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The Rhetoric of Black Abolitionism

An Exploratory Analysis of Antislavery Newspapers in New York State

In a span of thirty years, from 1832 to 1862, American abolitionists were able to reverse public opinion in the North on the question of slavery. Despite the dramatic political shift, the emergent hostility to "slave power" did not lead to an embrace of racial equality. Abolitionists, in the face of America's long history of racism, sought to link opposition to slavery with a call for civil rights. For black abolitionists, this was not only a strategic problem, it was a matter of self-definition. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the meanings of liberty, labor, and independence were the basis of contentious republican politics. Black abolitionists used this rhetorical raw material to fashion "fighting words" with which to generate solidarity and deliver their moral claims to the nation. This research employs an innovative strategy for the analysis of the discursive field, in an exploratory content analysis of five black newspapers in antebellum New York State. Computerized content analysis coded for themes, rhetoric, and ideology in a sample of more than 36,000 words of newspaper text. Although the discourse of black abolitionism is a social critique, it also contains a positive assertion of what free blacks would become. As important as the theme of "slavery" was to the discourse, so too were "colored" and "brotherhood." This analysis consistently showed the key features of political antislavery argumentation to be most common in the Douglass newspapers (the North Star *and* Frederick Douglass' Paper).*

In a span of thirty years, from 1832 to 1862, American abolitionists were able to reverse public opinion in the North on the question of slavery. How did this remarkable change occur? What role did abolitionism play in the

political developments that led to the Civil War and emancipation? While the main cause of death for American slavery may have been economic, ideology certainly played a part (Foner 1970, 1980). Abolitionism deserves credit for having continually pressed the question and for having demanded that northerners—particularly politicians and partisans—decide where they stood on the issue.

Despite the dramatic political shift, the emergent hostility of northerners to "slave power" did not lead to an embrace of racial equality. The predicament for abolitionists was to figure out how to link opposition to slavery with a call for civil rights, in the face of America's long history of racism. For black abolitionists, this was not only a strategic problem, it was a matter of self-definition. The goal of the movement, of course, was the eradication of slavery in the United States, but the process through which this would be accomplished involved the articulation of a free black American identity.

For free blacks, the matter of identity could not be left unresolved. It was, after all, their future to be dreamed of and planned for. Black abolitionists, in the day-to-day business of challenging slavery in a racist society, worked out the details of their desideratum. They demanded liberty and equality and justified their claims in the terms of America's political and cultural heritage. In doing so, they realized that it was necessary to articulate what their community would become when granted these rights. Their assertion that "we are just like you" was not merely a pragmatic strategy to undermine the validation of chattel slavery based on race, it was a sincere expression of their sense of what it meant to be American. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the meanings of liberty, labor, and independence were the basis of contentious republican politics. Black abolitionists used this rhetorical raw material to fashion "fighting words" with which to generate solidarity and deliver their moral claims to the nation.[1]

George A. Levesque (1970) noted that the large and impressive literature on American abolitionism had all but ignored the contributions of blacks. Thirty years later, the neglect continues. Except for recent work by Frankie Hutton (1992, 1993) and Bernell Tripp (1992, 1995) on the antebellum black press, and John L. Lucaites (1997) on black rhetoric, there has been little attention given to the role black leaders had in shaping antislavery activism, antebellum political discourse, or American reform. A complete understanding of abolitionism as a social movement is not possible without such scholarship.

The social movements literature includes a thorough and engaging debate of theoretical perspectives on the symbolic dimension of movements, and in particular, on the role of discourse. Framing theory remains the most common theoretical perspective (see Tarrow 1998; Snow and Benford 1992). Marc W. Steinberg (1998) has argued for a new analytical metaphor that captures the dynamic quality of meaning in social movements. His use of the "discursive field" is an intriguing approach, which has already yielded significant results (Steinberg 1999).

The present study suggests a somewhat different method for describing the circulation of ideas and arguments in social movement discourse. This study proposes that movement discourse be viewed as a networked field of concepts from which arguments are fashioned. This approach requires an examination of the sociocognitive structure of a discourse, as well as an analysis of its rhetoric. Through the circulation of meanings in their discursive field, the black abolitionists discovered the arguments they needed to articulate their moral claims, and at the same time, found a way to express their shared identity.

Because the "field" is a collective construction, it contains contradictions and unresolved tensions. Even as arguments come to be expressed in paradigmatic ways, alternative expressions are available and options are continually tried out; consensus is a tenuous achievement and never fully does away with the multivocality of meanings. Moreover, because the discursive field is never independent of hierarchical social relations, the construction of meanings in movement discourse cannot be isolated from the process of domination. Arguments contest particular arrangements, implicitly consenting to others.

The present research employs an innovative strategy for the analysis of the discursive field. The primary characteristic of this method is an attempt to capture the processes of moral claims-making and collective identity construction through the description of empirical patterns. Rather than setting the elements of the field into fixed, static relations, this work uses quantitative tools to express the probabilistic nature of various combinations. This project combines the insights of Steinberg's dialogic model (1994, 1998, 1999) with the tools of network analysis (Carley 1997; Carley and Palmquist 1992; Palmquist et al. 1997) in an exploratory content analysis of five black newspapers in antebellum New York State.

The Historical Context

Northern states began the process of emancipation in the last decades of the eighteenth century. New York lagged behind New England and Pennsylvania, in part, because slavery was more vital to the Empire State economy. New York passed a conservative gradual emancipation law in 1799 and then revised it in 1817 to end slavery in the state by 1827.[2]

Slavery in New York was a small-scale affair, with more than 80% of slaves held by masters who owned five or fewer. In the Hudson Valley, many slaves were regularly hired out for wages, and some disposed of their labor at their own discretion. In the first quarter of the nineteenth century, runaway slaves were common in New York City and not unknown in upstate areas. Both free blacks and sympathetic whites assisted slaves seeking their own freedom before it was to be granted by the state (Groth 1994). By the time that abolitionist organizations such as the American Anti-Slavery Society formed, in 1833, slavery had been abolished, but the memory of slaveholding was still fresh.

New York had the largest black population in the antebellum North. At the time that emancipation laws were being passed, the state was home to more than 40,000 blacks, including more than 15,000 slaves (Berlin 1998). Almost as soon as northern states decided on emancipation, in defining the meaning of the rights conferred by the Constitution, lawmakers repeatedly confirmed the widely held belief that the two populations, black and white, should not mix. Blacks were prohibited from serving on juries or testifying in courts, from owning guns, from serving in the military, and, in most states, from voting. States feared that unless they restricted the rights of blacks, they would attract a large population of freemen and fugitive slaves from neighboring areas. This fear led to a kind of competition to deprive blacks of civil rights (Tocqueville 1981). Legal restrictions and white prejudice ensured that the economic prospects of northern blacks were as limited as their political status (Litwack 1961).

Race prejudice was so common in nineteenth-century America that it was almost always assumed. Where laws neglected to make explicit the different status of whites and blacks, social norms ensured that the difference was respected. During his tour of America in 1831, Alexis de Tocqueville (1981: 343) noted:

> Race prejudice seems stronger in those states that have abolished slavery
> than in those where is still exists, and nowhere is it more intolerant than

in those states where slavery was never known. . . . In the North the white man no longer clearly sees the barrier that separates him from the degraded race, and he keeps the Negro at a distance all the more carefully because he fears lest one day they be confounded together.

Because American slavery conflated race and servitude, whites could not see blacks apart from this perceived sign of inferiority. White prejudice went a long way to ensure that blacks would never escape this condition.

