

Southern New Hampshire University

Identity Formation in the Thirteen American Colonies

An Interdisciplinary Approach with a Focus on Psychological Theory

A Capstone Project Submitted to the College of Online and Continuing Education in Partial  
Fulfillment of the Master of Arts in History

By

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## **Abstract**

This thesis addresses the process of the formation of a separate identity among the original Thirteen Colonies in the New World. Although the research into the American Revolution has been extensive, psychological principles have not been applied to explain the change in identity. A combinative approach is the best way to remedy this issue: an examination of the various causes of the Revolution between the years of 1763 and 1776 (economic, political, religious, geographical, and ideological) and how they created in-groups and out-groups will resolve this oversight. This analysis concludes that the major events during this time window led to the formation of solid in-groups and out-groups leading to the separation of identity and country, and the changes are explained using social identity theory and other group theories in social psychology and sociology.

## **Dedication**

For Eric, Leslie, Maximus, Michael Blaz, and John Fiandt

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## Glossary

**assumed similarity effect.** members of an in-group assume that other in-group members share their attitudes and values.

**brainstorming.** group members work together to generate many new ideas and solutions to a problem.

**categorization.** the process by which we perceive people or other stimuli in groups or categories rather than perceiving each person as a distinct individual.

**cohesiveness.** forces, both positive and negative, that cause members to remain in a group.

**common knowledge effect.** group members spend more time discussing shared than unshared information.

**deindividuation.** the anonymity of a group can lead people to do things they would not do alone.

**group.** people who are interdependent and have mutual influence on each other.

**groupthink.** poor group decision making based on inadequate considerations of alternatives.

**group polarization.** groups often make more extreme decisions than do individuals alone.

**group-serving biases.** members of an in-group make favorable attributions for the performance of in-group members and unfavorable attributions for performance by out-group members.

**in-group.** the group to which an individual belongs; membership in it forms part of his or her social identity.

**in-group favoritism effect.** the tendency to give more favorable evaluations and greater rewards to members of one's in-group than to members of out-groups.

**optimal distinctiveness.** a social identity in a group that is large enough to give the individual a sense of inclusion, but small enough to provide a sense of differentiation from others.

**ostracism.** experience of being ignored by others.

**out-group.** any group other than the in-group.

**out-group homogeneity effect.** perception that members of the out-group are more similar to each other than members of the in-group are to each other.

**realistic group conflict theory.** the theory that antagonism between groups arises from real conflicts of interest and the frustrations those conflicts produce.

**risky shift.** group discussion can lead individuals to make riskier decisions than they would make alone.

**salience.** the quality that makes a particular stimulus stand out and be noticed. Bright, noisy, colorful, unusual, and novel stimuli are usually the most salient.

**self-concept.** the collection of beliefs we hold about ourselves.

**self-stereotyping.** perceiving oneself as a member of a particular group and consequently behaving in line with that social identity.

**self-verification.** the process of seeking out and interpreting situations that confirm one's self-concept and avoiding or resisting situations and feedback that differ from one's self-concept.

**social identity.** the part of an individual's self-concept that derives from his or her membership in a social group.

**social identity theory.** the theory that an individual's self-concept derives partly from membership in an in-group.

**social norms.** rules and standards for appropriate behavior.

**working self-concept.** those aspects of the self-concept that are salient in a particular situational context.

## Introduction

The question of how the Thirteen Colonies came to rebel against Great Britain is of great interest to many historians. There are countless debates on the subject; the debate regarding the most important causes of the American Revolution is of greatest concern to this thesis. Although which individual cause was the most important factor is not the subject, each cause contributed to the formation of a separate identity in the colonies. These causes can be further broken down into categories of historical lens: geographical, economic, political, religious, and ideological. Geographical causes mainly focus on the sheer distance between the colonies and Great Britain. There are numerous complex economic causes ranging from Parliament's attempt to tax the colonies to pay for the Seven Years' War to the economic crisis created by the Currency Act of 1764.<sup>1</sup> Political causes generally concern the right to rule and the amount of power that should be vested in Parliament and in the colonial governing bodies. The various acts of Parliament concerning paying for the Seven Years' War and the dismantling of local governments are arguably the greatest in this category. Next, religious causes are less conspicuous, but it cannot be ignored that many came to the New World in search of religious freedom. Finally, and possibly most importantly, ideological causes were numerous and incredibly powerful. The idea that Parliament was infringing upon the rights that the colonists were due not only as Englishmen but as human beings permeated social and political discourse throughout this period. Enlightenment thinking and inflammatory works like *Common Sense* further fueled this aspect of the conflict.

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 17.

As was said above, this is an area that has sparked much debate. Since it is so researched and debated, what can be added to the discussion? The primary question of this capstone is how a separate American identity came to fruition through these circumstances. Because of this, an explanation of identity formation leads to social psychological theories. Specifically, social identity theory and the assignments of in-groups and out-groups are the most helpful in this case. What follows is a discussion of how the major causes within the period between the end of the Seven Years' War to the passing of the Declaration of Independence contributed to the separate identity with an addition of psychological theory and terminology to better explain how that was able to occur. Examining these issues through a combination of existing historical scholarship and previously unused psychological concepts will provide the most complete view of how an identity was created on a macro level. Due to the nature of social identity theory and the impracticability of using isolated cases of individuals to determine group identity, examining the development on a large-scale is the best approach.

Each of these circumstances served to further drive a wedge between the colonists and the British, and they can be much more easily understood by using psychological principles such as the out-group homogeneity effect, the assumed similarity effect, and the assignments of in-groups and out-groups. Of course, the two main groups in this situation are the colonists and the British, but there are also other subgroups. The most important of these other subgroups would be the Loyalists in the colonies. Most often, they were met with hostility and violence and between 60,000 and 100,000 of them left the country during this conflict.<sup>2</sup> The differences in these groups can be difficult to pinpoint on the surface, but by examining identity hierarchies and

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<sup>2</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies that Brought America from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 119.

the way that various groups were affected by the acts of Parliament they become more easily understood.

The addition of psychological theory and principles to this subject can be beneficial to understanding the motivations and reasoning behind collective action and historical events. Looking at large-scale groups does present the problem that there are fewer primary sources to consult as private letters and personal feelings become mostly irrelevant. However, the inclusion of newspaper illustrations and propaganda pieces become much more relevant as they were used to sway opinions in one direction or another. Much of this work relies on secondary information and the writings of psychologists, but the public documents, acts of Parliament, and resolutions of the Continental Congress are also highly important to the determination of the state of American identity.

By examining this existing scholarship, it is possible to know what has happened, but it can be harder to determine why something happened. This can be accomplished by utilizing psychological principles. Initially, the colonists were simply outraged and believed that if they appealed to Parliament that their pleas would be heard. As the economic crisis of the Currency Act hit close to home, and it became evident that the British were not going to back down, the divide increased. Were it not for the repeal of many of these offensive acts from the years immediately after, it is conceivable that the Revolution would have occurred much earlier. However, this small fix served to diminish the perceived differences between the various groups. Unfortunately for the British, their next attempts served to be the downfall of their colonial efforts in what is now the United States, and the identities diverged to the point of no return. The intricacies of these details and events are discussed in great detail throughout this project.

To begin this analysis, it is important to include a discussion of the characteristics of the original settlers that were sent to the New World in 1607. This is to show that the people that were sent to colonize the New World were very different from the average makeup of British society. Determining the difference between these people from the beginning of their relationship can aid in the explanation of the later events. Foundational differences are very influential to psychological analysis, and the initial characteristics of settlers were set in stone throughout their time in the New World leading to a degree of separation both geographically and in terms of identity.

The most logical way to go about the analysis is to put the events into chronological order and intersperse the narrative with historical and psychological explanations. Because of their wide reach into the public sphere and ability to shape public opinion, the major events of the conflict that would have been highly discussed will be considered in this analysis. After the descriptions of the original settlers and their makeup, the pivotal event of the Seven Years' War occurred and changed the dynamic in the colonies. The British need to pay for the war set up an ideological and monetary issue that began to further the divide in identity between the colonists and Great Britain. In the beginning, when referring to the British the colonists generally meant Parliament. It was not until later in the struggle that it became a problem with more than just Parliament.<sup>3</sup> Conflicts like the Currency Act and the Stamp Act reinforced the idea that the British did not care for the problems that the colonists were facing and that the colonists were not grateful for their defense. Miscommunication and misperception were prevalent on both sides of the Atlantic.

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<sup>3</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 199.

Action and counteraction color the conflict throughout the 1760s and early 1770s. After the problems caused by the acts of Parliament and the subsequent backing down of the regulations, there was a lull until the Boston Massacre. Had action not been taken to remedy that disaster, the Revolution and the solidification of a separate identity could have occurred at that time. Following the short lapse in revolutionary actions when the colonists thought that political coexistence could occur, Parliament decided to offer a special break to the East India Company regarding the tea trade which the colonists considered a threat. Not surprisingly, this brought back all of the negative views of the British that had been so prevalent only a few years prior. The colonists responded with the Boston Tea Party. This event shows that group behavior and groups dynamics can be very powerful, and that the foundational identity separation was still strong and salient.

British retaliation and the continuation of hostile relations occurred with the passing of the Coercive Acts and the subsequent meeting of the First Continental Congress in the colonies culminating in the beginning of military action at Lexington and Concord. This is a very pivotal moment in the saga of common identity. By convening the Congress, each member was committing illegal acts against the Crown; by beginning warfare, the colonists had taken their plight to the level of organized violence rather than simple street squabbles. This escalation shows an expression of the frustration that the colonists felt at their perceived rights being denied, but it is important to note that many still had hopes that there could be compromise on both sides. It was not until they realized that the King was also against them that their opinion was changed and full separation was possible.

The year 1775 was very busy in terms of revolutionary events, and it was the turning point for many individuals' views on whether or not they would be able to stay in the Empire. It

truly became time to choose sides and restore their self-concepts to a place of balance. Finally, Enlightenment thinking that drove the discussion of divinely granted rights forward, the publication of *Common Sense* which brought the regular laypeople into the crusade in greater numbers than previous events and discourse, and the passage of the Declaration of Independence were all to some extent directly responsible for the final push to solidify and form their separate American identity. By the point of publication of *Common Sense* and the acceptance of the Declaration, many colonists had decided that cutting ties with Great Britain was the only way to ensure that they had equal treatment, were granted basic human rights, and were free from the oppressive and corrupt body that was Parliament.

The events of the Revolution are not new. They have been recounted multiple times by many authors from numerous angles. However, to use the different historical lenses in describing the events and explaining the change in identity using social identity theory is a new direction that can open explanatory avenues for more than just this subject. Through social identity theory and the events that propelled the identity split forward, it is shown that psychohistorical approaches are highly applicable to macro group situations and provide a better picture of how events can shape outcomes than by relying on historical narrative alone. This thesis presents the argument that the addition of a psychological lens better portrays the separation of identity that occurred in the American colonies and that the events of 1763 to 1776 solidified the identity crisis and formation that occurred as a result.



## Chapter 1: Characteristics of the Original Settlers

Before delving into the happenings of 1763 to 1776, it is necessary to look at the characteristics of the original settlers for two reasons: to show that the settlers were vastly different from those that were in the Mother Country and to illustrate the difference in attitude between the original colonists and those that later rebelled. To understand how events panned out it is essential to know where they began. The purpose of this chapter is to lay the groundwork for the problems that occurred later. These early differences in social status, societal makeup, religious affiliations, and motivations are very indicative of a high probability of an identity shift that would occur in later years.

The colonists that were sent to the New World were not the typical ruling class in Great Britain. In fact, they were hardly representative of the British at all. New World expeditions represented a rare opportunity for those that were disadvantaged or poor in the Mother Country to create a new life for themselves. A mix of idealistic notions and sheer desperation led a large number of these people to make the dangerous journey to the unknown.<sup>1</sup> These early colonists enjoyed a “de facto independence” of sorts.<sup>2</sup> Religious freedom and economic opportunities were abundant, and America was not a priority for the British Parliament.<sup>3</sup> All of these factors helped to foster an environment for the colonists to determine their own way of governing. They could

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<sup>1</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies that Brought America from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 33-34.

<sup>2</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: The Challenge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 190.

<sup>3</sup> Jay Winik, *The Great Upheaval: America and the Birth of the Modern World, 1788-1800* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 21-26.

envision their colonies the way they chose to, and they decided to create a highly libertarian political culture.<sup>4</sup>

Not only is it important to understand the various political structures that the colonists created, but the characteristics of the colonists and the makeup of the companies that were sent to the New World can be very telling. Bernard Bailyn highlights the two main groups of people who initially made the journey: metropolitan and provincial.<sup>5</sup> The metropolitan individuals were the young men in their twenties who came alone looking for some form of economic freedom. They usually took on some form of debt to be able to afford the journey.<sup>6</sup> The provincial type was less common in the very beginning, but was no less important. In-tact family units, mainly farmers, comprised this group and they were responsible for much of the population growth that occurred later.<sup>7</sup> Within this mix were also a number of convicts and indentured servants needed for brute force building and carving of land.<sup>8</sup>

After these initial waves of immigrants required to set up settlements in the New World, there was a much more diverse representation of people. Skilled artisans and merchants began coming and replacing the muscle that had been the major component of the Virginia settlement. There were so many people that were immigrating that there was a fear in Britain that the entire population of the Mother Country would become depleted.<sup>9</sup> Those that came to London looking for work ended up boarding a ship to America instead. It was also a very attractive to religious

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<sup>4</sup> Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic History: A Critical Approach* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 116.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America: An Introduction* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986), 12.

<sup>6</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, 12-13.

<sup>7</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, 14.

<sup>8</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, 61.

<sup>9</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America*, 9.

separatists like the Puritans who wanted to start a new life without persecution.<sup>10</sup> Although many that came were men, single women did also come to the colonies to stay with a family, but they were required to have letters of recommendation from upstanding citizens to gain passage and a position.<sup>11</sup>

As more and more artisans and craftsman came to the New World, there arose two problems: first, that they needed intelligent Englishmen to ensure proper rule and success in the colonies, and second, that the labor force was quickly running dry. While they needed these intelligent men to run the colonies, they were also wary of sending their best people away from the continent.<sup>12</sup> Still, with advertisements and the later appointments of royal officials to rule in the colonies, that problem was more or less dealt with and will be addressed in full later in the chapter. The second problem was more difficult to address and required the importation of slaves into the colonies. These slaves made up the largest group of non-English present in the New World.<sup>13</sup> In addition to these slaves, vagrant children and petty criminals were also acquired via incentives and propaganda and sent to the New World to fill this void.<sup>14</sup>

Another problem that arose from New World colonization came from the Indian populations present. The English had a much different experience with this than the French did; the French were more concerned with creating avenues of trade with the Indian population, and the English's first priority was colonization.<sup>15</sup> That is not to say that the colonists had no contact with the native tribes. In fact, the Powhatan Indian tribe was very important to the survival of the

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<sup>10</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years: The Peopling of British North America: The Conflict of Civilizations, 1600-1675* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2012), 90-91.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years*, 87.

<sup>12</sup> John A. Grigg, *British Colonial America: People and Perspectives* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, Inc., 2008), 125.

<sup>13</sup> John A. Grigg, *British Colonial America*, 140.

<sup>14</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years*, 82-83.

<sup>15</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle*, 39.

Jamestown colony, and the Powhatans came to desire the benefits of European culture and craftsmanship.<sup>16</sup> The exchanges tended to be brutal, and the exchange of diseases was the worst of all. Both sides suffered from these exchanges: the Indians from the diseases brought from the European continent and the settlers from the diseases of the New World.<sup>17</sup> Eventually, as the colonial and Powhatan leadership changed and the colonists were becoming more numerous, the Indian relations collapsed. The colonists fear of Satanic and evil influences that were perceived in Indian culture and religion were renewed, and the conflict became bloody for both sides of the fight.<sup>18</sup>

All of the information above is presented to show that there was a unique mixing of individuals that immigrated to the colonies, and that these were vastly different from the general make up of Great Britain. They tended to be middle to lower class, tradesmen and artisans, adventurous, and they valued a certain level of autonomy. In addition to this mixing, it is also important to remember the distance between Great Britain and the colonies. This presented a very difficult problem in terms of requesting supplies and general ruling of the colonies. Before King James I and Parliament could establish physical colonial governments, the colonists had created their own systems.<sup>19</sup> In the original charter of the colony of Virginia in 1606, missionary work was set as a very prominent goal, but little direction was given to legal and political structures. In fact, it was stated in the charter that the colonial council could handle all the land

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<sup>16</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years*, 31.

<sup>17</sup> John A. Grigg, *British Colonial America*, 7.

<sup>18</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Barbarous Years*, 456, 503.

<sup>19</sup> Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 5.

granting and general justice of the colonies.<sup>20</sup> This set a precedent for loose political bands and relying on colonial communities to solve any problems that would arise.<sup>21</sup>

Increased immigration and population growth necessitated a new charter three years later. The Virginia Charter of 1609 was very different from the first draft. While still referring to “our loving subjects” this document is almost solely concerned with the colonial political and legal structure.<sup>22</sup> To take pressure off Parliament and to grant the colonists requests in a shorter amount of time, the appointed colonial officials were given the authority to take care of almost all colonial matters. While these individuals were paid by and appointed by the Crown, this created a further divide between the colonies and Great Britain and allowed a greater split between royal and colonial interests. This is illustrated yet again in the Virginia Charter of 1611. In this document, the King and Parliament authorize the colonists to move further out into uninhabited territory, but they once again give all rights and authority to the colonial officials and governors.<sup>23</sup> They still maintain that they are ultimately in charge of the venture, but the entire document is spent delegating various tasks and granting more authority to various groups in the colonies. Because they were mainly able to govern themselves, these colonists had no problem swearing loyalty to the Crown.<sup>24</sup>

These early experiences influenced the culture that emerged in the colonies. The culture was different from Great Britain simply because they faced circumstances that those in the

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<sup>20</sup> King James I, “The First Charter of Virginia,” April 10, 1606, accessed September 4, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/va01.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va01.asp).

<sup>21</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 26-27.

<sup>22</sup> King James I, “The Second Charter of Virginia,” May 23, 1609, accessed September 4, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/va02.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va02.asp).

<sup>23</sup> King James I, “The Third Charter of Virginia,” March 12, 1611, accessed September 4, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th\\_century/va03.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/17th_century/va03.asp).

<sup>24</sup> Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World*, 5.

Mother Country would never experience and could not understand.<sup>25</sup> Very early on, it could be seen that there was a new society forming in the New World.<sup>26</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota characterizes their society as being something between English and Indian; the close quarters of the societies of the settlers and the Indians allowed elements from multiple cultures to come together and create a culture distinct from that of the Mother Country.<sup>27</sup> This may be the case, but it does not mean that the colonists rejected British society.

Many people in America desired British goods. They saw it as a way to legitimize their culture and civilize the backwards land in which they were living.<sup>28</sup> Colonial craftsman, while skilled in their field, did not compare to the hundreds of years of experience and greater supply of fine goods that British craftsman could provide. Owning goods imported from Britain became a status symbol.

As was stated above, the makeup of the colonies was very different from Great Britain in a societal sense. There were no great aristocratic members present, and there was no equivalent of a high society. Bernard Bailyn observed the various differences between life and status in the colonies versus in Great Britain. Their world was small and provincial, and the colonists possessed a desire to make their world greater.<sup>29</sup> The “colonial elite,” so to say, more closely resembled middle and lower classes overseas. The mansions built in the colonies were hardly anything like the grand multi-floor, multi-room, endless mansions that decorated the English countryside. They were much smaller and humbler in their decoration and size fitting with the

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<sup>25</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 10.

<sup>26</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 6.

<sup>27</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 23-29.

<sup>28</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British*, 9.

