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Angry Abolitionists & The Rhetoric of Slavery: Minding the Moral Emotions in Social Movements

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ANGRY ABOLITIONISTS & THE RHETORIC OF SLAVERY: 
MINDING THE MORAL EMOTIONS IN SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

by

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**Angry Abolitionists & The Rhetoric of Slavery: Minding the Moral Emotions in Social Movements**

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The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
ABSTRACT

Although emotion is increasingly central in theories of social change, the sociology of social movements and emotion continues to have a mix-and-stir quality. Through a microanalysis of abolitionist discourse, this dissertation observes how the two are systematically intertwined by status claimsmaking processes. To better explore the affective dynamics of protest rhetoric through which “social movements move,” I construct a new synthetic theory of status as a moral-emotional resource, dependent upon cultural imaginaries and negotiated through rhetorical implicatures. Status-oriented moral emotions—including the egocentric and altruistic types of anger examined in this case study—can be aroused, altered, and rechanneled toward reform causes via dramaturgical claimsmaking. Moving beyond the predominance of logocentric accounts of immediatist abolitionism, I incorporate ethos and pathos to refer to the status implicatures of protest rhetoric (corresponding to ethos) and the provocative effects of these status implicatures (corresponding to pathos). As performed by prominent movement leaders, both means of status claimsmaking conditioned abolitionist charisma and reconditioned audience attitudes toward slavery. The ethos-pathos orientation of speakers though varied by race and gender, suggesting that ‘charisma’ itself is a privilege structured by status hierarchies and relative risks of sanctioning. In spite of racialization and subordination within abolitionism, black activists persisted in protest through creative rhetorics, such as implicit symbolic surgery upon status-beliefs and summoning emotional energy from heterodoxic status imaginaries. The proposed framework accounts better for abolitionism’s internal and external emotional dynamics, which were not always antecedent by discernible discursive shifts. Social movement theory therefore should be more mindful of the status-oriented moral emotions as well as how protest rhetoric mines them for social change.
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§1. On Abolitionist Persistence

The constellation of cultural, political, and economic causes leading to the American Civil War has been mapped. In one form or another, the primary driver of the country’s polarization and radicalization was racial slavery and fundamental disagreements over its legitimacy and humanity, its profitability and perpetuity. Though historians will continue to produce nuanced narratives of the specific sequence of American abolition and its passage through warfare, a range of acceptable interpretations has been definitively established.¹ The antislavery ideas behind those disagreements, their cultural-historical origins and logos, have been extensively mapped as well. The seeds of antislavery thought have been traced with fine precision through millennia-old religious and philosophical traditions.

Important questions though remain concerning antislavery as process rather than outcome, and as pathos rather than logos. How did the ‘antislavery impulse’ spread and stir the imagination of antebellum folk? How did the grassroots movement for abolition maintain its crescive momentum? How did its rhetoric and rituals enflame both missionary proponents and reactionary opponents? Most of the remaining questions then are microsociological ones having to do with the rhetorical process and

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¹ While new elaborations will appear, the consensus among historians over slavery’s causal primacy is of the same degree as the consensus among climate scientists that the globe is warming because of human actions (likewise both have their fringe detractors).
temporal persistence of social movements. Microsociology studies the situational socioemotional dynamics of communicative interactions (Collins 1987; Collins 2004; Jasper 1997; Summers Effler 2010). From within a microsociological perspective, answers to the questions listed above are logically the very same as providing an account of what made antislavery discourse stick.

With the abolition of slavery the American abolitionists achieved a great victory. It was certainly celebrated as such, pyrrhic though it was. The present work, instead of reexamining the origins or outcomes of the antislavery movement, directs our attention to another part of the story, another crucial piece of the long arc of the moral universe in which history bends toward justice. I am referring to the day-to-day rituals and successes of abolitionism en route to emancipation. Just as important to the spread of antislavery thoughts and preferences—the structure of preferences and attitudes that constitutes a ‘social movement’ according to McCarthy & Zald (1977)—is the process of maintaining movement momentum, sustaining the campaign of protest or what Summers Effler (2010) refers to as movement persistence (c.f. Eyerman’s pithy statement on emotion as what ‘makes movements move’). A microsociological view of movement processes of persistence directs our lens of inquiry toward the affective dynamics of the contentious gatherings of which a social movement is composed. How does protest rhetoric work? What skills of persuasion did the abolitionists possess? What were their main techniques of provocation? What ingredients in

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2 Here noting, with Collins 1987 and Turner 2012, that the basic unit of analysis in sociological microdynamics is not the individual but relational interactional processes.

3 I am alluding to the famous line by abolitionist preacher Theodore Parker, “I do not pretend to understand the moral universe; the arc is a long one, my eye reaches but little ways; I cannot calculate the curve and complete the figure by the experience of sight; I can divide it by conscience. And from what I see I am sure it bends toward justice,” which was later paraphrased by Martin Luther King Jr.
abolitionism’s repertoires of resistance were most effective? How was such a highly unpopular movement (akin to the high-risk chronically struggling groups Summers Effler studied) so successful in the long run?4

The idea that antislavery abolitionism was a hugely successful social movement shouldn’t come as a surprise. If it does so, it is because in the last century of historical writing about American abolition, either the abolitionists were blamed for causing a needless civil war or they were dismissed as a mostly useless crew of utopian absolutists holding no sway over the real power politics of slavery. Until recently the abolitionist movement was in the main considered a failure given the devolution of deliberation into a war that no one initially counted on as being necessary for emancipation.

The tide has fully turned in abolitionism studies. A less biased appraisal of the social movement now notes its immense national impact through political developments and civil disobedience or ‘defiant power’ in Piven’s excellent discussion (Piven 2006). Immediate abolition was not a impossibly ignorant demand, it merely meant that the inevitably gradual process of emancipation should be begun immediately by banning slavery in federally owned lands (e.g. the District of Columbia

4 I have very little sympathy for the skeptics who claim abolitionism as a social movement was mostly a failure rather than mostly a success (for a recent skeptic, see Grinspan’s recent piece in The New York Times, “Was Abolitionism a Failure?” Feb. 1, 2015). By most any contemporary measure, they were in fact very successful. It is a logical fallacy to insist only on the immediate and intentional political agents of war exclusively in explaining abolition, rather than the both indirect and unintentional consequences in the long-term sequence of abolition.

Another fallacy is limiting conceptions of success to persuasion rather than including provocation or what Piven (2006) theorizes as defiance. These are disagreements about process and causality, not disagreements over the substantive systems in place.

Viewing the abolitionist social movement as successful is not the same thing as asserting that everybody in free states back then was an abolitionist, which is clearly a comforting but false myth. Abolitionists were a despised unpopular minority even in the North.
and the territories) and by not permitting any more slave states into the Union. Now it is better recognized how the Republican politics of slavery merely lagged behind early abolitionist thought. The politicians in charge after 1860 came to adopt most of the antislavery ideas and policies of immediatist abolitionists like Theodore Dwight Weld (notably a cordon policy, Oakes 2014). Further, the illegal defiant actions of black and white northerners in hosting fugitive property—‘stealing’ under federal law southerners claimed—and in resisting slave bounty-hunters—‘kidnappers’ northerners replied—utterly infuriated the South, much as federal law enforcement of the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law outraged the North. The fugitive slave issue and the question of the criminality of harboring fugitive property tore the republic apart like no other issue (see Davis 2014 for an excellent overview).

That the abolition of slavery was incredibly violent in the United States is well known. Mass emancipation through military violence, all would agree, ranks among the most significant transformative events of U.S. history. Yet, there is a dearth of investigation into the specific microsociological processes cumulatively leading up to this monumental event. The conflict over slavery did not appear overnight. It grew and widened through public rhetoric, in town halls and on the streets, mass-communication technologies, and civil society organizations. Strictly speaking, there was no conflict over slavery apart from the rhetoric of slavery.

By the phrase ‘rhetoric of slavery’ I mean to highlight the actual communicative processes of slavery’s problematization and what made them stick. Most examples of the rhetoric of slavery in this study are of formal abolitionist oratory, instances of what I
shall call oratorical rhetoric as a sub-species of rhetoric, but I have also come to see and discuss even partly sub-linguistic human emotions and actions as part of the broader anthropological rhetoric of slavery for contributing to slavery’s delegitimization.⁵

On the microdynamic level, abolitionism was the process of generating and disseminating a compelling rhetoric of slavery to discredit the institution. In the next chapter I will argue that all social movements are rhetorics in the deeper anthropological sense of seeking to remake social reality through communicative action according to their own imaginaries. Abolitionism as microsociological process was the anti-rhetoric of slavery, which is to say, creative public rhetorics against slavery is what made abolitionism ‘move’ as a temporal crescive process. Social movement persistence and expansion involves the situational exercise of multiple modes of communication, not just framing and arguing. The day-to-day rhythms and successes of abolitionism occurred on the ground and in the streets through rhetorical performances aiming to persuade and provoke. Extension of the antislavery reference group, and intensification of emotional bonds among conscience constituents, was a practical accomplishment, temporally and viscerally achieved through the unfolding rhetoric of slavery.

A common distinction is made in rhetorical criticism between the three ‘means of persuasion’ following Aristotle: logos, ethos, and pathos. Previous historical and

⁵ I define and compare oratorical rhetoric with anthropological or ‘big’ rhetoric in the next chapter. Since ‘rhetoric’ is a commonly misunderstood and abused term, including among most sociologists, I unpack contemporary rhetorical theory to sociologists a bit more fully there. While the rhetorical analysis of moral protest has been done before by many rhetoricians (see Brown and Morris 2013; and Simons et al 1984), the approach has not been nearly as influential within the sociology of social movements.
sociological accounts of abolition have primarily focused on the *logos* of antislavery thought and political debate over slavery. They prioritize the propositional argumentation about slavery and its legal justifications. These accounts emphasize the cultural, religious sources of antislavery thought and the evolution of policy proposals for abolition. But logos by itself doesn’t take us very far in understanding what finally made antislavery discourse stick.

Logocentric histories fall short when explaining the actual processes of social change, how movements publicly appeal to spectators, expand their conscience constituencies, and intensify their emotional hold over participants. As any social psychologist worth their salt knows, logos by itself usually fails to persuade. Persuasive effects if attained by a rational argument are more likely because of, what psychologists term, priming associations, halo effects and/or affect balance. The relevant microdynamic processes are social, emotional and performative. Reason by itself doesn’t inspire, energize, and convert people. Emotion does that much better (see Appiah 2006: ch. 5 for a beautiful discussion of these points). As a growing number of sociologists are finding, certain emotional experiences are absolutely central to processes of social change. The better question, then, is how are the specific ‘moral emotions’ associated with collective problem-solving efforts activated? And how is the ‘emotional re-framing’ of reality, as in a conversion experience, accomplished through movement culture and rhetoric?

Now we have entered the terrain of ethos and pathos, the two means of persuasion that I believe are more useful for understanding the political and
performative potency of protest rhetoric. Ethos refers to impressions of virtue or vice made by a speaker. Pathos to how rhetoric stirs emotional experiences in audiences. Cicero tended to associate ethos with positive affects in the presentation of self, appearances of honesty and trustworthiness. Pathos he associated more with provocation, the incitement of violent negative emotions such shame, anger, or antipathy. Incorporating ethos and pathos into the sociological lexicon of social movement studies comes not without a bending of their classical usage though. I shall use them as tools for extracting the status implicatures of protest rhetoric (loosely corresponding to ethos) and the emotional effects of these status implicatures (loosely corresponding to pathos). In my microanalysis of records of protest rhetoric, ethos-pathos configurations of status implicatures are often what makes discourse affectively stick and, as was often the case, get stuck bitterly and unpleasantly in unsympathetic spectators who found them hard to swallow.\(^6\)

The antislavery movement was successfully sustained from the ground up through rhetorical performances of ethos and pathos. Ethos and pathos are species of affect experienceable by protest audiences whether composed of like-minded constituents, casual onlookers, or detractors averse to the reform cause. The ratio-composition of these three classes of auditors matters greatly for how protest rhetoric is received and creatively adjusted. The audience social context (the reception field as I shall redescribe it in Chapter 7) exerts a strong influence over what emotional configuration of ethos-pathos is delivered by protest leaders. As we will see over and

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\(^6\) In Chapter 1’s fuller presentation of the theoretical framework, I define status and distinguish between ‘status’ in general and ‘status groups.’ There I also review the main microsociological theories that speak to the interrelations between status, rhetoric, and emotion.
over again, the emotionally intense performative powers of protest rhetoric emerge relationally from within the transpersonal social exchanges occurring at contentious gatherings.

This relates to the dissertation’s larger theme of *charisma* and its peculiar mobilizatory and inherently social nature. Charisma is a social-movement phenomena par excellence: social movements make charisma, and charisma makes social movements (Collins 2001). While the microdynamics of charisma fell out of failure for a while in social movement studies during its long detour through various forms of macrostructural theory, they have finally reentered the spotlight. Explicating how charisma works social-psychologically and moral-emotionally in protest rhetoric is the theoretical enterprise I here commence. I will show that charisma is not an individual property but a highly unequal privilege and an outcome of protest rhetoric’s situational adaptability. We will see that one of the special performative properties of protest rhetoric comes from charisma’s ability to adjust to and alter the status dynamics present in protest’s reception field.

§2. The Multimodal Style

In the nineteenth century U.S., racial slavery was a contentious ‘social problem.’ Sociologists of social problems have usefully drawn upon rhetorical theory to examine the role of communication and framing in motivating collective action. Their common social-constructivist lens does not deny the structural reality of things like inequality and deprivation. It does focus attention on how these things are perceived through
language, prototypes, and attitudes that in some social context have cultural resonance. Even the ‘property in man’ had to be problematized through frames that struck a historically-specific chord in their time. Abolitionist frames varyingly and metaphorically equated slavery with sin, tyranny, and cruelty—the three dually cognitive-affective *pathos-oriented problematizations* I analyze in Chapter 3. It is hard to imagine what the antebellum ‘conflict over slavery’ looks like apart from these communicative processes of interpretive contestation that make up the rhetoric of slavery.

Several theoretical difficulties begin to arise though with respect to the abolitionist construction of slavery as a national social problem. In a strict constructivist interpretation, all dynamism is lost: discourse or frame analysis by itself fails to explain the conversion experience, deepening or weakening levels of commitment, decreasing or heightening intensity in the slavery debate. Dissecting frames and symbols alone does not take us very far in understanding the affective processes of intension and extension in abolitionism. Discourse analysis by itself is *logocentric*. It contains no account of the actual emotional mechanisms of persuasion and provocation. And if any social practice paradigmatically exceeds language by transversing multiple modalities of communicative interaction, it is emotion. Emotional microprocesses can increase the power capabilities of a social movement, but in protest rhetoric this is a civil-society sort of power produced not by force but by voluntary status-claimsmaking.

Something fishy occurs when certain symbolic patterns are analytically crystallized into the label of ‘frame’ without any reference to the affective dimension.
Surely these symbolic patterns are characterized by more than their resemblance to the pregiven beliefs and attitudes of audiences. Most of the cultural content we label ‘frames’ are in fact new ways of expressing unoriginal ideas so as to give them extra punch in their public delivery (or ‘umph’ as Sylvan Tomkins would say). Every frame is a set of ideas packaged so as to increase their mesmerizing appeal. Frames are like a form of trance work operating through associations and suggestions, experimenting with people’s affective attachments. Their ability to hold audiences captive doesn’t come purely from within the semantic content of a frame. Their performative powers, I would venture, instead derive from the nature of the social relationship in which a frame makes sense, the socioemotional attachments reinforced or torn asunder, plus the emotionally loaded status implicatures sown into the package.

Conventional constructivist discourse theory of the mono-modal type is especially problematic for interpreting immediatist abolitionism. Many of its core movement ‘frames’ were not original to it, yet their scalar emotional intensity was undergoing change of a different kind in the 1830s through 1850s. Novel performances of ethos and pathos were scaling higher plateaus altogether, e.g. in dignified public addresses by black abolitionists, or by subversive women orators before ‘mixed’ audiences, or in the provocative eloquence of abuse which caustically violated gentry norms of deference. The affective dimension of these new forms of protest rhetoric mattered greatly for the growing power of the antislavery movement. Skeptics of abolitionism’s successes fail to appreciate these shifts in emotional tone and style, which are not unrelated to the fact that the processes of social change cannot be
observed by looking at culture alone (nor social structure; Summers Effler 2002, 2005; Turner 2007).

This is especially the case with antislavery thought having as it did a millennia-long pedigree in Christian and republican traditions. The historical life of the relevant frames far exceeded the effective problematization of slavery. Not much was absolutely new in the ideas and slogans of immediatist abolitionism in the 1830s except perhaps the emotions, their person-carriers, and their disruptive effects—these being rhetorical differences in ethos and pathos, not logos. Thus the abolitionist social movement cannot be understood fully within the parameters of the cultural turn in historical sociology. According to historian James Oakes, “Slavery has long served as the rhetorical standard against which all forms of oppression are measured. Among men and women who struggle against various forms of their own oppression, there seems to be a nearly irresistible temptation to liken themselves to slaves” (2014: 52). Regarding American abolitionism, he notes, “For a quarter of a century, from the late 1830s until Congress finally abolished slavery in Washington, D.C., in 1862, the terms of the debate never really changed...At stake was the legitimacy of slavery itself, the right versus the wrong of ‘property in man’” (2014: 68). Thus the true agency of abolitionism as a temporally escalating process must instead be located in the microdynamics of the rhetoric of slavery, the continual operation of its affective mechanisms while the discursive binaries were relatively static.

Social problems construction is a rhetorical process depending and drawing upon human emotionality. As several previous sociologists have argued, the cognitive
bias in contemporary sociology continues to hinder our understanding of culture, power, and social change (especially Collins, Jasper, Summers Effler, & Gould among others). Overcoming any cognitive bias though requires the availability of some alternative, so next I offer my definition of affect. By incorporating socioemotional context and performative effects, rhetorical theory comes closer to understanding the powerful affective dynamics of social change than the discourse analysis of strict constructivists. The main problem is constructivism’s tendency to be mono-modal in its attention to language rather than multi-modal in considering multiple registers of practical semiotic modalities such as emotion and mood. “Semiotic practices” are meaningfully embodied, socially oriented exchanges that don’t necessarily need language to unfold (Sewell 2005: 335-345).

Affect is a type of communicative action uniquely based on psychophysiological arousals of the body that engender a subjective state of qualia or tone. Affect is the umbrella term for feelings of all kinds, moods, short-term emotions and longer-lasting emotions as well. This definition situates affect in the same general class as language with respect to their common ability to become meaningful modes of communication (though both seem to have potentially useless, playful properties as well). Affective experiences are not necessarily linguistic though. Babies can cry. Adults can be

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The proposed definition of affect assumes psychophysiological coherence in the body, i.e. that feeling-states have conjoined mind-body patterns. This is an assumption that recent ‘psychological constructivists’ have called into question. Psychological constructivism as I understand it claims i. that affect is not different in nature from cognition, ii. that emotions are not ‘discrete’ in basic types, and iii. that the three main components of an emotion (physiological, subjective, and behavioral) don’t always adhere together. I am more sympathetic to the first two claims, but regarding the third, I have difficulty thinking through the subjective qualia of emotion (i.e. the feeling-states of consciousness or the subconscious) apart from some behavioral and physiological basis even if it is more purely neuronal and less observable in conventional signs of ‘arousal.’
depressed without knowing it. While not linguistic in itself, affective experiences are ‘semiotic’—they make meanings by marking the body. A blush signifies unwanted attention and embarrassment. Feelings can be recognized and/or shared through bodily cues, facial countenances, rhythm, postures, vocal pitch and tone, etc. My definition thus recognizes that affect can potentially be an autonomous mode or media of social communication (i.e. autonomous from language, not power).

As two analytically distinct but constantly overlapping modes of communication, language and affect are socially oriented and thus inherently meaningful (perhaps there are a few exceptions to this rule though). If compared directly, affect is often a more automatic or even subliminal form of intersubjective communication than language, present just as much in how things are said, the nonverbal, and what is not said. Even when accompanying a speech-utterance, affect at its core has a constitutive nonlinguistic kernel. Its media are those psychophysiological arousals experienced qualitatively and often communicated to others without our conscious permission. The main nonlinguistic medium available to affective communication is social-psychological expression and suggestion (or perhaps ‘mimesis’) occurring through embodied nonverbal cues (Summers Effler et al 2014; Blackmann 2012). Even when emotion is culturally and cognitively regulated, the affective dimension sneaks through under our radar.⁸

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⁸ Psychologists like Paul Ekman have devised sophisticated ways of detecting regulated emotion through nanosecond facial reactions; his techniques though wouldn’t apply to Hochschild ‘deep’ mode of feeling work which changes the actual affective experience or qualia itself.
In summary, the ‘specific qualities and powers’ of affect—qua distinct potentially autonomous semiotic modality—include i. unconscious automaticity and associative tendencies, ii. psychophysiological coherence, iii. embodied nonverbal communicative capabilities, and iv. strong socially oriented dispositional tendencies. The affect theory I’m articulating here is admittedly anthropocentric, though other animals undoubtedly have affective experiences as well.

_Human emotionality_ is reciprocally interconnected with culture and structure. A major weakness of many cultural and structural sociologies of emotion is that both hold purely unilinear deterministic views of emotion. Most emotion researchers in sociology either adopt a complete cultural constructionism or subscribe to some ‘structural’ interactionism in explaining emotion (Summers Effler 2005). But the in-born psychological-affective apparatus of humans—our complex palate of socioemotional instincts—is not completely passive in these relationships. Socioemotional instincts are _drivers_ of both social order and cultural change. In making this critique I’m treading on a path forged by Emirbayer and his colleagues in viewing the social-psychological modalities of affective attachments as somewhat autonomous, agentic, and constitutive (Emirbayer & Goldberg 2005; Emirbayer & Mische 1996; Emirbayer 2005;.

9 “Specific qualities and powers” (Sewell’s phrase, 2005: 345-6).
10 Regarding these characteristics of affect, Turner (2007) suggests that the greater extensive emotional palate of humans was ‘selected’ evolutionarily for its ‘fitness’ value in strengthening group-level bonds and coordination. In other words, humanity’s sophisticated emotional capabilities likely evolved for their prosocial functions. For example, guilt, embarrassment and empathy are typically seen as the quintessential ‘moral emotions’ of humans (Tangney et al 2007; Haidt 2003). They are often predicated upon the welfare of the other and prioritize the normative social order over self-interests. According to Turner, Massey and many others, human emotional capabilities evolved before linguistic capabilities. Our wider emotional palette enhanced group coordination, communication, and thus, group-level survival. The latest scientific picture of the emotional instincts stresses the “survival of the kindest,” the socially attuned and the empathetic human ancestors (de Waal 2010; 2008; Niedenthal & Brauer 2012; Keltner 2009; Haidt 2006).
The concept of affect as a semiotic modality has radical implications for how we study social-movements-and-emotions, the burgeoning sub-sub-discipline concerned with questions of social change. Scholars in the field are right to note that collective emotion frequently operates to reinforce and to counter efforts at change (Flam 2005b; Scheve 2013). The challenge then involves specifying which sort of affective experiences in particular tend to motivate and stimulate protest rhetoric. In the next chapter I point to the formative role of anger and threats mixed with optimism and creativity (c.f. Jasper 2014). Until these affective-experiential conditions are theorized more systematically, studies of social-movements-and-emotions will continue to be an ad hoc hyphenated affair.

A human emotions perspective on humanity’s socioemotional instincts and affective media of communication has the potential to move beyond the mix-and-stir quality in studies of social change. This work is off to an exciting new start in recent writings by Flam, Jasper, Summers Effler, and Turner. However, I select an alternative but sturdier foundation for the project through rhetoric, status-oriented emotions, and the creativity of action. I propose that movement orients itself through social implicatures upon a certain class of human emotions that psychologists call the moral emotions—especially anger, shame, contempt, reciprocity, among others. I believe my approach excels at explicating specific microdynamic social-psychological processes through which affect drives, mediates, and sustains protest. In particular, moral-emotional experiences derived from our group-oriented socioemotional instincts are
fostered through the implicit status claimsmaking of protest rhetoric. As a result, moral-emotional arousal during contentious performances energizes and enlivens the ‘hot cognitions’ of injustice that protest speakers and audiences together focus their attention on. Positive and negative types of affect, both ‘ethos’ and ‘pathos’ as I develop the terms, were crucial to abolitionism’s power and persistence. Status claimsmaking in protest rhetoric activates and channels moral-emotional capabilities toward historically contingent objects, in the case of abolitionism, the enslaved.11

§3. Min(d)ing the Moral Emotions

Among the moral emotions, anger in particular has a special relationship to social movement mobilization (Jasper 2014; Flam 2005b). There are many manifestations of angry affects in protest that are not purely egocentric, reactionary, or self-interested, as anger is usually perceived to be. While anger does frequently arise from status losses when externally attributed, as Kemper (2011) describes, angry feelings can also emerge when one has no ‘status stake’ in an event whatsoever. Experimenters have found that personal feelings of anger can be produced empathetically just by observing a third-party being treated unfairly (Haidt 2003). These are incredibly complicated matters, but it seems that while standards of fairness are culturally relative, our psychic sensitivity to unfairness is not.12 Anger is a common emotional expression that occurs

11 In a related way, one of the main founders of the contemporary affective neurosciences, Jaak Panksepp self-describes himself as a constructivist when dealing with the neo-cortical part of the brain but not a constructivist regarding the emotional functions of the limbic system of the brain. Some socioemotional instincts like love, fear, anger, play, grief, care and curiosity, he claims to have proven, are wired into the limbic system (Panksepp & Biven 2012).

12 The best general textbook published in the psychology of emotion writes, “we are exquisitely sensitive to who deserves what, and to cheaters” (Keltner et al, 2014, Understanding Emotions. Third Edition).
when that psychic sensitivity gets tripped. According to psychologist Haidt, “anger is perhaps the most underappreciated moral emotion.”\textsuperscript{13} As noted, the self can have little to no personal stake in the matter but still feel angry or empathetic to some perceived injustice. Of course anger can have a darker more hostile side, it often does, though we should note that very few episodes of anger actually lead to violence (Collins 2008; Malesevic 2013).

Moral emotions are embodied dispositional responses toward the fulfillment or violation of certain socioemotional expectations at least partly natural to human beings. The human animal is especially sensitive to social slights and offenses. Indeed, moral emotions including shame and anger often are egocentric, having to do with the physical and/or symbolic treatment of the self by others, but not always so.\textsuperscript{14} While sociologists may focus on the culturally constructed components of emotion, the emotional brain seems at least partly hard-wired to be responsive to community, reciprocity, and status offense.\textsuperscript{15} The difficulty is with defining ‘moral’ precisely here, which clearly is not equivalent to ‘ethical’ or ‘egalitarian’ or even ‘altruistic.’ On this point Haidt acknowledges that, “there is no neat division between the moral emotions

\textsuperscript{13} Social-psychological experiments have conclusively shown that even third-party witnesses experience the dispositional arousal of anger that is desirous of corrective action. The full Haidt quote: “Anger is perhaps the most underappreciated moral emotion. A search of PsycINFO shows that anger is usually thought of as an immorl emotion…..a dark primal urge that must be suppressed by cultural and educational forces. But for every spectacular display of angry violence, there are many more mundane cases of people indignantly standing up for what is right or angrily demanding justice for themselves or others” (Haidt 2003: 856)

\textsuperscript{14} I thus disagree with Jonathan Haidt that moral emotions are defined by ‘disinterested’ elicitors (Haidt 2003). Moral emotions can be oriented upon the status of the self and still count as moral. Other sociologists though have noted the social functioning of shame (Scheff 1988; Kleres 2005).

\textsuperscript{15} This is no naturalistic ethics though. Moral emotions, probably more often than not, express and reinforce social hierarchies and inequalities given the cultural-moral legitimacy of the social order. Prosocial emotions are not necessarily ‘positive’ and they definitely can be downright unethical by most any contemporary ethical standard (Flam 2009).
and the nonmoral emotions” (2003: 854). Many emotions ranging from envy, grief to
disgust could be or become a moral emotion if community-oriented values are at stake
(including status-oriented emotions).

The moral emotion category has in fact recently been expanded to include a
wider range of emotions, including but not limited to guilt, outrage, feelings of
unfairness, a sense of social debt, loyalty, reciprocity, anger or indignation, etc., a list
that evokes many of the most important emotions in social movements. It is quite
probable that moral emotions derive their exceptional energy from our naturalistic
sensitivities to the group and to social wrongs. Moral emotions are the affective
mechanisms of humanity’s natural sociability, helping to explain why humans are so
socially oriented, or perhaps why a long period of involuntary solitude in itself is
considered a form of torture. They are a communicative mode of our embodied
engagement with events in the social world.

Moral emotions are merely embodied-dispositional tendencies arising from the
group-attuning instincts of the human animal. But they are powerful affective social-
psychological mechanisms. While partly ‘hard wired’ in humans, moral emotions are
not ‘naturally’ directed toward the dispossessed or enslaved. They had to be re-wired
through new imaginary maps, which is to say, by new moral cartographers and
practical map-readers. To put it more simply, moral emotions were attached to the

16 This of course does not mean that humans have natural moral emotions toward marginalized groups (I
wish they did!). Nor that the basis of social change is merely an expression of these pre-existing
sympathies. Moral emotions in themselves tend to be a ‘conservative’ force, i.e. desirous of social order
(vertically and horizontally) and hostile to social deviance. Our socioemotional instincts for empathy or
‘fellow feeling’ are strongly biased toward homophily and localism as even Adam Smith was aware.
Considered in the abstract, our biological moral-emotionality is ethically blind. Unfortunately then, the
moral emotions by themselves do not make a good basis for critical theory (contra the current vogue for
slave by moral entrepreneurs and their rhetorical performances over time. Stimulating or ‘mining’ the emotional instincts to reconstitute and intensify reference group allegiances is a central task of social movements.

The existence of moral-emotional capabilities or instincts is precisely why status claimsmaking is so important to social movement processes of mobilization and persistence. Status-rhetoric appeals to the socioemotional instincts for community, reciprocity and higher worth.\(^\text{17}\) It enables the formation of new protest reference groups, resocialization in different feeling rules, and the critical emotional energies of solidarity and stamina (see Collins 2001 for a related view). Status claimsmaking is a powerful affective instrument of charismatic leaders during contentious gatherings. It can potentially reconfigure human moral-emotional capacities and attachments. Social movements mine for the moral emotions because of their social-psychological powers over us. Sociologists then would be wise to keep them in mind.

Among the most effective of the moral emotions for ensuring movement momentum is anger. Anger is one of the most observed and most researched among the recurrent emotions of social movements (see Flam 2005b for an overview). Some social movement researchers go as far as to label it a sort of ‘prerequisite for protest.’ Anger is what is known as a “potency emotion” (Shieman 2006; Collins 1990; Fridja 1986). It activates adrenaline and preps the body for action, disposing one to

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\(^{17}\) Psychologists of emotion more commonly distinguish between four classes of socioemotional ‘instincts’: attachment, assertion, affection, and out-group aversion (see Keltner et al 2004).
corrective action and summons the psychic energy needed to overcome inhibitive fears. Black women activists in the Civil Rights movement intentionally sought anger as a resource to surmount fears of the consequences of protest (Robnett 1997).

Engendering collective anger enabled gay and lesbian activists to resist stigmatization and shame in ACT UP (Gould 2009). Anger at being humiliated by the government motivated Chinese student activists to march on Tiananmen Square (Yang 2005).

Feelings of anger, like shame and several other emotions, also have recursive self-producing effects, i.e. expressing anger by itself can increase feelings of anger (through what is no doubt a complicated affective-cognitive circuitry of the brain).

According to recent psychologists, the expression of anger can be healthy and quite effective in producing socially desired effects (Kasdan and Biswas-Diener 2014). Contrary then to impressions that anger is a reactionary, egotistical or counterproductive emotion, anger in fact can be used progressively, collectively, and respectfully, though it is perhaps more often than not seen as uncivil and rude today.

Anger is a potent emotional resource for instigating and maintaining resistance, being almost necessary to feel if there is a high chance of repression by more powerful elites.

However, because of hegemonic emotion cultures and structures of domination, anger among other contentious emotions are a very unequal resource. Criminologists posit higher levels of chronic frustration (qua anger without relief) among poorer social classes. Some have found that the chronic accumulation of negative affects of strain and stress increase the likelihood of criminal behavior (Agnew 1992). The most comprehensive sociological studies though have shown that the probability of feeling anger has a nonlinear relationship with social class (Collette & Lizardo 2010). Anger is
more common at the polar extremes of class structure: in chronic frustrations and angry moods among the poor, on one side, and acute expressions of anger among elites toward their status-subordinates, on the other (Collette & Lizardo 2010; also see Shieman 2006). If feeling anger is a near universal experience, the privilege of expressing anger at work is usually not. No one is supposed to express anger to superordinates. Rather, as Flam observes, “Positive feelings flow up and negative feelings flow down the social hierarchy” (Flam 2005b: 22). Members of status-subordinated groups are expected to contain their anger or, if anything, introject it through shame and self-blame.

Anger is considered by most social scientists to be a universal or primary emotion (though arguably not universally ‘discrete’ from other emotions and cognitions). There is undeniably a biological psychophysiological system associated with anger arousal. However, we also know that the experience and expression of anger varies immensely across cultures and across institutional realms (Hochschild 2003; Lively & Heise 2003). In professional white-collar occupations in the contemporary U.S., the suppression of anger is expected and routinized for all but the top (Schieman 2006). Workers must be capable of the ‘deep management’ of anger, changing not only the display of an emotion, but adjusting the emotional experience itself, or risk being fired (Hochschild 2003, 1983). Thus anger and other universal human emotions are still quite malleable by social context. It seems the affective architecture of humans, that bundle of socioemotional instincts, can be demolished and rebuilt—though one would not expect complete reconstructions to be without residual trauma.
Emotions are distributed unequally across social classes, not only in disparate rates of negative affects, but also in the privileges and risks in expressing ‘outlaw emotions’ such as anger (Jaggar 1989). This has important implications for how social movement emotions are studied. Status inequalities internal to movements bestow various emotional privileges upon movement elites. For a variety of reasons including the racializing stereotypes of minorities as uncivilized and aggressive, the repercussions and dangers of asserting anger in public can be greater for status-subordinated movement participants. As a result, minority activists are compelled to resort to various rhetorical strategies in reaction to such affect-suppression status binds. In Chapter 7 I shall describe how abolitionist women were socially compelled to orient most of their public rhetoric upon the production of positive affects in the presentation of the self (ethos) instead of the negative emotions of pathos. Likewise black women orators did enormous emotion work in the form of affect suppression to lessen the chances of backlash. Interestingly, Frederick Douglass navigated the status-binds somewhere in between affect-suppression on one hand and the freedom to speak abusively on the other. In American society past and present, the emotional resource of anger intersects with race, class, gender, sexuality and other bases of social stratification.

Though often labeled a ‘negative emotion,’ anger has the same prosocial character as other moral emotions. Anger can even reveal an intuitive empathetic kernel when activated in those third-party witnesses. I can be angry at your disadvantage, your experience of disrespect and unfairness, even though I am personally unaffected and relatively privileged. Such cosmopolitan instances of anger
abounded in abolitionist history as we will see in the following chapters. Thus I make a
distinction between altruistic anger and egocentric anger. Altruistic anger is especially
important in understanding the external emotional dynamics of a movement, how it
appeals to and stirs up a conscience constituency, as Collins (1990) notes, often after
disturbingly publicized instances of martyrdom. These are the emotional
microdynamics of extension.

Regarding the internal emotional dynamics of social movements though (the
microdynamics of intension), egocentric anger production is even more efficacious in
sustaining momentum than altruistic anger. As a moral emotion, anger of this type
corresponds to the socioemotional instincts toward assertion. Analysis of abolitionist
public speeches shows how protest rhetoric targeted, stimulated, and redirected
egocentric anger toward movement goals. Egocentric moral-emotional experiences
including anger are aroused through status claimsmaking, e.g. emotions of pride and
shame having to do with the reputation of the self and the honor of one’s local
compatriots. This fits with the theory that moral emotions do not have natural outlets
other than a strong in-group bias. The distinction between altruistic and egocentric
anger is a blurry one though. Even when anger erupts at a perceived insult to the self,
from a personal experience of a status-power threat, the trigger is often the perception
of injustice, some illegitimate moral violation of reciprocity and the social order.

There is a deep historical irony here and an important lesson to be learned about
the processes of social change. Past historians egregiously criticized specific
abolitionists for not really caring about racial equality. Abolitionists, white and black,
were dismissed for being overly obsessed with their own status rather than truly concerned about the violence of slavery and black civil rights. The rhetoric of anti-slavery was hence demythologized as a mask of the crude politics of mostly white men’s reputations. My account of angry abolitionist rhetoric indicates exactly what’s wrong with this widespread historical-ethical skepticism. Key to movement microdynamics is not suppressing the status-sensitive socioemotional instincts of assertion but rather appeasing and harnessing them toward local reciprocity, for instance, through ego-syntonic status implicatures that align them better with ethical projects. For example, the story of Wendell Phillips that opens the next chapter considers how he marshaled very provincial prides—in Boston, Massachusetts, New England—in service of resisting the slave bounty-hunting business. The theory of status rhetoric thus cuts through humanitarian discourse to uncover the necessary entanglement in moral protest of the status of the self and the status of the other. The two be nonviciously twined together. It is not that mobilizatory anger is always altruistic but that even egocentric anger can be usefully marshaled through status claimsmaking of protest rhetoric for collective problem-solving creativity. If there is a necessary narcissism in moral protest, it is not necessarily a destructive one. Increasing the status of the self is not necessarily at odds with increasing the status of the other. Even when they are at odds, ego-syntonic status assertions can be surprisingly progressive. In a human emotions perspective, the entire neo-Kantian dualism between altruism—pure ‘moral duty’—and egocentric action crumbles.

Abolitionist rhetoric is remarkable for seamlessly blurring altruistic- and egocentric- moral emotions together in an immensely productive way. In most
abolitionist discourse, it’s impossible to separate more egoistically produced status-oriented anger from more altruistic third-party indignation toward the sufferings of distant strangers (the cultural definition of ‘humanitarianism’ proposed in Stamatov 2013). Abolitionists marshaled, transmuted, and channeled egocentric angers into the quintessential social-movement emotions of indignation, outrage, and moral righteousness. How the microsociological processes of abolitionist persistence worked through protest rhetoric though is not adequately accounted for by Collins’s ritual theory because of his view of emotional energy as an outcome of ritual elements internal to the ‘situation’ relatively removed from status inequalities, and because of his rather restrictive ‘horizontal’ conception of social status (see my review of ritual theory and the Collins-Kemper debate in the next chapter). Ritual theory actually thwarts an appreciation of how antislavery frames acquired their affective ‘umph’ through status claims-making, which in turn was conditioned by the macrocultural frames (or status-beliefs) contained in widely distributed and socially accepted stereotypes (Ridgeway 2011). In my own formulation, the abundant status implicatures and alternative status imaginaries embedded in protest rhetoric linked egocentric emotions in audiences to the humanitarian cause of abolition.

Regarding one last hornet’s nest then before we begin, the confounding question of ‘moral progress.’ My account of the collective-action functions of status-oriented rhetoric resonates with recent philosophers of ethics who concretize moral progress as the work of ever expanding our localistic group-based socioemotional instincts—a fragile nonlinear project it would seem. I suggest that by following this pathway through the story of American abolition we may come to learn more about the
nature of social change itself and, as philosopher Appiah (2010) says, what makes ‘moral revolutions’ happen.

### §4. Overview of the Chapters

Historians of abolitionism are likely to be wary of my characterization of the abolitionists as ‘angry’ and as highly concerned with ‘status.’ Similar concepts in the functionalist collective-behavior tradition were used to dismiss the abolitionists as irrational apolitical fanatics in mid twentieth century scholarship. In the first chapter, I contrast my theory of status rhetoric and emotion to these previous reductionist accounts. Then I turn toward the debates raging in the sociology of emotion to show how they can speak to the interrelations between status, rhetoric and emotion. The final section telescopes outward to introduce a *big rhetoric* perspective to the sociology of social movements and emotion. There I embed possibilities for the condition of social movements within the broader anthropological horizons of homo rhetoricus, human emotionality, and the theory of creative action.

While the abolition of slavery is a neglected topic in sociology, it has received scores of attention from historians, exponentially so in recent years. Chapter 2 delves into several historiographical issues in the study of American abolitionism. I provide an overview of the most current historical data on the abolitionist movement regarding what social groups were more likely to be attracted to it and participate in it. I pay particular attention to the religious nature of the social movement and how that conditioned its organizational structure. The goal of this chapter is to both
contextualize abolitionism historically and offer a more precise conception of the movement’s scope.

In chapter 3 we see that the problematization of slavery through abolitionist discourse was as much an affective process as a cognitive one. Through the rhetorical performances of pathos, slavery was imagined intermittently as a national sin, a corruption of power, and a form of cruelty violating human sentiments. Abolitionist leaders drew upon these historically available emotional frames to construct slavery as an outrage. Successful frame-alignment produced experiences of moral pathos in the audience, i.e. horror over the nature of slavery and guilt at one’s personal complicity with it.

The next trilogy of chapters investigates the dynamics and dilemmas of black abolitionism. As public speakers black abolitionists were racialized and marginalized by predominantly white antislavery organizations. The segmented structure of the abolitionist movement presents a chance to analyze status inequalities internal to social movements. I am especially curious how status subordination altered the emotional expressions and experiences of protest rhetoric. Black abolitionist discourse developed distinctive indexical properties out of greater personal, familial, and historical experience with slavery as well as from a higher vulnerability to the violence and disrespects of northern racism. Quite reflexively, black abolitionists formulated a rhetoric oriented upon the telos of social recognition in response to the racial blindesses of their white colleagues. As I envision it, the rhetoric of recognition takes a more direct approach in appealing to the moral emotions through rational arguments
(logos) about the nature of humanity and human flourishing than status rhetoric, though the two overlap quite a bit.

Positions of status subordination limited public speaking opportunities and possibilities. Status structures gave rise to emotional inequalities that I analyze in chapter 5 under the category of black public speaking status binds (and again in chapter 8 under ethos work). Throughout the dissertation I document instances of emotional inequality and emotional privilege, for example, in social situations tolerating white abolitionist expressions of anger but requiring black abolitionists to suppress such intense affect, or risk violent backlash (antebellum cases of physical assault on black public speakers are too numerous to count). However, black abolitionists were always attempting to surmount the status-binds in disparately creative ways. This often meant performing respectability on stage while being tokenized as a representative of the “sable” race.

In chapter 6 I discuss several distinctive features of religious forms of status claimsmaking in black abolitionist speech. Performances of the sacred were, to some extent, another method for resisting internal status subordination within the movement. They were also embodied demonstrations of ethos to a wider public, an argument through character for racial equality and citizenship. Hybrid forms of status claimsmaking emerged among black antislavery ministers, such as hermeneutic appropriations of sacred narratives (a racial ecclesiology) and performances of high spiritual status (elevation exhortations).
Chapter 7 examines protest rhetoric from the point of view of the audience. For this query I reconstructed elements of audience affective experience using nineteenth century newspaper transcriptions of antislavery meetings. Through textual traces of audience actions and interruptions we can observe the intense emotional effects of status-rhetoric upon audiences. We also can see why rhetorical ‘success’ in abolitionism was not equivalent necessarily to achieving persuasion through positive affects. In the abolitionist tactic of agitation, heightening dissensus was often just as effective in bringing about emancipation over the long run (Piven 2006). In stenographic records of abolitionist oratory we can observe the production of violent negative emotions, e.g. audience dismay, contempt, and backlash. As I will show, many audiences were especially enraged by the abolitionist performance of alternative racial status imaginaries. In that chapter I construct a theory of reception fields to describe the the emergence of charisma through interactive status dynamics between speakers and listeners.

One reason abolitionism has attracted so much historical attention in the United States is because, by most accounts, from it originated the early women’s rights movement (in several accounts, after American women were excluded from the famed 1840 World Convention in London). Chapter 8 again analyzes status binds and emotional inequalities in public speaking but this time due to gender status subordination, given the imminent threat of backlash against the gender deviances of women abolitionist rhetors. What motivated some abolitionist women to take extreme rhetorical risks in the face of enormous social opposition? This leads me to compare two classes of ‘feminist-abolitionism.’ Comparing ethos work across the two types
sheds light on how emotional inequalities get translated into protest rhetoric and its status implicatures. *Patrician-feminists* were able to overcome public-speaking status binds through a habitus of formal education and social privilege. Relatively deprived, the *prophetic-feminists* resorted more to a religious habitus and theological vision to overcome those same gender binds. I theorize this practice of spiritual coping as a sort of status summoning that enabled a risk-immune style of public speaking ‘inspired by the spirit.’ Status summoning refers to the creative extraction of emotional energy, contra interaction ritual theory, from culturally autonomous religious formations and their alternative status imaginaries.

My conclusion returns to the broader historical significance of the abolitionist movement and its processual role in pushing forward the longer sequence of mass emancipation in the United States. To supplement the ‘macro’ historical account, I argue that the microdynamics of status rhetoric and emotion were mediating ‘path dependent’ factors. Why was the abolition of slavery in the United States so violent, is the right question to ask here. Evidence is not hard to find regarding just how infuriating abolitionist rhetoric and actions were to Southern political elites. As in the previous chapter on gender deviance in rhetoric, I draw upon *moral panic* theory to take a new angle on the old question of civil war causation. Admittedly a bit more speculative empirically than the prior chapters, I propose that abolitionist experimentations with antebellum status imaginaries, especially the dominant imaginaries of race and gender, were not only provocative but also a pivotal wedge in the escalation of conflict. The spectre of citizenship, white-male ethnic supremacy
versus the formal-legal equalization of status, was the point of contention where no compromise could be imagined.
Chapter 1
Indignant Hearts

The abolitionist community of antebellum Boston felt fervent pride in their port city. They constantly invoked beloved local memories of independence and revolution. Boston represented freedom and independence from tyranny, the deep national values and scripts religiously reaffirmed at antislavery public speeches and festivals. The city was also known as the intellectual capital of the nation in philosophical prestige and freethought, a different but similar expression of those same sentiments for independence. Abolitionist intellectuals tried to extend the honorable harbinger reputation of their home to the problem of slavery. They spoke of slavery as a deprivation of rights and a form of tyranny much worse than the ‘taxation without representation’ that a prior generation of Bostonians revolted against.

Lawyer turned-activist Wendell Phillips along with several other Boston abolitionists formed a Vigilante Committee to organize city safe havens for fugitives and to arrange for sources of aid to free blacks. After Congress passed the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law upping the punishments for such activities, their pride in Boston as the beacon of liberty took a terrible hit. The new law harshly punished any citizen who aided a fugitive slave, and it greatly increased the vulnerability of free blacks to abduction into slavery. Not only a symbolic affront, it was also an all-too-real political encroachment upon their home by the corrupt “Slave Power.” Quite soon after the 1850 compromise, conflicts between law enforcers and law resisters erupted in the streets.
In 1851, Thomas Sims found shelter in a Boston boardinghouse after his long flight from enslavement in Georgia. He received aid from Boston’s own underground Vigilante Committee. In April of that year, Sims was recognized on the street by slave bounty-hunters and then arrested by federal commissioners. Especially enraging to former lawyer Wendell Phillips and his colleagues, Sims was held prisoner within the walls of the downtown courthouse. To make an example of Sims the makeshift prison was guarded by hundreds of subpoenaed soldiers. The vivid images of federal force and ‘standing armies’ were anathema to the city’s ardent republican sentiments. Adding insult to injury, heavy metal chains were draped across the front doors of the courthouse. To antislavery sympathizers this could be nothing but an omen of the nefarious national ambitions of southern politicians who seemed so willing to infringe upon the rights of northerners.

Behind the scenes, the Vigilante Committee plotted its options. Plans ranged in consideration from a prison-break rescue to bribing the sailors who would likely transport Sims back to slavery. As lawyers pleaded futilely on his behalf, an open air meeting assembled in the Boston Commons. There Phillips raised his sonorous voice and called upon the public masses to free Sims by any means necessary.

Should any officer under this law or any other, attempt to take wife or relative of mine into bondage, I should feel justified, by every law of God and man, in shooting that officer. What I should do myself, I am ready to countenance every other man doing. Our laws in general, and this one in particular, puts the slave out of the pale of society; it utterly disfranchises him, denies him all shadow of protection. He is covered by no civil protection, bound by no civil duty; he is remitted back to his natural rights. In his case, I would fill my pockets with pistols, and thus secure myself a trial by a Massachusetts jury. The sympathies of the people would gather round such a man, put on trial

18 Note: in this passage Phillips is supposing what he would feel if he were black in Boston.
for such an offence. The mortal hatred which would set the hounds of the
law, thirsty for our blood, all on keener scent if we stood charged with legal
offences, would not reach him. *The instinctive sense of right, from which no
people, however base, can wholly free themselves would be his protection.*

With regard to ourselves, I wish Massachusetts men would crowd our
streets, and surround that chained Court House in hundreds of thousands; I
would that if this vile deed is to be done, it should be done in the presence of
as many *indignant hearts* as possible; that they should be obliged, in taking
that unhappy man away, to walk over our heads. *It will be a damning
disgrace to Massachusetts,* if a man standing on free soil, and entitled to the
presumption that he is a freeman, is dragged from her limits back to
bondage, without a jury trial, without any thing worthy of the name of a trial
or of evidence against him. It will be a damning disgrace if such a man can
be dragged back without the rails of every rail track being torn up, without
every village on the route rising en masse to block the wheels of Government
(*The Liberator* April 11, 1851; *emphasis mine*).

In this impromptu public speech, Phillips rested the honor of all Massachusetts upon
the fate of Sims. He warned his audience twice of the imminent threat of “damning
disgrace” to their home state. Prominent leader of the abolitionist movement, Phillips
excelled at maximizing the violent sentiments of his audiences (pathos). He gave them
scripts for experiencing righteous anger—our ‘indignant hearts,’ our ‘instinctive sense
of right’—framing the situation as one of a trial by public opinion.¹⁹ Phillips’s immediate
intention was to organize a local massive response of defiant power—*ready yourselves
to tear up ‘every rail’ necessary* to obstruct law enforcement and to resist the forcible
rendition of Sims back to the land of slavery that he risked his life to escape from.

In his public plea on behalf of Sims, Phillips encouraged his onlookers to
participate in imminent *contentious gatherings.* Tilly (2008) defines social movements
as complexes of public collective performances, that is, a sustained campaign of

¹⁹ In *Slavery By Trial,* DeLombard (2007) recently showed how legal metaphors of trial by public opinion
saturated abolitionist thinking and strategy.
reform-related contentious gatherings in which public claimsmaking is dramatized on behalf of some who are not present in addition to the gathered claimants.\(^2\) As Tilly (2008; 1995) has extensively documented, nineteenth-century movements drew upon and adapted relatively stable repertoires of collective action. The emerging scripts of the nineteenth-century looked to contentious gatherings for the expression of popular sovereignty or what Phillips longingly called ‘the trial of public opinion.’ In the democratic imaginary, the larger and more committed the claimsmakers, the closer the will of the people was approximated. Phillips enacted these new repertoire scripts in his proclamations for worthy Massachusetts “men to crowd the streets” and “every village on the route rising en masse” to join the protest. What’s going on here? Mainly Phillips is attempting to organize a ‘WUNC-display,’ Tilly’s shorthand for public social movement demonstrations of Worthiness, Unity, Numbers and Commitment (Tilly 2008: 121; I return to the conceptualization of WUNC displays in a later chapter).

Abolitionist demonstrations did try to publicly perform and dramatize the will of the people. But they were also performances oriented upon \textit{status} in a more general sense.\(^2\) Status in interactionist sociology refers to the evaluative sociocognitive processes of assigning people and treating them with different levels of prestige, worthiness, deference and respect (I shall review several competing theories of status below). Abolitionist meetings and speeches were replete with what I label \textit{status}

\(^2\) According to Tilly, nineteenth-century movements learned and adapted long-enduring repertoires of collective action to local contexts. The very form of the ‘social movement’ and its demonstrations was contingently assembled together from nineteenth-century scripts combining petitioning, meeting in public, new political ideas about popular sovereignty, and single-issue reform organizations such as anti-slavery societies (c.f. Rudbeck 2012)

\(^2\) Tilly’s theory of contentious performances is only minimally ‘performative.’ He avoids the well-established intellectual tradition of performance theory (see Eyerman 2005 for discussion).
claimsmaking or status-rhetoric to understand the main charismatic processes and tools of reform orators. Abolitionists made positive status claims on behalf of their antislavery societies and antislavery reference groups. Early British and American reformers were perpetually commemorated and hailed as saintly and courageous. Other abolitionist attendees were assured of their moral righteousness and character in displaying sensibilities toward the enslaved. Much of abolitionist rhetoric was devoted to degrading the status of slaveholders and of other opponents of the antislavery reference group. A common insult in the rhetoric of slavery was to accuse one’s opponents of a lack of feeling. According to the moral grammar of late eighteenth century sentimentalism, insensitivity to the bodily pain of others was a troubling sign of inhumanity (Abruzzo 2011). The main problem with slaveholding, in sentimental and republican emotional frames, is that masters could not resist the temptation to abuse their power and become cruel (see chapter 3 on the dominant emotional frames of abolitionism).

The arrest of Sims was an event for Boston abolitionists not unlike Phillips’s conversion experience to radical abolitionism after the 1837 murder of antislavery printer Elijah Lovejoy. ‘Events’ in historical sociology refer to transformations in durable cultural-and-social structures (Sewell 2005; Sewell 1996). Turning point events in the life course of social movements are usually emotionally intense (Eyerman 2005). They can result in sudden changes in the overall movement tone and mood, what Yang (2005) calls “critical emotional events” defined by their escalating or de-escalating
effects upon collective organization. Events to social movements excite the emotions and motivate redefinitions of the situation through performative and dramaturgical discourse. They unfold through the shifting relationships between movement challengers, opponents and onlookers (Yang 2005).

Federal military enforcement of the Fugitive Slave Law was one such critical emotional event for the immediatist abolitionists of Boston. It triggered local shame, feelings of despair and powerlessness, and thus outrage. Social movements ‘move’ through acts of emotional transformation (Collins 2001; Eyerman 2005). Their persistence depends upon amplifying initiating emotions and/or transmuting pangs of frustration (Collins 2001). Maintaining movement momentum depends upon successfully transforming feelings of loss and shame into more potent emotions. Likewise Phillips attempted to stir “indignant hearts” on behalf of Sims through both egocentric anger and altruistic anger. He promoted altruistic anger by framing Sims as a martyr of injustice, a victim of the Slave Power. Bostonians who had never heard of Sims before were encouraged to identify and empathize with him. Even third-party spectators could be moved by the unfairness of his plight. When angry feelings are attached to some specific offending object, slave bounty-hunting, the arrest of Sims, arming the courthouse, anger morphs into moral indignation (according to Hochschild 1983: 236).

Collins (1990, 2001) would understand the incidence of protest rhetoric as part of the ritual processes that sustain social movements through which they re-generate

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22 Yang 2005: 81; Kleres 2005 describes how the fall of the Berlin wall led to the demobilization of eastern German gay and lesbian activism.
group solidarity. Manifestations of that emotional energy include the potency emotions of indignation and feelings of righteous anger toward ritual offenders. Yet according to the predictions of ritual theory, the collective emotions of righteous anger would primarily flow from ingredients of the ritual that heighten solidarity, such as joint attention, rhythmic entrainment, mood, and exclusion of outsiders. Righteous anger emerges when the resultant moral-sacred solidarity of the group, its sense and symbols of itself, is perceived to be violated (Collins 1990). While these ingredients are indeed important conditions of the process of emotional transformation, they do not capture the main affective mechanisms by which Phillips’s protest rhetoric acquires its spur in this case.\(^2\)

As a result of the trafficking of Sims back to slavery, abolitionist rhetoric grew even more angry and apocalyptic. When one’s reference group experiences a sudden loss in self-images of status and power, with that loss being attributable to the specific agency of someone else, feelings of anger tend to follow as Kemper describes (Kemper 2011). Even more than appeals to altruism, Phillips devotes much of his speech upon these more egocentric feelings of anger. He aims to link up his audience’s claims to status with the fate of Sims. In Phillips’s rhetorical imagination, the status of all Massachusetts men rises and falls with the outcome of this event. The speech thus dramatizes the competition for status itself through a host of accompanying social implicatures. The implicit status claimsmaking contained therein seems to accomplish a fair share of the social-movement task of emotional

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\(^{23}\) Later in this chapter I shall more fully compare Collins’s interaction ritual theory with other alternatives in the sociology of emotion.
transformation, i.e. increasing levels of anger and outrage by constructing perceptions of an imminent status threat.

Righteous anger was the dominant movement mood of immediatist abolitionism. But the experience of indignant hearts was surely an overdetermined one and rife with inequality. The abolitionists were angry for many different reasons. Diverse abolitionists felt different kinds and levels of anger toward different perceived injustices. Antislavery emotions were conditioned and mediated by thoroughly religious symbols and narratives. The abolitionists felt righteous contempt for the wicked powers of the world. Some developed a prophetic style of condemning the nation for its sins. Because of racial and gendered inequalities, some expressions of anger were not tolerated among some groups internal to abolitionism (Chapters 4, 5, and 8 extend this particular point). Marginalized by the movement, many black abolitionists were tired of constant disrespect in civil society and chronic stereotyping by their white colleagues. Some feared for the lives of their families or feared their own abduction by slave-traffickers. In general the abolitionists, white and black, were frustrated with their relative powerlessness and found anger to be an effective emotion for summoning continued confidence and strength when the situation seemed to be worsening.

In present work I zero in on the moral-emotional functions and consequences of the dramatization of status in protest rhetoric. I find that charismatic protest leaders were movement participants who, through relational experiences with audiences, learned how to arouse and channel moral-emotional sentiments toward historically
contingent outlets. As I shall extensively document, the main way charismatic abolitionist leaders accomplished this feat was through artful implicit status claimsmaking in antislavery argumentation. In public squares and religious churches, antislavery sympathizers were praised for their conscience and character. They were also challenged to stay true to the antislavery lifestyle and not compromise their moral purity. Conversely, hecklers and compromisers were masterfully belittled and shamed by orators who invented the eloquence of (ad hominem) abuse as mastered by Wendell Phillips, Sojourner Truth, Angelina Grimké and Frederick Douglass. The dissertation consists in a hybrid microsociological-rhetorical analysis of the abolitionist oratory of these four individuals and several other prominent abolitionist leaders.

The talents these abolitionists had for mesmerizing audiences, their charisma, was the accumulated learning over many oratorical experimentations. Many of their creative rhetorical experimentations, including both successful zingers and lines that fell flat, have been historically recorded. Newspaper accounts of their speeches that include applause lines read like an instruction manual in eloquence (see especially Chapter 7). Through a close reading, an affective hermeneutics we could say, their tricks can be uncovered. Much of the emotional intensity, I have found, was produced by their performative experimentations upon the dominant racial and gender status imaginaries of their social context. Explicating the affective processes involved

Social movements do more than construct frames and emotions—they respond to human suffering and attune themselves to somewhat natural socioemotional instincts. I will argue that perceptions of fairness and cruelty are of course culturally relative, but that the human sensitivity to social unfairness is not. Pities for the enslaved are historically contingent, capacities for interpersonal empathy are not. My question includes but extends beyond how social movements construct emotions through frames; I’m also interested in how social movements activate, attune and attach human emotional instincts to contingently perceived objects.
required a dramaturgical interactionist lens to follow the symbolic happenings of status during their oratory. I thus came to see a theoretical need to treat status itself as a creative, adaptable, and nearly inexhaustible emotional resource for social movement processes. Status claimsmaking is like a money tree in this regard. Reconstituting status imaginaries was a resource for mobilization through outrage and for movement persistence through embattlement and martyrdom. Furthermore, the status implicatures of their protest rhetoric contributed to the social construction of slavery as a national problem. It made their rhetorical performances that attached perceptions of unfairness to slavery more compelling. In my view, the problematization of slavery was historically contingent, but the socioemotional status sensitivities entailed in the process were not. Social movement theory therefore must thus be mindful of the moral emotions to fully understand collective action processes of mobilization and persistence. Our theoretical minding of the moral emotions corresponds to their practical mining of them.

BRINGING STATUS BACK IN

Since most social movement participants are outsiders to the ‘halls of power,’ their dependence upon the rhetoric of status in cultivating moral influence is much more fundamental than previously acknowledged (though hinted at in Tilly’s WUNC displays concept). Efforts to bring status back into social movement studies, however, must navigate between the two major mistakes of past theories of ‘collective behavior.’ On one hand, many critical theorists subscribed to a voluntaristic overemphasis on
affective manipulation by charismatic leaders. On the other hand, many mid-century sociologists conflated status deterministically with large reified social structures like class and ethnicity.

The public contentious gatherings of social movements are typically comprised of political outsiders or non-elites who participate in symbolic demonstrations external to the headquarters of power (Tilly 2008; Staggenborg 2011; Goldberg 1991). Grassroots protesters either lack access or refuse the resources of coercion. This does not mean they are without power. It does mean though that social movements strive to cultivate a different form of power, namely, moral influence. The ‘call to arms’ of social movement mobilization is mostly figurative. Successful performances of moral authority derive from an altogether different game, that of symbolic politics (Gusfield 1986). Movement activists struggle to project high status in the eyes of civil society, to compete for public attention, and to convert their status claims into moral influence. They rely upon and often excel at status claimsmaking for purposes of both persuasion and provocation.

A common theoretical convention, inherited from Weber, is to distinguish between status and power in interpreting two different but overlapping dimensions of social stratification (Weber 1999, 1946; whereas authority or legitimate domination is a ‘status grant’ to power-holders, see Kemper 2011). For Weber, status refers to cultural-evaluative ascriptions and memberships of people into groups of varying prestige, esteem and deference (Collins 2000; Sauder 2005).
More recent proponents of status theory envision status as a performative, iterative and interactional process (Ridgeway 2011; Sauder 2005; Kemper 2011; Lizardo 2010). Status is a belief-dependent emotional resource for interactions including public acts of protest. Status hierarchies are *structures*, much in the sense intended by Sewell, ‘structures’ being constituted through a reciprocal interplay of virtual cognitive schemas and material resources. To put it in another way, status no longer fits the chronic dichotomy between culturalist and structuralist theoretical approaches, a dichotomy which Polletta has argued is a pernicious one for interpreting social movements (Polletta 1997; an argument also made by Summers-Effler 2005).

Status is social-structural—emerging and inhering in the relationships between social positions as if on a field—and it is cultural. The currency, signification and rules of status can change dramatically through historical contexts and across reference groups with distinct norms, values and expectations. Status performances draw upon the cultural imaginaries of status-belief systems, such as the unequal distribution of competence via primary person-construal devices like gender or race (Ridgeway 2011).

The fate of status concepts and status theory in social movements research has not been kind. Current discussions of contentious performances profitably draw upon a revival of theories of culture, emotion and performance. Yet status concepts and status claimsmaking continue to be neglected in the mix most likely because of their received associations with classical tension theory and unpopular functionalist models of collective behavior. If not ignored altogether they appear only by a different name. It appears that status concepts are suffering roughly similar theoretical vicissitudes as emotion concepts did before the full resurrection of the latter in the past two decades.
In both cases, social movement theory reacted against classical, functionalist models of collective behavior rightfully criticized for objectivistic and psychologically-reductive assumptions about the nature of social protest and the character of protesters. Regarding emotion, protesters were seen as so overly emotional so as to be irrational and apolitical. Regarding status, protest was seen as a sometimes pathological symptom of status inconsistencies or threats caused by objective social changes. Writing in 1955, sociologist Daniel Bell stated, “It is not surprising, therefore, that the political movements which have successful appealed to status resentments have been irrational in character, and have sought scapegoats which conveniently serve to symbolize the status threat” (Bell 1955: 168; quoted in Buechler 2011: 87). In criticizing these caricatures, both concepts disappeared in the eighties while the instrumental-rational and properly political nature of contention became highlighted.

Mid century status theory explained away the causes of extra-institutional action through rapid systemic changes triggering social and psychological strains (Smesler 1962; Kornhauser 1959; Bell 1955; Lenski 1954). In strain or tension theory, status and class became slippery concepts easily confused with each other (Wood & Hughes, 1984, make this observation). Status inconsistencies and relative deprivation caused individuals to feel stress, anxiety and alienation. Reform efforts emerged after status groups experienced threats to their normative dominance and reputation (Gusfield 1986). Status threats and gains were mostly objective features of the social environment given large-scale industrial and economic transitions.
The older version of status theory was also incredibly reductive. Protesters were not conscious of the real motivations and impulses propelling their discontent (a critique voiced by political process theorists; McAdam 1999: 16). Protest was not directly political, but served a psychological function of substitute satisfaction, easing repressions and enacting the fantasy ‘short-circuits’ of generalized beliefs (Smesler 1962). Status dynamics supposedly operated behind and through unknowing protestors like a ventriloquist. Not surprisingly status theories became unpopular in social movements studies.

In the neighboring discipline of history, the influence of functionalism and collective behavior theory likewise had souring effects upon the history of abolitionism. Objectivistic status concepts have similarly haunted historical representations of the American abolitionists and they continue to exert a powerful influence over how the nineteenth-century radical abolitionists are characterized to this day. Many mid century historians unsympathetically portrayed the abolitionists as irresponsible, overemotional idealists (Elkins 1976 [1959]; Donald 1970 [1956]; Donald 1965; Curry 1965). They were apolitical absolutists who disrupted a more conciliatory political approach to ending slavery through compromise, hence, were somewhat to blame for the secessionist movement beginning the American Civil War (the view of Elkins 1976 [1959]). William Lloyd Garrison especially was lead devil, corrupting Wendell Phillips and others with perfectionist doctrines (Hofstadter, 1989, makes this suggestion).

