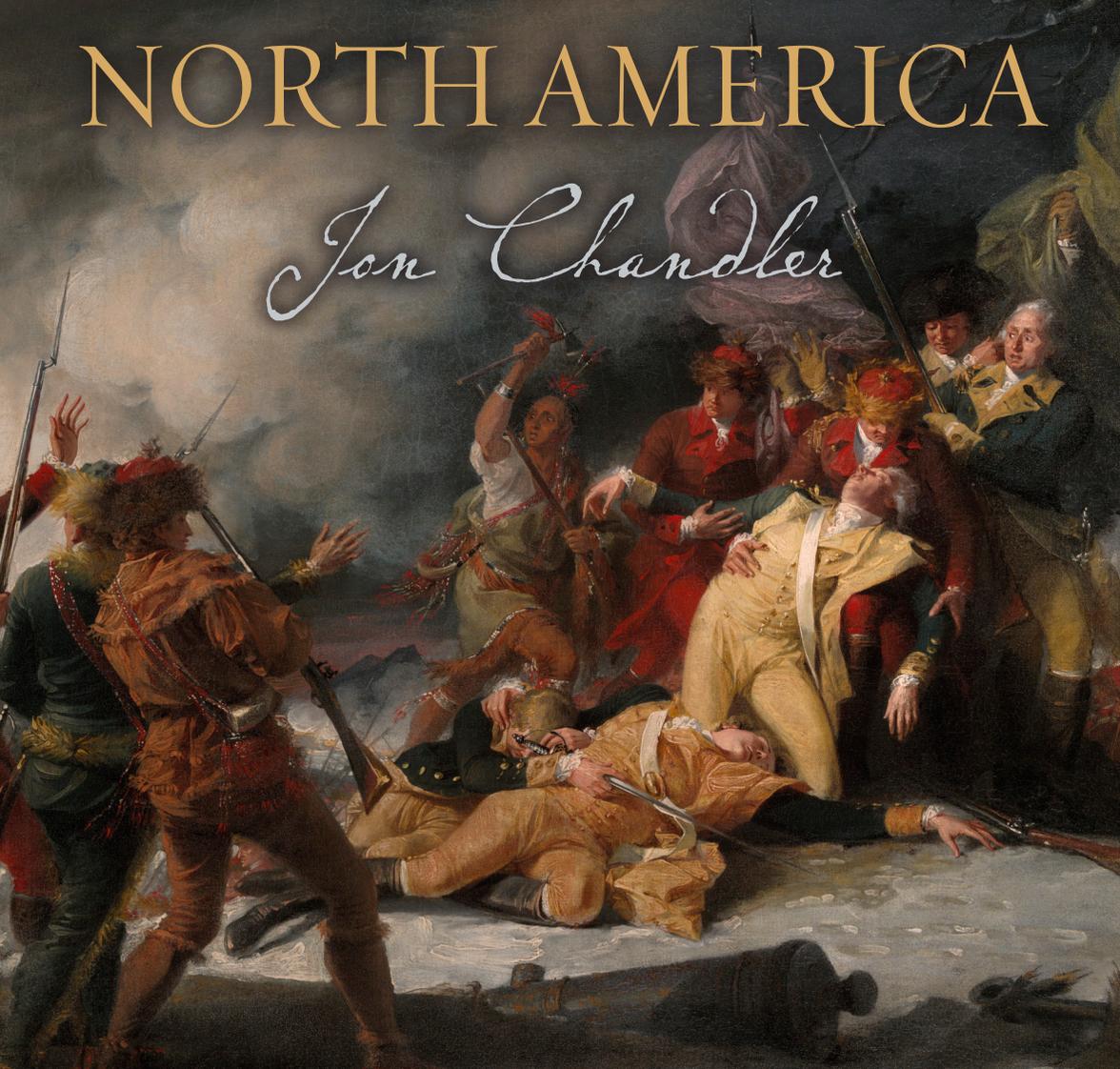


WAR, PATRIOTISM
AND IDENTITY
IN
REVOLUTIONARY
NORTH AMERICA

Jon Chandler



War, Patriotism and Identity in
Revolutionary North America



North America during the American Revolutionary War, 1775–1783

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Identity in Revolutionary
North America

