference to the bacon, until they had taken, as we learn, something like \$200.00 worth.

Entitling its article describing the riot, “Relieve the Distressed”, the *Intelligencer* offered no criticism of the women’s action but spoke instead of “gentlemen” of the city responding to the incident by spontaneously contributing to a relief fund for the wives and daughters of soldiers.³¹⁸ In contrast, a critical *Southern Confederacy* also reported on the incident the following day providing its readers with a less sympathetic account, suggesting that all the women, now numbering fifteen to twenty, were all well-dressed and employed making clothes for the government. As with the *Atlanta Intelligencer*, however, the refusal to pay

Officials”, describes the riot as occurring on the previous day. This is consistent with Bohannon’s dating of the riot, citing the *Macon Journal and Messenger*. McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p.180. Williams and Williams, “‘The Women Rising’”, p.70. *Southern Confederacy*, 19 March, 1863, p. 3. Bohannon, *More like Amazons than starving people*, p.164 n. 14. The significance of the date is that it excludes the possibility of Salisbury being a copycat riot as both occurred on the same day. ³¹⁸ *Atlanta Intelligencer*, copied by the *Macon Daily Telegraph*, 20 March, 1863. The wording of the *Intelligencer* account appears to be the source of northern coverage of the riot with both the *New York Times* and the *Newark Advocate* carrying identical reports emphasising the quiet determination of the women, describing them as soldiers’ wives with large families to support. *New York Times*, 5 April, 1863. *Newark Advocate*, 17 April, 1863. There is disagreement in the press accounts as to whether the price of the bacon was \$1.00 or \$1.10 per pound.

the prices asked was central to the story as the women explained how they “refused to give the common prices of the goods they wanted; therefore, they had collected in a body and were going around *seizing* what they wanted, and paying whatever prices they thought proper.” The women were eventually dispersed by the police. The real target of the *Southern Confederacy’s* article, however, was not the women but the government policy of impressment enabling generals and politicians, including state Governor Brown, to set the example of seizing goods and fixing a price. Claiming that the women had just as much right to seize the property of others and set a price on it, the paper compared the position of the women who were dispersed by the police with the victims of government action who had to submit to state confiscation of their goods, asking: “Is it any wonder that people become imbued with a spirit of lawlessness with such examples set before them.”³¹⁹

After further riots in Georgia, at Columbus and Augusta, the *Confederacy* continued to castigate the government, whilst also denigrating the Atlanta rioters by suggesting that most did not come from the city, only one was a soldier’s wife, and that the riot was led by a man who was now in prison where he deserved to be.³²⁰

³¹⁹ *Southern Confederacy*, 19 March, 1863. Bohannon accepts the *Confederacy’s* account of the women’s appearance and suggests that the well-dressed appearance of the women may well indicate that the women had not always been poor but had probably entered into government service because of wartime hardship. Bohannon, *More Like Amazons Than Starving People*, p. 151. In a later report dated the 25 March, the *Confederacy* was less sympathetic perhaps with an eye to its readership and advertisers, the paper defended the shopkeepers of the city, “whose profits are small and who have families to support”. The paper called for an end to such seizing, and urged any women in want to go to the authorities when their needs would be cheerfully and immediately met. Rather than continuing their attack on government policies, the paper concentrated instead in discrediting the rioters, in particular claiming that the “boss” of the rioters was no soldiers’ wife but married to a shoe maker, “who had not been in the army and is receiving very high wages for his labor.”

³²⁰ *Southern Confederacy*, 16 April, 1863.

Such attempts to discredit women rioters were not uncommon in the Confederate press as newspapers struggled to reconcile the contradiction of the sanctity of Confederate womanhood with unruly rioting women, many of whom were apparently soldiers' wives. As with the *Southern Confederacy's* account, newspapers frequently denied that rioters were soldiers' wives or in genuine need or, in other instances, trivialised or ridiculed the role of women rioters. Women who rioted were commonly accused of "unsexing" themselves by their actions or of acting like Amazons or *viragos*, thus forgoing their right to protection.³²¹

On the 18 March, 1863, women also rioted in Salisbury, North Carolina. The close similarities between the two riots in Atlanta and Salisbury, apparently happening on the same day in cities over two hundred and eighty miles apart, is uncanny, and in an age long predating social media raises questions as to how different groups of women, with no means of communicating, behaved in near identical ways. Whilst later riots must have been influenced to some extent by newspaper reports, no such explanation is available for Atlanta and Salisbury suggesting that both groups of women must have shared some similar communal memories that provided some basic template to guide the women.³²² The fullest

³²¹ Examples include the *Fayetteville Observer*, 6 April, 1863, the *Richmond Whig*, 6 April, 1863 and the *Charleston Daily Courier*, 4 March, 1863.

³²² That bread riots took place across the Confederacy in the Spring of 1863 is not remarkable although why women living in cities two hundred and eighty miles apart should appear to mirror one another's behaviour so closely on the same day is certainly curious. Bouton argues that European bread riots typically occurred between March and September because of the agricultural cycle and when merchants and small consumers competed for the grain supplies. Bouton, *The Flour War*, p.7. Accounts of hungry women unable to buy bread to feed their families had already appeared in the local North Carolina press two weeks prior to the riot. *North Carolina Argus*, 5 March, 1863. Christopher Graham's study of the Salisbury riot examines the background to the riot including patterns of enlistment and price inflation and suggests that a number of hardships came together in the Spring of 1863. Christopher A. Graham, "Women's Revolt in Rowan County," *Columbiad*, Spring 1999, 3, 1. pp. 131 – 147. The choice of the actual date of 18 March would appear to be little more

account of the riot in Salisbury was provided by the widely-cited *Carolina Watchman* which wrote how a large group of soldiers' wives, armed with at least hatchets, visited various businesses in the city demanding to buy flour and other commodities at government prices. When refused, as in Bartow County, the women took the goods anyway:

Between 40 and 50 soldiers' wives, followed by a numerous train of curious female observers, made an attack on several of our businesses last Wednesday, whom they regarded as speculators in the necessaries of life, for the purpose we are informed, of demanding an abatement in prices. [illegible line] The first house visited was Mr. M. Brown's. The demanded he should sell them flour at \$19.50 per barrel. This he declined to do, alledging [sic] that his flour had cost him more than that sum. They then said that they were determined to have the flour and would take it, unless he would sell it to them at the price the Government was paying for it; accordingly went to work with hatchets on his store room door. After some time spent in vain efforts to open the door, a parley was had, and Mr. Brown agreed to give them, free of charge, ten barrels . . .

Although cautioning the women against continuing with a dangerous strategy of seizing goods, the *Watchman's* account is largely sympathetic to the women recognising the "pinching want" that caused them to behave as they did. Perhaps conscious of its local readership, the paper reserved its main criticism for the speculators who were putting personal profit before the common good. The paper was also particularly critical of the county commissioners whose had managed the relief funds for soldiers' families so badly.³²³

than coincidence but the absence of any possibility of communication between the Atlanta and Salisbury rioters suggests that both groups of women were tapping into communal memories of such protests, perhaps going back to the American Revolution, which would be part of many families' histories.

³²³ *Carolina Watchman*, 23 March, 1863. <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-civilwar/4187> (last accessed 2 January, 2017). Graham suggests that the names of the rioters would have been known locally and that many of the men who enlisted in 1862 were older, married men. Although

Uniquely among Confederate bread riots, in addition to press accounts, there is also a lengthy explanation offered on behalf of the women by Mary C. Moore, one of the rioters, as well as a letter of complaint from its principal victim. What is evident from both accounts is that rather than a confrontation between women and the Confederate state, Salisbury, like so many of the bread riots, was an encounter between women demanding goods at fair prices and men they believed to be speculators. In the case of Salisbury, although the Confederate state was present at the scene of the riot in the person of the city mayor and county commissioners, state representatives remained bystanders, both literally and figuratively, as the women and merchants contested the price and meaning of bread as a necessity or commodity to be traded.

At one level, Moore's letter appears to be a classic account of impoverished Confederate women rioting to obtain essential household commodities at a price they could afford:

Stern necessity compelled us to go in serch [sic] of food to sustain life and some forty or more respectable but poor women started out backed by many citizens to get food we took our little money with us and offered to pay government prices for what we took but the speculators refused us anything or even admittance into their premises when we forced our way in and compelled them to give us something . . .

the argument is not quite developed by Graham, the implication seems to be that the *Watchman* would have been disinclined to be critical of the wives of local citizens, well known in their community, who were away fighting for their country. Graham does claim that some of the \$50,000 voted for the "relief of soldiers wives" was diverted by local commissioners to arm and equip soldiers. Ibid. Graham's characterisation of the 1862 volunteers is entirely consistent with Noe's analysis of "later enlistees" who were also older and more likely to be married. Noe, *Reluctant Rebels*, pp.14 – 15.

Yet the layering in Moore's letter indicates rather more about the role of soldiers' wives and bread riots. As with the women of Atlanta, the Salisbury rioters appear not to have been women seeking relief or entitlements because of the absence of their husbands away on military service but were "respectable" working women employed by the Confederate government making uniforms. Their central complaint was that they were unable to support their families because of the imbalance between what they could earn making uniforms for the government and what they had to pay speculators. Their proposed solution, as with other women such as Betty Horner and the anonymous Regulators, was that Vance fixed the price of goods, as the women: "do humbly pray you in [on] behalf of our helpless children to so fix the prices of bread and meat that we can by our labor gain an honest portion of that which sustains life." Whilst the letter shared many of the formulaic aspects and rhetorical ploys of other women's letters, Moore also wrote with an unusual level of conviction, confident that the women were right to behave as they did, denying that they were plunderers disturbing the peace of their community and reminding Vance that everything they did, they did openly, and that they had the support of "many citizens". Critically, like many other North Carolina women, Moore choose to express her request, not in the language of rights or entitlements but that of fairness, insisting that they did not want the state's money: "we ask not for charity, we only ask fair and reasonable prices".³²⁴

³²⁴ Mary C. Moore to Vance, 21 March. 1863. Box 163 GP NCDAH. The letter contains the usual plays on Vance's public persona and at one point, under the guise of flattering him as the choice of their husbands and sons, indirectly reminds him that as an elected politician he will need those votes again. Moore reinforces her point by referring to the support the women received from "many citizens" or male voters. In terms of complaints, the letter sets out the increases in household

Not surprisingly, their principal victim saw things rather differently. Michael Brown, described in North Carolina newspapers as the speculator believed to responsible for the local increase in the price of flour, saw the women simply as a lawless mob who had attacked the door of his store with hatchets and demanded his flour. Writing to Vance immediately after the riot, Brown's main complaint was not about the women but about the failure of the authorities to do maintain order. Although the city mayor and county commissioners were present, nothing was done to stop the women and "no effort [was] made to end and prohibit the illegal and forcible seizure."³²⁵ As a further illustration of bread riots being confrontations between women and traders and not women and the state, the *Carolina Watchman* noted the presence of county commissioners but observed, with implied criticism of the women, how the women passed them by in order to make their demands "on those you considered speculators."³²⁶ Some papers went further and, in a single uncorroborated report in the northern press, the *New York Evening Post* suggested that the women first approached the commandant of two companies of North Carolina soldiers, stationed at the city jail, to ask him to provide them with a guard to protect them in their actions against the speculators. Although the request was formally refused, nearly all the soldiers were then granted a furlough that afternoon when they then "hovered" at the scene as though prepared to help them if needed. The same northern account provided the only suggestion of violence

staples but claims that, because of the piecework rates, few women can earn more than a dollar a day from their work as seamstresses making uniform jackets and trousers.