Historians of abolitionism borrowed status concepts at will from the social sciences, leading to wide-ranging explanatory references to status decline, institutional
deprivation and class anxiety. All the same mistakes of objectivism and reductionism were endured in the historiography of abolitionism in the US. And historians have had to find their own way out of the anti-humanist hermeneutic entailed. In the past few decades historians have a struck a more balanced tone toward the American abolitionists, more appreciative of the ways they confronted the explosive antebellum climate of rising white-supremacist nationalism while often falling short (Stewart 1996; Goodman 1998; Jeffrey 1998; Mayer 1998; Newman 2002; Stauffer 2002). Dismissive accounts of the antislavery radicals through psychological caricature have at least temporarily stopped. However, as outlined above, there is a better approach to a status-sensitive analysis of abolitionism that does not contribute to the movement’s devaluation, but rather takes the context and creativity of abolitionists like Wendell Phillips more seriously. Status concepts can be used, not to discredit the egotistical or narcissistic, but to show how the abolitionists persistently attempted to persuade and provoke others in systemically racist environment.

Fortunately, the latest iteration of status theory emphasizes relational processes (Kurzman et al 2007; Ridgeway 2011; Saunter, Lynn & Podolny 2012; Lizardo 2010). Status is reconceptualized as a cultural and interactional process of claiming and according respect rather than a stable property of groups (more akin to Goffman’s ‘deference’ than to Weber’s ‘cultural honor’ per se, see Collins 2000; Sauder 2005). Status orders are constructed and performed, potentially negotiable yet obdurately persistent. In status construction theory, status beliefs are formulated through the repeated, relational experience of material resource advantage-disadvantages which eventually become codified through stereotypes (Ridgeway & Bourg 2004; Berger et al
Status beliefs can then be diffused in the macro-cultural order in categories and symbols that distribute esteem, competence and worthiness unequally. Status is the product of interactional processes and culturally constructed stereotypes. This is a vast improvement over older versions of status theory that tended to confuse status with class, perceiving it to be a more objective, environmental property subject to impersonal forces of change.

Thus, while the reaction against functionalist psychologism by new schools of thought was certainly needed and understandable, there is a missed opportunity here for reconsidering the uses of status in moral protest from within the cultural and emotional turn of recent social movement studies (Gould 2009; Smithey and Young 2010; Polletta 2006; Eyerman 2005; McAdam 1996; Benford & Hunt 1992). Status theory, among other things, can help explain the production of contentious moral emotions. Given the increasing emphasis on emotionality in collective action, one would hope more attention would be paid to how moral-emotional elements of injustice, grievances, and discontent are stirred on a collective level. Many of the ‘moral emotions’ (anger, shame, reciprocity, contempt, etc.) are superlatively sensitive to shifting status dynamics. They emerge from within the interactional ‘status-power

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25 Frame analysis is currently the predominant way of addressing this question. While there are some affinities with the frame analysis of frame-alignment processes, rhetoric directs our attention more to the creative invention of compelling arguments in response to some set of situational exigencies that seem to call forth a collective response (on the rhetorical situation, see Bitzer, 1968). If a frame mostly describes the conceptual content of powerful cultural metaphors, *rhetoric describes the performative intentions, implicatures and effects of cultural action*. Rhetorical leaders speak in response to contingent events and they are motivated by an intentional urge to remake the social world (Carrithers, 2009, pp. ix-x). Jasper (2010) similarly compares rhetorical to other cultural approaches in social movements theory. He proposes that rhetoric “encourages the cultural analyst to be precise about what purposes and outcomes the players seek” (p. 79). Questions about intent and effects become more important. I return to rhetorical theory in the final section of this chapter.
matrix’ to use Kemper’s term (2011). Status claims are affectively loaded, so to speak, in the emotional rewards or frustrating spurs delivered to audiences.

Social movements are simultaneously influenced by dominant emotion cultures and creative in the formation of new subcultural emotion norms (Gould 2009). Emotion cultures can be dominant and hegemonic within a society. In an emotion culture certain emotions can be constructed as deviant and undesirable with efforts made to censor displays of such “outlaw emotions” (Jaggar 1989: 166; Thoits 1990). Social movements can be analyzed as emotional subcultures in their own right (Ruiz-Junco 2013). Emotional subcultures emerge that revalue and recode emotions. Mainstream feeling rules are rejected by emotional subcultures and outlaw emotions defended. Learning how to display the right feelings can signify membership in a group and be a form of drawing symbolic boundaries (Wilkins 2008a; 2008b). Some subcultural groups today for instance repudiate the hegemonic norms of happiness and cheerfulness associated with middle-class America (Kotchimedova 2005). The emotion of anger, perceived as unprofessional in most modern settings, is an emotion frequently reappropriated and championed by subcultures of protest as I describe below (Flam 2005b). One manifestation of this is the internal sort of solidarity developed by movement participants with each other, what James Jasper terms “reciprocal emotions” (Jasper 1997). Solidarity consists of “agapic connections,” a more “permeable self,” and is produced by ritual interactions (Summers-Effler 2005). Social movements also encourage participants to manage and feel specific emotions toward external groups. Oriented upon designated opponents or targets, social movements frame injustices and vocalize their outrage (Gamson 1992; Jasper 1997). Breaking
hegemonic emotional-cultural norms, in turn, produces anger in onlooker audiences and potentially processes of public backlash. Sometimes inciting unwanted negative emotions through ‘breaching events’ is an intentional strategy of social movement groups (Benski 2005; Gould 2009).

Another dimension of the emotional subculture of social movements is the “emotional reframing of reality” (Flam 2005a: 4). This refers to a re-education in socioemotional cognitions, i.e. the proper affective valences one should feel toward social problems, institutions and targets. Things formerly coded as good or neutral become recoded as bad or disastrous, and vice versa. In joining an emotional subculture, protest participants are resocialized in their feeling rules, including concerning outlaw emotions. This may involve learning to distrust authorities to dispel modern democracy’s ‘secure-state effect’ or unlearning the habitual repression of anger (Berezin 2002; Flam 2005b). In chapter 3, I observe this emotional reframing process as it takes place in abolitionist discourse. Abolitionist claimsmakers framed slavery so as to generate negative affects towards slaveholders and positive affects toward slaves. In the emotional framing efforts of social movements we see how interlinked cognition and affect truly are.

Both ‘positive’ and ‘negative’ emotions play an important role in social movement processes. On one hand, high levels of positive emotion can potentially

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26 Distinguishing between positive and negative emotions is a well-established convention in the sociology of emotions. It however is an artificial analytical classification. The danger is that researchers use these terms uncritically in ways reflecting the normative evaluations of our hegemonic emotion culture. In fact, negative emotions can be ‘positive,’ i.e. prosocial, healthy or effective, as I will discuss below. The whole positive/negative terminology is socially constructed and should be acknowledged as such. What makes fear, anger and guilt ‘negative’ emotions when they can be such useful resources for reasonable pursuits?
have mobilizing effects (Collins 1990; 2004; Turner 2013; 2007). Movement leaders try to boost the hope and optimism of participants in overcoming resignation or cynicism. Charisma produces affection and loyalty in movement participants. There are also the related emotions of solidarity and group pride that help to sustain protest participation. For example, mutual-aid based feelings of solidarity maintaining participation in the Catholic Worker movement were generated by religious rituals, economic vulnerability and sharing laughter (Summers Effler 2005). Different social movements cultivate distinctive subcultural configurations of positive emotion. Activists in feminist peace and labor organizations for instance experimented with a more empathetic style of co-organizing based upon familial feelings of “sisterhood” (Taylor & Rupp 2002; Roth 2005). Elsewhere shared perceptions of the sacrifice of others generated “mutual escalating commitment” to the cause of protest and to each other (Kearney 2014). In general, for social movements, high numbers and turnout in demonstrations tends to produce positive group-based emotions including solidarity and confidence (Kemper 2001).

On the other hand, the role of negative emotions in motivating contentious performances cannot be underestimated. The production of moral outrage is a mobilizing tactic common to many social movements (Jasper 1997). In the classic *Talking Politics*, Gamson (1992) describes how political groups foster the “hot cognition” of injustice, i.e. perceptions and feelings of unfairness. Some activists perform ‘breaching events’ in public to surprise and shock audiences out of complacency (producing contempt and disgust as well, Benski 2005). Constructions and rumors of a threat mobilize collective efforts to prevent or ward off that threat from
occurring. In Not-In-My-Backyard movements, groups come together out of shared anxieties and insecurities, e.g., about nuclear energy facilities, environmental pollution or plans to build a homeless shelter next door (Jasper 1997). Threats that propel collective action range from insults to honor (or status) to mistaken perceptions of economic competition (nativist protest) to rumors of imminent violent victimization (mobilizing ‘self-defense’). Collective anxieties and fears can drive the radicalization of social movements toward violence (Tarrow 2011; Collins 2008).²⁷

Hence this dissertation takes a critical view of the relationship between social movements and emotions: emotions are frequently agents of conservation, suppression and demobilization in addition to their role in energizing protest (Kleres 2005). Additionally, within social movements emotional resources are unequally distributed by status inequalities. Uncritical views of the subject may stem from the obvious etymological affinity between ‘movement’ and ‘emotion’ (see Gould 2009: 3-4 for a discussion). Given that ‘emotion’ means movement in Latin, tautological affinities are irresistible but hinder empirical analysis. Thus it is all the more important to resist assuming a necessary relationship between the two empirical objects of inquiry. Passionate emotions can also function effectively to reproduce inequality and resist progressive social changes. Flam (2005b) describes the cementing emotions of domination that chronically hinder mobilization efforts, including shame, fear and even several positive emotions like security and gratitude. The attachment of the moral

²⁷ In the conclusion of this dissertation I reconsider these connections between status, threat and violence to develop a hypothesis about why abolition was so violent in the U.S. I echo and try to generalize the Wyatt-Brown thesis of Southern honor culture and effects of status threats.
emotions to social order is part of the difficulty, for instance, anger is just as often
directed at protesters for violating social expectations of obedience and deference.

Previous scholars have discussed the process of social movement formation as thus involving an emotional liberation (in addition to McAdam’s well-used notion of ‘cognitive liberation’). Flam describes emotional liberation as a social-psychological transformation through the learning of an alternative set of ‘feeling rules’ or habitus re-socialization. It involves counteracting those cementing emotions of domination, “detaching loyalties and other positive emotions from the institutions and organizations to which they were hitherto attached” (Flam 2005b: 31). In their place protestors encourage the experience and display of more assertive emotions, pride, anger and solidarity ostensibly being the most frequent empirical configuration (Flam 2005b).

A fuller understanding of protest rhetoric involves treating status dramaturgically as a negotiated, performed, generative emotional resource. Given the quite restrictive power limitations set upon publics in modern state societies, the emotional energy extracted from status claimsmaking enables an alternative pathway toward gaining influence and power—through public opinion and civil society discourse (Tilly 2008; Alexander 2006; Schudson 1999). Among movement audiences, status rhetoric fosters the sense of moral authority and of charisma attached to the leaders of reform. The construction of status threats fosters the negative affects of alarm, anger and moral outrage (Jasper 1997; Flam 2005; Tarrow 2011; Gusfield 1986). Possessing higher status engenders positive affects (Kemper 2011; Turner 2007). The accumulation of status or symbolic capital can be a potent cultural-emotional resource in itself for
mobilization, one that is constantly cited and implied through sociocognitive expectations and communications.

Lastly, efforts to recover status theory must navigate between two major mistakes made in past theories of collective behavior: the voluntaristic overemphasis on affective manipulation by charismatic leaders and the deterministic conflation of status with large reified social structures. For this purpose I shall propose a concept of *reception field* to refer to the relational, fluid status dynamics between movement leaders and audiences during a contentious performance through which charisma emerges. In reception fields, status-differentiations and rhetorical agencies mutually condition each other. In other words, status significations and imaginaries are being appealed to, performed and renegotiated through discourse. This is an ongoing and highly emotional process structured by the relational, interactional ‘status-power matrix’ (a temporal process much more fluid than Bourdieu’s ‘field’ concept but akin to his notion of ‘symbolic capital’; see Chapter 7 for details).

Status is a highly transposable currency that can be exchanged through creative rhetorical performances (as well as other forms of discourse not relevant to this paper). While quite common among the social implicatures of rhetoric, status is certainly not the only currency accounting for the affective intensities of movement audiences. There are a host of other relevant factors here that can contribute to eloquent rhetoric such as aesthetic format, intellectual vision, vocal texture, nonverbal body language, set-up and appearance, a sense for rhythm, talents at improvisation, etc (Heritage and Greatbatch 1986; Clayman 1993; Collins 2004). Such potential contributors to
eloquence are likely interwoven together with status claimmaking by the practical skills of experienced orators.

Alas the time is ripe for a recovery of status in sociological theory of social change. In the chapters that follow I reveal the abundant status implicatures of protest rhetoric, what I shall refer to as status claimmaking and sometimes just status rhetoric. I suggest that contentious gatherings and symbolic demonstrations can generally be interpreted as performances of heterodoxic status imaginaries on behalf of movement claimants and their clients. Emerging from the relative powerlessness of contenders, and sometimes from the threatened power of privileged groups, the language-game of status in seeking moral influence is fundamental to protest. This is certainly not an unprecedented insight. But it seems to be a forgotten one or, at best, an underappreciated one in recent studies of social change.

DRAMATURGICAL TRIADS

Parsing the mutual interdependencies between status, rhetoric and emotion is one of the most exciting areas of contemporary sociological theory. It goes to the very heart of the microsociological project of understanding social action. The main founding figure in this area is Erving Goffman who wrote about interaction rituals and impression management (e.g. the infamous notion of saving face and face-work). For Goffman

Again, my aim is not to debunk abolitionist discourse but rather to reappraise status rhetoric as a powerful affective mechanism in triggering the moral-emotional experiences of audience, creating emotional energy which can be directed, but is not necessarily so, to ethical projects. Two major theoretical predecessors of this project are Joas (1996) on the creativity of problem-solving action and from Castoriadis (1987) who in his The Imaginary Institution of Society proposes a similar conceptualization of resistance as social struggle over the institutionalization of cultural imaginaries.
feelings of embarrassment served to motivate performances and adjustments of status within conversational exchanges. His writings showed a fine appreciation of the status dynamics of everyday rhetoric through his dramaturgical theory of the conversation as a secularized ritual of deference. In conversations “all interactants are exquisitely sensitive to the exact amount of deference they are being awarded” (discussion in Scheff 1997: 173). There is a constant signaling of social worth in mundane communications. He called such social interactions rituals for how they generated, cultivated, and worshipped the main sacred thing in modern societies, the individual self.

Since Goffman’s pathbreaking work, several trajectories of microsociological theory have emerged that follow in his footsteps. Many of them further elaborate his presumed triadic model of status, rhetoric, and emotion. Some ambitiously attempt to systematize his insights into a general model of social action. One of the most important of these iterations is Scheff’s microsociological hermeneutics of emotional experience. Scheff (1988) makes an analytical distinction between communication mechanics (or language) and what he terms the “deference-emotion system” in social action. The deference-emotion system refers to the social-psychological processes enabling norm-based action and thus social conformity. It operates primarily through the specific emotions of pride and shame, two master social emotions. Arising from the perception of others’ evaluations of the self, variable self-feeling states of pride and shame are continuously present in action and provide useful dispositional information concerning the state the social bond. Empirically the two systems work in tandem with each other. Ordinary language-use (the communication system) is saturated with
Goffman’s constant signaling of social worth (the emotion-deference system). The two overlap even in banal formal features of rhetoric, such as the rhythm of turn-taking. Interrupting someone who is talking, instead of patiently listening, is not just a form of communication but an implicit status statement.

The branch of microsociology known as expectations states theory has excelled at analyzing status inequalities like this in group settings and how they are perpetuated through rhetoric and emotion. In Ridgeway’s iteration, cultural beliefs about status—categoric ‘person-construing’ frames or stereotypes— influence the social expectations brought into cooperative interactions. Specifically, stereotypical expectations concerning competence, a core modern manifestation of status, influence how people treat each other and how people perform in cooperative tasks as a result. In turn, relative differences in performance materially reproduce status inequalities. Hence, for Ridgeway, status inequality is a relatively autonomous self-persisting dynamic in modern societies.

Two further findings from expectation states theory will be useful for parsing the status-rhetoric-emotion triad. Ridgeway (2006) observes the influence of status-belief expectations upon the emotional dynamics of groups. Emotions such as confidence, pride, shame, shyness, and aggression are strongly biased by status inequalities. Negative affects tend to arise when performance expectations are thwarted. A common example is this is when status-subordinated people exert more agency than their stereotype would suggest. This could include talking more, interrupting, speaking with authority (leadership), or defying the deference expected of status-subordinates.
Such a situation often creates anger, contempt, and potentially violent backlash against the status offender (e.g. against professional women leaders in Ridgeway 2011). A second related concept that will be of enormous value in later chapters is the status-binds subordinates face. As I discuss in chapter 4, a status bind refers to a no-win situation, the lack of any meaningfully non-derogatory course of action, i.e. no secure way of claiming higher status. It is the counterpart to the relative privilege or freedoms of superordinates. I will identify several status binds in public speaking, for example, when status superordinates are relatively more free to incite violent emotion (pathos) in a way that status subordinates are not.

The finding that status dynamics shape emotional experience is the forte of Kemper (2011) among research in the sociology of emotion. Kemper could be considered a structural interactionist, another important trajectory of post-Goffman theory. In Kemper’s status-power theory of interaction, emotion is the physiological by-product of status-power claimsmaking efforts, whether they fail or succeed. For instance, feelings of anger are triggered when an alter is seen as being the cause of the status loss of the self. Kemper labels the feelings of backlash against a status-offender the emotion of contempt. In his writings can be found many similar pithy explanations of the basic emotions, addressing in what sort social situations happiness, sadness, shame, guilt, etc. are likely to arise. Emotional experience is the result of interactional outcomes in the status-power matrix. Such experiences are mediated by the social reference groups that an individual has internalized. Humans tend to be sensitive to status claims based upon the reference groups they were socialized into. Belonging to
multiple reference groups roughly determines which set of status claims one finds relevant and emotionally pertinent.

In his most recent book, Kemper (2011) has applied status-power theory of emotion to rhetorical situations of formal oratory and the production of charisma and/or eloquence. In this setting, the ‘emotional energy’ of an audience is most determined by the speaker’s symbolic maneuvers in the status-power game. The phenomena of charisma is dependent upon pre-existing reference groups. A orator has high charisma if they can heighten the status-power prospects of a present shared reference group. Kemper writes, “To interest and excite the crowd, the speaker focuses on the common status-power issues. Knowledge of the crowd’s status-power interests is a sine qua non. Oratorical technique, rhetorical flourishes, turns of phrase that succinctly, boldly, assertively cast the crowd’s status-power concerns into flashy talk—thereby accenting those concerns—exaggerations and innuendos that reach for hidden, maybe greedy, vengeful or other low and shameful motives, but legitimated through being enunciated and endorsed by a public figure—all these cater to the crowd’s deepest status-power interests and concerns” (2011: 168). In this account of formal oratory, the vicissitudes of the status (based on shared reference group affiliations) are the primary cause of charisma and emotional experience more generally.

The triadic schema of Kemper’s structuralism interactionism is very deterministic and unilinear. It posits a one-way flow from status-power through rhetoric to emotional outcomes. Emotion is always the dependent variable, manipulable by status-power performances. Status-power theory offers a very powerful explanatory
framework though. I treat it as a convenient baseline for making empirical guesses, e.g. a useful set of heuristics for exploring the affective experience of audiences, rather than for its ontology. Like many microsociologists, Kemper embraces reduction (but unlike Scheff). He is not afraid of slighting other elements of the rhetoric situation such as persuasive argument, aesthetics and/or rhythms.

The point is a sore one. It is one of the main sources of division between him and his once co-author and fellow microsociologist extraordinaire, Collins. Kemper is a strong critic of the ritual-theoretical component of Goffman’s thought and other inheritors of it including Collins who is a highly syncretistic social theorist of status and emotion. (For Kemper’s mistatertatation of the necessary religious foundations of ritual theory vis-a-vis truly ‘secular’ status-power sociology, see Kemper 2011; there as well can be found his extended critique of Goffmanian ritual theories including Collins.)

Collins’s theory bridges Durkheimian theories of solidarity, ritual, and collective emotion with Weberian theories of power, conflict, and domination. However, he credits Goffman the dramaturgist and Garfinkel the ethnomethodologist with providing the keys to his new synthesis. Broadly both Goffman and Garfinkel forged innovative interactionist theories inductively from close empirical analysis of everyday behavior. From Goffman he takes the microsociological focus on the situational conversational encounter (the interaction ritual) as the basic unit of analysis. From Garfinkel he inherits a deep appreciation of social reality as an accomplishment through routines. Routines stem not from culture, norms, nor rationality, but from long-lasting emotional tones of ordinariness that people in the main avoid questioning. Social order maintains itself
from a lack of rationality (that would discern the arbitrariness) and from a lack of
cognition (including cultural knowledge). Instead, ritually produced emotions are the
crucial explanatory factor. In Collins’s reading of ethnomethodology, “One could well
say that everyday life reality-construction is an emotional process, and that the
emotions that uphold reality come forth in intense form when the social reality is
broken” (1990: 30).

Interaction ritual chain theory is the name Collins develops for his synthetic
social-constructivist microsociology. He embraces a “situational reductionism” (but not
an individualistic one, Collins 1987). While macropatterns of power clearly exist, they
are reducible in principle to chains of interaction rituals, through which they exert
influence over people’s situational behavior (the only macro-level variables that actually
exist are space, time, and network density). Ultimately the source of social power lies
in the emotional energy that interaction rituals produce. Emotional energies are the
long-lasting undramatic affects that organize and maintain social realities including the
realities of stratification, domination and war. The question is how do these processes
unfold? And for our purposes, what does rhetoric and status have to do with it?

Emotional energy is one of the key concepts in Collins’s system. However, it is
fundamentally a metaphor for him. There are actually many different types and
manifestations of emotional energy depending upon the sort of rituals involved. If there
is a common denominator across emotional energies it is the anticipatory confidence
that rituals of the present and future will be successful. Emotional energies has both a
‘personal side’ and a ‘group side’ (Collins 1990). The personal side is individual self-
confidence and enthusiasm for taking the initiative in social situations. It is physiological and psychological, ranging from pride (high emotional energy) to shame (low emotional energy). It can also be stored in cognitive expectations regarding one’s ability to give orders (power rituals) and/or be accepted by a social group (status rituals). The ‘group side’ of emotional energy is moral solidarity, which manifests itself in group-supportive and group-defensive behaviors, such as punishment of ritual offenders. Collins (1990) describes the contagious feelings of ‘righteous anger’ in moral panics as being the stronghold of the ritualistic group over the individual.

This perspective adds a new twist to the study of rhetoric and its social-status implicatures. Collins would view the rhetorical occasion as a formal type of interaction ritual. Protest rhetoric, for instance, usually occurs within ritual assemblies of movement participants. Rhetoric is successful if it heightens group solidarity and generates emotional energy in the ritual practitioners. Such emotional energy is generated through several ritual ingredients, including the elements that Kemper downplays like joint attention, exclusion of outsiders, rhythmic entrainment, common moods and other short-term emotions (Collins 2004). Formal features of rhetoric are highlighted for their entrainment effects. Interestingly, neither Collins nor Kemper are concerned with the overt semantic content of rhetoric, though sacred symbols, once ritually constructed by group solidarity, come to serve an attentional and emotional function for Collins.

The purpose of formal rhetoric, say, within social movements, is emotional transformation. By Collins’s criteria, protest rhetoric is successful if it amplifies an
initiating short-term emotion or if it transmutes that emotion into something more cathartic and enduring (Collins 2001). “Group meetings are a kind of social machine for transforming energies” (Collins 1991: 41). The experience of charismatic authority, so common to social movements, is a by-product of ritual assembly and successful entrainment. For Collins, charisma is not a property of talented individuals. It is thoroughly emergent and dependent upon social ritual processes (Collins 2007). “The leader is the channel for the collective energy, and that is what seems to exalt him or her above the individuals in the mass. But the secret of the leader’s power is the group itself. It is the audience that creates the prophet; it is the movement that creates the leader” (Collins 1991: 40). Yet he also seems to recognize that the experienced orator comes to develop a knack for the process. Over multiple ritual occasions, and largely through tacit learning, the charismatic leader who is born gets better and better at stimulating audience emotion (Collins 1991: 25-26; I return to these themes in Chapter 7).

At least two forms of stratification by status are reproduced by chains of interaction rituals. Social status, for Collins, refers primarily to levels of inclusion and belonging in groups that periodically come together to meet in person. A status dimension is present in interaction rituals “insofar as the group is assembled and some membership feelings are being generated” (1990: 38). Status dynamics have more to do with group membership, whereas power refers to the ability to obtain the compliance of others. Determined by social network density and composition, these dynamics are more ‘horizontal’ than ‘vertical.’ In other words, the person who is located at the center of attention (the star or celebrity) has higher status than the mere
spectator participant who in turn has higher status than those on the fringe, the uninvited, or the excluded. Status is about popularity for Collins, who knows who, and who generates the buzz.\(^{29}\)

Thus Collins sometimes asserts that all rituals have a status component. “Every interaction is producing both status membership effects and power effects” (ibid). By definition rituals include some persons and exclude others; they attempt to focus join attention on some persons and not others. Other times he distinguishes between power-rituals per se and interaction rituals that are primarily oriented upon the production and reproduction of status. Status rituals, in a more Weberian sense, are a class of interaction rituals organized by tight-knit cultural communities. The main status rituals in the contemporary U.S. are in the spheres of higher education, entertainment, religion (though less so), and civil society, e.g. modern philanthropy and charity work (Collins and Hickman 1991). Court society is perhaps the medieval analogue. A key trait of status rituals in this sense is their network-dense ‘community’-like qualities. This makes them especially productive of group-based moral solidarity, leading to harsher

\(^{29}\) “Status groups [consist] empirically of people who are habitual conversational partners in nonhierarchical situations” (1987: 201). In Collins’s framework, status groups are membership-based culturally oriented communities composed of people who know each other who ritually and formally meet to exchange some form of cultural capital or distinction. Collins argues that ‘status’ should be restricted to Weber’s original formulation in which it refers to the associational, cultural aspect of stratification. Strictly speaking ‘status groups’ are not therefore microsociological in which the basic unit of analysis is the situational encounter. Status is a macropattern of cultural stratification constituted by microsociological markets in emotional energy. I cannot do justice to Collins’s argumentation here nor to shifts in his thought over his career regarding this issue. His analysis of status does raise an interesting historical conundrum though: is not there something anachronistic about using today’s social-psychological notion of status to analyze abolitionist rhetoric in a context where ‘status groups’ proper were more predominant, e.g. among secret societies, gentry politicians, and orthodox denominations? If forced I would argue that ‘status’ is a concept more transhistorically relevant than ‘status groups.’ Deploying social-psychological theory for purposes of historical-sociological analysis is precising what I attempt to do in this work.
reactions to ritual offenders. Overall though, everyday conversation in the U.S. is less rife with status stratification than premodern societies were (Collins 2000).

This is all fine as a footnote to Weber, but Collins is needlessly leading us into terminological confusion here given how psychologists and indeed most sociologists use the term ‘status’ more interactionistically (including Ridgeway, Kemper, Scheff, and many others; see Sauder 2005 for an excellent overview). Plus it leads to conceptual difficulties in his own work as when he claims that the emotional energy generated by status rituals depends both upon ‘horizontal’ centripetal dynamics of status proper and the overall social ranking of the ritual group within wider society. What is this overall group ranking if not a ‘vertical’ status dimension? I suspect part of his difficulty stems from his reluctance to the ‘cultural turn’ in sociological theory, including late Goffman’s notion of the frame, being much more central to Ridgeway’s theory of the constitutive status-beliefs influencing the interactional expectation-mediated reproduction of status inequalities. More oddly still, given Collins’s powerful critique of the ‘cognitive bias’ in sociology, is when he seems to contradict himself by writing that the “underlying basis” of emotional energy consists in cognitive expectations “of being able to dominate particular kinds of situations, or enact membership in particular groups” (1990: 40). How might stereotypes and implicit bias influence these cognitive

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30 The problem be seen in Collins’s debate with Kemper: “Kemper wishes to stress that groups are almost always unequal in status, whereas I conceive status groups as capable of being completely independent of each other. One group of friends (or coreligionists, or ethnic members) can be more or less oblivious to another clique; I confine ‘status’ to the internal structure of each group, leaving open the question of whether the various groups have any ranking in relation to each other...I confine ‘status’ relations to the ‘horizontal’ dimension of being included or excluded, from purely sociable, nonutilitarian activities. The sociologically most important variation in status group structure is its shape as a network, especially its density and the degree of cosmopolitanism or local closure of the network around particular individuals” (1990: 52-53).
expectations? The theory of emotional energy it seems is akin to expectation states theory but without the culturally constitutive role of frames. To avoid these conceptual and terminologies confusions surrounding ‘status,’ I propose we restrict the meaning of phrase ‘status groups’ to the Weber-Collins line of thought, while keeping a more general Goffman-Ridgeway understanding of ‘status’ itself as “a relationship of deference and esteem among actors” (the pithy definition used by Sauder 2005). Racial status, gender status, religious status, and other kinds of status, are vertical types of stratification, not network dependent per se but more dependent upon cultural frames or stereotypes (thus my usage of status terminology corresponds more to Ridgeway than Collins).

These are no mere quibbles; at stack is the commensurability of trajectories of microsociological theory post-Goffman. Nevertheless, they should not detract us from the big picture and the major strengths of interaction ritual theory. More than any other microsociologist or interactionist, Collins captures the mutual imbrication of social and emotional processes. Humans are naturally desirous of emotional energy and the solidarity that rituals give. Emotions bring people together in (rhetorical) rituals which produce new emotions. His resulting critique of Kemper’s status-power theory brings to issue to a head (in Collins 1990). To summarize Collins’s view simply, in Kemper’s efforts to de-mythologize ritual theory, he also mechanizes it. He takes what Collins calls ‘first-order’ emotionality out of the dramaturgical triad. It’s worth remembering that for Kemper emotions are ‘sociologically uninteresting’ in themselves. This couldn’t be further from the truth for Collins who laminates the two together into one temporal-spatial medium of the social. Emotional energy is one of three primary resources that
are being constantly exchanged through everyday interaction rituals (with cultural capital and social reputation being the other two, see Collins 1987). Emotions are not merely an epiphenomenal physiological reward for successful ‘status-power’ bids. Rather it is the motivational microfoundation from which power and domination dynamics emerge. In particular, Kemper’s *reference groups* cannot be assumed to be pregiven. They are in fact secondary outcomes of socioemotional microprocesses.⁴¹ Therefore, status cannot always be the theoretical prime mover, i.e. in explaining away affective experiences and rhetorical eloquence, contra the status that status receives in Kemper’s writings (esp. Kemper 2011).

Turner, an erstwhile colleague of Collins, has extended many of Collins’s insights into a more social-psychological direction. A common problem across Kemper, Collins and Scheff at least is their vagueness on anthropological questions regarding the nature of human emotionality itself. Why is it that humans are ‘emotional junkies’ to use Collins’s phrase? What range of socioemotional instincts has been ‘selected’ by humanity’s evolutionary prehistory? While these ‘sociobiological’ questions are substantively too abreast from my discussion, they are necessary ones to ask in developing a fuller understanding of the affective dimension of social life. The way in which Turner (2000, 2007, 2012) draws upon the affective neurosciences to formulate general microdynamic principles is strangely compelling. One main payoff is the perspective it provides regarding human moral-emotional instincts, situated as they are between culture and human nature. Another major payoff comes from how it

⁴¹ “The long-term result [of interaction rituals] is the feeling of status group membership” (Collins 1990: 32). The ontological status of the ‘group’ is an important and divisive question in contemporary sociological theory (c.f. Brubaker and Cooper 2003; Emirbayer 1997).
enables him to systematize the different accounts of social exchange, including the exchange of status implicatures or status claimsmaking, into a general theory of the ‘transactional needs’ humans bring into social interactions. Turner’s writings offer an exciting evolutionary (and affective-neuroscientific) outlook on why interconnections between status and emotion are hard-wired into the human species. His microdynamic theory of social change surely deserves fuller consideration elsewhere than is warranted here.

The sociology of emotion post-Goffman has attracted extraordinarily ambitious social theorists. In their eyes, emotion has been the missing ingredient holding back sociology from becoming a true science of human behavior. With this telos on the horizon, the structural theories of emotion in Kemper, Collins, and Turner have a certain detached analytical air of objectivism, externalism, and economism about them. For this reason, the more important debate in the sociology of emotion is not between them, but between them and Scheff. No shorter in ambition, Scheff aligns the microsociological project more with hermeneutics and the humanities than the hard sciences. His theories of emotion are firmly situated after the linguistic turn. His writings are resolutely phenomenological and hermeneutic. Relevantly, considering Collins’s dream of a detached purely externalist ethnomethodology, Scheff argues against ethnomethodology’s “tendency to assign a dubious status to inner experience” (1990: 53). For Scheff the very idea of developing an externalist science of ‘emotional

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32 Though he reconstructs rational-action theories via emotion, Collins is still very economistic sounding: “More broadly, all the spheres of life compete in a market for emotional energy” with market-like supply/demand dynamics.
energy’ as a sort of transactional social currency without describing the inward nature of affective experience is a categorical mistake.

Scheff (1997) writes that it’s foolhardy for the social sciences to adopt the detached and decentered point of view of Enlightenment science. He criticizes the ‘bias toward outer worlds’ across the social sciences or the neglect of the affective-experiential dimension of human social life. Every micro-individual person for Scheff is as inexhaustibly complex as a macro-society in its intra-relationships and multimodalities. Social action stems contextually from meaningful experiences, needs, feelings, desires, intentions, and motivations. He seeks to interpret the ‘inner worlds’ of social action, the cognitive-affective subjectivity of discursive action and its textual records. The inner-world quality of human speech and texts includes the host of unstated social implicatures that accompany any speech-act. Thus, while being interpretive and integrative, Scheff similarly inherits the Goffmanian triad in which status is constantly being communicated through language use. The inner world of a person is thoroughly structured by the aforementioned deference-emotion system.

The dramaturgical triad would thus take the following form in Scheff’s writings. Rhetoric is a site of creativity and complexity wherein the communication system of social action intersects with the emotion-deference system. Rhetoric is saturated with unstated social implicatures that spring from as well as shape the social-psychological status dynamics of affective experience.

Scheff’s holism alters the entire character of the sociology of emotion. The many part/whole interconnections Scheff identifies between inner and outer worlds are actual
causal social processes (Scheff 1997). He shares Collins's focus on microprocess but grounds his social explanations upon interpretive emotional processes. In contrast to Collins, the purpose of close empirical observation is not the suspension of presumed subjectivity but the revelation of inner worlds through part/whole analysis, Scheff's preferred term for his conceptual methodology (Scheff 1997). It is a dialectical hermeneutics that non-exhaustively teases out organic interconnections between inner and outer worlds. It does this through a “microanalysis of verbatim texts” (see Methodological Appendix for a more elaborate discussion). Microanalysis requires a three-way explication of the reciprocities between social contexts, texts, and unstated intentions or implicatures (for a similar model of hermeneutics, see Rambo and Chan 1990).

The three concepts of the dramaturgical triad are central to the microsociological theory of social change I develop in the pages that follow: Rhetoric. Emotion. Status. I frequently return to the question of their inseparability and mutual constitution: how affect impels rhetoric, and how rhetoric impacts affect; how status structures rhetoric, and how rhetoric performs status; how affect drives status structures, and how status distributes affect. There is a constant three-way dialectic between them and undoubtedly even more complex compounded interactive and recursive effects between all three. Through historical-textual methods of microanalysis

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33 Or we could deem it an exercise of affective hermeneutics. It has many similarities with the hermeneutic tradition of Dilthey, Gadamer and Ricoeur (see Reed and Lamb-Books 2011 for an overview). The notion of ‘inner worlds’ is quite unpopular in contemporary sociological theory mostly because it is misinterpreted as requiring the givenness of some natural interiority of the individual mind. It would be more accurate to view the ‘inner world’ quality of experience as part and parcel of the social-psychological processes of reality-construction (the psychoanalytic social theory of Anthony Elliott is useful here).
I investigate the mutually constitutive interrelations of emotion and status inequality, i.e. how status inequality *feels* as well as how unequal emotional distributions constrain variable practices of coping with, resisting, and/or reconstituting status structures. My animating objective is to better incorporate a ‘human emotions’ perspective into the historical and cultural sociology of social movements.

Focusing on socioemotional process in my historical reconstruction of abolitionist performances enabled fine-grained examinations of these variable three-way interconnections. For instance, my interpretation of Wendell Phillips highlights his charismatic production of emotional energy (qua pathos) through status-oriented rhetoric. Conversely, a major argument throughout the dissertation is that pre-existing status positions, shaped by race, class, and gender status structures, both constrained and privileged different individuals in terms of public speaking opportunities. Frederick Douglass and other black abolitionists were compelled by the racially oppressive context to spend more time than Phillips on the slower, careful cultivation of ethos and logos. Likewise, I show how the unequal distribution of affect by status structures influenced the ability to take rhetorical risks among abolitionist women. Angelina Grimké marshaled her elite southern credentials to break proscriptions against women’s public speaking. Remarkably, Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth in contrast forged an alternative pathway through the three-way dialectic. I suggest that they both summoned status *ex nihilo* from eloquent religious rhetoric and its emotional energy. This discovery in turn helped me re-read abolitionist discourse altogether as oriented upon efforts to reconstitute status imaginaries through protest rhetoric in general.
ABC’S OF SOCIAL CHANGE: AFFECT, BIG RHETORIC, CREATIVITY

‘Indignant hearts’ abounded in abolitionism. While anger has been studied in previous social movement research, as reviewed above, I approach it as one of the moral emotions in this work, giving a more foundational role to them and the rhetorical creativity they stimulate and are stimulated by. This section more fully articulates the rhetorical perspective I bring to the sociology of social movements, and I shall outline some its main contributions regarding the study of affect, performance, and creativity in protest. What work can the concept of rhetoric do for the microsociology of social change? Here I tap into the theoretical vision of big rhetoric, a general anthropological-hermeneutical view of rhetoric as essential to a wide variety of human social practices.

Rhetorical theory highlights the intentions, uses, and effects of meaning-making. Rhetoric is not so much a particular form of culture as it is the performative dimension of culture. In Kenneth Burke’s classic formulation, all symbolic language is action (Burke 1966). Or as several rhetorical theorists have put it more recently, there is no ‘zero-degree rhetoric’ in culture (Strecker & Tyler 2009; c.f. Simonson 2014). Cultural action is always doing something to someone for some purpose.

Traditionally, rhetoric has been introduced as the arts of persuasion, but there is also an alternative lineage of rhetoricians who prefer a more inclusive definition of

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34 Among the few social movement scholars who actually discuss rhetoric in this more nuanced sense—rather than as a mere synonym for framing—James Jasper suggests that rhetoric “encourages the cultural analyst to be precise about what purposes and outcomes the players seek” (Jasper 2010: 79). Rhetoric is intentional meaningful human action in all its emotional impulses, media, and effects. Which is to say the perspective is more German—a la Hans Joas and Axel Honneth—than French—pace Giles Deleuze and others (Joas 1996; 1993; Honneth 2007; c.f. Gould 2009 who lies more on the French side regarding ‘affect’).
rhetoric as any communicative action that moves, incites, or produces social effects of any sort (Carrithers 2009: 6; Gross 2005). Rhetoric is a dynamic performative dimension of social life that intersects with culture and communication. As I understand it, the rhetorical perspective examines how and why people try to get things done through a variety of semiotic modalities, including but not limited to linguistic communication. When using the concept in this ‘bigger’ sense, I shall speak of *anthropological rhetoric*. The term is meant to convey a sense of rhetoric as the practical purposes motivating everyday meaning-making. One promise of big rhetoric, as I elaborate below, is achieving a better understanding of the actual experiential and affective processes of mobilization and social change.

The usual prototype first thought of as rhetoric is formal persuasive oratory or the practice of public speaking. When talking about these public speaking activities I use the more narrow term, *oratorical rhetoric*, i.e. the act of public address, which is actually a subspecies of *anthropological rhetoric*. Oratorical rhetoric is the more conventional conception of rhetoric extending back to antiquity. Aristotle defined rhetoric as the art of probable demonstration in public. He envisioned its use most commonly for purposes of political deliberation. The Western rhetorical tradition often followed the view of rhetoric as a mode and style of speaking through language: rhetoric is the kind of speech based upon practical reason (*phronesis*) for purposes of persuasion. It consists of arguments that mix together logic and assumption presented for an audience to judge. As a specific type of speech occurring in specific settings, rhetoric differs from most ordinary conversations in its level of reflective, monologic, and partisan qualities (Farrell 1993).
Oratorical rhetoric can be conversational in style, but it typically has a more judicial or cumulative form than an ordinary conversation. In contrast, anthropological rhetoric includes both formal and informal speech. It views both of them as kinds of semiotic modalities operating with communicative purposes in mind.

Lovingly nicknamed 'big rhetoric' by contemporary theorists, anthropological rhetoric refers to any human remaking of reality by means other than the use of force (Schiappa 2001; c.f. Fahnestock 2013). Similarly, Booth (2004) defines rhetoric as “the entire range of resources that human beings share for producing effects on one another by the use of signs.” Rhetoric is the possibility, intention, and medium of remaking the socioemotional world through meaningful human action. Big rhetoric stresses the practical, cultural, and constitutive properties of anthropological-rhetorical practices. The broader conception is inspired by the writings of Kenneth Burke (1966), George Kennedy (1992), and others. Their theoretical heirs appreciate the rhetorical dimensions as more inclusive in principle than persuasion and linguistic components per se. For example, emotions are not just effects of rhetorics. They are rhetorics. Emotions are a semiotic modality of communication as defined in the Prologue. Most affects are psychophysiological arousals and signals that attempt to remake-the-world in miniature (or in macro-ature for collective emotions). I draw upon the philosophical-anthropological hermeneutic of Kennedy (1992) and Rickert (2013) in viewing rhetoric as that ‘sense of urge and energy’ to act upon others and the world to alter and change reality (the phrase is actually from anthropologist Carrithers 2009).

35 Here I provide Carrithers’s marvelous elucidation of anthropological rhetoric in full: “What does the notion of rhetoric do far, and to, the notion of culture and the practice of explaining cultures and
The rhetorical perspective revolutionizes the microsociological study of social change. As a mode of pragmatist thinking, it provides a useful redescription of the conditions of the possibility of social change. Both rhetorical theory and pragmatism highlight human situatedness and creativity in the material world. They both share an epistemic interest in the social situatedness of human cognition and action, i.e. how humans can practically revise ineffectual beliefs as a result of mediated encounters with the real. Their main theoretical strength comes from how they envision an ontological dialectic between culture, the world, and human creativity or the practical problem-solving adjustments of things in relationship to the self. Creativity suggests that humans work innovatively within and through the systems conditioning them (Perrin 2006; Csikzentmihalyi 1996). In situations of self-doubt and social uncertainty—those vintage Heideggerian moments of ‘breakdown’ in Dasein’s practical being-in-the-world (Heidegger 1962)—human action shows its capabilities for learning, recalibrating, and increasing intentionality (not to be confused with ‘teleological’ instrumental rationality for Joas 1996). Human action is desirous and creative. Desirous in the sense of feeling those urges and energies to adapt and adjust. Creative in the sense of imaging alternatives to problem solve through practical experimentation. This...
is the *homo rhetoricus* of anthropological rhetoric: the person who responds to practical failures and sufferings through creative meaning-making.

Yet, pragmatic social-theoretical accounts of social change tend to be incomplete. They are not immune from the ‘cognitive bias’ that has been seen afflicting contemporary sociological theories of culture, power, and action. The role of affect in stimulating creativity is mostly overlooked for instance in Joas’s reconstruction of the practical conditions of the possibility of intentional action (1996). Joas singles out situatedness, corporeality, and sociality as the main ingredients of creativity, yet his anthropology is so minimalist he disavows any substantive conception of the socioemotional instincts (in fact, his Gehlen-inspired philosophical anthropology at times reminds me of Sartre’s view of human subjectivity as pure nothingness). This leaves no room for the role of affect in stimulating the creative problem-solving activities highlighted by pragmatism.

In pragmatism and rhetorical theory we have a remarkable (and theoretically rare) account of the conditions of the possibility of social change. Compared to Joas, rhetorical theory comes closer to the affective dimension in thinking about intentionality, the impulses and energies of world (re)making. But most theorists of big rhetoric tend to treat affect as a vague naturalistic impulse toward motion. These approaches are extremely promising given their dialectical realism, historicity, and creative action-theory. But we can do them one better by anchoring anthropological rhetoric upon human emotionality (what I have earlier entitled a human emotion perspective, but now borrowing liberally from pragmatic theories of creative action and
big rhetoric). With the addition of some more advanced affect theory, anthropological rhetoric can truly make a difference in how we study creative collective action.

Emotions have a millennia-long history of being seen as derivative and dependent upon the beliefs of the mind. From Aristotle to Descartes to Geertz, emotions have been claimed to be derivative of cognitive appraisals and/or culture. The marvel of the emerging twentieth-century, so-called ‘affective sciences’ comes from how thoroughly it inverts this picture (as well as from how extensively it offers experimental verification). Tomkins considered affect to be the ‘primary motivational system’ that adjudicated between drives and cognitive demands. Psychologists after Tomkins have demonstrated how drastically feeling-states alter sociocognitive perceptions, expectations, judgments, and behaviors (for an overview of the psychological literature, see Keltner et al 2014). Obvious though it may be, your chances of being helped by someone are much greater if they are in a good mood. Your chances of writing skeptical critical prose, on the flip side, are greater if you are depressed (ibid). Any future action theory in microsociology must acknowledge that moods matter hugely in influencing communicative action (Silver 2011; Doan 2012).

The list of activities involving some ‘primary process’ of affect keeps growing (i.e. some limbic or subcortical neuroaffective activity).\textsuperscript{36} Emotional processing is central to the “fast thinking” part of the brain that Kahneman (2011) conveniently labels System 1. Affective valences and associations frequently generate the heuristics drawn

\textsuperscript{36} The notion of “primary processes” is of course from Freud’s \textit{Interpretation of Dreams}. On this note it should be recognized that there were many important intellectuals who resisted cognitivism even before the American psychology/sociology of emotion took off. The main ones that come to mind are Adam Smith, David Hume, Friedrich Nietzsche, Sigmund Freud, Martin Heidegger, John-Paul Sartre, and no doubt several others I am forgetting.
upon in processes of decision-making, efficiently so if not always correctly (Kahneman 2011). In other words, humans often make judgments rapidly and unconsciously based solely upon an affective processing or read of the situation (the “affect heuristics” of System 1). Emotions in principle can also take the form of an automatic bodily reaction that precedes and informs neo-cortex cognition and language-use (Turner 2007).

Collins (1993) states that all rationality has affective foundations, an insight not without some psychological evidence (Damasio 1994; Davidson 2012). Lastly, Haidt’s examination of the moral emotions including anger looks at how they serve rapid-fire functions of intuition. Their prosocial bias, he argues, influences everything from moral attitudes to political preferences (Haidt 2012; c.f. Shweder 2003).

When some of its social-theoretical implications are appreciated, affect theory has the potential to transform the entire interactionist project of microsociology, enabling a new analysis of the creative-rhetorical processes of social change. The dramaturgical triad gets drawn a bit differently in this light as I will sketch here.

First, the ‘situation’ cannot be the primary unit of microsociological analysis (contra Collins 1987; c.f. Norton 2014). The situation is an analytical heuristic and not really real empirical reality as Collins the ethnomethodologist seems to suggest. This is because humans are always already affectively engaged in the world. What is a social ‘situation’ if not a slice or detached clip of the unfolding rearrangements of the socioemotional stream? The ‘social’ is always already relational and dynamic (Emirbayer 1997; Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005); it is affective through and through. In the end ‘situation’ is an arbitrary term for describing what’s going on in the
socioemotional scheme of things or how the affective meanings are changing, being as they are constitutive of ‘definitions of the situation’ (Heise 2007). Social situations exist because of the ongoing human sensitivity toward affective affordances, the emotional signals of other people and how these ‘call forth’ creative action as Joas (1996) puts it (c.f. Levi-Martin 2011 on affordances and the aesthetic ecology of perception). Psychophysiological affects can be automatically triggered by socioemotional events; reciprocally, affective experiences and moods influence situational behavior. The socioemotional sequence or stream flows on. New situations are always already mediated by past affective-experiential conditioning, continually cumulating, maintaining and updating the associative ‘personal-world’ nexus of action (Kahneman 2011). Thus, human emotionality is a stimulus, medium, and outcome of social action. There is no social reality per se apart from we socioemotional pods and processes.  

Second, social movements revisited in this light are organizational translations of more primary collective-emotional processes of problem-solving that have an affective stimulus. Social movements consist of protest rhetorics that emerge as creative problem-solving responses to frustrating encounters with the all-too-real sacrifices required for some by society (i.e. inequality, suffering, alienation). As the pragmatists observe, impulses to creativity arise when our habitual beliefs fall out of

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37 Could not the same be said of culture and the symbolic webs we find ourselves in? Are they not just as primary? The answer is mostly yes, but also partly no, because culture as public language is one semiotic modality among others. As discussed above, there are some forms of communicative interactions that are affectively mediated but not linguistically mediated. If however we define culture as including all semiotic modalities, all forms of meaning-making including say the moodiness of social action, than the affirmative is more absolute.

38 I am thus led to a perspective exactly opposite of resource mobilization tradition (McCarthy & Zald 1977). Locating endogenous movement resources is secondary to the socioemotional catalysts of problem-solving creativity. Or, we could say, collective emotions in themselves are the critical resources for movement processes.
tune with the environment. New actions and adjustments then take place that either adapt the self or alter reality so that a better ‘fit’ can be found. On a societal level, the creative collective problem-solving processes are constantly going on—there is no sound reason that social statics are the default category of analysis over social dynamics (an insight integral to Turner’s account of micro- and macro- dynamics, Turner 2012).

Another way of putting this would be to say that social movement mobilization and persistence is animated by all-so anthropological ‘urges and energies’ to remake social reality according to alternative created ex nihilo (Castoriadis 1987; Clemens 2007; c.f. Chapter 8). The aim to adjust society or some subsystem of society that is ‘not working’ adequately is after all the domain of rhetoric par excellence. Now, having anchored rhetoric in human emotionality, we are in a better position to see what specific collective-emotional processes are crucial to the formation of social movements.39 The question becomes, what emotions are produced by those Heideggerian moments of practical breakdown when humans become aware of a lack of fit in the affectively conditioned nexus of personal-worlds vis-a-vis social realities? When business as usual, habits, and motivational ends are thwarted within society, frustration is an immediate oft-automatic emotional response. Negative emotions serve as initial cues and impulses to the rhetorical creativity that moves social movements.

Not coincidentally, the most salient emotion associated with impediments that frustrate

39 In other words, my theoretical reconstruction of social movements through big rhetoric leads to an even greater appreciation of the affective dimension of social movements. Homo rhetoricus is affected by socializing and socializes through affects. My argument here mimics Joas’s reconstruction of the social conditions of the possibility of rational action (Joas 1996), but instead I’ve outlined a possible reconstruction of the socioemotional conditions of the possibility of collective action while retaining his view of creativity as problem-solving.
intentional action is *anger*. Anger and related negative emotions arise when worldly resistance to human means-ends habits is encountered (see Katz 1999 for an excellent discussion of the phenomenological origins of anger in goal frustration). Again, according to Kemper (2011), anger is the emotion that arises when the frustrations of status loss are externally attributed, being channeled into what Saguy (2013) entitles a “blame frame.” In externalizing attribution, and by rapidly prepping ‘potency’ reactions, anger is a crucial moral-emotional resource for many movement processes (c.f. Jasper 2014; Flam 2005b).

Of course, widespread anger is not a sufficient condition for movement formation, but it seems to be a necessary one in some sense as well as being a crucial resource in itself for movement persistence. Previous sociologists have noted that some presence of positive emotion, e.g. confidence, self-efficacy, and hope, also seems to be part of the collective-emotional catalyst (what McAdam 1999 and Flam 2005 refer to as *cognitive* and *emotional liberation* respectively). No doubt the resources of positive-emotion are distributed unequally across society, which help to explain why the social strata most likely to participate in protest tend to be ‘from the middle’ rather than from the poorest classes (Turner 2015; I discuss exceptions to this rule in Chapter 8). Here, my main point is that social movement processes are abundantly and substantively affective throughout their entire lifecycle, that specific and somewhat natural kinds of human emotionality stimulate protest rhetoric (and even cease it; on movement dissolution, see Kleres 2005).  

40 The perspective articulated above applies well to other social movement processes in addition to mobilization: to dynamics of persistence, attrition, outcome and even dissolution. In studying these other
The creative collective problem-solving efforts of social movements, qua anthropological and oratorical rhetorics, have an affective stimulus. Our socioemotional instincts are highly sensitive to social wrongs or offenses to community, e.g. disorder, unfairness, lack of reciprocity, lack of care for dependents, etc. Negative moral emotions are produced by the rapid, oft-automatic affective ascertainment of such social wrongs, with moral-emotional sentiments responding automatically to practical social frustrations. Anger is the pivotal moral emotion for movement processes because it combines the feeling-states of frustration with the psychophysiological ‘potency’ arousals that generate a sense of self-efficacy and that prep dispositional action (to overcome the obstacles causing frustration). Hence, the psychophysiology of anger is common motivator behind so many of the moral-emotional manifestations that appear in social movements, e.g. outrage, indignation, contempt, righteous condemnation. While other moral emotions can serve the same constitutive interests in protest rhetoric as anger does, paying closer attention to anger is particularly useful in elucidating the fundamental interconnections between social movements, emotions, and rhetoric, for learning the new ABC’s of social change. In its distinctive configuration of negative emotion and self-efficacy prepping, anger is the common-denominator of affect that stimulates and contributes to diverse rhetorical performances of social-problems construction, blame frames, and alternative status imaginaries.

processes I likewise recommend attention be paid to the moral emotions, what is happening with them and how are they being ‘mined’ or re-attuned? Specifically, how is status claimsmaking, performing bids for status (and power) through protest rhetoric, influencing the moral-emotional experience of challengers and their onlookers? WUNC displays are just one specimen of the wider category. Moving beyond the affective stimuli of movements, status-oriented contentious performances are effective or explosive because of moral-emotional attunements.
Finally, if situations are ongoing socioemotional configurations, the social situations that often trigger anger are the ones in which status is at play (presupposing the aforementioned interactionist-dramaturgical theory of status here; perhaps for our mnemonic convenience we can make status the plural ‘s’ in the ABC’s acronym!). In other words, the affective affordances that provoke anger automatically largely have to do with violations of routine or events in the interactive status order. Status, like the conception of the situation, at its heart is conditioned by socioemotional relationships, or webs of affective conditioning. Treating others with deference, for example, usually includes some moral-emotional component of gratitude, respect, and awe (Haidt has analyzed these latter emotions as the other-praising category of moral emotion). According and withholding status are potentially sub-linguistic socioemotional processes (we could look at how primates negotiate status hierarchies for instance). Likewise, successfully receiving high status itself is a sort of emotional resource.\(^1\) Status seems to be the moral-emotional resource par excellence.

Putting it all together then, the relational socioemotional drama of status trips, steers, and channels moral-emotional instincts. This applies to both the positive emotions of deference and the negative emotions of anger. Affective events in the dynamics of status, i.e. mediated encounters with the affective affordances of threat or unfairness, trigger the imaginative rhetorical urge to remake the social world. In the

\(^1\) In this respect, Collins’s account of righteous anger is quite useful (Collins 1990). As discussed in the previous section, the problem becomes his exclusively ‘horizontal’ network view of status. Collins (1990) would say that possessing high status in networks produces specific kinds of emotional energies, namely, whatever psychological rewards accompany popularity and being the center of attention. Regarding the processual socioemotional constitution of status though, this is one place where I have more affinities with Collins’s microsociology than with Kemper’s deterministic status-power theory.
new ABC’s of social movement studies, charisma has a foundational relationship to status claimsmaking, the implicit status implicatures of protest rhetoric. The charismatic orator is someone who through receiving high status by audiences has discovered and come to embody a lay tacit learning of the new ABC’s of social change elaborated theoretically here. Collins suggestively writes, “An individual can dominate other people mainly by taking advantage of their feelings of solidarity…Whoever knows how to arouse these feelings in others has a crucial weapon, to use for good or evil” (Collins 1991: 25-26).

As I will document, abolitionist speeches were replete with such status-based activations of the moral emotions. Their contentious performances cited and constructed alternative status imaginaries. In chapter 6, to take another example, black abolitionists mad bids for higher status within the movement, and within society at large, through republican and religious tropes emphasizing the virtuosity of people of color. Now we can see how this is an instance of both oratorical and anthropological rhetoric. Responding to real social frustrations and deprivations having to due with racial inequality in the U.S., abolitionists envisioned and communicated a different symbolic distribution of prestige to resist racialization and racial stratification in the U.S. Alternative symbolic distributions were creatively imagined and applied inventively to the immediate social situation. Through imaginative status claimsmaking abolitionist public speakers attempted to reconstitute the status dynamics of their immediate reception field. Not surprisingly, given the implied violations of the status order, the heterodoxic status implicatures of black abolitionist discourse were received with emotional intensity, in both extreme positive affects and extreme negative affects
among audiences (see Chapters 4 and 7 for vivid examples). Abolitionist rhetoric ‘worked’ or ‘backfired’ because of the human sensitivity toward social status orders and near constant desires for higher worth (to qualify, oft being group level desires). Status claimsmaking in protest rhetoric appeals to, attunes to and activates the socioemotional instincts of human beings.

Social movement culture and contentious gatherings thus function performatively in aspiring to remake social reality in their own imaginaries. Even multi-institutional movements not targeting the state hold these aspirations to reconstitute their social context in some way. So if rhetoric is the art of adjustment through gestures and cultural performances, the concept has a special affinity with the processes of protest and social movement persistence (and the same is true of status as voluntary compliance vis-à-vis power as coercion). Social movements do more than contain campaigns of rhetoric. They are rhetorical organisms aiming to alter social reality. Social movements are affectively animated rhetorics—Angry Rhetorics.
Chapter 2
Moving Contexts of Abolition

“WHO ARE THE ABOLITIONISTS? THE ABOLITIONISTS ARE NOTHING?”

Downtown Philadelphia, construction of the new civic center Pennsylvania Hall was finally complete by the summer of 1838. Reformers planned it to be a place for lectures, conventions, debates, and worship. Its actual construction was likewise the purely voluntary product of the “organizing impulse” of local grassroots associations (Schudson’s phrase, 1999). Abolitionist societies had worked hard at fundraising and garnering support for the project. The over $40,000 price tag was raised by selling thousands of shares to white and black philanthropists and entrepreneurs of the city. Much of the principal was earned through the hard works of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society (PFASS) under the leadership of Lucretia Mott.

At the opening dedication, abolitionists affirmed the building stood as a testament to the antislavery principles of liberty and human rights. Indoors the hall was majestic by nineteenth-century standards. It “could hold 3,000 people, with meeting rooms available for smaller gatherings. Design highlights included gas lighting and a ventilator at the center of the ceiling that was shaped like a sunflower with ‘gilt rays.’ At the center of the sunflower was a concave mirror, ‘which at night sparkled like a diamond. Over the stage was an arch inscribed with the words, ‘Virtue, Liberty, and
Independence.” (Faulkner 2011: 76).  

PFASS members served an opening feast in its honor, or at least the best buffet one could manage when limited to nonalcoholic beverages and ‘free produce’ not tainted by slave labor.

Abolitionist women from around the nation congregated together the third week of May to hold the second annual Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women in the brand new hall. The conference schedule featured a series of well-respected speakers and events promoting antislavery awareness. After a year of almost steady circuit travel and lecturing, the Grimké sisters would be in attendance with the by-now legendary Angelina Grimké slated to speak.

Born in the South, Angelina and Sarah Grimké were raised wealthy on a slavery plantation near Charleston, South Carolina. They vividly recalled childhood memories of screaming slaves being whipped. After joining her sister Sarah in Philadelphia to get away from her unrepentant family, Angelina soon committed herself to William Lloyd Garrison’s program of immediate emancipation as a “cause worth dying for” and was promptly banned by the state of South Carolina from ever returning to Charleston (on the life of Angelina Grimké, see Ceplair 1989; Lerner 2004; Berkin 2009).

From 1837-1838, a long grueling lecture tour of New England by the Grimké sisters acquired national notoriety after they blatantly and publicly violated standards of feminine propriety by speaking before multiple “promiscuous audiences,” i.e. assemblies that tolerated and intermixed both ‘sexes’ (Zaeske 1995). Opponents of women public-speakers soon heckled and berated Angelina as a “Devil-ina” (see Webb 1838; Anti-Slavery Convention of American Women 1838. Among secondary accounts of the antislavery organizing behind and activities within Pennsylvania Hall, I am mainly relying upon Faulkner (2011) and Salerno (2005).
Chapter 8 for more detail). Angelina was that week in May also wedding the foremost Western antislavery crusader, Theodore Dwight Weld (Abzug 1980).

Several other prominent women abolitionist leaders would be speaking as well. Abby Kelley was preparing for her first public antislavery speech (Salerno 2005). She would soon be asked to join the executive committee of the American Anti-Slavery Society. Her nomination would result in the schism of the organization between progressive feminist-leaning Garrisonians and more conservative abolitionists who did not think it proper for women to conduct the business of the organization (Kraditor 1969). Lucretia Mott, long known for her Quaker ministry and interracial hospitality, was also active in the planning and proceedings of the convention. She had been insistent that her black ‘sisters’ be encouraged to attend (Faulkner 2011). In fact the black women’s turnout and participation in 1838 proved to be considerably higher than the previous year’s convention in New York City.

Trouble was brewing though even on the first day of the convention. A rumor caught fire in the city that Angelina Grimké had actually married a black man instead of Theodore Weld. Fears were stoked that Pennsylvania Hall was the new site of an abolitionist conspiracy to encourage the “amalgamation” of the races. Local newspapers printed reports of the indecency of white men being “seen gallanting black women to and from the Hall” (Faulkner 2011: 76). Placards and broadsides denouncing the convention kept cropping up across the city. One of them read, “‘Whereas a convention for the avowed purpose of effecting the immediate abolition of slavery in the Union is now in session in this city, it behooves all citizens, who entertain a proper
respect for the right of property, and the preservation of the Constitution of the United States, to interfere, forcibly if they must, and prevent the violation of those pledges heretofore held sacred” (Faulkner 2011: 77).

The newspaper reports were not entirely mistaken regarding charges of interracial mixing. The convention was radically more integrated than most northern institutions. By the third day of the convention a crowd of thousands had gathered outside the hall. Like other anti-abolitionist mobs erupting across the country in the past few years, this one quickly progressed from heckling and insults to vandalism and violence. They lofted rocks and brickbats (broken bricks) through the windows of the hall. Nevertheless, the abolitionist women indoors attempted to keep on schedule. In response, they raised their voices all the louder to be heard over the din and racket all around them. At one point, during the public chaos of May 16, Angelina Grimké rose to spoke in spite of the great noise. Fortunately a newspaper transcriber was present, recording her lines along with the loud interruptions (indicated by the below bracket marks []). Here are a few excerpts from the speech:

[Just then stones were thrown at the windows,—a great noise without, and commotion within] What is a mob? What would the breaking of every window be? What would the levelling of this Hall be? Any evidence that we are wrong, or that slavery is a good and wholesome institution? What if the mob should now burst in upon us, break up our meeting and commit violence upon our persons—would this be anything compared with what the slaves endure? No, no: and we do not remember them “as bound with them,” if we shrink in the time of peril, or feel unwilling to sacrifice ourselves, if need be, for their sake. [Great Noise.]

Many persons go to the South for a season, and are hospitably entertained in the parlor and at the table of the slaveholder. They never enter the huts of the slaves; they know nothing of the dark side of the picture, and they return home with praises on their lips of the generous character of those with whom they had tarried. Or if they witnessed the cruelties of slavery, by
remaining silent spectators they have naturally become callous—an insensibility has ensued which prepares them to apologize even for barbarity. Nothing but the corrupting influence of slavery on the hearts of the Northern people can induce them to apologize for it; and much will have been done for the destruction of Southern slavery when we have so reformed the North that no one here will be willing to risk his reputation by advocating or even excusing the holding of men as property. The South know it, and acknowledge that as fast as our principles prevail, the hold of the master must be relaxed. [Another outbreak of mobocratic spirit, and some confusion in the house.]

[Shoutings, stones thrown against the windows, &c.] There is nothing to be feared from those who would stop our mouths, but they themselves should fear and tremble. The current is even now setting fast against them. If the arm of the North had not caused the Bastille of slavery to totter to its foundation, you would not hear those cries. A few years ago, and the South felt secure, and with a contemptuous sneer asked, ‘Who are the abolitionists? The abolitionists are nothing?’—Ay, in one sense they were nothing, and they are nothing still. But in this we rejoice, that ‘God has chosen things that are not to bring to nought things that are’ [Mob again disturbed meeting.] (Lerner 2004: 271-273).

The disruptions from outside showed no sign of stopping. Attacks on the building by miscellaneous projectiles were getting worse. According to one historian of the event, the “white women [abolitionists] may not have appreciated the real dangers faced by black women when participating in interracial antislavery organizations” (Salerno 2005: 87). Angelina though was starting to come to terms with the danger they were all in should the out-of-control situation literally turn incendiary.

