FROM MORAL CONDEMNATION TO ECONOMIC STRATEGIES

FROM MORAL CONDEMNATION TO ECONOMIC STRATEGIES: REFRAMING

THE END OF THE BRITISH TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE

By

MARLENE SANTIN, B.A., B.A. (Hons), M.A.

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AUTHOR: Marlene Santin, B.A. (Western University), B.A. (Western University), M.A.

(McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Art Budros

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ABSTRACT

Why did Great Britain abolish the transatlantic slave trade in 1807, after a nearly twenty-year social movement campaign to end it? This question still continues to puzzle scholars despite the vast amount of historical research conducted on the subject since the beginning of the twentieth century. In this dissertation, I use social movement theory and a two-tiered empirical approach to examine British slave trade abolition. Systematic qualitative and quantitative analyses of the legislative debates on the slave trade underscores the importance of abolitionists' rhetorical strategies and the economic utility of Britain's departure from the trade. A frame analysis of abolitionists' speeches made during the parliamentary debates suggests that a law to end the slave trade was passed when abolitionist MPs deliberately reframed their ideological campaign to include an increased number of economic pleas in their arguments. Drawing on key aspects of social movement theory, I examine the relationship between resource mobilization, cultural framing and opportunity structures (both political and non-political) and British abolition. My findings suggest that cultural, economic and political factors help to explain why the British slave trade was finally abolished.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My dear friend and neighbour—the late Alice Boissonneau—inspired me throughout our years of friendship by her strength of character and her extreme generosity. Thank you for supporting me and allowing me to walk Megan.

Lynden, Tess, Oliver, Lily and all my friends at New Hope Animal Rescue gave me meaning and purpose outside of academia.

Over the years I have been fortunate enough to learn from many extraordinary teachers and professors who taught me lessons that went beyond the classroom. These individuals stand out because they always believed in me, provided me with wonderful opportunities and pushed me to be the best that I could be. This dissertation is dedicated to all of them.

Epigraph

Having heard all of this you may choose to look the other way, but you can never again say that you did not know. — William Wilberforce

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

> This traffic in the human species, which is so direct and daring an infringement of every principle of liberty and justice, has attracted the public notice… But it becomes a wise legislature to interfere without delay… It is this trade, which setting justice and humanity at defiance, crowds the unhappy Africans in the foul and pestilential holds of ships, where twenty-five thousand perish annually of disease and broken hearts. It is this traffic which places the survivors in the hands of masters whose natural feelings are destroyed by early and continual intercourse with the worst of slavery, where their spirits are broken and their bodies wasted by insupportable toils.
>
> William Roscoe, 1787

It would take another twenty years before the pleas of British historian and abolitionist William Roscoe in his work *The Wrongs of Africa* would be realized, when the British slave trade was legally abolished in 1807. On March 25, 2007, Great Britain commemorated the bicentennial year of the official end of its participation in the transatlantic slave trade. Over two hundred years have passed since British abolition signified the end of legally trading human commodities exported from their native country of Africa to a life of forced manual labour in the British West Indies, but puzzling questions still remain. Although the British transatlantic slave trade has been the object of serious study for well over one hundred years, we still know little about why it ended so abruptly in 1807, leaving other competing European nations such as Portugal and Spain to carry on what was considered by many to be a lucrative business.

In this dissertation, I seek to understand the mechanisms that account for the social movement impacts of one of the most important, yet curiously understudied campaigns in historical-sociology. Although the British effort to end the slave trade is considered to be

one of the first major large-scale movements to exist, social movement scholars have

largely ignored it. In fact, the lack of systematic sociological research on slave trade

abolition is in marked contrast to enormous literatures on the abolition of slavery. My

main objective throughout this study is to illustrate how this social movement

organization and the opportunities available to them contributed to the end of the British

slave trade. I will accomplish this using a two-tiered research design—qualitative and

quantitative methods—to study British abolition. I include two outcome measures that are

rarely—if ever—studied together. These are (1) policy change, which looks at law

making or more specifically whether or not a law has been passed and (2) agenda setting,

which examines the annual number of roll-call votes that a bill passed through in a

parliamentary debate.[1]

    While researchers have been studying the slave trade for the past century, there are

still many avenues of slave trade abolition left unexplored. Even though considerable

advancements have been accomplished in the data made available to describe the slave

trade (e.g., size, profits, and costs), there remains a gap in our knowledge of its abolition

and deficiencies in the theoretical and methodological approaches used to study the trade.

In response, I address these shortcomings by exploring the role that economic, cultural,

political and social structural factors played in the abolition of the British slave trade. As a

result, my research will unravel a more complex slave trade abolition story and in doing

so I challenge future researchers to look more critically at the cause of British abolition

and at the unique contributions of abolitionists.

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[1] I replace the British term 'division of the house' with 'roll-call' to align with the parliamentary terminology used in social movement literatures.

The anti-slave trade campaign that occurred in Britain is considered in many ways to be the prototype for all of the mass political and humanitarian campaigns which have followed it, up to and including the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and Anti-Apartheid Movement in South Africa (Hochschild 2005; Klein 1999; MacNair 2007; Tilly 1982). The undertaking of a campaign to end the slave trade was an onerous task, where the leaders of the movement—William Wilberforce and Thomas Clarkson— envisioned their initial role as mobilizing public opinion so that the British Parliament would be forced to act. Considered a mainstay of the colonial economy, Great Britain led the world in slave trading during the eighteenth century (Eltis et al. 2009). The slave trade was legal while at the same time considered a ruthless business, and much of transatlantic slave trade historiography is filled with horror stories about the brutality of the industry. For example, John Newton, a former slave ship captain, spoke of a shipmate "who threw a child overboard because it moaned at night in its mother's arms and kept him awake" (Galli 1997). Armed with evidence of the cruelty of the trade, most historical accounts reveal abolitionist MPs campaigned relentlessly year after year before Parliament to render the slave trade illegal. But, their efforts were often viewed as a hopeless cause. In fact, it took these crusaders several years to successfully pass a law for total abolition in Parliament. Past scholars have attributed British abolition to be the result the humanitarian campaigns of dedicated parliamentary reformers such as the Whig MP Wilberforce, considered a principle figure in ending the slave trade. Others have turned to economics to explain abolition. Eventually, historians used a combination of ideological and economic reasoning, but they also began to acknowledge that abolitionists played a

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part in ending the slave trade. A closer look reveals that prior studies offer competing reasons to explain British abolition. Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to adjudicate the ongoing debate about why the slave trade ended by trying to answer five overarching research questions:

(1) What role—if any—did resource mobilization play in British slave trade abolition?

(2) How did cultural framing (i.e., moral and economic frames) affect the abolition vote?

(3) What role—if any—did political opportunities play in British abolition?

(4) Did macroeconomic considerations factor into an abolition bill being passed by the British parliament?

(5) Do the above factors affect policy change and agenda setting differently? If so, why?

The argument I will advance is that abolitionists' strategies in Parliament and the opportunities available to the movement (both economic and political) all played an important role in ending the slave trade. In doing so, I make two significant contributions to sociological literatures. First, I add to the literature on social movement culture using frame analysis to study the rhetorical strategies of this early social movement organization via qualitative and quantitative analyses of the entire population of abolitionists' speeches delivered in Parliament from 1789 to 1807—something that is currently missing from sociology. Second, I conduct comprehensive quantitative analyses on original data sets to evaluate social movement theory. That is, I examine the effect of resource mobilization, cultural framing as well as economic and political opportunities on two outcome variables—policy change and agenda setting. As a result, this dissertation directly

addresses the limitations that currently exist in social movement literatures on abolition success. While historical research has advanced scholarship by producing some valuable studies on slave trade abolition, this dissertation adds important developments to these existing literatures that future scholars can build on.

WHY STUDY THE BRITISH SLAVE TRADE CASE?

Slavery has been one of the most universal of human institutions and has existed for several thousands of years in many places around the world (Engerman 2000; Patterson 1967; 1977). In fact, by the end of the eighteenth century, well over three-quarters of human beings alive were held in bondage of one kind or another, in various forms of slavery and serfdom (Hochschild 2005). Slavery is not a rare historical phenomenon. It has been present in societies dominated by all major religions and ideologies and has been legally carried on in some countries into the second half of the twentieth century, if not more informally in various places around the world until the present day (Engerman 2000).

The process of slavery and freedom is an enduring subject, one that many academics continue to take interest in. Yet, as much as they have taken a keen interest in the subject, a comprehensive explanation of why the British slave trade ended in 1807 is currently missing from the literature. One further problem is that early historiography has tended to conflate slave trade abolition with the emancipation of the enslaved, where researchers often surveyed both entities together rather than examining the campaign to end the slave trade on its own (Miller 2009). Beginning with the path breaking work of W.E.B. Du Bois at the end of the nineteenth century, academic focus finally shifted from a broad

examination of slavery to studies that concentrated exclusively on the end of the slave

trade (Patterson 1977; 1982).[2] But, questions still remain.

Even more important than the need for new approaches to examine the slave trade is

the necessity for fresh theoretical orientations that can be empirically examined. There are

two main theories that have been endorsed by historians to explain the end of the trade.

First, early twentieth-century scholars put forth arguments that the slave trade ended for

humanitarian reasons, that British politicians were suddenly enlightened to pass

legislation to abolish it. Later, in the mid-twentieth century, economic historians

debunked these arguments stating that abolition occurred because of economic

motivations rather than moral enlightenment. A third phase of slave trade studies occurred

in the 1960s where researchers attempted to quantify the trade and they also started to

look at the contribution of abolition campaigns to end the trade. What seems very

apparent upon reviewing the literature is that the debate about the causes of British

abolition has endured for well over two hundred years, with historians taking the forefront

of studying the slave trade. Despite the immense scholarly contributions made by

historians, researchers have yet to survey all of the ideological, cultural, social, political

and economic reasons why a law was passed to end the slave trade in 1807, after spending

so many stale years on the legislative agenda. In response, this dissertation represents a

major theoretical shift from simple monographic and descriptive studies of British slave

trade abolition to a more comprehensive framework that looks at all angles of British

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[2] See Du Bois (1896) *The Suppression of the African Slave Trade to the United States of America: 1638–1870* and Du Bois (1899) *The Philadelphia Negro: A Social Study.*

abolition through a theoretically and methodologically informed approach to studying the trade.

A SOCIOLOGICAL APPROACH TO EXPLAIN ABOLITION

Over the past two centuries, sociologists have made use of historical comparisons to investigate complex patterns of social change over time. For example, comparative historians such as Max Weber, Alex de Tocqueville, Marc Bloch, Reinhard Bendix, Barrington Moore, Jr., Jeffrey Paige and Theda Skocpol—just to name a few—have used this method to study macro-social topics such as religious evolution, political development, economic modernization, revolutions and the rise and fall of empires (Skocpol and Somers 1980). But surprisingly, no sociologist has studied the reasons why the British slave trade ended after a nearly twenty-year campaign by social movement activists to put an end to Britain's participation in the trade. While up to now considerable progress has been made in the study of slavery, Orlando Patterson's (1977: 438) challenge that researchers address the large gaps in our knowledge of the institution and the major deficiencies in our theoretical approaches needs to be revisited. Taking a sociological approach to examine the slave trade, my dissertation will use social movement theory and advanced methods to study the effect of distinct social movement components on British abolition.

I will examine several factors that I suggest contributed to the termination of the slave trade in Great Britain. Specifically, I will focus on the years 1789 to 1807, which covers a time period of abolitionists' campaigning in Parliament and when a law was finally passed. Using two different ways to measure social movement success—policy change

and agenda setting—my study takes a unique approach to examining British abolition. I rely on three key aspects of social movement theory to guide my analysis; these are resource mobilization, cultural frame analysis and opportunity structures. The cultural component of my research will be guided by Benford and Snow's (2000) theory of framing processes, which emphasizes intentional ways movement organizers frame their issues to resonate with the beliefs, feelings and desires of potential recruits and powerful actors. This approach helps to explain how groups use powerful symbols to legitimate, strengthen and attract support for their cause. In addition to studying rhetorical patterns using frame analysis, I move beyond prior research addressing two theoretical aspects de-emphasized in social movement literatures. These are routine institutionalized activities and non-political opportunities. Social movement theory often fails to address how individual movement actors can reshape opportunity structures. In general, focussing on abolition provides a way to examine how abolitionists mobilized and strategized in order to gain support for their cause and explains why some social movements take an unreasonable amount of time to achieve their goals.

DISSERTATION FRAMEWORK

This dissertation is divided into six chapters that follow this introduction, each building on the prior section in order to develop a structured analysis of the end of the British slave trade. In Chapter 2, I provide background information on Great Britain's participation in the transatlantic slave trade. I begin by briefly exploring the origins of the African slave trade. In addition, I provide the context of 'how' and 'why' Great Britain became involved in the slave trade and what the business encompassed describing in

detail the components of a typical slaving voyage. I present historical information and statistics on the seven main countries involved in the transatlantic slave trade (i.e., Great Britain, Portugal, France, Spain, United States, Netherlands and Denmark). I also highlight the vital role that religion played in slave trade abolition; particularly Evangelicals and Quakers throughout Britain who put into motion the philosophical ideas of freedom, liberty and benevolence, and spurred the creation of one of the first social movements in history.

In Chapter 3, I provide the context of the various scholarly debates surrounding British abolition through a review of the existing historical (and sociological) literatures via a historical analysis of different abolition themes presented at various stages of scholarship. To accomplish this, I divide past literature into three distinct abolition themes found in the literature. First, I examine the ideological explanations of British abolition, which mainly focused exclusively on moral reasoning. Second, I look at the economic reasons offered by several historians to explain British abolition, which centred on economic determinism, arguing that the slave trade ended given that it was not as profitable as it once had been. Finally, historians advanced the literature when they began to acknowledge the contribution of British parliamentary abolitionists in their campaign to end the trade. While it is true that noteworthy achievements were made in that researchers had newly developed facts and statistics about the trade available to them, none of these past scholars went so far as to use to use this information in a thorough analysis of British abolition. Moving away from historical interpretations, this dissertation offers a new approach to studying abolition. I conclude this chapter with a proposal of

what needs to be accomplished both theoretically and methodologically to facilitate our overall understanding of Britain's participation and eventual departure from the slave trade industry.

In Chapter 4, I develop a theoretical analysis using social movement theory. I build on the insights of three key aspects of the theory. These are (1) mobilization/protest, (2) cultural framing and (3) opportunities (both political and economic) available to the movement. I present a number of hypotheses to evaluate the relationship between abolitionists' petitioning, the framing of abolitionists' speeches in Parliament and economic and political opportunities on two key outcome variables that measure policy change and agenda setting. I conclude this chapter with a theoretical plan for studying British slave trade abolition.

In Chapter 5, I examine the effect of several explanatory variables on two social movement outcomes: (1) an abolition law being passed (i.e. policy change model) and (2) the annual number of roll-call votes a bill incurred (i.e. agenda setting model). My primary aim is to evaluate whether the abolition movement was successful because of mobilization and protest activities such as petitioning, the cultural framing in abolitionists' speeches, macroeconomic processes such as industrialization, slave trade profits and business cycles and the existence of a strong political ally with pro-abolition Prime Minister William Grenville in office. In order to do this, I define and provide context for each of the independent variables that I used in the analyses. First, I examine the effect of cultural framing on British abolition by including three variables (i.e., moral frames, economic frames and % economic frames). Next, I include two variables to

examine the effect of resource mobilization (i.e., petition numbers and signatories) on British abolition. Finally, I include three economic opportunity variables (i.e., business cycles, slave trade profits and industrialization rates) and one political opportunity variable (i.e., pro or anti-abolition prime minister) to survey the effect of different opportunity structures available to the movement. I then define each outcome variable and explain each of the statistical methods that I employed to model the British legislative process. To evaluate each set of hypotheses, I use Firth's penalized logistic regression to look at policy change and then I employ Exact Poisson regression to examine agenda setting.

In Chapter 6, I offer a qualitative analysis of the slave trade debates. The key objective of this chapter is to provide a deeper analysis of the abolition themes that emerged. In doing so, I concentrate on five things. First, I provide a brief analysis of what cultural framing looked like in the parliamentary slave trade debates. Second, I examine the context of abolitionist MPs' speeches in order to demonstrate how I created the cultural framing variables (i.e., moral frames and economic frames). Third, I look at counter-framing in anti-abolitionists' speeches (i.e., pro-slave trade arguments). Fourth, I interpret the strategic nature of the language employed by parliamentary abolitionists using the concept of "strategic adaptation" (McCammon et al. 2007; 2008)—the idea that social movements learn about the effectiveness of their prior approaches and make any necessary changes in pursuing success. Finally, I empirically demonstrate the importance of strong political alliances available to the abolition movement. The analyses in this

chapter mainly relied on a content analysis of transcripts from the slave trade debates in William Cobbett's Parliamentary History of England.

In the closing chapter of this dissertation, I summarize the theoretical and methodological implications of this study on British abolition and I also highlight some of the challenges of doing historical research. While the research findings are novel and what some might consider provocative, I acknowledge there are some weaknesses that still exist in abolition scholarship and I offer a strategy of how to address these remaining gaps in the future. With this in mind, I suggest what needs to be accomplished next to contribute to our understanding of slave trade abolition even further. Moreover, this dissertation has contemporary implications in that it provides a potential template for the critical examination of different types of human rights violations occurring all over the world today.

FINAL THOUGHTS

There is more to understanding British abolition than simply looking at economics and moral ideology. Examining the British slave trade from a sociological standpoint offers a new way to think about its abolition. In doing so, I show how opportunities such as the existence of a political alliance with the Prime Minister of Great Britain fostered a favourable movement environment. My contribution also offers new empirical evidence to suggest the possibility that economic considerations might have altered the course of history by pacifying voting members of Parliament opposed to slave trade abolition. In the end, I raise the possibility that economics mattered more to parliamentary MPs than humanitarian concerns.

CHAPTER 2: HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

THE ORIGINS OF THE AFRICAN SLAVE TRADE

The transatlantic slave trade represented the first major international movement of persons from the point of enslavement in Africa to forced labour in the Americas (Klein et al. 2001; Patterson 1982; Thomas 1997). For well over three-hundred years, participating European countries forcibly confined Africans on slave ships being transported to destinations across the Atlantic Ocean in order to exchange them for commodities brought back to their native countries. According to the W.E.B. Dubois Institute, from the sixteenth to the nineteenth century between eleven and twelve million Africans were transported in the slave trade. Moreover, it is estimated that about 35,000 voyages occurred during more than three and half centuries of the slave trade's existence (Hochschild 2005). The pre-existence of slavery within Africa allowed Europeans to mobilize the slave trade rather quickly by tapping into already existing supplies. In fact, the rulers of certain African states who were anxious to supply their own slaves in exchange for aid and commodities often assisted European traders.

In the beginning of the fifteenth century, the Portuguese started making sea journeys down the west coast of Africa to acquire slaves, and this process would continue for the next 450 years or so. Up until the mid-fifteenth century, most slaves were exchanged in the Spanish Caribbean with the owners of the gold mines in Cibao on Hispaniola (present day Haiti and Dominican Republic) emerging as major purchasers (Curtin 1969; Thomas 1997). This was the beginning of the slave traffic in the Americas and gold in Hispaniola was the lure. Portugal would eventually became the first European nation to engage in the

slave trade, with the earliest voyage carrying slaves direct from Africa to the Americas occurring around 1526 (Patterson 1982; Thomas 1997; Eltis et al. 2009). The journey set out from Sao Tome in the Bight of Biafra, although the slaves almost certainly originated from the Congo (Eltis et al. 2009). But, instead of capturing slaves, Portuguese slave captains preferred to buy or offer goods for captives and it was left to the native tribe's people to acquire these slaves for trade. This was the beginning of the transatlantic slave trade.

By the mid-sixteenth century, approximately 40,000 slaves were shipped from Africa to the Americas, to Europe or to the Atlantic islands with historians speculating that approximately 1,800 slaves were shipped per year to these destinations between 1550 and 1575 (Thomas 1997). From 1500 to 1820, every European immigrant who arrived in the New World was matched by at least two African slaves (Engerman 1986; Davis 2000). To put this figure into perspective, by 1790 an average annual shipment of African slaves was estimated at about 42,000 (Lovejoy 1982). These slaves and their descendants supplied the basic labour power that created dynamic New World economies and the first international mass markets for such consumer goods such as sugar, rice, tobacco, dyestuffs, and cotton (Davis 2000; Thomas 1997).

Sugar and the Slave Trade

Most scholars agree that the history of sugar production is closely intertwined with the history of slavery because the entire Atlantic economy was organized around slave-produced sugar up until around the nineteenth century (Solow 1987; Verlinden 1970). By the early fifteenth century, sugar plantations increasingly became a dominant form of

colonial exploitation in the Atlantic, and black African slaves eventually became the main source of labour for production (Patterson 1977; Solow 1987; Thomas 1997). According to Solow (1987), slave-produced sugar was an important stimulus for European growth for a couple of reasons. First, as an economic institution, slavery provided an increased supply of labour where the introduction of slaves into plantation economies was considered a new innovation that enhanced production. Second, slavery was a new form of holding wealth and the labour produced was considered a valuable asset in the portfolio of both slave traders and owners. So, while free labour could only be rented, slave labour became a capital asset (Fogel and Engerman 1974a; Solow 1987). Moreover, slavery introduced a more flexible supply of labour into the colonial system and consequently increased the rate of return on investment over what it would otherwise have been (Solow 1987). Because slave labour was considered more productive than free white labour, the return to investment was thought to have multiplied even further (Fogel and Engerman 1974a; Solow 1987). Consequently, the institution opened up investment opportunities and allowed northern Europe to trade its manufactures for slave-produced sugar.

The slave traffic to Brazil, which eventually accounted for about forty percent of the trade, got underway around 1560 (Eltis et al. 2009). An increasing demand for sugar drove this traffic. Over the period of 1560 to 1620, Africans gradually replaced the Amerindian labour force that early sugar mills had drawn from with a great majority of the slaves entering this early trade originating from the Upper Guinea coast (Curtin 1969; Eltis et al. 2009). By the time the Dutch invaded Brazil in 1630, Pernambuco, Bahia and Rio de Janeiro were supplying almost all of the sugar consumed in Europe and nearly all

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of the slaves producing it were Africans. By 1640, there were two major routes in the transatlantic slave trade operating, one to Brazil and the other to the mainland Spanish Americas. Together they accounted for approximately 7,500 departures a year, almost all of them from West-Central Africa (Curtin 1969; Eltis et al. 2009; Thomas 1997). After 1640, sugar production eventually spread to the eastern Caribbean. As sugar consumption steadily increased throughout Europe, the system of slavery began two centuries of westward expansion across tropical and sub-tropical North America (Eltis et al. 2009; Thomas 1997).

Although early Caribbean colonists initially grew small plots of cotton, cocoa, tobacco, indigo and ginger using both indentured and some slave labour, sugar was eventually introduced to Barbados in 1640. By 1650, small plot holders and white servants were replaced by large plantations using African slave labour for production. As a direct result, Brazilian sugar production could no longer compete and its markets became limited to southern Europe. The transformation of Barbados to an economy based on slaves and sugar was followed close behind by the Leeward Islands, Guadeloupe, Martinique, Jamaica and Saint Domingue (present day Haiti) (Curtin 1969; Eltis et al. 2009; Thomas 1997; Solow 1987). By 1660, the value of sugar imports to central Europe exceeded that of all other colonial produce combined (Curtin 1969; Davis 1973; Mintz 1985). By 1700, total sugar production in the Western Hemisphere was estimated to be roughly 54,000 tons and by 1740 it doubled; tripled by 1776 and nearly quadrupled by the end of the American Revolution in 1783 (Solow 1987). Of the six million slaves taken

from Africa in the eighteenth century, the Caribbean imported more than half and Brazil

only a third (Curtin 1969; Davis 1973; Mintz 1985).

The significance of slave-produced sugar and its role in the continuation of the

African slave trade cannot be understated. In the first half of the eighteenth century,

Britain had the third highest consumption rate of sugar in Europe with per capita

consumption being eight times that of the French (Tomich 1991). By 1750, sugar reached

the masses and even the poorest of the English population took sugar in their tea

(Richardson 1987). By 1774, sugar accounted for twenty percent of the total import bill,

far surpassing any other commodity (Curtin 1969; Davis 1973; Mintz 1985). The

dramatic transformation of the processes of its manufacture, transport, marketing, finance,

distribution and consumption at the end of the eighteenth century eventually redefined the

role of sugar in the world economy and caused an unprecedented increase in the amount

of sugar produced (Tomich 1991). Once the sugar-slave plantation arrived in the British

colonies, Britain focused their external trade on those areas and thus began what would be

known as the Golden Age of the transatlantic slave trade.

THE TRANSATLANTIC SLAVE TRADE, 1700–1808

Throughout the slave trade of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, 1.8

million African slaves died during transportation and another 10.6 million having

survived the treacherous journey were forced to labour on plantation systems throughout

the New World (Curtin 1969; Rediker 2007). No Europeans, whether indentured servants,

convicts or destitute free migrants were ever subjected to the environment or treatment

which greeted the typical African slave upon embarkation on the slave ship. For example,

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male and female slaves were separated, kept naked, packed close together with the men chained together for long periods of time (Clarkson 1808; Curtin 1969; Eltis et al. 2009; Solow 2001; Thomas 1997). While improvements in sailing technology and ship design in the early nineteenth century eventually cut the voyage time in half, mortality rates still remained high because of the unregulated nature of the business. In fact, throughout the slave trade era, filthy conditions ensured endemic gastro-intestinal diseases and a range of epidemic pathogens that, together with periodic slave revolts, meant that between twelve and thirteen percent of those embarked did not survive the journey (Eltis et al. 2009).

The slave voyage, which generally took six to eight weeks to complete, was routed through a dangerous belt of the Atlantic Ocean known as the Middle Passage and few, if any, slaves transported escaped this destiny. The slave ship, being one link in the chain of enslavement was considered a mobile, seagoing prison at a time when modern prisons had not yet been established on land (Rediker 2007). European countries involved in the trade sent their ships to six main regions along the African coast to acquire slaves (See figure 2.1 on page 19). The coastal region of West-Central Africa (present day Angola) was a major supplier of slaves, followed by the Bights of Benin and Biafra, which were later joined by the more marginal provenance zones of the Gold Coast, Senegambia, Southeast Africa, Sierra Leone and the Windward Coast (Rediker 2007). By 1600, the center of gravity of the volume of the trade was located in West-Central Africa, a long stretch of coast south of Cape Lopez that extended to Benguela. With the exception of a fifty-year period from 1676 to 1725, more slaves were taken from this area than any other part of Africa (Rediker 2007; Thomas 1997). To put this into perspective, from 1751 to 1850,

this region supplied nearly half of the entire African labour force in the Americas
(Rediker 2007; Thomas 1997). Moreover, in the half century after 1800, West-Central
Africa exported more slaves than all other African regions combined (Curtin 1969; Eltis
et al. 2009).

Figure 2.1   Major Coastal Regions where Slaves left Africa, All Years
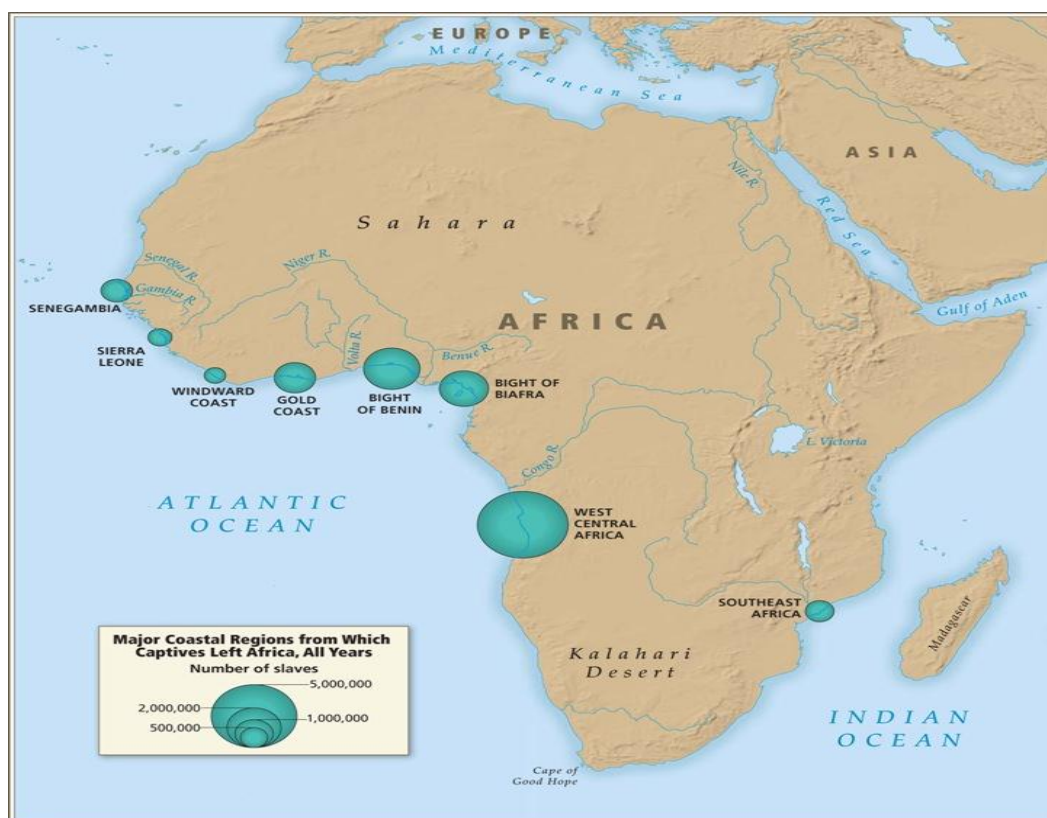
Source: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Eltis et al. 2009

The main countries participating in the slave trade were Great Britain, Portugal
(Brazil), France, the United States (British North America), the Netherlands, Denmark
and Spain (Uruguay). By the end of the eighteenth century, thousands of slave ships had
crossed the Atlantic transporting millions of captives to New World plantations, thus

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contributing to a new powerful Atlantic capitalist economy (Curtin 1969; Rediker 2007).

