

The Gentlemen Slavers:  
Status, Structure and Social Movements for the Conduct of Dirty Business

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We consider the influences on entering into ‘dirty business’ by which we mean economic activity that violates cultural values. We consider individual disposition to violate norms as a function of status, social contagion in a network, where status determines influence, and the role of a social movement to ignite attention to the norms and their violation. We analyze who entered the Liverpool slave trade. We find that high status Gentlemen were more likely to do so, and that they were highly influential on the behavior of their network partners. The abolition movement affected an increase in the magnitude of social influence, and shifted the balance of influence in favor of non-slavers.

Alternative worlds lie in the chasm between what is allowed and what is admired. In this paper we take up the question “who engages in dirty business?” By dirty business, we mean economic activities that are not effectively prohibited by legal authority, but are nevertheless counter to operative social values. Cultures and economies may turn on whether capable and influential people take up activities such as selling life insurance, performing abortions, or marketing complex financial products to people who don’t understand them. We examine what is arguably the most enduring instance of dirty business for Western society, the transatlantic slave trade. Specifically, we examine who, among investors in shipping ventures in eighteenth and early-nineteenth century Liverpool, participated in slaving voyages.

Engagements in dirty business represent a break down in the chain between cultural values and individual behavior, so it makes sense to structure our inquiry around the links in that chain. At the top are the cultural values themselves, at the bottom is the individual, and in between is the network that connects individuals and transmits culture. Most sociologists will think of the actor’s local network when confronting the question of why some engage in dirty business. The idea that some actors are embedded in networks with norms that diverge from broader cultural values was our first instinct too, and it turns out to be true in the Liverpool slave trade. Reference to divergent local networks, however, is not a fully satisfying explanation for dirty business, nor for the slave trade. It remains to be explained why dirty business takes root

at the local level in the first place, and how these local networks interact with the broader society. We aim to make a theoretical contribution by examining those questions.

In terms of the first, we explain who takes up dirty business with reference to the differential application of the social sanctions associated with counter-normative behavior. We consider the role of status for normative compliance. In The Human Group, Homans (1950) argued that norms have lesser grip on those with high status, because their positions in the hierarchy are sticky, and robust even in the face of normative violations. Zuckerman and Phillips (2001) usefully extend that position, and integrate much related evidence, to argue for middle-status conformity, that normative freedom applies to those at the top and bottom of the status hierarchy (neither have much to lose) while those in the middle are most likely to obey norms. The normative freedom of those at the top of the status hierarchy is particularly relevant for the seeding of dirty-business practices in a local network, because they are more contagious in terms of influence on network partners. We therefore see a process where high-status individuals adopt dirty-business practices because they are less subject to the social sanctions attached to those practices, and infect their network partners with those practices. These are the Gentlemen slavers of our title.

If the status-contagion argument explains where and how dirty business takes root, the question of where it stops remains. Sometimes, of course, it doesn't, and norms as to what economic activities are acceptable change. But in other instances, the broader society strikes back, with a social movement that aims to raise the cost of dirty business. That is what happened in the British slave trade, and it presents an opportunity to examine just how the macro-effort at social change affected individual behavior. Again, the action occurs at the relational level, as individuals on both sides of the norm fight to influence their peers. The effort of the social movement does affect this process as we see evidence that the social pressure brought to bear by both the pro- and anti-slave trade camps increases during the peak abolition years. The contentious public discourse that surrounds the British slave trade in those years provides the material for more potent social influence processes.

Overall, our approach is to refine understanding of the role of networks in the exercise of culture by considering both micro and macro moderators. On the micro side, we consider the role of individual attributes of status for network theories that have tended to focus on the links

that structure influence in networks at the cost of attending to the status of the nodes. In other words, we “bring the individual back in” to structural accounts of social influence. Of course, status is endemic in network analyses, but it is typically status derived from the network itself (e.g., centrality), and thus itself a structural product. Status as an individual attribute would appear to have particular relevance for explaining change in social systems, whereas status as an endogenous product of the network would tend to reinforce extant system characteristics (e.g., the Matthew Effect). Our research design allows us to examine both forms of status, and we document the relevance of status as an individual attribute even after controlling for centrality-based status (which itself operates in our context as network theorists would expect).

The macro moderator on network influence is the social movement. In effect, our study represents an integration of the structural and cultural modes of diffusion identified by Strang and Soule (1998). The operation of the network of Liverpool traders changes when the abolition movement heats up. Both slavers and non-slavers become more influential on their network partners. We attribute this to the effect of the abolition movement to “change the conversation” about slaving that takes place in networks, both by encouraging the creation and circulation of more and better arguments both for and against, but also by increasing the intensity of the contention by raising the moral stakes. This represents evidence of a new form of outcome measure for a social movement literature that has tended to identify impact as changes in state policy, or more recently, changes in organizations. Our analysis indicates that beyond these influences on formal institutions social movements also impact the culture by affecting contention at the relational level, when one contact tries to convince another what behavior is right.

### **An Analytic Narrative Approach**

We explore the determinants of participation in the dirty business of the Liverpool slave trade among 7534 investors in overseas ventures in Liverpool between 1730 and abolition in 1807. Thirty percent of these invested in a slave voyage at some point in their careers. In most of what follows the specific empirical question is: What is the likelihood that the next voyage invested in will be a slave voyage, for investors who have not yet participated in slaving. This might be thought of as the “transition to slaving.”

Our presentation will be in the form of an analytic narrative (Bates et al., 1998; Alexandrova, 2009). An analytic narrative is an approach to research that draws simultaneously on analytical tools and on the narrative form that is commonly employed in history. We have placed the detailed description of our quantitative data, methods and results in the Appendix to this paper. Here in the body, we'll iterate between theory, history, and the statistical results, as we consider individual, network, and cultural influences on the transition to the slave trade. Compared to the more typical sociological approach that presents theory, (sometimes) a case history, and statistics serially, our iterative approach is intended to be self-disciplining. By bringing these pieces closer together, it is easier to ensure that the analysis serves theory, while at the same time doing justice to seemingly peripheral details of history that do not fit the basic theory, rather than dismissing them as "outliers." Related, the use of historical narrative forces us to confront the interdependencies between the causal forces at work in Liverpool slaving while an approach that privileged a statistical analysis might foster an illusion of independence of effects (Gaddis, 2002).

### **Liverpool and the Transatlantic Slave Trade**

Figure 0 shows the number of transatlantic slaving voyages throughout history from the most common ports of departure. Of the 28,443 voyages with known ports of departure, more originated in Liverpool than in any other place (4,974, or 17.5% of the total). In the years where Liverpool was most active in the slave trade, from about 1750 to the abolition of the British trade in 1807, it clearly dominates all other ports. Between 1791 and 1806, its "market share" measured in terms of percentage of the world's slaving voyages never falls below 30%, and goes as high as 63% in 1798. Liverpool was well deserving of its sobriquets 'slave trading capital of the world' and 'the metropolis of slavery.'

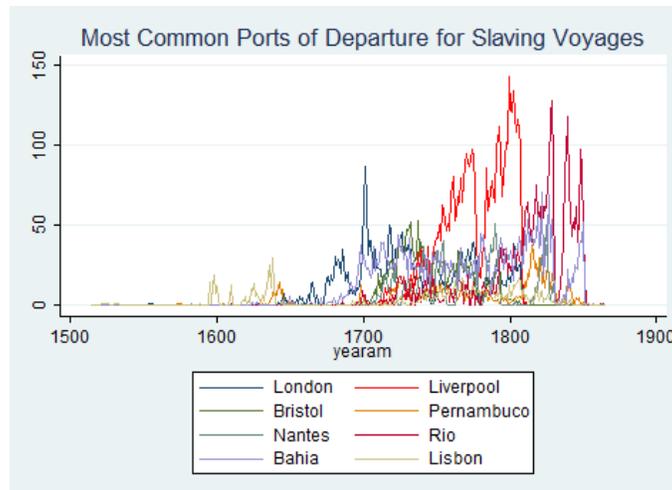


Figure 0, Slave Voyages from Leading Ports

London was initially the leading British slaving port owing to a monopoly granted to the Royal Africa Company that lasted until 1712. For a number of decades after that Bristol and London vied for leadership in the global industry, until Liverpool took over first place in 1744 and held that position until abolition. Liverpool's dominance of the trade in this period was a function of three factors. The first was that it was a first mover in building a number of wet docks, building the first in Great Britain in 1715, and following that with more throughout the eighteenth century. Power (1997) attributes this initiative to a town council dominated by the interests of overseas traders, noting that Liverpool experienced a "commercial *coup d'etat* (p. 311)" around the turn of the eighteenth century. Besides facilitating overseas trade, the docks also made Liverpool a shipbuilding center. Vessels used in the British slave trade were built in more than one hundred places, but they were much more likely to originate from Liverpool than anywhere else. Forty-two percent of Liverpool slaving voyages were on locally built ships, while the comparable proportion of local supply for Bristol and London was seventeen and ten percent.

