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**Self-Interest, Moral Principle, and Social Context:
A Rational Choice Analysis of the Abolitionist Movement**

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Is it possible to explain all political behavior in terms of self-interest? If we interpret self-interest as narrow, direct and short-term, the answer is obviously no. Things that we might call culture, ideology, ideas and moral principles clearly affect individual choices, and, thereby, political outcomes. But inquiries into the the logic behind these other forces often bring us back to interest. Much behavior that appears at odds with self-interest can be "rationalized" by considering long time horizons and the complexities of social interaction. In acting against my short-term self-interest, I may be building a useful reputation, winning and maintaining allies, making credible commitments, or establishing a focal point. Recent game theoretic work has shown how patterns of behavior that we might attribute to culture (Kreps 1990, Fearon and Laitin, 1996), partisanship (Aldrich 1995), ideology (Bawn 1999) or ideas (Garret and Weingast 1993, Weingast 1995, Bates, de Figueiredo and Weingast 1998) can arise endogenously in models with no causal force other than self-interest. The seemingly non-interest based behavior arises as the result of long time horizons, uncertainty and complex social interaction.

The success of the rational choice paradigm in explaining seemingly non-interest-based behavior motivates my initial question. What are the limits of self-interest explanations? While this paper cannot offer a comprehensive answer, it explores a particular alternative to interest, moral principle. I will focus here on a case in which the role played by interest seems to be quite small, and the role played by moral principle seems quite large – the abolitionist movement in the United States.

The seemingly straightforward claim that the abolitionist movement was motivated by principle begs many questions. Under what circumstances are people motivated by principle? When does principle override interest? Why is a given principle important to one person and not another? Does the "success" of a principle in motivating behavior depend on the logical force of its content, or simply on the social context in which it is invoked?

The argument developed here is that social context matters a lot. Specifically, in some social contexts, some individuals can benefit by taking modestly costly action in defense of a principle that has no direct link to their self-interest. They benefit because by defending the principle, they give a credible signal of their own trustworthiness. The idea that behavior contrary to one's short-term self interest can act as an effective signal is not new to game theoretic political science. Nor is it novel to claim that abolitionism sprang from a particular vision of social order held by evangelical communities in the early-to-mid 19th century. This paper's contribution is to show that this vision of social order created an unusual need for individuals to be able signal good intentions to their fellow community members.

The paper proceeds as follows. Section 1 offers a brief history of the abolitionist movement in the U.S. and discusses why it is particularly problematic for interest-based explanations of politics. Section 2 sketches a model in which behavior that seems to be at odds with self-interest benefits the individual and the group by creating a credible signal of willingness to cooperate. Section 3 discusses the extent to which the model captures the essence of the abolitionist movement.

1. Abolitionism and Religious Revivals

Opposition to slavery lay at the heart of the greatest crisis in U.S. history. Of course, by the eve of the Civil War, the slavery issue was not at the center of conflict. Most Northerners, even most Republicans, were not abolitionists[1], in the sense of insisting upon immediate emancipation. The Republican platform on which Abraham Lincoln was elected President took a moderate position on slavery, opposing the expansion of slavery to new territory, but explicitly affirming "the right of each state to order and control its own domestic institutions."[2] And the racist attitudes of Northerners of this period are well-documented. Many historians characterize the sectional crisis as a clash of cultures and basic values, an "irrepressible conflict,"[3] rather than a disagreement focused on any specific issue.

But it is nonetheless hard to imagine the crisis arising without the simultaneous existence of slaves in the South and abolitionists in the North. The events that drew mainstream Northerners into the conflict – the gag rule, repeated crises over slavery in the territories, sectional balance in the Senate, the Fugitive Slave Law -- were shaped by the confrontational strategies of abolitionists. If nothing else, the abolitionists affected history by creating enough paranoia on the part of Southern politicians to motivate reactions that, in turn, convinced many Northerners that a "Slave Power" conspiracy threatened the country.

