Structural Transformation and Value Change: The British Abolitionist Movement

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- ▶ How does the development of a new dominant mode of production impact social change?

British abolitionism as a case study

- *"one of the greatest discontinuities of human history: a system accepted as moral and just by one generation became a metaphor for extremes of immorality and injustice for the next."* (Holt 1990, p. 372)

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- A massive and rapid shift in public opinion

  - Anti-slavery campaigns start in late 18th C
  - By the 1830s, 20% of British population over age 15 had signed a petition for abolition

- Timing roughly coincides with Industrial Revolution

  - But debate among historians on precise causes
  - Not unambiguously in Britain's economic interest

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2. Evidence from mobilization outside Parliament
   - ▶ Industrializing parishes file more petitions for abolition
   - ▶ Industrialists lead petitioning campaigns
   - ▶ Newspaper articles in industrial districts emphasize anti-slavery values

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3. Evidence from mobilization in Parliament

   - ▶ Industrialist MPs more likely to vote for abolition
   - ▶ Industrialist MPs have fewer direct links to slavery
   - ▶ Rhetoric of industrialist MPs is more *universalist*

Historical background

1774-**1776.** Quakers initiate anti-slavery activity within their society.

1783 Quakers petition Parliament against slave trade.

1787. An anti-slavery society is formed in London. First campaign to abolish the slave trade.

1792. Second abolitionist campaign.

1807. Act for the Abolition of the Slave Trade.

1814, 1823, 1831. Public campaigns and petitions for abolition of slavery.

1833. Slave Emancipation Act.

Causes of abolition

- Humanitarian motives and influence of the Enlightenment (Clarkson, 1808; Kaufmann & Pape, 1999)

- Industrial capitalism
  - Declining absolute and relative contribution of the colonies to British economy (Williams, 1944)
  - New ideological order promoted by capitalist class replaces slavery with free labor (Davis, 1966)

Conceptual framework

- ▶ Groups can choose to mobilize for social change

- ▶ Groups differ in their values and income (from slavery and other activities)

- ▶ Power to mobilize is function of income

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▶ Mobilization increasing in

  ▶ Values
  ▶ Reliance on non-slavery income
  ▶ Contribution of group's participation to movement success (power)
  ▶ Past mobilization rates

  ▶ Formally

Conceptual framework – Application to industrial Britain

- ▶ Middle classes influenced by progressive ideas, have weak links to slavery, but are excluded from political process

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    ▶ Increases reliance on non-slavery income for everyone (Williams, 1944)

    ▶ Increases power of subset of middle classes (Crouzet, 1985; Fresh, 2020)

▶ Mobilization by groups of rising power enables further middle class mobilization and a broad movement (Drescher, 1986)
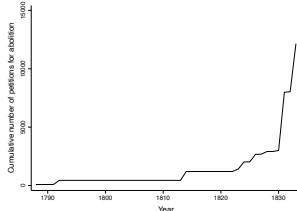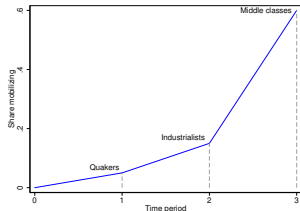
Abolitionist mobilization outside Parliament

- $\sim$ 9,000 parishes in England and Wales

- Anti-slavery petitions from the Journal of the House of Commons

- Measures of industrial activity
    - Coal-bearing bedrock and coal consumption in England (Fernihough & O'Rourke, 2021; Fresh, 2020)
    - Water mills in 1399-1477 from the Inquisitions Post Mortem (Heldring, Robinson and Vollmer 2021) and index of industrial output (Crafts and Harley 1992)
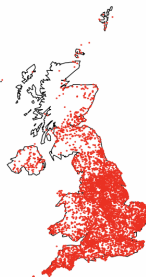   - Share males employed in manufacturing from 1831 census

Anti-slavery petitions

1787–1792

1806–1814

1821–1829

1830–1833

Industrialization and support for abolition

$$Log\ number\ of\ petitions_{it} = \beta_1 I_i \times G_t + \theta_i + \lambda_t + u_{it}$$

▶ I_i is a cross-sectional measure of industrialization, G_t is national trend in proxy of manufacturing activity