<sup>29</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew: The Genius and Ambiguities of the American Founders* (New York: Vintage Books, 2003), 8.

comparative simplicity of life.<sup>30</sup> Even the differences in their portraits can be catalogued. They are very plain in contrast with the “resplendent” paintings that adorned the parlors of the aristocracy of Great Britain.<sup>31</sup> These works show a humble and simple society; in hindsight, it is not inconceivable that these basic differences set the stage to reject the haughtiness of British society and be very suspicious of possible corruption that came from a people so concerned with appearances.



**Figure 1: Mount Vernon, Virginia<sup>32</sup>**

<sup>30</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 12.

<sup>31</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 21-23.

<sup>32</sup> Theodor Horydczak, “Mount Vernon. Front of Mount Vernon mansion,” ca. 1920-1950, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/resource/thc.5a46080/>.



**Figure 2: Chatsworth, England<sup>33</sup>**

From the beginning of their relationship, the colonists and the British were very different. John A. Grigg notes that both the society and the culture of the colonies was formed as a result of the conflicts that were faced in the New World, and this is a very accurate assessment.<sup>34</sup> They were a “marginal, borderland people,” and the relative neglect that they felt from Great Britain due to this marginality allowed them to create a different power structure rather quickly.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> “Front view of Chatsworth House, Chatsworth, England,” n. d., accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2002715780/>.

<sup>34</sup> John A. Grigg, *British Colonial America*, 204.

<sup>35</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *To Begin the World Anew*, 1-4.



Because of these factors, the British no longer knew the colonists or understood their circumstances, feelings, or plights.<sup>36</sup> After the tumult that was the English Civil War, the authority that was exercised over the colonies collapsed. As trying as it was to control the colonies in the New World with the westward expansion of settlers and the distance between them, it was nearly impossible to do with political unrest and a war on their hands. This event caused them to abandon their attempts to control the colonies.<sup>37</sup> The combination of the diverse characteristics, the distance between Great Britain and the colonies, the differences in societal values, the reliance on local and colonial governments to handle problems, and the effects of the English Civil War set the foundation for the conflict that would lead to independence. More importantly, they created deep feelings that the colonists were fundamentally different from Great Britain. Before 1763, these differences and issues were held in balance.<sup>38</sup> After the Seven Years' War, which is discussed in the next chapter, these differences became salient and contributed to the formation of a completely separate American identity.

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<sup>36</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 49.

<sup>37</sup> Jack P. Greene and Philip D. Morgan, *Atlantic History*, 117-119.

<sup>38</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1992), 22.

## Chapter 2: The Seven Years' War and the Difficulties of British Protection

Had events gone on as they had since the inception of the colonies, it is conceivable that there never would have been an American Revolution and the difference in identity would have never reached the level of salience to cause great distress. In fact, as of 1754, the colonists had been presented with the Albany Plan of Union drafted in part by Benjamin Franklin. This document proposed a single, general colonial-based government.<sup>1</sup> It would consist of a President-General appointed by and paid for by the Crown, and this person would have authority to appoint any and all other members necessary. This does not include colonial delegates; they would be appointed by each colony and sent to the delegation that would meet annually in Philadelphia.<sup>2</sup> Any act would require the assent of the President-General, and he was granted sole authority over trade, taxation, and emergency defense.<sup>3</sup> In this system, the colonists would have had control over their own country nearly in its entirety, but they would have had to pay to sustain it. In a way, this was an attempt to take some of the pressure off of Parliament in regard to colonial matters while still keeping Parliament as the sovereign body. Surprisingly, the colonists rejected this arrangement with their claim being that they were British and as such would be ruled by Parliament.<sup>4</sup>

This was quite a change from the identity that would fully manifest itself nearly twenty years later. This begs the question: what changed? The answer to this would have to be the Seven

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<sup>1</sup> Benjamin Franklin, Thomas Hutchinson, Samuel Eliot, Henry Steele Commager, and William E. Leuchtenburg, "Albany Plan of Union," July 10, 1754, accessed September 14, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/albany.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/albany.asp).

<sup>2</sup> Benjamin Franklin, "Albany Plan of Union."

<sup>3</sup> Benjamin Franklin, "Albany Plan of Union."

<sup>4</sup> Jay Winik, *The Great Upheaval: America and the Birth of the Modern World, 1788-1800* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 26.

Years' War. According to Fred Anderson, the Seven Years' War was the most important event in the eighteenth century as it was the catalyst for the ideological revolution that led into the splitting of the British and the American colonists.<sup>5</sup> This work does not include a battle by battle synopsis of the war, but it does go over the major aspects of the war that had an impact on post-war relations between the British and the colonists that began the identity crisis of the next decades.<sup>6</sup>

The war occurred due to long building territorial conflicts between the British and the French in the Ohio Territory. The battle over territory required the colonists to ask help of Parliament for their defense as colonial defenses were largely inadequate.<sup>7</sup> The British came to the defense of their colonies, and colonial soldiers aided the British troops in fighting the French and Indian coalition. Colonial officers who agreed to serve in the war were promised tracts of land in exchange for their service, and George Washington was among them.<sup>8</sup> Part of the reason that he was able to become the general of the Continental Army during the Revolutionary War was because of his victories sustained during the Seven Years' War. Part of the success of the Seven Years' War was that it provided the colonists and the British with a common view of the world and the Empire at large because of the shared experience.<sup>9</sup> While there may have been some argument about quartering British soldiers during the war, this did not serve to divide as much as it could have.<sup>10</sup> At the point of victory, the colonists were grateful for the help and the

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<sup>5</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), xvii-xix.

<sup>6</sup> A full account of the Seven Years' War can be found in *Crucible of War* by Fred Anderson or *Flight of the Eagle* by Conrad Black.

<sup>7</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 7.

<sup>8</sup> Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 132.

<sup>9</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 414.

<sup>10</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 167.

British were reveling in their gains from the Treaty of Paris. The differences from before had diminished salience in this victorious atmosphere.

The Treaty of Paris was signed in 1763 and officially ended the Seven Years' War. The terms of the Treaty gave Britain incredible gains in the New World. The North American continent was split down the Mississippi River with Britain retaining the eastern half and France controlling the western half but both sides had rights to use the Mississippi River.<sup>11</sup> The majority of the treaty consists of territory being restored and passed between the British and the French. British victory was not just limited to the war: they gained great amount of territory without French competition and they were granted access to supplies and supply lines that had been previously unavailable.<sup>12</sup> In essence, the Seven Years' War had been "stupid" for all involved except the British and the Americans: the British had now been opened to the entire area that they had wanted for years.<sup>13</sup>

While this victory was immense, and there were innumerable possibilities for the British in their newly acquired territory, it raised an issue that would be the downfall of the shared identity between Great Britain and the colonies. The British government had accumulated considerable debt from the war. Some estimates place the debt at around £150,000,000.<sup>14</sup> Severe financial ruin required a new policy to be formulated by the British.<sup>15</sup> In regard to this problem, the British made two decisions: first, that they would need to properly defend their newly

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<sup>11</sup> "Treaty of Paris," February 10, 1763, accessed September 7, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/paris763.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/paris763.asp).

<sup>12</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 454.

<sup>13</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies that Brought America from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 88.

<sup>14</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: The Challenge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 153.

<sup>15</sup> Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 125.

acquired land by indefinitely stationing troops in the colonies, and second, to pay for this deployment by placing taxes on the colonies. In combination with the seemingly insurmountable debt, the first decision compounded the need to quickly raise revenue by implementing the second decision.

It was imperative for the British to protect their empire. The question on all minds in Parliament was exactly how much security was necessary?<sup>16</sup> William Pitt was of the mind that the security force that Parliament had chosen was not at all large enough to meet the need for defense.<sup>17</sup> However, to send and maintain an adequate defense, the money had to come from some other source. Although the Sugar Act of 1733 was placed on the colonies years prior, the colonists had always ignored the regulations, and Parliament had not actively forced them to comply. The Seven Years' War debt crisis necessitated a different approach than this blasé attitude. The colonists, who had never been taxed before, began to pay their fair share of the burden from the war started at their expense.<sup>18</sup>

At this point, the colonists were still grateful for their British protectors and joyed that the war was finally over. Unfortunately, those hoping that everything could go back to the way it was before the conflict—with the colonies conducting business much as they pleased and Parliament keeping out of the war—were about to be gravely disappointed. Benjamin Franklin, who was then working as the Postmaster General for Massachusetts and Pennsylvania, attempted to convince Parliament of the difficulties that would arise out of taxing the colonies. He claimed that the more the government required in tax revenue, the less they would gain overall from the

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<sup>16</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 33.

<sup>17</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 111.

<sup>18</sup> Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire*, 140.

mercantilist relationship as the colonists would be pressed for money that could be put to more use elsewhere.<sup>19</sup> While this was a valid argument, and one made by the colonists later that year, the British had already made up their minds on how to act. Truthfully, part of the fuel for their decision was a fear of independence sentiment in the colonies that they had largely ignored over the course of the relationship, and they misguidedly believed that sharing the tax burden of paying for soldiers could diminish this sentiment.<sup>20</sup>

The colonists did not react well to the soldiers or to the rumors that Parliament may be placing a tax on them. These feelings of infringement upon their previously enjoyed rights led to uprisings in the colonies which made Parliamentary coercion difficult from afar.<sup>21</sup> A secondary goal for the soldiers was then necessary: keep the rebellion in the colonies under control to prevent another war.<sup>22</sup> From the beginning of their relationship, the colonies enjoyed the “salutary neglect” of Great Britain and were content with that aspect of the relationship.<sup>23</sup> Suddenly, that relationship changed completely. The “loose organization” that had characterized the political and business model was thrown into chaos by the unknown and unfortunate decision of Parliament to enact the Currency Act.<sup>24</sup>

The Currency Act made a potentially salvageable situation exponentially worse. It was brought to the attention of Parliament that the colonies were printing their own paper money intended for commerce and the payment of debts incurred. The act stated that the depreciating value of paper money and no adjustment for that depreciation led to unfair payments of debt

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<sup>19</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle*, 90.

<sup>20</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle*, 92.

<sup>21</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 456.

<sup>22</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 571.

<sup>23</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 6.

<sup>24</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 5.

which necessitated Parliament's action of outlawing it.<sup>25</sup> Specie was now the only valid form of payment that could be accepted in any transaction. Anyone that went against this order and continued to use paper money would be fined and dismissed from any positions of authority by order of Parliament.<sup>26</sup>

While Parliament may have felt that they were acting in concordance with their desire to have the colonists pay their fair share of the war debt, the colonists saw it as a threat to their very way of life without their consent. Realizing that this was a threat to their existence and their rights as Englishmen and British subjects, the colonists reacted with dismay and anger. They were faced with a force of unwanted soldiers and were being placed with regulations and the potential for taxes without any input.<sup>27</sup> While the claim that "no taxation without representation" caused the Revolution has been greatly exaggerated, it did cause the colonists to realize that their perceived identity as Englishmen were not equal with those in Great Britain. This began the crisis of identity that would come to more importance later in the conflict.

The fiscal reform attempt laid out in the Currency Act undermined the shaky stability between the colonists and Great Britain during the uncertain time after the war.<sup>28</sup> Perhaps if the British had not attempted to change the economic structure of the colonies, problems could have been more easily fixed in these early years. However, the frustration caused by economic trouble destroyed their ability to calm dissent and riots in the colonies.<sup>29</sup> This was further compounded

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<sup>25</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Currency Act," April, 19, 1764, accessed August 30, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/currency\\_act\\_1764.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/currency_act_1764.asp).

<sup>26</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Currency Act."

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Philips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 87.

<sup>28</sup> Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 10.

<sup>29</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 601.

by the reliance on colonial assemblies. Because the colonists previously had assemblies that remedied most of their daily troubles, they had little respect for royal authority.<sup>30</sup> Adding in an economic crisis in which the royal officials in the colonies were forced to comply did not help in this respect.

Terry Bouton describes the effects of the Currency Act on Pennsylvania. The severe shortage of money led to incredible economic stress on the colonists in this region. Many of them lost their land and were unable to pass on their land to their children.<sup>31</sup> For farmers, this meant that they no longer had a livelihood. The citizens of Pennsylvania, and the rest of the colonies, were put under incredible strain from the nullification of their primary method of payment. When people were unable to pay their debts incurred due to a lack of specie, their properties and businesses were foreclosed.<sup>32</sup>

Unsurprisingly, the inability to pay debts affected more than just enterprises; it also could hurt social standing and reputation. In Pennsylvania alone, the poverty rate increased by a factor of eight.<sup>33</sup> This was not unique to Pennsylvania. Many communities in all the colonies were suffering the same conditions. The Currency Act, while it may have had a valid economic reason to be enacted, created a feeling of shared suffering throughout the colonies. Many felt that the removal of paper currency was a form of punishment, and they assigned blame on Parliament for their distresses.<sup>34</sup> A full psychological discussion of the implications of this act on the formation of a distinct American identity will come shortly.

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<sup>30</sup> Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World*, 14.

<sup>31</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 14.

<sup>32</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 24.

<sup>33</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 27.

<sup>34</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 18, 27.



The Currency Act led many colonists to desire an equal distribution of wealth and land in the colonies in addition to granting equal political rights.<sup>35</sup> Although the equal distribution was eventually taken off the table, the colonists began to see corruption in all levels of the British Parliament. In fact, they went so far as to say that their oppressors were acting in league with Satan.<sup>36</sup> The transfer of primary power to the Parliamentary body was not enough to ward off corruption.<sup>37</sup> Representation was not granted to the majority of the country and none of the American colonies. In the colonists' views, Parliament and the British government had become more concerned with putting others down to keep up their lifestyle. Whether or not this was true, and on the whole, it was not, the conditions in the colonies were enough to convince a large number that Parliament was full of corrupt, out-of-touch politicians that did not have the interests of the colonies at heart.

Part of this stemmed from the differences between the colonists and the British. In general, the colonists tended to be self-made while the British had sponsors for traveling to the colonies and completing education.<sup>38</sup> The social division of England did not exist in such strong form in the colonies. Where there were the genteel classes and the rest of the commoners in England, there was only really one general class of the middling sort in the American colonies.<sup>39</sup>

The biggest downfall of the British in the colonies was that they assumed that the conditions were the same as they were in the home country.<sup>40</sup> As was seen in the first chapter,

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<sup>35</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 32.

<sup>36</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 29.

<sup>37</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1992), 47-49.

<sup>38</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), 12.

<sup>39</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 15.

<sup>40</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 122.

the conditions in the colonies were different from anything that would be faced in Great Britain. Additionally, the reliance on colonial governments and the salutary neglect that had been the precedent in the colonies led to more differences than Parliament anticipated. After these events, many Englishmen viewed the Americans not as fellow citizens but as a group that needed subjugated.<sup>41</sup> Likewise, the colonists began to see the British as unfair oppressors that were out of touch with their needs and desires.

The other act passed that year by Parliament was a renewal of the Sugar Act that was due to expire. This version of the act was stricter than its predecessor, and taxed the following items: sugar, coffee, indigo, all wine except that imported from France, silk, callico [sic], and linen cloth.<sup>42</sup> While this was an act that had been placed on the colonies before, the terms were slightly changed and contraband goods could now be seized. This time, the British fully intended to come through on the regulations and punishments. Instead of ignoring the regulations like they did in the past, the colonists in Massachusetts and Virginia penned petitions to Parliament to lift the regulations. The Massachusetts letter claimed that the taxes from this act would bring many burdens on the inhabitants in the form of economic restraint in light of the already difficult situation created by the Currency Act.<sup>43</sup> Specifically, they asked that the practice of “internal taxes” be continued until such a time that the colonists be granted representation in Parliament.<sup>44</sup> The Virginia Petition was similar to the Massachusetts Petition, but it was addressing the rumor

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<sup>41</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *Revolutionary Characters*, 21.

<sup>42</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Sugar Act,” April 5, 1764, accessed September 12, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/sugar\\_act\\_1764.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/sugar_act_1764.asp).

<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts House of Representatives, “Petition from the Massachusetts House of Representatives to the House of Commons,” November 3, 1764, accessed September 12, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/petition\\_mass\\_1764.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/petition_mass_1764.asp).

<sup>44</sup> Massachusetts House of Representatives, “Petition from the Massachusetts House of Representatives to the House of Commons.”

that a stamp duty was soon to be placed on the colonies. This letter begged Parliament to reconsider the decision due to the horrible conditions brought upon the colonies by the Currency Act and the Sugar Act. They iterated that the rights of Englishmen would not allow them to be taxed without a say in the decision.<sup>45</sup> Citing the “reciprocal benefits” of the colonists’ agrarian society and the British’s manufacturing capabilities, the Virginia House of Burgesses implored them to reconsider the proposed Stamp Act.<sup>46</sup> As is seen in the next chapter, their petitions were unsuccessful.

What does all of this mean for identity formation? Social identity is a part of the self-concept that comes solely from membership in a group.<sup>47</sup> This is also the basis of social identity theory; it further requires that a sense of inclusion in a group be felt and a sense of distinction from other groups and group members. This condition is known as optimal distinction.<sup>48</sup> Before the conflict over the Seven Years’ War, the Currency Act, and the stationing of British occupation, the colonists and the British that lived in the Mother Country felt that they belonged to more or less the same group: subjects of King George III and citizens of Great Britain. There was a small level of distinctiveness in that they were colonists who helped the British by supplying their agrarian needs. This led to a self-stereotype where the colonists perceived that they were a part of this group and acted according to the job that they had been assigned. Being treated in a certain way by another group can forge an identity, and a change in that treatment can also influence the social identity to change.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Virginia House of Burgesses, “Petition of the Virginia House of Burgesses to the House of Commons,” December 18, 1764, accessed September 3, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/petition\\_va\\_1764.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/petition_va_1764.asp).

<sup>46</sup> Virginia House of Burgesses, “Petition of the Virginia House of Burgesses to the House of Commons.”

<sup>47</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006), 102.

<sup>48</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 188.

<sup>49</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 103.

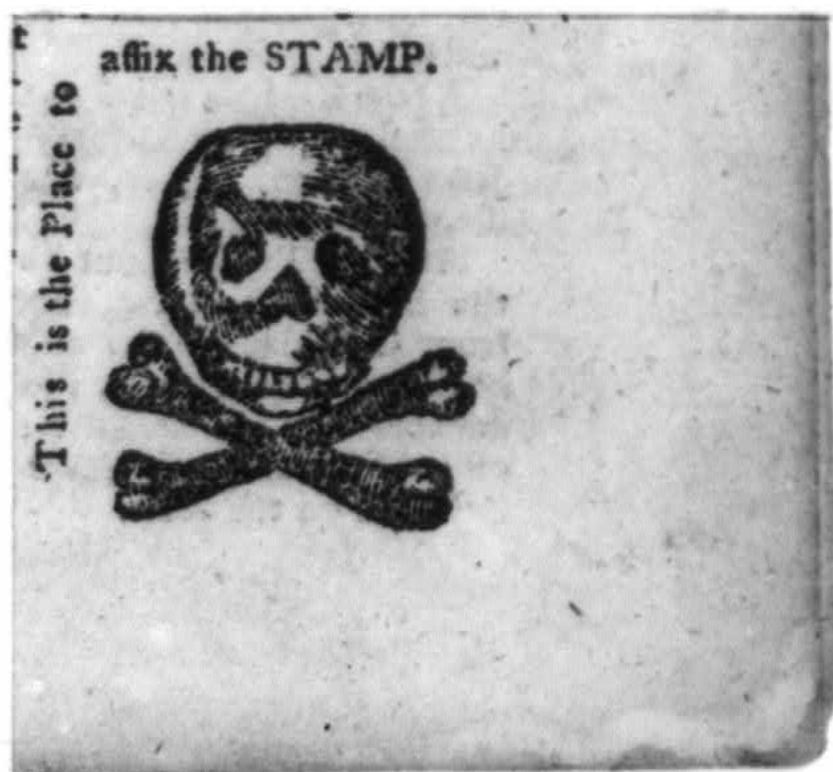
By supposedly alienating the colonists and changing the way that the British related to them, the foundations of an in-group and out-group were laid. The cohesiveness of the group was interrupted and the bonds keeping the colonists in the group were no longer as great of a concern.<sup>50</sup> One of the tenets of social identity theory that is experimentally visible are tiers of identity categorization that are activated when met with environmental stimuli that are against that tier of identity.<sup>51</sup> For example, the base tier of identity would be human, the next tier could be Christian, the one after could be British subject, following that would be colonist, and then whatever profession or family role the individual possessed. It is important to note that this could be different for each individual person but is here examined on a societal scale. The more significant the tier affected, the more significant the crisis of identity. This phenomenon can also be explained as a salience hierarchy rather than tiers, but the result is the same. Higher salience predicts a change in identity and a change in groups assignments for those involved.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 311.