³²⁵ *Raleigh Register*, 25 March, 1863. Michael Brown to Vance, 18 March, 1863. Box 163 GP NCDAH.

³²⁶ *Ibid.*

accompanying the riot, accusing Brown of brandishing a pistol and threatening to shoot the first woman who entered his store.³²⁷ Given that Salisbury was the most prominent of the North Carolina bread riots, and even allowing for the unreliability of northern press accounts, the absence any accounts of violence by women, other than the brandishing of hatchets, is telling.³²⁸

That the *Carolina Watchman* was critical of speculators was not unusual. Even before the outbreak of bread riots, the role of speculators or “extortioners” had been universally reviled in the Confederate press.³²⁹ Unlike other press debates, such as the role of planters and their continuing insistence on producing cotton or tobacco rather than essential commodities, there were no apologists for speculation. Such universal condemnation of speculators both enabled the Confederate press to avert criticism of wartime policy failures but also enabled papers to remind their readership of the southern values for which they were fighting. Attacks on speculators avoided discussion of the failures of government to control price inflation and ensure the necessary production and transportation of essential commodities by personalising the cause of domestic difficulties and failures on a relatively small number of selfish men who, unlike the great majority of their fellow citizens, put personal greed before national good. Such criticisms were

³²⁷ *New York Evening Post*, 9 May, 1863.

³²⁸ Edwards cites the Salisbury riot as evidence that desperate common women targeted and confronted Confederate officials who they saw as the enemy although her reliance on a single source from a documentary collection misses out the eye witness accounts of Moore and Brown and the report in the *Carolina Watchman*. The paper specifically criticised the women for ignoring the state officials present at the scene in their desire to get to the merchants. Edwards, *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, pp. 93- 94.

³²⁹ For a discussion of extortion and speculation being the cardinal sins of Confederate ideology see, “Sliding into the World’: The Sin of Extortion and the Dynamic of Confederate Identity”, in Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*.

complemented in the Confederate press by regular accounts of public spirited men who were making essential commodities available, often to soldiers' wives, at reduced prices. As with the praising of public benefactors, vilification of speculators was itself a restatement of Confederate republican virtue with speculation portrayed at an essentially northern vice or the preserve of foreign or Jewish merchants. In this sense, women bread rioters who were seizing goods from traders and merchants they believed, like Michael Brown, to be speculators, far from being dissenting voices, were acting entirely within mainstream Confederate public opinion, even if their direct actions shocked.

Following Atlanta and Salisbury, April, 1863, saw a series of bread riots across both Georgia and North Carolina, as well as the largest riot in the Confederacy in Richmond, Virginia.³³⁰ In Georgia, the meaning of the riots continued to be contested as women appeared to target Jewish or German owned

³³⁰ Although continuing to dominate the historiography, Richmond was far from typical and, both in terms of its size and its highly political location, was unlike any other Confederate bread riot, as over a thousand women and men surged through the streets and sacked local stores and warehouses. Whilst the size of the Richmond crowd easily exceeded any other riot, more importantly, the Richmond riot was uniquely a direct confrontation between women and the Confederate state. Unlike most riots which involved encounters between women and traders and were largely policed as low-level disturbances, Richmond was a manifestly political event with women making direct demands on the Confederate state, refusing orders to disperse and eventually only leaving the streets after the intervention of both the state governor and Confederate President, Jefferson Davis, who threatened to order state troops to fire on the crowd. Nowhere else in the Confederacy did riots result in the positioning of canon on the streets of southern cities or result in regular Confederate troops being diverted away from front line duties to guard the city. Even the legal consequences were exceptional with Richmond remaining the only riot where women were put before the courts, convicted and imprisoned. The Richmond historiography is extensive but most accounts return, sooner or later to Michael B. Chesson, "Harlots or Heroines? A New Look at the Richmond Bread Riot," *The Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*, vol.92, (April 1984), pp. 131 – 175. For the most recent analysis of Richmond as an insurgency see Kristen Brill, "Rich Women's War, Poor Women's Fight: Class and Conflict in the Richmond Bread Riot, 1863", in Marie Molloy and Laura Sandy, (eds.), *Negotiating the Peripheries: The Civil War and Slavery Reconsidered* (forthcoming, Liverpool University Press). It is likely that the Richmond riot was preceded by a riot or disturbance in Petersburg on the previous day. *New York Times*, 10 April, 1863.

stores. On the 1 April, a small group of women, described as being armed with revolvers and bowie knives, took calico from the Macon store of two Bavarian born brothers.³³¹ On the 10 and 11 April, further riots took place in Augusta, Milledgeville and Columbus, with the role of women being treated unsympathetically in the Georgia press. The *Southern Confederacy* dismissed the riots as the work of “wicked and ignorant” women whilst the *Savannah Republican* was also critical of the “feeble outbreaks” perpetrated by the women. Accusing the women of again arming themselves with pistols and bowie knives, and by implication being little other than a lawless mob headed by a few vagabonds, it nevertheless reported that the women had visited the stores, “for the purposes of helping themselves to merchandize at what they considered fair prices.”³³² In Augusta, local newspapers provided more details of the riot in the town describing how, on the 10 April, “a small number” of women apparently made unsuccessful attempts to obtain goods, first going to the store of Prussian born, Julius Reinhart, asking him “if he had shoes for a dollar a pair, and calico at fifty cents a yard as these were the prices they intended to pay”. Having failed to get goods from Reinhart, the women then went to a second store belonging to Edward Gallagher, an Irish born immigrant, before dispersing when the mayor and two police officers arrived. Although a man

³³¹ The principal sources for Macon are Williams and Williams, *The Women Rising*, p. 72 and Bohannon, *More Like Amazons Than Starving People* pp. 153-154. Both cite similar newspaper accounts but provide no additional details.

³³² Either for reasons of not wanting to publicise the riots, or because of being overtaken by the pace of events, some newspapers choose not to separate out the different riots. The 13 April edition of the *Savannah Republican*, covered Milledgeville, Columbus and Augusta whilst the 16 April edition of the *Southern Confederacy* covered Atlanta, Columbus and Augusta.

was arrested, seemingly for encouraging the women, which was clearly the greater crime in the eyes of the authorities, he seems not to have been brought to trial.³³³

Although essentially a confrontation between women and traders, the riot in the Georgia capital, Milledgeville, on the 10 April was the most political of the bread riots outside of Richmond, eventually involving state governor Joseph Brown. It was also tainted by overtones of anti-Semitism with Jewish premises possibly being deliberately targeted by discontented Confederate women. In a far from impartial eye witness account, the local correspondent of the *Savannah Republican* concluded a routine report on the proceedings of the Georgia legislature in dramatic fashion:

As I close my letter the streets present a painful spectacle. A crowd of women are about entering some of the Jew stores of the town and helping themselves. They are well supplied with Bowie knives and pistols and seem in dead earnest. It is not a bread riot but a measure of vengeance on the factory and some of the merchants who have been heartless in their exactions. It is well that it occurs here under the eye of those who set the example of seizing, and thus run the goods out of the State, or, in a great measure into the hands of heartless and exacting shylocks. The women were all comfortably clad, and did not disturb provision stores, which leads to the impression that it was an outside movement for the punishment of certain Jew merchants who have made themselves justly odious by their exactions.³³⁴

Whilst Bohannon has suggested that many southerners saw city merchants, many of whom were foreign born, as symbolic of greedy outsiders embracing “Yankee values” in an agrarian, southern society, associations between extortion

³³³ The fullest account of the Augusta riot is provided by Bohannon, *More Like Amazons Than Starving People*, p.157.

³³⁴ 13 April, 1863. *Savannah Republican*

and anti-Semitism appear widespread across the Confederacy and may have both fuelled women's resentments and reinforced a sense of justification.³³⁵ As with a number of other riots and raids, the principle target in Milledgeville was not bread but cloth. Newspaper reports described how about seventy-five women, some armed with pistols, first went to a dry goods store owned by Jacob Gans where they helped themselves to various silks, muslins and the like. Gans had apparently unsuccessfully attempted to appease the women by giving them a bale of yarns and possibly an offer of shoes.³³⁶ The women then went to cloth manufacturers, Leopold and Solomon Waitzfelder, seemingly seeking cotton yarn, although it is unclear whether the women were successful before being dispersed by the state authorities, after the city officials were "either unable or indisposed" to disperse the

³³⁵ Although Bohannon does not cite the *Republican*, he observes that five of the six merchants targeted in Georgia's 1863 riots had been born outside of the United States, four were from German states and two were Jewish Ibid, p. 148. Faust observes that much southern discussion of extortion "lapsed into anti-Semitism" and cites other examples of gross prejudice such as the decision of the Georgia town, Thomasville, in 1862 to expel all Jewish residents having accused them of extortion, speculation and counterfeiting. Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism* p.50. For further examples of anti-Semitic stereotyping, including the *Richmond Examiner*, as a prime promoter of anti-Semitism, see Coulter, *The Confederate States of America*, pp. 223 -229. As might be expected, the use of the term "shylock" was a common anti-Semitic trope implying that Jewish traders demanded their proverbial pound of flesh from soldiers' families. George C. Rable, *God's Almost Chosen People: A Religious History of the American Civil War*, Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), p.253. In a major study of Jewish communities in the South, Robert Rosen acknowledges southern anti-Semitism but suggests that southerners, who rarely met Jews, often confused Jews and Germans, blaming foreign traders generally for the shortages. Generally, Rosen minimises the impact of anti-Semitic outbursts that happened in Thomasville and in other places such as Richmond, arguing that despite the "sound and fury", no one was molested or injured. Robert N. Rosen, *The Jewish Confederates*, (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2000), pp. 265 -76. Southerners also wrote to the authorities about Jewish merchants such as the fifty men and women from Kingston, South Carolina who petitioned Secretary of War Seddon in March, 1864, complaining that they were "infested with a set of jewes." Citizens of Kingston to Secretary of War Seddon, 23 March, 1864, LRCSW Roll 135.