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Abbreviations

BL	British Library, London
GLC	Gilder Lehrman Collection, New York
<i>GWP</i>	W.W. Abbot et al. (eds) <i>The Papers of George Washington: Revolutionary War Series</i> (25 vols to date, Charlottesville, Va., 1987–)
<i>GWW</i>	John C. Fitzpatrick (ed.) <i>The Writings of George Washington from the Original Manuscript Sources, 1745–1799</i> (39 vols, Washington, D.C., 1931–44)
<i>JAP</i>	Robert J. Taylor et al. (eds) <i>The Papers of John Adams</i> (18 vols to date, Cambridge, Mass., 1977–)
<i>JCC</i>	Worthington C. Ford et al. (eds) <i>Journals of the Continental Congress, 1774–1789</i> (34 vols, Washington, D.C., 1904–37)
LC	Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.
<i>LDC</i>	Paul H. Smith et al. (eds) <i>Letters of Delegates to Congress, 1774–1789</i> (26 vols, Washington, D.C., 1976–2000)
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
NARA	National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, D.C.
NEHGS	New England Historical and Genealogical Society, Boston
<i>NGP</i>	Richard Showman and Dennis M. Conrad (eds) <i>The Papers of Nathanael Greene</i> (13 vols, Chapel Hill, N.C., 1976–2005)
NYHS	New York Historical Society
NYPL	New York Public Library
<i>PMHB</i>	<i>Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography</i>

- RWPF Revolutionary War Pension and Bounty-Land-Warrant
Application Files (M804)
- VMHB* *Virginia Magazine of History and Biography*
- WMQ* *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3rd series

Introduction

Three months after the first shots of the American Revolutionary War were fired at Lexington on 19 April 1775, Christopher Vail left his home on Long Island to join the Continental Army. Aged 17, he spent the next three years in almost continual military service with a range of continental, state, and militia units. Vail served in regiments raised in both New York and Connecticut, and never left those states. However, in the summer of 1778, he chose to enlist on a thirty-gun privateer. While Vail did not share the reasoning behind this decision, he was probably enticed by the pecuniary reward. Nor was service at sea likely to be an unknown quantity, since before the war Vail's father had operated a merchant vessel. Six months into the voyage the privateer was intercepted by a British schooner in the Caribbean, and Vail found himself imprisoned in Antigua. After a period of confinement, he resolved to cut short his stay by enlisting on a merchantman sailing for Britain. Over the next three years Vail served across the Atlantic with a variety of British and American privateering vessels. Vail was routinely 'examined' by his new employers, and questioned on his regional and political background. Upon joining a British privateer, one of Vail's comrades explained that he was not a rebel because he was not only 'willing to fight the French and Spaniards' but also 'willing to fight the Americans'. Throughout his narrative, Vail identified himself variously as an American, a Yankee, and a New Yorker as his service took him to Lisbon, Cadiz, Bordeaux, Salem, and New York. Like many British Americans, Vail was unable to separate the war from the question of his identity.¹

The American Revolutionary War divided friends, families, and communities, and ultimately tore apart the British Empire. The imperial crisis had weakened political loyalties, but most British Americans still considered themselves to be proud Britons and faithful subjects of the king. When the political dispute became violent, it was not clear how British Americans would respond, or whether a majority would even support the conflict.

1. Christopher Vail Journal, 1775–1782, LC.

These questions became even more significant on 4 July 1776 when the contest transformed from a war of reconciliation to a war of independence. However, the fight was far from over, and for revolutionary leaders securing popular support for the war became more important than ever.

Winning the war was entrusted to the men and women of the Continental Army. The congressional delegates who created the institution imagined an army that would represent the continent, its interests, and its people, who would unite in support of its continental cause. The war, they hoped, would encourage the diverse population of British America to imagine themselves as a continental people, represented in the fight by the Continental Army. ‘We Should not Consider ourselves inhabitants of a Parish, a County or a Colony,’ James Hendricks of the First Virginia Regiment urged his men two months prior to the Declaration of Independence, ‘but of the great Continent of America.’²

This image dominated popular print throughout the American Revolutionary War. Pamphlets, plays, and poems informed British Americans from north to south that the fate of the continent depended on the Continental Army achieving victory. The performance of celebratory and commemorative rituals reinforced this message in the public sphere. The Continental Army of the popular imagination consisted of a people united by the continental cause.

However, for those who called the army home, the reality was somewhat different. The army’s ability to create continental connections among its soldiers was limited. Instead, their sense of community was nurtured by military culture. Through the course of the war, the soldiers of the Continental Army considered themselves as members of a transnational community of military professionals, neglected by civil society. Those civilians who encountered the army during the course of the war were likely to share this interpretation of the army as a distinct military community rather than representative of the continental as a whole.

