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Author(s): Megan King

Email: mek24@kent.ac.uk

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Communication and Collective Mentality: Pathways of Mobilisation in Colonial America

Megan King

The political upheaval that comprised the American Revolutionary era instigated a new social, political, and intellectual consciousness amongst colonists from New Hampshire to Georgia, which ultimately aided in the shaping of an inclusive national identity for British North Americans in the eighteenth century. In order to comprehend the depth of such a transformative historical event it is critical to examine the extensive process that emboldened the colonists, and led them from reluctant opposition to legitimised resistance and, finally, to outright revolution. Recent trends in academia have ushered in a focus on radical behaviour, and social psychologists have described radicalisation as a process comprised of discrete developmental phases, in which an individual acquires and demonstrates beliefs, feelings, and actions in support of any given group or cause in conflict.¹ Historiography requires a connective tissue between primary sources, which convey the social conditions that enabled colonial Americans to execute a political uprising, and the contemporary scholarship, which identifies the objectives and methods of pursuit maintained by modern radical organisations. Through investigating the media campaign which aired American grievances and advertised protests, boycotts, and public denouncements of those deemed unpatriotic, and evaluating radical developments within the Imperial Crisis via the lens of contemporary scholarship on radicalisation and mobilisation, historians utilise a cross-disciplinary methodology to determine exactly how eighteenth-century Americans transformed the intercolonial communication of ideals into a tool for acquiring political influence.

History provides many examples of how certain background conditions and structural factors enable the recruitment and radicalisation of individuals. From extreme political action in the form of social revolutions and indiscriminate acts of terrorism, to violent protests in which perpetrators rationalise their actions through assigned motives and a given source of self-ascribed legitimacy (such as

¹ Clark McCauley and Sophia Moskalenko, *Friction: How Radicalization Happens to Them and Us* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 4.

religion or ideology), many historical sequences involve the radicalisation and mobilisation of the masses. Contemporary research in the field of terrorism studies most often suggests that radical actors incite the aforementioned methods of participation by emphasising the absence of socially desired values, including justice, equality, or freedom.² In so doing, a radical group or movement can often provide a sense of security through social cohesiveness that may otherwise be missing in lives that tend to be characterised by dysfunction, instability, or the perception of discrimination or personal injustice.³

In fact, a consensus across contemporary social-psychological literature clearly indicates that when an individual's level of perceived threat is powerful enough, or when prior responsibilities, such as supporting a family or building a career, are suddenly endangered or compromised, they will undergo a period of 'unfreezing', in which old commitments and involvements are likely to be abandoned so that new purposes may be assumed.⁴ People have an innate tendency to act out of anxiety, as well as a desire for conscious reasons with which to justify their allegiance and participation in radical organisations. Thus, it is not uncommon for people to seek new routines and connections that have the anticipated advantages of providing safety and improving both personal and public wellbeing.⁵ Through pain and fear, individuals are easily persuaded to respond to political trends and events, innately gravitating toward those with shared interests and experiences, including gender, geography, ethnic composition, occupation, and religious affiliation.⁶ This collective frame of mind creates a window for leadership to catalyse the process of radicalisation, and mobilises participants in various forms, ranging from protests and civil resistance,

² Katarzyna Jasko, Gary LaFree and Arie Kruglanski, 'Quest for Significance and Violent Extremism: The Case of Domestic Radicalization', *Political Psychology*, 38.5 (2016), 815-831 (p. 815).

³ Peter Simi, Bryan Bubolz, Hillary McNeel, Karyn Sporer and Steven Windisch, 'Trauma as a Precursor to Violent Extremism: How Non-Ideological Factors Can Influence Joining an Extremist Group', in *Research Brief* (College Park, MD: START, 2015), pp. 1-2 (p. 1) <https://www.start.umd.edu/pubs/START_CSTAB_TraumaAsPrecursortoViolentExtremism_April2015.pdf> [accessed 30 January].