<sup>51</sup> Jan E. Stets, and Peter J. Burke, "Identity Theory and Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 63, no. 3 (September, 2000): 231, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2695870>.

<sup>52</sup> Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December, 1995): 257, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787127>.



**Figure 3: Representation of Attitude Toward Stamp Act<sup>53</sup>**

The British were still operating under the idea that those in the Mother Country and those in the colonies were exactly the same; there would be no problem with governmental regulations from Parliament because all British subjects were ruled by that entity.<sup>54</sup> However, the lack of representation and the belief that they were being treated in an unfair way by a government that did not understand them caused the colonists to question the designation of British subject in their hierarchy of identity. That aspect of their identity was granted salience and the crisis of identity began. Asking the colonists to help pay for the war effort “lit the fuse” of both the war

<sup>53</sup> William Bradford, “This is the place to affix the stamp,” October 24, 1765, accessed October 20, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004672606/>.

<sup>54</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 119.

that would occur later and the formation of an American identity.<sup>55</sup> By the end of 1764, many of the colonists, but not quite a majority, had decided that if they were not allowed representation in Parliament they had but two choices: independence or slavery.<sup>56</sup> Part of this decision came out of the difficulties that they faced with where they belonged and whether or not their relationship with the British could continue in the manner that it had before. More attacks on identity salience and the colonists' social identity in general occurred throughout the rest of the time and culminated in the writing and ratification of the Declaration of Independence. The application of social identity theory and other identity related concepts can explain how each event leading up to that point contributed to the formation of an almost completely separate American identity.

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<sup>55</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 35.

<sup>56</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution*, 14.

### Chapter 3: The Stamp Act, the Townshend Act, and the Boston Massacre

The Seven Years' War and its aftermath inflamed the feelings of the colonists and angered the members of Parliament in Great Britain. When asking the colonists to contribute to the mountain of debt incurred during the defenses undertaken on the edges of the colonial territory, Parliament did not think that they were making an outrageous request. It only made sense to them that the colonists help. Unfortunately, as highlighted in the last chapter, the colonists saw this as an infringement upon their rights as British subjects. They also believed that they had sufficiently helped the cause by providing their own soldiers to fight alongside the British soldiers that were sent. In an effort to raise the amount of capital necessary to pay off the debts, Parliament and King George III decided to pass the Stamp Act. This fateful decision set off a spark that would cause unrest and violence in the colonies for many years.

After the horrible fiasco that was the Currency Act, the prospect of a stamp tax was inconceivable. The mountainous debt and lack of specie were causing near economic collapse in the colonies, and the renewed—and now enforced—Sugar Act was making matters even worse. The rising discontent was palpable, and the Stamp Act turned those feelings of discontent into Revolutionary sentiment.<sup>1</sup> This one act of Parliament made the colonists think and discuss more than they ever had in the past.<sup>2</sup> Did Parliament have the right to tax them? Did the colonial governments have sole power over taxation of the colonies or was Parliament sovereign in all

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<sup>1</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 51.

<sup>2</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 54.

areas under British control? Could taxes be enacted without colonial consent? These questions came to the forefront of political debate after the Stamp Act was passed.

Conservative estimates place the war debt at around £137,000,000 with an annual interest of roughly £5,000,000; with the income of the British government being around £8,000,000 per year, this was a crisis that was not going to just handle itself.<sup>3</sup> Before, the colonists were not actively protesting the taxes that had been placed on them by Parliament. They may have sent petitions and complained about the undue stress of the acts on both their personal lives and the business life of the colonies, but there were no widespread riots or protests. The Stamp Act changed this completely.<sup>4</sup>

Debates for the Stamp Act were discussed in Parliament beginning in February of 1764. In concordance with the majority of Parliament, Charles Townshend expressed his anger at the colonists for their challenge to Parliamentary authority: “And now will these Americans, Children planted by our Care, nourished up by our Indulgence until they are grown to a Degree of Strength and Opulence, and protected by our Arms, will they grudge to contribute their mite to relieve us from the heavy weight of that burden we lie under?”<sup>5</sup> Isaac Barré vehemently disagreed with his insinuation:

They planted by your Care? No! Oppressions planted em in America. They fled from your Tyranny to a then uncultivated and unhospitable Country—where they exposed themselves to almost all the hardships to which human Nature is liable, and among others to the Cruelties of a Savage foe, the most subtle and I take upon me to say the most formidable of any People on the face of Gods Earth. And yet, actuated by Principles of true english Lyberty, they met all these hardships with pleasure, compared with those

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<sup>3</sup> Robert J. Chaffin, “The Townshend Acts of 1767,” *The William and Mary Quarterly* 27, no. 1 (January, 1970): 91, accessed August 30, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1923840>.

<sup>4</sup> Eric Hinderaker and Peter C. Mancall, *At the Edge of Empire: The Backcountry in British North America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 141.

<sup>5</sup> Qtd. in Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 74-75.



they suffered in their own Country, from the hands of those who should have been their Friends.

They nourished up by *your* indulgence? they grew by your neglect of Em: as soon as you began to care about Em, that Care was Exercised in sending persons to rule over Em, in one Department and another, who were perhaps the Deputies of Deputies to some Member of this house—sent to Spy out their Lyberty, to misrepresent their Actions and to prey upon Em; men whose behaviour on many Occasions has caused the Blood of those Sons of Liberty to recoil within them; men promoted to the highest Seats of Justice, some, who to my knowledge were glad by going to a foreign Country to Escape being brought to the Bar of a Court of Justice in their own.

They protected by *your* Arms? they have nobly taken up Arms in your Defence, have Extended a Valour amidst their constant and Laborious industry for the defence of a Country, whose frontier, while drench'd in blood, its interior Parts have yielded all its little Savings to your Emolument. And believe me, remember I this Day told you so, that same Spirit of freedom which actuated that people at first will accompany them still.— But prudence forbids me to explain myself further. God knows I do not at this Time speak from motives of party Heat, what I deliver are the Genuine Sentiment of my heart.<sup>6</sup>

Isaac Barré truly captured the feelings of the colonists here in this speech. Many in the audience were captivated by his words, and some may have even felt that they treated the Americans poorly in the past and present with their considerations. Still, it came to no avail.

Despite Barré's incredible display of rhetoric, the Stamp Act was passed on March 22, 1765.<sup>7</sup> The act required a stamp to be purchased and placed on most written documents that were printed in the colonies. Nearly everyone was affected by this act, and after the catastrophe that was the Currency Act, these duties could only be paid in specie that could be very pricey for those with an already dwindled amount of funds available. Numerous items were covered by the Stamp Act: any and all court documents, licenses, bonds, warrants, grants, newspapers, pamphlets, advertisements, almanacks, and even packs of cards and dice.<sup>8</sup> If the documents were multiple pages, only one stamp was required. If any of the items listed in the act were printed in

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<sup>6</sup> Qtd. in Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 75.

<sup>7</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Stamp Act," March 22, 1765, accessed September 7, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/stamp\\_act\\_1765.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/stamp_act_1765.asp).

<sup>8</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Stamp Act."

another language, the cost of the duty doubled. Prices varied based on the item with most court documents requiring a stamp only costing three pence. However, the costs of the stamps ranged from two pence all the way up to six pounds depending on the document.<sup>9</sup>

The colonists' reaction to the Stamp Act was understandable. Honestly, they did not object to helping Parliament pay for the war if they were able to do it on their own terms using their own colonial governments to raise the revenue and send it overseas.<sup>10</sup> Had Parliament listened to this option, there may have never been a splitting of identity as the colonists would have felt that their way of life was being preserved while accomplishing what was necessary to aid the Mother Country. This was the beginning of a very interesting political debate in the colonies and Parliament: external versus internal taxes. Internal taxes were those taxes that affected every day, personal, and business life in the colonies such as the stamp tax while external taxes referred to those placed on trade. Parliament claimed the right to both of these taxes, but the colonists only granted them sovereignty over external taxes.<sup>11</sup> Officials in the colonies that still maintained that Parliament had the right to levy taxes were subject to violence.<sup>12</sup>

At the heart of the issue was the feeling that their freedom had been violated.<sup>13</sup> In addition to this was a very deep-seated fear regarding religion. Many in the colonies had come to the New World looking for religious freedom, and they feared that if the British could impose taxes and send soldiers they could also extend the authority of the Church of England onto

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<sup>9</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Stamp Act."

<sup>10</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 123.

<sup>11</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 126.

<sup>12</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 128.

<sup>13</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1992), 94.

colonial soil.<sup>14</sup> Feelings of fear permeated many aspects of life, and the belief that Parliament had overstepped their bounds of power was frequently expressed.<sup>15</sup>

After word of the Stamp Act reached America and the colonists were able to fully feel its effects, they came together and drafted resolutions to send to Parliament. The Resolves of the Pennsylvania Assembly on the Stamp Act, adopted on September 21, 1765, stated that the Americans had helped the British government in their fight against the French and the Indians during the war. In fact, they “most chearfully and liberally” helped in that regard.<sup>16</sup> They reiterated that they were entitled to the same rights as Englishmen, and the taxes that had been placed on them were illegal without proper representation.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the Resolutions of the Congress of October 19, 1765 asked for a repeal of the Stamp Act on economic grounds as the Pennsylvanians outlined in their resolves.<sup>18</sup> The stress on the American economy and the potential decrease in trade would outweigh the revenue taken in by the Stamp Act. Furthermore, this document claims that although the colonists have been asking for representation in Parliament, that would simply not be possible. They conceded that they were still attached to the government of Great Britain and did not want to break their ties, but it was not practical to conduct business in that way; the only way forward was to establish a colonial legislature that had the power to tax the colonies and would cooperate with Parliament but be independent over

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<sup>14</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 96.

<sup>15</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 110.

<sup>16</sup> Pennsylvania Assembly, “Resolves of the Pennsylvania Assembly on the Stamp Act,” September 21, 1765, accessed September 7, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/penn\\_assembly\\_1765.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/penn_assembly_1765.asp).

<sup>17</sup> Pennsylvania Assembly, “Resolves of the Pennsylvania Assembly on the Stamp Act.”

<sup>18</sup> Continental Congress, “Resolutions of the Continental Congress,” October 19, 1765, accessed September 21, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/resolu65.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/resolu65.asp).

the day-to-day happenings.<sup>19</sup> Basically, they were requesting the arrangement that had been proposed in the Albany Plan of Union in 1754.

In addition to these appeals, some colonies chose to write up a formal non-importation agreement although many were engaging in the boycott without a written declaration. New York and Connecticut both wrote up formal non-importation agreements at the end of 1765. New York's agreement claimed that the state commerce had been down due to the stamp levies and other "impositions" and "duties."<sup>20</sup> This document was signed by nearly two hundred merchants who refused to buy any British goods until the Act was repealed.<sup>21</sup> The Connecticut agreement went a step further and claimed that all government must be formed by the consent of those being governed.<sup>22</sup> From those in the colonies, Parliament could expect no "tame submission."<sup>23</sup> The Virginians declared the act illegal and refused to enforce it.<sup>24</sup>

After all of these petitions, resolutions, and reports of negative sentiment in the colonies, Parliament and King George III realized that they needed to do something or the unrest would soon become out of control. Much of the fault for the unrest in the colonies lies with the British. The policy that they had employed regarding the American colonists had not been "clear" or "consistent."<sup>25</sup> Being so far away and uninvolved in the official channels of the British government had prevented a strong group tie to Parliament. As Fred Anderson points out, every

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<sup>19</sup> Continental Congress, "Resolutions of the Continental Congress."

<sup>20</sup> Merchants of New York, "New York Merchants Non-Importation Agreement," October 31, 1765, accessed September 21, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/newyork\\_non\\_importation\\_1765.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/newyork_non_importation_1765.asp).

<sup>21</sup> Merchants of New York, "New York Non-Importation Agreement."

<sup>22</sup> New London, CT Assembly, "Connecticut Resolutions on the Stamp Act," December 10, 1765, accessed September 21, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/ct\\_resolutions\\_1765.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/ct_resolutions_1765.asp).

<sup>23</sup> New London, CT Assembly, "Connecticut Resolutions on the Stamp Act."

<sup>24</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 81.

<sup>25</sup> Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War: The Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* (New York: Vintage Books, 2000), 730.

“administrative miscalculation” pushed the colonists further away.<sup>26</sup> The greater salience of the differences contributed to the “us versus them” feelings that helped to classify Parliament as a member of the out-group.

In response to the colonists’ pleas, Parliament and the King decided to repeal the Stamp Act. Unfortunately, the colonists had made it an issue about Parliamentary sovereignty.<sup>27</sup> Many wanted to simply cut their losses and give up on trying to use the colonies to raise funds to pay off debt. King George III eventually voiced his inability to grant any concessions past repealing the Stamp Act.<sup>28</sup> A compromise was reached in which the Stamp Act would be repealed, but the Declaratory Act would be enacted. In the end, although the British wanted to defuse the situation, they also wanted to put America back in its place.<sup>29</sup>

The Stamp Act Repeal was signed on March 18, 1766 nearly one year after the original was signed into effect.<sup>30</sup> It stated that the furtherance of the act “would be attended with many inconveniences” and made the original null and void.<sup>31</sup> In keeping with the desire to assert dominance over the colonies, the Declaratory Act was also put into place. The Act was signed on the same day as the repeal, and it reinforced the authority that Parliament had over all British territory and subjects. This was “an act for the better securing the dependency of his majesty’s dominions in America upon the crown and parliament of Great Britain.”<sup>32</sup> While declaring that

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<sup>26</sup> Fred Anderson, *The Crucible of War*, 733.

<sup>27</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 695.

<sup>28</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 83.

<sup>29</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies that Brought America from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 99.

<sup>30</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “An Act Repealing the Stamp Act,” March 18, 1766, accessed September 22, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/repeal\\_stamp\\_act\\_1766.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/repeal_stamp_act_1766.asp).

<sup>31</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “An Act Repealing the Stamp Act.”

<sup>32</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Declaratory Act,” March 18, 1766, accessed September 22, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/declaratory\\_act\\_1766.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declaratory_act_1766.asp).

Britain had all authority over all the colonies, the act simultaneously declared all resolutions to the contrary illegal and non-binding.<sup>33</sup>

By repealing the Stamp Act and adding in the Declaratory Act, Parliament resolved the crisis for a short time.<sup>34</sup> The general feeling in the colonies was positive toward Parliament, and they were eager to continue on as they had before. Even with the Declaratory Act and its statement that Parliament possessed all authority over the colonies, there was a positive change in the minds of the colonists. However, their enthusiasm for the Empire was irrevocably diminished.<sup>35</sup> They had attempted to tax the colonies, and the fear that they could again was ever present. It was more a state of being cautiously optimistic than possessing complete trust in the future intentions of the Empire.

The peace did not last. While the colonists gloried in their triumph and felt that the group cohesiveness could be restored and shared once more, the British were still trying to figure out how to pay off the debt acquired from the Seven Years' War. Charles Townshend suggested taxing the colonies gradually; this way, they would be less likely to squirm under the regulations and the taxes could stop once Parliament was satisfied with the rate being taxed and the revenue being accepted.<sup>36</sup> The colonists' demands had let Parliament know that they needed a closer relationship with the colonists to be able to assert their dominance. To this end, and to help enforce existing and future acts, Townshend suggested a Board of Customs to be placed in Boston. He noted that it may exacerbate the issues between the colonists and the British, but it was necessary to show "superiority of the Mother Country."<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Declaratory Act."

<sup>34</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 712.

<sup>35</sup> Fred Anderson, *Crucible of War*, 712.

<sup>36</sup> Robert J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Acts of 1767," 99.

<sup>37</sup> Robert J. Chaffin, "The Townshend Acts of 1767," 115.

The decision to implement the Townshend Act was twofold for both Townshend and Parliament: making the colonists pay for their defense and strengthening “English sovereignty” in the colonies.<sup>38</sup> Passed on June 29, 1767 the Townshend Act was intended to raise money for the cost of administration and governments for the American colonies.<sup>39</sup> It placed duties on numerous items imported from England into the colonies and suspended some of the duties on imports into England. There were now duties on glass, paint, paper, mill-boards, and tea.<sup>40</sup>

Parliament did not comprehend that there were differences between the conditions in the colonies and the conditions in Great Britain. To them, the colonies were just another part of the Empire that could be controlled by the sovereign governing body.<sup>41</sup> They were operating under the assumed similarity effect. The colonists may have placed the British in an out-group, but the British were not yet ready to give up the colonists as subjects and a source of revenue. Because of this, the British were making assumptions that the colonists were more like them than they actually were. Townshend’s fears, that he would alienate both parties with his act, proved to be true. The colonists were angered and acted out in violence and the British responded with “naked force.”<sup>42</sup>

Before the colonists responded with full mob violence, they utilized their old way of petitions and requests. The Massachusetts Circular Letter to the Colonial Legislatures, written on February 11, 1768, detailed the renewed grievances from Parliament and asked that all colonial

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<sup>38</sup> Robert J. Chaffin, “The Townshend Acts of 1767,” 120.

<sup>39</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Townshend Act,” June 29, 1767, accessed September 22, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/townsend\\_act\\_1767.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/townsend_act_1767.asp).

<sup>40</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Townshend Act.”

<sup>41</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire*, 133.

<sup>42</sup> Robert J. Chaffin, “The Townshend Acts of 1767,” 121.

legislatures work together to secure the rights that they were due as Englishmen.<sup>43</sup> Although they are asking for rights as “Englishmen,” the bonds of an in-group can be seen here. By banding together to fight a common enemy for something that they believed due them, they formally established the in-group and out-group that would come to full fruition in later years. In this letter, they once again made the assertion that the colonists should demand a subordinate government to be placed in the colonies as Parliament could never adequately represent them.<sup>44</sup> Holding onto their identity as fellow Englishmen fueled the desire to correct the situation rather than enter full scale revolution immediately. Additionally, these early colonists tended to view Parliament as the aggressor rather than the King.

That being said, on April 21, 1768 the British government sent the Circular Letter to the Governors in America in which it stated that King George III was not pleased with the actions of the colonists. The “factious tendency,” attempt to “inflamm[e] the minds of his good subjects in the colonies,” and acting in “open opposition to and denial of the authority of Parliament.”<sup>45</sup> The King’s message, although containing palpable disappointment in the actions of the colonists, was filled with affection toward his colonial subjects and noted that the King felt the great affection for him from his subjects.<sup>46</sup> This attitude caused the colonists to desire being Englishmen for their love of the King but desire freedom for their detestation of Parliament.

Their love for the King notwithstanding, the colonists continued to protest the Townshend Act. Non-violent measures included more non-importation agreements. Boston and

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<sup>43</sup> Massachusetts House of Representatives, “Massachusetts Circular Letter to the Colonial Legislatures,” February 11, 1768, accessed September 22, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/mass\\_circ\\_let\\_1768.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/mass_circ_let_1768.asp).

<sup>44</sup> Massachusetts House of Representatives, “Massachusetts Circular Letter to the Colonial Legislatures.”