I

The study of the American Revolution has traditionally focused on explaining its causes and consequences, while the process of the Revolutionary

2. James Hendricks to Leven Powell, 24 May 1776, Leven Powell Papers, 1775–1827, LC.

War was treated largely by military historians from a battlefield perspective. Even one of the most impressive and extensive recent metanarratives of the Revolution, Gordon Wood's *Radicalism of the American Revolution* (1992), spares only a few pages to discuss the eight years of the Revolutionary War.³ However, over the last thirty years or so the problems associated with the prolonged military contest and its effects on Americans have received serious attention from scholars.⁴

This book is a contribution to this field. It is a study of the military culture of the Continental Army and its representation in popular contemporary discourse. It builds on a trend of recent analyses that have emphasised the significance of conceptions of honour, whiteness, and masculinity among the men of the Continental Army, but broadens the scope of investigation by examining the image of the army among both those within and outside the army.⁵

The relationship between the Continental Army and the people of the thirteen colonies of British North America that became the United States was first addressed by David Ramsay, who lived through the American Revolution and served in both the Continental Congress and the South Carolina legislature. In 1789, Ramsay published one of the earliest and most important histories of the Revolution. Ramsay, in an appendix that considered the 'influence' of the Revolution 'on the minds and morals of the

3. Gordon S. Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York, 1992), 247–50.

4. John Shy, *A People Numerous and Armed: Reflections on the Military Struggle for North America* (New York, 1976); Richard Buel, *Dear Liberty: Connecticut's Mobilisation for the Revolutionary War* (Middletown, Conn., 1980); Allan Kulikoff, *From British Peasants to Colonial American Farmers* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2000), 255–88; Wayne Bodle, *The Valley Forge Winter: Civilians and Soldiers in War* (University Park, Pa., 2002); Michael A. McDonnell, *The Politics of War: Race, Class, and Conflict in Revolutionary Virginia* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2007); John Resch and Walter Sargent (eds) *War and Society in the American Revolution* (DeKalb, Ill., 2007). For an astute analysis of the impact of the war on Britain, see Stephen Conway, *The British Isles and the War of American Independence* (Oxford, 2000).

5. For honour, see Caroline Cox, *A Proper Sense of Honour: Service and Sacrifice in George Washington's Army* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2004). For whiteness, see Gregory T. Knouff, *The Soldiers' Revolution: Pennsylvanians in Arms and Forging of Early American Identity* (University Park, Pa., 2004). For masculinity, see John A. Ruddiman, *Becoming Men of Some Consequence: Youth and Military Service in the Revolutionary War* (Charlottesville, Va., 2014).

Citizens', was one of the first to consider the effect of the war on identity. The war was accompanied by the 'vast expansion of the human mind', he wrote. 'A continental army,' he continued, 'composed of men from all the States, by freely mixing together, were assimilated into one mass.' Soldiers, by 'mingling with the citizens', wore away 'local prejudices', and established the foundations 'for the establishment of a nation'. The very existence of the Continental Army, then, may have changed people's understandings of self-definition. However, Ramsay raised an intriguing caveat. 'As the war was the people's war,' he explained, it was necessary for the political and military leaders of the revolutionary movement to 'rouse and unite the inhabitants... with the hope of obtaining remote advantages for their posterity', which 'was a work of difficulty' and 'was effected in a great measure by the tongues and pens of the well informed citizens, and on it depended the success of military operations'. Therefore, according to Ramsay, the 'vast expansion' of the popular imagination was both a cause and a consequence of the war itself.⁶

Little more thought was given to the topic until Charles Royster's influential study, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (1979). Royster, too, recognised an 'expansion of the human mind' among the men who fought, and reserved his criticism for

6. David Ramsay, *The History of the American Revolution*, ed. Lester H. Cohen (2 vols, Indianapolis, Ind., 1990), 631, 633–4. For the significance of Ramsay's history in the definition of early American identity, see Arthur H. Shaffer, *To Be An American: David Ramsay and the Making of American Consciousness* (Columbia, S.C., 1991); Peter C. Messer, 'From a Revolutionary History to a History of Revolution: David Ramsay and the American Revolution', *Journal of the Early Republic*, 22: 2 (2002), 205–33. Ramsay's theme was subject to some debate among his contemporaries. A year earlier, Benjamin Rush had commented that, far from the American Revolution being concluded, the war had merely been 'the first act of the great drama. We have changed our forms of government, but it remains yet to effect a revolution in our principles, opinions, and manners.' Rush believed it was only by a republican education that 'the youth of all the States may be melted (as it were) together into one mass of citizens'. Some thirty years later, John Adams posed the question: 'What do we mean by the American Revolution? Do we mean the American war?' In contrast to Ramsay and Rush, Adams concluded that 'The Revolution was effected before the war commenced. The Revolution was in the minds and hearts of the people... This radical change in the principles, opinions, sentiments, and affections of the people, was the real American Revolution.' Rush to Richard Price, 25 May 1786, *Letters to and from Richard Price, 1767–1790* (Cambridge, Mass., 1903), 85; Adams to Hezekiah Niles, 13 February 1818, *The Works of John Adams, Second President of the United States*, ed. Charles F. Adams (10 vols, Boston, 1856), 10: 282.

those whose neglect had caused the army to suffer.⁷ Royster chronicled how popular support for the army travelled from euphoric enthusiasm in the first year of the war to ambivalence and mistrust by the last. Struck by the disparity in the army's relationship with the people it represented, Royster argued that victory was ultimately due to the 'superior patriotism' of honourable officers and idealistic soldiers, whose attributes and character distinguished them not only from their European opponents but also the disinterested populace as a whole.⁸

Although it remains the most significant examination of the relationship between the army and the people of the United States, Royster's analysis raises some questions. Royster's dismissal of social studies for discounting the idealism of soldiers and for stressing their materialistic motives has received particular attention from scholars.⁹ More problematic is his assumption that there was a singular 'American national character' predicated on popular support for the American cause. While Royster admits this is a central premise of his argument, he fails to specify what that character is or to whom it

7. Charles M. Royster, *A Revolutionary People at War: The Continental Army and American Character, 1775–1783* (New York, 1979), 245.

8. Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 314.

9. Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, 373–8. Royster argued that self-interest did not explain why soldiers persisted in the army, and directly addressed the statistical analyses of Edward C. Papenfuss and Gregory A. Stiverson, 'General Smallwood's Recruits: The Peacetime Career of the Revolutionary War Private', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 30 (1973), 117–32; Mark E. Lender, 'The Enlisted Line: The Continental Soldiers of New Jersey', PhD dissertation, Rutgers University, 1975; Robert A. Gross, *The Minutemen and Their World* (New York, 1976); John R. Sellers, 'The Common Soldier in the American Revolution', in S.J. Underdal (ed.) *Military History of the American Revolution: Proceedings of the Sixth Military History Symposium, USAF Academy* (Washington, D.C., 1976), 151–61. Subsequent studies, in direct response to Royster's argument, attempted to conclusively demonstrate the lower-class origins of revolutionary soldiers: see James Kirkby Martin and Mark E. Lender, *A Respectable Army: The Military Origins of the Republic, 1763–1789* (Arlington, Ill., 1982); Charles P. Neimeyer, *America Goes to War: A Social History of the Continental Army* (New York, 1996). However, by expanding the debate to include the militia and state troops, recent studies have suggested that the decline of popular enthusiasm for military service after 1776 might be exaggerated: see Sargent, 'The Massachusetts Rank and File of 1777', in Resch and Sargent, *War and Society*, 42–69; Resch, 'The Revolution as a People's War: Mobilization in New Hampshire', in Resch and Sargent, *War and Society*, 70–102.

belongs.¹⁰ In his analysis, the war is a contest between peoples, Americans and Britons, invaders and invaded. Loyalists are indistinguishable from Britons. Royster does not appreciate that the distinction between loyalist and whig was fluid and interchangeable, or that it was possible for people to become genuinely apathetic and indifferent to the revolutionary contest.

Royster is far from the only historian to equate the Revolutionary War with a conflict for national liberation. Indeed, in the popular imagination the United States was created as Americans united and inspired by egalitarian ideals swept aside a foreign monarchy. This perspective is shaped by histories focused on well-known political and military leaders such as George Washington, Thomas Jefferson, and John Adams, whose views are assumed to be representative of most Americans.¹¹ However, as scholarship has established that the settlers of British North America continued to consider themselves as Britons until the outbreak of the American Revolution, and even beyond, historians have begun to address the war as an increasingly acrimonious and multidimensional civil contest.¹² From this perspective, the com-

10. Royster, *A Revolutionary People*, viii, 3, 23. This criticism is also raised by Sung Bok Kim, 'The Continental Army and the American People: A Review Essay', *New York History*, 63 (1982), 460–9.

11. Popular histories that written from this perspective emerge in a continuous flood, but some of the more notable scholarly works include Edmund S. Morgan, *The Birth of the Republic, 1763–1789* (Chicago, 1956, rev. edn, 1992); Bernard Bailyn, *The Ideological Origins of the American Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 1967, rev. edn, 1992); Robert Middlekauff, *The Glorious Cause: The American Revolution, 1763–1789* (New York, 1982); Wood, *Radicalism*. See also Edwin G. Burrows and Michael Wallace, 'The American Revolution: The Ideology and Psychology of National Liberation', *Perspectives in American History*, 6 (1972), 167–306.

12. For colonial Britishness, see Jack P. Greene, *Peripheries and Center: Constitutional Development in the Extended Politics of the British Empire and the United States, 1607–1788* (Athens, Ga., 1986), and 'Empire and Identity from the Glorious Revolution to the American Revolution', in P.J. Marshall (ed.) *The Eighteenth Century*, vol. 2 of *The Oxford History of the British Empire* (Oxford, 1998), 208–30; Michael Zuckerman, 'Identity in British America: Unease in Eden', in Nicholas Canny and Anthony Pagden (eds) *Colonial Identity in the Atlantic World, 500–1800* (Princeton, 1987), 115–57; John M. Murrin, 'A Roof without Walls: The Dilemma of American National Identity', in Richard Beeman, Stephen Botein, and Edward C. Carter II (eds) *Beyond Confederation: Origins of the Constitution and American National Identity* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1987), 333–48; T.H. Breen, 'Ideology and Nationalism on the Eve of the American Revolution: Revisions Once More in Need of Revising', *Journal of American History*, 84: 1 (1997), 13–39; Brendan McConville,

plex and often difficult relationship between the army and the people begins to seem less surprising. After all, there was no reason why the Continental Army, having been created by the Continental Congress, a transcolonial institution that had been in existence for less than a year, should secure the significant support from people who were citizens of a colony and subjects of an empire.

