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## **The US Declaration Of Independence: Emotion, Style, and Authorship**

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### **Authorship and Its Implications**

The research described in this report uses stylistic and emotional analyses of text to answer the question “Who wrote America’s Declaration of Independence?” Most sources that discuss the Declaration (with one notable exception described below) attribute its authorship to Thomas Jefferson, a Virginian revolutionary and later the third President of the United States. This attribution rests largely on three facts: the fact that Jefferson was a member of the committee charged with drafting a document and presenting it to the second Continental Congress, the fact that an early rough draft of the Declaration which incorporates corrections made by individuals and by the Congress is written in his handwriting, and the fact the Jefferson himself claimed authorship in his correspondence, in his autobiography, and most notably on his gravestone.

The public attribution of the Declaration to Jefferson, however, seems to have occurred several years after the writing and to have been tainted by party politics and conflicts between Republicans and Federalists (McDonald, 1999). As well, the existence of another early draft of the Declaration in the handwriting of John Adams, a revolutionary from Massachusetts and later the second President, who never claimed authorship, has been largely ignored (Lewis, 1947). The meaning of “authorship” in the context of the Declaration is less than clear (McDonald, 1999). By claiming authorship did Jefferson mean that he had “authorized the collected efforts of others,” “put the ideas of others into coherent form in his own words,” “worked with input from others to create a rough draft,” or “thought of it all himself?” McDonald (1999) notes that a claim of authorship has meant different things in different cultural and historical contexts, and that its meaning was undergoing a shift at the time when the first claims for authorship of the Declaration were made. The meaning of “authorship” was moving from that depicted in the first of the statements above (authorization) towards that depicted in the last (individual intellectual property).

Current celebrations of American Independence on July 4th are focussed on the Declaration of Independence. This document was approved by the Second Continental Congress on July 4th of 1776. Representatives’ convictions as to the necessity for independence are often tied, in the minds of laymen, to the Declaration. The author of this document is envisioned by casual observers as being the man whose eloquence “convinced” members of Congress to vote for the break with Britain. In actual fact the passage of the Declaration was something of an afterthought. Its drafting was assigned to a committee at the end of June and the document was approved two days *after* independence had been declared, on July 2nd 1776, by Lee’s and Adams’ resolution affirming “That these United Colonies, are, and of a right ought to be, free and independent states...” The wording of the resolution is echoed in the Declaration. In a letter to his wife Abigail, John Adams labelled July 2nd as the day worthy of memory.

Far from writing a passionate document designed to convince others to vote for independence, the author of the Declaration was in fact writing a public apologia - an after-the-fact justification of independence expressed in terms of the highest moral principles of the time. Problems with variations in the definition of authorship (from authorization to individual intellectual property) were noted above. In the context of the production of the Declaration, the situation described here leads to an additional question: to what extent does authorship of the Declaration of Independence equate with authorship of independence itself? Since the members of the drafting committee were already known to be supporters of independence, it would be fair to conclude that the Declaration of Independence convinced absolutely no one of the need for independence and therefore that the author of this document could not claim to have "authored" independence unless he had other evidence for his claim.

During 1776 sentiments against Britain ran high, as any reader of Empire Loyalist writings (Upton, 1967), or of descriptions of "Tory" witch hunts (Stuart, 1985) would attest. The author of the Declaration was determined to both capitalise on these feelings and to rationalise them, using them to explain that independence was justly deserved in view of the infamous actions of Britain, telescoped onto the person of her monarch George III. In the slang of 2001, the Declaration could be classified as a rant. It launches a barrage of accusations that are sandwiched between two expressions of high principle (Appendix A). Individuals minimally acquainted with the Declaration remember only the introductory segment of high principle and credit the author of the Declaration with inventing the ideas in it, attributing to him a significant degree of influence in the achievement of independence.