Hence she proposed that white women link arms with their black sisters to buffer them while exiting the building. This was surely a kind gesture but not a smart one for diffusing crowds angry over abolitionism’s supposed amalgamationist plot. Fortifying their sister solidarity with pride, the women marched out of the hall and into the street turmoil. They were physically pushed in their egress, hissed at, and assaulted with slurs: “Down with the Quaker, down with the nigger’s friend” (quoted in Faulkner
Yet none of the women were seriously injured as they left the scene as fast as they could. The following day, the still active crowd stormed the hall and set fire to the stage. By that night the glories of Pennsylvania Hall had been reduced to ash and ember.

**Who were the abolitionists?**

Antebellum abolitionists in U.S. history are intermittently considered nothing and everything. The radical abolitionists themselves embraced their weakness and folly as resolutely as martyrs who train themselves for fate’s necessity. In Grimké’s prophetic vision above, the apparent foolishness of the abolitionists would ultimately be vindicated by a deeper providence. Abolitionism as a sustained campaign of protest upset many northerners as well as southerners, and not purely because of their commitment to abolition, not exactly a novel idea at the time. Contempt for abolitionism stemmed from how the abolitionists egregiously violated the dominant racial and gender status quo. The very word ‘abolitionist’ to most northerners was loathed, more of an insult in their eyes than a badge of pride.

By examining Grimké’s speech above we learn more about what and whom the abolitionists defined themselves against. This being-against posture, the ‘anti’ stance-taking now so common in civil society, was itself a new phenomenon in the changing repertoires of protest. Abolitionist identity was formed in opposition toward slaveholding, much as the abolitionist social movement was the process of social-problems construction (Mauss 1975). Taking up an antislavery stance meant not being
‘callous’ or ‘insensible,’ as unrepentant slaveholders were, and not ‘remaining silent.’ Abolitionists stood against the ‘holding of men as property’ because they knew it to be, felt it to be, an unwarranted cruelty. They saw themselves as a people of great feeling and sensibility. Their own identity acquired meaning by these contrasts. To them abolitionism meant feeling a natural sympathy for victims enduring ‘violence against their persons.’ The speech thus constructs an antislavery reference group by drawing symbolic boundaries along lines of emotion and morality, i.e. their emotion work of sympathy for the enslaved performs symbolic boundaries between the righteous and the callous (Wilkins 2008a; 2008b).

In 1838, Angelina Grimké’s rising fame as a renegade reformer matched William Lloyd Garrison’s. As one of the movement’s most important early leaders, her rhetoric was suffused with dramaturgical creativity. Notice as an example her deft Christian-coded treatment of status. In her words, abolitionism sought to change public opinion, winning over ‘hearts,’ such that no future northerner would be willing ‘risk his reputation’ by condoning or compromising with slavery. Notice as well the operative status implicatures: God, principle, sensibility and sacrifice are all placed on the side of the abolitionists. Abolitionist orators like Grimké excelled at making bids for status and performing new status imaginaries, not just for the presently gathered antislavery reference group, but also on behalf of the main abolitionist client, enslaved blacks, and in many speeches, black people in general. In speaking on behalf of a client, the abolitionists wove their status together with the status of those not present to
represent themselves (in Chapter 8 on gender and ethos in abolitionism, I describe this as the duality of abolitionist ethos).  

Historians rarely agree on who counts as an abolitionist. One problem is agreeing upon which ideological threshold of position-taking must be crossed, i.e. being a gradualist or an immediatist, being for black civic equality or abolition alone, not too mentioned additional complicating factors, such as level of racial paternalism (i.e. subscribing to racializing beliefs), willingness to compromise (i.e. moral absolutism), degree of support for colonization (i.e. racial separatism), etc. One convention shared among many historians is to distinguish between ‘abolitionist’ and ‘antislavery.’ Pierson clarifies, “Historians have labeled the radicals who pressed for the most sweeping social changes the abolitionists while calling the moderates antislavery” (2003: 4, emphasis mine). The distinction is not an unproblematic one: it adheres to a quite traditional historiographical framework in which the Garrisonians were mostly apolitical religious fanatics in contrast to the sensible antislavery politicians who tried to work out compromises. The abolitionist-antislavery distinction is itself an interesting historical artifact inherited from antebellum political discourse: even then the

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43 Undoubtedly raising all the perplexing representational and ethical questions associated with speech, representation, and the subaltern, Spivak 1999. The slave in abolitionist discourse is Spivak’s subaltern who because of discursive power cannot speak for herself.

44 The question is deceptively simple and actually quite difficult to answer. For a small taste of the terminological difficulties: did one have to subscribe to the proposal of immediate emancipation to be an abolitionist? What if we have no historical records of one’s verbal consent? Were all free blacks engaged in communal elevation efforts abolitionists? Is signing a petition enough to warrant treatment as an abolitionist? Did one have to make a speech or join a society to count as a true abolitionist? Did one have to be willing to confront angry mobs in public like the Grimké sisters? Could one be an abolitionist and make political compromises about slavery? Could one be a colonizationist (racial separatist/emigrationist) and an abolitionist? Could one be a racist and an abolitionist? Were nonextensionist politicians who feared and despised the Slave Power abolitionists (or just antislavery)? Were slaves who resisted slavery with their feet abolitionists? The norm in abolitionism studies is to stick with your gut: you’ll know one when you see one.
abolitionists got labeled and dismissed as apolitical for their reluctance to compromise. The so-called “abolitionists” were despised for their absolutist ‘immediate emancipation’ slogan and for their ‘ultraist’ reform stances even by many “antislavery” sympathizers. They were pejoratively compared to the more highly esteemed policy position of “colonization” and “non-extensionism” (despite many of the substantive differences with the latter being relatively small, Oakes 2014; interestingly, southerners didn’t think there much difference neither). There are many reasons to be skeptical of the distinction’s analytical value.

More recent scholarship has suggested that the conventional abolitionist-antislavery distinction smoothes over considerable complexity and ambiguity. Today historians often prefer to blur the boundaries. McDaniel (2013) argues that even Garrison the quintessential radical abolitionist was not as apolitically minded as past historians have depicted him (see, for instance, Laurie’s anti-Garrison polemic). Robertson (2010) shows that the principled factionalism common in New England cliques was less important to the pragmatic coalitional abolitionist movements of Pennsylvania, Ohio, and the old Northwest. Many historians have also rightly noted that the political-apolitical dichotomy thwarts interpretation of black abolitionists who were often highly moralistic and highly political. Their speeches defied the radical-conservative factional divisions of the movement (Ball 2012; Ripley 1991). Thus the many crosscutting ideological differences internal to the movement against slavery makes any simplistic abolitionist-antislavery distinction unfeasible as is the case with most political labels in the U.S. Too many antislavery activists get excluded from the

45 Isaac Reed contributed useful suggestions here.
social movement heading for minor reasons, like by supporting a more gradual course of emancipation or even by voting for a third-party Liberty politician.\textsuperscript{46}

Perhaps the theoretical revisions accomplished in the previous chapter regarding the ABC’s of social change can be utilized to sort out the question of abolitionism’s boundaries as a social movement. Theoretically speaking, an abolitionist was anyone whose particular ‘inner-world’ experience of moral emotions, for whatever reason, put them at odds with slavery.\textsuperscript{47} Abolitionists \textit{were moved} and subsequently \textit{moved against} slavery. The main benefit of this approach is that its more inclusive scope conditions make the borders of the movement more open to the multimodalities of resistance. As suggested in the Prologue, the antislavery rhetoric that moved abolitionism as process is not limited to texts nor textual records of oratorical rhetoric. The movement also consisted of anthropological-rhetorical forms of meaning-making, a wider range of affective inclinations, urges, and intentions contributing to the delegitimization of slavery. For example, someone whose sentimental inclinations led them to donate to an antislavery society was an abolitionist. Someone whose anger and contempt toward slaveholders led them to pick up a gun against slave bounty hunters is also an abolitionist. Someone who hosted a ‘station’ for fugitive slaves, whether acting out condescending pity for the weak or out of a sense of obligation to

\textsuperscript{46} Garrisonians advocated not voting. Voting was a compromise with unchristian powers. Thus, contrary to the old historiographical convention, supporting an antislavery political party does not automatically disqualify one from being treated as an abolitionist, as Michael Pierson and other historians suggest. Pierson (2003) claims Harriet Beecher Stowe and Lydia Maria Child are not abolitionists while in my definition, they most definitely are.

\textsuperscript{47} The ‘for whatever reason’ part is tricky but key: in my view, there seem to be both more-cultural and more-natural pathways at arriving at abolitionism. The more-cultural pathways emerged from a particular discursive confluence of traditions (sentimentalism, republicanism, Protestant Christianity), which I discuss in the next chapter.
humanity, also counts. The social movement as a whole is much wider than the textual remnants that have survived the tragic wreckage of history. It makes more sense to center our definition in principle upon the broader anthropological-rhetoric of resisting slavery through any semiotic modality so as not to exclude the participation of the subaltern, the murdered, the mute, the illiterate, or the otherwise historically forgotten.

These are claims regarding conceptual method but important ones. It requires acknowledging abolitionism’s borders qua social movement were porous and wider than traditionally thought. Thus an abolitionist was someone whose intra-psychic configuration of moral-emotional dispositions inclined them against slavery so as to compel them to express antislavery sentiments in a variety of possible ways not limited to public address. In other words, true abolitionism included both the self-described “abolitionists” and people who disliked that label or perhaps had never even heard of it altogether. The analytical re-definition necessarily follows our discussion of the rhetoric of slavery in the prior chapters.48

Who counts as an abolitionist is harder to settle empirically. The broader conception though resonates with the boundary-work contained in Grimké’s above speech, by putting the dispositional agency of moral emotions front and center, i.e. an abolitionist was anyone who feeling slavery to be a social wrong resisted its power and perpetuity—being moved to move against its power. Not coincidentally, the proposed

48 My definition has some similarity with the frameworks of Alan Kraut (1983) and Herbert Aptheker (1989) in labeling the entire post-1830s antislavery field ‘abolitionist’ while recognizing the diversity of possible antislavery stances, the most extreme of which having been labeled ‘abolitionist’ in the past. I instead use the term radical abolitionist or Garrisonian to refer to this branch of abolitionism.
definition also resonates with the later Foucault’s conceptualization of *resistance*. In his words, abolitionism was a ‘plurality of resistances’:

...points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations...Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in a society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm of points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that makes a revolution possible...(Foucault 1990: 95-96).

Foucault came to see that wherever there is power, there is resistance. *Mutatis mutandis*, I argue that wherever there is slavery, there is abolitionism. Abolitionists challenged the legitimacy of slavery by word and by deed, by nonviolence and by violence. Someone resisting slavery with their feet by fleeing the plantation regime should be included as part of the social movement against slavery—a social movement after all being a crescive structure of preferences and attitudes—even if we have no historical record of their movements. Sometimes the resistance motivated by the socioemotional instincts is sheer survival. The rhetoric is the implication that slavery is not just, that slaves are not ‘happy’ with their bondage, a frequent claim made by proslavery writers, an argument utterly contradicted by the subaltern communication of fugitives (c.f. Chapter 4 and 5 on the *oratorical* fugitive rhetoric). All semiotic modes of
rhetoric challenging the legitimacy of slavery, whether oral, written, embodied or tacit were part of abolitionism.⁴⁹

This discussion does not imply that we cannot get a better sense of what sort of individuals and communities were more likely to participate than others, nor that we cannot obtain a thicker description of what sort of social movement this was. In the next section I consider the main structural and organizational features of the movement (its macroscopics). Then I compose a more detailed social profile of the movement’s individual contributors (its microscopics). Lastly I outline some of the more important dynamics of the temporal ecology of the movement as it creatively adjusted to its historical socioinstitutional environment (its telescopics).

MOVEMENT MACROSCOPICS: A BIRD’S EYE VIEW

Social movements have a dually dependent and creative relationship with their historical context. The dual relationship conditions the affective and rhetorical processes of social movements. The collective moral emotions that launch and sustain a movement direct their outrage against some historically specific social wrong. At the same time, moral-emotional experiences are conditioned by dominant emotion cultures and their culturally evaluative schemas of right and wrong. The relationship

⁴⁹ A related distinction worth making here is between micro-resistance and macro-resistance (Fleming & Spicer 2007) with my argument being that both kinds when oriented upon slavery are included. There are some hard definitional cases here. While John Brown was clearly an abolitionist, I do not consider all Union soldiers to be abolitionists by virtue of violence against southerners alone. Killing a slave master is not necessarily an instance of the rhetoric of slavery, but it could be if it was intended meaningful statement against slavery inspired by moral-emotional aversions to slavery. If pressed I would say the rhetorical dimension is not the violence itself (by definition) but the symbolic and performative significance of the violent act. Hence, my conceptual method is by no means in danger of including everything or everyone.
between context and creativity is even clearer in oratorical protest rhetoric. Eloquent speakers present timely and alternative avenues into the future, while drawing upon past values and memories shared with an audience.

Understanding abolitionist oratory and its function in the social movement requires some historical contextualization especially for twenty-first century readers who are right to intuit both strangeness and modernity in the movement. Many of our ready-to-hand prototypes of ‘social movements’ fail to recognize the historical novelties and oddities of abolitionism as a mass religious movement. The early nineteenth-century was an unsettled period of momentous change. It was a time shaped by accelerating technological development, widespread religious revivals, exponent population growth, and the rise of modern democratized political parties. The repertoires and frames of collective action were ‘up in the air.’ Many of our current repertoires of protest (as well as the language used to describe them as ‘social movements’) were actually invented and forged by moral entrepreneurs during this time period.

In the decades following the War for Independence, the American population actually became more religious. New theologies, denominations, and millennial prophecies swept up individuals from across the nation and their worries away. Mainstream politics, higher education, and voluntary associations were understood and organized by and staffed by the religious (Young 2006; Collins and Hickman 1991). Christianity was superlatively ‘hegemonic’ as we might say today, and Protestantism had not yet lost its communitarian and totalizing qualities. Though recently
disestablished from state rule, religious discourse continued to provide comprehensive
scripts and proscriptions for all spheres of life (including codes of ethics in family and
in business). Further, many of the organizational models and logics of popular
democracy emerged from schemas that were initially religious in nature (Stamatov
2011).

In the antebellum U.S., religious institutions were among the most powerful of
powers. Religion provided both a basis for social status stratification and a main
‘source of social power’—i.e. it enabled intensive forms of social control and
governance even more so than the still weak state bureaucracies. Which is to say,
religion was still the main source of ‘political power,’ the type of power that regulates
and compels obedience (Mann 1986). At the same time, the American religious field
was also a driver of vast social changes. The very existence of social movements,
among many other features of nascent civil society, had evangelical roots according to
another historical sociologist (Young 2006). The first national campaigns for moral
reform, concerning temperance and slavery, were forms of ‘confessional protest’ that
drew upon and fused religious schemas of collective sin and personal confession
(Young 2006; 2001).

Abolitionism was as much a religious movement as a social movement. It
devised new theologies, rituals, and even opened separate ‘come-outer’ churches
oriented upon antislavery missions. It shares in many of the notable features common
to modern ‘religious social movements’ as discerned by sociologists Davis and
Abolitionist rhetoric from the beginning targeted families and individuals in their private lives. As self-described moral suasionists, they sought the personal repentance of slaveholders and any northerners complicit with the slave economy. The federal government was not even an initial target at all. Instead, abolitionists bypassed the federal state. They engaged in alternative state-like institution-building efforts of their own (this is what Davis and Robinson 2012 refer to as bypassing the state). Abolitionists founded and established new schools, new businesses, new churches, and offered a variety of social services to blacks entangled by discriminatory laws.

Abolitionism possessed the dual ‘strict and caring sides’ quite common in religious social movements (Davis & Robinson 2012). In other words, the abolitionists were highly concerned with individual moral discipline and personal edification according to emerging middle-class norms of respectability. But the movement also had a strong ‘social justice’ side as well. It got much of its egalitarian impulse from Christian revivalism. In the specific case of abolitionism, its social-justice efforts were applied more across racial caste than to the economic poor per se (contra Davis and Robinson). Abolitionists formed interracial mutual aid societies and associations, some open and public, some more secretive and illegal. Examples include uplift societies, vigilante committees, debt relief funds, land communes, legal services from lawyers and illegal services from lawbreakers along the underground railroad. The wide range

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50 American abolitionism also benefitted from transnational diffusions and communications much like the globalizing, modern anti-modern religious social movements of the twentieth-century. However, the focus of this dissertation is exclusively on U.S. abolitionism despite it being part of a transatlantic network.
of multi-institutional efforts made abolitionism to some extent a subversive ‘state within a state,’ not only bypassing the state but occasionally embracing mass defiance of state laws (especially the fugitive slave laws on the federal level).

Importantly, abolitionism was a multiracial campaign, much more racially integrated than most religious movements (including other multiracial religious organizations or MROs). Here we should also note how mutual the mutual aid projects of abolitionism truly were. White abolitionists like Garrison depended substantially upon the patronage of black elites like James Forten (Davis 2014). Further, the white-black collaborations and cross-fertilizations of the 1830s were an important innovative development, e.g. helping to persuade white abolitionists like Garrison to reject antiblack colonization schemes.51

The movement’s multiracial character also generated deep internal tensions and dynamics. One example is the humanitarian attitude of northern abolitionists, including interestingly many sentiments expressed in black abolitionist discourse.52 Most northerners were humanitarian in how they practiced sympathy and pity for the pain and suffering of distant strangers (or, more accurately, representations of these distantly imagined things). Diaries reveal white abolitionists meditating upon the

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51 On the other hand, not all abolitionists were anticolonization; even some of the most prominent black abolitionists had emigrationist leanings at one point or another, e.g. Martin Delaney and Henry Hugh Garnet.

52 Stamatov (2013) defines humanitarianism as long-distance advocacy. Abruzzo (2011) defines humanitarianism as the problematization of bodily pain. I tend to combine these definitions in how I think about the historical specificity of humanitarianism as a set of moral emotions. In my survey of black abolitionist rhetoric, the degree of humanitarianism varies it seems according to personal or familial experience with slavery. Then there are examples of northern free blacks ‘awakening’ to the threat that slavery poses to them, and shedding the humanitarian language as a result (this is part of what I mean by indexical awakenings in chapter 5). I hypothesize that overall black humanitarianism decreases as racial essential increases in the 1840s.
torment of the slave and being moved to tears. Expressing moral sensitivity toward pain, Abruzzo observes, was a new way of performing high religious status (and fits with my above discussion of emotional boundary-work). This racial other-focused discourse gives the ‘caring side’ of the movement a unique twist. The main social justice sought was an end to the cruelties of slavery, an end to its torture of the body as well as to the effects that the deprivation of human liberty had upon the soul. Today we are easily alarmed about ambiguities of humanitarian discourse—its victimization, racial condescension and imperialist ambitions. But all of these critiques can be made of abolitionism as well as a proto-humanitarian movement that simultaneously resisted and reinforced racial status inequalities (as I show in chapter 4, thus not escaping many of the difficulties and dynamics of power and subordination that contemporary MROs tend to succumb to today; see Edwards et al 2013).

Like religious movements, abolitionism inspired utopian branches that withdrew from urban affairs and founded alternative farms and communes. Some more utopian-minded leaders of the movement resisted the “single-issue” platform and embraced a wide range of platforms, such as women’s rights, temperance, church reform, anti-Masonry, and even some cases, socialism and labor reform. Such broad multi-issue agendas are another common characteristic of religious social movements (Davis and Robinson 2012). However, the feminist and human rights discourse of the radical wings was much more progressive than the typical ‘strict moral side’ of religious movements regarding gender and sexuality especially. Such utopian attitudes and ‘ultraist’ rhetorics were deeply controversial among participants in the movement. Less feminist ‘conservative’ abolitionists preferred to keep reform activism grounded solidly in
existing churches. Both they and many black abolitionists protested the inclusion of other issues such as women’s rights that could detract from the movement’s focus on abolishing slavery. They worked together to protect a “single-issue” platform.

The comparison with Davis and Robinson’s ideal-typical religious social movement is illustrative. It throws several additional peculiarities of the abolitionist movement into sharper relief (which in turn can improve the theory of religious social movements). First, the ‘strict’ moralizing side of abolitionism had unexpected crossovers into the ‘caring side’ oriented upon racial social justice. Several of the most resonant frames in abolitionist rhetoric were oriented upon the personal and sexual sins that, abolitionists claimed, necessarily accompanied the ‘peculiar institution.’ Motivated by ideals of femininity and masculinity, abolitionists thus criticized slavery’s corrosive effects on the black family, manliness, and the innocence of children. Therefore, contra Davis and Robinson, racial egalitarianism and the very problematization of slavery in abolitionism cannot be subsumed wholly under the social-justice, mutual-aid wings of the movement. Some of the scripts for racial equality against slavery’s abuses sprung from ‘strict’ moralistic Victorianism.

Second, and vice versa, the ‘caring’ side of abolitionism contained hegemonic elements. One, as already mentioned, its humanitarianism could be paternalistic and condescending in the moral sentiments evoked by representations of victims of racial slavery. Two, and economically speaking, the abolitionists were strongly attracted to laissez-faire ideology, from which they liberally borrowed ‘free labor’ frames to

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53 Ashworth argument. Thus being gender essentializing while racially progressive. Women’s status tends not to do so well in religious movements overall.
problematize slavery as an inefficient system of forced labor. This intellectual inheritance makes it impossible to subsume abolitionism within sociology’s ‘systemic v. antisystemic’ distinction (our group speak for capitalist class projects and resistance to proletarianization). Abolitionism was not a Polanyian movement consisting of local communes striving to protect themselves from the destructive effects of modernization. Davis (1975) famously argued that antislavery ideas partly served an emergent hegemonic function for capitalist industrialization. Some antislavery arguments appealed to managers and wage-workers because of their implicit concern for the status of the ‘dependent’ worker in the new economy who had to work for another person for subsistence (i.e. they sought to distinguish wage-work from the condition of slavery, two states of work that were blurred in earlier republican discourse of independence v. servitude). Thus, abolitionist discourse actually served both systemic and antisystemic functions in American society. Or, in the words of Mintz (1995), the abolitionists were simultaneously ‘moralists and modernizers.’

Abolitionists were united by their affective aversion to slavery. Otherwise they did not have much in common. The organizations of the social movement (SMOs) were incredibly divisive and competitive with each other. Like historians, they disagreed over who really counted as an abolitionist and what was required. They offered competing problematizations and conflicting tactics for contention: the preferred tactics ranged

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54. Craig Calhoun (2012) gets American abolitionism fundamentally wrong here by extrapolating European frameworks of capital/labor to which E. P. Thompson’s moral economy & Polanyi’s double movement are more applicable.

55. More recently Davis (2014) has backed away from the strong hegemonic argument by examining how more ‘socialist’ themes were not foreign to prominent abolitionists including Frederick Douglass.

56. No doubt Foucault’s *Discipline & Punish* is a good reference point here. Like the Quaker reformers who Foucault traces in all their ironies, they strove intentionally for moral change while unintentionally rationalizing new forms of power.
from moral suasion to political party formation to violent revolution—the method of terror in John Brown’s attempted 1859 slave insurrection. There were multiple cliques and nodes of networking around diverse patrons and leaders, and there was no overarching organization managing the movement. The movement was highly decentralized with many communities of support far too autonomous to register as a local ‘auxiliary’ of some larger society. The biggest SMO, the American Anti-Slavery Society ceased to credibly speak for the movement after its schism in 1840.

Abolitionism was not immune to the accelerating unsettled times of early nineteenth-century American society. One quality abolitionism certainly shared with religious movements was the tendency to fall apart. Its internal divisiveness and factionalism increased over time. The early integrationist optimism of the 1830s gave way to increasingly separatist sentiments in the 1840s and 1850s (Stewart 2008; Stewart 1998). A bit of the age’s culturally ‘crumbing cosmos’ (Abzug 1995) seems to have been refracted through its disunities.

In what sense then was abolitionism actually a ‘social movement’? Certainly not in the sense of today’s professionally well-managed civil-society organizations. The movement was more of an outpouring of the civic-popularization of politics occurring across the country. Schudson (1999) situates abolitionism within the Second Era of democratic citizenship in U.S. history, in which the politics of deference toward local gentry gave way to the national “politics of affiliation” and a “new egalitarian ethos” (1999: 5-6). Northern abolitionists were devotees of the common civic rituals of the

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57 However, Benford argues that factionalism, e.g. between moderate and radical wings, can be productive for social movement success.
republic, public addresses, lyceums and uplift societies, prophetic-millennial preaching, festive street culture, party marches, commemorations of liberty, and endless organizing (Schudson nicknames it the ‘organizing impulse’). They expressed their antislavery opinions through all the public means available to them, and they imitated their context’s passionate political debates featuring the soaring oratorical entertainments of the famous. Thus, abolitionism’s momentum as a social movement was fueled by the erstwhile associational mold of American civil society (as opposed to today’s managerial memberships). Antislavery newspapers, for instance, were not mere ‘zines’ to be consumed. They were the communicative instruments of participatory associations consisting of dispersed members who desired to keep in touch with each other and exchange pertinent information (Schudson 1999: 122-123).

MOVEMENT MICROSCOPICS: THE VIEW FROM WITHIN

Antislavery abolitionism was a massive, highly religious, interracial social movement. The closest historical parallel to it in U.S. history is, predictably, the Civil Rights movement of the twentieth-century. In this section I assemble a social profile of the abolitionist protestors by synthesizing the best historical scholarship available. An initial disclaimer though, most previous quantitative scholarship on the topic predicates abolitionist membership upon oratorical and/or organizational participation, which we have already judged to be unsatisfactory for the broader view.
As a mass movement with mass-oriented tactics, abolitionism took off in the 1830s. There were a total of 120 antislavery groups before 1830, ranging from New England to the Upper South, with approximately 7,000 members total. By 1840, there were 1,350 antislavery organizations with over 250,000 members (Howe 2005; Young 2006). At least one historian though puts the tally in 1840 closer to 500,000 by including more free blacks (Horton 2013). Most white northerners did not care about the sufferings of the South’s slave population—why would one care about the affairs of distant strangers? Historians estimate that peak participation in the movement occurred in small to midsized villages scattered throughout New England and the Old Northwest. Among the most supportive of northern communities, abolitionists counted among them 10-15% of the population at most. Howe (2005) notes that official national membership reached over 2% of the total U.S. population before the war. Antebellum abolitionism, he suggests, was comparable in size and influence to today’s National Rifle Association. The states with the greatest number of antislavery organizations were New York, Massachusetts and Ohio, followed by Pennsylvania, New Hampshire and Vermont. Of course in various states and counties the proportion of the population attracted to antislavery ideas and sentiments was much greater.

Recognition of the multiracial composition of abolitionism is the most important historiographical development of the past two decades in the field of abolitionism studies. (Discussions of the shift can be found in Harrold 2001; Newman 2002; McCarthy & Stauffer 2006; Sinha 2010; 2006; Davis 2014). Foner writes, “Increasingly, blacks—not white abolitionists—occupy center stage. Slave resistance is now seen as central to the process of abolition in the United States” (Foner 2014). It is also better
acknowledged now that free black clerics, business owners and teachers kept antislavery culture alive in the ‘dormant’ years in between gradualism and immediatism (Newman 2002). Plus, the northern black community largely bankrolled the early immediatist organizing of the 1830s (Davis 2014). Free blacks convinced whites, including Garrison, of the moral fallacy of the American Colonization Society with its program of ‘voluntary’ expatriation.

Although we know that racial inequalities and racism deeply divided the social movement, it is not possible to know what percentage of abolitionists was black. The question is further complicated by the holistic, pragmatic nature of much antebellum black protest. Black participants interpreted a wide variety of everyday activities as antislavery performances even if they were not officially associated with ‘abolitionism’ in doctrine or organization (Ball 2012; Ripley 1991). In my conceptualization of abolitionism as a moral-emotional movement, most northern free blacks are included. For instance, widespread socioeconomic efforts among black communities at ‘elevation’ and ‘uplift’ were part of a meaningfully embodied argument against anti-black racism and against the legitimacy of slavery, and hence, part of the rhetoric of slavery.

Most of the movement’s white participants, if alive today, would be seen as quite racist (see Chapter 4). They held racialized conceptions of black inferiority even spouted them on stage at antislavery meetings. For many, disliking slavery and desiring its eradication was fully compatible with resignation toward the fact that formerly enslaved black people would never be capable of assimilation into the
American citizenry. Many of the SMOs were informally segregated. Some officially excluded blacks from membership. Racial segregation was both horizontal and vertical. Paid officer positions in the SMOs were largely reserved for whites. The developing tradition of holding autonomous Negro National Conventions in the 1840s leads one historian to see an increasing separatism and essentialist ‘racial modernity’ within the movement (Stewart 1998; c.f. Bell 1957). While some historians thus speak of ‘two abolitionisms’ given the extensiveness of northern segregation, other abolitionist groups were truly radical for fostering levels of interracial friendship unusual even in today’s MROs (Stauffer 2003; coven book).58

White and black women were crucial to the growth and spread of abolitionism. The movement’s accelerated diffusion in the 1830s depended greatly upon women’s often behind-the-scenes organizing labors. According to Jeffrey (1997), ordinary women workers formed the backbone of the movement through huge amounts of time spent managing boycotts, all-female societies, fundraisers, and mass petition drives (c.f. Zaeske 2003). Women across classes participated in organizing and fundraising efforts. Spinners and weavers in small to midsize towns found the movement appealing. Abolitionist women also found the social movement a potential ally for

58 After the ‘revisionist’ generation of historians from the 1970s on which criticized the ‘racist myopia’ of white abolitionists (Pease and Pease 1974; Fogel and Engerman 1974), current historians of abolitionism now cautiously defend its level of interracial inclusivity and egalitarianism (see McCarthy & Stauffer 2006; Stauffer 2003; Sinha 2012; 2006; Sklar 2007). Historians today seem to shy away from or are incapable of a systematic analysis of the racism of white abolitionism. Some go as far to try to banish ‘racism’ talk from abolitionist hagiography altogether (McPherson 2014 review of Davis). The trends make me suspect a normative epistemological polarity in the historiography of abolitionism. An empirical, systematic analysis of racism in white abolitionism should actually benefit from a hermeneutics of black abolitionist rhetoric. Some historians of abolitionism seem to be having a sort of colorblind multicultural moment in the absence of serious status-power sociological theorizing (which I attempt to do in Chapter 4).
improving their own status, whether through higher spiritual displays of care or by exploring opportunities for public demonstrations (Pierson 2003; Roth 2014; see Chapter 6 for further discussion).

While abolitionism was expanding its membership in the 1830s its geographical scope became more ‘sectional’ or polarized among regional borders. In response to both actual and rumored slave rebellions, southern tolerance of antislavery rhetoric dwindled quite rapidly. Reacting to slave rebellions and the radicalization of antislavery tactics, southern support for antislavery in any of its forms dwindled quite rapidly. Young (2006) demonstrates though abolitionism’s wide geographical scale across the northern states and territories, from New England coastal ports and metropolitan cities to rural frontiers. Many small-time white settlers of the frontier were adamantly antislavery because they did not wish to compete in expanding agricultural markets with slaveowners. In this respect too, the movement was broad, decentralized, and open to diverse local incarnations. Indeed, abolitionist organizing was typically accompanied by deep local prides, memories, and high regional patriotism, e.g. of the Yankee spirit (Arkin 2001; Laurie 2005).

Abolitionist membership tended young and highly religious. New members were often inspired by the egalitarian conversionism of the Second Great Awakening. Most abolitionists were Christian Protestants, but some Jewish and ‘freethought’ rationalists can be found, such as Ernestine Rose.59 Christian denominations with high rates of support included Presbyterian, Congregationalist, Baptist, Methodist, African

59 I don’t believe this challenges my conceptualization of official abolitionism as a religious social movement. Despite our prototypes of intolerance, orthodox religious movements often tolerate the participation of heterodox minorities (see Davis & Robinson 2012).
Methodist Episcopal, Quaker, and Unitarian. The 1830s wave of immediatist abolitionism was highly evangelical in character. It posited the power of ‘moral suasion,’ conviction by preaching the word, emotional appeals to an individual’s conscience, and subsequent repentance from a life of sin. Even the radical, less ecclesiological abolitionism of Garrison and the Grimké sisters had a fundamentally Christian evangelical character in many respects (though it abandoned scriptural literacy).60

Abolitionism attracted participants from all over the economic spectrum, from elite families and middling entrepreneurs to poorer wage workers. Within each strata several factors were correlated with increased likelihood of antislavery support. The ‘conscience constituency’ was motivated by liberal ‘new economy’ principles, such as free contractual labor, equal opportunity, and upward mobility (Foner 1970). Antislavery branches of the movement resonated in particular with the aspiring, the commercial, and the entrepreneurial classes (Davis 1975; Goodman 1998). Members of antislavery societies were most often also participants in the new market economy, typically as working class wage-laborers or middle-class professionals. Despite the prominent leadership and celebrity of several wealthy elites, e.g. Wendell Phillips, Gerrit Smith, and the Tappan brothers, heirs of the old gentry were relatively underrepresented

60 I discuss the meaning of the term ‘evangelical’ more in the next chapter when I analyze its emotions and frames. Suffice it here to say, we need to careful to not confuse evangelicalism with modern ‘scripturally literal’ fundamentalism. Young (2006) and other historians observe some tension between strands of evangelicalism, between more orthodox and more heterodox branches of abolitionism. Orthodox supporters, often Presbyterian or Congregationalist, made their antislavery activities revolve around church institutions. Many Christian evangelicals in these denominations had contempt for the reform radicalism associated with Garrison (e.g. the nonfeminist evangelicals in Hansen 1992).
(Aptheker 1989). Individuals among what historians call the ‘middling classes’ were, in contrast, more highly represented (Laurie 2005; Mintz 1995).61

In Magdol’s social history of the movement, the anti-slavery ‘rank and file’ tended to be young, market-oriented, managers or their employees, dwellers of midsized industrializing towns of the northern United States (Magdol 1986). His demographic snapshot emerged from an occupational analysis of antislavery society members, petition signers, and voting records. Magdol’s work has been celebrated as moving beyond narratives biased toward the wealthier elite leaders of the movement (his work was echoed later by Aptheker 1989 and Laurie 2005 among others). Previous historians were quite off key in their portrayal of abolitionists as old gentry elites expressing status anxieties in the new economy (especially culpable were the mid-century accounts by Avery Craven, David Donald, and Stanley Elkins). In reality abolitionism benefitted enormously from anti-aristocratic republican sentiments common among the working and middling classes (echoing Eric Foner’s 1970 cultural history of ‘free labor’).62

61 Historian Bruce Laurie defines the middling classes as that “spongy social layer of petty proprietors and small farmers poised between the established middle class and the working class” including mechanics, small retailers and petty professionals (Laurie 2005: xi); the term is sometimes contrasted with more well-established middle to upper classes).

62 Despite the associations of antislavery with the British empire (McDaniel 2013). For Aptheker (1989) this makes abolitionism amenable to a Marxist-DuBoisian analysis: “The great body of adherents of the anti-slavery movement were black and white folk with working-class ties; nor were the Abolitionist rural workers part of the affluent landed and farming interests. The most avid opponents of Abolitionism were the rich—the slaveowners and their lackeys, the merchants and their servitors, the dominant figures in politics, the press, the churches, and the schools” (Aptheker 1989: 41). “The evidence confirms the views of Wendell Phillips and Thomas Wentworth Higginson—despite dissenting opinion from a considerable number of historians—that the propertyless, the workers, artisans, and poorer farmers formed the vast majority of the mass following without which Abolitionism would have been inconsequential” (1989: 46). Aptheker and Magdol agree that most abolitionists were not in fact bourgeois property-owners.
Through the erstwhile vogue of ‘cliometric analysis,’ Fogel (1989) examined how the depressed economy of the 1840s and 1850s disgruntled the working classes toward rising rates of (Irish, Catholic) immigration. He argued that abolitionism benefitted from increased nativism that turned wage-workers against the Democratic Party, which was more favorable toward immigrants and ardently proslavery. The hypothesis fits with how other historians have characterized the antislavery political parties in their struggles against the second-party system (Pierson 2003). It also helps to explain why the abolitionist movement could exude strongly Victorian Protestant middle-class values—hard work, temperance, frugality, emotional restraint—even though many supporters were lower on the middling scale. Relatedly, Gusfield’s work (1986) demonstrates how the prohibitionism of the temperance movement—and many abolitionists were also temperance activists—served functions in both middle-class and nativist cultural agendas.

Assembling a social profile of such a diverse movement is no easy task even when relying upon the best available historical evidence. Nonetheless, to summarize, abolitionists were more likely to be middling new-market men and women. They were indeed moralists and modernizers (Mintz 1995). The average rank and file tended young, evangelical, and upwardly aspiring. They propagated free-labor values and held localistic pride and ambitions. Some were quite wealthy property-holders, but most were not. Some abstained from all voting for religious reasons, others ran for political office. Participants in abolitionist protest events ranged across the stratification hierarchy from white male millionaires (e.g. Gerrit Smith, Wendell Phillips) to black female domestic servants (e.g. Sojourner Truth, Maria Stewart). Whites and blacks alike
tended to perceive the mission of abolition through a religious lens. Many of the most effective and enduring activist leaders came from northern free black communities or from slavery itself.

MOVEMENT TELESCOPICS: THE VIEW OVER TIME

A third and final dimension of abolitionism as a social movement is as a temporal process. A temporally minded perspective is essential to microsociologists for revealing how the macro- and micro- elements are interconnected, i.e. the concrete reciprocities between the movement’s microdynamics and macrodynamics. Time matters because the creative microprocesses of abolitionist protest rhetoric cannot be fully understood apart from its moving historical contexts. All social movements ‘move’ within a dynamic political ecology of challengers, opponents, and onlookers. A recent cadre of sociologists has termed these institutional interactions the ‘dynamics of contention.’ My point is that the manifest and latent meanings of protest rhetoric are thoroughly conditioned by what is happening between the three. If an opponent becomes more repressive or if onlookers become disgusted, the protest rhetoric that moves movements adapts and adjusts to the new socioemotional situation—the new status-power matrix of affective attachments between proponents, opponents, and spectators. Like creativity in general, the collective problem-solving creativities of social movement emerge from within systems of relationships, the moving contexts of protest. In this way the telescopic view complements and synthesizes the macro and micro-dimensions of the movement described in the prior two sections.
A temporally minded perspective is also needed for understanding how abolitionism’s rhetoric of slavery made a difference in bringing about the abolition of slavery. The temporal dimension is crucial for understanding how these microdynamics of protest cumulate up to social-historical ‘events’ in the more macro sense intended by Sewell (2005). As transformations in enduring structures, like slavery and abolition, major historical events occur when creative microdynamic processes build up and puncture self-reproducing macrodynamic chains. Sewell thus discusses the need for an “eventful” historical sociology that is sensitive to the multiple temporalities of history, or the “heterogeneous temporalities of causality” as he puts it (c.f. Clemens 2007). In other words, events are his term for those interstitial crossovers between microdynamic time and macrodynamic time. And Sewell suggests that events are those relatively rare occurrences when microprocesses impact and revolutionize the macroprocesses.

The transformative processes of social change, according to Sewell, are ‘path-dependent,’ which is merely another way of describing the directionality of temporal processes. In path-dependent sequences, creative actions are conditioned by parameters set in the past but creative actions can also set new parameters limiting the possible actions of the future. Microdynamic creativity must work within the macrodynamic sequence (even to change it). An eventful sociology of social movements thus must take care in specifying both how social movements make

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63 This is the question of abolitionism’s outcome, its causal effects upon the historical sequence of mass military emancipation in the U.S. I bracket out this question when examining the microdynamic processes of persistence. However, I briefly outline some of the major micro-macro interconnections here. I shall also developing an alternative moral-panic account of the sequence in my Conclusion.
‘forced choices’ and how those ‘forced choices’ can nevertheless eventually be transformative ones within the unfolding sequences of the dynamics of contention (here borrowing the phrase ‘forced choice’ from Zizek 1989; c.f. Clemens 2007). While I did not find it feasible to structure this entire dissertation through a chronological narrative of events, what eventful sociology would require to some extent, the telescopic perspective is a necessary one for understanding the historical significance of the rhetoric of slavery. Here I will outline the causal sequence that I find most convincing, following Piven (2006) in emphasizing the provocative role of abolitionist agitation. The tactic of agitation or defiance was the ‘forced choice’ of abolitionism that through its microdynamic moral-emotional processes came to have macrodynamic evental effects.

One matter upon which historians tend to agree concerns the specific sequences that served to radicalize the abolitionist movement as well as the various missteps and overreactions southerners had, dramatically intensifying the sectional conflict over slavery. Early on, the publication of black Bostonian David Walker’s confrontational Appeal to the Colored Citizens of the World deeply upset southern governors and politicians. According to one North Carolinian official, the Appeal treated...

...in most inflammatory terms of the condition of the slaves in the Southern states, exaggerating their sufferings, magnifying their physical strength and underating the power of the whites; containing also an open appeal to their natural love of liberty; and throughout expressing sentiments totally subversive of all subordination in our slaves; and inculcating principles wholly at variance with the existing relation between the two colours of our Southern population...Every means which the existing laws of our State place within the reach of the police of this place are promptly used to prevent the dissemination of Walker’s pamphlet, and to restore confidence
to our fellow citizens... (quoted in Hinks 2000: 104-5).

Many southerners in fact blamed Walker, as well as Garrison’s new *Liberator*, as responsible for Nat Turner’s violent slave rebellion in Virginia, 1831. A few years later, abolitionists initiated a mass mailing campaign that flooded the south with antislavery pamphlets. The 1835 postal campaign was met with widespread outrage and censorship. Slaveholders were indignant that abolitionists would utilize recent technological innovations in printing and transportation against them (Schudson 1999). They saw the propaganda as part of a conspiracy to incite more violent slave insurrections. In the eyes of several southern politicians, the abolitionist literature was a plot to “rouse and inflame the passions of the slaves against their masters, to urge them on to deed of death” and it “proved beyond a doubt that a systematic attempt is making by some reckless persons at the North to sow sedition among the slaves at the South” (quoted in Schudson 1999: 105; quoted in Hinks 2000: 106).

Abolitionists also started experimenting with the petition as an instrument of protest. Mass signature drives produced antislavery petitions with an unprecedented numbers of signers, hitting the millions mark by the late 1830s. That approximately 70% of all antislavery petition signers were women, among them ‘moral mothers’ of the republic, only added to the panic among southerners. In response, the House of Representatives in 1836 passed a gag rule tabling all antislavery petitions instead of sending them to committee. The Congressional censorship continued a pattern in which the political opponents of abolitionism overreacted in ways that estranged more
people than just abolitionists. Northerners formerly indifferent to slavery become concerned with civil liberties being violated.

If there was one thing the abolitionists were good at doing then, it was ‘agitation,’ the word that became key to the Garrisonian parlance of protest. Abolitionist rhetoric provoked strong countermovement protests. Anti-abolitionist riots, like the one beginning this chapter, similarly had unintended consequences. They produced new ‘law-and-order’ allies to the abolitionist social movement (Ellingson 1995). Or, they radicalized the antislavery commitments of sympathizers like Wendell Phillips who only spoke out in protest after the murder of abolitionist printer Elijah Lovejoy in 1837.

These are just several of the ‘critical emotional events’ (Yang 2005) that affected the evolving relationships between various stakeholders in the conflict over slavery. They serve to illustrate the chain of actions-and-reactions caused by abolitionist protest rhetoric, often more via emotional provocation (pathos) than via rational persuasion (logos). A rare temporal-political analysis of abolitionism that extends this analysis comes from Piven (2006). She also makes the strong argument that ordinary American abolitionists were successful, indirectly, in achieving the movement’s primary objective of slavery’s complete abolition. In Piven’s account, mass emancipation resulted from the disruptive power of the abolitionist movement, from its radical embrace various legal and illegal tactics of defiance. Among the most significant effects of abolitionist demonstration, some after all hailing “Disunion!” and “No Compromise!” was the fracturing and destabilization of the Second Party System in
U.S. history, the competitive Democratic and Whig political parties of the 1830s and 1840s that had operated with a gentleman’s agreement to not discuss slavery as a federal issue. But the very vocal abolitionists forced public consideration of the issue against the wishes of almost all political elites. Schudson similarly observes, “The whole course of national political development from the War of 1812 to the Civil War can be seen as a set of maneuvers to keep from making a decision about slavery” (1999: 140). With antislavery’s growing conscience constituency and the rise of the moderate antislavery Republican Party this was no longer feasible in 1860.

According to Piven, immediatist abolitionism ended “the politics of avoidance and accommodation” that free and slave states had mutually maintained for decades. Through civil noncooperation and criminal defiance, including resistance to fugitive slave laws, they punctured through the gentleman’s social compact. This strategy was not necessarily intentional. The troubling “electoral dissensus” along sectional lines was actually more of an unintentional consequence of how abolitionist petitions and propaganda provoked fierce southern opposition. Southern politicians became more reactionary, defensive, and unwilling to make any further compromises with conciliatory northern politicians like Lincoln. After the presidential elections of 1856 and 1860, Southerners realized their dynasty over national politics was over. They soon seceded to protect their right to ‘property in man’ from possible federal strictures.

We should keep in mind however that most abolitionist ‘challengers’ did not interact with the mainstream political parties. Instead they formed associations that more often than not preached to the choir. Piven is right to stress how mediated and
unintentional the causal influence of the abolitionists was upon the total political
ecology of the social system. Her reconstruction is echoed by recent historical
scholarship that pinpoints the fugitive slave issue as the truly pivotal one in the
‘escalation of sectional conflict’ (Davis 2014 among others).

The sequence of immediate abolition in the U.S. was a diffuse cascade of
unintended consequences. Abolitionism was *manifestly unsuccessful* in achieving its
goal through moral suasion through logos nor by instigating slave rebellion.
Abolitionism was indirectly or *latently successful* though in inciting an egregious
overreaction by southerners that offended the sensibilities of many northerners not of
the conscience constituency. The dynamics-of-contention perspective would focus
attention of the political opportunity structures created by increasing division among
the elites. In contrast, my telescopic perspective gives more weight to abolitionist
actions and their incendiary effects. It implies a broader vision of what constitutes
successful protest rhetoric. In the quest to abolish slavery, the agitation of violent
emotions (pathos) could be just as effective as calm conciliatory persuasion (logos, and
to some extent, ethos). It appears again then, to return to the refrain, we should not
underestimate the status-oriented emotions of protest rhetoric.
Chapter 3
The Rhetoric of Slavery:
Emotional Frames in Abolitionist Discourse

PATHETIC PROBLEMATIZATIONS

Abolitionists sought to convince others that slavery was a serious, urgent social problem. Their speeches were part of a broader rhetorical project in the social re-construction of slavery. Toward this aim several key emotional frames were produced by abolitionist discourse to problematize the bodily sufferings of the slave as illegitimate, immoral, and of national concern. Over constant adjustments to their audiences, abolitionist orators invented and arranged several problem frames so as to make them as compelling as possible. Through their rhetorical creativity, something previously considered natural and inevitable was transformed into a ‘social problem,’ i.e. something seen as morally exigent, secular in origins, and practically remediable. As I will show, abolitionist protest rhetoric operated symbolically on the perceptual and affective valences association with slavery. This chapter focuses on the cultural symbolism of dominant emotional frames in abolitionism. Here I examine the rhetorical and emotional framing of slavery in the public addresses of several prominent abolitionists, focusing here upon the oratory of Lucretia Mott and William Lloyd Garrison. A future chapter will approach the issue of emotional resonance from the side of the audience.
Discourse and problematization are technical terms in Foucault (2002; 1997).

Discourse refers to unconscious modes of thought conditioning the societal possibility of experiencing historically specific objects. It includes both logics of thought and practical set-ups insofar as they were conditioned by thought. Late in his life, Foucault saw the idea of ‘problematization’ as a potentially unifying key to his eclectic writings. His many histories of knowledge/power all share a fascination with how social objects taken for granted in previous eras become de-familiarized and rendered problematic, e.g., whether by moralization or medicalization. Problematization through discourse is a necessary condition animating the many medical, juridical, penal and therapeutic reformers that appear in Foucault’s histories of mental illness, punishment and sexuality. Problematizations are a common nodal point shared by diverse constructions and approaches to some newly identified difficulty. In one of his last interviews, Foucault explained:

The work of a history of thought would be to rediscover at the root of these diverse solutions the general form of problematization that has made them possible—even in their very opposition; or what has made possible the transformation of the difficulties and obstacles of a practice into a general problem for which one proposes diverse practical solutions. It is problematization that responds to these difficulties, but by doing something quite other than expressing them or manifesting them: in connection with them, it develops the conditions in which possible responses can be given; it defines the elements that will constitute what the different solutions attempt

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64 The discourse analysis of abolitionist frames in this chapter borrow from several theoretical tool-kits, such as the pragmatist social-problems tradition in American sociology and recent proponents of it, from which I utilize the symbolic interactionist theory of frames. I also refer to Foucault’s genealogical theory here, especially his account of how problematizations enabled moral reformers to experience and offer a variety of rationalizing solutions toward certain historically arising ‘difficulties.’ Both Foucault and the social-problems sociologist see historical inquiry as foundational to the sociological approach, that the units, classes, functions and dysfunctions of a society should not be taken for granted by social scientists. Thus my account of emotional framing in abolitionist discourse constitutes one further step toward explaining how slavery came to be seen as a public social problem, morally reprehensible and practically terminable.
to respond to. This development of a given into a question, this transformation of a group of obstacles and difficulties into problems to which the diverse solutions will attempt to produce a response, this is what constitutes the point of problematization and the specific work of thought (Foucault 1997: 118).

The relevant question here for abolitionism is how did slavery come to be problematized through American traditions of discourse and what deep patterns did various rhetorics of slavery have in common? Foucault would identify abolitionist reformers as one option among many possible ‘diverse practical solutions’ enabled by the problematization of slavery. Foucault believed that problematizations were not determined by prior, putatively more fundamental, political or economic processes. Instead they could be quite original, relatively autonomous shifts in discursive structure.65

In addition to discourse and problematization, I apply the notion of “emotional frames” to describe the affective ‘umph’ attached to several recurrent symbolic patterns in abolitionist discourse (Flam 2005). Emotional frames did a fair share of the work of problematization on the ground. They were essential to how the rhetoric of slavery compellingly delegitimized the institution. The language of framing in sociology comes from Goffman who in Frame Analysis develops it to explicate the background

65 ‘Relatively autonomous’ that is from economy and government, not from power. The relationship between the political-economy of slavery and the problematizing rhetoric of slavery would is complex for Foucault to say the least. From the same interview cited in text: “Actually, for a domain of action, a behavior, to enter the field of thought, it is necessary for a certain number of factors to have made it uncertain, to have made it lose familiarity, or to have provoked a certain number of difficulties around it. These elements result from social, economic, or political processes. But here their only role is that of instigation. They can exist and perform their action for a very long time, before there is effective problematization by thought. And when thought intervenes, it doesn’t assume a unique form that is the direct result or the necessary expression of these difficulties; it is an original or specific response—often taking many forms, sometimes even contradictory in its different aspects—to these difficulties, which are destined for it by a situation or a context, and which hold true as a possible question” (Foucault 1997: 118).
meanings and roles presumed by interactions. Goffman conceptualized frames as ‘definitions of the situation that organize experience and guide actions’ (Goffman 1972; Saguy 2013: 4). Frames give order to experience by simplifying chaos, transposing things and finding correspondences. (For my purposes I will sometimes distinguish between the cognitive and affective dimensions of a frame though they are inseparable and, as suggested in the prologue, the affective kick of the symbolic pattern is what makes a frame a frame).

One useful convention of frame analysis in the study of social problems is the distinction between problem frames, blame frames and solution frames (Saguy 2013). Problem frames are rhetorical arguments or claims about why a particular social phenomenon is problematic, indicative of breakdown or injustice, and why the public should care about it. Blame frames are rhetorical arguments and claims about how moral and technical responsibility should be distributed. Solution frames are, finally, about what should be done in response given a social problem and the distribution of responsibility. Common solution frames today, for a variety of social problems, include moralization, medicalization, securitization, etc.

For the purposes of this chapter, a ‘frame’ refers to a repeated metaphorical

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66 Joel Best (2013) defines social-problem claims as “arguments to persuade others that something is wrong,” “that there is a problem that needs to be addressed.” Best disaggregates problems frames into a prognosis and a warrant. The prognosis refers to the basic establishment of facts, the grounds for recognizing that a problem exists, and can take the form of a statistic, a name or a typifying example. The prognosis of a problem frame does the work of providing ‘evidence’ of a phenomenon (I put evidence in scare quotes because we are not talking about scientific observation here; the evidence claimmakers refer to can be erroneous and mythological). The warrant is comprised of reasons an audience should care about the prognosis. Warrants can draw upon putative common values or make predictions about some disaster society is headed toward, assuming the undesirability of an end state either for moral reasons or out of practical expediency.

67 The distinction between the three kinds of frames is analytical in that actual rhetors often overlap them quite a bit. On the other hand, there can also be logical inconsistencies across the three categories of frames, or a category can be altogether absence (e.g. no solution frame for climate change).
construction that is more simple than a narrative. All frames have a metaphorical or symbolic dimension: frames produce the appearance of a natural resemblance between at least two heterogeneous things, one thing often being a particular practice and the other thing often being a more abstract concept. Among the three aforementioned categories of frames, problem frames are the most relevant to the following discussion. A problem frame is tantamount to an answer to the question, why does a particular configuration of facts constitute an undesirable state? A problem frame in abolitionist discourse can be parsed as: “Slavery is a problem because of ____________.” A problem frame exists when a public claimmaker fills in the blank so to speak. Obviously there is a close relationship between the cultural-intellectual tradition (e.g. sentimentalism) and the rhetorical construction of slavery that stems from it (e.g. the Sentimental frame of slavery as cruel). A frame is like a crystallization of a cultural tradition into a relatively simple and potent metaphorical statement that transposes cultural equivalences across signifieds and maximizes resonance to produce the ‘umph’ factor.\textsuperscript{68} In my frame analysis of abolitionist discourse, to give an overview, I found that three main emotional frames were common: the Sentimental frame, the Republican frame, and the Protestant frame:

The Sentimental frame problematizes slavery because of its cruelty and its inhumanity. Slavery is an affliction of the heart. Figured in the lash and the separation of families, slavery violates the fundamental moral nature of humanity based on

\textsuperscript{68} For example, the Protestant frame defines slavery as a sin—the metaphorical schema of ‘sin’ is well understood and easily generalizable. The frame though rests upon other theological principles and narratives that give it energy, i.e., the reasons an abolitionist might give for answering the question, “but why is slavery sinful?”
sympathy or fellow-feeling according to sentimental discourse.

The Republican frame presents slavery as a social problem because it goes against values of equal rights and liberty from tyrants, the principles enshrined in the nation’s collective memory of revolution and independence. Slavery is pre-eminently the deprivation of liberty. Republicanism sees slavery as a corruption of power, as despotic and tyrannical tendencies of government that the new republic was founded against.

Lastly, the third problem frame, the Evangelical Protestant frame, constructs slavery as a sin. Slavery is iniquitous on both an individual and national level (for instance, Garrison constantly claims the North is just as guilty as the South). Given the partial divinity of human beings and God’s biblical instructions for how to treat one’s fellow neighbor, slavery is an irremediable sin, which, like all sins according to nineteenth-century revivalists, should be repented from immediately.\(^6^9\) Many historians of abolitionism have here observed the intrinsic evangelical character of ‘immediate’ abolitionism (at least since Davis 1962; Loveland 1966; which I discuss at more length in the section below on the Evangelical frame).

The three dominant problem frames in abolitionism thus offer distinctive but compatible metaphorical figurations of slavery: slavery = cruelty, tyranny, moral sin. Another commonality among the three frames is the performative power they all possessed. Each frame weaves together affective associations with concise rhetorical argumentation. Inseparably cognitive and affective, each problem frame prescribes an

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\(^6^9\) Intermittently, abolitionists will claims that slavery is a problem because of how God created humans in His own image (*imago dei* theology) or because of the exemplary moral character of Christ the savior (*imitatione Christi* theology).
appropriate way of feeling toward slavery in addition to a way of thinking about slavery. On this note, Flam (2005) has stated that, “every cognitive frame implies emotional framing” (2005: 24). Protest claimsmakers offer an emotional re-framing of reality, an alternative set of affective attachments and attitudes toward objects, opponents, onlookers, etc.  

Indeed, the cultural patterns most often identified as ‘frames’ by scholars of contention often seem to be ones with strong moral-emotional components attached (e.g. disgust, outrage, shame, etc).  

Processes of social problem construction are not purely logical and not solely discursive as Foucault sometimes seems to suggest. Problematization is also an affective process oriented upon the communication and production of pathos—the strong and often negative emotions of an audience. The problem frames emerging from sentimentalism, republicanism, and evangelical Protestantism, are all pathetic problematizations oriented upon pathos, forged, adjusted, and delivered to provoke strong audience feelings toward slavery. Each of the three frames held a moral-emotional orientation that abolitionist speakers sought to arouse:

1) Sin in Christian experience was affectively associated with the moral-emotional feelings of guilt, disgust, and contempt (toward sin in the self and the

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70 Another usage of the term, ‘emotional frame’ is also common in the sociological literature. Emotional framing refers to efforts to craft protest rhetoric to resonate with pre-given emotional cultures (see Ruiz-Junco 2013 for a discussion). Flam’s treatment is more constitutive and more in line with my views of rhetorical and affective creativity.

71 It could be that the word ‘frame’ is too weak then and too cognitive to do the work needed. Alternately we can reconceptualize frames as inherently emotional frames so as to better acknowledge their affective kick. This is the path I take. I hypothesize that the efficacy of popular protest frames depends greatly upon how they alert those socioemotional instincts and activate those moral-emotional capabilities (discussed in chapter 1). I suspect Saguy’s discussion of dominant frames in the American obesity scare likewise could be reinterpreted as emotional frames with quasi-automatic prescriptions/proscriptions for moral-emotional experience, i.e., steering and expressing contempt, empathy, national fear/shame toward culturally constructed objects.
sinfulness of others).

2) Sentimentalism promoted the desirability of *sympathy* and *pity*, two of the more positive other-directed moral emotions. Conversely it felt *disgust* toward cruelty and bodily pain.

3) The emotional resonance of republican frames was more variable: the threat of tyranny provokes *wariness* on one hand, but also *anger* and *contempt* towards the despotic opponent. Republicanism also encourages a *civic pride* in the republic, and thus deep *shame* when the norms and ideals of the republic are broken.

**THE SENTIMENTAL FRAME**

In the eighteenth-century, sentimentalism was already a motivational driver of antislavery abolitionism in its then gradualist forms. It continued through the 1830s to shape abolitionist protest rhetoric but with new inflections. Sentimental philosophy stemmed from a variety of religious and secular sources. One source was Anglicanism’s doctrinal revolution from theologies of original sin to theologies of innate benevolence. Another source was the Scottish Enlightenment when moral philosophers like Smith and Hume grounded ethics upon humanity’s common moral nature. A third source was more literary, the ‘cult of sensibility’ as it emerged hand in hand with the birth of the novel in the eighteenth century. At first a medical term for the nervous system, ‘sensibility’ was generalized in literature to refer to the capacity of human nature to be affected and moved. Sentimentalism was a widely disseminated transatlantic discourse that without a doubt altered the history of the early U.S. (with
one historian even giving it partial credit for the existence of an independent U.S. republic, Burstein 1999). Not yet coded as ‘feminine’ in the late eighteenth-century U.S., sentimentalism made it perfectly acceptable for the highest politicians to weep out of compassion during their public addresses.72

The Sentimental frame of slavery emphasizes the institution’s violation of the moral and affective faculties of human nature. This argument is made in several steps. The first is the Smith-ian axiom that moral action is based on the sociable, affective propensities of humankind. ‘Right and wrong’ are more about intuition and inclination rather than abstract reasoning. For Smith ‘moral sentiments’ are fundamental to human nature. We are intrinsically sympathetic beings prone to imagine what it would be like to be in the position of the other. Synonymous with ‘fellow feeling,’ sympathy was the social emotion, the glue of moral communities like the family. Inversely follows condemnation of those actions that pervert the natural bonds of sympathy. Acts of cruelty go against human nature and natural law insofar as they violate our moral sentiments.

Sentimentalism underwent several permutations before its uptake by immediate abolitionists in the 1820s and 1830s. The most important of these was a shift in its gendered significations. Sentimentality was increasingly coded as feminine. The heir to the eighteenth century ‘Man of Feelings’ was the nineteenth-century ‘Moral Mother.’

72 The ‘man of feelings’ was replaced by the moral mother of sentiments by the 1830s (c.f. Burstein 1999). Increasing market competition and the commodification of labor was rendered acceptable only by offering a contrast to it, a refuge where kindred spirits and human warmth still thrived, the family. Home and hearth were seen as the necessary countervailing principle to a market run by self-interests. Abolitionists gained ground by using the cult of true womanhood and images of moral motherhood as bases for condemning the cruelty of slavery (Samuels 1992; Sanchez-Eppler 1992).
Sentimentalism thus became an ideological support for separate spheres (even in Smith ‘moral sentiments’ were less a property of civil society and more a property of the family). Male intellectuals and politicians increasingly distanced themselves from the ‘sentimentality’ proper to women. By the 1830s, many of sentimentalism’s scripts and prescriptions were exclusive of women’s domestic sphere, governing how mothers and wives should manage the educational and moral reproduction of the household.

Predictably then was a strong gender bias in the Sentimental frame of slavery in abolitionist rhetoric. I found it to be more common among women abolitionists and highly received when sentimental motifs predominated their speeches or novels. Renowned pious Quaker Lucretia Mott was widely praised throughout New England as the “mother” of abolitionism. Abolitionists benefitted from her acclaimed moral purity and from the associations of moral motherhood more generally. While prominent abolitionist men still drew upon Sentimental frames and their lingering resonance, they did so less frequently. Republican and primitivist ideals were beginning to replace sentimentality in the antebellum prescriptions of masculinity (Rotundo 1987).

More than any other abolitionist orator I read, Lucretia Mott’s diction was thoroughly saturated with sentimentality. Over the course of decades of delivering anti-slavery speeches, Mott repeatedly framed slavery as “outrage of human affections” (1980: 32). Slavery to her goes against the innate goodness with which humans were created and supposed to bestow upon each other. Slavery is a state of inhumanity when the whip strikes helpless fieldhands or separates enslaved mothers from their children. Mott’s description of slavery flows from her Quaker theology, rejecting
traditional doctrines of the deplavity of human nature. Mott believed that every child
was born with divine goodness in their soul. Indeed it is hard to distinguish the Quaker
elements of Mott’s thought—the divine spark inside every human—from the
sentimental elements—the moral sentiments of human nature. Her rhetoric displays a
potential synergy between Sentimental and Protestant problem frames. She fuses the
two in an overarching theology of benevolence in this statement:

I believe that the principles of righteousness can be carried out through the
land, and that we show our reverence for God by the respect we pay his
children. We do not sufficiently exercise our high moral nature. We resist the
benevolent principles and feelings that would lead us forth into lanes and by-
ways, that we might comfort and save the outcast and afflicted (Mott 1980
[1841]: 34; all Mott quotes are from records of her speeches).

Her claim is that God created humans with a ‘high moral nature’ rather than in a state
of total depravity. Humans have natural moral inclinations. Moral feelings lead one to
comfort the ‘outcast and afflicted,’ including the enslaved. These moral actions abide
by ‘benevolent principles and feelings.’

Mott’s sentimentalism enabled her to condemn slavery as an affliction of the
heart. Slaveholding is a form of cruelty violating the very moral nature of humanity. In
accordance with Quaker theology, Mott argued that every person should be able to
discern the immorality of slavery by consulting one’s conscience. Turning inward to
listen to one’s true moral feelings is the basis of righteousness. Every human being
knows deep down in their heart that slavery is wrong:

The labours of these few pioneers [the abolitionists] have been sufficient to
awake the nation to the consideration of this subject [slavery], and there is a
response in the hearts of those who have not been blinded by their sectarian
prejudices...in their inmost heart there is a response to the truth as it was
once uttered by a speaker of the House of Assembly in Barbadoes: that
‘every man knows in his heart that slaveholding is wrong’ (Mott 1980 [1848]: 74-75).

Echoing Smith’s theory of moral sentiments, Mott affirms the intuitive basis of the ethics of slavery. The human heart responds intuitively and automatically to moral truth. Later in her speaking career, Mott finds her claims vindicated in the bestseller *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. “Why is it that HARRIET BEECHER STOWE has had such success throughout the wide world? Because her work reaches the sense of right in the universal human heart” (Mott 1980 [1953]: 222).

Mott’s vocation as an abolitionist minister was to stir the heart toward compassion by speaking with inspiration. Right and wrong are validated through the natural experience of the tender feelings. One’s inclinations to feel sympathy and compassion for the slave in their sufferings constitutes her proof of slavery’s immorality. The task of ministers like herself was to effect “a greater enlargement of heart in all” (Mott 1980: 56). Slaveholders have lost touched with their heart, becoming inhumane in how they treat others. In principle though, even slaveholders are redeemable for Mott if they would only cast aside their false doctrines and idols to recognize the wrongs they have done.

The sentimentalization of the enslaved, the imagination of the tortured soul inside the scarred slave’s body, motivated Mott’s abolitionist activism. She appealed to the sentimentalist cosmology to encourage others to long-distance advocacy (a.k.a. humanitarianism in Stamatov 2013). The problematization of slavery as an ‘outrage of human affections’ thus slips into exhorting others to act out of their budding empathy:

When I look only over professing Christendom my soul mourns over the
doom to perpetual and unrequited toil, the entire deprivation of rights, the outrage of human affections, and the absence of all that makes life desirable, which all unite to weigh down the lives of so many millions, while so few are ready to raise the cry of justice and mercy on their behalf...You have pens and voices to commend their cause to others, and to portray their miseries so as to gain sympathy. To how many towns you might go, and awaken their inhabitants to the relief of these sufferings! (Mott 1980 [1841]: 32).