The abolitionist movement is thus a critical part of U.S. political development. It stands out, however as an example of significant political activity that is extremely hard to explain in terms of self-interest. Certainly abolitionists had nothing to gain economically from demanding the abolition of slavery. Indeed, the textile industry was an important component of the economy of New England, one stronghold of abolitionism. The textile sector benefitted from low cotton prices, which were due in large part to the use of slave labor. Nor does it seem likely that abolitionists were motivated by political self-interest, in the sense of gaining political allies (Bawn 1999). While some cases of whites taking political action to benefit blacks may have been motivated by the desire to gain the support of blacks -- see, for example, Parikh's (1996) analysis of affirmative action—it is hard to believe that ex-slaves would have made appealing allies. Ex-slaves simply had too little in the way of political clout and economic resources for their support to be worth courting.

The abolitionists do not seem to have been motivated by self-interest, but rather by principle, in particular, by their religious values. Virtually all accounts of the movement discuss its intimate relationship with the wave of religious revivalism known as the Second Great Awakening. It is clear that religion played an important role in the lives of abolitionists. Moreover, the basic abolitionist principle that bondage is sinful is logically consistent with doctrine of free will espoused by the revival movement.[4] But this doctrine was accepted by the members of mainstream churches who did not embrace abolitionism, so logical consistency alone seems unpromising as an explanation for why the revival communities embraced abolitionism, and most other Northerners did not.

Historians who have studied the link between abolitionism and revivalism emphasize that revival religion differed from the mainstream less in terms of religious

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[1] Fogel, 1989, p. 240.
[2] Quoted in Potter, 1976, p. 423.
[3] See discussion in Foner, 1970, pp. 2-3.
[4] See Barnes (1933) and Hammond (1979).

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doctrine, and more in terms of the social organization and individual experience of worship. I will discuss each of these differences in turn, as they are the foundation of my formal argument that the abolitionist movement helped to solve some problems of social order faced by the revival communities.

1.1 The Social Organization of Revivalism

The most striking feature of the revival movement is its egalitarianism.[5] Revival meetings involved a great deal of participation on the part of all audience members, including women.   Revival attendees prayed aloud, groaning and swaying. As long as these audible and physical expressions of emotion were motivated by genuine feeling, they were to be encouraged, as resistance might be a way of "resisting the Holy Ghost."[6] The great revival preacher, Charles Grandison Finney, encouraged those attending revivals to pray frequently, and let their prayers take the form of specific requests relevant to their own lives.

Finney was noted for his plain language, his charismatic and entertaining style of speaking, and for his analogies to farming, mechanics and medicine.   When attacked by the traditional clergy for some of the unorthodox and undignified practices of revivalists – public praying by women was considered particularly dangerous – Finney condemned obscure theology and abstract language in preaching, arguing that they encouraged sin by alienating ordinary folk from religious experiences that could lead to their salvation. The reported differences in the rhetorical styles of the revivalists of the Second Great Awakening and of mainstream clerical leaders of the same denominations are similar to the differences that Anderson (1996) has found in the rhetorical styles of post-democracy Russian leaders and those of the Soviet era.

Finney's early revivals, and those of other preachers who adopted his plain and colloquial way of communicating, were tremendously successful in bringing religion to frontier communities, where previously church membership had not been widespread.[7] In doing so, revivals strengthened fragile community ties in newly settled areas.

Egalitarianism permeated the doctrine of the great revivalists as well. Although the revival movement sprang primarily from Calvinist denominations, revivalists preached an empowering theology, eschewing notions of predestination and emphasizing the individual's own ability to bring about his or her salvation.   By arguing that religion was relevant to the everyday lives of ordinary people, revivalist doctrine endorsed a worldview that emphasized the spiritual and social value of the common man and woman. Morevoer, Hammond writes that "[t]he distinction between religious and secular reform and likewise that between personal conversion and creation of a new social order had no meaning in the world in which Finney and his converts lived."[8] The new social order was one in which hierarchical institutions mattered little and the actions of ordinary people mattered much. I now turn to the issue of benevolence.