▶ θ_i are parish fixed effects, λ_t are year fixed effects

Industrialization and support for abolition

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- ▶ I_i is a cross-sectional measure of industrialization, G_t is national trend in proxy of manufacturing activity
- ▶ θ_i are parish fixed effects, λ_t are year fixed effects
- ▶ include interactions of year fixed effects with controls for geographic and fixed location characteristics
- ▶ include time-varying controls: Quaker meeting houses and number of gentry

Industrialization and support for abolition

| Dependent variable	Log number of petitions					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Coal area $\times$ Coal consumption	0.380***	0.256***	0.255***			
	(0.0375)	(0.0357)	(0.0356)			
Log watermills $\times$ Industrial output				0.0110***	0.00877***	0.00874***
				(0.00175)	(0.00161)	(0.00160)
Observations	127876	127876	127876	127876	127876	127876
R-squared	0.347	0.391	0.391	0.346	0.390	0.391
Mean dep. variable	0.0488	0.0488	0.0488	0.0488	0.0488	0.0488
Year FE $\times$ Controls		✓	✓		✓	✓
Time-varying controls			✓			✓

IV analysis

▶ Parishes with fourteenth century mills may have been more developed before the Industrial Revolution in unobservable ways

▶ Predict location of mills using a location's water power potential
  (Mokyr, Sarid and van der Beek 2022)

  ▶ Maximum water power given by elevation differential $\times$ mass flow rate
  ▶ Operationalize using slope $\times$ flow accumulation at the 30-arc second grid cell level
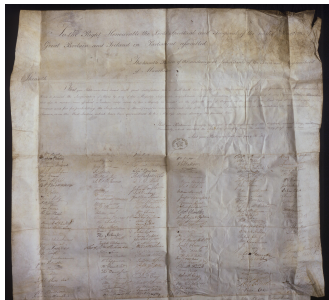
▸ First stage ▸ Results

Other petitioning activity
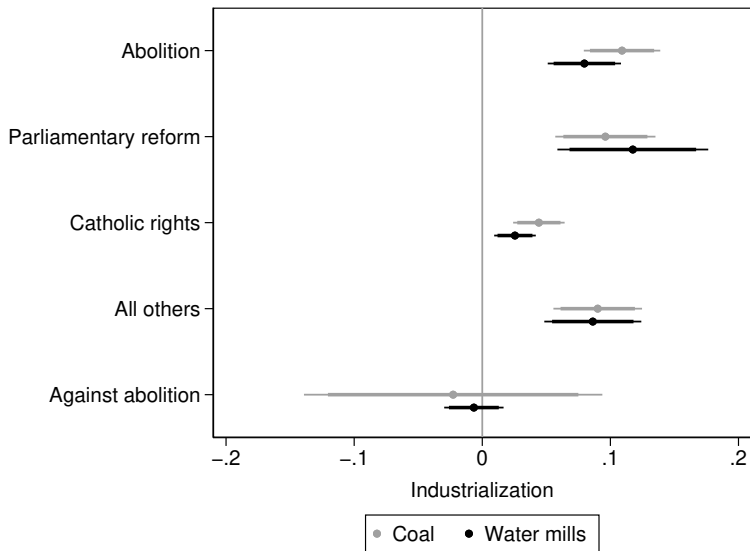
Industrialists as leaders of abolitionist campaigns

- ▶ Individual-level data on 2,348 petition signatures from 1806 Manchester petition

  - ▶ Transcribed by Manchester and Lancashire Family History Society (MLFFS) and names matched to trade directories
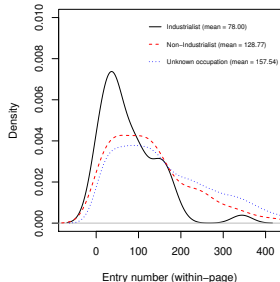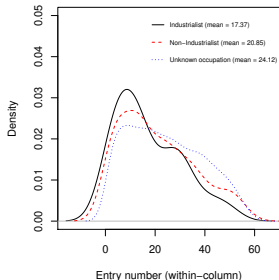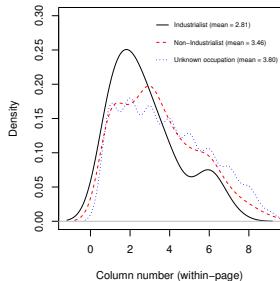