The second Liverpool advantage was its location. Liverpool ships could sail north around Ireland, taking them away from privateers during the frequent wars of the eighteenth century, while ships from the Southern England ports of Bristol and particularly London were more vulnerable. Liverpool slave traders also benefitted from proximity to the Isle of Man, which was a tax haven until 1765, allowing Liverpool traders to avoid duties on foreign goods

used to barter for slaves in West Africa. Related, Liverpool benefitted from the burgeoning textile industries in nearby south Lancashire and Manchester, and from improvements in the transportation linkages between those places and the port. Textiles were the most common commodity in the barter for slaves, typically making up about half of traded value. Other goods exported to Africa such as hardware and gunpowder were also made around Liverpool. The growth of the trade-industrial complex around Liverpool also created possibilities to process and sell the imports (staples such as sugar and cotton) that slave traders brought home from the Americas.

The third Liverpool advantage was human capital. We have already noted the dominance of merchants over Liverpool's politics. There was a similar commercial dominance over its culture, which was particularly materialist and mercantilist, and often openly hostile to the aesthetic and humanitarian aspirations of the enlightenment (Checkland, 1952). But this commercial focus, combined with the opportunities and risks of overseas trade, produced improvisers and innovators, and in many ways, Liverpool simply did the slave trade better. They implemented effective organizational governance mechanisms and trade remittance mechanisms for their far-flung enterprise, more so than slave traders from London and Bristol (Silverman and Ingram, 2012; Morgan, 2007). They developed close, even social, relationships with the African traders that supplied them with slaves, allowing them to rely on trust to smooth exchange (Behrendt, Latham and Northrup, 2010)<sup>1</sup>. They exploited market power in both acquiring and selling slaves, and they were first-movers into new slave markets (Morgan, 2007). Liverpool was also ahead of Bristol and London in the supply of capable ships' officers that allowed them unique advantage to operate in places such as the Bight of Biafra that did not have European resident agents, and therefore required that trade be conducted directly between ships' officers and African merchants (Behrendt, 2007).

Overseas traders in Liverpool could invest in the slave (triangle) trade or the more common direct trade. The direct trade involved taking immigrants and manufactured goods to the Americas and returning with agricultural staples. The ship owners typically did not own the

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<sup>1</sup> At one point, the leader of an African slave trading clan in Old Calabar lived in "Liverpool Hall", a home built in Liverpool by his British slave-trading partners and shipped to the west coast of Africa as a gift to him (Behrendt et al., 2010). "By the late 1780s as many as 50-70 Africans studied as schools around Liverpool, where they made contacts and learned about the slave trade (Morgan, 2007: 27)."

cargo. The slave trade from Liverpool involved taking tradables (manufactured goods, bar iron, salt) to the West Coast of Africa, trading them with African traders or less typically European factors for slaves (and perhaps ivory), sailing to the Americas, selling the slaves and, if time permitted, acquiring a cargo of agricultural staples for the return trip. Liverpool traders might acquire slaves in many places in West Africa, but the Bight of Biafra, particularly the ports of Bonny and Old Calabar, was their favored place of embarkation. Similarly, they sold slaves all over the Americas, but Jamaica (31% of Liverpool slaving voyages) and Barbados (14%) were the most common destinations. As Table 1 indicates, the slave trade represented more risk, more potential reward, and greater financial outlay than the direct trade.

Table 1  
Comparison of Direct Trade and Slave Trade, 1730-1807

	<b>Voyages in our Data</b>	<b>Ships Sunk, Seized or Condemned</b>	<b>Average Number of Owners</b>	<b>Estimate of Voyage Expenses, not including ship</b>	<b>Estimate of Gross Profit of Successful Voyage</b>
<b>Direct Trade</b>	14211	8.1%	3.19	£1,550-£2,000	£750-£1,000
<b>Slave Trade</b>	3034	18.8%	4.07	£3,850-£5,500	£3,000-£4,000

Estimates from our data (first three columns) and Silverman and Ingram, 2012 (last two columns)

### **Was the Slave Trade Really Counter to British Values?**

One might reasonably ask whether slavery was in fact “dirty business” in Britain in the period we study, given the economic importance of the slave trade and slavery to the metropole and her Caribbean colonies, the fact that the trade was carried out legally by British traders for more than two centuries, and that there was no active abolition movement in Britain until late in the eighteenth century. The answer is “yes.” The first chapter of *Moral Capital*, Chris Brown’s remarkable history of the cultural antecedents of British abolitionism, is titled “Antislavery without Abolitionism.” In it he argues that the slave trade represented a divergence between economic practice and normative values, and that there was a social cost to be paid: “Slave traders in Britain encountered public disapproval early in the eighteenth century, decades before

the emergence of those cultural movements [the abolition movement] often credited for engendering antislavery sentiment (2006: 37).” A key claim is that antislavery sentiment did not emerge simultaneously with the abolition movement, but was instead widespread throughout the period we study. As Davis explains, “climates of opinion do not give virgin birth to social movements (215).”

In Capitalism and Antislavery, Seymour Drescher further documents the low cultural standing of the slave trade: the “tension between economic utility and social distaste was present early in the development of the British slave colonies. Such attitudes appeared far too soon to attribute the phenomenon to the enlightenment. The condemnation of the slave trade as un-Christian and inhuman was distilled even into mid-eighteenth century children’s literature (1986:18).” He notes that slave vessels never landed in Britain, that metropolitans exposed to slavery in the Caribbean expressed culture shock, and that:

“By the mid-seventeenth century, when English subjects began systematically to buy and sell other human beings on a large scale, neither chattel slavery nor inherited bondage existed any longer within the boundaries of their own land. The language of antislavery ran through their rhetoric, their rituals and their riots throughout the eighteenth century. A ‘libertarian heritage’ was the dominant political ideology in the eighteenth century, to which all groups subscribed....The world was made safe for North-West European colonial slavery by the tyranny of distance rather than by universal principles.”

The view from history is of two solitudes, a muffled tension between a British culture that celebrated liberty operating adjacent to a colonial economic system that relied on slavery<sup>2</sup>. As Emma Rothschild concludes in her cultural history of the Johnstones, an eighteenth century Scottish family that participated in the slave economy (one of them was son-in-law to a Liverpool slave trader) while sometimes championing the values of abolition, “[t]he forty years ...from the new settlements of 1763 to the abolition of the slave trade (in British ships) in 1806, were a time of humanitarian sentiment as in the abolitionist associations...and at the same time, of consolidation and expansion in the Atlantic slave economy (p. 162).” These separate moral worlds could coexist because slavery occurred far away from Britain. While its perpetrators were not lauded at home, neither was it necessary to constantly confront their offense to British

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<sup>2</sup> This separation between the British value of liberty and colonial economic practice reminds of the “internal tension of empire and nation” between the value of national sovereignty and the colonial system itself that existed at about the same time in the Empire (Strang, 1990). Both abolitionists and champions of national sovereignty employed the analogy between slavery and colonialism (Brown, 2006).

values. Slavery violated those values, but distance from the slave colonies made it possible to avoid the conversation, and that was mostly what happened until the late eighteenth century<sup>3</sup>. The Liverpool traders, however, represented an exception to this normative suspension. They were literally the brokers between the metropole and the slave economy, the only residents of Britain actively involved in slavery. Slave traders were the bridge between those separate worlds, and therefore the focus of the energy produced by their normative tension: “Anti-slavery sentiment did circulate in the early eighteenth century....[but] critics tended to judge American slaveholders and Atlantic slave traders rather than British institutions and British policies (Brown, 2006: 36).” . This brings us to our puzzle, why did the Liverpool slave traders engage in a dirty business despite exposure to the anti-slaving values of British culture.