1.2 Benevolence: The Individual Experience of Revivalism

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[5] This section draws extensively on Hammond (1979), especially chapter 3.
[6] Finney (1960), quoted in Hammond (1979).
[7] Hammond (1979) pp. 38-39
[8] Hammond (1979) p. 60.

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Revivalists not only preached that ordinary people could play an active role in their own salvation, they also offered a series of public ways for someone who was saved to distinguish herself from sinners. Orthodox critics of revivalism were quick to point out that nothing prevents a sinner from praying and weeping at a revival meeting, claiming to be among the saved.   Revivalists were sensitive to this criticism, but unwilling to concede ground on their core egalitarian claim that salvation was experienced directly by the individual. Rather, they emphasized that anyone who was saved would necessarily want to bring about God's will on earth. Moreover, and again reflecting the egalitarian doctrine, the actions of a lowly-but-saved person could be consequential in implementing God's will.   These actions constituted benevolence. Specifically, benevolent actions were those that encouraged others to use God-given free will to save their souls.   Abstinence and the promotion of abstinence in others was one benevolent duty, since drunkeness interferred with free will. But the most important benevolent obligation was to work for the immediate abolition of slavery.

Hammond writes "benevolence neither won salvation for the Christian nor even assured him that he was saved; both the salvation and the assurance came from repentance and conversion, and benevolence was only supposed to follow…however, *obedience to the moral principle came to be taken as a sign to others that one was truly saved*" (page 3, italics added).   Benevolent activity served as a publically-observable signal of something, presumably something good, on the part of the benevolent individual. The public nature of benevolence was useful to other adherents of revivalism, because their obligations to another saved soul were different than their obligations to a sinner. "Claiming that one could tell, on the basis of secular action, whether or not a man was a Christian, they felt free to castigate any man who mocked them or hardened his heart against them. With such assurance of the rightness of their activities, it was perhaps inevitable that eventually they would turn to political means to enforce good behavior on the unregenerate" (Hammond, page 65). Benevolent activity thus indicated group membership, functioning as what Hardin (1997) calls a "norm of exclusion."

There are three points to emphasize from this brief review of the revival movement. First, revivalism was notably successful in areas where community ties were weak, and its success had the effect of strengthening these ties. Second, revivalism was egalitarian, both in its doctrine and its practice. Third, revivalism encouraged converts to take public actions that distinguished them from the unconverted. These points will be highlighted in the model I develop in the following section.

2. Modelling Problems of Social Order

Any community faces the problem of social order. "Social order" is the name social scientists give to whatever it is that keeps society from descending into Hobbesian anarchy. Calvert (1997) claims that social order must be self-enforcing, and that therefore, we can think of it as a cooperative equilibrium in a repeated Prisoner's Dilemma-like game. Calvert argues that the inevitable multiplicity of equilibria in repeated games indicate a basic truth about social reality – that social order takes many forms.

Scholars who use game theory to study aspects of social order use a social matching game to model social interaction.   A social matching game works as follows. A group of *n* people are randomly paired, and each pair plays the Prisoner's Dilemma

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depicted in Figure 1. Pay-offs ensue, and the game repeats, with new partners assigned, again at random. If actions are observable by all, then cooperation can be supported under the same circumstances (and by the same strategies) as when the Prisoners' Dilemma is played repeatedly by the same pair of players.   For example, a "grim trigger" strategy will support cooperation whenever $d > \dfrac{a-1}{a}$,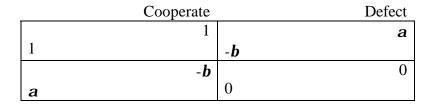 where d is the discount factor.[9]   If actions are observable only by one's current partner, cooperation will be harder to sustain, in the sense that the minimum discount factor will be higher, because a defector will only be punished when he is again paired with the person he initially defected against.   This would imply that sustaining social order is difficult indeed, unless individuals place very large values on the future, or face very little in the way of temptation to cheat others.   Moreover, the likelihood of sustaining social order should be lower, the larger the community.

<p style="text-align:center">Figure 1: Prisoner's Dilemma</p>

	Cooperate	Defect
	1	a
Cooperate	1	$-b$
	$-b$	0
Defect	a	0

Notes: $a > 1$, $b > 0$, $a - b < 2$.

