

THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO

# The Emergence of Colonial Unity

By

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July 2022

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Master of Arts  
degree in the Master of Arts Program in the Social Sciences

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**M**ost esteemed reader, I entrust the following to your inquisitive mind and wise judgement, may it enlighten your landscape of the past and light a candle for future creations. Here is a discussion on an oft forgotten moment in human History: when unity was freely chosen.

May the lessons therein entrusted amuse you as much as they did the writer.

Life is only brief if one does not have the Virtue to make it worthy, Art is there so we may gather strength from Human Genius, Knowledge is exists so we may reconcile Necessity with Curiosity.

Hoc scriptum Collinis est, et hodie ad meum sponsum volo tantum due verba dicere, id est: sum felicissimus hominum, sed cum tua unione erimus felicissimi atque hoc orbis erit felix.

Impara le lezioni che questi prodi Americani hanno escogitato per noi, ritrova la libertà di tuoi fratelli.

With deep gratitude for Prof. Padgett's patience and guidance, Rebecca's diligent eye and dexterous mind, and -foremost- for James' existence, I owe this thesis to him.

-Anthony



# 1. Overture, or Introduction

It is a story as old as time itself: the child of the monarch of the universe rebels, mutilates, and finally replaces the deposed sovereign. It is a fundamental part of the myth of progress and the triumph of justice that has accompanied Western civilization since early in its existence. It, however, did not remain as a myth confined to the tales of the Greeks and the Romans, but was a pervasive aspect of European politics since the end of the Classical Age that eventually engendered new myths. These new myths -like the Tudor Myth<sup>1</sup> - eventually became intermixed with Christian theology to create new organicist myths around historical events<sup>2</sup> that were intended not to legitimize the regime but also to exemplify the workings of divine providence and draw moral lessons therefrom.

With the passage of the centuries and the transition from the Late-Medieval into the Modern Age, such understandings of history became canonical and religious motifs were coopted by the secular and scientific worlds; now there was progress instead of the providential fall of a corrupt king and settling of a new regime.<sup>3</sup> Von Wright<sup>4</sup> puts it the most concisely: “The idea of progress which had its final breakthrough during the Enlightenment can rightly be regarded as a secularized heir to the Christian salvation story.”<sup>5</sup>

Alongside the idea of progress, also came the idea of regression, or in terms used by our 18<sup>th</sup> century ancestors “corruption.” As the oft-quoted Locke wrote in his first treatise: “And were it not for the corruption, and vitiousness of degenerate Men, there would be no need of any other; no necessity

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<sup>1</sup> Tillyard, E.M.W. *Shakespeare's History Plays*. (London: Chatto and Windus) 1961.

<sup>2</sup> Kelly, H. A. *Divine Providence in the England of Shakespeare's Histories*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard Univ. Press) 1970.

<sup>3</sup> Frankel, Charles. *The Faith of Reason: The Idea of Progress in the French Enlightenment*. (New York: King's Crown Press) 1948.

<sup>4</sup> von Wright, Georg Henry. “Progress: Fact and Fiction.” In *The Idea of Progress. Philosophie Und Wissenschaft, Transdisziplinäre Studien*, ed. By Arnold Burgen, Peter McLaughlin, and Jürgen Mittelstraß, 1-19. New York: De Gruyter, 1997.

<sup>5</sup> Von Wright, *Progress*, 5-6

that Men should separate from this great and natural Community, and by positive agreements combine into smaller and divided associations.”<sup>6</sup> (Locke 1689, 128)

Such ideas were so deeply rooted in European culture that it could be argued that it was inevitable for them to be carried into the Americas when they were rediscovered by the Europeans at the closing of the Renaissance. Indeed, they found a fertile soil in English opposition literature and eventually in the citizens of the British North American colonies.<sup>7</sup>

Ever since Bailyn wrote his seminal *The Ideological Origins* this story has remained alive in some form in the writings of many of the historians dealing with the American Revolution. Indeed, folk telling of the Revolution -once stripped of their ideological content- often contain taxes and tyranny<sup>8</sup> and sadly, this dichotomy between the academic and the folk is often very tenuous. The reasons why some of the most illustrious academics have fallen on the trap of taxes and tyranny may be impossible to fully discern, but certainly part of the problem is how contemporary rhetoric dealt with the Imperial Crisis and subsequent Revolution. One need only point to Patrick Henry’s Will which contains a manuscript of the fifth (rescinded) of the Virginia Resolutions of 1765:

“Therefore that the General Assembly of this Colony have [sic] the only and sole exclusive Right & Power to lay Taxes & Impositions upon the Inhabitants of this Colony and that every Attempt to vest such Power in any P[...] Person or Persons whatsoever other than the General Assembly aforesaid has a manifest Tendency to destroy British as well as American Freedom... The great point of Resistance to british [sic] Taxation was universally established in this Colony. This bro[ugh]t on the War which finally separated the countrys [sic] & gave Independence to ours.”<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Locke, John. *Two Treatises of Government*. (London) 1689.

<sup>7</sup> Bailyn, Bernard. *The ideological origins of the American Revolution*. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) 2017.

<sup>8</sup> For a deeper discussion on this point, see: Andrew M. Schocket. *Fighting Over the Founders How We Remember the American Revolution*. New York: NYU Press, 2015.

<sup>9</sup> CWF Rockefeller Library Special Collections. SCMS 1958.4

These sentences alone are enough to fill out an “American Revolution Clichés” Bingo card.

Here is where our story starts. The objective of this thesis is to begin disarming this narrative not by engaging directly with it or refuting it point by point in every single author that has written on the American Revolution -a task as useless as it is pointless- instead it is to present the story of an episode that most of the literature offhandedly dismisses because it does not fit the classical story of the Revolution as they believe it, but that might be the tipping point of the transition from the British North American Colonies into the United States. From the Early Modern to the Modern World. This is a study on the Stamp Act Congress.

Revolutions are extremely complex events. They are the world-shattering event by definition whose study requires a great amount of delicate intellectual work. Unfortunately, this delicacy runs often is placed by many academics in the hand of the blunt tool that is banal nationalism, which silently lingers in the minds of a revolution’s progeny.

It is perhaps inevitable that after such an extremely complicated socio-political event as a revolution, there might be rather slanted interpretations, fictitious narratives, and myth-building in the histories thereof. It is not outlandish to call Hutchinson<sup>10</sup> a “Tory” or “Loyalist” historian, Bancroft<sup>11</sup> as a “Whig” historian, and Boorstin<sup>12</sup> a “Consensus” historian.<sup>13</sup> Rather it is expected that we call out these ideologies when discussing their works- with the thinly veiled criticism at their self-serving and unethical methods more than implied- lest we fall for some sort of propaganda from the past. The problem is that it is often forgotten that our contemporaries are as infallible as those historians at whom we thumb our noses; thus, Boorstin is quotable only as an antiquarian curiosity or evidence

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<sup>10</sup>Hutchinson, T. and Hutchinson, J. *The History of the Province of Massachusetts Bay, from 1749 to 1774: Comprising a Detailed Narrative of the Origin and Early Stages of the American Revolution.* (London: J. Murray) 1828.

<sup>11</sup> Bancroft, George. *History of the United States of America: From the Discovery of the Continent.* (Boston: Little Brown) 1853.

<sup>12</sup> Boorstin, Daniel J. *The Genius of American Politics.* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press) 1953.

<sup>13</sup> Gibson, Alan Ray. *Interpreting the Founding: Guide to the Enduring Debates over the Origins and Foundations of the American Republic.* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas) 2006.

for intellectual history, yet Maier, Bailyn, Wood, and the Morgans *must* be cited as authorities for any argument on the Revolution.

Yet, it is often forgotten that even those great historians were encumbered by their own personal biases, affective attachments, and ideologies and are often left unquestioned for that exact reason: when intellectual history was all the rage Bailyn could be quoted just as Christians quote St. Paul; now that social history is in vogue, Wood's Radicalism (or lack thereof) is the cornerstone of any work that explains anything about the revolution. One detail that all of them share is something that might escape all but the most sagacious of observers: they are all Americans. Or better yet, they were citizens whose national identity they drew from the nation-state created by the American Revolution, whose career occurred in that same nation-state.

Perhaps this is why some big issues have slipped through the cracks: slavery and racism were neglected for a most of the history of American historiography; the role of women -keenly felt by the Revolutionary generation during the Imperial Crisis- neglected; the fate of other Europeans, colonists, and Native First Peoples unknown until their cameo as the bag guy of the day came up.

Glaring as those gaps were in the literature, few historians were interested in studying them until very recently, yet we cannot fall into the fallacy of believing that the story of the Revolution is now complete because the field is compulsively looking into race, gender, and colonialism. Rather, new gaps are forming and bad habits developing, for example the dismissal of politics in favor of "social factors" the careless treatment of delicate concepts like race and gender, and the overt politicization of the historian's craft.

In this thesis the reader will find that one of this work's main goals is shinning a light on one of those gaps: the blind trust of authority, the naïve conviction in a good story, and the blindness



caused by affective attachment to our extended concept of self. In short, you will understand why the literature was so misguided that this work needed to be produced.

### 1.1. “Literature Review”

While it is technically so, it is hard to argue that there is a literature on the subject at all. As far as can reasonably be discerned, there is only one volume dealing specifically with the Stamp Act Congress, alongside some MA thesis and doctoral dissertations, and a few articles on the Crisis that mention the Congress.

That being said, the field is composed entirely of C.A. Weslager (1976)<sup>14</sup> whose *The Stamp Act Congress* is the perfect pairing to the Morgans' *The Stamp Act Crisis*<sup>15</sup> (1953.) The former is a fundamental piece of the literature that serves as the cornerstone of citations for those desiring to go deeper than the Morgans: this monograph is a fascinating mix of genres, at once being source edition, contextualization, data transistor, and political history. However, as thorough as Weslager was, he fails almost entirely to provide anything beyond what the events and sources themselves say; often one feels as though it were a chronicle of the events leading up to the Congress, instead of a historical analysis thereof. Much is left unexplained, key facts and factors are omitted, and obvious corollaries missed.

It is best exemplified by Chapter Two's segment on Virginia's lack of a delegation to New York. The second chapter is an introduction to the delegates themselves, their political context, and the circumstances in each individual province that led to the dispatch of certain men or of none at all. For example, when discussing New Hampshire “Evidently there was a minority opinion that

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<sup>14</sup> Weslager, C. A. *The Stamp Act Congress: With an Exact Copy of the Complete Journal*. (Newark: University of Delaware Press) 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Morgan, E.S and Morgan H.M. *The stamp act crisis: Prologue to revolution*. (UNC Press Books) 1953.

delegates should be sent to New York despite the unsettled state of the colony. Unfortunately, Governor Wentworth recessed the Assembly until November 19, and there was no opportunity to reverse the earlier decision. Later, as the reader will see, the New Hampshire Assembly fully approved the proceedings of the Stamp Act Congress but did not participate because the invitation arrived at an inopportune time.”<sup>16</sup>

While this is a very satisfactory *account* it has little in terms of explanation, as it does not go into greater depth as to why the Massachusetts delegation could arrive in time even though the colonies’ proximity would make temporal matters equal between the two; or why the effect of Virginia’s governor adjourning the Burgesses proved fatal to the dispatch of representatives to the Congress when New York’s had the same amount of support from Lt. (and acting) Gov. Colden. As with every giant, we stand on its shoulders because it cannot reach the heavens itself.

Very limited hyperbole would be involved in stating that the field’s reach extends only as far as Weslager’s as there is only one published monograph on the Stamp Act Congress.

Naturally, there are theses and dissertations loitering inside universities’ archives that deal with it too, but they are to be considered inconsequential for this work for a variety of reasons; the first being that its lack of publication demonstrates a comparable lack of interest from the field in consuming that dissertation; then, there is the matter of how influential it was, which can readily be answered with a pithy comment as citations thereof are nigh on nonexistent; finally, there is the matter of what it could conceivably do with the intellectual tools available at the time of the writing, a crucial point since the advancements the field has made in the past quarter century render many of the non-trailblazing works rather useless for the modern reader.

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<sup>16</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 75-76

Finally, there are scattered articles that tangentially deal with the Congress, but that both never gained much of an audience, nor radically advanced our knowledge of this event.

Therein lies the difficulty in conducting such research: most discussions are found inside not just books, but *chapters* thereof, sometimes earning little more than a sentence or two. Thus, attempting to gauge how the field has understood the Stamp Act Congress already deals a very clear answer: not very much.

## 1.2. Everyone Forgets about the First Continental Congress

Nonetheless, it is an essential part of any history of the American Revolution and any telling thereof that has gained any academic traction includes it. It is then imperative to not only analyze what the most important exponents of the literature have said on the subject, however cursory it might be.

As always, the story begins at the historical era itself, unfortunately these works do not deal with it as such but as mythology. First and foremost, there is Mercy Otis Warren.<sup>17</sup> Her work provides many of the most durable ideas, anecdotes, and myths of the era. With her, the story of overlooking the Stamp Act Congress begins:

At a period when the taste and opinions of Americans were comparatively pure and simple, while they possessed that independence and dignity of mind, which is lost only by a multiplicity of wants and interests, new scenes were opening, beyond the reach of human calculation. At this important crisis, the delegates appointed from several of the colonies, to deliberate on the lowering aspect of political affairs, met at New York, on the first Tuesday of October, one thousand seven hundred and sixty-five.\* The moderate demands of this body, and the short period of its existence, discovered at once the affectionate attachment of

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<sup>17</sup> Warren, Mercy Otis. *History of the Rise, Progress, and Termination of the American Revolution: Interspersed with Biographical, Political and Moral Observations*. (Boston: Manning and Loring, For E. Larkin No. 47, Cornhill) 1805.

its members to the parent state and their dread of a general rupture, which at that time universally prevailed. They stated their claims as subjects to the crown of Great Britain; appointed agents to enforce them in the national councils; and agreed on petitions for the repeal of the stamp act, which had sown the seeds of discord throughout the colonies. The prayer of their constituents was, in a spirited, yet respectful manner, offered through them to the king, lords, and commons of Great Britain: they then separated, to wait the event.<sup>18</sup>

The following pages make it clear that she subscribes heavily to Great Man History, as both Patrick Henry and James Otis feature heavily as causal mechanisms. It is unsurprising, then, that she would have this approach for a variety of reasons, starting with the overshadowing that the SAC<sup>19</sup> got from subsequent events like the Continental Congresses, the War, the Constitution, the 1790s, and then Jefferson's 1800 "Revolution." Such a trait is characteristic of the literature, but she has a secondary potential motive for glossing over the SAC, being the daughter of James Otis (Sr.) and sister of James Otis (Jr.), two of the most central characters of the early stages of the Revolution. The former was Thomas Hutchinson's declared nemesis, while the latter was a delegate to the SAC. Both saw their early influencer diminish until they were margin notes in the story, with the Elder Otis fading into irrelevance after being passed over for Chief Justice and being vetoed by Governor Francis Bernard as an elected assembly member. While the Younger moderated his views after being elected as an SAC delegate from his earlier firebrand opposition to British policy, ostensibly due to his deteriorating mental state- a trend that continued to the end of his life.

Thus, it is understandable that she would focus more on the latter stages. However, David Ramsay<sup>20</sup> had a stronger cultural-political reasons to gloss over it: he was a proud South Carolinian to the

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<sup>18</sup> Otis Warren, *History of the Rise*, 32-33.

<sup>19</sup> From here on out, I shall use this abbreviation *en lieu* of Stamp Act Congress

<sup>20</sup> Ramsay, David. *The History of the American Revolution*. (Lexington, Ky.: Downing and Phillips) 1815.

point that he presents that colony as the linchpin of the success at holding that Congress, only to then place its relevance as a mirror of what everyone else in the country was already saying.<sup>21</sup> Even though he was a Federalist writing at the height of the Federalist ascent, his South Carolinian origin shone through and foreshadows his latter works, which had a strong particularistic bent.

It goes without saying that these works and all others published by the Revolutionary generation are highly encomiastic as well as teleological in nature, as they presumed that independence was inevitable and that all events leading to it were part of an organic continuum of American union. Any sensible historian would guard against determinism and both regarding Colonial unity and American independence, the Patriot authors fall into that trap. Where is why the inclusion of Loyalist historians has been so important to the field, since they hold the likewise highly ideological perspective that neither was inevitable, nor good.

First and foremost is the famous Thomas Hutchinson, the Massachusetts governor that, if there was one, was the “one person in America whose actions might have altered the outcome, given the set of circumstances that existed in the early 1770s”<sup>22</sup>

Writing in his unfortunate exile in England after the American victory in one of his many attempts to get the success he thought was warranted by his loyalty and struggles, but that the British government had failed to ever confer on him. Writing the history of Massachusetts, when he took up the matter of the SAC, he dealt with it mostly by examining the validity of the Congress’ claims and the inconsistencies of the American Revolutionaries.<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> Ramsay, *History*, 88-89

<sup>22</sup> Bailyn, Bernard. *Faces of Revolution: Personalities and Themes in the Struggle for American Independence*. (New York: Knopf) 1990, 98.

<sup>23</sup> Hutchinson, *History of the Province*, 94-95

In the same genre of revenge literature, Joseph Galloway,<sup>24</sup> Benjamin Franklin's friend of yore and last Speaker of the Pennsylvania Assembly, at the height of the War wrote his history whose subtitle speaks to his motives "The Causes of that Rebellion are pointed out, and the Policy and Necessity of offering to the Americans a System of Government founded in the Principles of the British Constitution, are clearly demonstrated." The entire work is littered with invectives of hypocrisy, sedition, and inconsistency, as his argument hinges on the idea that the faction of "republican" colonists -who in his work become a unity, intentionally not distinguishing between one colony or the other- had planned to rebel and seek independence from the beginning. Naturally, due to the political nature of the work, and the inaccuracy of the argument, the SAC could not be -and, indeed, was not- considered in his narrative; thus, from the Virginia Resolves he skips to the First Continental Congress and weaves the statements from both episodes into a single thread of planned independence masked through hypocrisy.<sup>25</sup> Since the Congress' resolves directly contradicts the idea that the "republican faction" had an agenda from the beginning, including the story of a convention of the colonies that resulted in expressions of loyalty and policy recommendations would damage his narrative.

Here we see another red thread running through the historiography of the American Revolution: often episodes will be excluded -either intentionally or not- because they would conflict with the story being constructed of what actually occurred and why it was righteous (from the American side) or treasonous (from the British side), and the SAC directly contradicts all of these narratives.

As the country lived through the Era of Good Feeling, Jacksonian Democracy, and finally reached the threshold of the Civil War, historians started focusing on a different aspect of the creation of the

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<sup>24</sup> Galloway, J. *Historical and Political Reflections on the Rise and Progress of the American Rebellion: In Which the Causes of That Rebellion Are Pointed Out and the Policy and Necessity of Offering to the Americans a System of Government Founded in the Principles of the British Constitution, Are Clearly Demonstrated.* (London: Printed for G. Wilkie) 1780.

<sup>25</sup> Galloway, *Historical and Political Reflections*, 87-95.

Republic, that of progress. It was no longer about studying tyranny defeated, but about studying the arc of human progress in its various forms, such as democracy, growth, and the nation; the greatest exponent of this so-called Whig tradition is Bancroft, whose *History of the United States, From the Discovery of the Americas* presents the story of the United States in the strong light of Manifest Destiny. It should suffice to use his own words to illustrate just what his work does “The members of this first Union of the American people were elected by the representatives of the people of each separate colony. Each of the colonies existed in its individuality... they met in Congress they recognised each other as equals.”<sup>26</sup> The myth of the Revolution as the fulfillment of American destiny shows up again.

While this idea reigned supreme throughout the long nineteenth century of revolutions, unifications, and nation-states, with the dawn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the ascent of the British Empire as a superpower and the United States as a global power, the benefits of belonging to a supranational state were reevaluated and historians from the so-called Imperial School like Charles Beer and Lawrence Gipson, Now it was no longer the story of tyranny defeated but of an “organized movement tending towards its [the British Empire] destruction”<sup>27</sup> that refused to cooperate with the need of the government to fulfill its duties by collecting taxes. Just like the Whig historians of generations past, this school had an incredibly deterministic view of the Revolution wherein it was “inevitable” and a change in British colonial policy was “impossible.” An important point in this story is the renewed interest in the SAC, as it was understood to be important. However, the importance given to it was because it showed in Andrews’<sup>28</sup> words:

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<sup>26</sup> Bancroft, *History of the U.S.*, 334

<sup>27</sup> Beer, G.L. *British Colonial Policy, 1754-1765*. (Cambridge University Press) 2010, 312

<sup>28</sup> Andrews, C.M. and Labaree, L.W. *The Colonial Period of American History*. (New York: Henry Holt in Company) 1902.

The importance of the Stamp Act congress does not lie in the declaration of principles which it enunciated. It lies in the accomplished fact that amid a thousand centrifugal tendencies that were keeping the colonies apart as the inhabitants of thirteen separate communities, there had arisen a conscious purpose of uniting to support a common interest.<sup>29</sup>

This recognition of the importance it had is undercut by the highly deterministic nature of their interpretations; according to Andrews, the SAC's resolutions "we find the first expression of American sentiment by a body practically representative of all the colonies."<sup>30</sup> (Andrews, 251) A sentiment that only needed an institutional outlet to be expressed since it already existed. After the Imperial interpretation, the focus changed from the institutional to the economic and the so-called Progressive historians were now arguing that the Revolution occurred due to the middle and lower classes revolting against the elites. First and foremost, there is Carl Becker with his theory of the dual revolution where Independence was a popular revolution and the Constitution was a reactionary pushback, in this view he can only dedicate around one page to the Congress as it does not fit into the framework. Its most famous exponent is Charles Beard who studied exclusively the 1780s with a rather cursory focus on evidence.