The impact of the "authorship" of the Declaration is also tied to its degree of influence *after* independence. Most early Americans paid little attention to the Declaration. Wills notes that although the US Constitution was regarded as a "pure voice of the Enlightenment" in Europe, the Declaration was largely ignored (1979, p. 357). After half a century of obscurity at home and abroad (McDonald, 1999; Wills, 1979) the Declaration was revived first in order to garner popular acclaim for a political party and later as a tool to help a new country "invent" itself. Users and interpreters of the sentiments and principles expressed in the Declaration, such as Abraham Lincoln added lustre to its reputation as a founding document.

In the name of authorship, the writer of the Declaration is credited with some things he never did (originating the idea of independence), some his Declaration could not have led to (independence itself), and others that happened many years after the writing of the Declaration when this document was brought to the foreground of American consciousness (defining America). Although this report examines the issue of authorship of the Declaration in terms of writing style and emotion, this issue is best understood in the context of the multiple definitions and implications of authorship.

Issues of authorship aside, the stylistic and emotional nature of documents as important as the Declaration of Independence are of interest in their own right. This paper will compare the Declaration, as it was accepted by the Congress, with the two early handwritten drafts by Jefferson and Adams. In order to better describe the Declaration of Independence, it will also compare the language and emotion in it to that in several other concurrent writings including those of Jefferson (*A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, *A Draft of the Virginia Constitution*, the *Virginia Bill of Rights*), Adams (*Novanglus Essay # 7*), Thomas Paine (*Common Sense*, and the *Crisis* report beginning "These are the times that try men's souls"), and Patrick Henry (the famous oration ending with "Give me liberty or give me death"). The writings and oration will be compared to one another using measures of style (word length, use of rare words, punctuation, negations, use of the verb "to be"), measures of emotion (activation and pleasantness), and a measure of imagery or word concreteness. The main issue addressed will be that of authorship.

The comparison of the Declaration to the writing of Thomas Paine is of particular interest because of a claim made half a century ago (Lewis, 1947) that Paine rather than Jefferson was the author of the Declaration. Lewis' claim still nibbles at the edges of American consciousness on the World Wide Web but it has received little serious consideration from scholars, perhaps because they, like early reviewers, dismiss Lewis' claim as something of a conspiracy theory (Challener, 1947; Wilson, 1947).

### **Lewis' Claim that Paine Authored the Declaration, and Problems with this Claim**

Joseph Lewis (1947) made an impassioned argument in support of his claim that the Declaration had been attributed to the wrong Thomas - Jefferson rather than Paine. His contention rested on several points which can be summarised as follows: (1) Jefferson was not the first choice for the drafting committee; (2) Paine and Jefferson often exchanged ideas, even extremely important ones; (3) Paine preferred to work anonymously; (4) Paine wrote vigorously in favour of Independence elsewhere while Jefferson did not; (5) Paine was more passionate about Independence, and therefore more likely to have produced a passionate document; (6) Jefferson was not against slavery, while Paine clearly was, and the Declaration draft included a strong clause against slavery; and (7) the stylistic dimensions of the Declaration, including word choices and certain spellings and capitalisations evident in the Adams copy, favour Paine rather than Jefferson as author.

The answer to Lewis' (1947) sixth point remains a puzzle. How could a man who owned slaves, who continued to own slaves until his death, who only freed three slaves in his will (p. 166), and who believed that they were inferior (p. 156), suggest that King George "has waged cruel war against human nature itself, violating its most sacred rights of life & liberty?" The anti-slavery clause refers to slavery as an "execrable commerce." The clause did not appear in the final Declaration because it was struck out by Congress. The best interpretation put on Jefferson's position and actions by his supporters is that his ideals were expressed in his rough draft of the Declaration, while his actions were controlled by the realities of Southern plantation life. Some writers doubt the depth or sincerity of the anti-slavery clause. Becker (1942/1972, pp. 212-216) compares it unfavourably to statements against slavery made later by Abraham Lincoln.