<sup>45</sup> Wills Hill: First Marquis of Downshire and Earl of Hillsborough, “Circular Letter to the Governors in America,” April 21, 1768, accessed September 22, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/circ\\_let\\_gov\\_1768.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/circ_let_gov_1768.asp).

<sup>46</sup> Wills Hill, “Circular Letter to the Governors in America.”



Charleston both signed non-importation agreements in 1768 and 1769, respectively, and both documents stated the usual stipulations. No goods, except those required for everyday life or medical supplies, would be imported into the ports at Boston or Charleston until the Act was repealed.<sup>47</sup> In addition to the standard refusal to import, the Charleston Non-Importation Agreement ended with a threat to anyone who broke the agreement or disagreed with it: they would be “treated with the utmost contempt.”<sup>48</sup> As this strategy had worked so well for the colonists in the repeal of the Stamp Act, they decided to use the same tactic. Those that did import were subject to public scrutiny and signs stating “IMPORTER” were placed on shop doors.<sup>49</sup>

Boston decided to hold a town meeting on September 13, 1768 to discuss what should be done about the infringement that was the Townshend Act. The town decided that no law could bind individuals without first obtaining their consent.<sup>50</sup> Like Virginia with the Stamp Act, Boston was attempting to declare the Townshend Act illegal. The only authority capable of operating in the colonies was the “Great and General Court,” and the meeting set up a plan for a committee formed specifically to address the grievances of the colonists and how to fix them.<sup>51</sup> It was obvious that these issues would not be resolved by simply ignoring them, but Parliament did not want to back down. One side was going to have to give if it was not going to come to organized violence. Unfortunately, the colonists thought that the British intended to harm them, and the

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<sup>47</sup> Merchants and Traders of Boston, “Boston Non-Importation Agreement,” August 1, 1768, accessed September 23, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/boston\\_non\\_importation\\_1768.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/boston_non_importation_1768.asp); Inhabitants of South Carolina, “Charleston Non-Importation Agreement,” July 22, 1769, accessed September 23, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/charleston\\_non\\_importation\\_1769.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/charleston_non_importation_1769.asp).

<sup>48</sup> Inhabitants of South Carolina, “Charleston Non-Importation Agreement.”

<sup>49</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 129.

<sup>50</sup> Samuel Adams, “Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting,” September 13, 1768, accessed September 23, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/res\\_boston\\_1768.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/res_boston_1768.asp).

<sup>51</sup> Samuel Adams, “Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting.”

British were convinced that there was a severely rebellious sentiment that needed put down.<sup>52</sup>

This created a volatile atmosphere.

The earliest example of this volatile atmosphere is the Boston Massacre. Tar and feathering was a practice throughout the Stamp Act and the Townshend Act conflict, but it was not very widespread and no one died as a result. These first casualties of the conflict served as an incredible source of propaganda for the early revolutionary cause. It also helps to show the realistic group conflict theory in motion. This is the idea that all group conflict results from real conflicts of interest and frustrations over those conflicts.<sup>53</sup> Parliament and the British troops wanted to enforce the acts and taxes in the colonies and the colonists wanted away from their reach. This is the most basic way to describe the cause of the Boston Massacre.

Patriots became more and more belligerent leading the governor of Massachusetts to request British help.<sup>54</sup> Soldiers came to protect the town, but that only served to anger the non-loyal colonists more. Those tensions came to violence on March 5, 1770.<sup>55</sup> A mob gathered in front of the Customs House to complain to Sentry Hugh White that one of the soldiers under his command had not paid for wig.<sup>56</sup> This was not the cause of the violence however; the mob heard that someone was coming to command them to leave. A rumor going around the mob said that James Murray, a justice of the peace, was on his way with a copy of the Riot Act.<sup>57</sup> British

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<sup>52</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1992), 158.

<sup>53</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology, 12<sup>th</sup> Edition* (Upper Saddle River, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 2006), 416.

<sup>54</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2010), 125.

<sup>55</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America*, 125.

<sup>56</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 59.

<sup>57</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 137-138.

soldiers were only able to disband the group with the reading of this Act and invocation of royal authority. Mob members were determined to not let that happen.

Growing more vocal and more violent the mob threw snowballs and sticks at James Murray behind them and the soldiers in front of them. Everyone in the entire crowd, except for the one person who was authorized to give the order, was screaming “Fire!”<sup>58</sup> One of the sticks hit Private Hugh Montgomery and knocked him to the ground. When he stood up, a yell rang out: “Damn you, fire!” So he did.<sup>59</sup>

The next few minutes were complete chaos. Montgomery’s shot did not meet a mark, but the next several shots did with a Patriot shot hitting the commanding officer, Captain Preston, in the arm.<sup>60</sup> Samuel Gray and Crispus Attucks were the first two individuals to be killed followed by James Caldwell and Samuel Maverick.<sup>61</sup> Another person, Patrick Carr, died later from his injuries.<sup>62</sup> Captain Preston stopped further violence as soon as he was able, but the line had been drawn. The cohesiveness of the group of “British subject” completely broke down at this point. There was no longer anything viable keeping the group together in light of the violence committed against the colonists.

Seven of the British soldiers, including Captain Preston, were charged with murder and tried. All but two of them were acquitted while being represented by Josiah Quincy and John Adams.<sup>63</sup> The two officers that were charged were only convicted of manslaughter. Hugh Montgomery, who later admitted to being the one who gave the order to fire, and Matthew

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<sup>58</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 138.

<sup>59</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 138.

<sup>60</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 138-139.

<sup>61</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution*, 61.

<sup>62</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 140.

<sup>63</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution*, 61.

Kilroy were discharged from the military and branded on their thumbs.<sup>64</sup> Regardless of the decision, it created a perfect atmosphere for propaganda and helped to change the minds of those who were on the fence.

Part of the problem of group violence and the reason behind it is the concept of group polarization. Groups are more likely to make extreme decisions than the individuals within them would make on their own.<sup>65</sup> A working self-concept was created based on the salience of the violence that had just occurred. It was evident to the colonists that they were now the enemies of the British, and the blatant murder, in their view, reinforced their belief that they were no longer compatible with the British.

The Patriots wasted no time in making the situation a propaganda gold mine. Samuel Adams instructed Paul Revere to make various engravings of the event that showed the British as the aggressors and enshrined the names of the dead forever as martyrs for the cause. This is a common process after tragedies when the desire is to use them to shape public opinion. Sometimes, the “prestige” of the event lies in the ability to make it into propaganda.<sup>66</sup> This worked in both directions in this instance. Samuel Adams was able to influence the minds of the colonists, but John Adams was able to use the event to convince the jury that the soldiers were not guilty by spinning the events in a plausible manner. By making it seem like the circumstances of the event dictated their actions, and they felt that they had to act in that way, John Adams made the jurors see the situation in the way he wanted.<sup>67</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 160-161.

<sup>65</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 305.

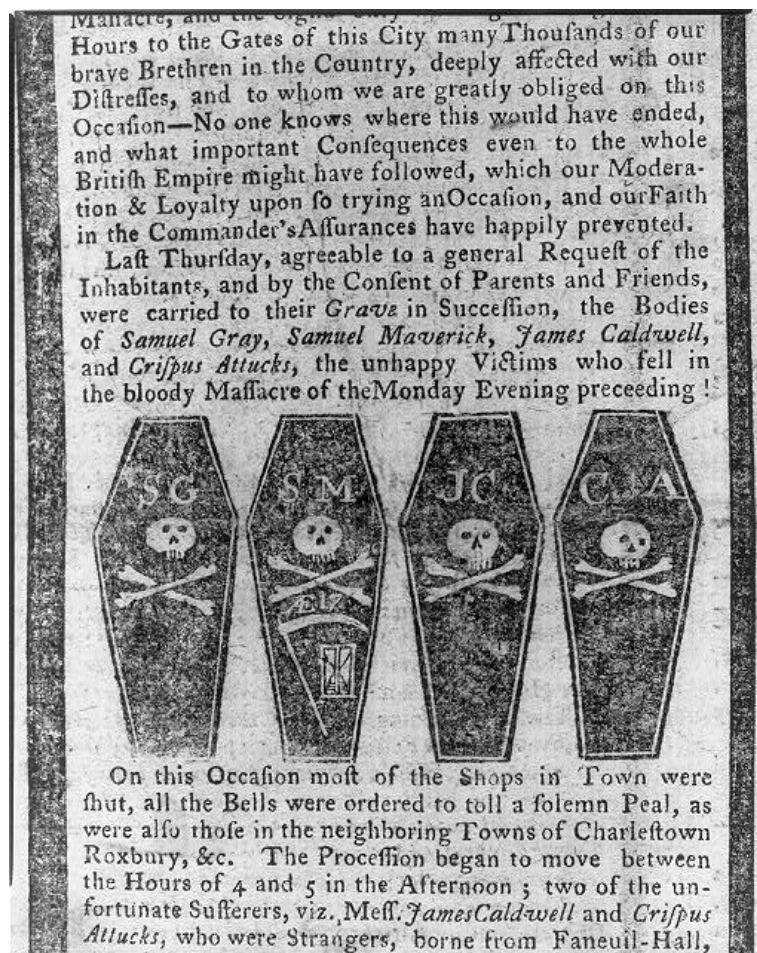
<sup>66</sup> Kathleen Ann Lawrence and Barry Alan Morris, “The Government As Plausibility Base: The Tactical Interpretation of Violence,” *World Communication* 19, no. 1 (1990): 6-7, accessed July 14, 2017, Accession #: 10842804.

<sup>67</sup> Kathleen Ann Lawrence and Barry Alan Morris, “The Government As Plausibility Base,” 8.



with skulls and crossbones on the front provided a shock factor to this funeral announcement. A similar picture was done by the Sons of Liberty incorporating the fifth victim that died later.

Their picture claimed that the young men whose initials appear on the coffins were “Murthered ... By the 29<sup>th</sup> Regiment.”<sup>69</sup> All of these tactics were highly effective while they lasted.



**Figure 5: Funeral Announcement by Paul Revere<sup>70</sup>**

<sup>69</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 140.

<sup>70</sup> Paul Revere, “Four coffins of men killed in the Boston Massacre,” March 12, 1770, accessed September 3, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2004672647/>.

Unfortunately for the hardcore Patriots, news soon reached the colonies that the British had repealed all of the Townshend Act except for the duty on tea.<sup>71</sup> Repealing the Townshend Act was an attempt to stop the violence in the colonies, but keeping the tea duty was an effort to maintain Parliamentary authority over the colonies. Because of this, much to the chagrin of the likes of Samuel Adams, the years of 1771 to 1773 were quiet, and it seemed that the storm would pass. However, the in-groups and out-groups had already been established and another event would bring them back to salient status. Tea provided this catalyst.

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<sup>71</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution*, 52.

## Chapter 4: The Boston Tea Party and Group Dynamics

After the horrible ordeal that was the Boston Massacre, Parliament and King George III decided to repeal the Townshend Act. A Parliamentary decision to keep the portion of act placing a duty on tea had the intent of establishing the dominance of the British government over the colonies. Even still, the repeal left open the possibility for reconciliation between the two groups.<sup>1</sup> Things went well for a few years, and the salience of the different goals of the colonists and the British diminished greatly. The years between 1771 and 1773 were quiet and relatively uneventful in the colonies allowing the Loyalists to regain some footing and put down the violence that had been occurring.<sup>2</sup> The reinstatement of the Tea Act with a break given to the East India Company reestablished the group boundaries.

Parliament had decided that tea was the line that had to be drawn.<sup>3</sup> That portion of the Townshend Act was never repealed, but it did not cause issue until the Tea Act was passed in 1773. The text of the act did not place a new duty on tea but allowed only the East India Company to export the tea without paying any export duties. The opening of the act stated that it has been enacted “to empower the commissioners of the treasury to grant licences to the East India Company to export tea duty-free.”<sup>4</sup> While this was an attempt to use up the stores of unused tea that the East India Company had not been able to export and reduce illegal smuggling

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<sup>1</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 62.

<sup>2</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2011), 152.

<sup>3</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies that Brought America from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership* (New York: Encounter Books, 2011), 102.

<sup>4</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Tea Act,” May 10, 1773, accessed September 29, 2017, [http://ahp.gatech.edu/tea\\_act\\_bp\\_1773.html](http://ahp.gatech.edu/tea_act_bp_1773.html).



of less expensive tea, the colonists saw it as yet another infringement upon their rights. The Tea Act was a threat to the “foundation of representative government.”<sup>5</sup>

In the eyes of the colonists, this was simply another attempt to place a tax on them.<sup>6</sup> Truth be told, this does not make a great deal of sense considering there was no new tax being added. However, by providing the East India Company with duty free exports and cracking down on tea smuggling, the colonists saw it as another threat to their way of life and their autonomy over their affairs. In the year 1771, between 83 and 90 percent of tea in the colonies was obtained through smuggling.<sup>7</sup> Now, all tea had to be legally purchased through the East India Company, and the tea duty had to be paid within three days.<sup>8</sup> When tea was imported into Boston Harbor and the colonists refused to pay the duty, problems became worse once again.

Governor Thomas Hutchinson refused to send the tea back without the colonists paying the duty owed, but the colonists believed that giving in and paying taxes on this shipment would only invite Parliament to place more taxes.<sup>9</sup> Additionally, they believed that Parliament had created a monopoly. Just like the tax situation, if Parliament were allowed to create one monopoly, they could create more.<sup>10</sup> As they believed the taxes were unfair, this was an unacceptable decision to make. In retaliation for the refusal of Hutchinson to send the tea back and for the placement of yet another tax without their consent, the colonists took matters into their own hands. A group of men, led by the ever-revolutionary Samuel Adams, dressed as

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<sup>5</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford University Press, 2011), 84

<sup>6</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 221.

<sup>7</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 77.

<sup>8</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Tea Act.”

<sup>9</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1974), 1-2.

<sup>10</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 3.

“Mohawks” and dumped the entire store of tea into the Boston Harbor.<sup>11</sup> In total, they dumped 340 chests—46 tons—worth £9,659 or one million dollars in today’s currency.<sup>12</sup>



**Figure 6: Lithograph of the Boston Tea Party<sup>13</sup>**

The same debate was raised once again: what was the extent of Parliamentary power over the colonies? Could Parliament make them pay the duty if they did not want to? Was the duty that they thought acceptable now unacceptable if the East India Company was exempt from the Act? After this, there was a general non-importation of tea from Great Britain and a campaign

<sup>11</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 5.

<sup>12</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 1-2; Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*,

<sup>13</sup> N. Currier, “Destruction of tea at Boston Harbor,” ca. 1840-1850, accessed October 18, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/91795889/>.

started in the colonies to stop drinking tea altogether. While many of the more moderate and conservative leaders wanted to wait and see how the events would play out, the radical leaders suggested a boycott and proactive measures.<sup>14</sup> The moderates were silenced after the Boston Tea Party, and the colonists' bond became strong.<sup>15</sup>

Up until this point, the colonists had been relatively non-violent in their protests and represented a very diverse gathering of individuals.<sup>16</sup> With the exception of some attacks, such as occurred at the Boston Massacre and the instances of tar and feathering, the problems had been addressed with petitions. The Tea Party represented considerable property damage, and many colonial officials disapproved of the action. Whether they approved in secret is not known, but the Patriots involved in the insurrection are still largely unknown to this day. They borrowed the Indian identity for their scheme for several reasons. The disguises provided a touch of anonymity, or deindividuation, that allowed them to both avoid paying for the damage they had caused and act in a riskier way than they would have otherwise.<sup>17</sup>

The issue of tea provided the colonists with a sense of self-respect.<sup>18</sup> Boycotting gave them a purpose and a means to fight the oppression that they felt. This once again awakened the feeling that their way of life and their very existence was being threatened. When groups feel threatened, they are more likely to act out to protect their identity and to reinforce the similarity of both self-concept and situation of the group members.<sup>19</sup> This led the group of nearly one

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<sup>14</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 49.

<sup>15</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 131-132.

<sup>16</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 6.

<sup>17</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 157; Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 169.

<sup>18</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 69.

<sup>19</sup> Casey S. Ryan and Laura M. Bogart, "Development of New Group Members' In-Group and Out-Group Stereotypes: Changes in Perceived Group Variability and Ethnocentrism," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 73, no. 4 (1997): 720, accessed September 7, 2017, ISSN #: 0002-3514/97.

hundred men to act in a way consistent with their feelings and remove the source of the identity threat. In this case, that was the tea sitting in the harbor since their demands for the removal of the tea and the resignations of officials had been ignored. However, this feeling of similarity only extended so far. As was said above, many leaders, including Benjamin Franklin, disapproved of the Tea Party.<sup>20</sup> Still, it was able to serve as a victory for the masses and propelled the conflict forward. Without the Tea Act and the Tea Party, there would have been no need for a British reaction.

British retaliation and punishment came for the colonists' defiance of the Tea Act in the form of the Coercive Acts which is the topic of the next chapter. That being said, the most important thing that came out of the Boston Tea Party is a reestablishment of the in-group and out-group criteria. There is much more to the discussion than a simple "colonists versus British" distinction. In fact, not all the colonists fit into that box. Nearly one-third of the colonists could be categorized as Loyalists.<sup>21</sup> From the beginning, almost all Loyalists disapproved of the British policy in the colonies; they were among some of the individuals that printed counterfeit money during the Currency Act crisis.<sup>22</sup> Generally, Loyalists shared the belief in rights, but they were unafraid of Parliament as a threat to those rights—they simply found more benefits aligning themselves with the British than with the Patriots.<sup>23</sup> The term "American" was adopted to distinguish the Patriots from the Loyalists with the Patriots adopting that term of separation.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>20</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 219.

<sup>21</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle*, 118.

<sup>22</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: The Challenge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 196-199.

<sup>23</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution*, 200-201.

<sup>24</sup> Andro Linklater, *The Fabric of America: How Our Borders and Boundaries Shaped the Country and Forged Our National Identity* (New York: Walker and Company, 2007), 44.

There were a number of characteristics that contributed to whether or not someone identified as a Loyalist. Time spent in America was a predictor of Loyalism: those that had been born in the colonies or had families that had been there for multiple generations tended toward to Patriot side of the conflict while new arrivals were generally Loyalists.<sup>25</sup> There were also economic reasons for being a Loyalist which varied by position and specialty, but there were not rules that extended across the board. The most obvious rule that was consistent was that of Crown official in America.<sup>26</sup> Another predictor was religious denomination. Loyalists tended to be Anglicans, and they deemed Presbyterians and Congregationalists rebels based on doctrine alone.<sup>27</sup> No matter the Loyalists feelings on the subject, the Patriots deemed suppressing Loyalism one of their most important goals<sup>28</sup>; the reason for choosing Loyalism, or Toryism as it was sometimes called, was of no matter and would not be tolerated.<sup>29</sup>

Because of this attitude toward Loyalists held by most Patriots, Loyalism could only flourish in areas that were not run by the Patriot faction. This really only occurred in New York and New Jersey.<sup>30</sup> An opposite effect occurred in some areas: strong rebel governments could push individuals on the fence toward Toryism in an attempt to gain British help.<sup>31</sup> Other areas showed a similar, but opposite, effect: those on the western border of the colonies tended toward the rebel side as they thought the rebels could provide better and more consistent protection from the threat of Indian violence.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775: A Good Year for Revolution* (New York: Viking, 2012), 196.

<sup>26</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775*, 121-126.

<sup>27</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775*, 120.

<sup>28</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775*, 155.

<sup>29</sup> David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 118.

<sup>30</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars: Religion, Politics, and the Triumph of Anglo-America* (New York: Basic Books, 1999), 168.

<sup>31</sup> Kevin Phillips, *The Cousins' Wars*, 174.

<sup>32</sup> Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 30.