³³⁶ Massey observes that clothing shortages became an issue from 1863 onwards as clothing wore out and replacement items or materials were hard to obtain not least because of government interventions to meet the needs of the army. Massey, *Ersatz in the Confederacy*, p. 79.

crowds.³³⁷ The women were also addressed by Judge Harris of the Superior Court who urged them to disperse saying their needs would be met. During the course of the riot, some of the women also spoke to state legislators who observed the riot, including Congressman Ebenezer Fain, who wrote to his daughter, explaining that the women, whose husbands were in the army, “had told the people that they had come to supply their wants, that they were suffering and must have provisions and clothes.” Apparently complaining about the favourable treatment given to Georgia slaveholders, the women had threatened that if justice was not done and they did not receive what they needed, their men would return home, with their guns in hand, when there would be “more blood shed [sic] than was at Bunker Hill.”³³⁸

If such sentiments were expressed publicly, and known to the authorities, it would certainly explain the robust actions eventually taken in Milledgeville to quell the riot and arrest rioters, including women. As with the riot in Richmond, rioting in the Georgia state capitol in the near vicinity of the capital building themselves, whilst publicly threatening to incite desertion and bloodshed, would appear to transgress most of the established boundaries to acceptable popular protest. Regardless of the reasons for the city officials failing to act, the state authorities called out guards from the nearby state penitentiary and Governor Brown, also present in the capital, ordered out armed militia after which three women and two men were arrested. Despite the arrests and the political overtones, in common with

³³⁷ *Macon Daily Telegraph*, 14 April, 1863. *Columbus Weekly Sun*, 21 April, 1863. *Augusta Chronicle and Sentinel*, 15 April, 1863. All three are cited by Bohannon who identifies all the merchants as Jewish immigrants. *Ibid*, pp.154 -156.

³³⁸ Huldah Fain to Murphy C. Briant, 14 April, 1863. Huldah Annie Fain Briant Papers, Perkins Library, Duke University.

other instances across the Confederacy with the exception of Richmond, none of the men or women appear to have been brought to trial and were eventually released.³³⁹ Notwithstanding the women's bloodthirsty threats, Huldah Fain appeared to offer at least qualified support to the women whose husbands were away fighting for their property and liberty: "such patriotic ladies will never suffer while provisions are in the country and they are right if they really are suffering."³⁴⁰

A riot in Columbus, Georgia, the following day was also concerned with cloth, particularly calico, enabling the Confederate press to trivialise the women's concerns over clothing and mock the women for wanting to wear calico rather than homespun cloth. As an unsympathetic editor at the *Greensborough Patriot* wrote: ". . . we are sorry for the gals, as they have still to wear homespun or fig leaves. Can the humane public make up a purse to buy *caliker* frocks for them".³⁴¹ Although two men were arrested, as usual neither was brought to trial.³⁴² In North Carolina, a further riot took place around the 23 or 24 March, in Guilford County. At

³³⁹ Bohannon believes that some of the women may have been following the proceedings of the legislature and could have timed their demonstration, to coincide with the legislative session but offers no evidence in support of the argument. Ibid. 156 – 157.

³⁴⁰ Huldah Fain, Ibid. The letter is cited by Rable, Faust and Bohannon, all of whom disagree as to location of the riot. Rable attributes the letter incorrectly to the Richmond riot whilst Faust takes the letter as evidence of a further riot in St. Lucah [sic], Georgia. Bohannon appears correct in concluding that the letter was written by Huldah Fain, from her home, in Santa Lucah. The confusions arise because Fain is apparently quoting from a letter, which she had received that day from her father, Ebenezer Fain, a Georgia congressman, referring to the Milledgeville riot he had just witnessed. Although the letter refers to the traders as the "the Jews", is not clear whether this is Fain's description or that of the women. Rable, *Civil Wars*, pp. 109 -110. Faust, *Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, p.54. Bohannon, *More Like Amazons Than Starving People* pp. 155, 165 n. 26.

³⁴¹ *Greensborough Patriot*, 23 April, 1863. As a parody of the cry "Bread or Blood", the women were reported as demanding, "cloth, *caliker* or bust by hokey". The Columbus riot also involved women from Girard, Alabama, across the Chattahoochee River. Generally, the tone of the *Patriot* was particularly hostile to women. Bynum describes the paper as the Piedmont's major Whig publication and highly critical of women's protest. Bynum, *Unruly Women*, pp. 145- 146.

³⁴² Bohannon, Ibid. p.158.

High Point, a small group of women, mainly soldiers' wives, seized a barrel of molasses from a local merchant, William Welch. As with the earlier Bartow County incident, the local Raleigh newspaper, *The Weekly Standard*, was broadly sympathetic and linked the incident to a refusal by the merchant to reduce the price of the goods. In common with other southern newspapers who were critical of an increasingly controlling Confederate state, it also took the opportunity to make comparisons between individual acts of seizure and the state sanctioned policy of impressment:

We learn from a friend that seven women at High Point, a day or two since, six of whom were soldiers' wives, went to the store of Mr. William Welch and rolled out a barrel of molasses and divided it. The merchant it is said, had refused to sell, and was holding up for a higher price. Our informant states that the merchant is a great war man, and favors general impressment of supplies by the army. How does he like the principle of impressment as applied in his case? ³⁴³

Within a matter of weeks, an attempted riot also took place in nearby Greensboro. The incident was reported on unsympathetically by the *Greensborough Patriot*, which portrayed the attempted riot as an encounter between reasonable men and unreasonable women, describing how a group of women, armed as usual with knives, axes and hatchets, were arrested as they attempted to break down the store door of a local merchant. A larger group had earlier been intercepted by concerned citizens who attempted to discover what they needed so, "if they were really suffering for the necessities of life, that proper means might be taken to relieve their necessities." Although the group of armed women were arrested, they

³⁴³ *Raleigh Weekly Standard*, 25 March, 1863. The *Standard*, edited by William Holden, was a consistent critic of the Confederate government in Richmond.

were released without charge once the incident was over. Whilst highly critical of the women, the *Patriot* concluded the story with an attack on speculators who they held responsible for “the present *mania* for female raids.”³⁴⁴

Almost certainly, the *Patriot* intended their use of the term *mania*, with its hints of hysteria, to be a further dismissal of the significance of women’s protests but the sudden emergence of riots led by women must have been mystifying to contemporary observers, not least because rioting by women appeared to abate almost as quickly as it had arisen. Whilst the initial outbreak of riots might be explained through the coming together of different factors in the Spring of 1863, there is no comparable explanation why, after the spate of riots in March and April, riots then became less frequent. Not only did riots become less common, but the focus of many incidents shifted away from the traditional market place to focus instead on transportation and government warehouses, many of which would have been stores for the new tax-in-kind imposed from April, 1863.³⁴⁵ Why Confederate bread riots became less frequent remains an open question, and although greater welfare provision, and possible improved policing of southern cities may have been factors, both appear marginal when measured against the continuing problems of

³⁴⁴ *Greensborough Patriot* 16 April, 1863. Again, the paper mocked the women, suggesting that one woman attempted to shoot a soldier but did not know how to pull the trigger.

³⁴⁵ The impact of tax-in-kind was significant and required ten percent of all produce grown on farms and plantations, over the level of subsistence, to be surrendered. It fell disproportionately on states such as North Carolina and Georgia with high levels of food production. Military impressment, which was much opposed by the states and Confederate newspapers, appears to have arisen as much through military necessity as through legislation. E. Merton Coulter, *The Confederate States of America, 1861- 1865* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1950), pp. 251 – 253. In practice, the confused and, at times, corrupt application of tax-in-kind and impressment, caused enormous local resentment adding to the discontent caused by conscription and speculation. New stores being used to hold products seized from local farms would certainly have been attractive targets and are unlikely to have been well guarded.

supply, which was exacerbated by military impressment of produce and livestock, making many household essentials unobtainable for southern families. As the many letters from women attest, there was no lessening of Confederate discontent during 1863 and 1864 despite the apparent reduction in riots.³⁴⁶

At about the same time as Greensboro, armed women “made an attack on a mill” seizing flour in Lafayette, Alabama. In Virginia, newspapers reported two instances of armed women intimidating merchants forcing them to give up cotton cloth and other supplies.³⁴⁷ Forty miles east of Raleigh, North Carolina at Wilson, a planned “female raid” was apparently avoided when “wise counsels”, presumably male, prevailed.³⁴⁸ In Monroe County, Georgia, at the end of April, a group of twenty-eight of women, reportedly armed with knives and guns, stopped a wagon transporting cotton from the factory to the railhead at Forsyth and stole four bales of manufactured cotton goods.³⁴⁹ At times, women combined the seizing of wagons with the traditional demand for fair prices. In a little-known incident in May, 1863, soldiers’ wives, from Buncombe County, the home county of state governor,

³⁴⁶ In general, the Confederacy was better at producing guns than butter. For an analysis of military needs taking precedence over feeding and clothing the civilian population see Thomas, *The Confederate Nation*, pp. 196 – 214. Bohannon, who views the Georgia urban riots primarily as a crisis in law and order, resulting from food shortages, sees enhanced policing in the city centres as a possible explanation for the reduction in riots, together with increased expenditure of relief. Bohannon, *More like Amazons than Starving People*. pp. 161- 162.

³⁴⁷ Coulter, *Ibid*. p. 423. Coulter provides no additional details but the citations suggest March or April, 1863.

³⁴⁸ *Daily Progress*, copied by the *Greensborough Patriot*, 9 April, 1863. The incident does not appear in any of the secondary accounts I reviewed.

³⁴⁹ *Edgefield Advertiser*, 6 May, 1863. The *Advertiser* which copied the Monroe County story from the Macon *Telegraph* asserted that none of the women concerned were suffering from “poverty or necessity” and that they were accompanied by a man armed with a gun. The theft probably happened on 17 April, 1863.

Zebulon Vance, seized a wagon load of goods, after having apparently failed to secure a reduction in price:

IMPRESSMENT, — We learn that on Friday, the 15th inst., a company of soldier's wives, on Avery's Creek, some 12 or 15 in number, who were destitute of provisions, and not being able to give the exorbitant prices asked, (1\$ per lb.) seized a wagon load of bacon, belonging to Wm. Henry, of Sulphur Springs, and helped themselves to 400 or 500 lbs. — We are told they paid, or offered the driver 50 cents per pound, but whether he accepted it or not we are not informed. — *Henderson Times* ³⁵⁰

By the autumn, probably on the 4 September, women were back on the streets again in Mobile, Alabama, in a rare example linking the protests with a demand to end the war, as women marched behind banners proclaiming “Bread or Blood” and “Bread and Peace”. Again, it seems possible that local Confederate troops sympathised with the women and may have disobeyed orders to put down the riot. It also seems likely that Jewish stores were again visited, with northern papers suggesting that local police beat a Jewish trader who had forcibly ejected women.³⁵¹ Why women in Mobile choose to add a demand for peace to their

³⁵⁰ *Weekly Standard*, 10 June, 1863. Again, the incident does not appear in any of the secondary accounts I reviewed.