To provide a broad perspective of the slave trade in its entirety, figure 2.2 on page 21

outlines the annual number of slaves carried by countries participating in the trade from

1501 to 1866, when the slave trade was eventually abandoned throughout the world. Here,

we find that four countries dominated the African slave trade throughout this time period:

Great Britain, Portugal/Brazil, France and the United States/British North America (See

figure 2.3 on page 22). By the end of the seventeenth century, the entire volume of slaves

carried off reached 30,000 per annum and 85,000 a century later. Despite the fact that the

British, Americans, Danish and Dutch eventually dropped out of the slave trade after

1807, over 80,000 slaves left Africa per year during the decade of 1821 to 1830. Well

over a million more—approximately one-tenth of the volume carried off in the entire

slave trade—followed in the next twenty years (Curtin 1969; Eltis et al. 2009). Although

Great Britain and Portugal both had the highest overall participation rates, Portugal

dominated the slave trade from the sixteenth century up until the mid-seventeenth

century, when Great Britain's involvement eventually surpassed all other countries in the

trade. In fact, from around 1663 to 1807, Britain carried the highest number of slaves

followed by Portugal, France and the United States. Moreover, from around the mid-

seventeenth century to the early nineteenth century, Spain would all but drop out of the

trade except for a few departures carrying a small number of slaves. After British

abolition in 1807, Spain/Uruguay and Portugal/Brazil took over as leading exporters of

slaves, albeit illegally after 1820 (see figure 2.2). As a result, the number of slaves

transported from Africa to the Americas remained high throughout the first half of

Figure 2.2   Annual Numbers of Slaves Embarked by Country, 1501–1866
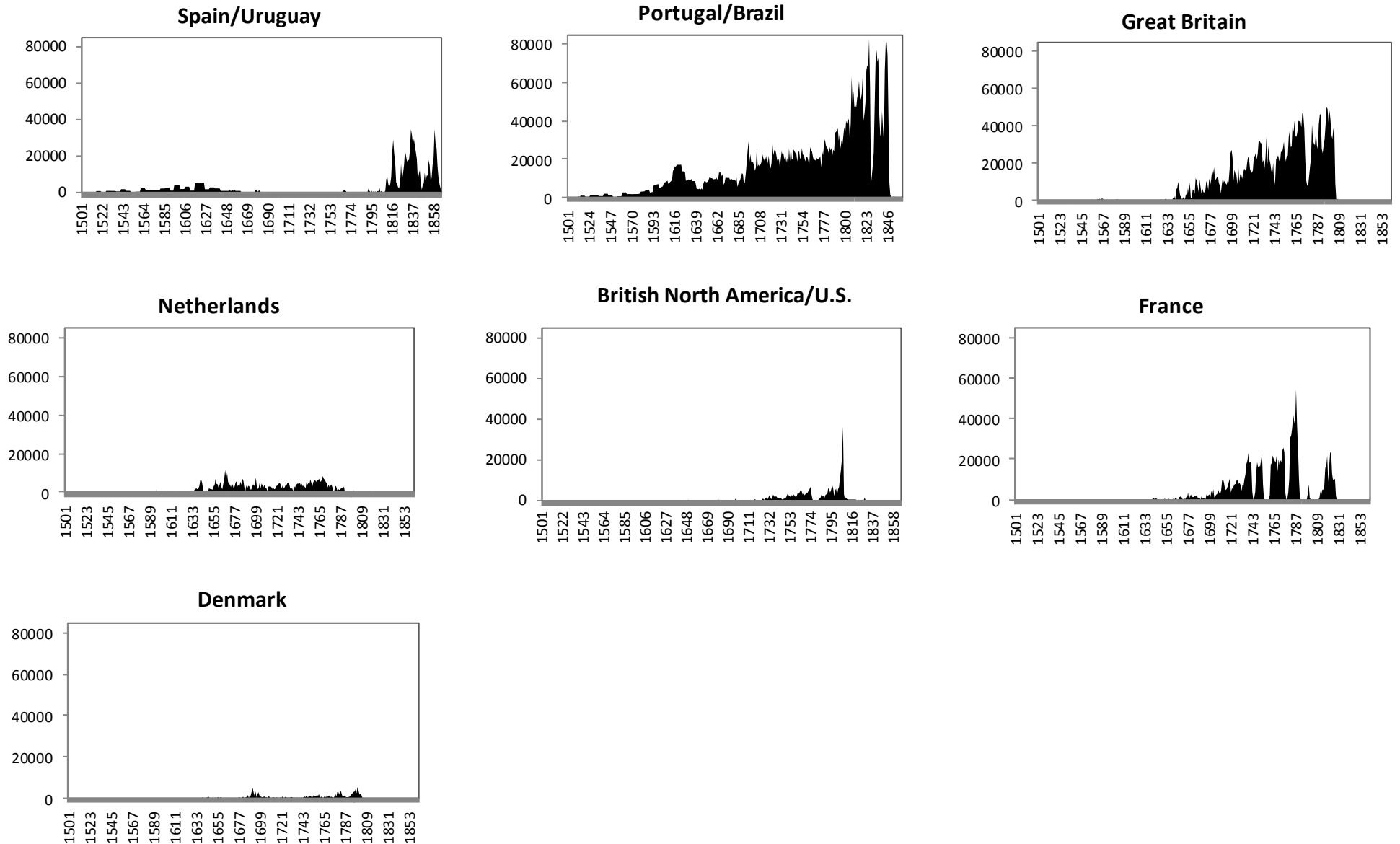
Data Source: Statistics drawn from The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Eltis et al. 2009

Figure 2.3   Annual Numbers of Slaves Embarked by Country during the Golden Age of the Slave Trade, 1700–1808
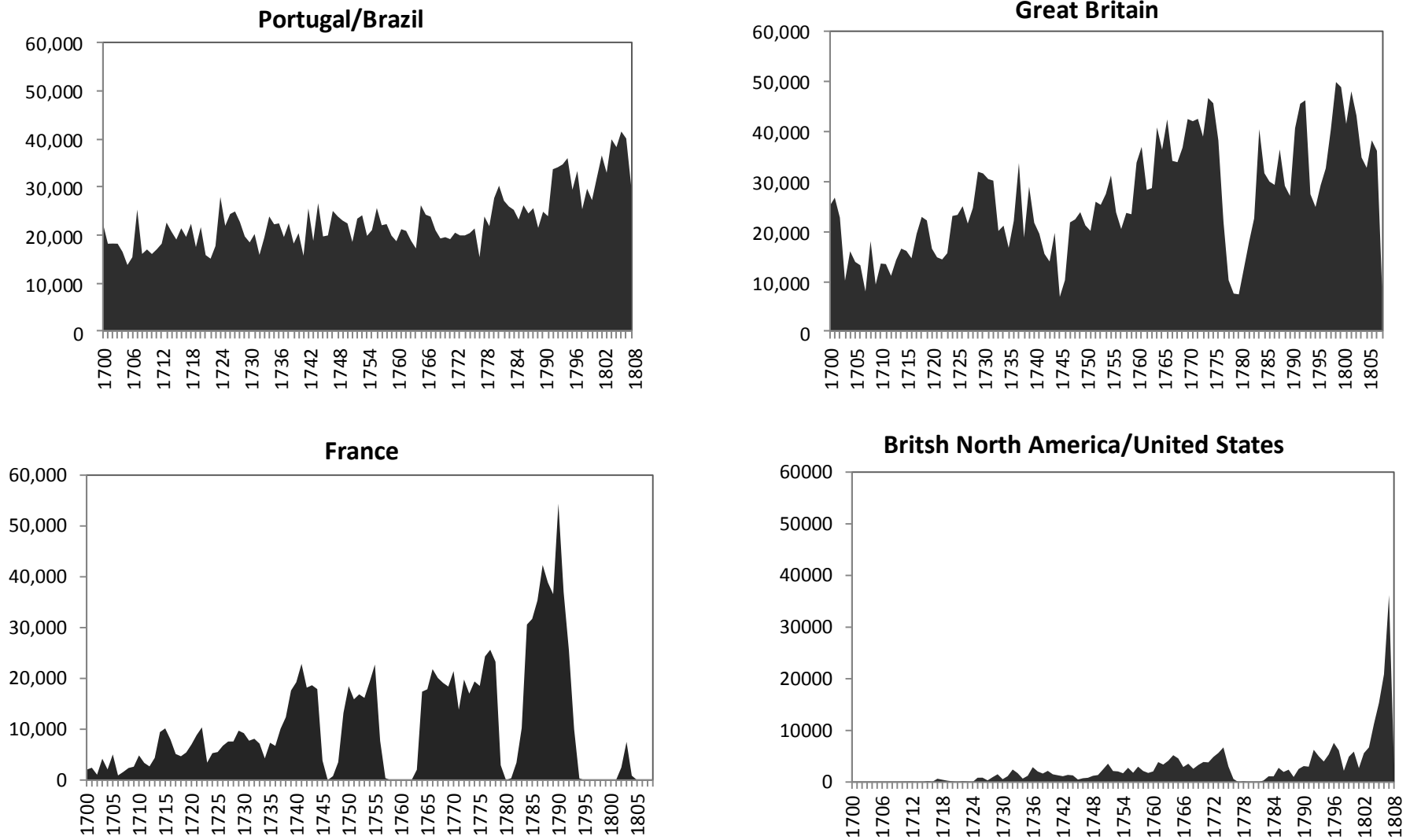
Data Source: Statistics drawn from The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Eltis et al. 2009

the nineteenth century, as did the slave trade to other destinations.

The period from 1700 to 1808 was labelled the "golden age" of the slave trade by historians because more slaves were transported during that era than any other time in the history of the trade. In fact, approximately eight out of ten Africans pulled into the slave trade made their journeys in the century and a half after 1700 (Eltis et al. 2009). Between 1761 and 1808, more than 1.5 million African slaves were transported from the African coast to the Americas by British slavers alone. Table 2.1 provides an overview of the total numbers of slaves each country exported for the period of 1761 to 1810. Over 3.6 million slaves were transported during these booming years of the trade.

Table 2.1   The Volume of the Slave Trade by National Carrier, 1761 to 1810

Nation	Exported African Slaves (#)
Great Britain	1,535,622
Portugal/Brazil	1,055,700
France	595,881
USA/13 colonies	294,900
Netherlands	116,416
Denmark	59,896
Total	3,658,415

Data Source: Statistics are drawn from Anstey (1977), Curtin (1969) and Klein (1969)

Despite the fact that two countries—Great Britain and the United States—ended their transatlantic slave trades in the first decade of the nineteenth century, and most European

colonies also seemingly ended their trade in slaves in response to British urging and attempted naval suppression, in the sixty-seven years of its nineteenth-century operation about four-fifths the numbers left Africa in the transatlantic slave trade on an annual basis compared to the eighteenth century (Engerman 1986; Eltis 1987a; Lovejoy 1983). In the end, Portugal/Brazil finally dropped out of slave trade in 1852 and Spain/Uruguay followed suit in 1866.

THE BRITISH SLAVE TRADE

Captain John Hawkins made the first known English slaving voyage to Africa in 1562 during the reign of Elizabeth I. During a period of six years, he captured over 1200 Africans and sold them to Spanish colonies in the Americas. From this modest start, British participation in the slave trade began and would continue until the early nineteenth century. Between 1660 and 1807, over three million Africans were transported to the Americas on British vessels (Curtin 1969; Eltis et al. 2009). Moreover, of the 27,000 recorded slave voyages between the late seventeenth and early nineteenth centuries, about 12,000 involved British ships (Kerr-Ritchie 2008; Walvin 2007). Regarded by many as an unavoidable evil, the slave trade became a symbol of Great Britain's naval and commercial greatness and brought immense wealth to the country during the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries (Robotham 1997). During the course of three centuries, millions of Africans were captured and transported to the New World, of which most were traded for sugar (Sheridan 1958; 1994). In fact, increased tea consumption in Great Britain during the eighteenth century was a major contributing factor in extending the

market for sugar (Richardson 1987). As a result, British overseas trade grew substantially with a high percentage coming from the transatlantic slave trade (Richardson 1987).

The two main facets of British involvement in the slave trade were investment in plantations employing slave labour and the flow of British merchandise and credit to the slave trader (Eltis 1979a; 1987b). By 1755, British traders supplied African slaves to the colonies of the British Empire as well as French, Spanish and Portuguese colonies (Hochschild 2005). The slave voyage was labelled a triangular trade, whereby English manufactures were traded for slaves off the coast of Africa; the slaves were then transported across the Middle Passage to West India or mainland colonies where they were exchanged for sugar, tobacco and other commodities. On the final leg of the journey, British slave vessels carried colonial produce back to the English port from where the journey originated (See figure 2.4 on page 26). The British slave trade involved three principal commodities: sugar, rum and slaves. British distillers made rum from Caribbean sugar and then British slave ships took the vats of rum to Africa to purchase slaves from their African owners/dealers in exchange for the rum. Other items such as guns, ammunition, copper, cloth, glassware and manila pots were also traded for slaves. The voyage across the Atlantic itself generally took six to eight weeks. Once in the Americas, those Africans who had survived the journey were off-loaded for trade and put to work as slaves. The bulk of the human cargo was trafficked in the Caribbean for cane sugar, which was transported back to Europe, and the cycle continued. In some cases, British ships returned home with other commodities such as coffee, tobacco, rice, and

later slave produced cotton (Mannix 1962). According to several historical records, an excellent profit was made (Inikori 1981; Solow 1985; Williams 1944).

Figure 2.4   The Transatlantic Slave Trade Triangular Voyage
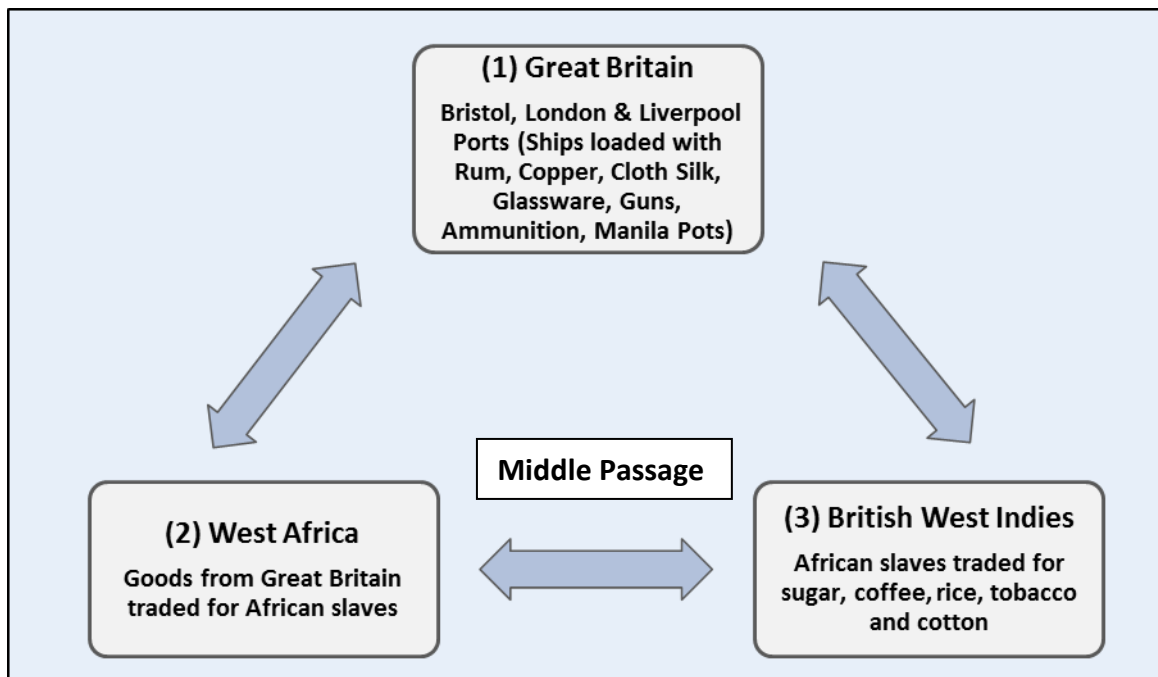
The Business of the Slave Trade

At the beginning of the seventeenth century, the woolen industry dominated English trade and manufacturing, accounting for four-fifths of foreign trade, mainly with Europe (Solow 1987). However, with the appearance of slave-grown sugar and tobacco, British trade eventually turned to the West and became the entrepôt for Europe's supply of these goods. The production of sugar and tobacco, their low cost and their elasticity of supply depended on the continuing flow of slaves to the colonies. By the eighteenth century, total trade increased significantly and British ships crisscrossed the Atlantic carrying manufactured goods to Africa, the West Indies, Brazil, Portugal and British North

America. The Atlantic islands exported wine and Brazilian gold, and the West Indies exported sugar and molasses. In addition, some British North American colonies sent rice and tobacco to Britain; others shipped fish, lumber, horses and flour to the West Indies and purchased British manufactures with the proceeds (Solow 1987; Thomas 1997). All of these trade flows depended on the output of slave labour. Moreover, between 1700 and 1774, the population of British North America increased tenfold and was responsible for most of the expansion of British overseas trade during the middle decades of the century (Solow 1987; Thomas 1997).

At the end of the eighteenth century, Britain emerged as a dominant economic power in the European world economy. Under its hegemony, Britain infiltrated the markets of other colonizing powers and established trade with periphery countries on the basis of British manufactured goods and other services such as capital, shipping, banking, insurance for raw materials and agricultural products (Solow 1987). The British shipping industry and system of credit expanded world trade and increased the demand for new crops outside of Britain (Solow 1987). By the beginning nineteenth century, Britain was the world's largest consumer of products from periphery countries and consequently was the only nation that could supply the credit, machinery and manufactured goods required to support this expansion. Furthermore, the growth of multilateral trading in the world economy extended British financial power, developed cheap sources of supply, increased the volume of commodities in circulation and secured markets for British manufactures throughout the world economy (Hobsbawm 1968).

The triangular trade was considered very profitable to Great Britain and slave labour was a necessary condition of this economic success (Inikori 1981; 1987; Solow 1985; Williams 1944). According to Gee (1750), sugar and tobacco plantations served a number of economically energizing functions for Great Britain. First, they led to the hire of 300 ships providing employment for 6,000 sailors. Second, many Britons employed in occupations allied to ship building and maintenance depended indirectly on the plantations for their incomes. Third, British West Indian produce became a substitute for more expensive produce from Spanish and Portuguese colonies. Finally, the African slave trade carried no money out, supplied plantations with slave labour and also brought in a great deal of gold for slaves traded to the Spanish West-Indies.

The Slaving Voyage

The transatlantic slaving system hinged on consumer demand for commodities (e.g., sugar, coffee, indigo, rice, tobacco and cotton) and also negative growth rates in slave populations due to malnourished diets, punishing work conditions, poor disease environments and imbalanced sex ratios (Solow 1991). A great deal of planning went into the organization of a slaving voyage. In fact, the business strategies among British slave merchants were shaped around seasonal transaction cycles; whether in the supply of capital, labour, shipping and trading goods in European ports; the supply of provisions and slaves in Africa, or the merchant-planter demand for labour in the Americas (Behrendt 2001). With these cycles in mind, merchants attempted to coordinate voyages with supply and demand in Europe, Africa and the Americas. During the British parliamentary abolition campaign, Liverpool was the main slaving port, having organized

the most expeditions and transported the highest number of slaves compared to other

ports in London and Bristol (See figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5   Annual Numbers of Slaves Transported by British Port, 1789–1807
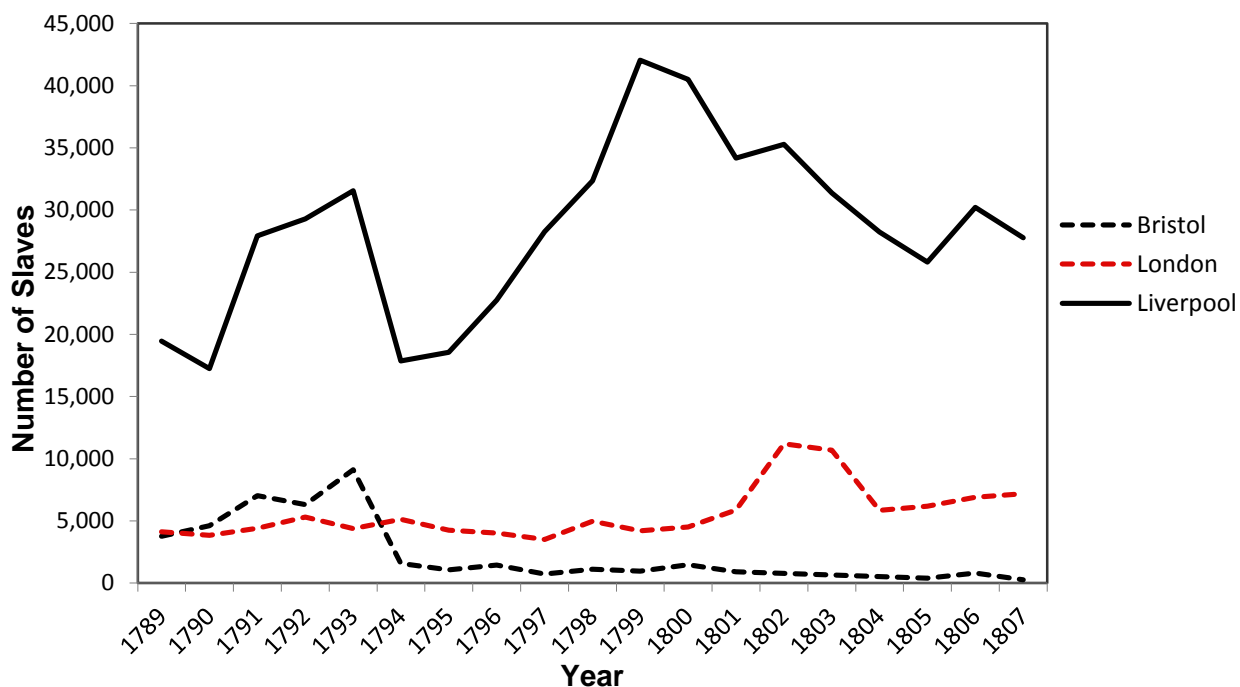
Data Source: Statistics drawn from The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Eltis et al. 2009

At the outset, merchants needed to arrange financing for a slaving venture, however,

this was often difficult to secure. The availability and cost of credit fluctuated with

consumer incomes, the price of plantation produce and the risks associated with wartime

sailing (Solow 1991). Voyages that were organized around optimal transaction cycles

minimized risks, reduced costs and maximized the potential for profits (Behrendt 2001).

As British merchants negotiated terms of credit with financiers, they paid close attention

to the seasonal patterns of the major British overseas shuttle trades, which dictated the

availability of manpower, shipping and supplies. But, as previously mentioned, there were serious risks to consider when organizing a slaving expedition. For example, when enemy privateers and warships captured large numbers of British slavers and produce vessels, as happened in the years 1689–1697, 1744–1745, 1777–1782 and 1793–1794, many lenders believed that the risks of slaving outweighed potential returns and consequently tightened credit (Behrendt 2001). In addition, several British slaving merchants who could secure loans also thought that wartime risks prohibited organizing ventures. Consequently, the number of slaving voyages subsequently decreased, as demonstrated below in figure 2.6. For example, during the liquidity crises of 1793, the volume of the British slave trade dropped by more than two-thirds. Once this crisis passed in the latter part of the

Figure 2.6   Annual Numbers of British Voyages in the Slave Trade, 1789–1807
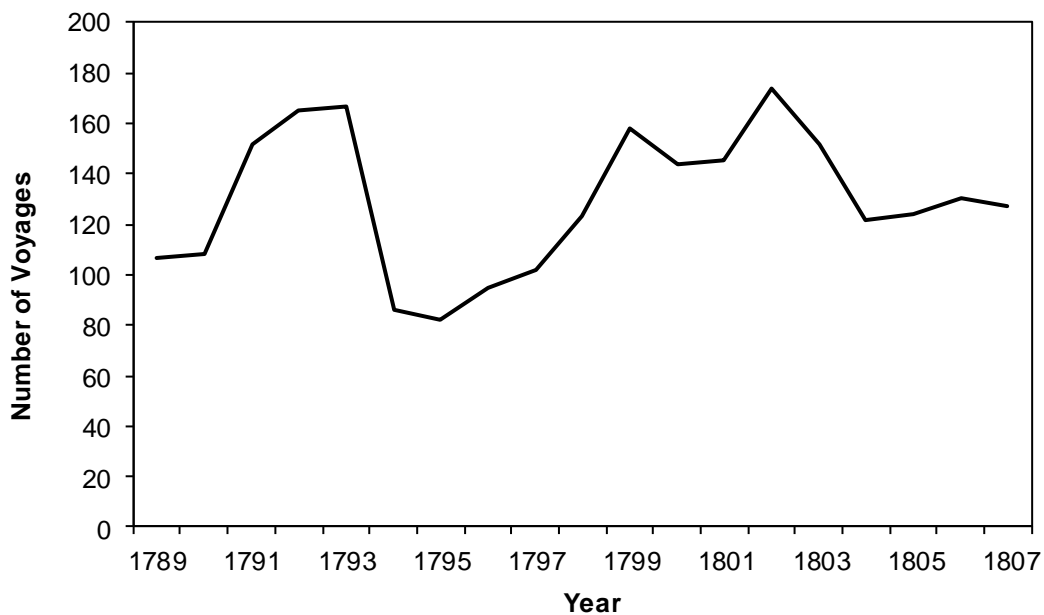
Data Source: Statistics drawn from The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Eltis et al. 2009

eighteenth century, financiers extended credit to stimulate the expansion of British slavery in Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent, Jamaica and other British colonies (Behrendt 2001). As a result, British slave traders purchased record numbers of enslaved Africans. By 1803, British merchants had little difficulty obtaining credit, as fears of slave trade abolition led planters to bid up slave prices in expectation of future labour shortages (Coleman and Hutchinson 2006; Behrendt 2001).

In response to supply and demand factors, merchants timed their slaving expeditions to arrive at Atlantic destinations during specific months. In general, voyages that sailed from England and returned to port within a year had the greatest chance of earning a profit (Behrendt 2001). For most British slavers, an early summer departure from England increased the speed of the triangular voyage (Behrendt 2001). Furthermore, the most cost-effective voyages usually arrived in Africa during months when coastal dealers supplied greater numbers of slaves and provisions and usually completed slave loading in time to trade in the Caribbean or North America during the harvest cycle (Behrendt 2001). Maintaining a regular cycle of slaving expeditions required identifying African markets where supplies of slaves exceeded demand. Business savvy merchants accomplished this by examining reports of earlier voyages contained in local newspapers, customs documents, coffeehouse ledgers, and by corresponding and networking with other slave traders. They kept shipping lists, which included the names of vessels, captains and owners, intended African markets and numbers of slaves, and dates of customs clearance or sailings (Behrendt 2001). Some added notations on the market in the Americas and also the numbers of slaves that embarked and disembarked. In addition, they estimated

likely levels of competition by learning the destinations of recent slaving voyages from

shipbrokers and other informants in English ports (Behrendt 2001). In Africa, the Bight of

Biafra, West Central Africa and Sierra Leone followed by the Gold Coast were the main

ports utilized by British slave traders (See table 2.2).

**Table 2.2   The Regional Distribution of British Slave Exports from Africa,
1780–1807**

Decades	Sene-gambia	Sierra Leone	Gold Coast	Bight of Benin	Bight of Biafra	West-Central Africa
1780-89	350 (0.1)	53,100 (15.2)	31,090 (8.9)	25,500 (7.3)	211,000 (60.4)	25,150 (7.2)
1790-99	2,921 (0.7)	50,850 (12.2)	57,520 (13.8)	7,090 1.7)	170,070 (40.8)	128,390 (30.8)
1800-07	2,250 (0.8)	42,970 (15.3)	30,050 (10.7)	2,250 (0.8)	123,000 (43.8)	80,320 (28.6)

Note: Figures in brackets refer to percentage share of exports.
Data Source: Richardson, 1989

Merchants organizing slaving voyages depended on a sound labour market because the

requirements of purchasing and guarding a human cargo demanded crewing levels twice

that of comparably sized vessels (Behrendt 2001). In most cases, slave captains hired

skilled mariners to sail the vessels, employed several trading mates and trained carpenters,

joiners, coopers, and surgeons, as well as guards to watch over enslaved Africans both on

the coast and during the voyage across the Atlantic (Thomas 1997; Behrendt 2001).

Adding to the cost of an expedition was the fact that the destructiveness of the slave trade

required merchants to procure sailing vessels every three to four years (Thomas 1997).

For example, there were shipwrecks on all legs of the journey, shore-based attacks by

African groups, slave insurrections on ships, captures during European wars and

deterioration on ship hulls destroyed by marine life in the warm Atlantic waters.

Moreover, the British shipbuilding industry could not supply the number of ships required

by British traders, nor could merchants afford or risk purchasing expensive new vessels.

As a result, three out of four British slavers were second-hand vessels acquired from other

trades (Berendt 2001).

THE MOVEMENT FOR ABOLITION

> Liberty is the right of every human creature, as soon as he breathes the vital air; no
> human law can deprive him of that right which he derives from the law of nature.
>
> John Wesley (1872:79)

The progress of intellectual history in the eighteenth century paved the way for the

movement toward abolishing the slave trade in Great Britain. Two major factors drove the

development of the British abolition movement. First, eighteenth-century philosophers

began to publicly criticize the merits of slavery and the slave trade. Second, religious

groups such as Christian Evangelicals and Quakers rallied support against the slave trade.

A major shift in attitude by influential thinkers regarded slavery and the slave trade

system as morally reprehensible and no longer philosophically defensible (Anstey

1975a).[3] In particular, the growth of liberal thought throughout Great Britain played a key

role in spreading anti-slavery agendas that eventually led to the development of

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[3]See John Locke (1690) *Two Treatises of Government*, Francis Hutcheson's (1755) *A System of Moral Philosophy*, Baron de Montesquieu's (1748) *The Spirit of the Laws*, Adam Smith's (1776) The Wealth of Nations and Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.

abolitionist reform. Slavery came to be understood as the antithesis of the emergent forms of polity, moral sensibility and economic activity. It was viewed as the epitome of archaic, inefficient and backward production and was generally presumed to be incompatible with the emerging modern world. Conversely, free wage labour was regarded as the universal outcome of the historical processes of capitalist development (Tomich 1991).

While eighteenth-century philosophical agendas were important in highlighting liberal ideas and helped to change the way people viewed slavery, they were considered to be nothing more than the opinions of men. It was actually through the contribution of religious agendas that the real crusade for the abolition of slavery and slave trade began. Evangelical Christianity, which spread throughout both Great Britain and her North American colonies, offered an egalitarian God relatively unconcerned with man-made hierarchies. The support and organization of Evangelicals and Quakers throughout Britain put in motion the philosophical ideas of freedom, liberty and benevolence. These ideals cast considerable doubt on the acceptance of slavery and the slave trade in the minds of many reformers throughout Great Britain. Credited with having produced a disproportionate share of the world's anti-slavery leaders, the Quaker movement was considered to be one of the most resilient and widespread religious organizations (Aptheker 1940). Armed with an anti-slavery agenda, they influenced other religious denominations through their widespread appeals and they popularized the idea of creating a society for humanitarian purposes emphasizing their motto of "friends and humanity" (Fisher 1935).

By 1750, over 90,000 Quakers on both sides of the Atlantic began to urge their members to abandon both slave ownership and participation in the slave trade (Lindsay 2008). Moreover, Quakers, Anglican evangelicals and also some prominent Methodists throughout Great Britain publicly condemned slavery and the greed of slave trade merchants. For example, when John Wesley—the father of Methodism—witnessed the conditions of the slaves, he denounced slave traders as "butchers" and "wolves" and accused them of robbery, fraud and murder (Merrill 1945). As a result, the first signs of religious organization against the slave trade appeared throughout Great Britain and those involved spoke out publicly:

> Such, Sir, is the general history of the progress of the slave trade; And whatever those whose interest is concerned in it may pretend to say in its justification, they will not be able to contradict historical facts, which prove it originated in private prospects of gain: was established by violence and treachery; and has been conducted for centuries past, even to this day, with a spirit of cruelty and injustice, unknown in the history of any other people or any other country.

(London Times, Issue 861 Col B Sept 29, 1787)

Once the slave's right to possess himself had been established by well-known philosophers and religious groups throughout Great Britain, the greater task of translating these rights into terms of actual legal machinery still needed to be done. Only politicians through their control of the law could accomplish this (Fletcher 1933). In the 1780s, prominent members of the British Parliament became the leading proponents of abolition (Fisher 1935). As a result, the campaign to end the slave trade became an unavoidable feature of British politics (Oldfield 1992; 1995).

The popular mobilizations and innovations of British abolitionists in the eighteenth century crystallized the development of the modern social movement (Colley 2005; Tilly

1982; Tilly 1995; Tarrow 1989; 1994; 1998). An eventual shift in British public opinion

beginning in the late 1780's constitutes one of the most dramatic events in the history of

the British slave trade (Drescher 1994; 1999). By the middle of the eighteenth century, the

underpinnings of a social movement began when scattered and un-unified objectors

throughout Great Britain started to challenge the merits of the slave trade (Merrill 1945).

With no official organization in sight, during the 1780s a powerful group of politicians

including William Pitt, Charles James Fox and William Wilberforce tried to abolish the

slave trade but they only succeeded in regulating conditions on British slave ships.

Eventually, when like-minded Brits joined forces to end the slave trade, a landmark social

movement was formed. One major historical event spurred this movement's formation

(Hochschild 2005; Thomas 1997). In the spring of 1783, events related to Britain's

participation in the transatlantic slave trade were made public when the abolitionist

Granville Sharp unsuccessfully attempted to prosecute the crew responsible for throwing

slaves overboard a British slaver called the *Zong* (Anstey 1975a). Presiding over the

appeal, the Chief Justice of the King's Bench Lord Mansfield ruled that murder was not

the issue. Instead, the jury reasoned as if horses had died instead of human beings

(Hochschild 2005). Even more surprising was the fact that the case turned into a civil

insurance dispute and not a homicide trial.

In November 1781, the *Zong's* Captain, Luke Collingwood, deliberately instructed

his crew to throw 132 of his slave cargo overboard to their deaths. Threatened by

epidemic, he took great care to insure his cargo before he murdered them (Coupland

1933). The following account reveals what transpired. The *Zong* sailed from Africa on

route to Jamaica with 440 slaves on board facing headwinds more than twice the normal strength. To make matters worse, when the inexperienced Captain mistook Jamaica for another island, he overshot his destination with grave consequences. As a result, it took almost four months to reach the slave port Black River in Jamaica. Incidentally, maritime insurance paid nothing if a captain had to kill slaves suppressing a rebellion, but it covered most other hazards at sea (Hochschild 2005). In other words, if a slave died due to circumstances beyond a captain's control, maritime insurance covered the loss. Understanding that dead slaves brought no profit, Collingwood decided to throw the ill slaves overboard and collect on the insurance policy. Because the shipping business treated slaves as cargo, they were insured at thirty pounds apiece or approximately four thousand dollars in today's currency (Hochschild 2005). Collingwood instructed his officers to testify they had run out of water, a loss covered by insurance under the principle of Jettison in maritime law (Hochschild 2005). He argued that the ailing slaves had to be sacrificed to ensure that the crew and remaining healthy slaves had water. According to various historical accounts, fifty-four slaves jettisoned the first day and forty-two a day later. By the time the third group was to be thrown over, twenty-six were tossed in arms still shackled and ten leapt over themselves. By all accounts, only one slave survived. A few months afterward, the *Zong's* owners filed an insurance claim which added up to over half a million dollars in today's currency (Hochschild 2005). Granville Sharpe wrote letters and a number of prominent clergy mentioned the case in their sermons. For example, a well-known Anglican clergyman Dr. Peter Peckard preached the "slave trade as a most barbarous and cruel traffick" to his congregation after

hearing what happened in the *Zong* case (Hochschild 2005). Others followed suit, and the story spread quickly throughout Great Britain. As a result, the incident was enough to outrage and appeal to the virtues of Quaker abolitionists and is considered a landmark case that motivated them just a few years later to form the abolition society.

On May 22, 1787, a group of twelve determined men organized a meeting at a printing shop at 2 George Yard in London to begin what would eventually flourish into an ambitious social movement organization (Merill 1945). Primarily an idealistic phenomenon, *The Society for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*—also known as *The London Committee*—sprang from religious, philosophical and humanitarian thought and was instrumental in creating a constituency for abolition (Jarret 1974; Oldfield 1992, 1995). The Committee rallied with a vision of mounting a national campaign against the slave trade and securing the passage of an abolition bill through Parliament (Coupland, 1933). With great political force, they began what would initially become an anti-slavery crusade backed by great humanitarian zeal (Wilson 1950). Granville Sharpe was president, but by this time his role in the movement became largely symbolic (Austen and Smith 1969). Thomas Clarkson was in charge of the laborious task of evidence collection. Eventually, the movement attracted the talents of William Wilberforce [1759–1833], a distinguished member of the House of Commons, a reformer, a philanthropist and humanitarian who became the leader and chief advisor of the anti-slave trade campaign. Labelled as one voice that changed the lives of millions by contemporary standards, he symbolized the power of the spoken word in solving one of the world's most controversial social problems (Kerr-Ritchie 2008). In fact, Wilberforce's passion and

interest in abolition started well before the movement began, when at the age of fourteen when he wrote a letter to a New York newspaper condemning the human trafficking of African slaves (Merrill 1945). In addition, he had the advantage of having powerful connections such as Prime Minister William Pitt, a friend from Cambridge University who initially supported him in abolition. After much encouragement from Pitt, Wilberforce took it upon himself to initiate the first legislation against the trade (Rees 1954).

The movement for abolition took on two initial tasks. First they created a London-based national committee along with a parliamentary spokesperson responsible both for formulating policy and coordinating action throughout the country. Second, they began publishing anti-slavery material to turn the public against the trade. For example, Clarkson wrote and distributed two thousand copies of a pamphlet entitled *"A Summary View of the Slave Trade and of the Probable Consequences of Its Abolition"* (Clarkson, 1808: 276-85). Although the London Committee opposed slavery itself, they made a strategic decision to concentrate on abolishing the slave trade, assuming that slave owners would treat their captives better if there were no fresh sources of slaves and that the end of the trade would eventually lead to the abolition of slavery. Using their widespread organization, the London Committee eventually created the first massive grassroots movement for political change by mobilizing millions of British citizens to sign petitions, contribute money, organize law suits, attend rallies and meetings, boycott sugar and campaign for reformist political candidates (Anstey 1975a; Brown 2006; Drescher 1990; Hochschild 2005; Lindsay 2008). At the beginning of the movement, abolition

committees from all around Great Britain generated 102 anti-slave trade petitions to Parliament, demonstrating the first major instances of mass mobilization by placing British abolition on parliamentary legislative agenda (Anstey 1975a, Crafton 1792; Kaufmann and Pape 1999; Drescher 1987). Newspapers were also strategically used as tools of mass propaganda, sending key messages to British citizens framing anti-slavery action as both moral and an important political imperative. The key issue is how abolitionism transformed from a small group activity to a mass social movement where individuals made history by making choices and taking action within social, cultural and economic settings (Jennings 1997).