⁴ McCauley and Moskalkenko, p. 250.

⁵ A.W. Kruglanski, M. Crenshaw, J. M. Post and J. Victoroff, 'What Should This Fight Be Called?: Metaphors of Counterterrorism and Their Implications', *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 8.3 (2007), 97-133 (p. 101).

⁶ McCauley and Moskalkenko, p. 30.

to armed rebellion and outright revolution.⁷ As a result, these processes of radicalisation and ensuing mobilisation are most often viewed as fluid and dynamic.⁸

As Erica Chenoweth has defined, the mobilisation of these radicalised individuals is a process by which passive individuals become active participants in social life by pursuing coordinated popular action towards a defined set of claims, interests, or goals. There is a shared viewpoint across social psychological scholarship that political mobilisation occurs outside of formal organisations, and arises as a substitute for malfunctioning governmental bodies.⁹ According to research affiliates of the National Consortium for the Study of Terrorism and Responses to Terrorism (START), the process of radicalising individuals to the point of mobilisation is a route that social groups pursue when other alternatives are either blocked, usurped by conflicting interests, or are otherwise unavailable.¹⁰ Ultimately, an incentive to develop alternative models of organisation surfaces when conditions allow individuals on the periphery to gain access to social groups that reflect their alignments and feature influential partnerships or additional benefits.¹¹ Furthermore, START researchers have long postulated links between displays of violence and a frustration over the absence of fulfilment of important psychological needs, such as the need to belong, the need for membership in social groups, and the need for control, certainty, and meaning in life. Multiple studies regarding interpersonal rejection, including 2006 research by Mark R. Leary, Jean M. Twenge and Erin Quinlivan, have shown that when radical actors had the perception that their social identities were being threatened, they subsequently experienced feelings of rejection or ostracisation, which consequently increased the likelihood that these individuals would resort to displaying aggression and supporting revenge.¹² The colonial employment of direct action during the Imperial Crisis in British America serves as a confirmation of these contemporary theoretical approaches, and by historicising and

⁷ Erica Chenoweth, 'Political Mobilization and Institutions', in *The Routledge Handbook of Comparative Political Institutions*, ed. by Jennifer Gandhi and Ruben Ruiz-Rufino (New York: Routledge, 2015), pp. 362-376 (p. 362).

⁸ McCauley and Moskaleiko, p. 5.

⁹ Chenoweth, p. 362.

¹⁰ Chenoweth, p. 363.

¹¹ Elizabeth Clemens, 'Organizational Repertoires and Institutional Change: Women's Groups and the Transformation of U.S. Politics, 1890-1920', *American Journal of Sociology*, 98.4 (1993), 755-798 (p. 755).

¹² Mark R. Leary, Jean M. Twenge and Erin Quinlivan, 'Interpersonal Rejection as a Determinant of Anger and Aggression', *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10.2 (2006), 111-132 <https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327957pspr1002_2> [accessed 26 February 2019]; Jasko, LaFree, and Kruglanski, 'Quest for Significance', p. 816

evaluating these processes through contemporary studies of asymmetric conflict, researchers add a new dimension to studies of radical behaviours and the phenomenon of mass mobilisation.

Although the majority of colonists did not favour a separation from Britain at the onset of the Anglo-American conflict, various factors sparked a push for independence when the central government — which had previously wielded very limited authority over the daily lives of Americans — began threatening their civil liberties.¹³ Prior to the Stamp Act, which was passed on 22 March 1765, the majority of Bostonians still very much cherished their connection to Great Britain, and openly confessed a continued allegiance to King George III. Following the passage of the Stamp Act, however, loyalty to Britain gradually weakened as colonists began to question, if ‘one part of a Kingdom [could] be said to be dependent on another, when all have the same common rights?’¹⁴ In so doing, individuals were able to challenge the imperial jeopardisation of external factors (such as the distribution of wealth, social rank, and access to basic necessities such as food and shelter), while simultaneously asserting the rights guaranteed to them by the English Constitution, addressing specific legislative issues, and criticising the Parliamentary decision-making processes without directly dismissing the Crown. Often, governmental legislation — including instances of both repression and accommodation — was manipulated by fundamental Patriots in interpersonal conversations, public demonstrations, and printed narratives as a means of emphasising and catalysing colonial fears in addition to mobilising massive portions of the population.