- ▶ Order of signatures reflects involvement in the movement (Makovi, 2019)

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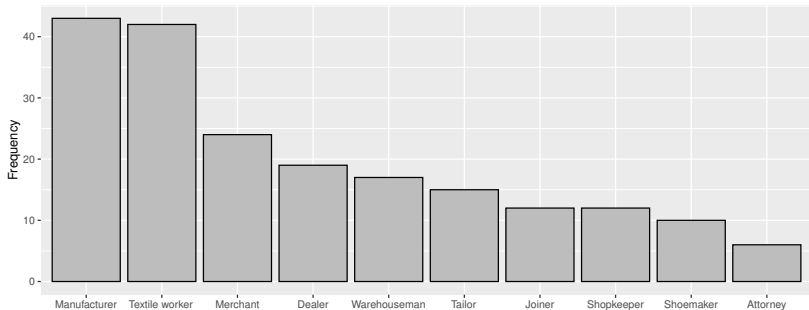
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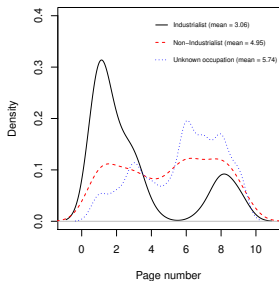
Anti-slavery in the press

~12,000 articles on slavery between 1787 and 1833 from British Newspaper Archive
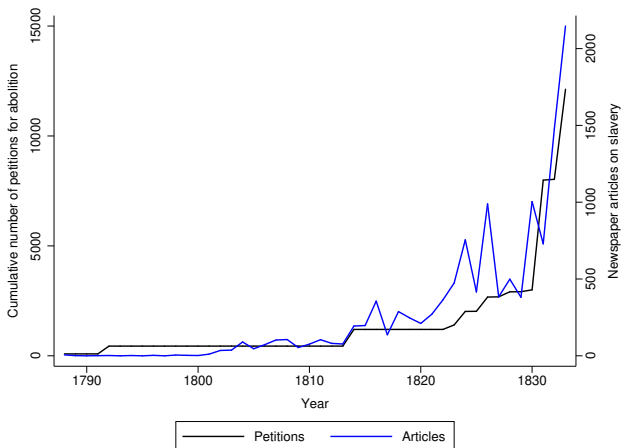
Topics by location of publication

Coal area
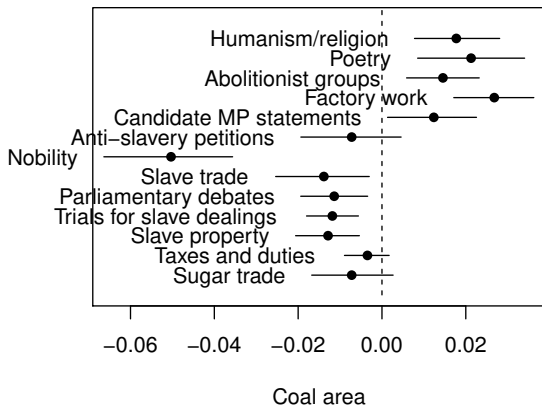
Humanist arguments

"Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself," under which term we believe are comprehended our fellow creatures of every nation, tongue and colour. ... Can there be a greater violation of his righteous law, than to buy and sell our fellow men, to claim a right of property in them and their offspring, to hold in perpetual bondage those for whom, as for us, Christ died!