It was not until the nineteenth century that any collective steps at the international level were taken to abolish the slave trade. At this juncture, several European countries signed various declarations condemning the practice of slavery and calling for the end of the slave trade (Zoglin 1986). It was also during this time period that interventionist British abolitionist diplomacy began. In fact, the important role that Great Britain played in the history of the abolition of the entire Atlantic slave trade cannot be overlooked. After carrying well over three million slaves across the Atlantic, a third of them in the quarter century preceding 1807, the British not only abolished their own trade but also sent two warships to Africa to initiate what would become a seventy-five year campaign against the slave trafficking of all other countries (Curtin 1969; Drescher 1977; Eltis 1979b). Like Great Britain, the United States also declared the slave trade illegal in 1807. During the next ten years, through a means of bilateral anti-slave trade treaties, other major maritime powers passed laws to abolish the trade. In 1814 the Netherlands agreed

to abolish the trade and in 1815 France followed suit. Although both Portugal (in 1815) and Spain (in 1817) abolished the trade north of the equator and agreed to make it illegal south of the line in 1820, both Spanish and Portuguese colonies carried on the trade illegally (Bethell 1966; Coupland 1964). In fact, for another thirty years, thousands of slaves were exported from Africa to the sugar and coffee plantations of Brazil, and it would take a further ten years for the illegal trading of slaves to Spanish colonies of Cuba and Puerto Rico to be suppressed (Bethell 1966).

FINAL THOUGHTS

The end of the British slave trade has occupied a distinctive place in the literature on slavery and abolition (Drescher 1994). While the immense contributions of historians to the study of the slave trade has provided a greater understanding of the multidimensional workings of the institution, there remains some debate over what caused British abolition of the trade. While there has been considerable progress made in the time periods and regions surveyed and in the data and methods employed, there are still large gaps in our knowledge of the institution and shortcomings in our theoretical approaches to studying slave trade abolition (Drescher 2009). The following section sets up a new examination of the slave trade by outlining the various historical debates surrounding British abolition. Moving beyond these studies using sociology as a guide, I offer a new theoretical approach to understanding this phenomenon.

CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL ANALYSIS

THE ABOLITION OF THE BRITISH SLAVE TRADE

Given that the British anti-slave trade campaign is considered to be one of the first social movements based on modern types of political propaganda to take place in Europe (Hochschild 2005; Klein 1999; MacNair 2007; Tilly 1982), it is surprisingly an understudied topic in social scientific research.[4] In fact, compared to the vast amount of historical research produced on the British slave trade from 1940 to the late 1990s, over the past decade not much work has been accomplished on the abolition of the British slave trade (But see Allen 2009; Brown 2006; Davis 2006; Carrington 2002; Drescher 2009; Eltis 2009; Gould 2003; Hochschild 2005; Lindsay 2008; Mason 2009; Miller 2009; Morgan 2000; Rediker 2007; Ryden 2009). Furthermore, historical sociologists have contributed very little to advancing the study of British abolition. For example, researchers have examined slavery and abolitionism in general (e.g., Budros 2011; 2013; Belin 1908; Blackburn 1997, 2000; Bonacich 1975; Dodd 1918; Du Bois 1896; 1899; Jones and Hoepner 1967; Kopytoff 1982; Macleod 1925; Patterson 1967, 1977, 1982; Stinchcombe 1994) and slave manumissions (e.g., Budros 2004; 2005), but very few social scientists have exclusively examined British slave trade abolition (But see Du Bois 1896; Gee 1945; Stamatov 2010 and Tilly 1982). Even still, most of what we know about slave trade abolition is credited almost entirely to specialized historians who have

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[4] According to Klein (1990), "Not only has there been a failure in the dialogue between the academic and general literate world, but there is a surprising ignorance within the scholarly world at large about the nature of the trade…and this failure to communicate the recent scholarly research has allowed the general discussion of the trade to become so politicized and emotional that most academics and intellectuals refuse to confront the trade with anything approaching a rational analysis" (p. xvii-xviii).

provided numerous insightful, yet somewhat limited studies.[5] A sociological analysis has the potential to offer theories and methodologies that allow us to move in a different direction from prior interpretations to explain why the British abolition campaign took so long to realize success.

I contribute to sociological literatures by addressing five limitations in our knowledge of British slave trade abolition. First, an overwhelming majority of prior research conducted on slave trade abolition has mainly relied on historical narratives and therefore lacks rigorous empirical analyses to support any findings. For example, prior studies have reported on basic statistics such as the size and profits of the trade, but researchers have not used this data in a quantitative analysis to explain why the slave trade ended. In response, I add an important dimension to our understanding of British abolition by performing empirical analyses (both quantitative and qualitative) guided by social movement theory to examine the economic, ideological, cultural, political and social structural factors that led to the end of the slave trade. A second weakness is that prior studies have not empirically examined the relationship between macroeconomic processes and British abolition. To address this gap, I include variables in my analyses to determine the effect—if any—that slave trade profits, industrialization rates and business cycles had on Britain's decision to eliminate the trade. A third shortcoming is that despite a general acknowledgement of Britain's early success in ending the transatlantic slave

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[5] See the following dedicated historical studies conducted on the slave trade: Anstey 1972; 1975a; Bass 1989; Bean 1971; Carrington 2002; Coupland 1923; 1933; Drescher 1977; 1986; 1990; 1994; Eltis and Walvin 1981; Eltis 1982, 1987; Gould 2003; Klingberg 1926; MacInnes 1934; Jenning 1997; Hochschild 2005; Hogg 1973; Thomas 1997; Jennings 1997; Kaufman and Pape 1999; Klein 1969, 1978; 1999; Law 1995; Lindsay 2008; Mason 2009; Merrill 1945; Oldfield 1992; 1995; Rawley 1981; Rediker 2007; Richardson 1998; Thomas 1997; Walvin 1982; Wyndham 1935; Williams 1940; 1943; 1944; Wilson 1950.

trade, researchers have traditionally downplayed the role of public opinion in the abolition movement (But see Oldfield 1992; 1995; Drescher 1990; 1994; and Tilly 1982; 2004; 2008).[6] In response, I confront this problem by examining the effect of anti-slave trade petitioning on abolition success. Fourth, with the exception of a few noteworthy historical studies, most scholarly work on slave trade abolition has either de-emphasized or completely ignored the contribution of British abolitionists in Parliament (But see Anstey 1972; 1975a; Drescher 1977; 1990; 1994; Oldfield 1992; 1995). In fact, prior research has paid very little attention to the analysis of parliamentary abolitionists' tactical repertoires (But see Drescher 1990). I address this deficiency by performing a qualitative analysis on abolitionists' legislative speeches to explore the effect—if any—that their arguments had on parliamentary voting patterns. Finally, no researcher to date has examined how social movement actions, culture and opportunities (both political and economic) have effected both policy change and agenda setting in the British legislative debates.

In the following sections, I elaborate on the aforementioned scholarly gaps in more detail to demonstrate why a sociological interpretation of British abolition is essential to address the various shortcomings found in the literature. I accomplish this by briefly outlining the direction of abolition research and by providing a historical analysis of three distinct abolition themes presented in historical literatures on the slave trade. Moving forward, I conclude this chapter with a plan of what needs to be accomplished both theoretically and methodologically to advance our overall understanding of British participation and eventual departure from the slave trade industry.

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[6] Great Britain was the first European nation to pass legislation to end the transatlantic slave trade, followed by the Netherlands in 1814, France and Portugal in 1815 and finally Spain in 1817. The United States ended their participation in the transatlantic trade shortly after Great Britain did so in 1807.

HISTORICAL INTERPRETATIONS OF BRITISH ABOLITION

British abolition has traditionally been subjected to a variety of competing historical interpretations resulting in contradictory conclusions why Great Britain withdrew from the trade. While this has created some confusion regarding the cause of British abolition, opposing explanations have also challenged researchers to perform a more thorough up-to-date analysis of the slave trade. According to Engerman (1986), these types of debates are a central part of the process through which historical knowledge progresses by the discovery of new data sources that enriches scholarship. Moreover, these debates have generated important questions concerning the origins of the trade, its economic structure, its demographics, its economic and social impacts, and finally the causes of its abolition (Klein 1999: xxi).

A broad overview of the historical literature on British abolition reveals that four distinct stages of research exist. Table 3.1 on page 46 provides an overall snapshot of abolition research from 1900 to the present, where two theoretical approaches have dominated past abolition studies. First of all, prior researchers have generally employed a *historical reductionist* approach by attributing slave trade abolition to isolated causes such as ideological, economic or political motivations. Secondly, researchers also took on a *revisionist* stance post-stage one, where they reinterpreted the evidence and causes surrounding British slave trade abolition. This re-evaluation of existing knowledge and/or the discovery of new data allowed the history of British abolition to progress throughout each stage of scholarship. Furthermore, three distinct abolition arguments— ideological, economic and political—have been offered by historians to explain British abolition.

Table 3.1 A Summary of Abolition Research, 1900–Present

Stage	Time Period	Abolition Argument	Support	Theoretical Support	Empirical Analysis
One	1900–1939	Ideological	Theoretical	Historical Narrative Historical Reductionism Social Determinism	No
Two	1940–1959	Economic	Theoretical	Historical Revisionism Historical Reductionism Economic Determinism	No
Three	1960–1985	Economic Ideological	Theoretical Empirical Critical Studies	Historical Revisionism Historical Reductionism Economic Determinism Social Determinism	No
Four	1986–2014	Economic Ideological Political	Theoretical Empirical Critical Studies	Historical Revisionism Historical Reductionism Economic Determinism Social Determinism	No
Five	2014–	Economic Ideological Political Cultural	Theoretical Empirical Critical Studies	Historical Revisionism Social Movement Theory ∗ *Resource Mobilization* ∗ *Cultural Frame Analysis* ∗ *Opportunity Theory*	Yes

In the following sections, I outline each abolition theme in further detail to provide the groundwork for a fifth stage (See table 3.1), where I employ advanced empirical analyses guided by a sociological theoretical framework to help clarify the process of British slave trade abolition.

IDEOLOGICAL EXPLANATIONS OF BRITISH ABOLITION

> Professor Coupland, in an imaginary interview with Wilberforce, asks him: "What do you think, sir, is the primary significance of your work, the lesson of the abolition of the slave system?" The instant answer is: "It was God's work. It signifies the triumph of His will over human selfishness. It teaches that no obstacle of interest or prejudice is irremovable by faith and prayer"
>
> Williams 1944:178

Past explanations of slave trade abolition have focused on the social deterministic ideas of imperial historians (e.g., Coupland 1923; 1933; Jorns 1931; Klingberg 1926).[7] These early researchers attempted to reconstruct the moral reasoning behind the abolitionists' campaign using Clarkson's (1808) essay on the history of the abolition of the African slave trade as a pivotal document in developing the ideological context that the British government was influenced by a group of crusaders who argued the case for humanity over greed, materialism and exploitation (Drescher 1987). Drawing on these early narratives, some historians have argued that British abolition was primarily an altruistic impulse that drove reformers to mobilize themselves in new ways to demand an

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[7] The key primary sources used by early imperial historians to explain British abolition are Thomas Clarkson's (1808) *The History of the Rise, Progress, and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the African Slave trade by the British Parliament;* Clarkson's (1788) *An Essay on the Impolicy of the African Slave trade*; Olaudah Equiano's firsthand account of being captured in the slave trade entitled *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Olaudah Equiano, Or Gustavus Vassa, The African,* first published in 1789; Thomas Fowell Buxton's (1839) *The African Slave Trade and Its Remedy* and William Crafton Bell's (1792) *A Short Sketch of the Evidence for the Abolition of the Slave Trade*.

end to the slave trade. Employing broad historical narratives, this approach emphasized the idea that a rise in compassionate thinking and philanthropy during the late eighteenth century led to the emergence of new attitudes toward children, the underprivileged, animals and the dispossessed (e.g., enslaved Africans). Taking this viewpoint, the British abolition campaign was labelled exclusively as a moral crusade that was achieved at the expense of booming industry profits (Klein 1999). Emphasizing evangelical opposition and humanitarian politics, ideological explanations centred on the impact that eighteenth and nineteenth-century enlightened thinkers and religious groups had on abolition success, which they argued influenced public opinion and persuaded politicians to vote against it (Rice 1970).[8] By distinguishing between what they considered 'good' and 'bad' commerce, anti-slave trade advocates offered both a critique of the slave trade and an outline of acceptable forms of commercial capitalism (Gould 2003). Historians who supported this line of reasoning further argued the British slave trade was doomed when parliamentary abolitionists exposed its brutalities throughout the content of their legislative speeches. For example, Coupland (1933) used excerpts from the legislative slave trade debates to demonstrate how abolitionists often pleaded "for atonement for our long and cruel injustice towards Africa" (p.98).

There are three main weaknesses with ideological explanations of British slave abolition. First, existing studies that support ideological reasoning lack empirical support for the conclusion that moral considerations ended the British slave trade. Second, ideological explanations are generally supported by historical narratives and therefore

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[8] Some examples of well-known eighteenth and nineteenth-century anti-slavery/slave trade writers include John Locke, Adam Smith, Thomas Hobbes, Francis Hutcheson and Baron de Montesquieu.

lack rigorous theoretical analyses to explain British slave trade abolition (Eltis and Engerman 2000). For example, Coupland's (1933) research has been criticized by some historians for being impressionistic and for naively characterizing abolition as an act that lifted mankind to a higher moral plane by nurturing the religious optimism of the Victorian age (See: Anstey 1972, 1975a; 1976; Drescher 1987; and Williams 1944). Finally, ideological explanations are speculative and narrow in focus because they ignore other plausible reasons for British abolition such as economic, political and cultural factors as well as the contribution of abolitionists' strategies within the parliamentary slave trade debates.

While more current studies acknowledge the influence that enlightened thinkers and humanitarian philosophy had on the British public and parliament (e.g., Kaufmann and Pape 1999; Brown 2006; Gould 2003; Hochschild 2006 and Jennings 1997), on the whole most contemporary researchers would agree that moral ideology played only a minor role in facilitating British abolition. For example, recent scholars such as Kaufmann and Pape (1999) offer an explanation with moral undertones by stressing that parliament voted for abolition as a response to public concerns on the legitimacy of the trade. But, even this account speaks more to the power of social organization rather than straightforward moral justifications for ending the slave trade.

In the end, most researchers challenge the idea that the British government could no longer tolerate the corruption of slave trade and therefore abolished it. If morality really factored into the ballot to end the slave trade, then researchers should ask the question why it took abolitionists—who began their campaign in an intellectually favourable

climate to anti-slavery thought—nearly twenty years to successfully pass legislation to end the trade (Anstey 1972). By privileging moral ideology, the humanitarian approach has left unexplained the reasons why 282 of Wilberforce's fellow MPs suddenly realized the justice of his arguments after so many years of opposition (Jupp 1977). In the next section, I will summarize and evaluate the economic explanations that past researchers have offered to explain the end of the British slave trade.

ECONOMIC EXPLANATIONS OF BRITISH ABOLITION

One of the first economic explanations of slave trade abolition was offered by the historian Eric Williams (1944) in *Capitalism and Slavery*.[9] Considered a work of revisionist history, Williams attempted to explain the process of British abolition through a purely economic lens (Anstey 1972; Drescher 1990; 1999). Whereas some historians viewed abolition as a product of changing levels of moral awareness independent of any measurable factor, Williams argued the politics of abolition was influenced by the financial motives of British industrialists (Engerman 1972; Eltis and Engerman 2000). According to Williams (1944), British abolition could be attributed to economic determinism, or more specifically what he called the "profit motive." For Williams (1938): "Parliament was converted not by the principles of humanity but by economics" (p. 180). In fact, Williams claimed that the steady decrease in slave trade profits until 1807—as compared to other more profitable industries—not only made abolition possible, but an otherwise practical choice for the British government. In the end, he

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[9] Williams's (1944) historical analysis of the slave trade was developed from his 1938 doctoral dissertation, *The Economic Aspect of the Abolition of West Indian Slave Trade and Slavery* which drew heavily on Lowell Joseph Ragatz's (1928) work *The Fall of the Planter Class in the British Caribbean, 1763-1833.*

concluded that slave trade abolition could not have triumphed independently of the economic developments that he linked to industrialization (Drescher 1987).

Williams's main contribution to abolition scholarship was his theory of decline more commonly referred to as the *Williams's Thesis*, where he argued that the profitability the slave trade steadily decreased in the aftermath of the American Revolution (1775-83) to a point where it diminished in importance to Great Britain's economy (See Williams 1944: 120).[10] According to Williams, British attitudes and policy towards the slave trade were derived purely from economic self-interest in that as long as the trade was still profitable and vital to the economy, it would be tolerated (See Williams 1940:107). According to Williams (1938): "the idea that the slave trade was abolished despite the fact that it was profitable is a legend which would have surprised no one so much as the men who were chiefly responsible for the measure"(p. 167). He directly challenged widely held prior assertions that altruism was the root cause behind the collapse of the slave trade and so he began the successful overturn of idealistic views about the process of British abolition (Engerman 1986). For Williams (1943): "the story of the great humanitarian crusade has been frequently told and as frequently misunderstood" (p. 75). In addition, he argued that: "The weakness of the West Indian system was less that it immoral than it was unprofitable" (Williams 1943: 67). Moreover, his research set the stage for what became one of the most enduring debates on the cause of British abolition (Brown 2006; Drescher

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[10] One other second stage historian analyzed slave trade profitability and concurred with Williams's theory of economic decline. In the *Commercial and Financial Organization of the British Slave Trade, 1750-1807*, Sheridan (1958) asserted that: "Despite prosperous conditions during several short-run periods after 1763, the general trend was downward. Declining profits, wartime losses, inclement weather, slave rebellions, and other difficulties found the planters going deeper and deeper into debt with their London agent" (p. 258). However, he does not offer empirical support for this conclusion.

1987). According to Williams, there were more lucrative outlets for investments than in the business of trading slaves. In the end, he reasoned that commerce was the great emancipator: "leave the slave trade alone and it would commit suicide" (William 1943:73). Put simply, British Capitalists no longer considered the slave trade to be a profitable industry and in 1807 the government abolished it.

Yet, there are three major problems with the abolition arguments championed by Williams. First, he did not have access to important data sets created by later economic historians to empirically evaluate his abolition theory (e.g., Eltis et al. 2009; Mitchell and Deane 1962; Anstey 1975b). The second problem is that Williams based his analysis on reductionist assumptions and therefore his study is theoretically weak. Finally, and most importantly, Williams completely overlooked the political pressure and tactics used by British abolitionists within both the legislature and the public arena. He not only disregarded the role of humanitarianism, but he also dismissed abolitionists as superfluous and hypocritical (Drescher 1987). Furthermore, he discredited William Wilberforce—the leader of the abolition movement. According to Williams (1944):

> Wilberforce with effeminate face appears small in stature. There is a certain smugness about the man, his life, his religion. As a leader, he was inept, addicted to moderation, compromise and delay. He deprecated extreme measures and feared popular agitation (p. 181).

I will address all of these theoretical and empirical weaknesses by creating unique measures and using social movement theory to examine the role that economics and social movement organization played in ending the trade.

The Debate about Slave Trade Profitability

Incited by Williams's conclusions about the economics of abolition, a heated debate about the value of slave trade profits occurred among many prominent historians. Some scholars argued that there was evidence of decreasing returns (e.g., Anstey 1972; 1975a; Anderson and Richardson 1985; Thomas and Bean 1974). For example, Anstey (1975a) offers profitability estimates that support Williams's claims that slave trade profits decreased prior to an abolition bill being passed. Conversely, other historians have argued that the slave trade remained profitable until the very end (e.g., Darity 1997; 2000; Drescher 1977; 1986; Eltis 1987a; 1987b; Inikori 1981; Klein 1969, 1978; 1999; Temperley 1977) and consequently denied a relationship between an alleged decline of slave trade profits and British abolition.[11] According to these researchers, the industry did quite well during the period of 1750 to 1807, as the British share of the trade rose quite sharply toward the end of the eighteenth century and was maintained through the period just prior to abolition (Drescher 1977). For example, Eltis (1987a) used econometric models to show that the slave trade was still a profitable industry for Great Britain at the time it was eliminated. With respect to abolition, he argued that Britain chose to withdraw from the trade believing that freed slaves would work for lower pay, which would lead to cheaper products. In the end, researchers have not empirically demonstrated if a connection between the value of slave trade profits and British abolition exists. Indeed,

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[11] The calculation of slave profits is a highly complicated process and therefore not surprising that different estimates exist. According to Solow (2001) "Slave trade profits depended on the availability (read "price") of trade goods in England; the rate at which such goods exchanged for slaves in Africa; the price of the slaves in the Americas; the costs of transportation, insurance, and capital" (p. 15).

most of the research produced on the economics of the slave trade has created more confusion surrounding Williams's assumptions about declining slave trade profitability.

Drescher (1977) provided the most direct challenge to Williams's decline theory and as a result has been labelled as the historian who discredited the long-standing thesis that British abolitionists succeeded only because the slave trade was in a state of irreversible decline (Davis 2000). According to Drescher (1977), "If one thus incorporates slave-trade profitability into the story of abolition, economic ironies are more abundant than iron laws" (p. 32). In *Econocide*, Drescher (1977) attempted to demonstrate two things. First, the slave trade was profitable and therefore economically important to the British economy after the mid-1780s and second, antislavery ideas were transformed into an effectively organized mass social movement by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries in Britain and other countries such as France. In particular, Drescher highlighted how abolitionism was an important part of popular culture in Britain at that time, commanding support from those in society who had no financial interest in the matter. He further argued that British abolition did not result from the decline of the slave trade profits, but instead from what he termed "econocide" or economic suicide as the slave trade remained extremely profitable at the time of its abolition. Considered one of the first scholars to give credence to the abolitionists' cause, Drescher (1977) defined *econocide* as "the radical termination of a profitable trade by a newly empowered political movement that finally sentenced the British transoceanic slave trade to death" (p. xxvii). He argued that the slave trade was still quite lucrative and therefore significant for Great Britain when it was outlawed in 1807. According to Drescher, abolition occurred due to

the massive mobilization campaign in Britain founded on individual rights and new forms of political organization. Drescher (1977) goes on to explain that Williams mistook effects for a cause in that the eventual decline of the slave trade was the effect of abolition, not one of the causes as Williams sought to prove.[12] In other words, he theorized the economic decline was more likely a direct result of the suppression of the slave trade (Anstey 1968, 1975a; Drescher 1977). The problem with Drescher's study is that like so many other researchers before him, he does not provide a comprehensive enough analysis of profit estimates to explain British abolition. Like most prior researchers, he did not use any of the economic variables created during this time period to conduct a more thorough examination of British abolition.

Eventually, scholars began to criticize Williams for distracting scholarship from a whole range of other important social and political variables and for dismissing abolitionists as insignificant to the abolition of the trade (e.g., Anstey 1968; 1975a; Drescher 1987). For example, some researcher's de-emphasized economics altogether and instead have examined the role of abolitionists and also political circumstances such as wartime crisis in the nation's overseas commerce (e.g., Anstey 1972; 1975a; 1975b; 1977). In the following section, I will evaluate the theories of historians who argued that abolitionists played a part in ending the slave trade. Notwithstanding, there are two noteworthy historians who examined the role that public opinion and abolitionist strategies played in British slave trade abolition. In addition to highlighting their

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[12] Contributing even more to the confusion surrounding what caused British abolition is the fact that more contemporary historians have criticized Drescher's (1977) argument in Econocide. For example, Ryden (2009) stated that Drescher did not understand the effect of international trade on British sugar planters and that the Econocide narrative grossly overestimates the health of the British sugar economy during the early years of the nineteenth century (p. 373).

accomplishments, I will also underscore some of the problems with their studies and offer

solutions on how to gain a better understanding of British abolition. Moving forward, I

end this chapter with an explanation of how a sociological analysis of British abolition

can address all of the limitations found in prior literatures.

ABOLITIONISTS' STRATEGIES IN PARLIAMENT

Anstey (1972) is the first academic to emphasize the importance of abolitionists'

strategies within the parliamentary slave trade debates. Where Anstey's explanation

departed from traditional accounts is that he attributed abolition to an interaction between

political circumstances, a wartime crisis and abolitionist tactics of developing policies

based on national interest. For example, he argued that policies such as ending the slave

trade to conquered islands brought about its abolition (See: Anstey 1972). Although

Anstey's explanation involved both tactics and undertones of economic reasoning, his

research was mostly based on the ideological jargon of eighteenth and nineteenth-century

writers and lacked systematic data and a theoretical analysis. Other scholars also argued

that abolition resulted from parliamentary leadership, together with new forms of social

and political mobilization (e.g., Drescher 1977; 1987). Yet, with the exception of the

historian Seymour Drescher, none went as far to measure this possibility.[13] According to

Drescher (1994), while it is true that historians have made breakthrough theoretical

contributions by highlighting other key political and social factors attributed to British

abolition (e.g., Bass 1989; Bender 1992; Davis 1984; 1987; Drescher 1986; 1987; 1990;

1994; Gould 2003; Jennings 1997; Oldfield 1992; 1995), some have also devalued British

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[13] See Drescher (1990) "People and Parliament: The Rhetoric of the British Slave Trade" for his quantitative analysis of abolitionists' speeches in Parliament.

abolitionism through their reluctance to characterize it as a social movement (e.g., Davis 1984; Oldfield 1992). Likewise, he argued that notwithstanding Britain's early success in ending the slave trade, most scholars have generally hesitated to assign public opinion any meaningful role in the passage of a British abolition law in 1807 (e.g., Davis 1984; Eltis 1987b; Fogel et al. 1992; Walvin 1985).

The Mobilization of Public Opinion

Eventually, critics of both Williams's thesis of economic decline and of the humanitarianism school of thought explored other probable causes of British abolition. In fact, for the first time in the history of abolition scholarship, researchers underscored the importance of other major social and political aspects of the process (See Darity 1987; Drescher 1990; 1994; Engerman 1986; Oldfield 1992; 1995). In doing so, they began to study the social processes of abolition. For example, Drescher (1977) made one of the most important contributions to abolition scholarship by introducing the idea that social movement activists played a far greater role in British abolition than prior academics have suggested. By placing more importance on the movement to end the slave trade, researchers like Drescher finally considered mobilization techniques such as petitioning and also the tactical repertoires of parliamentary abolitionists within the debates on British abolition (See: Drescher 1990; 1994; Oldfield 1992; 1995).

There are two key researchers—Seymour Drescher and J.R. Oldfield— that advanced historical scholarship by looking more closely at the actions of British abolitionists. In fact, their most valuable contribution was to advance the idea that economic analysis alone could not entirely account for the social and ideological changes that occurred in the

early nineteenth-century Britain. Instead, these researchers acknowledged the important role of British abolitionists and the indispensable part they played in the mobilization of public opinion against the slave trade (See: Drescher 1987; 1990; 1994; Oldfield 1995).[14] The leaders of the campaign attempted to mobilize public opinion through organized meetings, the publication and distribution of books, and the circulation of pamphlets, letters and petitions. In addition, they used the burgeoning newspaper press to highlight the brutality of the slave trade. But to date, there are only a few studies that provide insight on the mobilization techniques used by the British abolitionists and I outline these below.

Oldfield (1992) examined how the Committee for the Abolition of the Slave Trade (The London Committee) mobilized public opinion against the slave trade through the petitions they organized and presented to the House of Commons. Although he placed great emphasis on the contribution of abolitionists, his research does not explain if this mobilization technique factored into eventual abolition success. For example, Oldfield reasoned that the absence of a consistent national petition campaign throughout the entirety of the abolition movement meant that public opinion played little or no role in British abolition (Drescher 1992). While he acknowledged that opinion building and mass petitioning were central to the success of the movement, he also criticized abolitionists for their inaction, stating that the committee lost momentum and ultimately purpose after 1797 (Oldfield 1992:342). Furthermore, while Oldfield recognized that The London Committee continued to pressure Parliament to abolish the trade, he also argued that it is

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[14] Other researchers such as Bass 1989, Morgan 2000 and MacNair 2007 examined the role of British abolitionists; however their studies were mainly historical reviews.

"almost impossible to judge how successful these tactics were" (p. 343). In the end, his study is limited because he neglected to empirically examine mobilization over the entirety of the campaign and as a result he did not look at the effect of mass petitioning on abolition success. Consequently, Oldfield downplays the role that British abolitionist politicians played in parliament and he fails to explain if the petitions they presented actually influenced voting members of Parliament.

In comparison, Drescher (1994) provides a good overview of what he terms popular mobilization and extra-parliamentary pressure after 1792. In a direct challenge to Oldfield (1992), he examined the national petition campaigns of both anti and pro-slave trade advocates throughout the British abolition movement. In disagreement with what he considered Oldfield's "devaluation of popular mobilization," he concluded that anti-slavery opinion was present despite the lack of consistent petitioning (Drescher 1994: 165). According to Drescher (1994), the large number of anti-slave trade petitions presented to parliament at the beginning of the movement demonstrates how successful these tactics were in raising awareness of the issue. He also highlights the importance of the petitions that were presented to parliament in 1806, just before the final reading of the abolition bill in the legislature. According to Drescher (1994), pro-slave trade advocates opposed the abolition bill on the grounds that it would injure the interests of the cotton industry. When the bill passed in the House of Lords, pro-slave trade advocates organized and distributed a petition throughout Manchester to persons they knew were involved in the slave trade. The petition received support from 400 individuals (Drescher 1994). In

response, the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson distributed an emergency petition throughout the same city. Within hours, he collected more than 2,300 signatures.

By placing significance on not only the act of petitioning itself, but also on the timing of these extra-parliamentary strategies, Drescher identified the important role of parliamentary leadership within the slave trade debates. Yet, there are shortcomings in his research. First, although he provides evidence that popular mobilization, innovations and anti-slavery opinion were present throughout Great Britain and helped to crystalize the birth of the abolition social movement, Drescher fails to demarcate the role of abolitionists in ending the trade beyond their ability to raise awareness of the issue in Parliament. Second, even though Drescher does examine the content and number of the petitions presented to Parliament over the course of the movement, he does not attempt to connect this petitioning with abolition success. In the end, his study does not fully explain if and how the abolitionists' mobilization activities contributed to slave trade abolition

Parliamentary Leadership and Tactical Repertoires

Historical researchers eventually turned to abolitionists' leadership and their role in the nearly twenty year legislative battle to end the trade. Bass (1989) is one of the first scholars to survey the content of abolitionists' parliamentary speeches within the slave trade debates. He is also one of the first researchers to demonstrate the importance of abolitionist MPs and their strategies:

> The Abolitionists' strategy was equally complex. Realizing that moral denunciation alone would have little effect against the formidable arguments of the slavers, they argued that the very inhumanity of the trade had rendered it economically inefficient. By demonstrating that the actions of the slavers and the planters contradicted their own espoused profit motive, the abolitionists sought to

> expose the trade as a violation of the commonly understood meaning of commerce (p.153)

Examining the 1791–92 debates, Bass concluded that both economic and moral arguments were important within the abolitionists' discourse on the slave trade. While he makes a noteworthy contribution by demonstrating that abolitionist MPs indeed strategized within the debates, he does not attempt to connect this finding to slave trade abolition. In addition, his analysis falls short because he only looks at selected excerpts and therefore he neglects to provide any real analysis of the abolitionists' strategies and slave trade abolition. Given that he only examines a sample of two years of the slave trade debates rather than ones that transpired over the course of the movement, his research is limited in scope. In response, Drescher (1990) provides a more advanced analysis of the contributions of British abolitionists by arguing that the end of the slave trade resulted from parliamentary leadership, together with new forms of social and political mobilization (Kerr-Ritchie 2008). In doing so, he demonstrates how politicians used innovative ways to promote slave trade abolition in Parliament. Through Drescher's examination of their ability to strategize within the parliamentary slave trade debates, his work is ground-breaking and moves beyond all prior assessments of British abolition.

Drescher's (1990) research question examined whether British notions of moral legitimacy and economic utility of the slave trade were more or less randomly distributed over the political landscape of abolition. To answer this question, he conducted a quantitative content analysis of pro and anti-abolition parliamentary speeches on the slave trade. Through his examination of the 1791–92 and 1806–07 legislative slave trade debates, Drescher goes beyond Bass's earlier research to study what he characterized as

the "convergence" between the moral and economic arguments offered by both sides in parliament. His empirical approach involved calculating what he termed the "gross rhetorical product" by counting the moral, economic and strategic reasons offered by pro and anti-abolitionists within the slave trade debates. His findings demonstrate that moral arguments were higher for pro-abolitionists and conversely that economic arguments were higher for anti-abolitionists when a bill to end the trade was finally passed by Parliament in 1807. In addition, he argues that because abolitionists used humanitarian arguments three times as often as economic ones, there was little indication of convergence between the two sides over time and consequently that each parliamentary position had a distinct rhetorical profile of favouring either moral (e.g., abolitionists) or economic arguments (e.g., anti-abolitionists) (See: Drescher 1990). In light of this finding, he concluded that: "Grand Benevolent gestures were the abolitionists' preserve, as were emotional appeals to guilt, shame, and empathy" (p.574). Although Drescher's study advances the literature, we are left with no definitive answer on the cause of British abolition other than the fact that parliamentary abolitionists preferred moral arguments to economic reasoning.