There are several problems with Lewis' claim that Paine wrote the Declaration and with the evidence he used to support this claim. Problems fall into three main categories: outright errors or omissions, overemphasis of weak clues, and the fact that strong clues point to motive for Paine, and perhaps opportunity, but not necessarily authorship. As an example of the first problem, Lewis made much of the fact that several words in the Adams draft of the Declaration were capitalised for stress, and he attributed this to the fact that Adams was copying a Paine original because Paine used similar capitalisations (pp. 130-131). In reaching this conclusion, Lewis neglected to note that the habit of capitalisation of stressed words was characteristic of Adams himself (it is evident in his letters). As well, Lewis emphasised Jefferson's respectful attitude to King George III and his lack of passion for Independence, neglecting to mention that a draft of the Virginia Constitution, produced by Jefferson in June of 1776 (and analysed in this report), gave evidence of both passion and a confrontational attitude to the king.

When making the second type of error, overemphasis of details, Lewis was too ambitious in interpreting information out of context. Challener (1947) says of Lewis that "He lifts quotations from their contexts and warps them to his own purposes with startling felicity" (p. 381). This is seen in Lewis' use of snippets of letters and phrases which are interpreted as having hidden meanings. Writing before the publication of the Declaration Paine used the words "the decree has finally gone forth" which Lewis (1947, p. 88) interpreted as implying both knowledge and

authorship of the Declaration. From their context, these words could be referring to any of several actions of the Congress in its move towards independence.

The third type of problem arose because the strongest pieces of evidence put forth by Lewis such as the friendship of Jefferson and Paine and their interaction, or Paine's attitudes towards slavery and Independence, show that Paine had the opportunity to write the Declaration and even the motive, but do not prove that he necessarily did write it. Would any patriot passionately in favour of Independence and friendly with Jefferson be an equally likely author of the Declaration? An examination of the Declaration in terms of emotion and style should throw some light on Lewis' claim: if the Declaration matched the style and emotion of Paine rather than Jefferson, it would make the evidence for motive and opportunity provided by Lewis more believable. If the Declaration were to prove a closer match for the style of Thomas Jefferson however, Lewis' claim could be laid to rest.

Lewis (1947, p. 84) suggests that the Declaration of Independence is an actualisation of Paine's ideals expressed in *Common Sense*. Jefferson may have been strongly influenced by Paine's ideals, but he may have represented these ideals in the Declaration as a result of his own conviction, so that Paine's influence was expressed at second hand. Retrospectively (in a letter written when he was 80, in 1823), Jefferson suggested that "the sentiments of independence, and the reasons for declaring it" might indeed have come from discussions around him at the time, because he "did not consider it as any part of [his] charge to invent new ideas altogether" though he "turned to neither book nor pamphlet" while writing the Declaration (Lewis, 1947, p. 296, excerpt from a letter to James Madison).

The principle of parsimony maintains that entities should not be multiplied beyond necessity: thus if Jefferson is recognised as the author of the Declaration on considerable evidence, the fact that another individual had opportunity and motive are not necessarily enough to negate Jefferson's authorship, and further if Adams is known to have employed capitalisation as a means of stressing important words, a third party need not be invented as an intermediary to the creative process and as the source of the capitalisation.

Looking at letters written by Jefferson and Adams on the topic of the Declaration many years after Independence, both McDonald (1999) and Lewis (1947, pp. 296, 301) conclude that some doubts are being cast on the authorship of the Declaration, but they interpret these in different ways: McDonald uses the letters to address the definition and implications of authorship, Lewis to address the identity of the author. If the least supportable of Lewis' claims were disregarded, an important issue would still have arisen as a result of his investigation and this issue would address the history and nature of the Adams copy of the Declaration which is enough like the Jefferson rough draft to be clearly related to it, but different in several interesting ways. Neither of the two Presidents' letters explains the nature or existence of this copy, which has been dated "ante June 28, 1776," that is, before the Declaration had been seen by the Congress. The second task undertaken in this report was a close comparison of the two early drafts of the Declaration.

