**The Salons Project**

**Determination of Heterogeneity through Network Analysis**

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**Previous Work and Visualization Goal**

The French Enlightenment was a sweeping, two hundred year period of questioning and discovery that shaped the world into what it is today. Beginning with Isaac Newton himself laying the groundwork for classical mechanics and calculus, this tumultuous time saw not only scientific advances, but also the development of core modern day philosophies by notable authors such as Immanuel Kant, John Locke, and Adam Smith. On the surface, this was the age that developed both the steam engine and capitalism, but a deeper dive reveals more than that.

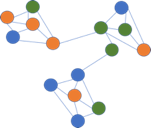
The common thread that ties together the sprawling ideas of a two hundred year period is the emphasis on reasoning and deduction. Prior to the enlightenment, religious orthodoxy dominated and the world was as the church said. Thanks to the early work of Isaac Newton and Descartes, however, questioning the status quo was the new norm. The question is, how did this seemingly generic yet revolutionary idea of “reasoning” permeate from one person to another, starting in France and eventually reaching the Americas?1

In a time of information immobility, discourse was the driver of thought development. In the French enlightenment, there were official academies for developing and discussing ideas pertaining to a certain realm of science or philosophy. Of similar importance, though, were the informal networks of literary “salons” that encouraged productive conversation between a wide range of people.2

An initial analysis of the complex interaction between salons and the academies has been done by Dr. Melanie Conroy3. In her work, she performed extensive network analysis of individuals attending both types of formal and informal social groups. She found that the salons themselves were likely not the gates allowing access to the academy, rather, they were derived from the academies themselves. Based on this, she concludes that both the academies and salons were therefore products of the characteristics of the people that attended them.

The goal of our visualization is to determine the roles of these characteristics in forming the social groups that in turn produced the revolutionary Enlightenment ideas. Were ideas such as capitalism and separation of church and state derived from a diverse body of thought or from the echo chamber of the elites? Did women have an equal say in these groups, or were they underrepresented in certain areas of discussion? How did someone’s nationality or economic status help or hurt them in this time period?

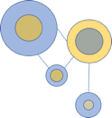
To answer these questions, we aim to look at the French Salon data not as a collection of individuals attending different academies and salons, but as discrete groups of people going from one to another. By grouping people by their professional, political, religious, etc. similarities, we aim to draw conclusions about the formations of the Enlightenment ideas. Knowing the context behind how an idea is formed is just as important as the idea itself, and we hope to uncover that with our analysis. Initial sketches of how this analysis will be done can be seen below:



**Figure 1:** Potential network analysis would involve creating a network of people

and coloring by characteristic. In this figure, there are three distinct clusters,

and each cluster appears to have a unique dominant characteristic.



**Figure 2:** Alternatively, salons and academies could be grouped by the number of people

of a certain characteristic and shown as a much simpler network. Here there are

four nodes representing four salons/academies, and it is apparent that one of

them is overrepresented in the yellow characteristic.

**References**

1. Weber, E. *Movements, Currents, Trends: Aspects of European Thought in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries.* 1992.

2. Dorinda, O. *Panorama of the Enlightenment.* 2006. Getty Publications, p 29. ISBN 978-0892368617

3. Conroy, M. *Networks of the Enlightenment*. 2019. **The Workshop**, Number 6.