Despite the fact that Drescher thoroughly outlined the position of abolitionist MPs, he overlooked the fact that they deliberately changed their rhetorical platform after nearly twenty years of losing debates and also the possibility that this change might be associated with the cause of British abolition. As a result, there are some methodological problems that weaken Drescher's analysis. First, although he provides quantitative evidence to suggest that abolitionists changed their rhetorical profile from the 1791–92 to the 1806–07 debates to include more economic reasoning and fewer morally framed

arguments, he fails to examine how these changes might have impacted parliamentary voting patterns. For example, Drescher empirically demonstrates that abolitionists decreased their use of moral arguments from 72 percent during 1791–92 to 67 percent throughout 1806–1807, and also that they increased their use of economic reasoning from 17 percent during 1791–92 to 27 percent for the duration of 1806–07. Yet, he fails to consider the increase in economic arguments and the subsequent decline in moral rhetoric as evidence of the importance of both abolitionists' strategies and economic factors in the final years of the abolition debates. Second, considering Drescher only analyzes a sample of four key years of the parliamentary slave trade debates, he missed out on important deliberations in between these two time periods. Despite the fact that he acknowledges the slave trade debates offer the advantage of analyzing abolitionists' arguments over a period of twenty years (See: Drescher 1990: 569), he does not offer a complete analysis of annual data over the entire movement. The third problem with Drescher's study is that he neglects to incorporate important outcome variables into his analysis. For example, he does not examine if there is a relationship between abolitionist rhetorical profiles and actual voting patterns (i.e., abolition success). Finally, he does not offer any analyses beyond his conclusion that abolitionists were twice as likely to use moral arguments as their opponents during both bienniums (See: Drescher 1990: 573). In the end, he does not consider how the structure of abolitionist rhetoric impacted abolition success. So, while it is true that Drescher's study advances the literature, there are still some questions that remain.

I will improve on Drescher's efforts using social movement theory combined with a thorough empirical analysis using annual data of the slave trade debates. My study differs from Drescher's because I actually create a measure of abolitionist success by examining voting patterns in my analysis through the creation of two distinct outcome variables. As a result, my contribution will put empirical flesh on the role that abolitionists' strategies and economic considerations played in ending the slave trade. I will also demonstrate how social movement theory can contribute to a clearer understanding of abolition.

IMPORTANT HISTORICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Before I conclude this chapter, I will briefly outline some of the important contributions made by historians to the study of the slave trade. In the 1960s, a quantitative revolution occurred with the development of new data made available by specialized quantitative historians, which allowed researchers to empirically examine the profitability of the slave trade and other industries when British abolition occurred in 1807 (See: Anstey 1972; 1975b; 1977; Curtin 1969; Drescher 1977; 1986; 1987; Eltis 1987a; 1987b; 1979b; Eltis et al. 2009, Engerman 1972; Fogel and Engerman 1974a; 1974b; 1976; Inikori 1975a; 1981; Klein 1969; 1978; Leveen 1975; Miller 1986; Lovejoy 1982; Lovejoy and Richardson 1995a; Lovejoy and Richardson 1995b; Richardson 1991; Solow 1985; 1987; Temperley 1977). For example, Curtin's (1969) pioneering synthesis of the transatlantic slave trade is an original contribution to historical methodology as well as to the field of slave trade studies, where he provided one of the first estimates of the total volume of the African slave trade as well as a survey of all the issues that would eventually become the basic themes of this period of research (Klein 1999). With the

quantification of various aspects the slave trade, researchers now had important data at their avail to study its abolition (e.g., Anstey 1972; 1975b; Drescher 1977; 1986; Eltis 1987a; 1987b; Engerman 1972; Klein 1978; Temperley 1977). In addition, another noteworthy accomplishment made by historians is the creation of *Voyages: The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database*, which contains important details of nearly 35,000 slave voyages between 1514 and 1866 and provides the most comprehensive source of descriptive data currently available on the slave trade. Constructed by renowned experts in the field, the database provides information that could help to answer historical questions with a greater degree of precision and rigour than was previously possible.[15] Even so, no researchers to date have used any of the variables contained in this database to conduct a comprehensive quantitative analysis of British abolition.

While it is true that some important quantitative advances have been made with respect to the slave trade, there is an important limitation that stands out. Even though researchers were pioneers in quantifying various aspects of the slave trade; none of these measures have ever been used to analyze British abolition. For example, most quantitative research focuses exclusively on general slave trade characteristics such as the size of the trade (e.g., Anstey 1975b; Curtin 1969; Eltis 1987a; Inikori 1975a; 1975b; Leveen 1975; Lovejoy 1982), profits and losses (e.g., Anstey 1968; 1975b; Anderson and Richardson 1983; 1985; Aufhauser 1974; Bethell 1966; Darity 1985; Engerman 1972; Darity 1990; Drescher 1977; 1986; Inikori 1981; 1983; Thomas and Bean 1974), slave prices (e.g.,

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[15] Under the leadership of David Eltis, Herbert Klein, Stephen Behrendt, David Richardson, Manolo Florentino and numerous other scholars, the database took decades to compile and is gleaned from original documents and historical publications located in archives, libraries, and other institutions throughout the world. For the interactive database, see: http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/index.faces

Eltis, Lewis and Richardson 2005; Lovejoy and Richardson 1995a; 1995b; Miller 1986) [16]

and slave mortality rates (e.g., Cohn 1985; Cohn and Jenson 1982; Eltis 1982; 1984;

Kipple and Higgins 1989; Klein and Engerman 1975; Miller 1981; 1986; Northrup 1978),

but none of these variables have ever been used by any researcher in a thorough empirical

analysis to examine the causes of British abolition.[17] According to Solow (2001): "Philip

Curtin produced the first census of the Atlantic slave trade, but it was greeted with

perhaps too much emphasis on the numbers and not enough on applications" (p. 10).

FINAL THOUGHTS

Considering that British abolitionists pioneered the techniques that have been used by

nearly every social movement since, work theorizing the all of the conditions of slave

trade abolition is currently absent from the literature. Consequently, there remains a major

contribution to be made to the existing research on British abolition. To accomplish this, I

outline a fifth stage of research that incorporates ideological, economic, political and

cultural explanations of British abolition using more advanced theoretical and empirical

methods. Having access to data generated by economic historians along with the variables

I created from a qualitative analysis of abolitionists' speeches, I am well equipped to

perform a thorough examination of British abolition. Finally, my study is the first

scholarly work to empirically evaluate the theories offered by past historians using

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[16] Note: while I will not use slave prices, slave imports and exports as variables in my analysis, they are still important to reference because these variables were used in my calculation of slave trade profits.

[17] Note: historians would eventually advance economic research on the slave trade by critiquing and revising quantitative estimates created by third-stage researchers such as the size of the slave trade (e.g., Behrendt 1993; 1997; Eltis 1987a; 1987b; Richardson 1989;Richardson and Behrendt 1995; Sheridan 1994), profits and losses (e.g., Behrendt 1993; 2001), slave prices (e.g., Eltis, Lewis and Richardson 2005; Steckel and Jenson 1986; Lovejoy and Richardson 1995a; 1995b; 2002) and slave mortality rates (e.g., Behrendt 1997; Eltis 1989; Haines 2000; Kipple and Higgins 1989; Klein et 2001), but even still these variables have never been used to date in a comprehensive analysis of British abolition.

important economic, political, social and cultural variables in quantitative analyses of British abolition. The following chapter sets up a fresh examination of the slave trade by offering a new theoretical approach to understanding this phenomenon. To accomplish this, I will discuss the theoretical assumptions of social movement theory regarding slave trade abolition and I will outline the sociological concepts guiding this dissertation. Specifically, I will address how social movement theory can be used to assess the impact of resource mobilization, cultural framing and opportunity structures (both economic and political) on British abolition.

CHAPTER 4: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

As the previous chapter reveals, studies examining the role and contribution of British abolitionists are somewhat limited in number, and the few examinations that do exist suffer from data limitations and underdeveloped theories. In addition, a sociological explanation of British abolition is missing from the literature. This dissertation will address these shortcomings using relevant components of social movement theory aligned with key hypotheses to better explain the abolition of the British slave trade. Since the British campaign is considered to be one of the first organized social movements, social movement theory is the most suitable approach to guide this study on slave trade abolition.

THE SOCIAL MOVEMENT CONTEXT OF BRITISH ABOLITION

Social movements are broad alliances of people connected through shared interest, acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or organization of which they are a part of (Turner and Killian 1972). Rather than seeing movements as only expressions of extremism and violence, they are better defined as collective challenges, based on common purposes, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities (Tarrow 1994). In most cases, these structured groups or social movement organizations seek inclusion, policy or legal changes, new benefits and/or rights, changes in culture or changes in what Armstrong and Bernstein (2008) label the "rules of the game." More recently, scholars have offered a much broader model of movements that sees struggle as pervasive to both institutional and extra-institutional settings, and just as likely to be about cultural issues as about political or economic matters (McAdam,

Tarrow and Tilly 2001). Bound in a web of social connections and obligations, social movement organizations gain strength in numbers through the realization of shared characteristics or collective identities (Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003). This study builds on the insights of three social movement theoretical traditions. These are resource mobilization, cultural framing and opportunity structures (both economic and political).

Table 4.1 on page 70 outlines the social movement context of abolition that will guide this dissertation. Focusing on key components of the theory to explore the causes of British abolition, this study makes several important theoretical contributions to historical literatures and to social movement scholarship. First, I consider the relationship between routine institutional activity (e.g., petitions and signatories) and social movement success. Second, I use cultural frame analysis to study the rhetorical strategies of this early social movement organization. Third, I examine the political and economic opportunities that existed within the abolition movement. Finally, I employ two different movement outcomes rarely studied together—policy change and agenda setting—to examine abolition success. The next section provides an overview of policy change and agenda setting and following this I outline how social movement theory can be used to explain the end of the slave trade.

Policy Change and Agenda Setting

Even though governments do not commonly adopt a policy/law in a single discrete moment in time, most research on legislative activity treats outcomes as if they do (King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005; McCammon et al. 2001; Soule and Zylan 1997). In fact, most studies on policy change—which involves simply analyzing a response variable that

Table 4.1   The Social Movement Context of Abolition

Movement Component	Independent Variable	Mechanism	Movement Logic	Effect on Dependent Variables
Resource Mobilization: *Institutional Activity*	Petitions	Increasing numbers	Increase in Movement Strength	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes.
	Signatories	Increasing numbers	Increase in Movement Strength	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes
Cultural Framing: *Tactical Repertoires*	Moral Frames *(Ideological Arguments)*	Increasing *numbers*	Unfavourable Opportunity/ Decreasing Resonance	(A) Decrease in Votes "for" abolition (B) Decrease in the number of roll-call votes
	Economic Frames *(Economic Arguments)*	Increasing *numbers*	Favourable Opportunity/ Increasing Resonance	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes
	% Economic Frames *(Economic Arguments)*	Increasing *rates (%)*		
Political Opportunity: *Political Alliances*	Prime Minister (Pro-abolition or Anti-abolition)	Pro-abolition Prime Minister in office	Favourable Opportunity/ Political Alliances	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes
Economic Opportunity: *Economics*	Business Cycles *(Peaks and Troughs)*	Peak Years	Favourable Opportunity/ Economics	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes
	Industrialization	Increasing Rates	Favourable Opportunity/ Decreased Profit Margins	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes
	Profits (Slave Trade)	Decreasing Rates	Favourable Opportunity/ Decreased Profit Margins	(A) Increase in Votes "for" abolition (B) Increase in the number of roll-call votes

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examines whether or not a law was passed—have focused on the final stage of legislation depicting policy adoption as a dichotomous event. In reality, policy change almost always takes place over a series of stages. To examine the cause of slave trade abolition, this dissertation focuses on two distinct types of success. In doing so, I offer a compliment to the conventional policy change approach to examine social movement success. Building on the work of past scholars (e.g., King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005; McAdam and Su 2002; Soule et al. 1999), I explore the concept of agenda setting— the idea that legislative changes can be theorized as a set of distinct outcomes. To do this, I take an approach that disaggregates the British legislative process into six fundamental stages in order to determine the effects of resource mobilization, cultural framing and opportunities (economic and political) on the likelihood of an abolition bill passing through to the final stage and therefore achieving success.

According to King, Cornwall and Dahlin (2005), movement scholars need to look at the "pathway to social movement success," recognizing that achievements will vary at each stage and therefore from year to year. While past movement scholars have looked at the legislative process within the American political system (e.g., McAdam and Su 2002; King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005), I use the idea of agenda setting to examine the British system. Using an approach that examines the number of readings (i.e., roll-call votes) a bill passes through is a different way to measure movement success. For example, if a law does not pass in a given year, the movement is considered to be unsuccessful in the policy change model. On the other hand, in the agenda setting model those years are not all the same in terms of the number of readings/roll-call votes a bill passes through.

Consequently, annual progress might be considered higher in some years compared to others if a bill makes it through more roll-call votes. Thus far, social movement scholars seldom—if ever—use both policy change and agenda setting approaches in one study to examine movement success. As a result, I make a unique contribution to social movement literatures.

While using a conventional policy approach is relatively straightforward in that an abolition law was passed in 1807, the agenda setting method is a little more detailed. For example, although counting the annual number of roll-call votes a slave trade bill incurred is not complicated, there are a few issues to consider. First, the British political process was fragmented, consisting of distinctive stages and multiple veto points. Second, there are two legislative divisions in the British Parliament (i.e., the House of Commons and the House of Lords) to consider when measuring the number of readings/roll-call votes. Historically, the Lords were well known for holding the most power of the two legislative divisions because they could—and often did—reject a bill that was passed by the House of Commons.

The British legislative process took on the following trajectory. First, a bill had to be introduced by a member of the House of Commons and following that it was read for the first time and subsequently voted on. The success of the first reading was often determined using an informal oral vote combined with a show of hands. If the bill passed, it was read a second time; a roll-call vote was taken and it only passed if the necessary constitutional majority voted for it. The third and final reading of a bill in the Commons included suggested revisions to the legislation. If a majority passed the bill, it moved to

the House of Lords where it had to undergo the same three-stage process.[18] The influence

of political outsiders was for the most part limited, except where abolitionist MPs

delivered messages from beyond the walls of Parliament through their close networking

with abolition societies and groups.

    As some movement scholars suggest (e.g., King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005), the

fragmentation of the legislative process means that the impact of mobilization can vary at

different stages, creating numerous opportunities for legislator decision-making. Scholars

also argue that lobbies are likely to be more successful at the early agenda setting stages

(Baumgartner and Leech 1998; King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005). According to these

researchers, social movements should be less influential at later stages, where stricter

requirements are more likely to exhaust resources and where inappropriate actions could

cause legislators to withdraw their support for a bill. In other words, the stakes are higher

at later stages when the prospect of implementing a law becomes a reality and the

consequentiality of action could cause legislators to revoke their support (King, Cornwall

and Dahlin 2005). With respect to British slave trade abolition, agenda setting has

important implications. When a bill passed through to a later stage of a debate, this meant

that abolitionist MPs broke important barriers because they convinced more of their

fellow MPs to support abolition. In other words, when more voting MPs took the bill

seriously, this signalled the legitimacy of the measure to parliament. In addition, each

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[18] While most bills were usually introduced first in the House of Commons, and voted on three separate times before proceeding to the House of Lords, this was not always the case. For example, as a bold strategic move an abolition bill was first introduced in the House of Lords in 1807, passed three readings and was subsequently introduced and passed in the House of Commons. Furthermore, most bills that were introduced in a first reading generally passed to a second reading. Once a bill passed second reading it was read a third time to hear any recommended revisions to the bill, voted on and passed into law if the majority supported it.

successful roll-call vote also demonstrated that abolitionists created important political alliances in that more of their fellow MPs supported them. Building on the idea of agenda setting, I suggest that each succeeding stage in the slave trade debates had increasingly stricter rules and was more significant. This approach also might help to explain why abolitionists were often successful in persuading legislators to introduce a bill, but failed to gather enough support to get a bill passed beyond a second roll-call vote until 1804. The question I now address is the role that each social movement component played in abolition success.

OVERVIEW OF MOVEMENT THEORY

Social movement research has taken a number of theoretical shifts since the 1960s, when scholars began to view protest and reform activities as instrumental action rather than irrational behaviour (Goodwin and Jasper 2003; McAdam and Scott 2005). Beginning in the 1970s, movement scholars regarded formal organization as a core feature of social movement organizations because in many ways they acted a lot like firms, hiring staff, accumulating resources and selling their point of view (McCarthy and Zald 1977). Emphasizing that social movement organizations take advantage of resources such as time and money to support their objectives, the theory expanded to include the concept of resource mobilization (Goodwin and Jasper 2003). During the 1980s, new movement theory began to acknowledge the cultural, ideological and value dimensions of social movement organizations in their effort to create symbols that convinced society of their grievances and to establish a feeling of solidarity among participants (Goodwin and Jasper 2003). Two main cultural components have dominated social movement

literatures: (1) the objective of social movement organizations to create a collective

identity among participants and (2) the process by which social movement organizations

frame their issues in order to do so (See: Benford 1997; Benford and Snow 2000; Snow et

al. 1986; McCammon et al. 2007). While earlier social movement research primarily

focused on movement emergence and development (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996),

the real explanatory power of the theory originates in how and why some movement

organizations succeed while others fail in their expressed goals (Guigni 1998;

McCammon et al. 2007). According to Gamson (1995), a social movement organizations'

strategy is a key factor that determines their success or in some cases their failure. Finally,

social movement theory was further advanced when researchers began to look beyond

political opportunity theory and acknowledged that other kinds of opportunities existed

that social movement organizations were just as likely to take advantage of. In the

sections that follow, I will explain in more detail how past movement scholars have used

resource mobilization, cultural framing and opportunity structures in order to set up how

each of these components can be used to better explain British slave trade abolition.

RESOURCE MOBILIZATION

The resource mobilization theory examines the exploitation of available resources

that enables the emergence, growth and success of social movements (McCarthy and Zald

1977; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; McCarthy and Zald 2002). To organize, social

movement campaigns must have sufficient resources such as money, skills, strong

leadership and social networks. Movement participation, which encompasses not only

mobilization but also protest activities, is a broad term that identifies actions such as

public opinion for change, to the creation of specific organizations to amend inequalities and also the extra or routine institutionalized actions of movement activists (Guigni 1998; McAdam and Su 2002; Mahoney and Rueschmeyer 2003; Tarrow 1998). An important assertion of social movement theory is the idea that social and political change is often shaped by groups lacking access to conventional channels of institutional change (See: Piven and Cloward 1977).

To attain their goals, social movements employ a wide range of different kinds of strategies (Rojas 2006). In some cases, movements use extra-institutional tactics that are disruptive in nature to challenge authority and broadcast their grievances (Andrews and Caren 2010). Alternatively, movement scholars also acknowledge that conventional or routine institutional activities are effective strategies when employed by social movement organizations. Although this dissertation concentrates on conventional forms of protest, the following section provides a brief overview of the types of strategies past movement scholars have deemed the most effective in assisting social movement organizations to reach their stated goals.

Social Movement Strategies

Over the past four decades, numerous studies have been conducted on the effectiveness of different kinds of social movement strategies. Mainly, researchers have concentrated their analyses on three different types of protest actions. First, disruptive forms of protest that are aggressive and confrontational activities which includes persuasive tactics such as sit-ins, demonstrations, boycotts, vigils and marches (See: Amenta et al. 2009; Budros 2013; Cress and Snow 2000; Gamson 1975; 1990; Gamson

and Schmeidler 1984; King and Soule 2007; Luders 2006; McAdam 1982, 1983; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Piven and Cloward 1977; Rojas 2006; Tarrow 1998; Taylor and Van Dyke 2007; Tilly 1994; 2008). Second, violent protest actions include coercive strategies such as strikes, blockades and in some cases bombings (See: Budros 2013; Gamson 1990; Piven and Cloward 1977; Schumaker 1975, 1978; Shorter and Tilly 1974; Taft and Ross 1969; Tilly, Tilly and Tilly 1975; Welch 1975). Third, researchers have also examined the effectiveness of conventional strategies that focus on the idea of legitimacy and public image in order to appeal to democratic values (Rojas 2006). Conventional protest actions are considered peaceful non-confrontational persuasive tactics that include activities such as petitioning, letter-writing campaigns, lobbying and low-key rallies (See: Budros 2011; 2013; Caren, Ghoshal and Ribasa 2011; Ferree 2003; McCammon et al. 2001; McCammon 2001; McCammon and Campbell 2001; McCammon 2003; McCammon et al. 2007; McCammon 2012). In addition, some researchers have also looked at the impact of all three forms of protest together (See: Budros 2013). The large variety of strategies used by social movement organizations raises an important question about which kinds of approaches have been most effective in facilitating their goals (Rojas 2006). However, prior research has not entirely settled the debate on which types of strategies work best for achieving success (Giugni 1998; McAdam and Su 2002; Tarrow 1998; Taylor and Van Dyke 2007).

Social movements that employ conventional strategies have been shown to successfully produce change (Raeburn 2004). These strategies are usually motivated by a belief that power holders will change their behaviour if enough people agree with the

social movement organization's demands (Della Porta and Diani 1999). Until recently, very few sociologists have focused on the use of routine institutional activity as an advantageous mobilization strategy (But see: Budros 2011; 2013; Caren, Ghoshal and Ribassa 2011; McCammon et al. 2001; McCammon 2001, 2003, 2012; McCammon and Campbell 2001; McCammon et al. 2007). Furthermore, few scholars have studied conventional activities such as petition writing (But see: Budros 2011; Caren, Ghoshal and Ribassa 2011; McCammon et al. 2001; Yukich 2013). Petitioning is considered to be an effective strategy because it is a relatively easy, low risk activity based on persuasion rather than threats (Tarrow 1998). But, with the exception of a few recent studies that have examined how increased petitioning effected movement formation (e.g., Caren, Ghoshal and Ribassa 2011) and movement success (e.g., Budros 2011), petition writing as a useful movement activity remains understudied. Building on these recent studies, I respond to this gap and add to the growing literature on conventional protest actions by examining if this type of strategy helped to end the slave trade.

Resource Mobilization and the Abolition Movement

Examining routine institutional activities, my contribution to social movement literatures includes the addition of two variables that measure conventional mobilization/protest: (1) the number of annual petitions presented to the British legislature and (2) the number of annual signatories. Petitioning involves resource mobilization by tapping into both the skills and social networks of movement members, but more importantly it provides a way to measure the influence or persuasion of a social movement organization's protest methods. Unlike past research that has combined and

measured these strategies together (See: McCammon et al. 2001); I envision more explanatory power in disaggregating these tactics to include a separate count of the actual number of annual petitions and also one for the annual number of signatories. While petitions measure how many grievances a movement has, signatories provide a direct measure of the mobilizing strength of the movement.

At the onset of the parliamentary abolition debates, legislative petitions flooded in at rates never seen before, which interrupted proceedings since British law required that each appeal be read aloud in Parliament. In a country where constituencies had no control over the House of Lords and where fewer than one-in-ten could vote in the House of Commons, petitions were used to get a message across to voting members of Parliament (Hochschild 2005). For example, during the 1792 slave trade debates, abolitionists presented 519 petitions with 390,000 signatures to Parliament demonstrating one the first major instances of mass mobilization (Anstey 1975a; Kaufmann and Pape 1999; Drescher 1987; Crafton 1792; Hochschild 2005). According to Drescher (1994), the large number of anti-slave trade petitions presented to Parliament at the beginning of the movement demonstrates how successful these tactics were in raising awareness of the issue. He also highlights the importance of the petitions that were presented to Parliament in 1806, just before the final reading of an abolition bill in the legislature. According to Drescher (1994), when the bill passed in the upper House, the opposition rallied outside Parliament and circulated a petition throughout Manchester to those who had interest in the slave trade. The petition itself received more than 400 signatures, the city's largest single lobby against abolition since 1792 (Drescher 1994). Faced with this unexpected oppositional

tactic, Thomas Clarkson countered with an emergency call for an abolition petition from the same city. Within hours, more than 2,300 names were collected and the appeal was immediately sent to London. In the end, abolition supporters out signed their opponents by a margin of more than five to one and parliamentary abolitionists provided this evidence to the voting members of the House of Lords (Drescher 1994).

The general research question I will examine is how routine institutional activities like petitioning impacted the movement's chance for success. Since the slave trade abolition movement was unsuccessful in passing a law in Parliament for several years, measuring the conventional tactics that abolitionists used has the potential to provide some insight as to why this social movement organization took so long to realize its goals. Considering that abolitionists only petitioned heavily at the beginning years of the debates and then picked up this activity again towards end of the movement, I expect this may have factored into their consistent failure to pass a law. Following conventional logic on the effect of routine institutional activity, I suggest that higher annual petition and signatory numbers positively influenced votes in favour of abolition, thus increasing the probability of a law passing. Petitions provide a measure of persuasion, whereas signatories provide a measure of mobilization. Therefore, I expect these measures influenced voting parliamentarians to pass an abolition bill. I will test this assumption by including two indicators that measure the impact of routine activism on the dependent variables—an abolition law being passed and the number of roll-call votes that a bill passed through in each House of Parliament. Building on this logic, increasing petition and signatory numbers should lead to an increase in available resources and movement

strength, thereby creating favourable movement circumstances. Based on these insights, I

suggest the following four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1a: Increasing numbers of annual petitions should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

Hypothesis 1b: Increasing numbers of annual petitions should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Hypothesis 2a: Increasing numbers of annual petition signatories should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

Hypothesis 2b: Increasing numbers of annual petition signatories should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

CULTURAL FRAME ANALYSIS

Social movement theory experienced a cultural shift a few decades ago when

researchers began to focus on how movements use symbols, language, discourse, identity

and other dimensions of culture to recruit, retain, mobilize and motivate their members

(Williams 2007). Here, cultural analysts promote the idea of *framing*, which emphasizes

how social movement organizations engage in deliberate meaning-making strategies to

effectively present their ideas in order to their weaken opponents' claims (Benford and

Snow 2000; Benford 1993; Ferree et al. 2002; Fiss and Hirsch 2005; McCaffrey and Keys

2000; Pedriana 2006; Snow et al. 1986; Snow 2004). Researchers use framing strategies

to explore how social movements come to understand problems and how they sell these

perspectives to a wider audience (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Reese 2001; Goodwin and

Jasper 2003; Miceli 2005). More specifically, they consider how movement activists

strategically manipulate their messages in public arenas to legitimate their cause and

motivate collective action (Benford 1997; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996; Benford and Snow 2000; Snow 2004; Snow et al.1986; Miceli 2005). Building on the work of earlier scholars who defined frames as mental constructs that identified meanings within interactive situations (See: Bateson 1972; Blumer 1969; Goffman 1972; 1974), the framing perspective was further refined by researchers to examine the successes and failures of social movements (e.g., Snow and Benford 1992; Benford 1997; Jasper 1997; Benford and Snow 2000; Messer, Adams and Shriver 2002; Oliver and Johnson 2000; Williams and Benford 2000; Yukich 2013). While successful movements often deliberately appeal to the existing values and beliefs of their target population, if unappealing frames are offered they risk being viewed as irrelevant and therefore failure.

Early research on the political success of social movements has overlooked the role of cultural frame analysis (McCammon et al. 2007). According to McCammon (2012), very little systematic empirical research has been conducted on the successes and failures of movement activists' framing efforts. In fact, researchers have only recently begun to test framing theories through a systematic analysis of how social movement organizations structure the meaning of their cause (e.g., Cress and Snow 2000; McCammon 2012; McCammon et al. 2001). Despite these advances, most of the existing research on activist framing is qualitative, with researchers only examining a small number of cases (But see: Broad, Crawley, and Foley 2004; Croteau and Hicks 2003; Hallgrímsdóttir 2006; Maney et al. 2005; McCaffrey and Keys 2000; McCammon 2012). In an effort to complement this important research, my analysis will include a quantitative component that examines the way parliamentary MPs framed their abolition arguments during the legislative slave

trade debates. Since very few studies of activist framing employ a quantitative approach (But see: Burstein and Hirsch 2007; McCammon, Hewitt and Smith 2004; McCammon 2012), and to date no researcher has explored how abolitionists framed their arguments during the slave trade debates, my study is the first attempt to examine the different types of frames that abolitionists used in their speeches. While it is true that the historian Seymour Drescher's pivotal 1990 study examined abolitionists' rhetorical patterns within the slave trade debates, my analysis improves on his because I analyze the entire population of abolitionists' parliamentary speeches, rather than a sample of years. Unlike Drescher's approach, the key to my analysis is that I attempt to empirically demonstrate that abolitionists were only successful when they purposely included more viable economic rationales in their arguments to appease voting parliamentarians. Through an examination of the effect of their strategic speeches on the outcome of abolition, this dissertation makes an important contribution to social movement literatures by examining the role of culture in slave trade abolition, something that currently missing from both historical and sociological literatures. The following section outlines the framing processes that I will use to guide this analysis of British abolition.

Framing Processes

The literature on cultural frame analysis offers widespread insights into a number of the processes associated with frame development and innovation (e.g. Cable and Shriver 1995; Capek 1993; Gamson 1992; Johnston and Snow 1998; Kubal 1998; Neuman 1998; Triandafyllidou and Fotiou 1998; White 1999; Zdravomyslova 1996). What this suggests is that social movement organizations use carefully thought out strategies when they

develop the core framing tasks of their organization. In doing so, they intentionally create framing strategies that are calculated and goal directed to achieve a specific purpose such as recruiting members, mobilizing support and acquiring resources (Benford and Snow 2000). In many instances, social movements experience opposition and disapproval as they advocate for social change (Gamson, Gerhards and Rucht 2002). Consequently, researchers underscore the importance of "frame resonance," arguing that the mobilizing strength of a movement's discourse is heavily dependent on the capacity of the focal frame to resonate with existing or emerging belief systems (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988).

Collective Action Frames

Past researchers have identified different types of frames to measure movement strength and/or success. Collective action frames are defined as action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that both inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of a social movement organization (Benford and Snow 2000). In the scope of social movement research, these frames are used in several different ways to mobilize potential supporters and demobilize antagonists (Benford and Snow 2000; Snow and Benford 1988). For example, they are used to: (1) facilitate a shared understanding of some problematic condition or situation in need of change, (2) assign responsibility to whom or what is to blame, (3) articulate an alternative set of arrangements, and (4) urge others to act collectively to affect change (Benford and Snow 2000: 615). Movement researchers also recognize that meaning making in collective action is often an emergent and fluid activity where unrelated frames can be positioned at different intervals during a

movement's ongoing efforts to realize their goals (McCaffrey and Keys 2000; McCammon, Hewitt, and Smith 2004). This dissertation will focus on two different kinds of collective action frames: *moral* and *economic* frames. At the beginning of the anti-slave trade movement, abolitionists primarily used moral frames in their parliamentary speeches, but I will empirically demonstrate that after many years of defeat they deliberately changed their discourse to include more economic frames in their abolition arguments.

Scholars suggest that a social movement organization's ideological orientation is the principal force that shapes their strategies, where the process of framing entails a diagnoses of the social problem at hand, its solutions, as well as the justifications for pursuing reformative actions (Carmin and Balser 2002; Haines 2006; McCammon 2012; Polletta and Ho 2004; Snow and Benford 1988). Here, social movements deliberately frame their beliefs in a way that promotes an awareness of some kind of social injustice (Benford 1997). In this context, these kinds of frames define a problematic condition or situation as both intrinsically wrong and caused by an identifiable actor or antagonist to a cause (Benford and Snow 2000). Past research demonstrates that social movement organizations often articulate grievances with the intention of making people feel sympathetic or angry enough to join their campaign (Benford 1997). For example, McAdams (1988) study on the American civil rights movement revealed how activists used injustice framing to successfully gain support and incite action for their cause.

Snow and his colleagues (1986) developed the idea of "frame alignment" processes, which are the deliberate efforts by social movement organizations to link their interpretive

frames with potential resource providers (See: Snow et al. 1986: 467–475). Sometimes

frames that are offered do not resonate with a target audience. In order to succeed,

movements often require the transformation of a frame where old meanings are reframed

in order to gain support (Goffman 1974; Snow et al. 1986). The concept of frame

transformations refers to a strategic alignment process that changes old understandings

and meanings by generating new ones (Snow et al. 1986). Very few researchers have

examined the reasons why social movement members change their strategies by varying

the frames they offer, but those that have offer unique ways to understand frame

alignment processes and social movement success (See: Fetner 2001; McCammon et al.

2008; McCammon 2012; Snow, Vliegenhart and Corrigall-Brown 2007).

Frame Analysis and Slave Trade Abolition

Drawing on theories of frame analysis, I argue that parliamentary abolitionists

strategically reframed their cause during the final years of the slave trade debates in an

effort to influence voting. In this case, frame analysis is a valuable tool to examine how

these activists intentionally presented their arguments to gain support for their cause.

Over the course of the movement, abolitionist MPs used two different types of collective

action frames to persuade voting parliamentarians. These are:

(1) *Moral frames* in the form of ideological arguments that condemned the slave trade as oppressive, criminal and inhumane; and

(2) *Economic frames* in the form of economic arguments that labelled the slave trade business risky and unprofitable, and offered trade alternatives.

To elaborate, moral frames were emotional and critical of the slave traders, urging for

immediate abolition on the grounds that slaves were treated inhumanely, while at the

same time ignoring any economic concerns. These arguments were crafted in an attempt to convince voting politicians of the evils of the trade rather than providing feasible economic alternatives. Conversely, economic frames underscored the positive fiscal consequences that Great Britain would experience if she abolished the slave trade and focused on the exchange of other less risky commodities. In the following sections, I explain how abolitionists used these frames and I demonstrate their application to the abolition movement by outlining the corresponding hypotheses that I will test. In addition, a qualitative analysis of both moral and economic frames (See: Chapter 6) will further demonstrate how abolitionists shifted from using moral justifications to an increased usage of economic language within the political landscape of abolition.

Moral Frames

I use moral frames to represent the ideological arguments offered by parliamentary abolitionists and I create an indicator to measure the number of times this type of frame was employed each year of the slave trade debates. A typical example of the ideological framework that abolitionist MPs used in their speeches revealed the degradation and harsh treatment of the slaves transported through the Middle Passage. For example, abolitionists repeatedly described a slave's treatment as worse than any physical punishment they suffered because it destroyed their will to live. Africans were stripped of all their dignity; captured, shackled in irons and crammed into darken holds of mouldy slave vessels where they inevitably suffered thirst, hunger, abuse, disease and eventually death (Baker 1970). Time and time again, abolitionists argued primarily on the basis of humanitarian grounds. In fact, this rhetorical pattern remained virtually unchanged throughout nearly the entire

movement, when abolitionist MPs first petitioned in Parliament against the slave trade on

the grounds of Christianity, humanity, justice and charity. Nevertheless, the use of

ideological arguments did not persuade voting parliamentarians to end the trade. Despite

their consistent failure, abolitionist MPs made no attempt to shift the emphasis of their

lobbying before Parliament until the final years of the debates (Drescher 1990).

While it is true that prior researchers have examined abolitionists' rhetorical patterns

within the slave trade debates (e.g., Drescher 1990; 1994), my analysis improves on these

past studies by examining all of the speeches delivered by parliamentary abolitionists.