In the early national period through the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the meaning of liberty was explicitly linked to an expanding notion of citizenship. In the decades after the Revolution, citizenship tended to be defined as a right of property holders. By the beginning of abolitionism, citizenship was generally understood to be based on a community of shared identity. Equality before the law was to be guaranteed by the republican form of government. As a result, citizenship was inevitably racial. Most whites could not conceive of sharing their community with anyone who was not of European, Protestant heritage. From the debate over Missouri in the 1820s, to the Dred Scott decision in 1857, northern politics validated the prevailing view that the rights and privileges of citizenship were limited to whites. The popularity of colonization, as a way to protect American liberty for whites, is easily understood in this context. Blacks would never be accepted into the American mainstream; if they were to be freemen, they would have to live elsewhere (Condit and Lucaites 1991; Litwack 1961).

Blacks recognized the persistence and virulence of American race prejudice but rejected the idea of colonization. Instead, they sought to be admitted as equals into the American polity. New York remained a popular place for free blacks to get on with the business of living. There were modest opportunities for earning a livelihood, and a large enough population in many places to form the bonds of community. Black culture thrived in New York City, as well as the other large population centers in the state (Franklin and Moss 1994).

Black leaders disputed the "self-evident truths" of nineteenth-century racial ideology, demanding that the nation live up to its republican identity. They consented to the basic terms of American civic culture by seeking to be included in it. Blacks in New York refused to be excluded from the American experience. At the same time, they reflected critically on their own communities for failing to achieve, despite onerous circumstances, a status that would prove their worth to the majority.

Black Abolitionism in New York

New York City was a hub of black abolitionism. Beginning in the 1830s, blacks held a series of conventions at which both slavery and racism were passionately denounced. A network of safe houses and vigilance committees protected the large fugitive slave population and the city's black churches were an eager audience for antislavery literature (Foote 1995). Ministers in the city, such as Henry Highland Garnet, Alexander Crummell, and Samuel Cornish, were among the leaders of the free black community in the North.

Several other cities and towns in the state played host to significant black abolitionist efforts. Conventions were held in Buffalo (1843), Troy (1847), and Rochester (1853). The antislavery lecture circuit spanned from Rochester to Brooklyn, from Saratoga to Buffalo, with stops in Geneva, Ithaca, Corning, Bath, and a dozen other towns in the Finger Lakes region. Lecturers visited the towns of the Hudson Valley and along the canal routes. The antislavery message reached all corners of the state.

Black abolitionists sustained a more radical critique of American society than their white colleagues. The same forces that generated a conservative outlook, with regard to reform, among northern whites produced militancy among blacks. Protestant revivalism has been identified as a source of the emergence of immediatism in American antislavery agitation (Barnes 1964). Black churches were steeped in millennial perfectionism. Whites were more likely to have faith in the inevitability of progress; blacks had little reason to believe that American racism would end of its own accord. Whites worried that abolition would invite a more general attack on the institution of private property, but blacks, who owned little capital and did not expect to own any in the future, would not have feared such an attack as an outcome of antislavery activism. Because nineteenth-century black institutions were not invested in the status quo, they were more likely to breed radicalization (Levesque 1970).

Perhaps the most extreme note sounded by the black abolitionists was a call to self-defense by any means necessary. The early years of the movement were dominated by William Lloyd Garrison's philosophy of nonviolence, and both white and black leaders were far more likely to favor "moral suasion." But, beginning in the middle of the 1840s, some black leaders began to develop a rhetorical strategy for framing the call to violent resistance (Ripley 1991). When Henry Highland Garnet delivered his eloquent "Address to the Slaves of the United States of America" at the National Con-

vention of Colored Citizens in 1843, his resolution was twice rejected by the convention, but it was clear that blacks in the North were growing impatient with the Garrisonian approach. Garnet's argument expressed the right to self-defense in the fiery rhetoric of the American revolutionaries. Echoing Patrick Henry, Garnet reminded the convention that men have the right to resist oppression. Even if the call to violence led to a disastrous confrontation, Garnet reasoned, some conditions are so awful that death would be preferable. Slavery, he proposed, was such a condition. As the situation of slaves and free blacks worsened, Garnet's speech became increasingly popular (Shiffrin 1971). By 1854, black conventions went so far as to endorse the principle of "Liberty or Death!" (Franklin and Moss 1994).

The argument connecting antislavery and racial equality was not well received in New York or anywhere else in the North. Jacksonian populism, the dominant political discourse of the first half of the nineteenth century, was constructed on the basis of a partisan appeal to white working men. The foundations of this appeal were racial superiority, male egalitarianism, and expansionism (Saxton 1998); white workers were all too willing to believe that their status depended on keeping blacks, Indians, and women in their place—at the bottom of the status hierarchy. If artisans, yeomen, and laborers realized that they would never achieve equality with Yankee aristocrats or entrepreneurs, they took comfort in their assumed superiority to blacks, slave and free.

Economic and social competition prevented white audiences from thoughtfully considering the issue of civil rights. For much of the time the second party system was functioning, Democrats controlled the national government on the basis of the alliance between northern white workers and southern planters. The party of Jackson made citizenship for white working men seem inescapably linked to a defense of plantation slavery. In the decade before the Civil War, this union broke down, as workers perceived the expansion of slavery into the territories as a direct threat to their well-being. Territorial expansion was a promise of economic independence in the eyes of wage laborers. The Free Soil movement was founded on the equation "free soil = free labor = free men," the logic of which necessitated the exclusion of blacks. Representative David Wilmot, whose Wilmot Proviso was the touchstone of political contention in the 1850s, explained the logic of his proposal: "I plead the cause and the rights of white freemen. I would preserve to free white labor a fair country, a rich inheritance, where the sons of toil, of

my own race and color, can live without the disgrace which association with negro slavery brings upon free labor" (quoted in Litwack 1961:47). When they perceived that it was in their interest to do so, white workers would oppose slavery as an un-American system of coercion but without endorsing the abolitionist argument that "all men are created equal" (Saxton 1998; Roediger 1991; Wilentz 1984).

The use of the concept of free labor was increasingly common in the antebellum period, particularly to emphasize the difference between North and South. Free labor, through its binary opposition of slavery/freedom, disguised the extent to which workers in the North were subjected to legal and economic coercion, on the one hand, and social inequality, on the other hand. Political expressions of this ideology (Whigs, Free Soilers, Republicans) had to convince workers that the right to sell one's labor promised an opportunity for achieved equality. Both black and white abolitionists supported this interpretation, whether out of enthusiasm for commercial capitalism or the belief that the absence of this freedom was a singular social evil (Foner 1996). For blacks, of course, the difference between slavery and wage labor was paramount. They had to use whatever rhetorical tools were available to oppose slavery. If they had suggested, following some of the radical union leaders, that the conditions of slaves and wage workers were similarly unfree, it seems unlikely that the cause of antislavery would have benefited. A total rejection of northern society would have doomed the effort to free their southern brethren.

It was into this complex system of interpretations of freedom, independence, citizenship, and race that the black abolitionists interjected their moral claims to humanity and justice. Their "fighting words" were made of the same discursive material as other popular forms of political speech. Partisan politics, journalism, fiction, sermons, and lectures all made use of the styles and voices of republicanism, political economy, and evangelical revivalism. The black abolitionists were speaking in ways that their contemporaries could understand. It was not simply a pragmatic decision. These discursive fields form the context in which nineteenth-century social movements diagnosed society, planned their reforms, and motivated participants to labor, sometimes at significant personal costs. Black abolitionists used newspapers, in particular, to achieve these goals.

Black Abolitionist Newspapers

Free blacks constituted a crucial audience for the antislavery press. William Lloyd Garrison often acknowledged the importance of the black community for his *Liberator*. Black editors, such as Samuel Cornish, Frederick Douglass, and Charles B. Ray, would do the same. The writers whose words appeared in the black abolitionist newspapers understood that they addressed, in some sense, the wider antislavery movement, but they were more deliberate in their attention to their black readers.