The images of ‘unrequited toil’ and ‘absence of all that makes life desirable’ is intended to promote sympathetic action. For Mott and many other abolitionist speakers, sentimentalism was more than a set of beliefs and principles. It is in fact more than a matter of framing. The Sentimental frame of the slave’s suffering in the previous passage is imbued with pathetic appeals to the audience.

Pathos in abolitionist oratory is a means to an end. It is an essential part of the strategy of ‘moral suasion’ that Mott shared with William Lloyd Garrison: appeal to the moral emotions (the ‘heart’) of the audience in order the change their attitudes in order to shift private opinions rather than legislating morality. The presumed connections between sympathy, pathos, and moral transformation are evident in Mott’s 1841 speech:

Let us put our own souls in their souls’ stead, who are in slavery, and let us labor for their liberation as bound with them. Let us look at the souls who are led away into hopeless captivity deprived of every right, and sundered from every happy association—the parents separated from their children, and all the relations of life outraged; and then let us obey the dictates of sympathy (Mott 1980 [1841]: 30)

Nearly all the principles of sentimentalism are distilled in this remarkable quote: the human faculty for empathetic imagination, the pathos of the suffering, the violation of moral sentiments in the rupturing of natural social bonds, the exhortation to moral action predicated upon sympathetic fellow-feeling. Abolitionists like Mott found the
Sentimental frame of slavery to be emotionally compelling: slavery destroys the family, it promotes hopelessness and misery, it abuses the body with the lash. The horrific images proffered were designed to provoke indignation, because slavery is an outrage to the natural affections.

Sentimentalism in abolitionist discourse was more than a set of framing devices. It was a visceral performance of the pathos of indignation and pity. Grounded upon these affective experiences, abolitionists tried to resensitize people’s consciences to slavery through excruciating tales of tragedy and even pornographic images of brutality (Kammerrer). The quotes below, extracted from speeches by several other abolitionists, support my observation that the Sentimental frame of slavery was especially common among women orators. I also include a few lines from Garrison, two adopting the Sentimental frame, and one distancing himself from it, to demonstrate the implicit gender status distinctions.

Further Instances of the Sentimental Frame

1. Ernestine Rose (Jewish free-thought, women’s rights advocate):
“I have named here none of the evils of slavery. It were vain for me to attempt to do so. You can all understand it as well as I can as I have never been in the position of a slave. It not only deprives a human being of his own identity, of his own person, but it subjects him eternally to the bitter degradation of bondage. I need not tell you of the pangs and misery caused by slavery, arising from the fact that the nearest and dearest bonds are severed and broken asunder. I need not depict before your eyes that parents and children are placed alternately on the auction-block, and they are bid off and knowed down like merchandize, and then separated, never again to behold each other. I will not repeat these things, for you know them too well. As I said before, the curse of slavery is not confined to the poor black victim alone; but my friends the whole country is cursed by slavery. The Southern white population are cursed by it; and so much is my mind of a universal tendency, that while I deprecate slavery and slaveholding, while all my
sympathies gush forth for the poor slave I cannot withhold some pity and commiseration for the slaveholder too; for it is an eternal principle of right, that the evil-doer shall be punished by the evil he inflicts upon others; and terribly cursed and punished is the South by the evil they inflict on the poor slave, by a violation of all human rights, by a violation of all the dearest principles of humanity.” (Rose speech 191)

2. Angelina Grimké (Quaker, raised on Southern slave plantation):
“...if they have witnessed the cruelties of slavery, by remaining silent spectators they have naturally become callous—an insensibility has ensued which prepares them to apologize even for barbarity...I only wonder that I had such feelings. I wonder when I reflect under what influence I was brought up, that my heart is not harder than the nether millstone. But in the midst of temptation, I was preserved, and my sympathy grew warmer, and my hatred of slavery more inveterate, until at last I have exiled myself from my native land because I could no longer endure to hear the wailing of the slave.” (Grimké in Ceplair 1989 [speech] :320-1).

3. William Lloyd Garrison (assuming the point of view of the slave in this quote):
“My benevolence is neither contracted nor selfish. I pity that man whose heart is not larger than a whole continent.” (Garrison 1968 [1829 speech]: 52).

“We [Americans] have invaded our territories, depopulated our villages, and kindled among us the flames of an exterminating war. They have wedged us into the holds of their ‘floating hells,’ with suffocating compactness, and without distinction of age or sex—allowing us neither to inhale the invigorating air of heaven, nor to witness the cheering light of the sun, neither wholesome food nor change of raiment—by which treatment thousands have expired under the most horrible sufferings...They have cruelly torn the wife from her husband, the mother from her daughter, and children from their parents, and sold them into perpetual exile...They have lacerated our bodies with whips, and brands, and knives, for the most innocent and trifling offences, and often solely to gratify their malignant propensities; nor do they esteem it a crime worthy of death to murder us at will” (Garrison 1968 [1829 speech]: 55).

“I still believe that the demands of justice will be satisfied; that the voice of bleeding humanity will melt the most obdurate heart; and that the land will be redeemed and regenerated by an enlightened and energetic public opinion” (Garrison 1968 [1832 book]: 35).

Against mere ‘sentimentalism’: 
“In short, it [genuine abolitionism] is a life, not an impulse—a quenchless flame of philanthropy, not a transient spark of sentimentalism” (Garrison 1968: 200).

THE REPUBLICAN FRAME

According to Bellah and colleagues (1985), the nineteenth-century U.S. was becoming a less ‘republican’ place as measured by the classic values of republicanism, civic virtue and sacrifice for the common good. Regarding the decades before the Civil War however, this is probably an exaggeration. American civil society discourse continued to valorize the binaries of classical republicanism (and many scholars of nationalism argue that it has done so to this day). Republicanism as an intellectual tradition is no less complex than sentimentalism and has an even longer pedigree. While there are many historiographical debates about the truest version of republicanism, the term typically refers to a group of political philosophies advocating the protection of liberty from rule by arbitrary power. Contra Bellah, I do not make a strong distinction between republicanism and some forms of liberalism (the abolitionists preferred the term republican). Republicanism across its many different forms tended to place higher worth upon mixed government, constitutional rights, the rule of law, and a high valuation of political participation. Many of the revolutionary elites seeking American independence were motivated by classical republicanism, which for them meant self-determination and freedom from oppressive colonial power (as manifested in the issues of taxation, navies and trade). In general, republican philosophers tended to worry about the corruption of power. They disliked ‘monarchy’ and hated ‘tyranny.’ They were also wary over the rise of the merchant classes who were seen as putting
self-interest above civic virtue (see Wood 1993).

Abolitionist orators sought to associate the republican symbols of the new nation with their cause. Republican frames in abolitionism constructed slavery as a problem because of its deprivation of liberties. Slavery deprives man of the fundamental right to self-ownership. Slaveholders resemble the republican’s ‘tyrant’ who thirsts for more power and imposes unfair demands upon his subjects. Antislavery ally and transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson poignantly presented the problem:

We sometimes say, the planter does not want slaves, he only wants the immunities and the luxuries which the slaves yield him; give him money, give him a machine that will yield him as much money as the slaves, and he will thankfully let them go. He has no love of slavery, he wants luxury, and he will pay even this price of crime and danger for it. But I think experience does not warrant this favorable distinction, but shows the existence, beside the the covetousness, of a bitterer element, the love of power, the voluptuousness of holding a human being in his absolute control...The planter is the spoiled child of his unnatural habits, and has contracted in his indolent and luxurious climate the need of excitement by irritating and tormenting his slave (Emerson 1995 [1844 speech]: 17-18).

For Emerson slavery is an unnatural imbalance of power that tempts human wickedness. It sets up the plantation class for idleness, sadism, licentiousness and ultimate moral destruction. Abolitionists constructed slavery through the Republican frame as a lack of liberty on one hand, and an abuse of power on the other.

Slavery was interpreted as a rebellion against natural law insofar as it deprived men of their inalienable rights to freedom, self-control, and independence. Usage of the Republican frame in abolitionist discourse was likely as gender biased as sentimentalism. Its main ideals of “independence” and “freedom” in antebellum culture
held the gender connotations of “manliness.” Though women could make their own distinct sacrifices for the republic, men were the default self-owners of the republic who possessed the republican rights to freedom (based as it was upon women’s unfreedoms; c.f. Rotundo 1987 on the “Masculine Achiever” figure of manliness). In addition to the masculinist repudiation of the dependencies and deprivations of slavery, republicanism promoted arguments against forced labor in general (however, it did not necessarily view wage labor as much better).

Republicanism has been the source of the master frame of equal rights for many modern social movements. Master frames are well-understood conventions that make for easily transposable schemas applicable to many different social scenes. Often master frames are the most compelling among alternative problem-frames because of their seemingly self-evident status. Garrison in some of his speeches dismissed the need of making the republican argument, presuming it part of the stock of common knowledge.

In addition to the masculinist connotations, there is also a unique race-based bias behind the appearance and frequency of the Republican frame in abolitionist discourse. Overall black abolitionism was more reverential than the Garrisonians about the status and interpretation of Republican frames (on black antebellum protest, see Chapters 4-6). Prominent black abolitionists found more meaning in and used Republican frames more frequently than white abolitionists. For James McCune Smith and Frederick Douglass, the Declaration of Independence was a sacred document, its only foible being the nation’s lived hypocrisy when set next to it. The Constitution, on
the other hand, was a profane document contaminated by slaveholding interests, as McCune Smith argued in his speech, ‘The Destiny of the People of Color’:

We are not in possession of physical superiority: yet we must overturn the doctrine that ‘might makes right,’ and we can only do so by demonstrating that ‘right makes right.’ This very doctrine is contained in the American Declaration of Independence, which declares ‘all men to have certain unalienable rights.’ But the Constitution of these United States, professedly constructed on the above principles, hold that there are some ‘other persons’—besides all men—who are not entitled to these rights. We are those ‘other persons;—we are the exception. It is our destiny to prove that even this exception is wrong, and therefore contrary the the highest interests of the whole people, and to eradicate from the Constitution this exception, so contrary to its general principles (McCune Smith 1841 speech, in Stauffer 2006:52).

The eloquence of identification in McCune Smith’s ‘we are the exception’ line is of a quality inimitable to white abolitionists like Garrison or Phillips. His speech exemplifies how black antebellum protest elevated the more republican Declaration over the articles of the Constitution.73 Given the decisive preference of prominent black abolitionists for the Republican frame (see Chapters 4-6 on black antebellum protest), historians have made too much of the tragic irony of republicanism’s historical sources, that it first emerged from Roman slave laws to protect the rights of Roman citizens, and that American liberty was born from the same citizen-slave dualism. It is wrong to think that cultural developments inevitably remain in the ‘constitutive’ social mold of their birthplace out of some supposed relation of structural necessity. Clearly ideas can shed their swaddle. In this case, the Roman prejudice against and exclusion of slaves, foreigners and the poor, was no longer a necessary nor unconscious connotation plaguing how black abolitionists made practical use of republican tropes (c.f. Myers

73 Those who drafted the Constitution were of course of republican persuasion. The founding federalism of the U.S. Constitution however, in abolitionist eyes, enshrined legal chattel slavery thus violating republican principles.
Republican sentiments motivate Garrison to assert that any person born on American soil should possess all the privileges and rights of citizenship. He castigated proslavery politicians for regarding skin color as a legitimate basis for membership in the republic of citizens (see for instance Garrison’s humorous ‘A Short Catechism,’ in which he mocks the anti-black racism of southerners in general, 1968: 289-292).

Garrison was the main drafter behind the ‘Declaration of Sentiments’ founding the American Anti-Slavery Society, a document modeled on the Declaration of Independence, and subsequently, full of ardent anti-slavery republican arguments:

We further maintain—that no man has a right to enslave or imbrute his brother—to hold or acknowledge him, for one moment, as a piece of merchandize—to keep back his hire by fraud—or to brutalize his mind, by denying him the means of intellectual, social and moral improvement. The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable. To invade it is to usurp the prerogative of Jehovah. Every man has a right to his own body—to the products of his own labor—to the protection of the law—and to the common advantages of society. It is piracy to buy or steal a native African, and subject him to servitude (1968 [1833 AASS ‘Declaration of Sentiments’]: 68).

Framed by republicanism, slavery is wrong because it interferes with natural rights. ‘The right to enjoy liberty is inalienable’ obviously echoes the language of Jefferson.

Foremost, Garrison wrote, every person possesses a ‘right to his own body,’ a natural right from which other civil rights follow, including free labor, legal protection, freedom of association, and intellectual freedom. When a republican legal order is in existence, according to Garrison, slavery is by definition a crime. It is ‘piracy’ or ‘stealing’ (we should note, however, that southern republicans would accuse northerners of infringing upon their republican rights to property by ‘stealing’ fugitive slave property).
Garrison was notorious for his fiery orations in addition to his witty editorial pen. One republican trope common throughout his recorded speeches is condemning the great hypocrisy of the nation in honoring the Declaration yet maintaining racial slavery. One of Garrison’s English abolitionist counterparts, the political economist Harriet Martineau, had toured the United States in the early 1830s and published early sociological reflections on the very same gap between U.S. morals and manners (Martineau 1981 [1837]). Martineau’s ‘science of morals’ posited that a society’s level of general unhappiness was a direct result of the number of ‘anomalies’ that existed between a society’s professed morals and its actually practiced manners. Slavery was America’s most heinous anomaly. While this line became a standard argument in abolitionist discourse, Martineau’s notion of societal contradictions in particular may have influenced Garrison and other American abolitionists (see for instance Garrison’s tribute to Martineau, in Garrison 1968: 272).

It soon became an annual abolitionist ritual to condemn the national hypocrisy of slavery on every Fourth of July through long dour addresses intended to shame the day’s celebrants and ruin the otherwise festive mood:

Every Fourth of July, our Declaration of Independence is produced, with a sublime indignation, to set forth the tyranny of the mother country, and to challenge the admiration of the world...Before God, I must say, that such a glaring contradiction as exists between our creed and practice, the annals of six thousand years cannot parallel. In view of it, I am ashamed of my country. I am sick of our unmeaning declamation in praise of liberty and equality; of our hypocritical cant about the unalienable rights of man. I could not, for my right hand, stand up before a European assembly, and exult that I am an American citizen, and denounce the usurpations of a kingly government as wicked and unjust; or should I make the attempt, the recollection of my country’s barbarity and despotism would blister my lips, and cover my cheeks with burning blushes of shame (Garrison 1968 [1829 speech]: 53-54).
Such radical Fourth of July rhetoric is typical of Garrison-inspired abolitionists (including Frederick Douglass’s famous 1852 speech, “What to the Slave is the Fourth of July?”). It constitutes a whole genre of abolitionist discourse in itself. The genre features heavy use of Republican frames and political memes based on the Declaration principles at the heart of the meaning of Independence Day. These yearly orations were a chance for abolitionists to perform the prophet role to the republic, denouncing their society’s ‘glaring contradictions’ and ‘hypocritical cant.’ Unapologetically, Garrison relished delivering shockingly unpatriotic lines, such as the above ‘I am ashamed of my country,’ a line that also hints at a bit of the moral-emotional pathos generated by Republican frames.

For Garrison, the appropriate republican emotion when reacting to national hypocrisy is shame. Shame results when the false basis of prior pride is exposed. It is a social emotion that expresses one’s internal moral dissatisfaction with oneself in the eyes of the other (Scheff 1997). Shaming audiences is the Republican frame’s emotional counterpart to the sympathy generated by sentimental pathos. Like sympathy, shame is a ‘means of persuasion,’ another localization of abolitionist pathos, encouraging and provoking auditors to form new affective attachments. Interestingly, many modern social movements after abolitionism have found the mass tactic of shaming effective in pressuring political elites to change (Appiah 2010)

Garrison found additional ways of exploiting American pride in the Declaration and resultant discomfort with contradictions of the country’s providential standing in the world. Garrison cleverly realized the geopolitical basis of modern feelings of shame
in his *Thoughts on African Colonization*, his critique of the popular proposal to ‘remove’
freed blacks by shipping them to Liberia or other colonies:

...it is proclaimed to the world by the Colonization Society, that the American
people can never be as republican in their feelings and practices as
Frenchmen, Spaniards or Englishmen! Nay, that religion itself cannot subdue
their malignant prejudices, nor induce them to treat their dark-skinned
brethren in accordance with their professions of republicanism! My
countrymen! is it so? Are you willing thus to be held up as tyrants and
hypocrites for ever? as less magnanimous and just than the populace of

Garrison’s rhetorical question plays to feelings of American exceptionalism. He
challenges the national distinctions through which Americans have disassociated
themselves from Old World hierarchy. The specter of the ‘tyrant’ continues to haunt the
new republic in how African Americans are treated by their ‘brethren,’ repeating the
Republican frame’s antipathy toward monarchy and despotism.

*Further Instances of the Republican Frame*

1. Lucretia Mott:
“It is always unsafe to invest man with power over his fellow being. ‘Call no
man master’—that is the true doctrine.”

“Many who look at other lands, and witness the sufferings of their people,
and see how the poor are crushed by oppression and taxation, to maintain
the existence and the prerogatives of an aristocracy, turn with delight to the
hope of a reform co-extensive with the earth. They realize that true
republicanism is true Christian democracy” (Mott 1980 [1941 speech]: 34).

2. James McCune Smith:
“But why have Republics been so short-lived? The same Epitaph is written
over the graves of all of them—SLAVERY. History, however, has falsely
called Republics what have been Polygarchies, or Tyrannies of many
masters. Sparta, Athens, Rome under the commonwealth, and even these
United States are not Republics or Democracies. They are Polygarchies.
Slavery destroyed the Republics of Antiquity; shall it also destroy our
Republic?...Too few in number to cope with our oppressors by physical force, and being by our nature obliged to resist slavery, we must resort to moral weapons: these whilst they will triumph over slavery will save the Republic. The slaves of the ancients struggled against the persons of their masters; our relative decrease is proof that we assimilate with the persons of ours, and we contend therefore only against their Prejudices and Errors. What will be the result? Slavery must cease and over its grave there will grow up a pure Republic. The destiny then, which we must fulfill in relation to the form of government under which we dwell is eminently conservative. We will save the form of government and convert it into a substance” (McCune Smith 1841 speech, in Stauffer 2006:54-55).

3. Ernestine Rose

“All my feeling and principles are republican; I may say I am a republican by nature; but in comparison to the liberation of 800,000 slaves, the Declaration of Independence falls into utter insignificance” (Rose 148-149).

“This country has sent forth to the world a great and glorious truth—that eternal truth of the equality of men upon which the Declaration of Independence is based—that ‘all men are created equal; and endowed with an inalienable right to life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.’ That declaration, wafted like a bright vision of hope on the breezes of heaven to the remotest parts of the earth, to whisper freedom and equality to the downtrodden millions of men. And yet, while that declaration is thus wafted by the genius of freedom all over the earth, here, under its shadow, the children that had been born and brought up here are subjected to dark and bitter bondage. This country, therefore stands before the moral consistency of the world, to be judged thereby. From monarchical and despotic countries we do not expect much; but those countries have a right to hold you to your professions. The Quakers say, that according to the light you possess is the demand made upon you. It is a true and correct saying. According to your professions, we have a right to hold you responsible; and therefore, this country stands responsible for its false and hypocritical professions without carrying out the great, eternal truth of the equality of man. (Cheers.)” (189).

4. Antoinette Brown Blackwell:

“Slavery is malignantly aristocratic, and seems to absorb all other manifestations of the principle into itself” (1863 speech)

“[Slavery] is one phase of [the conflict]—the most acute phase, undoubtedly; but not, therefore, the broadest and most momentous one. Slavery was the peculiar institution of the South; but we, as a nation, have an incomparable greater peculiar institution of our own. The one is only peculiarly exceptional to our general policy; the other is essentially and organically at war with it. It
is the only thing which pointedly distinguishes us from a dozen other nations. The consent of the governed is the sole, legitimate authority of any government! This is the essential peculiar creed of our Republic. That principle is on one side of this war; and the old doctrine of might makes right, which is the necessary groundwork of all monarchies or oligarchies, is on the other side” (1863 speech).

“A nation proclaiming the astonished world that governments derive all just powers solely from the consent of the governed, yet in the very face of this assertion enslaved the black, and disenfranchised half its white subjects, besides minor things of like import and consistency—do you wonder that eighty years of such policy culminated in rebellion? Old World monarchies denied our great axiom, and, copying from them, it seemed easy to uphold our anomalies. The new Republic magnanimously allowed humanity an unprecedented share of sovereignty and corresponding representation, but it assigned a portion also to sheer arbitrary power” (1863 speech).

THE EVANGELICAL PROTESTANT FRAME

Civil society was uniquely religious in the decades before the Civil War. While more Americans than not continued to have no official church membership, the Protestant worldview exerted hegemonic influence over public discourse. Many social institutions reflected Protestant Christian domination. Almost all schools of higher education were sponsored, staffed, and administered exclusively by Protestant Christians. Between 1790 and 1830, over 600 religiously affiliated newspapers were founded, some like the American National Preacher with high rates of subscription of around 25,000 readers (Noll 1992: 227). Riding high on the gains of the Second Great Awakening, orthodox Protestant denominations by the 1820s had established a nation-wide ‘benevolent empire’ composed of charities, temperance societies, Sabbatarian societies with Sunday school curricula, Bible distribution organizations, missionary support-systems and the mass printing of and dissemination of moralistic, millennial Christian tracts (Young 2006; Schudson 1999). The American Tract Society, for instance, printed five
pages of pamphlet material for every resident in the United States in 1830 (Noll 1992: 227).

The Second Great Awakening of the U.S. was a reaction to the deism and disestablishment tendencies of the revolutionary generation. The early republic became less secular in the first decades of the nineteenth century with the rapid growth of Methodist and Baptist denominations in addition to many other newer sects. The means of spreading religious awakenings across the country included revivalistic camp-meetings, outdoor baptisms, evangelical preachers, and dedicated circuit riders. Also included was Charles Grandison Finney’s notorious ‘anxious bench,’ where sinners were pressured to reject or accept Christ in the moment and become instantly saved. Moderately antislavery, Finney was a major inspiration for the upcoming generation of immediatist abolitionists including Lewis Tappan and Theodore Weld whose own conversion experience occurred at one of Finney’s revivals (Abzug 1980; Essig 1978).

In theological terms, Finney was thoroughly ‘Arminian,’ which is to say that he emphasized the role of human free will in aiding the Lord’s work of salvation. Finney claimed that the moment of conversion gave birth to a second stage in the life of an individual, characterized by a higher state of spiritual existence. In particular, the converted would increasingly experience the virtues of personal holiness and benevolence toward others. Benevolence in Protestant theology, as a result of Finney’s generation, morphed from a pietistic attitude of praising God’s goodness to a more active sentiment oriented upon the welfare of others. This is significant because
“Evangelical notions of benevolence and ability in turn shaped a new concept of sin which abolitionists applied to slavery. Once benevolence was defined as a concern for ‘our fellow creatures’ or the rights of others, sin acquired a social connotation” (Loveland 1966: 181).

The Evangelical Protestant problem frame approaches slavery through the category of sin. For the abolitionists, sin is understood to be social yet practical, being the result of individual dispositions and choices, rather than an ontological fallen state all humans are born into. In his earliest recorded speech Garrison exclaims, “We are all alike guilty. Slavery is strictly a national sin” (1968 [1829]: 60). In a later speech, he states, “Freedom is of God, and Slavery is of the devil” (1854 speech: 6). This construction of slavery as (inter)personal sin is essential to the rise of immediatist abolitionism and what distinguishes it from gradualist abolitionism. Slavery was an evil system in an abstract sense for the gradual abolitionists, who for the most part didn’t blame slaveholders personally for getting ensnared by the wicked system. For the immediatists, slavery is a product of human volition. Its continued existence as a system rests entirely upon the willful moral disobedience of slaveholders. Loveland explains, “When abolitionists demanded immediate emancipation, they were not merely saying that slavery should be abolished or that it should be abolished ‘now’; they were also arguing that abolition was fully within man’s power and completely dependent upon his initiative” (Loveland 1966: 184). This is a less theological and more secular understanding of sin as the product of human action. As a consequence, the problem frame of slavery of evangelical Protestantism seamlessly flows into a blame frame that identifies individual slaveholders as morally responsible for slavery. The
Evangelical Protestant problem frame of slavery seems inseparable from the Evangelical Protestant blame frame. Individuals are responsible, deserving blame, for actively keeping other humans in bondage. No wonder southern slaveholders felt so insulted and enraged by the immediate abolitionists: their very salvation was being challenged! Their inclusion in the church’s communion services was at risk in denominational debates over slaveholding (McKivigan 1980).

The structure of abolitionist argument in the 1830 was pre-figured and outlined by revivalistic theology in the 1810s and 1820s also known as evangelical Protestantism. Among historians Loveland (1966) makes the strongest case that immediatist abolitionism is directly ‘derived’ from Protestant evangelicalism, but she doesn’t offer a clear definition of what constitutes an ‘evangelical.’ Most scholars of religion identify it with scriptural authority and the belief that faith in Christ effects one’s personal salvation. Protestant missionaries are evangelical—they try to spread the ‘gospel message’ about salvation through faith, distributing bibles for nonbelievers to read themselves, attempting to convert people to Christianity.\footnote{The Greek etymological roots of ‘evangelical’ can be translated as ‘gospel message’ or ‘good news.’} The goal of the evangelical minister is to convict people of their sin, show them how to convert—by becoming aware of sin and becoming assured of grace—and guide them through the process of repentance.

Garrison and other immediatist abolitionists envisioned a similar process happening for slaveholders. They called it ‘moral suasion,’ but it resembled the evangelical experience of regeneration. According to Finney’s revival manual, when an individual chooses to have faith, they experience \emph{a change in heart that leads them}
immediately to stop sinning. Immediatists envisioned ‘moral suasion’ as a similar transformation of the heart, but regarding individual attitudes toward slavery, ideally serving as a means to the end of total abolition. The abolition of slavery was one piece of a more comprehensive, eschatological program of establishing the kingdom of God on earth. “In sum, immediatism was an exhilarating, practical faith which defined sin in concrete terms, demanded weapons to fight it, and optimistically predicted its abolition as the final step toward the millennium.” Loveland distinguishes immediatist abolitionism from earlier gradualist abolitionism on this basis: “Immediatism signaled a change of disposition, not of discourse, in the American antislavery movement” (1966: 180, 174). The abolitionists realized this could be a multi-step process for slave-owners, but once slave-owners become aware of their disobedience and misdeeds, the process begins at once (see also Davis 1962).

A potential flaw with the evangelicalism explanation of abolitionism arises in interpreting the ‘Garrisonian’ or ‘radical’ version of immediatist abolitionism. Garrison and Mott both prioritized the moral thrust of the evangel relative to other typical elements of evangelicalism (as did later social gospel theologians in the liberal trajectory of American Protestantism). Mott often declared, ‘if slaveholders use scriptures to justify slavery, so much the worse for scripture!’ Garrison likewise was not a subscriber in scriptural authority nor church authority. Garrisonian abolitionists are sometimes called ‘radical’ for their rejection of and withdrawal from any social institution contaminated by complicity with slavery. They recommended that true Christians ‘come out’ of all sinful institutions, political parties included and almost every Protestant denomination. Garrison was a ‘come-outer’ religiously and an
anarchist politically (Perry 1973). He did not identify with any one denomination or any specific party. Some historians thus distinguish between the radical come-outer abolitionism of Garrison’s circle from the more church-centered abolitionism of Lewis Tappan and the latter’s New York city circle (Friedman 1979).

For several reasons however we should not draw the religious fault lines of abolitionism along the presence or absence of evangelicalism itself. It is true that some elements of evangelicalism are missing in the Garrisonians, mainly biblicism and a respectful ecclesiology. But to perceive the Garrisonians as less evangelical, firstly, neglects how well their perfectionist moral impulse conforms with revivalistic, evangelical religion. In a sense, the immediate abolitionists were all Wesleyan, implicit adherents to John Wesley’s *A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*, agreeing with the ethical principle that all sin is voluntary and can willfully be avoided. The motifs of spiritual conversion and regeneration are strong across all the abolitionists, especially the perfectionist come-outers. Their perfectionism stemmed from a particular version of Protestant millennialism. Garrison writes, “It appears to us a self-evident truth, that, whatever the gospel is designed to destroy at any period of the world, being contrary to it, ought now to be abandoned.” (1968 [1838]: 76). Garrisonian abolitionists were millennialists in the belief that they must be preparing themselves for the return of Christ and the Day of Judgment.

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75 But, albeit with some hindsight bias, we can associate biblicism and scriptural literacy with proto-fundamentalist developments instead of evangelicalism per se, and many Catholics and Anabaptists would dispute the existence of a doctrine of church in mainline Protestantism anyway.

76 Another example of Garrison’s millennialist judgement rhetoric: “Yet I know that God reigns, and that the slave system contains within itself the elements of destruction. But how long it is to curse the earth, and desecrate his image, he alone foresees. It is frightful to think of the capacity of a nation like this to
Second, it should be noted that Garrison and his colleagues are still dogmatic Christians by our standards, being believers in personal salvation and the importance of faith. They are definitely Christocentric, which is a defining element of evangelicalism. Garrison, Mott, Weld and others were ‘religious virtuosos,’ not only in social and moral passion, but also in the pursuit of status through the dynamics of religious fields (in the Bourdieu-ian sense of ‘field,’ see Stamatov 2013: 94). Their immediatism is a performance of a higher religious purity with levels of Weberian ‘asceticism’ equal to any monk or nun. The ascetic impulse of religion toward purification is the main medium of status distinction in religious fields. This helps to make sense of abolitionism’s schismatic tendencies as well. Garrisonian abolitionists are like charismatic preachers who find some grievance with organized religion and lead their disciples to break away to start a new sect. Abolitionism experienced many internal schisms and saw many new anti-slavery sects because it was a religious field of sorts, a fact which also demonstrates the special religious quality of U.S. civil society during that time period.

Lastly, almost every abolitionist speaker uses the language of sin and personal moral evil as an essential part of how they problematize slavery. The Evangelical Protestant frame of slavery is ubiquitous. This is the third reason for applying the term evangelical to the Garrisonians, and for labeling this frame ‘Evangelical Protestant’ or just ‘Evangelical.’ Inevitably, a few exceptions present themselves still to the evangelicalism account, e.g., it is far too logic bending to apply the evangelical label to commit sin before the measure of its iniquities be filled, and the exterminating judgments of God overtake it” (1854 speech: 34).
any atheistic ‘free thought’ abolitionist, such as Ernestine Rose, nor does it work well for some of the transcendentalists like Emerson who were also anti-slavery. Evangelical abolitionists contributed to the marginalization of the more heterodox or nonbelievers within the movement. In general, evangelicalism was part of the means of domination in antebellum society, part of the American Protestant hegemony that maintained many hierarchical class, race and gender distinctions. Abolitionism of course was not immune to the reproduction of these status inequalities through its culture and its frames.

To substantiate these claims about immediatism’s evangelical character, some exemplary instances of the Evangelical Protestant frame are examined below, including several speeches by Garrison where his religious symbolism is most dense. In addition to the evangelical construction of slavery as personal sin, Garrison’s theological arguments against prejudice and racism are also relevant to the religious significance of immediatism, so I include them as well. This first quote comes from one of Garrison’s yearly Fourth of July addresses. It reveals his self-identification as a saint of Christianity and shows how he understands the close relationship between immediatist abolitionism and Christianity:

Genuine abolitionism is not a hobby, got up for personal or associated aggrandizement; it is not a political ruse; it is not a spasm of sympathy, which lasts but for a moment, leaving the system weak and worn; it is not a fever of enthusiasm; it is not the fruit of fanaticism; it is not a spirit of faction. It is of heaven, not of men. It lives in the heart as a vital principle. It is an essential part of Christianity, and aside from it there can be no humanity...It is the spirit of Jesus, who was sent ‘to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God’ (1968 [Fourth of July Oration]: 199-200).
This alone is sufficient evidence for treating Garrison as a religious virtuoso. He
identifies abolitionism as a true and purer form of Christianity. Abolitionism proclaims
the good news of liberation to the slave; it is the ‘spirit of Jesus’ and an anticipation of
the millennium to come. Interestingly, Garrison senses a conflict between his radical
social theology and the Sentimental frame of slavery: the ‘genuine’ moral action of
Christianity is deeper than sentimentalism’s ‘spasms of sympathy.’ Again, as
discussed previously, the backdrop to this binary distinction, Garrison’s performance
of manliness, is the nineteenth century localization of sentiment in women’s bodies.

A common religious motif Garrison shared with other abolitionists, including
Lewis Tappan and Frederick Douglass, is the idea that Christian missionaries should
work domestically as well as abroad. The slave is the heathen within who needs
instruction and deliverance just as much as foreign pagans do. Abolitionists across
sectarian divides routinely make the argument that missionaries should concentrate
their evangelical efforts first at home by converting slaves to Christianity. One part of
how the Evangelical Protestant frame problematizes slavery is its hindering of the
potential salvation of the slave. The emphasis on the slave’s spiritual liberation in
addition to their physical liberation resonated with evangelical audiences. If the
enslaved are denied religious instruction, they may never experience spiritual freedom.
Even Garrison makes this argument by imagining the lamentations of the enslaved
African: “Nor have they [the American people] deprived us merely of our liberties. They
would destroy our souls, by endeavoring to deprive us of the means of instruction—of
a knowledge of God, and Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit, and a way of salvation”
(1968 [1829 speech]: 55). In addition to being inherently sinful, slavery is also
B. Lamb

problematted by the Evangelical frame for denying the slave the gospel. Slavery ‘destroys the soul’ of the slave in addition to his or her body. This line of argumentation shows how strange and historically specific the religious-cultural problematization of slavery was.

Suppose one could ask Garrison why exactly he thought slavery a sin? Is labeling slavery a sin nothing more than his expression of disapproval? Can’t we agree that slavery is wrong without agreeing on the philosophical reason why it is wrong? What in particular makes slavery so sinful? I doubt Garrison would shy away from such a conversation despite the modernist inflection of the questions. Asking someone their reasons for a moral practice quickly produces, some would say less important, religious and philosophical differences (Appiah 2006; Rorty 1989). In Garrison’s case the thought experiment is useful because it reveals his critique of racial prejudice in addition to slavery. To treat someone differently because of the color of their skin is, for Garrison, an offense to the wisdom of God the Creator:

I do not rejoice the less, but admire and exalt him [the Creator] the more, that, notwithstanding he has made of one blood the whole family of man, he has made the whole family of man to differ in personal appearance, complexion and habits...Surely it would be sinful for a black man to repine and murmur, to impeach the wisdom and goodness of God, because he was made with a sable complexion; and dare I be guilty of such an impeachment, by persecuting him on account of his color? I dare not. (1968 [1932 book]: 30).

All human descendants have the same origin in Adam and Eve, for Garrison, contra early racializing ethnologists and phrenologists who posited a polygenesis of different racial human species. All humans inherit the same blood as part of one divinely created family. Combining reflections upon the Book of Genesis with New Testament
scriptures, Garrison believes that diversity in ‘complexion’ is pleasing to God the Creator. His abolitionist biblical hermeneutics uncovers a moral message in the doctrine of creation against racial slavery in particular (as well as slavery in general). Racism is an ‘impeachment’ of the ‘wisdom and goodness of God.’ A characteristically nineteenth-century theology of benevolence is apparent here as well. God is benevolent in creating the world; all creatures are good; therefore humans should be benevolent to each other in the model of God’s original benevolence (and exercise a benevolent dominion over nature). Perhaps benevolence, good will toward all, is the closest we come to locating an evangelical auditor counterpart to the pathos of the republican’s shame and the sentimentalist’s sympathy. All three are culturally specific moral emotions appealed to by abolitionist oratory. The moral emotion of benevolence enhances Garrison’s creationist argument against slavery.

Creationism sits comfortably well with the Evangelical Protestant frame, both of which assert God’s sovereignty and ultimate providence in history. In several of his later speeches, Garrison develops this more explicitly using a theology of imago dei to criticize racial prejudice. As articulated by Christian mythology, humans were created as a blend of dust and divinity, part sinful and partially godlike in the image of the Creator. Slavery is wrong because it treads upon the divine part of humanity, the imago dei (see Davis on this theme as well). Such creationist tropes frequently reappear in Garrison’s rhetoric. Here are three notable examples:

1. Slavery annihilates manhood, and puts down in its crimson ledger as chattels personal, those who are created in the image of God. Hence, it tramples under foot whatever pertains to human safety, human prosperity, human happiness.” (1968 [circa 1854 speech]: 141, emphasis mine).
2. Every man is equivalent to every other man. Destroy the equivalent, and what is left? ‘So God created man in his own image—male and female created he them.’ This is a death-blow to all claims of superiority, to all charges of inferiority, to all usurpation, to all oppressive dominion” (1854 speech: 16, emphasis mine).

3. But, if they [slaves] are men; if they are to run the same career of immortality with ourselves; if the same law of God is over them as over all others; if they have souls to be saved or lost; if Jesus included them among those for whom he laid down his life; if Christ is within many of them ‘the hope of glory,’ then, when I claim for them all that we claim for ourselves, because we are created in the image of God, I am guilty of no extravagance, but am bound, by every principle of honour, by all the claims of human nature, by obedience to Almighty God, to ‘remember them that are in bonds as bound with them,’ and to demand their immediate and unconditional emancipation.” (1854 speech: 18, emphasis mine).

The last declamation especially connects many of the theological motifs discussed above: humans are part divine, created in the image of God and having souls that are immortal, which can be saved or lost. Garrison interweaves the creationism of imago dei with the Evangelical frame of concern for the slave’s salvation. Genesis and the New Testament are synthesized in his abolitionist hermeneutic. They both are used as arguments against slavery for it being the logical contradiction of benevolence. Slavery is inherently a debasement of humanity, and slaveholders are debasers of their own eternal brethren.

In the second imago dei quotation above, the doctrine of creation is interpreted as a ‘death-blow’ to all ‘claims of superiority.’ Prima facie this seems like a slight of hand. But for Garrison, the egalitarian and emancipatory elements of the Evangelical Protestant frame have priority over biblical exegesis. Garrison and Mott defend the ‘spirit’ of the text, over the ‘letter’ of the text. For them this meant that the kingdom of
God suspended and leveled worldly distinctions. A common biblical slogan emerging from ministers of the Second Great Awakening was “God is no respecter of persons,” a phrase that abolitionists eagerly appropriated and applied to slavery (Garrison 1854 speech: 10; also in McCune Smith quote below). As radical abolitionists, they included racial status, or the ‘spirit of slavery,’ as one form of worldly rank that would be disintegrated. This is a reading of Genesis and imago dei principles through the upside-down kingdom of the New Testament. Garrison is reading history through his favorite verse from Galatians: “‘In Christ Jesus, all are one: there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female”’ (1968 [1832]: 32, emphasis mine).

Further Instances of the Evangelical Protestant Frame

1. Lucretia Mott

Let the Abolitionist, who should be as the Jesus of the present age on the Mount Zion of Freedom, continue to say: ‘Ye have heard that it was said by them of old, thou shalt threat they slaves kindly, thou shalt prepare them for freedom at a future day; but I say unto you hold no slaves at all, proclaim liberty now throughout the land to all the inhabitants thereof.’ Let this be the loud sounding jubilee that shall be uttered. Let us no longer be blinded by the dim theology that only in the far seeing vision discovers a millenium, when violence shall no more be heard in the land--wasting nor destruction in her borders--lending faith and confidence to our hopes, assuring us that even we ourselves shall be instrumental in proclaiming liberty to the captive. (1980 [1848 speech]: 76-77).

Would the name or the depth of the purse, intelligence, or literary attainments be the criterion of respectability? would the principles of right be made subservient to notions of honor or rank?” (1980 [1843 sermon]: 42)

2. James McCune Smith:

[Our oppressors] drive us from the magnificent temples which they erect for the worship of the Most High, as if He were a ‘respecer of persons.’ “
(McCune Smith, in Stauffer 2005)
CONCLUSION

Frames are powerful constructs because of their potential to tap on the socioemotional instincts, through rhetoric potentially rechanneling moral-emotional experiences toward new objects and outlets. Frames are those powerful cultural metaphors, the easily recognizable ‘affective mappings’ in terminology proposed by Emirbayer & Goldberg (2005). The decomposition of abolitionist discourse into three main emotional frames may not seem that innovative. However, this application of frame analysis is in itself an original contribution to the history of abolitionism. Applying the simple tools of frame theory takes a small but unprecedented step toward explaining the historical puzzle of how, why, and when slavery was morally problematized (one would think a necessary step prior to abolition). For microsociological purposes, the affective kick of the three problems frames is also crucial for understanding social movement stamina, those microdynamic processes of persistence and regeneration.

The emotional resonance of abolitionist rhetoric operated through the three pathetic problematizations discussed here. Sentimental, Republican, and Evangelical Protestant emotional frames contributed to making abolitionist ideas more compelling through the production of frame-conditioned moral emotions, e.g. sympathy, contempt, shame, guilt, and confidence. Charismatic orators employed these problem frames to arouse moral-emotional energies in audiences. Through emotional framing, they altered not only perceptions, but also affective attitudes toward slavery. As I will observe with the status implicatures of abolitionist discourse, emotional frames were
an important part of the protest rhetoric making the movement move.
Chapter 4
“Have We Been Listening To A Thing Or A Man?”
Race In Abolitionism

It will sound either odd or obvious to say, but abolitionism was racially progressive relative to its time period. It fostered higher amounts of interracial contact and higher levels of racial egalitarianism than anywhere else in American society. Some white abolitionists proudly attended black churches, resisted segregation on trains and steamboats, and welcomingly invited black colleagues into their home. Some black abolitionists linked arms, formed friendships, and engaged in business and correspondence with their white colleagues.

Sociologists though may find the historiographical debates about race in abolitionism to be unsettling. One group of historians celebrates the radical inclusivity and intermixing of the abolitionists, praising them as ahead of their time and an inspiration to our own.77 Another group gives a more pessimistic portrait of the abolitionists as largely perpetuating the racialized discourse and racial caste inequalities of their time period through sentimentalist constructions, for one, but also through various structural and/or interpersonal racisms. I wager sociologists will eventually come to recognize that current theories in the sociology of race & ethnicity were forged in a different historical context, marked by both continuities and discontinuities with the age of slavery. On one hand, notions of ‘colorblind racism’ or ‘microaggressions’ would be utterly anachronistic if applied to the abolitionists. On the

77 John Stauffer (2012; 2002) and Manisha Sinha (2012; 2006) are two prominent scholarly examples.
other hand, many concepts from the contemporary sociology of race, such as racialization, segregation, discrimination, status backlash, etc., are more applicable transhistorically as this chapter will demonstrate.

The overarching thesis of Chapters 4-6 is that black abolitionist discourse is structured by a meta-level argument against the racial status-power inequalities maintained within white abolitionist organizations. The present chapter initiates a re-reading of black antislavery oratory as the semiotic and affective expression of a social struggle for recognition. Recognition was the ultimate motivating reform telos for most black abolitionists. It meant being citizens and compatriots of the American national community. It entailed social interactions as equal subjects of humanity. Every ‘inch’ of inter-racial recognition, as Frederick Douglass declared, was ‘sternly disputed’ in antebellum America. After all, the most prestigious antislavery organization of the time was the American Colonization Society (ACS), which proposed to ship manumitted slaves and free blacks out of the country. The efforts of black abolitionists to resist such racial exclusion gave their rhetorical performances a unique structure of feeling. Their speeches made an indexical turn away from the problem frames analyzed in the previous chapter (see section on ‘The Existential Anti-Frame’ below).

In the last chapter I briefly noted that emotional frame selection intersected with gendered and racial processes of status stratification. Black abolitionists, for instance, were more ambivalent toward sentimental frames of slavery and less equivocal about republican frames. Republican discourse was more compatible than sentimentalism with the struggle for full racial equality and not mere inter-racial pity. This chapter
continues this mode of interrogation by concentrating on how the racial status inequalities internal to the abolitionist movement impacted the rhetoric of slavery. To be fully understood, black abolitionist discourse must be interpreted as a sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit reaction to the racial biases and blindesses of white abolitionism. Black abolitionists encountered, criticized, and surmounted racial status-beliefs in a variety of ways, especially, as I will argue, through ethos-oriented testimony and through logos-oriented arguments about the nature of prejudice (what I will label the rhetoric of recognition). They also experienced obstacles and ‘binds’ in public speaking that white abolitionists did not have to worry about (which I examine in chapter 5).

THE TWO ABOLITIONISMS

“Color prejudice” or racism, black abolitionist argued, was worse in the North than in the South. Such statements are puzzling prima facie given the violence and brutality buttressing southern slavery. In his first recorded speech, Frederick Douglass declared, “Prejudice against color is stronger north than south; it hangs around my neck like a heavy weight. It presses me out from among my fellow men, and...I have met it at every step the three years I have been out of southern slavery” (Douglass [1841] in Blassingame 1979: 5). Similarly, Theodore S. Wright suggested that white

78 All Douglass quotes in this chapter unless otherwise noted are from transcribed notes or drafts of his public speeches, as collected and republished in The Frederick Douglass Papers: Series One: Speeches, Debates, and Interviews, Volumes 1-3, under the editorship of John W. Blassingame. I try to give the year date of when the speech was originally delivered as part of the in text citation to all Douglass quotes.
79 Less well known than Douglass, Theodore S. Wright was a Presbyterian minister, educated at Princeton Theological Seminary, and a co-founding member of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833.
northerners were “doing more violence to them [black Americans] by your prejudice, than [slaveholders] are to our slaves by [their] treatment” (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 173). Resolving this puzzle will be addressed by examining elements of the northern racial regime as interpreted by black abolitionists some of whom were former slaves themselves.

But first, to aid abolitionism studies in overcoming its current multicultural moment, I present a much needed systematic overview of types of racial status inequality and conflict within the abolitionist social movement, including: 1. *racialization* through stereotypes and civil-society binaries; 2. *social-structural mechanisms* reproducing racial inequality, including segregation and unequal remuneration; 3. *interpersonal racism* in the forms of both explicit and implicit racial prejudice. As in the last chapter, I focus on several prominent antislavery leaders and their oratory. This chapter revolves around Douglass, one of the very top names in the history of American public address. He was a prolific abolitionist speaker, antislavery newspaper editor, and he wrote three highly successful autobiographies over the course of his life. His personal experience born and raised a slave on the Eastern Shore of Maryland gave his rhetoric a distinctive existential style. In the following chapters, we’ll add to his oratory the voices of Sojourner Truth, James McCune Smith, Maria Stewart, Theodore S. Wright and many others. In addition to trying to persuade unsympathetic northern audiences to the antislavery viewpoint, black abolitionist leaders also subtly crafted their public addresses as vehicles of criticism of the racial status inequalities internal to white abolitionism. Reflecting the social situation of racial conflict, their speeches featured an existential style and a rhetoric of recognition as I shall soon explain.
Since the 1970s many historians have highlighted the neglect of black abolitionists in the scholarly literature as an inexcusable example of continued racial bias (Quarles 1969; Pease & Pease 1974; Shortell 2004; Fellman 2006). Many historians now claim that there were in fact ‘two abolitionisms’ split asunder by numerous organizational and ideological divides between white and black activists (Pease & Pease 1974; Ripley 1991; Hodges 2010). “By the 1840 two distinct abolitionisms existed. Whites approached slavery and freedom on an abstract, ideological plane; blacks defined slavery and freedom in more concrete, experiential terms. White abolitionism drew largely upon evangelical theology and theories of universal reform; black abolitionism was grounded in political philosophy and shaped by daily experiences in a racist society” (Ripley 1991: 24). Past studies erred in generalizing their observations of white abolitionists with the whole movement, ignoring or subsuming black abolitionists into white-centric studies. Past studies also ignored the central role black activists played in keeping antislavery alive during the interstitial years between gradualist and immediatist abolitionism (Newman 2002).

Black abolitionism differed from white abolitionism in several regards. It was more often than not oriented upon the urgent practical issues facing black northern communities. For northern black abolitionists, “bondage, prejudice and discrimination were only varied manifestations of the same problem, so interrelated that to neglect one was to endanger all” (Pease & Pease 1974: 8). Black abolitionism prioritized concrete ways to improve the social status of black communities in the north. Education, family stability, literacy, moral conduct and finances were seen as an integral part of anti-slavery activism. The parlance of ‘elevation’ and ‘uplift’ structured
the hortatory oratory of black abolitionists to northern black communities. The “belief that the elevation of the race and the fight against slavery were inseparable battles—ultimately distinguished white abolitionist ideology from black abolitionism...despite black abolitionists’ insistence that the issues were inseparable, white abolitionists tended to view the northern black campaign for civil rights as a secondary concern” (Ball 2012: 139). Some white abolitionists in fact scolded black abolitionists for self-serving behaviors, negatively viewing as unrepublican what was really the uphill struggle of an entire community for socio-economic improvement (Pease & Pease 1974: 14). Strictly speaking, the term ‘black abolitionism’ is a somewhat artificial construct that does not adequately capture the unity of antislavery grievances with everyday struggles for recognition among northern blacks (see Ripley 1991; in this chapter, I use the term black abolitionism inclusively for these different modes of protest and social conflict).

The first thing to know about black abolitionism is that it was as devoted to eradicating northern prejudice as it was to abolishing southern slavery. It valued racial social equality as much as the abolition of slavery, in contrast to white abolitionism’s privileging of the latter sometimes to the exclusion of the former. The two were intrinsically connected in black abolitionist discourse. In positing the unity of slavery and prejudice, black abolitionists were grappling with the national logic of racialization. It was race and racial status inequality that bound permanently with the fate of the slave, though they more commonly spoke of this relationship as a spiritual one—the second thing we should know. Slavery and prejudice were inseparably bound together by a ‘spirit of slavery’ and a ‘cord of caste’ in the theological rhetoric of Reverend
Theodore S. Wright: “prejudice must be killed or slavery will never be abolished. Abolitionists must annihilate in their own bosoms the cord of caste. We must be consistent—recognize the colored man in every respect as a man and brother” (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 170). Black abolitionism sought social recognition through religious and spiritual schemas (c.f. Chapter 6).

Another major difference between the ‘two abolitionisms’ is indicated by the frustration of black abolitionists toward the reform eclecticism of Garrison and others who sometimes featured reforms other than antislavery in their speeches. White abolitionism seemed easily distracted by irrelevant ideological debates and far too divisible by sectarian quibbles. As evident in the last chapter’s discussion of the Evangelical Protestant frame, “white abolitionists often put the condition of their own souls first” (Pease & Pease 1974: 11). In other words, antislavery activism was a way for many whites to perform their own salvation by showing the new ‘Christian benevolence’ to the most ‘afflicted and outcast.’ For Garrisonians, the quest for postmillennial moral perfectionism sprouted in wildly different directions in a way that could be frustrating for black abolitionists. Frederick Douglass and Charles Remond split from their Garrisonian colleague John A. Collins when he decided to address socialism and property reform in a speech rather than abolition (McFeely 1991: 104-105). The rift between the American Anti-Slavery Society and black abolitionism grew ever larger in the 1840s and 1850s. In the 1840s, black abolitionists renewed the more autonomous tradition of holding separate National Colored Conventions (Bell 1957). Historian James Stewart (1998) uses the phrase ‘racial modernity’ to label the
increasingly separatist, essentialist tendencies of both white and black abolitionism in the decades before the Civil War.

Recent scholars of abolitionism have become aware of the obstinacy of multilevel racism within even the relatively interracial Garrisonian branches of abolitionism. White abolitionism’s structural racism included overt segregation, pay inequity, overt interpersonal disrespect, and implicit representational biases. Starting with the last of these, among the three problem frames, the Sentimental frame was the most entangled with the wider racializing civil-society binaries. Sentimentalism contributed to the social construction of race through notions of nature, childhood, and innocence. Historian Fredrickson (1987) has labeled this paradigm ‘romantic racialism.’ It constituted race as a status inequality through notions of warmth, submissiveness, and comedy (the very same sentimentalist binaries constitutive of gender status beliefs in the same time period). Harriet Beecher Stowe was the most famous exemplar of romantic racialism and the literary sentimentalization of the slave. Uncle Tom, Eliza and other African characters in Stowe’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin are simpleminded yet morally virtuous. The African race is naturalized as docile, comedic, and kind-hearted (see Roth 2014 for an excellent overview of Stowe’s racialized sentimentalism). The sentimentalization of the slave was also evident in the bias of limiting black orators at antislavery meetings to experiential testimony. Black speakers were instructed by white abolitionists to portray the barbarity of the slaveholders who would take advantage of the more primitive but innocent African race. One Garrisonian advised Douglass to avoid sounding too intelligent or else his audiences would never “believe you were ever a slave” (McFeely 1991: 95). Sentimental framing motivated white abolitionist efforts to
control black rhetoric, limiting it to a descriptive function while letting white abolitionists provide the philosophical principles.

The sentimentalization of the slave is a specific instance of what sociologists of race now call **racialization**, the construction of specific fictitious concepts of racial difference (Brekhus et al 2010). This is the most basic level of white abolitionism’s complicity with racial inequality, the level of stereotype formation. On this plane, abolitionist frames and discourse contributed to the constitution of race as a status difference. Romantic racialism (along with other contemporaneous racial formations, such as early scientific racism) ensured that northern free blacks would see the mutual reciprocity of slavery and prejudice in *race-conceptions*. They would always be aware of how that racial logic extended across the Mason Dixon line, connecting their fate to that of the slave (even if there were not more immediate family ties as there often were).

Other levels of complicity included the participation of white abolitionists in mechanisms of segregation, discrimination and social control (see the mechanistic account of segregation in Anderson 2010). These are social-structural processes reproducing racial inequalities within abolitionism through rules, institutions, and spatial logics of action. Black antislavery agents were paid about half of the wage of their white counterparts. They also had more difficulties in securing building venues for their speeches (Stauffer 2009: 16, 18). Additional examples of racial discrimination include the unequal distribution of offices in antislavery organizations. The largest of these, the American Anti-Slavery Society (AASS), run by Boston-based Garrisonians, never
assigned higher offices to black members. Administrative leaders of the society, like Maria Chapman, tried to micro-manage the society's black agents, not trusting them with money and suspecting them of causing unnecessary conflicts (McFeely 1991: 108, 165). Eventually the AASS more or less excommunicated Douglass for starting an independent newspaper and for deviating too far from official SMO doctrine (the break was ideologically expressed as a matter of different interpretations of the Constitution and possibilities for political anti-slavery). Chapman considered Douglass “ungrateful” and Garrison called him an “apostate” (ibid: 178). These anecdotes are but illustrations of a larger pattern in white abolitionism, in which mechanisms of segregation, discrimination, and social control perpetuated racial status inequalities.

Racialization through stereotypes and racial mechanisms like segregation also rendered interracial interpersonal interactions problematic within antislavery events and meetings. Many white abolitionists continued to avoid mixed race appearances in public. When separating the races proved difficult for antislavery colleagues on the road, white abolitionists expressed instinctive discomfort. Despite his public actions against segregation, Wendell Phillips in a private letter confessed of feeling ill at ease when sharing a room (McFeely 1991: 94). Other white abolitionists were not as covert and polite about race relations as Phillips tried to be. “To make [northern public] people comfortable, some antislavery speakers, such as Edmund Quincy, unattractively and unsuccessfully tried for the common touch by making jokes about black people” (McFeely 1991: 84). Quincy was an AASS officer and editor for Garrison’s The Liberator. He once rebuked Douglass an “unconscionable nigger” (quoted in Stauffer 2009: 18). Such nonchalant racism was prevalent even at antislavery meetings though
frowned upon by prominent leaders like Garrison and Phillips. Before a mostly white audience at the New York Anti-Slavery Society meeting in 1837, Reverend Wright argued quite radically for limiting abolitionism to people committed to eliminating prejudices:

Every man who comes into this society ought to be catechized. It should be ascertained whether he looks upon man as man, all of one blood and one family. A healthful atmosphere must be created in which the slave may live when rescued from the horrors of slavery. I am sensible, I am detaining you, but I feel that this is an important point. I am alarmed sometimes when I look at the constitutions of our societies. I am afraid that brethren sometimes endeavor so to form the constitutions of societies that they will be popular. I have seen constitutions of abolition societies, where nothing was said about the improvement of the man of color! They have overlooked the giant sin of prejudice. They have passed by this foul monster, which is at once the parent and offspring of slavery (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 169-170).

Abolitionists should have to undergo a ‘catechism,’ Wright argues, in the removal of racial prejudice (today it would be called ‘antiracist training’). The tropes of ‘one blood’ and ‘one family’ are biblical spiritual phrases that he employs to criticize the anti-black prejudices still present in antislavery societies. Wright senses that many whites participated in the associations for reasons other than concern for the slave or for the ‘improvement of the man of color’—an urgent concern of black abolitionists.

Abolitionism, for Wright, should be about working to eliminate the segregationist logic of society. Throughout northern states before the Civil War, public ‘amalgamation’ of the races was not only condemned but also could be dangerous. It triggered anti-abolitionist riots and violent status backlash.80 Both Wright and Douglass were

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80 One of the ironies in the history of abolitionism is that its largest impact upon northern politics probably came from shifting public attitudes toward anti-abolitionist violence (Ellingson presents a sociological version of this argument, which is widely shared among historians).
physically assaulted for their public speaking, Douglass nearly being murdered in Indiana on his 1843 lecture tour.

Many northern audiences would not take a black speaker seriously if he or she was not legitimated by a white colleague who verified and vouched for their testimony. This was the case as well for most of the 50 or so slave narratives published before the Civil War, including *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*. Slave testimony was expected to be authenticated by more reputable whites, as Garrison and Phillips did in introducing Douglass’s *Narrative* to the world. Slave narratives have been analyzed as “black messages” with “white envelopes” for this reason (Sekora 1987). Eventually Douglass grew “tired of all the conjectures about his not having truly been a slave, and not being able to write his own speeches. He could damned well read and write; he had been a slave, but slavery had not left him a beast to be displayed; he was not a black dummy manipulated by a white ventriloquist” (McFeely 1991: 113).

Discussion of the racial inequalities internal to abolitionism is not to downplay the relative progress made. White abolitionism made some significant advances over the virulent racism of southern and northern states. However, black activists were chronically disappointed by the persistent racism of their white abolitionist colleagues. Taken together, the specific forms of racialization, racial mechanisms, and interpersonal prejudice outlined above constituted a ‘racial regime’ (Alexander 2012).

The racial regime of the antebellum North was in many respects similar to postbellum Jim Crow. Antebellum North and South were two historically unique racial regimes each producing their own particular configuration of interracial relationships,
violence, disrespect, and despair. Prejudice may have seemed less severe on southern estates to Douglass because there interracial interactions and intermingling was much more regular precisely because the social death of the enslaved was more complete (Alexander 2012: 27; Patterson 1982). Douglass, who in his first recorded speech declared that ‘prejudice against color is stronger north than south,’ later elaborated, “Everywhere we are treated as a degraded people. If we go to the church, we are despised there, and made to take an obscure place, though the preacher talks of all men being made of one blood” ([1849] Blassingame 1982: 168). White abolitionism was inevitably conditioned by its temporal context in the northern racial regime.

THE RHETORIC OF RECOGNITION

Black protest rhetoric in the abolitionist movement is shaped by a meta-linguistic struggle by northern free blacks for social status. Black abolitionist discourse argues for recognition, membership, and status. It argues against the denial of recognition, membership, and status by predominantly white SMOs. Grieving the lack of interracial recognition, Douglass observes “we have, in this country, no adequate idea of humanity yet; the nation does not feel that these are men, it cannot see, through the dark skin and curly hair of the black man, anything like humanity, or that has claims to human rights” (1982 [1848]: 119). His eloquent arguments exemplify what I shall call the rhetoric of recognition. By this phrase I mean to refer to how black abolitionist discourse came to understand and articulate the nature of race in America through
nineteenth-century cultural-religious schemas. It is what processes of ‘racial conceptualization’ look like when articulated from positions of racial status-subordination (to borrow a phrase from Morning 2011). In other words, it is a philosophical anthropology that black abolitionists constructed to make sense of all the racial inequalities outlined above. It has both descriptive and normative components, emerging from a context of racial conflict.

Social movements oriented upon recognition today are often called ‘identity politics’ and considered a ‘postmodern’ or ‘post-socialist’ form of collective action. Fraser (1997) distinguishes between recognition and redistribution as two analytically distinct dimensions of justice. Disrespect or misrecognition is a deprivation of cultural justice whereas redistribution is oriented upon economic justice. The two forms of injustice are mutually entwined empirically, but their deprivations have differing remedies. “The remedy for cultural injustice...is some sort of cultural or symbolic change. This could involve upwardly revaluing disrespected identities and the cultural products of maligned groups. It could also involve recognizing and positively valorizing cultural diversity. More radically still, it could involve the wholesale transformation of societal patterns of representation, interpretation, and communication in ways that would change everybody’s sense of self” (Fraser 1997: 15). In making these distinctions, Fraser suggestively offers three potential remedies for the cultural injustice of disrespect: 1. Re-evaluations (upward) of a group’s value in civil society; 2. Reappraisals of cultural diversity in general in civil society; and 3. Radical displacements regarding who can speak, and how to communicate, or what it means to participate in civil society. Among these three, the second is conspicuously absent
from black abolitionist rhetoric suggesting that the ‘multicultural’ remedy is a more recent product of developments in American culture. The first remedy Fraser mentions though, the effort to bring about a cultural re-evaluation of a minority in public attitudes, is ubiquitous in black abolitionist rhetoric.81

Black abolitionist discourse emphasizes the many positive contributions that blacks made to the national community. Blacks fought in the War for Independence, sacrificing their lives beside white militiamen. Douglass frequently cited the claim that the first American to shed blood in the Revolution was black. Black Americans were also the “pioneers of civilization” in the early republic, according to Douglass, toiling on its fields and driving its great economic expansion West. “They cultivated it with their toil and watered it with their tears; their labor had earned it” (1982 [1854]: 478).

Douglass also gestured toward the religious contributions blacks made to American Christianity. Through their long hard struggle with adversity, blacks discovered and exemplified genuine Christianity in the new nation.

Fraser’s three remedies for misrecognition are too presentist to interpret black abolitionist discourse. Her model of cultural recognition and its remedies assumes that ethnic differentiation is largely what activists pursuing recognition desire. But this is not why social recognition was so important to black abolitionists. The sort of deprivations they referred to, of being “shut out of human regards” in Douglass’s words, were paramount social injustices, not merely the ‘cultural’ injustices of identity politics.

81 It is more unclear how to measure the third remedy empirically, but there is indeed some evidence for such a large-scale transformation of nineteenth century civil society in terms of its constitutive logics. The public sphere was slowly being democratized from the elite deferential ‘republic of letters’ to multiple more contentious publics (Schudson 1999). Fraser’s third remedy thus points to an important condition of the possibility of black public oratory in the early nineteenth century.
Recognition qua social justice is the perception that others perceive the self as a legitimate bearer of worth, that is, a potential claimer of status. It is the socially basic state of being included in ‘human regards’ interactionally and institutionally.

Recognition is a special kind of status. It is the most elementary kind of status accord (sometimes referred to as ‘citizenship’) that credits an individual as a legitimate member of society who is entitled to their own relationships and property. Such social recognition is a prerequisite of making status claims and being accorded status, which is to say, of being a normal ‘living’ member of society. It is the opposite of Patterson’s notion of social death in which an individual is ‘alienated’ from all natal claims and relationships (Patterson 1982). In black abolitionist discourse, slavery as social death was the negative screen throwing the importance of recognition into relief as a necessary ingredient of viable life from belonging to a human community. By treating people as instruments of one’s personal will, slavery denies enslaved persons this basic form of status.

Recognition thus refers to the constitutive, interactional processes through which an individual acquires a social self via adjusting one’s responses based upon how others see you. In other words, being a subject of some social worth depends upon the willingness of others to accord recognition qua the minimal amount of status. When social status is completely withheld through a system of racial slavery, humans lose a sense of self and become animalized (on the dynamics of ‘animalization’ in slavery, see Davis 2014). The basic interactional processes of status according, so foundational to being human, are mostly absent in slavery and utterly distorted in...
regimes of racial segregation. Race in the South was a semiotics of social death: the absence of social recognition is nearly total, though it can be occasionally glimpsed through cracks in the contradictory logics of slavery (Davis 2014; Douglass himself will made a similar argument about the paradoxes of slavery).

Race in the North still marks one as separate, but the position is potentially ambiguous, situating personhood liminally between social death and social normalcy in the sense of being recognized as a possible interactional partner and competitor for status (with more ambiguity than social death). In this un-dead state of existence one could find Douglass and other inside outsiders, included in social rituals and yet represented as other and not belonging as early Douglass often found to be the case within abolitionism. Douglass felt his self being split between partial recognition as a member of society and the absence of full recognition or its intermittent withdrawal. This is a stratification by status through the symbolic violence of racialization. There is present a meager minimum of social recognition, but it is clouded out by an abundance of misrecognition through stereotypes. From within this liminal social position of being inside outsiders, Douglass crafted careful arguments for why he and other people of color deserved full social recognition.

By *rhetoric of recognition* then I refer to all the ways in which black abolitionist discourse was conditioned by the social struggle of a stigmatized minority for the minimal status accord expected between members of a community (recognition). In it the abolition of slavery was inherently connected to personal local struggles for equality and citizenship. Black abolitionists perceived the deprivation and distortion of
social recognition as the essential unity of slavery and prejudice. Given the continuities of misrecognition or disrespect in slavery and prejudice, the implicatures of black antislavery orations were claims for that status accord minimally expected of human social interactions. “We cry for help to humanity, a common humanity, and here too we are repulsed” (Douglass 1982 [1853]: 425). Black protest rhetoric was a creative response to the daily denials of their humanity, from being not recognized by white neighbors, employers, strangers and, as I have shown above, by their abolitionist colleagues.