The pendulum swung in the other direction once again when the Second World and Cold Wars pushed the necessity of a unified society. The Revolution looked like the perfect moment to look to for a comparable level of social unity, then authors like Boorstin<sup>31</sup> and Hartz<sup>32</sup> who were interested in tracing the liberal consensus that existed in the late-Colonial Era that led to American political

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<sup>29</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, 252.

<sup>30</sup> Andrews, *Colonial Period*, 251.

<sup>31</sup> Boorstin, D. J. *The Americans: The National Experience*. (New York: Random House) 1965.

<sup>32</sup> Hartz, L. *The Liberal Tradition in America: an Interpretation of American Political Thought since the Revolution*. (New York: Harcourt Brace) 1955.



thought, practice, and ideology. Naturally, there is little in their works that relates to the subject at hand since the political is present as an accompanying feature of ideology. It is then unsurprising that the next generation produced one of the most singular of authors in the history of the field: Bernard Bailyn.

Bailyn can be considered the start of modern historiography on the American Revolution as he adhered to the principles of historical research to a degree that his predecessors could never achieve. Thus, his *Ideological Origins* was an instant classic as it posited that it was neither socio-economic theories nor the study of mythologized heroes that could better explain the American Revolution. Instead, we needed to look at the source of their ideologies to understand the behavior of the Revolutionary generation, thus by looking at the works of Sidney and Harrington we can understand how the Imperial Crisis came about. Thus, the SAC was a natural consequence of this conspiratorial ideology that had developed since the early 18<sup>th</sup> century and all events that followed were nigh on inevitable.

Alongside Bailyn, another of the field's titans share's his method of intellectual history, albeit with greater inclusion of political events: the Morgans. Helen and Edmund Morgan had an even greater impact on the field since both *The Stamp Act Crisis* and the documentary compilation *Prologue to Revolution* form the cornerstone of any credible work that deals with the Stamp Act. Ever since, everyone has had to rely on them as no other monographs dealt with this fundamental moment of the Revolution. This seminal work remains current after seven decades and continues to be cited as gospel with even less critiques than Bailyn himself. While for the most part this is warranted, some of the claims and assumptions need to be reevaluated and it appears that the field has neglected to do so. Such a seminal work reveals the primary mover for the thesis you are currently reading: for

nigh on seventy years, the narrative regarding the Stamp Act and its subsequent Congress have gone largely unchallenged and those who have attempted to do so have, by-and-large, failed.

They laid the foundation for the critical assessment and partial rejection of most of the field that came before and a slew of new studies have rewritten the story of the American Revolution. Often by the direct influence of these characters, students with new perspectives cropped up with a critical revision of this world, from the American Revolutionary world to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Atlantic World. This is, of course, due to Bernard Bailyn once again,<sup>33</sup> who almost single-handedly founded this subfield.

For Atlantic History to become solidified as it is today, it first needed to gain the strong input of social history that Bailyn's heir furnished with his *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*.<sup>34</sup> It laid the groundwork for analyzing historical events as caused by the changing in underlying social infrastructure that then became legitimated with ideology and put into practice with politics. Once again, such an event as a Congress of the colonies would not be very relevant since it effected no immediately recognizable change in the long-term structures of British North American society. With such an awareness of the blind spots that the field had donned for more than two centuries, there was an unprecedented -and long overdue- amount of attention to the role that those excluded from the socio-political mainstream had in the Revolutionary Era; historians like John Hope Franklin<sup>35</sup> questioned the erasure of Africans, people of African descent, and the enslaved, while others like Linda Kerber<sup>36</sup> shone a much-needed light back their central role women had during the

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<sup>33</sup> Bailyn, B. *Atlantic history: concept and contours*. (Cambridge, Ma: Harvard University Press) 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Wood, G.S. *The Radicalism of the American Revolution*. (New York: A.A. Knopf) 1992.

<sup>35</sup> Hope Franklin, J and. Moss, A.A.. *From Slavery to Freedom : a History of African Americans*. (New York: McGraw-Hill) 1994.

<sup>36</sup> Kerber, Linda K. *Women of the Republic: Intellect and Ideology in Revolutionary America*. (Charlottesville: University of North Carolina Press) 1980.

Revolution, and Calloway<sup>37</sup> the largely ignored role of the First Peoples in the Revolutionary Era. As the subject at hand had no impact whatsoever in the lives of these legally excluded people, they will not feature prominently in this work.

The trend to dismiss political events and elite leadership reached such a fever pitch that the founding father -so to speak- of the social-history domination in the field -Gordon S. Wood- stated that “there does seem to be something new and different about the present-day academic vilification. . . . Academic historians over the past forty years have tended to focus on issues of race, class, and gender in the early Republic and to shun issues of politics and political leadership.”<sup>38</sup> Significantly magnified is the situation now as there has not been a pushback and the field is currently dominated by social historians working on race, gender, or empire. However, there was a contingent reaction that came from outside of the academic world, when the political situation of the early 21<sup>st</sup> century generated renewed interest in the Revolutionary Generation as both a collective society but also as a group of unique individuals. Its literary manifestation was what is derisively called “Founder’s Chic.” It is the genre of non-academic, non-fiction books about the dominant figures of that generation, while it has some pitfalls it such as reviving Great Man history; regardless, it placed political history back in the minds of academics studying the Revolution, and revived interest in monographs like DuRivage’s<sup>39</sup> and Chervinsky’s<sup>40</sup> and authoritative overviews such as Middlekauff’s<sup>41</sup> because of the laity’s interest in “popular” books such as McCullough’s<sup>42</sup> and Chernow’s.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Calloway, C.G. *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities*. (New York: Cambridge University Press) 1995.

<sup>38</sup> Wood, G.S. *Revolutionary Characters: What Made the Founders Different* (New York) 2006, 7 – 8.

<sup>39</sup> Du Rivage, J. *Revolution Against Empire: Taxes, Politics, and the Origins of American Independence*. (New Haven: Yale University Press) 2017.

<sup>40</sup> Chervinsky, L M. *The Cabinet: George Washington and the Creation of an American Institution*. (Cambridge, MA: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press) 2020.

<sup>41</sup> Middlekauff, R. *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*. (New York: Oxford University Press) 2005.

<sup>42</sup> McCullough, D.G. *John Adams*. (New York: Simon & Schuster) 2001.

<sup>43</sup> Chernow, R. *Washington: A Life*. (New York: Penguin Press) 2010.

### 1.3. The Dynamics of Social Life

The point of the existence of a field that has consistently and continually failed to critically revise works almost a century old even through billions of words spent arguing and debating on the minutiae of the Era has been substantially made. While some respected, contemporary works have been left unanalyzed for now, it is important to linger for a moment on a crucial question: why is it that a field as dynamic and thorough as that of the American Revolution has not produced more than one book authoritative on the Stamp Act Crisis and one on the SAC?

Could it be because of a lack of sources? Perhaps the Morgans and Weslager were *that* thorough. Or is it that there is nothing left to explain after the supplementary literature of articles and book chapters have widened the bounds set by the Morgans?

Well, none of these are true. The closest one to being somewhat accurate is the third question about supplementary literature, but even then, it is mostly on the Crisis and there is very little on the Congress.

The reason for this is a matter that would call for a research on its own, yet here it must be stated that there is a clearly discernible thread running through all of the works cited above: they all lack a credible explanation for why the Stamp Act was so disruptive in the lives of North American colonists, and also of how this came about, instead simply focusing on whichever aspect thereof is the most conducive to the argument being made in the monograph or article and moving on, hoping that -or not caring if- the Morgans were wrong.

Yet, another cause is to be found at the origin of this rather disturbing trend, and that is the transition of the historical guild from social scientists into non-fiction writers.

It was not only the subjects that piqued the interest of the academics that changed, but also the way that these academics began understanding -or not- the functioning of human societies beyond the particular. With the rise of postmodernism in tertiary institutions, the very idea of uncovering patterns of repetition in any aspect of society became archaic and rather disreputable; the only ideas that held sway was that of subjectivism, control, and power. No longer could political explanations be useful since politics excluded the oppressed in a society. The job of the historian -these academics posit- is not to understand the past, but to raise the voices of those forgotten by history.

It is then clear why microhistory would be so popular, as it requires almost no theoretical background and it *a priori* prohibits any semblance of nomothetical conclusions. In short, the job of the historian became that of attorney of the oppressed dead and if one was forced to cite anything regarding the SAC they could rely on the Morgans' narrative credibility and on any postmodernist to explain its irrelevance.

Aside from being rather dangerous to not just the guild and trade, but also to the research itself, this is patently wrong: historians have, of necessity, a solemn duty to find patterns that intersect and traverse many events in the past to be able to -to the best of our ability- reconstruct, explain history, and connect it to the present.

#### 1.4. "That's How the Cookie Crumbles..."

Clearly, not a very reputable opinion in the minds of many of the best-regarded historical academics of today. Yet, it remains the way of the historian. We have been forced to do the job of most social scientists since Herodotus was at once a historian, chronicler, mythographer, social theorist, religious scholar, ethnographer, sociologist, and literary academic in his quest to understand the Persian Wars. Most historians since have made it a point to lay out their worldview to explain how they see the

social world behaving, in order that their conclusions drawn from a historical event might be credible in the eyes of the reader.

It is important to point out that methodological individualism has dominated in social-scientific literature has made it particularly onerous for any explanation of sociogenesis as it tautologically presumes that an individual (or actor) is something and that from it one can draw conclusions about the individual's endpoint. Particularly troubling is that the literature suffers from this ailment not because of the influence of a school of thought or intellectual, but because most of the historical literature is absolutely devoid of the most basic premises and definitions that serve as the theoretical background to their study. In this world, things happen to people and then more things happen, and the entirety of this process is self-evident. What an actor is or why a subsequent action is the logical corollary to a certain event, is absolutely unclear and is based on common sense.

Given that the present study deals directly with the *origins* of colonial unity, it will not be lacking a theoretical framework that makes clear what an actor is, what the logic of an action is, and how causality functions.

Since the greatest cause for the lack of comprehension of the Stamp Act Crisis and Congress is the absence of a formulation of social principles, ours will be stated before delving into the study: in order to better understand how 18<sup>th</sup> century society works, one must first look at how societies – or better yet, *social systems*- work and while many formulations have been put forward, we shall make use of Prof. John Padgett's theoretical framework of autocatalysis.<sup>44</sup>

## 1.5. Conflict of Interests

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<sup>44</sup> Padgett, J.F. and Powell, W.W. *The Emergence of Organizations and Markets*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press) 2012.

It is customary for any self-respecting and credibility-seeking article in the natural sciences to conclude with a disclaimer indicating a lack of personal conflicts of interest with the research; it is a deontologically imperative practice that -for reasons unclear to your author- has never docked at the shores of the social sciences or the humanities- highly detrimental as this absence is to both.

Whereas it ought to be an integral part of the work of the social scientist or the humanist since we are liable to create an affective attachment to our subjects of study that could be far more detrimental to the end result than any pecuniary incentive would be for a natural-scientific paper.

Therefore, allow me to state two possible conflicts of interest that need to be taken into account before examining the arguments set forward here:

- The first one is related to the field within which it places itself -18<sup>th</sup> century North America and the American Revolution- and it has to do with the author's education and marital status: the author is on track to receive his MA degree from an American university and is currently engaged to an American citizen.

The author will readily and firmly declare that neither has affected the thoroughness with which this study was conducted, but also desired that his readers would not be oblivious thereto.

- The second possible one is regarding the theoretical framework used to analyze the data gathered in this study: Professor Padgett's theory of autocatalysis was taught to the author by the very man, who later agreed to become the author's MA thesis faculty advisor.

Once again, the author will readily and firmly declare that neither has affected the thoroughness with which this study was conducted but desired his readers would not be oblivious thereto.

## 1.6. Autocatalysis

This “radical new theory of societal change”<sup>45</sup> is concerned with the origin of novelty. Padgett created a model that explains how new social organizations originate out of pre-existent circumstances.<sup>46</sup> It was inspired by the eponymous biochemical theory definition of life.<sup>47</sup> Pairing this inspiration and the metaphor alongside social network analysis, he pioneered this model that posits that “In the short run, actors create relations; in the long run, relations create actors”<sup>48</sup> which are “vehicles through which autocatalytic life organizes.”<sup>49</sup> This is the study of society as *life*, actors as *organizations*, and relations as *markets*. They join to create networks and organizations that are made up of individual nodes (or in his terminology *cells*) which are constantly dying and being replaced within -and by- the autocatalytic networks to which it belonged.

One of the most important inputs that this theory has is that it borrows from SNA<sup>50</sup> the view of social systems (societies) as being composed of co-existent layered. These are the economic, the political, and the kinship domains, but also “other domains... such as religion and the military [that] could be added.”<sup>51</sup> It bears noting that since the theory was formalized very recently there are still modifications to be made, such as including semantic networks,<sup>52</sup> epinets, and labor networks, which would more efficiently model social systems -e.g.: religion as epinets, that co-exist with semantic, hierarchical, and political networks; and labor networks that encompass guilds and armies into a single kind of autocatalytic network. Moreover, it builds upon the basis of SNA to reconceptualize edges as transforming and not merely transmitting flows;<sup>53</sup> therefore, in classical SNA an epinet would move information through the nodes at various speeds, an autocatalytic network would posit

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<sup>45</sup> Robins, G. *Doing social network research: Network-based research design for social scientists*. (Sage) 2015, 28.

<sup>46</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 1-30

<sup>47</sup> Eigen, Manfred, and Peter Schuster. "A principle of natural self-organization." *Naturwissenschaften* 64, no. 11 (1977): 541-565.

<sup>48</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 2.

<sup>49</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 3.

<sup>50</sup> Henceforth the abbreviation of “Social Network Analysis”

<sup>51</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 5.

<sup>52</sup> By his own verbal admission, it is an aspect that needs to be incorporated.

<sup>53</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 9.



that information mutates as it moves through the cells, which in turn determines the velocity of reception.

With these bases, he moves from how social systems function to how they are generated, which is where his eight network-folding mechanisms of organizational innovation come into play. As multiple social networks interact, the feedback and transpositions that occurs between them changes the flows within the same and -if any of the networks is poised- generates organizational novelty.<sup>54</sup>

Eight are the network-folding mechanisms so far identified by Padgett, yet they are not exhaustive an exhaustive list of all of the possible mechanisms as it requires further research. Thus, while this work will utilize autocatalysis it will not attempt to use the eightfold taxonomical division of network-folding mechanisms as it anticipates that they could prove to be insufficient to explain the SAC.

## 1.7. Hypothesis

From the above we have already one hypothesis: the Stamp Act Congress is the result of networks folding in a manner not yet described by the frameworks as it stands.

Further, it is hypothesized that the autocatalytic networks that had been priming for the folding that resulted in the Stamp Act Congress were made to converge and transform due to the Stamp Act.

Finally, we hypothesize that the Stamp Act tipped the various colonial networks to the point that their long-term tendency towards colonial convergence and entanglement to each other and to the metropolis became path-dependent with the gathering of the Stamp Act Congress towards colonial unity, which began emerging then and became consolidated over the next decade.

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<sup>54</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 11.

## 1.8. Methodology

In order to examine the validity -or lack thereof- of these hypotheses we will use the tools of social network analysis to understand the political, kinship, semantic, and economic networks in the British World during the Stamp Act Crisis to observe the flows within and between these networks as they were put under pressure by the exacerbating crisis.

By analyzing the assemblies of all the thirteen mainland colonies, we will use primary and secondary sources to examine how their relations primed them to for the Crisis and subsequent Congress after years of sociopolitical tranquility in, and between, the colonies that a rather innocuous act that was not radically different from those passed before then would stir “his Majesty’s most loyal subjects”<sup>55</sup> into a frenzy that forced them into form a continental gathering of the colonies after centuries of being “until now... ever at variance, and foolishly jealous of each other. They are now, by the refined policy of Mr. George Grenville, united for their common defence against what they believe to be oppression”<sup>56</sup>

Those were the words of Joseph Warren, the American commander who died at Breed’s Hill when talking about intercolonial relations prior to 1765. He was a key player in the years leading up to the War and his letters contain prescient insights into his world. In the same letter, immediately after the above, he states “will they [not] soon forget the weight which this close union gives them.”<sup>57</sup>

What generations of historians afterwards forgot, he knew from the very moment.

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<sup>55</sup> United States. Continental Congress and Library of Congress. Manuscript Division. *Journals of the Continental Congress 1774-1789*. [Washington, D.C.]: Library of Congress, 1774

<sup>56</sup> Joseph Warren to Mr. Edmund Dana, March 19<sup>th</sup> 1766.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*

## 2. The Organizational Innovation of the United States, or Only Rip van Winkle was Right

We have already established that the continuity argument of social historians is at best flawed, and at worse lazy. Instead, we must observe the most patent of changes that occur in a social system to mark the thresholds of historical change, otherwise we might be drawn into the fallacy of believing that the Ottomans were, in reality, Romans.

So, let us go to the mid-to-late 1700s. Depending on how, where, and whom we look at it, we might encounter either a volatile society in the midst of hasty change or a stagnant society that has not changed much in the past century and will remain likewise in the next.

If we focus on the social aspect of racial relations, second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century could indeed be classified as stagnant: racial conceptualizations that would dominate the 19<sup>th</sup> century were becoming quite consolidated and were widespread enough to make slavery a political issue of secondary importance.<sup>58</sup> If we look at trade and commerce, we will encounter a world primed for the advent of new technologies that would mark the starkest social change since the innovation of agriculture. If we observe only the political developments we would be confused: we would see a world that from a place of peace, consensus, and prosperity on the turn of a dime became monothematic and chose to adopt contentious politics as the main mode of political engagement.

Then, we must look towards some quantitative indicators to gauge whether or not there was change or stability independently of how we might analyze it.

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<sup>58</sup> Del Mar, David Peterson. *The American family: From obligation to freedom*. (Springer) 2011

## 2.1. The Demographics of the Late 18<sup>th</sup> Century

Fig. 2. Estimated Population of American Colonies: 1610 to 1780

Z 1-23 COLONIAL AND PRE-FEDERAL STATISTICS

Series Z 1-19. Estimated Population of American Colonies: 1610 to 1780

Series No.	Colony	1780	1770	1760	1750	1740	1730	1720	1710	1700	1690	1680	1670	1660	1650	1640	1630
<b>WHITE AND NEGRO</b>																	
1	Total.....	2,780,369	2,148,076	1,593,625	1,170,769	905,563	629,445	466,185	331,711	250,888	210,372	151,507	111,935	75,058	50,365	26,634	4,646
2	Maine.....	49,138	81,287	20,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
3	New Hampshire.....	87,822	65,355	89,093	27,555	23,256	10,755	9,375	5,681	4,958	4,164	2,047	1,805	1,555	1,000	900	400
4	Vermont.....	47,650	10,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
5	Plymouth.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
6	Massachusetts.....	258,627	235,368	202,600	188,005	151,613	114,115	91,026	62,850	55,941	47,424	6,400	5,338	1,980	1,566	1,020	350
7	Rhode Island.....	58,946	58,199	45,471	89,225	25,255	18,950	11,690	7,578	5,884	4,324	3,017	2,185	1,538	.....	.....	.....
8	Connecticut.....	206,701	183,881	142,470	111,280	89,580	75,580	58,880	39,450	25,970	21,545	17,246	12,692	7,980	4,189	785	800
9	New York.....	210,541	162,920	117,138	76,699	63,685	48,554	36,918	21,855	19,107	19,909	9,680	5,754	4,936	4,116	1,930	350
10	New Jersey.....	152,927	117,421	89,812	71,993	51,270	37,510	29,918	19,872	14,010	8,090	8,400	1,000	.....	.....	.....	.....
11	Pennsylvania.....	327,305	240,057	182,703	119,655	85,637	51,707	30,562	24,450	17,950	11,450	880	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
12	Delaware.....	45,885	35,496	33,250	28,704	19,870	9,170	5,385	3,645	2,470	1,482	1,005	700	540	185	.....	.....
13	Maryland.....	245,474	202,699	162,287	141,073	116,093	91,113	66,133	42,741	29,604	24,024	17,904	13,226	8,426	4,504	688	.....
14	Virginia.....	638,004	447,015	335,726	231,033	180,440	114,009	87,327	75,231	58,560	38,046	42,594	33,308	27,020	19,731	10,442	2,500
15	North Carolina.....	270,133	197,200	110,442	72,984	51,790	30,000	21,270	15,120	10,720	7,500	5,430	8,800	1,000	.....	.....	.....
16	South Carolina.....	180,000	124,244	94,074	64,000	45,000	30,000	17,048	10,883	5,704	3,900	1,200	200	.....	.....	.....	.....
17	Georgia.....	55,071	22,375	8,878	5,200	2,021	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
18	Kentucky.....	45,000	15,700	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
19	Tennessee.....	10,000	1,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
<b>NEGRO</b>																	
1	Total.....	575,420	459,822	325,806	236,420	150,024	91,021	68,839	44,866	27,817	16,729	6,971	4,535	2,920	1,600	597	60
2	Maine.....	458	475	800	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
3	New Hampshire.....	641	654	600	550	500	200	170	150	130	100	75	65	50	40	30	.....
4	Vermont.....	50	25	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
5	Plymouth.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
6	Massachusetts.....	4,822	4,754	4,566	4,075	3,038	2,780	2,150	1,810	1,300	460	170	160	422	295	155	.....
7	Rhode Island.....	12,671	3,761	8,468	3,847	2,408	1,648	543	375	300	250	175	115	65	25	.....	.....
8	Connecticut.....	5,885	5,698	3,783	3,016	2,598	1,490	1,083	750	460	200	50	35	25	20	15	.....
9	New York.....	21,054	19,112	15,340	11,014	8,895	6,505	5,740	2,811	2,286	1,670	1,200	690	600	500	232	10
10	New Jersey.....	10,460	7,320	5,667	5,354	4,865	3,008	2,381	1,322	840	450	200	60	.....	.....	.....	.....
11	Pennsylvania.....	7,855	5,761	4,409	2,872	2,055	1,241	2,000	1,575	430	270	25	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
12	Delaware.....	2,996	1,896	1,733	1,496	1,035	478	700	500	135	82	55	40	30	15	.....	.....
13	Maryland.....	80,515	63,318	49,004	43,456	24,051	17,220	12,499	7,945	3,227	2,162	1,611	1,180	758	300	20	.....
14	Virginia.....	220,882	187,605	140,570	101,452	60,000	30,000	22,569	23,118	15,390	9,345	3,000	2,090	860	435	150	80
15	North Carolina.....	91,000	69,600	38,554	19,800	11,000	6,000	3,000	900	415	300	210	150	20	.....	.....	.....
16	South Carolina.....	97,000	75,178	57,354	39,006	30,000	20,000	12,000	4,100	2,444	1,500	500	30	.....	.....	.....	.....
17	Georgia.....	20,831	10,625	3,578	1,000	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
18	Kentucky.....	7,200	2,500	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
19	Tennessee.....	1,500	200	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....