Black newspapers span the abolitionist period, beginning in the late 1820s and continuing until the Civil War. Some ran for a considerable time, but most were short-lived (Franklin and Moss 1994; Litwack 1961). Tension within the antislavery community sometimes arose because white leaders, such as Garrison, felt that the black papers were diminishing the readership of the established journals. They failed to understand why northern blacks wanted to express their outrage and their hopes in their own voices. This is exactly the special mission that black editors set for themselves.

The first issue of the *Weekly Advocate* appeared on 7 January 1837, under the proprietorship of Phillip A. Bell (see Bell 1837). Bell's aim for the paper was to increase readership among northern blacks by writing about the issues that concerned the community, such as abolitionism, temperance, universal suffrage, and education. Bell's newspaper opposed colonization as well as slavery. After nine issues, Bell joined forces with Cornish. The name of the paper was changed to the *Colored American* for the release of the 4 March 1837 issue. The last issue of the paper appeared in 1842 (Jacobs 1976).

When Frederick Douglass returned to the United States from a lecture tour of Great Britain and Ireland, he announced his intention to publish a newspaper. He moved to Rochester and began publishing the *North Star* in December 1847. The paper was a four-page weekly that carried on its masthead the motto "Right is of no sex—truth is of no color—God is the father of us all, and we are all Brethren." Douglass's success as an editor established him as the most prominent black in the United States and a towering figure in the abolitionist movement. In 1851, Douglass changed the name of his paper to *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, under which it ran until 1860. By 1855, the paper had 3,000 subscriptions (Douglass 1994).

The *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* was a leading black newspaper in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. Edited by Thomas Hamil-

ton in New York City, it began publication in July 1859 and lasted until March 1861. Through its reporting, letters, and editorials, the newspaper aggressively championed black cultural independence and racial identity. Its national appeal derived from its emphasis on black life and culture. Hamilton's editorials provided a platform for discussions of the key topics of the day, including secession, slavery, and emigration.

The paper resurfaced again in August 1861. Edited by Robert Hamilton, Thomas's brother, the new journal assumed a broader and more active role in the defense of black rights during the Civil War years. Its offices were often used for the recruitment of black soldiers. The paper regularly published letters from black soldiers and provided communication for families separated during the war. The paper circulated widely among black troops in the field and southern blacks in Union-occupied territory. Publication was suspended in December 1865. During its final year, the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* became the official organ of the National Equal Rights League, an aggressive advocate of radical reconstruction (Ripley 1985).

Method

Perhaps the most common use of ideology in the social sciences is to denote the contest of meanings accompanying social conflict in which actors with power have a distinct advantage. John B. Thompson (1990) has enumerated the main ideological dimensions of modern discourse: *legitimation*, *dissimulation*, *unification*, *fragmentation*, and *reification*. Each dimension is subdivided into particular modes. Reification, for example, concerns arguments about the immutability of current arrangements. An assertion that a particular aspect of social life is natural, and for that reason should not or cannot be changed, is an instance of the naturalization mode. Fragmentation, in contrast, concerns assertions about differences and identity boundaries. The differentiation mode involves assertions about group identity and social distinctions, "characteristics which disunite" the community, and keep the powerless "from constituting an effective challenge to existing relations" (ibid.: 65).

A promising development is the recent "discursive turn" in social movement research. Steinberg (1994, 1998, 1999) has cogently assessed the theoretical problems of frame analysis. Drawing on Bahktinian semiotics and cultural psychology, he shows how the concept of discourse supplies the

necessary flexibility and subtlety to account for the symbolic dimension of modern social movements. Discourse analysis begins with the notion of speech as a form of mediated action; it is a symbolic practice that produces the cultural codes by which people make sense of their experience (Steinberg 1999). Text is produced as an interaction among actors in specific settings. Meaning does not adhere to words independently of their use but rather only through social interaction within a system of hierarchical relations. As a result, the concept of dialogue suggests contention, negotiation, and struggle rather than merely transparent communication.

Steinberg (1998) proposes that "discursive fields" be used to describe how meaning facilitates and constrains collective action. He notes that "such fields contain the genres that collective actors can draw upon to construct discursively diagnosis, prognosis, and motivation. They are historically and contextually dependent, partially structured through hegemony, and the vocabularies, symbols, and meanings within them are dialogic" (ibid.: 856). The notion of a field in which the planning, perception, and interpretation of collective action take place suggests that the ways in which meaning making promotes and inhibits action is not fully conscious or intentional. But neither is it entirely outside the control of the actors involved.

Network analysis is a relatively new and under-utilized approach in the social scientific study of discourse. The goal is to construct a "mental map" based on coding of the semantic links among concepts (Carley 1997; Carley and Palmquist 1992). This diagram of semantic relations reflects either a cognitive map of an individual's knowledge domain or a sociocognitive map of a group's discourse, showing the shared worldview among members of a social movement.

Network analysis allows the researcher to categorize the kinds of relationships between the ideas, or concepts, that comprise the building blocks of a text. Kathleen Carley (1997) argues that concepts have meaning only in relation to other concepts. Two concepts can be linked directly or indirectly, resulting in local and extended networks. These relations may be measured along several dimensions, including imageability, evokability, density, conductivity, and intensity. When concepts have been categorized, a taxonomy of the network can be constructed.

The strength of network analysis lies in its ability to uncover structural relations between the concepts and, therefore, to provide a glimpse at how arguments might be put together. Arguments require a raw material of sensi-

bility, and the network is best expressed through a matrix of co-occurrences. The process of argument construction can be detailed through an analysis of contingencies, rather than the more familiar forms of tag-and-sort coding. A network analysis might show how the meaning of liberty differed for free blacks who stayed in the North and those who fled to Canada following passage of the Fugitive Slave Law in 1850. This would be the case, for example, if in the discourse of the former group "liberty" tended to be used with "equality" and "America" while in the discourse of the latter group it tended to be deployed with "justice" and "nature."

In the present study, computerized content coding using *SemioCode* (Shortell 2002) generated frequencies and co-occurrences for a set of sixteen themes (JUSTICE, LIBERTY, RIGHTS, UPLIFT, AMERICA, SLAVERY, GOD, BROTHERHOOD, COLORED, PROPERTY, LABOR, CHARACTER, SUFFERING, NATURE, POLITICS, and LAW).[3] The sociocognitive network was mapped using odds ratios to characterize probabilistic relations among elements. Odds ratios are a measure of association in contingency tables; instead of measuring the degree to which proportions of one variable vary by the other, as in the standard Chi-square test, odds express the likelihood that a random case is in one category of a variable rather than any other. Odds ratios show if the odds for a category vary by values of the other variable (Rudas 1998; Knoke and Burke 1980).

In addition, the present study used multidimensional scaling (MDS) to illustrate the structure of the socio-cognitive network. The ALSCAL algorithm was employed to calculate solutions separately for each subsample, and for the black abolitionist discourse as a whole (see Everitt and Dunn 1992). The strength of associations can be depicted spatially; items closer together in the map are more highly related. Euclidian distances between points can be interpreted as a measure of correlation between elements in the network.

The paragraph was employed as coding unit in all analyses (see Popping 2000). In written English, the paragraph is the basic syntactic container for the argument. In this regard, as a coding unit, it falls between the "utterance" and the "text" in the formal units of the Leech and Svartvik (1994) communicative grammar. Researchers studying concepts generally use the sentence or utterance as the coding unit, since the sentence is the basic syntactic container for meaning. In this study, however, concepts are regarded as the building blocks of arguments, and so it is necessary to use a standard coding unit best suited for arguments rather than meanings.