The right of the slave to be raised from the level of the brute creation, to which he has been sunk through no fault of his own, and to be restored to that of human nature, in which he was created by his Maker, can be denied by none, as an universal rule or maxim

Abolitionist mobilization in Parliament

▶ Division votes on 1833 Ministerial Plan for the Abolition of Slavery

▶ MPs' economic interests and other characteristics from Stenton's (1976) *Who's who of British members of Parliament* and *Legacies of British Slavery Database*

▶ Constituency characteristics from various sources

    ▶ Distance to nearest port, river, coast, urban center, distance to London, latitude, ruggedness, slope, elevation, wheat suitability, population, population density, market integration index, number of gentry, Quaker meeting houses

Industrial interests and support for abolition

Dependent variable	Antislavery vote			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Industrial interests	0.361***	0.265***	0.350***	0.271***
	(0.0924)	(0.0883)	(0.0919)	(0.0867)
Slave owner		-0.204***		-0.212***
		(0.0606)		(0.0606)
Merchant		0.0352		-0.0187
		(0.0837)		(0.0859)
Gentry		-0.00102		-0.0143
		(0.0581)		(0.0587)
Aristocracy		-0.0844		-0.105
		(0.0670)		(0.0693)
Liberal		0.153***		0.129***
		(0.0450)		(0.0473)
Radical		0.369***		0.342***
		(0.0547)		(0.0558)
Protestant dissenter		0.194*		0.201
		(0.117)		(0.122)
Oxbridge graduate		0.00706		-0.0168
		(0.0420)		(0.0431)
Observations	546	544	546	544
R-squared	0.0243	0.130	0.0892	0.186
Mean dep. variable	0.375	0.377	0.375	0.377
Constituency controls			✓	✓

Industrial interests and support for abolition
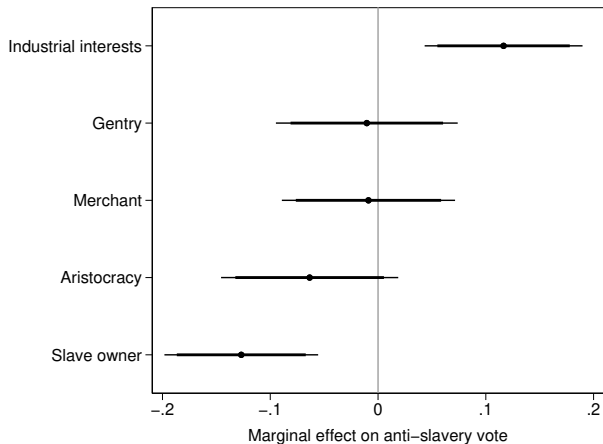
The role of economic interest
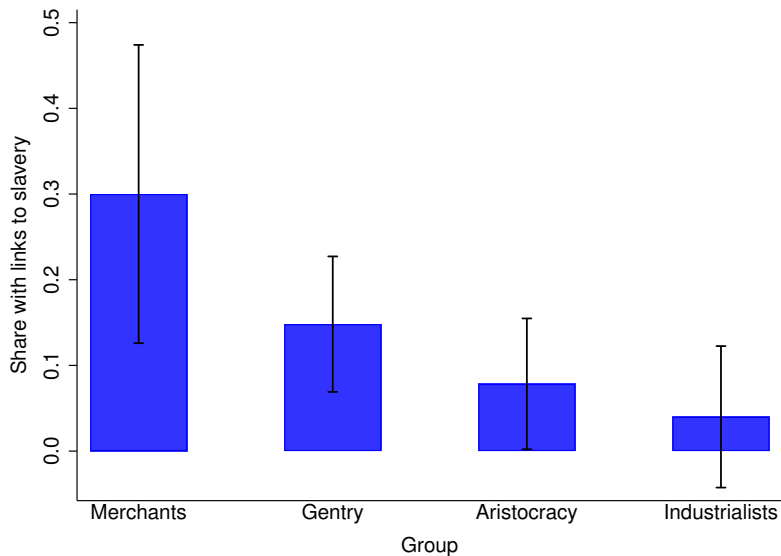
The role of values

- Parliamentary speeches of MPs on slavery and other issues (1833-1834) (Eggers and Spirling (2014))

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- ▶ Proxy humanist values with universalism using Moral Foundations Dictionary (Haidt and Graham, 2009; Enke, 2020)

- ▶ MFD identifies words belonging to one of four moral foundations, two universalist and two communal

  - ▶ Harm/care: emotional suffering, care for weak and vulnerable, cruelty
  - ▶ Fairness/reciprocity: treat people differently, act unfairly, deny rights
  - ▶ In-group/loyalty: show love for country, betray group
  - ▶ Authority/respect: lack of respect for authority, conform to societal traditions