<sup>1</sup> For 1690-1750, Maine counties included with Massachusetts. Maine was a part of Massachusetts until it became a separate State in 1820.  
<sup>2</sup> One of the original 13 States.  
<sup>3</sup> Admitted to statehood in 1791.  
<sup>4</sup> Admitted to statehood in 1792.  
<sup>5</sup> Includes some Indians.  
<sup>6</sup> Includes 20 Negroes.

Fig. 3. Ethnic Composition by Region in 1776

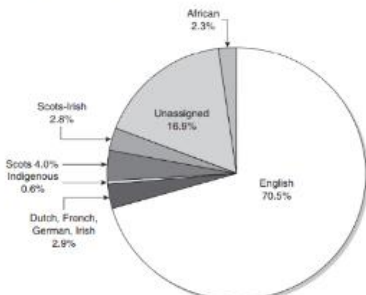


Figure 3.1 New England Colonies, Approximate Population in 1776  
 SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Part II, Series Z 20-132* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976).

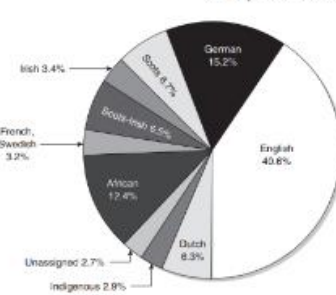


Figure 3.2 Middle Colonies, Approximate Population in 1776  
 SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Part II, Series Z 20-132* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976).

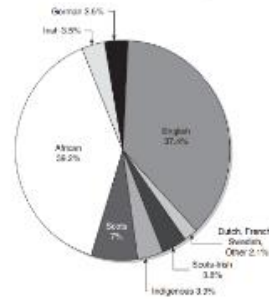


Figure 3.3 Southern Colonies, Approximate Population in 1776  
 SOURCE: U.S. Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Part II, Series Z 20-132* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1976).

Starting with population, we will immediately encounter an explosive growth in the thirteen colonies that eventually formed the United States. (Fig. 1.)<sup>59</sup> As the table shows, there was an explosive growth in British North America, with the total population expanding at a rate of around 240% or around 80% each decade. From a demographic perspective. The graphs shown above (Fig. 2.)<sup>60</sup> are from 1776, but if we look at the growth that ethnic populations had in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, we will see that as we get closer to Independence ethnic fragmentation increased.<sup>61</sup>

Fig. 4. Estimated Decennial Immigration by Ethnic Group into the Thirteen Colonies, 1700-1775

TABLE I.1 Estimated Decennial Immigration by Ethnic Group into the Thirteen Colonies, 1700-1775.

DECADE	AFRICANS	GERMANS*	NORTHERN		SOUTHERN		WELSH	OTHER	TOTAL
			IRISH	IRISH	SCOTS	ENGLISH			
1700-1709	9,000	(100)	(600)	(800)	(200)	(400)	(300)	(100)	(11,500)
1710-1719	10,800	(3,700)	(1,200)	(1,700)	(500)	(1,300)	(900)	(200)	(20,300)
1720-1729	9,900	(2,300)	(2,100)	(3,000)	(800)	(2,200)	(1,500)	(200)	(22,000)
1730-1739	40,500	13,000	4,400	7,400	(2,000)	(4,900)	(3,200)	(800)	(76,200)
1740-1749	58,500	16,600	9,200	9,100	(3,100)	(7,500)	(4,900)	(1,100)	(110,000)
1750-1759	49,600	29,100	14,200	8,100	(3,700)	(8,800)	(5,800)	(1,200)	(120,500)
1760-1769	82,300	14,500	21,200	8,500	10,000	(11,900)	(7,800)	(1,600)	157,800
1770-1775	17,800	5,200	13,200	3,900	15,000	7,100	(4,600)	(700)	67,500
<i>Total</i>	278,400	84,500	66,100	42,500	35,300	(44,100)	(29,000)	(5,900)	(585,800)

\*"Germans" refers to German-speaking peoples, many of whom came from areas outside the modern borders of Germany, especially Switzerland and Alsace.

Note: Figures in Table I.1 were rounded to the nearest one hundred immigrants. The estimates in the table are divided into three categories: most accurate (no demarcation), less accurate ( ), and least accurate ( ).

Source: Aaron S. Fogleman, "Migrations to the Thirteen British North American Colonies, 1700-1775: New Estimates," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 22 (1992), 691-709, contains a detailed discussion of the sources used in compiling Table I.1

The statistics all tell the same story of mobility and growth. McCusker<sup>62</sup> (1991) concurs "a central characteristic of early American economic history: rapid expansion of population and settled area occurred without major structural changes in economic organization."<sup>63</sup> We begin seeing that

<sup>59</sup> Taken from: Census Bureau, 1152-1200

<sup>60</sup> Taken from: Parrillo, Vincent N. *Diversity in America*. (Routledge) 2015

<sup>61</sup> Taken from: Fogleman, A.S. *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775*. (University of Pennsylvania Press) 2014

<sup>62</sup> McCusker, J.J. and Menard, R. *The Economy of British America, 1607-1789*. (Charlottesville: UNC Press Books) 2014.

<sup>63</sup> McCusker, *Economy*, 70

throughout the mid-1700s onwards there was a dynamic status quo, wherein transformations could often be overlooked because the timeframe in which they occurred was too long to fully grasp.

Solely from population growth and ethnic (*ergo* religious) diversity we can see that the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century was a period of great mobility and consistent transformation. Yet, any student of European history would tell you that ethno-religious fragmentation combined with plentiful resources is the perfect recipe for disunity and war (especially among Protestants), which this only makes the puzzle of the emergence of colonial unity even more baffling:

More denominations + More languages + More ethnicities + More political ideologies + More interests = Political Unity?

By that measure either European or American history make no sense, yet most of the field will overlook or even justify this by invoking “mentality,” “protestant ethic,” “contingency,” or even “race”; any of which is highly unsatisfactory as an explanation.

## 2.2. Novelty

Then, let us start from the end -perilous though it be- to settle some landmarks of organizational innovation.

It is the year 1789 CE, in the geographical area between the 45 N and 30 N parallels, and the 90 W and 75 W meridians is a single polity under the name of *The United States of America* it is led by a single magistrate, President George Washington, who executes the laws set forth by the *United States Congress* and judged by the *Supreme Court of the United States*. It is a federal republic with power distributed between the Federal, State, and Local governments- albeit with uncertain limits. Its population hovers around 4 million inhabitants,<sup>64</sup> whose ancestry is uniquely mixed compared to any

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<sup>64</sup> Census Bureau, *1790 Census*

other polity in the planet with the European population -originally only British- now was 80% non-English,<sup>65</sup> and the non-European population accounting for around 20% of the population -in a racially segregated society dominated by people of European ancestry.<sup>66</sup> There was one dominant and majoritarian national identity: American.

Compare it to 1750, where in the same geographical location there is an impossible-to-count number of polities, including the British Empire's 13 colonies, the Spanish Empire's Florida colonies, the French Empire's Louisiana and Canadian colonies, and a myriad of First People tribes that inhabited the territories between and -often- within these polities. The population was around 1,2 million British subjects (and enslaved peoples), 70.000 French subjects, 28.000 Spanish Subjects (including enslaved people and First Peoples living there),<sup>67</sup> and First Peoples hovering around 250.000 people atomized in countless tribes.<sup>68</sup> There were countless religions, including Catholicism, Protestant denominations, Primitive religions, Islam, and African religions. Likewise, there was no centralized system of government or even established fora for cooperation or interaction, every time had to be *ad hoc*, such as the were the intercolonial Covenant Chains.

In short, that geographical area underwent clear organizational innovation, but more importantly, there was systemic invention.<sup>69</sup>

Although such a statement might seem banal, it opens up the question of emergence in the socio-political context; if the transformation in the span of a mere three generations is so clear, the corollary would be that the moment of transition would likewise be. Yet one of the greatest issues

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<sup>65</sup> Ueda, Reed, ed. *A companion to American immigration*. (John Wiley & Sons) 2011

<sup>66</sup> Census Bureau, *Black Population Report*, 1918

<sup>67</sup> Spanish Census of 1766, image thereof found at: <https://www.sos.mo.gov/default.aspx?PageID=9621>

<sup>68</sup> Richter, Daniel K. *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America*. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press) 2003.

<sup>69</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 11

that historians of the American Revolution have is determining what exactly is it that they are studying.

### 2.3. The Revolution's Bounds

Much has been debated surrounding the outer bounds of the American Revolution and whether circumscribing it to a specific set of years is analytically useful. Most interpretations usually consider its upper bound to be somewhere between the Peace of Paris and the Bill of Rights, whereas its lower bounds can be found in some texts as low as the end of the Seven Years War.<sup>70</sup> However, Independence,<sup>71</sup> Lexington & Concord,<sup>72</sup> the Boston Massacre,<sup>73</sup> or the Stamp Act Crisis<sup>74</sup> are usually considered to be its beginnings.

The issue at hand concerns the definition of what a *revolution* is, what the *American* revolution is, thus where it started and ended. This is a concern as old as the Revolution itself, with Jefferson founding styling his election to the presidency “the Revolution of 1800.” He could do so because how the Revolution was defined depended on how it was interpreted during the revolution and while as historians we need not obsess over who was “right” or not, the matter does raise some crucial questions that most academics struggle to grapple with: if the interpretation of the Revolution is that of a democratic revolution, then Jefferson was correct about his election; if it is thought to be about diverging conceptions of empire<sup>75</sup> then the Revolution ends when public discourse revolves another

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<sup>70</sup> Anderson, Fred. *Crucible of War: the Seven Years' War and the Fate of Empire in British North America, 1754-1766* / Fred Anderson. (New York: Alfred A. Knopf) 2000.

<sup>71</sup> McCullough, David G. *John Adams*. (New York: Simon & Schuster) 2001

<sup>72</sup> Tourtellot, Arthur Bernon. *Lexington and Concord: The beginning of the war of the American Revolution*. (WW Norton & Company) 2000

<sup>73</sup> Hinderaker, Eric. *Boston's Massacre*. (Harvard University Press) 2017

<sup>74</sup> Thomas, P. D. G. *British Politics and the Stamp Act Crisis: The First Phase of the American Revolution 1763-1767*. Oxford ; New York: Clarendon Press, 1975.

<sup>75</sup> Greene, J.P. *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607-1788*. (Athens: University of Georgia Press) 1986.



taxonomical classification of the polity; if debates on taxes and constitutionality (like the Morgans posit) then it can be said to be settled once public unrest over them subsides.

It is then, no wonder, that the debate rages on, and the starting and finishing points are so mercurial.

A new approach is warranted, one capable of taking stock of changes and identify the continuities and discontinuities without forcing the analyst to be wed to a year as it fits the framework. Here autocatalysis can save the day.

### 3. The Stamp Act Congress and Systemic Innovation

As prefaced above, this paper hypothesizes that it was at the tail-end of the Crisis that networks folded enough for autocatalytic mechanisms to cause the emergence of an entirely different polity.

But where to start? Well, one of the criticisms more often levied at Padgett is the lack of replicability that his *opus magnum* poses, as it does not furnish the reader with sufficient ways to apply the theory to their research.<sup>76</sup> That is the greatest misconception about the framework, since it relies not on fungible concepts such as “human nature” or even “identity,” instead it focuses on *flows*. Hence, we must begin looking at the various flows of the Euro-American world of the 18<sup>th</sup> century to gauge which autocatalytic networks existed, and which tipped by the end of the century.

#### 3.1. A Note on Revolutions

We shall not dally exceedingly on the debate of what a “revolution” even is- or the heuristic usefulness thereof.<sup>77</sup> Instead, we shall posit 2 propositions about them, and about the American specifically:

- a) A revolution from an autocatalytic network perspective is nothing more than the *temporal condensation of widespread network folding that creates systemic innovation.*
- b) The American Revolution is *the series of interconnected, interdependent mechanisms that caused - and were caused by- network folding at a large-scale in American colonies, thereby resulting in the systemic innovation of the United States of America.*

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<sup>76</sup> Page, Scott E. "John F. Padgett and Walter W. Powell: The Emergence of Organizations and Markets." (2013): 304-306

<sup>77</sup> Anyone interested in the discussion may go to: Stone, Lawrence. "Theories of revolution." *World Politics* 18, no. 2 (1966): 159-176.

Out of these two premises we can begin our study from a perspective that examines positive change as opposed to compliance with ideological maxims. The first allow us to detract from the term “revolution” all of the ideological and affective baggage that it has acquired over the past two and a half centuries. This is necessary to avoid the mistakes of New-Left historians like Gary Nash who seem to view in the American Revolution, the sort of revolution they desired for the world, in the process imbuing it with conceptions of class, and politics that were entirely foreign to it. The second function this working definition serves is to establish the firm analytical bounds of *systemic innovation* as the hallmark of a revolution; this allows us to refine our discourse and separate events of quantifiably different nature like the Russian Revolution from the Paris Commune or John Brown’s military actions. That way, the historian is freed to do their job and not have to rely on the discourse of their historical subjects. Finally, the American Revolution taken to mean the network transformations that result in the systemic innovation of the U.S. because that way we may avoid the pitfalls of semantics by thinking that it was the statement of existence in 1776 that created the United States, when in actuality there was not yet a consolidation of the new networks for it to be considered the eponymous organization of later date.

## 4. British Autocatalysis, or *Ex Coloniis America*

Now, let us briefly describe the world from which the United States emerged to examine which networks resulted in the greatest transformation.

In order to limit the research to a point of viability, we shall not examine the entirety of the networks that made up the autocatalytic system of the British Empire; instead, we shall focus on the political and kinship aspects – with the occasional mercantile relation- to examine the networks that existed prior to the Revolution and analyze how they intersect with the SAC.

### 4.1. The Structure of English Networks<sup>78</sup>

English history is uniquely characterized by a punctuated equilibrium of revolutions (as defined above) and prolonged moments of stability with a permanence of forms. From William's victory at Hastings onwards, every few centuries there has been a revolution that has remade autocatalytic networks and was then followed by the prolonged life of that organization. From the Magna Carta (1215) to the English Reformation (1532), all the way to the Glorious Revolution (1688-1689), England was in a punctuated equilibrium of rewiring and reframing, as Padgett calls it, wherein the same institution -Crown, Parliament, electors- is hollowed out and filled with new functions not previously available to the last inhabitant of the institutions. The best case-example for this is the Glorious Revolution, as it remade Monarchy to just an extent that the last monarch to ever use royal assent as an individual choice instead of a formal legalization came to the throne little more than a decade after the Revolution. (Pincus 2009) After 1689, the Monarchy and Parliament roles hitherto

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<sup>78</sup> The following sections rely heavily on foundational authors, for that reason they will not be consistently cited after this note: Namier, L. *The structure of politics at the accession of George III.* (Springer) 1957; Langford, P. *A polite and commercial people: England 1727-1783.* (Oxford University Press) 1992; O'Gorman, F. *The long eighteenth century: British political and social history 1688-1832.* (Bloomsbury Publishing) 2016.

unknown to the English world: no longer was the Monarch an active player in politics but took on the role of a mediator; likewise, the Lords no longer dominated the British government, but that role was now partly transferred to the Commons.

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Britain reached a state of equilibrium where the political world was a two-party system with the Georgian kings mediating from a distance. England, in particular lived, through transformations in the political dominion that separated of politics from the Monarchy and transferred power and influence on the Whigs and Tories, and individual personalities. In the kinship dominion, the changes were of a change in centrality as the Monarch was no longer the Jacobite king of yore, successfully replicating the French absolutist model (Pincus, 2009) but was a *primus inter pares* so to speak and the Houses of Grenville and Walpole had a gained a degree and betweenness centrality comparable to the king's. Meanwhile, economic growth was rampant as the Dutch institutions<sup>79</sup> were utilized by the gentry (like Walpole himself) that was linking itself to the aristocracy through kingship and election to the Commons and became a flashpoint of British policy and politics in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, to the point that excise and gin taxes, both detested by the gentry, almost brought the mighty Walpole down,<sup>80</sup> and succeeded in toppling even George III's favorite, Lord Bute. These autocatalytic networks resulted in the Whig supremacy that saw the interests of the gentry prevail over those of the aristocracy, and that same gentry enter the political realm to the point that some of the most central figures of the age (Walpole, Pitt, Grenville) rose from the gentry thanks to their political offices.

The Robinocracy itself (Walpole's dominance in 1721-1742) was a period of political stability that endured the Tory defeat and the Whig supremacy that would outlast him by two decades. After

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<sup>79</sup> Padgett, *Emergence*, 208-234.

<sup>80</sup> Dickinson, H. T. *Walpole and the Whig Supremacy*. (London: English Universities Press) 1973.

Walpole's fall in 1742 the structural hole<sup>81</sup> left in his wake, his networks attempted to fill this gaping hole that left English politics reeling. Through his own planning, his resignation allowed his partisans, the Pelhams, the chance to form a Whig government after his fall. (Coxe, 1.62)<sup>82</sup> The subsequent governments led -formally or informally- by his allies. Even after the death of Willmington and the rise of Carteret to the "office" of Prime Minister, the cabinet was still full of Pelhamites, who eventually led to the former's fall. After that, the following three decades are a patchwork of ministries, more infamous than famous.

The glaring exception is William Pitt, the Elder. He was the man, who never was the official head of his ministries, yet gave the British Empire some of its mightiest victories. Leading the government through the Seven Years' War, he was responsible for the transferal of Canada to the British as well as their victory at war. The same war that would ultimately prove to be his own political downfall as his commitment to not relenting on the Bourbons caused him to lose his luster once political winds had changed. For the purpose of our study, it is interesting to examine why it is that they had changed.

#### 4.2. Folding under Royal Pressure

The reason Pitt fell in 1762 is the same that buoyed him to prominence in the first place: the fall of Walpole.

Regardless of how any single individual perceived Robert Walpole and his ministry, it is undeniable that he was the dominant figure in English politics during the first half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The downside of this was that there was no immediate, nor intuitive replacement once he resigned from

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<sup>81</sup> As theorized by Burt, see: Burt, Ronald S. "Structural holes." In *Social Stratification*, pp. 659-663. Routledge, 2018.

<sup>82</sup> Coxe, William. *Memoirs of the Administration of the Right Honourable Henry Pelham: Collected from the Family Papers, and Other Authentic Documents*. London: Longman, Rees, Orme, Brown, and Green, 1829

the position he himself had pioneered. Even his closest, most powerful allies, the Pelhams, could only manage his legacy in tandem with the added benefit of being siblings. When Henry Pelham died, it was up to the Duke of Newcastle alone to lead the whole of the Whig party. However, he was not up to the task of leading such a complex political organization that comprised many different ideological poles, interest groups, kinship networks, and personal ambitions. On top of that, after the suppression of the Jacobite rising of 1745 there was no longer any Tory party or even faction against whom they could collectively form an identity. In this vacuum the various Whig factions rose, including the Pelhamites (Walpole's "Old Corps," later the Rockinghamites,) Grenvillites, Bedfordites, and Chathamites. This fragmentation lasted a short amount of time before it transformed into a partisan fight that led to the resurrection of parties in the latter half of the century.<sup>83</sup> After Pelham's death in 1754, the system lacked a single cell with as great a centrality, as well as social capital, as Robert Walpole or the Pelham brothers combined; Newcastle on his own was unlikely to last long as he did not enjoy either the social capital or the temperament to handle the delicacy of the political structure. Thus, his government -led by one of the most experienced men in politics at the time and direct successor of Walpole- lasted a meager two years. While there are many causal mechanisms that we could ascribe to his government's fall, the most important one is that his attempt at being Walpole, without his personal connections, became a liability when he stocked his cabinet with men of great ambition and social capital as great if -not greater- than his own. After two years, with the country plunged into another pan-European war, the English political establishment had to find a figure to fill that gigantic structural hole created in 1742 that had yet to find a suitable replacement. Since the Pelhams were either too irritable or too dead to form effective personal-political networks, this structural hole could only be bridged by bringing in someone whose

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<sup>83</sup> Elofson, Warren M. *Rockingham Connection and the Second Founding of the Whig Party*. (McGill-Queen's Press-MQUP) 1996

personality not only reassured the Commons of competence but also had a demeanor conciliatory enough to allow the factions to trust one another in government.