### **Status and Entry to the Slave Trade**

Given that the slave trade was legal, any sanctions traders incur for violating cultural expectations would be social. Slave trading, like other instances of dirty business, is in the realm of normative control. And even though there was no active contention over the trade until late in the eighteenth century, Liverpool traders did suffer social sanctions: “The moral censure of ‘Liverpool Men’ by evangelicals and Dissenters was to shape subsequent perceptions of the town’s eighteenth century merchants as brutal and boorish (Longmore, 2007: 227).” The hostility was visited at an interpersonal level, as in the case of the London correspondent of a Liverpool slave trade supporter, who addressed him as ‘Liverpool man’, not to be confused with the Londoner who claimed the label ‘humanity man’ (Wilson, 1998). In an often repeated story, a famous visiting actor, performing a drunken Richard the III, responded to the complaints of his Liverpool audience with a speech that is a model of norm-based scolding:

“What! You hiss me? Hiss George Frederick Cooke? You contemptible money-getters! I banish you! There is not a brick in your damn town but what has been cemented by the blood of a negro! (Broadbent, 1908, 120-121).”

In the face of such stigma, the necessary question to explain the initiation of the slave trade is: “are some individuals are less affected by norms than others?” Various arguments in

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<sup>3</sup> In this view, what differentiates the years of the abolition movement from the decades that preceded it is not a shift in public attitudes towards slavery, but rather the enactment of attitudes that existed, but were not talked about or acted upon. This is part of the reason for the very fast acceleration of the abolition movement once it began: “The overwhelming majority of articulate Britons were abolitionists as soon as they gathered together to discuss the slave trade (Drescher, 1990: 580).”

social psychology and sociology point to status as a moderator of normative control. Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) integrate those arguments and evidence to offer a theory of middle-status conformity. The idea is that norms grip most tightly for those in the middle of a status hierarchy. Those at the top and bottom of the status hierarchy have more freedom from the norm and are more likely to engage in anti-normative behavior. The key mechanism is security of status. Phillips and Zuckerman describe a status system that is quite sticky for those who are clearly insiders, or outsiders. Since those at the top are safe in their status, they feel autonomy from norms. Since those at the bottom don't perceive much chance of climbing in the status hierarchy, they too feel autonomy. Those in the middle, however, feel the potential to climb and the risk of falling, and they therefore attend most carefully to normative expectations.

Throughout the eighteenth century, Liverpool's elite citizens were associated with the slave trade. For example, we traced the names of the 41 members of the Common Council of Liverpool in 1752 (found in The Liverpool Memorandum Book, 1752) to our data, and found that 24 were slaving investors. Only four were involved in overseas trade but not the slave trade, so participation in slavery was much more likely among the traders on the Council than in Liverpool overall. However, the political (and probably economic) status represented by sitting on the town council is not what Phillips and Zuckerman rely on to predict middle-status conformity. They are careful to explain that the theory applies when status indicates "the amount of honor or esteem accorded to a person (386)," not power, ability or resources.

To capture the "honor or esteem" accorded to overseas traders, we rely on legal status, particularly the designation of Gentleman. An authoritative contemporaneous account of English law identifies Gentlemen as those who "studieth the laws of the realm, who studieth in the universities, who professeth liberal sciences, and (to be short) who can live idly, and without manual labour, and will bear the port, charge, and countenance of a Gentleman..." (Blackstone, 1765, Book 1: 394). Gentleman was not, of course, the top social rank in Britain. The order of ranks were the nobility; titles of dignity (Knights and Baronets); titles of worship (Esquires and Gentlemen); Yeoman or Freemen (commoners with enough capital to qualify to sit on juries and to vote in elections for public office); and all others. However, there were no nobles or titles of dignity among the investors in overseas trade in Liverpool. Among 200 leading Liverpool slave

traders that appear in the index of wills in Pope (2007) four died with titles of dignity, but all of these were obtained after entry to the slave trade.

By statute, individuals were required to identify by rank in legal proceedings and other actions, so these categories were not superfluous. However, unlike the other ranks, there was in practice no explicit regulation over claims of the title Esquire or Gentleman<sup>4</sup>. This creates a question as to whether those titles actually indicate differential status in our data. The evidence suggests there were some barriers to claiming these titles, as they were relatively rare: among the almost 8000 traders we study, there were only 129 Gentlemen and 88 Esquires. There are a number of reasons to believe that the Esquire title was the more likely to be claimed by pretenders. First, it proliferated in the mid-to-late late eighteenth century (Leneman, 2000). In wills and death notices, more than 30% of leading Liverpool slavers were titled Esquire, while less than 10% were titled Gentleman (Pope, 2007)<sup>5</sup>. It is also true that the title “Esquire” and “Merchant” were regularly combined in occupational listings for our traders, whereas “Gentleman” and “Merchant” were combined only once. Based on these and other facts, we concluded that the title Esquire was often claimed by successful merchants in a way that Gentleman was not.<sup>6</sup> We therefore combine Esquires with Merchants in our data and view this category to be second in rank behind Gentlemen<sup>7</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> There were technical rules governing the titles of nobility and dignity and these were enforced because they had implications for a person’s legal rights. Similarly, the Freeman title was actively governed because it was a requirement for voting, and Liverpool like other places kept rolls of Freemen.

<sup>5</sup> One slaver, John Crosbie, appears as Esquire in our data, and Gentleman at the time of his death in 1791. As a former mayor of Liverpool, he could legitimately have used the honorific Esquire. That he was instead identified as Gentleman suggests that Esquire was becoming debased by that time in a way that Gentleman was not yet. There is nobody in our data as a Gentleman who appears in Pope’s (2007) list of wills as an Esquire.

<sup>6</sup> One documented example is that of William Boats, a captain in the slave trade who went on to a prolific career as an owner of ships. He was identified as Esquire upon his death, although he did not qualify by the criteria set out by Blackstone (1765), specifically he was not the son of a peer or Knight (he was an orphan child found in a boat), he was not made an Esquire by the King, and he did not hold an office of trust under the crown. The idea that many Esquires in our data were “just” successful merchants is reinforced by the fact that they were extremely active traders, each responsible on average of 22 voyages in our data (compared to eight for Gentlemen, nine for other Merchants, and six for Other status ranks).

<sup>7</sup> We also investigated this categorization empirically in two ways. First, we examined who Esquires in our data affiliated with among the other ranks. They were most likely to affiliate with other Esquires and Merchants, and were least likely to affiliate with Gentlemen. On the assumption that traders of like-status will seek each other out (Podolny, 1993), the pattern of affiliation suggests that the nominal Esquires are close in status to Merchants. The apparent repulsion between Gentlemen and Esquires only makes sense if the latter group were viewed by the former as illegitimate pretenders to a higher status. Second, in supplemental analyses we treated Esquires as a separate category and compared their propensity to slaving and their influence in the network to that of other status ranks. On the former, they are most like the “Other” category, and on the latter, like the “Merchant” category. All of these

Figure 1 shows the base-rate of transition to slavery for the status types of Gentleman, Merchants, and Others. Merchants and Others were all freemen. Others performed some designated profession or occupation (e.g., brewers, glaziers, captains). Merchants lived off their capital through importing and exporting, and we therefore categorized them as closer to the “idle” Gentlemen. The effect sizes represent the likelihood of an overseas trader who has not yet invested in slavery taking a stake in a slave voyage. Other is the comparison category (with a likelihood of entering the slave trade of 1.00). Merchants were twenty-percent more likely than Others to enter the slave trade, and Gentlemen sixty-five percent more likely. Traders with higher status were indeed more likely to flaunt the norms against participation in the slave trade.