As radical leaders emerged within the Patriot movement, likeminded writers and printers promoted and advanced their agendas, and, as a result, efficiently communicated revolutionary ideologies across the Eastern seaboard. Intercolonial communication was not only geographically difficult, but was also discouraged by Royal officials. Pamphlets and newspapers proved to be an incredibly rich source of political information for the inhabitants of British North America; in 1763, there were approximately three dozen printers in the American colonies, each of which produced a weekly issue.¹⁵ There was considerable demand for these materials among colonial readers: the number of newspapers produced

¹³ Andrew Jackson O’Shaughnessy, *The Men Who Lost America: British Leadership, the American Revolution, and the Fate of the Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2013), p. 7.

¹⁴ Untitled article, *Boston Evening Post*, 1 July 1765, p. 1

¹⁵ Phillip Davidson, *Propaganda and the American Revolution, 1763-1783* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1973), p. 32.

doubled over the next twelve years, and again between 1775 to 1790, as both Loyalists and Patriots took advantage of these mediums and employed the press in a war of words and propaganda.¹⁶

These publications were not only ubiquitous, but also provided the wordsmiths of the Revolution with the crucial benefit of anonymity. Whether printed in a pamphlet, or serialised in weekly newspaper instalments, pseudonyms served as a line of defence for both writer and publisher, and enabled Patriots to directly assert their opinions while simultaneously sparing them any persecution they might incur as a result of their political positions. This sense of security encouraged colonists to engage with their protected right of free speech, as guaranteed by the English Constitution.

Alongside this anonymity, classical pseudonyms performed a variety of additional functions. They added gravitas to colonial literature, and also created a connection between eighteenth-century Americans and the inhabitants of ancient Rome. In Patriot propaganda, the use of a Roman-inspired pseudonym displayed the intellectual capabilities of an author; familiarity with ancient authority implied an elevated level of education and indicated a certain degree of wealth. As the identities behind pseudonyms were not overly difficult to discern, the fact that rather prominent well-educated men, such as Samuel Adams and Dr Joseph Warren, wrote covertly penned articles and pamphlets immediately increased the validity of the fundamental Patriot argument. Secondly, employment of a pseudonym allowed authors to personify their argument: allusions to antiquity contrasted the chaos and distress of the Imperial Crisis with a more simplistic, virtuous past, and, according to Eran Shalev, in so doing, allowed Revolutionary writers to align themselves and their ideology with ancient figures that carried allegorical and metaphorical insinuations.¹⁷ In playing upon these themes, authors instilled a sense of tradition among their readers, and ultimately provided themselves and their audience with a degree of assurance and security in their progression towards radicalism. This sense of old-world authority assigned rationalisation to the Patriot ideology. While, on the surface, pseudonyms were used as rhetorical devices to gain the high ground in

¹⁶ Eran Shalev, 'Ancient Masks, American Fathers: Classical Pseudonyms During the American Revolution and Early Republic', *Journal of the Early Republic*, 23 (2003), 151-172 (p. 157).