Punishment of Loyalism extended past the initial ostracism common among the early years before the Boston Massacre and the Boston Tea Party. During the beginning of hostilities, the reaction to Loyalism was much stronger. Many were accused of being spies and they were imprisoned with little or no evidence against them.<sup>33</sup> Removing the Loyalists from power did grant many of the Patriots some upward mobility in society.<sup>34</sup> The Loyalists represent a group separate from the rebels and the British. They fell somewhere in between these two groups, but as far as the rebel colonists were concerned, if a person was not devoted to the cause of liberty, they were an enemy. By the time the Tea Party was concluded, the lines were drawn and it was American liberty against British Imperial power.<sup>35</sup>

Since the distinctions were being officially drawn at this point in the history, it is important to delve into the mechanics of social identity theory and group behavior and how they manifest themselves in this historical topic. Because the Americans did not have any common visible characteristics like race or ethnic origin, it is necessary to note that it is not essential to have similar visible characteristics. The state, which in the Americans' case is a group of colonists and colonial legislatures that are committed to liberty, can be just as strong of a bond as any common origin.<sup>36</sup> Becoming dissatisfied with the state—in this case Parliament—can lead individuals to engage in revolutionary activity to bring their self-concept back into harmony.<sup>37</sup>

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<sup>33</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 56.

<sup>34</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Fire and Light: How the Enlightenment Transformed Our World* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2013), 88.

<sup>35</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Fire and Light*, 78.

<sup>36</sup> David B. Knight, "Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72, no. 4 (1982): 521, accessed September 7, 2017, doi: 10.1111/j.1467-8306.1982.tb01842.x.

<sup>37</sup> David B. Knight, "Identity and Territory," 522.

Once in-groups and out-groups are established, there are certain observable phenomena that occur. The first of these is the assumed similarity effect. People in groups generally believe that they are more similar to members of their in-groups than they are to members of the out-group.<sup>38</sup> This goes hand-in-hand with the out-group homogeneity effect. It is the belief that members of the out-group are all the same.<sup>39</sup> Both of these effects are part of the group-serving bias. Members of in-groups are usually plagued with the common knowledge effect that can hamper their decision-making process. Groups tend to surround themselves with people that hold the same beliefs and opinions which only gives them a view of one side of the problem.<sup>40</sup>

Generally, how a person should think or act comes, at least in part, from their membership in a group; behavior is obtained from the beliefs of a group.<sup>41</sup> With this comes the application to this era: the colonists strongly believed in freedom, liberty, and a representative government with natural rights. Ideology is the strongest predictor of how a person will behave, and they tend to possess attitudes and engage in behaviors that promote the in-group image and cohesion.<sup>42</sup> As makes sense with the events like the Boston Massacre, environmental stimuli can activate this behavior.<sup>43</sup>

None of this makes any difference without the main theory in question: social identity theory. This theory states that an individual's self-concept comes from group membership, and it has been defined in previous chapters. Being at one with a group worldview and engaging in

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<sup>38</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 187.

<sup>39</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 187.

<sup>40</sup> Shelley E. Taylor, Letitia Anne Peplau, and David O. Sears, *Social Psychology*, 313.

<sup>41</sup> Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, "A Tale of Two Theories: A Critical Comparison of Identity Theory with Social Identity Theory," *Social Psychology Quarterly* 58, no. 4 (December, 1995): 260, accessed July 10, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2787127>.

<sup>42</sup> Christopher J. Devine, "Ideological Social Identity: Psychological Attachment to Ideological In-Groups as a Political Phenomenon and a Behavioral Influence," *Political Behavior* 37, no. 1 (2015): 510-512, accessed September 9, 2017, doi: 10.1007/s11109-014-9280-6.

<sup>43</sup> Christopher J. Devine, "Ideological Social Identity," 515.

self-verification (acting in a way to portray this group identity) contributes to group action and is at the heart of the revolutionary action that followed the Boston Massacre and Tea Party.<sup>44</sup>

Representing the group positively in the public eye and acting to improve their condition are directly related to these events and this theory. The willingness to engage in collective action is dependent upon how important group membership is to the individual engaging in it.<sup>45</sup>

Likelihood of engagement is very high if there is perceived mistreatment of the group that could be remedied by action.<sup>46</sup> This tenet perfectly describes the circumstances surrounding the Boston Tea Party: the rebels thought that if they removed the offensive property that the British might back down from their position on authority over the colonies. Another principle that can dictate this action is the tendency of in-groups to deindividuate members of the out-group; deindividuation of the enemy can cause an aggressive reaction.<sup>47</sup> Aggressive reactions were present in the early days of the conflict and they became more common place in later years and especially during the armed conflict.

Evaluation of others is also important to in-group and out-group dynamics. Not only is it beneficial to have positive views of the in-group, but the judgment process of other in-group members and the categorization of the in-group versus the out-group are observable and quantifiable. These evaluations of others are made by comparing individuals to a “salient norm

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<sup>44</sup> Michael A. Hogg, Deborah J. Terry, and Katherine M. White, “A Tale of Two Theories,” 226-232.

<sup>45</sup> Kay Deaux, Anne Reid, Daniela Martin, and Nida Bikmen, “Ideologies of Diversity and Inequality: Predictive Collective Action in Groups Varying in Ethnicity and Immigrant Status,” *Political Psychology* 27, no. 1 (2006): 124, accessed September 7, 2017, ISSN #: 0462-895X.

<sup>46</sup> Kay Deaux, Anne Reid, Daniela Martin, and Nida Bikmen, “Ideologies of Diversity and Inequality,” 126.

<sup>47</sup> Norbert Vanbeselaere, “The Impact of In-Group and Out-Group Homogeneity/Heterogeneity Upon Intergroup Relations,” *Basic and Applied Social Psychology* 12, no. 3 (1991): 291-301, accessed September 7, 2017, ISSN #: 0197-3533.



or standard.”<sup>48</sup> Likewise, judgments made are based on accessible and relevant information.<sup>49</sup>

The information used to determine whether or not someone should be a member of the in-group relied solely on their opinion of the British government and their commitment to liberty, natural rights, and representative government. A secondary piece of information was their willingness to engage in the actual cause, but this was not a necessity; many Tories were not interested in fighting but they were still assigned to the out-group.

All of the principles highlighted in this chapter can be used to explain how the events progressed and why they progressed in the way that they did. Group dynamics are especially important in the discussion of organized violence and the formation of alliances. The wedges that were driven between individuals and larger groups helped to create the crisis of identity that shifted the hierarchy out of balance. This created the desire to fix the fractured self-concept that resulted in the engagement in revolutionary behavior. As is seen in later events, the Patriots acted in a way that would put their self-concept back in line with their newly held set of beliefs surrounding the way their country should be governed. The space between the two countries helped to exacerbate these effects and weaken the bonds of Empire. No matter the feelings toward the Empire, local communities and feelings will almost always take precedence.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Mussweiler and Galen V. Bodenhausen, “I Know You Are, But What Am I? Self-Evaluative Consequences of Judging In-Group and Out-Group Members,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 82, no. 1 (2002): 19, accessed September 18, 2017, doi: 10.1037//0022-3514.82.1.19.

<sup>49</sup> Thomas Mussweiler and Galen V. Bodenhausen, “I Know You Are, But What Am I?,” 20.

<sup>50</sup> David B. Knight, “Identity and Territory,” 516.

## Chapter 5: The Coercive Acts and the Beginning of Treason

After the insurrection that was the Boston Tea Party in December of 1773, the British Parliament realized that the colonists in America were completely out of control. It was essential to remedy this as soon as possible. This begged the question: what was the proper course of action toward the colonists? In answer to this, Parliament adopted a series of legislation known as the Coercive, or Intolerable, Acts. The reasoning behind these acts were twofold. First, it was to punish the colonists for their insubordination and their destruction of British property. Second, and with greater consequence, it was to assert the dominance of Parliament over the affairs of the colonists. Instead of bringing the colonists back into the role of members of British society, the Coercive Acts expanded the ever-growing gap between the identity of the British and that of the American colonists. Desires were becoming visibly incompatible, and the feeling that the colonists were being treated like children that needed scolding was more prevalent. The Coercive Acts gave the colonists the leverage needed to convene a Continental Congress and convinced the colonists that Britain was a “despotic monarchy.”<sup>1</sup>

Upon hearing word that private letters from Massachusetts Governor Thomas Hutchinson and Massachusetts merchant Andrew Oliver, known as the Whately Letters, had been leaked to the public, Benjamin Franklin received a summons to appear before the British Privy Council on January 29, 1774 for further inquiry.<sup>2</sup> Franklin had taken full responsibility for leaking the letters

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<sup>1</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: “The People,” The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 46.

<sup>2</sup> Israel Mauduit, Alexander Wedderburn, Earl of Rosslyn, George Bancroft, William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, *Franklin Before the Privy Council, White Hall Chapel, London, 1774: on behalf of the province of Massachusetts, to advocate the removal of Hutchinson and Oliver* (Philadelphia: John M. Butler, 1860), 6-9, <https://archive.org/details/franklinbeforepr00maud>.

in a previous meeting, but was not punished because of his argument: the British did not need to worry about rebellion against the Crown as the colonists' rage had been redirected to two from the home front.<sup>3</sup> However, the meeting quickly took a turn past the matter claimed. Alexander Wedderburn, the Earl of Rosslyn and Solicitor General, called Franklin "a true incendiary" in regard to the colonial rebellions and began to insult Franklin's character.<sup>4</sup> It was difficult for him to make these accusations as Franklin had actually condemned the Boston Tea Party and instructed the colonists to pay for the damage they had caused, but Wedderburn continued nonetheless.<sup>5</sup>

During all of this, Franklin simply stood and listened. He did not say anything in his own defense but was internally baffled by the events taking place around him. In Franklin's opinion, it could have proved very helpful to the British to use the Whately Letters to claim that all of the friction between them and the colonies had been caused by Hutchinson rather than by the sole action of Parliament.<sup>6</sup> It had the potential to quell the anger of the colonists long enough for the officials to decide how best to diffuse the situation at large. Unfortunately, this is not the path they chose. In their decision to acquit Hutchinson and Oliver and consider Franklin the guilty party, the Privy Council—and Parliament as an extension—showed that they were hostile toward the colonists and the colonies.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Israel Mauduit, *Franklin Before the Privy Council*, 3-5.

<sup>4</sup> Israel Mauduit, *Franklin Before the Privy Council*, 9-10.

<sup>5</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots: The Men Who Started the American Revolution* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1988), 185.

<sup>6</sup> A. J. Langguth, *Patriots*, 186.

<sup>7</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), 227.

Franklin left the “trial” without uttering a word and came to the realization that he would lose more than just his petition to have Hutchinson removed from the colonial government.<sup>8</sup> It did not take long for the council to give final judgment; Franklin was removed from all of his colonial posts.<sup>9</sup> In this way, the British were ostracizing Franklin and assuming that any person who was not acting to further the group-serving bias had to be categorized in the out-group. Even though Franklin did not always agree with the colonists and was supportive of keeping the colonies under British rule with some concessions, the conflict had reached the point where these groups were being further defined on both sides of the Atlantic. As a result of this encounter and the Boston Tea Party, the King decided it was not time for a peaceful conversation and reconciliation. On the contrary, it was time to remedy the regret of not enforcing more control over the colonies from the beginning.<sup>10</sup> He concluded that part of the reason for the insubordination was the concessions given in 1766; no more concessions would be given.<sup>11</sup>

Luckily for Franklin, his humiliation landed him in the in-group in the colonies once he decided that the conflict could not be ended by his efforts in Britain. Franklin had many friends in the newspaper business, and they helped spread the word of his ill-treatment.<sup>12</sup> From a psychological standpoint, Wedderburn made a grave error. Pure character attacks with almost no basis in reality are not effective in changing perceptions of a person; this is especially true of someone in the in-group.<sup>13</sup> The British assigned Franklin to the colonists’ group with their

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<sup>8</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 228.

<sup>9</sup> Israel Mauduit, *Franklin Before the Privy Council*, 11.

<sup>10</sup> Israel Mauduit, *Franklin Before the Privy Council*, 12.

<sup>11</sup> Israel Mauduit, *Franklin Before the Privy Council*, 13.

<sup>12</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 185.

<sup>13</sup> Thomas Lee Budelsheim, David A. Houston, and Stephen J. DePaola, “Persuasiveness of In-Group and Out-Group Political Messages: The Case of Negative Political Campaigning,” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 70, no. 3 (1996): 523-526, accessed September 21, 2017, ISSN #: 0022-3514.

actions and took away their credibility by ignoring evidence and engaging in character attacks. On the other hand, the colonists gained a very influential figure.

Franklin was right in his assessment of the British sentiment toward the colonies. After the fiasco that was the Tea Party and continued refusal of the colonists to pay for the damage they had caused, the only thing on the minds of those in Parliament was how to make the colonists pay for what they had done while simultaneously asserting the dominance of royal and Parliamentary authority. The answer to their problem, and what pushed many colonists to the breaking point, was the Coercive Acts.<sup>14</sup> This was a series of four acts of Parliament: the Boston Port Act, the Administration of Justice Act, the Massachusetts Government Act, and the Quartering Act. The Quebec Act, though not directed at the colonies in rebellion, also helped to inflame the feelings of the colonists and undermine the remaining cohesiveness between the British and the Americans.

In light of the violence and destruction that occurred in Boston, the Boston Port Act passed without opposition.<sup>15</sup> Throughout the beginnings of the conflict, Isaac Barré had been very supportive of the colonists' cause and sympathetic to their plight. However, even he did not object to the act when it was brought forward. In his view, they had finally crossed the line, and it was no longer acceptable to support them.<sup>16</sup> The act did not punish all of the colonies, but only closed the port at Boston. Due to the "dangerous commotions and insurrections" that had occurred in Boston, it was deemed necessary to close the port and not allow any ships or goods

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<sup>14</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 73.

<sup>15</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots: The Boston Tea Party and the Making of America* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010), 192.

<sup>16</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2011), 182.

in or out.<sup>17</sup> Not surprisingly, this caused many shortages in Boston of food and medicine and there was no remedy. If any bribes were taken to let goods in, the person that accepted the bribe would be fined the very large sum of fifty pounds.<sup>18</sup>

In May, the Boston Committee of Correspondence sent out a circular letter to the rest of the colonies. It described the great hurt that the colony was experiencing as a result of the Port Act. As was the custom with these documents, it called for a boycott of British goods in order to maintain “the rights of America.”<sup>19</sup> This is also an occurrence of the reference “in the common cause” that appears in many more of the colonial documents.<sup>20</sup> The colonists began to realize that they were all suffering together; they were not suffering as Bostonians or Virginians or Pennsylvanians but as fellows. In this way, the suffering became the salient factor in their identity and made them see that they were all similarly suffering under the British, even if this was not entirely accurate. People in Boston without food were most certainly suffering more than those in New York, but the feeling that some of their own were being subjugated was stronger than the reality.

Farmington, Connecticut also weighed in on the Boston Port Act. The inhabitants of the town noted that the Port Act was enacted for the sole purpose of placing stress on the colonies. Additionally, they conclude that the government of Great Britain is of the Devil himself with the goal of enslaving the colonists and taking away their liberty.<sup>21</sup> However, the Proceedings were

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<sup>17</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Boston Port Act,” March 31, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/boston\\_port\\_act.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/boston_port_act.asp).

<sup>18</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Boston Port Act.”

<sup>19</sup> Boston Committee of Correspondence, “Circular Letter of the Boston Committee of Correspondence,” May 13, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/circ\\_let\\_boston\\_1774.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/circ_let_boston_1774.asp).

<sup>20</sup> Boston Committee of Correspondence, “Circular Letter of the Boston Committee of Correspondence.”

<sup>21</sup> “Proceedings of Farmington, Connecticut, on the Boston Port Act,” May 19, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/proc\\_farm\\_ct\\_1774.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc_farm_ct_1774.asp).

still claiming that “it is the greatest dignity, interest, and happiness of every American to be united with our parent state, while our liberties are duly secured.”<sup>22</sup> Here it can be seen that they are still desiring to be united but on the condition that their rights be restored and no longer trampled on. Another important point is that they are referring to themselves as “Americans” which shows a language of separation appearing.

Truthfully, the British anticipated that the colonists would back down after the Boston Port Act and pay the money that was owed for the destroyed tea.<sup>23</sup> As was their problem from the beginning, they could not understand the colonists and their struggles. They did not realize that the problem was becoming much deeper and much more difficult to solve. Identity crises must be addressed and remedied. Banding together was much more common as the assumed similarity effect became more visible. In fact, a day of fasting was declared by the Virginia House of Burgesses in order to show solidarity and pray for the relief of their fellows in Boston.<sup>24</sup> The cohesiveness of the Patriot colonists’ group was growing increasingly stronger as the conflict continued.

Parliament did not stop with Boston Port Act. The Administration of Justice Act was passed on May 20, 1774. It noted that there had been attempts to subvert the acts of Parliament with considerable violence in the colony of Massachusetts, and that the government there was no longer suitable to carrying out justice.<sup>25</sup> With such violence and lawlessness ruling, it was really a matter of principle for Parliament for both the administration of adequate justice and to assert their dominance over the colonial government structure. The act gave authority to the governor

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<sup>22</sup> “Proceedings of Farmington, Connecticut on the Boston Port Act.”

<sup>23</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 193.

<sup>24</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*,

<sup>25</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Administration of Justice Act,” May 20, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/admin\\_of\\_justice\\_act.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/admin_of_justice_act.asp).

or lieutenant governor to move any trial to another colony or to Great Britain if they did not believe that justice could be served.<sup>26</sup> While this may seem like a relatively reasonable act, the colonists still viewed it as an attempt to undermine their colonial authorities by a body that they did not recognize as a sovereign authority.

Passed the same day as the Massachusetts Government Act was the Administration of Justice Act. The Massachusetts Government Act completely reformed the colonial courts. All judges, officers, and the like were let go and replaced by royally appointed individuals.<sup>27</sup> Parliament believed that the colonists in Massachusetts had been encouraged to violence by their officials and a change in leadership was necessary. The governments there were no longer capable of conducting business and the whole system needed overhauled.<sup>28</sup> Both of these acts worried the colonists and solidified their feelings that Great Britain was a threat. Debtor's court was in the most danger from this change.<sup>29</sup> The British were obviously going to enforce the laws that the colonial governments had not.

The final act falling within the Coercive Acts is the Quartering Act passed on June 2, 1774. This act stated that the colonists must provide housing to British officers and troops if barracks are not available.<sup>30</sup> A twenty-four-hour window was provided for the colonists to make their arrangements and they must be made "fit for the reception of such officers and soldiers" for the amount of time that the commanding officer designates.<sup>31</sup> Once again, this served to increase

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<sup>26</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Administration of Justice Act."

<sup>27</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Massachusetts Government Act," May 20, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/mass\\_gov\\_act.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/mass_gov_act.asp).

<sup>28</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Massachusetts Government Act."

<sup>29</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 193.

<sup>30</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Quartering Act," June 2, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/quartering\\_act\\_1774.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/quartering_act_1774.asp).

<sup>31</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, "The Quartering Act."



the gap between the relative desires and goals of the British and the Patriot colonists. Also, they were having the opposite effect that Parliament intended; rather than forcing the colonists to comply with the authority and wishes of the British government, the support for Boston and the common cause of the colonists was increased.<sup>32</sup>

In response to the Coercive Acts, there were letters and resolves circulated throughout the colonies. The Letter from the New York Committee of Fifty-One to the Boston Committee of Correspondence was sent out on May 23, 1774 before the colonists would have received word of the second and third acts. The New York Committee expressed their desire to find a method of remedying the current “fatal emergency” that was faced in Boston.<sup>33</sup> The most significant aspect of this letter was its proposed convening of a “congress of the deputies from the colonies in general.”<sup>34</sup> Likewise, on June 18, 1774, Philadelphia proceedings also called for a congress to secure their rights. The closing of Boston’s Port was clearly illegal, against colonial policies, and a threat to liberty—all would suffer “in the common cause” and Boston must be helped because of it.<sup>35</sup> Finally, the Virginia Convention also called for a renewed boycott and anyone found breaking it would be shunned as a Tory.<sup>36</sup> All of these proposals and resolutions expressed great distress at the oppression by Parliament, and it is evident that the colonies would need to come together and brainstorm ways to fix the situation.