But what made Pitt be Pitt and not Walpole? Simple, due to his unique manner of politicking, he was both an enemy and friend to everyone at one point or another: tracing the network of William Pitt in a non-dynamic manner is useless, as it yields most of the English political elite. This shows us that he was the only possible choice at the time, for no other -especially none of the succeeding Prime Ministers- would command that level of trust and respect in the political world other than the King himself, and given that the Crown was transitioning to a symbolic role, Parliament would have been in trouble forming a government, much less one capable of surviving the Seven Years' War, much less win it.

In office, Pitt did what he does best, i.e.: make enemies. Even though he had entered Parliament as a fierce critic of everything Walpole, his ministry was nominally led by one of the Old Corps - Devonshire- and was packed with men like Halifax and Bedford who were more powerful than Devonshire, and more consonant with one another than Pitt and the Prime Minister. With the ministry falling Pitt was called again to lead the government, this time with an old enemy of his - Newcastle- who also happened to be an Old Corps Whig.

Here we must remark that the succession of ministries after 1742 is characteristic of the highly centralized nature of English autocatalytic networks, as they tended to revolve around a single individual, either in the positive -like Elizabeth I or Cromwell- or negative -Charles I and James II. These networks' self-replication through time was so successful that when James was faced with expulsion and the new king was demanded a Bill of Rights that would take power -and protagonism- from his hands, the system went less than 3 decades without placing another figure square in the center of politics. If we observe the continuum of reframing and rewiring that the English political-



autocatalytic networks had produced, we would be taken back almost to Hastings itself. Hence, the decline of royal prerogative after Anne, the rise and fall of political parties, and the military defeat of Jacobitism as a credible political force, left the system completely unprepared to take the incoming shocks that were in the near future, so it strove to use its centripetal force to trial many as network cores, and failed. But not only did it fail, but it gave the opportunity for alternative political species to grow as the old system was faltering: it was the populist politics of Pitt and the authoritarian politics of the Prince of Wales.

The first ruled by extending his networks through his personality at the elite level, and his rhetoric at the popular level. Thus, his discourse on patriotism was perfectly consonant with what the Country Whigs had been rallying for and led him to be elected as a Walpole critic; while his personal flexibility led him to establish many relationships -and break as many- as expediency required. This meant that he was the only man with enough of a centrality -both in degree and betweenness- to lead an effective and strong ministry through war and beyond. Had George the II lived longer, Pitt would have been the next Walpole and become the unquestionable center of British politics for a generation. Instead, the system encountered the contingency of the king's passing.

Had George II been George I or William III, the latter half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century would have been called the Age of Pitt. However, for four decades, the circles around the Prince of Wales had become hotbeds of Toryism, and opposition; George III did not escape this tendency. Thus, when he became king after his father's passing, two events simultaneously occurred: the English political system found itself with two competing nuclei, and the British world had to rearrange itself.

#### 4.3. The British World is Elected Anew

While autocatalysis reserves little room for contingency, in this case it is difficult to imagine that a difference in timing would not have produced radically different outcomes.

Since George II died during the last months of 1760 not only England but also the rest of the enfranchised British world had to face an electoral campaign. Every death of a monarch, most colonies had their assemblies dissolved and writs of election produced *because* of the death itself. It was then pure coincidence that the King died months before England was slated to hold elections the next year as the seven-year lifespan of the Commons was over in 1761. Thus, the whole political system had to confront a renewal that year.

While most networks were in a strong enough position to survive this electoral challenge with relatively unsurprising results, like most of the colonial assemblies, English networks had been fielding structural attacks for the past two decades and this time the system collapsed.

Although the Commons had almost 600 seats -558 to be exact- less than 1/5 of them experienced a contested election. Meaning that more than 80% of the House remained the same when it reconvened again in the summer. Given this continuity, one would be led to believe that there was no change at hand. Yet, the fact that the makeup of the Commons did not change much does not mean that change did not occur; after that election, the change was in the power that the Ministry would have over the House and the King over the Ministry.

The fact that so many of the MPs owed their elections to rotten or pocket boroughs meant that if there was a change in the patronage or kinship networks, the underlying structure of many constituencies would change. With the rise of a new King, one highly involved in politics, these networks were indeed changed as those with who shared his Authoritarian leanings would be favored, while those who tended towards a more Radical position would be nudged out of their position.

Every person who left their post was then replaced with someone else, people that the literature has often called “Tories,” and they would then name Bute, Grenville, and North as Tory because they had similar leanings to the -actual- Tories of the latter part of the 18<sup>th</sup> century like Pitt the Younger.

However, most were not Tories, but self-professed Whigs, even Bute was not a Tory himself.

Transformations were underway and the Tories were not even close to being able to gain power—even with the king’s influence; with 20% of the Commons, and public opinion inside and out of the elite being against the Tories, it is rather unlikely that they could have seized the government in such a fashion. Instead, what took place was a network folding in the political domain as the Whigs network fragmented from communities inside a larger network into continually drifting networks that had less links to one another.

In the kinship domain, there was an interesting phenomenon of gentry individuals marrying into aristocratic houses and gaining prominence therefrom, at the same time as aristocrats became ever more concerned with the aesthetic and social aspect of the aristocratic lifestyle than with the *ancien regime* precepts of what a nobleman ought to do. It was almost the apex of the Enlightenment and aristocratic interests were starting to become less invested in politics than were the gentry’s: the former was firmly established with enough legal support and social predominance to no longer require political office to sustain it. while the latter needed to defend the mercantile system, and industrialist proto-capitalism that allowed them to gain that office. Thus, politics was changing as autocatalytic networks maintained its long-term trend of centralization, and kinship networks transformed in response to it and aided in fueling the former. Finally, the social distinction between the nobility and the gentry was becoming a flashpoint of elite relationships, as they were separated by social expectations and legal distinctions, but also by economic foundations, leading to a further fractioning between those like William Pitt (who would drift closer to Wilkes as time passed) and

The Duke of Bedford, who even though belonged to the same political faction as Pitt, by the time the latter was booted by the pushed out of the Ministry, was closer ideologically and politically to the King than to his own co-partisan.

This was the state of English politics by the time of the Stamp Act Crisis and Congress, as the mechanisms that gave way for it start to become clear, but they do not yet explain how is it that a simple tax on paper could give rise to such a clean cut from previous history. For that we must look to the colonies.

#### 4.4. The Crisis

The arguments put forward have been plentiful: it was the courts closing, an attack on democracy, the principle,<sup>84</sup> conspiratorial mentality,<sup>85</sup> lack of representation,<sup>86</sup> or even all of the above.<sup>87</sup>

However, none is satisfactory as they all treat “the mob” or “the people” as a reified entity, ideological consistency, concerted action, or a latent national spirit. We could spend pages refuting the premises for each of those presumptions, yet they are mostly mutually exclusive, thereby precluding any credible explanation that can account for multicausality.

Instead, we will look at how autocatalytic networks in the British American Colonies intersected.

Unlike what most of the literature has as a foundational premise, this colonial unity was not guaranteed and colonial interactions before Independence were scarce up to 1765. It is then imperative to examine not the intercolonial network that existed already (which is where the literature dwells) but intercolonial interactions before the Stamp Act, individual colonies at the beginning of the Crisis, and the resulting network that emerged thereafter.

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<sup>84</sup> Morgans, Stamp Act, *passim*.

<sup>85</sup> Bailyn, *Ideological Origins*, *passim*

<sup>86</sup> Wood, Gordon S. *The creation of the American republic, 1776-1787*. (UNC Press Books) 2011

<sup>87</sup> Middlekauff, Robert. *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763-1789*. (Oxford University Press) 2007



This colony is unique in its combination of religious diversity, ethnic fragmentation, elite leadership, population growth, political partisanship, and policy issues. It has made the interpretation of its late-Colonial history difficult to interpret and has found a wealth of approaches that we will not dwell on this issue as it would take an essay of its own.

The following domains are those that made Pennsylvania so unique: a two-party system,<sup>90</sup> a Quaker elite,<sup>91</sup> and an involved Proprietor.<sup>92</sup> Unlike New York, which had two parties but a royal governor, Maryland, which was proprietary, but its factions were less political than pragmatic, and Massachusetts whose Puritan elite had moved from politicking to preaching, Pennsylvania is the case-study for 18<sup>th</sup> century North America.

The Assembly had a few inherent divisions: Western and Eastern counties; Quakers and “Presbyterians”; Assembly Party and Proprietor Party; English-descendants and German-descendants.

The Eastern-Western division<sup>93</sup> is the first source of network pressure that eventually caused its folding. The Eastward expansion had created a slew of problems 1) ethnic fragmentation, 2) religious dissent, 3) unequal political representation, 4) worsening of First Peoples-Pennsylvania colonist relations, 5) institutional imbalances.

With the spillover from the European wars of the past decades reaching the American colonies, immigration from German-speaking countries, Ireland, and Scotland increased, particularly to

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<sup>90</sup> Newcomb, Benjamin H. *Political Partisanship in the American Middle Colonies, 1700-1776*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995: *passim*

<sup>91</sup> Rothermund, Dietmar. *The Layman's Progress: Religious and Political Experience in Colonial Pennsylvania, 1740-1770*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1962: *passim*

<sup>92</sup> Hutson, James H. *Pennsylvania Politics, 1746-1770: The Movement for Royal Government and Its Consequences*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1972: *passim*

<sup>93</sup> Frantz, John B and William Pencak --, et al. *Beyond Philadelphia: The American Revolution in the Pennsylvania Hinterland*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1998

Pennsylvania<sup>94</sup> a disproportionate amount of the newest inhabitants settled in the aptly named “Hinterland,” the counties that bordered First-People territory. These communities were not only geographically isolated but also socio-politically, culturally, and linguistically so. This proved to be a small issue in the beginning, but with the Seven Years’ War and the agitation of the First Peoples in North America, incursions against the colonies skyrocketed, affecting mostly the German populations in the Colony. This created flows of military actions on the frontier that eventually spilled over to the colony’s establishment with the so-called Paxton Boys<sup>95</sup> massacring the “Natives” and marching to Philadelphia. Here we encounter the system readapting and absorbing the new networks with which it was confronted, in the figure of Benjamin Franklin leading a militia to militarily halt them, only to stop at Germantown and hold parley with them. While the most of elite thought that frontierspeople could not be integrated as they were barbarous -that is, neither English nor Quaker- Franklin saw the opportunity to not further antagonize them. The outcome clearly shows the organizational innovation is the reason why this contest ended in a conversation instead of bloodshed: Franklin lacked the Quaker sensibilities against violence, the political establishment fully supported his actions, and the apparent danger the Paxton Boys posed would have made even more of a popular hero. Yet, he concluded it not in bloodshed but in a peaceable resolution because of his famous political acumen: perhaps he realized that had he fought them he would have begun a civil war that could lead to the Colony’s dissolution.

Intimately connected to the frontier issue is the political issue, which had pitted the Assembly and Proprietary parties since the early years of the Colony. While this two-party system had led -just like the English system- to a dominance by consistent dominance of one party over the other -Assembly

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<sup>94</sup> Splitter, Wolfgang. “The Germans in Pennsylvania Politics, 1758-1790: A Quantitative Analysis.” *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 122, no. 1/2 (1998): 39–76.

<sup>95</sup> Dunbar, John Raine. *The Paxton Papers*. The Hague: M. Nijhoff, 1957:

over Proprietary, this contest was hard-fought for decades on end and did not subside even with the Seven Years' War, when instead it intensified.<sup>96</sup> The issues were similar to those in England: taxation, money minting, the role of the army, and the limits of the executive.

When looking at the Pennsylvania political system, one would be inclined to think that the Colony's reaction to the Stamp Act would be of universal agreement given that it would drain only specie and not colonial paper money, which the Assembly had insisted on minting in the previous years and would become the sole kind of legal currency flowing through the province; its enforcement would allow the Proprietor through his governor to appoint even more offices than before.

Instead, the issue divided along partisan lines, then along ethnic lines, and finally along religious lines.

At the offset, the Assembly party -then seeking to have the Crown take over the government from Thomas Penn- held its peace, while the Proprietary party came out strongly against it.<sup>97</sup> Eventually, the elite moved to a point of unanimous criticism of the Act that resulted in mobbing and sending delegates to the SAC. It is these delegates that show exactly how the flows from the above-mentioned domains were affected by the Crisis to appoint delegates to New York- thereby giving it greater legitimacy:

- 1) George Bryan was an assemblymember elected to represent the City of Philadelphia. A proprietary member, born in Ireland, and a merchant who was a fervent defender of the Western provinces. He was a leader in radical politics, intercolonial representation of his province, and of the Colony's transition to an independent state.<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> Hutson, *PP*, 41-121

<sup>97</sup> Thayer, Theodore. *Pennsylvania Politics and the Growth of Democracy, 1740-1776*. Harrisburg: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1953.

<sup>98</sup> Konkle, Burton Alva. *George Bryan and the Constitution of Pennsylvania, 1731-1791*. Philadelphia: W.J. Campbell, 1922



- 2) John Morton was likewise an Assemblyman; he came from Chester County. He was a member of the Proprietary party, who was eventually deprived of office for supporting Franklin.<sup>99</sup> He was of Finnish descent and eventually converted to Anglicanism.<sup>100</sup>
- 3.1) Joseph Fox, the Speaker of the Assembly, a Quaker and Assembly partisan, he was likewise one of Franklin's closest collaborators. He ultimately did not attend the SAC in order to tend to his duties as Speaker at a time when the Proprietary party was again routed in the election of 1765.<sup>101</sup>
- 3.2) John Dickinson took the place of Fox. He was likewise a Proprietary partisan, a Presbyterian, but he was born in Maryland to Samuel Dickinson and Mary Cadwallader. Known for his pamphlets, his greatest contribution to colonial unity was his trans-colonial roles: he was elected in Pennsylvania, was active in Delaware politics, and inherited large holdings in Maryland.<sup>102</sup>

From this grouping, it would appear that the least radical of elements in the province were elected to represent the colony in the Congress. Instead, when we look closer, we find that they were all creatures of Franklin one way or another, they were unwitting representatives of all the network foldings that had taken and were taking place in the colony: Bryan was an Irish immigrant and merchant with deep concern for the frontier counties, with him came the global British networks and dynamics, like Whig radicalism, anti-English sentiments, and merchant networks.<sup>103</sup> While the Stamp Act would not have affected him as a Philadelphian, or an advocate of the frontier counties,

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<sup>99</sup> Thayer, *Growth of Democracy*, 105-110

<sup>100</sup> Springer, Ruth L. *John Morton in contemporary records*. Harrisburg, Pa: Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, 1967.

<sup>101</sup> Hutson, *Growth of Democracy*, 146

<sup>102</sup> Flower, Milton Embick. *John Dickinson, Conservative Revolutionary*. Charlottesville: Published for the Friends of the John Dickinson Mansion by the University Press of Virginia, 1983.

<sup>103</sup> Crosbie, Barry. *Irish Imperial Networks: Migration, Social Communication and Exchange in Nineteenth-century India*. Cambridge, UK, 2012.

and would have actively benefited him as a Proprietary partisan, as an Irish merchant with radical-Whig leanings he would have suffered countless defeats if Imperial government was strengthened.

Likewise, John Morton as a politician and Anglican vestryman would have benefited from the Imperial-authoritarian program (see below) and opposing the government had little plausible rewards.

Finally, Dickinson stood to gain only if the colonies remained separate since it would have allowed to continue choosing his residence based on his various economic and political interests.

Yet, all of them attended the Congress as the networks that produced them would have been greatly imperiled: Morton would have seen Chester County lose its privileges with greater Imperial interference, Dickinson's transcolonial trading networks would have fractured had the Act been enforced, and Bryan's Irish networks would have experienced an even more oppressive English domination if Authoritarian policies succeeded in North America.

All delegates of the SAC from Pennsylvania became Revolutionary leaders, and two of them were Continental congressmen. The fact that they ended up in the same political grouping as Benjamin Franklin and Pennsylvania radicals is beyond counterintuitive until we contextualize their lives.

Autocatalysis shows itself more prominently in this case as it rearranged semantic networks to create new epinets overriding the expected rational interests of the individuals. Indeed, Morton bankrupted himself by joining Nonimportation- the individual gave way to the relations that created him.<sup>104</sup>

## 5.2. New York

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<sup>104</sup> Springer, *John Morton*, 83

Networks in New York demonstrate a strong primacy of the kinship dominion over the political and the economic, although it must be clearly stated that a primacy does not mean a supremacy and that all three (and other dominions) co-existed and were in constant interaction with one another.

Thus, the impetus of seeing a two-party system around the Livingstons and the DeLanceys from the 60s onwards is highly reductive<sup>105</sup>; instead, we must understand that while there was a tendency towards a political bipolarity in the long run, when looking at the specifics, there is no continuity between one “party system” and the next. Thus, when the Court-Country dichotomy of the 50s ends with the rise of James DeLancey to the Lieutenant Governorship, the existence of a new one, though highly likely, was not guaranteed but merely structurally primed.<sup>106</sup>

This came in the form not of the of a Livingston-DeLancey party system.<sup>107</sup> Instead the Assembly was in a “state of uncertainty until new leaders emerged” This slowly began to take place when Governor Monckton, Lt. Gov. Colden, and Governor Moore took office in 1761, 1763, and 1765 respectively. During these years, the “country grandees” saw their fortunes rise and the New York City merchants lose political clout.<sup>108</sup>

Yet, any attempt at neat categorizations during this period are bound to be erroneous given the deeply personal nature of New York politics. While one day the political fight might be Court versus Country, the next it might be upriver versus downriver. The prime example thereof is the triumvirate: three New York Lawyers (William Smith, William Livingston, and John Morin Scott) “identified themselves with the New York Sons of Liberty.”<sup>109</sup> The apparent contradiction is that of a Livingston -the Livingstons then controlling the Assembly- associating himself with the Sons of

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<sup>105</sup> Bonomi, Patricia U. *A Factious People: Politics and Society in Colonial New York*. Ithaca ; London: Cornell University Press, 2014.

<sup>106</sup> Newcomb, *Partisanship*, 166-167

<sup>107</sup> Bonomi, *Faction People*, 231

<sup>108</sup> Bonomi, *Faction People*, 232

<sup>109</sup> Bonomi, *Faction People*, 233-234

Liberty, yet it becomes logical when we understand that they had personal animosity against Lt. Gov. Colden.

Therefore, we must first understand that in the New York political world, between the death of Lt. Gov. James DeLancey (1760) and the land riots (1766) that culminated in the 1768 election, there was intense instability where personal and commercial interests often superseded factional or even kinship politics. Secondly, we must look at the ego-nets of each subject of interest to understand the autocatalytic network, as opposed to presuming that a shared surname means structural equivalence.

In that light, the delegates to the SAC are interesting examples of the networks that led to the Congress itself:

William Bayard was not only a merchant and prominently associated with the Sons of Liberty, but he was also a member of the Bayard family, whose progeny could be found in Pennsylvania, Georgia, and Delaware.<sup>110</sup> Whether he had any contact with any of those distant relatives -who likewise became involved in late-Colonial/Revolutionary politics- is unclear. However, it is certain that this kinship network was keenly aware of the necessity of facilitating propitious marriages; hence, it branched out to Georgia's Houstons, Maryland's Carrolls, and Pennsylvania's Chews. He himself descended from the Schuylers and the Van Cortlands. Little is known about his life beyond his late loyalism. However, we do know that in the 1760s he was close to the radical Whigs in New York as not only a Son of Liberty, but also politically close to Philip Livingston.<sup>111</sup> His commercial interests, kinship networks, and political alliances make him a prime candidate for a SAC radical, yet his future loyalism poses the question of which parts of his networks led him to become the conservative that by 1768 his constituents perceived him to be when he came in 6<sup>th</sup> out of seven

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<sup>110</sup> *Appleton's Cyc.* 1:199

<sup>111</sup> Bonomi, *Factionous People*, 231

candidates for New York County Assemblymen, defeated by a Livingston, a DeLancey, and two of DeLancey's men. Looking at his biography, we can see that from an economic point of view he had great incentives to be part of the Whig radicals; from a political point of view he was closely linked to the mercantile, moderate Philip Livingston; from a kinship perspective, we can begin seeing how he fits into the network. Whereas as a Bayard he had illustrious ancestors, he personally never established marriage alliances with powerful figures, so his political clout was contingent on his political alliances, and when it dwindled, so did he. Having lost his political and personal networks, he was left only with his affective link to the Crown.