Figure 1 (Coefficients from Model 1)

Figure 1 indicates that anti-normative slave trading increased monotonically with the status of the trader, which does not on the surface appear consistent with the prediction that the greatest conformity will be at middle-status levels. It is important to remember, however, that

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results support the conclusion that the label Esquire in our data indicates an active Merchant, and not someone with a status above Gentleman.

our data represents a truncation of the status hierarchy. All of the overseas traders, even those that appear in our data with the rank of Other, were relatively wealthy. For example, in 1800, when there were approximately 80,000 residents of Liverpool, our data identify 748 distinct Liverpool traders. These were not necessarily the 748 wealthiest in the town, but they were among the roughly 12% of Liverpool residents at that time that appeared in Gore's directory of "principal residents." The vast majority of residents could not have invested in overseas trade. This was certainly true for the lowest rungs of the status hierarchy, the group that would, according to the middle-status conformity prediction, be expected to join the high-status Gentleman in the slave trade. The fact that the lowest of the low could not invest in the slave trade did not stop them from participating in other ways, particularly as crew. Consider this account of a Liverpool slave ship captain:

"With respect to the mortality amongst the crews of African ships<sup>8</sup>, it must be taken into account that many of the individuals composing them were the very dregs of the community. Some of them had escaped from jails, others were undiscovered offenders, who sought to withdraw themselves from their country, lest they should fall into the hands of the officers of justice. These wretched beings used to flock to Liverpool (Williams, 1897: 688)."

Phillips and Zuckerman (2001) suggested that the anti-normative behavior of those of high- and low-status could take different forms. With Gentleman being most likely among overseas traders to invest in slaving, and the "dregs of the community" carrying out the dirty business as crew, the result is indeed middle-status conformity.

For us, one of the appeals of the Gentleman category as an indicator of status is that it is completely independent of trading, or indeed, any economic activity. By decoupling conduct and status, a cleaner view of the liberating potential of high status becomes possible. We do have access to another measure of status among Liverpool traders. A trader's status in the inter-trader network created by co-investments does not have the advantage of being completely separate from slaving, but it nevertheless represents a form of "honor or esteem" in the sense of indicating that a trader is an attractive partner. Furthermore, the familiar Matthew Effect (Podolny, 1993) creates stickiness in this hierarchy, such that highly central traders may feel safe in their network status, while low centrality traders may feel sufficiently peripheral as to be

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<sup>8</sup> The mortality rate of European crew on transatlantic slave voyages was approximately 20%, owing mostly to malaria and yellow fever (Curtin, 1969).

emboldened to flaunt the broader social norm against slaving. As Figure 2 shows, the likelihood of engaging in slaving is highest for those at the high and low end of the network status hierarchy. Conformity to the anti-slaving norm is highest at middle status.

## Transition To Slavery as a Function of Status in the Trading Network

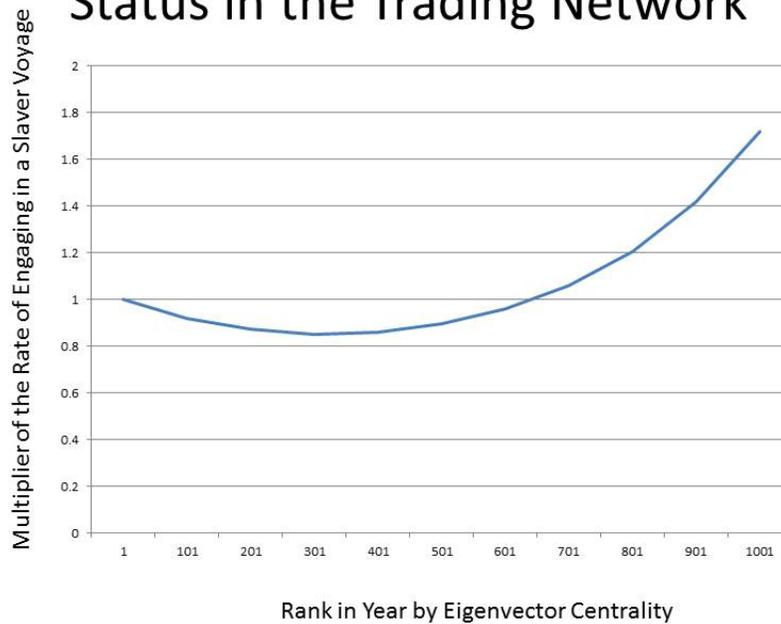


Figure 2 (Coefficients from Model 1)

Finally on trader status, we examine for Liverpool slaving one of Phillips and Zuckerman's (2001) key caveats, that the middle-status conformity prediction holds only when status does not equal power, ability, or resources. Network centrality in particular is a function of previous voyage-investments, and might therefore be expected to correlate with ability (through experience) and wealth (through previous successful voyages). However, our models include a direct measure of previous non-slaving voyages, an appropriate control for both trader experience and wealth through trading investments. As would be expected this variable is highly correlated with network status (.54). Interestingly, it is negatively associated with the likelihood of participating in a slave voyage (see model 1, Appendix). Furthermore, model 1 includes another variable that proxies material resources, the percentage of an investor's previous ships

that have been lost (sunk, seized or condemned). That variable has a positive relationship to the likelihood of entering the slave trade. This, combined with the effect of non-slaving experience, suggests that it is not simply the case that those made wealthy in the non-slave trade went into the slave trade. Instead, the results suggest that engaging in the slave trade was more an act of desperation of traders who had not experienced success in the non-slave trade.

Despite the assurance provided by these control variables, we were still concerned that the Gentleman category might represent material endowments that made it easier to get into the expensive slave trade. We consulted the data on the values of personal estates of leading Liverpool slave traders presented in Pope (2007) as one source of insight into the levels of wealth represented by our status categories. The Gentlemen in that list left estates with an average value of £5707. Merchants and Esquires left estates averaging £17544, while the comparable figure for the Other rank was £9303. Of course, Pope's list is a sample of leading slavers, not a census, and the figures represent wealth upon death, not at the time of entering the slave trade. Nevertheless, it is consistent with the fact that there is nothing in the legal definition of Gentleman that necessitates wealth, particularly relative to the active merchant class.

As yet another investigation into whether Gentlemen brought non-status advantages to the conduct of the slave trade, we conducted an extensive analysis of the investments and performance of Gentlemen in the slave trade. It is detailed in the section in the Appendix titled "Did Gentlemen Slavers Perform or Invest Differently?" and results are summarized in Table 2a. That analysis indicates that slaving investments by Gentlemen were no more or less likely than investments by non-Gentlemen to sink, to be captured, or to experience crew deaths, or to yield fewer slaves than planned. There is a weak indication ships Gentlemen invested in yielded fewer slaves than planned. Gentlemen's voyages were shorter than others, because they went to different ports in Africa and the Americas. Again, this could represent a trade-off, and does not necessarily indicate greater profits. Gentlemen invested in the same sized ships as others, but ranked higher on the lists of owners. They were no more likely to invest in particularly risky voyages. In all, the analysis yielded an intriguing result on the duration of Gentlemen's voyages, but no clear evidence that they performed better, invested more, or took more risks than others.

The evidence on wealth, investments and voyage performance offers nothing to refute our conclusion that Gentleman entered the slave trade because their social status gave them

autonomy from normative constraint. Overall, Liverpool slavers appear to have followed the middle-status conformity pattern. Gentleman of high legal rank invested in that trade, while the “dregs of the community” participated as crew. Among all overseas traders in Liverpool, those with high or low status in the trading network were more likely to enter the slave trade. In the next section, we build on this individual analysis of status by considering who is more influential for encouraging others to enter the slave trade.