Just as there was no single ‘national character,’ nor a single experience of war, there was no single way that the Continental Army was perceived by the people of British North America. Perceptions were shaped by understandings of political, religious, or moral ideologies, and by conceptions of personal or communal interests. Different people, at different places, at different times, articulated different thoughts, feelings and responses. It is important to acknowledge the diversity of wartime experiences, while highlighting similarities and connections.

II

Identities are not always easy to uncover. The majority of British North Americans did not offer us any testimony of their lives, and even those who did leave a written record did not necessarily register their inner thoughts and feelings. Nonetheless, there is evidence that can be gained from the writings of contemporaries, often on tangential topics, and that can be inferred from their actions. Collective identities were many and varied, and by no means exclusive. A perception of belonging to community, locality, region,

The King's Three Faces: The Rise and Fall of Royal America, 1688–1776 (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006). Jon Butler contests this view, arguing that an American nationality had emerged long before the Revolution: see *Becoming America: The Revolution Before 1776* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000). For studies of the war as a civil contest, often written from an Atlantic perspective, see Andrew O’Shaughnessy, *An Empire Divided: The American Revolution and the British Caribbean* (Philadelphia, 2000); Brendan Simms, *Three Victories and a Defeat: The Rise and Fall of the First British Empire, 1714–1783* (London, 2007); Wim Klooster, *Revolutions in the Atlantic World: A Comparative History* (New York, 2009); David Armitage, ‘Succession and the Civil War’, in Don H. Doyle (ed.) *Secession as an International Phenomenon: From America's Civil War to Contemporary Separatist Movements* (Athens, Ga., 2010), 47–9; T.H. Breen, *American Insurgents, American Patriots: The Revolution of the People* (New York, 2010); Stephen Conway, *A Short History of the Revolutionary War* (London, 2013).

continent, or nation, existed alongside other senses of belonging such as to a family, ethnicity, gender, class, profession, or religion. In trying to understand the relationship between these identities, some scholars have conceived of ‘concentric loyalties’, with identities nested inside each other like matryoshka dolls.¹³ However, this could easily imply a form of ranking, or hierarchy, when the relationship was often far more fluid. Identities were not so much inherent characteristics as tools that were developed, melded, and deployed as and when they became useful.¹⁴

Nationalism could be one way to address the relationship between identities and the perception of belonging to a community. The work of Benedict Anderson has probably been the most influential on our understanding of national consciousness in the Americas. Anderson defined the nation as ‘an imagined political community’. It is ‘imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign’, or in other words is territorially finite, and is a community where most of its members will never know each other. Anderson argued that the increasing availability of printed material enabled people to think about themselves and their relationships to others in new ways, creating new ideas of social space. Anderson emphasised the importance of print culture in fostering a sense of community among the ‘original Thirteen Colonies’, arguing that their compact nature and the accessibility of their market centres allowed their populations to be closely connected by print and commerce. This ‘print capitalism’ allowed colonists to imagine themselves as a political community.¹⁵ Anderson’s argument has plenty of pitfalls. Among

13. The term is outlined by Anthony D. Smith in *The Ethnic Origins of Nations* (London, 1986) and *National Identity* (London, 1991).

14. My understanding of identities draws on Philip Gleason, ‘Identifying Identity: A Semantic History’, *Journal of American History*, 69 (1983), 910–31; Stuart Hall, ‘Introduction: Who Needs “Identity?”’, in Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay (eds) *Questions of Cultural Identity* (London, 1996), 1–17; James D. Fearon, ‘What is Identity (as we now use the word)?’, unpublished manuscript, Stanford University, 1999; Rogers Brubaker and Fredrick Cooper, ‘Beyond “Identity”’, *Theory and History*, 29 (2000), 1–47; Stephen Conway, *Britain, Ireland, and Continental Europe in the Eighteenth Century: Similarities, Connections, Identities* (Oxford, 2011).

15. Benedict R. Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1983, rev. edn, 2006), 6–7, 36–46, 63–6. The literature on nationalism is vast. Important general accounts include E.J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780: Programme, Myth, Reality* (Cambridge, 1990); Liah Greenfeld, *Nationalism: Five Roads to Modernity* (Cambridge, Mass., 1992); Rogers Brubaker, *Nationalism Reframed Nationhood and the National Question in*

them, he does not take heed of the British colonies in Canada and the West Indies, and he does not consider the transatlantic flow of print capitalism. Others have questioned whether colonists shared a common print culture, rather than a fragmented world where local printers served local readers.¹⁶ Nonetheless his argument is still valuable, particularly his notions on the role of the imagination.