¹⁷ Shalev, p. 158.

political debates, they also proposed a more profound meta-explanation of American society in terms of antiquity.¹⁸

Perhaps the most notable pseudonymous exchange occurred in 1775 between Tory Judge Daniel Leonard, who assumed the name ‘Massachusettensis’, and John Adams, who wrote as ‘Novanglus’. In his argument, Adams maintained that a push for independence was hardly a consideration in the minds of the colonists, and that, while the colonies hoped to remain the subjects of the Crown, Americans were a self-governing people who should not be required to display subservience to Parliament. While Novanglus’s literature featured thoughtful well-developed arguments, Adams’s writing was often encumbered by legal jargon, which Leonard described as a ‘huge pile of learning’.¹⁹ Although the pair’s exchange was abruptly halted by the outbreak of conflict at Lexington and Concord, the use of pseudonyms and classical allegory allowed both authors to expertly defend their viewpoints in a compelling exchange that lasted nearly four months during 1775. While Adams was a less compelling writer than his counterpart, his ability to continue the Patriot trend of metaphorically explaining the American political landscape through the lens of antiquity aided the rationalisation of radical thinking.

As such, these publications established a connection between classical histories and the social concerns of the colonies within the American mind. By playing upon these notions of Natural Law, much of Boston’s print media also advocated colonial inheritance. In the minds of many Bostonians, Americans possessed a unique entitlement to the colonies; they were the direct descendants of the courageous men and women who ventured to North America, laboured to establish settlements, and funded the entire operation with the contents of their own pockets. Americans thus felt that Britain had no right to expect further financial contributions through the levying of an external tax. For example, in July of 1765, one radical writer begged the question, ‘[f]or who would have left their friends and country and travelled into remote and inhospitable desarts [sic], exposed to a thousand hardships and dangers to make settlements where they would be less free than they were at home?’²⁰ As the Imperial Crisis

¹⁸ Shalev, p. 158.

¹⁹ John Adams and Jonathan Sewall, *Novanglus and Massachusettensis, or, Political Essays: Published in the Years 1774 and 1775, on the Principal Points of Controversy between Great Britain and Her Colonies* (Boston: Hews & Goss, 1819), p. 226.

²⁰ Untitled article, *Boston Evening Post*, 1 July 1765, p. 1.

progressed, Boston's revolutionary writers distinguished Great Britain as 'their' country, and accordingly referred to the American colonies as 'our' country. These arguments were continuously reworded and reiterated within printed material, and emphasised the longstanding fiscal contributions of British North Americans to the economy of their mother country, and consequently questioned the validity of the Britain's decision to sequester more of their assets via legislation such as the Stamp Act of 1765.

The Stamp Act Crisis signalled a major turning point in the content of American news sources, and introduced a new trend in colonial journalism as Bostonians were reportedly 'THUNDER-STRUCK' by the passage of the legislation, and prominent individuals such as James Otis began to call upon 'true lovers of liberty' to resist the impositions of the legislation.²¹ Radical writers probed their audience through Boston's newspapers and pamphlets: if Americans accept these taxes, what's next? Will our generation be able to continue our practices of self-government or will we be reduced to mere property, labouring as slaves to our mother country? Will our children inherit the security provided by free will, economic opportunity, and protected property, or will they be sentenced to a bleak existence ushered in by tyranny, excessive tax, and inadequate governmental representation?

As the legislation levied a tax on legal documents, newspapers, magazines, playing cards, and many other types of paper used throughout the colonies, the Act had a significant financial impact, and especially affected attorneys, printers, editors, and merchants. Americans consequently perceived the Stamp Act as a direct threat to the operational capacity of the free press and the overall functionality of business and trade. Bostonian merchants almost instantaneously began to (openly) plead with Britain to reconsider the legislation. As one merchant wrote, '[c]olonies need to be able to trade freely if they are expected to make financial contributions to Britain', and thus pointed out the inherent contradiction in taxing a territory while simultaneously inhibiting a major source of domestic income.²² Essentially, the

²¹ Untitled article, *Boston Evening Post*, 17 June 1765, p. 1.

²² Untitled article, *Massachusetts Gazette and Boston News Letter*, 30 May 1765, p. 1.

enforcement of an external tax, in addition to a restriction upon the colonial practices of trade, did not prove beneficial for either the colonies or their mother country.