### **Structural Influences on the Transition to Slaving**

A large and robust literature on social contagion shows that attitudes and behaviors are more likely to be shared among connected actors. After countless studies, researchers still identify questions such as “who will be influential?” as pressing (see for example Iyengar et al., 2011, and the co-published commentaries). Overwhelmingly, however, the literature on social contagion examines the diffusion of opinions, knowledge, and the adoption of innovation. These things are different fundamentally from entry to slaving. In the typical example of social contagion, what is in question is the utility of a product or idea (e.g., Tolbert and Zucker, 1983). The backdrop is uncertainty and the absence of normative expectations, not, as in the case of slaving, a normative expectation *not* to adopt the “innovation.” Potential slave traders did not face uncertainty as to whether slaving was an effective economic strategy, and neither could they claim uncertainty as to its legitimacy. Moreover, the status of a trader as an “opinion leader” cannot be assumed to be independent of the normative status of their behavior. Social influence in this situation cannot operate according to the same mechanisms as it does in others.

There are some studies that have identified social contagion in the context of anti-normative behavior (e.g., Christiakis and Fowler’s 2007 analysis of the diffusion of obesity; Bearman and Stovel, 2000 on becoming a Nazi). Norms rely on social sanctions, so if one’s social group adopts anti-normative behavior, one could find local social support for engaging in the same behavior. In Liverpool, a trader might feel enabled (or even pressured) to enter slaving if his network contacts were slavers. Very relevant empirical evidence for the question of social contagion in the entry to the slave trade comes from Younts’ (2008) experimental analysis of the social influences on anti-normative behavior. He identified that (a) endorsement of anti-normative behavior (cheating) by a reference group increased the likelihood of the subject

cheating; and (b) the suggestion to cheat was more influential when it came from a higher status confederate.

Figure 3 shows the impact of a trader's network contacts on the likelihood of entering the slave trade. Notably, our independent variables are "net exposure" measures. What we have done for each class of status (Gentlemen, Merchants, Others) is counted the number of slavers to whom the trader is connected in his network of co-investments, and subtracted from that the number of non-slavers to whom he is connected. This is an important variant on many models of social contagion, which often weigh adopters as influential, and non-adopters as having no influence. In our case, the issue at hand is moral suasion, and non-slavers should be expected to be every bit as influential as slavers. Influence, in other words, cuts both ways, with slavers pulling their contacts into the slave trade, and non-slavers operating to keep them out.<sup>9</sup>

The results show that social contagion did indeed operate in the Liverpool slave trade. Moreover, status mattered, significantly. The lowest status traders (Others) actually had a small negative influence on the behavior of their partners. A trader who had a net network exposure to Others of +1 (tied to one more slaving Other than non-slaving Others) would be 2% less likely to enter the slave trade. Merchants had a positive social contagion effect. Every additional Merchant slaver in a trader's network increased the likelihood of entering the slave trade by 6%. The really large effect was for Gentlemen. An additional Gentleman slaver in a trader's network increased the likelihood of entering the slave trade by a whopping 75%. (And of course, non-slaving Merchants and Gentlemen influenced to keep their network partners out of the slave trade).

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<sup>9</sup> In this specification represented in Figure 3, we make a simplifying assumption that the influence of slavers and non-slavers on network partners is of equal magnitude. We relax that assumption in subsequent analyses.

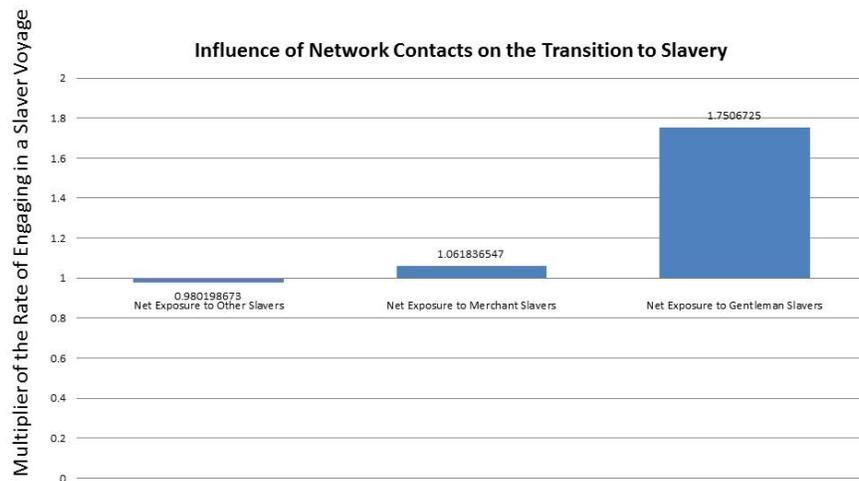


Figure 3 (Coefficients from Model 1)

Younts' (2008) explanation for the status effect on the diffusion of deviance depended on the correlation between status and ability, such that the high status endorsement is more credible. We are doubtful of that mechanism, at least in our context, because we simply don't believe there was uncertainty about the efficacy of a slaving investment. Moreover, with an anti-normative behavior as opposed to one whose efficacy is uncertain, the costs of social sanction must be considered. As explained, we don't think that Gentlemen would have been viewed as more competent about trading or slaving—their status comes from a different institutional source. We expect instead that the contagiousness of Gentlemen slavers comes from the "moral cover" that their status provides. Consistent with this, in supplementary analysis we found that traders with more network status, gained as a function of voyages, were not more influential on their network partners' likelihood to enter slaving. Whether or not one entered the slave trade was not a function of technical uncertainty but moral authority. Legal status provided a dispensation that centrality in the network of traders did not.

Of course, our network of co-investing traders does not capture all of the social structure that surrounded a trader. As an effort to get at the many other sources of social contagion a

trader faced, such as clubs, neighborhoods, meetings in taverns and on the street, we included a measure of whether the trader lived in Liverpool, where anti-slavery norms were relatively weak. Controlling for all else (including position in the trader network), Liverpool residents were 68% more likely to enter the slave trade than non-residents. We also considered the percentage of all traders who were slavers, as a way of capturing influence beyond a trader's immediate partners. This might be a proxy for weak network ties, or the City's culture. With every one-percent increase in that measure, the likelihood of entering the slave trade increased by 5%.

The bottom line is that social structure operated to increase the likelihood of entering the slave trade in Liverpool. Gentlemen slavers were particularly infectious on the likelihood that their partners would enter the trade (and similarly, Gentlemen non-slavers were influential in keeping their partners out of slavery). It was not only the immediate network that mattered. Diffuse influences operated, as simply living in Liverpool increased the likelihood of becoming a slaver. Moreover, when more traders were slavers, others were more likely to enter the trade.

### **Social Movement Influence: Changing the Conversation**

The Abolition movement in Britain started in earnest in 1787, and succeeded in legislation twenty years later. In those twenty years Liverpool did not shrink in the face of contention, but rather *increased* its dominance of the slave trade. At the time, the public will was expressed to Parliament in the form of petitions. Every major British city produced petitions for the abolitionist cause save Liverpool, which instead produced frequent petitions in favor of the slave trade. In Manchester, which had a deep economic interest in Liverpool's slave industry as the source of manufactured goods for trade, 10,000 people signed an abolition petition in 1787.

The support for the movement in Manchester demonstrates that it was not only economic interest in the slave trade that predicted support for abolition. Both Manchester and Liverpool depended economically on slaving, but Liverpool was different because its merchants engaged directly as slave traders. That "being active slavers" made all the difference in the stance to abolition is further indicated by the fact that as soon after British abolition as 1814, Liverpool generated 30,000 signatures on a petition against a re-opening of the French slave trade. Credit for attracting many of those names went to John Gladstone (Drescher, 1988), who had previously invested in a slaving voyage (although only one, among many direct-trade investments).

Liverpool was also active in the campaign for emancipation that followed abolition, despite persisting economic interest in trade with slave-holding colonies (Howman, 2007).

If abolition itself affected a reversal of Liverpool's position on the slave trade, it was only after a resistance that was unique in Britain. The resistance occurred at a political level, through counter-petitioning and arguments by Liverpool's representatives in parliament. There were occasional episodes of mob violence against abolitionists in Liverpool. But the interaction between the abolitionist and slaving forces necessarily happened every day in the course of business in Liverpool. "The friends of the hapless Africans, and many such are to be found even here, have not been passive and unconcerned in the struggle...They have remonstrated in public and in private (The Picture of Liverpool, 1805: 148)." As Howell (2007: 282) puts it, "It seems that the matter was being widely discussed [in Liverpool] and strong positions on both sides of the argument were being adopted."