Moreover, this study is unique because I attempt to empirically demonstrate that

ideological arguments did nothing but impede total abolition. In the end, I suggest that

moral frames did not influence parliamentarians to vote for abolition since the bill was

defeated for so many consecutive years. Following this logic, I expect that the increased

use of moral frames had a negative effect on legislative outcomes—whether an abolition

law was passed or not. This leads to the following two hypotheses:

> **Hypothesis 3a:** Increasing numbers of moral frames (ideological
> arguments) should have a negative effect on the likelihood of an abolition
> law being passed.

> **Hypothesis 3b:** Increasing numbers of moral frames (ideological
> arguments) should have a negative effect on the number of roll-call votes a
> bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

Economic Frames

I also use frame analysis to examine the conditions leading to the strategic decision

by parliamentary abolitionists to change their rationale for abolition from predominantly

ideological-based reasoning to include more economic considerations near the end of the

abolition debates. Examining slave trade abolition through the lens of social movement theory demonstrates that when confronted with significant defeat, abolitionists were compelled to reconsider whether they were using effective tactics. In other words, I argue that abolitionist MPs deliberately switched to economic arguments (i.e., economic frames) after their proposed legislation to end the trade was ignored after nearly sixteen years of debate. Simply put, slave trade abolition could not be achieved by ideological arguments (i.e., moral frames), but instead resulted from a complex interaction of abolitionist pressure and tactics (Anstey 1972).

The transition from moral to economic framing involved not only a change in the focal frame, but also a change in abolitionists' tactics. After they had exhausted their efforts utilizing a humanitarian campaign, I argue that abolitionists realized that they needed a completely different approach. Economic frames represented a change in ideas about abolition and as a result had more of a chance to resonate with antagonists of the cause. Moreover, this type of frame was completely detached from emotional or humanitarian reasoning and instead offered economic solutions that appealed both to abolitionist MPs and their adversaries. Consequently, these frames represented a sudden shift in principles that had the potential to blindside their pro-slave trade opponents.

At the end of the eighteenth century, abolition speeches in Parliament were not as lengthy or passionate as they were when the campaign began. Due to Britain's preoccupation with an impending war with France, the slave trade abolition debates literally disappeared from both Houses of Parliament from 1800 to 1803, when no bills were introduced. As a result, the abolition campaign quietly fell off the map. McCammon

(2003) suggests that political defeats are important predictors of when a movement will use a new tactic. Significant defeats can send the message that current strategies are ineffective and that new ones are needed. Clearly overpowered, abolitionists retreated and would not table another abolition bill until 1804. Armed with new strategies, the debates that occurred from 1804 to 1807 would prove much different than earlier deliberations. Building on the idea of strategic alignment processes, I argue that abolitionists included more economic rationales in their speeches in order to persuade voting members in Parliament opposed to slave trade abolition. This reasoning generates four hypotheses related to cultural framing:

> **Hypothesis 4a:** Increasing *numbers* of economic frames (economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

> **Hypothesis 4b:** Increasing *numbers* of economic frames (economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

> **Hypothesis 5a:** Increasing *rates* of economic frames (% economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

> **Hypothesis 5b:** Increasing *rates* of economic frames (% economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES

The foundation of social movement research has been political process theory, which emphasizes the role of political opportunities in social movement organization and in forecasting a movement's potential success (McAdam 1982; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978). Typically referred to as the political opportunity structure, this theory examines how the

opening of political environments can facilitate favourable movement opportunities.

Tarrow (1989) defined a political opportunity as being consistent with—but not

necessarily a formal or permanent dimension of—the political struggle that encourages

people to engage in contentious politics. One weakness with the theory is that compared

to resource mobilization theorists, political process theorists stress that movement

activists do not randomly choose their goals. Instead, political contexts create an arena

where certain grievances can be communicated around which social movements organize

(Meyer 2004). A second weakness is that researchers have been so preoccupied with how

social movement organizations achieve political goals (e.g., Amenta and Caren 2004;

Kriesi 2004; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996); they have neglected the role of other

non-political opportunity structures in movement success (McCammon et al. 2007). Since

this approach underscores the importance of political environments, empirical research

based on this theory has tended to focus on political opportunities (e.g., Almeida 2003;

Almeida and Stearns 1998; Fetner 2001; Jenkins, Jacobs, and Agnone 2003; Kerbo and

Shaffer 1992; Kitschelt 1986; Noonan 1995; Olivier 1990; Rohlinger 2006; Santoro 2008;

Suh 2001; Tarrow 1994), emphasizing the role of institutional resources and the historical

precedents for social mobilization in a given political system (Kitschelt 1986; Lee 2012).

As a result, the theory often fails to recognize that other important types of opportunities

can and do impact movement success.

Political process theory argues that the actions of movement members depend on the

existence or lack of a specific political opportunity assuming that movements will develop

and gain influence when sympathetic governments are in power (Amenta et al. 2009;

Meyer 2004; Meyer and Minkoff 2004). In this way, the theory differentiates between the internal dynamics of social movements and the broad social and political dynamics that shape the opportunities and constraints for mobilization (Tilly 1978; McAdam 1982; Andrews 1997; Tarrow 1998). The role of political allies and supporters, the availability of access points in the political system and the capacity of the state to change all play an important part in the political opportunity structure. But, according to McCammon and her colleagues (2001), the assumption that political decision-making and movement success are unaffected by circumstances beyond formal political dynamics is too narrow-minded. One weakness in social movement literatures is that few studies—if any—have considered the effect of both political and non-political opportunities on social movement outcomes, instead choosing to examine only one or the other. In response, I address this theoretical limitation by examining not only the political opportunities available to the abolition movement, but also non-political opportunity structures (i.e., economic opportunities) in relation to the eventual success of British abolition.

Political Opportunities and Abolition

Political opportunities can play an important role in the success of social movements (McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978). Amenta and his colleagues (e.g., 1992; 1994; 1996) argue that a sympathetic political context makes a positive difference for social movement outcomes. In particular, they examined the presence of sympathetic governments and state bureaucracies and the existence and accessibility of key political alliances to the movement (Della Porta 1996; Della Porta and Rucht 1995; Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1994). The idea is that in order to succeed,

movement actors often need to marshal political support inside institutional arenas (Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1994). The rationale is that social movement organizations require support in order to persuade political authorities to consider their claims and modify their policies accordingly. In this way, scholars suggest that the political opportunity structure can influence policy change when social movement organizations create alliances with powerful supporters who are willing to take up the movements' cause (e.g., Andrews 2001; Budros 2013; Kriesi et al. 1995; McCammon et al. 2001; Soule and Olzak 2004; Tarrow 1994).

I now turn to the literature on democratic presidents with pro-movement sentiments. Some researchers claim that a leftist government has the power to change relevant policies, where an association with elite allies can create a favourable movement context for the social movement organization. For example, in their study of the effect of American civil rights protest on movement emergence, development and influence, Meyer and Minkoff (2004) found evidence to suggest that a democratic presidential administration encouraged positive policy outcomes where government support effectively altered the balance of power in favour of the movement and their chances of success. I draw on this literature to examine the role that this kind of political opportunity played in the British abolition movement.

I focus on how powerful political allies created opportunities for policy change and increased the likelihood that a bill would pass through more roll-call votes. In this context, I focus on three key aspects of having the Prime Minister of Britain as a political ally. First, is the idea of *leadership* or the fact the prime minister was the leader of the

party and presumably had influence over other members. Second, the prime minister had

the *authority to grant favours* in that he had the power to decide 'who' received cabinet

posts and other coveted positions in government. Third, is the concept of *agenda setting*,

given that the prime minister could influence which bills got introduced, how they were

introduced and also when. In this manner, political allies of the movement had the

authority to ask for favours from their fellow MPs, were often privy to confidential

information regarding oppositional strategies, could negotiate with fellow MPs outside of

Parliament, and in that respect be influential because they had the power to sway

parliamentarians to vote for abolition. Because social movement theory has a tendency to

focus on structure and less on agency, examining political alliances provides evidence of

the role that agency—or more specifically leadership—plays in decision making

processes. I offer two hypotheses to evaluate the idea that a pro-abolition prime minister

in office would have a positive effect on abolition success:

> **Hypothesis 6a:** The presence of a pro-abolition prime minister should
> have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

> **Hypothesis 6b:** The presence of pro-abolition prime minister should have
> a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the
> House of Commons and House of Lords.

Moving Beyond Political Opportunities

Acknowledging that a wide range of opportunity structures exist, social movement

researchers have only recently considered how economic, gendered, cultural,

demographic, industry or corporate, rhetorical and discursive opportunities have impacted

movement success (See: Budros 2004; Fetner 2001; Hallgrimsdottir 2006; McCammon et

al. 2001; McCammon et al. 2007; Raeburn 2004; Schurman 2004; Schurman and Munro

2009; Soule 2009; Walstrom and Peterson 2006). For example, Luder's (2006) study of business responses to civil rights mobilization examined how economic opportunities predicted the reactions of specific actors to a social movement's demands as well as the general prospects of movement success. Advancing the literature in their study of women's suffrage movements in the United States, McCammon and her colleagues (2001) found that shifting gender relations produced a gendered opportunity for women's suffrage by altering attitudes among political decision makers about the appropriate roles of women in society. Their findings demonstrate that changing gender relations transformed expectations about women's participation in politics and increased the readiness of political decision makers to support suffrage. As past research shows, the importance of the different kinds of opportunity structures that make up a movement's environment extends the idea of political opportunity structures to include other important opportunities that are also available to social movement organizations. I draw on this small, but growing literature to examine the role that economic opportunities played in the abolition crusade. Considering that abolitionists' arguments were ineffective in Parliament every year until 1807 begs the question why an abolition bill was finally passed after so many years of consistent failure? This unchanged political landscape is why economic opportunity structures are important conceptual tools that have the potential to help to explain British abolition.

Economic Opportunities and British Abolition

I will explore the effect of three different macroeconomic processes on the success of the British abolition movement. First, I will look at the impact of general economic

cycles—peaks and troughs—on abolition over the course of the movement. Second, I will evaluate the effect of increasing British industrialization rates on abolition. Finally, I will examine the effect of annual slave trade profits on abolition. The general questions I will explore are if and how fluctuating macroeconomic conditions influenced how parliamentarians voted in the abolition debates.

Past studies have demonstrated a theoretical association between improving macro-economic conditions and opportunities for movement success (e.g., Aho 2003; Budros 2004; 2005). According to Aho (2003), a plausible hypothesis about the relationship between favourable economic conditions and social movement success is that people can afford social politics when they prosper economically. In other words, when faced with social movement demands, governments tend to be more generous in during economic upswings. Past research has also established that economic peaks can foster a favourable opportunity context (e.g., Budros 2005; Kotlikoff and Rupert 1980). I build on Kotlikoff and Rupert's (1980) theory that improving economic conditions increased slaveholder wealth (i.e., personal wealth) by amending this theory slightly to apply to the British slave trade abolition movement. Considering the unique context of British abolition given that voting members in Parliament did not actually own slaves, it makes sense that prosperous economic conditions (i.e., Britain's booming economy) would contribute to feelings of security and also that these conditions were indirectly tied to the slave trade as demonstrated in the parliamentary debates. Applying the aforementioned logic to the case of British abolition, parliamentarians should have been more likely to support an abolition bill during general economic upswings (i.e., peaks). In other words, there was no real

danger ending the slave trade since prosperity could be linked to other developing and lucrative industries. This logic leads to the following two hypotheses:

Hypothesis 7a: Economic peaks should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

Hypothesis 7b: Economic peaks should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.

The historian, Eric Williams, claimed that the process of industrial development led to British slave trade abolition, arguing that rising industrialization could be linked to falling slave trade profits. His rationale was that increasing industrialization rates signified technological innovation and labour efficiency—the increased use of agricultural machinery that replaced slave labour—as well as the growth of other lucrative business sectors throughout Great Britain that competed with the slave trade. The implication is that the diminishing need for slave labour caused trade profits to plummet. Likewise, when other profitable industries entered the picture, the fiscal importance of the slave trade waned in comparison. This made ending the trade a reasonable choice for the government. Drawing on Williams's logic, I will use industrialization rates as an alternative way to capture the effects of slave trade profits in that rising industrialization signalled a reduction in the need for slave labour and consequently the demand for slaves also declined. With a lower demand for slaves, it follows that fewer slaves were procured and transported to the British colonies (See: figure 2.6, p. 30). Fewer numbers of slaving voyages translated into a reduction in slave sales, which should have resulted in lower profits. Considering the difficulties that I encountered measuring actual slave trade profits

(See: Chapter 5, Pp. 110–11), using industrialization is a different way to gauge the

importance of the trade to the Britain's economy. It follows that British MPs should have

been more likely to support a slave trade abolition bill as industrialization rates increased.

Based on this line of reasoning, I suggest the following two hypotheses:

> **Hypothesis 8a:** Increasing industrialization rates should have a positive
> effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

> **Hypothesis 8b:** Increasing industrialization rates should have a positive
> effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of
> Commons and House of Lords.

Building on the work of past scholars who identified a theoretical link between rising

slave prices and favourable manumission movement opportunities (e.g., Budros 2004); I

modified this theory to examine the effect of fluctuating slave trade profits on abolition

success. Since British abolition is about slave trading and not slave holding, a different

logic applies with specific considerations. I expect that decreasing slave trade profits will

have more explanatory power in my analysis because it will allow me to evaluate two

dominant slave trade abolition theories. These are (1) Williams's (1944) "decline" theory

that Great Britain could afford to abolish the slave trade when she did because of

declining profitability and (2) Drescher's (1977) "econocide" theory which instead

reasoned that the slave trade was very profitable when it was abolished in 1807.

Considering both of these rationales, I expect favourable movement opportunities

occurred when slave trade profits decreased rendering the slave trade an unsuccessful

commercial venture for Great Britain. I argue that the parliamentary majority refused to

eliminate the slave trade because it was connected to Britain's thriving national economy.

For example, more often than not, pro-slave trade parliamentarians were careful to

emphasize how profitable and important the trade was to Great Britain in their speeches. It stands to reason that if Britain's economic success was associated with this source of profits, the parliamentary majority would vote against abolition for the sake of national commerce. On the other hand, if slave trade profits actually decreased and abolitionist MPs emphasized this in their speeches (See: Chapter 6, Pp. 153–56), it makes sense that more parliamentarians could have been persuaded to vote in favour of ending the slave trade. The following hypothesis summarizes the effect of decreasing slave trade profits on British abolition:

> **Hypothesis 9:** Decreasing slave profits should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Using social movement theory to examine British abolition has the potential to provide explanations that are currently missing from both historical and sociological literatures. The theory also provides a way to empirically explore which strategies made a difference to the success of the abolition movement. To accomplish this, I employ a two-tiered research design that includes (1) a quantitative analysis using variables that represent the effect that resource mobilization, cultural framing, and opportunities (both political and economic) had on movement success and (2) a supplementary qualitative analysis of British abolitionists' speeches in Parliament. The important question I will investigate throughout the final chapters of this dissertation is 'if' and 'how' cultural framing along with other key variables might have factored into an abolition bill passing. In the next chapter, I offer a quantitative analysis of British abolition.

CHAPTER 5: EXPLAINING THE END OF THE SLAVE TRADE

This study of the British slave trade examines the relationship between resource mobilization, cultural framing, opportunities (both economic and political) and the enactment of an abolition law in Great Britain at a point in time when the slave trade was considered a booming industry. Was British abolition of the slave trade a rational decision based on economic considerations or a more counterintuitive action that sanctioned a financially successful industry? In this chapter, I use framing data along with other key variables to perform a quantitative analysis of British abolition to explore this question.

I employ Firth's penalized logistic regression and exact Poisson regression models as the statistical tools for my analysis. I examine two movement outcomes—policy change and agenda setting—and in doing so I offer a complete analysis of British abolition by providing a complement to the conventional social movement approach of looking at discrete outcomes. By assessing the abolition theories of prior scholars, I will demonstrate that a sociological approach helps to clarify some of the reasons why the slave trade might have been abolished. In the end, I suggest that existing studies on British abolition have not considered 'if' and 'how' social movements and opportunity structures played a role in abolition success. In response, I evaluate key components of social movement theory to help explain the elimination of the British slave trade. My primary aim is to assess the effect of several key variables—petitions, signatories, moral and economic frames, political allies, business cycles, slave trade profits and industrialization—on British abolition.

MODELLING THE LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

While this dissertation advances the literature on British slave trade abolition, there are some data limitations I encountered such as a small sample sizes and low event-per-variable (EPV) ratios that precluded any multivariate analyses from being reliably performed on the data sets I created. For these reasons, I will instead examine bivariate relationships in each of the models presented. Furthermore, while it is true that the economic data used in this study are up to date numbers provided by leading economic historians in the field, some scholars have suggested that the accuracy of historical statistics gathered from primary sources may at times be questioned (e.g., Deane 1965; Mitchell and Deane 1962). Despite these limitations, I am well equipped to employ Firth's penalized logistic regression and Exact Poisson regression models to evaluate each set of social movement hypotheses.

DATA AND MEASUREMENTS

Dependent Variables

I measure each of the dependent variables differently to explain abolition success. In distinguishing between two response variables, my objective is to distinguish between two important forms of political influence: (1) *policy change* (e.g., McCammon et al. 2001; Soule and Zylan 1997) and (2) *agenda setting* (e.g., King, Cornwall and Dahlin 2005; McAdam and Su 2002; Soule and Zylan 1997; Soule and King 2006; Soule et al. 1999). In the first analysis, I examine policy change using a conventional social movement outcome variable that measures whether or not an abolition law was passed. The second analysis takes a different approach to examine abolition using the idea of

agenda setting, where I created a response variable that measures the likelihood that a bill would pass through a total of six roll-call votes (i.e., in the House of Commons and the House of Lords) to become a law. I developed these variables from all House of Commons and House of Lords roll-call votes on a slave trade abolition bill between 1789 and 1807. In the following sections, I explain each of the models in more detail and I highlight the methodological issues that I encountered in each analysis.

Policy Change Model

In the first model, I use Firth's penalized logistic regression to explain abolition success via a policy change lens. To measure this dependent variable, I use a dichotomous measure coded as the risk or the annual probability of slave trade abolition taking place, coded 0 for the years prior to the enactment of an abolition law and 1 for the year that a law was passed in the British legislature. The total number of cases is calculated in terms of the number of years that an abolition law could have passed in parliament (i.e., N=19).

There are four modelling issues that I needed to consider, all of which are common problems related to the use of maximum likelihood (ML) to estimate conventional logistic models and all of which can produce biased coefficients and/or significance tests. First, quasi-separation of data happens when independent variables predict outcomes very well or perfectly (Budros 2011; Heinze 2006; Heinze and Schemper 2002; Hilbe 2009; Maiti and Pradhan 2008). Second, event rarity occurs when the events measured by the dependent variable consist of less than five percent or so of the total number of cases (Budros 2011; King and Zang 2001). Third is the problem of finite or small samples when n < 100–200 (Budros 2011; Heinze 2006; Heinze and Schemper 2002; Hilbe 2009; King

and Zeng 2001; Maiti and Pradhan 2008). Fourth, the ratio of the number of outcome events to the number of independent variables—event-per-variable (EPV)—can also be problematic (Budros 2011; Chen 2007; Vittinghoff and McCulloch 2006).

The following issues are all relevant to this study. First, even though abolition events constitute nearly six percent of the total number of cases and event rarity might not be considered a problem, it should still be addressed. Second, small population size is an issue in this model because N=19. Third, because an EPV ratio of four has been defined as potentially worrisome in conventional logistic models (Vittinghoff and McCulloch 2006), the small EPV ratios in this analysis are problematic. Since penalized logistic regression is well-suited to handles these issues, I use it to model this process. This approach handles conditions where events comprise less than five percent of the number of cases, sample sizes are under 100 and EPV ratios are less than four (Heinze and Schemper 2002; Hilbe 2009; Maiti and Pradhan 2008). The Firth Logit model predicts which explanatory variables influence the rate of adoption and the estimated degree of those effects. However, because the dependent variable is coded as 1 when an abolition law passed and 0 otherwise, I cannot determine if certain variables influenced voting outcomes earlier than the year that an abolition law was actually passed. For that reason, I also model the data using Exact Poisson regression and agenda setting to explore this possibility.

Agenda Setting Model

Following the lead of past scholars, I suggest that legislative changes can be theorized as a set of distinct outcomes. Building on the idea of agenda setting, I

disaggregated the legislative process into six fundamental stages to determine the effects

of resource mobilization, cultural framing, and economic and political opportunities on

the number of roll-call votes that a bill passed through. Agenda setting involves framing

policymaking debates, educating lawmakers and bringing attention and salience to issues

that might otherwise be overlooked (King, Bentele and Soule 2007). While past scholars

have looked at policy adoption as a successive process that determines which stages

social movement organizations are more likely to influence the progress of a legislative

proposal, I use an agenda setting approach to examine how far British abolitionists got in

the legislative process. In other words, I am interested in exploring how many stages a bill

passed through annually. Using this measure of success is different than the

aforementioned policy change model. For example, if a law does not pass in any given

year in the policy change model, those years are coded as zero. But, in the agenda setting

model, those years are not all the same in terms of the number of roll-call votes that a bill

experienced and therefore annual progress could be considered higher in some years when

compared to others. In other words, if a social movement's bill makes it through to a later

stage of the legislative process, this tells us something detailed about the extent of their

success despite their inability to pass a law.

Since I am working with count data (i.e., the number of roll-call votes), I model this

process using Exact Poisson regression in order to look at the relationship between each

of the predictors and annual voting data.[19] Poisson regression can be used when the data

available is expressed as events per person or years of observation and "Exact" Poisson is

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[19]Voting data was gleaned from a content analysis of the parliamentary debates and cross-checked with
several historical sources.

used when the sample size is too small for a regular regression—which uses the standard maximum-likelihood-based estimator—and/or when some of the cells formed by the outcome and categorical predictor variable have no observations. In this case, Exact Poisson is effective when dealing with situations where non-events occur in data sets by providing an unbiased and reliable estimator in small samples. Since I am dealing with a small population size (N=19), the Exact Poisson model is appropriate for studying abolition. One potential methodological issue is that the Poisson model assumes that the dependent variable has equal mean and variance. When this assumption is violated (i.e., when the variance exceeds the mean and the dependent variable is over-dispersed), the model generates spuriously small standard errors for explanatory variables and thus artificially inflates their significance levels (Cameron and Trivedi 1990). Fortunately, over dispersion is not a problem in this model. I evaluate abolition success using a dependent variable that measures the number of roll-call votes that occurred for a bill in both legislative houses of Parliament. I computed this outcome as a count defined by the number of annual roll-call votes of an abolition bill, which ranged from 0 to 6, with 7 indicating a law was passed. This overall approach was chosen to capture the effect of each explanatory variable on the likelihood of a bill passing through more stages in Parliament.

From an agenda setting perspective, the number of readings of an abolition bill—followed by a roll-call vote—addresses the extent of annual success. As the slave trade bill passed through more stages, this demonstrated that more parliamentary MPs supported the measure, thus legitimizing it and signalling acceptance and allegiance to the

abolitionists' cause. This is important because it demonstrates that abolitionist MPs experienced some wins along the way and that they were successful even if they were not able to achieve total slave trade abolition until 1807. Moving forward, I will examine the effects of resource mobilization, cultural framing and opportunities (both political and economic) on both measures of legislative success. In the following section, I briefly address the value of small-*N* studies in sociology and then I define and provide background information on each of the independent variables utilized in the analyses to explain British abolition.

The Value of Small-N Studies

When researchers study historical events, they are often challenged with the task of examining individual cases or events that take place over a span of years. In most cases, there is usually no alternative to using smaller sample sizes in this kind of research (e.g., N < 100-200). For that reason, most small-*N* sociological studies have been qualitative in nature and have employed techniques such as Mill's (1872) Method of Difference and Agreement. For example, researchers have used this method to produce valuable studies on social classes and peasantry (e.g., Moore 1966), social revolutions (e.g., Skocpol 1976; 1979), English and American working class formation (e.g., Katznelson 1985) and welfare developments in the United States (e.g., Orloff and Skocpol 1984). While many scholars agree there is a place for small-*N* research in sociology, there has been much disagreement among sociologists about the importance of this approach (See: Mahoney 2000; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003; Steinmetz 2004). Most debates have centered on techniques of causal inference and also more importantly on what causal inference

means for small-*N* research as compared to large-*N* studies. For example, some researchers maintain there is much worth in small-*N* research (e.g., Mahoney 2000; Mahoney and Rueschemeyer 2003) while others have argued that we must take a "cautious" stance interpreting the results of these studies (Lieberson 1991). However, there is no question that as the literature advances, so do the methods used to study historical phenomena a small numbers of cases.

   While it is true that in the past small-*N* researchers were limited in the methods of analysis they had in their toolkits, this changed when scholars began to explore other methodological possibilities being used in other disciplines. The result is that sociology has experienced much forward momentum with respect to addressing the data limitations encountered in small-*N* studies. More recently, sociologists have borrowed some of the sophisticated statistical approaches being used in fields such as health and psychology, where researchers have developed innovative ways to reliably analyze and find meaning in small numbers of cases (See: Cameron and Trivedi 1998; Coxe, West and Aiken 2008; Corcoran et al. 2001; Maiti and Pradhan 2008; Mehta and Patel 1995). Turning to quantitative research techniques, sociologists now have at their avail statistical procedures such as Poisson and Exact Poisson regression, penalized logistic regression and negative binomial regression, all of which are approaches that can be used in small-*N* research analysis. As a result, studies that demonstrate the value of using more nuanced statistical techniques on smaller sample sizes are starting to appear in sociological journals (See: Budros 2011, 2013; King, Bentele and Soule 2007). Consequently, my dissertation adds

to this emerging body of sociological research by using more refined approaches to studying historical phenomenon where data limitations exist.

Independent Variables

I included nine independent variables that correspond to the hypotheses outlined in chapter 4. Table 5.1 on page 109 provides a summary of each predictor with a brief description of their measure and the corresponding hypotheses that are being tested. The resource mobilization indicators are *Petitions* and *Signatories.* These are measured as the total number of annual petitions and the signatories submitted to the British legislature by anti-slave trade campaigners each year from 1789 until an abolition law was passed in 1807. Petition data are presented in a number of historical sources (e.g., Drescher 1990; Hochschild 2005) and I was able to cross-check these numbers with transcripts of the British slave trade parliamentary debates. Since the debates occurred after the petitions were received, this indicator did not need to be lagged.

Turning to cultural framing, I collected data from the slave trade debates to create three variables—*Moral Frames* and *Economic Frames* and *% Economic Frames*. Through an inductive approach, I developed a content key that included words which represented either ideological arguments (i.e., moral frames) or economic arguments (i.e., economic frames). To create *Moral Frames* and *Economic Frames*, my procedure involved counting each word as one unit to account for either frame. Debates from both Houses of Parliament were included in the count (i.e., the House of Commons and the House of Lords). To measure these variables, I tallied the number of times both types of frames were used annually. I also went a step further and created the *% Economic Frames*

Table 5.1   Summary of Independent Variables

Social Movement Component	Variable	Measure
Resource Mobilization	*Petitions* (**H1a, H1b**)	Annual *number* of slave trade petitions
	Signatories (**H2a, H2b**)	Annual *number* of slave trade petition signatories
Cultural Framing	*Moral Frames* (**H3a, H3b**)	Annual *number* of moral frames utilized in abolitionists' speeches
	Economic Frames (**H4a, H4b**)	Annual *number* of economic frames utilized in abolitionists' speeches
	% Economic Frames (**H5a, H5b**)	Annual *rate (%)* of economic frames utilized in abolitionists' speeches
Political Opportunities	*Prime Minister* (**H6a, H6b**)	Pro-abolition Prime Minister = 1 Anti-abolition Prime Minister = 0
Economic Opportunities	*Business Cycles* (**H7a, H7b**)	Peak year = (0,1) Trough year = (0,1)
	Industrialization (**H8a, H8b**)	Annual *rate* of British world share of Industrialization
	Profits (**H9**)	Annual profits of the British slave trade (£)

variable, where I calculated the annual percentage of economic arguments as a percentage

of all frames (i.e., Moral Frames and Economic Frames) used for each year. Calculating

this percentage allowed me to examine how relative changes in economic and moral

frames affected movement success. Given this, I focus on the idea of how keyword

meanings are spread out over time and across the slave debates and the effect that economic arguments had on legislative outcomes in Parliament.

With respect to economic opportunities, the variable *Business Cycles* measures both prosperous and declining commercial conditions in Great Britain using two dummy variables coded 1 for peak years (0 = otherwise) and 1 in trough years (0 = otherwise). I used Broadberry and Van Leeuwen's (2010) estimates to code each year in the analysis as either a peak or trough before following conventional logic and lagging this measure one year. The variable *Industrialization* was created as an alternative way to capture slave trade profits. To do so, I used a measure of the yearly percentage of Great Britain's share of world industrialization based on the Bairoch's (1982) data series, which are estimates of per capita manufacturing production in a common currency of different nations. Since rising industrialization rates translate into more efficient forms of labour through increased technology and machinery that reduced the need for slave labour, this indicator acts as a reasonable complement for gauging the effect of slave trade profits on British abolition. In addition, this variable was interpolated in order to calculate annual figures and then lagged one year to measure the impact of rising industrialization rates on legislative outcomes of the slave trade debates. Since annual estimates of slave trade profits for Great Britain do not currently exist (But see Anstey 1975a for decennial profit estimates), I created a *Profits* variable where I attempted to measure yearly slave trade profits. To do this, I used data gleaned from the Transatlantic Slave Trade Database to calculate the annual numbers of slaves that disembarked in British colonies and I multiplied this figure by Roger Anstey's (1975b) annual profit per slave estimate. Using

primary sources, Anstey extracted and adjusted data from voyage accounts and linked them to quotations on the prices of slaves sold by British slave traders. In addition, other costs were deducted from net profits such as transport costs (e.g., expenditures on slaving vessels, deployment of crew, and length of trip and port fees), duties and shipping charges, crew wages and payment, and slave losses in transit. The annual profit figures I created were then deflated using McCusker's (2001) commodity price index and using conventional logic were lagged one year to measure the impact of slave trade profits on annual legislative outcomes in Parliament. I must call attention to an important methodological predicament that I encountered. Since the method I used to compute annual slave trade profits relies on fragmented data and statistics calculated by other scholars, it is a weak measure. But then, considering it is the only annual measure that currently exists, it was still worthy of some analysis. At the same time, I must emphasize the variable I created should be cautiously interpreted and that a more precise measure could yield different results.

To look at political opportunities available to the movement, I created the variable *Prime Minister* (0 = anti-abolition; 1 = pro-abolition) using a coding strategy that examined the abolition attitude of each prime minister in office during the slave trade debates. This information was collected from numerous historical sources (e.g., Anstey 1975a; Drescher 1977; Hochschild 2005; Kaufmann and Pape 1999; Thomas 1997; Williams 1944), all of which offer extensive accounts of the political background (e.g., ultra Tory, pragmatic Tories and Whigs) and abolition stance (i.e., pro or anti-abolition) of each of Great Britain's leaders. I used a different method to code Prime Minister

William Pitt because several historical sources suggest that his attitude toward abolition changed from pro-abolition to a non-supportive standpoint. To explain, a number of researchers suggest that Pitt supported abolition until 1792, but changed to an unsupportive political position from 1793 onward (See: Anstey 1975a; Drescher 1977; Hochschild 2005).

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

I attempted to answer five overarching research questions that I proposed in chapter 1 by testing several hypotheses that addressed each of these queries. Table 5.2 on page 113 outlines each social movement hypothesis. In this section, I will evaluate these propositions by examining the bivariate relationships between each of the nine independent variables and voting patterns in the slave trade debates. I will start by evaluating the cultural framing hypotheses, followed by an analysis of the effect of political and economic opportunities on abolition success. Then, I will briefly discuss what the non-significant results tell us about British abolition. Lastly, I will address the differences in the findings between model 1 and model 2. Turning to the results, table 5.3 on page 114 displays the bivariate coefficients for each model included in the analysis.

Cultural Framing

How did cultural framing (i.e. moral and economic frames) affect the abolition vote? To answer this question, I offered six hypotheses to evaluate the effect of framing on an abolition law passing (model 1) and the number of annual roll-call votes a bill incurred (model 2). Hypothesis 3a and 3b predicted there would be a negative relationship between

Table 5.2 Social Movement Hypotheses

	Hypotheses
1a	Increasing numbers of annual petitions should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
1b	Increasing numbers of annual petitions should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
2a	Increasing numbers of annual petition signatories should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
2b	Increasing numbers of annual petition signatories should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
3a	Increasing numbers of moral frames (ideological arguments) should have a negative effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
3b	Increasing numbers of moral frames (ideological arguments) should have a negative effect on number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
4a	Increasing numbers of economic frames (economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
4b	Increasing numbers of economic frames (economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
5a	Increasing *rates* of economic frames (economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
5b	Increasing *rates* of economic frames (economic arguments) should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
6a	The presence of a pro-abolition prime minister should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
6b	The presence of pro-abolition prime minister should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
7a	Economic peaks should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
7b	Economic peaks should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
8a	Increasing industrialization rates should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.
8b	Increasing industrialization rates should have a positive effect on the number of roll-call votes a bill incurred in the House of Commons and House of Lords.
9	Decreasing slave profits should have a positive effect on the likelihood of an abolition law being passed.

Table 5.3   The Impact of Social Movements on British Abolition, 1789–1807

Variable	Hypotheses	Model 1: Policy Change	Model 2: Agenda Setting
Resource Mobilization:			
Petitions	H1a & H1b	.002 (.003)	-.10
Signatories	H2a & H2b	.000 (.003)	-.000
Cultural Framing:			
Moral Frames	H3a & **H3b**[a]	.02 (.014)	.007**.
Economic Frames	**H4a**[a] & **H4b**[a]	.06* (.022)	.02***
% Economic Frames	**H5a**[a] & **H5b**[a]	.15† (.10)	.05***
Political Opportunities:			
Prime Minister	H6a & **H6b**[a]	1.99 (1.70)	.71*
Economic Opportunities:			
Business Cycles	H7a & H7b	-.671 (1.69)	.20
Industrialization	**H8a**[a] & **H8b**[a]	1.60† (1.10)	.62***
Profits	H9	.1.52 (1.69)	

Notes: Superscript [a] indicates significant hypotheses; standard errors in parentheses.
    N = 19 (Model 1), N = 19 (Model 2). † $p<.10$, * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, ***$p<.001$.

the numbers of ideological arguments offered by abolitionist MPs and each outcome variable. So, as Moral Frames increased, the likelihood of abolition success decreased. Conversely, hypotheses 4a, 4b, 5a and 5b predicted there would be a positive relationship between the *number* and *percentage* of economic arguments offered by abolitionists MPs and each of the response variables. That is, when *Economic Frames* and *% Economic Frames* increased, I assumed the likelihood of abolition success also increased. The results fail to provide support for hypotheses 3a and 3b. That is, increasing numbers of ideological arguments did not influence abolition in the way that I expected. In addition to this finding, the results also suggest that economic arguments played an important role in British abolition as all of the cultural framing hypotheses regarding economics were confirmed. Below, I elaborate on these framing results in more detail.