Themes were operationalized as sets of keywords. Because the present study is exploratory, any instance of any of the keywords for a theme triggered the coding switch in the software—that is, the theme was coded as present in that paragraph. Further work will need to be done to determine the optimal level of breadth and depth for this kind of theme coding, but this algorithm probably mimics typical human coding.[4]

The network of meanings thus laid out will permit the investigation of argument construction, which is vital to understanding claims making and collective identity construction in social movement discourse. While this study cannot hope to fully depict the black abolitionists' rhetoric, it identifies some of the discourse's central features. Rhetoric analysis consists of coding for (1) tone, (2) mode, and (3) basis.

The codes for tone (ANGER, JOY, SADNESS, and IRONY) were designed to capture the use of emotion. Given that the focus of the present study is on discourse as a collective practice, the psychological state of the author is not a target of analysis. Rather, content coding aims to capture the use of emotion as one oratorical option among others. Abolitionist discourse could have included very little use of emotions—if, for example, the principal argument against slavery were that it was economically inefficient—so that the prevalence of different tones suggests something important about the kinds of arguments thought of as most efficacious, in terms of claims making and collective identity.

The present study defines mode as a dimension of rhetoric loosely based on Geoffrey Leech's (1983) theory of pragmatics. Illocutionary action depicts the social-relational aspect of arguments. The black abolitionists' assertions can be described as adhering to particular kinds of social goals: to categorize, to persuade, to condemn, and so on. Because meaning is not always easy for an author to control—as Mikhail Bahktin (1981:293) puts it, "the word in language is half someone else's"—the success of an illocutionary action is not simply a matter of semantics. Arguments work, in the sociological sense, because of the ways they are understood: as, generally speaking, (1) describing the social world, (2) explaining it, or, (3) evaluating it. For example, when a speaker defines an incident as an instance of oppression (an evaluative illocution), the communicative message is not exclusively or primarily about the meaning of words. Rather, the message functions to create or reinforce a shared understanding of the world, to motivate action, to make salient particular identity characteristics, and so forth.

The most common illocutionary action in written English is the ASSER-TIVE. The intent of this illocution is to state the facts about the subject matter at hand. In contrast, the EXPLANATORY illocution includes assertions that are designed to educate; arguments make connections that reflect a didactic viewpoint. These two types can be contrasted, generally speaking, as regarding the "what" question and the "why" question of a communicative message, respectively. Finally, EVALUATIVE illocutions include arguments whose primary purpose is to judge, to place facts in a moral problematic. Unlike the other two types, EVALUATIVE illocutions have to do more with value (e.g., good/bad, beautiful/ugly, right/wrong, etc.) than with verisimilitude.

Next, paragraphs were coded in terms of basis (SIMILARITY or DIFFERENCE). With this dimension of rhetoric, the goal was to capture the kinds of comparison employed in the logic of the abolitionist arguments. When two concepts are linked, there is always an implicit or explicit basis for the connection. The categories used in the present study for logical basis are by no means exhaustive, but it seemed that equality and inequality (i.e., that concept X is the same as concept Y, or that X is not the same as Y) were likely to be the most common types.

Paragraphs were coded for rhetoric by four trained readers. Only paragraphs with at least two different themes, including at least one of the main abolitionist themes (LIBERTY, RIGHTS, AMERICA, SLAVERY, COLORED, SUFFERING, and POLITICS) were coded. This coding filter was adopted to ensure that the paragraphs examined would have a sufficient density of antislavery content; the black abolitionist newspapers, after all, reported on and discussed other things, including entertainment, organizations, travel, and so forth. Disagreements were resolved by discussion until a majority agreed on the same code. If no consensus could be reached, the paragraph was coded as neutral on that aspect.

Finally, in order to place the black abolitionist discourse along the power dimension, the present research operationalized key modes of two of Thompson's ideological dimensions most germane to the nineteenth-century discussion of race: NATURALIZATION and DIFFERENTIATION. Coding attempted to identify claims in the abolitionist texts that were used to dispute the justification of racial inequality as natural and inevitable (naturalization), and to dispute arguments in favor of the significance of racial differences (differentiation). According to Thompson's (1990) formulation, ideological

Table 1 Extant black abolitionist newspapers in New York

Newspaper	Dates of publication
Freedom's Journal	1827–29
Rights of All	1829
Weekly Advocate*	1837
Colored American*	1837–41
Mirror of Liberty	1838–40
Northern Star and Freemen's Advocate	1842
Ram's Horn	1846–48
North Star*	1847–51
Frederick Douglass' Paper*	1851–59
Douglass' Monthly	1859–60
Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*	1859–61

Sources: Hutton 1993 and Ripley 1985.
*Indicates that the newspaper was included in the sample.

communication follows relations of domination. In the present case, pro-slavery arguments would be ideological, and therefore, antislavery arguments counterideological. Again, four trained readers were used and disagreements were resolved by discussion.

A sample of texts written by blacks in each of five newspapers (the *Weekly Advocate*, the *Colored American*, the *North Star*, *Frederick Douglass' Paper*, and the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*) published in New York State between 1827 and 1860 was drawn from published collections (Ripley 1985; Douglass 1979) and available microfilm reels at the New York Public Library's Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture. Table 1 lists extant black abolitionist newspapers in New York State, and indicates those selected into the sample. The authorship criterion was verified by comparison to a list of black abolitionists compiled from the notes and commentaries presented in Ripley 1985. Because of editorial and/or organizational continuity, texts were pooled for the *Weekly Advocate* and the *Colored American* as well as for the two Douglass newspapers.

In an exploratory study such as this, sampling is guided by practical concerns. The sample was limited to five New York newspapers to make data collection more manageable. Thus, some important black abolitionist periodicals were not included. A full study of the rhetoric of black abolitionism will require a more systematic sampling strategy. Moreover, since a proba-

bility sample was not taken, some caution must be exercised when interpreting the results.

Texts were not selected on the basis of content. Rather, this research mined *The Black Abolitionist Papers* (Ripley 1985) and *The Frederick Douglass Papers* (Douglass 1979) for texts that were presented or published in New York. Those from the five newspapers in the sample were retained. Additional texts were added from available microfilm reels for the *Weekly Advocate*, the *Colored American*, and the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*. The primary concern in this sampling strategy was that a sufficient amount of text could be found for a variety of New York newspapers, in an exploratory attempt to describe the structure of black abolitionist discourse. The present analysis is based on 136 paragraphs (about 20,000 words) from the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*, 79 paragraphs (about 12,000 words) from the Douglass newspapers, and 42 paragraphs (about 4,500 words) from the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*. In all, the present study examined 257 paragraphs (more than 36,000 words) of black abolitionist text.

In addition, the present study used a sample of 179 paragraphs (about 14,000 words) from the *Working Man's Advocate*—a nineteenth-century New York labor newspaper—as a point of comparison in terms of the socio-cognitive network, in order to check the validity of the theme coding. Since the abolitionist and labor texts share an immediate historical and geographic context, they should have some properties in common. At the same time, they represent different social movements, and as such, each should exhibit a thematic profile reflecting the particular worldview of its movement. A meaningful pattern of similarity and difference should be illuminated by the comparison. If the contrast between the abolitionist texts and the labor texts makes sense, the computerized coding algorithms are supported. If the contrast seems haphazard, it suggests that the coding algorithms are not measuring the expected content.

Coding Examples

In order to clarify the operation of the computerized content coding, I present a few examples of coded paragraphs. Themes coded as present are indicated. Codes for tone, mode, and basis are given only when not coded as neutral.