Of course, everyday conversations seldom leave a trace on history. But there is evidence of a rhetorical shift in pamphlets from the time. Drescher (1988) observes a shift in the content of arguments that Liverpoolians produced for the consumption of outsiders. Before the abolition movement, there appears almost no explicit defense of the trade from Liverpool, probably because there was no active threat against it. Discussions of the slave trade in guides to Liverpool before the abolition movement were matter of fact descriptions, with no justifications (or criticisms). The abolition movement ignited an active defense of the trade. The Liverpool Council commissioned an extensive defense of the trade on religious grounds (Harris, 1788). Letter writers, poets, and others presented secular arguments.

The content of these published documents suggests the discussions and arguments that must have been happening in Liverpool at this time. Harris (1788) cited many non-condemning references to slavery from the Old Testament. Observing that "an argument that proves too much proves nothing" he shrewdly claimed that abolitionists' frequent use of the golden rule against slavery could similarly be used to invalidate every other hierarchical human arrangement (72). Secular arguments included that Africans were already enslaved in Africa; that the transatlantic trade exposed them to Christianity; and that it presented them with some chance of emancipation. Of course the economic benefits of the trade were also cited. In petitions and Parliamentary debates, economic issues were the foundation of the antiabolitionist argument

(Drescher, 1990). In the local discourse, it was sometimes observed that economic benefits were spread wide in Liverpool through its generous charitable institutions (Drescher, 1988).

On the abolition side, the arguments targeted the inhumanity of the practice. They backed up that characterization with stories of brutality from the ships, and a very early effort of abolitionists was to collect such testimonials from captains and seamen in Liverpool and elsewhere. They also challenged the anti-abolitionists' claims about the condition of Africans in Africa. The economic interest argument was met with the response that trade with Africa could continue, but with a commodity other than humans. Wilberforce (1807) provides an excellent summary of the abolitionists' case. Drescher (1990) shows abolitionists' emphasis on moral issues, for example that their most characteristic arguments in Parliamentary debates were: Policy Irrelevance (the idea that economic interests are irrelevant to the fundamentally moral issue); British guilt; British pride; religion; and justice. The champion of abolitionism in Liverpool was William Roscoe, who argued for decades against the trade, and in 1807 voted for abolition as a newly elected Member of Parliament from Liverpool. Roscoe was an historian, the author of an influential biography of Lorenzo de' Medici, and he frequently compared Liverpool to renaissance Florence. That flattering analogy offered redemption of identity to Liverpudlians who were willing to sacrifice the naked commercialism of the slave trade and invest in culture (Wilson, 1998).

Ultimately, the balance of espoused interests in Liverpool shifted. This is apparent in the tone of guides to the town published in the late-nineteenth century (Drescher, 1988). The Picture of Liverpool published in 1805 begins its discussion of the trade by calling the label "metropolis of slavery" an unfounded and illiberal characterization of the town. The slave trade is attributed to three or four houses, and to merchants from outside Liverpool. It is "the duty of those who feel for the honour of the town, and disapprove of the traffic to rescue it from this general opprobrium by every means in their power (147)." The slavers are recognized as being sometimes "of fair, unblemished characters, but of mild and conciliatory dispositions, exemplary not only for their public spirit, but also for their private munificence and liberality (147)." These concessions remind us that that the slavers were neighbors of the writer, but they were also made under the rubric of "giving the devil his due." The emerging picture is of a town that separated itself from the slavers. But if the town came to align itself with the abolitionist

sentiments of the country, the slavers themselves did not. They carried their case to the end, indeed, beyond it as Roscoe was met by a violent mob when he returned to Liverpool after casting his vote for abolition. They could do nothing besides persist, once they had been stained as “devils” and accused of inhumanity. Devils cannot be redeemed.

What was the effect of the escalation of arguments prompted by the abolition movement? Figure 4 is like Figure 3 above in that it examines the social contagion of slaving, however it allows the infectiousness of slavers on their network partners to be different in the years of active abolition. The earlier result that higher-status slavers have more influence maintains in both movement and non-movement years. But there is a striking increase of the magnitude of the effect, over all statuses, but highest for Gentlemen, in the years of the abolition movement. During the abolition movement, when the rhetoric for and against the slave trade was hottest, and the arguments sharpest, traders had a much greater influence on whether their partners entered the trade.

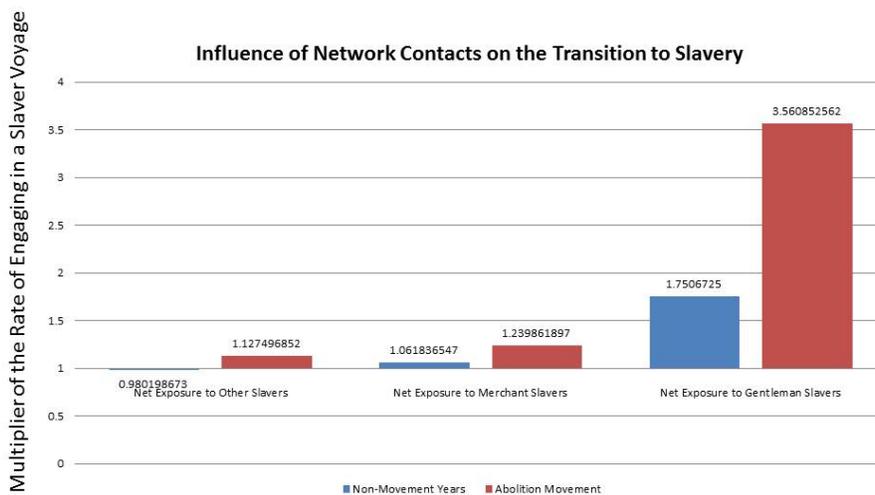


Figure 4 (Coefficients from Model 2)

Both Figures 3 and 4 show the effect of net exposure to slavers (slavers in a trader’s network minus non-slavers) and constrain the effect of slavers to be equal to that of non-slavers. We’ll finish our analysis by relaxing that assumption. Figure 5 shows the network impact of

various ranks, in abolition movement years and non-movement years, allowing the impact of slavers to be different from non-slavers. There is a remarkably consistent ordering of effects. Higher ranks are always more socially contagious; slavers always increase the likelihood of partners entering the trade while non-slavers decrease it; and the magnitude of the influence effects is always greater in the years of the abolition movement.

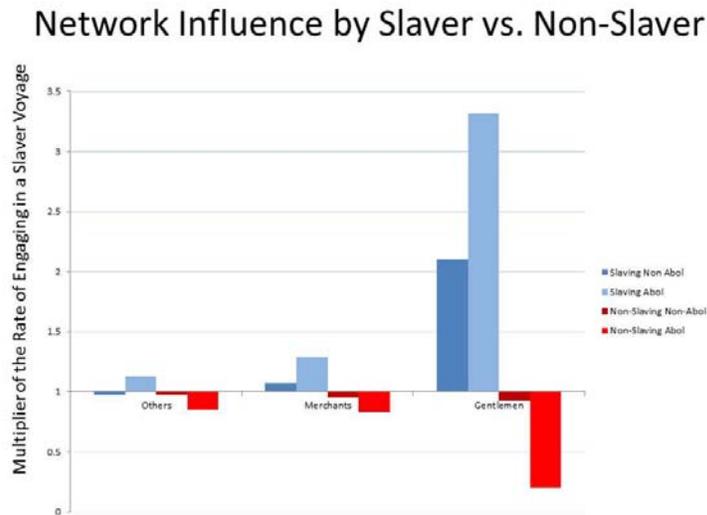


Figure 5 (Coefficients from Supplementary Analysis)

It is hard to eyeball the relative effects of slavers and non-slavers in Figure 5 as it visually understates the magnitude of multipliers of the rate less than one (a multiplier of .5 would offset a multiplier of 2, but would appear smaller on the graph). To make comparison of magnitudes clear, we offer Figure 6. Here we show the net effect on the transition to slaving rate for a trader who had one partner who was a slaver and one partner who was a non-slaver. It is created directly from Figure 5 by multiplying the slaver effect times the non-slaver effect (our logit model is multiplicative). The magnitudes of the slaver and non-slaver effects are about equal for Others and Merchants, in both movement and non-movement years. But for Gentlemen, there is a marked shift of relative influence during the abolition movement. Before the movement, Gentlemen slavers were more influential to pull their network partners into the slave trade than Gentlemen non-slavers were to keep their partners out. But during abolition years, Gentlemen non-slavers become more influential.