Richer models, however, reveal ways that social order can be sustained under infrequent interaction.   Milgrom, North and Weingast (1990) allow players to report defections to a central authority that will make punishment status known to all other players. They argue that the "Law Merchant" governing early European mercantile fairs served precisely this function, allowing cooperation to be sustained for lower values of d than would have been possible otherwise.   Alternatively, Calvert (1997), showed that allowing decentralized communication can also sustain cooperation, although the presumably higher costs of communication require higher discount factors, relative to the centralized case.   One drawback of the Law Merchant form of social order is that centralization creates a hierarchy (the medieval courts established by the Law Merchant had power over traders) and hierarchy permits the exploitation of those at the bottom by those at the top (the judges could extort bribes or show favortism.)

Fearon and Laitin (1998), in a model that explores the relationship between ethnic groups, simplify the issue by assuming defections are observed by all members of an ethnic community. Intra-group cooperation can thus be sustained under the same basic conditions as ongoing individual interaction, and inter-group cooperation can also be sustained by within-group punishment.   They do not explicitly model communication, rather, they focus on the problem of noise.   That is, in their model, someone who intends to cooperate will actually defect with some small probability, e. These "accidental" defections maybe due simply to mistakes – e.g., I thought the grain that I delivered to you

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[9] "Grim trigger" means that players cooperate with those who have cooperated in the past , but always defect against anyone who has ever defected.   Punishment lasts forever.

was fine; you discovered it to be rancid.   More importantly, they could also be due to lack of common understanding of what "cooperation" would entail – e.g., you expected me to show up for work even though it's raining; I thought I could stay home. While the first kind of accidental defection can be dealt with via a second interaction (in which you show me the rancid grain and I cooperate by refunding your payment), the second is harder to rectify.[10]

2.1 Modelling the Social Environment of Revival Communities

The models briefly discussed above highlight three issues in the maintenance of social order. First, centralized and decentralized solutions are possible. Second, costs of communication matter for both types of solution, but they are higher for decentralized ones. Third, noise, particularly in the in the form of a lack of common understanding about what constitutes cooperation in unforeseen circumstances, exacerbates the problem of establishing social order.

How do the revival communities score on these issues?   I interpret the lack of strong community ties before the wave of revivalism as implying both that noise would be a significant problem, that costs of communication would not be trivial, and that no centralized institution was in place to economize on communication costs, along the lines of a Law Merchant.   Moreover, the egalitarian ethic of revivalist practice and doctrine revealed a disposition against hierarchical/centralized solutions to the problem of social orders in favor of egalitarian/decentralized ones.   I should emphasize that I am claiming that the disposition toward an egalitarian social order existed before the revivals, and that this existing disposition shaped the revival movement, not the reverse. The premise I will build on here is that revivalism succeeded by offering higher status and greater empowerment to people (women especially) who were disadvantaged by relatively hierarchical organization of mainstream churches.

I introduce two complications to the basic social matching game. First, as in Fearon and Laitin, there is is noise. Sometimes a player who cooperated will be accused of defecting, and therefore punished. Conversely, sometimes defection will not be punished. Sometimes, good intentions will be misinterpreted and sometimes misdeeds will be tolerated.[11] The probability that one's action is misconstrued (cooperation is punished or defection ignored) is e. A player who defects in period t will thus be put in punishment status in round $t + 1$ with probability $1 - e$, and will remain out of punishment status with probability e. And a player who cooperates will be punished with probability e. I do not explicitly model the process by which players end up in punishment status[12] For this paper's purposes, the important things about punishment status is that is correlated with past actions but not perfectly.

The second complication is that there are two types of people, good guys and bad guys. Good guys have discount factor d_1, where $0 < d_1 < 1$. Bad guys have d_2, where $0 <$

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[10] Kreps (1991) argues that the role of culture is to establish a common understanding of what constitutes cooperation in ambiguous situations (e.g., the employee shows up unless the employer has specifically told him that he can stay home.)   The argument here is that the relatively new communities where revivalism was most successful had not yet developed this level of community culture.