Universalism is distinctive of industrialists

Typical

Universalist
Communal

safe, protect, attack, communiti, destroy, nation, cruel, war, wrong, agit, valu, enemi, honest, suffer, famili, peaceabl, honesti, ruin, wretch, wick
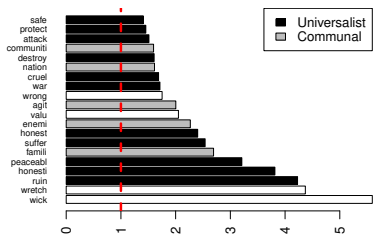
Proportion in industrialists' speeches / Overall proportion

Atypical

Universalist
Communal

dissent, church, respect, law, legal, injustic, author, proper, posit, principl, justic, control, gross, moral, charact, duti, justifi, unit, refus, individu, fair
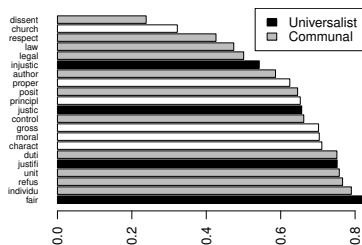
Proportion in industrialists' speeches / Overall proportion

Universalism is distinctive of industrialists

- Universalism$_s$ = Universalist moral words$_s$ − Communal moral words$_s$

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► $\text{Universalism}_s = \text{Universalist moral words}_s - \text{Communal moral words}_s$
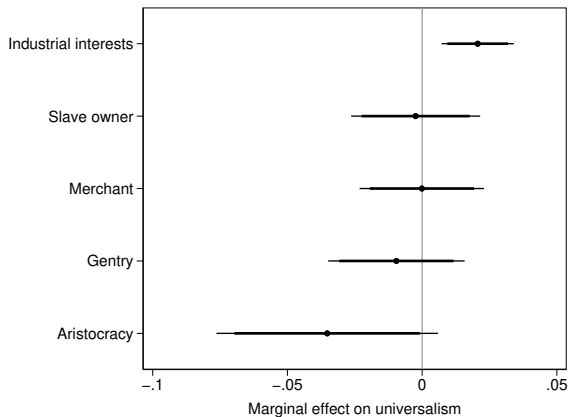
Universalism is distinctive of industrialists

▶ Speeches of industrialists are more universalist

   ▶ Also in debates other than slavery

   ▶ With debate fixed effects

▶ But not more emphasis on morality in general

▶ And no difference on other moral foundations (sanctity/degradation)

▶ Table

Examining other alternatives

- Antislavery vote not predicted by views on free trade or involvement in textiles. ▸ Table

- Antislavery vote not driven by pressures from constituents. ▸ Table

- Antislavery vote is not a response to agitation for domestic reforms. ▸ Table

Taking stock

- Industrial interests strongly linked to anti-slavery at the aggregate and individual level

    - Structural transformation can lead to social change
    - Both values and economic interests play a role in this process

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- Many questions left to answer

  - Origins of industrialists' universalist values
  - Additional channels for social change: value diffusion, status-based transmission

Thank you!

Conceptual framework

- Groups characterized by values v_g, slavery income y_g^s and non-slavery income y_g^o

- Power to mobilize for change depends on income $p(y_g)$, $p' > 0$

- Costs of mobilization $c_t = c \left(\sum_{i \in S_t} \sigma_i \right)$, $c' < 0$, where σ_i is size of group i

- Expected utility from participation for group g is given by:

$$U_g = \pi(v_g - y_g^s) - c$$

▸ Back

Conceptual framework

- Estimated probability of other groups' mobilization for group g that did not participate in $t-1$ is