### **Documents Analyzed**

The *first* document analysed was, of course, the Declaration itself as it had been passed by the Congress (<http://www.nara.gov/exhall/charters/declaration/declaration.htm> ).

The *second* was Jefferson's "rough draft" of the Declaration, reconstructed by Boyd from the handwritten version with corrections on it made by individuals and by Congress

(<http://leweb.loc.gov/exhibits> ). A facsimile of Jefferson's handwritten draft was included in

Lewis' book (1947). The *third* document was the Adams handwritten copy of the Declaration

([http://www.masshist.org/apselected\\_5\\_text.html](http://www.masshist.org/apselected_5_text.html) ) which is available in facsimile and text at the

same site on the web, and also in Lewis' book. The *fourth* document was Paine's *Common Sense*, published in 1776 (<http://www.promo.net/pg/>). This book is credited with having inspired considerable pro-revolutionary feeling among Americans at a crucial time in history. The *fifth* document is a report written by Paine dated December 23, 1776, and purportedly read to Washington's troops at Valley Forge. This document begins with the lines "These are the times that try men's souls. The summer patriot and the sunshine patriot will, in this crisis, shrink from the service of their country;" and continues by asserting that "Tyranny, like hell, is not easily conquered" ([http://www.leftjustified.com/leftjust/lib/fr/tp/tac/c\\_01.html](http://www.leftjustified.com/leftjust/lib/fr/tp/tac/c_01.html)). The *sixth* document is the Bill of Rights from the Pennsylvania Constitution, which Lewis (1947, p. 225) suggests was written by Paine and was similar to the Declaration (the Bill comes at the beginning of the State Constitution: <http://www.paconstitution.duq.edu/con76.html>). The *seventh* document was the Bill of Rights from the Virginia Constitution, which is attributed to Jefferson but which Lewis (1947, p. 212) suggests was written or at least inspired by Paine (<http://www.yale.edu/lawweb/avalon/states/va05.htm>), and the *eighth* document an early draft of the Virginia Constitution (minus a Bill of Rights) written by Jefferson in June of 1776 (<http://etext.lib.virginia.edu>). This document was not mentioned by Lewis (1947) for which omission one of his reviewers chastised him (Challener, 1947). The *ninth* document was Jefferson's *A Summary View of the Rights of British America*, which outlined the unfairness of British rule with specific reference to particular Acts. It was published in 1774 (<http://etext.virginia.edu/toc/modeng/public/Jefsum.html>). The *tenth* document was one written and published anonymously by Adams - *Novanglus Essay # 7*, published in 1775 and discussing workable forms of government (<http://www.geocities.com/athens/styx/1070/1751/novanglu.htm>). The *eleventh* and final document was the famous Patrick Henry 1775 oration on the imperative of pursuing Liberty (<http://www.historyplace.com/speeches/henry.htm>) which includes the lines "Gentlemen may cry, 'Peace! Peace!' - but there is no peace. The war is actually begun! The next gale that sweeps from the north will bring to our ears the clash of resounding arms!"

Only two of the documents studied were written after the Declaration had been accepted by Congress (July, 1776) - one Bill of Rights (Pennsylvania, September, 1776) and the report on the *American Crisis* by Paine (December, 1776). Such documents should be treated cautiously because they might resemble the Declaration as a result of its acceptance and publication, and are therefore not acceptable evidence of authorship. They are acceptable as standards of comparison, however. The Virginia and Pennsylvania Bills of Rights were included because they had been mentioned specifically by Lewis (1947), and Paine's *Crisis* report was included to provide an example of his passionate writing style which might have been somewhat diluted in *Common Sense* due to the length of the latter.

### **The Measures Used to Describe the Documents**

The documents were compared using the output of a computer program designed to analyse text (Whissell, 1994). This program employed the Dictionary of Affect in Language in its most updated form (Whissell, 2001). Analyses involving the program and the Dictionary of Affect have previously been applied to political materials such as the inaugural addresses of US Presidents (Whissell & Sigelman, 2001) and to materials written at about the time of the American Revolution (Whissell, 2001) as well as to more recent literary efforts (Whissell, 1999).