³⁵¹ The standard account remains Harriet E. Amos, “All-Absorbing Topics’: Food and Clothing in Confederate Mobile.”, *Atlanta Historical Journal*, Part 3 – 4 (1978), pp. 17 – 28. The Mobile riot is widely referenced by historians, partly perhaps because of Amos’s detailed early study, and also because of the dramatic banners carried by the women. Although Amos dates the riot as happening in April, northern newspaper accounts suggest the main riot occurred on or around the 4 September. *New York Times*, 11 October, 1863 and *Connecticut Courant*, 19 September, 1863. It does seem likely that some form of riot also took place in March or April which may account for the confusion over dates. *Staunton Spectator*, 7 April 1863. Chesson also refers to an earlier riot in Mobile which he dates as 25 March, 1863. Chesson, “Harlots or Heroines”, p. 136. Critically in the September riot, Confederate troops were deployed but had to be withdrawn when they seemingly sympathised with the women. Although Amos describes southern newspapers refraining from reporting on the riot for fear of accounts being read by the enemy, some northern newspapers delighted in describing how Alabama troops refused to obey orders. Mobile also provides one of the rare illustrations of women rioting, although the illustration dates from 1883 <http://www.encyclopediaofalabama.org/article/m-8227> (last accessed 17 January, 2017). Gates

complaints is unclear although similar demands, using the same language, had been made in the city earlier in the year. More pertinently, is the broader question of why obvious discontent with the impact of the war on their families so rarely translated into women demanding an end to the war itself? The point was not lost on some northern observers, such as the abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher, who drew attention to it in a letter to the New York press in the early summer of 1863: “Even when hunger drives women to riot and violence, it is remarkable that they demand “bread “and never “peace”. The consistent absence of wider demands, such as an end to the war, continued to be a distinctive feature of women’s riots throughout the war, suggesting either a remarkable discipline in how women expressed their discontent or perhaps indicating a continuing loyalty to the South in the face of perceived northern aggression, regardless of any disaffection with the Confederacy itself. As with women’s letters, discontent was not always the same as disloyalty.³⁵²

In February, 1864, the North Carolina press was carrying stories of fifteen mounted soldiers’ wives, reportedly dressed in militia uniforms, from Zollicoffer,

suggests that an earlier incident had also taken place in Talladega, Alabama in September, when women seized shoes. Ibid. p.39.

³⁵² Mobile remains the only riot where peace was mentioned in either press or eyewitness accounts. Posters and handbills demanding “BREAD OR PEACE” had appeared in the city earlier in the year in April and although signed anonymously as BRUTUS 11, appeared from the text, to be the work of a man. Andrew F. Smith, *Starving the South: How the North Won the Civil War* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2011), p.62. In June 1863, the *Southern Recorder* printed in full a letter to the *New York Independent* by Henry Ward Beecher when he warned about the continuing resolve of the South, making the observation about bread and peace. *Southern Recorder*, 2 June, 1863. Beecher’s letter applauded southern resilience but why an ardent abolitionist, and supporter of Lincoln, should write in such terms is not clear, although in early 1863 he may have wished to remind his audience that the South could only be defeated through continuing military effort alone and that there was no easy alternative such as hoping that the South could be defeated simply by starvation. As with the riots, very few letters by women to the Confederate authorities demanded an end to the war.

raiding warehouses in Bristol, Tennessee, and carrying off cotton yarn. In the following month, there was a further report of women, mainly soldiers' wives, offering to pay fair prices when raiding government tithe or tax-in-kind stores in Davidson County, North Carolina.³⁵³ A similar raid on a North Carolina tithe store in Bladenboro, probably around the same time, unusually did result in five women being imprisoned, almost certainly because the matter was viewed as simple larceny rather than a protest by the women. The women were all described as the wives or widows of soldiers or with family in the army. Unlike in other instances there appears to have been no attempt by the women to negotiate over prices and no surviving records of any press coverage. The sole record of the incident is a petition, on behalf of the women, by local men, describing them as "poor and ignorant creatures" and which acknowledged that the women accepted that their actions were unlawful but that they had been driven by "hunger and prospective suffering."³⁵⁴

By March, 1864, and possibly earlier, bread riots or raids had spread to South Carolina with women forcibly taking corn from a wagon in Barnwell, having armed themselves with clubs and muskets before overwhelming the African-American driver. Although Barnwell remains the only South Carolina disturbance

³⁵³ The *Bristol Gazette*, 4 February, 1864, copied by the *Raleigh Daily Progress*, 10 February, 1864. *Raleigh Daily Progress*, 29 February and 3 March, 1864. Neither incident appears in my review of secondary sources.

³⁵⁴ The source is a petition to Vance from Bladenboro in April, 1864, seeking the release of the women after they had been imprisoned for the theft of sacks of rice and corn. Although Bynum, McCurry and Gates all associate the incident with the Bladen Regulators, there is no supporting evidence offered for this, and Gates incorrectly dates the incident to early 1863. In contrast to the Regulators letter, the language of the petition, which is signed only by men, including a Clerk of a Superior Court and Justices of the Peace, suggests it is essentially a traditional plea for clemency. Bladenboro petition to Vance, 13 April, 1864, Box 176 GP NCDAH. Bynum, *Unruly Women*, p. 134, McCurry, *Confederate Reckoning*, p. 90, Gates, *Agriculture and the Civil War*, p. 39.

directly reported in the press, many of the familiar tropes are present in the brief account with the women described as Amazons, the paper denying that the owner of the corn was a speculator and the women justifying their actions by claiming necessity knew no law:

An acquaintance of ours had a wagon load of corn hauled to Aitken with a view to selling it. He is not a speculator of the SHYLOCK school. His charges are reasonable; but the women on the road, like famished ravens, scented the corn. The negro driver was immediately besieged by those modern [illegible] and with clubs and muskets and a bold charge, the negro had to surrender. Those Amazons carried off the prize in triumph, declaring that necessity knows no law.³⁵⁵

Significantly, references to possible riots had been appearing in the South Carolina press as early as March, 1863, before the riots in Salisbury and Atlanta, when the Columbia based *Confederate Baptist*, was warning that the “cry of famishing children” would lead “unsexed” women to sack granaries.³⁵⁶ That the *Baptist* should choose to describe the women in such distinctive terms, before such press characterisations had become commonplace, and describe the possible sackings of granaries, suggests that earlier such incidents may have already occurred in South Carolina. Certainly the language of the Barnwell raiders, with references to necessity and the law, suggest a familiarity, on the part of the women, with riots or raids elsewhere in the Confederacy. Whilst little within the state’s political culture may have emboldened women to write on their own behalf to the Confederate authorities or demonstrate publicly on the streets, South Carolina women certainly

³⁵⁵ *Charleston Daily Courier*, 4 March, 1864.

³⁵⁶ *Confederate Baptist*, 11 March, 1863, cited in Drago, *Confederate Phoenix*, p.75. Drago argues that as early as December, 1862, shortages were acute and women were struggling to feed their families particularly in upcountry counties.

played their full role in supporting deserters and draft evaders within their families and communities and the state's elites, including its newspaper editors, appear to have been well aware of the potential dangers arising from food shortages. In early 1862, a Free Market was established in Charleston, with regular announcements appearing in the local press seeking support. By July, 1863, the announcement was amended to warn of the danger of bread riots, "in our conservative city, to her serious injury and deep disgrace." The Barnwell raid may have been the only reported incident in South Carolina but seems unlikely to have been the only such event in the state.³⁵⁷ Even allowing for such assumptions, however, it does seem that fewer women rioted in South Carolina compared to Georgia and North Carolina. Significantly fewer South Carolinian women also petitioned the Confederate authorities in their own right. Whilst the particular political culture of the state, dominated by traditional planter interests, may not have encouraged any public expression of women's discontent, it is also noticeable that South Carolina remained the southern state with the least developed print culture, and one of the lowest levels of school expansion, in the years prior to the Civil War. Whilst women's letters and petitions, as well as a willingness to take to the streets, was

³⁵⁷ *Charleston Mercury*, 29 April, 1863. The warning was repeated in future editions but had disappeared by January, 1864, ironically before the Barnwell raid. Some southern cities including Charleston established free markets to distribute food to destitute families. Gleeson estimates that in 1862 the Charleston market had received \$45,000 from the city authorities and supported 558 families but had its city funding withdrawn the following year and had apparently closed by 1864. Gleeson, *The Green and the Gray*, pp.136 – 141. Rable argues that free markets generally operated during the earlier years of the war, that demand soon outstripped contributions and too few families were helped. Rable, *Civil Wars*, p.106. Even without free markets, the state authorities in South Carolina continued to support families. Although figures are not available for Barnwell, Cauthen suggests that in May 1864, over four thousand families, in Pickens County alone, were in receipt of some level of relief, with similar levels of need in neighbouring upcountry counties. Cauthen, *South Carolina Goes to War*, p.176. Campbell reports seven thousand families in Columbia receiving free public rations in March, 1865. Campbell, *When Sherman Marched North from the Sea*, pp.69 – 70.

not simply a consequence of print journalism it is difficult to avoid some degree of association, as the language of the Barnwell women suggests.³⁵⁸

Raids on stores also occurred in Georgia and in the autumn in 1863, soldiers' wives attempted to break into a government store, again probably a tithe store, in Thomasville to take food. The women subsequently appeared in the Thomas County Superior Court but once again escaped with a warning. In early 1864, other Thomas County women, armed with rifles, stopped a wagon and stole its cargo of corn. In Lowndes County, in April, women raided a government tithe store and took a quantity of bacon and in Valdosta women took cotton yarn from a store after the storekeeper refused to accept Confederate money. There were accounts of other incidents in the same neighbourhood with women taking bacon from a government warehouse and a minor riot taking place in the small settlement of Naylor with women, some members of the local church, demanding yarn, cloth and bacon.³⁵⁹

The final major bread riot took place in Savannah, Georgia, in April, 1864.³⁶⁰ At least fifty women, and probably more, went to grocery stores demanding

³⁵⁸ Wells observes that whilst numbers of newspapers, as well as their circulation, swelled across the South in the decade prior to the war, South Carolina and Maryland remained the exceptions. Whereas the number of copies in circulation almost trebled in Georgia and doubled in North Carolina in the period 1850 – 1860, in South Carolina it barely increased from 53,743 to 53,870. Whilst the numbers of schools and numbers of students in southern states increased significantly prior to the war, in South Carolina the increases were far more modest. Wells, *The Origins of the Southern Middle Class, 1800 – 1861*, pp.174 – 177.