[11] The noise in Fearon and Laitin's model is somewhat different. In their model, the noise occurs in the actions, so that a player who intends to cooperate, accidentally defects.

[12] See Milgrom, North and Weingast (1990) and Calvert for ways that this can be modelled.

$d_2 < d_1$. Bad guys are bad because they place less weight on the future and are therefore less likely to cooperate. The fraction of good guys in the population is p. This heterogeneity of types is meant to capture a basic problem faced by any community, not necessarily one that was peculiar to the revivalist communities.

Players do not observe the type of their partner in each round of the game, nor do they observe their history of behavior. A player does know, however, whether her partner is in punishment status or not. I cannot see into my partner's soul to tell if he is a good guy or a bad guy. Nor I do know exactly what transpired in his past interactions. I do know, however, my community's current judgement of him, and I know that the judgement is correct with probability $1 - e$.

I will look at some equilibria of this basic game to establish some benchmark results. Then I will add one more feature, designed to capture the idea of benevolence, as understood by the revival communities. I will give players the opportunity to take observable costly action in each round. This action confers no short-term benefits, but eliminates the probability that one is put in punishment by mistake. Specifically, in the game with benevolence, each player makes two decisions, whether to pay cost k or not, and whether to cooperate or not. The probability of being punished is conditional on both decisions, as follows

$$\text{prob(Punishment|Cooperate and Pay } k) = 0$$
$$\text{prob(Punishment|Cooperate and Don't Pay)} = e$$
$$\text{prob(Punishment|Defect and Pay } k) = 1\text{-}e$$
$$\text{prob(Punishment|Defect and Don't Pay)} = 1$$

Paying k represents taking benevolent action, such as organizing a petition demanding immediate abolition, or writing a pamphlet. Someone who takes the benevolent action and cooperates will not be punished, whereas someone who cooperates without taking the benevolent action continues to run the risk e of undeserved punishment. Someone who takes the benevolent action, but defects will be punished with the same probability as before, $1 - e$, and someone who both foregoes the opportunity to show benevolence and defects will be punished with certainty.

Table 1: Parameters

Parameter	Meaning
a	Temptation to defect
b	Sucker pay-off
d_1, d_2	Discount factors of good guys and bad guys
e	Probability that action is misinterpreted
p	Fraction of good guys
n	Number of periods in punishment phase
k	Cost of benevolent action

In discussing equilibria in the repeated game, I will consider those that rely on finite punishments. Strategies involving infinite punishment are technically problematic when there is noise – in each successive round, there will be fewer and fewer players not in the punishment phase. Cooperation cannot be sustained indefinitely. With finite punishments, a player who is judged to have defected is sentenced to n rounds in the

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punishment phase.   Cooperation will be sustained in all the equilibria discussed below by players defecting against partners who are in the punishment phase, and cooperating with those not in the punishment phase. Table 1 summarizes the parameters of the model.

2.2 Some Equilibria Without Benevolence

I will discuss two equilibria in the basic game without benevolence, in order to demonstrate the problems posed by the juxtaposition of noise and heterogenous types. The first equilibrium involves universal cooperation, universal in the sense that both good guys and bad guys cooperate with each other. The second involves partial cooperation, in the sense that the good guys cooperate and the bad guys don't.

Let S_C be the strategy that supports cooperation, specifically.

S_C : When not in punishment phase, if partner is in the punishment phase, defect, otherwise cooperate. Defect when in punishment phase.

 If both good guys and bad guys play S_C, there will be universal cooperation. Universal cooperation can be an equilibrium as long as

$$a < 1 + \frac{d_2(1-2e)(1-d_2^{\,n})}{\left[1-d_2 + d_2 e(1-d_2^{\,n})\right](1+ne)} \tag{1}$$

That is, universal cooperation is possible as long as the short term gain from defecting (a) is not too large, as long as the bad guys are not too bad (d_2 is not too small), and the probability of a misunderstanding (e) is not too great. See the appendix for details.