The computer program read all words and punctuation marks in a text and produced a set of 10 scores. A list of these scores with examples of the words producing them is included in Table 1. The first three measures in Table 1 (Pleasantness, Activation, Imagery) depended on comparisons of words in documents with people's opinions of the emotion or imagery in these

words, while the last seven (rare words, negations, use of “to be,” colons, periods, punctuations, word length) were direct measures of the documents involved. Most of the words in the documents studied were matched to the Dictionary of Affect (overall: 90%; range for individual documents: 88-91%).

## Results of Analyses of Emotion and Style

### A Description of the Declaration in Normative Terms

The Declaration of Independence can be described in normative terms on the basis of comparisons to a broadly sampled corpus of everyday English (Whissell, 1998). The language of the Declaration was less Pleasant and more Active than everyday English, a fact which may be explained by the document’s revolutionary purposes, and by its contents (Appendix A). It was also more abstract than everyday English (lower in concrete Imagery), probably as a result of its inclusion of statements of abstract principle. In comparison to everyday English, the Declaration was a linguistically complex document because it included a rather high proportion of rare words (15% in comparison to the norm of 10%), relatively long words (closer to 5 rather than the norm of 4 letters long), and relatively long sentences (40 words long as compared to adult everyday English norms of 15-20 words long). Because of this linguistic complexity, the average reader would find the Declaration of Independence more difficult to read than a novel or newspaper report. The linguistic complexity of the Declaration may be due to the document’s importance and to its legal standing. It was one of the first official statements made by a newly declared country. Henry’s oration and Paine’s *Crisis* report were both similar to everyday English in terms of their linguistic complexity, but these samples served different purposes than the Declaration and were indeed more comparable to newspaper reports in their intent than it was.

### Ranking the Documents on All Measures

Ranks for all documents on the 10 measures of the report are listed in Appendix B. Inferential statistical tests indicated the presence of significant (non-chance) differences among documents on all measures. The ranks in Appendix B range from 1 (most or highest) to 11 (least or lowest). Repeated ranks are indicative of ties. Ranks are used in parentheses below to support statements describing the various documents. For example, the first column of data (Pleasantness) reveals that the three versions of the Declaration were tied for medium Pleasantness at a rank of 5, along with two other documents (Paine’s *Common Sense* and his *Crisis* report). The most Pleasant documents were those with the highest ranks - Henry’s oration and the Pennsylvania Bill of Rights (ranked 1.5). The least Pleasant document (ranked 11) was the Virginia Constitution draft written by Jefferson. An examination of Henry’s oration (last row of the table) reveals that it was very Pleasant (1.5), highly Imaged or concrete (2), made frequent use of the verb “to be” (1), was negative in tone (negations: 1), had short sentences (high rank for Periods, 3), and was heavily punctuated (3). At the opposite end of the continuum it included the fewest rare words (11), and the shortest words (ranked 11 for length), while making use of few colons (10). This oration had been structured to produce the strongest possible impact on a wide variety of listeners. Part of Patrick Henry’s fame as an orator rests on the way he was able to employ emotion, imagery, and style to make his point.

### Comparing the Final Declaration with the Two Drafts

It is very obvious from the data that the three forms of the Declaration of Independence obtained similar ranks for most measures, and often identical or tied ranks. This is true in spite of the fact that the Declaration accepted by the Congress was only three fourths as long as the original rough drafts. The Declaration accepted by Congress is notable in terms of its high Activation

(rank=2.5), its high Imagery (2), its relatively high use of rare words (3.5), and colons (3), its use of longer words, on the average, than any other document (1), and its avoidance of Negations (11) and forms of the verb “to be” (10). Not surprisingly, in view of the fact that the Declaration was enumerating past wrongs, it made frequent use of forms of the verb “has” as in “he has obstructed” and “he has refused” (from the Declaration, in reference to King George III) rather than “to be.” The two drafts obtained similar ranks.