³⁵⁹ All the examples are from Williams, Williams and Carlson, *Plain Folk in a Rich Man's War*. pp.85 – 87 who also include details of a further disturbance in Archer, Florida. David Williams additionally lists Sherman, Texas, where one hundred and twenty-five women reportedly ransacked stores, and Yancey County, in Western North Carolina, where fifty women raided a government store. Williams, *Bitterly Divided*, p.99. No other details of the incidents are available.

³⁶⁰ I have excluded from this analysis accounts in the northern press of further riots in Richmond in November, 1863, and October, 1864, which appear to be gross propaganda pieces. The Indiana

provisions and it seems likely that some efforts were made to appease the women or negotiate over prices, before other women rushed forward and helped themselves to goods, including bacon. Three women were then arrested and detained, pending an appearance in court.³⁶¹ Unusually, one of the participants in the riot subsequently handed out printed cards explaining the reasons for the women's actions which a sympathetic *Turnwold Countrymen* reported to its readership. Unlike other riots, the nature of the women's complaint was not about speculators or the price of goods but about the failures of the Confederate state and how, despite constant appeals to the authorities, soldiers' families remained without food. If the authorities would not respond to reasoned argument or appeals, then the women would do whatever was necessary to obtain the food they needed. Signing herself as "A Sufferer", the woman wrote:

'Necessity has no law, and poverty is the mother of invention,' remarks the old proverb: and these shall be the principles on which we shall, in future stand. If fair words and fair means will not do, we will try what virtue there is in stones. We want food, and must have it, by one way or the other, and if not contributed peacefully, we will have it forcibly, at the risk of our lives.³⁶²

Hancock Democrat wrote that during the November riot, five hundred women took the streets and that women and children died including a woman holding a diminutive American flag. The piece also claimed that there had been five slave insurrections over the previous months in Georgia resulting in executions, including the burning to death of seven to eight slaves, one of whom was pregnant. *Hancock Democrat*, 12 November, 1863. In October, 1864, the *Chicago Tribune* carried a very brief report, supposedly based on a smuggled letter from a Federal prisoner, saying that old men, women and children had again rioted in the capitol. *Chicago Tribune*, 23 October, 1864.

³⁶¹ *The Raleigh Daily Conservative* in its account of the riot published on the 3 May, 1864 suggests that some initial negotiations may have started before other women seized goods.

³⁶² *Turnwold Countryman*, 3 May, 1864. The article is cited by Faust, *The Creation of Confederate Nationalism*, p. 54. The *Countryman* was produced on the Turnwold Plantation in Putnam County, Georgia between 1862 and 1866.

The response of the Savannah judicial and civic authorities to the rioters is significant. Although the three arrested women subsequently appeared in the local police court, all three were discharged without any formal penalty, despite a hostile court telling them that by rioting they had ceased to be women and, by implication, had lost their traditional entitlement to protection. The court did threaten the women with the loss of their county relief, suggesting that, for the court magistrate, the problem of rioting women was essentially a civil rather than criminal matter. Two of the merchants who had lost property in the riot appealed to the City Council for compensation, but without success, which certainly demonstrated a degree of self-interest on behalf of the City but again suggests that the city authorities also viewed such incidents as private matters between the women and the traders.³⁶³ Whatever alarms rioting women caused in Savannah, the state saw no reason to intervene beyond dispersing the crowd and restoring order to the streets.³⁶⁴

Despite the traditional response of the authorities in eventually taking no action against the women, the decision by one of the participants in the Savannah riot to produce printed cards, justifying the women's actions, demonstrates an unusual degree of political awareness. Although couched in the conventional language of women's petitions, citing necessity as the excuse, the *Sufferer's* card

³⁶³ Ibid. In terms of the traders, John Gilliland petitioned the Council for \$250 for the loss of bacon and an A.F. Mira similarly claimed \$210. *Savannah Republican*, 22 April, 1864. The arrested women are named as Mary Walsh, Anne Glin and Julia McLane in Jones, *Saving Savannah*, p. 193. Whether the identities of women arrested at riots is informative is questionable. As Hufton observes, those present at the start of a riot were often not those present at the end when arrests were typically made. Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, pp. 467 – 468.

³⁶⁴ By way of comparison, Savannah papers also reported in April an account of Georgia troops breaking into commissary stores in Virginia to take flour and bacon when one Georgia officer was shot and killed and five or six soldiers wounded. *Savannah Republican*, 15 April, 1864.

also signals the intent of the women to take direct action, by taking for themselves what they needed, regardless of the consequences. Whilst the printing of justifications might be new and unambiguously political, by setting out the principled case for direct action, the Savannah women, or as least their apologist, were also connecting themselves with the mainstream tradition of Anglo-American popular protest made legitimate by the failure of the authorities to act to remedy a wrong. Faced with a Confederate state, unable to provide them with they needed, impoverished white women would “usurp” those state functions for themselves, and take the law into their own hands.³⁶⁵

In seeking to understand the meaning of the Confederate bread riots, where ordinary women compensated for the failures of the Confederate state by imposing their own version of the law on market traders and merchants, is it necessary to put aside our modern perceptions of riots. Despite a recent emphasis on their political dimensions, bread riots, as a manifestation of women’s discontent with the impact of the war on them and their families, share more with similar women’s protests in eighteenth and nineteenth century England and France and Revolutionary America, than other forms of Civil War resistance or dissent. Placing the bread riots within a broader Anglo-American tradition of popular protest, including its insistence on an underlying legitimacy, highlights not just the central role of women

³⁶⁵ Tilly describes women taking the law into their own hands to set prices after the authorities neglected their traditional duty to do so, as a “usurpation” of the state’s function. Tilly, *The Formation of Nation States in Western Europe*, pp. 386 – 388. For the traditional rights of the poor to enforce fair prices and take what they needed, also see Ruth Bogin, “Petitioning and the New Moral Economy of Post- Revolutionary America”, *The William and Mary Quarterly*, Vol. 45, No. 3 (July, 1988), pp. 391 -425.

but begins to offer an explanation for some of the riots most distinctive features including the very specific demands of women, the ritualised nature of violence and the apparent lack of any expressions of disloyalty to the Confederacy. Highlighting such as aspects of the bread riots is not to deny other interpretations of women's discontent. Riots took place against a background of enormous deprivation and hardship described in detail in women's letters, often exacerbated by a sense of inequality of sacrifice, and it would be remarkable if some women's participation in the riots was not fuelled by class resentment or, at times, communal opposition to the war. Likewise, bread riots often demonstrate planning and organization and some women showed an awareness of themselves as political actors in attempting to explain themselves to politicians and the public as in Milledgeville and Savannah. As in Salisbury, women also demonstrated a political astuteness in reminding politicians of their dependency on their husband's votes when seeking re-election. Whilst such elements were certainly present, political interpretations on their own, however, struggle to explain the limited role of violence in the riots and why such desperate women restricted their demands to bread and other commodities with hardly any mention of peace or the ending of the war or indeed without any suggestion of disloyalty to the Confederacy.

In choosing to act as they did, rioting Confederate women demonstrated an acute understanding of their own popular history. Tolerance of mass protest, as long as it remained within established boundaries and did not challenge the authority of the state, was well established within American colonial culture and the revolutionary era, particularly in defence of the interests of communities. Critical to

the issue of legitimacy of popular protest was the form such protests took. In order to be accepted as legitimate, or at least tolerated, popular uprisings typically followed a failure of the lawful authorities to act, reflected grievances within communities and had to be seen to be characterized by a degree of moderation and purpose.³⁶⁶ The question of violence was central and, at all costs, legitimate protest had to avoid the excessive use of violence.³⁶⁷ In practice, this allowed the property of merchants, and others accused of exploitation, to be attacked and damaged and weapons to be carried but, whilst any manner of “ferocious threats” was acceptable, including some level of manhandling, actual bloodshed and certainly causing death was not.³⁶⁸ In this sense, bread riots have frequently been viewed in the literature as akin to *charivari* and other traditional rituals often symbolically rebelling against the authorities, but not actually challenging the established order, and where the rules of engagement were understood by both sides.³⁶⁹ How ordinary Confederate women, supposedly confined to the private antebellum sphere of hearth and home, became familiar with such unwritten social rules is not known but the persistence of community rituals over time in southern society as a means of shaming wrong doers and protecting traditional standards is

³⁶⁶ Maier, *Ibid*, pp. 4, 12 -13, 21. For the restraint of mobs and the selective destruction of property also see Wood, *The Radicalisation of the American Revolution*, p.90.

³⁶⁷ Hufton, *The Prospect Before Her*, p.469 and *Women in Revolution*, p.94.

³⁶⁸ Hobsbawm and Rudé, *Captain Swing*, p.212. Generally, the literature emphasises, perhaps inevitably, the reasonableness of bread rioting crowds as in Thompson famous dictum that: “It is the restraint, rather than the disorder, which is remarkable”. *Ibid*. p.112.

³⁶⁹ For a cultural reading of the behaviour of crowds and the significance of ritual, see Natalie Z. Davis, *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (London: Duckworth, 1973). Davis argues that the sixteenth century religious riots in France were often an attempt to make the authorities carry out their traditional responsibilities. Crowds viewed their illegal acts as legitimate and grounded in community customs.

not in doubt.³⁷⁰ Whilst rioting women undoubtedly had access to the limited accounts of riots carried in the Confederate press and would have met together in church congregations and the market place queues, the deftness by which women conducted their direct action to avoid transgressing the established boundaries of acceptable protest, suggests that family histories and communal experience must also have played their part in the bread riots.³⁷¹

The central role of women, and the absence of men, was a defining feature of the bread riots.³⁷² Although other contemporary riots, such as the 1863 New York Draft Riot, involved both men and women, the Confederate Bread Riots appear only to involve women. At times, unsympathetic southern newspapers were keen to suggest that shadowy, individual men had a controlling hand in the riots but, even in the least sympathetic newspapers accounts, these remained women's riots. The significance of women's role is even more evident when set against the relatively infrequency of southern riots; unlike in the North, southerners rarely

³⁷⁰ The fullest discussion of community rituals and their function in southern society between 1800 and 1860, including the role of *shivaree*, is found in Wyatt – Brown, *Southern Honour*, pp. 435 – 461.

³⁷¹ Discussing the importance of custom in offering some protection for communities against the incursions of powerful modernisers in nineteenth century England, Malcolmson has suggested breaches of customary practice could be remembered across three generations. Robert W. Malcolmson, *Popular Recreations in English Society*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), p.116. Such a time frame would support the argument that it is possible that some Civil War women could have drawn on family histories of the American Revolution, in the same way that some of the Bladen women *Regulators* may well have had family ties to the original Regulator Movement. (I am grateful to David Silkenat of Edinburgh University for the *Regulator* observation.) In terms of time frames, elderly Southern Claims Commission petitioners cited parents who fought in American Revolution in support of their own claims of loyalty. Brantley, SCC Approved Claim, 4087. Mew, SCC Approved Claim, 1880.