This book does not offer a comprehensive re-evaluation of Anderson's argument, nor does it dive into shifting scholarly debates on the definition and constitution of a 'nation'. Rather, it seeks to broaden our focus by exploring how Americans understood their relationship to a physical place: the North American continent. Building on recent scholarship, I argue that an imagined geographical community was constructed around perceptions of continental commonality and difference.¹⁷ Americans were well aware of the continental divisions of the earth, and their geographical perceptions

the New Europe (Cambridge, 1996). Many studies of the development of national identity in the United States focus on the early republic: see, for example, David Waldstreicher, *In the Midst of Perpetual Fetes: The Making of American Nationalism, 1776–1820* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1997); Jürgen Heideking, Geneviève Fabre, and Kai Dreisbach (eds) *Celebrating Ethnicity and Nation: American Festive Culture from the Revolution to the Early 20th Century* (Oxford, 2001); A.W. Robertson, "Look on This Picture... And on This!" Nationalism, Localism, and Partisan Images of Otherness in the United States, 1787–1820', *American Historical Review*, 106 (2001), 1263–80. For discussion of nationalism in the period before the constitution, see Murrin, 'Roof without Walls'; Butler, *Becoming America*; T.H. Breen, 'Interpreting New World Nationalism', in Don H. Doyle and Marco Antonio Pamplona (eds) *Nationalism in the New World* (Athens, Ga., 2006), 41–60; Jack P. Greene, 'State and National Identities in the Era of the American Revolution', in Doyle and Pamplona, *Nationalism in the New World*, 61–79.

16. This critique draws on Ed White, 'Early American Nations as Imagined Communities', *American Quarterly*, 56 (2004), 49–81; Jennifer Rose Mercieca, 'Choice, Loyalty and Safety in the Construction of a Distinctly American Imagined Nationalism', *Rhetoric & Public Affairs*, 9 (2006), 279–302.

17. D.W. Meinig, *The Shaping of America, volume 1: Atlantic America, 1492–1800* (London, 1986); Marc Egnal, *A Mighty Empire: The Origins of the American Revolution* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1988); Jack P. Greene, *The Intellectual Construction of America: Exceptionalism and Identity from 1492 to 1800* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1993); Martin Brückner, *The Geographic Revolution in Early America: Maps, Literacy, and National Identity* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 2006); James D. Drake, *The Nation's Nature: How Continental Presumptions Gave Rise to the United States of America* (Charlottesville, Va., 2011).

guided their ideas and actions. Thomas Paine's popular *Common Sense* exhorted in one of its most resounding passages that it was 'absurd' for 'a continent to be perpetually governed by an island'. For 'as England and America, with respect to each other, reverse the common order of Nature, it is evident they belong to different systems; England to Europe, America to itself'.¹⁸

However, in attempting to uncover how colonists identified with a particular place historians have to be careful not to project modern conceptions onto the past. One scholar calls even the colony a 'fabricated region', arguing that these were less important to eighteenth-century Americans than they are to modern historians.¹⁹ Migrations, economies, and societies transcended colonial boundaries, which were themselves at times fluid and contested. Broader frameworks could offer a viable alternative. Regional analyses are one option, but they too have been accused of anachronism, as the coherence of regional societies and cultures often fall apart upon closer inspection.²⁰ Paine and others envisioned a continental society, although it was geographically ill-defined. After all, continents in the eighteenth century did not have standard definitions or boundaries. Nonetheless, the imagined continent provided a canvas for colonists to imagine a shared identification with a place. It was 'the great Continent of America,' rather than their county or their colony, which the men of the First Virginia Regiment were urged to consider as their community and their home.²¹

It is people, then, and their thoughts and ideas, that are at the centre of this project. My analysis is based on a loose division between those I call soldiers and those I call civilians. There is no shortage of problems and inaccuracies with these terms, not least because distinctions between combatants and non-combatants were not firmly established during the eighteenth century.²² The fratricidal nature of the conflict in America complicated matters further. The universal male obligation to defend one's community by serving

18. Thomas Paine, *Common Sense* (Philadelphia, 1776), 25.

19. Wayne Bodle, 'The Fabricated Region: On the Insufficiency of "Colonies" for Understanding American Colonial History', *Early American Studies*, 1 (2003), 1–27.

20. Michael Zuckerman, 'Regionalism', in Daniel Vickers (ed.) *A Companion to Colonial America* (Malden, Mass., 2003), 311–33.