Differences between the Jefferson and Adams drafts of the Declaration are most obvious in the use of colons (Jefferson’s draft had the most) and punctuation marks in general. Jefferson’s draft had a relatively low number of punctuation marks (rank=10.5) and therefore relatively large processing units.

### The Method for Evaluating Similarities between Documents

Spearman rank correlation coefficients were used to represent how closely the documents were related to one another in terms of emotion and style. High positive correlations indicate agreement in ranks and similarity of documents, while low negative correlations indicate that one document has high ranks where the other has low ones, or, in other words, that the documents are opposite or very different in nature. All the conclusions in this section are based on the presence of statistically significant correlations between documents which are recounted in detail in Appendix C.

### Relationship of the Declaration to Other Documents

The Declaration accepted by Congress was most closely (as suggested above) related to the Adams and Jefferson drafts. It was negatively related to (i.e., very different from, in fact opposite to) Adams’ *Novanglus* essay, and Paine’s *Common Sense*, though similar to Jefferson’s *Summary View*.

The relationship between the two handwritten drafts was high but far from perfect. In the four cases where the ranks for the Jefferson and Adams drafts disagreed (Activation, colons, periods, punctuation marks) the Adams draft was actually closer to the final Declaration 4/4 times. The likelihood of this happening by chance is quite low.

In comparing the draft versions of the Declaration to the remaining documents, it was noted that Jefferson’s rough draft was similar to his *Virginia Draft Constitution*, while being quite different from *Novanglus*, and *Common Sense*. Adams’ draft evinced a similar pattern of relationships: it was similar to Jefferson’s *Summary View* but different than Adam’s own *Novanglus* and Paine’s *Common Sense*.

### Conclusions Based on Similarity of Documents

The *only* works which were similar to the Declaration of Independence were either (a) other versions of the Declaration or (b) the writings of Thomas Jefferson. Paine’s *Common Sense*, claimed by Lewis (1947) to have been the source of the Declaration, is negatively related to it, suggesting extreme differences in emotion and style between documents. For example, *Common Sense* was relatively Passive while the Declaration was relatively Active. The Declaration was high on Imagery and used longer words than did *Common Sense*. On the other hand, the Declaration made little use of the verb “to be” while *Common Sense* used it often, and the Declaration was one of the least heavily punctuated documents while *Common Sense* was among the most heavily punctuated ones. It is also notable that Adams’ *Novanglus* essay was very different in terms of emotion and style from his draft copy of the Declaration, suggesting opposite types of emotion and style. For example, the *Novanglus* essay was much more Passive in language than the Declaration. It also used fewer rare words and more negations, and made

much more frequent use of the verb “to be,” indicating that Adams, who was the author of *Novanglus*, was not the author of the draft of the Declaration in his handwriting. This does not rule out contributions to the final document from Adams such as the ones made in his own handwriting on Jefferson’s rough draft. It does however suggest that any corrections or suggestions which were incorporated did not alter the general emotion and style of the document.

There was little similarity between the writing styles of Jefferson and Paine. *Common Sense* was the emotional and linguistic opposite of Jefferson’s *Summary View* and *Virginia Draft Constitution*. Although the *Crisis* report showed some similarity to Henry’s oration and the *Pennsylvania Bill of Rights*, it was not like any of Jefferson’s works. It cannot be argued, therefore, that the relationship of the Declaration to Jefferson’s writings was mediated by similarities of Jefferson’s emotion and style to Paine’s.

Thomas Jefferson’s style and emotion are evident in all three forms of the Declaration studied, while nobody else’s style and emotion are similar to it. Both of the other candidates for authorship (Adams, because of the existence of a copy in his handwriting, and Paine, as a result of Lewis’ claims) had writing styles distinctly different from that of the Declaration. Patrick Henry’s style was also distinctly different from the Declaration. On the basis of the emotion and style, the authorship of the Declaration - including the draft in Adams’ handwriting - must be attributed to Thomas Jefferson.