³⁷² As Olwen Hufton has observed in the context of eighteenth century French riots, bread riots were the province of women. Men might be involved but “a bread riot without women is an inherent contradiction.” The women most likely to riot were not the destitute, who had few expectations anyway, but women who had struggled to stay on the right side of the fine line between barely managing and destitution and typically many were mothers struggling to feed their children and hold their families together. Hufton, *Women in Revolution*, p. 94

rioted but when they did, it was women who took to the streets. We know relatively little about women rioters except through far from impartial newspaper reports. There are few opportunities to connect individual women to riots and, other than unreliable arrest sheets, most names are unknown, but women who rioted are unlikely to be very different from the many women who wrote to the Confederate authorities. Whilst some of the rioters may well have been marginalised, poor white women, like the market hucksters of the Richmond riot, others were almost certainly yeoman women who, like the women of Wayne County in North Carolina who wrote to Vance in February, 1863, had known better days when they had plenty but who as a consequence of the war became “beggars and starvers”. The self-styled Bladen Regulators, who had indeed threatened direct action also remembered the days when they had “a good little homestead and other things convenient for there wellbeing.” These were not women living in habitual poverty but women who had achieved a level of self-sufficiency, however precarious, now destroyed by the war. Whatever the claims of some southern press, women rioters appear not to have been the sweepings of Confederate society.³⁷³ The Salisbury rioters were seemingly women of some standing in their community, with Mary C. Moore describing herself and the other Salisbury rioters as poor but “respectable” women, working as government seamstresses and known to “many citizens” who supported their actions in the riot. It is unlikely that all the bread rioters shared the same background. As in Salisbury, many of the apparently well-dressed

³⁷³ The 4 April, 1863, *Richmond Examiner* famously dismissed the Richmond rioters as “a handful of prostitutes, professional thieves, Irish and Yankee hags, gallow- birds from all lands but our own . . .”

Milledgeville women may also have been working as seamstresses but, if the *Sufferer* is to be believed, the Savannah rioters were mainly poor women, married to soldiers and dependent on their husband's inadequate army pay. Neither do such women appear to be disloyal. Moore claimed to be shocked by the suggestion that they were mere plunderers disturbing the peace of the community but claimed to be supported by gentlemen of "good and high standing". Huldah Fain considered the Milledgeville women, the wives and mothers of soldiers, as "patriotic ladies" whose demands might well be justified. Outside of Richmond, even a hostile press never accused the women, unlike speculators, of being unpatriotic or enemies of the state.

The demands of women rioters were highly specific. As with women who wrote to the Confederate authorities seeking social justice and fairness, the same themes dominated the language of the rioters.³⁷⁴ The persistent demand was for goods at prices the women could afford and, in some instances, women enacted identical rituals, offering fair prices for the goods before seizing them. That women in different locations, should pursue the same demands, with little or no opportunity for communication between themselves, supports the argument that women must have drawn on communal memories to guide their actions. Certainly, such behaviour by women was not new and much late eighteenth century much American popular protest also centred on the price of essential commodities,

³⁷⁴ This reading of the bread riots is consistent with Jacqueline Campbell's analysis who, noting the explicit nature of the women's actions, argues that far from seeing themselves as being disloyal, women bread rioters were pursuing social justice and a restoration of the social order on which southern society was based. Campbell, *When Sherman marched North from the Sea*. p. 83.

particularly bread, with crowds acting in support of traditional customs against the manipulations of merchants and speculators. Such incidents were again often led by women and frequently involved confrontations with merchants, believed to be “engrossing” or hoarding scarce goods, when the goods would be seized and sold at a “just price.” In one instance in 1777, a crowd of over one hundred Boston women tossed a local “engrosser” into a cart and dragged him out of the city and seized his goods whilst in the same year there were accounts of women raiding storehouses in the port town of Beverly.³⁷⁵ Such popular concerns about “price gouging” and the debates about the setting of a just price continued to resonate in southern communities into the nineteenth century.³⁷⁶

What Confederate women did not demand is equally significant. Despite women’s complaints in their letters about the hardships and injustices of the war, women did not use riots as the means to demand an end to the war any more than they used their letters to demand peace. Such omissions may well speak to the women’s innate loyalty, and certainly Huldah Fain described the Milledgeville rioters in such terms, but it may also reflect the gendered nature of acceptable

³⁷⁵ Foner, *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*, p.151. Wood, *The Radicalisation of The American Revolution*. p.90. Countryman, *Social protest and the revolutionary movement, 1765 – 1776*, p.185. Foner estimates that between 1776 and 1779, there were more than thirty such incidents involving confrontations between crowds and the merchants they accused of hoarding goods Foner, *Give Me Liberty*, p.214. By far the fullest account of links with *taxation populaire* and other traditional practices brought to the American colonies as a result of English and Irish immigration is provided by Foner in his chapter, “Price Controls and the Laissez-Faire: Paine and the Moral Economy of the American Crowd” in *Tom Paine and Revolutionary America*. For links between the traditional moral economy and a developing republican egalitarianism, see Bogin, “Petitioning and the New Moral Economy of Post- Revolutionary America”. Bogin argues that the scope of the moral economy applications began to develop, during the Revolutionary Era, beyond simple control of prices to include wider concerns such as land ownership or fairness in the burden of tax obligations. In this sense, the Confederate bread riots with their single-minded insistence on fair prices for essential commodities might be seen as reflecting older moral economy traditions.

³⁷⁶ Ford, *Origins of Southern Radicalism*, pp. 35 -36.

popular protest. Bread riots were traditionally tolerated partly because they were primarily seen as women's affairs but also because they carefully avoided transgressing the established boundaries of acceptable protest by crossing over into the male world of politics.³⁷⁷ Ordinary white women would have been well aware that in a southern society structured around white patriarchy and control, underpinned with the potential for violence, they could not afford protest to be confused with dissent.³⁷⁸

The role of violence was equally limited and circumscribed by custom. Although many women armed themselves, and some almost certainly set out to intimidate, there appears to have been little actual violence perpetrated by the women. Generally, women's violence was limited to forcing open premises when traders resisted or threatening owners who challenged them. Although stores and depots were broken open, there appears to have been nothing akin to the widespread looting, destruction and assaults that accompanied riots in the North.³⁷⁹ Other than in Richmond, both women and the authorities appear to have

³⁷⁷ Bouton suggests that not only was the market place seen as the logical extension of a women's household role but also, because women were seen as being without power, they posed no threat to the authorities and could therefore act as they did with less fear of retribution. Rather than viewing their behaviour as dangerous, women's actions in food riots were seen as statements of private distress, consistent with women's maternal responsibilities. Bouton, *The Flour War*, pp 17 – 18.

³⁷⁸ See Wyatt-Brown's *Southern Honour*. Although paying relatively little attention to non-elite women, Wyatt-Brown graphically illustrates the highly coded nature of southern society designed to regulate a social and racial order that otherwise might degenerate into chaos. In his "Anatomy of a Wife-Killing", the study concludes with an examination of the gendered violence that resulted from a breach of male centred community norms.

³⁷⁹ Accounts of northern riots, often resulting in fatalities, appeared regularly in both the northern and southern press. In the New York draft riot in July, 1863, the disturbance lasted five days or more, over a hundred African- Americans were killed, a militia colonel murdered, public buildings destroyed and an orphanage, a symbol of elite patronage, burnt to the ground. Giesburg, *Army at Home*, pp.127 – 131. The standard work is Iver Bernstein, *The New York City Draft Riots: Their Significance for American Society and Politics in the Age of the Civil War*, (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990).

abided by the same conventions with women often appearing to threaten but not actually carrying through any such acts of violence and dispersing when ordered to do so by the authorities. Where violence did occur, women were more likely to be the victims not the perpetrators.³⁸⁰ When women fought, they fought with traders not with the police or militia and Confederate bread riots were not violent confrontations between women and the state but the principal protagonists were impoverished white women and market traders and merchants. Other than in Richmond, where women did confront the Confederate state, the authorities appear equally restrained, if almost certainly confused by the gendered nature of the protests, with no violent dispersals of mobs of women and no punitive court sentences. In some instances, troops and city authorities may have declined to act against the women but there were limits to such gendered protections. Richmond may have been an outlier, but it also illustrates the limits of Confederate paternalism when confronted by insurgency. In Richmond, where women did transgress convention and challenge the authority of the state, armed troops stood by ready to fire on Jefferson Davis's command and women were imprisoned regardless of their gender.

Women's riots challenged gender assumptions but remained bounded by tradition. Recent scholarship properly draws attention to the transformative role of the war in the lives of many ordinary, white women, driven through hardship and

³⁸⁰ In both Richmond and Mobile press accounts record women being attacked by shop owners. Even in Richmond, the level of personal violence seems limited. Chesson identifies only three incidents of possible bloodshed including an incident where a woman rioter was attacked by a shop owner, losing fingers from a hand. Chesson, "Harlots and Heroines", p.152.

suffering, to find new ways to assert themselves and break, at least for the duration of the war, with antebellum patriarchy. Whilst some women broke with tradition and learnt how to publicly petition and cajole Confederate politicians on behalf of their families, others went further and took direct action to meet their families' needs. The meaning of such direct action is not without its contradictions, however, and even as women behaved in ways which challenged their ascribed roles, rioting women ultimately deferred to traditional authority. That women rioted was shocking but women ensured, in most instances, that riots remained within the boundaries of what tradition dictated was acceptable and women neither openly challenged the authority of the state nor transgressed gender expectations by framing their needs as political demands on the state. Yet the hostility rioting women provoked is telling as newspapers attempted to uncouple such women from the sanctified image of womanhood and sacrifice that lay at the heart of Confederate ideology. Rioting women may have "unsexed" themselves and acted as *Amazons* but in doing so in such dramatically public ways that even self-censoring southern newspapers could not completely ignore, such women, many of them the wives of soldiers, offered an alternative version of Confederate womanhood where women defined for themselves the meaning of sacrifice, less concerned with the politics of the war so much as the daily business of survival.

That desperate Confederate women rioted is not remarkable. What is remarkable, in an age long predating social media, is the transmission of ideas and how many such riots, on one occasion happening on the same day many miles apart, followed identical rituals with women adopting the same behaviours whilst

consistency avoiding others. Most emblematic of the women's behaviour was the "fixing of the price" with women seeking to give legitimacy to their actions by offering to pay a fair price for the goods even in events such as at Avery's Creek, essentially a form of highway robbery, women apparently still offered to pay the driver fifty cents a pound for the bacon they were seizing. Even more persistent was the exclusive focus on bread, cotton and other household essentials with women, other than a few banners carried in Mobile, consistently refusing to use riots to pursue other goals such as peace and the end to the war. Equally unimaginable, in the modern era, is the idea of a riot without bloodshed or wanton destruction of property but, not only did Confederate women consistently retain their focus on household essentials, to the exclusion of other agendas, they also resolutely avoided personal violence or the burning of buildings although such acts were commonplace in comparable northern riots. In seeking to understand such behaviour, little in women's own accounts or those of contemporary observers is of help. The only slender clues within women's own accounts is that women such as Mary C. Moore in Salisbury and the anonymous *Sufferer* in Savannah, share with letter writers such as Martha Coltrane from Randolph County, a view of the world that was essentially moral and where fairness and social justice should prevail.