This final effect brings us full circle. We began by showing that high status Gentlemen exploited their normative autonomy to enter the slave trade at higher rates than traders of lower status. We then showed how the network amplified this individual tendency, as these Gentlemen slavers were more influential on the likelihood of their network partners entering the slave trade. Finally, we show that culture, in the form of a social movement, conditions the micro and meso action. The abolition movement brought the anti-normative character of the slave trade into the open, and made it the basis of active argument. This operated to increase the influence that traders, whether slavers or non-slavers, had on their partners. But more than simply amplify influence, the abolition movement also shifted the balance in favor of non-slavers. It operated as a thumb on the scale of debate such that now, the process of social influence in Liverpool became more likely to discourage entry to the trade.

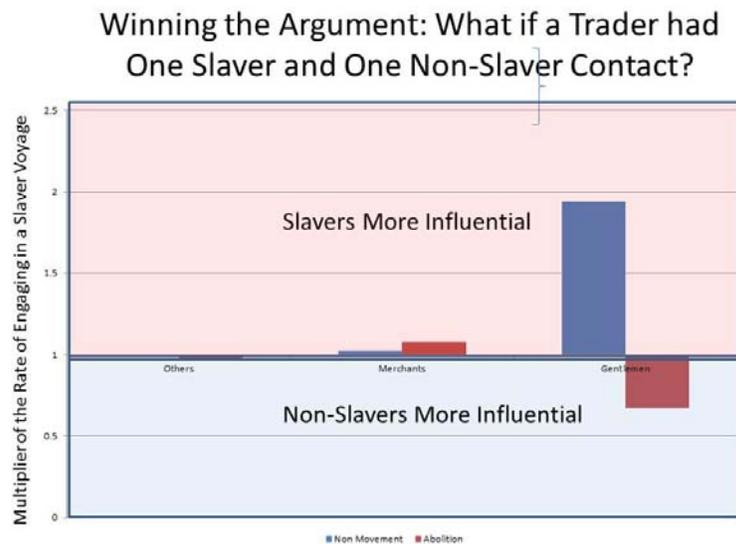


Figure 6 (Coefficients from Supplementary Analysis)

## Conclusion

David Fischer (1970) said that history is useful to refine theory, and to help us understand who we are as a people. For theory, we have leveraged the case of Liverpool slaving to understand dirty business, the phenomenon whereby some people pursue economic activities that violate cultural values. Our explanation considers individuals, networks and culture. We harnessed the

concept of individual status to explain why some individuals will flout the norms. They become the seeds of dirty business. The role of the network is to spread the seeds. Here again status matters, insidiously as those high status individuals most likely to deviate from norms are also the most influential on the behavior of their network partners. Finally we considered the role of a social movement to affect the exercise of norms in human interactions. The abolition movement turned up the heat on the slave trade, and made it impossible for non-slavers to look the other way. It also generated sharper arguments both for and against the trade. The effect was to increase the magnitude of social influence. A trader's network partners affected the trader more during abolition, because whether they were slavers or not, they had a better case to make, and they were motivated to press it. Slavers and non-slavers were not amplified equally, however. The non-slavers, who had the weight of the culture behind them, were also favored on the edges of the network. In this way the social movement allowed the broader culture to seep back in to the subculture that had developed in Liverpool.

As for who we are as a people, we wonder what case can say more about that than the transatlantic slave trade. In a grand "who we are as Americans" inquiry, Bailyn (2012) attributes American slavery to English racism. We would suggest instead that America did not get slaves from England, but rather from slave traders, most of whom were English. Who are we as a people? We are now as we were then, a set of hierarchically ordered egoists, linked together and looking to each other for guidance, capable of diverging very far from what we ourselves believe to be right if the conditions allow it.

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## Appendix Data, Methods and Analysis

We relied on data from three sources: (1) The Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (to identify slave voyages and their owners); (2) Liverpool Plantation Register (to identify non-slave voyages and their owners); (3) Gore's Directories (to identify the occupation and status of owners). We created a trader network where two traders were connected if they had ever co-invested in an overseas shipping venture.

The *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TAST)* (Eltis et al., 200X) compiles data on all known slave voyages throughout the entire trans-Atlantic slave-trade period, between 1514 and 1867. For each voyage, the database includes the following information where possible: the names of all vessel owners, the dates on which the voyage began and ended, the location(s) on the African coast where the vessel embarked slaves, the location(s) in the Americas where the vessel disembarked slaves, and the outcome of the voyage – successful completion, sank, captured by privateers or pirates, lost to some other calamity, etc. We use these data to identify the number of voyages by year and departure port for Figure 1. We use the data for Liverpool-departing voyages to identify slave voyages undertaken by Liverpool ships, and the shipowners involved in these voyages. Co-ownership of vessels in this database is used as an input into the construction of the shipowner network.

The *Liverpool Plantation Register* database (Schofield et al., 19XX) is a series of computer files compiled by historians of Liverpool's maritime trade. The files cover a range of data, including information on all vessels registered at the port of Liverpool between 1734 and 1784 (as recorded in the official Register of Vessels at Liverpool) and on all voyages known to have been undertaken by these vessels (as recorded in voyage registration documents, insurance documents, and newspaper advertisements and articles). For each voyage, the database includes the following information: the names of all vessel owners, the occupations of many vessel owners, the dates on which the voyage began, the destination(s) of the voyage, and the outcome of the voyage – successful completion, sank, captured by privateers or pirates, lost to some other calamity, etc. These data cover both slave-trade and non-slave-trade voyages. We use these data to identify the non-slave voyages undertaken by Liverpool ships, and the shipowners involved in these voyages. We also use these data to double-check the *TAST* data on slave voyages.

Beginning in 1766, John Gore began publication of *Gore's Liverpool Directory, Containing an Alphabetical List of the Merchants, Tradesmen, and Principal Inhabitants of the Town of Liverpool with their Respective Addresses*. This directory was published roughly every three years through the mid-1800s. We used this directory to identify occupations of those shipowners whose occupations were not provided in the Liverpool Plantation Register database, and to double-check the occupation data that were provided in that database. By integrating

information in Gore's Directory with that in the Liverpool Plantation Register database, we were able to identify occupations for more than 98% of all owners appearing in our data set.

### **Analysis of Transition to Slavery**

Our statistical analysis looks at the likelihood of a trader who was not previously a slaver entering the slave trade by investing in a slaving voyage. The unit of analysis is the trader-investment, and the dependent variable is a zero if that investment is not slaving, one if it is. The models below are logit models. We have also estimated event history models with comparable results. Results appear in Table A1.

### **Did Gentlemen Slavers Perform or Invest Differently?**

We argue that Gentlemen entered slaving at a higher rate, and influenced others to enter, as a function of their social status. We have already explained why we don't believe their entry into slaving or infectiousness was due to superior resources or capabilities. In this section of analysis we explore this idea with an in-depth analysis of the slave voyages that Gentlemen invested in. Specifically, we seek answers to two questions. First, whether Gentlemen were more effective slavers? If their voyages were more successful, that would be an alternative explanation to status as to why they were more influential on network partners. Second, whether Gentlemen's investments in the slave trade suggest that they may have had more capital, or been less risk averse than other traders? If that was true, it would be an alternative explanation to status as to why they were more likely to enter slaving.