Political expediency was the first principle of politics in the Colony; it could heal the hatred between James DeLancey and Gov. Clinton, it could make the Livingstons cozy up to Governors Monckton and Moore, and to the perennial stand-in, Lt. Gov. Colden. Thus, the rise of the Livingstons during Colden's tenure would be difficult to explain were it not for the expediency that it represented.

The fact that two of the SAC delegates were Livingston should be unsurprising: the DeLanceys were currently at odds with Colden and they took the lead (James jr. specifically) in leading the mob. The choice in New York delegates represents the view that the Colony's elite had of the SAC: not a convivial gathering of radicals, but a legitimate institution that required the majority in power to send delegates, even if it meant crossing Colden, who viewed the gathering as illegal.

Philip Livingston has the distinction of being a member of the Albany Congress, SAC, and Continental Congresses. Being the heir of Livingston manor, he was at the core of this kinship network and had a strong impact in setting the pace as the decades wore on. He found himself on the gracious side of Colden, which probably affected his moderate response to the Stamp Act, earning him the scorn of the radical Whigs in the province, then led by James DeLancey jr.

Far less prominent than Philip, Robert Robert Livingston came from the Claremont branch. Consequently, he not only was more involved in New York City, but was also a lawyer and judge. He married the daughter of Henry Beekman, who inherited her father's landowning, thereby making Robert Robert one of the wealthiest men in the province. As an Assemblyman and Admiralty-Court judge, he was at the heart of the legal circuit of the City. It is, then, unsurprising that when Monckton chose the Livingstons as his political anchor, Robert Robert would be appointed to the Supreme Court (1763-1775.) It was here that he found his enmity for Lt. Gov. Colden as the latter interfered with the judiciary, most notably in the case of *Forsey v. Cunningham*. Like his cousin, William, his opposition to the Act is to be found less in factional politics and more in personal enmities.<sup>112</sup>

In political alliances we see the career of Leonard Lispenard: coming from a merchant family, his source of influence came from his family and his wife's wealth- Alice Rutgers.<sup>113</sup> An avowed Son of Liberty, he was nonetheless connected to the Livingstons, serving with them in the revolutionary Committees of Twenty-Five, Fifty-One, Fifteen, and Sixty.<sup>114</sup>

The remaining delegate, John Cruger, was a friend of Lispenard and a Son of Liberty, but most importantly he was the Mayor of New York City, which meant that he was the head of one of the most fervently anti-Stamp Act cities in the entire continent, but his role as a (successful) merchant gave him a personal stake in the outcome of the Congress.<sup>115</sup>

The SAC was part of the continuum of the political fight in New York that at that point had become (primarily) DeLanceys v. Livingstons and made whomever was not in a position of power

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<sup>112</sup> Dangerfield, G. *Chancellor Robert R. Livingston of New York, 1746 - 1813*. New York: Harcourt, 1960.

<sup>113</sup> Bolton, Robert. *The History of the Several Towns, Manors, and Patents of the County of Westchester: From Its First Settlement to the Present Time*. C. F. Roper, 1881.

<sup>114</sup> Rivington's Gazetteer, November 24, 1774

<sup>115</sup> Harrington, V. D. *The New York Merchant on the Eve of the Revolution*. New York, 1935.

seize any and every opportunity they could to win it back from their adversaries. That it was the Stamp Act does not make it any more remarkable, but it does make it special in the sense that it made NY's networks intersect with those of other colonies due to contact with their delegates when they stayed in New York. Thus, when Imperial relations took their final downturn, the autocatalytic networks were so deeply set that it would not have matter if the DeLanceys or the Livingstons had been in power, for whomever was in power would have fallen alongside the British government.

### 5.3. New Jersey

Between beginning of the Seven Years' War and the Stamp Act, New Jersey mostly resembled Pennsylvania and New York in its political behavior as it kept a status quo that rewarded the administration faction.<sup>116</sup> Thus, when the establishment Whigs ("opposition faction" in Kemmerer's words) failed to live up to its wartime responsibilities, supporters of the administration gained the ascendancy and controlled the Assembly.<sup>117</sup>

While it was like any other in North America, the Jersey Assembly had a less contentious relationship with the governor than any of its neighbors<sup>118</sup>- partly due to the broad-bottom system that Bernard had implemented.<sup>119</sup> It had allowed the supporters of the administration to profit politically from the victory over France and supinely accept Authoritarian Reformers as governors without much of a fight; compare that to the reaction Massachusetts had when the former Jersey governor took his posting in the Bay Colony.<sup>120</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Newcomb, *Partisanship*, 131.

<sup>117</sup> Kemmerer, Donald Lorenzo. *Path to Freedom: The Struggle for Self-government in Colonial New Jersey, 1703-1776*. Princeton, London: Princeton university press; H. Milford, Oxford University Press, 1940, 266-274.

<sup>118</sup> Francis Bernard to the Bishop of Bristol, January 7, 1760.

<sup>119</sup> Morgans, *Stamp Act*, 8-9 .

<sup>120</sup> Morgans, *Stamp Act*, 10-11.

Thus, we can see that the Province's networks had been established around Establishment Whigs who had been able to negotiate with Authoritarian Reformers like Bernard. Yet, when the external shock of the Stamp Act hit it, the coalition of Establishment Whigs and Authoritarian Reformers that was in control of the Assembly was unable to provide the leadership that the Colony needed. Thus, an Authoritarian like Gov. Franklin and an Establishment Whig like Speaker Ogden, though both unhappy with the Act, came to a similar reaction of not excessively antagonizing the Imperial government. While the former reacted like his Authoritarian peers and was willing to use military force to quell the population -something the Council had to dissuade him from-<sup>121</sup> the Speaker simply responded with a statement about the inexpediency of sending representatives to the Congress given the size and economic relevance of the province.<sup>122</sup> Clearly, this reaction would not suffice for a province in the middle the two most radical colonies -PA and NY- and it was up to the most powerful economic guild of the Colony -lawyers- to push back against the Speaker's decision,<sup>123</sup> thereby forcing him to self-convene the Assembly in an extra-legal session where the delegates were chosen. While Franklin was deeply unhappy with this decision, it is likely that he was not consulted on it, instead it is likelier that the reason for not rashly dissolving the Assembly was that Ogden had coordinated with him and given him assurances that with his presence any delegation would not produce anything that would directly contradict the Imperial government.<sup>124</sup> While there is no extant communication between them that can prove this, his behavior in the SAC and his justification for being one of the two members to not sign<sup>125</sup> -actually leaving before it adjourned- alongside Ruggles -Bernard's man in the MA delegation- make it likely that he was never

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<sup>121</sup> New Jersey Archives, 24: 600.

<sup>122</sup> New Jersey Colonial Documents, 9: 436.

<sup>123</sup> Chroust, Anton-Hermann. "The Lawyers of New Jersey and the Stamp Act." *The American Journal of Legal History* 6, no. 3 (1962): 286–97. <https://doi.org/10.2307/844074>.

<sup>124</sup> Kemerer thinks that it was Franklin outwitting Ogden so he would not be forced to dissolve a legal Assebly. See note 20, page 286. Kemerer, *Path to Freedom*, 286

<sup>125</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 149



a convinced of the Congress and that he was there with the same intentions as Ruggles. The fact that the two men to leave the conference were close to two Authoritarian Reformer governors of New Jersey, makes it likely that there was a measure of coordination.

The other two delegates, Joseph Borden and Hendrick Fisher are representatives of the regional networks that affected New Jersey: the former was a kinsman of Thomas McKean of Delaware by his daughter's marriage to McKean,<sup>126</sup> while Fischer is part of the generation of immigrants who were coming to the colonies in ever greater number since the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in Germany and migrated as a boy with his parents straight to Sommerset County, which elected him Assemblyman in 1740 and for the next three decades. Meanwhile, Borden was a merchant and boat line owner that transported mail, and passengers from Pennsylvania to New York. He not only held a betweenness centrality rare for the late colonial period, but his reachability was incredibly high as he was one of the first people not on the Atlantic Coast as he delivered many of the news coming to the trading hub that was New York into the Western parts of the colonies.<sup>127</sup>

The networks here are then clear: autocatalytic networks provided an Establishment Whig leadership that swung from compromise to compromise until it was forced to choose between the Authoritarians and the Radicals, a transatlantic flow of biographies from the Old World to the backcountry of the North American colonies, and transcolonial networks that weakly connected various provinces that would have otherwise been disconnected.

Ogden going to the SAC is as surprising as his walkout, or that of Ruggles: not very much so.

#### 5.4. Maryland

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<sup>126</sup> Coleman, J. *Thomas McKean, Forgotten Leader of the Revolution*. New Jersey: Rockaway, 1975.

<sup>127</sup> Fisher, Hendrick. 1736. Papers, 1736-1776.

Pennsylvania's politics were so contentious because the ultimate responsibility for the actions of one political faction could be attributed to a single man, so it is then not very surprising that the other Proprietary colony, Maryland, would have politics that were contentious and revolved around the Proprietor.

To an even greater degree than Pennsylvania, the Calverts held such great sway over Maryland institutions that county officials were all appointed instead of elected; the Council was made up of ten hand-picked men of means and influence, and they were awarded the most profitable offices in exchange for loyalty to the Proprietor.<sup>128</sup>

Apart from Lord Baltimore himself, the Secretary of the Province held the most power over Maryland. For the period in question, it was Cecilius Calvert, Baltimore's uncle, who held the post from London for 26 years. Immediately below them, there was the Governor, who from 1753 to 1769 was Horatio Sharpe and had the unfortunate task of dealing with the Assembly, following Calvert's instructions, and complying with the Board of Trade and other Imperial officers.

During the Seven Years War, relations between the Governor and the Assembly soured as a supply bill was passed by that body, which started the contentious relations that the "Country" majority in the Assembly and the "Court" domination in the Council would keep alive until the end of the Colonial Period.<sup>129</sup> These groupings were more stable than in Pennsylvania or New York precisely because of the greater amount of control the Proprietor had over the colony, meaning that most of the time whenever a political fight broke out, various ideologies (Authoritarians, Radicals, Establishment Whigs) had less of an effect than the networks' attempts to either protect or damage the Calverts.

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<sup>128</sup> Skaggs, David Curtis. *Roots of Maryland Democracy, 1753-1776*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1973, 15-16

<sup>129</sup> Skaggs, *Maryland Democracy*, 114.

While in theory everything revolved around the Calverts, in practice there were many powerful men who held great sway and owned much land that also had an important role in the Colony such as were the Carrolls and the Dulanys.<sup>130</sup> These kinship networks sought for most of the Colony's history to link themselves to Lord Baltimore, yet by the 1760s this was no longer a given: the military, and socio-political developments over the decades had created an extremely solid foundation of opposition to the Calverts, one that only kept growing as time passed and more issues rose up on which the Proprietor was on the wrong side. This opposition, at first was made up of people in peripheral positions in the elite's networks, but as time went by and the Proprietor's receded, highly influential men joined in.

First the issue, that of Catholicism plagued the Province as the substantial minority (around 12% of the inhabitants)<sup>131</sup> did not decrease in size even through all of the anti-Catholic statutes passed from the Glorious Revolution onwards. This meant that every time that anti-Catholic sentiment became popular, there would be a clash between the majority Protestant population and the (relatively) legally protected Catholic minority. Thus, the so-called Great Awakening of the 1740s brought the issue to the forefront, making an enemy of those New Lights who would not stomach any semblance of Catholicism in Maryland, and, given that the Council was the source of protection for Catholics, anyone already opposing Baltimore would band with those who hated the Catholic protection he provided.<sup>132</sup>

Like with Catholicism, Calvert's religion became a political issue when in the 1760s the Vestry system in the Province began to create great problems because Parish Rectors were appointed by Baltimore as a reward to his loyalists.<sup>133</sup> These positions were extremely advantageous since the

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<sup>130</sup> Land, Aubrey C. *Colonial Maryland, a History*. Millwood, N.Y: KTO Press, 1981.

<sup>131</sup> Skaggs, *Maryland Democracy*, 67

<sup>132</sup> Skaggs, *Maryland Democracy*, 72

<sup>133</sup> Skaggs, *Maryland Democracy*, 124

Proprietor pretended he could not punish rectors who misbehaved and levied taxes to support the parishes while denying the vestries any role in selecting rectors. Naturally, when Calvert denied any plea from parishioners, he made more and more enemies.

When the Stamp Act's passage reached Maryland, the Colony's response was mediated by the Calverts' response. Had they fought for the charter rights that gave the Proprietor sole authority to levy taxes in the Province,<sup>134</sup> they would have found their political position strengthened and the province come more tightly into their hands. Instead, when their position was of acceptance, the court party networks experienced the network tipping that was longtime coming.

It was gradual but beginning with Daniel Dulany's place as the intellectual head of Marylander opposition to the Stamp Act,<sup>135</sup> Proprietary networks became increasingly fragile and those surrounding Assembly and mob leaders began gaining political clout. Thus, the Hammonds rose from their father's secondary place in politics to become highly influential members of Maryland's political world.<sup>136</sup>

In short, the networks that sent a delegation to the SAC were undergoing the foldings that would end in the wholesale tipping that would result in the end of Proprietary government in a province that lacked a tradition of opposition to it (like PA) and end British rule in a colony that was not technically ruled by the British government.

By the time Gov. Sharpe agreed to reconvene the Assembly after a smallpox outbreak had forced it to adjourn, the actions of the mob in the Summer, the rise of the Hammonds, and the position of the Calverts had put the Governor in a position where a petition by all of Maryland's lawyers

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<sup>134</sup> General Gage to Governor Sharpe, September 16, 23, 1765.

<sup>135</sup> Dulany, Daniel. *Considerations on the Propriety of Imposing Taxes in the British Colonies : for the Purpose of Raising a Revenue, by Act of Parliament*. New York: North-America, 1765.

<sup>136</sup> Skaggs, *Maryland Democracy*, 120-121

convinced him to call the House back into session.<sup>137</sup> Unsurprisingly, three delegates were nominated- Edward Tilgham, Thomas Ringgold, and William Murdock- and they “were all gentlemen farmers, landowners, and leaders in the anti-proprietary party in the Assembly.”<sup>138</sup>

From that point onwards, the networks did what they had been doing for the past century: the Assembly allocated 500 pounds for the delegation, the Council -the eternal protector of Frederick Calvert’s aristocratic lifestyle- found no objection to this appointment save for the allocation of the funds, and Gov. Sharpe went along with the Council’s decision. Everything behaved exactly as it was supposed to and all the pieces of the puzzle continued giving life to the networks that composed it: autocatalysis did not stop, autocatalytic networks, unbeknownst to them, folded. Thus, when anti-proprietary leaders went to New York and met members from Pennsylvania and Delaware who were on their Proprietor’s side yet shared their same grievances, the networks on Lord Baltimore’s side were at a structural disadvantage: opponents of the Calverts found networks that would provide ideological foundations, political support, and informational advantages, while supporters were more and more isolated.

Frederick Calvert died in 1771 but by then the actions of the British government had doomed his successor to inherit a province deeply opposed to him or any other proprietor.

## 5.5. New Hampshire

North of Massachusetts, New Hampshire found itself in the position of having too much space, too many resources, and too little oversight. In 1741 when the son of a former Lt. Governor became himself governor -Benning Wentworth- the colony experienced an acceleration of the autocatalytic networks, when the political system started revolving around him. His centrality was truly

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<sup>137</sup> Maryland Archives, 59: 19-20.

<sup>138</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 74

unparalleled as he was at once the most central political figure, most (eigenvector) centrally located merchant, the core of the most degree central of kinship networks, and the most betweenness-central individual in Anglo-American relations in his colony.

The colony depended on him for its commercial power since he was the Surveyor General of the King's Woods in North America, which gave him the responsibility of overseeing the logging of masts in the backcountry so it would adhere to the constraints set by the White Pines Act of 1711. Maritime trade depended on having durable logs for shipbuilding so allowing for additional logging gave New Hampshire a steady and profitable source of income.<sup>139</sup> This is probably the source of his almost uncontested power and it made him the political kingmaker, the middleman between New Hampshire and England, the head of the white-pine monopoly, and the most sought-after kinsman in the colony.<sup>140</sup>

It is then unsurprising that the SAC had no New Hampshirites, since it would have meant an outright affront to English authorities that would have a single culprit- Wentworth himself. In that sense, the autocatalytic networks that led to the consolidation of power by the Wentworth clan, showed that the Stamp Act was not enough to tip them: any opposition that he had was not strong or embedded enough to push for sending delegates without gubernatorial consent- like New York's; the mercantile interests were so deeply tied to the Wentworth clan, and the Governor's willingness to overlook smuggling and illegal logging -as long as his cut was guaranteed- that any damage emanating from the Stamp Act would be vastly inferior to the damage incurred if the Imperial government took a closer look at his oversight of the backwoods.<sup>141</sup> Benning Wentworth was the

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<sup>139</sup> Fisher, H. A. L., and Eleanor L. Lord. 1898. "Industrial Experiments in the British Colonies of North America". *The Economic Journal*. 8 (31).

<sup>140</sup> Daniell, Jere R. *Experiment in Republicanism: New Hampshire Politics and the American Revolution, 1741-1794*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1970.

<sup>141</sup> Daniell, *Experiment*, 9

heart of New Hampshire and there were neither the rational interests for his opposition to attend the Congress, nor a structural push to override him in his opposition.<sup>142</sup>

Although the Stamp Act was as detrimental and despised there as in the rest of the colonies, the response of the Speaker sent to the Massachusetts House is revealing of the political bind that it created in the colony: whereas elsewhere the radical Whigs were in power, in New Hampshire there was no such neat division, it was mostly pro or anti-Wentworth and they could have different ideologies, networks, and interests between them but all they shared was the peripheral position within the colony's autocatalytic networks. Thus, the Speaker's decision to send a letter excusing himself because of the late arrival of the invitation<sup>143</sup> is more than fanciful given that the first delegates to arrive came from South Carolina.

We see how the extremely centralized networks in New Hampshire led to them resisting the shock from the Stamp Act, thus remaining aloof of the political push for unity. Nevertheless, by the time the Congress ended, the situation in the Continent had shifted to such a degree that the House could no longer avoid sending remonstrances to Parliament and the governor retired within two years.<sup>144</sup>

## 5.6. Massachusetts

Due to the popular politics of the Province, as well as the longevity that it enjoyed, in the 1760s the political world had clear delimiting lines that split those who curried favor with the imperial government and those who opposed further limitation on local prerogatives.<sup>145</sup> When the Seven Years War broke out, the necessity to appoint military commanders led to Governor Shirley being

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<sup>142</sup> Looney, J.F. *The King's Representative: Benning Wentworth, Colonial Governor, 1741-1767*, unpublished Ph.D. Dissertation, Lehigh University, 1961.

<sup>143</sup> New Hampshire Records, 7:81.

<sup>144</sup> Daniell, *Experiment*, 35-73

<sup>145</sup> Pencak, William. *War, Politics & Revolution in Provincial Massachusetts*. Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1981: 149-175; Labaree, Benjamin Woods. *Colonial Massachusetts: A History*. Millwood, N.Y.: KTO Press, 1979: 194-217

appointed Commander-in-Chief in North America following Braddock's demise,<sup>146</sup> which in turn shifted politics from a contentious Radical Whig- Authoritarian Reformer (or in Pencack's terms: Country-Court) party dichotomy to a consensus and administration ascendancy. It lasted longer than Shirley himself, as his contentious relationship with New York led to his recall to England. Yet, this created the opening for Thomas Pownall to take his place as governor and Thomas Hutchinson as leader of the Authoritarian Reformer faction.

This created the perfect opportunity for the radical Whigs to take control, as Loudon represented the most direct link to Parliamentary policy requiring ever more colonial troops and resources, which led to conflict with Pownall. Due to the former's ham-fisted application of these demands, the latter gained popular affections. He even kept Hutchinson as Lt. Governor and was supported by Authoritarians like Timothy Ruggles and Establishment Whigs like Thomas Hancock.<sup>147</sup> In 1760 he was replaced by Francis Bernard, when he was appointed Governor of South Carolina.