### **A Comparison of the Jefferson and Adams Drafts**

In view of the conclusion reached on the basis of emotion and style (an attribution of authorship to Jefferson), the draft of the Declaration in Adams’ handwriting was compared to that in Jefferson’s at a detailed level. Although Adams never claimed authorship of the Declaration, it is important to understand the place of his draft in the unfolding of events. Differences between the two documents are summarised in Table 2. As noted by Lewis (1947) there were frequent differences in capitalisation (e.g. the Adams copy beings “When in the Course of human Events it becomes necessary for a People ...” while the Jefferson copy begins “When in the course of human events is becomes necessary for a people ...”). Jefferson used the ampersand (&) to indicate the word “and” while Adams did not. In the analysis described in the previous section, the ampersand had been transformed back into the word “and” to avoid the overemphasis of trivial differences. There were differences in punctuation (also evident in Table 2). Jefferson used more colons (:) and fewer commas and periods (,) than Adams. There were preferential differences in spelling (Jefferson rendered “independent” as “independant,” for example, and “impel” as “impell”). There were some relatively trivial spelling errors in the Jefferson draft and an omission of apostrophes in the Adams draft. There were also some few differences at the level of words and phrases. As pointed out by Lewis (1947), “self evident” and “unalienable” are characteristic of the Adams copy. Later in the Declaration, Jefferson referred to “fellow-subjects” where Adams had “fellow citizens.”

Table 2 also indicates which rendering - that of Jefferson or that of Adams - was most like the final form of the Declaration. Capitalisation for stress was employed in the Declaration, but not in exactly the same manner as that employed by Adams. The first sentence of the Declaration itself reads “When in the Course of human events it become necessary for one people ...” The ampersand, of course, did not appear in the Declaration in lieu of the word “and” which was spelled out. The punctuation of the final document included more periods and fewer colons than the Jefferson original - i.e., it was more like the Adams copy, though again not exactly so. The preferential spellings were roughly equally represented in the final document, and the word “independant” (which is found several times elsewhere in Jefferson’s writings) was rendered as



“independent.” Jefferson’s spelling errors were corrected. When it comes to differences at the level of mismatched words and phrases, however, the final document was clearly closer to the Adams draft, following the Jefferson draft in only one example (the choice of verb in the phrase “erected” offices as opposed to “created” offices).

When inferential statistics were used to compare all words and punctuation marks in the Declaration to all those in Adams draft copy, only one significant difference (beyond chance level) was observed. The Declaration itself uses dashes (-) at several early points while the Adams’ copy does not. These dashes are visible in the Dunlap Broadside of July 8, 1776, a facsimile of which is available at <http://earlyamerica.com/earlyamerica/freedom/doi/doi.jpg> . When a similar comparison was made for Jefferson’s rough draft, with “&” and “and” being considered equivalent, four statistically significant differences were observed. These involved the use of colons (the Declaration had proportionally fewer than Jefferson’s draft), periods and commas (the Declaration had more than the draft), and the word “independant” (the “a” in the final syllable is Jefferson’s preferred spelling).

The overall conclusions which can be reached on the basis of the comparison of documents are the following: the two drafts of the Declaration were extremely similar to one another, though they differed in capitalisation, the use of the ampersand, spelling, punctuation, “typos,” and, in a few cases, words and phrases. The document most like the Declaration itself was the Adams document. This finding reiterates the one reported in the sections on ranks and relationship analyses.