There are three points to note about the universal cooperation equilibrium. First, as is common in models with noise, punishments occur in equilibrium even though defection never occurs – and, indeed, even though *everyone knows* that defection never occurs. All punishments are the result of misunderstanding, but they are nonetheless necessary to sustain cooperation.[13]

The second point is that the equilibrium conditions and pay-offs do not depend on the fraction of bad guys in the population. This is because, in this equilibrium, everybody behaves like a good guy.

The most important point is that the critical factor that determines whether universal cooperation is possible is the discount factor of the bad guys. If the bad guys are really bad, universal cooperation will not be possible, no matter how patient the good guys are. This begs the question of what happens when when d_2 is too low to sustain universal cooperation?   Can the good guys manage to cooperate among themselves, given that they run the risk of being exploited by bad guys?

The answer is yes, but not surprisingly, the conditions are stringent. In a partial cooperation equilibrium, the good guys play S_C and the bad guys always defect.   Partial cooperation is an equilibrium when

$$q(1-a) - b(1-q) + d(1-d^{n})(1-2e)V > 0 \tag{2}$$

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[13] See Green and Porter on this point.

where $q = \dfrac{p(1+n-ne)}{p(1+n-ne)+(1-p)(1+ne)}$ is the probability that one's partner is a good guy conditional on the fact that she is currently not in a punishment phase, and

$$V = \dfrac{\dfrac{p}{1+ne} - \dfrac{(1-p)}{1+n-ne}}{1-d+de(1-d^{n})}.$$

The partial cooperation equilibrium has the advantage of not depending on the discount factor of the bad guys. The disadvantage is that it requires the good guys to be extremely patient (relative to the universal cooperation requirement). For example, when $a = 2$, $b = 1$, $p = .5$, $e = .1$, and $n = 20$, universal cooperation is sustainable when both types have discount factors of at least .86. For these same parameter values, partial cooperation is only sustainable when the good guys have a discount factor greater than .999. This example suggests that the presence of bad guys, along with the problem of noisy punishments can make it hard for a community to solve the problem of social order.

2.3 Adding Benevolence as a Signal of Type

The problem in the basic game is that players can't tell the difference between good guy and a bad guy. If the community had some signal of an individual's type, could it not perhaps do a better job of assigning punishment only when deserved? The argument here is that costly benevolent action can serve as such a signal. Now consider the above game expanded to allow each player to take a benevolent action in each period. Benevolence costs the individual k, and is observed by the community.

I am interested in equilibria in which good guys take benevolent action and cooperate with partners who are not in the punishment state, and bad guys eschew benevolence and defect. In order for such an equilibrium to exist, six conditions must hold.

1. Given that they are going to cooperate, good guys prefer taking benevolent action to not, or $d_1 V_1 e(1-d_1^{n}) > k$.

2. Given that they took benevolent action, good guys prefer cooperating to defecting, or $d_1 V_1(1-e)(1-d_1^{n}) > \dfrac{p(1+n)(a-1)+b(1-p)}{1+pn}$.

3. Good guys prefer cooperation and benevolence to defection and no benevolence – that this they do not gain by acting like bad guys, or
$d_1 V_1(1-d_1^{n}) > k + \dfrac{p(1+n)(a-1)+b(1-p)}{1+pn}$.

4. Given that they are going to defect, bad guys prefer not to take benevolent action, or $d_2 V_2 e(1-d_2^{n}) < k$

5. Given that they did not take benevolent action, bad guys prefer to defect, or $d_2 V_2(1-e)(1-d_2^{n}) < \dfrac{p(1+n)(a-1)+b(1-p)}{1+pn}$

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6. Bad guys prefer defection and no benevolence to cooperation and benevolence; they do not gain by acting like good guys, or

$$d_2 V_2 (1 - d_2^n) < k + \frac{p(1+n)(a-1) + b(1-p)}{1 + pn} .$$

$$(V_1 = \frac{p - \frac{b(1-p)}{n+1} - k}{1 - d} \text{ and } V_2 = \frac{pa}{1 - d^{n+1}} . \text{ See the appendix for details.})$$