The print media consistently served as a forum for the development of Patriot policy and a tool for the establishment of a collective mentality that verbally shamed dissenters for any level of ‘lukewarmness’ in pamphlets, newspapers, and on broadsides. In the Patriot propaganda campaign, a lack of public support was equivalent to outright opposition of the American cause and Boston’s journalists questioned the character of any and all individuals who neglected to exude notions of Patriotism. The print media incited a widespread apprehension of Britain’s intent to execute absolute power over her colonies, but also of making an enemy of fundamental Patriot organisations, such as the Sons of Liberty. For instance, when merchants continued to import or export items across the ocean, their shops were shamed in colonial newspapers, and citizens were urged to completely cut ties with them, which occasionally resulted in acts of vandalism or public humiliation. When individuals refused to boycott items such as fabrics, tools, and groceries, they could likewise find themselves criticised in the media as profoundly dishonourable, and articles recalled crowds dragging individuals to the Liberty Tree to issue a public apology and denounce all things British. Such instances served as a warning to the Bostonian readership: either you’re with us or against us.

Following the news of the Townshend Duties — a series of acts passed during 1767 and 1768 comprised of punitive and revenue-raising measures — the production of provocative material increased as calls to action were issued and radical deeds were defended. The Townshend Duties were issued with the intent of funding the salaries of Loyalist governors and judges, regulating trade, and establishing the British Parliament’s ultimate authority to tax the colonies, and were consequently denounced as unconstitutional by Bostonians. Formulated by Samuel Adams and James Otis, Jr., the Massachusetts Circular Letter was passed by the Massachusetts General Court in February 1768 and sent to the representative bodies of the other twelve colonies.²³ The letter argued for a strictly internal taxation, whereby colonists would contribute to the provincial assemblies in which they were represented, and it

²³ Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 181.

was widely distributed and warmly received. Parliament's insistence on taxing an unrepresented portion of the population was not only illegal — as it directly violated the rights guaranteed to all citizens by the British Constitution — but, as a result of the physical distance that separated Britain and her colonies, it was also utterly impractical. Publications such as the Massachusetts Circular Letter were multifaceted pieces, written as a means of inciting support from the general public, as much as to garner the attention of royal officials and pressure the government to respond to colonial concerns and plans of action.

Although the colonial Secretary of State, Lord Hillsborough, ordered the Massachusetts General Court to revoke its accusations of illegal taxation, the court remained constant in its convictions. Governor Francis Bernard promptly dissolved the General Court, and authors such as 'Hyperion' begged the question, '[w]here is the boasted liberty of Englishmen, if property may be disposed, charters suspended, assemblies dissolved, and every valued Right annihilated, at the uncontrollable will of an external power?'²⁴ Similar cries were found across the entirety of Massachusetts's media outlets, and as hopes of both Parliamentary morality and sympathy toward the colonies dwindled to a new low, an outbreak of collective violence enveloped Massachusetts. Samuel Adams defended these acts of insurgency within a January 1769 article written under the pseudonym 'Shippen', within which he argued, '[a]fter all, mobs and riots in this capitol are the presence, rather than the true cause of the bitterness express'd against it [...]. It is the part this town has taken on the side of liberty'.²⁵

As if tensions had not already been soaring since the distribution of the Massachusetts Circular Letter, Boston's print media unleashed a proliferation of human-interest stories and dramatised descriptions following the events of 5 March 1770, when a small British army detachment fired into a crowd, killing five Americans in what was dubbed the Boston Massacre. In response to the incident, the first step of the Patriot media campaign provoked panic among readers, while the second step instilled in them a desire for vengeance. The Patriot account of the Massacre was reprinted time and time again as a means of both memorialising those who senselessly lost their lives through the illustration of martyrdom, and simultaneously mobilising colonists to collective action, and filled the newspapers in all

²⁴ Untitled article, *Boston Evening Post*, 3 October 1768, p. 1.

²⁵ Untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 30 January 1769, p. 2.

thirteen colonies with imagery of the bloodshed in Boston that irrevocably added fuel to the proverbial fire throughout the colonies.