The author of the letter presented below (signed "Sidney" [1841] but

probably penned by Henry Highland Garnet) writes to William Whipper, a black intellectual and moral reformer, to argue for the value of race consciousness among free blacks:

> Again, it is one of the most malignant features of slavery, that it leads the oppressor to stigmatize his victim with inferiority of nature, after he himself has almost brutalized him. This is a universal fact. Hence the oppressed must vindicate their character. No abstract disquisitions from sympathizing friends, can effectually do this. The oppressed themselves must manifest energy of character and elevation of soul. Oppression never quails until it sees that the downtrodden and outraged "know their rights, and knowing, dare maintain." This is a radical assurance, a resistless evidence both of worth and manliness, and of earnest intention and deep determination. (*Colored American*, 6 March 1841; see Ripley 1985, 3:356) [Themes: RIGHTS, UPLIFT, SLAVERY, CHARACTER, SUFFERING, NATURE; rhetorical tone: ANGER; rhetorical mode: EVALUATIVE; rhetorical basis: DIFFERENCE.]

Writing from the free black community in Brooklyn, Joseph C. Holly (1848) provides an analysis of "slave power"—the term used by abolitionists to refer to the domination of slave-holding interests in the federal government—an idea that would become common in abolitionist writing in the 1850s:

> In the formation of a constitution for the government of the confederacy, the North did not only mortgage every particle of its soil as a hunting ground for the bloodhounds of slavery, biped and quadruped, to dog the track of, and worry the panting fugitive from the worse than deathlike vale of Southern oppression; they did not only pledge every strong arm at the North to go to the South in case the slaves, goaded by oppression, should imitate the "virtues of their forefathers," and vindicate their rights by subscribing to the doctrine of Algernon Sydney— that resistance to tyrants is obedience to God—and crush them in subjection to their galling yoke; but in the spirit of compromise and barter, stipulated that the slaveholder should have additional power in proportion as he became the great plunderer of human rights, the more insolent to the great declaration of fundamental principle, the substratum of all democratic institutions. (*North Star*, 12 May 1848; see Ripley 1985,

4:18) [Themes: RIGHTS, SLAVERY, GOD, CHARACTER, SUF-
FERING, BODY; rhetorical tone: ANGER; rhetorical mode: ASSER-
TIVE; rhetorical basis: DIFFERENCE.]

Uriah Boston, a leading figure in the free black community in Pough-
keepsie, New York, writes to Frederick Douglass on the question of separa-
tion versus integration as a strategy for achieving equality with whites. Doug-
lass was one of the leading voices on the separation side of the debate; Boston
(1855) writes to argue in favor of integration:

> The true policy, in my opinion, for the colored people to pursue is, lessen
> the distinction between whites and colored citizens of the United States.
> We are American citizens by birth, by habit, by habitation, and by lan-
> guage. Why, then, wish to be considered Africans. "African churches"—
> African schools will do while nothing better is to be had. These will
> do very well in Africa, but not in the U.S. The presumption with most
> people is that no man is a proper citizen of one certain country while he
> claims at the same time to be a citizen of any other country. It therefore
> seems out of place and unreasonable to claim to be Americans, and at
> the same time claim to be Africans. Common sense would seem to dic-
> tate that if we are American citizens, then we are in our own country of
> right; but, on the other hand, if we be Africans, then surely our country
> is Africa. For my part, I claim to be an American citizen, and also claim
> to be a man. When I claim to be anything else, I trust I shall evince my
> bravery and wisdom by taking my proper place, whether it be in Africa or
> elsewhere. "Colored Americans" will do in the United States, but "Afri-
> cans" never. I shall be greatly mistaken if the free colored people of this
> country shall consent to be packed and labelled for the African market
> by "Ethiop" and "Communipaw." (*Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 20 April
> 1855; see Ripley 1985, 4:323) [Themes: LIBERTY, RIGHTS, UPLIFT,
> AMERICA, BROTHERHOOD, COLORED; rhetorical mode: EX-
> PLANATORY; rhetorical basis: DIFFERENCE.]

Proslavery advocates often used the economic difficulties of the sugar
plantations in Jamaica after slavery was abolished on the island as evidence
that blacks were unfit for freedom. Samuel Ringgold Ward (1859), who had
emigrated to Jamaica in 1855, writes to G. W. Reynolds, editor of the *Visitor*
in Franklin, New York, to defend the island's reputation:

The blacks were denied all education, and almost all means of moral and intellectual enlightenment. Such are always the demands of slavery. As a consequence, emancipation found the negroes, as a whole—there were a few in the towns in better circumstances—as ignorant, and almost as much heathens, as when they were first stolen from Africa. Since emancipation, something has been done for the education of the negroes, and more for their evangelization, but when I tell that out of a revenue of 200,000, our sapient Legislature doles out but 3,000 a year for the education of the entire population—400,000—you will not be surprised to learn that the education of the masses goes on but slowly. (*Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*, 27 August 1859; see Ripley 1985, 5:20) [Themes: LIBERTY, UPLIFT, SLAVERY, COLORED; rhetorical mode: ASSERTIVE.]

It is interesting to note that the preceding passage was one of the few that was reliably coded for IRONY. Of the tone codes, only ANGER occurred often enough and was reliably coded for to be analyzed in the present study.

In the following editorial, Thomas Hamilton (1860) bemoans the absence of an attitude of racial equality in Abraham Lincoln's presidential campaign, suggesting that the Republicans—despite their antislavery platform—were as racist as the Democrats:

The Republican party today, though we believe in the minority, being the most intelligent contains by far the greatest number of these two classes of men, and hence, though with larger professions for humanity, is by far its more dangerous enemy. Under the guise of humanity, they do and say many things—as, for example, they oppose the reopening of the slave trade. They would fain make the world believe it to be a movement of humanity; and yet the world too plainly sees that it is but a stroke of policy to check the spread, growth, and strength of the black masses on this continent. They oppose the progress of slavery in the territories, and would cry humanity to the world; but the world has already seen that it is but the same black masses looming up, huge, grim, and threatening, before this Republican party, and hence their opposition. Their opposition to slavery means opposition to the black man—nothing else. Where it is clearly in their power to do anything for the oppressed colored man, why then they are too nice, too conservative, to do it. They find, too often, a way to slip round it—find a method how not to do

it. If too hard pressed or fairly cornered by the opposite party, then it is they go beyond said opposite party in their manifestations of hatred and contempt for the black man and his rights. (*Weekly Anglo–African Magazine*, 17 March 1860; see Ripley 1985, 5:71) [Themes: RIGHTS, SLAVERY, COLORED, SUFFERING, POLITICS; rhetorical mode: ASSERTIVE; rhetorical basis: DIFFERENCE.]

In addition, some examples of the ideology coding also would be useful. Exemplars of the naturalization mode are presented below.

"Sidney" (1841) responds to William Whipper's call for full integration on the basis of moral reform:

The elevation of a people is not measurably dependent upon external relations or peculiar circumstances, as it is upon the inward rational sentiments which enable the soul to change circumstances to its own temper and disposition. Without these, the aids of sympathizing friends, the whisperings of hope, the power of eternal truth, are of but little advantage. We take the case of an individual. His ancestors have been the objects of wrong and violence. In consequence, they become degraded. At the season of thought and reflection he feels a desire to escape from the degradation of his sires, and the oppressions of the many. The sympathy of friends is excited, and they make active exertions. (*Colored American*, 6 March 1841; see Ripley 1985, 3:356) [NATURALIZATION]

William J. Wilson (1853), using the pseudonym "Ethiop," corresponded with Frederick Douglass on the need for distinct black institutions in the North. Writing from Brooklyn, Wilson describes the effects of racism upon the black community in New York City:

The result of all this, upon my mind, may be summed up in a few words. A radical change in the process of our development is here demanded. At present, what we find around us, either in art or literature, is made so to press upon us, that we depreciate, we despise, we almost hate ourselves, and all that favors us. Well may we scoff at black skins and woolly heads, since every model set before us for admiration has pallid face and flaxen head, or emanations thereof. I speak plainly. It is useless to mince this matter. Every one of your readers knows that a black girl would as soon fondle an imp as a black doll—such is the force of this species of education upon her. I remember once to have suddenly introduced one among