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<sup>32</sup> Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 196.

<sup>33</sup> New York Committee of Fifty-One, “Letter from the New York Committee of Fifty-One to the Boston Committee of Correspondence,” May 23, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/letter\\_ny\\_comm\\_1774.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/letter_ny_comm_1774.asp).

<sup>34</sup> New York Committee, “Letter from the New York Committee to the Boston Committee.”

<sup>35</sup> “Proceedings of the Inhabitants of Philadelphia,” June 18, 1774, accessed October 9, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/proc\\_in\\_pa\\_1774.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/proc_in_pa_1774.asp).

<sup>36</sup> “Proceedings of the Inhabitants of Philadelphia.”

The last large-scale colonial action before the convening of the Continental Congress was the Suffolk Resolves written by Dr. Joseph Warren on September 9, 1774. These were written in the county of Suffolk—the city of Boston was the largest in that county—and they provided a list of resolves based on the troubles that the colonists were facing. They claimed that Great Britain was pursuing her “guiltless children” and that it was essential for the colonists to defend their rights and liberties.<sup>37</sup> Along with this, they feared the establishment of the Catholic religion in the colonies. Once again, the resolves called for a convening of a congress. However, the Suffolk Resolves had a very intriguing element added to them: they “cheerfully” saw King George III as their sovereign ruler and claimed that their affection for the King kept them only in a defensive role.<sup>38</sup> Up until this point, the colonists, Loyalists and Patriots alike, still felt a great deal of connection with the King. In their eyes, however inaccurate, Parliament was acting independent of the King’s wishes, and Parliament was the true aggressor. Until that aspect could be changed, the possibility of reconciliation was still very real.

Although not an official part of the Coercive Acts because it did not directly impact the Thirteen North American Colonies, the Quebec Act allowed some of their fears to be realized. Feelings toward the Quebec Act became a “litmus test” for many in the colonies with the answer determining Loyalism or Patriotism.<sup>39</sup> In the act, many aspects of the local government were established as the British were given Quebec in the Treaty of Paris at the conclusion of the Seven Years’ War and had not made any efforts to institute rules or governments. However, that is not the issue to the colonists: the act specifically says that the free exercise of the “Religion of the

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<sup>37</sup> Joseph Warren, “The Suffolk Resolves,” September 9, 1774, accessed September 4, 2017, <https://www.nps.gov/mima/learn/education/upload/The%20Suffolk%20Resolves.pdf>.

<sup>38</sup> Joseph Warren, “The Suffolk Resolves.”

<sup>39</sup> Vernon P. Creviston, “‘No King Unless it Be a Constitutional King’: The Quebec Act in the Coming of the American Revolution,” *The Historian* (2011): 464, accessed September 4, 2017, Accession #: edsgci.269228814.

Church of Rome” was allowed and that those individuals did not have to take any oaths to serve in an office.<sup>40</sup> Within this, the colonists worst fears were truly realized. It was not just an act that applied to another British territory but a threat to colonial way of life. If the British government could establish an official religion in Quebec, they could easily use that “dangerous precedent” to set up an official religion and religious tests throughout their territories.<sup>41</sup>

These actions did not just threaten their way of life but were a threat to their very existence. Religious freedom was integral to colonial life and the reason that many of them made the dangerous journey to the colonies. Thus, in the working self-concept, their identity as individuals fleeing religious persecution became the most salient and the most under threat. Many newspapers began to implicate the King and not just Parliament; they referred to him as one of the Catholic tyrants of the past.<sup>42</sup>

Of course, because of the time lag between Great Britain and North America, the colonists had not received word of the Quebec Act by the time they convened the First Continental Congress. The Quebec Act would be of more importance during the events of 1775. That being said, their fear of an established religion was still hanging in the back of their minds. In response to the Coercive Acts, the colonies called on their own delegates to come up with a way to get the Acts repealed and to decide how best to move forward. No matter the minutia of the decisions, it was certain that the colonists could not submit themselves to the power of Parliament.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Parliament of Great Britain, “The Quebec Act,” October 7, 1774, accessed October 10, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/quebec\\_act\\_1774.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/quebec_act_1774.asp).

<sup>41</sup> Vernon P. Creviston, “No King Unless it Be a Constitutional King,” 468.

<sup>42</sup> Vernon P. Creviston, “No King Unless it Be a Constitutional King,” 474.

<sup>43</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (New York: The Norton Library, 1974), 71.

The decision to convene the Continental Congress was incredibly dangerous and risky. By defying Parliament and coming together to make further resolutions to undermine their orders, the delegates were committing an illegal act. Parliament had banned all meetings that did not have the consent of the governors in the colonies making the congressional assembly illegal.<sup>44</sup> Delegates were appointed by their individual colonies and they met in Philadelphia at Carpenters' Hall.<sup>45</sup> At the time of the meeting, the delegates and the majority of the colonists were still loyal to the King of England, but they were firmly set against any and all acts of Parliament. This was simply due to their belief that they were not and could not be represented in Parliament.<sup>46</sup> It is important to note that they held these beliefs, but they were still not set on revolution.<sup>47</sup>

The delegates came from different backgrounds with some being lawyers and officials and others being merchants and farmers. There were two general types that emerged throughout debates and proceedings: the conservative and the radical.<sup>48</sup> Conservative delegates desired an end to hostilities that would be gained by staying in the British Empire, and the radical delegates wanted to inflame the others and manipulate feelings in order to have more action taken. The Congress was convened on September 5, 1774 and lasted over a month within which the delegates made a number of resolutions.<sup>49</sup> There was almost no dissent in these resolutions even

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<sup>44</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 186.

<sup>45</sup> Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 25.

<sup>46</sup> Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause*, 247.

<sup>47</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 195.

<sup>48</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 89.

<sup>49</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), 131.

with the difference in conservatism and radicalism. Nearly every vote was unanimous, and the only problems that arose were with the specific dates listed in the documents.<sup>50</sup>

The threats felt by the colonists helped them to have the goal of colonial unity as their driving force.<sup>51</sup> Again, this can be explained using the assumed similarity effect and the common knowledge effect. In-groups tend to see themselves as highly similar and they tend to speak about their own group's viewpoint on issues rather than adding in other perspectives. This was extremely true for this group especially since Loyalist activity led to ostracism. Additionally, group settings tend to bring out the risky shift making groups act much more radically than they would individually. For all of these reasons, compounded by the feeling of threat and emergency, there was a tendency toward unanimity.

The Suffolk Resolves were affirmed during the proceedings of the early days of the Continental Congress. Other important documents of this First Continental Congress include the Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress and the Articles of Association. On October 14, 1774, the Congress wrote out the Declaration and Resolves referencing the various affronts by the British Parliament toward the colonies. According to the document, Parliament was claiming a right to "bind the people of America."<sup>52</sup> The document includes a list of the rights that the colonists possessed such as life, liberty, and property, all of the rights given to Englishmen, and participation in legislative bodies and a list of each of the Coercive Acts and the Quebec Act with the caveat that they must be repealed.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 92.

<sup>51</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 96.

<sup>52</sup> Continental Congress, "Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress," October 14, 1774, accessed October 10, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/resolves.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/resolves.asp).

<sup>53</sup> Continental Congress, "Declaration and Resolves of the First Continental Congress."

The Articles of Association were enacted toward the end of the congressional session and they outlined a plan of action for the colonies. It noted that the colonists still felt great affection for their King whom they recognized as the sovereign ruler for them and their fellow subjects in Great Britain, but that their “present unhappy situation” was the result of the “ruinous system of colony administration” that had been utilized since 1763.<sup>54</sup> Of course, as with all other colonial resolutions, a non-importation agreement was included. Once again, anyone who broke the pact was to be ostracized. To help this, they called on the committees of every town and city to enforce the boycott and find out any “enemies of American liberty.”<sup>55</sup> In order to keep up communication between colonies and each other, it was ordered that a Committee of Correspondence be set up in each colony to spread news throughout the colonies and send information to the delegates at the Congress.<sup>56</sup>

The Continental Congress had sent these documents to the King and left open the option for a cancellation of the non-importation should the Coercive Acts be repealed. They had decided that there would be peace should England agree to adopt their ultimatum, and they truly believed that, at the end of the day, the King was a fair leader and concerned with the wellbeing of his subjects.<sup>57</sup> The colonists still believed that the King was a member of their in-group and that he would listen to their request. Instead, the King declared the colonies to be in a state of rebellion and concluded that “blows must decide” the end of the conflict.<sup>58</sup> King George III ordered that all members of Congress be arrested and gave authorization to use force but to

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<sup>54</sup> Continental Congress, “The Articles of Association,” October 20, 1774, accessed October 11, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/contcong\\_10-20-74.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/contcong_10-20-74.asp).

<sup>55</sup> Continental Congress, “The Articles of Association.”

<sup>56</sup> Continental Congress, “The Articles of Association.”

<sup>57</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 198-199.

<sup>58</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse*, 200; Benjamin L. Carp, *Defiance of the Patriots*, 200.

attempt avoiding bloodshed before the outcome could be properly settled. Now, “liberty appeared to be in retreat before the forces of tyranny.”<sup>59</sup>

The Coercive Acts certainly pushed the colonists’ patience over the edge. What they had previously been able to resist and pressure a repeal was no longer a possibility. Still, they were not quite ready for independence at this point.<sup>60</sup> Before the Coercive Acts were enacted, there really was little basis for their claims of tyranny, but they served to provide tangible proof for the malicious intent of Parliament toward the colonies.<sup>61</sup> As 1774 came to a close, the chances of a “mutually satisfactory resolution” were slipping away.<sup>62</sup> The crisis of identity that the colonists were experiencing required that they act in a way consistent with their emerging identity, and that identity did not allow them to submit to the Coercive Acts. The King’s action against them caused this crisis to be fully realized and shaped the events that occurred throughout the remainder of the conflict.

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<sup>59</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution: A History* (New York: The Modern Library, 2002), 61.

<sup>60</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The American Revolution*, 48.

<sup>61</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 31.

<sup>62</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 135.

## Chapter 6: The Turbulent Year of 1775

Seventeen seventy-five was a pivotal year for the American Revolution and the identity of the colonists. The problems that had been brewing for over a decade finally came to blows in April, and the attempts at peace were unsuccessful. Before 1775, the colonists were displeased with the actions of Parliament and simply wished to be left alone. After the Coercive Acts, the Quebec Act, and the rejection of the King, the colonists felt the full restriction of imperial power and decided that they could be permanently separated from Great Britain as early as March of 1775.<sup>1</sup> The events of 1775, specifically Patrick Henry's inflammatory speech, the convening of and petitions of the Second Continental Congress, and the beginning of armed conflict, solidified the change that had been building for some time, and they launched the American colonies into full-scale revolution.

Most researchers cite 1776 as the most important year of the Revolution, but this is inherently fallacious. In truth, without the careful mingling of events beginning in 1763 there would have been no revolution and no dates for an argument. The colonists did not decide to go for independence overnight; there was a process involved. Because of this, 1775 can be just as important to identity formation as 1776. To determine how the Congress came to adopt the Declaration of Independence, it is necessary to examine what directly led up to the change. The most obvious of these would be the transition to armed conflict. Fighting in defense of their cause portrays the principle that threats to identity and self-concept can result in violent behavior to bring them back into proper balance.

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<sup>1</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 5.



One of the most influential Virginians during this time was undoubtedly Patrick Henry. His speech delivered in the Provincial Congress of Virginia in March of 1775 has gone down in history, and it helped to capture the decision that the Patriots needed to make. Were they really willing to risk their lives to fight the oppression they felt so strongly? According to Patrick Henry, they not only could, but they must.

Henry seemed to view the situation with more gusto than the rest. Many were hoping that Parliament and the King would simply give into their demands and they could go back to life as it was before. However, the events of 1774 and the King's declaration of their state of rebellion began to change minds—perhaps the King had been just as dangerous as Parliament all along.<sup>2</sup> It soon became a choice between being loyal to one's fellow colonists and home country or being loyal to the King; "it was now a question of one or the other."<sup>3</sup> Henry chastised anyone who still held onto hopes that there would be concessions and urged everyone to adopt a more proactive attitude.

In his speech, he stated that staying under the control of Great Britain was a question of freedom or slavery, and that this was no time for hollow ceremony.<sup>4</sup> The rationale of the colonists' desire to stay in union with Great Britain was also questioned: "I have but one lamp by which my feet are guided, and that is the lamp of experience. I know of no way of judging the future but by the past. And judging by the past, I wish to know what there has been in the conduct of the British ministry for the last ten years to justify these hopes with which gentlemen

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<sup>2</sup> Vernon P. Creviston, "'No King Unless it Be a Constitutional King': The Quebec Act in the Coming of the American Revolution," *The Historian* (2011): 476, accessed September 4, 2017, Accession #: edsgci.269228814.

<sup>3</sup> Vernon P. Creviston, "'No King Unless it Be a Constitutional King,'" 477.

<sup>4</sup> Patrick Henry, "Patrick Henry – Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death," March 23, 1775, accessed October 10, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/patrick.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/patrick.asp).

have been pleased to solace themselves.”<sup>5</sup> These are harsh words indeed, but they make an excellent point. What exactly was the hope riding on? He noted that the British had sent armies and navies to “bind us,” and that the colonists had been “spurned” by their “enemies.”<sup>6</sup> This was an incredibly powerful picture he painted, and it shows a decisive in-group and out-group language being utilized. He further accentuates the difficulties being faced in the second half of his speech:

They tell us sir, that we are weak; unable to cope with so formidable an adversary. But when shall we be stronger? Will it be the next week, or the next year? Will it be when we are totally disarmed, and when a British guard shall be stationed in every house? Shall we gather strength by irresolution and inaction? Shall we acquire the means of effectual resistance by lying supinely on our backs and hugging the delusive phantom of hope, until our enemies shall have bound us hand and foot? Sir, we are not weak if we make a proper use of those means which the God of nature hath placed in our power. The millions of people, armed in the holy cause of liberty, and in such a country as that which we possess, are invincible by any force which our enemy can send against us. Besides, sir, we shall not fight our battles alone. There is a just God who presides over the destinies of nations, and who will raise up friends to fight our battles for us. The battle, sir, is not to the strong alone; it is to the vigilant, the active, the brave. Besides, sir, we have no election. If we were base enough to desire it, it is now too late to retire from the contest. There is no retreat but in submission and slavery! Our chains are forged! Their clanking may be heard on the plains on Boston! The war is inevitable—and let it come! I repeat it, sir, let it come.

It is in vain, sir, to extenuate the matter. Gentlemen may cry, Peace, Peace—but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms! Our brethren are already in the field! Why stand we here idle? What is it that gentlemen wish? What would they have? Is life so dear, or peace so sweet, as to be purchased at the price of chains and slavery? Forbid it, Almighty God! I know not what course others may take; but as for me, give me liberty or give me death!<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Patrick Henry, “Patrick Henry – Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death.”

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Henry, “Patrick Henry – Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death.”

<sup>7</sup> Patrick Henry, “Patrick Henry – Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death.”

This speech represents a decisive call for greater action with the consequences of inaction very plainly laid out. The language is clear; the British are the enemy and the colonists need to present a united front if they are going to avoid being enslaved by imperial tyranny.

The same day that Patrick Henry delivered his speech, the Provincial Congress of Virginia passed a list of resolutions. They asked for the creation of a “well regulated militia” for the purpose of securing free government for the citizens of the colonies.<sup>8</sup> It is obvious that these people were moving toward war, or at least felt that they needed to be prepared for the worst to happen. If they were truly going to go forward with their separate identity, they needed to act in a way that reinforced this identity. It truly became necessary in their minds to protect their rights from “farther violations” and threats from Great Britain.<sup>9</sup> While nobody actively wanted to go to war, they were desiring to settle the issue at hand.<sup>10</sup>

What makes this speech and the resolutions more important in terms of solidifying the separate colonial identity is the offer that the colonists received in February of 1775. Governor Thomas Hutchinson’s pleas to attempt peace with the colonies had been heard, and Lord North decided to make them an offer. His offer included recognition of the Continental Congress as the colonial legislative body—with the caveat that Parliament was still the supreme authority—and there would be no taxes placed on the colonies. The only item that Parliament would regulate would be trade between the colonies and the Mother Country.<sup>11</sup> This would have been exactly what the colonists had been asking for since the beginning of the conflict, but the King stopped

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<sup>8</sup> Provincial Congress of Virginia, “Resolutions of the Provincial Congress of Virginia,” March 23, 1775, accessed October 18, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/res\\_cong\\_va\\_1775.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/res_cong_va_1775.asp).

<sup>9</sup> Provincial Congress of Virginia, “Resolutions of the Provincial Congress of Virginia.”

<sup>10</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775: A Good Year for Revolution* (New York: Viking, 2012), 3.

<sup>11</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest: How the Boston Tea Party Sparked a Revolution* (Cambridge: Da Capo Press, 2011), 197.

the offer from being presented to the Continental Congress. Instead, he ordered Lord Dartmouth, the head of colonial affairs, to send documents to the colonies calling for the “arrest [of] principal actors and abettors.”<sup>12</sup> General Gage received those orders on April 14, 1775.<sup>13</sup> For any of those that were on the fence about how the King regarded the colonists, this refusal to negotiate and direct threat to their officials cemented the feeling that the King was also against them. In light of this development, Patrick Henry’s speech did not seem so hyperbolic.

The conflict came to blows very quickly after the order was received. Four days later on April 19, 1775, the battles of Lexington and Concord officially began the armed hostilities of the Revolutionary War. By the end of the battle which spanned over the two cities, 250 British soldiers were killed compared to the American’s less than 100 casualties.<sup>14</sup> According to John McWilliams, Lexington and Concord was the hinge in the conflict and propelled all other events forward.<sup>15</sup> This was not only important to the military and political cause of the Revolution but also to the psychological process of solidifying their identity. It provided a symbol of victory for the entire group of Patriots and reinforced their identity separation.<sup>16</sup>

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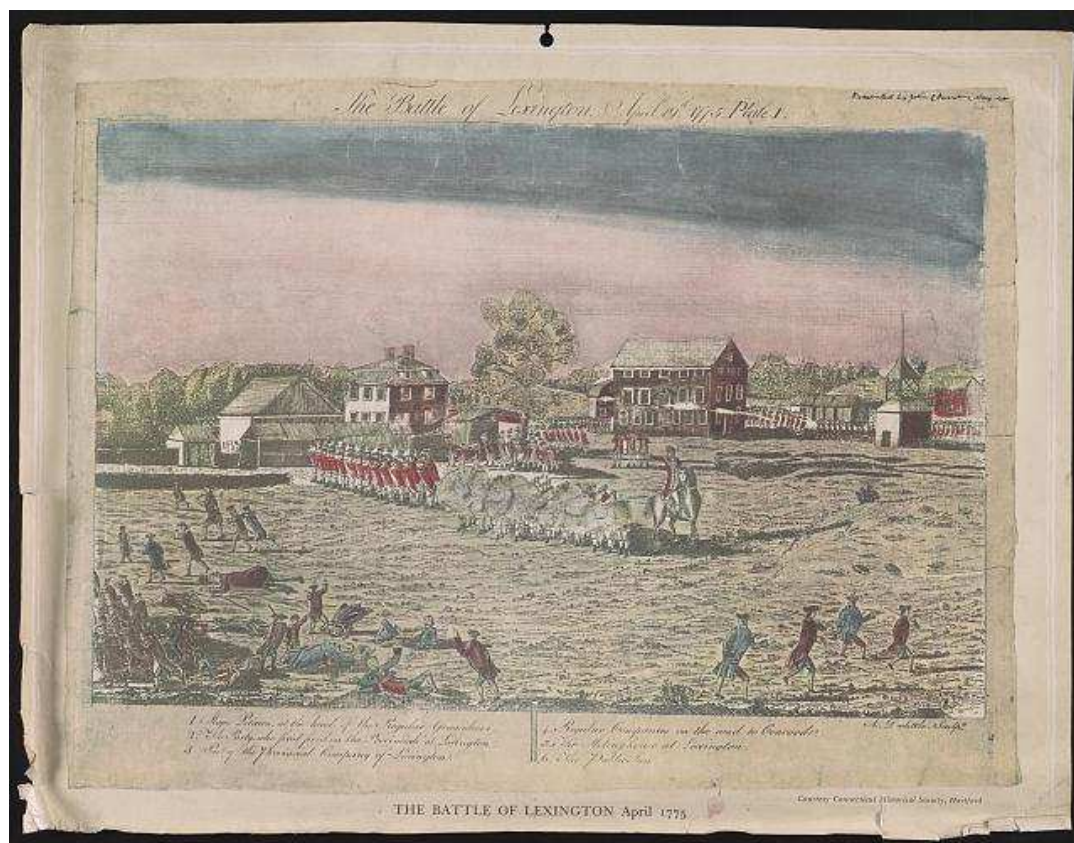
<sup>12</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 197.