Broadsides featuring pictures of coffins with skulls and cross bones were plastered on buildings and poles throughout the city, and visual language also flooded Bostonian newspapers and invoked sadness over those who were killed, concern for those who were injured, and fear about what the future might hold. Countless eyewitness testimonies were penned, and described how the ‘[s]oldiers of the 29th Regiment were seen parading the Streets with [...] drawn Cutlasses and Bayonets, abusing and wounding Numbers of the Inhabitants’, or how the early risers of the following morning were horrified at the sight of ‘the Blood of our Fellow Citizens running like Water thro’ King-Street’.²⁶ Newspaper reports also revealed gruesome details about the actual wounds sustained by members of the public, including, for example, how a bullet had removed a large portion of Samuel Gray’s skull, and how Samuel Maverick — the 17-year-old son of a widow — had suffered an entire night before succumbing to a wound that perforated his abdomen.²⁷ The circulation of such graphic language proliferated the notion among colonists along the Eastern seaboard that next time it could be you, your town, your child, your spouse, or your neighbour.

Equal to the fear and anxiety experienced by Bostonians was their communal anger. As the print media outlined the indescribable cruelty of British troops who exerted ‘an attempt to fire upon or push with their bayonets the persons who undertook to remove the slain and wounded’, bitterness radiated from the city of Boston.²⁸ Patriots quickly sprang into action, and wasted no time in organising new aims and objectives to combat King George and his Parliament. A special committee led by Adams and Warren was formed immediately following the Massacre to petition for the full removal of all British troops from the colonies, while a local militia was also instated to patrol the streets of Boston around the clock.²⁹ In the eyes of many Americans, royal officials had reached a new low by disrespecting their status as colonists and devaluing their contributions to their mother country. The colonists’ faith in Great Britain and its ability to constitutionally govern the colonies was subsequently replaced with a new desperation

²⁶ Samuel Adams, untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 30 January 1769, p. 2; untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 12 March 1770, p. 3.

²⁷ Untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 12 March 1770, p. 3.

²⁸ Untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 12 March 1770, p. 3.

²⁹ Untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 12 March 1770, p. 3.

for American liberty.³⁰ As one Patriot writer professed in regard to those pushing for independence: ‘[w]hat an opening have been given them?’³¹

Colonial criticisms increasingly targeted imperial legislation, and by 1774, Patriot authors did not have to work very hard to incite emotional responses to Parliamentary action as Boston’s struggle against imperialism became a national movement.³² In the aftermath of the Boston Tea Party — when a group of men disrupted the East India Company’s attempt at importing 342 chests of tea by ransacking the vessels and dumping each chest into Boston Harbor — Parliament issued the Coercive Acts, Britain’s most invasive deed thus far. The Acts removed Massachusetts’ rights to self-governance and were interpreted by the citizens as nothing more than revenge, were publicised as such, and consequently assisted the Patriot push for independence. In accordance with these measures, town meetings — which were a cornerstone of the American political scheme — were outlawed, and could only convene with the permission of the Crown-appointed governor.³³ In response, a self-proclaimed ‘Gentleman of Distinction’ wrote: ‘[t]hey require no comment, as they are the most open and explicit DECLARATION OF WAR that can be made’, as once again, the Bostonian media unleashed a flurry of printed material upon the exhausted and fearful citizens of Massachusetts, which appealed to the desires and demands of their fellow citizens through practical, intellectual, and emotional appeals to the audience.³⁴

As Philip Davidson has concluded, the bundles of newspapers that were dropped off at crossroad inns and subscribers’ rural estates in the countryside, distributed among urban taverns and public gathering places in larger colonial cities, and imported into the various military camps had the potential to be potent tools of revolutionary mobilisation.³⁵ During the eighteenth century, fundamental Patriots invested overwhelming amounts of time and money to support the printing press: they subsidised

³⁰ Pauline Maier, ‘The Townshend Acts and the Consolidation of Colonial Resistance’, in *Major Problems in the Era of the American Revolution 1760-1791 Volume II*, ed. by Richard Brown (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000), pp. 128-136 (p. 132).