21. James Hendricks to Leven Powell, 24 May 1776, Leven Powell Papers, 1775–1827, LC.

22. Geoffrey Parker, 'Early Modern Europe', in Michael Howard, George J. Andreopoulos, and Mark R. Shulman (eds) *The Laws of War: Constraints on Warfare*

in the militia held particular relevance in North America and meant that many men we might regard as civilians received military training and bore arms, although many of these militia units were as much political or social entities as military institutions.²³ Officers of both sides frequently struggled to distinguish soldier from civilian.²⁴

However, although the term ‘civilian’ is an anachronism, Americans as well as Europeans understood that there were distinctions between those who fought and those who did not, created by location, occupation, and social status, as well as gender and age.²⁵ When soldiers wrote about civilians it was often in terms of the geographical context in which they encountered them, as ‘country people’, or ‘inhabitants’. Emer de Vattel, a contemporary theorist, suggested that all inhabitants in enemy territory be considered enemies, but emphasised that they should not participate in hostilities. Vattel believed that women and children should be offered protection, as should all inhabitants, provided they submitted to the enemy.²⁶ Whether they had read Vattel or not, soldiers habitually treated inhabitants differently if they were operating behind enemy lines, when often the possession of a weapon was enough to confer status as a combatant.²⁷ Other soldiers based their decisions on how people behaved: British officers in Pennsylvania in 1777 assumed that anyone who approached the army was friendly, while anyone who ran must have been an enemy.²⁸ Where possible, I have acted on the

in the Western World (New Haven, Conn., 1994), 40–1; Wayne E. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers: Anglo-American Warfare, 1500–1865* (Oxford, 2011), 188–9.

23. Ronald L. Boucher, ‘The Colonial Militia as a Social Institution: Salem, Massachusetts, 1764–1775’, *Military Affairs*, 37 (1973), 125–7; Edmund S. Morgan, *Inventing the People: The Rise of Popular Sovereignty in England and America* (New York, 1988), 153–73; McDonnell, *Politics of War*, 37–9.

24. Lee, *Barbarians and Brothers*, 171–208.

25. Erica Michiko Charters, Eve Rosenhaft, and Hannah Smith (eds) *Civilians and War in Europe, 1618–1815* (Liverpool, 2012), 11.

26. Emer de Vattel, *The Law of Nations; Or, Principles of the Law of Nature: Applied to the Conduct and Affairs of Nations and Sovereigns* (2 vols, London, 1759), 2: 27, 52, 89–90. See also Anicée Van Engeland, *Civilian or Combatant? A Challenge for the 21st Century* (Oxford, 2011), 11–13.

27. George Washington to William Alexander, Lord Stirling, 14 January 1780, William Alexander Papers, 1774–1782, LC; Nathanael Greene to the Inhabitants upon the Saluda, 5 June 1781, *NGP*, 8: 349.

28. Bodle, *Valley Forge Winter*, 77–8.

definitions that civilians themselves provided (or were provided with) in the context of their words or actions.

In contrast, soldiers would appear comparatively simple to define, distinguished by their arms, their uniforms, and their physical arrangement within institutional organisations. This, however, would belie the truly bewildering complexity of the revolutionary military. Enlistment lengths varied from one month to three years or the duration of the war, and anything in between. Continental and state regiments were sometimes organised quite differently, and on other occasions were indistinguishable. Militia mobilisation was sometimes merely a community exercise, while on other occasions it involved extended military service alongside Continental and state troops. Although this book focuses on those who served as Continentals, the experiences of state and militia troops on certain occasions provide useful clarification and illumination. Furthermore, these institutional differences are arguably more important to historians than they were to contemporaries themselves. Throughout the war, men alternated between these services, picking and choosing which suited them best. Rather than organisational distinctions, it was usually the common (and idiosyncratic) experiences of soldiering that most left its mark on how men conceived of the relationship with the world.²⁹

I have limited my analysis to the people who were inhabitants of (and migrants to) the thirteen rebellious colonies of British North America that would form the United States during the American Revolutionary War. These are arguably artificial limitations: after all, perceptions of the relationship between the Continental Army and the imagined continent were hardly limited to this time or space. However, it is only in these thirteen colonies that the army maintained a significant presence (except for brief incursions into Canada and Florida), so it is here that the distinction between what the Continental Army was and what it was imagined to be come across most

29. On the institutional evolution of the army, see Don Higginbotham, *The War of American Independence: Military Attitudes, Politics, and Practice, 1763–1789* (New York, 1971); Martin and Lender, *Respectable Army*; Robert K. Wright, *The Continental Army* (Washington, D.C., 1986); E. Wayne Carp, *To Starve the Army at Pleasure: Continental Army Administration and American Popular Culture, 1775–1783* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1984); Harry M. Ward, *George Washington's Enforcers: Policing the Continental Army* (Carbondale, Ill., 2006). For the militia, see Steven Rosswurm, *Arms, Country and Class: The Philadelphia Militia and the 'Lower Sort' During the American Revolution* (New Brunswick, N.J., 1987); Mark V. Kwasny, *Washington's Partisan War, 1775–1783* (Kent, Ohio, 1996).

clearly. This study, then, is limited to considerations of the identities of Americans. Furthermore, the contrast between perceptions of armies when at war and when at peace raises separate and significant questions that my own considerations of time and space would not permit to be addressed here.