First, I will explain the effects of *Moral Frames* on British abolition. If you recall, I previously explained how early twentieth-century historians labelled the British abolition campaign exclusively as a moral crusade, arguing that the slave trade ended because abolitionist MPs exposed its brutalities throughout the content of their legislative speeches (e.g., Coupland 1923; 1933; Jorns 1931; Klingberg 1926). In contrast, I theorized that the use of ideological arguments hindered abolitionists' chances of winning a majority of votes. The results in model 2 (agenda setting) demonstrate that ideological arguments actually did make a difference as *Moral Frames* were significant and not in the direction that I predicted. Instead, the relationship is positive, meaning that increasing numbers of ideological arguments actually increased the likelihood of an abolition bill making it through more roll-call votes. What this finding suggests is that humanitarian

concerns piqued the interest of ordinary people to join the abolition crusade thereby

strengthening the cause in parliament. However, I also argue this was not enough to

totally end the slave trade. Instead, the results show that moral arguments only really

influenced agenda setting rather than policy change. This is an important finding because

it establishes that the influence of moral framing was limited. As the analyses will go on

to demonstrate, economic framing seemed to matter the most with respect to British

abolition.

I now address the economic framing results in each of the models. Turning to the

results in model 1 (policy change), both *Economic Frames* and *% Economic Frames* had

significant positive effects on an abolition law passing. That is, increasing *numbers* and

percentages of economic arguments increased the likelihood of abolition success. As

shown in the first column, the cultural framing variable that has the strongest impact on

policy change is *Economic Frames*. This suggests the chances of passing an abolition law

increased when abolitionist MPs increased the number of economic arguments they

employed in their speeches. Turning to *% Economic Frames*—another way to capture the

effect of economic and moral arguments—it also predicts in model 1. So, as the

percentage of economic arguments in abolitionists' speeches increased (i.e., the decreased

percentage of ideological arguments), the chances of passing an abolition law increased.

To supplement these results, I also plotted the relationship between *% Economic Frames*

and the rate of yearly votes for abolition, which offers a different way to look at policy

change. Figure 5.1 on page 117 displays a moderate positive association between the

percentage of economic arguments and the annual percentage of votes for British

abolition. Overall, these framing results provide further support for my argument that when abolitionists intentionally included more economic arguments in their speeches, the British Parliament responded in a favourable way.

Figure 5.1   % Economic Frames vs. Annual Voting Rates 'for' Abolition

Economic Frame (%)
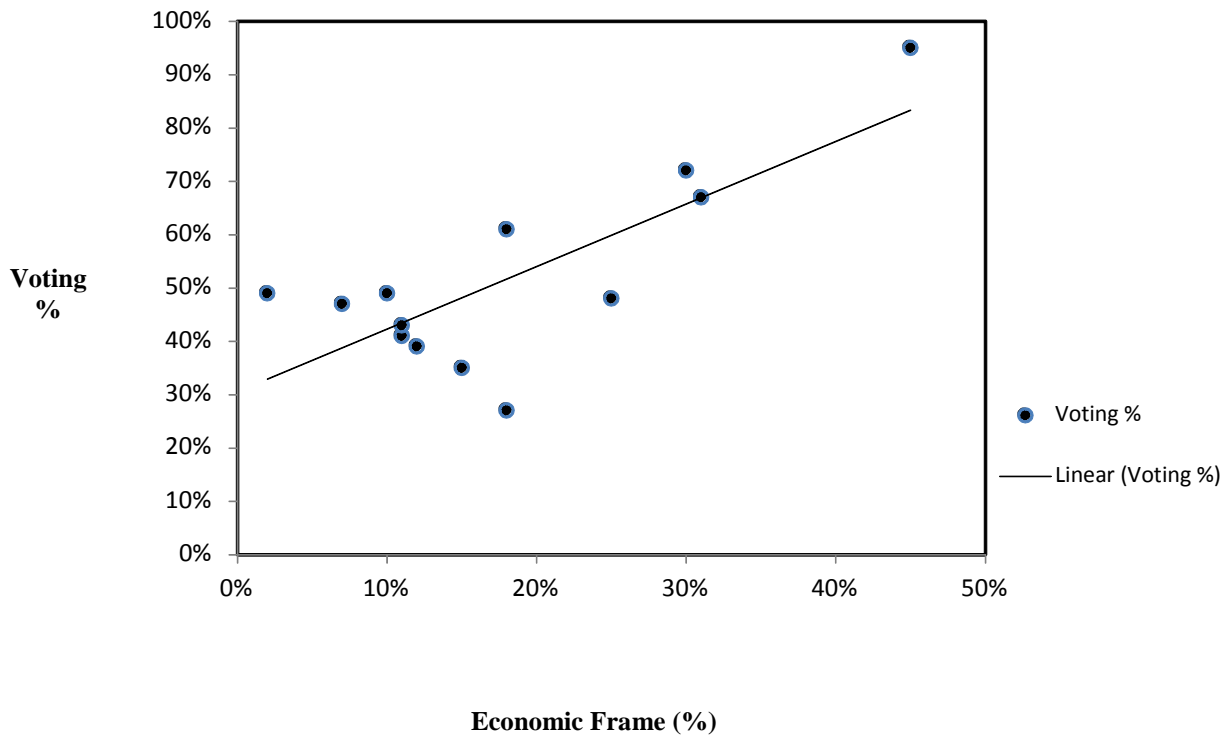
Since the conventional dependent variable used in the policy change model examines the final stage of movement success—rather than looking at successes that can occur along the way—I now turn to the notion of agenda setting (model 2) to explore 'if' and 'how' the cultural framing results differ. According to the results, both *Economic Frames* and *% Economic Frames* were highly significant. Clearly, these findings support the idea that increasing numbers and percentages of economic arguments used in abolitionists' speeches positively influenced the number of roll-call votes a bill experienced and

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therefore how far it passed in both houses of Parliament. Consequently, these results establish that British abolitionists did experience some achievements prior to the passing of an abolition law in 1807. In fact, the idea of agenda setting tells us something different than the policy change model. That is, social movements can and often do experience small victories on the path to success. In the end, the cultural framing results provide empirical support for the idea that when abolitionists turned to economic reasoning to align their arguments with the belief systems of the wider political environment, they succeeded in influencing the vote.

Considering these findings, I will now address how this analysis of cultural framing moves scholarship forward in three distinctive ways. First, my approach improves on past studies that only analyzed a small sample of the slave trade legislative debates. Instead, my study examines all of the abolition speeches delivered in Parliament. The implication of only studying a few years of the debates is that we miss out on important information that promotes a greater understanding of slave trade abolition. Second, this study is the first of its kind to empirically demonstrate that moral considerations actually did matter. This is important because my findings support the abolition arguments of early twentieth-century scholars who claimed that the slave trade ended because of humanitarian concerns. Bearing this in mind, there is still a need to reconsider early morality-based abolition theories more carefully. Third, I also provide empirical evidence to suggest that economic considerations factored into Britain's decision to end the slave trade—a first in sociology. In fact, the overall results in both models suggest that economic arguments mattered most with respect to passing a law to end the slave trade. The findings in this

context point to economic considerations warranting greater attention in the history of British slave trade abolition. For example, when abolitionist MPs intentionally attacked the slave trade on an economic level by arguing that it was a risky and unprofitable business, the cultural framing results strongly suggest that this strategy played a role in their success. Below, I move on to explore the effect of political and economic opportunity structures on British abolition.

Political Opportunities

Question 3 examined how key political allies available to the movement effected abolition success by asking: what role—if any—did political opportunities play in British abolition? To address this question, I offered two hypotheses to test the effect of having a pro-abolition prime minister in office versus a non-supportive political leader. Hypotheses 6a and 6b predicted that the presence of a pro-abolition prime minister would increase the likelihood of an abolition law passing and also the number of roll-call votes a bill passed through. If you recall, the foundation for these hypotheses is that British prime ministers formed distinct opinions on slave trade abolition according to their political affiliation. For example, Ultra Tories did not support abolition, Pragmatic Tory leaders could go either way on the issue and Whig prime ministers were considered allies of parliamentary abolitionists. With respect to slave trade abolition, I make the case that a strong political alliance with a pro-abolition prime minister near the end of the movement helped abolitionist MPs to succeed in ending the slave trade. Turning to the evidence on political opportunities, the variable *Prime Minister* had non-significant effects in model 1, meaning that political alliances did not increase the likelihood of getting an abolition law

passed. Conversely, *Prime Minister* appears significant in model 2, thereby confirming hypothesis 6b and establishing that having a strong political ally played a meaningful role in abolition success by increasing the number of roll-call votes a bill experienced. This finding is important because it helps to shed some light on the consistent failure on the part of abolitionist MPs in getting a total abolition law passed, where I empirically demonstrate for the first time that the absence of pro-abolition leaders from 1792 to 1806 may have weakened their cause. According to this result, the presence of political allies warrants greater attention in the work on social movement outcomes. For example, this finding establishes the possibility that having pro-abolition Prime Minister William Grenville in office may have facilitated abolition success in several ways. As the leader of the party, he could influence other members and he had the ability to grant favours such as awarding sought-after cabinet positions and other posts. Most importantly, he controlled agenda setting given that he had the authority to decide 'when' and 'how' a bill was introduced. For these reasons, the results in model 2 also provide empirical support for the role that leadership and decision making (i.e., agency) play social movement success. To enhance these findings, I will also provide supplementary qualitative evidence in the next chapter that further establishes the importance of having political alliances for social movement organizations.

Economic Opportunities

Question 4 examined the effect of economic opportunities on slave trade abolition by asking this: did macroeconomic considerations factor into an abolition bill being passed by the British Parliament? To answer this question, I offered five general hypotheses to

evaluate three different kinds of economic opportunities. These are the effect of business cycles, industrialization rates and slave trade profits on votes for abolition. Of these three economic opportunities only *Industrialization* predicted in both models. I will discuss this finding in more detail below.

The idea that industrialism generated British slave abolition has been an important reoccurring theme in historical literatures. From a sociological standpoint, I hypothesized that increasing industrialization rates—as an alternative way to examine slave trade profits—had a positive effect on an abolition law being passed (model 1) and also on the number of roll-call votes a bill went through (model 2). In doing so, I attempted to evaluate Eric Williams's theory that rising industrialization caused slave trade profits to fall, which he claimed made British abolition possible. While *Industrialization* was only marginally significant at the $p < .10$ level in model 1, in model 2 it was highly significant at $p < .001$. To supplement these results, I also plotted the relationship between rising industrialization rates and voting percentages in Parliament. Figure 5.2 on page 122 illustrates a moderate to strong positive association between this variable and the percentage of annual votes 'for' British abolition.

Considering these findings along with the positive relationship demonstrated in figure 5.2 helps to clarify how rising industrialization factored into British slave trade abolition in a significant way. To explain, I suggest that growing rates signalled commercial development closely related to technological innovation and this created a favourable political environment more receptive to abolition. The onset of industrialization involved the use of new forms of energy whereas in the pre-industrial economy machinery was

Figure 5.2   Industrialization vs. Annual Voting Rates 'for' Abolition
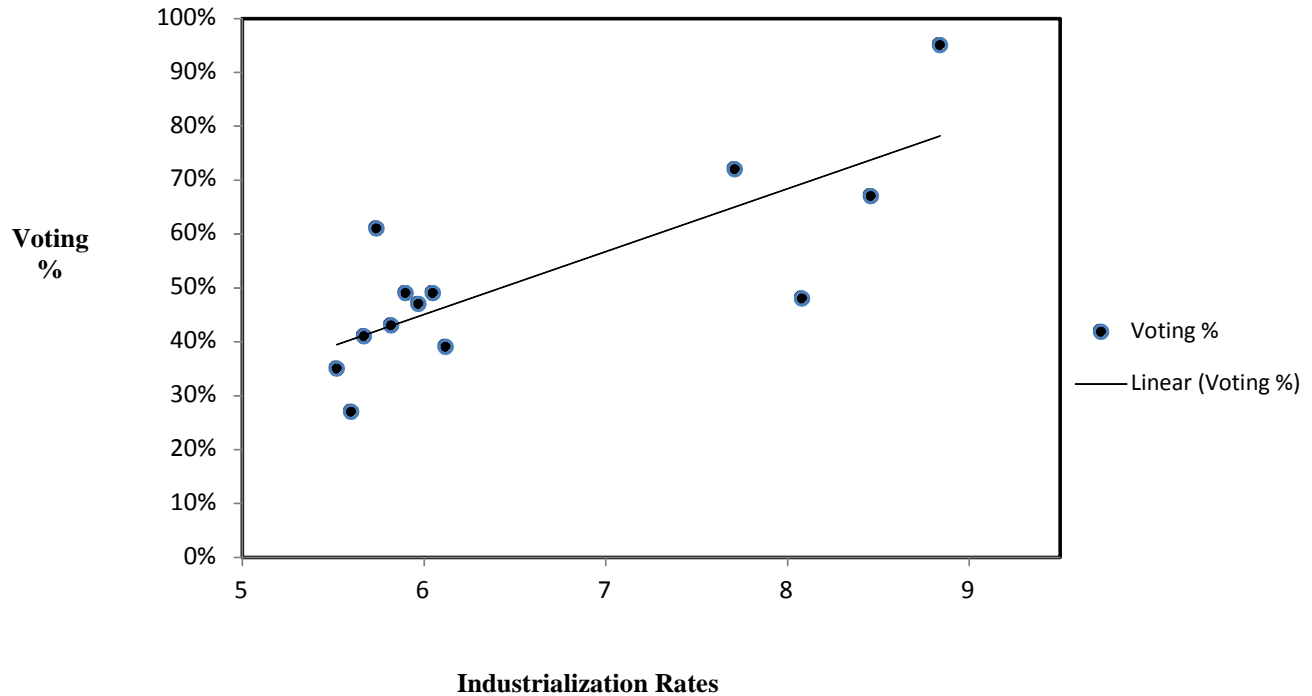
powered by human muscle (e.g., slaves), by animals, by wood burning or by waterpower.

With increased industrialization, much of the new technologies developed were machines

that could be powered by coal, which in turn made more efficient forms of labour

possible. Parliamentary abolitionists also used this idea to their advantage by suggesting

that new agricultural machinery could be used as a substitute for slave labour (see chapter

6, pp. 159–160). If the demand for slaves was reduced, then it makes sense that slave

trade profits would decline if fewer slaves were procured. While this opens up the

possibility that Williams was correct when he suggested that industrialization played a

role in British abolition, the overall results of this dissertation also suggest he might have

missed out on other important factors such as the effects of other types of opportunities

and also how abolitionists' leadership influenced the vote. I will now move on to briefly

discuss the non-significant resource mobilization and economic opportunity results.

Petitioning, Business Cycles and Slave Trade Profits

Question 1 asked: what role—if any—did resource mobilization play in British slave

trade abolition? Mainly, I was interested in examining the effect of conventional

protest/mobilization activities like petitioning on voting members of Parliament.

Movement scholars use petitioning to measure the influence of a social movement's

protest methods and the number of signatories to measure its mobilizing strength. The

idea is that petitioning is considered and effective strategy because it is a relatively easy

and non-threatening way to persuade people to support a cause (Tarrow 1998). Following

this conventional logic, I offered four hypotheses to test the possibility that when petitions

were used, this strategy would help abolitionists to succeed. That is, I expected that

increasing numbers of annual petitions and signatories would increase the probability of

an abolition law being passed (model 1) and also the number roll-call votes a bill passed

through (model 2). Turning to the results, none of the resource mobilization hypotheses

were confirmed as *Petitions* and *Signatories* did not predict in either model.

I offer one possible explanation why petitioning had no meaningful effect on

abolition success. Considering that abolitionists only really petitioned heavily at the very

beginning of the movement and much later in response to pro-slave trade petitions

submitted to parliament in 1806 is intriguing. The absence of annual petitioning activity

suggests the possibility that British abolitionists may not have been as highly organized

outside of Parliament after they managed to get a slave trade bill on the legislative

agenda. In fact, a number of historical sources claim they did not formally meet to arrange any petitioning activities between 1793 and 1805 (e.g., Anstey 1975a; Drescher 1977; Drescher 1994; Hochschild 2005). So, what began as a highly organized and successful petitioning campaign likely diminished after this early win. While it might seem reasonable to assume that the lack of consistent petitioning activity throughout the campaign is not important information in this analysis, I suggest these non-significant results are thought-provoking and reveal something interesting about British abolition. Indeed, the absence of annual petitioning tells an important part of the abolition story because it supports the idea that the most meaningful abolition activities occurred in Parliament during the legislative slave trade debates and the results are indicative of the crucial role that political insiders (i.e., abolitionist MPs) and cultural framing played in British abolition. In the end, it appears that conventional activism was irrelevant to abolition success.

There are also two non-significant economic opportunity results that I will now address. First, I looked at the effect of *Business Cycles* (i.e., peaks and troughs) on British slave trade abolition. The implication of looking business cycles is that prior studies have demonstrated a theoretical relationship between improving macro-economic conditions and opportunities for movement success in that governments tend to be more generous during economic upswings (e.g. Aho 2003; Budros 2004; 2005). However, there appears to be no significant association between economic peaks and abolition success in either model suggesting that business cycles did not factor into the abolition vote in any meaningful way. With this in mind, it could be the case that economic upswings did not

resonate with voting MPs, instead being viewed as non-tangible fiscal representations of general macro-economic conditions. Or the opposite may be true in that they resonated too much in Parliament. In fact, it could be that prosperous economic conditions were inextricably linked to the slave trade and as a result pro-slave trade MPs were not willing to banish a trade they thought supported Great Britain's economy.

There has been a longstanding debate about how slave trade profits factored into British slave trade abolition. Some past scholars have argued that profits decreased to a point where Great Britain could afford to abolish the slave trade (e.g., Williams 1944) and others have claimed that profits were actually still quite high when the trade was abolished (e.g., Drescher 1977). The results suggest that slave trade returns played no significant role in British abolition as *Profits* did not predict in either model. However, given the methodological obstacles of developing a sound profits measure, I was confronted with a formidable challenge in evaluating this economic opportunity adequately. So, in the end it remains unclear whether profits—as I measured them—were consequential to the movement to end the trade. In response to this uncertainty, I used rising industrialization rates to address this weak profits measure.

Policy Change versus Agenda Setting

To complete the discussion, I will now address Question 5, which asked if resource mobilization, cultural framing, political opportunities and economic opportunities affected each of the models—policy change and agenda setting—in the analyses differently. Overall, the results in table 5.3 appear relatively similar as *Economic Frames*, *% Economic Frames* and *Industrialization* are significant in each of the models. However,

there are two important differences between the models that I will discuss in more detail below.

First, *Moral Frames* is only significant in model 2, and in a way that is different from my original hypothesis that the increasing moral frames would decrease the likelihood of the abolition bill passing through more roll-call votes. Instead, the findings demonstrate that the increased usage of ideological arguments actually increased the probability of a bill passing through to another reading. This is a curious, yet straightforward finding when you consider the fine details—that abolitionists used the highest numbers of ideological arguments until 1804, when they deliberately altered their speeches to include a much higher proportion of economic rationales. So, this difference in the results between the two models makes sense when you consider the possibility that moral considerations likely helped to get an abolition bill on the parliamentary agenda from 1789 all the way through to 1804, but these kinds of rationales were also rather limited in scope with respect to getting a bill past stage two to a law being passed. Ultimately, what this tells us is that while a humanitarian agenda certainly helped the abolitionists cause by raising awareness, the economic themes within cultural framing and opportunity structures played more meaningful roles in the abolition story.

The second difference is that the political opportunity variable *Prime Minister* is only significant in the agenda setting model 2. This finding has two very important implications in social movement scholarship and in particular the research I have conducted on the success of the abolition movement. First of all, considering that *Prime Minister* was non-significant in the policy change model 1, if I had ended my analysis

there I would have overlooked the important role that political alliances play in helping

social movements to achieve success. Using two different measures of movement success

allowed me to demonstrate that political alliances actually do matter. As past scholars

have suggested, if an important policymaking function of movements is that of agenda

setting, then perhaps the lack of evidence linking social movement success to policy

outcomes is due to the tendency of researchers to concentrate on the final stage of

policymaking rather than on pre-policy or agenda setting stages (Burstein, Bauldry and

Froese 2005; Burstein and Linton 2002; Burstein 1999). Had my research focused solely

on policy outcomes, I would have missed the chance to demonstrate that having Prime

Minister William Grenville as an ally in the abolition crusade made a positive difference

to the movement. The second and perhaps most important implication that the different

results between the two models shows is that while political opportunities are important,

the non-significant results in model 1 tell us that political alliances do not always facilitate

movement success. The fact that an alliance between abolitionist MPs and Prime Minister

Grenville increased the chances of a bill passing through advanced stages of the

parliamentary proceedings (model 2), but failed to increase the likelihood of a law passing

(model 1) establishes that although political alliances are indeed useful, there are also

limits to some forms of leadership. In the end, the value of using an agenda setting

approach is that it allowed me to empirically demonstrate that in addition to cultural

framing and economic opportunities, political opportunities also factored into Great

Britain's decision to end the slave trade.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The findings in this chapter help to settle the longstanding debate over why the British slave trade ended. More specifically, they show that abolition was influenced by two different economic processes: (1) cultural framing (i.e., economic arguments) and (2) rising industrialization (i.e., economic development). The results also suggest that Williams (1944) was on the right path when he argued that "parliament was converted not by the principles of humanity but by economics" (p. 180). But, my findings also suggest that this is not the entire story. The results demonstrate that ideological arguments actually did matter. While it is true that past researchers have championed the role that humanitarianism played in slave trade abolition, they also overlooked how different opportunity structures contributed to end of the slave trade. Moreover, prior scholars have also disregarded the contribution of parliamentary abolitionists to slave trade abolition. For example, some researchers have attempted to discredit William Wilberforce, the leader of the abolition movement (e.g., Williams 1944). On the contrary, I provide support for the importance of cultural language processes in abolitionists' speeches for ending the trade. My findings establish that parliamentary abolitionists recognized that economics mattered and modified their tactics to succeed. In the end, I suggest that abolitionist MPs did make a difference for the movement. Without their economic framing strategies, the British slave trade might have been prolonged, as was the case with Portuguese-Brazil and Spanish-Cuba.

Banning the slave trade was the first step on the path to African freedom. An antecedent to the elimination of slavery, British slave trade abolition is a crucial part of

the history of slavery—one that until this dissertation, sociologists have for the most part disregarded in their studies. This chapter provides empirical evidence to suggest that abolitionists took advantage of the opportunity structures available to them and strategically reframed the core arguments in their speeches to include more economic reasoning. Moreover, the findings reveal that British abolition is a complex historical case and that there was more to ending the trade than simple moral imperatives.

This chapter advances social movement scholarship in several ways. I make a key contribution to sociology by explaining two different types of movement success that are seldom ever studied together. Looking at both analyses provides some important insights that help to unravel some of the complexities of explaining the end of the slave trade. According to the results, British abolition was effected by four general movement forces. First, while abolitionists' organization was successful in getting the issue of slave trade abolition on the parliamentary agenda, their actions outside of Parliament did not seem to matter as much as how they strategically framed their speeches during the slave trade debates in an attempt to influence legislative outcomes. In fact, the movement was, for the most part, ineffectual outside of Parliament from 1792 onward. Second, I reveal that having a pro-abolition prime minister as an ally created a unique political opportunity for parliamentary abolitionists. The results support the idea that political alliances can and do matter, but also that there are limits to some forms of leadership and decision making. Third, I show that macro-economic conditions closely related to the slave trade such as rising British industrialization was an important factor in ending the slave trade. When more efficient forms of labour started to emerge due to industrial advances, the need for

slaves lessoned and as a result industry profits declined. And more importantly, the fact

that parliamentary abolitionists strategically emphasized this idea in their speeches also

demonstrates the interplay between agency and structure. Finally, I reveal how

abolitionists purposely changed their rhetorical strategies from including a high

proportion of ideological arguments—which failed to resonate with voting

parliamentarians—to a deliberate strategy of including more economic reasoning in their

speeches. Most importantly, the results suggest that without abolitionist leadership in

Parliament, it is questionable whether British abolition would have occurred the year that

it did. According to the historian Roger Anstey (1972), the end justified the means in that

abolitionists found a way to follow their Christian values by cleverly masking their

humanitarian zeal and arguing for abolition in the interest of Great Britain:

> For in the situation which Grenville and the abolitionists had so ingeniously
> contrived—and which is perhaps the harder to discern because we are so
> conditioned to expecting interest to masquerade as altruism that we may miss
> altruism when concealed beneath the cloak of interest (p.331).

In order to structure the cultural components of this dissertation, in the next chapter I offer

a supplementary qualitative analysis of the framing strategies used by abolitionists within

the parliamentary debates. In addition, I provide a qualitative analysis of strategic

adaptation and political alliances in the abolition movement, which offers a more in-depth

look at the causes of slave trade abolition.

CHAPTER 6: QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

To provide context and a deeper exploration of the slave trade debates, I conducted a qualitative analysis of the arguments offered in the speeches of both pro and anti-abolition parliamentary MPs. The main objective of this chapter is to explore in more rich detail all of abolition themes that emerged throughout the debates. In doing so, there are five things that I will accomplish. First, I provide a dynamic portrayal of moral and economic framing in the slave trade debates. Second, I demonstrate how I created the cultural framing variables that I used in the quantitative analyses, thus offering a more detailed interpretation of the abolition themes that emerged. Third, I offer some analysis of the pro-slave trade counter-framing arguments presented by anti-abolitionist MPs throughout the debates. Fourth, I provide qualitative examples to demonstrate how strategic adaptation (McCammon et al. 2007; 2008) was an approach used by abolitionists to influence the vote. Finally, I provide qualitative support for the idea that a political alliance with Prime Minister William Grenville helped abolitionists to win the vote. In the previous chapter, I provided a statistical analysis of the cultural framing variables and I demonstrated the effects that moral and economic frames had on voting patterns. In this chapter, I offer an important complement to these quantitative results by bringing to life the ideological and economic arguments that abolitionist MPs used in their speeches.

A CULTURAL FRAME ANALYSIS OF THE SLAVE TRADE DEBATES

Frames are the vehicle by which activists and reformers shape meanings and convey their claims, grievances, and proposals. Often, they use cultural resources (i.e., beliefs, ideologies, values and myths) to make their goals persuasive, appealing and legitimate. In

doing so, they attempt to make their proposals resonate among a certain audience by connecting them to popular beliefs, whether by amplifying previously muted themes or re-expressing old ideas in new idioms (Schudson 1989). Using a cultural frame analysis of the slave trade debates, I examined how the ideological arguments (i.e., moral frames) offered by British abolitionists endured until around the year 1804, when they deliberately shifted their agenda to include more economic rationales (i.e., economic frames) in response to the realization that moral considerations did not seem to have any real influence on voting parliamentarians. Examining the same types of debates held within the same venue (i.e., the British legislature) allowed for a consistent measure of abolitionists' arguments. The generous fifteen-year time span allowed me to evaluate the durability and/or changing nature of moral and economic frames. Through this approach, I investigated how slave trade abolition arguments were legitimated over the course of the entire movement.

In chapter 4, I established that abolitionists used collective action frames to characterize the slave trade and I suggested that the use of these frames varied over time. To understand just how frames can change in response to the immediate context, I analyzed the presence of moral and economic arguments in abolitionists' speeches. Framing, in my usage, is about how abolitionists intentionally changed their core arguments from a moral-based agenda to include more economic rationales in response to the consistent failures they experienced during the debates. Through an examination of abolitionists' rhetorical patterns, this dissertation is part of an emerging body of research on cultural framing in formal protest. To illustrate framing patterns, in the following

section I provide the frequencies of the moral and economic frames used over the course

of the movement, followed by a qualitative analysis of selected excerpts from the debates

in order to demonstrate the abolitionists' strategies.

Moral versus Economic Frames

To provide an overview of cultural framing in the slave trade debates, I calculated the

frequencies that both types of frames were used each year. The results are presented in

figure 6.1 on page 134. Turning to this data, I explore how keyword meanings are spread

out over the course of the debates. Through this approach, along with the content analysis

that follows, I provide empirical support for the idea that commercial imperatives took

precedence over humanitarian concerns with respect to passing a bill for British abolition.

Moreover, the qualitative results suggest that abolitionist leadership and their strategic

decision-making also factored into a law being passed.

Throughout the first decade of the slave trade debates, moral frames (i.e., ideological

arguments) accounted for between 82 and 98 percent of the all of the rhetoric coded.

Conversely, economic frames (i.e., economic arguments) remained consistently low at

between just 2 and 18 percent. In 1804, economic frames swiftly rose to 30 percent and

then to 46 percent in the final year when the slave trade was legally abolished. So, the

important question to ask is how these framing rates can help to explain British abolition?

While figure 6.1 demonstrates that abolitionists consistently argued ideologically

throughout the slave trade debates, it would be naive to interpret this finding to mean that

British abolition was exclusively a humanitarian decision.

Looking at the 1806–07 data more closely reveals that abolitionists suddenly changed

Figure 6.1   **Frequencies of Moral and Economic Frames, 1789–1807**
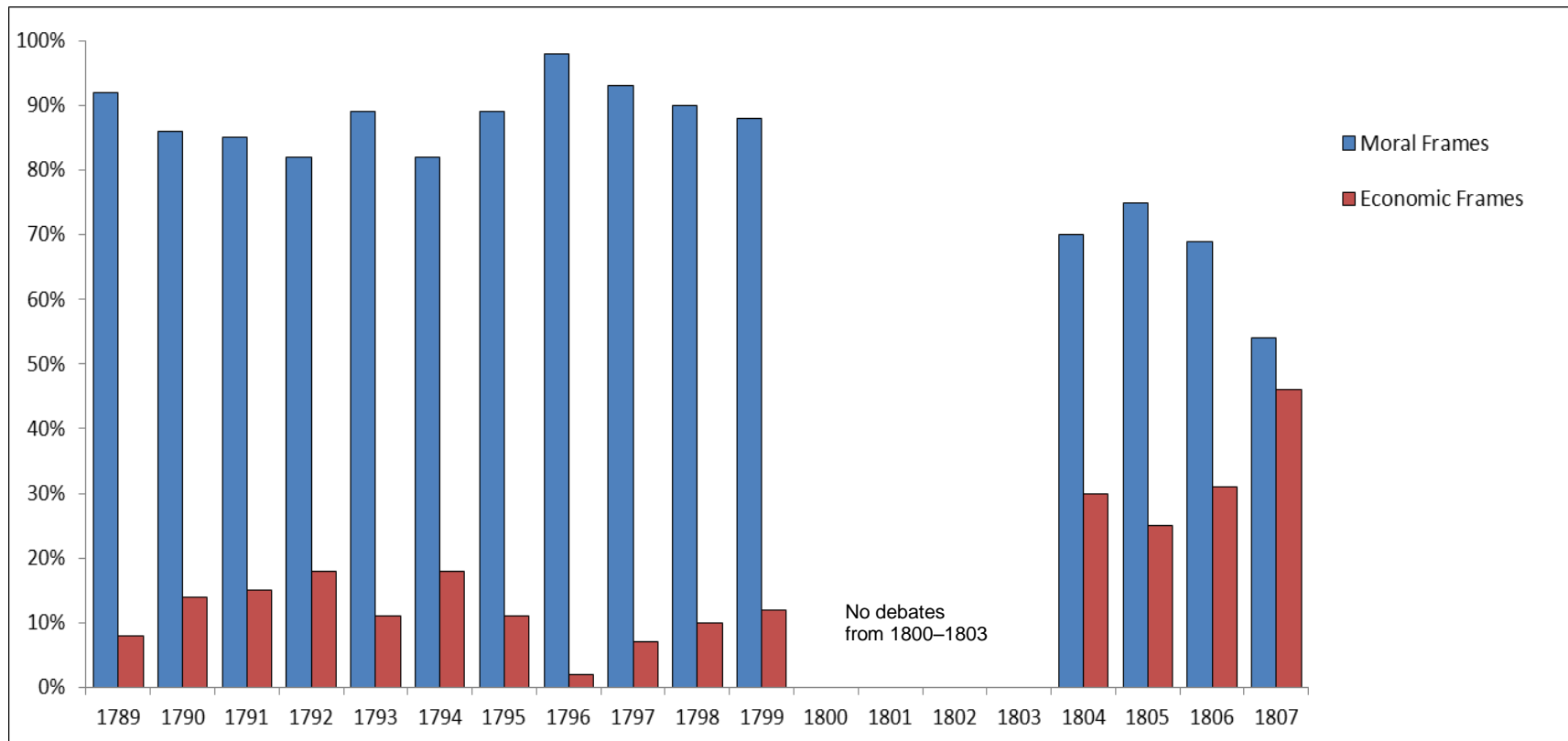
Data source: content analysis of slave trade debates 1789–1807

their rationale for ending the trade, when the rate of moral frames declined while at the same time economic frames increased. Consequently, these framing rates provide some empirical support for my prior assertion that abolitionist MPs made the strategic decision to use more economic rationales near the end of the debates. The key finding to take away from this analysis is that moral frames actually decreased by 18 percent from 1806 to 1807 while economic frames increased by 15 percent in the final year. This suggests the possibility that when abolitionists changed their strategy to include more economic arguments, more MPs were persuaded to vote for abolition. The following sections outline how I created both the moral and economic frames to examine British abolition. The qualitative evidence I will present further supports the idea that abolitionists made deliberate choices when they framed their arguments before Parliament towards the end of the slave debates.