Although dramatic, bread riots were not a constant feature of the women's discontent across the Confederacy. Other than in the spring of 1863, riots were spasmodic and some states, such as Florida and Texas, reported virtually no riots at all, although the reports from Barnwell and the Columbia press accounts suggest that even in the South Carolina heartland of secession, women's protests

may have been more common than previously assumed. Even though the consistency of women's behaviour is remarkable, not all riots and raids were the same. Richmond may have been an outlier but its April 1863 riot indicates that in parts of the South women were prepared to take direct political action and even outside Richmond, other women were demonstrating a growing political awareness as in Milledgeville, Salisbury and Savannah where rioting women were keen to justify themselves and seek public support for their behaviour. In other instances, such as Bladenboro, where "poor and ignorant" women were imprisoned, seizures of corn and other essentials may have simply been acts of desperate women taking what they needed without any wider meaning. But in most instances, the Confederate bread riots were neither essentially political acts nor simple, unconnected outbreaks of lawlessness. In sharing similar and distinctive characteristics, the bread riots offer a rare example of a form of collective protest uniquely associated with women. Even allowing for the difficulties of connecting individual women and their accounts to participation in the riots, in other than a handful of cases, it remains possible nonetheless to draw a connecting line from women's pleas in letters for prices to be fixed, to the direct action of women rioters seizing goods they had been unable to buy at fair prices. Far from being a challenge to the legitimacy of the new state, or a demand for new rights or entitlements, the bread riots were essentially a conservative response to the crisis affecting many ordinary Confederate families, seeking an end to wartime abuses and the restoration of an older and more ordered world where families were able to clothe and feed themselves. South Carolina remains a possible exception, but in

Georgia and North Carolina, women driven by hunger and desperation, turned their discontent into direct action and inserted themselves into a failing and dysfunctional marketplace to seize the goods they needed and to do for themselves what the state had failed to do for them. Rather than viewing such actions as violent resistance to the Confederacy, the bread riots are better understood as part of a continuum of Anglo- American protest made legitimate by the failure of the authorities to act to protect southern households from the abuses of speculation and market manipulation.

Conclusion: The conservative nature of Confederate dissent and discontent.

On the 5 September, 1872, a small notice appeared in the *Charleston Daily News*. Sandwiched between local shipping news and an advertisement for liver pills, the notice advised local readers that Theodore W. Parmele, the Special Commissioner for South Carolina appointed by the Southern Claims Commission would be available, for a few days only, at the Charleston Hotel to take testimonies from prospective petitioners. Other than his reports to the Commission in respect of claims from South Carolina, little is known about Parmele. He was certainly one of the earliest special commissioners appointed and had probably served, during the war, as a colonel in a New York Infantry Regiment until being discharged on medical grounds in October, 1863. Parmele's reports to the Commission are however are of particular interest, not least through his tendency to add his own comments to the formal testimonies. In February, 1872, he had clearly struggled to come to a decision regarding the claim of Joseph Clarke, a Lancaster County farmer and blacksmith, who presented himself as a steadfast union supporter forced to keep quiet during the war and who had told Parmele that he had stood as Union candidate in the 1860 state elections and had also been threatened by the Ku Klux Klan after the war. Like a number of other southern unionists, Clarke had also taken public office under the Confederacy in order to avoid military service, the type of act which the national commissioners in Washington were increasingly viewing as proof of disloyalty. Struggling over his recommendation to the national

commissioners, Parmele reflected in his report: “It is so difficult to get facts concerning the loyalty of anyone. . .”³⁸¹

Parmele would, of course, not have been the first representative of an occupying power who struggled with the nature of truth when faced with difficult judgements.³⁸² But imperfect as they are, the records of the Southern Claims Commission taken together with women’s letters written to the Confederate authorities and newspaper accounts of bread riots, offer an unusually diverse range of essentially vernacular sources reflecting the experiences and dissatisfactions of ordinary white southerners living through the war. Not only do the range of sources include groups often on the margins of historical records, such as those unable to write for themselves or landless labourers, but critically also include both southerners proclaiming a continuing allegiance to the Union and those asserting loyalty to the Confederacy. Whilst the mix of records and the choice of states do not claim to be a representative cross-sectional sample, as a group they are not unrepresentative of the southern experience. Most tellingly, the breadth of the sampling illustrates the complex nature of much Confederate dissent and discontent and helps us see more clearly some of its different and at times unexpected strands, as well as the uneven impact of the Confederate project of nation building. Critically the research distinguishes between southerners who often asserted their loyalty to the Confederacy but were profoundly unhappy with the impact of the war on their families and other southerners implacably opposed

³⁸¹ Clarke, SCC Disallowed Claim, 12652.

³⁸² John 18:38. South Carolina remained under Reconstruction government until Wade Hampton’s disputed election victory in 1876.

to the Confederacy, or completely indifferent to its calls on their allegiance.

Although frequently conflated in the scholarship, dissent in the Civil War South was not the same as discontent and discontent did not always indicate disloyalty and indeed the many letters and petitions sent to the Confederate authorities suggest remarkable levels of continuing faith in the new nation, or at least hostility to the North, until late in the war.

Through its emphasis on men and women's own accounts of their experiences, the thesis examines dissent and discontent in its own terms and the meaning it had for ordinary southerners and enables us to see how many southerners interpreted their unionism in highly subjective and individual ways, demonstrates how women's agency was contingent on their differing loyalties and shows the extent to which Confederate class antagonism intersected with race anxiety, particularly in South Carolina. What is striking is the subjective nature of much dissent as southerners defined for themselves the meaning of their loyalties in ways often defying easy classification. Southerners who were disloyal to the Confederacy often framed that dissent after the war in terms of a continuing loyalty to the Union. Although much scholarship continues to view southern unionists as either steadfast or compromised, the statements and language of many unionists suggests that for many southerners the meaning of such an attachment was rarely so straightforward. The proclamation of being a Union man or woman may have indicated an antipathy to secession but otherwise indicated little about the nature of the individual dissent. There is no doubt that traditional political unionism persisted in the South, despite its difficulties in expression during the war, but this research

suggests that there were also many southern men and women whose self-proclaimed attachment to the Union might be better understood as a statement of identity or as a broader cultural attachment to the idea of the union.

Such unionism took on many different forms ranging from southerners who literally took up arms against the Confederacy in Federal armies or in border conflicts through to other unionists whose dissent amounted to little more than remaining on their farms and refusing to lend their support to secession. Rather in the manner of modern European separatist movements, southern unionism often acted as unifying idea, binding together disparate, and at times competing, strands under a single banner. Many accounts proclaimed support for the Union but then described behaviours that some may find contradictory as southern unionists did what they considered necessary to protect themselves and their families during the war including, if needed, working for the Confederacy or taking on official positions to avoid conscription, allowing themselves to be conscripted into Confederate militias and reserve regiments and supporting family members in Confederate armies. Although frequently viewed as ambiguous, ambivalent or equivocal in their Union beliefs by modern commentators, it is doubtful whether such men and women who also sheltered deserters, supported Federal troops and put their own lives and the safety of their families at risk would recognise such descriptions of their wartime loyalty.

To understand such dissent it is necessary, to move beyond such absolutist constructions of unionist loyalty with its origins, as Suzanne Michelle Lee has shown, in post war Reconstruction politics. The testimonies of many southerners

suggest that their unionism had little to do with conventional politics and indeed a number appear to place little value on politics at all. It is remarkable how prosaic and understated the reasons such southerners gave for the defence of the Union which, other than veterans honouring their national flag, rarely move beyond broad statements in support of the established government. Far more compelling and vivid are their accounts of the widespread fear and criticism of secession, particularly among many smallholding farmers, as posing a critical threat to their way of life and traditional independence. At times underpinned by a pervasive race fear, such dissent although expressed in terms of union loyalty, was frequently a defence of home and family. Such broad unhappiness with secession and fears for the future were often turned into active resistance and opposition when families and communities were threatened, most significantly with the introduction of conscription from 1862 onwards. As scholars, such as Margaret Storey, have shown such dissent was often fuelled and sustained by kinship and community ties. This research supports such arguments with many southerners testifying to the close-knit nature of their communities, such as in Bethania, North Carolina, often under attack from their secessionist neighbours and whose members boldly continued to proclaim their union loyalty even as they served in the state militia, sold supplies to the Confederate army or took on official government contracts. If a self-proclaimed loyalty to the union was often a predominately cultural attachment rather than a statement of political belief, it was arguably all the more powerful for that. Despite the apparent contradictions in their behaviour, many such southerners were willing to put their own and the lives of the families at risk, and

men such as Joseph Shumpert from Lexington County, South Carolina, were prepared to walk many miles to shake the hand of escaped Federal prisoners from Indiana for no other reason than their shared membership of an imagined union community.

Women were at the heart of both dissent and discontent as, out of necessity, ordinary southern women asserted themselves in new and often very public ways during a civil war that disrupted the gender relations of southern society. Whilst earlier scholarship has focussed on elite Confederate women, or more recently, on poor rural women demanding new entitlements from the state or engaging in violent resistance, this reading of women's letters and petitions, state papers and newspaper accounts demonstrates that women's wartime agency was far wider and involved many ordinary non-elite southern women otherwise loyal to Confederacy. Although there is little to suggest that such changes in women's roles survived the end of the war, women's wartime agency was not simply a function of elite privilege or popular resistance but was widespread across the South as the new Confederate state reached deep into southern society and the lives of ordinary women and their families.

Southern women divided in their loyalties to the Confederacy and such divisions shaped their dissent and discontent. For women opposed to the new secessionist state, dissent frequently centred around desertion and draft evasion largely triggered by the introduction of widespread conscription from 1862 onwards. In time, support for family members extended to support for other men and, depending on opportunity, for escaped Federal prisoners. Unlike southern

men, whose wartime experience frequently resulted in a loss of mastery, women could be empowered by the war. Through the centrality of their role in supporting deserters and draft evaders, many such women became protectors of southern men not purely their supporters and carers. By enabling southern men to evade military service, or by directly supporting enemy combatants, such women put themselves at the heart of opposition and resistance to the Confederacy. Some women went further by having to directly confront Confederate officials or forces who often targeted women as a key element in an internal war against draft evasion and desertion. As with border women effectively providing a domestic chain in support of Confederate guerrillas who were targeted by Federal forces, so Confederate forces recognised that tackling desertion required intimidating and punishing the women who made it possible. Significantly many such women were widows and independent heads of their households and whose dissent was quite separate from male resistance.