We explored those questions by looking at all Liverpool voyages in the Slave Voyages data base, and considering whether Gentlemen were among the ownership team for the voyage. We differentiated between whether the Gentlemen was first in the ownership list or occupied a subordinate position. We differentiated this position on the possibility that the first ranked owner represented a larger share of ownership, or acted as "ships husband", the leader of the venture who gave instructions to the captain. The variable *Gentleman Husband* indicates that the first owner was a Gentlemen, *Other Gentlemen* is a count of how many other Gentlemen were among the ownership group. Additionally we control for the year of the voyage, the size of the ship (tons), whether the voyage was in wartime, the size of the ownership group, the experience of the first owner (potential husband), and whether the captain had an ownership stake in the venture.

Our dependent variables for performance include the likelihood of being captured or sunk, the number of crew who died on the voyage, the shortfall in slaves (the number planned for the voyage less the actual number obtained, which is a negative indicator of performance), the time of the overall voyage and the time spent in the Americas selling slaves and acquiring cargo (shorter voyages are better because they increase the likelihood of time for a voyage the following year). Gentlemen slavers were neither more nor less likely to see their ships sink, be captured, or their crew die. There is a weakly significant ( $p < .10$ ) effect of *Other Gentlemen* on the ownership team to be associated with a higher predicted shortfall of slaves. Since the effect

is weak, and it does not occur when Gentlemen are in the strategic husband role, it is not a strong indicator of performance.

A more notable performance effect was with regard to time. Voyages with Gentlemen Husbands were overall shorter and less time in the Americas. To further investigate this interesting effect we re-estimated both of these duration models using fixed effects. In the overall voyage length model we included an effect for the first destination in West Africa. In the time in the Americas model, we included an effect for the first port reached in the Americas. In both cases, inclusion of those fixed effects causes the Gentlemen Husband variables to become insignificant (in fact, Other Gentlemen were associated with longer voyages once the destination in West Africa was controlled for). This means that the shorter durations of voyages with Gentleman Husbands was due to the fact that they went to different places in Africa and the Americas. The choice of places to acquire and sell slaves was a strategic one and typically represented trade-offs. For example at places in West Africa with a centralized slave fort, acquiring slaves was faster but also more expensive. So, it could well be that Gentlemen slavers paid a higher price, or received a lower price, for slaves in exchange for their shorter voyages. Alternatively, it could be that Gentlemen had some particular advantage that allowed them to operate more quickly. For example, African traders like the Efik in Old Calabar had a banded status system that in some ways mirrored that of Britain (Behrendt et al., 2010). Perhaps high status African traders favored high status English traders. Alternatively, Gentlemen may have received preference in American ports due to their status. Both of these mechanisms are different from our focus on “freedom from normative control”, however they both depend on Gentlemen’s high status.

Turning to the nature of the voyages Gentlemen engaged in, they were no more or less likely to employ the governance mechanism of extending an ownership stake to the captain, and the ships were no larger or smaller. In an analysis not reported, we found that Gentlemen tended to be higher on the ownership list than non-Gentlemen (average rank 2.7 for Gentlemen, 3.1 for non-Gentlemen). This is largely because they were significantly more likely to show up listed first (the role we call “Husband”) among the owners. If that tendency indicates a higher ownership stake, it might mean that Gentlemen invested more than others, but listing first may represent not the magnitude of Gentlemen’s investments, but instead a form of deference. Furthermore, Gentlemen were no more likely to invest during wartime, which represents particularly high risks and rewards. Again, this is inconsistent the alternative explanation for our status results, that they are driven by Gentlemen with more wealth willing to engage in more risk.

Table A1

## Logit Models of The Likelihood of Trader Investing in The Slave Trade for the First Time

	(1)	(2)
Gentleman	0.503*** (0.171)	0.498*** (0.172)
Merchant	0.179*** (0.0492)	0.180*** (0.0493)
Network Status	-	-
	0.000866*** (0.000311)	0.000875*** (0.000313)
(Network Status) <sup>2</sup>	1.51e-06*** (2.70e-07)	1.44e-06*** (2.74e-07)
% Ships Lost	0.672*** (0.185)	0.668*** (0.185)
Network Influence from Gentlemen	0.699*** (0.112)	0.625*** (0.122)
Network Influence from Merchants	0.0896*** (0.00691)	0.0828*** (0.00731)
Network Influence from Others	-0.0165* (0.00885)	-0.0232** (0.00937)
Log(Non-Slaving Voyages)	-1.011*** (0.0372)	-1.012*** (0.0384)
% Traders who are Slavers	4.960*** (0.339)	5.024*** (0.340)
Liverpool Resident	0.521*** (0.0494)	0.590*** (0.0524)
U.S. War	-1.235*** (0.226)	-1.237*** (0.226)
Abolition Year	-0.591*** (0.0729)	-0.351*** (0.130)
Abol. * Net. Inf. Gentlemen		0.666* (0.345)
Abol. * Net. Inf. Merchants		0.131*** (0.0372)
Abol. * Net. Inf. Others		0.148*** (0.0332)
Abol. * log(Non-Slave Voyages)		0.198** (0.0934)
Abol. * Liverpool Resident		-0.485*** (0.148)
Constant	-3.519*** (0.148)	-3.562*** (0.148)
Observations	28,568	28,568
Standard errors in parentheses		
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1		

Table A2  
Did Gentlemen Slavers Invest or Perform Differently?

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)
	Ship-wrecked	Captured	Crew died	Slave shortfall	Voyage length	Voyage Length	Time in Americas	Time in Americas	Captain Owner	Ship size	War
						African port fixed effects		American port fixed effects			
<b>Year</b>	0.01**	0.04***	-0.14***	-2.40***	-1.81***	-2.37***	-0.47***	-0.37***	-0.01***	2.70***	-0.03***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.09)	(0.14)	(0.17)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.00)	(0.05)	(0.00)
<b>Number Owners</b>	-0.01	-0.01	-0.05	1.31**	2.71***	0.33	-1.28***	-1.09**	0.29***	-2.01***	0.04***
	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.06)	(0.52)	(0.86)	(0.93)	(0.47)	(0.45)	(0.02)	(0.46)	(0.02)
<b>Captain Owner</b>	-0.33*	-0.18	0.55	4.95	13.50**	16.22***	3.08	1.57			-0.00
	(0.19)	(0.17)	(0.45)	(3.29)	(5.49)	(5.72)	(3.16)	(2.96)			(0.10)
<b>Husband Exp.</b>	-0.00	-0.01**	0.03***	0.17***	0.21**	0.07	-0.04	0.03	-0.04***		0.01***
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.06)	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.00)		(0.00)
<b>Ship Size</b>	-0.00	-	0.01***	0.29***	0.04	0.19***	0.10***	0.05***	0.00		-0.00***
		0.00***									
	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.00)	(0.01)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.00)		(0.00)
<b>Wartime</b>	0.11	1.56***	-0.18	-9.82***	16.39***	14.71***	1.68	-1.57	-0.04		
	(0.14)	(0.12)	(0.38)	(2.85)	(4.76)	(5.04)	(2.76)	(2.65)	(0.10)		
<b>Gent. Husband</b>	-0.01	-0.13	-1.08	3.73	-26.73*	-1.56	-13.46**	-0.10	-0.76	12.99	0.03
	(0.43)	(0.41)	(0.74)	(8.76)	(14.39)	(14.82)	(6.30)	(6.24)	(0.61)	(8.72)	(0.30)
<b>Other Gents</b>	-0.13	-0.09	1.46	14.54*	16.67	26.80*	14.15	11.76	0.00	1.74	-0.28
	(0.50)	(0.51)	(1.14)	(8.29)	(13.85)	(14.61)	(9.83)	(9.19)	(0.28)	(8.63)	(0.26)
<b>Constant</b>	-19.6***	-	246.38***	4,265.15***	3,600.93***	4,597.15***	883.32***	693.48***	15.80***	-	47.11***
		81.8***								4,648***	
	(7.14)	(7.74)	(27.64)	(154.61)	(243.86)	(307.45)	(118.09)	(119.83)	(5.06)	(94.15)	(4.05)
<b>Observations</b>	4,591	4,591	2,159	3,860	3,317	2,646	1,746	1,746	4,591	4,810	4,591
<b>R-squared</b>			0.06	0.19	0.10	0.27	0.05	0.21		0.36	
Standard errors in parentheses											
*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1											