From surrounding events, it is possible to date both the Adams and the Jefferson drafts to the last few days of June, 1776. What process would produce documents so similar, yet account for the differences between them? Adams’ copy is most likely not a literal copy - that is Adams was not looking at a document and copying it word for word. If this were the case, there would be no differences in capitalisation and punctuation, and no differences in words and phrases, though some spelling differences might still exist. If Adams were writing his draft from dictation, however, many of the differences between the documents would be explained. The Declaration was designed as an oration (McDonald, 1999; Lewis, 1994), so it would not be surprising if Jefferson (or some other person) read a draft to Adams, who wrote it down. Adams would write in his own preferential style (capitalisation, preferred spellings), and might quite easily have replaced Jefferson’s colons with periods or commas since punctuation is not entirely clear from speech.

The assumption that Adams created his draft of the Declaration in response to a dictation or oration does not entirely explain the differences in words and phrases or the fact that the final Declaration is most similar to the Adams draft in this respect. It is possible that Adams inserted his own preferred words, and that he later argued for them in Congress as a member of the drafting committee. Some of the differences between drafts appear as corrections on the Jefferson rough draft (e.g., “denounces”), which would support this contention. Becker (1942/1972) suggests that the Adams draft includes some of Adams’ corrections but not others because Adams produced it between two readings of Jefferson’s rough draft, and returned to the rough draft later to make additional corrections (pp. 140-141).

With respect to punctuation marks and capitalisations, it is probable that some of the differences between Jefferson’s draft and the Declaration were enacted by the printer or the engrosser of the Declaration. It is unlikely that the printer or engrosser saw the Adams draft because this was mailed to Abigail Adams in Massachusetts before Congress considered the Declaration.

All in all, the evidence suggests that the Adams draft copy of the Declaration of Independence was in fact a copy of the Jefferson rough draft, and that this copy was taken by dictation, likely after Adams had read and made some of his changes to Jefferson's rough draft.

## Issues and Conclusions

This study had some potential limitations. It used electronic sources for several of the documents studied, but these were reputable sources which were backed up, in the case of the Declaration, by facsimiles. The age of the documents involved was not a serious issue for three reasons: the hit rate remained high (90%), previous research has suggested that the techniques employed here can also be used with older documents (Whissell & Sigelman, 2001), and all documents were from the same time frame, and therefore directly comparable to one another.

Analyses have lead to several conclusions with respect to the authorship of the Declaration of Independence and of the Adams draft copy. These conclusions are outlined below in the context of a multidimensional approach to the understanding of the authorship and its implications.

Stylistic and emotional analyses have laid the issue of authorship of the Declaration of Independence to rest. The writing style and emotionality of the document are those of Thomas Jefferson, who is the currently acknowledged author. They do not resemble those of any of the other contemporaries studied here, specifically not those of Thomas Paine. The handwritten Adams draft was also authored by Jefferson. When Jefferson used ideas propounded by others in writing the Declaration, he did so in his own emotion and style. This conclusion matches his recollections of the event, and also Adams' recollections. Adams seemed to believe that this interpretation of authorship should have restrained the praise and adulation directed at Jefferson as the "author" of the Declaration (McDonald, 1999).

In terms of the continuum of phrases discussed earlier, Jefferson likely "put the ideas of others, along with his own, into coherent form in his own words," and this with some help from Adams, Franklin, the drafting committee, and Congress who authorised the document. From the historic record of events, it is also clear that the author of the Declaration was not necessarily one and the same individual as the author of independence itself, and that the influence of the Declaration grew as later Americans began to look at it in retrospect. Adams' early and assertive public stance in respect to independence and his seconding of the motion for independence give him as strong a claim as Jefferson to the title of "author of independence".

The Adams draft copy of the Declaration was likely taken as dictation rather than being a literal transcription. It may have been taken after Adams had seen Jefferson's rough draft and suggested some corrections to it. The greater similarity of the Adams draft to the Declaration in terms of punctuation may be the result of editorial intervention, and its greater similarity in terms of language the result of Adams continued intervention in the process as a committee member and a member of Congress.

<a href="#">Table 1*</a>	<a href="#">Table 2*</a>
<a href="#">Appendix A*</a>	<a href="#">Appendix B*</a>
<a href="#">Appendix C*</a>	

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