In a speech in 1853 before the American and Foreign Anti-Slavery Society (AFASS) in New York city, Douglass shifts attention from slavery to the shared plight of all black Americans:

But I do not propose to confine your attention to the details of Slavery...I rather wish to speak of the condition of the colored people of the United States generally. This people, free and slave, are rapidly filling up the number of four millions. They are becoming a nation, in the midst of a nation which disowns them, and for weal or for woe this nation is united. The distinction between the slave and the free is not great, and their destiny seems one and the same. The black man is linked to his brother by indissoluble ties. The one cannot be truly free while the other is a slave. The free colored man is reminded by the ten thousand petty annoyances with which he meets every day, of his identity with an enslaved people—and that with them he is destined to fall or flourish. We are one nation then, if not one in immediate condition at least one in prospects (1982 [1853]: 427).

Douglass argues that all blacks whether free or enslaved face a common social situation in the U.S. because of the attitudes of dominant society toward people of color. Whether racial identification is voluntarily desired or not, blacks are bound together through the deprivation of full recognition that accompanies racial ascription. White racism and disrespect brings together ‘a nation in the midst of a nation which
disowns them’ in the lines above. Therefore, southern slavery and northern acts of harassment, the everyday ‘ten thousand petty annoyances,’ disclose an essential unity through ‘colorphobia.’ This is Douglass’s answer to a background question, hypothetically posed or perhaps a question that Douglass frequently asks himself, ‘why should free blacks care about what happens to the slaves?’ The answer for him above involves some set of ‘indissoluble ties’ between slave and free, perhaps including familial connections but also suggesting the common bondage of race. Douglass claims in a prior speech that his acknowledgement of these ties kept him from permanently settling down abroad instead of becoming a social reformer.

Rereading this passage closely, why is it that enslaved and free blacks in the U.S. share one ‘destiny’? The answer seems immediately apparent to Douglass, because of shared racial status. He consistently uses the language of ‘color’ and ‘prejudice’ though over racial status inequality and discrimination. Prejudice for Douglass refers to degrading social interactions toward persons of color as a socially unwanted people. Until prejudice or racial status inequality (in my more ‘etic’ terms) is leveled—needing its own kind of abolition—no black person can be truly free while the other is a slave.’ Interracial recognition, and the lack of it, is posited as the unity of slavery and prejudice that binds free blacks indefinitely with the enslaved.

How does one argue for recognition? What means of probable demonstration can be used to persuade others of one’s humanity? How does one prove that the principles of liberty and equality in the Declaration are in fact self-evident and self-
evidently applicable to blacks as well as whites? Whither a rhetoric of recognition?

These are disturbing but pertinent moral questions that black abolitionists were compelled to address. Trying to answer them led to various difficulties. For instance, black abolitionist discourse framed slavery as a paradoxical institution that simultaneously withholds and concedes human recognition to the slave. Douglass asks,

Must I undertake to prove that the slave is a man? That point is conceded already. Nobody doubts it. The slaveholders themselves acknowledge it when they punish disobedience on the part of the slave...What is this but the acknowledgement that the slave is a moral, intellectual and responsible being? The manhood of the slave is conceded (1982 [1852]: 369).

Slavery dehumanizes slaves by treating them as thing-like or animal-like instruments. However, human recognition can never be fully suppressed; it is ‘conceded’ through the interpersonal cracks in the institutional edifice of slavery. Douglass offers examples of interstitial recognition by referring to southern laws that forbid teaching slaves to read or write. What are such laws but an implicit recognition of the slave’s humanity? Articulating a philosophical anthropology of the matter, Douglas surveys the range of activities performed by black Americans, from the slave employment of mechanical tools to the entrepreneurial professions of free blacks, arguing that only humans are capable of such creative, intelligent actions. In the rhetoric of recognition, the humanity of the excluded other can only be pointed to, it is always already there.83

83 The rhetoric of recognition certainly seems more secular in Douglass than in the antislavery speeches of black clerics (for the latter, see chapter 6). Though Douglass is notorious for condemning American churches, his speeches are still saturated with God-talk and other religious elements (his own ‘genuine Christianity’ as he calls it). More applicable to the rhetoric of recognition, he frequently claims that prejudice is a violation of the image of God. But we can theorize that the semiotic spiritualization of slavery occurs to a greater degree among black clerics. For related reasons, hopefully evident in my
Another development in the rhetoric of recognition was the idea of ‘moral power.’ Douglass sometimes made a comparative argument to shame American audiences. He would tell audiences about his prejudice-free experiences while on a speaking tour through England, Scotland, and Ireland: “Whatever denunciations England may be entitled to on account of her treatment of Ireland and her own poor, one thing can be said of her, that no man in that country, or in any of her dominions, is treated as less than a man on account of his complexion” (1982 [1849]: 211). Such international comparisons introduced a line of cultural-relativism argumentation in lay theories of race and racism. They could be used to expose the provinciality of U.S. racial practices. Black and white abolitionists would often use Britain or France as an external point of reference from which to criticize American systems of slavery and segregation. They offered an example of a place where human recognition was the default status for black persons, not a status ‘every inch sternly disputed.’ Douglass uses the phrase ‘moral power’ a few times throughout his speaking career to highlight the racial-egalitarian precedent set by Haiti and other European countries regarding abolition and prejudice. It was his hope to stir a sense of geopolitical competition over the morals of civilization and progress, to make Americans feel shame at lagging behind in this civilizing project.\footnote{Said (1994:83-84) suggests that the abolition of slavery was part of the legitimate domination of the British Empire in the nineteenth century. Appiah (2010) observes similar geopolitical honor-shame based tactics in a variety of modern social movements.}

Recognition however was not an exclusive construction of slavery in black abolitionist discourse. Slavery’s violence was also well understood to exceed...
inequalities of status and recognition, e.g., as when Douglass argued that without the coercive force of the whip slavery would fall (for a profound reflection on “the whip” by Douglass, Blassingame 1982: 254). Nonetheless, my focus here has been on how black abolitionists struggled against racial status subordination through the rhetoric of recognition.

THE EXISTENTIAL (ANTI)FRAME

The vastly different social situations of white and black abolitionists influenced their respective antislavery rhetorics. White abolitionists in well-funded churches and prestigious philanthropic organizations were motivated by Christian benevolence, civil virtue, and the humanitarian sensibility of late sentimentalism. Black abolitionists had more immediate and practical motivations behind their protests arising from their marginalized position in a racist society. Many had family members still enslaved in the South. Some were fugitives who obtained their freedom illegally and, remaining in the U.S., risked being arrested back into slavery by slave-catchers with the full support of the federal government. Most continued to encounter forms of racist violence and harassment that they associated with slavery. Such exigent circumstances made reform activism more pressing for black communities in the midst of adversity than for whites. Northern blacks’ practical struggle for legal, political, and social recognition conditioned the rhetorical pattern of their public appeals, giving black abolitionist
public speaking a unique structure of feeling. A more *existential* attitude and *indexical*
style of speaking emerged from their pursuit of social recognition. 85

The existential style of black abolitionist rhetoric takes the form of an ‘I’ crying out for recognition. Again: “We cry for help to humanity, a common humanity, and here too we are repulsed” (Douglass [1853] in Blassingame 1982: 425). It is an intense first-person mode whether it pleads for help or warns of retribution. It includes more storytelling in which orators give personal examples of hardship and dehumanization. The existential style is also apparent in several recurrent rhetorical motifs of black abolitionism: 1. claims that all slaves have an inborn desire for freedom and a willingness to fight to the death; 2. moral lifestyle exhortations to other free blacks to be respectable so as to obtain social recognition by whites; and, 3. confessedly paradoxical arguments for recognition based on the ‘manhood’ of black Americans. Overall the pathos evoked by the existential attitude is moral outrage but at a level exceeding sentimentalism’s more bourgeois shock-value. Black abolitionist rhetoric could sometimes though plummets into feelings of despair and hopelessness.

Existential framing (or better yet, ‘anti-framing,’ as I propose below) emerges out of pressing concerns to *survive, resist, and overcome* anti-black multilevel racism. Existential rhetoric was an implicit meta-argument—drawing upon themes of family,

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85 I use the term ‘existential’ with some wariness. I do not mean to characterize black abolitionist rhetoric as more emotional or embodied than supposedly more rational, more abstract rhetoric of white abolitionists. These racialized binaries were part and parcel of the civil-society discourse conditioning the northern racial regime. The existential style is not more or less philosophical, but more like a paradigm shift in the mode of philosophicizing not unlike the other ‘existential turn’ of nineteenth century Continental philosophy from abstract theories of consciousness to reflections upon practical life and death. Except here the existential turn describes a shift in the mode of abolitionist discourse from quasi-humanitarian representations to speech reflecting the practical issues and emergencies of northern free blacks.
respectability, desire for liberty, death and despair—for social recognition and status equality within the broader abolitionist movement. One of Douglass’s speeches in 1848, over the tenth-year anniversary of West Indian emancipation in Rochester, starts off like a typical abolitionist address heavily relying upon sentimental framing. Half way through the following section, it abruptly takes an existential turn beyond the tropes of sympathy:

Truly we are a great nation! At this moment, three million slaves clank their galling fetters and drag their heavy chains on American soil. Three million from whom all rights are robbed. Three millions, a population equal to that of all Scotland, who in this land of liberty and light, are denied the right to learn to read the name of God. They toil under a broiling sun and a driver’s lash; they are sold like cattle in the market and are shut out from human regards—thought of and spoken of as property—sanctioned as property by cruel laws, and sanctified as such by the Church and Clergy of the country. While I am addressing you, four of my own dear sisters and one brother are enduring the frightful horrors of American slavery. In what part of the Union, they may be, I do not know; two of them, Sarah and Catharine, were sold from Maryland before I escaped from there. I am cut off from all communication with—I cannot hear from them, nor can they hear from me—we are sundered forever. My case, is the case of thousands; and the case of my sisters, is the case of Millions” (Blassingame 1982 [1848]: 144, emphasis mine).

The themes of onerous toil, violence and family separation are common in abolitionist discourse. But they become more than humanitarian representations from-a-distance in Douglass’s oratory as was often the case in white abolitionism’s sentimental framing of slavery. Douglass makes the slave less anonymous by personally revealing his familial attachments to real people still enslaved. The existential turn makes the standard sentimental tropes more poignant and despairing. The symbolic constructs implode and instead take on properties of indexicality stemming from the biographical experiences and traumas experienced by most blacks living in the antebellum U.S.
The existential style of black protest rhetoric transforms abolitionist discourse from a symbolic mode of linguistic operation, in the representation and social construction of the slave, to an *indexical* mode of linguistic operation. It is the social-movement substantiation of Peirce’s distinction between symbolic and indexical kinds of semiotic modalities (Peirce 1955: 275). In fact, indexical language is ‘semiotic’ much in the same way as emotions are—the blush not only signifies embarrassment but is a directly mechanical yet meaningful effect. Unlike the arbitrariness of the symbol, the index has a physical connection to the reality it indicates, like a wind index to the weather. Analogously, black abolitionists were indexical subject-objects of speech. They held real autobiographical, familial, and social-economic connections to slavery. They felt the ‘indissoluble ties’ of ‘race’ to the enslaved. Their protest rhetoric as a result was not as ‘symbolic’ or as from-a-distance as white abolitionist figures of speech. Disclosing the ‘behind,’ ‘around’ and ‘outside’ of the frame, the existential style de-selects what a frame had selected. It punctures, so to speak, the subjective reality of frames with a touch of the real.

It is tempting to label this distinctive rhetorical pattern in black abolitionist discourse the Existential problem frame to be symmetrical with the three problem frames examined in the last chapter. Black abolitionists argued that slavery was a problem for how it destroyed the lives of human beings and filled all black Americans with fear and despair—claims expressed in a first-person mode. However, I would venture, black abolitionist existentialism has several dynamics that make it incongruent with the ‘frame’ category of culture. It has a tense antagonistic relationship with the constitutive deflections of frames (each frame being a Burkean ‘terministic screen’).
The existential style pierces through the symbolic selectivity of frames through complex first-person accounts. It reinvents the presentation of problem frames through a more indexical testimonial ethos. It is thus more accurate to speak of the presence of an Existential anti-frame here instead of a fourth symbolic problem frame per se.\footnote{To clarify, this is not an absolute distinction. Both semiotic modalities were present in both white and black abolitionist discourse. But inclusions of indexical connections to slavery and the enslaved were much more common in black protest rhetoric. There are no doubt many possible forms of indexicality. Among white abolitionists, I would single out the Grimké sisters as manifesting some of the same indexical-to-slavery qualities as well by referring to their own biographical encounters with the brutality of slavery.}

Another of Douglass’s public address develops existential-indexical features when he entreats his antipathetic audience on behalf of his family members in the face of the audience’s increasing loss of interest. This time, during a speech for the American Anti-Slavery Society meeting in New York city, Douglass’s satiric mimicking offended the audience members, half of whom got up to leave, leading Douglass to issue this incredible impromptu:

Suppose you yourselves were black, and that your sisters and brothers were in slavery, subject to the brutality and the lash of the atrocious tyrant who knew no mercy—Suppose, I say, that you were free, and that your dearest and nearest relatives were in the condition that the Southern slaves are, and that the Church sanctioned such infamy, would you not feel as I do? There is no use in being offended with me, I have a right to address you. There is no difference, except of colour, between us. As I said four years ago, I say now, I am your brother—(cheers and laughter)—yes I am, and (although) you may pass me by as you will and cut me and despise me, I’ll tell every one I meet that I am your brother. (Cheers and laughter) (1982 [1848]: 129).

In this moment Douglass is talking to the backs of many upset people. He rebukes them, inviting them to see things from his vantage point as a free black man with family still in bondage. The scene recorded above is a rare moment in Douglass’s oratory
when he actually seems to lose control over the attentions of his audience and has difficulty letting them go. The Existential Anti-Frame above plays into his distinctive, mesmerizing eloquence that historians and critics uniformly hail. Elsewhere he tells stories about his own experiences of bearing the cruelty of his masters. Occasionally he would bare his own back to show audiences his scars from ‘the lash’ (Stauffer 2009: 17). If the existential style were a ‘problem frame,’ it could be parsed as slavery is a problem because of how it nearly destroyed my life and the lives of others close to me.

Existential Anti-framing uses experiential testimony to portray the horrors of slavery, though its reflections upon those experiences can be quite abstract. The abuses and evils of slavery acquire a more realistic feel. Sometimes the oratorical experience of this realism is jarring. It can, almost accidentally, produce misanthropic sentiments and an ethos of despair. This speech moves from observing the same personal connections black have with the enslaved into calls of damnation and feelings of despair:

I have no doubt, that there are hundreds here to-day, that have parents, children, sisters and brothers, who are now in slavery. Oh! how deep is the damnation of America—under what a load of crime does she stagger from day to day! What a hell of wickedness is there coiled up in her bosom, and what awful judgment awaits her impenitence! My friends, words cannot express my feelings. My soul is sick of this picture of an awful reality. The wails of bondmen are on my ear, and their heavy sorrows weigh down my heart (1982 [1848]: 144).

These words gave auditors (and readers) a glimpse of the personal pain Douglass feels toward slavery. The feelings of outrage and despair are, for him, inexpressible. After the capture of a fugitive slave in 1851, he mourns, “The return of Henry Long to all the horrors of a life of endless slavery has shrouded my spirit in gloom.” “The moral
horizon is dark and gloomy—not merely portentous of fierce and wrathful storms, but of a long and dreary winter of oppression and cruelty” (1982 [1851]: 279, 294). It is hard to imagine that white abolitionists were as capable of feeling the depth of Douglass’s despair having not experienced slavery themselves. It is not hard to imagine that many blacks felt the same sense of hopelessness toward the American system of racism and slavery that Douglass expresses here.

Similar expressions of despair can be seen in two speeches delivered by Reverend Wright before predominantly white audiences:

Oh, it is impossible for you to tell how the heart of the colored man yearns toward those who plead in his cause. You have never felt the oppression of the slave. You have never known what it is to have a master, or to see your parents and children in slavery (Wright [1835] in Foner 1998: 165).

The spirit [of slavery] is withering all our hopes, and oftentimes causes the colored parent as he looks upon his child, to wish he had never been born. Often is the heart of the colored mother, as she presses her child to her bosom, filled with sorrow to think that, by reason of this prejudice, it is cut off from all hopes of usefulness in this land.” “...this prejudice follows the colored man everywhere, and depresses his spirits” (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 171-2)

The diction here that Douglass and Wright choose to use is not unlike the prophetic rhetoric of Garrison who also condemns the iniquities America and confounds its Constitution as an ‘agreement with hell.’ But the mood is drastically different. Garrison’s moral condemnations being inspired by his postmillennial optimism never feel this dark.

Two more elements of the Existential Anti-Frame emerged as a response to nineteenth century discursive debates over race and slavery. Pro-slavery ideology was increasingly part of the public conversation about slavery in the 1830 through 1850s.
Many antislavery audiences were familiar with popular biblical arguments for slavery. In the theological cosmos of white supremacy, the African race was created to be subservient to other more civilized races. Slavery was a divinely ordained institution for Africans, and most blacks had no desire for freedom. They preferred the paternal care of their masters who looked after them and provided for all of their needs. Proslavery proponents argued that blacks were incapable of ‘independence’ and ‘manliness,’ two powerful moral gendered binaries in nineteenth-century civil society discourse (Rotundo 1987).

On the defensive against such accusations, black abolitionists refuted proslavery claims by pointing to the actions of fugitives, insurrections, and the willingness of some slaves to die rather than live in bondage. Examples of these acts were not hard to find, they were the headlines of the day. With characteristic wit, Douglass exclaimed, “Give a slave a knowledge of geography, and he will give you a lesson in locomotion” (Douglass [1854]: 456). Actions of resistance proved that blacks shared the innate human drive for liberty and independence. Drawing upon republican frames, Douglass told heroic stories of doomed plots to overthrow masters and failed flights to freedom (see 1982 [1848]: 199 for one). The uprising of Nat Turner that shook the nerves of the entire South in 1831, and led many southerners to mistakenly blame the fledgling abolitionists for inciting insurrection, was praised by Douglass as an example of black manliness comparable in virtue to George Washington. In one speech Douglass tells of past social encounters with northern whites who have naively asked him, why do slaves tolerate the condition of slavery, the question itself blaming the
slave for his or her oppression. In the speech Douglass re-directs the blame back onto northern whites, stressing their complicity with the national system of slavery:

...but for your readiness to stand by them [Constitutional compromises], the slave might instantly assert and maintain his rights. The contest now would be wonderfully unequal. Seventeen millions of armed, disciplined, and intelligent people, against three millions of unarmed and uninformed. Sir, we are often taunted with the inquiry from Northern white men— ‘Why do your people submit to slavery? and does not that submission prove them an inferior race? Why have they not shown a desire for freedom?’ Such language is as disgraceful to the insolent men who use it, as it is tantalising and insulting to us. It is mean and cowardly for any white man to use such language toward us. My language to all such, is, Give us fair play and if we do not gain our freedom, it will be time to taunt us thus (Blassingame 1982 [1848]: 145).

Douglass repudiates the question for its faulty premises. One cannot assume that slaves do not desire freedom from the lack of a general insurrection in the South, nor that perpetual bondage in any way suggest the contentedness of the slave. Such assumptions are ‘disgraceful’ and ‘insulting’ to all black Americans for implying blacks are less republican and less human than whites according to those self-evident Declaration principles. Instead, Douglass points to the structural power inequalities that deprive most slaves of any other option but subjugation. If the situation were more equal in power between whites and blacks, Douglass assures his audience, self-emancipation by any means necessary would soon follow.

In general Douglass and other radical abolitionists like McCune Smith did not disavow violent slave insurrections, at least not to the extent that the nonresistant Garrisonians did. Early Douglass claimed he was a ‘peace man’ but he soon broke with the Garrisonian doctrine of pacifism. Both Douglass and McCune Smith hailed Toussaint L’overture and the Haitian revolution in which slaves seized their freedom.
through force. They embraced romantic tropes signaling self-assertion and self-transcendence (on the romanticism of radical abolitionism, see Stauffer 2002). In a 1847 speech, Douglass quotes Lord Byron’s famous line from Child Harold’s Pilgrimage, “‘Who would be free, themselves must strike the blow.’” (1982 [1847]: 89).
If given the opportunity, most slaves would indeed ‘strike the blow’ against their masters. These two existential motifs, desiring liberty and willingness to fight, are inseparable in the radicalization of Douglass’s thought in the 1850s as well as in the rise of early black nationalist thought in other abolitionists like Martin Delaney and Henry Garnet.

The Existential Anti-frame of black abolitionism transforms abolitionist discourse, including its Sentimental, Republican and Evangelical tropes. It does not abandon those frames, but rather enlivens them with indexical qualities. It also adds a set of topoi: the desire for liberty and willingness to die, the despair and hopelessness of racial slavery in America. These are some of the original contributions black orators made to abolitionist discourse.

CONCLUSION

In black abolitionist discourse, the symbolic violence of prejudice was one with slavery’s denial of humanity. When Douglass claimed prejudice to be worse North than South, the remark must be interpreted through the status dimension of race, including its fundamental form of recognition. The common thread interweaving slavery and prejudice was the relatively autonomous status dimension of racialization and racism
foreclosing possibilities of inter-racial citizenship and binding northern free blacks to
the southern slave through dominant status imaginaries and prototypes, even when
more concrete ties were lacking. Black abolitionists invented the rhetoric of recognition
and performed the existential style to problematize slavery and prejudice in one blow.
Chapter 5
Black Status Binds:
Unequal Affects in Public Speaking

A THEORY OF BLACK STATUS BINDS

Occupying a position of racial status disadvantage within abolitionism constrained black public speaking opportunities. Black orators faced a set of structural and social-psychological status binds that added to their protest certain difficulties and distractions that white abolitionist were relatively unburdened by. A few like Douglass and McCune Smith were able to transcend these status binds in their antislavery writing and speaking—or, perhaps we should say, that their specific intra-racial status binds were ultimately less pernicious for a variety of reasons not hard to guess. For others were too marginalized, dispossessed, and blocked structurally to ever experience the relative freedoms that later Douglass eventually achieved in his rhetoric. The present chapter adds to our understanding of how status inequalities internal to movements constrain the microprocesses of protest rhetoric with implications for movement persistence and the lack thereof. Spiting the general proscription on using social-psychological principles to do historical work, here I propose to do precisely the opposite, drawing upon the latest in sociological social-psychology to reconstruct the public speaking experiences and emotions of Douglass and several others.

Specifically, Ridgeway’s expectation states theory of status inequalities and status binds (introduced in Chapter 1), though stemming from observations of goal-oriented interpersonal settings, can contribute to a fuller understanding of the motives
and the frustrations of black protest rhetoric. Ridgeway subdivides the social psychology of status into two bodies of theories, one she calls expectation states theory and the other she entitles status construction theory. The two are inversions of each but also reciprocal in explaining the emergence and persistence of status inequality. Status construction theory attempts to explain the origins of status beliefs through repeated material resource disadvantages. Expectation states theory examines how status-ranked behavioral hierarchies are reproduced through interpersonal interactions that draw upon self-fulfilling status beliefs, i.e., expectations states (Ridgeway 2011). The latter will be the theory most relevant to my analysis of public speaking binds below.

Status enables and constrains access to a variety of scarce resources such as power, popularity, and/or wealth. Ridgeway defines status structures as “the standing [individuals] attain in the behavioral hierarchies of influence, status, and perceived suitability for leadership that commonly develop in interpersonal contexts” (Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz 2013: 297). She theorizes status as a Sewellian ‘dual structure’ constituted reciprocally by macro-cultural schemas (e.g. common beliefs about what other people believe) and material distributions of resources. Status inequalities are partly constituted by status-beliefs in the form of cultural stereotypes, about race, class and gender, among other socio-cognitive categories of person construal. These beliefs are somewhat self-fulfilling in interactional settings through interpersonal typifications and expectations. A few key status-beliefs, such as race and gender in the U.S. context, operate so rapidly and automatically in our cognitions that Ridgeway calls them ‘primary frames’ (Ridgeway 2011). They are the unconscious cultural categories
of person perception heavily relied upon in the course of social interactions. Through the mutual interplay of primary frames and interaction, status has its own dynamics, qua relatively autonomous self-reproducing systems of inequality.

Social interactions in goal-oriented situations are mediated by socio-cognitive expectations derived from macro-cultural status beliefs. The cultural associations of status structures rank persons with varying levels of prestige, though prestige can take different forms, e.g. assumed leadership competence being a main one in capitalist societies. Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz (2013) also observe that the content of primary stereotypes reflects the vantage point of the dominant racial-ethnic gender group (namely, white men). For instance, the prototype of femininity is white (not black) women with higher warmth and relational qualities but lower competence and leadership abilities. Ridgeway argues that race and class also have an irreducible status-dimension like gender does. Race in the U.S., like gender, is a primary frame of person construal, in fact, to a large extent, secondary class connotations are nested within the primary category of race. Emerging from the interplay of cultural status-beliefs and expectation-imbued interactions, gender and race conceptualizations are primarily status inequalities.

Status-disadvantaged situations tend to produce double standards and certain deprivations of freedom that Ridgeway calls status binds. A status bind refers to the

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87 Stereotypes of femininity are based on white men’s prototypical image of white women. Stereotypes of race on the other hand are based on white men’s prototypical image of contrasted masculinities, resulting in all blackness being implicitly coded masculine.

88 Women in modern professional settings, for instance, experience a “double-bind.” If women act according to feminine typifications and norms, they rarely obtain power or influence. To have influence women often must assert themselves, yet women’s assertiveness can produce backlash and be formally or informally sanctioned for contradicting stereotypes of femininity. Instead ambitious women are often
lack of any meaningful non-derogatory means for acquiring influence or higher prestige. It is the deprivation of possible individual freedoms due to social pressures placed on the individual to conform to their primary status identities. For the case of modern black Americans in the contemporary U.S., Ridgeway notes, the status binds are similar to gender but often shaped by distinctive stereotypical content derived from “their historical origins in the violence of slavery” (Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz 2013: 303).

Before elaborating further the idea of black status-binds, and how they existed in the actual time of slavery, it is worthwhile to point out some more direct parallels between gender and racial status-beliefs in antebellum abolitionism. The primary frames that constitute status inequalities typically code the subordinate status position as one of emotion (versus rationality) and relationally ‘submissive’ and ‘cooperative’ (versus independent). The presence of such perennial symbolic binaries, emotion/rationality or independence/warmth, is a sure indicator that a status dimension is operative.

Emotion-rationality binaries were certainly constitutive of gender status structures (see Chapter 8), but they were also operative in the sentimentalization of race by white abolitionist discourse. Romantic racialism depicted the African race as having the innocence, intelligence, and emotional sincerity of children (Fredrickson 1987). In the abolitionist theodicy of slavery, Africans were easily exploited as slaves because of their natural kindheartedness. Not all white abolitionists subscribed to these views, but the status binaries were still replicated by those who didn’t. At some
antislavery meetings, a formerly enslaved fugitive would not be expected to speak but
to sing spirituals in between the orations of white abolitionists. White abolitionists like
Harriet Beecher Stowe were talented at putting sentimental words in the mouth of the
oppressed slave through novels and poems, including one interpellating Sojourner
Truth as the primitive exotic ‘sibyl’ of Libya (Painter 1996).  

The status-binds that black abolitionists faced stemmed from the social
juvenilization of blacks through the binaries of nineteenth century civil-society
discourse. Romantic racialism was one contributor. In the larger scheme of things, the
racialized binaries developed from the context of white European colonialism and its
orientalism juxtaposing Western civilization versus savage states of nature. The content
of antebellum racial stereotypes were prototypical images of primitive bestial humans
with higher physical powers but lower mental intelligence. Africans were labeled and
judged to be an inferior ‘species’ at a level of development analogous to the human
capabilities of children. The child analogy contributed to other racializing stereotypes of
the African as well, such as their supposed natural morality and emotionality. Racial
status in the nineteenth-century U.S. was conditioned by these juvenilized conceptions
of racial difference. Racialization was one ideological basis for the institution of slavery.
But it was also the source of macro-cultural status beliefs in northern society, fueling
anti-black prejudice and shaping the interactions between black orators and their
audiences.

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89 Douglass and Wright, in contrast, emphasized the muteness of the slave: “I came here to speak for my
brethren in bonds, because they cannot speak for themselves, they are dumb” (Douglass 1982 [1851]:
330).
DOUGLASS & DOUBLE CONSCIOUSNESS

Black status-binds in public speaking resulted from racial status-beliefs about emotion, intelligence, and physical violence—and other stereotypes produced by late sentimentalism’s racialization of blackness (Roth 2014). Black speakers were no doubt aware of how audiences automatically framed them through these stereotypes, which could make public speaking trickier. Douglass was ever aware of the persistence of prejudice even at antislavery meetings and how racial status inequalities were reinforced, e.g. the blatant bias in what topic Douglass has been asked to speak upon. Although speaking before an audience of abolitionists at the New England Anti-Slavery Society meeting in Boston’s Faneuil Hall, Douglass’s words are pleading and distrustful:

I beg of you, then, to hear me calmly—without prejudice or opposition. You, it must be remembered, have in your hands all power in this land. I stand here not only in minority, but identified with a class whom every body can insult with impunity. Surely, the ambition for superiority must be great indeed in honorable men to induce them to insult a poor black man, whom the basest fellow in the street can insult with impunity (1982 [1849]: 204).

Not unusual, for Douglass, there is some satiric prodding of men’s honor here, yet the request for recognition seems quite earnest. The prejudice he refers to here includes his sometimes hostile reception by unsympathetic audiences who deem his philosophizing and rational argumentation arrogant. The final line above, that even ‘the basest fellow in the street’ can insult a black man with ‘impunity,’ expresses the daily status degradations characteristic of the northern racial regime. Disrespect toward the self by others is assumed and expected when in public spaces. It is the lack of prejudice that is the surprise.
This section of the speech illustrates what W. E. B. Du Bois terms ‘double consciousness,’ the feeling of being at war within one’s self between two incompatible self-conceptions, one partly self-made and partly aided by the nurture of one’s spiritual community, in conflict with another self-image degraded and internalized through the stereotypes a minority encounters in the attitudes of a majority (Du Bois 1994: 2). Douglass experiences double consciousness in the feeling of tension between partial recognition and generalized disrespect. Black status-binds are like the experience of double-consciousness while performing in mixed-race settings. We could theorize further, status-binds are the practical, interactional implications of double-consciousness and its basis in relations between a minority and a dominant racial-ethnic majority group. A status-bind is present for a black orator if they are constrained from acting in certain ways or from saying certain things, which their white colleagues are free to do, because of racial stereotypes and social expectations.

One black status bind in abolitionist rhetoric resulted from civil-society binaries valuing rationality and denigrating emotion. Romantic racialism’s coding of blacks as more emotional than rational created a double bind revolving around feeling rules and displays of affect. The racialized social set-up put black orators in a unique affect-suppression bind. Speakers could conform to primary race frames, but not be taken seriously. Or, in an attempt to have more influence, speakers could choose to privilege rational argumentation over emotion, but risk upsetting audiences who expected an entertaining display of emotion. Black speakers who chose the latter course of

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90 “It has been said, that the variety of the human family, to which I belong, excels less in the intellectual, than in the emotional characteristics of men” (Douglass in Blassingame 1985: 16).
performing rationality and respectability risked being seen as arrogant and pretentious by white audiences who possessed a variety of means of sanctioning frame offenders. Mild forms of reprimand included hissing, interrupting, leaving, or making a causal rebuke after the lecture—actions sometimes recorded by a newspaper transcriber or later narrated by the speaker. Speaking in mixed-raced settings could be dangerous as status backlash was not implausible. Douglass for instance was almost killed after a mob reaction to his anti-slavery speech in Indiana (to say nothing of the later fist fights he was drawn into). Other northern blacks were brutally beaten for their mere attendance at a mixed-race antislavery meeting. Thus, one main black status bind stemmed directly from the racialization of the emotion/rationality binary, disabling any meaningfully non-potentially-derogatory option for many black abolitionists. Many black abolitionists responded to this affect bind by suppressing intense emotion altogether through a politics of respectability (this is certainly true for many black women abolitionists as well, see next section).

Some indication of the psychological experience of these status-binds can be found in the recorded speeches of Douglass, though Douglass was perhaps exceptional in his ability to remake himself and transcend the limitations that white abolitionist societies and audiences placed on black speakers (perhaps all the more reason to test the theory of status-binds on Douglass since he would be among black abolitionists the least affected). Indeed there is biographical and stenographic evidence for thinking that Douglass was aware of racial status-binds, and found them constraining especially in the first decade of his speaking career, but was increasingly less bound by them with his growing celebrity and independence from white
antislavery societies. Early on he rudely discovered that white abolitionists expected him to deliver the emotional bang of the meeting and not deal in the more rational, philosophical arguments against slavery. He was encouraged to talk more like a slave and to stick to personal stories of cruel masters that moved the sympathies of the audiences.

Implicit racial bias within white abolitionism forced early Douglass into a variety of public speaking status binds, including the affect-suppression bind sketched above. To be a success with white audiences, he felt that he had to be emotionally entertaining, but if he was too emotionally entertaining, audiences would not take his antislavery message seriously. Occasionally Douglass was so hilarious in his mimicking performances that he offended the more Victorian members of his audience who walked out on him.\(^{91}\) There is something inimitable about the way Douglass made sense of and dealt with the status-binds of a black orator perhaps owing to his outlier intelligence. To attempt a summary of his changing experience of status binds, early Douglass managed a precarious balancing act between comedy and tragedy, almost managing to reconcile the situation’s contradictory obligations. Later Douglass resolutely repudiated occupying the racialized lower status polarity of the rationality-emotion binary. In 1850s he defies racial expectation states by writing out eloquent, scientific, rationalistic speeches—his embrace of a more logocentric rhetoric of recognition. Still consciously reacting to racial status inequality, Douglass increasingly tries to resolve the status binds by performing rationality and respectability.

\(^{91}\) One journalist noted: “Those who have never heard Frederick Douglass’s sarcastic tones, and seen his expressive countenance, can have but a poor idea of the humor of this part of his speech, or of its overwhelming effect upon the audience” (Douglass in Blassingame 1982: 132).
A common characteristic of status-disadvantaged positions is being judged by double standards, i.e., having to meet a higher bar in the demonstration of competence, and being judged adversely even for behaving in an identical way to superordinate others who are not so judged. The double standards that black abolitionists felt compelled by often had to do with intelligence and eloquence. Douglass realized that black orators were taken as representative of their race, held in comparison to the best white exemplars of eloquence. Every speech was potentially taken as a proof of the intelligence of the entire race in a way quite foreign to how white abolitionist orators were received and judged. Although Douglass could hold his ground against an Everett or a Webster, he criticized such race-based comparisons for how they were used to legitimate the denial of social recognition:

...this folly is seen in the arguments directed against the humanity of the negro. His faculties and powers, uneducated and unimproved, have been contrasted with those of the highest cultivation; and the world has then been called upon to behold the immense and amazing difference between the man admitted, and the man disputed” (1982 [1854]: 502).

Black orators (‘the man disputed’) were judged as less intelligent and therefore less human by being compared to the highest trained rhetoricians of the land, so that white audiences could confirm their primary race frames. Average white abolitionists (‘the man admitted’) were not similarly held to such high standards. Given the high social pressures of being made a token representative of the collective and of being taken as a measure of that entire collective’s capabilities, black abolitionists found public speaking occasions to be freighted with heavy significance. A sort of status bind is present here as well since rhetorical performances of high intelligence could still be demeaned in a variety of ways, e.g. auditors who thought Douglass lied about being
raised as a slave because no slave could possibly be so eloquent. Douglass responded to public-speaking status binds in different ways throughout his career, from suppressing his philosophical inclination, to astounding audiences with more eloquence than they had ever seen, to in the above case, addressing the racial double standards head on through the rhetoric of recognition, pointing out the unfairness of racial status structures directly to his audiences.

On some speaking occasions, Douglass seems more unsure about what tactic to adopt in addressing status claims. He speaks of feeling like he is ever “on trial,” and asked to do the impossible, as when proving the humanity of the slave in argument with proslavery ideology:

> the [Richmond] Examiner boldly asserts that the negro has no such right—BECAUSE HE IS NOT A MAN! There are three ways to answer this denial. One is by ridicule; a second is by denunciation; and a third is by argument. I hardly know under which of these modes my answer to-day will fall. I feel myself somewhat on trial; and that this is just the point where there is hesitation, if not serious doubt. I cannot, however, argue; I must assert (1982 [1854]: 501).

During this speech Douglass self-observes a sensation of hesitance. Elsewhere he calls it ‘diffidence,’ the feeling of a lack of confidence in speaking. Douglass’s temporary diffidence or doubt in himself (as the dictionary defines ‘diffidence’) could have arisen from repeated experiences of disrespect, being constantly challenged, or from the high stakes game of managing contradictory expectations. It also had to do with his audience in this case. The context of this speech was the invitation of Western Reserve College to Douglass to give a prestigious academic address at the college’s summer commencement ceremonies in 1854. It was an unprecedented occasion, the
first for any black American, and a very controversial decision among the faculty and student body. For the occasion, Douglass wrote out his most scientific oration yet consisting of logical arguments against the scientific racism of reputable ethnologists of the day. And yet Douglass qualifies himself as offering mere assertions, not arguments.

In some of his speeches, Douglass expresses the feeling of holding himself back and not being able to state how he truly feels. He seems to be stuck in an affect-suppression bind of wanting to condemn slavery more intensely than he allows himself to:

Sir, this is strong language. For the sake of my people, I would to God it were extravagantly strong. But, Sir, I fear our fault here to-day will not be that we have pleaded the cause of the slave too vehemently, but too tamely; that we have not contemplated his wrongs with too much excitement, but with unnatural calmness and composure. For my part, I cannot speak as I feel on this subject. My language, though never so bitter, is less bitter than my experience. At best, my poor speech, is to the facts in the case, but as the shadow to the substance (1982 [1853]: 426).

Douglass finds the social norms of language to be insufficient for the moral outrage of slavery and his own experiences of injustice. These linguistic difficulties partly emerge from the same rationality-emotion binaries discussed above. White abolitionists like Garrison and Phillips could be outraged and caustic without being judged negatively for it because rationality was their default status or primary frame (see Chapter 7 on Phillips’s eloquence of abuse). Since rationality was in dispute for black speakers, they were more likely to suppress emotional intensities of hatred. Phillips’s style of the ‘eloquence of abuse’ was a kind of antebellum white privilege not afforded to black speakers for the most part. By disciplining one’s speech with a stricter set of feeling
rules, black abolitionists ‘worked the binaries’ to perform status equality (Alexander 2010). In this way black orators affectively navigated a variety of public-speaking status binds by suppressing their existential outrage and hatred, instead monitoring their speech to fit the civic values of their context.

Such self-censorship is a reason why public speaking could be trickier for black abolitionists. It is common for the upwardly aspiring to feel a lack of synchronicity between their socialized language mannerisms and the linguistic norms and rules expected of high class others. In his field theory of linguistic capital and linguistic habitus, Pierre Bourdieu (1991) highlights the discomfort of speaking felt by members of lower social classes when in the presence of higher social classes. The discomfort arises from implicit awareness of one’s lack of linguistic capital in certain social settings. It can produce a variety of symptoms in speech, including nervousness, ‘diffidence,’ and hesitation due to self-censorship. In the previous paragraph’s quote, one indication of a linguistic habitus is Douglass’s deferential ‘sir’ language. Sir diction is quite frequent in Douglass’s speeches before predominantly white audiences (sometimes being used two or three times per paragraph in the 1853 AFASS speech). It is a part of Douglass’s general self-effacing remarks that start at least half of his antebellum speeches (at least, half of his speeches before white audiences). The sir diction could have indexical origins in Douglass’s linguistic socialization in the South from experiences of being raised and disciplined as a slave. Partly though it is a means Douglass uses to gratify his auditor’s desire for the prestige (hence, a form of status-rhetoric that I discuss in chapter six). Given Douglass’s eloquence and wit though, it is often startling to see chronic self-effacing gestures by Douglass even in the 1850s (of
course, some of this is standard introductory accoutrements of ethos and humility, but it is present to a far higher degree in Douglass than in white abolitionists).

The disjunction between linguistic habitus and social field—Bourdieu calls it *hysteresis*—was most severe for the early speeches of Douglass having recently escaped from slavery in Maryland. Describing his new home in New Bedford, Massachusetts, he notes the frequent feeling of awkwardness he had when he was first trying to adjust to northern society:

> When I first came here, I felt the greatest possible *diffidence* to sitting with whites. I used to come up from the ship-yard where I worked, with my hands hardened with toil, rough and uncomely, and my movements *awkward*, (for I was unacquainted with the rules of politeness), I would shrink back, and would not have taken my meals with the whites, had they not pressed me to do so” (1982 [1849]: 213; *emphasis mine*).

Douglass’s first abolitionist speeches were characterized by extreme nervousness and, some present say, total confusion (McFeely 1991: 88). In mixed-race settings, as Ridgeway would put it, racial status-beliefs become salient. Speaking in front of predominantly white audiences at first contradicted Douglass’s social-linguistic habitus formed as it was in Maryland’s Eastern Shore. Regarding the social conditions of his later self-transcendence of status binds, Douglass did have an extraordinary childhood for a slave in many respects, serving as the play companion for a wealthy white child and experiencing the relative freedoms of Baltimore port-life (Preston 1980). No doubt his ‘southern’ linguistic habitus looked very different from the linguistic habitus of even his brothers and sisters who were enslaved as field hands. Douglass seems to have mostly reinvented his linguistic habitus by the mid-1850s or so (Stauffer 2009). Yet, even then, I suspect remnants of it remained in his sir-diction and out-of-proportion
self-effacing introductions—these being partly a product of the double consciousness predicated upon racial status inequalities and partly a performance of status-rhetoric.

Douglass is one of the greatest orators in the history of American public address, but as we have seen, this did not make him immune to black status-binds in public speaking. He, like other black abolitionists before white audiences, had to do extra performative labors in order to overcome the default dis-identification primary frames used by white auditors to perceive and judge black orators differently than white orators. Douglass suggests a common psychological experience of double consciousness among black public speakers, stemming from awareness of status-beliefs or ‘prejudice’:

Sir, I am a colored man, and this is a white audience. No colored man, with any nervous sensibility, can stand before an American audience without an intense and painful sense of the immense disadvantage under which he labors. He feels little borne up by the brotherly sympathy and generous enthusiasm which give wings to the eloquence and strength to the hearts of abler men engaged in other and more popular causes. The ground which a colored man occupies in this country is every inch of it sternly disputed. Not by argument or any just appeal to the understanding; but by a cold, flinty-hearted, unreasoning and unreasonable prejudice against him as a man and a member of the human family (1882 [1853]: 424).

Ever aware of the stereotypes surrounding him, Douglass’s entreatings displays the oft higher Dubois-ian social reflexivity characteristic of racial inside-outsiders. He perceives himself through the eyes of dominant society which racializes him and aggregates him as part of a lower class. As I have demonstrated in this section, the apprehension of the likely prejudices of audiences makes public speaking a more burdensome task for black orators. It made it rife with status binds. Public speaking opportunities were approached by black orators as potential performative proofs that
racial equality is desirable and possible. Such a task was an ‘immense disadvantage,’ making the affective management and rhetorical risks of public speaking eloquence even more precarious.

INDEXICAL AWAKENINGS IN BLACK FEMINIST-ABOLITIONISM

If black abolitionist men faced significant difficulties in their public speaking endeavors, the status binds facing black women speakers were even more onerous. Historian Yee writes, “Violence on the lecture tours, was an even greater threat for black women than for black men and white abolitionists. Physical and verbal attacks against black women activists could originate at any time or place from crowds motivated by three sources of hostility: anti-black feelings, anti-abolitionist sentiments, and hatred of ‘public’ women” (Yee 1992: 113-4). Black women abolitionists challenged the status quo in multiple respects corresponding to their stratified subordination by multiple status inequalities. Yet their eloquence defied racist stereotypes of ignorance and incivility. They defied social expectations about women’s proper role in society by speaking out in public settings to ‘promiscuous’ audiences. Furthermore, they faced a unique set or ‘intersection’ of primary status frames in the social cognitions of northern audiences. Race and gender stereotypes then and now were ‘co-articulated’ as sociologists of gender and sexuality would say.

As Ridgeway would predict, the antebellum ‘primary frame’ construals of black women were conditioned by the dominant standpoint of white men. Black women were seen as more masculine than white women due to racial othering by white men.
they were typified as lacking feminine dignity and viewed as sexually impure. Many scholars of race and gender have observed that stereotypes for black women ranged from the physically powerful Mammy to the sexual Jezebel temptress. Another dominant social expectation was that black women largely do menial, unintelligent, domestic service for others. At an annual anti-slavery meeting in New York City, Sarah Douglass reported being questioned on the street about the housecleaning whereabouts. ‘Washer woman’ was the prototypical class connotation nested in the primary status frames of black women. Most free black women needing to earn wages for subsistence were in fact funneled into this highly exploited low-wage segment of the labor market, working as laundresses, seamstresses, servants, bakers, boardinghouse keepers, etc. Only well educated members of wealthier families escaped the expectations of domestic service (and even then they weren’t invulnerable especially after deaths in the families and legal-financial troubles).

Black women seeking to promote abolition were compelled to spend much more of their speeches doing ethos work to justify their very presence in civil society (c.f. Chapter 8 on feminist ethos work). If they pursued this path of rhetorical risk-taking, they often did so through evangelical religion as was the case for abolitionists Maria Stewart and Sojourner Truth. Some Quaker women like Sarah Douglas and Charlotte Forten found a precedent for public address in the open inspiration setting of the Meeting of Friends. In general, black women abolitionists were less ambivalent toward organized religion, at least when compared to Douglass and other come-outer abolitionists. They also more enthusiastically drew upon the Sentimental frame, as did white women abolitionists, to emphasize the potential moral influence of women and
the natural role of women in sympathizing with the slave. Black women abolitionists tended to subscribe to the ideals of true womanhood, popular among the white middle-classes, as a way of performing respectability, i.e. through practicing the feminine values of piety, purity, submissiveness, tenderness and domesticity (see Yee 1992). Performing true womanhood, including submission or deference to black men in public, was part of a wider strategy for racial recognition. If black women conformed to traditional idealized femininity in their relationships with black men, it could constitute another potential proof of racial equality with white people. In this relational gendered performance of worth and respectability, racial and gender identity were inherently co-articulated.

However, this method of pursuing racial recognition through respectability and true femininity produced contradictory role-obligations for black women activists who simultaneously felt compelled to demonstrate the intelligence of the race as well as the submission of black women to black men. Black women abolitionist thus faced a distinctive double bind between the improvement of the ‘race’ and asserting their rights as black women. One rhetorical translation of the double bind was an exceedingly formal display of polite ethos in their orations (though I will discuss exceptions below like Sojourner Truth). One journalist after witnessing a speech by Frances Ellen Watkins Harper wrote, “She...speaks without notes, with gestures few and fitting. Her manning is marked by dignity and composure. She is never assuming, never theatrical” (quoted in Logan 1995: 31). Black women also strived for this demure deferential ethos to subvert negative stereotypes of black womanhood. I have found interpreting their abolitionist discourse to be a more difficult task because of the level
of formality pursued in the attempt to negotiate the race-gender double bind. This section can only take some preliminary steps toward incorporating a comparative rhetorical analysis of abolitionist discourse across race and gender into the overall dissertation. The task may be always incomplete though given the fragmentary historical evidence and records.

Less historical record exists of the abolitionist speeches delivered by black women relative to plentiful archive in black men’s abolitionist oratory. Some of the most notable speeches were poorly transcribed, heavily edited, or rewritten altogether from later memories of the event. Even more were never recorded altogether and are lost to history. Most journalists did not even think the extemporaneous speeches of Sojourner Truth were even worth recording (Painter 1996; even Frederick Douglass dismissed her as uncultured). The most prominent black women abolitionists, then and now, were speeches by Sojourner Truth, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper, and Mary Ann Cady Shadd. These three individuals attained some degree of fame in local or national press, though their fame for many was more of a despised notoriety rather than celebrity. Several more orators have been re-discovered and anthologized, enabling the addition of Maria W. Stewart, Sarah Parker Remond, Lucy Stanton, Sarah Douglass, and several others to our list.

Several previous historians have identified several rhetorical patterns in black women’s abolitionist discourse (Tate 2003; Peterson 1995; Yee 1992; Sterling 1984). In addition to a compulsion toward ‘ladylike’ formality, they frequently stressed the severity of slavery upon women in particular. Exhorting the women in their audiences,
they promoted feelings of sympathy toward slave mothers and their enslaved ‘sisters.’

Black women members of antislavery societies were also more likely than white
women members to focus on holistic issues of community improvement for northern
blacks. Initially the all black Salem Female Anti-Slavery Society of Massachusetts did
not even list the abolition of slavery as one of its resolutions. Instead they focused on
criticizing colonization proposals and managing local communal concerns. Only after
the group integrated with white women did it start to employ “abstract Garrisonian
ideas of the sinfulness of slavery, as reflected in its new constitution” (Yee 1992: 89).

Black women abolitionists saw black civil rights and women’s rights as
inseparable issues. Abolishing slavery and achieving women’s suffrage were united in
their black-feminist call for equal rights for all. A common motif across many of the
speeches is an emphasis on education and empowerment through the cultivation of
mind. Black women embraced elevation exhortations along with black men. Some of
the speech fragments are entirely dedicated to this theme, e.g. the speeches by
Elizabeth Jennings and Sarah Woodson.

With the exception of Sojourner Truth, most black women with some public
antislavery address recorded were not formerly enslaved (Ellen Craft would be another
exception, but her speaking career was in England). Rather they “had all been born into
free black families in which they enjoyed some measure of economic privilege and
formal education. Their background of education, relative economic comfort, and
family activism set them apart from both slaves and the majority of free blacks” (Yee
1992: 113). Many free black women were so overburdened with low-wage work and
family domestic expectations that they did not have time to associate with antislavery societies. Black women who did acquire the necessary degree of leisure, confidence, and courage from well-established families that often maintained a long inheritance of antislavery sentiments and protest. For some, moral-emotional sensitization toward the suffering of the enslaved was not unlike the conversion experience of white reformers who came to the cause out of a humanitarian sensibility or some other sense of social responsibility perennially afflicting the wealthy.

Like white women abolitionists, black women public speakers relied heavily upon the Sentimental frame. Given the affective associations of true femininity, they were more unequivocal toward sentimentalism than their black male colleagues.

Slavery is framed as being especially cruel to enslaved women for separating mothers from their children and for inflicting violence upon women. Sarah Parker Remond declared, “Women are the worst victims of the Slave Power” ([1859] Foner 1998: 330).

A speech by Lucy Stanton illustrates black women’s Sentimental framing of the enslaved woman’s sufferings:

Woman, I turn to thee. Is it not thy mission to visit the poor? to shed the tear of sympathy? to relieve the wants of the suffering? Where wilt thou find objects more needing sympathy than among the slaves...Now thou canst feel for the slave-mother who has bent with the same interest over her child, whose heart is entwined around it even more firmly than thine own around thine, for to her it is the only ray of joy in a dreary world...Mother, sister, by thy own deep sorrow of heart; by the sympathy of thy woman’s nature, plead for the downtrodden of thy own, of every land. Instill the principles of love, of common brotherhood, in the nursery, in the social circle. Let these be the prayer of thy life (Lucy Stanton [1850] in Foner 1998: 222-3).

Stanton here calls for sisterly solidarity, a common interracial identification among women with each other, made possible by women’s natural tendencies toward the
tender emotions. The bonds of womanhood extend across slavery’s borders and across the colorline in Stanton’s address. Every mother should be able to understand the despair of losing a child. All women have a duty to ‘shed the tear of sympathy’ and to ‘instill the principles of love.’ This discourse of “female influence” was highly praised by eminent male abolitionists like Garrison and Douglass.

The frequency of the Sentimental frame in antislavery speeches by black women led me to ponder the predominance of the symbolic modality of representation in their discourse, with several prominent exceptions that I will discuss. For the most part, I did not detect a high level of indexicality among upper- to middle-class black women reformers. Like Lucretia Mott, they employed similar sentimental frames and familiar stories about slavery not stemming from personal experience. Their motivation to activism often seemed to be compassion from a distance, supplemented with feelings of identification on the basis of sisterhood. While this line of thought may seem dismissive, it opened up a set of productive questions for me to ask when interpreting black women’s rhetoric in the movement. It led me to see moments of what I will call *indexical awakenings* in several speeches.

Indexical awakenings could here include black women’s historical experiences of antislavery radicalization insofar as these experiences were triggered by specific biographical events that revealed the irrevocable impact of structural racism upon their personal lives. In principle the concept refers more generally to any microsociological experience of being *checked* in the Piercean sense by macrostructural forces that curtail one’s range of identities and freedoms. For example, poet and novelist Frances
Ellen Watkins Harper did not join the antislavery lecture circuit until new anti-black laws in Maryland against mobility prevented her indefinitely from being able to visit friends and relatives in her home city of Baltimore. It simply became too dangerous for her given the risks the trafficking in slavery posed to free blacks everywhere. The Maryland law in fact criminalized any travel into the state by free blacks by penalty of enslavement. When a free man within state boundaries was arrested and abducted to a Georgia plantation, Watkins Harper pledged herself to the abolitionist movement (Foster 1990: 10). She had experienced an indexical awakening, i.e. a self-discovery of proneness to threatening liabilities and limitations—the strings attached to her and others’ occupation of the subordinate position in the racial status hierarchy.

Indexical awakenings are a form of the creativity of action, consisting of impulses toward greater reflexivity and problem-solving (roughly equivalent to Kahneman’s “slow thinking” concept). Mediated by the affective experience of frustration, they compel problem-solving creativity to the status binds that one suddenly finds oneself within (while actually having been there all along). These moments of realization and conversion can be quite productive of protest rhetoric as was the case for Watkins Hapers and other black middle-class women who were then moved to join abolitionism. To put it Mills-ian terms, indexical awakenings are like when the ‘sociological imagination’ comes and shakes you by the feet without requiring much by way of imagination. They are especially likely to occur after one is involuntarily status-ized in a new way because of a pregiven primary frame that had already been a characteristic of one’s biographical experiences.
Two decades earlier, Sarah Douglas underwent a similar conversion experience. Douglas was a Quaker schoolteacher for black children and an original member of the Philadelphia Female Anti-Slavery Society. In a speech delivered sometime in June, 1832, she recounts how she came to espouse abolitionism:

One short year ago, how different were my feelings on the subject of slavery! It is true, the wail of the captive sometimes came to my ear in the midst of my happiness, and caused my heart to bleed for his wrongs; but alas! the impression was as evanescent as the early cloud and morning dew. I had formed a little world of my own, and cared not to move beyond its precincts. But how was the scene changed when I beheld the oppressor lurking on the border of my own peaceful home! I saw his iron hand stretched forth to seize me as his prey, and the cause of the slave became my own. I started up, and with one mighty effort threw from me the lethargy which had covered me as a mantle for years; and determined, by the help of the Almighty, to use every exertion in my power to elevate the character of my wronged and neglected race. (Douglas [1832 speech] in Foner 1998: 122-3, emphasis mine).

As for Watkins Harper, the increasingly precarious social position of free black woman in the antebellum U.S., given the dangers of racism and slave trafficking, compelled Douglas to become an abolitionist. The important role of threat as a kind of negative ‘opportunity structure’ generating frustration and outrage has been observed by previous social movement theorists (see Tarrow 2011: 32). In my analysis, heightened perceptions of the liabilities of one’s status position can lead to mobilizatory indexical awakenings. The corruption and threat of slave abduction for instance made ‘distant’ slavery feel more ‘close’ to free blacks. The resultant reflexivity punctures the symbolic mode of abolitionist discourse with the hitherto unfocused indexical connections to status structures.

Sojourner Truth, in contrast, did not need an awakening to the looming threat of slavery. She was born a slave in New York State, being among the last generation of
legally enslaved black New Yorkers. Because of the state’s gradual emancipation laws, she only officially was freed from bondage in 1828 (see Painter 1996). Not coincidentally, her style of protest rhetoric, insofar as historians can reassemble given fragmentary records, is thoroughly indexical and existential in the sense of displaying those more first-person anti-framing tendencies described above.\(^92\) For my purposes, some rhetorical analysis of Sojourner Truth’s abolitionist discourse is necessary to appreciate the multimodal differences among black women reformers. Yee writes, “While some free black women struggled to meet middle-class standards of respectable womanhood in their daily lives and in their activism, others, such as Truth, Harriet Tubman, and Mary Ann Shadd Cary, essentially did what they pleased, abandoning any kind of sexual stereotypes and ignoring prevailing expectations of ladylike behavior” (Yee 1992: 156). Sojourner Truth did not try to perform respectability and ‘true womanhood’ like most black women abolitionists did. Instead she spoke from the actual experiences of being a mother whose children were sold into slavery of the Deep South as well as from the experiences common to most poor black women in the north who, slave or free, were expected to do menial domestic work for others. In her 1851 speech, she was recalled to have stated, “I have borne thirteen children and seen them almost all sold off into slavery, and when I cried out with a mother’s grief,

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\(^92\) I make the disclaimer because Sojourner Truth continues to be exoticized as the primitive, physically domineering racial other, and has been at least since Harriet Beecher Stowe dubbed her as the “Libyan Sibyl.” Poor and illiterate, Sojourner Truth found herself even then being represented hyperbolically (and she was quite aware of this, Logan 1995: 20). Her most famous speech of 1851, “Aren’t I A Woman?” was not actually transcribed during its delivery, but only reconstructed from the memories of an auditor some twenty years later. Some contemporary feminists reject any possibility of credibly interpreting her discourse, arguing that whatever discourse ‘recorded’ in her name are imaginary products of racist fantasy (Haraway for instance, see Logan 1995 for a discussion). Other historians recommend proceeding with the utmost caution.
none but Jesus heard” ([1851 speech] in Logan 1995: 26). She also described the oppressive socioeconomic situation facing most free black women in the northern United States. In a later speech at a Women’s Rights Convention, she describes the distinctive stereotypes and burdens they faced:

> There is a great stir about colored men getting their rights, but not a word about the colored women; and if colored men get their rights, and not colored women get theirs, you see the colored men will be masters over the women, and it will be just as bad as it was before. So I am for keeping the thing going while things are stirring; because if we wait till it is still, it will take a great while to get it going again. White women are a great deal smarter, and know more than colored women, while colored women do not know scarcely anything. They go out washing, which is about as high as a colored woman gets, and their men go about idle, strutting up and down; and when the women come home, they ask for their money and take it all, and then scold because there is no food ([1867 speech] in Logan 1995: 28).

Black civil rights and women’s rights can only ever be falsely separated in Sojourner Truth’s feminist-abolitionist vision. She envisions a fuller meaning to the phrase ‘equal rights for all’ and guards against the incessant invisibilization of black women in republican discourse. She also describes here some of the distinctive forms of oppression facing black women in particular due to the intersection of race and gender. Intersectionality in this instance refers to how black women experience gender expectations differently given racial status inequality and simultaneously experience race differently given gender status inequality (i.e. that the experience of oppression is multiplicative or ‘interactive,’ and not merely additive of two separate types of burdens, see Crenshaw 1991). One intersectional motif that appears in both the 1851 and 1867 speech-fragments is how Sojourner Truth rebuts stereotypes of black women’s unintelligence. First she points to the general lack of educational opportunity, suggesting social not natural factors. Second, she argues that levels of intelligence
always vary across individuals, but so what? Differences in cognitive abilities should determine democratic citizenship; the protection of basic legal rights should not depend upon personal levels of ‘culturedness.’

Sojourner Truth’s frank depiction of the constraints and conflicts of black women’s everyday lives, historians would suggest, is closer to the actual experiences of most black women residing in Free States in this time period. Breaking with the overly formal discourse of middle-class black women reformers, she raises attention about the ‘binds’ black women faced between the social necessities of work, the discrimination of educational and economic institutions, and a double-bind relationship with black men. Most black women did not have the leisure time to perform ‘true womanhood,’ the strategy of respectability preferred by Douglas and Watkins Harper. The demanding schedule of cheap wage work and domestic unpaid labor prevented many black women from being able to participate in civil-society activities, including antislavery organizations (Yee 1992: 19).
Chapter 6
In Tones of Holy Affection

RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE IN BLACK PROTEST RHETORIC

The argument in the previous two chapters was that black rhetorical strategy was addressed, not only to movement audiences, but also implicitly to other movement participants, namely white abolitionists who often despite their best intentions perpetrated multiple racial status inequalities within abolitionism. The present chapter concludes the trilogy on how the racial status dynamics of abolitionism affected protest rhetoric. This time around I investigate how black ministers and orators creatively responded to and in some cases surmounted their status binds. By far most black abolitionists in antebellum American were Protestant Christian, but they differed by a wide variety of class backgrounds. Many were wage-workers including, as discussed in the previous chapter, black women workers whose economic opportunities were severely limited to domestic service. Some came from the emerging urban-professional ‘middling’ classes, such as black clergymen and business entrepreneurs (several of whom were wealthy patrons of the budding immediatist movement, such as James Forten and William Whipper). A core pattern of black abolitionist discourse that I came to appreciate is how implicit status claimmaking was dramaturgically performed and deftly accomplished through religious schemas. Black abolitionists seemed to find hidden reserves of emotional energy through their creative interpretations of Evangelical Protest discourse and frames. To interpret these
rhetorical performances I here construct a theory of status surgery. One of the most salient species of status surgery in black protest rhetoric was religious status claimsmaking. By this I wish to refer to how black abolitionist discourse resisted racialization, symbolically operated upon racial status imaginaries, and performed inter-racial ethos through “tones of holy affection.”

Intersections between religion, power, and status are well theorized by historical sociologists (see Stamatov 2011; Gorski & Turkmen-Dervisoglu 2013). Many previous scholars have studied how religion contributes to the civilizing, racializing, sentimentalizing constitution of status structures, reinforcing old status inequalities and/or creating new ones. Like other multimodal semiotic practices, religion can provide the cognitive schemas and binaries that go into the formation of specific status-beliefs and stereotypes. And, further, religion itself is a sort of status structure when it distinguishes religious elites, the priestly and the pure, from the lay and impure (c.f. Stamatov 2013: 94). We are rightfully then skeptical about the role religion can play in suspending status structures and how it might reduce status inequality (Smith 1996). I approach the question here by examining the creative status claimsmaking efforts of socially subordinated groups in religious social movements (as we learned in Chapter 2 that abolitionism was to a large extent a religious social movement). What is distinctive

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93 Frederick Douglass in My Bondage and My Freedom (2003: 122).
94 Recent scholarship has criticized the very category of ‘religion,’ its trans-cultural applicability and its tainted-ness by Euro-Christian domination (see Nongbri 2013 for a cogent statement of this view). Religious studies scholar Bush (2014) points out by this criteria, culture, politics, government, family, etc. are just as problematic. In Bush’s definition, religion involves transcendent discourse about the transcendent, and practices, communities, institutions oriented upon that transcendent discourse. Bush conceptualize ‘religious experience’ as “an episode in which someone is aware of something that she takes to be a god, spirit, or some other religious object or state of consciousness and [emotional] experience as undergone in a religious context” (2014: 75).
if anything about religious forms of status claimsmaking in social movements? For this purpose I analyze religious status claimsmaking as a species of black status surgery by considering how several black orators utilized the cognitive-emotional resources of Protestantism to cope with and criticize racial inequalities (here, viewing religion much as ‘cultural toolkit,’ as do Emerson, Smith & Sikkink 1999; Edgell & Tranby 2007; for a recent revaluation of coping in the sociology religion, see Sullivan 2011).

The research behind this chapter focused on sermons, society addresses, and other antislavery speeches. My main source of data, The Black Abolitionist Papers project, is a treasure trove of documents (in both the series of reprints, edited by Peter Ripley, and the larger online database, which contains searchable items from over a hundred different archives). Several religious frames and phrases of interest emerged from a first read, which I then searched for more systematically online, e.g. “spirit of slavery,” and how “sin” and “brethren” tropes were used (at least this is what I am in the process of doing). Not surprisingly given the immense literature on the black church in America (Roberts 2010; Pattillo-McCoy 1998; Billingsley 1999), Christian cultural schemas and narratives were central to forming a black-American antislavery identity and in condemning slavery and racial prejudice. Spiritual language and scriptural references involving status implicatures were ubiquitous across men and women and among non-clergy abolitionists.95 As I shall demonstrate below, black

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95 However, there were major differences in the more church-oriented religious rhetorics coming from black clerics and the more anti-establishment rhetoric of other non-clergy activists. Black abolitionists experienced the tension between religious institutionalism and anti-institutionalism, which was of course a wider divide the multiracial abolitionist social movement faced between center and radical wings. Some like early Frederick Douglass held more of an affinity for Garrison’s mode of ‘come-outer’ religious dissent. They distinguished between corrupt church institutions and the genuine ‘spirit’ of Christianity.
abolitionist rhetoric exemplifies how a status-subordinated group can turn to religion and turn religion into a cognitive-emotional resource for responding to status inequality.

ON STATUS SURGERY

Status-disadvantaged groups have always experimented with different means of mitigating status inequality and its negative emotional effects. In their study of gender status inequality, Ridgeway and Bourg (2004) describe several tactics the subordinated have taken or could take to alter and alleviate disadvantaging status-beliefs. Potential courses of creative action include: 1. subvert stereotypes by becoming doubly competent in the face of adverse judgments and double standards; 2. highlight secondary status characteristics to be more salient, e.g., education or credentials, with the intent to de-emphasize a pejorative ‘master status’ ascription; 3. try to increase numbers and visibility of status-subordinated individuals in high-level positions with the hope that shifts in status-beliefs will eventually follow; and, perhaps most radically, 4., disrupt status-beliefs by destabilizing the cognitive categories that frame and construct status positions. Status-subordinated groups are thus not without potential cognitive-symbolic tools for reconfiguring and/or reconstituting status-beliefs, but the symbolic politics of status is a risky affair (see chapter seven for a more extended discussion of rhetorical risks).