Francis Bernard was such a firm supporter of authoritarian-imperialist policy that he proposed a revamp of colonial governance that would create an American nobility and uniformity in colonial institutions.<sup>148</sup> It is important to note how Bernard fits into the politics of not just the Colony but the Empire as a whole; as an ally and kinsman of Lord Barrington, the long-serving minister from 1755 until 1778, he was connected, indebted, and subordinate to the Authoritarian Reformers as Barrington was one of the staunchest supporters of these policies and was reappointed just days after George III took office.<sup>149</sup>

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<sup>146</sup> Simms, Brendan. *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714-1783*. London ; New York: Allen Lane, 2007: 346

<sup>147</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 153

<sup>148</sup> Morgans, *Stamp Act*, 14

<sup>149</sup> George III, King of Great Britain, and Bonamy Dobrée. *The Letters of King George III*. London [etc.]: Cassell and Company, Ltd, 1935



Coming from a successful governorship in New Jersey,<sup>150</sup> Bernard encountered a political system that was split between the supporter of former governors Shirley and Pownall.<sup>151</sup> Intending to continue his successful method of governance that stayed above the partisan fray and attempted cooperation between the parts, he embarked on a project to settle his tenure “on the broad bottom of the people in general.”<sup>152</sup> To him, this meant seeking to govern the province through consensus, yet his conception thereof was rather limited as only aroused the fury of both factions by alternatively favoring one or the other in the years preceding the Stamp Act.<sup>153</sup> It is clear that he was intent on making his “system” work regardless of whom it angered. He did not take into account the fact that Massachusetts was not New Jersey and that his conception of the British Empire was not universally shared. Thus, he “lobbied against the Molasses, Sugar, and Stamp acts,”<sup>154</sup> gave Hutchinson the Chief Judgeship at the Superior Court, and nominated radical Whig John Tyng to be Justice at the Inferior Court.<sup>155</sup>

The system appeared to work as he was somewhat popular during the first part of his administration even though he strained relations with some British officials when he feuded with Gen. Amherst and called the Assembly into session in 1764 to write a protest against the impending Stamp Act.<sup>156</sup>

While his system may have been successful elsewhere, in this Colony it ran into the autocatalytic networks that had recently reformed around the Shirley-Pownall controversies, which included the semantic network of the radical Whigs, the kinship networks of the Hancocks, and the commercial networks of the “Merchants club.” The conflicting flows between these placed a strong strain on the

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<sup>150</sup> See above

<sup>151</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 151

<sup>152</sup> Francis Bernard to John Pownall, 2 March 1761

<sup>153</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 158-163

<sup>154</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 160

<sup>155</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 161

<sup>156</sup> Massachusetts General Court. *Journal of the House of Representatives of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*. Boston, 1715, 41: 95.

system: the political networks, which were in Bernard's own words "parties so nearly equal, that it would have been madness... to have put myself at the head of either of them,"<sup>157</sup> were engaged in partisan rancor that had plagued the Colony for most of the century, had recently been revived by Gov. Shirley's behavior, and would not abate until the Massachusetts was a State.

That is how Bernard did what his predecessors never did: he lost the political center of gravity. Instead of being pro-Shirley or pro-Pownall, now there was a clear political demarcation line between Radical Whigs and Authoritarian Reformers with Thomas Hutchinson being the latter's head. The governor, on the other hand, was another imperial official with less of a stake in his political future, so by the time the Stamp Act Crisis came around, animosity was directed at the man with the richest social capital of the imperial faction -Hutchinson- even though Bernard was equally reviled by the mob.<sup>158</sup>

These networks led with the most direct of links to the Stamp Act Congress: Bernard having somewhat successfully balanced his non-partisan approach for four years, calls a special session of the Assembly to remonstrate against the proposed act for levying duties on stamps. This reaches the extent of his action against it, as it was the most a fervent Authoritarian Reformer would dare against a ministry as determined as Grenville's. In the meantime, the merchants, politicians, and lawyers begin receiving news of the impending act and begin agitating for more decisive and principled stands against the government: it was at once a radicalization based on self-interest and ideological grounds.<sup>159</sup> In practice, the two sides, then living under the uncomfortable broad-bottom system -which ironically caused even more partisan strife- started expanding the size of the networks

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<sup>157</sup> Francis Bernard to Viscount Barrington, 1<sup>st</sup> May 1762, 20<sup>th</sup> February 1762

<sup>158</sup> Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts*, 228

<sup>159</sup> Labaree, *Colonial Massachusetts*, 225

by reaching out to the those previously excluded from the political process, and those at the distant top. The network's diameter increased and the geodesic distance likewise increased.

Now, the political network was no longer contained within the restricted limits of the autocatalytic networks of kinship and friendship that had characterized the elite, instead it included men new to politics, popular leaders, and the Imperial governing structures like never before.<sup>160</sup>

Likewise, the distance between the ideological poles began growing as the autocatalytic semantic networks began producing more and ever-more radical differences surrounding conceptions of English liberty, natural rights, and justice. Now, for the radicals there was an introduction to the natural rights rabbit hole, although it would not gain much clout until the next decade, and the central concepts of English rights began to create new connections that would become so loosely connected to one another that they would split, until they totally and finally broke. Whereas an examination of the growing ideological gap analyzed with semantic networks does not yet exist -to my knowledge- and ideology has had a treacherous historiographical path<sup>161</sup> so we shall not dwell excessively on this point, yet a quick examination of some of the most important documents of the crisis in Massachusetts will illustrate this point. Between the sermon given at the commencement of the 1765 Assembly,<sup>162</sup> Otis' *Rights of the British Colonies*,<sup>163</sup> the committee's report to respond to Maudit's letters,<sup>164</sup> and Bernard's speech before the legislature on May 30<sup>th</sup> 1765.<sup>165</sup> The ideas of

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<sup>160</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 187-206

<sup>161</sup> For this, see: Breen, T. H. "Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising." *The Journal of American History* 84, no. 1 (1997): 13–39. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2952733>.

<sup>162</sup> Andrew Eliot, *A Sermon Preached before ... Francis Bernard ... The ... Council, and the ...House Of Representatives ... May 29th 1765*. Boston, 1765.

<sup>163</sup> Otis, James. *The Rights of the British Colonies Asserted and Proved*, Boston: 1764.

<sup>164</sup> Committee composed of: Speaker Samuel White and Assemblymen Worthington, Otis, Thacher, Ruggles, Cushing, and Russell. MAGC, *JHRCM*, 41:72. It is notable that it was missing only Partridge from the eventual MA delegation to the SAC

<sup>165</sup> MAGC, *JHRCM*, 42:9.

rights and responsibilities therein contained begin to diverge from the more conciliatory rhetoric of the previous decade, marking the greatest departure from autocatalytic networks up to that point.

James Otis Jr. was the son of one of the most prominent politicians in the whole of Massachusetts, the eponymous Assemblyman, who spearheaded the Province's politics by being the counterpoint to the Authoritarian Reformers, arch-enemy of Hutchinson, political master of Cape Cod, and successful merchant-lawyer.<sup>166</sup> In 1757 he sought election to the Council from the Assembly but was apparently refused because Hutchinson had badmouthed him to the governor,<sup>167</sup> a story that repeated itself in 1760 when Bernard passed over Otis for the Superior Court.<sup>168</sup> In both instances, it is not only the personal and kinship interplay, but also the political, economic, and ideological elements that show come together to create the autocatalytic network that was splitting the Colony in half by the early 1760s. The elder James came out of an alliance between the Otises and the Bacons, two of the most prominent families of Barnstable County, thereby aiding in the solidification of their preeminence there.<sup>169</sup> The younger James was a brilliant lawyer and orator whose fiery rhetoric was remembered long after his death. He was part of the kinship network that directly opposed Hutchinson's but also head of the Radical Whig faction in the Assembly. He is the product of the clash between the Authoritarian Reformers and the Radical Whigs in the form of the feud between Otis and Hutchinson over the post of Justice of the Superior Court.

Oliver Partridge was instead a product of the so-called River Gods who controlled politics in Western New England. By that fact, and the recent proclamation of 1763 he saw his future political growth stymied by the loss of possibilities in the West and the likely ascendancy of the East. He was

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<sup>166</sup> Water, John J. *The Otis Family in Provincial and Revolutionary Massachusetts*. University of North Carolina Press, 1968: 61-75.

<sup>167</sup> “[Otis] never Did Carry things while in the Court By any merit But only By Doing little Low Dirty things for Governor Shirley” Thomas Hutchinson, CUNY, Otis papers, Box 1, 44, memorandum, c.15 Aug 1757

<sup>168</sup> Attorney General Edmund Trowbridge to William Bolla, 15<sup>th</sup> July 1762

<sup>169</sup> Water, *The Otis Family*, 26

selected by the Assembly to be a delegate to the Albany Congress, meaning that he already had experience with First People relations (he attended the Albany Covenant Chains in 1745 and in 1751) and intercolonial conventions (he also attended the famous 1754 Albany Congress).<sup>170</sup>

Finally, Timothy Ruggles, a close ally of Bernard's, former Speaker of the Assembly elected over James Otis Sr. and ally of the Authoritarian Reformers such as Hutchinson.<sup>171</sup> He was, from early on, an advocate for strong measures in the Bay Colony. His recent election to the Speaker's chair, the power Bernard and Hutchinson held in the Colony, (Bernard's machinations),<sup>172</sup> and the reputation he had gained as a military man made him a reasonable choice for an Assembly wanting to send a balanced delegation.

Massachusetts' autocatalytic networks were not so much disrupted by the Act or the Crisis, but by the emboldened rise of Authoritarian Reformers in Old and New England. Bernard was a biographical product of aristocratic political-kinship networks in England that required trusted collaborators in the Colonies (just like William Franklin); Thomas Hutchinson was the product of the patronage networks that were created around the Governor's office after the transition to a Royal Colony; James Otis was the product of the rise of the lawyers and merchants who had been in peripheral positions of the power networks in the Colony but gained strength after the Shirley-Pownall Controversy; Partridge was the product of the network of intercolonial relations that struggled to consolidate and made attempt after attempt to coordinate colonies, even if for unifying on policy regarding the First Peoples; Timothy Ruggles was a product of the Authoritarian

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<sup>170</sup> Shannon, Timothy J. (Timothy John). *Indians and Colonists at the Crossroads of Empire : the Albany Congress of 1754 / Timothy J. Shannon*. Ithaca, N.Y: Cornell University Press, 2000, 132.

<sup>171</sup> Pencack, *War and Politics*, 167

<sup>172</sup> Morgans, *Stamp Act*, 110



South Carolina most vividly exemplifies the British political struggle between the Authoritarian Reformers and the Radical Whigs: from Gov. Glen's tenure onward, the Colony experienced a series of propitious -and often unfortunate but always to them unexpected- circumstances that allowed it to become the first colony to have its delegates arrive to New York for the SAC.<sup>173</sup>

The circumstances present themselves clearly: the political culture in the Province was one of "brinkmanship."<sup>174</sup> The practice of making threats and taking positions that pushed the limits of what was politically acceptable became commonplace practice. The exact beginnings of it are not clear, yet after the Stono Slave Uprising, South Carolinian elites found their networks threatened to a degree like never before, so it caused a reorganization of the networks from contentious internal politics of self-interest to a consensus politics of status interests.<sup>175</sup>

South Carolina was a province with an enslaved population so large that to anyone analyzing it as a complex system it would become obvious that the Stono Uprising was not at all unexpected: it was not a systemic accident, but was actually inevitable given that the demographic composition of the Colony was 2:1 enslaved to free people, 70.000 to 35.000.<sup>176</sup> However, the structure of these networks was unbalanced in favor of the white freemen because the enslaved people of generations prior to the Uprising had undergone social death upon being enslaved and had no social networks of any kind once they arrived to the colonies,<sup>177</sup> thus it would take decades before the enslaved peoples could create a common language and links between each other in order to organize the uprising against the oppressing minority.

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<sup>173</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 116

<sup>174</sup> Mercantini, Jonathan. *Who Shall Rule at Home?: The Evolution of South Carolina Political Culture, 1748-1776*. (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2007) 14-24.

<sup>175</sup> Wood, P.H. *Black Majority: Negroes in Colonial South Carolina from 1670 through the Stono Rebellion* (New York: W.W. Norton and Co., 1974), 326.

<sup>176</sup> United States. Bureau of the Census. *A Century of Population Growth from the First Census of the United States to the Twelfth, 1790-1900* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1909), 3-15.

<sup>177</sup> Patterson, Orlando. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982.

When this failed due to the structural constraints of the larger British Empire, the elites now felt that the status quo had been unsustainable, so they decided that to ward off the danger of further slave uprisings, they would settle on a more harmonious and consensus-based political system.<sup>178</sup>

Naturally, this system would not be sustainable and -as Mercantini points out- it broke down whenever controversy arose.<sup>179</sup> However, controversy was less prevalent than external shocks, which reinforced this harmony, like the Cherokee War (1759-1761). It presented the colonists with the very real danger of First Peoples like the Cherokees and Creeks crossing the frontier to raid and take back what they thought to be their lands.

These kinds of shocks were parallel to three developments in the political culture of the colony: the rise of the Assembly as the main governing structure in the colony,<sup>180</sup> the adoption of the brinkman way of politicking, and the growth of Radical Whig ideology of liberty and self-government.<sup>181</sup> In fact, it was these traits that set it apart from the other Southern colonies that had similar situations and demographics but less external shocks.

The outcome was that of an elite that worked hard to preserve political harmony, something that could only be achieved by securing the least amount of interference from governing structures.

Compounded with the fact that the elites shared the same lifestyle of the planter-slaver, they could live within the confines of their fiefdoms and not have to engage in politics unless their ways of living were threatened by external forces. Such an agreement on personal liberty -for the

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<sup>178</sup> Weir, Robert M. "'The Harmony We Were Famous For': An Interpretation of Pre-Revolutionary South Carolina Politics." *The William and Mary Quarterly: A Magazine of Early American History* (1969): 474-501.

<sup>179</sup> Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule*, 15-17

<sup>180</sup> Greene, Jack P. *The Quest for Power: The Lower Houses of Assembly in the Southern Royal Colonies, 1689-1776* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books) 2014.

<sup>181</sup> Bailyn, *The ideological Origins*, 47; 283-284.



enfranchised citizens, of course- was path-dependent on co-evolving with a Radical Whig mentality based on a historical mistrust of government interference, standing armies, and taxation.<sup>182</sup>

At the same time, however, the Imperial government was seeing the rise of a network of Authoritarian Reformers who wanted the exact opposite of that, which the Southern Carolinian planters wanted: more revenue through taxes, more oversight, less self-government.<sup>183</sup> Thus, the Board of Trade began tightening the strings of the appointed governors and forced them to comply with their instructions, which continued getting more specific and expansive. Conflict immediately arose and it was contingent on the personality of the Governor what reaction came out of the Board's demands. Gov. Glen, for example, was stuck in the mentality of the 40s when the Board began reprimanding him for disregarding his instructions, which led him to become more stringent in his enforcement of the Imperial government's demands.<sup>184</sup>

However, the planter elites would not countenance such an invasion of their perceived prerogatives as representatives of the freemen and pushed back with such strength that it ended by rendering the Council almost irrelevant.<sup>185</sup> When the Council was no longer politically relevant and it was up to the Governor to become the conduit of the Board's dictates, a political crisis like the Gadsen Controversy of 1764 would end up with the defeat of the Governor after the Assembly refused to allocate a salary for two years.<sup>186</sup>

Before that, the Colony had gone through of series of governors that had -accidentally- made the Assembly more powerful: Gov. Glen had become a figure of intense dislike by the elites due to his newfound zeal in 1751 of applying the Board's mandates, rendering him ineffective in the eyes of

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<sup>182</sup> Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins*, 144-160

<sup>183</sup> Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule*, 26-67

<sup>184</sup> Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule*, 87-100

<sup>185</sup> Sirmans, M. Eugene. *Colonial South Carolina: A Political History, 1663-1763*. (Chapel Hill: UNC Press Books) 2012, 295-314

<sup>186</sup> Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule*, 181

the Board, thereby leading to his replacement. Sir Henry Lyttleton had the good fortune of arriving when the War was raging so the Imperial government could not afford to be too demanding of the colonies and led to the controversy with South Carolina temporarily quelling.<sup>187</sup> However, when he was promoted to be Governor of Jamaica -a posting far more rewarding and prestigious- his replacement gave the Assembly an upper hand, as the first choice -MA Gov. Powell- never took his post, and his replacement arrived after almost two years of interim government under William Bull II. Upon his arrival, the Assembly felt more empowered, the war was winding down, and wartime debts needed to be repaid, so his replacement, Gov. Boone, had the unlucky job of leading the colony through the first few years of the Authoritarian ascendancy under George III.<sup>188</sup>

Unsurprisingly, this led to political conflict when Christopher Gadsen was elected to the Assembly in 1762, only to have Boone veto his election.

The political fight this caused demonstrates the networks that existed in South Carolina and the political maturity that led them to be the avant-garde of the Revolution: the Assembly refused to allocate a salary for over two years after his dissolution of the Assembly, and he eventually left the Colony for England where his replacement was appointed when the Rockingham Ministry took power and sent Lord Montagu to South Carolina.<sup>189</sup> He did not arrive until 1766, which meant that through the Crisis William Bull II -an Establishment Whig- was Acting Governor and had to deal with an Assembly that had had outgrown his leadership as Speaker during the late 40s and had seen the rise of Radical Whigs to power in the Assembly like Gadsen and Laurens.

His middle-of-the-road position was unsustainable given his lack of authority as Acting Gov., the Board's ever-growing demands for effective enforcement of the Authoritarian policies emanating

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<sup>187</sup> Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 335

<sup>188</sup> Sirmans, *Colonial South Carolina*, 333-357

<sup>189</sup> Mercantini, *Who Shall Rule*, 231

from Westminster. Thus, when the SC Assembly received the invitation to the New York conference, the Speaker was at first opposed but the House overruled him and when a committee was formed to examine the expediency of sending delegates, it voted to approve of the report, send three delegates, and an immense sum of 600 pounds (20% more than the 500 that the MD Council had found so objectionable).<sup>190</sup> The delegates arrived on September 16<sup>th</sup> to New York, the first delegation to do so and it was made up of the usual suspects: Christopher Gadsen, planter, merchant, Son of Liberty, and *cause celebre* of the early 1760s Radicals; John Rutledge was a young Middle Temple-trained lawyer, heir to a plantation household, and former head of the Assembly's Committee on Privileges and Elections, which upheld Gadsen's election to the House; finally, Thomas Lynch Sr., planter, landholder in Georgia and Florida, and Assemblyman since 1752, was one of the Radical members of that body and a friend of Gadsen's.<sup>191</sup>

Their appointment shows that the autocatalytic networks that had repelled governor after governor had now produced supplemental leaders of their own; leaders who were the very individuals that had defeated the cells introduced by the Board of Trade as conduits to Britain.

## 5.8. North Carolina

North Carolina and Georgia were a very isolated colonies, with unproductive territories, and a population evenly split between free and enslaved people. The networks this created are unsurprising: highly clustered, kinship networks that suffered from demographic uncertainty, and socio-economic underdevelopment.<sup>192</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> *Journal of the House of Commons of the Assembly of South Carolina*, Jan 8 1765 - August 9 1765 (Columbia, South Carolina) 1949, 150; 158.

<sup>191</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 94

<sup>192</sup> Lefler, H.T. and Powell, W.S. *Colonial North Carolina: A History*. (New York: Scribner, 1973)

A consequence of this was the relative stability but immaturity of its politics given that there was a turnover rate of between 20 and 45% of a region every single election.<sup>193</sup> For many years, the greatest political controversy in the Colony was the site of the capital, which only reflected regional concerns and had no choice but to be resolved. Thus, even if North Carolinians were as likely as the rest of their fellow colonists to oppose the Act -and the demographic composition raises questions about it- the fact that most of the workers in the Colony were farmers of rather limited wealth makes it all the more unlikely that it would openly defy the British government. Finally, the demographic composition of the colony of around 1:1 free to enslaved made the Colony be in a perpetual fear of slave uprisings.

So, when the governor died in early 1765 and Lt. Gov. Tryon took charge of the Colony's executive, the Assembly's prorogation was inevitable and was concluded more than 10 days before Patrick Henry's explosive speech.<sup>194</sup> At this point it is impossible that the SAC was the reason for the Assembly to have adjourned, and it is instead likely that Tryon did not want to wade into the tricky balancing act of a governor being forced to enforce a highly unpopular law while the Imperial government's directive were at the same time being disregarded.

The question is then why did the Assembly not send its own delegates? Why wait for it to be reconvened, when New York did not? The answer lies in the way autocatalytic networks grew in the Colony, as they were the product of clustering and did not have easy access to either the information that had so riled up other colonies, nor the emotional charge therefrom. The state of affairs was so calm in this province that it was not until the last week of the SAC that the Colony saw mob

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<sup>193</sup> Greene, Jack P. *Negotiated authorities: essays in colonial political and constitutional history*. (Charlottesville, VA: The University of Virginia Press) 1994, 215-237

<sup>194</sup> *The Colonial Records of North Carolina*, 7: 88

violence and riots against the Act, as these mobs were the ones networking with others outside of North Carolina and had the opportunity to partake in the collective furor.

## 5.9. Georgia

By the time Grenville came to power, Georgia had been a Royal Colony for about a decade, its population hovered around 18,000, split 60-40 between free and enslaved people.<sup>195</sup> When compared to Delaware -its closest colony in population- and North Carolina -closest in demographics- the southernmost colony begins looking quite different from all the invited colonies.

Alongside demographic weakness, the colony was still in the process of building its institutions after the transferal from a Proprietary to a Royal government. The Assembly had not yet achieved the level of political maturity that other colonies had, and the conflicts with the governor were absent from the political scene starting with Gov. Ellis' arrival and continuing until 1765. This meant that by the time Massachusetts' letter arrived to Georgia, attendance at the SAC was unlikely.

Indeed, when the letter arrived the Assembly was in adjournment, so Speaker Alexander Wylly had an informal meeting with the assemblymembers in Savannah to respond to the letter. Even though all of those present around 64% of its members- agreed to ask that the governor respond to the invitation, Gov. James Wright understood that this would mean an open affront to the Imperial government, so he kept the House in adjournment forcing the members to either send delegates unofficially (illegally) or compromise with the governor and demonstrate their opposition in other ways.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>195</sup> Census Bureau, *Population Growth*, 3-15.

<sup>196</sup> Coleman, K. *Colonial Georgia: A History*. (New York: Scribner) 1976.