Table 2 Percentage of paragraphs containing themes

Theme	Abolitionist texts				Working Man's Advocate
	All texts[a]	CA/WA[b]	Douglass papers[c]	Anglo–African	
JUSTICE	8.6	5.9	8.9	16.7	3.4
LIBERTY	26.4	20.6	39.2	21.4	19.8
RIGHTS	20.6	22.1	21.5	14.3	28.2
UPLIFT	17.9	22.8	10.1	16.7	5.1
AMERICA	25.3	21.3	32.9	23.8	26.0
SLAVERY	23.7	14.7	48.1	7.1	11.3
GOD	14.8	14.0	21.6	4.8	4.0
BROTHERHOOD	31.5	32.4	29.1	33.3	18.6
COLORED	24.1	20.6	22.8	38.1	2.8
PROPERTY	3.5	5.2	1.3	2.4	18.6
LABOR	11.7	11.0	15.2	7.1	19.2
CHARACTER	21.0	21.3	24.1	14.3	13.0
SUFFERING	21.0	17.7	30.4	14.3	10.7
NATURE	5.8	8.1	1.3	7.1	8.5
POLITICS	18.7	16.9	27.9	7.1	23.2
LAW	11.3	10.3	10.1	16.7	9.6
Paragraphs	257	136	79	42	179

[a]Includes all texts from all black abolitionist newspapers.
[b]Includes the *Colored American* and the *Weekly Advocate*.
[c]Includes the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

a company of twenty colored girls, and if it had been a spirit the effect could not have been more wonderful. Such scampering and screaming can better be imagined than told. As simple as these slight incidents may seem at first sight, they lie at the bottom of half our difficulties. (*Frederick Douglass' Paper*, 11 March 1853; see Ripley 1985, 4:130) [Theme: NATURALIZATION]

Results

Table 2 shows the prevalence of themes in each subsample and for the discourse as a whole (i.e., all the black abolitionist texts taken together), with a sample of texts from a labor newspaper for comparison. The thematic profile of the Douglass newspapers corresponds to what is typically thought of

as abolitionist discourse. The themes of LIBERTY, SLAVERY, and SUF-FERING are all more common in the Douglass newspapers than the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* or the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*. In addition, POLITICS and AMERICA are also more common in the Douglass newspapers.

The *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* shows some similarity to the Douglass newspapers—compare RIGHTS, BROTHERHOOD, COLORED, and CHARACTER—though the typical abolitionist themes are somewhat less common. The *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* displays what might be called self-help orientation, with UPLIFT one of its most prominent themes. The *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* is clearly most distinctive. The themes of JUSTICE, COLORED, and LAW are more common here than in the other black abolitionist newspapers, which is probably a result both of its cultural bent and its publication in the years immediately preceding the Civil War. It appeared at a time when dissolution seemed inevitable and emancipation a more realistic possibility; it was, therefore, less concerned with undermining the validity of proslavery arguments and more concerned with securing the full status of citizenship.

Comparing the abolitionist discourse with that from the labor newspaper, the *Working Man's Advocate*, similarities and differences are evident. Both kinds of discourse are affiliated with social movements; as a result, RIGHTS is common in both samples. The same is true of LIBERTY and AMERICA. But there are important differences between the two types of discourse. The abolitionist texts are more likely to use SLAVERY, of course, but are also more likely to employ a self-help/moral exhortation language, as evidenced by the greater prevalence of UPLIFT, CHARACTER, and GOD. Discussion of race, indicated by COLORED, is also more common in the abolitionist texts than in the labor discourse. Labor themes, such as LABOR and PROPERTY, are more common in the *Working Man's Advocate* sample.

Table 3 shows the odds of various themes in combination with SLAVERY in the black abolitionist texts. The table gives odds and odds ratios. "Odds of first" and "Odds of second" indicate the odds of the first theme and second theme in the pair being present in a paragraph. These odds are simply another way to express prevalence. "Odds ratio" is a ratio of the cross product of the 2 x 2 contingency table; it expresses the extent to which the odds of one theme are contingent on the condition of the other. Values larger than one indicate positive association. For example, the odds that a paragraph

Table 3 Odds of co-occurrence for SLAVERY and selected themes

Themes	Newspaper	Odds of first	Odds of second	Odds ratio
SLAVERY & LIBERTY	*CA/WA*[a]	0.17 (20)	0.26 (28)	3.20 (8)
	Douglass papers[b]	0.93 (38)	0.65 (31)	2.42 (19)
	Anglo–African	0.08 (3)	0.27 (9)	—
SLAVERY & POLITICS	*CA/WA*	0.17 (20)	0.21 (23)	—
	Douglass papers	0.93 (38)	0.39 (22)	5.83 (17)
	Anglo–African	0.08 (3)	0.08 (3)	—
SLAVERY & CHARACTER	*CA/WA*	0.17 (20)	0.27 (29)	5.11 (10)
	Douglass papers	0.93 (38)	0.32 (19)	0.77 (8)
	Anglo–African	0.08 (3)	0.17 (6)	—
SLAVERY & SUFFERING	*CA/WA*	0.17 (20)	0.21 (24)	2.33 (6)
	Douglass papers	0.93 (38)	0.44 (24)	2.32 (15)
	Anglo–African	0.08 (3)	0.17 (6)	—

Note: Number of paragraphs given in parentheses. A dash indicates that the value could not be calculated.
[a] Includes the *Colored American* and the *Weekly Advocate*.
[b] Includes the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

selected at random from the Douglass newspapers (Table 3, row 2) would contain the theme SLAVERY was 0.93 (present in 38 paragraphs, absent in 41: $38 \div 41 = 0.93$). The odds that a randomly selected paragraph would contain LIBERTY was 0.65 (present in 31 paragraphs, absent in 48: $31 \div 48 = 0.65$). The odds that LIBERTY would be present, though, is contingent on

the presence of SLAVERY. LIBERTY is 2.42 times more likely to occur in paragraphs in which SLAVERY is also present.[5]

In general, the odds suggest that SLAVERY and these selected themes tended to co-occur. In only one particular instance, SLAVERY and CHARACTER in the Douglass newspapers, was there an inverse contingency. The depiction of probabilistic relationships demonstrates that these associations were not absolute. It is not true, for example, that every time SLAVERY appears, so does LIBERTY. Sometimes the combination is needed for a particular argument, and sometimes it is not. The meaning of the two themes cannot be fixed in static relation to the other.

The arguments in black abolitionist discourse were built on strategic combinations based on the flexible meanings of the concept "slavery" and other symbols of American social and political life. The tactical pairing of SLAVERY and LIBERTY, SUFFERING, POLITICS, or CHARACTER was necessary to accomplish the specific goals of the movement. Not all possible combinations occur precisely because argument construction is intentional, even if not always fully conscious to the individual authors. Insight into the deliberate nature of contention over the meaning of slavery is possible through the analysis of these contingencies. The fact that SLAVERY is more likely to occur with CHARACTER than with PROPERTY, and with POLITICS more than with LABOR, indicates the kinds of arguments believed to be effective in the claims-making of black abolitionism.

Table 4 displays the odds of various themes in combination with COLORED in the black abolitionist texts. This pattern of contingencies illustrates the manner in which this discourse was a part of the construction of a collective identity of black Americans in the nineteenth century. Most important in this regard is the co-occurrence of COLORED with RIGHTS, with SUFFERING, and with BROTHERHOOD. These combinations suggest the outlines of the central subject position in prophetic speech, the suffering victim on whose behalf divine justice is exercised.