³¹ Untitled article, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 12 March 1770, p. 3.

³² Ray Raphael, *The First American Revolution: Before Lexington and Concord* (New York: The New Press, 2003), p. 110.

³³ Ray Raphael, ‘Yankees With Staves and Musick’, *Phi Kappa Phi Forum*, 86.3 (2006), p. 23. British rule in the colonies was enforced by a colonial governor appointed by King George III. In 1774, General Thomas Gage was instated to replace the acting governor, Thomas Hutchinson.

³⁴ ‘Extract of a Letter from a Gentleman of Distinction, dated London, June 1, 1774’, *Boston Gazette and Country Journal*, 22 August 1774, p. 1.

³⁵ Davidson, p. 52.

printers, aided in the provision of paper, contributed private correspondence to newspapers, ordered the publication of specific political documents, sent pamphlets in diplomatic packets, combatted Loyalist literature, distributed broadsides, and indoctrinated youth into the movement through the production of an illustrated children's book of British atrocities. While media influence upon social and political happenings was not a new phenomenon, exploration of colonial news sources reveals a great deal about why, when, and how the inhabitants of British North America became radicalised, and subsequently mobilised, in the years that comprise the Imperial Crisis.

Although Revolutionary America remains grossly overlooked in the histories of radicalism, by examining the ever-present influence of the mass media upon an impressionable audience, scholars such as Bruce Hoffman have historicised the relationship between radical behaviour and the role played by the media. As in contemporary internet forums and online publications for radical groups, for colonists, print media was the principal basis of popular opinion during the American Revolution, and played a vital role in the Patriot campaign.³⁶ As Hoffman has asserted, throughout the course of history, the mass media has assumed three critical functions for radical networks: the lure of participation, guidance on how to seek involvement, and a forum through which the ideology may be diffused. This was consistent in considering the American Revolution: through the creation of an intercolonial media campaign, the Patriot movement facilitated a sense of collectivism by utilising the fear of impending British tyranny, and exploited certain social, political, economic, and psychological factors and stressors to unite colonists under a set of beliefs, feelings, and actions in support of an authentically American identity that revolved around liberty, public virtue, and unalienable civil rights.

As colonists transitioned through the phases of opposition and resistance before their eventual push to completely sever ties with Great Britain, their decision-making processes followed a course based upon assigned motives, coordinated collective action, the establishment of principles and practices for self-government, and, ultimately, the legitimisation of the methods and objectives pursued by the Patriot cause. These social progressions were encouraged not only by the personal impact of familial relationships, friendships, and social networks, but also by the printed word, as readers were warned

³⁶ Bruce Hoffman, *Inside Terrorism* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 174.

that Americans ‘never can, never ought, nor never will’ subject themselves to British tyranny.³⁷ Radical writers utilised newspapers, pamphlets, and broadsides as a means of maximising their distribution, strengthening the impact of their message, ensuring ideological ubiquity, and instigating reactionary mobilisation. Resistance was gradually legitimised, and opposition was institutionalised, as a proactive Patriot leadership and easily accessible media sources encouraged colonists to abandon any sense of Loyalism to a governing body that they believed would not only continue to neglect to guarantee them adequate representation, but also intentionally force them into a state of utter despotism. Ultimately, in considering Revolutionary America as comprised of entirely radicalisable individuals who were afforded an opportunity to become actively engaged in combatting the very processes which previously rendered them deprived, marginalised, and altogether excluded, the utilisation of the media was as critical to the Patriot movement of the American Revolution as it is to contemporary radical networks.

³⁷ ‘The Crisis, Number III’, *New England Chronicle*, 15 June 1775, p. 1.

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