<sup>13</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 203.

<sup>14</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America: A Narrative History*, 8<sup>th</sup> Edition (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 2010), 134.

<sup>15</sup> John McWilliams, “Lexington, Concord, and the ‘Hinge of the Future,’” *American Literary History* 5, no. 1 (Spring, 1993): 2, August 30, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/489758>.

<sup>16</sup> John McWilliams, “Lexington, Concord, and the ‘Hinge of the Future,’” 4.



**Figure 7: Battle of Lexington<sup>17</sup>**

The particulars of military strategy are outside the scope of this thesis, but it is important to note that the battle's origins are still unsure.<sup>18</sup> An accidental discharge or a purposeful one from either side could be responsible for the beginning of fighting. Regardless of who started the fighting, the American victory was a significant source of pride and affirmation of the justness of their cause. Revolutions can be won or lost based on collective attitudes, and a victory against a foe so formidable as the British Regulars provided the colonists with the confidence they needed

<sup>17</sup> Amos Doolittle, "The battle of Lexington April 1775," 1775, accessed October 21, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2015650276/>.

<sup>18</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 209.

to adopt their new identity.<sup>19</sup> It also allowed for propaganda for both sides of the Atlantic. The British and the Americans tried to convince the citizens of each country that the other side had started the hostilities.<sup>20</sup> Again, this served to widen the gap between the identities of each country: each saw the other as the enemy and it reinforced the assumed similarity effect and the out-group homogeneity effect.

After the battle, the King and Parliament decided that they had greatly underestimated the colonists and the depth of their feeling. By August of 1775, the British government could tell that the colonists were moving toward independence and that an offer of accommodation might no longer be possible.<sup>21</sup> Not surprisingly, they employed the same strategy that led them into the Coercive Acts: punishing the colonies. They had “intentions to cut the colonials down to size” both economically and politically.<sup>22</sup> Parliament decided that the colonies, specifically New England, were full of “Goths and Vandals,” and it was high time for the British army to restore law and order.<sup>23</sup> This, of course, backfired, and the identity of the colonists was nearly set in stone.

The Second Continental Congress convened in May of that year to discuss how to further the war effort. At the same time, Mecklenburg County in North Carolina passed the Mecklenburg Resolutions. The Resolutions stated that the British were enemies to the rights of man and an enemy of America. They also declared the colonies under no authority other than their own, and as they designated all acts under that illegitimate government null and void, it

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<sup>19</sup> John McWilliams, “‘Lexington, Concord, and the ‘Hinge of the Future,’” 7.

<sup>20</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 212.

<sup>21</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775*, 7-17.

<sup>22</sup> Kevin Phillips, *1775*, 91.

<sup>23</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 221.

reinstated all of the former colonial laws.<sup>24</sup> This was a precursor to the Declaration of Independence and illustrates that the colonists were slowly becoming more open to the idea of dropping the British portion of their identity altogether.

On May 31, the Charlotte Town Committee came together and decided to reaffirm the Mecklenburg Resolutions. Additionally, they declared that the Provincial Congress in each colony would govern and the Continental Congress would oversee all of those.<sup>25</sup> Like the Resolutions, they established new laws in place of those they considered null and void, and they extended this to categorize anyone who was an officer of the Crown as “an Enemy to his Country.”<sup>26</sup> While these resolves included a plan to establish a militia and acquire weapon supplies, they also contained an ultimatum: if the British would abandon their “unjust and arbitrary pretensions” then the colonists would amend their resolutions.<sup>27</sup> As was stated above, the King decided against any further efforts for diplomacy.

Both sides had anticipated very short battles and large amounts of accommodation, but with neither side willing to be the first one to give that possibility fading into nothingness.<sup>28</sup> It seemed that the colonists had inadvertently chosen resistance with the decision to utilize ultimatums. When Parliament did not back down, it became the “point of no return.”<sup>29</sup> Their initial reasons for fighting may have been a defense of their rights as Englishmen, but it began to turn to independence after the Coercive Acts were passed.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Mecklenburg County Convention of Delegates, “The Mecklenburg Resolutions,” May 20, 1775, accessed October 18, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/nc06.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/nc06.asp).

<sup>25</sup> Charlotte Town Committee, “The Charlotte Town Resolves,” May 31, 1775, accessed October 17, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/charlott.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/charlott.asp).

<sup>26</sup> Charlotte Town Committee, “The Charlotte Town Resolves.”

<sup>27</sup> Charlotte Town Committee, “The Charlotte Town Resolves.”

<sup>28</sup> David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 40.

<sup>29</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause: American Response to the Coercive Acts of 1774* (New York: The Norton Library, 1974), 101.

<sup>30</sup> David McCullough, *1776*, 54-55.

The next conflict to occur in 1775 was the Battle of Bunker Hill. This is an important event because of the way the British chose to treat it; they treated it as a foreign war.<sup>31</sup> They declared the colonists to be engaging in a “traitorous rebellion,” and intended to inflict any means to place stress on the colonies in an attempt to place them back into submission.<sup>32</sup> Unlike Lexington and Concord, the newly formed Continental Army did not win the battle. British troops initially retreated, retreated a second time, and then successfully attacked after the colonial forces ran out of gun powder.<sup>33</sup> Although considered a British military victory, they lost 1,054 soldiers compared to the Americans nearly 400 soldiers.<sup>34</sup> Due to the loss at the battle, the Continental Congress had to determine the best course of action.

Although the Americans had inflicted greater casualties on the British, it was still a loss for the colonies and shook confidences. This loss affected the working self-concept by granting greater salience to both the lost battle and the prospect of being forced to submit to stricter imperial authority. To keep a positive and consistent self-concept, the delegates of the Continental Congress decided to act in accordance with this new threat and draft two documents: The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms and the Olive Branch Petition.

The Declaration of the Causes and Necessity of Taking Up Arms was drafted on July 6, 1775 and outlined the reasons that the colonists thought it necessary to fight for their beliefs. It is filled with imagery and reminiscence of the colonial past. Recalling how their forefathers left to seek “civil and religious freedom” in the “distant and unhospitable wilds of America,” the colonists were offended by the attempt of Great Britain to secure a “hasty peace” by “subduing

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<sup>31</sup> David McCullough, *1776*, 7.

<sup>32</sup> David McCullough, *1776*, 10, 68.

<sup>33</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America*, 135-136.

<sup>34</sup> George Brown Tindall and David Emory Shi, *America*, 136.



... faithful friends.”<sup>35</sup> They insist that they had been the model of good behavior since the beginning of colonization in addition to helping during the Seven Years’ War, and they were being rewarded with “threatening expressions against the colonies.”<sup>36</sup> Their case is well presented, and they conclude by stating that they took up arms to defend their freedom and protect their property. However, they offered to lay down arms once the threats to their way of life were removed.<sup>37</sup> This is consistent with the past traditions of petitions and ultimatums.

The second document drafted was the Olive Branch Petition on July 8, 1775. It was written and sent directly to King George III to ask for peace and offer a course of negotiation and reconciliation. Beginning with more recollection of the days before, the drafters noted that the union of Great Britain and the American colonies had been mutually beneficial, and the colonists had provided the British with help during their war on American soil.<sup>38</sup> They claimed that they were “connected with Great Britain by the strongest ties that can unite societies, and deploring every event that tends in any degree to weaken them,” and begged the King to put a stop to the afflictions.<sup>39</sup> They finished off the petition with a wish for a “happy and permanent reconciliation.”<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, the King never read the petition and rejected it outright. Any feeling of comradery with the King was overshadowed by renewed anger at his affront. Congress was declared the de facto government of the colonies, and the Revolution continued.<sup>41</sup> Although there may have been differences of opinion in the colonies with the Loyalists and the Patriots,

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<sup>35</sup> Continental Congress, “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North-America, Now Met in Congress at Philadelphia, Setting Fort the Causes and Necessity of Their Taking Up Arms,” July 6, 1775, accessed September 24, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/arms.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/arms.asp).

<sup>36</sup> Continental Congress, “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North-America.”

<sup>37</sup> Continental Congress, “A Declaration by the Representatives of the United Colonies of North-America.”

<sup>38</sup> Continental Congress, “The Olive Branch Petition,” July 8, 1775, accessed October 14, 2017, [http://ahp.gatech.edu/olive\\_branch\\_1775.html](http://ahp.gatech.edu/olive_branch_1775.html).

<sup>39</sup> Continental Congress, “The Olive Branch Petition.”

<sup>40</sup> Continental Congress, “The Olive Branch Petition.”

<sup>41</sup> Harlow Giles Unger, *American Tempest*, 223.

the rejection of the Olive Branch Petition was a significant factor in the solidification of the colonists' separate American identity.

After the conclusion of 1775, military enlistments in the Continental Army increased due to the hopes for success among Patriots.<sup>42</sup> In fact, even reluctant revolutionaries had decided to make a defiant stand rather than the more passive attitude they had previously taken.<sup>43</sup> The armed violence that occurred during this year is the expression of their change in identity becoming solidified, and it shows the tendency for a threat to the self-concept to result in expulsion of that which is not consistent. By attempting to correct their identity crisis by acting out in violence, the Patriots were establishing their position as dominant and behaving in a way that benefitted the in-group goals. It became clear after the beginning of armed hostilities and the rejection of the Olive Branch Petition that it was time for the Patriots to hold up their side of the unanswered ultimatums. By the end of the year, it was obvious that the colonists were not simple "rabble," but could fight with zealous enthusiasm.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> David Ammerman, *In the Common Cause*, 101; Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy: "The People," The Founders, and the Troubled Ending of the American Revolution* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 51.

<sup>43</sup> Terry Bouton, *Taming Democracy*, 51.

<sup>44</sup> Don Cook, *The Long Fuse: How England Lost the American Colonies, 1760-1785* (New York: The Atlantic Monthly Press, 1995), 226.

## Chapter 7: The Enlightenment, *Common Sense*, and the Declaration of Independence

A vastly important ingredient in identity formation is ideology. Shared beliefs can bring a group together regardless of visible differences, and these beliefs are not easy to suppress. External stimuli can be removed, but once an idea has taken root it is nearly impossible to squelch. The Enlightenment was incredibly influential on the events and rhetoric of the American Revolution. While not everyone was learned enough to be fully versed in Enlightenment works, *Common Sense* helped to bring the general populace into the loop of great debate and intelligent conversation. The manifestations of these ideological changes and their impact on identity ended in the passage of the Declaration of Independence. With these events, it can be seen that the change in identity had run its course.

Most people think of identity as coming from visible characteristics such as race or ethnicity, but that is not always the case.<sup>1</sup> Truthfully, any shared characteristic can be the basis for an identity as long as it has enough salience in the situation. Whenever an identity is based on ideology or political affiliation, those that belong to the category are expected to conform to the belief system and to the wishes of the group.<sup>2</sup> This can be seen multiple times throughout the events between 1763 and 1776. Visible resistance became a badge of whether or not a person was adequately a Patriot, and those caught breaking the rules were publicly shamed and ridiculed.

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<sup>1</sup> Jasper M. Trautsch, "The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism," *National Identities* 18, no. 3 (2016): 297, accessed July 10, 2017, doi: 10.1080/14608944.2015.1027761.

<sup>2</sup> Jasper M. Trautsch, "The Origins and Nature of American Nationalism," 303.

The ability to have a say in representation was considered a birthright of Englishmen, and the colonists were committed to possessing and defending that right.<sup>3</sup> The right to self-defense was also considered a basic right of the English and this was the method of preserving their rights and defending what they believed in.<sup>4</sup> In response to the threats that they felt to their way of life, the colonists decided to defend their rights as Englishmen in line with the previous traditions and Enlightenment teachings. They truly believed that they were not only fighting for their lives but for the cause of all mankind and that they were perfectly suited to do so because the corruption so common in Great Britain had not yet reached the colonies.<sup>5</sup>

On a grand scale, the Enlightenment was the spread of science, liberty, civilization, and Republican government.<sup>6</sup> It changed the way that people connected to each other, and it allowed Americans to find “enlightened connections” to form their new society.<sup>7</sup> Due to the distance between America and Europe and the different demographic makeup of America, the Enlightenment ideologies arrived there later than they did in Europe. Once they arrived, their cause became more of a Revolution by reasoning.<sup>8</sup> In the Enlightenment, the people of Boston, and by extension the people in the rest of the colonies, found common ground and a reason to fight.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle: The Grand Strategies that Brought American from Colonial Dependence to World Leadership* (New York: Encounter Books, 2013), 95.

<sup>4</sup> Eliga H. Gould, *The Persistence of Empire: British Political Culture in the Age of the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 132.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge: The Belknap Press, 1992), 139.

<sup>6</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1991), 192.

<sup>7</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*, ix-6.

<sup>8</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America: Reflections on the Birth of the United States* (New York: Penguin Books, 2011), 28.

<sup>9</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Fire and Light: How the Enlightenment Transformed Our World* (New York: Thomas Dunne Books, 2013), 70.

Enlightenment thinking influenced the course of the Revolution and the documents that it produced. Although numerous writings have been found to have influenced the public, the works of Jean Jacques Rousseau and John Locke were particularly important. They brought to the forefront the idea that consent to a law dictates its validity; this offered the colonists a logical defense for their taxation problem.<sup>10</sup> Because they had no representation in the government of Great Britain, they were not obligated to follow it until they were granted representation. This can be seen in their arguments regarding internal and external government roles that were common during the Stamp Act crisis. As Parliament was an external government, they should not have the authority to tax without the consent of the colonial, or internal, government.<sup>11</sup> Part of the reason for this distinction made by the colonists was the principle of division of power; absolute power was a danger to liberty and by having Parliament as supreme was a threat to that liberty.<sup>12</sup>

The rights to liberty and property came from these works, as well. They were held in high importance by the revolutionaries.<sup>13</sup> It became the source of their identity and gave their cause meaning. In addition, it reinforced the belief that larger public domains such as governments meant that the private domain had to be larger for protection of all these rights.<sup>14</sup> Locke's work was especially important to the more intelligent revolutionaries and the authors of the Declaration of Independence. He introduced both the idea of radical equality and the idea that governments should be formed with the intention of creating conditions where natural rights can

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<sup>10</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Fire and Light*, 174.

<sup>11</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 211-215.

<sup>12</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 229.

<sup>13</sup> Andro Linklater, *The Fabric of America: How Our Borders and Boundaries Shaped the Country and Forged Our National Identity* (New York: Walker and Company, 2007), 89.

<sup>14</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America*, 314.

be properly enjoyed.<sup>15</sup> Because of their commitment to Enlightenment principles, the separate identity was given an ideological basis. In addition to their way of life feeling threatened, they separated because of their belief in a wider set of principles offering a greater cause to rally behind. The country created at the end of the Revolutionary War was the first nation to be based on Enlightenment principles with political power being granted to those who could work for it rather than those who were born into it.<sup>16</sup>

As was stated above, the most influential works of the Enlightenment in America were those of Rousseau and Locke. *The Social Contract* and *The Second Treatise of Government* are the most applicable to American Revolution ideology and the principles that they followed in creating their identity and forming the country. Other works were influential, but none were as far-reaching or as evident as these.

Rousseau's *The Social Contract* delves into the bonds that form individuals into a society and keep them together in a society. He states that no man has natural authority over any other man, and that the common good and necessity are what bring individuals together to form a society.<sup>17</sup> People are better off when they remain free or at least all live under the same conditions without undue burden on one group or person more than another. When it does occur that a government offers different treatment, whether it be negative or preferential, to another or holds one group to a different standard, offense is the result.<sup>18</sup> Additionally, the distance between the governed and the government can be of some trouble. With greater distances, the population will not develop the same affection for their rulers and the duties of administration become a

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<sup>15</sup> James MacGregor Burns, *Fire and Light*, 35-37.

<sup>16</sup> Gordon S. Wood, *The Idea of America*, 203, 274.

<sup>17</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, trans. by G. D. H. Cole (1762), 5, 18, PDF version, accessed October 19, 2017, [https://www.ucc.ie/archive/hdsp/Rousseau\\_contrat-social.pdf](https://www.ucc.ie/archive/hdsp/Rousseau_contrat-social.pdf).

<sup>18</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 13.

burden.<sup>19</sup> This illustrates the problem with the colonies. Because of the distance between the colonies and Great Britain, there were more administrative troubles and less of a feeling of comradery. While they may have still been somewhat loyal to King George III, they had no affection for Parliament after feeling that they had been treated differently than others. By not being provided with a means to voice their opinion, they had been singled out by Parliament compared to regular English citizens. Rousseau finished his discussion with this thought: “I prefer liberty with danger to peace with slavery.”<sup>20</sup>

*The Social Contract* accurately described what happened during the conflict leading up to the armed confrontation. The distance contributed to the identity separation and the perceived singling out of the colonists, whether real or imagined is of no matter, undoubtedly contributed to the division of identity. It most likely provided the colonial elite with a level of explanation as to why they needed to act and what led to the need for their action.

Locke also adds to the discussion with his works. He wrote two treatises on the subject of government, and while they are both interesting works, the second is more applicable to this topic. *The Second Treatise of Government* concerns law, government, and society. Like Rousseau, he also states that “[t]he natural liberty of a man is to be free from any superior power on earth.”<sup>21</sup> Locke presents numerous popular Enlightenment thoughts that were present in the colonies at this time: the importance of property rights, that all people are free, equal, and independent, and that supreme power with no form of check or balance is undesirable.<sup>22</sup> All of

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<sup>19</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 35.

<sup>20</sup> Jean Jacques Rousseau, *The Social Contract*, 115.

<sup>21</sup> John Locke and Ian Shapiro, *Two Treatises of Government: And a Letter Concerning Toleration* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 109.

<sup>22</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 119, 141, 167.

these can be found referenced throughout the struggle and influenced the decisions made by the colonists.

In addition to these common principles, Locke also notes that it should be the job of any King to ensure the happiness of his people; when people are unhappy and subject to an arbitrary, or despotic, power, they will try their best to find a way to alleviate the displeasure.<sup>23</sup> This is also a somewhat accurate description of what occurred in the colonies. They felt unhappy under the rule of their King and looked for a way to remedy that feeling. Locke describes the process of changing political power affiliation in this essay, as well. As long as the society exists, the political power that has been handed over by its citizens cannot be regained. However, miscarriages of rule can cause a forfeit of that power back to society and then a new government can be created with that available power.<sup>24</sup> Using this basis, Great Britain forfeited their political power over the colonies with their numerous legislative blunders, and it fell back on the Patriots to create a new government out of that forfeiture. Additionally, this change in power also contributed to the change in identity. If their grant of political power could not be respected, they would need to sever ties and create their own.