$$\pi_t^P = \pi\left(\sum_{i \in S_{t-1}} p_i + p_g\right)$$

$$\pi_t^{NP} = \pi\left(\sum_{i \in S_{t-1}} p_i\right)$$

- Mobilization requires that pro-reform values exceed

$$v_g \geq y_g^s \frac{c_t}{\pi^P - \pi^{NP}}$$

IV analysis – First stage

Standardized point estimate= 0.053, t–stat= 5.46

Back
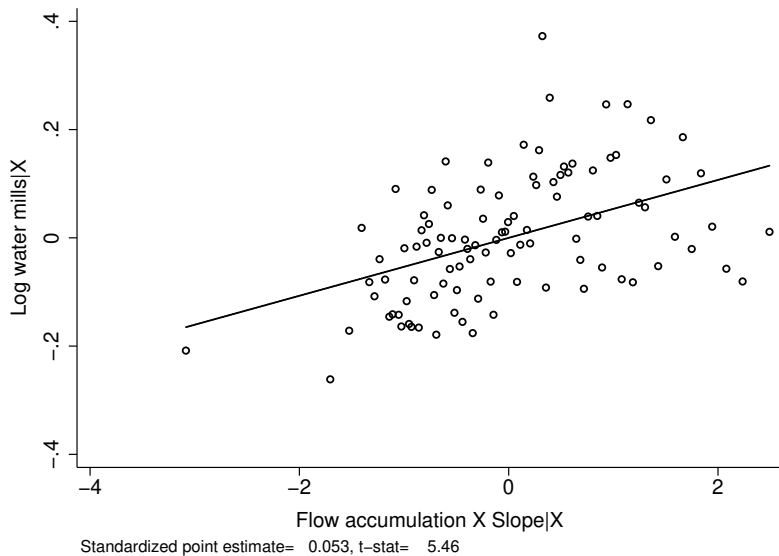
IV analysis – Results

Dependent variable	Log number of petitions		Log water mills		Log number of petitions	
	OLS	Reduced form	First stage		2SLS	
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Log water mills×Industrial output	0.0105***				0.215***	0.154***
	(0.00174)				(0.0430)	(0.0342)
Flow×Slope×Industrial output		0.00148***	0.00687***	0.00700***		
		(0.000146)	(0.00125)	(0.00128)		
First stage effective F-stat					30.215	29.513
AR CIs					[0.152,0.339]	[0.106,0.161]
Observations	127876	127876	127876	127876	127876	127876
R-squared	0.349	0.349	0.933	0.934	-0.303	-0.161
Mean dep. variable	0.0488	0.0488	0.395	0.395	0.0488	0.0488
Year FE × Additional controls				✓		✓

▸ Back

Universalism by MP characteristics and debate

Dependent variable	Universalism			General morality			Purity		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Industrial interests	0.0206***	0.0232***	0.0114	0.0000586	0.000116	0.000134	-0.000155	-0.000130	0.0000691
	(0.00682)	(0.00678)	(0.00750)	(0.000142)	(0.000130)	(0.000138)	(0.000123)	(0.000124)	(0.000129)
Slave owner	-0.00242	-0.00425	-0.00839	0.0000395	0.0000360	0.000182	-0.000259**	-0.000274**	-0.0000304
	(0.0122)	(0.0117)	(0.0145)	(0.000185)	(0.000189)	(0.000138)	(0.000123)	(0.000117)	(0.0000966)
Merchant	-0.000105	-0.000479	-0.00657	-0.0000136	-0.00000281	0.0000454	-0.000431***	-0.000478***	-0.000307***
	(0.0117)	(0.0106)	(0.0128)	(0.000171)	(0.000177)	(0.000168)	(0.0000957)	(0.0000880)	(0.0000644)
Aristocracy	-0.0352*	-0.0369*	-0.0437**	-0.000221*	-0.000223*	-0.000823***	-0.000529***	-0.000542***	-0.000314***
	(0.0209)	(0.0213)	(0.0198)	(0.000125)	(0.000122)	(0.000136)	(0.000154)	(0.000156)	(0.0000773)
Liberal	-0.00248	0.00297	0.00288	-0.000434	-0.000504**	-0.000431**	0.000151	0.000134	0.0000676
	(0.0183)	(0.0183)	(0.0187)	(0.000263)	(0.000242)	(0.000201)	(0.000162)	(0.000167)	(0.000117)
Radical	0.0109	0.0151	0.0168	-0.000301	-0.000362	-0.000240	0.000114	0.000116	0.0000988
	(0.0178)	(0.0171)	(0.0181)	(0.000278)	(0.000259)	(0.000215)	(0.000141)	(0.000150)	(0.000114)
Protestant dissenter	-0.00708	-0.00669	0.00598	-0.0000271	-0.0000650	-0.000235	0.000522***	0.000522***	0.000231**
	(0.00826)	(0.00733)	(0.00995)	(0.000219)	(0.000219)	(0.000223)	(0.000142)	(0.000145)	(0.000104)
Gentry	-0.00956	-0.00552	-0.0225*	-0.000170	-0.000193	-0.000131	-0.000115	-0.000124	0.000104
	(0.0129)	(0.0131)	(0.0126)	(0.000211)	(0.000205)	(0.000145)	(0.000116)	(0.000120)	(0.0000755)
Oxbridge graduate	0.0177	0.0195	0.0268*	-0.000496***	-0.000526***	-0.000587***	-0.0000619	-0.0000669	-0.000296***
	(0.0163)	(0.0164)	(0.0158)	(0.000186)	(0.000182)	(0.000166)	(0.000137)	(0.000141)	(0.0000863)
Observations	7757	7471	7471	7757	7471	7471	7757	7471	7471
R-squared	0.00193	0.00207	0.191	0.00399	0.00463	0.191	0.0204	0.0218	0.355
Mean dep. variable	0.00196	-0.00495	-0.00495	0.0116	0.0116	0.0116	0.00346	0.00351	0.00351
Debate FE			✓			✓			✓
Drop slavery debates		✓	✓		✓	✓		✓	✓