The autocatalytic networks in Georgia were highly clustered: it had very little trade with the other colonies,<sup>197</sup> settlers were in high demand, kinship networks were confined to the Colony itself.<sup>198</sup> In short, the colony was isolated from the other colonies and its main interactions were with the Imperial government and the frontier's First Peoples- a constant source of concern for Georgians. The isolation was so strong that when Benjamin Franklin -the most central cell in the whole of the North American colonies- was appointed agent for that colony in 1768, he claimed to not know anyone in Georgia.<sup>199</sup> It was not until the Townshend Acts and the controversy over the Colonial Agent in London that the political quiet and regional isolation ended. At that point, however, the split was path-dependent and the first great political fight that began with William Knox's pamphlet<sup>200</sup> ended with a duplication of the job of Agent and drew the battle lines in the Colony that would show themselves at the time of the First Continental Congress.<sup>201</sup>

Thus, when Gov. Wright decided to not call the House into session, he was not acting as a tyrant, or a fervent supporter of the Ministry, he was reflecting the structural limits that Georgia exhibited in its heavy dependence on Imperial government for trade and settlers. The networks were small in diameter and poor in links to other colonies; instead, it had negative links to the First Peoples, and far too many to the Metropolis. When no delegate was sent but the Assembly, it was not an anomaly but a behavior similar to places like New Hampshire that had an almighty governor, the West Indies with the unbalanced demographic weight of the enslaved population, and Canadian colonies that had a constant danger from foreign enemies. None of the above sent delegates to the SAC.

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<sup>197</sup> Paul M. Pressly. "The West Indies, Cornerstone of Trade." In *On the Rim of the Caribbean*, 50–69. University of Georgia Press, 2013.

<sup>198</sup> Harold E. Davis. "Slavery, Class Structure, and the Family." In *The Fledgling Province*, 125–60. The University of North Carolina Press, 2012.

<sup>199</sup> Benjamin Franklin to William Franklin, July 2<sup>nd</sup> 1768

<sup>200</sup> Knox, William. *The Claim of the Colonies to an exemption from internal taxes imposed by authority of Parliament*. 1765

<sup>201</sup> Aldridge, Alfred Owen. "Benjamin Franklin as Georgia Agent." *The Georgia Review* 6, no. 2 (1952): 161-173

That the Assembly had the Speaker sign the SAC's petitions on December 14<sup>th</sup> and then send them to England is a reflection of Gov. Wright's success who had managed to avoid the dispatch of delegates and get only a belated endorsement of the SAC knowing that it would not arrive before the end of Winter.

### 5.10. Delaware

The Lower Counties had the unique position of being at once independent of, but inseparable from, Pennsylvania. It is this unique place that allowed it to have different politics from all other colonies as its institutions were at once intersecting with the bigger colony, but distant enough to guarantee it wide latitude over its own government.

Its Assembly was composed of 18 delegates from the three counties that could legislate on matters regarding only those counties. They shared a governor with Pennsylvania, as it was part of the Penns' properties, but also a council. However, the distance made it impracticable for the governor (technically the Lt. Governor) to be very involved in the politics of the colonies.<sup>202</sup>

In practical terms, it meant that it did not share the contentious anti-proprietor politics that Pennsylvania had, which also gave it a more conciliatory posture towards proprietary government and better relations. It is, in part, this that made caused the governor to veto only two bills in the early part of the 1760s. Politics in the Counties were mostly peaceful and local matters did not suffer from the ethno-religious political divide that made the proprietary fights extremely complex in Pennsylvania.<sup>203</sup>

Yet, the ties to the networks did not recognize Imperial or institutional boundaries and developments in the Quaker State inevitably affected Delaware. Autocatalysis was at once local and

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<sup>202</sup> Munroe, John A. *Colonial Delaware: A History*. Millwood (N.Y.: KTO Press) 1978.

<sup>203</sup> Munroe, *Colonial Delaware*, 162-164

transcolonial: it was composed of the Lower Counties networks, which highly connected between them due to their geographical location, the Pennsylvania-Delaware networks that encompassed those who held strong financial, commercial, or kinship ties on both side of the boundary, and the Middle-States networks that connected the Lower Counties more directly to states like Maryland and New Jersey, due to their Pennsylvania links.

The freedoms that the unique institutional position had granted them, made them more permeable to the influence of Proprietary politicians as well as Anti-Proprietary ones. For example, Benjamin Chew and William Till owned large holdings in Delaware so their influence and presence was more keenly felt than most other politicians from the Pennsylvania.<sup>204</sup> His influence was powerful enough that in 1764 it was him that drafted the address to the King stating satisfaction with the Penns' government.<sup>205</sup> Such a statement most likely reflected widespread sentiments in the colony as The Lower Counties were mostly out of the hands of the Board of Trade, so its networks did not have to sustain the constant shocks that the Board provided to other colonies every time it halted a law or furthered instructions to a governor.<sup>206</sup> Delaware had easy access other colonies' networks, while also being shielded from the complexity of the greater British Atlantic governance that Imperial government implied.

Autocatalysis hummed along with relative stability as it was reproduced by Delawarean networks that were tended to cluster, and Pennsylvanian-Delawarean networks that tended to be spread over many colonies and had a production tendency that benefitted the latter by exposing it to trade networks, kinship clans, and information that would otherwise have been out of reach for a colony with the socio-economic development that Delaware had.

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<sup>204</sup> Munroe, *Colonial Delaware*, 228

<sup>205</sup> Munroe, *Colonial Delaware*, 235

<sup>206</sup> Munroe, *Colonial Delaware*, 148; 235



The Stamp Act presented a great danger to the colony's privileged position, so when word of its passage reached the colony, its intracolony networks were activated in opposition to the extension of Imperial government by means of Vice-Admiralty Courts, and its intercolony links were strengthened as the networks sought to produce a solution to the impending implementation of the Act.

The result is that Jacob Kollock, Thomas McKean, and Caesar Rodney were nominated to be delegates to the SAC when Massachusetts' letter reached the Assembly.<sup>207</sup>

Here, we can clearly observe the functioning of autocatalysis in Delaware, as the response from the political elites at the Assembly was not to attempt to reconvene itself, or *de facto* do so like other colonies, as it would have required the interference of the usually absent governor, but all representatives of each county drafted a letter nominating three Assembly members to the SAC.

While these nominations were, in theory, independent of one another, the fact that two of the letters were almost identical shows that the intracolony networks had been activated and the Assembly had agreed to the plan without having to legally, or illegally, convene. The SAC's delegates were a product of the same networks that had crafted a sort of "salutary neglect" with the Proprietor's government. Meanwhile, the intercolony networks that were so crucial to Delaware spilled over into its intracolony networks, when Pennsylvanian politics affected how the Delawarean elite reacted to the Stamp Act.

In Pennsylvania the response had been split along partisan lines, with the Quaker Party taking the Imperial government's side in hopes that it would guarantee it a Royal government, and the Proprietary Party letting its members vote their conscience. Delaware's response to the Act was heavily influenced by those who had most fervently opposed it in its sister colony. Once again, it

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<sup>207</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 95-98

was the Proprietary partisans who saw a perfect opportunity to counter the Quaker supremacy and they were instrumental in having the Assembly attend the SAC. Undoubtedly, the fact that Dickinson -the single largest landholder in Kent County- was part of the Proprietary faction and a delegate to the Congress made the decision to attend, all the more palatable to the Assembly members.

From the same Kent County where Dickinson owned his holdings, Caesar Rodney came from a well-to-do family that allowed him to get his education at the Latin school in Philadelphia before his father died and was forced to take charge of his family. He was the grandson of the Speaker of the Assembly, William Rodney, and from an early age, thanks to his financial position he was able to dedicate himself to public service by being Sheriff at Kent County, and Justice of the Peace (1759-1759) before he was elected to the Assembly in 1761.<sup>208</sup> He was soon closely associated with Thomas McKean, with whom he compiled the laws of the colony. Alongside George Read, they would be the crucial figures in intercolonial relations as the committee of correspondence after they drafted the message thanking the King for the repeal of the Stamp Act in 1766.<sup>209</sup> He shows both the DE-PA connections in his education that thrust him in the heart of one of the most important cities in the whole continent. Before the SAC his wider intercolonial connections were very limited, yet after 1765 his letters begin having many out-of-state (including Pennsylvania) correspondents.<sup>210</sup>

Jacob Kollock was the Speaker of the Assembly up to its last session. He had already worked with Rodney when in 1759 a paper-printing commission was set up by the Assembly.<sup>211</sup> In the end, he did

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<sup>208</sup> Scott, Jane. *A Gentleman as Well as a Whig: Caesar Rodney and the American Revolution*. (Newark : University of Delaware Press) 2000.

<sup>209</sup> Munroe, *Colonial Delaware*, 246-247

<sup>210</sup> Rodney, Caesar, George Herbert Ryden, and Historical Society of Delaware. *Letters to and from Caesar Rodney, 1756-1784: Member of the Stamp Act Congress and the First and Second Continental Congresses; Speaker of the Delaware Colonial Assembly; President of the Delaware State; Major General of the Delaware Militia; Signer of the Declaration of Independence*. Philadelphia: Pub. for the Historical Society of Delaware by the University of Pennsylvania Press, 1933

<sup>211</sup> *ibid*

not attend the SAC, but the fact that he was one of the three delegates shows the level of commitment that the political elites of the colony had for this Congress.

It is noteworthy that both Speakers of Pennsylvania and Delaware were elected but did not attend the SAC, and it speaks to the importance both colonies placed on it.

Finally, Thomas McKean -who had compiled the Colony's laws alongside Rodney- quickly rose from being the son of a farmer to being a Justice of the Peace and Assembly member. He married Mary Borden, a New Jersey woman, and daughter of James Borden. This was not a coincidence given that his legal practice had extended from the Lower Counties, to Pennsylvania, and to New Jersey in 1765- two years after marrying Mary.<sup>212</sup>

While only those three men were the Delaware delegation, one other man must be mentioned since he is a crucial cell of the autocatalytic networks that elected the other three members. George Read was then Attorney General and recently elected to the Assembly. As the son of a Maryland entrepreneur, he held connections in that state, his own home state, and Pennsylvania where he was educated.<sup>213</sup> Along McKean and Rodney, he would become one of the most central figures of the Revolution in Delaware and was a delegate to the Continental Congresses with both men.

The close connection these men had extends the links to autocatalytic networks in other colonies all the more relevant, as Read was married to the sister of George Ross, a Pennsylvania Assemblyman and future member of the Continental Congress. And even more importantly, the close friendship he had to John Dickinson, the most famous Proprietary politician in PA. This delegation was densely linked to some of the most central cells of the North American networks: Kollock was close

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<sup>212</sup> Buchanan, Roberdeau. *Life of the Hon. Thomas McKean, LL.D., Member of the Continental Congress from Delaware, Chief Justice and Governor of Pennsylvania, Signer of the Declaration of Independence, and President of Congress*. Lancaster, Pa.: Inquirer Printing Company, 1890.

<sup>213</sup> Read, W.T. *Life and Correspondence of George Read, Signer of the Declaration of Independence* (Philadelphia: J.B. Lippincott & Co.) 1870.

enough to Benjamin Franklin to have his son appointed Customs Collector, while Read was so close to Dickinson that those two men were the lynchpins of the opposition to declaring independence in 1776.<sup>214</sup>

While this small state gets very little attention from the literature, it was in fact instrumental in fostering the network links that eventually led to a closer intercolonial unity and, soon thereafter, to Independence. We can see the seeds of the direction that this colony was pushing the other colonies in, when we read the letter of appointment that New Castle County wrote for its nominees to the SAC:

“we at present labour Under in not haveing it in our Power to Convene as a House, and in a Regular manner to appoint a Committee. Yet, zealous for the happiness of Our Constituents, think it Our duty in this Way to serve them as much as in Us lies (Assured of the Hearty Approbation of any future House of Assembly of this Government), etc.”<sup>215</sup>

From the very beginning, this delegation was instructed to seek further intercolonial cooperation. The number of links it had to other colonies and the biographical continuity in further intercolonial assemblies is evidence of the indirect way that the Stamp Act pushed the colonies towards unity: not through ideological consonance, but through network establishment that was willfully directed, as well as spillover from the shocks that came in the early 1760s.

### 5.11. Rhode Island

Just like Massachusetts, politics in Rhode Island hinged around the long-running feud between the Wards and the Hopkins.

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<sup>214</sup> Munroe, John A. "Read, George (1733-1798), signer of the Declaration of Independence and of the Constitution." *American National Biography*. 1 Feb. 2000; Accessed 20 Jul. 2022.

<sup>215</sup> Cited in: Weslager, *Congress*, 95

The former were the Wards' kinship networks that had gained prominence when Richard Ward became governor of the province after the deaths of the Wanton brothers. The latter revolved around Gov. Hopkins as he rose from a scion of the Wantons to leader of his faction.<sup>216</sup>

With the network-consolidation period of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century, the privateer Wanton brothers rose to power over the issue of paper-money minting and began feuding with Richard Ward -then Secretary of the Assembly- eventually he made an alliance with the Greene clan, which continued the feud with the Wantons until 1758 when Gov. William Greene died after being in office for eight out of the past ten years.<sup>217</sup>

At this point, the political center of gravity had moved from the Ward-Wanton continuum to the so-called Ward-Hopkins Controversy. However, the Wantons did not disappear from the political world and instead forged an alliance with the merchant clan of the Browns of Providence, who brought Stephen Hopkins with them. The latter's ascendancy took an important turn when he was appointed alongside Martin Howard Jr. as the colony's Albany Congress delegates, only to be elected governor next year.<sup>218</sup>

At this juncture, the autocatalytic networks had been established and they produced a feud that included people completely unrelated to its origin in the 1730s in paper-money minting; now, the feud was between the supporters of the Wards and the supporters of the Hopkins, the policies and political issues were -at best- contingent, and allegiances changed swiftly, like Elisha Brown's coat-turning to the Wards when Samuel became the head of the faction in 1758.<sup>219</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> Lovejoy, David S. *Rhode Island Politics and the American Revolution, 1760-1776*. (Providence, R.I.: Brown University Press) 1958.

<sup>217</sup> Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 6-9

<sup>218</sup> Shannon, *Albany Congress*, 130

<sup>219</sup> Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 11

The structural bases had been set more than a generation prior and had stabilized enough that just like Connecticut,<sup>220</sup> it did not matter what name the factions had, they were recognizable across time and issues. Part of the reason why it was easier for these networks to perpetuate themselves in the geographical nature of the networks, with the Wanton-Brown-Hopkins faction coming from Providence and the Wards coming from Newport; naturally, as time went by, these geographical pillars changed but their effect is remarkable.<sup>221</sup>

The nature of Rhode Island politics, the mercantile leaning of its economy, and the openness of its institutions made it so that its centrally connected nodes intersected with those of other colonies from an early stage – something highly uncharacteristic for North American colonies.<sup>222</sup> Gov. Hopkins' attendance to the Albany Congress as well as the famous libel court case with Ward links him to both Hutchinson and Otis -the heads of Massachusetts political factions in the 60s- as Otis represented him and Edmund Trowbridge represented Ward.<sup>223</sup> Ties with Massachusetts were never as severed as Roger Williams would have had it and they affected the colony for centuries.

This accounts for part of the infamously inconsistent behavior that the colony exhibited during the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>224</sup> The other part is the institutional framework, which guaranteed that the Ministry and the Board of trade had little executive power over the colony: the governor was elected and had no strong executive personality like in other colonies where he was also elected, elections were frequent, and franchise widely distributed. The Imperial government never could get this colony under its thumb and their actions reflect that factual independence.<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>220</sup> See below

<sup>221</sup> Thompson, Mack E. "The Ward-Hopkins Controversy and the American Revolution in Rhode Island: An Interpretation." *The William and Mary Quarterly* 16, no. 3 (1959): 363–75.

<sup>222</sup> Ward, H.M. *Unite or Die": Intercolony Relations, 1690-1763*. (Port Washington, N.Y: Kennikat Press) 1971.

<sup>223</sup> Bicknell, T.W. *The History of the State of Rhode Island and Providence Plantations*. (United States: American Historical Society) 1920.

<sup>224</sup> See: Chapter 1 of Lovejoy's *Rhode Island Politics* for a discussion on Rhode Islandism

<sup>225</sup> Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 73-75

When the Authoritarian Reformers gained power, Rhode Island -maybe even more than any other colony- had much to lose. For its inhabitants it meant a complete revolution in their lives, which would have directly conflicted with their political cultures, their electoral practices, their financial measures, their economic foundations, but also their tradition of self-government. It would have been impossible to conceive of Rhode Island submitting to the Act given that:

Resistance to Great Britain was usually a bi- partisan activity in the Assembly. In this case, however, it was apparent that if any fame or notoriety redounded to the colony for its participation in this first, natively inspired congress of the colonies, the Ward party wanted all the credit.<sup>226</sup>

The chosen delegates were Metcalf Bowler, a successful Newport merchant and Ward partisan, and Henry Ward himself.<sup>227</sup> These two were the direct result of the Ward network, and the Ward-Hopkins networks interactions: Henry was one of the many Wards in Rhode Island government because, since the Wantons came to power, the practice of establishing an heir was made clear and the role of kinship in maintaining political stability were made an imperative. Likewise, Bowler was part of those would-be grandees of Newport who would not have been able to break into the ranks of the elite had he not attached himself politically to the Wards.

The results were obvious as Henry Ward was Secretary of the Colony for 37 years starting in 1760 and from 1767 Bowler was the Speaker of the House. Yet, this was contingent on the Wards being in power when the Crisis broke out, as the products of autocatalytic networks in Rhode Island were in constant contact with other colonies and were strongly in favor of preserving the unique privileges and liberties that the Colony held to be its right.

## 5.12. Connecticut

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<sup>226</sup> Lovejoy, *Rhode Island Politics*, 114

<sup>227</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 88-90





Thus, while, in the 1740s the divide was religion-based, by the 1750s it was about Yale College would be governed and by it was about the various companies that wanted to expand the colony further West.<sup>229</sup>

Here is where the shock of Imperial government was most keenly felt: in the aftermath of the Seven Year's War, the 1763 Proclamation was issued, and the lands West of the dividing line were now off-limits to new settlers.<sup>230</sup> It went flew in the face of the emergence of various settlement companies in various colonies, like the Delaware Company, but it specially aggravated the Susquehannah Company.<sup>231</sup> Both organizations were established as joint ventures that would profit from westward expansion, so when the Imperial government categorically precluded this possibility, the Company's proprietors had no alternative but to fight for the reopening of the frontier. Unable to obtain any victories from the authorities that had created the situation, they decided to make it a political issue that split the political elites in half. Or so it would seem because, in actuality, this split had been ongoing for a long time and reflected the autocatalytic networks in the province.

There were clearly some divisions on the issues, but these division most of the time mirrored the East-West divided that had plagued the Colony for decades. The 1740s only intensified this trend when the East was the main area of propagation of New Lights, while the West was still an Old Light stronghold. The early 1760s saw the -mostly Easterner- supporters of the Susquehannah Company fight for their perceived right to settle and expand Westward over the opposition of men like Gov. Fitch.<sup>232</sup> This fight continued even after the 1763 Proclamation should have ended the

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<sup>229</sup> Zeichner, *Years of Controversy*, 221-222

<sup>230</sup> Calloway, Colin G. *The Scratch of a Pen: 1763 and the Transformation of North America*. Oxford, England ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2006

<sup>231</sup> Boyd, J.P. *The Susquehannah Company: Connecticut's Experiment in Expansion*. (New Haven: Yale University Press) 1935.

<sup>232</sup> Zeichner, *Years of Controversy*, 31-32.

power of the Company, but by then it was a sort of complex organization that could not be dismantled by taking away its future bottom line. Instead, the members persisted and morphed into other types of factions opposing their historical faction in whatever form it took.

A perfect example of biographical autocatalysis, Connecticut was a province that held such a biographical continuity in the various factions that rose up through time as the networks replaced cell after cell until there was nothing left of the old faction, yet the new networks were equally opposed to their old adversaries.

Thus, when time came to select representatives to the SAC the choices reflect the equilibrium that a colony with such lively and likely contentious politics would have: no dominance over the other faction. While Eliphalet Dyer was one of the Proprietors of the Susquehannah Company, an Easterner, and a member of the Council; William Samuel Johnson was part of the Anglican clergy and held a more conservative position than Dyer, as did David Rowland who had studied Theology at Yale.<sup>233</sup>

It was the best choice for a colony that needed to preserve its charter rights while remonstrating for its right: had they nominated three Susquehannah men, the demands made on behalf of CT would have been far more radical; had they been given the power to sign the petitions produced by the Congress, it would have been out of the hands of the Colony's elites; had the delegation been composed only of men like the Johnson and Rowland it is possible that they would have behaved like New Jersey's Speaker Ogden and walked out before the Congress adjourned.

Networks in Connecticut were not fundamentally disturbed nor were they tipped, instead they folded with other colonies' networks and the Colony's production of biographies who would fight

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<sup>233</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 70.

for the self-government that it had enjoyed for a long time facilitated the connection with other networks.