Regardless of level of religious dissent nonetheless, a shared Protestant spiritualism shaped how many black abolitionists interpreted and criticized racial inequality.
The notion of *status surgery* such symbolic efforts and techniques in black abolitionist discourse, targeting, excising, and reconstituting the pernicious prototypes and cognitive classifications of racial status-beliefs. Status surgery is a creative ‘constitutive rhetoric’ that suspends and subverts the dominant status imaginaries.96 Naming it ‘status surgery’ is inspired by James McCune Smith who was actual physician and also a more figurative surgeon of the status imaginaries through his rhetoric. He was a New York City doctor who trained abroad at a medical school in Scotland. Occassional abolitionist lecturer, he also became a prolific essayist publishing as ‘Communipaw’ in several antislavery newspapers (on his life, see Stauffer 2006; 2002).

Oriented upon the abolition of racial status inequality in addition to the abolition of slavery, black abolitionists became status surgeons in the social implicatures of their protest rhetoric. They operated symbolically and performatively upon racial status-beliefs. Status surgery involved the precision of *ethos work*, i.e. rhetorical performances that produce positive affects toward the self as a means of persuasion (see Chapter 8 for more on ethos work). The existential anti-frame discussed in Chapter 4 can also be re-interpreted in this performative vein as a type of status surgery. It clearly trades in status implicatures by employing the motifs of courage and virtue to demonstrate black aptitudes for republicanism and manliness. I group all of these processes of together under the category of black status surgery. The concept

96 On constitutive rhetoric, see Maurice Charland (1987). Exploring the potential of constitutive rhetoric with regard to status-beliefs is one of the main contributions of the dissertation.
includes a variety of ways in which subordinated social groups interpret, problematize, and attempt to reconstitute the status structures locating them.\(^{97}\)

The concept also speaks to the necessary cultural-theoretical component of the ‘imaginaries’ informing the constitutive status-beliefs or frames organizing status structures.\(^{98}\) I wish to contrast my synthetic theory of the drama of status in rhetoric with some of the more ‘materialist’ tenets of what Ridgeway and colleagues call “status construction theory,” which is an account of the origins of status-beliefs from material disadvantages (Ridgeway 2001; Ridgeway & Bourg 2004). To ferret out the cultural meanings of of status-beliefs, we can apply Sewell’s notion of the ‘duality of structure’ to think of status as consisting reciprocally of cognitive schemas and a distribution of resources (Sewell 1992). The resources of status, for instance, include the emotional energy awards of higher prestige. In other words, status structures are built within and ontop of landscapes of meaning (Reed 2011: 110-117), or as I refer to them, cultural imaginaries (Castoriadis 1997; 1987). My theory of abolitionist oratory treats status as a moral-emotional resource dependent upon cultural imaginaries and creatively negotiated through the social implicatures of rhetoric. Subordinated groups can pragmatically and creatively invent rhetorics that aim at reconstituting the dominant status imaginaries, including the racializing binaries of civil society (instances of status-rhetoric in other social movements can be found in Gould 2009; Saguy 2013)

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97 Clearly such efforts at status surgery should not be confused with macro changes in stratification systems nor with the power and violence of slavery. I am dealing more with micro or social-psychological tactics of coping/resisting status inequality as in Summers Effler 2002; c.f. Sullivan 2011 on religious coping.

98 A major strength of cultural-sociology is that it is more amenable to the historical analysis of the religious construction of status structures and their reconstitution by religious social movements in particular (according with the ‘third wave’ of historical sociology; for a critique of the Post-Marxist regime of knowledge in historical sociology, Stamatov 2011).
on oppositional frames; Alexander 2006 on civil society discourse; Epstein 1996 on credibility struggles).

Status-beliefs give rise to implicit and explicit biases in how differently ranked people are treated (thus being a relevant concept for understanding segregation and discrimination). Of course, there are many different kinds of status inequality: racial status and religious status are the two most relevant to this chapter. Racial status, I should note, is only one dimension of race/racism—which is a complex multilevel system (as are gender, class and sexuality). The status dimension of race includes the binaries and interactional frames that assign less competence and/or respect to racialized groups. Religious status consists of whatever prestige and authority can be obtained from being highly religious or from being seen as that. Both racial and religious status are highly historically-specific in regards to their constitutive significations, emotional resources, gradations, and boundaries. I thus now turn to exploring empirical variegations in the relationship between racial and religious status in contentious contexts.

RELIGIOUS STATUS CLAIMSMAKING

Another puzzle that arises, prima facie, in interpreting black abolitionist discourse is why black orators criticized something they called the “spirit of slavery” as vehemently as slavery itself. Reverend Wright was extremely critical of the prejudice he encountered in his white abolitionist colleagues, which he courageously confronted and rebuked in public. Wright once stated, “The prejudice which exists against the colored man, the
free man is like the atmosphere, everywhere felt by him...still we are slaves—
everywhere we feel the chain galling us. It is by that prejudice which the resolution
condemns, *the spirit of slavery*, the law which has been enacted here, by a corrupt
public sentiment, through the influence of slavery which treats moral agents different
from the rule of God…” (Foner 1998: 171, *emphasis mine*). Without an understanding
of the cultural, religious, and psychological constitution of racial status structures in the
antebellum North, the reference to the ‘spirit of slavery’ may sound trivializing: why
promote Christianity’s spiritualist language of slavery instead of focusing attention on
the actual institution of slavery? As will we see, Wright was not alone in making sense
of race and racism through the language of Christian spiritualism. This chapter situates
their spiritualistic problematizations of slavery within the racial status dynamics of
abolitionism. Bids for inter-racial recognition and status equality were effectively, and
more neutrally, couched in Christian terms.

Several addition interactions between religion and status can be observed in
black protest rhetoric. As proposed in the previous section, I think of these as forms of
religious status claimsmaking, i.e. ways of religiously articulating bids for higher racial
status. I outline five of them here before explicating the evidence for each in more
depth.⁹⁹

⁹⁹ A sixth form of religious status claimsmaking, claiming *divine inspiration* for authoritative public
speech, is discussed as prophetic feminist ethos work in Chapter 8. Rhetoricians have studied claims of
possessing divine inspiration under the heading of ethos—ethos work often being a precondition for the
public speaking of members of subordinated groups. Abolitionist women in particular, e.g. Maria
Stewart, Lucretia Mott & Angelina Grimké, tended to perform rhetorical self-divinization to authorize their
gender deviance in public speaking (see Chapter 8).
1. **Hermeneutic Scripting** is provisional, scripturally mediated, formation of a reference group that orients status claimsmaking.

2. **Status Summoning** generates positive emotional energy from religious discourse and practice (in this sense, I treat religion as its own discursive source of social power—religion is a regime of biopolitical governance).

3. **Wearing the Otherworldly** consists of embodied performances of high religious status to enhance the status of a reference-group before various civil-society publics.

4. **Theo-Cosmopolitanism** is a (post)millennial antebellum worldview that destabilizes symbolic boundaries. The level of Christian ‘religiosity’ entailed is quite variable as we will see in the speeches of McCune Smith.

5. Lastly, **Spiritualistic Problematizations** are the schematization of racial status through theological language. It includes the “spirit of slavery” tropes through which racial inequality itself was problematized and criticized. It is a theological version of the rhetoric of recognition (as elaborated in Chapter 4).

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**Hermeneutic Scripting**

Hermeneutic scripting refers to how sacred texts—scriptures—are turned into scripts for making status claims. Religious narratives can offer alternative standards and alternative status imaginaries that subordinated groups find appealing because they promise or envision a symbolic redistribution of prestige (albeit at times a weird sort of eternal prestige). Hermeneutic scripting achieves a religiously-constructed formation of
reference groups. It locates and makes coherent identity groups within sacred narratives and landscapes, e.g., election, persecution and redemption. Functioning like an oppositional subculture, the subjugated can use religion to construct new cognitive maps, values, and/or symbolic boundaries.

As a search term in the *Black Abolitionist Papers*, the term ‘brethren’ has thousands of hits. Other similarly used phrases included: ‘children of persecution’, ‘our oppressed people,’ and being God’s people. Black clerics used these words including ‘brethren’ quite frequently and quite colloquially, and not in a fully secular sense as far as I can tell, to refer to the unity of the enslaved population and the free people of color in the U.S. The minister Samuel Cornish wrote,

> Brethren we are innocent sufferers. Our fathers before us for many generations, have been sacrificed to the spirit of slavery and caste...Our colored brethren should fear their injuries with patience and meekness. The Lord often makes use of the injurious treatment of others, for the wholesome correction of his children. (Colored American, 7/22/1837).

While bleak the religious schemas entailed claiming ownership or membership in God’s church. An important subtype of hermeneutic scripting then is *ecclesial identification*, adopting the identity of the church through communion metaphors, tantamount to positioning one’s reference group as the chosen people of God.

Many historians have noted the importance of the Exodus story to fugitive slaves and black abolitionists, how it was appropriated symbolically and re-lived experientially (Glaude Jr. 2000; Davis 2014). Imagining emancipation as an iteration of the Exodus story was a scriptural-hermeneutic form of boundary-drawing and reference group formation (e.g. the chosen people versus the worldly). It also rendered
adversity meaningful and encouraged persistence through the ‘wilderness’ times. Hence the religious hermeneutic itself was a source of emotional energy for protest. It was also a performative source of emotionally potent status claimsmaking: black abolitionists used scripture to invert and plot out new status positions of the self and others upon a biblical landscape of meaning.

Some scholars have argued that black abolitionists used religion to develop a nationalist identity during this time (Moses 1996; Glaude Jr. 2000). But I found that their ‘racial conceptualization’—to borrow Morning’s term for how the nature of racial difference is imagined by the public (Morning 2011)—was often more couched in the language of Christian community and spiritualism (before and in addition to nation tropes).\textsuperscript{100} In particular, ‘brotherhood’ and ‘sisterhood’ tropes suggested a religious basis to racial identification. Further, the social-movement significance of this Christian-fraternal identification is apparent in how black abolitionists formulated arguments against colonization. For example, in an early statement against colonization, the Philadelphia Resolution drafted in 1817, James Forten and others wrote:

\begin{quote}
Resolved, That we never will separate ourselves voluntarily from the slave population in this country; \textit{they are our brethren by the ties of consanguinity, of suffering, and of wrong}; and we feel that there is more virtue in suffering privations with them, than fancied adventures for a season (Philadelphia Resolution, \textit{emphasis mine}).
\end{quote}

Such brethren tropes are no doubt overdetermined with meanings but include connotations of a spiritual affiliation between free and slave in addition to the often real

\textsuperscript{100} Glaude Jr. (2000) and Roberts (2010) are right to move beyond a spiritual-political dichotomy in the literature on early black nationalism.
biological ties between separated family members. Thus, in-group racial
conceptualization (a.k.a. racial reference group formation) in the U.S. was
‘ecclesiological’ before being ‘national.’ Black abolitionists made status claims on the
basis of this provisional, strategic racial ecclesiology (that was not without its
contradictions).  

Status Summoning

As already seen with hermeneutic scripting, black abolitionism drew upon religion for
the emotional resources of coping with inequality. The religion of the oppressed partly
helps with the self-management of negative affects. Coping, however, is typically
dismissed by scholars as self-defeating (for a critique of the skeptical view, see
Sullivan 2011). I argue, in contrast, that coping is another form of religious status
claimsmaking—a more inward rhetoric though (Nienkamp 2009) —utilized by black
abolitionists to generate stamina and thus movement persistence. I shall redescribe
the process of coping through religious schemas as a status-summoning of emotional
energy through heterodoxic cultural imaginaries. Status-summoning short-circuits the
dominant doxic status structures through internal spiritual rhetorics that construct and
rely upon the heterodoxic status imaginaries of the religion of the oppressed. Coping is

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101 Like many church-world distinctions, this identification was porous, and religious communion tropes
could also be used to deconstruct racial formation boundaries e.g. Wright’s Christian cosmopolitanism
of the human family: “The identity of the human family, the principle of recognizing all men as brethren—
that is the doctrine, that is the point which touches the quick of the community. It is an easy thing to ask
about the vileness of slavery at the South, but to call the dark man a brother, heartily to embrace the
doctrine advanced in the second article of the Constitution, to treat all men according to their moral
worth, to treat the man of color in all circumstances as a man and brother—that is the test” (Wright

102 Similar to therapeutic culture today or, what Jennifer Silva labels the ‘mood economy’ of working
class youth, Silva 2013.
in fact a form of rhetorical creativity developed by status-subordinated group members so as to obtain the psychic-affective rewards of higher status without actually switching status positions nor actually altering the dominant status structures (at least not materially in the short term).

Black protest rhetoric religiously imagined and invoked anti-worldly inversions of the status quo. The “foolish confounding the wise” was a popular one, but there were many others as well stemming from evangelical Christianity (the ultimate triumph of the meek, the poor, the last, etc.). The positive affects produced sometimes enabled the will and confidence needed to join social movements, seize the stage, and do risky status claimsmaking in public:

We are emboldened thus to speak, not from a reliance on the mere arm of flesh; no, it is in the righteousness of our cause, a knowledge of the attributes of Deity, combined with a consciousness of innocence under suffering, that have inspired us with a moral courage which no oppression shall shake, no fulminations overawe...the unmerited abuse, that has been so unsparingly heaped upon us by colonizationists...the persecution and oppression, which, it seems, are in reserve for us... (William Watkins in the 6/4/1831 Liberator).

After his hermeneutic scripting, the Reverend William Watkins frames northern colonizationists as the persecutors. He then asserts that his feelings of courage and boldness—his confidence and stamina—are produced by “a knowledge of the attributes of the Deity.” The divine attributes alluded to here most likely include (from comparing this passage to similar passages): righteousness, justice, peacefulness, mercifulness, inter alia. Hence, black orators seemed to draw emotional energy from invisible immaterial cultural sources (Collins would explain this as the feelings of solidarity associated with and activated by sacred symbols formed through rituals; but
I think this downplays the cultural creativity of coping). A combination of religious promissory notes, inversions, and emotions ‘emboldened Watkins thus to speak,’ and there are many similar testimonies in other abolitionists, such as Maria W. Stewart and Sojourner Truth.\(^{103}\) The social-psychological flow behind such testimonies seems to be that hermeneutic scripting begets status summoning begets the emotional energy to mobilize, protest and perform.

Similar energizing effects can work vice versa from religious rhetoric that degrades the status of opponents of one’s reference group. Colonizationists and slaveholders were framed as sinful, irreligious, unchristian and, as we have seen, persecutors of God’s people. One reason adopting a persecution narrative is worthwhile is the emotional payoff that comes from *depraving the enemy*, a sort of inverse of status summoning, i.e. visualizing the opponents of your reference group as evil antagonists (the sacred-evil, according to Alexander 2003). Religious status claimsmaking could take inverted forms, claiming higher religious status for one’s group while lowering the religious status of opponents of one’s reference group.

\textit{Wearing the Otherworldly}

\(^{103}\) For a similar example from a speech by Maria W. Stewart: “I felt that I had a great work to perform; and was in haste to make a profession of my faith in Christ, that I might be about my Father’s business [Luke 2: 49]. Soon after I made this profession, The Spirit of God came before me, and I spake before many. When going home, reflecting on what I had said, I felt ashamed, and knew not where I should hide myself. A something said within my breast, ‘Press forward, I will be with thee.’ And my heart made this reply, Lord, if thou wilt be with me, then I will speak for thee as long as I live. And thus far I have every reason to believe that it is the divine influence of the Holy Spirit operating upon my heart that could possibly induce me to make the feeble and unworthy efforts that I have” (Stewart 1833 speech, Richardson 1987: 67).
Black abolitionists tried to make ‘currency exchanges’ or ‘conversions in capital’ by cashing in high religious status. *Wearing the otherworldly*, the third type of religious status claimsmaking, describes their attempts to embody the role, semblance, and sincerity of the religious virtuoso. Wearing the otherworldly means attaining to the moral dispositions, mannerisms, and accoutrements that signify religious virtue (or high religious status). Black clerics especially presumed that performing high religious and/or moral status could boost or at least alleviate low racial status.

As discussed in Chapter 4, abolishing slavery and obtaining recognition through respectability were seen as mutually reciprocal projects. Black abolitionists believed that performing respectability through higher moral conduct could be a means of contradicting racial prejudice and obtaining social recognition from northern whites.

Speaking before a predominantly black audience in Rochester, 1848, Douglass says:

> When Southern slaveholders and their Northern abettors received no countenance from the community; when they would be rebuked and shunned by respectable and Christian people, there would be reason to expect a speedy downfall of the entire system. The colored people at the North possess a potent means of changing public opinion on this great question. Their conduct is observed by friend and foe. They should therefore aim at a high standard of morality and self-respect. That they may command something more than sympathy, they must earn the respect of a community, of a nation; while they could never do this by exclusive organizations, but by making themselves of the people, interested in and for what concerns the whole people. They must be temperance people, otherwise they may expect to remain in degradation. It is pro-slavery policy to keep the colored man in a subordinate position, mental, moral, and physical. We must declare our independence of such trammel, and avail ourselves of the various avenues to improvement (1982 [1848]: 113).

Douglass then describes his experience of teaching himself to read and write, suggesting literacy as one avenue of social improvement. This speech reveals how closely related Douglass perceived the abolition of slavery to be with improving the
social conditions of northern black communities. Douglass’s argument presumes that a greater number of high class ‘respectable’ blacks will gradually and logically shift public sentiments and attitudes toward blacks in a more favorable direction. As a form of religious status surgery, this doesn’t challenge double standards and binds; instead it responds to them by striving to be doubly competent (as discussed in Ridgeway 2011). Respectability is an ethos-oriented appeal against colonization, the proposal of removing free blacks from the country. The above quote also shows how Douglass would occasionally criticize the Sentimental frame and blacks who would be content as objects of mere sympathy. Instead he emphasizes the importance of ‘self-respect’ to obtain recognition as members of the national community.

Often called elevation or the uplift paradigm of the abolitionist social movement, exhortations instructed audiences to cultivate piety, temperance, economy and moral purity. It was believed that individual edification would be the basis of communal improvement, which would eventually dissolve anti-black prejudice and racism. Through practical exhortations, black abolitionists encouraged their black audiences to ‘social improvement.’ Such hortatory efforts were part of a general strategy in black abolitionism to attain social recognition by white northern constituencies. Concrete elevation campaigns included practicing temperance from alcohol, especially liquor; fundraising for local public schools and obtaining access to more education; hard work and fiscal discipline whether in business or household management; religious instruction and the cultivation of higher moral conduct generally. As seen in previous chapters, the politics of respectability in black abolitionism was thoroughly structured by gender. In elevation speeches, black men were exhorted to conform to the
‘manliness’ ideals of the ‘Christian gentlemen’ who exercised self-restraint and
decency (Rotundo 1987). Black men were prescribed to be industrious and
independent for themselves and to enable the proper domesticity of their spouses (Yee

Historians of abolitionism have shown that these local projects of moral
‘elevation’ were an integral, motivating part of black anti-slavery activism (Stewart
2008; Ball 2012). Elevation campaigns aimed to increase the overall socio-economic
position of blacks in society, individually and collectively, in society. They attempted to
combat racial prejudice through exemplary moral performances, or what historians
also sometimes call the ‘politics of respectability.’ Ball (2012) writes that, “This belief
that the elevation of the race and the fight against slavery were inseparable battles—
ultimately distinguished white abolitionist ideology from black abolitionism...despite
black abolitionists’ insistence that the issues were inseparable, white abolitionists
tended to view the northern black campaign for civil rights as a secondary concern and
focused primarily on the abolition of southern slavery” (Ball 2012: 139). I argue that a
cultural-theory of status-beliefs and status surgery is needed to situate and explain the
underlying religious logic of elevation. The reform strategy of uplift was inseparably
socioeconomic and religious: elevation was an implicit embodied challenge to the
frames whites used to stigmatize the entire free black population. Subverting the
stereotypes, black abolitionists tried to ‘work the binaries,’ i.e., conditioning affective
associations of the free-black community not with degradation, but with valuable
markers of (gender, class, and religious) status (Alexander 2006; Alexander 2010).
Elevation rhetoric was a form of status surgery, a means of persuasion symbolically operating upon the belief-components of the dominant status structures.

Through the logic of elevation, black abolitionism had a more practical slant than white abolitionism. It stressed the need for communal autonomy and accountability to high moral standards in business, education and family life. The pursuit of racial egalitarianism and justice behind elevation campaigns was missed by some whites who criticized it for being too economic and ‘selfish’ (ironically drawing upon republican frames to criticize the struggle for social equality). Part of this lack of understanding was due to the strong individualistic thinking of white abolitionism, which could confuse a communal status-oriented quest with self-promotion. Elevation exhortations, in contrast, acknowledged the social conditions maintaining racial status inequalities.

In historical studies of black protest, a dichotomy is likewise often posited here between such individualist and more structuralist perspectives of social change (Hinojosa & Park 2004), it being well acknowledged that black repertoires and church traditions intermittently incorporated both perspectives: both elevation’s empowerment through individual responsibility/self-restraint, and, on the other side, empowerment through liberation from oppressive systems. Uplift gets inevitably interpreted as the individualistic side and thus ‘conservative’ from today’s standpoint in the sociology of religion (Emerson, Smith & Sikkink 1999). But this dichotomy I think misses the distinctive cultural logic of status claims-making motivating elevation efforts. Black
antebellum business-owner William Whipper’s speech crystallizes the more holistic logic of uplift:

I firmly believe that if the three hundred thousand free colored people possessed such a character, the moral force and influence it would send forth would disperse slavery from our land. Yes, it would reverse the present order of things; it would reorganize public opinion, dissolve the calumnies of our enemies, and remove all the prejudices against our complexion...And when the nations of the earth can point to our whole people, and find them possessing a character, the christian base of which is as broad and high as that of the individual I have exhibited in miniature, it will be then that they will regard us as virtuous ornaments—that our sable hue will be changed from a badge of degradation to a badge of honor (Whipper 125).

In Whipper’s exhortations, wearing the otherworldly is a ‘rhetoric’ in the classical meaning of the term, a persuasive strategy of public communication. It is simultaneously a social ethic and an embodied internal rhetoric, or as Whipper coins, a ‘virtuous ornamentation.’ He seems incredibly optimistic about the potential impact of uplift upon the politics of slavery and abolition. The optimism partly stems from a postmillennial cosmology that magnifies the significance of small acts through its promissory notes (intimately related to processes of hermeneutic scripting). His rhetoric is also animated by those anti-worldly heterodoxic inversions we saw above with status-summoning: the ‘moral force’ of character will ‘reverse the present order of things.’

Whipper’s self-professed self-fashioning thus is another useful metaphor here—practitioners of faith sometimes self-describe the religious experience as a transformation in clothing: the religious life entails an wearing a different outfit of virtues. These metaphors are present in the abolitionist uplift literature as well where the basic idea is that possessing high religious status, and making that status relatively
more salient, may have ‘halo effects’ upon social identity. Wearing the otherworldly
focuses attention on a ‘secondary status frame’ (the significations of moral purity and
piety associated with religious status) in order to disrupt the socio-cognitive person-
construal of ‘primary framing devices’ (including, race). Hence, my term ‘wearing the
otherworldly’ incorporates the religious inflection of uplift with metaphors of spirituality
(high religious status) as clothing. My only aim here is to recontextualize elevation
efforts as a performative form of status claimsmaking to make them more
understandable and seem less trivial (or ‘conservative’). Working the binaries in the
antebellum era of mass communication was not a completely impractical strategy (nor
is it irrelevant to politics today). When black abolitionist rhetoric is contextualized in the
highly religious political field of the nineteenth century, it defies the individual-structural
dichotomy in theories of social change.

Theo-Cosmopolitanism

De-stabilizing the nominal classificatory categories presupposed by status beliefs is a
fourth and more radical way of symbolically operating upon the belief-component of
status structures. It aims to suspend the default sociocognitive frames of civil-society
discourse, and thus can be extremely hard to achieve. Nonethess, efforts at
categorical de-nomination has been found appealing throughout history by various
status-disadvantaged groups, including several black abolitionists. I label the pattern

\[104\] Plus, the desirability of social projects of de-categorization—analogous to the post-binary gender-
bending described by queer theorists—always seem to be highly contentious and alarming to skeptics. When does de-stabilizing racial binaries reinforce newer forms of colorblind racism? I cannot here enter
that debate. Instead I merely indicate the presence of such a de-stabilizing cosmopolitan strategy of
status surgery in black abolitionist discourse.
‘cosmopolitanism’ because of its spiritualist-humanist vision of social justice. In other words, cosmopolitanism emphasizes a common spiritual humanity in order to destabilize rigid group-level differences including ‘race’ itself. The level of theological anchoring of \textit{cosmo}-politanism varied from the romantic humanism of McCune Smith to the Christian evangelicalism of the Reverend Wright (see below). Regardless, cosmopolitan ‘frames’ in black abolitionist discourse construct slavery as a problem by emphasizing the universality of man (to put it the terms of Chapter 3; cosmopolitanism differs from republicanism in its romantic universalism).

When applied to racism, cosmopolitanism operates upon the status imaginaries by disintegrating categorical racial nominations while affirming voluntary differences. It redescribes and disaggregates racial difference as diverse expressions of a common human spirit. In his 1843 speech, ‘The Destiny of the People of Color,’ McCune Smith declares:

‘Homo sum humani nil a me alienum puto.’ [Terence the Roman: ‘I am a man, and I deem nothing human alien from me.’] Glorious sentiment! How Godlike in its sympathies, how universal in its grasp! The common brotherhood of humanity is a doctrine inseparably linked with our fate. It is a necessary consequence of the equality of all the members of the human species. And we are destined to demonstrate that equality (McCune Smith 2006: 53).

McCune Smith invokes philosophers of antiquity as a precedent for erasing racial divisions between humans while affirming individual differences. The universality of man for McCune Smith implies the decreasing significance of racial status-beliefs.

\footnote{Cosmopolitanism promotes a vision of racial justice from humanity’s common moral nature. Among critical theorists today, ‘cosmopolitanism’ is a word of choice to describe the cultural destabilization of nationalist symbolic boundaries. According to Appiah (2006), elements of cosmopolitan thought stem widely from Greco-Roman stoicism, the Scottish Enlightenment, and Judeo-Christian religious traditions.}
Elsewhere, McCune Smith celebrates interracial marriages and mixtures as destined to make racial categories irrelevant (McCune Smith 2006: 92). Take away the nominal framework and the conditions of anti-black prejudice disintegrate. Strictly speaking, *the cosmopolitan frame problematizes race itself*, not slavery or prejudice, though McCune Smith believes these latter evils are dependent upon race fictions as a necessary condition. Categoric racial nominations are part and parcel of the American problem of slavery for contributing to its perpetuity. It is worth noting here how such cosmopolitanism could motivate practical politics. McCune Smith’s cosmopolitan critique of ‘race’ inspired him to lead the Radical Abolition party of the 1850s which had strong integrationist sentiments (for an account, see Stauffer 2002).

Cosmopolitan frames are also evident in Wright’s 1837 speech. For Wright though, cosmopolitanism is thoroughly Christian in its roots, logic, and moral ends. He declares that abolitionism will flounder unless it preserves its original inspiration in ‘the principle of recognizing man as man’:

> Three years ago, when a man professed to be an Abolitionist we knew where he was. He was an individual who recognized the identity of the human family. Now a man may call himself an Abolitionist and we know not where to find him. Your tests are taken away. A rush is made into the Abolition ranks...Why, sir, unless men come out and take their stand on the principle of recognizing man as man, I tremble for the ark, and I fear our society will become like the expatriation society—everybody an Abolitionist. These points which have lain in the dark must be brought out to view. The identity of the human family, the principle of recognizing all men as brethren—that is the doctrine, that is the point which touches the quick of the community. It is an easy thing to ask about the vileness of slavery at the South, but to call the dark man a brother, heartily to embrace the doctrine advanced in the second article of the Constitution, to treat all men according to their moral worth, to treat the man of color in all circumstances as a man and brother—that is the test (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 169).
What does it mean to be an abolitionist? For Wright, McCune Smith and Douglass, being against slavery is not enough.\textsuperscript{106} The shibboleth of abolitionism for them requires personal consent to ‘treating all men according to their moral worth.’ The Christian inflection in such brotherhood tropes comes out even stronger in Wright’s rhetoric. Either way, cosmopolitanism in black abolitionist discourse is an explicit critique of racialization by northern publics and by white abolitionist colleagues. In opposition to early scientific racism’s polygenesis of ‘breeds,’ it envisions one family, one community, and one humanity without fictitious subdivisions into different ‘races.’ Thus black orators made cosmopolitan arguments that operated on racialized status imaginaries by making racial primary frames both less ‘primary’ and less ‘racial.’

\textit{Spiritualistic Problematization}

The spiritualization of slavery as a metaphor to frame various experiences of inequality is certainly not a new idea, but its presence in black abolitionism warrants explanation since it is not at all clear that speaking of slavery metaphorically would help the cause of real slavery’s abolition. I propose that the semiotic spiritualization of slavery was a more compelling (i.e. deeper than ‘frame alignment’ per se) and less risky way for black abolitionists to talk about race and the racial status inequalities internal to abolitionism. It produced a contextually compelling and religiously understandable problematization of what they called ‘colorphobia’ and/or ‘cruel prejudice.’ Thus a fifth and final form of religious status claimsmaking is the spiritualization of slavery and racism through

\textsuperscript{106} Humanist ‘unity’ rhetoric is not difficult to find in Douglass as well.
religious schemas, in which the ‘essence’ of racial inequality is interpreted through culturally available codes and scripts, in this case, evangelical Protestantism.\textsuperscript{107}

Religions are fertile sources of lay theorizing, including reflexive grappling with the nature of status and inequality. Subordinated groups may frame and explicitly problematize inequality through the spiritual schemas of religious discourse. Quite often in black abolitionist discourse, racial status itself was talked and thought about through the personalistic vocabulary of American Protestantism. Nothing in principle prevents problematizations (in the Foucaultian sense discussed in Chapter 3) from employing religious schemas to help objectify some difficulty as a problem. Something like this was occurring when black ministers spoke against racial status inequality as a problem of the heart and soul.

The Reverend Wright frequently criticized the ‘spirit of slavery’ as it continued to afflict his white-abolitionist colleagues when they reproduced stereotypes and segregationism within the movement:

Our hearts have recently been gladdened by an address of the annual meeting of the Friends’ Society in the city of New York, in which they insist upon the doctrine of immediate emancipation. But that very good man who signed the document as the organ of that society within the past year, received a man of color, a Presbyterian minister, into this house, gave him his meals alone in the kitchen, and did not introduce him to his family. That shows how men can testify against slavery at the South, and not assail it at the North, where it is tangible. Here is something for Abolitionists to do. What can the friends of emancipation effect while the spirit of slavery is so fearfully prevalent? Let every man take his stand, burn out this prejudice, live it down, talk it down, everywhere consider the colored man as a man, in the church, the stage, the steamboat, the public house, in all places, and the

\textsuperscript{107} In the terms of the previous chapters, spiritualistic problematization is a rhetoric of recognition couched through Evangelical Protestant frames. Here I am interrogating it as an implicit form of status claims making developed by black abolitionist ministers who were perhaps less inclined than Douglass to philosophical-anthropological discourse.
death blow to slavery will be struck (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 170, *emphasis mine*).—

Wright here suggests that the spirit of slavery is just as oppressive as slavery itself, that they are different kinds of oppression both manifesting the same affliction of heart, of not recognizing ‘man as man.’ This religious rhetoric unified racial slavery and anti-black prejudice through imagining ‘slavery’ as a deeper, more fundamental spiritual disease. Wright argues that the spirit must be abolished before slavery can be abolished. Rather than dismiss such spiritualism, we should analyze this as a form of religious rhetoric that explicitly targets racialization and racial status inequality head on. It appeals to the religious enthymemes of his audience and formulates a persuasive argument against status subordination within the movement.

The spiritualistic language Wright used translated and communicated experiences of racial status subordination in a way readily understandable to evangelical white abolitionists. New York anti-slavery societies after all tended to be more religiously church-centered. This is not to suggest that Wright’s spiritualist perceptions of racial inequality were a product of conscious strategizing. Instead, the cultural schemas of Christian spiritualism were drawn upon in a mostly unconscious way to account for the persistence of racial status inequality in northern states and

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108 Another example: “It is true that we may walk abroad; we may enjoy our domestic comforts, our families; retire to the closet; visit the sanctuary, and may be permitted to urge on our children and our neighbors in well doing. But sir, still we are slave—everywhere we feel the chain galling us. It is by that prejudice which the resolution condemns, *the spirit of slavery*, the law which has been enacted here, by a corrupt public sentiment, through the influence of slavery which treats moral agents different from the rule of God, which treats them irrespective of their morals or intellectual cultivation. *This spirit is withering all our hopes...*” (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 171).

109 Where is your love for the colored man who is crushed at your feet? Talking to us about emancipating our slaves when you are enslaving them by your feelings, and doing more violence to them by your prejudice, than we are to our slaves by our treatment. They call on us to evince our love for the slave, by *treating man as man*, the colored man as a man, according to his worth” (Wright [1837] in Foner 1998: 173).
within anti-slavery societies. Spiritualization constrained Wright to view racial inequalities in highly personalistic ways, but it simultaneously enabled him to soften his rebuke of the racism present among white abolitionist members. Using socio-emotional softeners is a common rhetorical trait among the status-subordinated (Ridgeway 2011).

According to Reverend Wright, whites had a heart problem. He framed both northern racism and southern slavery as sinful behaviors.\textsuperscript{110} The nineteenth-century religious landscapes of meaning made problematizations of racism highly personalistic. Today it is tempting to dismiss this as a predecessor of abstract liberalism (which it is clearly not) and as falling under all the problems associated with conservative individualism and the ‘new racism’ (Bonilla-Silva 2010). Instead, in my account, black abolitionists developed a nineteenth-century spiritualist conception of racial status, and from this basis, launched a blistering critique of northern racism in addition to southern slavery. Religious schemas, though odd sounding in today’s secular social science, partly enabled black abolitionists within their historical horizons to identify and criticize racial status structures without the language of status or discrimination. Slavery and prejudice were unified spiritually in black abolitionist conceptions of race.

CONCLUSION

Status surgery was not automatically effective in its performative intents of reducing racial status inequality within abolitionism. However, as demonstrated above, a variety

\hspace{1em}\textsuperscript{110} I’ve also come across “demon” language in reference to northern prejudice.
of forms of religious status claimsmaking did contribute to black abolitionist persistence in protest. Furthermore, there are in fact some well known instances in the history of abolitionism in which white abolitionists experienced an ‘awakening’ through the interracial contact facilitated by antislavery meetings, societies, newspapers, boardinghouses, etc. Recent historians demonstrate that black protest activities were central in convincing antislavery whites that colonization was not only practically unfeasible but morally heinous (Newman 2002; David 2014). The very rise of ‘immediatist’ branches of abolitionism owed much to the status-oriented rhetoric black abolitionists communicated to whites.\textsuperscript{111}

\textsuperscript{111} See for instance Newman 2002 for a discussion of how black religious organizing helped antislavery thought survive a phase of abeyance from 1800 to 1830.
Chapter 7
Moving Audiences:
Conditions of Charisma & Pathos

WHAT’S IN A WUNC?

The important role status claims-making serves in the social movement process is quite clearly implied in Tilly’s late notion of contentious performances, in particular, his notion of the WUNC display (Tilly 2004, 2008; on Tilly’s belated, and rather surprising, interactionist turn, see Collins 2010). Modern social movements groups frequently dramatize their claims-making through public performances. A usual feature of such public demonstrations is also the performance of the worthiness, unity, popularity (‘numbers’), and commitment of the protestors, hence the acronym ‘WUNC’ (Tilly 2004: 4). These representations make the most sense within the context of democratic political regimes, in which assumptions of popular sovereignty increase the legitimacy of public claims-making (c.f. Rudbeck 2012; Tarrow 2011). I would suggest though that the idea of WUNC displays is a quite narrow way of talking about status in its formal dimensions. The WUNC-component of public demonstration is merely one further species of the drama of status in protest rhetoric.
The WUNC concept is in fact an example of the pervasive tendency to avoid an explicit discussion of status while referring to status by another name.\textsuperscript{112} It is a very promising step toward a rehabilitation of rhetoric and status in social movements though these connections remain underspecified so far. But the emotional content and energy of WUNC displays at actual rhetorical events needs to be explored in ways Tilly either was not interested in or died before being able to examine them (Collins 2010).

How is ‘worthiness’ successfully performed by charismatic public speakers, i.e. what are the conditions of charisma? How do various audiences actually experience the status claims-making of WUNC displays? Do they accept the invitation to accord status, form new references groups, or do they feel hostile to people who would challenge the status quo status order?

Thanks to nineteenth century practices of public lecturing and reporting, the emotional response to status rhetoric can be observed in eyewitness reports and in stenographic allusions to audience actions interrupting an oration, e.g., applause lines, interruptions, hissing, heckling, cheering, etc. Drawing upon a methodology more common in the sociology of emotion (Scheff 1997), my rhetorical analysis below attempts to explicate the emotional, relational ‘inner worlds’ of protest rhetoric through a part/whole analysis of verbatim transcripts, in this case, of speeches by the prominent abolitionist leader, Wendell Phillips. Scheff elaborates upon his part/whole methodology as follows: “Using transcripts or verbatim texts as data, one interprets the meaning of the smallest parts (words and gestures) of expressions within the ever

\textsuperscript{112} Alexander (2010, 2006) does the same thing in my view: working the binaries \textit{is a status process} with cultural and affective dimensions. Here though I am actually affirming the wider insight of Alexander and cultural sociology that ‘social structures’ are culturally and performatively constituted.
greater wholes within which they occur” (1997: 16). A microanalysis of transcripts of protest rhetoric and auditor reactions can illustrate the contentious, dramaturgical negotiations of status as a socioemotional resource.

Wendell Phillips so excelled at the art of degrading the honor of abolitionism’s opponents that his contemporaries birthed a nickname for his style of speaking, the *eloquence of abuse*. ‘Eloquence of abuse’ was a phrase pulled from Coleridge’s *Specimens of Table Talk*. In a memoir, Robert C. Winthrop seems the first to have used it to describe the speaking styles of Charles Sumner, Phillips and others. Historian Irving Bartlett (1961) re-uses the phrase paradigmatically in book titles and chapter headings. Bartlett gives us a sense of the severity of Phillips’s rhetoric: he introduces Phillips as “the most eloquent man of his time, the golden-voiced orator who made the abuse of popular heroes his stock in trade and got away with it. He could publicly label Lincoln a ‘slave-hound,’ Edward Everett a ‘whining spaniel’ and Senator Robert C. Winthrop a ‘bastard,’ with the matter-of-fact finality of a man reading from the Scriptures or calling out the time” (Bartlett 1961: 1, *emphasis mine*).

The audience action of applause is similarly the object of investigation in Heritage and Greatbatch’s seminal 1986 article, “Generating Applause” (c.f. Clayman 1993 on booing). Analyzing political speeches by British parliamentarians, they offered a sophisticated inquiry into conditions of the production of applause lines, but their main concern is the emotional effects of seven different aesthetically-pleasing formats, e.g. contrasts, three-part lists, and so on. Interestingly though, the concept of status irrepressibly surfaces in their article when they observe that 81% of all applause lines follow one or a combination of: i. external attacks, ii. statements of approval of own
party; iii. internal attacks on party faction; iv. policy recommendation; v. commendations of particular individuals or groups (1986, pp. 119-120).

Records of audience approbation and disapprobation are also a useful empirical proxy for the affective experience of charismatic leadership in social movements. They enable an interrogation of the implicit interconnections between status, rhetoric and emotion in contentious performances. The correlations then observed between rhetorical status claimsmaking and audience emotional energy, I theorize, are in fact more than mere correlations much as Kemper’s status-power theory of emotions would predict (2011, 2006, 1990). This chapter thus examines the emotional effects of status-imbued protest rhetoric upon onlookers and audiences, building upon a recent growth of interest in them as specific sites and forcefields of contentious politics (Collins 2001; Blee & McDowell 2012; McAdam & Boudet 2012; Benski 2005). For this purpose I turn toward Phillips as a prominent movement leader to demonstrate that a fair share of his stage charisma derived from status claimsmaking. As discussed in Chapter 2, the symbolic politics of status was a go-to method for increasing both the internal solidarity of the movement and the external dissensus of movement audiences (on the polarizing effects of radical abolitionism, see Piven 2006; Darsey 1997). In other words, the emotional charged status dimension of protest rhetoric was often put to the service of both persuasion and provocation. Below I will focus on the impact of the latter, the production of ‘violent emotion’ or pathos as seen in the emotional expressions of audiences.
RHETORICAL IMPLICATURES IN RECEPTION FIELDS

Rhetoric has meant many things since antiquity not least of all oratory as a creative art (on changing conceptions of rhetoric in the U.S., see Cmiel, 1990: 165-6, 176-184). While rhetoric has some affinities with the frame analysis of frame-alignment processes, it directs our attention more to the creative invention of compelling arguments in response to some set of situational exigencies that seem to call forth a collective response (on the rhetorical situation, see Bitzer 1968). Whereas a frame mostly describes the conceptual content of powerful cultural metaphors, \textit{rhetoric describes the performative intentions, implicatures and effects of cultural action}.\textsuperscript{113}

Rhetorical leaders speak in response to contingent events and they are motivated by an intentional urge to remake the social world (Carrithers 2009, pp. ix-x). Expanding upon the classical view, the following analysis also incorporates contemporary rhetorical theories that highlight the constitutive, normative, and affective dimensions of rhetoric (Charland 1987; Hariman & Lucaites 2007; Grossberg 2010). The sociology of rhetoric cannot do away with these elements by making rhetoric a value-neutral term—there is an inevitable bias in rhetorical criticism toward evaluating good, efficacious rhetoric.

Sociological inquiry contextualizes rhetorical performances by teasing out some of the social conditions—status elevation, degradation, \textit{inter alia}—and social implicatures of effective rhetoric. Rhetoricians often leave these relational status-power

\textsuperscript{113} Among sociologists of social movements, Jasper (2010) similarly compares rhetorical to other cultural approaches in social movements theory. He proposes that rhetoric “encourages the cultural analyst to be precise about what purposes and outcomes the players seek” (2010: 79). Questions about intent and effects become more important.
processes implicit in Aristotle’s tripartite ethos-pathos-logos distinction. Indeed each one of Aristotle’s three ‘means of persuasion’ is status-dependent in some way. Ethos refers to the production of positive sentiments toward the character of the speaker. Pathos refers here to passionate emotions of the audience in response to the rhetor’s status constructions or status provocations. Cicero closely associated pathos with the more ‘violent emotion’ of auditors. The present chapter follows the production of pathos by one especially charismatic individual; the next will analyze the production of ethos in more depth.

Status hierarchies precede, condition, and motivate rhetorical performances. Doxic status beliefs often determine an audience’s judgments and sensibilities toward protest rhetoric. On the other hand, status is also a currency and emotional resource internal to rhetoric via performances of ethos-pathos-logos. Creative rhetoric can alter how the game for symbolic capital is played or shake up what counts as symbolic capital. To borrow Bourdieu’s terms, protest rhetoric rearticulates the symbolic principles of vision and division in the immediate reception field. Rhetorical performances of alternative status imaginaries can thus disrupt the taken-for-granted interactional status order, produce new affective attachments and reference groups, or trigger angry frustrations and furies. Protest rhetoric involves performative challenges to the reigning doxic distribution of symbolic capital, i.e., how rhetorical challengers make novel status claims and attempt to reconstitute mundane status dynamics through the creation and performance of heterodoxic status imaginaries. In records of

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114 Even logos requires some deference to the status of the audience’s shared doxic beliefs. In this fashion, reference group attachments and status claimsmaking penetrate the internal ethos-pathos-logos structure of rhetoric.
abolitionist oratory there is evidence of both the production of positive speaker- and group- oriented affects (ethos) and violently negative emotions of the non-persuasive sort (pathos), e.g. audience dismay, disgust and backlash. Many audiences were especially enraged by the abolitionist performance of alternative racial status imaginaries.

As suggested in a previous chapter, efforts to recover status theory must navigate between two major mistakes made in past theories of collective behavior: the voluntaristic overemphasis on affective manipulation by charismatic leaders and the deterministic conflation of status with large reified social structures. Here I will use the term *reception field* to refer to the relational, fluid status dynamics between movement leaders and audiences during a contentious performance through which charisma emerges. Status-differentiations and rhetorical agencies mutually condition each other in reception fields. In other words, status significations and imaginaries are being appealed to, performed and renegotiated through discourse. This is an ongoing and highly emotional process structured by perceived niches in the interactional ‘status-power matrix’ (and much more fluid than Bourdieu’s ‘field’ concept; Kemper 2011).

The concept of reception fields offers a social-psychological redescription of the affective relationships between movement leaders and audiences. Here I defer to Emirbayer and Goldberg’s innovative relational reconceptualization of affective attachments within social movements. Reception fields are the somewhat autonomous ‘affective mappings’ of ‘transpersonal emotional investments’ to use their phrase (Emirbayer and Goldberg 2005: 470, 508). Their recommendation is to move beyond simplistic understandings of the charismatic leader as an aloof manipulator of audience
affects—charisma does not exist in a vacuum—as well as to abandon reductive deterministic models of how social structure shapes the social psychology of protest (the latter would include the older version of status theory). Collins similarly writes, “Charisma is one of the most obvious cases where individual characteristics are part of a group phenomenon, where the individual is most patently constructed by social conditions” (2007: 258). Movement activists are neither dupes of macro-structures nor are they cynical manipulators of the moral emotions. They are part of the reception field, receiving, giving and exchanging status with audiences. Metaphorically speaking, reception fields are a force field of emotional energy between members and/or contenders—animated, mapped, transformed, and adjusted by status claimsmaking processes.

The drama of status varies across different types of reception fields, as I will observe below in the audiences at antislavery meetings. When audiences are primarily composed of movement members and supporters—or ‘conscience constituencies’—status claimsmaking is oriented upon the status enhancement of the reference group. When audiences are more heterogeneous with dissenters or counter-mobilizers present, status claimsmaking can become more embattled and ‘abusive’ through dramaturgical competitions over status between supporters and opponents trying to disrupt and compete for the assembly’s attention. Such heated confrontations between movement supporters and detractors, as Collins (2001) notes, are often quite beneficial to the movement overall in accruing higher publicity, emotional energy, and conscience sympathizers.
WENDELL PHILLIPS & THE ELOQUENCE OF ABUSE

U.S. antebellum society was a time of great political, religious and cultural flux involving major symbolic disruptions to Old World status imaginaries. Republican and egalitarian ideologies of the Revolution were challenging the basis of gentry distinction in ways unintended by the revolutionary elite (Wood 1992; Bouton 2007; Howe 2007). Middling, merchant classes increasingly appropriated practices and significations of the refined, including education, grammatical speech, dress, manners, etc. Historian Kenneth Cmiel writes, “The diffusion of refined ways of life made genteel language a less effective elite social marker. If you understood ‘taste’ as a moral as well as aesthetic category, and if you judged taste by its outward manifestations, it was simply becoming harder and harder to tell who was who” (1990: 176). ‘Ladies and gentleman,’ for instance, was being expanded to include all during this time period. Mass education, democracy and printing technology were developing in more inclusive directions. The result was a pervasive middling style of politics, religion and rhetoric, a blend of civilizing pressures of refinement with required familiarity toward the vernacular, the colloquial and slang (e.g. political oratory of log cabins and hard cider, Cmiel 1990: 63). Public audiences reacted with derision when orators acted too ‘aristocratic,’ and preachers and politicians took note.

The Abolitionist Oratory of Phillips

Historians agree that some of the most charismatic abolitionist speeches were delivered by Wendell Phillips, an orator frequently ranked among the top in the history
of American public address (Brigance 1960; Oliver 1965; Hofstadter 1989). Proud proponent of the immediatist abolitionism associated with the Boston-based Garrisonians, he acquired national fame for his derisive eloquence of abuse. The American National Biography states, “In the 1850s no public speaker more completely dominated the debate over the problem of slavery and the growing crisis between North and South than did Phillips.” He was a reformer celebrity, a quite wealthy philanthropist and a self-professed ‘agitator’ for black equality. He helped to lead the Vigilance Committee of Boston, a group committed to disobedience and resistance in the service of protecting fugitive slaves from former masters and officials (as seen in the anecdote beginning Chapter 1). His antislavery message was widely reprinted and disseminated.

Many of the speeches of Wendell Phillips are preserved in print form though edited (Phillips 1863; Phillips 1891). Beyond the textual content of these revised speeches, two other types of data give glimpses of his rhetorical style and its immediate reception. First, there exist numerous eyewitness accounts written by spectators of his public speaking. Second are stenographic records of audience actions, expressions and interruptions occurring during his speeches. The publishers of Phillips’s two-part series Speeches, Lectures, and Letters made the fortunate call of

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115 In The American Political Tradition, Richard Hofstadter writes, ‘Phillips was the most valuable acquisition of the New England abolitionists. He brought to the movement a good name, an ingratiating personality, a great talent for handling mobs and hecklers, and, above all, his voice. He was probably the most effective speaker of his time. Chauncey Depew, when over ninety, declared that he could recall hearing all the leading speakers from Clay and Webster to Woodrow Wilson, and that Phillips was the greatest’ (1989: 183).
preserving these circumstantial notes for historical interest over and against Phillips’s wishes of erasing them.\textsuperscript{118} They allude to a variety of audience interruptions including applause, uproar, unease, hissing, hecklers, laughter, questions, and other verbal shouts. They were included in speech transcriptions by stenographers who were present and skilled at shorthand—in many cases by friend of the family, J. M. W. Yerrington—and reproduced in printed form in local newspapers. Before micro-analyzing selections from his protest rhetoric, I describe a bit of the misé-en-scene through several eyewitness reports.

\textit{Eyewitness Reports}

In a eulogy by a rhetorician from Andover Theological Seminary recalled and commented on Phillip’s oratory. His “musical register was a baritone, used in the upper series of the chest notes. With its absolute purity, and its density of vibratory resonance, his voiced possessed a carrying power that penetrated to every part of any large audience-room. The character of the voice—the man in it—had the effect of ‘finding’ its auditor. It had an intimate tone, as if it were speaking to each one as an unknown friend” (quoted in Yeager 1960: 358-9). Contemporary and close friend Thomas Wentworth Higginson likewise once tried to explain the great attraction people

\begin{footnotes}
\item[118] “The only liberty the Publisher has taken with these materials has been to reinsert the expressions of approbation and disapprobation on the part of the audience, which Mr. Phillips had erased...This was done because they were deemed a part of the antislavery history of the times, and interesting, therefore, to every one who shall read this book...” (Publisher’s note in Phillips, 1863: iv). Public address scholar Willard Hayes Yeager (1960) notes that Phillips did take advantage of the chance to revise the text of the speeches before their final published form in his two-part anthology. This could introduce some historical inaccuracy if one wanted to know exactly what he said and how he put it. For the purposes of analyzing the indications of audience approbation or disapprobation, which Phillips tried to delete, the potential distortion is less.
\end{footnotes}
felt when Phillips was speaking. He suggests it was the plain colloquial style of Phillips despite his lofty ideas:

The keynote to the oratory of Wendell Phillips lay in this: that it was essentially conversational—the conversational raised to its highest power. Perhaps no orator ever spoke with so little apparent effort or began so entirely on the plane of his average hearers. It was as if he simply repeated, in a little louder tone, what he had just been saying to some familiar friend at his elbow. The effect was absolutely disarming...he held them by his very quietness; it did not seem to have occurred to him to doubt his power to hold them...Then, as the argument went on, the voice grew deeper, the action more animated, and the sentences came in a long, sonorous swell, still easy and graceful, but powerful as the soft stretching of a tiger’s paw (Higginson, quoted in Filler 1965: xiii-xiv).

Part of the novelty lie in his break from the formal construction and stifling deliverance he was taught at Harvard for instead a more ordinary conversational style. Phillips combined an oppositional message, immediate abolition or any of the other radical issues he also took up such as women’s rights and labor, with a highly consensual informal attitude. By talking to the audience colloquially, Phillips seems to have temporarily suspended and leveled the mundane status order in which he himself as a wealthy gentleman was quite distinguished from commoners. Phillips’s oratory performed and produced the appearance of status de-differentiation, reconstituting the status dynamics of his immediate reception field to feel more egalitarian. In turn this performative leveling of status heightened the intimacy and emotional energy of the gathering, ensuring new affective attachments to Phillips himself, and subsequently, the antislavery campaign as well. Audiences were elevated, and elated, by fraternal communion with such a charming enlightened gentleman.

In Higginson’s quote above, Phillips uses a common technique of good public speakers, lowering his voice, rather than raising it, to get the attention and respect of
the audience—‘he held them by his quietness.’ The same oratorical strategy of asserting status is also seen in Lydia Maria Child’s account of a rambunctious anti-slavery meeting Phillips lost control of due to disrupters and hecklers in the audience. Child’s eyewitness account vividly portrays the emotional volatility and violent backlash many abolitionists faced:

The meeting opened well. The antislavery sentiment was there in strong force; but soon the mob began to yell from the galleries...Mr. Phillips stood on the front of the platform for a full hour, trying to be heard whenever the storm lullled a little. They cried, ‘Throw him out! ‘Throw a brick-bat at him!’ ‘Your house is a-fire: don’t you know your house is a-fire?’...I should think there were four of five hundred of them. At one time they all rose up, many of them clattered down-stairs, and there was a surging forward toward the platform. My heart beat so fast I could hear it; for I did not then know how Mr. Phillips’s armed friends were stationed at every door, and in the middle of every aisle. They formed a firm wall which the mob could not pass. At last it was announced that the police were coming. I saw and heard nothing of them, but there was a lull. Mr. Phillips tried to speak, but his voice was again drowned. Then, by a clever stroke of management, he stooped forward, and addressed his speech to the reporters directly below him. This tantalized the mob; and they began to call out, ‘Speak louder! we want to hear what you’re saying’; whereupon he raised his voice, and for half an hour he seemed to hold them in the hollow of his hand. But, as soon as he sat down, they began to yell and sing again, to prevent any more speaking (Child, 1883: 147).

Child’s ‘clever stroke of management’ is an apt phrased for Phillips’s intuition of status-power dynamics. By lowering his voice and speaking to those in the front row, he does several things. First, he continues to show his elevated preference for the voluntary compliance awarded to status rather than the involuntary contest of force, i.e. he does not cruelly abandon the status game for an exchange of power like the crowd does by taunting and shouting over Phillips, and this in itself is a sort of status claim. His bid for status, not power, is successful momentarily because of how he excludes the antiabolitionists by speaking only to his closer audience. Being excluded
from a conversation when present to it is a kind of status degradation, here frustrating
the antiabolitionists, leading them to resume paying attention to Phillips (status accord)
rather than endure the feelings of exclusion. Regarding his ability to think on his feet
though, Child’s report is corroborated by others. Phillips was unusually capable of
handling antiabolitionist hecklers, using their defensiveness toward their own status
against them.

The role of successful status bids can also be seen in another disrupted speech
on May 12, 1859. Here Phillips enhanced the status position of abolitionists and the
enslaved, while attacking the status of a boisterous racist in the audience:

A Voice—‘Have we a right to hang negroes?’

[Phillips:] I will tell you just the difference between the man who asked that
question and the negro who was sold yesterday in the Carolinas. The man in
the Carolinas is black outside; the questioner is black inside. [Laughter and
applause.] The man in the Carolinas has a black face; the questioner has a
black heart. [Applause and cries of ‘Good, good.’] The man in the Carolinas
takes a box six feet by three and is nailed up within it, and, at the risk of his
life, rides four hundred miles on the railway to a free state, because he
values liberty like a man; and the questioner, if he had been born a slave,
would have cowered like a spaniel and rotted to death like a dog,
[tumultuous applause]; because, in fine, the slave of the Carolinas is a man,
and the being that would insult a depressed and hated race, in a community
like ours, is a brute. [Renewed applause.] (Yeager 1960: 346, *all brackets in
original*).

As evident in this exchange, Phillips was matchless in the art of the zinger. The above
selection exemplifies Phillips’s notorious and relentless eloquence of abuse. Phillips
displays wit and emotional energy on his feet, producing great laughter and applause.
Yet, what is Phillips doing precisely that makes his ad lib such a rhetorical success? A
dramaturgical theory of status rhetoric offers a compelling interpretation. Phillips is
seeking, defending, advocating and denigrating status on several levels. In the first
place, he shuns the disruptive person whose offensive interjection was an affront. Interrupting a speaker is a potential status loss that Phillips must deal with before continuing on in his argument. Audience members identifying with the antislavery position cheer his verbal sanctioning of the heckler. The heckler’s exclusion from their reference groups is solidified, his opinions do not matter (status loss).

On another level, the applause lines as recorded above follow certain rhetorical sequences whereby Phillips simultaneously enhances the status of the fugitive slave. The African American who fought for his liberty is more a ‘man’ (status accord) than the questioner. Fugitive runaway slaves were one of the central antislavery figures of abolitionist rhetoric, frequently appearing in Phillips’s speeches as the object of status-enhancing efforts. Reevaluating their rights to dignity caused both visceral approbation, from those identifying with the abolitionist reference group, and disapprobation from individuals more inclined to the antiabolitionist countermovement.

**Audience Actions in Speech Transcriptions**

In perhaps Phillips’s most famous antislavery speech, ‘Philosophy of the Abolition Movement, status claimsmaking accounts for the overwhelming majority of applause lines. In the written transcription of the speech there were 36 audience actions total in the speech. All of these but two were positive emotional expressions, a fact having to due with the context and composition of this particular reception field. Specifically the range of transcribed notes referring to auditor responses include ‘Loud cheers,’ ‘Shouts and laughter,’ ‘Enthusiastic applause,’ ‘Hear! hear!’ and ‘Sensation’ or variations of these words. One of the more ambiguous references to ‘sensation,’ of
which there are two, likely refers to expressions of dismay and unease following Phillips’s complaint over the injustice of abolitionists not receiving the recognition they deserve by society.

Approximately 32 of the 36 applause lines accompany rhetorical productions of status, two are more oriented on power, and the last two are expressions of laughter ostensibly pleased purely with Phillips’s clever verbal play (here following Kemper’s distinction between status and power, Kemper 2011). The 32 status-oriented applause lines involve either status enhancement of the abolitionist reference group or status loss for opponents of abolitionism, compromising politicians being the most common target (10 of the latter kind of degrading status-rhetoric). Of the antislavery status-enhancing comments, nine of them in some way praise the ‘humble printer boy,’ William Lloyd Garrison, who was present at the meeting and once ‘pointed to’ directly by Phillips (1863: 149). Six status claims deal with the historical agency and efficacy of the self-described radical abolitionists, e.g. Phillips’s eagerness to take credit for preparing the ground for the remarkable success of Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* and the rising publicity of key antislavery politicians. This is part of Phillips’s overall argument that the method of ‘agitation’ first started by Garrison, had been tremendously effective in national politics. Finally, two of the applause lines are more tied to the rhetorical performance of power, not status, one by hailing northern resistance to the Fugitive Slave Law (threatening noncompliance with authority), and the other by implying eventual destruction of slavery and its supporters (i.e. loss of other’s power).

A few more examples from this speech can illustrate these points:
1. “There are far more dead hearts to be quickened, than confused intellects to be cleared up,—more dumb dogs to be made to speak, than doubting consciences to be enlightened. [Loud cheers.] We have use, then, sometimes, for something beside argument” (Phillips 1863: 107).

Leading up to this moment of loud cheers, Phillips justifies the abolitionist method of aggressive agitation. He argues that the method of rational argumentation is not very effective because of the depth of sin and selfishness in a slavery-supporting person. These persons are not merely doubters or ‘confused intellects’ with whom the informed abolitionist can present facts and research. They are incapable of reason and therefore, can only be shamed by radical exhortation and condemnation. The ‘dumb dogs’ put down is a status degradation of that majority of the public indifferent to the suffering slave and to the exigency of abolition. The corresponding implication is that the occupation of the agitator or social reformer is validated and made more respectable (status gain).

2. “The deference which every gentleman owes to the proprieties of social life, that self-respect and regard to consistency which is every man’s duty,—these, if no deeper feelings, will ever prevent us from giving such proofs of this newly-invented Christian courtesy. [Great cheering.]” (Phillips 1863: 113).

Before this complex line Phillips argues against honoring any dead politician, no matter how great in worldly reputation, who has compromised with and contributed to anti-black legal discrimination. The eloquence of abuse in unleashed upon various political targets. He mocks the idea of building a public monument to Henry Clay or even having a funeral parade for Daniel Webster. “If that be the test of charity and courtesy, we cannot give it to the world. [Loud cheers.]” (Phillips 1863: 113). Phillips guides his
resource group of abolitionists to embrace an antislavery status imaginary as an alternative to the worldly status imaginaries supporting racial slavery and segregation. True deference is incompatible with the routine of giving ‘evil men’ the courtesy and accolades civil society claims they deserve (1863: 114). Phillips exhorts his audience to refrain from this form of amoral status accord so popular in the secular world (the ‘world’ being the negative pole of Christian civil-society discourse). Thus abolitionists can justly withdraw participation from what the world defines as worthy and estimable, being true to their higher moral duty and uncompromising integrity instead. When two reference groups potentially conflict, as in the impulse to honor morally repugnant men, a status re-evaluation enables the symbolic victory of one’s reference group over another’s. Self-status enhancement and other-status denigration are occurring simultaneously in this rhetorical performance.

3. “How shall a feeble minority, without weight or influence in the country, with no jury of millions to appeals to,—denounced, vilified, and contemned,—how shall we make way against the overwhelming weight of some colossal reputation, if we do not turn from the idolatrous present, and appeal to the human race, saying to your idols of to-day, ‘Here we are defeated; but we will write our judgment with the iron pen of a century to some, and it shall never be forgotten, if we can help it, that you were false in your generation to the claims of the slave!’ [Loud cheers.]” (Phillips 1863: 114).

While overlapping with many of the motifs from the previous examples, Phillips’s rhetorical strategy here is more oriented toward power. The implicit problematic is what to do when status claimsmaking fails. When agitation is unable to obtain voluntary compliance (via status rhetoric) here and now, at least we can be assured of ultimate victory by historical forces. Phillips threatens anyone opposed to abolition with
being on the wrong side of history. Of course, power and status claims are blurry here: being on the side of Providence is status worthy in itself. Perhaps given the militant turn of abolitionist rhetoric in the 1850s, Phillips is repressing the desire to take up more forceful means of power. Elsewhere the thematic of power is signified as the coming of God’s judgment or the threat of violent slave insurrection if immediate emancipation is not undertaken.

**Status Backlash**

The emotional energy associated with charisma and eloquence varies significantly with the level of reference-group heterogeneity in the reception field. I have found that the affective experience of audiences differs radically across two types of reception fields. In the first type, the reception field is relatively homogenous. Members share a common symbolic identity and reference group (the antislavery cause). They feel pleasure when group values and norms are confirmed by status rhetoric. This homogenous reception field was the backdrop to the self-congratulatory tone and mood of Phillips’s ‘Philosophy of Abolition’ speech of 1853.

In a second type of reception field, the orator produces negative emotional energy, a clash of reference groups and status backlash by defenders of the doxic status order. Phillips could be experienced as haughty and alienating to many especially among the white working classes. After all he was imagining a radically different world, economically and politically, from the one the American public was used to, a world without slavery (and without the worsening racialization of blacks that white working classes were building and benefitting from). In a public meeting at
Fanueil Hall in Boston on October 30, 1842, a group of antiabolitionists interrupted black abolitionist Charles L. Remond, drowning him out by shouting racial insults and being so loud he could not speak. Phillips angrily took the pulpit after this crude affront to his colleague and condemned the crowd:

You are the guilty ones. The swarming thousands before me, the creators of public sentiment, bolt and bar that poor man’s dungeon tonight. [Great uproar.] I know I am addressing the white slaves of the North. [Hisses and shouts.] Yes, you dare to hiss me, of course. But you dare not break the chain which binds you to the car of slavery. [Uproar.] Shake your chains; you have not the courage to break them. This old hall cannot rock, as it used to, with the spirit of liberty. It is chained down by the iron links of the United States Constitution. [Great noise, hisses, and uproar.] (Yeager 1960: 340).

Interestingly, the whites who would not even let Remond speak, still paid attention enough to Phillips to get the gist. In this interaction it appears they raged the most at him though when he dared to insult the U.S. Constitution, a sacred doxic cornerstone of white-nationalist reference groups of the time. Phillips infuriatingly compared the northern white citizenry to the status of the slave. Renegotiating the status imaginaries of his reception field, he flipped the pervasive freedom-slavery binary. Since threats to status and status-losses are typically experienced as anger toward the precipitator of that fall (or toward surrogates), this explains the ferocious status backlash Phillips and other abolitionists often encountered as seen in the above passage. Even in these more hostile reception fields, there is still a close relationship between Phillips’s performative operations on the status imaginaries at stake and the affective intensities of his immediate reception field.

Phillips received different audience responses and provoked different affective experiences relative to the composition of his reception field, i.e. who showed up, with
what groups physically and with what groups in mind—the virtual communities of status and value comprising an auditor’s reference groups. Reception fields are affectively diverse but partly constituted by rhetoric itself. In other words, reference groups and their status-power valuations are in flux during a rhetorical performance. Reference groups are ‘at play,’ conflicting and competing, and to some extent being transformed altogether within malleable reception fields. Like a force field, the emotional energy of rhetoric often moves unevenly across diverse reception fields, just as rhetorical action attempts to operate upon the transpersonal emotional investments interweaving rhetors and auditors. Contentious performances are animated by this mutual conditioning of rhetoric and status. Abolitionist oratory traded in processes of status competition viscerally felt and experienced by audiences as expressed by approbation or disapprobation. Studying these status claimsmaking processes helps to explain what made Phillips such an ‘eloquent’ and ‘charismatic’ speaker.