▸ Back

Possible mechanism: Anti-mercantilism

Dependent variable	Antislavery vote		
	(1)	(2)	(3)
Industrial interests	0.271***	0.266***	0.278***
	(0.0867)	(0.0867)	(0.0886)
Free trade		0.0675	
		(0.0662)	
Corn laws		0.00498	
		(0.0588)	
Textile manufacturer			-0.0391
			(0.219)
Observations	544	544	544
R-squared	0.186	0.188	0.186
Mean dep. variable	0.377	0.377	0.377

Possible mechanism: Constituents' pressures

Dependent variable	Anti-slavery vote								Pledged to abolish
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
Industrial interests	0.271***	0.244***	0.273***	0.270***	0.275***	0.274***	0.247***	0.234**	0.00512
	(0.0867)	(0.0894)	(0.0879)	(0.0867)	(0.0871)	(0.0860)	(0.0952)	(0.0978)	(0.0920)
Coal area		0.226**						0.218**	
		(0.100)						(0.101)	
Log water mills			0.0535					0.0509	
			(0.0334)					(0.0338)	
Log textile mills				-0.00920				-0.0131	
				(0.0357)				(0.0348)	
Log petitions overall					0.0226			0.0156	
					(0.0347)			(0.0342)	
Log petitions 1833						0.0228			
						(0.0359)			
Ran unopposed							-0.0365	-0.0489	
							(0.0453)	(0.0451)	
Industrial interests × Ran unopposed							0.0959	0.0604	
							(0.219)	(0.252)	
Observations	544	544	544	544	544	544	548	544	544
R-squared	0.186	0.194	0.190	0.186	0.187	0.187	0.186	0.200	0.159
Mean dep. variable	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.378	0.377	0.237

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Possible mechanism: Pressures for domestic reform

Dependent variable	Anti-slavery vote						
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)
Industrial interests	0.271***	0.262***	0.283*	0.263***	0.251**	0.278***	0.299***
	(0.0867)	(0.0869)	(0.152)	(0.0878)	(0.118)	(0.0881)	(0.0947)
Log labor incidents 1828-1833		0.0283	0.0291				
		(0.0212)	(0.0223)				
Industrial interests × Labor incidents 1828-1833			-0.0112				
			(0.0658)				
Log labor incidents 1833				0.0278	0.0253		
				(0.0409)	(0.0454)		
Industrial interests × Labor incidents 1833					0.0161		
					(0.0845)		
Log Swing riots						0.0409	0.0416
						(0.0259)	(0.0259)
Industrial interests × Swing riots							-0.107
							(0.148)
Observations	544	544	544	544	544	544	544
R-squared	0.186	0.189	0.189	0.187	0.187	0.191	0.191
Mean dep. variable	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377

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