### 5.13. Virginia

Studying Virginia presents interesting questions regarding our subject at hand. Overall, the literature has very few answers to why Virginia behaved like it did in reaction to the Stamp Act.<sup>234</sup> It went from being the ideological center of colonial resistance to being in the minority of colonies that did not send delegates to the SAC- the only major colony among them.<sup>235</sup>

The colony's politics did not have the same long-term structural consistency as others like Rhode Island or Pennsylvania, instead the political fights that came up every now and then functioned as a series of skirmishes between the Virginia elites and the British colonial government through its governors for specific issues. Be it the Two-Penny Act, or the Pistole Fee controversy, there were no parties backing one or the other but rather contingent groupings that supported one or the other. The primary reason for this was the lack of a political culture with a calling for inclusiveness: it was a political class made up of gentlemen farmers that were interested in maintaining their revenues from their plantations and maintaining a relationship of little intervention by the Imperial government.<sup>236</sup>

The Stamp Act did not change the fundamental priorities of the Virginia planters' elite: preserving and expanding the profitability of their plantations. It was no small matter for them, since the

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<sup>234</sup> For example: Kolp, J.G. *Gentlemen and Freeholders: Electoral Politics in Colonial Virginia*. (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press) 1998; Sydnor, C.S. *Gentlemen Freeholders: Political Practices in Washington's Virginia*. (Williamsburg: University of North Carolina Press) 1952; Evans, E. G. *A Topping People: The Rise and Decline of Virginia's Old Political Elite, 1680-1790*. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press) 2009.

<sup>235</sup> Weslager, *Congress*, 99

<sup>236</sup> Emory, *Topping People*, 42-45

scarcity of specie meant that in Virginia, tobacco was often used as currency and its value could have great impact on the political scene -as demonstrated by the Two-Penny Act.<sup>237</sup>

The other fundamental issue for Virginians of the time was the availability of land since that was the source of unlimited wealth that tobacco trade and slaves created for them.

Both had taken strong hits in the years preceding the Stamp Act, but since the Currency Act of 1764 was far more damaging on Virginia, the expected response was that which could be produced by the autocatalytic networks: preservation of the status quo.

While other networks' spillover was knocking on the door of the gentlemen planter elite that made Jefferson a protégé of Fauquier, and Washington almost fully unconcerned about the Stamp Act in the middle of election season, it initially raised concerns but was not enough to tip the networks.

Instead, it disrupted them by introducing biographies such as Patrick Henry's seeking the place of older politicians like Randolph, Bland, and Whyte, who were fundamentally very similar to him.

Virginian men were concerned with their plantation, their education, and their social life above all else.<sup>238</sup> A by-product of the servile economic development, the corollary for this lifestyle was that those that did not have the economic standing to fund this way of life, would be locked out of the elite even if they entered the Assembly.<sup>239</sup>

Virginia's political elite had a high bar for entry precisely because it was not an entry ticket to the Assembly, it was an entry to the embedded social networks that ran the Colony. These functioned under similar codes of conduct and had very similar interests so even the governors with the most detailed instructions could not be expected to follow them and oppose the men who were in control

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<sup>237</sup>Knollenberg, B. *Origin of the American Revolution, 1759-1766*. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund) 2002, 53-64.

<sup>238</sup> Emory, *Topping People*, 147-176.

<sup>239</sup> Sydnor, *Gentlemen Freeholders*, 60-93

of the Province. Such was the case with the Two-Penny Acts that forced the governor to explicitly disregard his instructions by accepting laws without a holding clause.

Politics in Virginia functioned under a gentleman's agreement and breaking it would have had dire consequences as it would break the trust that held the political world in relative harmony at a time when many colonies were engaged in blood-feuds going back generations. It is then a reasonable conjecture that when Gov. Fauquier prorogued the Assembly after the Virginia Resolves were passed by a thinly-attended House, the political leaders who held the reins of power in the House of Burgesses and elsewhere in the Province would not have been in favor of allowing the most radical elements to talk their way into a -likely- illegal, if not outright treasonous, convention of the colonies.

Thus, autocatalytic networks produced yet another gentlemen's agreement that kept the peace in the political elite by not bringing even more undue attention to Virginia.

#### 5.14. American Autocatalysis

When George Grenville decided the expediency of passing a stamp act in the Western colonies, this was the situation in the colonies. It fed the autocatalytic networks that existed in the continent and pushed some of those to invent ways to adapt to this external shock.



underwent some transformations: Pennsylvania saw the Proprietary Party come back from the dead to contend the 1764 election, and make big gains therein, after Pontiac's War, the Paxton Boys Rebellion, and the Paper Money Controversy shook the Colony's anti-Proprietary fights; South Carolina had to contend with Solto's Uprising and then the Cherokee War, which reconfigured the networks in such a way that the elite now became more compact and sought political harmony; Georgia had such a limited lifespan that it was still consolidating its networks and it did so around a protection against the First People's existence on the other side of the frontier.

Meanwhile, in England the crumbling of the Old Corps Whigs (Establishment Whigs) had led to a series of ministries that attempted to pacify George III and pass policies amenable to him and his ego-net. Thus, Pitt resigned, Bute was forced out through sheer repulsion by the still majoritarian Establishment Whigs, and Grenville found himself at the head of a ministry balancing Authoritarian Reformers dear to the King and Establishment Whigs who were craving to regain power.

Furthermore, his position vis-à-vis the King was rather tenuous as the two men did not get along, which meant that he had to rely on his network of political peers -Authoritarian Reformers- and stay further from his origins as an Establishment Whig. The implementation of such reforms as the Stamp Act were the consequence of Grenville getting closer to the Authoritarians, so around him was formed a network of ideas, individuals, and information that pushed out men like Pitt, Pownall, and William Blake, and brought in men like Thomas McCulloh.<sup>240</sup>

With the political necessity of surviving as Prime Minister, the structural pressures to further the Authoritarian agenda, and asymmetric information with the people under him, he pushed through the Stamp Act of 1765.

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<sup>240</sup> High, James. "HENRY McCULLOH: PROGENITOR OF THE STAMP ACT." *The North Carolina Historical Review* 29, no. 1 (1952): 24–38. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23515641>.

Before it had even been passed the Massachusetts General Court had already sent complaints and instructions to its agent in London- just like every other colony in the continent. Among other, this caused political problems already present, when in Massachusetts the Assembly voted to replace Israel Maudit as Agent, sending in his stead Hutchinson. The issue was not quickly resolved and instead it dragged on pitching Hutchinson, Bernard, and Otis until eventually Bernard's man Richard Jackson replaced Maudit, and Hutchinson remained Lt. Governor.

When news of the Act actually reached the shores of the colonies, autocatalytic networks began quivering under the increased clout that Radical Whigs had gained by opposing it. Thus, Patrick Henry, recently elected and coming from outside the inner circle of the Virginia elites, became a hero for Radicals and many opponents of the Act. Maneuvering the Assembly to have it pass a majority of his resolves, the network of printers in the colonies -already threatened by the Act- distributed all over the colonies putting it in front of the eyes of many common citizens. This, however appears to have been a calculated defeat for Patrick's opponents in Virginia as they allowed the Burgesses to be in light attendance by the time the Resolves were voted; that way they could claim to not have obstructed him nor be included in his possible treason, furthermore Fauquier was almost guaranteed to prorogue the House due to Henry's actions. Thus, Virginian elites managed to keep the colony out of the maelstrom of the Crisis- or so they thought.

Instead, it only made the push by Massachusetts -or to be more exact, Massachusetts' Radical Whigs- to gather an intercolonial congress of the thirteen continental colonies in New York -the same colony that had hosted the last intercolonial conference, and the many Covenant Chain conferences- all the more urgent.

While it is clear that the Act was highly unpopular, the reaction to it was consistent with how news of its passage had percolated through the networks: in the Authoritarian networks it was yet another



ministerial instruction that was going to be resisted by the various assemblies and that would eventually be enforced; in the Radical Whig networks it flowed through the various cells and presented them with various opportunities to oppose whomever their particular enemy was. For the Otises it was an opportunity to get back at Bernard for Hutchinson's Superior Court appointment; for South Carolinian assemblymembers it gave them yet another issue to raise against whatever was left of Lt. Gov. Bull's authority whom they knew would be forced to enforce it; for Proprietary politicians and Presbyterians in Pennsylvania it gave them the opportunity to contest the election, which they knew would pit the Quakers as defenders of the Act against them as defenders of liberty. Yet at this point most networks were relatively untouched by the Act or the disturbances it caused, it would take months of continual protest and social unrest<sup>241</sup> force the networks to contend with the various political pressures: Authoritarians would have to find a way to defend their position, Radicals would have to appease the agitated mobs by opposing it to the end, and Establishment Whigs had to choose a political solution that would not overtly compromise them in the eyes of either their colonial bases of support nor those of the Imperial officers that could later on secure a profitable post for them in the future. William Franklin and Francis Bernard chose to not move an inch from Imperial policy; Eliphalet Dyer chose to seek a way to fight back against the British authorities, surely hoping that further cooperation would then lead to unified complaints over the 1763 proclamation; Robert Ogden and Benning Wentworth instead chose the closest solution to the *status quo* that they could by ensuring that their colonies would have the minimum possible representation possible, and the Congress the least effect possible.

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<sup>241</sup> Maier, P. *From Resistance to Revolution; Colonial Radicals and the Development of American Opposition to Britain, 1765-1776*. (New York: Knopf) 1972.

In the eyes of the literature, the latter carried the day as the Stamp Act Congress had very little effect on intercolonial relations, no effect whatsoever in repealing it, and biennial quelling of colonial resistance.

However, the Establishment Whig strategy was doomed to fail because the Authoritarians were categorically refusing to engage with the Congress in any way whatsoever -New York's Colden only complained about it but knew that calling Gen. Gage to detain the Congress would only raise its profile- while the Radicals would jump at the opportunity to engage with other colonies and discuss resistance strategies, which is exactly what Rhode Island and Maryland did. In the end, they were either forced to accept the Radical's actions -like William Samuel Johnson- or openly defy their actions -like Speaker Ogden- and face the wrath of the emboldened Radicals and their mobs.

It went along those lines: the Authoritarians lost more and more ground until they were an absolute minority in government over the next few years relying on a government thousands of miles away for their security that continued to make unworkable demands of them.

Meanwhile, the Radicals found exactly what they wanted: a network of likeminded individuals who were now introduced to their own intracolony networks and allowed them to access an exponentially higher number of weak links.

The move was clearly successful: the Radicals presented themselves as something difficult to quell since it was not outright rebellion nor treason, while they made more allies and acquaintances at an ever-faster rate than the Authoritarians were losing them.

Thus, the Eliphalet Dyer delegation found friends in men like George Bryan who were likewise vexed by the 1763 Proclamation; John Cruger could meet John Dickinson, James Otis, and Metcalf Bowler and establish connection with leading men in extremely Radical cities rocked by mob action to gain information, insights, and counsel on how to deal with the most radicals in the mobs.

Leonard Lispenard and William Bayard could establish contact, epistolary exchanges, and more importantly legitimization by meeting with another Son of Liberty in Christopher Gadsen. The Philip and Robert R Livingston could exchange words with Henry Ward about having their enemy clan be at the head of the opposition and its political repercussions, given that Capt. DeLancey being head of the mob in New York and Gov. Stephen Hopkins was the writer of one of the most important pamphlets of the crisis back in 1764. Pennsylvania and Maryland delegations could discuss the particulars of having a proprietary government and talking through being elected to the same convention by the exact opposite faction in each colony. Finally, James Borden could introduce his son-in-law Thomas McKean to his delegation and vice versa, John Dickison could talk to Caesar Rodney about their shared friend George Read, the Marylanders could see themselves in the South Carolinians, and New England protestants in Pennsylvanian Quakers.

The seeds of colonial unity had been sowed.

Not only do we see this in the biographical continuity with the subsequent Continental Congresses but also these individuals begin to appear in the correspondence of each other after 1765.

All those suppers, discussions, arguments, and shared space led these leaders of the various colonies to integrate each other in their conceptions of the shared continent not as stereotypes of “New Englander men” “Quaker” or “Southerner” but rather as colonial subject with often overlapping interests and ever-more intersecting networks.

## 6. British Politics

While there were many points where the transatlantic networks increased their geodesic distance -for example the governance structures of the colonies- in one key aspect the diameter of the British Atlantic autocatalytic system was quite reduced: ideology.

While the Padgett autocatalytic model does not yet fully account for it, in this story it is inevitable since the British Atlantic World had the particular trait of ideological consonance. Bailyn's landmark work shines a light on the important moment when this consonance ended and trust between the metropolis and colonies was broken, and while the "conspiracy mentality" has been a useful framework to examine how radicalism was manifested, it is fully insufficient to explain the further developments. Here, Justin DuRivage's monograph<sup>242</sup>, but also Greene<sup>243</sup> and Olson<sup>244</sup> before him fill the gap by linking English and Colonial politics under his tripartite framework of authoritarian reformers, establishment Whigs, and radical Whigs. With his study, we have been able to see that the ideological gap is not so much between the "Americans" and the "British" but between the radical Whigs and both the reformers and establishment Whigs.

We can see fully fledged how this took shape in the colonial side of the Atlantic, where individuals who had grand plans for the reformation of the Empire -like Gov. Bernard and Dulany- became loyalists and radical Whigs -like John Hancock and Phillip Hammond- spearheaded the Revolutionary movement.

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<sup>242</sup> DuRivage, *Revolution against Empire, passim*

<sup>243</sup> Greene, J. P. "Political Mimesis: A Consideration of the Historical and Cultural Roots of Legislative Behavior in the British Colonies in the Eighteenth Century." *The American Historical Review* 75, no. 2 (1969): 337-60

<sup>244</sup> Olson, A.G. *Anglo-American Politics, 1660-1775: The Relationship Between Parties in England and Colonial America*. (London: Oxford University Press) 1973.

Yet that development is beyond the scope of our work, instead what it can allow us to see is how British semantic networks had an important effect in shaping the battle lines that the other autocatalytic flows were creating.

For example, if we take the case of John Dickinson, we will see that his ideology as set out in his *Letters* is not very different from Pitt's on the other side of the Atlantic, and like the former his opposition to the act was fervent but also conditioned by the structural constraints of the year 1765, thus when the situation changed, the Crisis subsided, and the networks transformed, Pitt became the head of the ministry that imposed the Townshend duties and Dickinson Adams' greatest foe in the Continental Congress. Likewise, if we examine the discourses that Hancock and Wilkes had, we will encounter great similarities. Finally, Bernard and Dulany's version of the British Empire was already quite close to that of a Lord North or a Grenville so when the Revolution became bellicose it is unsurprising that the Dulany would remain on the side of the Metropolis.

While, by the end of the Stamp Act Congress, not much was set in stone -much less predestined, like the literature seems to believe- but there was a path-dependency forming among the semantic networks of the British World.

As with other aspects of this study, it would require an *ad hoc* work on the subject to fully unravel the corollaries of these networks, but for now, it suffices to say that reconciling politics with a form of network ideology is a *sine qua non* for the study of the British 18<sup>th</sup> century and that British autocatalytic networks often transformed *because* of it more than ideology changing as a consequence of networks folding.

## 7. Epilogue: The Continental Congresses

After the Stamp Act was repealed and calm returned to the colonies, autocatalytic networks did what they were supposed to with the then-current political stability and consolidated themselves by strengthening those transcolonial links, pushing information and ideas that would percolate for two years until the Townshend Acts were passed, and tipping those networks that were incompatible with the new situation. Bernard lasted a mere three years after repeal, Benjamin was able to come back from being the Royalist politician to being a Continental Congressman, Thomas Hancock repudiated his father's political leanings in the Council and became the leader of the Boston mob, South Carolina -tasked in the SAC with passing onto NC and GA the resolutions- strengthened ties with the Southern colonies, Proprietary fights in PA and MD became secondary to Imperial regulation versus colonial resistance, and colony after colony began doing away with what was left of the Authoritarian Reformers, and forcing the Establishment Whigs to take sides. Politics were no longer about colonial issues, they were about how the colonies would react to the Authoritarians in the Ministry.

That the response to the Townshend Acts was non-importation shows how confident the Radicals were in their effectiveness as it would have required coordination and unity to make them work. The fact that the Ministry caved before the Radicals did is a sign of something that the SAC could not - apparently- claim: success.

When King George's ministries kept pushing one after the other the same policies and Non-importation had lost its edge, no solutions were left, so the one logical action short of rebellion was to do what they had done in 1765, call an intercontinental congress.

This time, twelve out of the thirteen colonies that eventually declared Independence in 1776 attended. Even through the vastly different political circumstances of 1774, nine delegates to the SAC were also delegates to the First Continental Congress. Three of them died before the First Continental. That means that 36% of the entire SAC was part of the next Continental Congress. The biographical continuity ends there, but biographical autocatalysis does not, since in the First Continental Samuel Ward (Former Governor and Henry Ward's more successful brother) was elected to this body, and Robert R Livingston "The Chancellor" son of the eponymous SAC delegate was elected to the Second Continental. George Read was elected to the First Continental, thereby filling the third position that Speaker Kollock had filled and then not used in 1765- his presence there is due to biographical autocatalysis since he was such a close collaborator of McKean and Rodney that if Speaker Kollock had not taken the third slot, it probably would have gone to Read.

If we take into the account the differences between the two bodies, we will find that once we take out the members from the colonies that were not present in the SAC, the members who died (or were close to dying) and close collaborators of members of SAC delegates, the percentage of biographical continuity between the two Congresses rises to 53%.

The leadership taken by the Continental Congress and the continuity of membership between the two bodies is the most definitive evidence of the impact that the Stamp Act Congress had, one that went beyond its immediate impact, but one that definitively changed American history and the history of the World with it.

## 8. Conclusions

These strands that came together in the Stamp Act Congress had not been created by a manifest destiny or by divine providence, instead they were the product of autocatalytic networks that had rearranged themselves over the past two decades and were starting to put out production and biographies that separately would have maintained the existence of several autocatalytic networks within the North American Continent, but that together would fold in a way that gave rise to colonial unity- first by unifying social networks, then by homologizing semantic networks, and finally by causing organizational innovation when Independence was declared and the Confederation was established.

Emergence is never immediate; likewise, colonial unity emerged over many striking events, network tipping, and biographical replacement, yet its most significant moment came in 1765 when the various autocatalytic networks present in the British North American Colonies folded as they intersected each other during the Stamp Act Congress. The events that followed speak to this importance.

In the Americas, Britain had 22 colonies that went as far up North as Newfoundland, and as far South as Jamaica, yet in 1776 only thirteen of those declared independence from Great Britain and established a confederation of states that culminated in the foundation of the federal nation-state of the United States of America. In the complex history of intercolonial relations preceding the First Continental Congress (the first great *American* landmark, if most of the literature is to be believed) there had been few moments that involved various continental colonies, however, the first one to directly involve all of them, and the only one that had a lasting impact was the Stamp Act Congress.



After it we see a biographical continuity with the subsequent intercolonial congresses and later in the American Congresses.

Had there been no Stamp Act Congress and had each colony responded to the Act in its own individual way like they did to the Sugar and Paper Money acts, there is no way to know exactly what would have happened, but it is clear that the individual network transformations that eventually led to the wholesale network tipping event that we call the American Revolution would not have been built, instead governors could have banded together to push for a version of Bernard's plan for colonial reform, the Authoritarian ministry under the auspices of the King would have consented and today's Bostonians would going up buildings using lifts.<sup>245</sup>

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<sup>245</sup> This argument is not novel in itself, William H. Nelson had already made a similar argument -albeit with radically different ideas and evidence- in *The American Tory*, where he posited that it was the lack of intercolonial links between the loyalists that led to the victory of the radicals. Nelson, William H. *The American Tory*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 14.

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## 10. Table of Contents

### Contents

1. Overture, or Introduction.....	5
1.1. “Literature Review” .....	9
1.2. Everyone Forgets about the First Continental Congress .....	11
1.3. The Dynamics of Social Life .....	20
1.4. “That’s How the Cookie Crumbles...” .....	21
1.5. Conflict of Interests .....	22
1.6. Autocatalysis .....	23
1.7. Hypothesis .....	25
1.8. Methodology.....	26
2. The Organizational Innovation of the United States, or Only Rip van Winkle was Right.....	27
2.1. The Demographics of the Late 18 <sup>th</sup> Century.....	28
2.2. Novelty .....	30
2.3. The Revolution’s Bounds.....	32
3. The Stamp Act Congress and Systemic Innovation.....	34
3.1. A Note on Revolutions.....	34
4. British Autocatalysis, or <i>Ex Coloniis America</i> .....	36
4.1. The Structure of English Networks .....	36
4.2. Folding under Royal Pressure.....	38
4.3. The British World is Elected Anew.....	41
4.4. The Crisis .....	44
5. Out of Many... ..	45
5.1. Pennsylvania .....	45
5.2. New York.....	50
5.3. New Jersey .....	55

5.4.	Maryland.....	57
5.5.	New Hampshire .....	61
5.6.	Massachusetts .....	63
5.7.	South Carolina.....	70
5.8.	North Carolina .....	75
5.9.	Georgia .....	77
5.10.	Delaware.....	79
5.11.	Rhode Island.....	84
5.12.	Connecticut.....	87
5.13.	Virginia.....	91
5.14.	American Autocatalysis.....	93
6.	British Politics .....	100
7.	Epilogue: The Continental Congresses.....	102
8.	Conclusions .....	104
9.	Bibliography.....	106
	Unedited Primary Sources.....	106
	Secondary Literature and Edited Primary Sources .....	107
10.	Table of Contents.....	123