Table 5 displays the partial thematic structure for SLAVERY by newspaper group and for the black abolitionist discourse as a whole.[6] In the MDS results, smaller numbers indicate greater association between themes. Since the solutions are not directly comparable across subsamples, the average distance between all pairs of themes is given. The MDS solution not only shows the association between a particular pair of themes but also yields clusters of related themes.

Table 4 Odds of co-occurrence for COLORED and selected themes

Themes	Newspaper	Odds of first	Odds of second	Odds ratio
COLORED & RIGHTS	CA/WA[a]	0.26 (28)	0.28 (30)	2.62 (11)
	Douglass papers[b]	0.30 (18)	0.27 (17)	1.57 (5)
	Anglo-African	0.62 (16)	0.17 (6)	4.00 (4)
COLORED & UPLIFT	CA/WA	0.26 (28)	0.30 (31)	0.66 (5)
	Douglass papers	0.30 (18)	0.11 (8)	7.44 (5)
	Anglo-African	0.62 (16)	0.20 (7)	—
COLORED & SUFFERING	CA/WA	0.26 (28)	0.21 (24)	1.19 (8)
	Douglass papers	0.30 (18)	0.44 (24)	3.07 (9)
	Anglo-African	0.62 (16)	0.17 (6)	4.00 (4)
COLORED & BROTHERHOOD	CA/WA	0.26 (28)	0.48 (44)	2.00 (14)
	Douglass papers	0.30 (18)	0.41 (23)	2.45 (8)
	Anglo-African	0.62 (16)	0.50 (14)	0.86 (5)

Note: Number of paragraphs given in parentheses. A dash indicates that the value could not be calculated.
[a]Includes the *Colored American* and the *Weekly Advocate*.
[b]Includes the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

As Table 5 shows, SLAVERY appears to be more tightly integrated in the Douglass newspapers, as indicated by the generally smaller distances between SLAVERY and other themes, than in the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* or the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*. An important thematic cluster is seen in the Douglass newspapers, consisting of

Table 5 Partial thematic structure for SLAVERY

| SLAVERY and | All texts[a] | Newspaper | | |
		CA/WA[b]	Douglass papers[c]	Anglo-African
LIBERTY	1.4	2.0	1.0	2.3
RIGHTS	0.9	1.5	1.7	4.2
AMERICA	0.8	0.2	0.9	2.1
COLORED	1.0	2.4	1.2	3.3
SUFFERING	0.8	1.0	0.6	2.6
POLITICS	1.2	2.3	0.3	3.3
Theme average[d]	1.8	2.1	1.7	2.9
Grand average[e]	2.3	2.4	2.2	2.3
Stress[f]	0.16	0.17	0.17	0.21

Note: Distances are calculated from ALSCAL solutions for three dimensions. Values are Euclidian distances between elements in the subject space. Smaller distances indicate a stronger association.
[a]Includes all texts from all black abolitionist newspapers.
[b]Includes the *Colored American* and the *Weekly Advocate*.
[c]Includes the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.
[d]Average distance for theme across its 15 pairs.
[e]Average distance for all 120 pairs.
[f]Goodness-of-fit indicator for ALSCAL solution. Lower values indicate that more of the variation in the original co-occurrence matrix is accounted for by the coordinate solution.

SLAVERY-LIBERTY-SUFFERING-POLITICS, which might be considered the definitive constellation of abolitionist discourse. This is the intersection of political and prophetic speech. The *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* shows some affinity to this structure; the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* is most distinctive in this regard.

Table 6 gives the results of the rhetoric coding.[7] Coders were able to achieve sufficient agreement only on ANGER, so only these results are presented. Because there were too few paragraphs that contained multiple themes, including at least one of the key themes, in the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*, only the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* and the Douglass newspapers are included separately. Both use ANGER about equally often. The *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* uses the ASSERTIVE and EXPLANATORY modes with about the same frequency, substantially more often than it uses the EVALUATIVE mode. The Douglass newspapers, in contrast, use the EVALUATIVE mode almost as much as the ASSERTIVE. The extent to which a discourse is disputatious can be indicated in a simple

Table 6   Percentage of paragraphs containing rhetoric features

	Sample[a]	
Rhetoric feature	CA/WA[b]	Douglass papers[c]
ANGER	23.3	27.8
ASSERTIVE	36.7	34.3
EXPLANATORY	40.0	22.9
EVALUATIVE	13.3	31.4
SIMILARITY	23.2	14.3
DIFFERENCE	50.0	48.6
Paragraphs[c]	30	36

[a]There were too few paragraphs from the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* to code, so it was omitted from the sample.
[b]Includes the *Colored American* and the *Weekly Advocate*.
[c]Includes the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.

way by the ratio of evaluative to assertive illocutions. It appears that the Douglass newspapers were more likely than the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* to favor this kind of discursive formulation; the index of disputation for the former is 0.92 and for the latter is 0.36.

As shown in Table 6, arguments based on DIFFERENCE were more common than arguments based on SIMILARITY. This may be a function of the popularity of racist assertions in nineteenth-century public speech. The black abolitionists had to argue, time and again, against assertions that race differences were natural, were important, and were permanent. Because proslavery arguments relied, logically, on difference, abolitionist discourse tended to employ this basis in much of its own argumentation.

The results of the ideology coding are shown in Table 7. The Douglass newspapers stand out as most likely to employ arguments challenging NATURALIZATION and DIFFERENTIATION; the prevalence of both modes is more than twice as common in the Douglass newspapers than in the other newspapers. Odds ratios indicate that the two modes are contingent in each subsample. The odds that DIFFERENTIATION will be present in paragraphs where NATURALIZATION is present, compared with paragraphs where NATURALIZATION is absent, are 9.59 for the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*, 1.90 for the Douglass newspapers, and 4.27 for the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* (not shown in Table 7). Because

Table 7   Percentage of paragraphs and selected contingencies of ideological dimensions

Ideological dimension	Sample		
	CA/WA[a]	Douglass papers[b]	*Anglo–African*
NATURALIZATION	11.8	33.3	16.7
Odds with:			
LIBERTY, BROTHERHOOD, or POLITICS	0.99	1.40	1.12
SLAVERY	1.07	1.63	—
SUFFERING, BODY,[c] or JUSTICE	0.93	1.67	1.20
DIFFERENTIATION	11.8	25.0	11.9
Odds with:			
LIBERTY, BROTHERHOOD, or POLITICS	1.79	2.83	—
SLAVERY	1.43	1.08	1.18
SUFFERING, BODY,[c] or JUSTICE	1.02	1.83	1.76
Paragraphs	136	36	42

Note: A dash indicates that the value could not be calculated.
[a]Includes the *Colored American* and the *Weekly Advocate*.
[b]Includes the *North Star* and *Frederick Douglass' Paper*.
[c]BODY was one of the themes omitted from Table 2 because it occurred in fewer than 5% of all newspapers. It is included here for theoretical interest.

the number of paragraphs in which the modes are present is quite small, these odds are, at best, general indicators of contingency. It is impossible to make comparisons between them.

NATURALIZATION is more likely to occur in paragraphs where republican themes, such as LIBERTY, BROTHERHOOD, or POLITICS, are present than in paragraphs in which these republican themes are absent in the Douglass newspapers and the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* but not in the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*. DIFFERENTIATION was contingent with these republican themes in the Douglass newspapers and the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*. NATURALIZATION is also more likely to occur with SLAVERY than without it in both the Douglass newspapers and the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*. DIFFERENTIATION was more likely in paragraphs containing the SLAVERY vocabulary in the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* than in the Douglass newspapers. The odds of NATURALIZATION being present in paragraphs with such prophetic themes as SUFFERING, BODY, or JUSTICE were higher in the

Douglass newspapers and the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine* than in the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*. The same pattern obtains for DIFFER-ENTIATION. In the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate*, both ideological modes appear to be independent of the use of these prophetic themes.