I have attempted to evaluate the perspective of different people from across the colonial population, and regional, political, religious, social, and ethnic backgrounds are discussed when relevant. Unfortunately, owing to the sources available and the scale of this project, some voices are disproportionately vocal, while others stay disappointingly quiet. The several thousand loyalists who took up arms with provincial regiments have, after some consideration, been excluded from this study, although for comparison they are occasionally discussed alongside the European soldiers who formed the imperial armies.³⁰ The perceptions of Native Americans fighting on the frontier and African Americans seeking their freedom have also been omitted, not least because the majority of both groups fought with the British, while the legions of men and women who followed the army in war are another notable absence.³¹ An important consideration here was the shortage of

30. The loyalist experience has undergone a scholarly resurgence recently: see in particular Ruma Chopra, *Unnatural Rebellion: Loyalists in New York City during the Revolution* (Charlottesville, Va., 2011); Jeremy Banister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto, 2012); Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: American Loyalists in the Revolutionary World* (London, 2012). The experience of those loyalists who took up arms is, however, in need of further attention, with existing studies often limited to the loyalist militias in the south: see Clyde R. Ferguson, 'Carolina and Georgia Patriot and Loyalist Militia in Action, 1778–1783', in Jeffrey J. Crow and Larry E. Tise (eds) *The Southern Experience in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1978), 174–99; Jim Piecuch, *Three Peoples, One King: Loyalists, Indians, and Slaves in the Revolutionary South, 1775–1782* (Columbia, S.C., 2008).

31. For camp followers, see Holly A. Mayer, *Belonging to the Army: Camp Followers and Community during the American Revolution* (Columbia, S.C., 1996). Benjamin Quarles, *The Negro in the American Revolution* (Chapel Hill, N.C., 1961) remains a useful account of the African American experience of the Revolutionary War. See also Sylvia R. Frey, *Water from the Rock: Black Resistance in a Revolutionary Age* (Princeton, 1991); Gary B. Nash, *The Forgotten Fifth: African Americans in the Age of Revolution* (Cambridge, Mass., 2000); Douglas R. Egerton, *Death or Liberty: African-Americans and Revolutionary America* (New York, 2009). The most comprehensive account of the Revolutionary War from a Native American perspective is Colin G. Calloway, *The American Revolution in Indian Country: Crisis and Diversity in Native American Communities* (New York, 1995). See also Barbara Graymont,

available reflective first-hand accounts. Any attempt to uncover the thoughts and self-perceptions of these peoples within the confines of this book would no doubt have resulted in over-generalisations that would fail to do justice to the diversity of their experiences.

There is also the potential for regional imbalance, with literate New Englanders often contributing a majority of the available source material. This is not necessarily disproportionate, however, for New England contributed more than half of the Continental Army's soldiers through the war. Nonetheless, whenever possible I have provided voices from a variety of regions. Finally, learned and literate white men on occasion appear somewhat disproportionately. This is not only because they wrote the most, but also because they were most often in a position to influence perceptions, whether as prominent intellectuals, political leaders, or military officers. However, ideas do not exist in a vacuum, and wherever possible I have attempted to explain how ordinary men and women engaged with them, whether through their thoughts or through their actions.

III

As this book aims to uncover the conceptual understanding of identities, it relies on individual accounts and testimonies. An objection to this method could be that these individuals could prove to be unrepresentative, or their ideas idiosyncratic. I hope that with enough examples conveying the same message, from different people with different backgrounds, I can suggest that these views were not atypical. Where there is a particularly striking opinion, or conflicting perspectives on an issue, I have attempted to explain their basis and why they deviate from the norm. I hope that, if anything, the numerous intellectual conflicts and contrasts add weight to when ideas do correlate and correspond.

The Iroquois in the American Revolution (Syracuse, N.Y., 1972); James H. O'Donnell III, *Southern Indians in the American Revolution* (Knoxville, Tenn., 1973); Richard White, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650–1815* (Cambridge, 1991). For the African Americans and Native Americans who served in or alongside the Continental Army, see Neimeyer, *America Goes to War*, pp. 65–108; Joseph T. Glatthaar and James Kirkby Martin, *Forgotten Allies: The Oneida Indians and the American Revolution* (New York, 2006); Eric G. Grundset (ed.) *Forgotten Patriots: African American and American Indian Patriots in the Revolutionary War* (Washington, D.C., 2008).