MORAL FRAMES: IDEOLOGICAL ARGUMENTS OFFERED BY PARLIAMENTARY ABOLITIONISTS

At the start of the debates, William Wilberforce delivered a speech to introduce a slave trade abolition bill in the House of Commons. Despite the eloquence of his performance and the condemning facts he provided about the business of the trade, the bill was eventually defeated. To explore the reasons why his effort to pass an abolition law failed over a period of fifteen years of parliamentary debates, this section qualitatively examines how the messages offered by British abolitionists were dominated by three distinct moral themes. It is divided into three parts with table 6.1 on page 136 providing an overview of the key moral themes that I used to guide this part of the

Table 6.1   Key Features of Moral Frames Offered by Parliamentary Abolitionists

Frame	Definition of Frame	Moral Themes	Rationale for Argument	Moral Frame Examples
Moral frames	Represents the arguments offered by abolitionists that characterized the slave trade as oppressive, inhumane and criminal.	*(i) The victimization of slaves*	Abolitionists detailed how slaves were subjected to cruel treatment by their captors (e.g., treated like animals)	∗ Animals (e.g., horses, cattle, apes) ∗ Beat/Beaten/Beating ∗ Brutal/Brutality/Barbarous ∗ Criminal/Criminals/Criminality ∗ Cruel/Cruelty ∗ Depress/Depressed ∗ Disgrace/Disgraceful ∗ Degrade/Degrading ∗ Evil
		(ii) The slave trade characterized as an oppressive industry	Abolitionists branded the slave trade as an inhumane business.	∗ Guilt ∗ Harsh ∗ Humiliate/Humiliation ∗ Illegal
		(iii) Criminal aspects of the slave trade (e.g., The kidnapping of African slaves)	Abolitionists claimed the African slaves were unlawfully captured against their will and placed into forced bondage.	∗ Immoral/Immorality ∗ Impolicy ∗ Inferior ∗ Inhumane/Inhumanely ∗ Injustice/Unjust/Just/Justice ∗ Kidnapping ∗ Lash/Lashed ∗ Misery/Miserable ∗ Murder/Murdered/ Murderous ∗ Oppress/Oppressed/ Oppression ∗ Punish/Punished/Punishing ∗ Rape/Raped/Rapine ∗ Robbery ∗ Starve/Starved/Starvation ∗ Suffer/Suffered/Suffering ∗ Terror/Tyranny/Treachery ∗ Unethical ∗ Virtue/Virtuous ∗ Whip/Whipped/Whipping ∗ Wretch/Wretched/Wretchedness

analysis. The first part elaborates on the *victimization of slaves* theme that endured over the entire course of the slave trade debates. The second part details how abolitionists characterized the slave trade as an *oppressive industry* in their speeches. The final section focuses on how abolitionists often presented arguments that centred on the *criminal aspects* of the slave trade. As outlined in chapter 4, moral frames define a problematic condition or situation as both intrinsically wrong and caused by an identifiable actor or antagonist to a cause. In the case of the slave trade, I used moral frames to identify the ideological arguments offered by British abolitionists to condemn the slave trade. Therefore, the core task of this frame was to promote an awareness of the inhumane aspects the slave trade in order to convince voting politicians to end it. This pattern of using moral justifications to frame their arguments continued over the next fourteen abolition debates. Through a qualitative examination of each of these themes, the results establish that abolitionist MPs offered three separate ideological rationales for ending the slave trade. First, they argued that African slaves were physically and psychologically abused by their captors. Second, they framed the slave trade as an inhumane industry. Finally, they claimed that slaves were illegally captured against their will and placed into forced bondage, thus labelling the slave trade criminal. In the following sections, I demonstrate how each of these moral themes emerges from the qualitative data.

(i) The Victimization of Slaves

> …if a trade in men is established, if her men are all converted into goods, and become commodities that can be bartered, it follows they must be subject to ravage just as goods are….
>
> <div align="right">Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 101.1789</div>

The ideological arguments offered by abolitionists primarily involved them depicting the victimization of slaves in their descriptions of the terrible conditions and abuse that Africans experienced while on board the slave ships during their journey to the new world. Through narrative descriptions in their speeches, they provided stories of how ship captains treated their captives like animals, often comparing their condition to being no better than that of common livestock. During the early years of the debates, the abolitionist Thomas Clarkson became the main agent of popular mobilization by providing evidence of the deplorable conditions that slaves experienced while on board the slave ships (Drescher 1990). Through Clarkson's meticulous investigations, British abolitionists were shocked at the facts they learned about the trade. His painstaking inquiries on the ports of Great Britain proved extremely vital and incriminating against the slave traders. Not only did Clarkson organize the entire inquiry of the slave trade, he actually took on most of the investigative work himself. He devoured every book that he could find on Africa and questioned everyone he knew who had been there, including the slave traders. Clarkson's examination first began in the slaving port of Bristol, where he interviewed thousands of sailors involved in the trade. Through his work exposing the injustices of the industry, he often framed the slave trade as a problem of morality and he provided strong evidence of how routinely slaves were victimized.

The victimization theme is very clearly demonstrated in the central document of British mass mobilization, the *Abstract of the Evidence before the House of Commons* (1791), which was based on two humanitarian essays written by Clarkson. The first part of the document outlined the inhumane treatment of the slaves by their captors. During

the early years of the debates, abolitionists' arguments primarily focused on the

immorality of the trade. In fact, when they compiled their *Abstract* to present before

Parliament, eighty percent of the document was dedicated to the inhumane treatment of

the slaves and only three percent devoted to economic arguments (Drescher 1990). One

approach commonly used by abolitionist MPs was to describe the deplorable conditions

on the slave ships. For example, they testified in Parliament that slaving vessels could be

smelled a mile away and nearly all historical accounts stressed the horrible stench that

came out of the slave holds where quite often diseased slaves lay dying (Ransford 1971).

Furthermore, they revealed that slaves were routinely detained in a tortuous manner,

chained two by two, right leg and left leg, right hand and left hand and crammed into

inadequate ship holds:

> On the arrival of the slave ships, armed parties were regularly sent out in the evenings, who scoured the neighbouring country, and brought in their prey in the night; these wretched victims were to be seen in the morning bound back to back in the huts on the shore, whence they were conveyed, tied hand and foot, on board the slave ships.
>
> Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 252.1789

What remains clear is that early on in the campaign abolitionist MPs emphasized the

humanitarian aspect of their plea in their effort to portray slaves as victims subjected to

cruel treatment. For example, Wilberforce often described how slaves died during the

voyage due to *disease* and ill treatment:

> The diseases, however, which they contract on shipboard, the astringent washes which are to hide their wounds, and the mischievous tricks used to make them up for sale, are…one principal cause of this mortality. Upon the whole, however, here is a mortality of about fifty per cent., and this among negroes who are not bought unless quite healthy at first, and unless (as the phrase is with cattle) they are sound in wind and limb.
>
> Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 101.1789

Moreover, one of the most widely cited statements made by Wilberforce originates from the following excerpt of a speech he made during an introductory bill to end the slave trade:

> The slaves who are sometimes described as rejoicing at their captivity, are so wrung with misery at leaving their country, that it is the constant practice to set sail at night, lest they should be sensible of their departure...The truth is, that for the sake of exercise, these miserable wretches, loaded with chains, oppressed with disease and wretchedness, are forced to dance by the terror of the lash, and sometimes by the actual use of it...
>
> Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 101.1789

Part of the abolitionists' early strategy in Parliament was to argue that slaves were treated like animals, abused at their master's hands at every opportunity and also that they were often treated no better than livestock. For example, Wilberforce often constructed his arguments in the following way: "Slaves are considered as cattle, left without instruction…. so depressed as to have no means of civilization" (Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 51.1789). Furthermore, one common abolition argument that appears frequently throughout the debates was the condition of slaves and their treatment being compared to that of *cattle* or *horses*:

> They are brought, as we are told, from three or four thousand miles off, and exchanged like cattle from one hand to another, until they reach the coast. We see then that it is the existence of the slave trade that is the spring of all this infernal traffic, and that the remedy cannot be applied without abolition.
>
> Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 101.1789

Since abolitionists argued that African slaves were treated like animals, they also claimed they were frequently abused at their master's hands. In fact, they took great care to emphasize this idea in their speeches: "It was not merely that they worked under the whip

like cattle; but no attempts were ever made to instruct them in the principles of religion and morality" (Parliamentary History, XXXIX, 261, 1791).

Despite several threats and attempts made on his life, Clarkson was relentless in his investigation. He conducted a detailed survey of the environment of the slave trade, where he witnessed firsthand the instruments used on the Africans held in captivity on slaving vessels. Likewise, he actually managed to acquire a few of these instruments and presented them before Parliament with the intention of demonstrating how inhumanely the slaves were treated by their captors. For example, Clarkson held up the devices for all MPs to see and stated: "when I witnessed for myself the inhumane instruments used for captivity, I could feel the jagged lock biting into my skin, for a minute...not a life time" (Parliamentary History, XXXIX, 260, 1791).

Clarkson persistently interviewed thousands of witnesses searching for evidence against the slave trade. During a period of seven years, he maintained correspondence with over four hundred people and travelled over thirty-five thousand miles in order to do so (Merrill 1945). Depictions of the slave ships used in the trade were also presented as evidence of the deplorable conditions the slaves faced during their long voyage at sea to the New World. In fact, Clarkson demonstrated the intolerable conditions of the Middle Passage by presenting a well-known diagram of a slaving vessel called the *Brooks* in Parliament, which illustrated how slaves were crammed into the ships hold and kept chained in a space smaller than a coffin (Forneaux 1974). In depicting a slave's journey on the *Brooks*, abolitionists often framed their argument before Parliament in the following way:

I must speak of the transit of the slaves in the West Indies. This I confess, in my own opinion, is the most wretched part of the whole subject. So much misery condensed in so little room, is more than the human imagination had ever before conceived... Let anyone imagine to himself 6 or 700 of these wretches chained two and two, surrounded with every object that is nauseous and disgusting, diseased, and struggling under every kind of wretchedness! How can we bear to think of such a scene as this?

Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 41, 1789

(ii) *The Slave Trade Characterized as an Oppressive Industry*

The trade commenced in Africa, and after spreading a variety of vices there, in order to effect the robbery of persons, who were the objects of its pursuit, it proceeded, with cruelty, to the misery and destruction of the places where it was carried on…

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Deb 10 June 1806 vol. 7, p.597

William Wilberforce was determined to show how cruel the slave trade business was and he consistently articulated this viewpoint throughout the parliamentary debates. During one of his early speeches, he described the *wickedness* of the trade in what would become an early foreshadowing of his commitment to the cause:

As soon as ever I had arrived thus far in my investigation of the slave trade, I confess to you sir, so enormous so dreadful, so irremediable did its wickedness appear that my own mind was completely made up for the abolition. A trade founded in iniquity, and carried on as this was, must be abolished, let the policy be what it might,—let the consequences be what they would, I from this time determined that I would never rest till I had effected its abolition.

Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 101.1789

In addition to characterizing the slave trade as *wicked*, abolitionists often claimed the trade was an oppressive industry labelling it *barbarous* and *violent*. For example, typical of the moral strategy used by abolitionists in their speeches, Wilberforce argued:

Does anyone suppose a slave trade would help their civilization? Is it not plain, that she must suffer from it? That civilization must be checked; that her barbarous manners must be made more barbarous; and that the happiness of her millions of inhabitants must be prejudiced with her intercourse with Britain? Does not everyone

see that a slave trade, carried on around her coasts, must carry violence and desolation to her very centre?

Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 101. 1790

Moreover, in their effort to counter pro-slave trade arguments in Parliament, abolitionists regularly preached evangelical moral dogma in an attempt to appeal to the virtuous sense of their fellow MPs. In doing so, they labelled the trade *inhumane*, highlighting the oppressive methods used by the slave traders to procure their cargo. For example, during a speech in 1806 Lord Chancellor stated:

> He also had been an eye witness to the trade carried on the coast of Africa, and although he could not say in what manner they might have been collected in the interior, yet their treatment on the coast, and during the middle passage, was inhumane to a degree, most shocking! Parents were torn from their children, infants snatched from the breast of their mothers, while the unhappy parents were pinioned down in chains to the bottom of the hold of a Guinea ship, frequently surrounded by famine and death.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 24 June 1806 vol. 7, p. 807

(iii)   *Criminal Aspects of the Slave Trade*

> It was universally admitted by the merchants, the planters and all descriptions of persons, that the slave trade, so far as regards Africa, was unjust and impolitic, founded in robbery, kidnapping and murder, and affording an incentive to the worst passions and crimes.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 23 February 1807 vol. 8, p.946

In a powerful three hour speech delivered before the House of Commons in 1789, Wilberforce revealed surprising and distressing facts about the slave trade. In it, he depicted the slave traders as plucking their captives from their natural habitat and taking them to strange lands with foreign languages against their will. What is more, this characterization of the trade would endure throughout the entire abolition campaign.

According to Wilberforce, the slave trade was criminal because it went against all of the principles of Christianity: "it was the glory of our religion, that it not only forbade all those odious means by which slaves were procured, but expressly prohibited the practice of man-stealing, and called us to act on a principle of universal philanthropy, and kind good-will to all men" (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 10 June 1806 vol. 7, p.593).

At the beginning of the parliamentary abolition debates, Wilberforce frequently used moral frames throughout his speeches in an effort to convince his fellow MPs of the corruption and criminal aspects of the slave trade. In fact, not only did he condemn the trade, but he also aggressively criticized slave traders, businessmen and anyone else who grew rich from what he branded a corrupt system. For example, in a speech recited before the House of Commons in 1791 he argued:

> He had always conceived that the custom of trafficking in human creatures had been incautiously begun, without its dreadful and necessary consequences being foreseen! For he could never persuade himself that any man, under the influence of moral principles, could suffer knowingly to be carrying on a trade replete with fraud, cruelty, and destruction.
>
> <div align="right">Parliamentary History, XXIX, 252, 1791</div>

Another approach that abolitionists used throughout the debates was to aggressively label the slave trade an illegal business, with the intention of persuading parliamentary MPs to vote for its abolition on the grounds that it was a criminal offence. In fact, they repeatedly crafted their speeches using words such as *criminal* and *guilt* in their arguments to characterize the trade. For example, according to the abolitionist—and then Prime Minister—William Grenville:

> But, my lords, when it is considered that this trade is the most criminal that any country can be engaged in; when it is considered how much guilt has been incurred in carrying it on, in tearing the unhappy Africans by thousands and tens of thousands,

from their families, their friends, their connections, and their social ties, and dooming
them to a life of slavery and misery, and after incurring all this guilt, that the
continuance of the criminal traffic must end in the ruin of the planters in your islands,
who vainly expect profit from it, surely there can be no doubt that this detestable trade
ought at once to be abolished.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Deb 05 February 1807 vol. 8, p.658

When faced with oppositional arguments from pro-slave trade MPs who claimed that

Africans were actually content with their forced situation, abolitionists often countered by

asking their adversaries how they might react if they were treated like a slave: "He would

ask one of the opposers of the bill, who was a member of the board of aldermen of

London, whether he would think it a happy change, to be snatched away from one of the

city banquets, and crammed into a slave ship as the blacks were" (Hansard's

Parliamentary Debates. 27 February 1807 vol. 8, p.1040). In the end, it seems as though

pro-slave trade advocates were not moved or swayed by the ideological arguments offered

by abolitionist MPs because they responded by presenting their own anti-abolition

rationales in an attempt to block an abolition bill from ever reaching the House of Lords.

COUNTER-FRAMING: ANTI-ABOLITIONISTS FIGHT BACK

Still Negroes are your property: so are your horses, and of more value too, if price and
value are the same. See how those noble and useful animals are treated by coachmen
and others…did you ever hear of a coachman punished for the cruel treatment of his
horses?

Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 290, 1789

Social movements often confront opposition when they advocate for social change

(Snow, Vliegenhart and Corrigall-Brown 2007). As several researchers emphasize,

meaning making by social movement organizations is normally a highly collaborative but

contested process, with movement adversaries providing their own perspectives in

opposition to activist claims (Dugan 2004; Esacove 2004; Rucht 2004). For Benford and

Snow (2000:617), counter-framing "includes refutations of the logic… [and] of solutions

advocated by opponents as well as a rationale for its own remedies." According to the

theory, framing contests can erupt over time where opposing sides react to each other's

frames and try to persuade authorities and bystanders of the rightness of their cause

(Benford and Snow 2000; McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). The significance of

counter-framing is that this kind of oppositional collective action can actually weaken a

social movement's cause by establishing a logical antithetical position. Nowhere is this

point better illustrated than in the British social movement to end the slave trade. In fact,

the qualitative evidence suggests that pro-slave trade advocates formulated their own

structured arguments using both moral and economic frames in order to provide rational

reasons for the continuance of the trade. For example, in 1805 pro-slave trade MP Sir

William Young argued:

> We may abandon the trade, but we cannot abolish it, and we shall besides be
> doing great injury to the Africans themselves. As to the humanity of the case, are
> we sure that the slaves, are not treated with much greater inhumanity in Africa
> than in the West Indies? Are they, not driven in their own country like cattle with
> irons about their necks…An African master, however, we are told, can coolly toss
> his slave, when half dead, into a ditch, and say "there is so much money lost."

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 28 February 1805 vol. 3, p. 649

Responding to the abolitionists' use of moral frames during the debates, pro-slave

trade MPs aggressively fought back, which often resulted in heated parliamentary brawls.

In fact, counter-framing arguments were used quite frequently by the opposition during

the debates, which I suggest might have weakened the abolitionists' position. In many

instances, lengthy and explosive disputes followed abolitionists' speeches where the

ideological arguments they presented were vulnerable to reframing by slave trade advocates targeted by the movement. For example, pro-slave trade MPs emphasized a central contradiction of how abolitionists could preach about liberty and human dignity when the conditions of their factory systems were often worse than the conditions of the slave trade (Loewenberg 1985). Moreover, a number of pro-slave trade MPs opposed ending the slave trade on the grounds that it would devastate British commerce. Some considered the slave trade a necessary evil, whereas others argued they had seen nothing of the cruelties the Negroes spoke of. Making matters worse, politically powerful movement opponents such as the Duke of Clarence argued in Parliament that it would be impolite and unjust to abolish the slave trade on financial grounds: "He went into the merits of the trade, the immense capital that was employed, and the correspondences that must ensure from putting a stop to that which ages had confirmed as highly beneficial to this country" (Parliamentary History, XXX, 659, 1793).[20] Even more problematic was that even the British Monarchy defended the continuance of the slave trade by openly criticizing the leader of the movement: "His Royal Highness asserted that promoters of abolition were either fanatics or hypocrites and in one of those classes he ranked Mr. Wilberforce" (Parliamentary History, XXX, 659, 1793). It would seem as though counter-framing of the movement by pro-slave trade MPs clearly weakened the abolitionists' position in Parliament. For example, MP Thomas Grosvenor likened the slave trade to a consequence of the natural law of Africa and he countered the abolitionists' arguments by stating:

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[20] The Duke of Clarence, also known as Prince William, was the third son of King George the III, who ruled over Great Britain and Ireland from 1760 until his death in 1820.

> The gentlemen (abolitionists) had displayed a great deal of eloquence in exhibiting in hard colours, the traffic in slaves. He acknowledged it was not an amiable trade, but neither was the trade of a butcher an amiable trade, and a good mutton chop was, nevertheless, a very good thing.
>
> Parliamentary History, XXIX, 281, 1791

Pro-slave trade advocates often countered abolitionists by employing their own humanitarian agenda throughout the debates. In fact, there are several examples that demonstrate how they retaliated by articulating their own tailored ideological arguments in an effort to weaken their opponents' position. For example, they argued that British abolition combined with the international continuance of the trade would actually increase the chances that slaves would be treated more inhumanely by other countries that would inevitable takeover the entire trade should Britain elect to abolish it (Drescher 1990; Klein and Engerman 1978). They based their argument on the assumption that African slaves would be worse off because no inhabitants of any other country treated slaves as well as Great Britain did. Ironically, in some instances they also claimed that even African slaves were opposed to abolition: "The Negroes in the West Indies did not desire the abolition: for they considered any obstacle to the importation of new slaves as a prolongation and increase of their present labours" (Parliamentary History, XXXIII, 571, 1797). They further argued that at the very least the British slave trade was regulated: "the cause of humanity would not gain the least from such abolition: it would not only throw the trade in the hands of other commercial powers, who would benefit from our mistaken benevolence, and would carry it on without any regulation whatsoever" (Parliamentary History, XXXII, 752, 1796).

Despite their consistent failure, abolitionist MPs made no attempt to shift the emphasis of their lobbying before Parliament (Drescher 1990). Even more challenging was the fact that the penalty in Great Britain for killing an African slave was less than that for stealing a loaf of bread (Porter 1970). Not surprisingly, pro-slave trade MPs took advantage of this and crafted their own rational arguments in an attempt to thwart the abolitionists' cause. For example, one of their central claims was that Africans were well suited to being slaves: "I am at a loss to conceive how a colony can be expected to prosper, or even to exist; especially when the avowed purposes of the colony are to abolish a trade to which (whether just or unjust) the natives are perfectly reconciled" (Parliamentary History, XXXIX, 92, 1791). The fact that pro-slave trade advocates also received much public support to justify the business was also problematic for the abolition campaign. For example, in an article published in the London Times in 1789, a local merchant Brook Watson stated: "...I could not help thinking that a speedy abolition of the Slave Trade would be inhumane, unjust, and contrary to every principle of policy."[21] To add to this, representatives of the main slaving towns of Liverpool and Bristol also offered strong opposition to abolition, as did merchant MPs who were heavily invested in the trade (Austen and Smith 1969).

On the whole, it appears that the ideological arguments offered by abolitionists did very little to help their cause. At the end of the eighteenth century, pro-slave trade MP Wyndham stated that: "Those who wish for abolition may have very good wishes, but I do not know that these wishes will have the effect which they expect" (Parliamentary

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[21] *The London Times*: Issue 1160; col 2, May 21 1789.

History, XXXIII, 1413. 1798). By all accounts, moral framing was clearly ineffectual in persuading a majority of parliamentarians to vote for abolition. Likewise, the qualitative evidence suggests that abolitionists realized that their hard work campaigning was seemingly all for nothing. After years of constant defeat, they retreated and did not initiate any more abolition bills from 1800 to 1803, during which the debate literally disappeared from both Houses of Parliament. At their lowest ebb, frustrated, unmotivated and tiring of the constant failure, Wilberforce opened the debates in 1799 with the following mundane appeal in the House of Commons:

> He had so often called attention of the House to this subject that he should think it would be putting himself and the House to a great deal of unnecessary trouble if he were to repeat all the arguments he has used on former occasions. It was 12 years since he had first pointed to the House the evils that attached to the African slave trade.
>
> Parliamentary History, XXXIV, 518, 1799

Clearly discouraged, abolitionists retreated and did not return to fight for the cause until 1804. A systematic examination of the qualitative themes in the parliamentary debate transcripts suggests that a bill would not pass unless the abolitionist MPs changed their tactics. Armed with new strategies, I will demonstrate how parliamentary abolitionists deliberately tailored their speeches to include more economic reasoning during the 1804–1807 slave trade debates.

ECONOMIC FRAMES: ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS OFFERED BY PARLIAMENTARY ABOLITIONISTS

This section examines three distinct economic themes that emerged through a qualitative analysis of abolition speeches delivered during the slave trade debates. First, I will illustrate how abolitionist MPs deliberately argued that the slave trade was

unprofitable. Second, I will demonstrate how they characterized the slave trade as a *risky business*. Finally, I will provide examples to show that abolitionist MPs intentionally presented viable *economic alternatives* to the trading of slaves. To elaborate on the meaning of economic frames, these types of arguments underscored the positive economic consequences that Great Britain would experience if the slave trade was abolished. Turning to the slave trade debates, I will establish that parliamentary abolitionists made a very strategic decision to change their abolition rationale to include more economic considerations near the end of the movement. In this context, economic frames represented a complete shift in their earlier ideas to support abolition, which I suggest had more of a chance to resonate with movement adversaries. As the qualitative evidence will demonstrate, economic frames were completely detached from humanitarian reasoning and instead offered economically grounded solutions that appealed to the majority of voting parliamentarians. Table 6.2 on page 152 provides a summary of the key economic themes that will guide this part of the analysis.

The rhetorical patterns in abolitionists' speeches reveal that simple humanitarian pressure was not enough to convince voting parliamentarians to end the slave trade. Instead, they needed facts and alternatives to help support their cause. Ironically, there is also evidence to suggest that abolitionist MPs may have sensed early on the movement that economics would play some role in ending the trade. For example, between 1791 and 1792, they staged a boycott of West Indian produce such as sugar, the product of slave labour (Merrill 1945). Pamphlets were distributed to the public that stated "every person who habitually consumes one article of West Indian produce, raised by slaves, is guilty

Table 6.2   Key Features of Economic Frames Offered by Parliamentary Abolitionists

Frame	Definition of Frame	Economic Themes	Rationale for Argument	Economic Frame Examples
Economic Frames	Represents the arguments offered by abolitionists, which characterized the slave trade as economically unsustainable.	*(i) The slave trade industry characterized as unprofitable*	Abolitionists argued the slave trade was unprofitable compared to earlier years (e.g., loss of cargo, unpaid and mounting debt)	∗ Advantageous Alternatives ∗ Alternate Trade ∗ Business ∗ Capital ∗ Commerce ∗ Demand ∗ Economic Alternatives ∗ Economic Advantage ∗ Economic Reasoning ∗ Expense ∗ Free labour ∗ Free trade ∗ Growth ∗ Competitive/Competitiveness ∗ International Demand ∗ Innovation/Innovative ∗ Legitimate commerce ∗ Loss/Lose/Losing ∗ Manufacture trade ∗ Machinery (usage) ∗ Material ∗ National interest ∗ Profits/Profitable/Profitability ∗ Proposer/Prosperous/ Prosperity ∗ Propagation ∗ Non-prosperous ∗ Resources ∗ Risk/Risky ∗ Supply/Supplies ∗ Technology/Technological ∗ Trade alternatives ∗ Wealth
		(ii) The slave trade business characterized as risky	Abolitionists characterized the slave trade as a risky business (e.g., dangerous due to insurrections, compared to a lottery)	
		(iii) Viable economic alternatives	Abolitionists offered ideas about business alternatives to replace the slave trade (e.g., breeding, use of machinery and legitimate commerce)	

of the crime of murder" (Merrill 1945:394). This tactic, however, had no impact on voting members of Parliament. As a result, abolitionists were unsuccessful in getting a bill introduced into a very traditional House of Lords. Eventually, Wilberforce recognized that horror stories and moral condemnation alone would never achieve an end to the slave trade. Instead, the qualitative evidence suggests that he realized he would need to convince Parliament that banning the trade would not have an adverse effect on national commerce. In fact, the parliamentary majority would not tolerate his characterization of the slave trade as a national sin (Porter 1970). In the end, Wilberforce acknowledged the necessity of creating new meaning behind the abolition campaign and also the need to formulate new strategic propositions in order to do so. What remains clear is that the British government would remain supportive of the slave trade industry as long as it was perceived as profitable and indispensable to the national economy (Williams 1940). In response, Wilberforce and his fellow abolitionists proceeded by attacking the trading of the slaves instead of their treatment, where they emphasized the idea of legitimate commercial behaviour in their speeches before Parliament. Moving forward, one of the central issues was whether slave trade abolition could be achieved without seriously damaging British West Indian agriculture and commerce (Porter 1970).

(i) *The Slave Trade Industry Characterized as Unprofitable*

> On the ground of humanity, every topic of argument has been exhausted; there is not a feeling of the human heart but pleads for the abolition of this barbarous traffic.

> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 28 February 1805 vol. 3 p. 663

The qualitative evidence clearly demonstrates that the arguments offered by Abolitionist MPs during 1804 to1807 debates are substantively different from their earlier rhetorical strategies. After spending years reciting the horrors of the slave trade with Africa, Wilberforce deliberately chose to employ a new line of attack in his speeches. In fact, during a second reading of an abolition bill in 1805, he acknowledged that a change in strategy was needed in that every topic on the grounds of humanity had been argued before Parliament to no avail. After so many years of defeat, facing the same oppositional arguments that the slave trade was too lucrative to eliminate, he moved in Parliament to attack the profits of the trade. For example, using Jamaica as a case study, Wilberforce argued that most businessmen involved in the slave trade were heavily in debt and consequently the system only benefitted a few:

> …however some men might flourish for a while, they would, by neglecting that maxim, find themselves in the end overtaken by absolute poverty. He recommended this Jamaica report to the house, by which they would see the foundation on which he made these observations. In the course of 20 years the number of executions for debt ascended to 80,000, and amounted to 22½ millions sterling. He left gentlemen to consider how far this might with propriety be called in a national sense a ruinous concern, and that therefore a general policy was against it, and to reflect on the propriety of making these public sacrifices to the private interests of these few book-keepers and individuals who benefit by the system.

> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 28 February 1805 vol. 3, p.671

Furthermore, abolitionist MPs creatively began to attack other parts of the trade, testifying before Parliament that slaving vessels were not suitable enough to carry sugar and as a result profits were lost (Sheridan 1958). For example, they testified that the ships involved in the trade were built to carry a maximum number of slaves and consequently did not have big enough holds to transport large cargos of sugar. As a result, slaving

vessels often returned to Britain with very little cargo or sometimes only bills of exchange for future dealings with the plantations (Sheridan 1958). Likewise, parliamentary abolitionists such as Lord Howick endeavoured to show that earlier slave restriction-carrying bills that were passed also limited the number of slaves that could be carried on board a ship and therefore financially weakened the trade. For example, he argued:

> The persons interested in this measure were either the merchants engaged in the trade, the shipowners, or the planters; and if he should shew that none of their interests would be injured by the measure, he was confident all opposition to it must cease…. That capital must have since been reduced to a still lower proportion, by the operation of the slave carrying bill, and the bills which prohibited the importation of slaves into the colonies conquered from the enemy. What remained now was only a remnant of the trade for the supply of the old British colonies.

> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 23 February 1807 vol. 8, pp. 947-948

It is not surprising that when Wilberforce's motions attained complete or partial success in the House of Commons, they were subsequently blocked by the House of Lords (Anstey 1972). To be successful, abolitionists needed to find equally rewarding alternative policies based on different commerce and they needed to provide evidence that the slave system was not as profitable as it was once perceived to be. For example, in 1806 abolitionist MP Whitbread claimed that:

> …in the course of his discussions of it, his calculations, with respect to the comparative value of the labour of freemen and slaves, were luminous and convincing. One of the incontrovertible results of these, was, that the expences of procuring the unhappy objects in question, the expences of transporting them, and their maintenance afterwards, comparing all these with the value of the labour actually performed, evinced that this labour was not so profitable, by much…

> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 24 June 1806 vol. 7, p. 804.

In fact, the qualitative evidence suggests that Wilberforce realized that he needed to convince the majority of Parliament they would not suffer commercially if they passed a bill to end the slave trade. In order to do so, he had to attack the profits of the trade and reason that all of Great Britain would benefit from its abolition. For example, during a speech before the House of Commons in 1807 he argued:

> Of profit and loss between English money and African blood. It was thought necessary to prove to the house, that the country could not lose by abstaining from murder. It had been proved by Mr. Pitt, from the most undeniable calculations, that the islands and the empire at large, would gain in revenue, in seamen, in commerce, in strength, and in profit; by the abolition…

<div align="right">Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 27 February 1807 vol. 8, p.1052</div>

(ii)   The Slave Trade Industry Characterized as a Risky Business

> Those engaged in commercial concerns were necessarily exposed to risks, and sufficient warning had long been given to those engaged in this abominable traffic.

<div align="right">Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 27 February 1807 vol. 8, p.943</div>

The second theme that emerged from the qualitative analysis is that abolitionists realized they needed to convince Parliament that the slave trade was not a sound business venture and consequently there were many different kinds of risks associated with it. Although only to a very small degree, abolitionists did offer economic arguments that characterized the slave trade as a risky business during earlier years of the debates. In fact, one approach they used was to highlight the damaging effect the slave trade had on the British Marine. For example, Wilberforce stated on a number of occasions that "the trade was the grave rather than the nursery of seamen" (Parliamentary History, XXIX, 270. 1791). During one of his first major speeches before Parliament he pressed this issue:

The next subject which I shall touch upon, is, the influence of the slave trade upon our marine: and instead of being a benefit to our sailors as some have ignorantly argued I do assert it is their grave. The evidence upon the point is clear; for, by the indefatigable industry and public spirit of Mr. Clarkson, the muster rolls of all the slave ships have been collected and compared with those of other trades; and it appears in the result that more sailors die in one year in the slave trade, than die in two years in all our other trades put together. It appears by the muster roll to 88 slave ships which sailed from Liverpool in 1787, that the original crews consisted of 3170 sailors - of these only 1428 returned: 642 died or were lost…

Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 41. 1790

Abolitionists further characterized the slave trade as risky when they claimed that the importation of new slaves caused a population imbalance resulting in blacks far outnumbering whites, thereby inciting them to rebel against them. Abolitionist MP Lord Howick further argued the point that colonies that did not import fresh slaves experienced no such insurrections:

What source of consolation could it be to the old negroes to behold fresh importations of their unhappy countrymen, doomed to endure similar slavery with themselves? The only effect this could produce, would be that of sowing the seeds of continual insurrection. But the prohibition to import fresh negroes, could not be fairly adduced as a motive why the old ones should revolt. It was proved by experience and fact, that in those islands, where there was no regular supply of fresh negroes, no insurrection ever took place. With respect to the general security of the islands, the danger does not arise from those negroes who have been long settled in them, and used to their masters, but from those who have been freshly imported, and are smarting under recent wrongs.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 23 February 1807 vol. 8, p.952

To strengthen their position, abolitionists often presented case studies before Parliament to suggest that an abolition law could prevent slaves from rebelling against their masters. For example, they argued:

Nothing tended so much to the calamities that had ruined St. Domingo, as the unlimited power that individuals had of increasing the disproportion between the

black and the white population. This bill would extinguish that power, and, therefore, secure the tranquillity of the British colonies.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 06 March 1807 vol. 9, p.60

Another "risk" theme that emerged was the abolitionist MPs characterization of the slave as a *lottery*. In this manner, Wilberforce tried to convince Parliament that the slave trade was risky since only a few individuals profited from the business and furthermore that trade revenue was unfairly concentrated in Liverpool and Bristol. In doing so, he often branded the slave trade in the following way throughout the course of the debates:

> He alluded to Bristol and Liverpool, particularly to the latter. Long might she be rich and flourishing provided it was fair and honest gains, but it was due to this detestable traffic that she had risen to her present opulence, and that not only because it composed a 30th part of her export trade, but also because it merely a lottery-profitable, indeed, to some individuals, but a losing trade on the whole.