Conclusion

Black abolitionists generated a coherent, positive identity in the process of reporting on slavery and exhorting the nation to righteousness. In many ways, black abolitionist texts are similar to other mid-nineteenth-century political discourses. Like the labor texts, the discursive repertoire of black abolition-ism was anchored by the republican field. Arguments challenging the domi-nant racial ideology are common, indicating that assumptions about race were being acknowledged as well as contested. Although the discourse of black abolitionism is a social critique, it also contains a positive assertion of what free blacks would become. As important as the theme of SLAVERY was to the discourse, so too were COLORED and BROTHERHOOD.

The present results consistently show the key features of political anti-slavery argumentation to be most common in the Douglass newspapers. Dis-cussion of slavery dominates the pages of the Douglass newspapers much more than the others (it is more than three times more frequent than in the *Colored American/Weekly Advocate* and more than six times more frequent than in the *Weekly Anglo-African Magazine*). Most of the republican themes, such as JUSTICE, LIBERTY, RIGHTS, AMERICA, and POLITICS, are more common in the Douglass newspapers. Prophetic themes, such as SUF-FERING and JUSTICE, are also more frequent. The EVALUATIVE mode was more likely to be used. These features lend the Douglass newspapers their distinctive rhetorical profile.

The decision to include various concepts or rhetoric elements together transcends the individual authorial intent. As Steinberg (1998, 1999) has argued, the discursive field is bounded by social and cultural factors, within which movement participants act. The present analysis shows that the argu-ments used were selected from an available repertoire; on some occasions, for example, SLAVERY was used with POLITICS, and on others, it was used with CHARACTER. Although various arguments were, in a sense, always potentially available, some were more common in particular instances of anti-slavery argumentation. Other arguments were tried and discarded, and some

were never employed, because they failed to resonate with the audiences (free blacks, sympathetic whites, politicians and partisans, etc.) or were simply unimaginable.

To the extent that the antebellum black newspapers studied here constitute parts of the same discourse, the results suggest that the discourse included a good deal of variation. The "discursive turn" in social movements theory, as articulated by Steinberg (1994, 1998, 1999), provides a framework for making sense of this dispersion. In contrast to a "frame," which connotes a static, finished entity, a "discursive field" evokes change and experimentation. Some of the key features of black abolitionist discourse were intentional. The emphasis on such themes as COLORED and BROTHERHOOD, and the turning of republican ideas on the basis of race, were deliberate strategies in the effort to articulate a positive identity.

In contrast to the frames approach, the present analysis suggests the strategic construction of arguments based on shifting meanings in the socio-cognitive network. The contingencies presented here clearly show that arguments were deliberate rather than formulaic. As the network approach stresses, concepts are flexible, moving between poles of general use and specific deployment, and between the poles of idiosyncratic meaning and social consensus (Carley 1997).

At the same time, black abolitionist discourse reveals its dependence on the wider American worldview. It articulated a criticism of slavery on the basis of normative beliefs about labor. Instead of a total rejection of American society, black abolitionists reassured the majority that blacks wanted to be Americans; their complaints demanded change at the same time as they affirmed allegiance to the emerging liberal capitalist belief system. Although not definitively shown by the present results, the topography of the black abolitionist field, as described here, shows that the discourse was not completely outside of the mainstream in nineteenth-century America.

There were many possible arguments against slavery available to the black abolitionists. The present results, including the comparison between abolitionist and labor discourse, show that their black abolitionist discourse was, in a fundamental way, familiar to audiences in nineteenth-century America. Their claims were grounded in the language of republicanism. Perhaps the most striking manifestation of this is the frequency of moral exhortation. The present analysis is in agreement with Hutton (1992) that black newspapers were an important source of socialization. The moral claims and

the collective identity of American blacks rested on the condition of agreement with the prevailing moral standards.

The energy spent contesting the dominant attitudes about racial differences testifies to the power of the hegemonic view. Black abolitionists asserted that oppression, rather than nature, determined their degraded state. Their arguments legitimated the notion that race was a biological category—that blacks were alike, and as a group might achieve equality with whites—and underscored its importance in structuring American society. The idea that race was a social construction designed to perpetuate inequality was simply outside the discursive field.

Some methodological issues need to be resolved with further research. Additional studies will have to determine the ideal point, in terms of diversity and intensity, at which to set the computerized coding scripts. A systematic attempt to evaluate computerized coding compared to human judgment is required. The present study, nonetheless, demonstrates the utility of network analysis. This approach has the virtue of revealing discursive structure without specifying a priori all the possible links between concepts. The present analysis could be contrasted with Carley's (1997) technique for mapping the conceptual network. Semantic grammars (see Franzosi 1989), which were not used here, might also illuminate substantial and rhetorical features of abolitionist discourse in the same manner.

The black abolitionists' "fighting words" challenged white America to fulfill its promise as "the shining city on the hill." They argued that blacks played a critical role in the salvation drama of the American experiment; redemption will come, they contended, only when blacks have been granted liberty and equality. At the same time, through their discourse, black abolitionists constructed a positive identity for blacks in America and tried to make this collective sense of self the basis for political solidarity. The discursive field of black abolitionism was not entirely strategic or intentional. Antislavery arguments were built of the same discursive components used by other antebellum reform movements. Black abolitionists did not reject American society in toto. To do so would have meant certain defeat. Whether deliberate or not, their criticism of slavery reinforced the emerging liberal capitalist worldview. Black abolitionism, like every other antebellum social movement, could not completely transcend the hegemonic discourse of the nascent commercial elite.

Notes

1   I have borrowed this apt phrase from Steinberg (1999). It refers to the production of contentious discourse by a social movement. Particularly interested in class formation, Steinberg draws out the power dimension of discourse as a symbolic practice. He notes (ibid.: 14) that "discourse is both a mediator and source of power. Discourse mediates power by facilitating the social action of control and exploitation. It is a form of power, for through it consciousness is shaped and the possibilities for action and change are culturally constituted. Fighting words are thus both a conduit and source of power."

2   New York passed a gradual emancipation act in 1785, but it was rejected by the Council of Revision, oddly enough, because it deprived freedmen of the right to vote. Such was the effect of Revolutionary idealism. After New York slaves were freed 40 years later, when cooler heads prevailed, they were soon after stripped of the franchise (Litwack 1961).

3   Additional themes were coded for but are excluded from the present discussion because they were very uncommon (appearing in fewer than 5% of the paragraphs) in all newspapers.

4   It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss the relationship between human and computer coding. Preliminary work in the development of *SemioCode* suggests that trained student coders generally use a "first instance" algorithm. One advantage of computerized coding tools is, perhaps, the ability to explicitly determine the coding practice and reliably employ it.

5   The formula is $f_{00} \times f_{11} \div f_{01} \times f_{10}$. In the example discussed, this is equal to $29 \times 19 \div 19 \times 12 = 2.42$. The odds that LIBERTY is present when SLAVERY is present was 1.58 ($19 \div 12$), and the odds that LIBERTY is absent when SLAVERY is present was 0.65 ($19 \div 29$). The ratio of the former to the latter ($1.58 \div 0.65$) is 2.42.

6   The goodness of fit measure (stress) indicates that the three-dimensional solution accounts for only a fair amount of the variation in the original distance matrix. To test hypotheses about the structure of the discourse, more texts need to be analyzed. As an alternative strategy, individual differences MDS solutions were calculated using the INDSCAL algorithm. The results do not differ substantially from the ALSCAL solutions shown.

7   Because of time constraints, a random sample of paragraphs from the Douglass newspapers was selected for coding.

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