CONCLUSION

My aim in this chapter partly has been to allay some of the fears that social movement researchers continue to hold toward status concepts. Thus I have distanced status theory from its earlier manifestation in functionalist collective behavior theories. Further, I extend the late ‘interactionist turn’ of Tilly, regarding his theory of the WUNC-component of contentious performances, by examining the emotional effects of such performances upon movement audiences. Re-orienting contentious performances more thoroughly upon processes of status claimsmaking is not as reductive as the classical model of status anxiety and tension proved to be. Dramaturgically conceived,
status rhetoric is an affectively powerful resource as well as a specific mechanism of charisma that social movement actors use to persuade and provoke. In sum, status is a highly transposable currency (i.e. symbolic capital) that can be exchanged through creative rhetorical performances (as well as other forms of discourse not relevant to my analysis here). While quite common among the social implicatures of rhetoric, status is certainly not the only currency accounting for the affective intensities of movement audiences. There are a host of other relevant factors here that can contribute to eloquent rhetoric such as aesthetic format, intellectual vision, vocal texture, nonverbal body language, set up and appearance, a sense for rhythm, talents at improvisation, etc (c.f. Heritage and Greatbatch 1986). Such potential contributors to eloquence are likely interwoven together with status claimsmaking by the practical skills of experienced orators.
INTRODUCTION: GENDER TROUBLE IN ABOLITIONISM

The threat of gender deviance surrounding antebellum female oratory stirred a national moral panic that created a shared rhetorical disadvantage among abolitionist women. Women who spoke in public about the cruelty of slavery risked being stigmatized themselves as female ‘monsters.’ Many scholars have taken an interest in the distinctive struggles of the ‘feminist-abolitionists’ in responding creatively to confining ‘true womanhood’ gender expectations. Among them, historians and rhetorical critics have long appreciated how women reformers came to realize that their advocacy for abolition—whether by petition, boycott, convention or oration—was hindered by women’s subordination through practices of femininity that repudiated women’s public-political oratory. As feminist rhetorician Karlyn Kohrs Campbell writes in Man Cannot Speak For Her, “They were a group virtually unique in rhetorical history because a central element in woman’s oppression was the denial of her right to speak” (1989: 9).

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119 The secondary literature on gender and the public sphere in the nineteenth century is a true macro-level phenomena (for a recent overview of literature on women abolitionists, see Kellow 2013).

120 Most historians continue to draw a close relationship between women’s abolitionism and the earliest organized social movement for women’s rights. Women’s abolitionism was the forerunner of first-wave feminism, though some skeptics usefully point out that many anti-slavery women did not come to endorse ‘women’s rights’ rhetoric. Summing up a complicated relationship, historian Hewitt writes, “Although it is clear now that not all abolitionists became women’s rights advocates, it is still acknowledged that nearly all pioneer woman’s rights advocates embraced abolitionism” (Hewitt 2002: 127). Teasing out some of the social processes behind why and how abolition was fused with women’s rights for some female abolitionists, but not others, is one area this chapter will shed some light upon.
In one of the earliest studies of women’s abolitionist rhetoric, *Pioneer Women Orators* (1954), Lillian O’Connor uses Aristotelian theory to interpret distinctive elements of women’s antislavery oratory, including a chapter on ethos, a rhetorical term meaning persuasion through the character of the speaker. O’Connor positively assesses the wider social perceptual-evaluative impact of women’s presentation of ethos. She writes, “ethical proof [ethos] had been presented by the speakers in such ways that, when the period ended, there was general acceptance of the fact that women could express opinions publicly before mixed audiences and yet remain virtuous and high-principled...On these two phases of ethos—high moral integrity and intelligence—the early women speakers made a good case for their sex” (1954: 157).

The performance of ethos, O’Connor argues, had repercussions not only for the cause of reform (abolitionism), but for public perceptions of femininity as well.

This chapter extends O’Connor’s insight by uncovering the processes and mechanisms through which the social-movement rhetoric of ethos in particular can become a means of improving women’s social status. My status theory of rhetoric builds upon an additional empirical observation relevant but absent in O’Connor’s classic study: women’s abolitionist rhetoric was heavily biased toward ethos relative to men’s anti-slavery speeches and mostly involuntarily due to gender status binds. By investigating the interconnections between status, emotion and gender, this chapter will answer several questions, including: Why was a greater proportion of early abolitionist female oratory oriented upon ethos? What were the risks, emotions and

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121 This chapter uses the word ‘ethos’ in its technical rhetorical sense while developing a sociological approach to the study of it. Ethos refers to any qualities of speech that reflect favorably upon the character of the speaker. I discuss approaches to ethos in more depth in Section II.
status processes that drove some women reformers to seize the pulpit and others to rescind it? How does ethos work actually operate upon gender practices and cultural understandings of women’s status? Interpreting women’s abolitionist rhetoric demands a sociological exploration into how status-disadvantaged groups, marginalized within a social movement and without, can operate upon dominant status-beliefs through performing ethos.

Abolitionist women faced a ‘status bind’ arising from nineteenth-century gender beliefs and practices (below I develop the notion of status binds based on the research of Ridgeway & Kricheli-Katz 2013; Ridgeway 2011; Wilkins 2012). A definitional feature of status binds is the inability to choose a non-derogatory course of action. Reform women could comply with proper biblical femininity as it was imagined, being silent and subservient in mixed-gender meetings, but in doing so risk subordination and powerlessness in reform projects. Or women could make demands and raise grievances in public, but risk being sanctioned as immodest and unbecoming. Abolitionist women who did venture in public speaking also faced a set of contradictory double standards that male orators were unaffected by. Their speeches about slavery were simultaneously received and reacted to as deviant displays of gender. Women’s anti-slavery message could easily get crowded out by, to use the iconic phrase, ‘gender troubles’ (Butler 1990). Attempting to ward off moral panic over gender deviance, abolitionist women orators spent relatively greater amounts of speech time doing ethos work. And in speaking on behalf of the slave, abolitionist women were judged as making claims about the emotional nature, morality and
intelligence of womanhood itself. Another layer of the gender status-bind resulted from these double standards: reform women who drew upon and strived to conform to the sentimentalization of femininity, by highlighting women’s caring sensibilities and moral purity, were as a result easily dismissed as apolitical, impractical and idealistic. Through sentimental framing, most antebellum audiences avoided taking women speakers seriously.

A general rhetorical tendency among status-disadvantaged groups is for ethos to be performatively prioritized over appeals to pathos and/or logos. In the case of abolitionist rhetoric, not having to spend as much time on self-justifications for one’s speech was a nineteenth century form of male privilege. By virtue of the public alarm and repressive response to gender deviance (see below), the status-power dynamics of northern antebellum society made it more difficult for women speakers to produce the necessary emotional energy to perform formal, public oratory (on the emotional-energy dilemmas of subordinated women, see Summers-Effler 2002). The rhetorical constants of confidence and eloquence aimed at by all antebellum speakers were further out of reach for women reformers than for men because of these gender binds. As a result abolitionist women were pressured to withhold emotional energy from the problematization of slavery to instead make ‘ethical’ appeals in defense women’s public communicative activities. A common pattern can be seen in the relationship between status inequality, emotion and rhetoric, not just for women abolitionists but for

122 All abolitionist speeches can be analyzed as a ‘co-articulation’ of race and gender. Women’s abolitionist rhetoric, especially by white woman, was entangled in popular racialized imaginaries saturated with various figurations of the ‘relational pairing’ of white women and black men (see Roth 2014).
many disenfranchised groups struggling for recognition and rights. Heightened scrutiny of ethos and, in response, more intense *ethos work* frequently follows from being rhetorically disadvantaged by a variety of status binds. Ethos work is thus another kind of public speaking bind arising from status inequality (much like formalizing affect-suppression was for many black abolitionists, men and women, in chapter 5).

This chapter demonstrates that women abolitionists developed three different activist styles in response to the rhetorically disadvantaging situation of gender deviance. Many abolitionist women found public speaking too risky and withdrew from public claims-making altogether (though when they did, they often sought out and invented other sorts of anti-slavery rhetorics, see Jeffrey 1997). Constructing my own cultural-sociological theory of emotional energy, I try to answer the question: why were some able to cross the status-power hurdle of gender deviance, but not others? This chapter argues that it was not a matter of individual talent and personality. Rather, the unequal distribution of emotional energy between abolitionist women enabled a select few to do ethos work in the effort to surmount gendered public-speaking binds. The chapter then compares two types of feminist-ethos work in abolitionism, the patrician-feminist and the prophetic-feminist, examining how they activated or generated the necessary emotional energy from different sources.

The empirical scope of this chapter is limited to antebellum anti-slavery addresses by women, concentrating on the 1830s decade. I compare and contrast two prominent women abolitionists from the very first generation of female orators in the United States, Maria W. Stewart and Angelina Grimké. These two public speakers
exemplified different patterns and pathways between social status, emotion, ethos and public speaking. The ideal-types I construct however are not solely inducted from their few surviving speeches, but pulled together from a wider qualitative, content analysis of 41 speeches total by 17 abolitionist women (5 white; 12 black) from 1828 to 1861. By examining alternative ways of translating emotional energy into the willingness to take rhetorical risks, I demonstrate a relationship between emotional inequalities—the unequal distribution of emotion resources by prior social status—and the variant of feminist-ethos performed. Contributing to current debates in the sociology of emotion over the role of status (Kemper 2011; Turner & Stets 2005; Collins 2004), the chapter highlights the less predictable capability of some of the most dispossessed abolitionist women, low-wage black women workers like Maria Stewart, to summon status and its emotional rewards from relatively autonomous cultural sources.

THE EMOTIONAL INEQUALITIES OF ETHOS WORK

In this section, I develop a social-psychological, cultural-sociological conception of ethos in relation to the Western intellectual tradition of rhetoric and suggest how a historical-sociological analysis of the subject might proceed. An extensive orientation upon ethos was one of the first patterns to emerge in my study of women’s abolitionist rhetoric. Women orators had to argue for their credibility and reliability before their anti-slavery message could be taken seriously. This was a mostly involuntary gender bias or

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123 There are however important differences among generations of abolitionist women orators. For instance, Of Aristotle’s three components of ethos—goodness, good sense, and goodwill—O’Connor demonstrates that the earliest generation of women reformers in 1830s focused on performing moral goodness to the almost complete exclusion of other ‘ethical proofs.’ This privileging of moral ethos can be explained.
constraint given women’s position of status disadvantage and the harsh climate of reactions to the ‘monstrosity’ of female oratory. In other words, the ethos work of women abolitionists was a response to the status binds and double standards of being judged adversely merely for being a woman on stage. As we will see, not all abolitionist women were willing to perform public ethos work, which was risky and usually depended upon the prior possession of significant reserves of emotional energy.

At the same time, ethos work was not completely involuntary. Appeals to ethos were performatively prioritized by abolitionist women who struggled for greater rhetorical agency. Ethos work aimed at changing a group’s perceived status more generally. Appeals to ethos have been a go-to rhetorical strategy for many dispossessed groups throughout history, a valuable tool for resisting status subordination. The right to speak in public deliberative settings is closely guarded and bound up with rights of citizenship and autonomy in the Western political imagination, making ethos a sort of requisite for greater status equality. Performing ethos was often an intentionally chosen strategy in reaction to status subordination.

Ethos in the rhetorical tradition refers to qualities of the speaker that enhance his or her favorability before the audience. According to Aristotle, ethos is a ‘means of persuasion’ internal to the delivery of a speech. Making an impression of moral integrity and virtue could help make audiences more receptive to one’s argument. In Aristotle’s original formulation ethos is the mode of ‘probable demonstration’ that is based on the character of the speaker—in contrast with pathos, the emotional inclinations of the audience, and logos, the rational argument contained in the message of the speech.
With political deliberative settings in mind, Aristotle broke ethos down into “three things making the orator himself trustworthy...good sense, goodness, and good will” (quoted in Wisse 1989: 29). Aristotle is also known for offering a rather rationalistic conception of ethos in his attention to the intellectual qualities of reliability and credibility.

Unfortunately Aristotle’s conception of ethos is less than adequate for interpreting women’s abolitionist rhetoric. The rhetorical tradition after Aristotle grew more flexible and fluid in the conceptualization of ethos. Cicero, for instance, tends to associate ethos with any and all qualities enhancing the favorability of the speaker, including the ‘gentler emotions’ that improve how an audience feels toward a speaker. According to rhetoric scholar Jakob Wisse, ethos is still abundantly emotional for Cicero but refers to a different set of emotions when compared to pathos (also Kennedy 1998: 224). Ethos includes any character trait that produces feelings of sympathy for the speaker. It is “that gentleness, which wins us the favor of the audience,” associating for Cicero with properties of confidence, calmness, dignity and “personal humanity” (Wisse 1989: 238). In contrast, pathos is the excitation of violent emotions in the audience—a different set of emotions like anger, fear, joy, grief, indignation, etc. While Wisse wishes to prove that there is no necessary conceptual overlap between ethos and pathos, this point seems less relevant for the study of women’s abolitionist rhetoric: women making public claims to ethos in itself could
provoke ‘violent emotions’ against female orators (though this reaction would not be read as a standard/successful instance of ethos and pathos)."\textsuperscript{124}

Cicero and the Roman rhetorical tradition also treat ethos more practically than Aristotle, for instance, recognizing the influence of prior social standing upon the speaker’s impressions. Aristotle bracketed this out as ‘atechnoi’—not of the technique, i.e., not an internal means of persuasion. However, the question of the relationship between prior reputation (social status) and ethos (internal or rhetorical status) does not seem resolved within the rhetorical tradition and begs for a more sociological analysis. Lastly, given the juridical settings of Roman theorists, ethos could refer to the character of the speaker or the character of a client for whom the speaker is an advocate, much as a lawyer. The Roman dual conception of ethos, potentially more relational than Aristotle, seems immediately more applicable to abolitionist speakers who were making status claims, not just for themselves, but on behalf of the character of enslaved persons. For example, the successful performance of women’s abolitionist ethos had implications for how slaves were viewed, e.g., as humane victims worthy of sympathy.

The full analytical potential of the concept of ethos for the sociology of gender, emotion, and social movements has hitherto not been explored. A sociological approach though would part with the rhetorical tradition on several points. In particular sociologists would have a greater interest in the social conditions of ethos, its cultural and affective content, as well as its performative properties. Here I offer a few broad

\textsuperscript{124} This raises the relevant question of how dominated by masculinist assumptions the rhetorical tradition is. I cannot deal with this question here, especially since others more able already have elsewhere (see Buchanan & Ryan 2010).
principles for sociological investigation incorporating social-psychological theories from the sociology of emotion.

Ethos is the rhetorical performance of the *status* of the speaker. It involves the production of positive affects in the presentation of the self. It is a status claim to a worthwhile persona, that is, someone who because of their status should be listened to (for a similar approach, see Kemper 2011: 95-98). A speaker’s style of ethos depends significantly upon the culturally-specific stereotypes that inform dominant status-beliefs. These status-beliefs may be possessed by the speaker’s reference group or they may be assumed by the speaker to be possessed by audience members.

Multiple levels of status claims-making go into the performance of ethos. At the most basic level, the right to speak itself is a prerequisite status-claim for ethos work. Public speaking itself is an originary status-claim that if accepted, signals legitimacy and social membership in a community. An enslaved person, for instance, is usually denied the ability to do the status claims-making of ethos work; he or she is treated more commonly as ‘socially dead’ (Patterson 1982). Polluted identities can be excluded and stigmatized such that audiences disavow any possibility of ethos. Originary social exclusion from speech can be seen when hecklers refuse to listen at all to black abolitionists. The recognition of authority is a minimal condition of the possibility of ethos—it can be effectively denied, but it can also be seized in surprising ways (as suggested by Butler 1997).

More nuanced layers of ethos work are similarly status-imbued. Complicating the basic authority to speak would be Aristotle’s attention to reliability and
trustworthiness as qualities of ethos. If a speaker is deemed mad or not interested in the welfare of others, audiences will tend not to take him or her seriously. Ethos at this level is a ‘credibility struggle’ to borrow a term (Epstein 1996). Impressions of coherence and consistency are most important. Thus credibility, the elements of Aristotle’s ‘good sense,’ also seems to be a sort of necessary condition, like authority, for persuasive public speaking. Abolitionists frequently found that they had to be explicit and detailed about their sources of evidence regarding the cruelties of slavery before various publics would believe them.

If authority and credibility are the ‘thin’ necessary conditions of ethos work, affective-meanings are the ‘thickest’ layers of ethos. Drawing upon culturally-specific values and reference-groups, speakers produce positive affects in the presentation of the self. In principle, given cultural difference, there seem to be an infinite number of ways of attaining positive affective-valuations of the speaker’s personality. This level of status claimsmaking includes all available symbols and significations connoting character, comportment, dignity, humanity, importance, integrity and so on. It emerges from the cultural-moral beliefs and values of a society and its publics. For example, given permutations in late sentimentalism, confessing the depth of one’s feelings and sympathy toward the bodily pain of others was a popular signifier of one’s moral character and humanity in antebellum literature (Abruzzo 2011). This is merely one cultural imaginary feeding the speaker’s self-presentation of positive affects.

Ethos work is an intensively affective form of relational labor. The emergence of ethos consists in the production of a series of affective-meanings inclining audiences
toward speakers and/or the reference-groups of the speakers. More consistently than pathos, ethos involves the generation, performance, and maintenance of positive affects in the reception field of the speaker. Producing such positive affects through ethos work, resulting in affective attachments to the speaker, can create the sense of experiencing a charismatic orator. Charisma is largely accounted for by how successful ethos work produces personalistic attachments to the self of the speaker through the medium of positive affects. Pace Aristotle, ethos is thoroughly emotional as well as rational or cognitive. Ethos work aims at the affective-meanings that audiences hold toward groups of people and the symbolic markers of them contributing to status-beliefs. In the terms of affect control theory, ethos work consists in symbolic operations upon the affective-meanings of status-beliefs (Heise 1979; Rogers et al 2013). It trades in and operates upon the affective valences of stereotypes.

125 The notion of affective-meanings in affect control theory is useful for dissecting the performance of ethos. According with its predictions, the affective-meanings of ethos can be categorized into the three main 'semantic-universals.' Evaluation quite clearly corresponds to Aristotle's proof of 'goodness' and some elements of 'good will.' Potency is related to authority, including the right to speak but perhaps also reliability ('good sense') in one's practical knowledge and ability to accomplish what one claims to be able to do. Affect-control theory's semantic-universal of Activity does not correspond as well to Aristotle's formulation, but it adds an important dimension to our conception of ethos as another sort of necessary condition—all ethos work is active. An affect control theory of ethos can explain several tendencies in women's abolitionist rhetoric. As we will see, abolitionist women strived and often achieved high evaluation ratings thanks to the moral-sentimentalization of femininity. Abolitionists tried to capitalize upon the naturalized moral goodness of true womanhood, as did other political groups in this time period. By virtue of being a reformer and/or speaker, activity levels would be high as well. However, abolitionist women would most likely score low on the potency dimension of positive affect. Women's deprivation of potency in terms of affective-meanings was a central property of antebellum gender binds in public speaking never fully surmounted. Women reformers were idealized through domestic discourse, and even their benevolent activity could be congruous with domesticity, but they were ultimately still dismissed as impractical and apolitical (low potency). A broader principle here might be that status-binds often compel the subordinate to initially orient themselves wholly upon the evaluation register among the constitutive affective-meanings of ethos. Gender status-binds not only biased abolitionist women toward ethos work, but also biased them to the evaluation dimension of ethos. O'Connor (1954), for instance, demonstrates that the earliest generation of women reformers in 1830s focused on performing moral goodness to the almost complete exclusion of other 'ethical proofs,' such as intelligence and concern for audience welfare. How gender binds constrain ethos work, e.g.,
Ethos is a distinctive form of *ad hominem* status-rhetoric, but focusing on self-elevation rather than the denigration of others, the latter being more common in the last chapter’s analysis of Wendell Phillip’s radical rhetoric. His eloquence of abuse was another form of status-rhetoric, like ethos. But it was much more other-directed, and animated by the aim of putting antislavery’s opponents down. Abusive anti-slavery rhetoric is also *ad hominem* but aligns better with *pathos* in regards to the production of negative affects as compared to the egocentric positive affects of ethos. Both ethos and the eloquence of abuse are rhetorical performances of status though and can be incidents of ‘constitutive rhetoric,’ in which audience prejudices and affective-attachments are reconfigured (Charland 1989).

In terms of status theory, ethos is more of a bid for status rather than an inheritance of durable status inequalities. It is a more ephemeral, performative wage for credible status that fluctuates with the argument and rhythm of the speaker’s rhetoric. Its existence is temporal and temporarily lasting at least as long as the speaker’s presentation of the self. Many different mediums of signification can be involved in its generation of positive affects, from bodily appearance, clothing, posture, gesture to the spoken words themselves. However, the rhetoric of ethos is only a microcosm of status varying in its degree of alignment or deviance from dominant status-beliefs. Ethos is a kind of *performed status* of the speaker in distinction to the speaker’s *received status*, to redescribe Aristotle’s distinction between external and internal

foreclosing political connotations of power in particular, thus adds to the predictions of affect control theory.
means of persuasion. Or, making a distinction between rhetorical status (ethos) and other social statuses is another useful way of thinking about it. Ethos can be the performed status, not only of the self, but also of reference groups and other ascribed categoric groups that the self is identified with. The status-rhetoric of ethos works on multiple levels of status-perceptions simultaneously, and this seems to be especially the case for status-disadvantaged groups because of the double standards applied to them. In addition to an individual’s presentation of self, ethos is implicitly read as a social performance as well. Thus the ethos work of abolitionist women could benefit status-perceptions of more identities than the identity of the individual speaker. Positive affects could be directed through rhetoric’s ‘halo effects’ toward all abolitionists, to all slaves or, potentially, to all women as a sociocognitive category. Performing one’s right to speak about slavery involved renegotiating women’s general gender status. Further, the ethos work of abolitionist women was relationally inseparable from claims about the racial status of the slave, every speech co-articulating race and gender. Roth (2014) argues that as white women’s status increased in antebellum popular culture, the status and power of black men correspondingly decreased. A web of relational ascriptions and group affiliations is thus in play in ethos work.

The ethos-oriented production of positive affects in the presentation of self can be hard work especially for members of status-disadvantaged groups who seek to participate in a social movement. It is a practical skill dependent upon emotional resources that not everyone can access equally. Ethos work depends upon some level
of existing emotional energy. Without emotional energy, subordinated individuals do not have the will or stamina to engage in the difficult work of publicly, imaginatively re-negotiating status beliefs (c.f. Summers-Effler 2002). In Collins’s interaction ritual theory, emotional energy is conceptualized as the “enduring emotions that give people high or low levels of energy in diverse situations, that keep their enthusiasm up or bring it down, and that make them initiate or fail to instigate interactions” (Turner and Stets 2005: 74). Without emotional energy, the risks assessed with public speaking opportunities, e.g. willingness to be perceived as gender deviant, are not seen as worth taking. Groups with low levels of emotional energy find themselves dispossessed of speech opportunities and unwilling to go against the grain of dominant gender expectations. Emotional energy is not purely an individual phenomenon. It emerges from and during ritualistic relationships including the rhythmic dynamics of entrainment occurring during a speech (Collins 2004; 1999). On this point, interestingly enough, ‘confidence’ etymologically means having ‘faith together’ (see Simonson 1999). A receptive entrained audience may enable a greater tolerance for risky ethos work. I will argue though that there are many different possible sources of the emotional energy used to do ethos work, two of which are discussed in this chapter.

Emotional energy is not a magical, mystical concept, and we can further demystify it by identifying its social sources. When brainstorming the various possible conditions of emotional energy, it quickly becomes clear that there is unequal distribution of a kind of social capital determining courses of rhetorical action from behind the scenes despite appearances and claims of the charismatic speaker to the contrary. Here the frequent reciprocal relationship between performed rhetorical status
and ‘received status’ must be acknowledged. Social status tied to an individual’s social standing preceding the rhetorical performance, whether from class respectability or family prestige, is entirely relevant. Note, Aristotle’s rhetorical framework excludes received status as ‘external’ to the means of persuasion, underestimating the porous borders between the two. Received status influences the presentation of the performed status of the self both in the individual’s dispositions and in audience perceptions of the speaker’s reputation, celebrity or notoriety. From the theories of Kemper (1978; 2011), we would expect speakers from high status backgrounds to be more able to access reserves of stored emotional energy than low status individuals. Conditioned by ‘received’ status differences, the emotional energy enabling ethos work is distributed unequally. There are important exceptions to this rule though, instances where the absence of received status does not prevent unpredictable, extraordinary performances of rhetorical status. These more rare cases can only be accounted for through some recognition of the relatively autonomous cultural sources of emotional energy (see section below on ‘prophetic-feminism’). Ethos work can be a powerful tool of social movements, albeit often involuntarily for status-disadvantaged actors, but it in turn depends upon emotional resources that are distributed unequally across social-movement actors.

THE MONSTROSITY OF FEMALE ORATORY

Historian Varon (2008) has argued that struggles and anxieties involving femininity were central to the abolition of slavery, as central as were violent masculinities. In the early
nineteenth century, sentimental frames were increasingly localized in ‘women’s sphere’ and applied more exclusively to white women’s bodies (Burstein 1999). Framed by the sentimentalization of femininity, women in public could signify religious reverence and moral purity. Consequently different sides of the slavery debate tried to control the location and interpretation of women’s bodies in public spaces. Political parties increasingly invited women on stage as idealized helpers and moral mothers to stand beside male candidates for office in the 1840s. They tried to capitalize on associations with the feminine virtues of piety and decency, though simultaneously performing masculinity to avoid their apolitical connotations (a frequent disavowal or contradictory splitting by gender, see Pierson 2003; Ryan 1990; Varon 1998; Zboray & Zboray 2010).

At the same time women were also finding public roles and attention through novels, magazines and benevolent societies. Women’s participation in charities and benevolent organizations was Okayed as a natural extension of moral-sentimentalized femininity even if it technically occurred outside domestic spaces (Ginzberg 1990).

Middling women activists and entrepreneurs found cracks in the edifice of ‘separate spheres’ even while adhering to the discursive logic of domesticity itself (Smith-Rosenberg 1985; Kerber 1988). More troubling however were the radical abolitionist women who were less loyal to fulfilling the mores and ideals of a proper lady. American civil society was uniquely religious in the decades before the Civil War as were most of the era’s social movements for reform (on forms ‘confessional protest’ in the 1820s and 1830s, see Young 2002; 2006). Gender essentialism was naturalized through commonsense, science and religious discourse. In the last of these, sexual difference was biblically commanded and divinized as part of the sacred social order.
St. Paul’s epistolary injunction for women to ‘submit’ and ‘remain silent’ at religious gatherings was frequently appealed to. Public speaking presumed authority, which in turn presumed masculinity. These gendered scripts and scriptures made formal oratory one of the most closely guarded instruments of male domination in the public domain. Women who struck the formal rhetorical pose committed major gender deviance against patrimonial, biblical traditions of male authority. Transgressions against the rule of public silence could incite religious policing, excommunication, or violent backlash in the form of various missile projectiles to torching offending venues.

The country’s harsh reaction to freethinker lecturer Frances Wright in the 1820s exemplifies the traditional interdictions against women’s speech and related processes of gender-status backlash. A sojourner from Scotland, Wright delivered public speeches advocating for emancipation and women’s education, and her disciples joined communitarian experiments that were widely seen as scandalous. She was denounced as “blasphemer” and a “female monster” (quoted in Varon 2008: 131). Part of the outrage was directed at her advocacy of radical gender egalitarianism and ‘free love’ outside of marriage. After Wright’s utopian commune in Tennessee failed, “sexual scandal was attached to it and her” (Ceplair 1989: 7). In newspaper coverage and social attitudes, she became the prototype for the deviance and licentiousness associated with women public speakers. Moral-panic-like reactions reinforced the perception of female oratory as a “form of exposure that carried with it, for women, the taint of sexual impropriety” (Varon 2008: 131). Some early women abolitionists in fact were accused of “Fanny Wrightism,” a charge against the inherent moral wrongness and sexual monstrosity of female oratory (ibid).
In antebellum times, not all forms of oratory were perceived as equally transgressive for women. There were multiple levels of taboo with varying degrees of associated risk. Women found less risky outlets for speech in all-female societies. Segregation by ‘sex’ was a common form of social control that tolerated women’s speech in all-female settings. The rapid proliferation of anti-slavery societies in the 1830s was shaped by the sex-segregation of female auxiliary societies meeting separately from men. However, even in these settings, women’s adoption of the procedural conventions of business meetings made some nervous. But such mild forms of gender deviance were rendered more tolerable through the logic of gender segregation.

Much more alarming were women abolitionists who ventured to speak to ‘promiscuous’ audiences composed of men and women (on the ‘promiscuous audience’ controversy, see Zaeske 1995). This was generally perceived as a violation of sacred scriptures endorsing authoritative masculinity and submissive femininity. The unthinkably worst form of gender deviance in public speaking consisted of women orators who dared to share a stage on equal ground with men. Women who formally and rationally debated men in public provoked probably nearly everyone. Here abolitionist women grossly violated ‘true womanhood’ and challenged male authority by disagreeing and arguing with men about the ethics of slavery. Predictably when the Grimké sisters from the South began violating these prohibitions including the last in their 1837-38 lecture tour, Congregationalist clergymen Massachusetts responded with a public letter condemning the impropriety: “when she [woman] assumes the place and tone of man as a public reformer, our care and protection of her seem
unnecessary...and her character becomes unnatural” (quoted in Campbell 1989: 24). The clerics issued a general reminder to churches that women were to obey, not teach, as clearly prescribed in the New Testament. The letter reinforced the attitude that female orators were ‘unnatural’ monsters shadowed by the specter of Fanny Wright.

The antebellum moral panic over female oratory stemmed from perceived threats to traditions of male authority. As in other moral panics, rumors about the dangers of these ‘folk devils’ spread rapidly across regions and classes. Angelina Grimké was actually nicknamed ‘Devil-in-a.’ Newspaper accusations against abolitionist women speakers ranged from charging them with immodesty and indelicacy to downright insanity. Publicity undermined the praised moral superiority and gentler domestic nature of women. “In short,” preached Boston minister Hubbard Winslow, “when the distinguishing graces of modesty, deference, delicacy, and sweet charity are in any way displaced by the opposite qualities of boldness, arrogance, rudeness, indelicacy, and the spirit of denunciation...they [women] have stretched themselves beyond their measure and violated the inspired injunction that saith... ‘Let the woman learn in silence with all subjection, but I suffer not a woman to teach, nor to usurp authority over the man, but to be in silence.’” (quoted in Hansen 1993: 83). Such ministers perceived women’s public speaking as an ‘usurption’ of man’s authority.

Prohibitions against female oratory were rooted in conceptions of ‘true womanhood’ and applied to both white and black women. Black audiences of abolitionist Maria W. Stewart pelted her with tomatoes and ridiculed her claims to divine inspiration as blasphemous. An early black reformer, Stewart was demonized
five years before the Grimké sisters took the stage. Leading scholar of black women’s abolitionist rhetoric, Shirley Yee captures how the cultural anxiety over gender deviance cut across races: “Public speaking, more than any other abolitionist activity, seemed to spark the greatest conflict between the sexes. Public opinion was slow to accept female lecturers, regardless of race, because public speaking was an activity in which an individual assumed the role of authority long the domain of political leaders and a predominantly male clergy and forbidden to women by social and religious custom” (Yee 1992: 114-5). In Black Women Abolitionists, Yee further observes that many black women voluntarily tried to conform to the ideals of true womanhood as a means of performing racial respectability, despite the severe economic difficulties facing most northern black residents.

In summary, female oratory was a form of gender deviance creating major rhetorical disadvantages for abolitionist women. Women’s public speaking about political issues like slavery was widely seen as too transgressive and threatening to clergy, politicians and other patriarchs. Public speaking gender deviance was likewise too controversial for many of their abolitionist colleagues. As much as the anti-slavery politics tried to profit by association with women’s innate moral superiority and sympathy (Pierson 2003), it was also the “woman question” that split the American Anti-Slavery Society apart in 1840, a testament to the power of horizontal and vertical sex-segregation norms of the time (Kraditor 1969). Women who spoke in public about the evils of slavery risked stigmatization as female “monsters.” Most abolitionist women were well aware of the risks and that their anti-slavery speeches were read, feared and maligned as violations of femininity. They responded to gender status binds
in a variety of ways, as we will see, depending on the emotional and cultural resources available to them.

PATTERNS IN WOMEN’S ABOLITIONIST RHETORIC

Choosing to be an anti-slavery lecturer was a highly self-selective process. Gender status binds intensified the self-selection of those women willing to take rhetorical risks. Emerging from the social situation of rhetorical disadvantage, outlined above, women’s abolitionist rhetoric displays several common features. As mentioned, the first is devoting a greater quantity of speaking on ethos rather than logos and/or pathos. The surviving records of speeches of Angelina Grimké for instance are almost entirely filled by ethos-related arguments. For example, she describes at length growing up in the South (Charleston, South Carolina) and feeling instinctive revulsion toward slavery from early childhood. “As a Southerner I feel that it is my duty to stand up here tonight and bear testimony against slavery. I have seen it—I have seen it. I know it has horrors that can never be described. I was brought up under its wing: I witnessed for many years its demoralizing influences, and its destructiveness to human happiness” (Grimké in Lerner 2004: 270). Having first-hand experience with slavery, from being raised on a slave-labor plantation, proved to be a major means of securing credibility for Angelina. Her speeches have a testimonial quality that makes their claims seem more ‘reliable and trustworthy’ in accordance with the Aristotelian rationalist mode of ethos. Other women abolitionists who could not point to direct familiarity with slavery still incorporated evidence and references to give their ethos the same qualities
of good sense. Since women were not as likely to have their rational arguments taken seriously, even when presenting the same data as men abolitionists, evidence centering is one form of gender bias in ethos work emerging as a result of status binds. Women abolitionists felt even greater pressure to ensure the strength and accuracy of their evidence, since audiences would be more skeptical toward the intellectual-rational trustworthiness of women’s appeals.

In addition to dwelling upon ethos, the content of ‘ethical’ appeals was often quite similar across abolitionist women. Claiming divine inspiration for and citing biblical precedents of woman’s speech was a common motif in the speeches of Maria W. Stewart, Lucretia Mott and Angelina Grimké. Known by historians as America’s first woman political speaker, Stewart constructed a religious-moral ethos to justify her speech: “Be not offended because I tell you the truth; for I believe that God has fired my soul with a holy zeal for his cause” (Stewart, quoted in Richardson 1987: 52). Below I will analyze Stewart’s rhetoric to illustrate the prophetic-feminist ethos.

Abolitionist women developed a uniquely “feminine style” of ethos in the words of Campbell. According to Campbell (1989), this consisted of practical exhortations by female orators to women audiences, developing the consciousness of sisterhood and woman’s potential moral agency. Abolitionist women claimed authority from the greater moral superiority of their ‘sex’ and natural inclinations of sympathy. They utilized the localization of late sentimentalism in femininity as a cultural resource for ethos work.
Women’s putative propensity toward emotion and relatively greater sensibility was another source of their credibility in moral reform efforts. Angelina Grimké emphasized the depth of her personal feelings of the misery of slaves vis-a-vis morally bankrupt southerners and some northern travelers to the South: “if they [visitors to the South] have witnessed the cruelties of slavery, by remaining silent spectators they have naturally become callous—and insensitivity has ensued which prepares them to apologize even for barbarity. Nothing but the corrupting influence of slavery on the hearts of the Northern people can induce them to apologize for it” (Lerner 2004: 271).

Drawing upon the emerging humanitarianism, which grounded moral virtue upon sensibility, Grimké thus assailed those who were ‘callous’ and ‘insensible’ toward the cruelties of slavery (on anti-slavery humanitarianism, see Abruzzo 2011). The more sensitive sensibility of women was one possible source of character praise and attribution of ‘good will.’ Performances of women’s naturalized humanitarianism were thus another source of ethos-qua credibility and trustworthiness: women’s authentic feelings and ‘beating hearts’ for victims of slavery could be ethical appeals to their goodness and good will as orators (Robertson 2010).

Women’s abolitionist rhetoric (differences)

Though the rhetorical disadvantage of gender deviance was shared, abolitionist women reacted to it in different ways. Differences in women’s abolitionist ethos stemmed from a wide variety of sources, including religious denomination, school education, family background, cultural capital, regional custom, etc. They differed in
how orthodox or heterodox they presented themselves. They also differed in level of concern for anti-black racism alongside slavery and abolition. Black women’s abolitionist ethos ranged from participating in the ‘politics of respectability’ to prophetic jeremiads against overlapping oppressions (Yee 1992). A main division among abolitionist women was the very same ‘woman question’ so vexing to men abolitionists. Women were likewise split over the degree of feminism appropriate to include in anti-slavery activities.

In *Strained Sisterhood*, Hansen examines the rifts that grew between members of the Boston Female Anti-Slavery Society and eventually led to the disbanding of the organization in 1840. The main division Hansen explores is between wealthier, well-educated, more religiously heterodox women (such as Lydia Maria Child, Maria Weston Chapman, etc.) and evangelical, middling women more traditionalist in their conceptions of reform (whom I don’t consider in this chapter). Hansen convincingly shows how family class background and social standing influenced self-selection into these two conflicting factions in their disagreement over appropriate expressions of female activism. Members of the first higher-status group were often religious dissenters—of Unitarian, Quaker or ‘come-outer’ sectarian persuasion—and were much more likely to embrace the cause of women’s rights as fully compatible with their abolitionist agenda. They aligned themselves with Garrison’s inclusive ‘ultraist’ vision of reform. In the next section I offer an ideal-typical classification of them as *patrician*-
feminist given the relevance of social standing and local elite reference groups to their ethos work.¹²⁶

Members of the second, more popular group in the Boston female society associated more with Baptist and Congregationalist denominations. Inspired by evangelical revivals, their religious worldview included adherence to a scripturally delineated gender division of labor. Hansen calls this group the ‘non-feminist church-oriented’ clique of anti-slavery women. They felt more comfortable organizationally with gender-segregated female-only societies serving as supportive auxiliaries to men. This faction felt bound to Pauline instructions for women to keep silent and not to teach. The second ideal-type is thus more a part of the negative background screen consisting of like-minded abolitionist women who disavowed ethos work altogether and especially avoided the taint of ‘women’s rights’ rhetoric. Instead preferring the discourse of women’s duties rather than women’s rights, they were more concerned about reconciling their anti-slavery activities with the discourse of domesticity.

Indeed most abolitionist women avoided the stigma of gender deviance associated with female oratory. Instead they sought, invented and experimented with other less oratorical venues for anti-slavery work aligning more easily with the cultural logic of femininity (see Jeffrey 1997). Anti-slavery ‘rank and file’ women found other means of expressing themselves, alternative embodied rhetorics, and other ways of supporting the anti-slavery cause that did not involve egregious rhetorical risk-taking.

¹²⁶ I am using the sociological phrase ‘ideal-type’ in a looser sense than in the Parsonian reading of Weber. I make no claim that this typology exhausts all possibilities.
Hansen’s case study of ‘strained sisterhood’ usefully contrasts the interconnections between prior social standing and the degree to which abolitionist women took feminist rhetorical risks. We can conceptualize the division as being between feminist-abolitionists socialized in patrician families to be more risk-tolerant and women socialized in middling families to be more risk-averse. In other words, evangelical abolitionist women of lower to ‘middling’ class were much more likely to be risk-averse to being tainted by gender deviance. Here Hansen describes the more reluctant disposition toward female oratory:

[Many] evangelicals refused to voice their complaints during meetings, some ‘out of sisterly regard’ for the radicals' feelings [patrician-feminists], others because of inexperience in large public forums. As Lucy Parker explained, she, like many in the society, was ‘a poor speaker [so] rather than expose herself to ridicule she had been silent.’...Judith Shipley commented that she did not participate in the debates since ‘it was of no consequence what she thought individually’ and she was ‘willing to give up her feelings about it’ (Hansen 1993: 112-113, emphasis mine).

Members of this faction preferred silence, conflict avoidance, and felt as though they were ‘poor speakers.’ In contrast, upper class abolitionist women from wealthy, prestigious, highly educated families were more comfortable in positions of antagonism and more likely to embrace public speaking as deserving a place within women’s activist repertoire. Their habitus of privilege predisposed and gave them more confidence toward women’s public speech.

We can therefore draw a close relationship between class position, family prestige, degree of feminism, and the willingness to take rhetorical risks. Patrician feminists could activate emotional energy from prior social standing in order to perform the ethos work necessary to surmount women’s public speaking binds. Middling
nonfeminist abolitionist women possessed lower levels of emotional energy and as a result lacked the confidence needed to take such rhetorical risks. They withdrew from feminist ethos work.

This outcome was not so much a product of individual differences in natural oratorical talents. It was more due to socially structured differences in status-based emotional resources. Emotional inequality intersects with gender and divides ‘sisterhood’ in ways having implications for rhetorical agency. Emotional resources bequeathed by received status are constraining and enabling of the possibilities for rhetorical risk-taking by subordinated groups. Here, the unequal distribution of emotional capital partly accounts for differences in why groups choose to accept, cope and/or protest gender status binds through different postures of feminist ethos. The patrician-feminist ability to disregard stereotypes of traditional femininity and the public moral panic over gender deviance depended in large part upon the pre-performative activation of emotional capital.

A third form of feminist ethos work also existed among abolitionist women and presents an exceptional case of much theoretical interest to existing (sociological) social psychologies of status-oriented emotions and emotional energy. In the prophetic-feminist ethos, abolitionist women seem to have generated emotional energy ex nihilo by drawing upon the promissory notes of culturally autonomous sources. They appealed to sacred scriptures, like the second risk-averse group, but interpreted them through the Christian-millennial lens of radical racial and gender egalitarianism. They confronted the stigma of gender deviance head on in public, like the patrician-
feminists, but they did so by summoning alternative status imaginaries rather than by activating emotional energy from prior social standing. Prominent examples here include Maria Stewart, Sojourner Truth, Ernestine Rose (with some qualifications given her atheism) and for certain reasons specified below, Angelina Grimké’s 1838 May address to the Second Convention of Anti-Slavery Women at Pennsylvania Hall. In prophetic-feminist ethos work, background or ‘external’ social status seems to matter less in accounting for rhetorical intensity or ‘eloquence.’ Instead, the emotional energy fueling ethos work has to be invoked ex nihilo from immaterial, culturally autonomous sources. See Table 1 for full comparison. Alternative status imaginaries are cited and performed through prophetic speech. I argue that the very existence of prophetic-feminism calls for a cultural-sociological analysis of sources of emotional energy that moves beyond current social psychological theories from Kemper to Collins.

The two types of feminist ethos work, patrician and prophetic, are ideal-types in the Weberian sense of the term. They are one-sided exaggerations not perfectly realized in the social-historical world. They are however heuristic constructs enabling some causal conjecture, in this case, about effects of unequal emotional capital upon the willingness to take feminist rhetorical risks. They are also ideal types in another sense, the classification being fluid, not fixed. Individuals may have some features of both, or over the course of a lecture tour, oscillate between types. This seems to be the case in what can be reconstructed of Angelina Grimké’s brief rhetorical career. However, switching between types of ethos work is not completely random. The ideal-types indicate typical sources and differing causal pathways of generating emotional
energy. This ideal-typical comparison helps to explain, for instance, why and how Grimké experienced a rhetorical radicalization during the events surrounding the burning of Pennsylvania Hall in May, 1838.

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<th>Table 1</th>
<th>PATRICIAN-FEMINIST ETHOS</th>
<th>PROPHETIC-FEMINIST ETHOS</th>
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<tr>
<td>Status</td>
<td>Prior social status appealed to and performed</td>
<td>Prior status matters less; or circumstantial dispossession</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>Secular-liberal tendencies</td>
<td>Radical-religious tendencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference group</td>
<td>Local elites</td>
<td>Distant imaginary reference groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethos work</td>
<td>Activation of reserves</td>
<td>Summoning <em>ex nihilo</em></td>
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<tr>
<td>Emotional energy</td>
<td>Risk-tolerant levels</td>
<td>Risk-immune levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>Women’s rights</td>
<td>Humanist schemas</td>
<td>Millennial schemas</td>
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<tr>
<td>Femininity</td>
<td>Sensible &amp; morally superior</td>
<td>Victimized but redemptive</td>
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*Table 1. Ideal-typical Comparison of Patrician and Prophetic Feminist Ethos Work*

THE PATRICIAN-FEMINIST ETHOS: ACTIVATING EMOTIONAL ENERGY

Female orators who did brave the charge of ‘Fanny Wrightism’ like Angelina Grimké found themselves stuck in a gender status-bind in which a greater proportion of their speech had to be spent doing the ethos work that prominent male abolitionists like Wendell Phillips and Frederick Douglass often breezed through en route to the pathos-oriented excitement of violent emotions. Patrician-feminists were usually abolitionist women from wealthy, prestigious families. They were distinguished by being able to transfer funds of emotional energy toward a risk-tolerant, liberal feminist ethos that affirmed the American citizenship of women and women’s equal human rights.
Prominent examples here include Lydia Maria Child, Lucretia Mott, Angelina Grimké, Maria Weston Chapman, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucy Stone among others. Patrician-feminist abolitionists cultivated a progressive, more secular self gravitating toward republican rights-discourse and budding humanist ideology, including Garrison’s human rights language. Patrician feminists explicitly aligned themselves with the ‘ultraist’ reform platform of Garrisonian abolitionism. Like Garrison, they held the social problems of slavery and women’s rights, among other reform issues of the day, together co-extensively through an androgynous cosmopolitanism. Their ethos work was partly enabled by a habitus of privilege formed from socialization into well-educated, prestigious and progressive families. Upper class families and female academies trained them to be more at ease with formal speaking. As a result they could access numerous sources of emotional energy, including family prestige, cultural capital and class respectability. The patrician-feminist ethos was a rhetorical performance crafted for local reference groups tending to consist of the wealthy, well-educated heterodox elite.

Angelina Grimké was among the first generation of abolitionist women public speakers. Over a short but intense lecture tour, 1837-38, she rapidly rose to obtain celebrity status in New England and the Old Northwest. Hailed as an inspiring symbol of progress by her supporters, to her opponents, she was an example of everything heinous about abolitionism, who bestowed the “Devil-ina” nickname upon her. In firsthand reports Grimké is described as transforming herself on stage from a pale anxious lady to a beaming charismatic figure, for instance, according to one report by Lydia Maria Child (Berkin 2009: 65). Wendell Phillips finds remarkable Grimké’s “serene
indifference to the judgment of those about her” (quoted in Berkin 2009: 67). How was Grimké capable of such ‘serene indifference’ to the moral panic stirred by her public speaking, and how did she overcome gender binds by transforming her nervousness into confidence on stage?

To a large extent Grimké was able to ‘cash out’ emotional energy from an early training in holding high-status dispositions. Born to one of the wealthiest families of Charleston, South Carolina, her father was a prestigious Episcopalian judge and she was raised among the plantation elite (ranking among the wealthiest Americans at the time). Even at an early age, Grimké experimented with her privilege by refusing religious confirmation into the Episcopalian church, instead beginning a life of anti-establishment religious dissent. In her diary she wrote, “I feel that I am called with a high and holy calling” (quoted in Berkin 2009: 12). Moving north to Philadelphia and converting to abolitionism, she was one of the few women invited to the American Anti-Slavery Society’s training of an army of field agents, hubristically titled the “Seventy Apostles.” She quickly acquired a network of elite supporters from Boston to New York City who helped to arrange her travel and speaking venues. After being publicly scorned by America’s most famous lady, Catherine Beecher, as well as by the general association of Congregationalist ministers, she boldly wrote counter-rebuttals defending her egalitarian humanist vision. Soon she was the object of courtship of abolitionism’s most prominent western leader, Theodore D. Weld.

Only a few fragmentary records of her speeches exist, but they are widely accessible today. All of her speeches are heavily oriented upon ethos. She emphasizes
themes of universal morality and rights irrespective of sex, tropes common to a
patrician-feminist ethos as I’m defining it. One of the reasons Angelina Grimké was
prized so highly by Garrisonian abolitionists was for her authenticating southern
credentials. She could refer to her personal eyewitnessing of slavery’s cruelties as a
plantation child. Her testimonial ethos was a form of proof in the frequently ‘forensic’
mode of abolitionist rhetoric (on public trial metaphors in abolitionist literature, see
DeLombard 2007).

Grimké’s speech before the Massachusetts state senate in 1838 was an
unprecedented suspension of dominant gender norms. Her performance was very
formal and highlights her respectability and credibility as a former southerner:

I stand before you as a southerner, exiled from the land of my birth, by the
sound of the lash, and the piteous cry of the slave. I stand before you as a
repentant slaveholder. I stand before you as a moral being, endowed with
precious and inalienable rights, which are correlative with solemn duties and
high responsibilities; and as a moral being I feel that I owe it to the suffering
slave, and to the deluded master, to my country and the world, to do all that
I can to overturn a system of complicated crimes, built up upon the broken
hearts and prostrate bodies of my countrymen in chains, and cemented by
the blood and sweat and tears of my sisters in bonds (Lerner 2004: 268-9).

The speech manifests several qualities of patrician-feminist ethos work. Ethos is
indicated in the repetitive figuration that directs attention to the character of the
speaker. She presumes that her southern background ensures that her claims are
trustworthy and reliable. She also displays ethos work in performing her moral
goodness and benevolence by drawing upon republican schemas of ‘inalienable
rights.’ The politics here show clear secular-humanist tendencies.
This speech must be interpreted in relation to the gender binds of her context which would have been felt intensely in the halls of the state senate. In between the lines of her anti-slavery message is a feminist argument for improving women’s status, though her feminist ethos is still saturated with the sentimental logic of proper femininity as when she displays those deep naturalized feelings of sympathy toward the slave and especially her ‘sister in bonds.’ She reinforces the public enthymemes associating true womanhood with civilization’s higher sensibility to pain, indicating women’s moral superiority. The moral idealization of femininity is affirmed by her strong humanitarian language of ‘blood and sweat and tears.’ The speech also illustrates how the performance of ethos constitutes a means of persuasion: if women’s natural/higher moral sensibilities condemn slavery, then shouldn’t civilization as well?

Ethos work is also apparent in another section of the same speech. Before the following passage, she argues from scriptural precedents for the public work of abolitionist women. Then she compares the moral refinement of contemporary reform women with the morally degraded means of persuasion used by the biblical Esther to persuade the King of Persia to free her people:

Mr. Chairman, it is my privilege to stand before you on a similar mission of life and love; but I thank God that we live in an age of the world too enlightened and too moral to admit of the adoption of the same means [as Queen Esther] to obtain as holy an end. I feel that it would be an insult to this Committee, were I to attempt to win their favor by arraying my person in gold, and silver, and costly apparel, or by inviting them to partake of the luxurious feasts, or the banquet of wine. I understand the spirit of the age too well to believe that you could be moved by such sensual means—means as unworthy of you, as they would be beneath the dignity of the cause of humanity. Yes, I feel that if you are reached at all, it will not be by me, but by the truths I shall endeavor to present to your understandings and your hearts (Lerner 2004: 268).
This ethos work includes themes of women’s moral respectability as a legitimating rationale for their public speech. It is an assertion of authority as the right to speak, justified again mostly through evaluative affective-meanings (moral goodness). A likely subtext of this section of the speech is Grimké’s disavowal of the illicit sexual connotations attached to women public speakers. In referring to the age’s progress beyond the sensual means of persuasion used by Queen Esther, Grimké disassociates herself from the stigma of Fanny Wrightism. Lastly, Grimké again highlights the universality of humanity and truth irrespective of sex. Women are bound to the same natural laws as men, the laws that give all humanity the voice of conscience and reason. A minimal ethos-oriented appeal to ‘good sense’ or intellectual trustworthiness animates these tropes.

Grimké’s humanism and universalism exemplifies how the patrician-feminist persona activates emotional energy in order to overcome gender binds through ethos work. The conditions and possibility of patrician-feminist ethos work can be understood through existing social-psychological theories of emotion (e.g. Collins’s theory of emotional energy and Kemper’s status-power theory). Given her class and status background, her habitus of privilege, Grimké could access large stores of emotional energy, activating them as needed. Her reserve of emotional energy enabled her to transform herself on stage from anxiously deviant to serenely respectable. Her formal oratory was not a radical departure from already-possessed inclinations toward autonomy and confidence. High levels of emotional energy can be seen across the range of ethos-related traits discussed above, from the initial willingness to take rhetorical risks to other forms of religious and ideological deviance as well. The
patrician-feminist ethos was risk-tolerant and comfortable with dissent in multiple ways. Grimké and other patrician-feminists incorporated feminism into abolitionism through humanist schemas. Among the diverse groupings of abolitionist women, they were the most able to tackle the question of women’s secular political status and means of improving it head on.

THE PROPHETIC-FEMINIST ETHOS: STATUS SUMMONING

There are other means of rhetorical self-transformation and alternative styles of ethos work less reliant upon prior social standing. Prophetic feminism constructed an ethos based on persecution and martyrdom. Less secular and more Manichean than the Victorian discourse of the patrician feminists, prophetic speakers divinized themselves, drawing upon hermeneutic scripts and identifying with the chosen people. They interpreted and criticized slavery and racism through the religious imaginaries of sacred texts. Credible ethos was more difficult to achieve because of their low prior social standing. Confidence and trustworthiness had to come from other sources besides prior familial-cultural prestige. Instead of activating emotional energy from high-status positions, they developed ways of summoning emotional energy from religion via religious status-claimsmaking.

In the prophetic style of feminist ethos, abolitionist women speakers motivated and energized themselves by calling upon the cultural gods and invoking religion’s promissory notes. More likely to emerge in the rhetoric of black women speakers, the prophetic-feminists often lacked the white privileges invisible to patrician feminists.
Racial dispossession complicated and multiplied their gender status subordination. Often in proportion to their degree of marginalization by race, class and gender, they drew upon the evangelical, millennial cognitive-emotional resources of Protestantism. Ethos was less an activation of emotional energy from embodied-socialized sources, and more of a *summoning of emotional energy from the immaterial*, that is to say, the affective-meanings associated with religious collective representations. In status summoning, prophetic-feminists forged ethos from more distant reference groups vis-a-vis the local elite reference groups of patrician feminists. Their reference groups was the invisible church of the persecuted and martyred.

Prophetic feminism developed an idiosyncratic but comprehensive vision of justice that criticized multiple forms of oppression through an evangelical religious lens. As speakers they drew upon the cultural schemas and frames discussed in Chapter 3 under the Protestant-evangelical rhetoric of slavery. For them, the issue of slavery and women’s rights was unified through scriptural hermeneutics or a ‘Bible politics’ (to use a phrase from John Stauffer’s study of radical abolitionism, Stauffer 2002). These elements clearly predominate in the speeches of Maria W. Stewart who some historians hail as America’s first woman political speaker (Richardson 1987).

Not much is known about the biography of Stewart. She was an orphan from Connecticut who moved to Boston sometime in her twenties. She probably worked intermittently as low-paid teacher and a domestic servant. Her speeches address the unique oppressions faced by free black women in regards to inequalities in education, marriage and domestic-labor markets (see chapter 5 for more about Stewart). In a
speech from 1833, Stewart describes the religious experience that led her to take the
pulpit and persevere behind it:

I felt that I had a great work to perform; and was in haste to make a
profession of my faith in Christ, that I might be about my Father’s business
before me, and I spake before many. When going home, reflecting on what I
had said, I felt ashamed, and knew not where I should hide myself. A
something said within my breast, ‘Press forward, I will be with thee.’ And my
heart made this reply, Lord, if thou wilt be with me, then I will speak for thee
as long as I live. And thus far I have every reason to believe that it is the
divine influence of the Holy Spirit operating upon my heart that could
possibly induce me to make the feeble and unworthy efforts that I have
(Stewart 1833 speech, Richardson 1987: 67).

The speech exemplifies the affective dynamics at play in the feminist-prophetic style of
ethos work. Stewart came from humble origins and experienced the degrading
segregated labor markets in domestic service. In the social hierarchy of the day, she
was very low status (in terms of received status). Her authorization to speak and the
performed status of her ethos, owed less to pre-existing dispositions of high emotional
capital and more to the schemas and symbols of evangelical religion. She claimed no
education but the “teachings of the Holy Spirit” (Stewart 1832 speech, Richardson
1987: 45). Rhetorical self-divinization, or the pre-emptive ownership of divine
messages, is a hallmark of radical prophetic rhetoric (Darsey 1997).

It is all the more remarkable, given her class and status background, that
Stewart was able to surmount overlapping gender and racial binds to speak out
publicly. Fiercely opposed, crowds hissed at her, heckled and pelted her with
tomatoes. Where then did her emotional energy and stamina come from then? In a
speech delivered in Boston, 1832, Stewart unveils a bit of the sort of emotional energy
that energizes the prophet figure:
The frowns of the world shall never discourage me, nor its smiles flatter me; for with the help of God, I am resolved to withstand the fiery darts of the devil, and the assaults of wicked men...I fear neither men nor devils; for the God in whom I trust is able to deliver me from the rage and malice of my enemies, and from them that rise up against me (Stewart 1832 speech, Richardson 1987: 50).

Stewart adopts an otherworldly frame of reference, detached and transcending the sins of the world. She dis-identifies with local status politics, instead internalizing the distant reference groups imagined by evangelical Protestantism. Her otherworldly reference group leads her to feel determination and courage when surrounded by her worldly enemies. Compared to the patrician-feminism, Stewart’s willingness to take rhetorical risks seems even greater; I thus deem her emotional energy ‘risk-immune’ in contrast to the ‘risk-tolerant’ ethos of patrician-feminism. Further, her rhetoric is entirely feminist, but in a less abstract way: she condemns the ‘assaults of wicked men’ and the moral failures of black men. Her otherworldly religious schemas seem to immunize her to very real local threats of humiliation and violence. She also pushes ethos work to the limit: in her quite explicit rejection of performing ‘good sense’ or ‘good will,’ she risks alienating audiences. Predictably some auditors dismissed her as insane and blasphemous, rejecting her ethos work in self-divinization. The prophetic-feminist ethos exceeds the conciliatory, deliberative aims of the Aristotelian rhetorical tradition (one reason Darsey labels it ‘radical rhetoric,’ Darsey 1997).

In contrast to patrician-feminism’s activation of confidence from received social status, Stewart summons emotional energy from imaginary sources, such as cultural gods, distant reference groups and religious promissory notes. The last of these is evident here:
Do you ask, why are you ['daughters of Africa'] wretched and miserable? I reply, look at the many of the most worthy and most interesting of us doomed to spend our lives in gentlemen's kitchens...But ah! methinks our oppression is soon to come to an end; yea, before the Majesty of heaven, our groans and cries have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth [James 5:4].” (Stewart 1832 speech, Richardson 1987: 48-49).

Again we see that Stewart’s feminism is practically situated in the real problems of marginalization and dispossession in the lives of black women. Women of color were widely assumed to be domestics in northern cities. In the face of racial oppression and despair, Stewart summons energy from millennial hopes: she claims the ‘Lord of Saboath’ is responsive to injustice and pain and will intervene to end the oppression. Her optimism comes from millennial predictions about the coming of heaven on earth. Interestingly, her religious assurance in the ultimate victory of the righteous is echoed over two decades later by another prophetic-feminist abolitionist, Frances Ellen Watkins Harper:

Slavery is mean, because it tramples on the feeble and weak. A man comes with his affidavits from the South and hurries me before a commissioner; upon that evidence ex parte and alone he hitches me to the car of slavery and trails my womanhood in the dust...God is on the side of freedom; and any cause that has God on its side, I care not how much it may be trampled upon, how much it may be trailed in the dust, is sure to triumph (Frances Ellen Watkins Harper 1857 speech in Foner and Branham 1998: 307).

Harper’s eloquence stems partly from her repetition above of the words ‘trampled’ and ‘trailed in the dust.’ She figures slavery and womanhood together as positions of the victimized, persecuted weak, but with a twist. In the millennial cosmology of evangelical Protestantism, God is on the side of the weak and oppressed. Harper comes to feel the same hope that Stewart did in her prediction of all wrongs be righted
and abolition eventually triumphing. The cultural promissory notes of religion are one potential source of emotional energy for public speaking.

Prophetic-feminism relies upon status summoning to accomplish ethos work. Status summoning is an alternative way of generating the emotional energy needed to overcome gender-status binds in public speaking. It seems to emerge unpredictably from some people’s experience of dispossession, when there is little pre-existing privilege to cash-out on, through a religious framing of injustice. As we have seen, some key mechanisms can include the internalization of distant or imaginary reference groups (e.g. the martyred, the Israelites of the exodus, the invisible church, the heaven-bound) as well as subscription to culturally autonomous promissory notes (e.g., the ultimate victory of the righteous, the leveling of social difference in the new Jerusalem, the heavenly inheritance of the poor). Prophetic-feminism has a providential millennialist view of justice, problematizing gender status through biblical narratives (on redemptive womanhood, see Cutter 2003). Its abolitionist rhetoric especially enjoys the chiasmic tropes and resources of evangelical Protestantism, through which alternative status imaginaries are envisioned and performed.127

Through these means, some abolitionist women were able to generate emotional energy ex nihilo (on the formation of cultural imaginaries ex nihilo, see Castoriadis 1987 and Clemens 2007). If patrician-feminist abolitionist ‘cash out’ emotional energy to do ethos work, prophetic-feminist abolitionists pay with credit. They borrow emotional energy from a religiously framed future, inspired by inverted

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127 I am using the language of cultural autonomy (Alexader 2003) and creativity ex nihilo (Castoriadis 1987), not to try to dis-embed religion from social inequalities, but to oppose a certain reductionism in the sociology of emotion that tends to harness all emotional energy to material sources.
status imaginaries that oppose the profane status hierarchies of the world. By invoking these immaterial imaginaries, abolitionist women are energized to speak and condemn.

As qualified above, these distinctions are ideal-typical. The relationship between prior social standing and the prophetic-feminist ethos is not one-to-one, but can vary. An interesting case of this would be when patrician-feminists feel threatened by the risky circumstances surrounding a specific speaking occasion and in response to it either retreat or undergo radicalization. Ethos work is shaped by context and can shift between the two styles of feminist-abolitionism based on antecedent events. For example, while Angelina Grimké has clear tendencies toward patrician-feminist ethos work, as analyzed above, it is clear that she was also capable of the more prophetic genre of public speaking as seen in the opening vignette of chapter 2.

CONCLUSION

This chapter showed how various linkages between abolitionism and feminism were forged through the rhetorical performance of ethos. Ethos was the site of a social struggle over gender status within the abolitionist rhetoric of slavery. Radical abolitionism’s fluctuating support or at least tolerance for women public speakers was partly enabling of the feminist project, qua a sort of small-scale opportunity-structure for early feminists who then appropriated the rhetorical domain of public communication as an important means in the struggle for women’s status.128

128 In clear commemorative language, Elizabeth Cady Stanton expresses and reflects upon the unfolding of this opportunity structure within abolitionism, for instance: “Yes, this is the only organization on God’s footstool where the humanity of woman is recognized, and these are the only men who have every echoed back her cries for justice and equality...No the mission of this Radical Anti-Slavery Movement is
This chapter interrogated how and why women’s anti-slavery activities required a higher reflexivity about and greater orientation upon ethos relative to men’s privileging of both ‘pathos’ and ‘logos’ in slavery addresses, as we saw in the last chapter with the eloquence of abuse. I argued that the ethos work of women abolitionists was another kind of public speaking status bind, according with my arguments in chapter 5. Thus total, three types of abolitionist women’s feminist ethos work can be distinguished by levels of emotional energy, which, in turn, was often but not always determined by the individual’s prior social standing. By comparing two specific styles of feminist-ethos work among abolitionist women, the patrician-feminist and the prophetic-feminist, I constructed a theory of status summoning that advances beyond Collins’s notion of activating stored emotional energy and Kemper’s status-power theory of rhetorical eloquence to take into account culturally autonomous sources of emotional energy. Status summoning in the feminist-prophetic ethos generates the emotional energy needed to overcome public-speaking gender binds through self-divinization, distant reference groups, alternative status imaginaries and religious promissory notes.

Ethos work is an important initial phase in social movement rhetoric for many women movement participants. Ultimately, though, if the goal of ethos work is persuasion, patrician-feminist abolitionists were more successful than the prophetic-feminists. Patrician-feminists spoke with local elites in mind, displaying good will toward them. Prophets are not as gentle and ‘serene.’ Nonetheless, this study shows

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not to the African slave alone, but to the slaves of custom, creed and sex, as well, and most faithfully has it done its work” (1860 speech, quoted in Ceplair 1989: 2).
that multiple possibilities of ethos work exist that can increase the rhetorical power and social-movement agency of status-subordinated groups. Both the *respectability* of the patricians and the *radicalism* of the prophets can be important strategies in overcoming status binds. The theory of status summoning is important for recognizing the performative agency and persistence of marginalized actors in protest.
Chapter 9
Looking Back Ahead

VIOLENT ABOLITION, OR WHEN STATUS CONFLICTS EXPLODE

Unlike other colonial territories and empires swept away by the Age of Emancipation, the abolition of slavery in the United States was incredibly violent. The emancipation of four million slaves through federal force was a revolutionary event like no other in American history—politically, economically, culturally, and intellectually (Menand 2001). There are other nineteenth-century instances of slavery being abolished without the gross costs of war including, we should note, the casualties of slaves freed by fiat during the war who joined Union troops and died in battle. A question for future historical sociologists of American abolition is why was this violence necessary or what configurational path-dependent sequence made it so (here using ‘path-dependence’ in the same sense discussed in Chapter 2)? In this concluding chapter I briefly outline how my main dissertation findings could contribute to this question, if perhaps a sequel book were on the agenda. The more terminal account of American slavery included here flows seamlessly from the previous chapter in how I again utilize theories of gender, power, and moral panic to understand several escalatory dynamics in the conflict over slavery.