The Enlightenment helped shape the Patriots' feelings on natural rights, consent of the governed, and property rights that propelled the Revolution forward and created another basis for their identity to be forged and solidified. While the Enlightenment works were for the more learned members of society, the tenets could be grasped by all. *Common Sense* represented the Enlightenment ideas put into simpler terms that could be read and understood by the majority of colonists. Thomas Paine's pamphlet sold between 300,000 and 500,000 copies throughout the

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<sup>23</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 189, 199.

<sup>24</sup> John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, 208-209.



colonies and changed colonial opinion regarding independence.<sup>25</sup> It has been said that while the revolutionary leaders wrote for each other, Paine wrote for everyone else.<sup>26</sup> Once the colonists received news of the Hessians and the rejection of the Olive Branch Petition, they only required a small push to shift their direction toward full independence.<sup>27</sup>

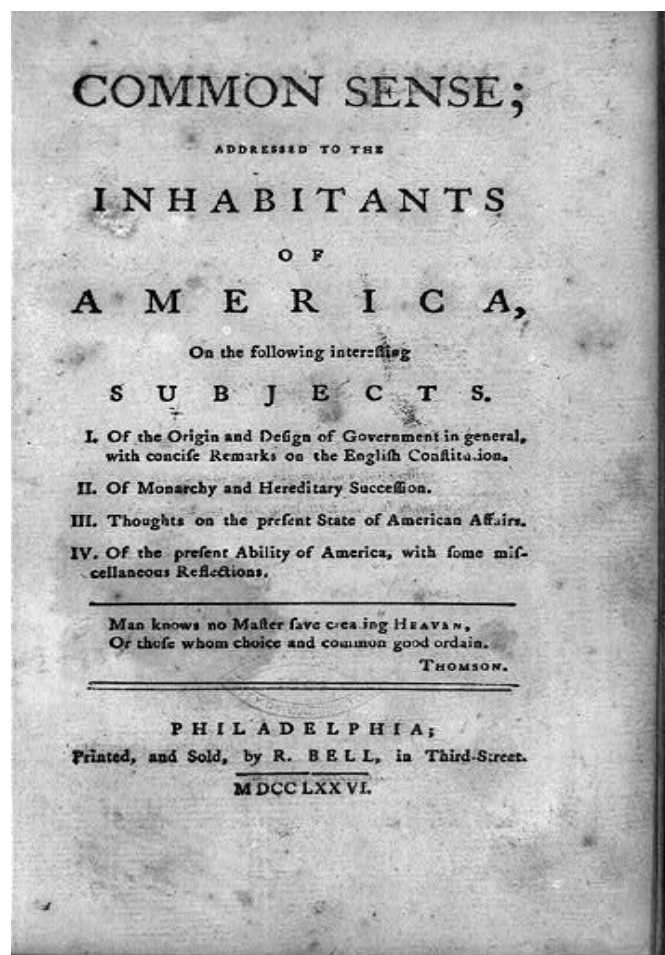


Figure 8: Cover of the Pamphlet *Common Sense*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>25</sup> Rowland L. Young, "A Powerful Change in the Minds of Men," *American Bar Association Journal* 62, no. 1 (January, 1976): 90, August 30, 2017, Accession #: edsjsr.25727479.

<sup>26</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened* (New York: Fall River Press, 2007), 219.

<sup>27</sup> Rowland L. Young, "A Powerful Change in the Minds of Men," 90.

<sup>28</sup> Thomas Paine, "Common sense; addressed to the inhabitants of America, on the following interesting subjects," 1776, accessed October 21, 2017, <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006681076/>.

Paine realized the very important point that ideas are not linked to social class.<sup>29</sup> By writing this pamphlet, he showed the inhabitants of the colonies that they could also be included in the discussion of rights and revolution. He truly brought the Enlightenment, and the Revolution, to the masses. In an effort to make the colonists understand the depth of the situation they were entering, Paine noted that this was not a conflict that was confined to American soil, and it was not something that was going to go away with reconciliation or time.<sup>30</sup> In this way, *Common Sense* provided the colonists with a moral justification for their fight and their identity separation.<sup>31</sup>

*Common Sense* took the American colonies by storm. Paine's prose was elegant and accessible to the general populace. In the work, Paine begins by stating that government is produced by human wickedness and in its "best state is but a necessary evil."<sup>32</sup> He notes that the British government is one that is divided against itself, and the King is incapable of keeping the peace.<sup>33</sup> Sooner or later, the colonists would be dragged into another battle at the expense of Great Britain, and it would negatively impact colonial life. As the colonists had made many sacrifices during the Seven Years' War, this was a point that hit very close to home.

Paine made it clear to his readers that reconciliation had become a fleeting dream, and a government that cannot preserve peace is no government at all.<sup>34</sup> Following this assertion, it is said that "[t]ime hath found us" to depart from Great Britain.<sup>35</sup> Here is a call to action. Paine notes that the values of Great Britain and the values of the Americans are now very different and

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<sup>29</sup> A. Owen Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American Ideology* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1984), 23.

<sup>30</sup> A. Owen Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American Ideology*, 61.

<sup>31</sup> A. Owen Aldridge, *Thomas Paine's American Ideology*, 26.

<sup>32</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, in *Paine: Collected Writings* (New York: Liberty Classics, 1995), 6.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 10, 19.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 21, 31.

<sup>35</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 36.

required a physical separation of the two peoples. This was not only a value separation but a reflection of an ideological separation and a solidification of a different identity. In Paine's view, nothing could settle this like a declaration of independence. This would help further the cause for four reasons: 1) there would not be the possibility for mediation with other countries as the colonies would be seen as rebels rather than an independent people, 2) other countries, such as France, will not offer to help in the war if they think the colonies will rejoin an enemy country, 3) they would be considered rebels by the world until they were united in their cause and purpose, and 4) if accompanied by letters to all of the European countries that their intent was for peaceable relations at the conclusion of the conflict, they would be more likely to help now.<sup>36</sup>

Paine's work was highly influential and helped to solidify the separate identity. He changed the "squabble" into an enduring conflict and event with great significance.<sup>37</sup> It inflamed the spirit in the Americans and affirmed their identity change as the correct path. *Common Sense* was published in January of 1776, and it gave the colonists plenty to consider regarding where to go next and how to act to support their changing identity. One of the first documental manifestations of this change in identity and decision to declare independence came from Virginia. On June 12, 1776 the Virginia Convention of Delegates passed the Virginia Declaration of Rights which stated "[t]hat all men are by nature equally free and independent and have certain inherent rights."<sup>38</sup> In addition to granting all basic rights—freedom of religion, freedom of the press, establishment of a militia, no excessive bail, fair trial, etc.—it also stated that the greatest happiness with the least danger of poor government administration comes

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<sup>36</sup> Thomas Paine, *Common Sense*, 45.

<sup>37</sup> Alan Axelrod, *The American Revolution: What Really Happened*, 145.

<sup>38</sup> Virginia Convention of Delegates, "Virginia Declaration of Rights," June 12, 1776, accessed October 21, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/virginia.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/virginia.asp).

directly from the people.<sup>39</sup> In these statements the influence of Enlightenment thinking, *Common Sense*, and a separate identity can be seen. It further serves as a prototype Declaration of Independence.

The Declaration of Independence had two objectives. First, it was intended to show the abuses that the colonists had suffered at the hands of King George III. Second, it was a “universal declaration of human rights.”<sup>40</sup> The delegates of the Continental Congress voted to dissolve the connection between the colonies and Great Britain, and the draft of the Declaration of Independence was drafted.<sup>41</sup> Although a committee was appointed to draft the document, almost all of the writing came from Thomas Jefferson. After editing the document, the Congress adopted it on July 4, 1776. It granted all powers to free and independent states.<sup>42</sup>

The beginning of the Declaration of Independence is as follows:

When in the course of human events, it becomes necessary for one people to dissolve the political bands which have connected them with another, and to assume among the powers of the earth, the separate and equal station to which the laws of nature and of nature’s God entitle them, a decent respect to the opinions of mankind requires that they should declare the causes which impel them to the separation.

We hold these truths to be self-evident: That all men are created equal; that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights; that among these are life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; that, to secure these rights, governments are instituted among men, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed; that whenever any form of government becomes destructive of these ends, it is the right of the people to alter or to abolish it, and to institute new government, laying its foundation on such principles, and organizing its powers in such form, as to them shall seem most likely to effect their safety and happiness.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Virginia Convention of Delegates, “Virginia Declaration of Rights.”

<sup>40</sup> Conrad Black, *Flight of the Eagle*, 123.

<sup>41</sup> David McCullough, *1776* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2005), 135.

<sup>42</sup> Ben Baack, “Forging a Nation State: The Continental Congress and Financing of the War of American Independence,” *Economic History Review* 54, no. 4 (2001): 639, accessed September 18, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org.ezproxy.snhu.edu/stable/3091625>.

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “The Declaration of Independence,” July 4, 1776, accessed August 24, 2017, [http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th\\_century/declare.asp](http://avalon.law.yale.edu/18th_century/declare.asp).

The language of the Declaration of Independence is very similar to that of the Virginia version, but it also outlines the abuses and offenses of King George III. The “long train of abuses and usurpations” have necessitated the separation of peoples.<sup>44</sup> These abuses include the taxation without consent and the dissolution of local governments among all of the other commonly cited items. They state that the British “abdicated the government here, by declaring us out of his protection and waging war against us” and that they as colonists are now “absolved from all allegiance to the British crown.”<sup>45</sup> It is evident in this document that the colonists now saw themselves as Americans with a separate identity from the British. There may have been some differences on individual levels regarding identity, but the society was moving head on into independence and was committed to creating a new country that embodied their values, ideology, and identity.

This document was treason. Once it was received in Great Britain, it was met with anger and resentment. To British citizen Ambrose Serle, it showed “the villainy and madness of these deluded people ... A more impudent, false, and atrocious proclamation was never fabricated by the hands of man.”<sup>46</sup> Outrage may have existed, but by the end of the conflict the British had realized that they were unwilling to police the colonies with the level that would be necessary to suppress the rebellious spirit.<sup>47</sup> The Declaration was the embodiment of the separate identity and the logical conclusion to recovering the positive self-concept and behaving in a way that reinforces a group identity.

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<sup>44</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence.”

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Declaration of Independence.”

<sup>46</sup> David McCullough, 1776, 141.

<sup>47</sup> Jay Winik, *The Great Upheaval: American and the Birth of the Modern World, 1788-1800* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 34.

The Enlightenment in Europe directly contributed to American thought during this period; it allowed for past ideas to be renewed and extended.<sup>48</sup> The conflict in America proved that the Enlightenment could be put into practice and allowed the Americans to overtake Europe as the model for a better society as Europe still possessed an aristocracy.<sup>49</sup> What makes the American cause so unique is that the American Enlightenment was occurring in a wilderness when compared to the great halls of England and France.<sup>50</sup> Men like Thomas Paine provided a common and accessible ideological base for the Americans and opened the door for the Declaration of Independence.

The crisis of identity that began with the conclusion of the Seven Years' War was solved with the passing of the Declaration. It represented an official, written measurement of collective identity and placed the social identity back in line with the self-concept. Ideology is a very accurate predictor of behavior and identification, and this situation is no exception. Throughout the years of 1763 to 1776 a separate American identity was forged and solidified based on the circumstances. Without the Enlightenment and *Common Sense* the dedication to the cause would have been greatly diminished and the Revolution would have been unsuccessful. Because of the Enlightenment, they were able to create an identity based on ideas and beliefs rather than shared physical characteristics. However, without all of the other conditions and external stressors regarding geography, religion, economics, and politics, the ideology alone would not have been enough. The combination of each of these factors together allowed for an American identity to be created and solidified.

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<sup>48</sup> Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution*, 30, 41.

<sup>49</sup> R. R. Palmer, *The Age of the Democratic Revolution: The Challenge* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), 239, 282.

<sup>50</sup> Kariann Akemi Yokota, *Unbecoming British: How Revolutionary America Became a Postcolonial Nation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 57.

## Conclusion

Any historical subject benefits from a multifaceted approach; the events leading up to the American Revolution are no different in this respect. While much research has been done into the causes of the Revolution on the bases of economics, geography, religion, politics, and ideology, the addition of a psychological lens greatly benefits the discussion. By providing a mechanical method for how a separate American identity formed using these causes as reasons for the change, this interdisciplinary practice provides new answers for current understanding and new areas for further research.

Utilizing psychological theory made the identity shift from loyal British subject to American patriot more obvious. By combining psychology and history to explain this phenomenon, a more accurate picture can be drawn of the process. Social identity theory applied to the various major causes and events leading up to the Revolution shows that the colonists and the British categorized themselves into in-groups and out-groups based on shared experiences and ideological differences. The Enlightenment and the idea that every person possessed natural rights that could not be granted or taken away by a governmental body were strong predictors of the separation of identity.

Most of the research into social identity refers to ethnic and racial groups, but the same theories can be extended and applied to ideological factors. Interestingly, ideology is one of the strongest predictors of identity, and the work should be extended to cover this area of identity formation. Part of the reason for this oversight could be that it is much more difficult to quantify than observable differences such as race or ethnicity. However, this should be remedied, and this

era is a prime example of how powerful ideology can be. It transcends observable differences and differences of economic situation and religious affiliation.

The colonists could define their in-group relatively easily due to the distance between the colonies and Great Britain, their desire to not be ruled by the Church of England, a need for economic freedom, the right to form their own government as they saw most effective, and the belief that their natural rights were being compromised. Were all these conditions not met, the categorization would not have been as effective as it was. There were some that did not fit into this box, but the Loyalists were subject to ridicule and ostracism because of their failure to adopt the Patriots' belief system.

In the future, it would be beneficial to consider this event on a more micro level rather than the macro level presented here. A sort of case study that presents these feelings embodied in specific individuals from this time would help to propel the research forward. A perfect, step by step example of this change in identity may not exist as the variability of individuals is endless. However, there are numerous people who could be added to a case study to show that there is variability, but there is also a tendency to move in a similar direction. Minute differences in individuals exist, but the general trajectory of their identity formation would be more or less the same. Samuel Adams was noted in this text, but his beliefs tended to be on the very extreme desiring the American Revolution from the very beginning of the conflict. Other more moderate individuals along with these revolutionaries would most accurately portray the differences and the group tendency toward risky behavior when together.

Psychological principles, in concert with historical data and other already widely accepted methods of study, should be included in more analyses. Their explanatory benefits and ability to determine causality make them very important to understanding human behavior and



better determining why events played out in the exact way that they did. It can also be the case that they can explain why a separation of identity did not occur earlier. The possibilities of explanation stretch very far with social psychology and sociology.

Based on the information presented here, it can be seen that the wedge was driven further and further to separate the British and Americans in their identity crisis. The conflict began with the end of the Seven Years' War, but the differences in population demographics and societal circumstances had set the stage for conflict to be able to appear since the start of colonization. A catalyst is all that was needed. The Currency Act and the Stamp Act led colonists to feel that the British did not care about their situation and could no longer properly represent their interests. Although the repeal fixed the situation for a time, the underlying problem of raising funds was still there, and the Townshend Act was implemented. Culminating in the Boston Massacre, the issue was not simply going to go away. Feelings of a great threat to their way of life forced the colonists into action. Repealing the Townshend Act—minus the duty on tea—allowed for two years of peace, but the conflict was quickly picked back up. Later events such as the Boston Tea Party, the Coercive Acts, the Battle at Lexington and Concord, and the convening of a Continental Congress solidified these feelings and allowed the identity crisis to end in separation. By the time the Declaration of Independence was signed, the commitment to creating a new country using this identity and the strong ideologies at its root were highly salient among most of the inhabitants.

From the presented analysis, it is evident that psychology can present new avenues for both research and explanation. A fresh way of viewing a situation is possible, and the numerous theories in social psychology and sociology can be used in many events and circumstances throughout history. By examining social identity theory as it applies to the original colonists in

the British American colonies, a clear path of identity is forged and can be studied. When all areas of conventional research are exhausted, psychology offers a new way of thinking and explaining events that have no other viable avenues of research left. Hopefully, more analysis akin to what is presented here will follow.

## **Appendix A: Timeline**

Timeline of Documents and Events Referenced:

**April 10, 1606** The First Charter of Virginia

**May 14, 1607** Jamestown Colony established

**May 23, 1609** The Second Charter of Virginia

**March 12, 1611** The Third Charter of Virginia

**March 3, 1619** Petition for a Charter of New England by Northern Company of Adventurers

**July 10, 1754** Albany Plan of Union is proposed

**February 10, 1763** The Treaty of Paris is signed

**April 5, 1764** Parliament passes the Sugar Act

**April 19, 1764** Parliament passes the Currency Act

**November 3, 1764** Petition from the Massachusetts House of Representatives to the House of Commons

**December 18, 1764** Petition of the Virginia House of Burgesses to the House of Commons

**March 22, 1765** Parliament passes the Stamp Act

**September 21, 1765** Resolves of the Pennsylvania Assembly on the Stamp Act

**October 19, 1765** Resolutions of the Continental Congress

**October 31, 1765** New York Merchants Non-Importation Agreement

**December 10, 1765** Connecticut Resolutions on the Stamp Act

**March 18, 1766** Parliament passes An Act Repealing the Stamp Act

**March 18, 1766** Parliament passes the Declaratory Act

**June 29, 1767** Parliament passes the Townshend Act

**February 11, 1768** Massachusetts Circular Letter to the Colonial Legislatures

**April 21, 1768** Circular Letter to the Governors in America

**August 1, 1768** Boston Non-Importation Agreement

**September 13, 1768** Resolutions of the Boston Town Meeting

**July 22, 1769** Charleston Non-Importation Agreement

**March 5, 1770** Boston Massacre

**March 12, 1773** Virginia Resolutions Establishing a Committee of Correspondence

**May 10, 1773** Parliament passes the Tea Act

**May 28, 1773** Resolutions of the Massachusetts House of Representatives Agreeing to the  
Virginia Proposal

**October 16, 1773** The Philadelphia Resolutions

**December 15, 1773** Association of the Sons of Liberty in New York

**December 16, 1773** The Boston Tea Party

**January 29, 1774** Benjamin Franklin appears before the British Privy Council

**March 31, 1774** Parliament passes the Boston Port Act

**May 13, 1774** Circular Letter of the Boston Committee of Correspondence

**May 19, 1774** Proceedings of Farmington, Connecticut, on the Boston Port Act

**May 20, 1774** Parliament passes the Administration of Justice Act

**May 20, 1774** Parliament passes the Massachusetts Government Act

**May 23, 1774** Letter from the New York Committee of Fifty-One to the Boston Committee of  
Correspondence

**June 2, 1774** Parliament passes the Quartering Act

**June 18, 1774** Proceedings of the Inhabitants of Philadelphia

**August 1-6, 1774** The Association of the Virginia Convention

**September 5, 1774** First Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia

**September 9, 1774** Joseph Warren presents the Suffolk Resolves

**October 7, 1774** Parliament passes the Quebec Act

**October 14, 1774** Declarations and Resolves of the First Continental Congress

**October 20, 1774** The Articles of Association

**March 23, 1775** Patrick Henry delivers speech: Give Me Liberty Or Give Me Death

**March 23, 1775** Resolutions of the Provincial Congress of Virginia

**April 19, 1775** The Battle of Lexington and Concord

**May 10, 1775** Second Continental Congress meets in Philadelphia

**May 20, 1775** The Mecklenburg Resolves

**May 31, 1775** Charlotte Town Resolves

**June 14, 1775** Continental Army created by the Continental Congress

**June 17, 1775** Battle of Bunker Hill

**July 5-8, 1775** Olive Branch Petition is sent to King George III

**July 6, 1775** Declaration of the Causes and Necessities of Taking Up Arms

**January 10, 1776** Publication of *Common Sense*

**June 12, 1776** Virginia Declaration of Rights

**July 4, 1776** Declaration of Independence

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