Parliamentary History, XXIX, 271, 1791

In fact, Wilberforce repeatedly returned to this line of reasoning during later deliberations by once again comparing the slave trade industry to a lottery:

> It was said, why not put an end to the lottery, and other evils in this country? He acknowledged that he considered the lottery a very bad mode of raising money, and would concur in any measure for putting an end to it…

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates 23 February 1807 vol. 8, p. 993

(iii) Viable Economic Alternatives

> …the only rational way to put a stop to this trade would be to make it the interest of those who carried it on to abandon it.

Parliamentary History, XXXIV, 565. 1799

Abolitionist historiography indicates that while economic conjuncture played a role in British abolition, without abolitionist leadership the movement might not have

succeeded (Drescher 1987). In fact, Wilberforce delivered a speech before Parliament in 1799 that would foreshadow a strategic turning point in the abolition campaign. Hinting at this strategy after the movement was resurrected in Parliament in 1804; Wilberforce expressed the failure of ideological reasoning in a letter to his friend Hannah More: "Alas! The tales of horror, which once caused so many tears to flow, are all forgotten" (Porter 1970:125). Despite the fact that abolitionist MPs started to include more economic arguments in their speeches, they once again failed to pass an abolition law in 1805. It was at this point in time that they reconvened and gathered more evidence to directly attack the trade itself by promoting a different kind of commerce.

Examining the slave trade debates suggests that even though abolitionists must have realized early on they would need to convince Parliament that economically viable alternatives to the trade existed, during the first decade of the campaign they chose to prioritize ideological arguments. With respect to economic alternatives to the trade, abolitionists offered three distinct arguments throughout their speeches. First, they argued that the introduction of new machinery could replace slaves, which in turn reduced the need for the importation of new slaves. Second, they reasoned that abolition could be achieved by increasing the existing population of slaves through breeding along with their humane treatment. Third, they suggested another course of action to the trading of slaves such as the exchange of African agricultural produce.

During the first decade of debates, abolitionist MPs often suggested that the introduction of *machinery* to cultivate the land would be a feasible alternative to importing new slaves into the colonies. Instead of importing more slave labour, they

proposed it would be more economical in the long run to introduce machinery to replace

slaves. For example, they suggested that if an abolition bill were passed "the planters

would sustain some loss until they substituted machinery, and some various methods for

facilitating labour" (Parliamentary History, XXXIII, 571. 1797). Moreover, during a

crucial abolition debate a decade later in 1807, abolitionist MP Lord Howick offered the

same rationale:

> I think, sir, that much may be done to encourage their settlement in these islands, and
> that a great deal of what is now performed by the blacks, might be performed by
> means of machinery, as well as that there are a great many articles of useful labour to
> which the whites are competent.

> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 23 February 1807 vol. 8, p.954

 Another economic argument that abolitionist MPs frequently used is revealed in

earlier speeches where they championed the idea of *breeding* slaves rather than importing

new stock:

> If any man were to tell him a country in which, though horses were used, yet very few
> were bred, this would not induce him to suppose that there was any unfriendliness in
> the climate of that country to natural propagation of horses, but merely to it being
> found cheaper to buy horses than to breed them. It was not his fault, Mr Fox said, that
> he was reduced to the degrading necessity of speaking of human beings as if they
> were horses—but he urged the case with horses was evidently the case with the slaves
> in the West Indies. Planters did not choose to treat them with attention and humanity
> that would ensure their breeding.

> (Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 316, 1789)

In fact, there are numerous instances throughout the debates where abolitionists proposed

that "the stock of Negroes might be kept up by breeding" (Parliamentary History,

XXXIX, 59, 1791). For example, in one of his early speeches before Parliament,

Wilberforce further argued that successful breeding depended on slaves being treated

humanely:

> Births will thus increase naturally; instead of fresh accessions of the same Negroes
> from Africa, each generation will then improve upon the former, and thus will the
> West Indies themselves eventually profit by the abolition of the slave trade. But, Sir, I
> will show by experience already had, how the multiplication of slaves depends upon
> their good treatment. I will show, therefore, by authentic documents, how their
> numbers have increased (or rather how the decrease has lessened) in the same
> proportion as the treatment has improved.
>
> Parliamentary History, XXVIII, 41. 1790

The qualitative evidence suggests that the main economic argument that abolitionists

offered for ending the slave trade during the first decade of the debates was based on this

line of reasoning: "the natural multiplication of the slaves would facilitate an

economically viable alternative than trading slaves" (Parliamentary History, XXIX, 1072,

1792). In 1806, Wilberforce again recommended that the kind treatment of slaves would

ensure their breeding and put an end to the slave trade:

> There would be no need of bounties for the encouragement of negro population, as
> had been proposed by a noble lord, if the domestic comforts of the slave were
> properly attended to; and the only way of producing this effect would be the total
> abolition of the slave trade, which would force the planter, from a sense of interest, to
> improve the situation of the negro. But as long as the slave market could be resorted
> to, so long would the system of breeding be neglected…
>
> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 10 June 1806 vol. 7, p.595

Moreover, in 1807, pro-abolition Prime Minister William Grenville further emphasized

that slave populations were increasing naturally and therefore newly imported slaves were

no longer necessary:

> Some years since I was engaged in calculations respecting the population of the
> West-India islands…The result of those calculations was, with respect to the island

of Jamaica, that from the year 1698 to 1730, the excess of deaths above the births amounted to 3½per cent.; from 1730 to 1755, to 2½ per cent; from 1755 to 1769, to 1¾; per cent.; from 1769 to 1780, to 3–5ths per cent.; and the average of three years ending, in 1798 or 1800, it is not material which, gives an excess of deaths of only 1–24th per cent. In this calculation is included the whole population of the island, and of course the fresh importations; and it is well known, that with respect to the latter, the negroes newly imported die in the harbours before they are landed to the amount of 5 per cent., and that many more die soon after they are set to work.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 05 February 1807 vol. 8, p.658

After so many years of defeat, abolitionist MPs eventually introduced a new economic doctrine called legitimate trade and proposed the idea of trading alternative products other than slaves before Parliament (Austen and Smith 1969). For example, when abolitionists delivered their legislative speeches, they underscored that it was in Great Britain's commercial interests to replace the slave trade with a legitimate trade involving produce from Africa (Hart 2001). According to pro-abolition MPs, this plan had the added benefit of showing the Africans the advantages of morally acceptable commerce. As a result, the idea of "legitimate commerce" became the cornerstone of British African policy in the early nineteenth century and I suggest this may have been a factor that helped the abolitionists' cause. Indeed, the qualitative evidence supports the idea that Wilberforce was determined to confront the slave trade at an economic level, to cut off its source of supply by providing a more profitable alternative. Pro-slave trade MPs argued against legitimate trade claiming that the substitution of other items would not make up for losses that would occur if the slave trade were abolished. In response, abolitionist MPs countered that a trade in products other than slaves would certainly make up for the forecasted aggregate loss caused by abolition (Austen and Smith 1969). They further proposed to halt the slave trade by the development of African agriculture. For

example, they reasoned that Great Britain could stimulate regular trade by procuring African agricultural products in return for consumer goods needed in Africa. Citing the work of the anti-slavery campaigner Thomas Fowl Buxton, abolitionists argued in Parliament that "the avenues to legitimate commerce will be opened; confidence between man and man will be inspired; whilst civilization will advance as the natural effect, and Christianity operate as the proximate cause of this happy change" (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 27 February 1807 vol. 8. P. 1041). As follows, Wilberforce's vision was the liberation of Africa utilizing her own resources. He went on to attempt to convince Parliament that trading commercial items instead of slaves was in Britain's best interest and he emphasized that "growing commerce" would be a result (Howard 1972). For example, he argued that "the real remedy, the true ransom for Africa, will be found in her fertile soil. The redemption of Africa could be affected by calling out her own resources" (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 27 February 1807 vol. 8. P. 1041). In the end, Wilberforce suggested equally rewarding alternatives to the trading of slaves such as exchanging foreign goods for inanimate African objects rather than for slaves. Through this strategic move, I suggest that abolitionists finally created a plan of attack that made sense and seemed acceptable to parliamentary MPs. According to Austen and Smith (1969), the advocacy of legitimate commerce ultimately appealed to members of Parliament because it was a way for them to follow their consciences without endangering Great Britain's economy. Moreover, the sudden rise in the demand for palm oil—a West African export—after 1800 contributed to the functioning of legitimate commerce (Lovejoy and Richardson 2002; Howard 1972).

STRATEGIC ADAPTATION IN THE SLAVE TRADE DEBATES

I now introduce the theory of strategic adaptation (McCammon et al. 2007; 2008) and through a qualitative analysis I will demonstrate how this theory helps to explain the end of the British slave trade. In their study on US women's jury's rights campaigns, McCammon and her colleagues (2007; 2008) used the term strategic adaptation to demonstrate how activists adapted their tactics and discourse to developments in the broader political and cultural environment. In the end, they argued that movement activists who engaged in strategic adaptation were more likely to win a change in jury laws more rapidly. I suggest that the slave trade abolition case is an ideal example to illustrate the process of strategic adaptation. I draw on the idea that sometimes social movements engage in 'strategic adaptation' to show that whenever this approach is used, they are more likely to advance the kinds of policy changes they pursue. Above all, I will qualitatively demonstrate how abolitionists eventually tailored their strategies to respond effectively to the signals sent to them by pro-slave trade MPs. In doing so, I show how agency factored into movement success and as a result I move beyond deterministic structural movement analysis by demonstrating that abolitionist MPs made strategic decisions in Parliament based on what they learned about the effectiveness of their prior tactics. Considering this is only the second time that the theory of strategic adaptation has been tested and no researcher to date has used theory to explain British abolition, I make an important contribution to social movement literatures.

The theory of strategic adaptation is best understood as a series of four critical steps (see figure 6.1 on page 165) in which activists adapt their strategies to developments that

Figure 6.2   The Process of Strategic Adaptation


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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            Environmental Signals:             │
│ -Political defeats and reasons given for      │
│  defeats;                                      │
│ -Opposition statements and/or actions;        │
│ -Changed political or cultural circumstances. │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│            1. Signal Perception               │
│ - The Social Movement Organization recieves   │
│   and understands signals.                     │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│        2. Self-evaluation Engagment:          │
│ -The Social Movement Organization determines   │
│  if a change in tactics is needed.             │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│               3. Adaptation                    │
│ -The Social Movement Organization decides to   │
│  change tactics to better respond to           │
│  environment;                                  │
│ -The Social Movement Organization has adequate │
│  resources to adapt.                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│             4. Implementation                  │
│ -Social Movement Organization implements       │
│  changed tactics.                              │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      ⇩
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│         Positive Policy Change/Law            │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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Source: Model adapted from McCammon et al. (2008), p. 1117

occur in their environment. After signals from targets, opponents, or other key actors are sent to social movement organizations, the process involves the following steps. First, activists must recognize and interpret the signals from their environment. These signals offer important information and the perception of these signals helps a social movement

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organization figure out which actions will help them to succeed. Second, the social movement organization must evaluate whether to adapt their tactics based on their understanding of the signals they receive. At this point in time, they need to assess existing strategies in order to determine which are more likely to be the most effective in helping them to achieve their goals. Third, the social movement organization must be willing to change their tactics on the basis of what they learn in the preceding steps, where they make choices based on the signals they receive from targets, opponents, and other key actors in the field. The final step in strategic adaptation involves implementing the strategic response. This is the follow-through stage and is most critical because without this action, the social movement organization in all likelihood would not succeed. Yet, the chosen tactic may not always lead to success due to a variety of different factors. In this case, the four steps are often repeated as the social movement develops, refines and improves their strategies, generating what McCammon and her colleagues (2008) refer to as a "strategic dance."

In the context of British abolition, I argue that abolitionist MPs were most politically effective when they strategically responded to their environment by examining their defeats and shaping their discursive tactics to counter or appease their opposition. For example, abolitionist MPs eventually adjusted their strategies according to culturally accepted norms, i.e., that the slave trade would be accepted so long as it was considered to be an economic benefit for Great Britain. Over the course of the parliamentary deliberations, signals were sent to abolitionists via political defeats and/or oppositional statements and actions. In fact, pro-slave trade MPs delivered countless speeches

indicating their resistance to abolition, arguing against the measure using logic that

ending the slave trade would financially harm Great Britain. For example, pro-slave trade

MP General Tarleton retorted to Wilberforce in 1806:

> If the right hon. gent. seriously meant to proceed with the proposed measure, he
> could only say, that his constituents would feel themselves justified in coming
> forward in the most respectful manner, to solicit from parliament that to which
> they would conceive themselves justly entitled; namely, compensation for the
> losses they would sustain, in consequence of a measure that would deprive them
> of a trade which they had followed from the time of queen Elizabeth, under the
> sanction of parliamentary protection. The necessary consequence of the measure
> must be bankruptcies without number; the emigration of useful artisans, with their
> capitals, to America; and the loss to this country, for ever, of many useful
> artificers.
>
> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 10 June, 1806 vol. 7, p.587

    The first stage of strategic adaptation is the point in time when social movement

organizations start to understand the signals from their opponents. Turning to the slave

trade debates, there are several instances where abolitionists recognized their strategies

(i.e., using humanitarian rationales in their speeches) were failing to influence pro-slave

trade MPs. For example, in a speech delivered before the House of Commons in 1805,

abolitionist MP Huddlestone acknowledged that financial interest was a key reason

offered by adversaries for prolonging the trade:

> Thus, it seems to be like a fatality attendant on this traffic, that every argument
> offered in defence of it is built on the ground of interest—of pecuniary profit—
> opposed to every higher consideration—to every motive that has reference to
> justice, morality, or religion—or to that great principle which comprehends and
> unites in itself the opinion of them all. Place before the most determined advocate
> of this trade the image of himself in the garb and harness of a slave; dragged, and
> severed forever from each tie that attached him to existence, without one ray of
> hope to cheer him, without one point of consolation on which to rest; place before
> him this picture, and you will extort from him the reluctant confession that he
> would not endure for an hour the misery to which, he condemns his fellow-man

for life!—But even on this narrow ground, this degrading principle of interest, the advocates of this traffic have been refuted.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 28 February 1805 vol. 3, p.664

At this juncture, it appears that abolitionists finally understood that their opponents were not moved by moral arguments against the trade, as they repeatedly defended the necessity of the slave trades existence for Great Britain's economy.

During the second stage of strategic adaptation, social movement organizations engage in self-evaluation to determine if a change in tactics is needed. In the case of the slave trade, there is qualitative evidence to suggest that abolitionists started to realize during the 1805 debates that a new approach was necessary if they were going to succeed in abolishing the trade. For example, they admitted that "on the ground of humanity, every topic of argument has been exhausted; there is not a feeling of the human heart but pleads for the abolition of this barbarous traffic" (Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 28 February 1805 vol. 3, p. 663). At this point, it appears that abolitionist MPs also recognized that the British government would continue to support the slave trade industry as long as it was perceived as profitable and indispensable to the national economy. They acknowledged that humanitarian rationales were not working and therefore the necessity of creating new meaning behind their abolition campaign. For example, in a speech delivered before the House of Commons in 1805, Wilberforce warned his fellow MPs that their existing strategy was futile:

The storm is fast gathering; every instant it becomes blacker and blacker. Even now I know not whether it be not too late to avert the impending evil, but of this I am quite sure—that we have no time to lose.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 28 February 1805 vol. 3 p. 673

The third stage of strategic adaptation occurs when social movements decide to change their tactics to better respond to their environment and when they have the adequate resources to do so. With respect to British abolition, this is when they made the deliberate choice to adapt, where the leaders of the movement realized prior strategies were ineffective. Instead, they needed to find alternative policies to convince voting parliamentarians to end the trade. For example, Wilberforce remarked in a letter to Prime Minister William Grenville in 1806 that "the mistaken idea" had gained currency that the bill "rests on general abolition principles or is grounded on justice and humanity, an imputation which," he added significantly, "I am aware would prove fatal to it."[22] Moreover, in a speech delivered before the House of Commons in 1806, Wilberforce finally acknowledged the error of using humanitarian rationales over the course of the movement to end the trade:

> But he should ever deprecate the introduction of such appeals to sacred authority into that house, as tending rather to ridicule than to any satisfactory result. He should have heard with pleasure the declarations of his noble friend (lord Castlereagh) respecting the radical injustice of the traffic, had he not at the same time seemed to oppose every method that had been proposed for its abolition, and had not his speech been uniformly applauded by those who were friendly to the trade. They were perfectly willing to permit the trade to be railed at, while, in fact, it received their most effectual support. He himself had derived pleasure from the reflection, that the measures he had brought forward at different times on this subject had been supported by almost all the ablest men on both sides of the house, who had seldom agreed on any great measure of policy, If he had erred, he had erred with great authorities.

<div align="center">Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 10 June 1806 vol. 3, p.593-594</div>

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[22] Dropmore MSS., Wilberforce to Grenville, 23 Apr. 1806.

According to theory, at this stage social movements must be willing to adjust their actions on the basis of what they have learned in the preceding steps. For example, speaking before the House of Commons in 1807, pro-abolition MP Lord Howick acknowledged that humanitarian arguments were pointless before opening the floor to debate slave trade profits:

> I shall not disgust the house by a recital of those atrocities on the innocent and unoffending. We have heard enough of floating dungeons, and the merciless treatment to which these unhappy children of Africa are subjected, in consequence of that cruel necessity which tears them from all the revered connections of life, from the social endearments of father, husband, and wife; and which, not satisfied with this extreme of injustice and persecution, consigns them to a foreign shore, after a beastly exposure, to the disposal of the highest bidder, to be appreciated by him, not as his fellow being, endued with mind and feeling, but as an inanimate effect, on the profits of which he may voluntarily speculate.
>
> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 23 February 1807 vol. 8, p.965

In the final stage of strategic adaptation, social movement organizations implement a change in their strategy. This is the most critical phase because it involves the execution of a tactical response. But, according to theory, the chosen response does not always lead to success and very often a social movement organization will cycle through the preceding steps until they eventually choose the right strategy. In the case of British abolition, the qualitative results suggest that abolitionist MPs consistently used moral arguments during the first decade of the debates ignoring important cues sent by pro-slave trade opponents that signalled the slave trade was too vital to Great Britain's economy to end it. Eventually, parliamentary abolitionists caught on and made a calculated decision to attack the trading of the slaves and not their treatment by emphasizing legitimate commercial behaviour in their speeches. They further argued that abolishing the trade

would not financially damage those involved. For example, in a speech given before the

House of Commons in 1807, abolitionist MP Lord Howick stressed that abolishing the

trade would not injure the financial interests of Britain or her colonies:

> But in place of doing injury to the West-India property by this measure of abolition, which was now about to be accomplished, he should shew that the West Indies would be benefited and improved by it. The persons interested in this measure were either the merchants engaged in the trade, the shipowners, or the planters; and if he should shew that none of their interests would be injured by the measure, he was confident all opposition to it must cease.

Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. 23 February 1807 vol. 8, p.947

The idea that parliamentary abolitionists' cycled through the four stages of stages of

strategic adaptation before finally choosing a successful strategy ties into the importance

of having Prime Minister William Grenville as a parliamentary ally. By the time

abolitionist MPs finally understood that they needed to change the arguments in their

speeches to include more economic rationales, they had also forged a strategic alliance

with Prime Minister Grenville, who in turn provided agenda setting advice and support

for their cause. In the next section, I will qualitatively demonstrate how this alliance made

a difference to the movement.

THE IMPORTANCE OF POLITICAL ALLIANCES

I will now offer some qualitative examples to show how political alliances mattered

to the social movement to end the slave trade. In doing so, I make an important

contribution to social movement literatures by demonstrating that having the Prime

Minister of Great Britain as a strong ally helped the abolitionists' cause. As a result, I add

substance to the quantitative results in chapter 5. According to Anstey (1972), Prime

Minister William Grenville went to great pains to influence his fellow MPs in order to acquire votes in the House of Lords, where the danger of an abolition bill failing was much greater. For example, in a letter written to William Wilberforce on May 20, 1806, Grenville discussed the next course of action to be taken. In doing so, he revealed that he was more organized than his predecessor—Prime Minister William Pitt—in his effort to make the general abolition bill a government measure. That is, a policy which the support of ministers and their political supporters could be demanded (Anstey 1972). After outlining his proposal to first restrict the British slave trade to one-third of the African coastline, Grenville suggested the following strategy to Wilberforce:

> We should then come at the beginning of next session to consider the most advantageous way of bringing forward the rest of the subject, either moved as a Government measure by Mr. Fox (if on full consideration that is thought best for the success of the thing which I well know is what you will most regard,) or brought forward as before by you, and supported by a previous decision of the Cabinet, supposing that can be obtained. [23]

Furthermore, the personal papers of Prime Minister Grenville and Wilberforce further reveal the importance of this political alliance. In fact, Anstey (1972) argued that Grenville strategized with Wilberforce outside of Parliament on agenda setting tactics such as how and when to introduce a bill. For example, at the end of January 1807, Prime Minister Grenville voiced concern over the approaching abolition vote in Parliament. According to excerpts from Wilberforce's diary, Grenville warned him that "he could not count more than fifty-six, yet had taken pains, written letters, etc.… The Princes are canvassing against us, alas" Three days later he advised Wilberforce that the debate had been put off for two days because Lords Spencer and Holland were ill and he urged him

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[23] Wilberforce MSS. (Duke Collection), Grenville to Wilberforce, 20 May I 806.

to take advantage of this: "Any votes that you can get in the interval pray do." When we interpret the aforementioned cultural framing results along with the qualitative analysis of strategic adaptation and political alliances, a very interesting account of British abolition emerges that complements both sociological and historical literatures.

On January 2, 1807, Prime Minister Grenville introduced the Slave Trade Abolition Bill in the House of Lords for its first reading. It passed with very little opposition. On February 4, the Lords voted for a second reading of the bill. On February 10, the bill was read a third time, passed, and ordered to be sent to the House of Commons. Finally, after so many years of promoting abolition, William Wilberforce received overwhelming support during the key House of Commons debate that occurred on February 23, 1807. The debate lasted ten hours and the House voted overwhelmingly in favour of the bill by 283 to 16. According to several historical accounts, parliamentarians leapt to their feet with loud cheers and gave Wilberforce the greatest standing ovation ever witnessed in British parliamentary history. His head in his hands, Wilberforce broke down in tears as his long crusade had finally been realized. In the end, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade Act* was finally passed on March, 25, 1807. Under the terms of the abolition statute, no slavers were permitted to clear from ports in the United Kingdom after May 1, 1807, and no slaves could land in the colonies after March 1 the following year. This outcome was the result of a nearly twenty-year campaign of pressure on British Parliament to end the slave trade.

FINAL THOUGHTS

The important questions I investigated throughout this chapter are if and how cultural framing, strategic adaptation and political alliances might have factored into an abolition law being passed. I have also made an original contribution to social movement literatures since there are few—if any—framing studies that use quantitative and qualitative approaches together to study movement success. While I provide some clarity on the reasons why the slave trade might have ended, this chapter is more about offering possibilities rather than making definitive assumptions. In the end, I suggest that the abolition of the slave trade was made possible by the co-existence of a set of economic and political conditions, and strongly led social movement activists who deliberately took advantage of these circumstances and strategically reframed their cause before Parliament. My contribution in this chapter is that I qualitatively demonstrated how economic frames or more specifically economic arguments may have played a pivotal role in convincing voting parliamentarians to end the trade. In addition, I show how the concept of strategic adaptation—the idea that parliamentary abolitionists recognized the ineffectiveness of prior strategies and modified their tactics to succeed— helps to explain British abolition. I suggest that in order to succeed, abolitionists purposely changed their rhetorical strategies to include more economic frames in their speeches. This, along with the existence of a strong political alliance with Prime Minister William Grenville made a positive difference for the movement. In the concluding chapter of this dissertation, I will elaborate in more detail on what these findings mean for the history of British abolition and also what needs to be accomplished next.

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CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

I scarcely know of any subject, the contemplation of which is more pleasing than that of the correction or of the removal of any of the acknowledged evils of life; for while we rejoice to think that the sufferings of our fellow-creatures may have been thus, in any instance, relieved, we must rejoice equally to think that our own moral condition must have been necessarily improved by the change.

Thomas Clarkson 1808: 1

Thomas Clarkson's (1808) opening address in *The History of The Rise, Progress and Accomplishment of the Abolition of the Slave Trade by British Parliament* provides some foreshadowing of the enduring nature of the topic of British abolition. Despite the enormous amount of research conducted on the British slave trade, a comprehensive explanation of its abolition is missing from sociological literatures. Throughout this dissertation, I have endeavoured to solve this historical puzzle using social movement theory as a guide. The overall findings suggest that the abolition movement was successful for three reasons: (1) macroeconomic processes like industrialization, (2) the existence of a strong political alliance with pro-abolition Prime Minister William Grenville and (3) when abolitionists strategically adapted their parliamentary speeches to include more economic arguments focusing on the fiscal benefits of abolition.

IMPLICATIONS AND CONTRIBUTIONS

This research contributes to the broad discipline of sociology in three distinctive ways. First, this study is an important and much needed addition to the area of historical sociology. As yet, sociologists have not thoroughly studied British slave trade abolition

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and as a result this dissertation fills a void in our understanding of one of the first well-documented social movements in history.

Second, this study contributes to sociological theory by examining two different types of movement success that are rarely studied together—policy change and agenda setting. Using two different measures of movement success allowed me to empirically demonstrate that in addition to cultural framing, opportunities (both political and economic) also factored into Great Britain's decision to end the slave trade. Policy change concentrates on the final stage of policymaking rather than on the pre-policy stages. Therefore, had I not employed the agenda setting approach, I might have missed out on the importance of having political alliances and social movement success. In addition, I used McCammon and her colleague's (2007) model of 'strategic adaptation' to examine British abolition and in doing so I demonstrate how the theory can be used to explain social movement success. While the main tenets of social movement theory provide insight on the causes of British abolition, strategic adaptation offers a novel approach to studying this phenomenon. Very few scholars have studied social movement success using this approach and none so far have examined the role that this strategic process played in British abolition success. While past research has deemphasized the contribution of British abolitionists, the process of strategic adaptation clarifies how abolitionist MPs deliberately adapted the core frames in their speeches to align with the broader cultural and political environment.

Finally, using a two-tiered research design to study the slave trade, this dissertation provides a thorough evaluation of key components of social movement theory, which

adds to methodological literatures of the discipline. Mixed methods approaches are fairly uncommon in historical sociology, yet this methodology provides much insight into the phenomenon of British slave trade abolition. Using a combination of qualitative data, descriptive statistics and more advanced quantitative methods such as Exact Poisson regression and Firth's penalized logistic regression; this study demonstrates how using different methods can help to provide a more comprehensive explanation of complex historical events like British abolition.

LIMITATIONS OF THIS STUDY

I encountered two common methodological limitations in this study that historical researchers often face. The first limitation is that having a limited number of cases to work with—as is often the situation with historical research—creates difficulty in making definitive claims. For example, in both of the quantitative analyses I performed, I was limited to fewer than twenty cases (i.e., N=19). For that reason, I make no absolute conclusions throughout this dissertation. However, I do suggest that with historical research—as do many other researchers—this is often the best we can do until either new data is discovered or better methods are created. Having said this, small-N studies are on the rise, appearing more often in sociological literatures and consequently they are becoming more widely accepted among scholars. The second limitation is that I was restricted to analyzing bivariate relationships in both models because of the small sample sizes and the low event-per-variable (EPV) ratios that I encountered. While these bivariate analyses shed some light on the reasons for British slave trade abolition, there is still more work to be done by future researchers.

FUTURE RESEARCH

To complement this dissertation, further studies—both qualitative and quantitative—could determine whether the counter-framing tactics used by pro-slave trade parliamentarians weakened abolitionists arguments and if this might be reflected in voting patterns. Despite the fact that I did not thoroughly examine counter-framing tactics in my study, I can offer future scholars a glimpse into some of the oppositional themes that I encountered in my qualitative research (See: Appendix A, p.211). Like abolitionist framing, pro-slave trade framing also involved the use of moral and economic arguments to support the prolonged continuance of the trade. For that reason, British slave trade abolition warrants more in-depth study using frame analysis and more specifically the counter-framing strategies of pro-slave advocates in the parliamentary debates on the slave trade. This opens up the possibility for an avenue of future research that would further contribute to our understanding of British slave trade abolition.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

In 2007, the British Parliament commemorated the two-hundredth anniversary of the abolition of the transatlantic slave trade. Considered to be one of the most successful slave-trading countries, Great Britain together with Portugal, accounted for nearly 70 percent of all Africans transported to the Americas.[24] After a long, drawn out abolition campaign, it was declared on May 1, 1807 that "all manner of dealing and reading in the purchase, sale, barter, or transfer of slaves or of persons intending to be sold, transferred, used, or dealt with as slaves, practiced or carried in, at, or from any part of the coast or

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[24] British National Archives http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

countries of Africa shall be abolished, prohibited and declared to be unlawful."[25] But, I am left to wonder what British slave trade abolition really accomplished? That Africans had the potential to lead full and promising lives would actually take a much longer time to be realized. Although Great Britain ended the slave trade, it would take another three decades before the end of British colonial slavery would be achieved. In fact, African slaves continued to be traded within the British Caribbean islands, while thousands of slaves were born to enslaved mothers under the protective mantle of the British state (Kerr-Ritchie 2008). Similarly, the United States Congress officially ended the legal participation of its citizens in the transatlantic slave trade in 1808, but enslaved Africans continued to be traded from the Upper South to Deep South states in the domestic slave trade. In fact, the political-economic system of slavery in the United States was not legally terminated until 1865, following a civil war. Not surprisingly, slavery still exists today.

I think that for some people, it might be easier to believe that moral enlightenment due to the recognition of human suffering brought about an end to the British slave trade because that is what many early historians have argued. In this dissertation, I make no attempt to offer the reader a reassuring social explanation why the slave trade was finally abolished. Instead, I allow empirical evidence guided by social movement theory to point us toward a new interpretation of the end of the British slave trade—a historical-sociological revisionist work that, if I have succeeded, will peak the interest of other scholars and be revised beyond this study. My research journey involved going back in

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[25] British National Archives http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk

time to examine primary sources, which provided a different interpretation than what past scholars have offered. Taking abolition scholarship in a completely different direction, I investigated beyond past claims and examined what really happened during the parliamentary slave trade debates. Taking a sociological approach to understanding the slave trade has allowed for a unique examination of several factors overlooked in prior research.

In the end, this study underscores the possibility that the British slave trade was abolished when abolitionists took advantage of opportunity structures and strategically reframed their arguments economically before Parliament. The findings demonstrate there was more to ending the British slave trade than simple moral imperatives. Furthermore, this study offers insight into the reasons why nations resist pursuing costly international moral goals and allows us to formulate theories of how opportunity structures influence active responses. While the world faces humanitarian challenges such as ethnic cleansing and genocide, examining the iniquities of the transatlantic slave trade helps us to understand why human rights abuses occur unimpeded while world leaders stand by without providing aide. For example, one only needs to look at the case of present-day Syria, where the Syrian government has been launching a war of sectarian cleansing on its own population for over two years while the United Nations has been paralyzed into inaction. While current world leaders have not intervened to stop the bloodshed in Syria, and have refrained from calling it "genocide" and instead refer to it as a "civil war," the

important question to ask is why?[26] What can social movements, political opportunities and economic considerations tell us about humanitarian intervention?

According to the modern day abolition organization *Free the Slaves*, there are approximately 21 to 30 million people held in slavery today. Forced to work under threat of violence, without pay, unable to escape this fate, these individuals are contemporary examples of what could be labelled cheap, disposable people (Bales 1999). Modern day slavery is everywhere, in factories, brothels, mines, farm fields, restaurants, construction sites and also private homes. Traffickers who lure their vulnerable victims with false promises of decent employment or education have deceived many unsuspecting people. Some slaves are forced to work through physical threats on either themselves or their families, while others are trapped by debts from corrupt lenders. Slavery is illegal in every country in the world, yet it still happens nearly everywhere.

In closing, I propose the following question: could British abolition have implications in twenty-first century? In other words, can we use this analysis to investigate other instances where both society and government have turned a blind eye to other atrocities occurring throughout the contemporary world? Could this study inform future United Nations policy decisions regarding human's rights interventions? Drawing from a social movement perspective and frame analysis, the most important part of the findings is that primary historical documents point us in unique direction; that the slave trade ended only after abolitionists reframed their moral cause before Parliament. Specifically, the results indicate that in the long run economics seemed to matter more than humanitarian

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[26] According to the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights (SOHR), as of early December 2013, the number of those who were killed is estimated at more than 125,000, among who are estimated to be more than 44,000 civilians.

considerations. But in the end, that abolitionist MPs deliberately used economic strategies

to achieve abolition does not take away from their honourable ulterior motives. According

to William Wilberforce when referencing a successful roll-call vote that had just occurred

to abolish the trade:

> The generous and humane principles which had been that day unfolded, were worthy of a British parliament to teach, and of a British people to learn.

> Hansard's Parliamentary Debates. Deb 23 February 1807 vol. 8 cc994

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APPENDIX A: COUNTER-FRAMING CODING SCHEME

Frame	Definition of Frame	Moral Themes	Rationale for Argument
Moral Frames	Represents the arguments offered by pro-slave trade MPs that characterized Africans as being content as slaves, slavery as a positive opportunity and the slave trade a humane industry.	*(i) African slaves were content*	Pro-slave trade MPs argued that Africans were content being slaves
		(ii) The slave trade characterized as a humane industry	Pro-slave trade MPs labelled the slave trade as a humane industry
		(iii) Slavery was a positive opportunity for Africans	Pro-slave trade MPs claimed that slavery was a good opportunity for Africans

Frame	Definition of Frame	Economic Themes	Rationale for Argument
Economic Frames	Represents the arguments offered by pro-slave trade MPs that characterized the slave trade as profitable, crucial to Great Britain's economy, and its abolition as a potential cause of financial ruin for those involved in the trade (i.e., bankers, investors, merchants...etc.)	*(i) The slave trade characterized as profitable*	Pro-slave trade MPs argued the slave trade was a profitable industry
		(ii) The slave trade characterized as vital to Great Britain's economy	Pro-slave trade MPs characterized the slave trade industry as vital to Great Britain's economy
		(iii) Slave trade abolition equated to financial ruin	Pro-slave trade MPs argued that abolition financially ruin those involved in the business