Historians today emphasize the immense economic profitability of American slavery especially in the decades following the cotton revolution. Historians stress the political power of southern slaveholding elites over the national state apparatus, a
power they were not willing to abdicate voluntarily. More and more historians also appreciate the depth and tenacity of white supremacy in early American nationalism to which changes in the racial status order were deeply disturbing. What all of these accounts have in common is only a minor indirect role for the abolitionists and their tactics of national agitation (pace Piven 2006 and my own account below). Recent quite reputable historians have speculated, counterfactually, that without coercive intervention by Union armies, American racial slavery would have lasted well into the twentieth century (e.g. Davis 2014 for one). Given the capitalist profitability of southern slavery vis-a-vis wage-labor regimes, and given the rising vehemence of proslavery ideology, it begs the question whether any northern ‘rhetoric’ of slavery could do any good. Since persuasion is out of the picture, do men and women abolitionists become irrelevant as well as their status-rhetorics and emotion cultures?

I think not. In this conclusion I return to the temporal sequence of abolitionism and emancipation in the United States, this time turning my attention to the devolution of rhetoric into violence. What role did the rhetorical status conflicts of fiercely divided national publics play in bringing about a set of sociopolitical conditions in which there seemed to be no other way out other than war? (on perceptions of ‘no way out’ and violent movements, see Goodwin 2001). Future sociologists, as suggested already by historians of the matter, will surely come to trace complex conjunctures of causes and excavate complex overdeterminations of meaning in any fuller social explanation of violent abolition. I can only scratch the surface here which I do, admittedly a bit more speculatively than in the previous chapters, by examining the temporal effects of two intersecting dimensions of the rhetoric of slavery: gender and religion. I hope to add a
few observations stemming from the analyses of previous chapters to the recent interest of several historians, for instance Varon (2008) and Whites (2005; 1992), in demonstrating the centrality of gender to the sequence of antebellum conflict escalation in the U.S.

How did abolitionist actions, antislavery emotion culture and, in particular, antislavery rhetorics of gender, have a formative influence upon the social conditions in which intrastate violence over slavery seemed inevitable and thus became plausible? I believe that reexamining the gender dimension of the ‘sectional conflict’ can disclose new light on how American systems of gender absolutism reinforced the pathway toward intrastate secession and war in the conflict over slavery. I unfold the argument by comparing three different forms of appealing to feminine purity and masculine honor. Below I term them rhetorical methods of marshaling the feminine, i.e. how idealized femininity was used, sometimes explosively, by both men and women as a peculiar resource for status-claiming and/or status-degrading opponents.¹²⁹

The affective dynamics of such rhetoric accelerated and absolutized the conflict over slavery as did the new humanitarian discourse which divided opponents along the symbolic boundaries of in-humanity (Abruzzo 2011 is suggestive in this regard, a la Carl Schmitt). I thus posit some relationship between a variety of cultural absolutisms—including in some cases, religious nationalism, humanitarianism, and as I show below

¹²⁹ In doing so, I accomplish several historiographical goals: i. I affirmed the cultural-structural synthetic vision of ‘third wave’ historical sociology by showing how thoroughly emotional/cultural/religious gender formations exerted significant causal influence; and, I demonstrated the potential of new attempts to bring social-psychological theorizing back into historical sociology in a more responsible antireductive way, for instance, avoiding past mistakes of psychologism in status-analyses of the abolitionists; and iii. finally, I contributed to the literature on civil war causation / causes of U.S. abolition by showing how antislavery emotion-culture and its gendered rhetorics of slavery were influential upon abolition outcomes albeit not as straightforwardly as activists (nor historians) imagined it.
also certain gender ideologies—and the inability to manage conflicts through the rhetorical deliberation of normal politics (c.f. Kronsell & Svedberg 2012). Among these competing contested absolutisms, nineteenth-century processes of feminine idealizations distinctive to U.S. culture played a part in the escalation of status conflicts in the rhetoric of slavery. Additionally here I integrate many of the social-psychological social-movement phenomena touched upon in previous chapters—including social problems construction, moral panics, status-power rhetorics and their emotional energy—to shed light upon this path-dependent sequence. The emerging picture interconnects cultural processes of sacralization, religion, gender, status and war in ways that continue to apply well to instances of humanitarian warfare today (Kronsell & Svedberg 2012). Recent political scientists have similarly re-assessed and elevated status conflicts and the role of reputation among potential causes of war (Dafoe et al 2014; c.f. Wimmer 2014; Appiah 2010).

On a more personal note, in conceptualizing this conclusion I originally sought to study the effects of feminine idealization upon abolitionist women, how it motivated and/or constrained them (as a sort of conclusion to chapter 8). But this is well researched already (the secondary literature on gender and abolitionism is a true macro-level phenomenal!). Increasingly I grew interested in the public rhetoric of feminine idealization, including how men in politics, religion, and the press were also energized and/or constrained by it as a gender belief-system. I came to realize that sentimental femininity was used as a basis of status claimsmaking and as a means of conflict between men, for instance, in the politics of slavery. In addition to benevolent reform women, antislavery and proslavery men also drew upon femininity as an
affectively intense cultural resource. Gender symbolism was not confined to the expression of gender identity (as sociologists of gender are well aware). Hence, I still think feminine-idealization played a causal role in the U.S. sequence of immediate abolition, partly because of how it motivated reform women but also partly because of how it emotionally escalated status conflicts between both women and men. In regards to “civil war causation,” my gender-status account thus redescribes and generalizes the Wyatt-Brown thesis of southern honor cultures, and it supplements the current consensus on the primacy of slavery (Wyatt-Brown 1986; 1985).

GENDER ABSOLUTISM IN AMERICAN CULTURE

The transatlantic nineteenth-century saw the rise of new gender-essentialist cultures. The increasingly exclusive sentimentalization of femininity was one of these. Colonial generations in the U.S. prized the public emotional sentiments and sociability of men, but by the 1830s these tender feelings were mostly privatized and localized in women’s bodies and the domestic sphere (Burstein 1999). Across newspapers, novels, sermons and ladies magazines, women’s inclination toward sympathy and sensibility was naturalized. Women were framed as possessing religious innocence, fragile ‘nerves,’ and a greater moral sensitivity to suffering of others. Occurring at the same time, historian Zagarri (2007) observes, was a dispossession of women’s (already quite limited) political agency in the early 1800s after the turmoil of Revolution.

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130 Definitely, important place for ‘pathos’ as the excitation of violent emotions in this analysis.
The secondary literature on the topic of gender and the politics of slavery is justly humungous (for a recent overview, see Kellow 2013). Many historians have demonstrated the importance of hundreds of thousands of northern women enacting benevolent femininity in producing mass antislavery petitions (Zaeske 2003), fundraising, boycotting and/or sheltering fugitives (Jeffrey 1997; Faulkner 2011; Horton 2013). Women writers and speakers appealed to ‘domestic feminism’ to portray slavery as a violation of the sacred-moral American family (Ashworth 1992; Roth 2014).

Previous studies have examined differences in northern and southern conceptions of masculinity, often focusing on the role of honorific cultures of the south and how they distorted perceptions of the antislavery threat (Wyatt-Brown 1986). One historian has memorably argued that the civil war was a “crisis in gender” (Whites 1992). The crisis included divergences in gender ideologies between Democratic proslavery patriarchy—the prerogative right to patriarchy that free yeomen shared with slaveholders—versus moderate Republican steps toward feminism and ‘restrained masculinity’ (Pierson 2003). In her recent work on the rhetorical origins of the civil war, Varon (2008) emphasizes the role of anxieties over femininity and gender disorder in influencing attitudes toward sectional “disunion.”

Antebellum femininity was a powerful gender construct or ‘cultural resource’ that both women and men drew upon albeit in quite different ways. Reform women directed the energies of moral idealization toward voluntary civil-society pursuits, many of which were encouraged and praised. Women performed and reiterated the cultural logic of proper femininity, but also used the construct to promote their own agency and status (Ginzberg 1990; Ryan 1997; 1990; and many others). Men also cited and drew
upon femininity, finding that the rhetoric of femininity could amplify and certify their
d Public position-takings. Antislavery and proslavery men competed to most control and
claim ownership over those feminine significations of virtue, purity and truth.

According to the historian Cutter (2003), women of the new republic were hailed
as playing a grand salvific role in the nation. Even low status women could potentially
tap into and benefit from beliefs in “redemptive womanhood” (Cutter 2003). The

The idealization of women in antebellum American culture was heavily religious
and superlatively strange in some respects (for remarkable, counter-intuitive
extensions of redemptive womanhood, see Cutter 2003). A cursory comparison with
postrevolutionary France suggests that women were not as morally and religiously
idealized there as they were in the U.S. around the same time (as discussed in Joan
Landes’s work 1989). We can triangulate this hypothesis with some extracts from the
famous travel literature of the 1830s, including an observation on American attitudes
toward women by Harriet Martineau from England and then similar comments by Alexis
de Tocqueville from France. In Society in America, Martineau writes:
The American woman “is told that her lot is cast in the paradise of women: and there is no country in the world where there is so much boasting of the ‘chivalrous’ treatment she enjoys. That is to say,—she has the best place in stage-coaches: when there are not chairs enough for everybody, the gentlemen stand: she hears oratorical flourishes on public occasions about wives and home, and apostrophes to woman: her husband’s hair stands on end at the idea of her working, and he toils to indulge her with money: she has the liberty to get her brain turned by religious excitements...and, especially, her morals are guarded by the strictest observance of propriety in her presence. In short, indulgence is given her as a substitute for justice. Her case differs from that of the slave, as to the principle, just so far as this: that the indulgence is large and universal, instead of petty and capricious (Martineau Vol III: 156).

So to Martineau, excessive feminine idealization seemed somewhat distinctive of the U.S. No country “boasts” as much about its women, her innocence and respect. She perceives that performances of masculine status, or chivalry, are really behind it. Martineau thus both observes the high religious-moral connotations of American femininity and sees through it. She rightly notes that feminine idealization and status subordination are two sides of the same coin.

Now, de Tocqueville’s turn:

In no country has such constant care been taken as in America to trace two clearly distinct lines of action for the two sexes and to make them keep pace one with the other, but in two pathways that are always different (1840: 212)... There are people in Europe who, confounding together the different characteristics of the sexes, would make man and woman into beings not only equal but alike...It is not thus that the Americans understand that species of democratic equality which may be established between the sexes. They admit that as nature has appointed such wide differences between the physical and moral constitution of man and woman, her manifest design was to give a distinct employment to their various faculties; and they hold that improvement does not consist in making beings so dissimilar do pretty nearly the same things, but in causing each of them to fulfill their respective tasks in the best possible manner. (1840: 211).

In the United States men seldom compliment women, but they daily show how much they esteem them...It is true that the Americans rarely lavish upon women those eager attentions which are commonly paid them in Europe, but...
their conduct to women always implies that they suppose them to be virtuous and refined; and such is the respect entertained for the moral freedom of the sex that in the presence of a woman the most guarded language is used lest her ear should be offended by an expression...the Americans can conceive nothing more precious than a woman’s honor...

(1840: 213)

In the same section Tocqueville expresses his surprise at the tenacity with which Americans assert the “equality of the sexes” through defenses of women’s moral superiority while at the same time they change not her social inferiority. Both Martineau and Tocqueville make comments about the religious inflection of femininity in the U.S. though neither do so with much admiration. Tocqueville’s line, *Americans conceive nothing more precious than a woman’s honor*, suggests the extent to which sentimental femininity was made a sacred value in U.S. with symbolic and emotional attachments similar to that of a religious good. It also may hint to us, perhaps with hindsight bias, the violence with which Americans would be willing to defend feminine purity.

In sum, these quotes from two foreign travelers of the 1830s usefully illustrate and confirm the presence of a distinctive and excessive kind of gender absolutism in the U.S. characterized by the maximization of conceptions of sexual difference and feminine idealization. Antebellum femininity in the U.S. from the 1820s to the 1850s was a religiously co-articulated, and an exceptionally absolutist type of gender essentialism. One, the cultural construction of femininity in this time period was thoroughly embedded in a highly religious Protestant civil-society in the U.S. following the Second Great Awakening. Performances of femininity were simultaneously performances of religion given women’s supposed innate religious impulse. Second,
this religiously articulated femininity was part of a culturally specific system of gender essentialism. It was a highly relational and partly regressive postrevolutionary interpretation of sexual difference in the U.S. that I call gender absolutism.

Gender absolutism is a type of gender essentialism characterized by the cultural-religious-affective maximization of sexual difference. In the early nineteenth-century U.S., it took the form of feminine idealization, i.e., how femininity was constructed as religiously and morally superior than masculinity. Gender absolutism radicalizes gender essentialism by increasing the asymmetrical distribution of the affective-meanings that are constitutive of status-beliefs (see below). Feminine idealization is a modern type of gender essentialism based upon the moral-sentimentalization of women, having strong religious overtones in the American case.

Further, feminine idealization seemed to be especially volatile in public communication and status conflicts for a variety of reasons. Like other religious constructs, it was a culturally autonomous source of mobilizatory emotional energy. Because of its rhetorical power, male claimsmakers appeared highly concerned with policing, controlling, and/or projecting the meanings of femininity for their own ends. Feminine idealization thus served multiple functions simultaneously. It was a patriarchal legitimating vehicle of gender status-subordination in the new republic of brothers, in which citizenship assumed masculinity. And it was a highly effective source of adversarial status-claims between men (and women) in public. Predictably relational

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131 Feminine idealization is, in Cecilia Ridgeway’s terms, a primary framing device, i.e., a person-construction emerging from status inequality (Ridgeway 2011). In Ridgeway’s theory of gender status, women are framed as possessing high relational-emotional properties, but low in competence/rationality.
and heteronormative, the rhetoric of femininity was thoroughly entangled with
masculine status: projections of polluted femininities were perceived as personal
threats to men’s honor.

As a sociologist wanting to making a theoretical contribution, I utilize
innovations gender-status theory (Ridgeway 2011; also status-power theory, Kemper
2011) and affect control theory (Heise 2007; 1979; Rogers et al 2013) to systematically
identify potential causal linkages between antebellum gender formations and the
abolition of slavery. After contextualizing feminine idealization in American culture and
modern gender absolutism, I try to tease out some of the more direct connections or
mechanisms between feminine idealization, masculine honor, and the violent war over
slavery. Essentialist conceptions of gender, or as I’ve argued absolutist conceptions of
masculinity and femininity played an integral role in constructing threats, in generating
sympathy for the antislavery or proslavery cause, in mobilizing votes and petition
signatures, and in provoking antiabolitionist backlash, moral panic and overreaction.

Modern gender status was constructed upon these nineteenth century
landscapes of meaning. Religious cultural traditions helped to construct femininity as
having sacred properties in the U.S. Despite disenfranchise, and the deprivation of
citizenship, women’s civic presence and symbolism was sought out by political parties
seeking to capitalize by association with women as symbol-bearers of truth, virtue, and
disinterested care for the nation (Waldstreicher 1997; Pierson 2003). As women were
sentimentalized as pious pure and proud symbols of the republic, men to the contrary
were constructed as more self-interested, powerful and to some extent, less morally
restrained given participation in markets and parties that were coded less Christian and less civic-republican (Ashworth 1992). In this way, antebellum sentimentalism maximized the affective, relational asymmetries of gender essentialism.

This emerging cultural configuration was an absolutist form of gender essentialism. In it feminine status acquired a near null value in public rationality, political power, and instrumental competence. To understand the distinctiveness of gender absolutism, affect-control theories of intergroup stereotyping are useful (Heise 2007; Rogers 2013 et al). Affect control theory dissects and measures the belief-components of stereotypes through three different semantic registers of “affective meaning”: evaluation (goodness), potency (power), and activity (activity/passivity). As a maximization of sexual difference, gender absolutism multiplies the asymmetrical distribution of affective-meanings almost to the logical limit. In other words, all qualities of an affective-cognitive register are all distributed to men or all distributed to women.

To put this more concretely, in American feminine idealization, gender stereotyping assigns 100% of evaluation-meanings to women, but 0% of potency/activity meanings. Femininity’s associations with religious purity and moral goodness (high evaluation) were maximized. In inverse proportion, men’s monopoly over the semantic registers of potency and activity grew. And as women’s high evaluative connotations increased, the evaluative rankings of predominantly male occupations and identities declined. Lastly, the affective-meanings of potency and activity were minimized for women. Remnants of this affective-cognitive patterning of gender status are of course still with us. Today we recognize this evaluation/potency
disparity as essentially constitutive of status distinctions (Ridgeway 2011). We certainly still have the gender essentialism and gender status inequalities (think of horizontal occupational sex-segregation), but the degree of asymmetrical absolutization today seems less in comparison to antebellum feminine idealization. Thus the notion of gender absolutism can be a useful heuristic for thinking historically about differences in levels and kinds of gender essentialism. It suggests some historical difference when we are use to thinking in continuity.

MARSHALING THE SACRED FROM THE RHETORIC OF SLAVERY TO CIVIL WAR

An oddity in American gender absolutism is that a vehicle of gender status-subordination, idealized femininity, became an instrument of status claimsmaking. When dominant in a society, gender absolutism conditions and permeates all fields and institutions in that society. Operating much like a species of symbolic capital, feminine idealization becomes another culturally available resource in the struggle for social status (i.e. ‘feminine capital’ was a peculiarly affective/evaluative coinage in the general currency of symbolic capital). Various social groups tried to stand next to the evaluative aura of femininity. Vice versa groups tried to degrade the status of the other by projecting a polluted femininity upon opponents of a reference group. Such projections were simultaneously acts of gender policing.

A further oddity is that this gendered means of status claimsmaking destroyed the conditions of its own existence by helping propel the politics of slavery from status

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132 There are certainly absolutist archetypes constantly reappearing in popular culture, including masculinity as the dark hero (low evaluation, high potency and activity)
games to battles over power. Within a heteronormative matrix, status-summoning the sacred-feminine and/or projecting the unfeminine is deeply threatening to masculine status. My argument is that appropriating and expropriating feminine idealization constrained conflictual action and ultimately reduced the options for creative deliberation.

Analytically I distinguish three mechanisms or processes through which feminine idealization escalated status conflicts in violent directions. To stress the relational entanglements of feminine and masculine status in the discourse surrounding slavery, I refer to these three processes as marshaling the feminine. Each refers to a mediating, incendiary influence femininity held upon the masculinist politics of slavery:

1. **Policing polluted femininity** refers to collective disturbances arising from women’s gender deviance and the unintentional consequences of gender status backlash. Moral panics over deviance and subsequent policing and claimsmaking are central concepts here.

2. **Calibrating the sacred feminine** refers to how both men and women shape, invoke, and activate the significations and sentiments attached to femininity constructs for political purposes. This concept develops a cultural-sociology explanation of how appeals to the sacred feminine heighten status conflicts.

3. **Victimizing the feminine other**, lastly, refers to adversarial claimsmaking again open to men and women that that involves accusations of moral femininity being violated. The concept is not about the accuracy of the victimization model per se, but
about how, given entanglements of feminine purity and masculine honor, the antislavery rhetoric of sexual victimization was especially explosive.

**Policing (& Panicking Over) Polluted Femininity:**

Moral panics over perceptions of gender deviance are probably more likely in societies with a history of gender-absolute. With the exception of Varon (2008), historians have underestimated the role of gendered collective anxieties and moral-panic emotions at key turning points before the Civil War. Elements typically associated with the phenomena of ‘moral panic’ are clearly present in conflicts over slavery. Notably actual riots and mobs erupted over charges of abolitionist ‘promiscuity’ and ‘amalgamationism’ in the 1830s and on after revolutions in the technologies of mass communication. In my view of them, moral panic phenomena are characterized by violations of cultural scripts and how those acts of deviance produce the ‘excitement of violent emotions’ (what Cicero calls *pathos*). Hostile, angry and resentful emotions triggered antiabolitionist reactions to interracial assemblies as well as the backlash against women abolitionist orators who violated those Pauline injunctions to keep silent. Moral-panic wise, abolitionist women were demonized as ‘folk devils’ disturbing the social order. Angelina Grimké was especially incendiary as a southern woman who came to disavow her wealthy plantation heritage. As mentioned in a previous chapter, in fact she was actually nicknamed “Devil-ina” by unreceptive northerners and southerners.
In *Moral Panics, Sex Panics*, Herdt (2009) observes “an endless series of sexualized moral panics in American culture,” a series we can trace even further back into the nineteenth century and no doubt before. Moral panics over gender deviance can be more or less ‘sexualized,’ as we will see below. Why are there so many ‘sexualized moral panics’ in U.S. civil society and politics? In my view, the answer partly has to do with the American history of gender absolutism making social panics over gender and gender-specific sexual deviance more likely and more intense. Societies with a high value on female purity devote greater resources to protecting feminine-idealized sexual purity. With Mary Douglass’s work, we can expect perceptions of sex-gender deviance to produce all the collective anxieties associated with boundary violations. Similar emotions seem present in status backlash against status-subordinates who overstep their bounds. Herdt (2009) also acknowledges the real danger and violence caused by moral sexualized gender panics: lives are literally at (the) stake.

Another common trait of moral-panic phenomena is an exaggeration of the actual danger posed by a social threat (e.g. fears of social decline or imminent collapse). Moral panics consist in overreactions to perceived threats. All of these elements of a moral panic, boundary violations, collective disturbance and exaggerated threat, can be seen over and over again in antebellum politics and civil society.

Historians have documented all the ways in which Southern politicians reacted

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133 In this paragraph, I am putting the ‘sex panic’ label in scare quotes to emphasize that gender and sexuality are relatively autonomous dimensions of power. The two forms of power qua conformity/deviance can also intersect and influence each other. For instance, in the rhetoric of feminine victimization, rape and sexual coercion were part of the sexual-scandal elements of the public debate. Gender-deviance dynamics overlapped with sexual-scandal dynamics. Thanks to Amy Wilkins for helping me clarify this.
counterproductively to abolitionist threats that they interpreted much worse than they actually were (Davis 2014). When translated into proslavery policy and law, these overreactions by the Slave Power alienated large swaths of northerners. The south-controlled House passed offensive, unrepoman ‘gag rules’ to shelve all antislavery petitions. Notably an estimated 70% of antislavery petition signers were women. Southerners were also personally outraged by the idea (and fact) of northern men and women aiding fugitive slaves in direct disobedience of federal law (despite relatively minor overall costs). The Draconian new fugitive laws imposed in response were ultimately extremely counterproductive in inspiring northern animosity and resistance (see Davis 2014 for a synthesis of these points).

Panicky demonization ran both north and south. Southerners pointed to feminist-abolitionist “monsters” to brush all northern antislavery with the taint of gender deviance. Problematizing and policing polluted femininity by such claimsmaking was discrediting of other position-takings. Southerners were likewise accused of gender impropriety. Abolitionists framed slavery as a violation of sentimental femininity. Slavery brought coercive tyranny and market corruption into the family (Ashworth 1992). Thus casting aspersions of polluted femininity was a rhetorical resource in the politics of slavery. Accusations of gender deviance framed and amplified the debate and implicitly put masculine status in doubt. Of course, attacks on polluted femininity were also form of status backlash against women, a way of reinforcing and policing women’s conformity with gender norms. The women who knowingly broke these norms produced some of the violent emotions escalating the conflict.
In reality, most of the historical efficacy of the abolitionist movement, including the many courageous petition-signing and speech-making women, probably came from being an unintentional catalyst in this sequence of moral panics, perceived threat and demonization (c.f. Ellingson 1995). In violating codes of true femininity, abolitionist women drove this sequence forward. In answer to the question regarding who abolished slavery, referring to grand men in congress is not enough. The question instead becomes how did powerful men respond in violence-inducing ways to the polluted agency of gender-deviant women? Women’s agency and resultant gender-related panics must be acknowledged as a main cause of the path-dependent sequence of conflict escalation.

Calibrating the Sacred Feminine

The second type of marshaling I call calibrating the sacred feminine. Like other sacred objects, sentimental femininity produced collective emotional energy, or specifically, group pride, nostalgia, loyalty and selflessness or a sense of disinterest. And like other cultural gods, the feminine sacred signaled the legitimacy of one’s reference group, which through feminine tokenism was stamped with the aura of righteousness or rightness. We should note immediately that men capitalized on the high evaluative rankings of womanhood without abrogating the masculine monopoly over power.

In contrast to the policing of polluted femininities, here men and women closely identify with and perform gender conformity. Claims to high status are made implicitly by placing oneself in proximity to the evaluating rankings of femininity, being extremely
This form of status claimsmaking prizes and proprietizes the good woman’s conformity with feminine scripts and symbols. It is a ‘tokenization’ in the strongest literal meanings of the word. In cultures of feminine idealization, public claims to masculine status can also be articulated through feminized images and frames. Indeed, claiming group respectability through demonstrations of proper submissive femininity was a common strategy among even status-subordinated groups as well (Yee 1992). Such citations always involve a performative adaptation of true womanhood, a situational calibration of feminine standards according to the status-power goals of the claimsmakers, including making adjustments of femininity more appealing to certain constituents. Gender status-beliefs and general status-subordination is reproduced and reiterated through such public demonstrations of femininity.

Antebellum men in politics, religion and the press capitalized the positive affective-meanings of feminine idealization. Various political parties including the Whigs and Free-Soilers invited women to the stage to demonstrate true womanhood and moral motherhood. Pierson (2003) examines how antislavery politicians stylized the rhetoric of feminine-idealization to cater to various audiences. They drew upon gender and family ideologies as a resource for generating positive political affects, those group-oriented feelings of pride, loyalty, disinterest and righteousness. The emerging Republican party committed itself to a vision of “female morality, male restraint, and

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134 I'm willing to venture, in societies as strongly heterosexual and gender-essentialist as the antebellum U.S., femininity is a routine medium of men’s status exchange (maybe Levi-Strauss and Lacan were on to something here). Perhaps there is also a correlation here between the degree of feminine idealization (moralization) and the urgency or anxiety men feel to control, manage and police those significations.
sentimental marriage.” But, as Pierson notes, parties simultaneously and
contradictorily disavowed apolitical connotations of sentimental femininity (its null
potency rankings and medium activity ratings). Labeling this ‘gender bifurcation,’
Pierson shows how such contradictory (dis)identifications appealed to more radical
voters without losing the support of moderates. Male claimsmakers tried to control the
interpretations of the sacred-feminine (qua high evaluation affective-meanings) but
without sacrificing masculine status (qua high potency and activity affective-
meanings). 135

In this way, distinctive processes of feminine idealization influenced American
political culture during period transitioning toward mass popularized politics. A related
gendered ‘perfectionist’ family-oriented political style still seems present in
contemporary political campaigns, in which politicians try just as eagerly to benefit
from the aura of sentimental femininity (as well as the sentimentalization of children and
pets). American religious constructs of femininity became a source of status-
summoning and its production of mobilizatory emotional energy.

The affective dynamics of feminine idealization heightened political conflicts in a
way perhaps similar to how religion and politics sometimes mix in volatile ways
(Juergensmeyer 2003). Claiming the sacred, in our case, the gender-absolute had
radicalizing effects upon men and women. A part of this was how men’s status was so
closely entangled with the presentation and ‘protection’ of women’s gender
conformity. Competing calibrations of the sacred feminine were personally threatening

135 The strategy makes social-psychological sense, according to the principles of affect balance theory:
positive or negative affective attachments are unconsciously transferred through the psychological need
for affective balance (Fritz Heider).
to antebellum male politicians. For instance, the Free-Soil's framing of sacred-femininity as romantic and 'free' was a direct challenge to the Democratic Party's patriarchal defense of all yeoman rights to self-sovereignty, including both black subordination and female submission (Pierson 2003; c.f. Whites 2005). Losing control over interpretations of the sacred feminine was collectively felt as disturbing and threatening to many Americans, making a status-power 'game switch' from rhetorical claimsmaking (status games) to compliance enforcement (power games) seem more reasonable. Hence, calibrating the sacred-feminine was another provocative marshalling of the feminine in the conflict over slavery.

_Victimizing the feminine other_

The final form of marshalling the feminine is victimization. I am referring to the rhetoric not the reality of victimization, i.e., the problematization of women’s degrading treatment by various claimsmakers and how such depictions further called into question the status claims of other men (worth, sincerity, and credibility). Victimizing the feminine other refers to incendiary accusations of how women are treated by opponents of a reference group. By portraying the feminine other as a victim of cruelty and corruption, adversaries degraded, demonized and discredited status-claims by the other. Rather than a policing of gender deviance or a calibration of the sacred-feminine, this is a problematization of violations of sacred/sentimental femininity. If Tocqueville was correct in the above quote, that antebellum Americans could imagine
nothing as precious as woman’s honor, victimizing the feminine other called that honor into question and thus assaulted the status of the other.

Narratives and depictions of feminine victimization were used by both sides in the politics of slavery to repudiate an opponent’s position-takings. Southerners claimed the factory wage-labor of many northern women to be foul, unfeminine, and even more degrading than slavery. From the other side, northerner charges of immoral wickedness on the slave plantation struck harder. As antislavery rhetoric radicalized in the debate with proslavery ideology it called for more public attention to widespread sexual violence occurring in slave huts and fields. Radical men and women abolitionist writers violated the southern code of silence on this matter. Always concerned with credibility and supportive evidence, abolitionists used the simple logic of mulatto birth rates to indict southern monstrosity in how slave women were treated (Walters 1973; Clark 1995; Lasser 2008; c.f. Abruzzo’s 2011 discussion of Weld’s American Slavery As It Is). Several prominent antislavery politicians also called attention to the violence of rape and the shame of adultery plaguing the system of slavery (see Kammerer for an analysis of the pornographic dimensions of antislavery rhetoric). By discussing victimization as a rhetorical means of marshalling the feminine, I mean to echo Abruzzo’s statement that “The very real wrongs suffered by enslaved African Americans stood in the shadow of debates about the character and reputations of white Americans and their localities, as well as the anxieties of whites about their civility and refinement” (2011: 78-79). The honor of the South was at stake in these depictions. Southern nationalism and paternalistic proslavery were being discredited.
Not surprisingly, accused reference groups reacted adversely to references to a violated sacred femininity. An implied loss of women’s honor (i.e., moral purity) in one’s reference group was a threat to men’s honor as well (i.e., independence, self-mastery and paternal chivalry). Masculine status was dependent upon policing women’s status because perceptions of gender deviance could be ad hominem fodder in the struggle for credibility. White men’s reputations were inevitably entangled with women’s honor, including perceptions of the purity of both white and black women. Awareness of black women’s sexual victimization held damaging implications for southern honor. And perhaps more than the other types of marshalling the feminine, accusations of feminine victimization hyperbolic or not produced immediate violent backlash (Pierson 2003).

One last observation to make here about the relationship between feminine idealization and violence. The sentimentalization of femininity overlapped quite a bit with new the humanitarian discourse problematizing the deliberate infliction of physical pain. Not only antislavery but proslavery writers felt obligated by it and participated in this modern discourse when they defended slavery paternalistically. While the role of gender in the rise of humanitarian discourse has not been traced, as far as I know, the two were bound together by the affective logic of late sentimentalism. Sympathy was naturalized as feminine at the same time that sympathy toward the physical pain of others was becoming a sign of moral humanness in general. One implication of these cultural developments is that victimizing the feminine other was tantamount to a dehumanization of the enemy. In antislavery rhetoric, slaveholders who willingly
inflicted pain and committed violence (including sexual violence) against their slaves were spiritually dead, morally wicked and, importantly, inhumane.

Abruzzo observes that “instead of settling the debate, humanitarianism, and claims of cruelty and benevolence, only escalated it and created a war of competing narratives aims at establishing the true nature of slavery” (2011: 160). The same can be said of feminine-idealization and its mirror opposite, feminine victimization. Attacks on the sacred-feminine escalated the rhetoric of slavery to a breaking point. That is to say, charges of violating sacred femininity were felt to be incompatible with the language-game of status. They were fighting words, honor codes revoked, that tore the voluntary status-abiding social fabric apart. By increasing perceptions of disorder and by posing threats to masculine status, the emotional energy of feminine idealization accelerates conflict sequences toward violence. The pathos of femininity, its production of violent emotions, amplified and ultimately imploded the rhetoric of slavery.

The relationship presumed here between gender, humanitarianism and warfare should not be surprising to contemporary intellectuals (for contemporary analysis, see Kronsell & Svedberg 2012). Motifs of female victimization are common in the run up to humanitarian warfare still today (or one might say, imperial activism). They continue to provide a compelling, often supplementary moral justification for military intervention even today. Violence is rationalized to save women from violence. Unfortunately, it is beyond the reach of this dissertation to wrestle with the ethics of such issues.

CONCLUSION
This terminal sketch of abolitionism deepened the status-power redescription of interconnections between gender and emotion (as initiated by the previous chapter). I developed a hypothesis about the social effects of gendered processes of sacralization in inclining the U.S. politics of slavery toward extrapolitical violence. In highly religious gender-absolutist societies like the antebellum U.S., the purity-coded emotional energy of masculinity/femininity is thus volatile, finding both ‘redemptive’ and violent outlets.

The chapter highlighted the relevance of gender absolutism in understanding the devolution of rhetorical deliberation into violence. Analytically I disaggregated the mediating excitatory influence of feminine idealization upon the U.S. conflict over slavery into three modes of *marshaling the feminine*: policing polluted femininity; calibrating the sacred feminine; victimizing the feminine other. Feminine idealization among other gendered absolutes are ironically a potent affective resource in public communications and conflicts: it is simultaneously a legitimating vehicle of gender status-subordination and a means of making adversarial emotionally intense status claims between mixed-gender publics. The logic of gender-absolutism motivating antebellum men and women, in politics, religion and the press, accounts partly for why violence was necessary to abolish slavery in the U.S., thus filling a gap in existing political-economic explanations. Mainly by posing threats to status (Wyatt-Brown 1986; Dafoe et al 2014), the extraction of emotional energy from a variety of absolutisms tilts and/or accelerates conflict sequences toward violence.
Conclusion

This dissertation approached the cultural changes and challenges of slavery’s problematization concretely through social movement processes. Webs and elements of culture can exist and be inherited without their combinations automatically being influential. We saw this to be the case regarding unoriginal discursive binaries of slavery and freedom, of sin and salvation, and even of sense and sensibility. I have examined the creative rhetorical labors, not of invention per se, but of arrangement. Or perhaps we could say of amplification, i.e. the affective maximization of meaning as a condition of cultural power. In this light, abolitionist frames were context-specific recombinations that acquired affective ‘umph’ through their socioemotional implicatures and the psychic sensitivities of others to them. By redescribing abolitionism as the (anti-) rhetoric of slavery, I theorized social movements as the collective-emotional work of making discourse stick. We should note that the creative communicative and affective labors of protest are not non-discursive. Rather I have envisioned their affective dynamics here as extensions and intensifications of meaning, as semiotic modalities not meaningless mechanisms. Thus it is entirely possible, as my account suggests, that discourse can be relatively static while drastic or even ‘evental’ cultural change yet occurs through ongoing communicative interactions. Culture is both constraining of and carried along by the continually flowing and swirling socioemotional streams of history.

To borrow from the terminology of Butler (1997), socioemotional needs and instincts are a source of ‘discursive agency.’ The wording ‘affective microdynamics’ is
merely a technical shorthand for referring to how people negotiate and renegotiate the social-cultural order through their moral-embodied dispositions and their rhetorical performances. A major objective of the present work has been to show how affect made a difference, not only in the biographies of individual public speakers, but also in the social and cultural history of an entire nation. Popular and scholarly wisdom are in general agreement that feelings are not very deep. In popular wisdom, it is best not to have strong feelings or, if you do, to keep them to yourself. Feelings are thought of as personal private mental states not really having much of a predictable pattern nor much of an effect on the social world. Shelves of pop psychology provide prosaic instructions on how to alter your mood by merely interpreting things differently. Why let negative feelings get you down when they are optional and adjustable? Worse, in scholarly wisdom, the attribution of states of feeling to individuals is a common tactic of discrediting their actions and beliefs. Saying someone is upset or frustrated is all too often translated as don’t take them too seriously. To be asked about your feelings in academic forums is like being slapped in the face. Given the reason-emotion dualisms, it is taken as an insult to one’s intelligence for implying that one *feels* something instead of *thinks* something. The implicit view of feelings in such attributions is that feelings are not real and of a different register than the ‘hard’ facts. They are temporary subjective departures that get in the way of routine communication and deliberation.

In contrast, I have demonstrated how human feeling capabilities mattered historically for the moment-by-moment successes of abolitionism, as well as how they *might* have made a difference in the longer-term sequence of the movement’s ultimate success, the actual abolition of slavery. Specifically I have shown how *status-oriented*
moral emotions such as anger and outrage motivated both the abolitionists and their countermovement mobilizers. Dramaturogical status implicatures enlivened protest rhetoric with moral-emotional experiences. To be truly compelling and/or alarming, antislavery problematizations required enormous affective labors on all rhetorical fronts. Diverse ethos-pathos orientations of abolitionist performances all contributed to making the social constructions of slavery finally stick, reference group by reference group, and/or get stuck like a ‘bone in the throat.

Abolitionism studies thus needs to move beyond past and present preponderances of cultural history approaches in the field. In Chapter 3, I showed that what made abolitionist frames particularly effective was their pathos not their logos. Scholars of social movements should take interest in how I theorized frames as the packaging of unoriginal ideas so as to maximize their affective ‘umph.’ Abolitionist frames were how the rhetoric of slavery constructed slavery as a social problem, not just cognitively, but emotionally so in people’s viscerally experienced relationships with slavery, slaveholders and the enslaved. Part of the moral-emotional intensity of movement frames comes from the specific status implicatures sown into the package. Republican frames labeled proslavery opponents as tyrants corrupted by power—an external status degradation of the protest target. This civic framing also threatened northerners with a loss of status should they let the republic fall short of its founding memories of liberty. Hence the conversation between abolitionism studies and social movement theory can progress forward by highlight the thorough emotionality of processes of the social construction of slavery.
Currently the focus on framing in social movement theory is limited by its cognitive bias (Jasper 1997). Whereas I incorporated pathos in Chapter 3 to reduce this bias, the subsequent chapter, Chapter 4, examined another limitation of frame analysis with respect to the affective experiences of social movement participants. There we observed the interest that status-subordinated actors had in busting the dominant frames, i.e. speaking from personal experiences and more indexical connections to the social problem. In black abolitionist discourse, each of the three pathos-oriented frames acquired a different quality or ‘feel.’ My argument was that the racisms of slavery and the northern context indexicalized black abolitionist discourse, i.e. producing a unique existential structure of feeling that can be observed not just in the symbols but also in the voice of their protests. The ethos work of existential anti-framing when considered together with the pathetic problematizations of the previous chapter may suggest the need for moving beyond the post-Goffman terminology of ‘frame’ altogether. We are still in need for a better theoretical language to capture the umphs, cries, pangs and punches in the delivery and reception of protest rhetoric at contentious gatherings. Until that language is invented though, it must be acknowledged that emotion is the critical ingredient in ‘frame’ formation with respect to collective action (much as Flam 2005 claims).

Sociologists of race and ethnicity will be intrigued to see how nineteenth-century black abolitionists developed an idiosyncratic racial conceptualization to resist the hegemonic racializations of antebellum civil society. Antebellum black protest defies many of the default presuppositions and categories held by contemporary sociologists. For example, black abolitionists drew upon spiritualistic and personalistic
schemas to theorize ‘race’ as the unity of prejudice and slavery. Religious experience and religious emotions were a source of both personal and collective empowerment for many free blacks. In Chapter 6, we saw that evangelical religion was an emotional aid through its potentialities with regard to status claimsmaking. While appealing to heterodoxic status imaginaries may have been a potent form of agitating pro-slavery sympathizers, it was also an unpredictable emotional resource for otherwise dispossessed protesters. Thus scholars of race and racism need to be careful not to dismiss all spiritualistic/personalistic language in protest as ‘conservative’ and/or ‘systemic.’ To do so is to belittle the rhetorical creativity and contributions of protestors racially subordinated within the abolitionist social movement. Black abolitionist efforts at elevation and exhortation were revalued through the proposed theory of status claimsmaking. Further, we noted instances where these religious-moral projects were productive of ‘indexical awakenings’ among white abolitionists who came to realize their own complicity in the racial regimes (of either the proto-Jim-Crow segregationist north or the social-death regime of southern slavery).

In chapters 5 and 8 we saw how protest rhetoric was shaped by racial and gender status binds emerging from social contexts of stratification. Attunement to the situational status dynamics of reception fields led black and women abolitionists to perform virtue and character, no doubt tokenistically or sociocognitively on behalf of the categorically-subordinated populations they stood for, literally and metaphorically, whether for black men or women or white women. Black abolitionists did ethos-work by stressing their heroic contributions to the republic and the slave’s innate desires for liberty. Abolitionist women did ethos-work by stressing their credentials, their
sentimental womanhood, and in the case of the prophetic feminists, by seizing divine authorization. Thus the social-psychological theory of status binds was drawn upon to make historical inferences about the affective experiences of some of abolitionism’s most important prominent leaders. This explication will be of particular interest to historians of abolitionism who may be wary about past social-psychological caricatures that have rightfully been abandoned.

I should be clear that performances of ethos were no less important to movement persistence than productions of pathos. Both were important forms of charisma, each having their peculiar potential for eloquence and each being conditioned by different kinds of status claimsmaking as judged situationally necessary. We now have a better view of how exactly ‘charisma makes social movements, and social movements make charisma’ (as noted in the Prologue and in Collins 2001). We can see that the socioemotional microdynamics of charisma operate differently according to the social context, the status binds, and the resultant creative rhetorical performances (of ethos-pathos-logos). There is no doubt a blurry continuum here between performances primarily oriented on ethos and performances primarily concerned with pathos (and even ostensibly pure logos oriented speeches). Black and women abolitionists were more compelled to do ethos work, and yet their very embodiment of ethos on stage could be quite provocative by itself for many audiences, i.e. productive of the violent emotions of backlash. Sometimes then it would make sense to treat ethos work as a subspecies of pathos qua any emotionally intense rhetoric.
In Chapter 7, I developed an original theory of the status dynamics that unfold at the contentious gatherings of social movements. Reception fields refer to the situational socioemotional relationships between salient leaders and their less salient audiences. The theory presented there opened a new vista from which to view the emergence of charisma in social movements. Building upon a growing interest in movement audiences, the theory of reception fields incorporates the affective experiences of protest onlookers and/or antagonists. Thus my account of protest rhetoric hooks up with political process theory by examining how perceived relationships between challengers, opponents, and onlookers unfold concretely at the sites of protest. The relational nexus of threats and opportunities implied by political process theory is constituted by status-oriented rhetorical performances of ethos and pathos.

Further, we could catalog ideal—typically the many collective-action functions that varying ethos-pathos orientations served as seen in my previous explications of abolitionist discourse. How did different types of status claimsmaking operate to encourage stamina, solidarity, and/or scandal? It seems that both ethos and pathos could at times serve both intension and extension functions regarding the emotional dynamics of social movements. Ethos work, the production of positive affects in the presentation of the self, was not only directed toward spectators for purposes of persuasion and expanding an altruistic conscience constituency. It also could be self-empowering and build up the stamina of subordinated movement actors. Likewise, pathos-oriented rhetoric excelled at agitation and provoking dissensus. But it also encouraged internal group solidarity and recommitment to the embattled cause.
Finally, as we observed in the last two chapters, incendiary emotional rhetorics also made a difference in propelling forward the antebellum conflict between competing rhetorics of slavery. The heterodoxic reconstitutions of racial and gender status suggested, encouraged, or implied by various abolitionist rhetorics were especially explosive, or as I have put it, productive of pathos. Instigating the southern moral panic and overreactionary countermobilization was abolitionist status claimsmaking with regard race, gender, region, and of course, with regard to the status of the enslaved, the formerly enslaved, and the slave’s ‘sensible’ northern advocates. Thus we can see how deviant performances of gender and race in the rhetoric of slavery may have precipitated, mediated, and amplified the conflict over slavery.
A Methodological Appendix

In the research-design stage of inquiry, I realized that public address was a prime site for studying emotion and emotional energy in U.S. abolitionism. Formal oratory before physical copresent audiences was much more important as a means of communication and coordination in the nineteenth-century than it is today (Reynolds 1995; Scott 1980; Baskerville 1979). Notoriously, abolitionist rhetoric in the antebellum period is dripping with passion. So I began collecting and outlining nearly 200 abolitionist speeches, the process and totals of which I describe below. Meanwhile I started to ask myself, what exactly did I have a case of in all these speeches? Theorizing the case at hand quickly propelled me into protest rhetoric and social movements theory though I maintained my original interests in culture, emotion, and morality.

An immediate problem concerned method. How could affect as I have defined it (in the Prologue and Chapter 1) be empirically studied let alone historically observed? Though incredibly plastic psychologically, I believe humans are born with an affective architecture of dependence, attachment, and reciprocity. It is well established for instance that humans have affective needs for social recognition, worth, and care (Bowlby 1982; Turner 2007; for human life to be ‘viable’ in the words of Butler 2004). The socioemotional instincts and needs are not irrelevant in understanding social movement processes as is usually assumed. Emotions are psychological responses to and embodied preparations for social happenings. According to Gould (2009), affective
sensations in the body are cued and offer clues as to what is happening in the
temporal chain of social events.\(^{136}\)

For purposes of historical-sociological inquiry, we can assume that language and affect are empirically entangled in speech utterances. Some affective dimension can be observed in historical records of language-use even in records of discourse not explicitly about the emotions. This is because affects leave their meaningful mark— their semiotic—upon writing as well as upon the body. Their meanings are certainly not transparent though. Nor do I claim that an ‘original’ affective experience can be fully reconstructed. But doing affective hermeneutics in principle is not radically different from doing cultural hermeneutics in requiring contextual investigations to disclose both surface and deep meanings of a text. So if the question about method concerns making inferences about affective experiences through textual traces, this is something that social science historians can do without too much trouble. If, however, methodologism demands nothing less than total access into the cognitive-affective ‘inner worlds’ of individuals, this is not possible in my view. Social science encounters an insuperable asymptotic limit if its objective is to fully explicate the affective complexity of an individual let alone a group. But no need for this to stop us from what we can do as social scientists, namely, continue to make cautious inferences about affective experiences from historical records of speech-utterances.

To this end I drew upon methods of “microanalysis” more common in the sociology of emotion (Scheff 1997). This involves more than a contextual and careful

\(^{136}\) Gould has defines affect as “experiences of bodily energy and intensity that arise in response to stimuli impinging on the body.” She continues, “Affect, then, is the body’s ongoing and relatively amorphous inventory-taking of coming into contact and interacting with the world” (2009: 19-20).
reading of abolitionist public address. It requires an affective hermeneutics that reads in between the lines of speeches for the cosmological, relational, and emotional implicatures, what Scheff refers to as the *inner worlds* of affective experience. Scheff’s romantic sociology of emotion is a dialectical hermeneutics that teases out non-exhaustively the organic social interconnections between inner and outer worlds. It does this most often in his words through a “microanalysis of verbatim texts.”

In my collection of abolitionist orations, practically speaking, I had a record of the communicative actions of speakers and sometimes their interactions with audiences. Unfortunately, some of the abolitionist speeches I collected were edited before their newspaper publication and not ‘verbatim’ records precisely. Unfortunately no one had Collins’s handy ‘tape recorder’ ready back then. Rather, newspaper transcriptions and stenographic reports on antislavery meetings are the closest we can get to the microprocesses of abolitionist protest rhetoric as they unfolded. The published speeches were indeed one further step removed from von Ranke’s *wie es eigentlich gewesen*, i.e. one more step away from “that noble dream” of historians: *reality as it really happened* (Novick 1989). It is not always possible to tell how large this editorial ‘step’ of revision was. In some cases the published documents were quite accurate being transcribed by journalists skeptical of abolitionist ideas and/or amused onlookers of protest events for their entertainment value (and public addresses back then were entertainment). Regardless though, some editorial finessing to inflate eloquence and ego post hoc does not invalidate the main hermeneutic findings of the dissertation regarding the social implicatures and affective mechanisms of protest rhetoric. This is because my findings were based more upon the cultural content of the
speeches, their gist, and auditor reaction to them. Perhaps my findings would be invalidated if I had attempted a Collinesque analysis of formal-ritual aspects of the rhetorical delivery and rhythm, but this was not what I did.

Microanalysis requires a three-way explication of the reciprocities between social contexts, texts, and unstated intentions or implicatures (for a similar model of hermeneutics, see Rambo and Chan 1990). It approaches verbatim texts through a part/whole hermeneutics that constantly and dialectically relates ‘inner’ and ‘outer’ worlds. Elaborating upon the part/whole hermeneutics of microanalytic methods, Scheff writes: ‘Using transcripts or verbatim texts as data, one interprets the meaning of the smallest parts (words and gestures) of expressions within the ever greater wholes within which they occur’ (1997: 16). By the phrase ‘inner world’ Scheff refers to the intentions, motives, beliefs and feelings that animate production of discursive expressions. We could thus say that Scheff’s part/whole methodology stumbles upon the rhetorical dimension of culture without calling it out as such. Inheriting the tradition of dramaturgical analysis from Goffman, Scheff’s microanalysis of verbatim human expressions discloses a ubiquitous “deference-emotion system” implicit in social action (Scheff 1988) My empirical findings have largely confirmed the Goffman-Scheff conjecture with regard to protest rhetoric, and I have given it explanatory value by connecting it to specific social movement processes of persistence. I theorize the ‘inner worlds’ of protest as being shaped by the contours of status claimsmaking and subsequent moral-emotional arousal (c.f. “Dramaturgical Triads” in Chapter 1).
One final note regarding Scheff’s holistic methodology. His romanticist-humanist vision induces the sociology of emotion to embrace a less scientistic vision. His model discipline for the sociology of emotion, for example, is *psychoanalysis* for crossing the technical-clinical divide as well as the lines between between comparative and case-specific research. (*Botany* is his other model discipline of choice for unifying comparative structure and dynamic process; his hero is Goethe.) He further proposes that the many part/whole interconnections he explicates are actual causal processes of a social-psychological sort (and not mere homologies). Scheff shares Collins’s focus on empirical microprocesses but he grounds his social explanations upon *interpretive* emotional dynamics (as opposed to formal ritual properties). The purpose of close empirical observation in the microanalysis of texts is not the suspension of presumed subjectivity but rather the disclosure of inner worlds through *part/whole analysis*.

Throughout the previous chapters I have highlighted certain events and individuals because they manifest and crystallize the deeper structures, meanings, and affects of their context particularly well. In other words, abolitionist oratory is a productive site for viewing multiple part/whole relationships (the case-specifics) and for theorizing social movement processes more generally (the comparative). I began the dissertation with Phillips’s reaction to the capture of Sims with similar motivations: many of the urgencies, difficulties, potentials, and limits of the abolitionist movement as a whole can be read in between the lines of this speech fragment. Again my approach here is indebted to Scheff: “By carefully examining the smallest parts, the words and gestures as they occur in utterances, the analyst can make systematic inferences about the thoughts and feelings of the participants, and the kind of
relationship that develops between them. This study suggests that any segment of human discourse, no matter how brief, is a microcosm which contains many elements of the entire relationship between the participants, their relations with others, and indeed all human relationships" (Scheff 1997: 149). From one historical event we acquire a sense of the abolitionist socioemotional universe and of those temporally changing relationships between enslaved clients, activist challengers, legal opponents and public onlookers.

Among a variety of preserved abolitionist documents—slave narratives, correspondence, diaries, newspaper editorials, novels, tracts, poems, pictures and other forms of protest culture (see McCarthy & Stauffer 2004)—I found abolitionist oratory to be the most fruitful source of data in exploring the dramaturgical triad of rhetoric, status, and emotions in contentious performances. This is partly because of the importance of oratory within abolitionism—public speeches served the social movement’s crescive functions of recruitment, identification, and persistence—and partly because of the marvelous multimodal nature of oratory as a situational dynamic form of discourse. Much more than in written novels and slave narratives, dynamics of status and affect could be observed ‘in the moment.’ Thanks to those detailed newspaper records and other eyewitness accounts, the antislavery podium was the most convenient site for observing both ethos and pathos. The data spoke well to how orators charismatically and dramaturgically negotiated the status imaginaries of their context.
Getting now to the specifics, I was able to locate, collect, and include 186 speeches by a diverse set of abolitionists consisting of 54 different individuals. Frederick Douglass is the best represented among that collection; 50 of the speeches are his, an imbalance perhaps excusable since he alone could be the single subject of many worthwhile dissertations. As a cursory overview, 89 of the speeches were delivered by 24 black men; 15 of the speeches were delivered by 12 black women; 54 speeches were delivered by 12 white men; and 26 of the speeches were delivered by 5 white women. Also relevant here would be a decomposition of speeches by the religious denomination of the orator. Evangelical ‘come-outer,’ Quaker, Baptist and Congregational have the highest numbers in my collection. I should note that given systematic anthologizing by African American historians in the past few decades, I suspect my ‘sample’ of black orators is closer to reliably representing the actually existing population of black public speakers than is my ‘sample’ of white orators. In most cases the university library either had copies or could interlibrary loan collections of the relevant speeches I needed. The project would have been a lot weaker, for instance, without John Blassingame’s five volume publication of The Frederick Douglass Papers Series One: Speeches, Debates, Interviews or without the Black Abolitionist Papers database and series consisting of collections of documents from over a hundred different archives. Occasionally I obtained an originally published collection of speeches from sometime from 1830 to the 1860s, or a reprint soon after. A few of the speeches were located through digital newspaper archives and in at least one case, Google search.
A potential weakness resulting from my data collection was a bias toward abolitionist celebrities (again, whose lectures were for many audiences a form of entertainment as well as education). In re more silent participants of antislavery organizations existed than public speakers, it being much harder to reconstruct their less linguistic modes of abolitionist creativity and rhetoric. Second, among those who did venture to put forth opinions from the pulpit, many of them have also been forgotten either due to a shortage or stenographers or the historical tragedy of neglect and fire. In twentieth century anthologies and databases, there is inevitably a bias toward more well known abolitionists and feminists, such as Frederick Douglass, William Lloyd Garrison, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Frances Ellen Watkins Harper.

In response to some of these methodological concerns with reliability and validity, first of all, I can say that my study does not mean to be a representative sample of the actual-historical population of all extant abolitionist speakers. It is impossible to known how representative my selection of speeches is to this unknown sum of individuals. I thus instead embraced the qualitative features of microanalysis rather than the quantitative exploits of numbers given the lack of historical evidence. This does mean that my data analysis cannot be generalized to all abolitionists, but given the immense internal diversity of the abolitionist movement that would be a very difficult task by any measure. But considering my research questions about movement persistence, emotion, and charisma, the historical bias toward prominent abolitionist orators in the academic press of today is not necessarily problematic with regard to the theoretical validity of my findings. Part of the wider rationale behind the dissertation is that a focus on prominent leaders of the movement is useful and justifiable for
substantive theoretical reasons appreciated by other historical sociologists. During unsettled time periods, individuals constantly and rationally look to align their behavior with groups so as to avoid a loss of status (Ermakoff 2008). Ermakoff’s notion of ‘collective alignment’ consists concretely of waiting around and watching what course of conduct others take. The public decisions of prominent leaders are crucial to coordination processes because other individuals view their rhetoric as clues, rightly or wrongly, to the future direction of the group. The rhetoric of leaders is potentially performative in constituting group identifications and influencing group decisions, including counterintuitive decisions to collectively abdicate (in Ermakoff’s monograph) or to collective persist in mine. Within abolitionism as a high-risk chronically failing movement (Summers Effler 2010), speeches by prominent individuals like Wendell Phillips and Angelina Grimké had the most impact. Their stance-takings were cited and their arguments recycled by other movement actors. For example, while the rejection of colonization was not original, Garrison’s very visible declamation against the American Colonization Society in The Liberator gained national attention and led the abolitionist movement as a whole to take a new ‘immediatist’ direction (Garrison was by no means the first immediatist).

Through much outlining and rereading I came to appreciate these and additional social-psychological mechanisms of the protest rhetoric that moves movements. Wendell Phillips was one of the first orators I examined and not coincidentally bookends the dissertation. His “eloquence of abuse” first drew me to ponder the social implicatures of protest rhetoric and its relation to his intense charisma and talents at provoking pathos. I eventually came to recognize a widespread pattern of social-
movement leaders, even less ‘abusive’ ones, appealing to moral emotions through status claimsmaking. But I also came to see status claimsmaking, though often the central social implicature in my analysis, as one of multiple means of ‘mining the moral emotions.’ The list of these moral-emotional methods expanded to include pathos-oriented problematizations, experiential testimony, and the more logocentric rhetoric of recognition, etc. All them however seem to overlap with status claimsmaking even if their primary mode of persuasion is not status-based.

Another major conceptual difficulty we’ve already encountered was the temporal, multimodal scope of abolitionism as a ‘social movement’ (discussed in Chapter 2). Partly the trouble arises from the inherent limitations of the surviving historical documents vis-a-vis a necessary comprehension of the social movement as a whole so as to be able to do part/whole affective hermeneutics. A common convention among historians is to operationalize abolitionist membership through some specific empirical record, signing an anti-slavery petition, joining a society organization or event, or giving a public speech against slavery. But historical records do not speak to what Sims was feeling nor how the various public onlookers to Phillips’s plea responded. Yet we can still theoretically appreciate and make inferences about the multimodalities of affective practices churning behind, through, and around the texts of protest. Some abolitionists like Phillips signed petitions and gave formal speeches on the philosophy of abolitionism, but there was also an abolitionism of the streets. We will always have more data about the former than the latter. Harriet Tubman for instance
was illiterate (Horton 2013). Though I focus on abolitionist public address, I do not wish to foreclose from theoretical consideration the wider variety of unrecorded rhetorics that also went into, say, the construction of ‘fugitive slave’ events or other less-linguistic affective practices sustaining the broader movement. Thus reducing abolitionism itself to activities referenced by the textual record misunderstands the nature of operationalization. The historian’s other noble dream of counting can prevent a fuller movement-wide comprehension of American abolitionism, which depends upon some willingness to make some realist theoretical inferences. In a Foucaultian perspective, an abolitionist is anyone who resisted the power of slavery. Some did so by joining antislavery societies with well-recorded minutes and others did quite practically but less textually with their feet, hands, and/or guns.

Related definitional problems stem as well from the interracial, intercaste nature of the movement. Arbitrarily setting some empirically-operationalized bar tends to exclude the less-textual multimodal contributions of many of the most important participants from the abolitionist heading. The conceptualization I offer in chapter 2 depends minimally upon some openmindedness to a dialectical-realist mode of thinking. Simply put, there was a wide-ranging heterogenous movement of people to delegitimize, subvert and eradicate slavery. Being part of that moved moving movement is the only sound analytical threshold of inclusion. This has the virtue of sidestepping the issue of drawing precise boundaries along ideological lines, such as explicit subscription to the “immediate emancipation” slogan, which as some historians note, was not as obviously self-evident in meaning as one might suppose (Davis 1962; Loveland 1966). The boundaries of abolitionism cannot be resolved ideologically, but
only rhetorically or movementally. Prima facie this may seem tautological—but the
tautology only arises from thinking of social movements as pre-existing group
identities, rather than as real rhetorical processes of feeling, identifying and resisting.

My microsociological account of abolitionism thus relies heavily upon
dialectical-logical forms of inquiry with reference to what hermeneut extraordinaire
Hans-Georg Gadamer calls the “speculative” structure of language. Thus with
Phillips’s speech on Sims, or in Grimké’s ringing PA Hall address, for instances, I
aimed to refract a bit of the complexity of the whole movement within the evental parts.
When contrasted to inductive/deductive analytical methods, dialectical thinking is more
open to seeing some particular part in the light of the social whole and seeing the
whole in the part. Dialectical theorists insist that social totalities really exist and have
effects even if they cannot be observed in their fullness. They are nevertheless
refracted within the logic and contradictions immanent to the cultural object. The
object is conditioned by and participates in wider systems of structure and meanings
that are irreducible to it. Critical inquiry into any given social object or configurational
set of objects should in principle reveal novel information about the whole. Critical-
realist approaches in social science, Bhaskar writes, require the category of totality qua
the interrelations between structures of relations (1979: 55). Epistemologically

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137 For Gadamer (2004 [1960]) all interpreted texts have a ‘speculative’ structure that needs to be
uncovered to enable understanding. This dimension is the horizon of meanings (or world) that the text
reflects, to some extent like a mirror. Texts are always partial finite expressions of larger horizontal
meanings. Gadamer suggests the interpreter treat texts as an answers to some set of questions
implicitly posed by its context and to which the texts are dialectically related. Jean Grondin summarizes,
“Thus every word, as the event of a moment, carries with it the unsaid, to which it is related by
responding and summoning.” Thus Gadamer’s speculative hermeneutics surely involves the same sort
of part/whole hermeneutics inspiring Scheff’s microanalysis of the unstated implicatures of inner
worlds.
speaking, the investigator strives to engage in what he calls “totalization,” i.e. coming to understand the meaning of a part through its positioning within the social totality.

Likewise I invited us to think of antislavery abolitionism as a spatial-temporal whole in order to better understand the implicatures and inner worlds of individual protestors (thus engaging in those part/whole dialectics between inner and outer worlds described by Scheff). The dialectical approach for exampled enabled my account of Angelina Grimké’s prophetic radicalization in PA Hall, of Frederick Douglass surmounting of racial status-binds on stage, and of Wendell Phillips provoking pathos through the eloquence of abuse. Dialectically speaking, these rhetorical leaders manifested, impacted, and altered the character of the abolitionist movement. Grimké performed the courage and rhetorical risk-taking she wished modeled. Garrison burned the constitution and advised against complicity with political corruption through voting for antislavery political parties. Frederick Douglass resisted racialization by white abolitionism and creatively overcame a variety of status-binds potentially thwarting protest eloquence. Here again we see the role of the public signals and communications of prominent leaders in arranging and aligning extraordinary collective behavior (Ermakoff 2008).

Lastly, in addition to newspaper records and their published speeches, secondary historical sources have been invaluable in themselves as a wealth of knowledge and in contextualizing specific speech events. Even when historians address large theoretical questions, the forest is usually lost in the trees. No historian
of abolitionism is asking questions about the relationship between rhetoric, status, and emotion in social movements, for instance, despite the importance of status-related emotions to abolitionist mobilization and persistence. Yet the secondary sources produced by historians can play a more vital role in historical sociology and contemporary sociological theory. In the present thesis, secondary sources have served at least three invaluable functions. First, sometimes I have been able to ‘triangulate’ the transcribed speech with historical commentary about a specific speech event. Biographies were actually the most useful for this. Secondary sources helped me situate and contextualize a specific rhetorical performance, e.g. Garrison’s 1829 Park Street Church address is covered in exacting detail in Henry Mayer’s 2003 biography *All on Fire*). They can serve as an aid to a more holistic comprehension of a speech including motivations behind and receptions of it. This was not possible for many of the speeches, but it was for many. Blassingame and colleagues preface every Douglass speech reprint with some commentary on its immediate context. Where possible, this *secondary mediation* of primary texts helped bring them to life, helping me uncover the status dynamics at play in rhetorical performances and their reception fields.

Second, the informative narratives presented in historical scholarship can be re-analyzed through a sociological lens. The sociologist can point out to the historian crucial, unobservable social forces and/or intervening variables that better make sense of the narrative’s unfolding sequence of actions and reactions. A historian may describe the unruly hostile reactions of a crowd toward an abolitionist, but not dive into social explanations of crowd emotional hostility as a form of social-psychological
status backlash. In emplotting a narrative, historians often miss the key explanatory factors and mechanisms effecting the sequence of actions. This is often the case for instance with status. Status backlash against rhetorical challenges to the antebellum white supremacist racial order explains most fully why anti-abolitionists burned down Pennsylvania Hall (as retold in Chapter 2). In most historical accounts, certainly not all, the key explanatory mechanism, e.g. status threat and backlash, is absent. Hence the need for redescription of histories by sociological theory.\footnote{Other sociologists have recently experimented with secondary data analysis in a productive way. Kemper (2011) convincingly re-interprets historical accounts of Australian aboriginal religious events through status-power theory. His explanations of religious emotional energy supplement and account better for what classical anthropologists observed. Michael Mann’s four (to be five) volume historical sociology of human civilizations and modernity is essentially a gigantic secondary data analysis.}

In the present work I have interwoven such secondary data analysis with primary textual-rhetorical criticism. For example, Chapter three redescribes the findings of many different cultural historians through a social-problems conceptualization of emotional framing. Chapter four starts with a systematic account of racist episodes historians have documented within the abolitionist movement through concepts from the sociology of race & ethnicity, such as racialization, social-structural mechanisms of discrimination and segregation, and the notion of implicit bias in interpersonal interactions. And so on.

Sociological dependence upon the historians is theoretically productive. Furthermore, in the field of slavery and abolition studies, dependence is not only productive but inevitable. Abolitionism studies been experiencing a renaissance since the 1990s, as many historians have noted. If I had known beforehand just how enormous the secondary literature had become, I would have reconsidered topics.
New watershed work seems to be published every year. Even career historians, let alone a sociology graduate student, have difficulty keeping up with it all. The ongoing renaissance is extremely exciting nonetheless. Historians are undoubtedly on the chase of subjects that cut to the core of American modernity, culture, and identity. I suspect more sociologists will take note, and the sociological study of slavery will experience a corresponding rebirth in the discipline (how could it not? Think of the case overdetermination, i.e. race, power, civil society, empire, gender, religion, war, and social changes, etc).
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