Other women, who proclaimed their loyalty to the Confederacy, asserted themselves in very different ways through their use of letters and public petitions in the defence of their families but also by through direct action in taking to the streets to seize bread and other essential goods their families needed. Unlike southern unionists, such women, many of whom had sons and husbands in Confederate armies, rarely signalled opposition to the new Confederate state, even as they set out their discontent and dissatisfactions with the impact of the war on their families and the unfairness of their sacrifice. Although again based in the defence of family

such discontent was very different from dissent as such women continued to look to the state as the means of redress.

As dramatic as some public protests were, there is little in this reading, to see such women's wartime empowerment as a political awakening of poor white women acting a new constituency of soldiers' wives. Although women undoubtedly at times became political actors, seeking to insert themselves into the male world of Confederate politics by attempting to lobby and influence Confederate politicians and the wider public, politics did not define them. An examination of the language of women's letters and petitions, their goals in acting as they did and even the ritualised nature of much of their public protests suggest far greater continuity with traditional forms of petition and protest characteristically associated with women in their dealings with power. Whilst women with sons or husbands in service frequently claimed the traditional moral authority of soldiers' mothers and wives, the evidence of women's letters and petitions suggests too many women used such self-descriptions in too many ways for the declaration to have any particular meaning other than as a convenient and effective shorthand to claim attention from a distant and, at times, disinterested state. Other than the politics of the market place or factory gates there is no evidence of wider organisation or structure and, as Laura Edwards has shown, few aspects of women's wartime agency appeared to survive the widespread collapse of southern society and rural economy following the war. Rather than being defined by conventional politics, the distinctive feature of such discontent was that of women acting together, most probably with neighbours, friends and family members, in writing their letters, constructing their

petitions or taking *en masse* to the streets to challenge merchants and store holders. Unlike southern unionist dissent, deeply grounded in traditional family and community ties, the primary reference point for discontented loyal women was other, like-minded women. Such wartime discontent was unambiguously women's work.

This reading of accounts from the Carolinas and Georgia also demonstrates the prevalence of race anxiety and antipathy amongst ordinary southerners, including those claiming to support the Union. Secession may have created a new slave republic of white men but these testimonies and petitions remind us that the South was already such a place. Whilst ownership of small numbers of slaves was commonplace among yeoman farmers, testimonies and petitions show the limited nature of the relationship between ordinary southern whites and slaves or free persons of colour. Even among self-proclaimed unionists, relatively few whites claimed to have supported abolition during the war. Some whites did refuse to own slaves on principle, either on religious or political grounds, and provided accounts of mixing with local black communities but these appear to have been in a small minority even among southern unionists. More commonly, whites and blacks lived in different worlds where contact between both was highly regulated by a careful race etiquette and custom and where collaboration, even over matters such as support for escaped Federal prisoners, was often limited. Ordinary white southern unionists may have opposed secession but their opposition to the Confederacy did not extend to opposing slavery or collaborating with black southerners to oppose a common enemy. For many, slaves were simply an accepted part of a southern

labour economy or wealth accumulation. Indeed, the critical issue for many yeoman farmers or self-working farmers as they described themselves, was not slave ownership itself but fears about their future. Yeoman farmers opposed to the Confederacy did not condemn rich planters for owning slaves but for taking the South into a ruinous war that conscripted their sons and threatened their traditional yeoman independence.

The prevalence of antagonism towards rich planters was widespread across different communities in the South. Unlike some scholarship viewing resistance to the Confederacy largely in terms of class, hostility to rich slave owners appears to have been a sentiment widely shared among southerners, both loyal and disloyal to the Confederacy. Many women, and some men, who wrote letters to the Confederate authorities frequently complained bitterly to the authorities about the inequality of sacrifice as rich slave owners used their privileges to avoid playing their full part in the war. Next to speculators, slave owners were indeed the group most vilified in such correspondence. Southern unionists, in turn, often blamed slaveholders for dragging the South into an unnecessary war in their own selfish interests and often declared that they saw little need to fight in a war to protect planters' slave property. At times, such class antagonisms intersected with race anxieties in ways challenging to assertions of white *herrenvolk* solidarity and more suggestive of fears of mudsill exploitation. In South Carolina, in particular, yeoman farmers expressed their bitter resentment about the state's slave owning aristocracy in terms of race as they feared the loss of their traditional mastery as the consequence of a slaveholder's war. Either through recklessness or calculated

intent, they believed the outcome of the war would result in the loss of their property and leave them no better than the slaves working in the fields. In terms of the complex nature of Confederate dissent and discontent, the bitter resentment of rich slaveholders among smallholding farmers in South Carolina, compounded by acute anxieties over race, is telling even when recorded as post-war accounts. Although such conflicts within the Confederacy are more commonly associated with traditional “communities of dissent” such as the North Carolina Quaker Belt or Piney Woods, Mississippi, it is evident that even South Carolina, the heartland of secession, was not immune from such internal divisions.

South Carolina was not only unusual for the extent of its racially based bitterness and class antagonism among its yeoman farmers. In comparing the three states, the virtual absence of any public expression of women’s discontent in South Carolina is conspicuous. Whilst local differences are evident in the North Carolina and Georgia sources, both states otherwise present largely similar patterns of discontent by women, both in the letters and petitions they wrote and the direct action some women chose to take. In contrast, ordinary women in South Carolina, despite their undoubted hardships, seemingly wrote few letters on their own behalf, organised no petitions and, with the exception of Barnwell in 1864, there are no records of riots or raids by women in the state. Letters and petitions in South Carolina continue to be dominated by men, with the needs of women only cited in support of male requests. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that particular patriarchal culture of the state, with its unsympathetic political structures, simply did not permit the public expression of women’s discontent.

Whilst the accounts of southern unionists, and the letters of discontented women, highlight the gendered nature of Confederate dissent and discontent and the intersection of class antagonisms with race anxieties within the Confederacy, they tell us remarkably little about the role of religious convictions. Despite the religiosity of southern society, few southerners expressed their dissent and discontent in such terms. Certainly, a number of accounts and letters demonstrate a familiarity with biblical references and some indicate church membership but few southerners put their religious beliefs, or at least its language, at the heart of their dissent or their discontent. Although Almira Acors from Virginia may have invoked divine justice on the Confederacy for its heartlessness to women and children, her letter berating President Jefferson Davis appears very much the exception. In general, when Confederate women used religious references it was part of the formulaic flattery of southern governors and the pretence that men in authority would naturally be guided by their scriptural beliefs to act in response to the women's pleas. More commonly, particularly in the North Carolina Quaker Belt, letter writers used more broadly based ethical language emphasising fairness or social justice in an attempt to encourage rather than berate. In this sense both the contrived religious flattery of some letters and the appeals to fairness in others are consistent with women's letters often being exercises in manipulation and persuasion. Southern unionist accounts are no more illuminating. Whilst opposition to the Confederacy in parts of the South may have been underpinned by religious and cultural divisions, the accounts provided by southern unionists make little mention of such differences other than in a handful of instances concerning

slavery. Possibly as a consequence of their origins as post war claims for financial compensation, southerners may well have seen advantages in defining their dissent in secular rather than religious terms.

If there are limited explanations for the absence of religious references in either southern dissent or discontent, then our understanding of how ordinary Confederate women learnt how to adapt letters and petitions to their own purposes, often with considerable ingenuity and inventiveness, is hardly more developed. Other than recognising that many such letters and petitions were joint enterprises with women often writing and signing together and drawing on their shared experiences or the resources of small communities, there are few clues in the sources as to how women learnt their craft except that the letters do suggest a familiarity with both the formal and informal conventions of petitions. Whilst there is little evidence to support such an assertion, it may well be that the conventional assumptions regarding the highly gendered and domestic role of women in the antebellum South may have overlooked a level of familiarity with everyday politics or public life than previously believed, at least amongst some women. Certainly, as Beth Schweiger suggests, levels of literacy and the extent of an emerging print culture reaching into isolated communities may well have been underestimated. An even greater gap in our understanding is how women learnt the distinctive rituals of bread riots and the acceptable boundaries of public protest. Given that women were involved in such popular protests during the Revolutionary period, it is not unreasonable to assume that such knowledge may well have been part of family

and collective memories although how ideas were then transmitted across time and space, without the benefit of mass or social media, remains one of conjecture.

Despite their differences, dissent and discontent both present as essentially conservative impulses seeking the reinstatement of an older and more stable order. As Carl Degler observed, many years ago, it was secession that was disruptive and radical. Even the language of dissent reflected traditional values and, unlike their secessionist neighbours, southern unionists did not view themselves as being citizens of a new nation. At a time when the Civil War was reshaping national citizenship, native born southern unionist men, did not conceive of themselves as citizens at all except in the very traditional sense of being free white man owing allegiance to their state. Other than veterans of earlier wars who expressed their loyalty to the Union in terms of an emotional attachment to the flag or other such symbols, expressions of loyalty remained remarkably understated and prosaic and, despite being part of a formal claims process that literally rewarded Union loyalty, few could articulate reasons for supporting the Union beyond a belief that there was no good reason to change. Although southerners interpreted their allegiance to the idea of the Union in very different and subjective ways, for most the attachment was deeply grounded in strong kinship and community ties and was essentially a defence of a tradition and a southern way of life.

The many letters of ordinary women to the Confederate authorities were also often in the defence of their family. Whilst many women must have wearied of the war, critically such letters and petitions from North Carolina and Georgia continued

to assert a loyalty to the Confederacy until the end and few indicate dissent, despite the level of unhappiness. Far from being a challenge to the Confederate state or demanding new political entitlements or rights, most letters and petitions, overwhelmingly expressed in the traditional language of protection and favours, sought relief for starving families or favours in the form of having men exempted from military service. A small number of letters went further and asked for greater intervention by the state in fixing the price of essential goods. In articulating their needs in such distinctive language, as with the actions of women bread rioters, such women were connecting themselves with older traditions of Anglo-American popular protest seeking the restoration of fairer market arrangements. Ordinary white women may have asserted themselves in unprecedented ways during the Civil War but they did so for the most basic and elemental of causes in order to clothe and feed their families. As with dissenting southern unionists, the actions of such women can be seen a response to the disruption of secession and the war and a desire to return to an older and more ordered southern world, however real or imagined it might have been.

Abbreviations

GDAH	Georgia Department of Archives and History, Morrow
GP	Governor's Papers
LRCSW	Letters Received Confederate Secretary of War
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC.
NCDAH	State Archives, Division of Archives and History, Raleigh, North Carolina
OR	War of the Rebellion: Official Records of the Union and Confederate Armies
RG	Record Group
SCC	Southern Claims Commission
SCDAH	South Carolina Department of Archives and History, Columbia
SCL	South Caroliniana Library, University of South Carolina, Columbia

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