Because so many parameters are involved, the general properties and comparative statics of this equilibrium are not straightforward, and I do not have any general results to report in this current draft. Return, however to the example used above, in which $a = 2$, $b = 1$, $p = .5$, $e = .1$, $n = 20$, and let $k = .1$. That is, 50% of the population are bad guys, there is a 10% chance that cooperation (without benevolence) will be misconstrued and therefore punished, and the cost of benevolent action is 10% of what one would gain by defecting on a cooperative partner. Recall from above, that in this case, social order is hard to maintain. For universal cooperation, either the the bad guys have to be pretty good (having discount factors of $> .86$). For partial cooperation, the good guys have to be close to infinitely patient. With benevolence in the model, the equilbrium characterized above exists whenever the good guys' discount factor is greater than .69.

3. Discussion

What does the social matching game imply for the emergence of abolitionism in revival communities? My argument, in short, is this. The problem of establishing social order was acute in the communities where revivalism took hold. Because many of these communities were new and had little in the way of existing institutions, problems of noise and unobserved heterogeneity of type were particularly important. Revivalism, with its emphasis on benevolent action, offered a way of mitigating these problems. Moreover, it did so in an egalitarian way that appealed to those who were disenfranchised by more traditional and more heirarchical forms of social order.

The problem is that model doesn't necessarily identify abolitionism as the single cause that could become associated with benevolence. A partial response might be that while this imprecision is unfortunate, it is also empirically accurate. Abolitionism was not, in fact, the only issue to excite radical fervor in the revival communities – temperance, women's rights, and missionary work were others (Wyatt-Brown 1980). The fact that abolitionism is the issue that seems the most consequential historically may be due primarily to the coalition politics that led to the successful formation of the Republican party. If the Know-Nothing party enjoyed the success that it seemed destined for in mid-1850's, the revival communities might be remembered for their passion for temperance.[14]

The partial response is unsatisfying, however. While abolitionism was not the only issue that benevolent action was directed toward, there are still innumerable forms of costly action that could have played the role of k in the model. Moreover, the specific forms that benevolence took, political and otherwise, were more or less consistent with

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[14] See Foner on the near-success of the Know Nothing party.

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the basic principles of revivalist theology, especially the importance of individual free will. After all the game theory, do we simply end up finding that principle does matter after all? Not necessarily. Recall that the basic principle of free will was important in mainstream Calvinism at this time as well, and members of the mainstream churches were not particularly likely to embrace abolitionism. Rather, public action motivated by ideas consistent with free will occurred in the revival communities at the same time that they pursued an egalitarian form of social order, itself consistent with the idea of individual free will.

Consider the following way that the model could be extended. Ex ante, the community faces a choice about how to expand the social matching game to mitigate the effects of noise and unobserved type. That is, it must choose what constitutes benevolence from a set of alternatives. Suppose, in addition that the different alternatives reduce e to different extents, e.g., one type of observable costly action reduces the chance of being punished for cooperating to $e/5$, while another only reduces it to $e/2$. If both types of action involve the same individual cost k, a standard Beckerian (1983) argument would imply that the community should choose the first (more efficient) alternative. What would it mean substantively for different forms of costly action to have differential impact on the degree of noise present in equilibrium? One possibility is that the content of the costly action can have the effect of reducing uncertainty about what constitutes "cooperative" behavior in different circumstances (Kreps 1990).

While this is only a sketch of an argument, the implication is that the content of ideas and their logical consistency with broad principles matter when the principles are an important (or vulnerable) component of an equilibrium that is benefical to (some) community members, relative to other equilibria that may be more focal. The free will of the individual mattered to the revival communities not simply because it was consistent with their religious doctrine, but because it was consistent with the egalitarian form of social order that they were trying to maintain as an equilibrium. Abolitionism provided effective content for benevolence not because it was consistent with egalitarian *doctrine*, but because it was consistent with egalitarian *practice*. Abolitionist activity clarified the implications of a social order founded on individual freedom and responsibility. Furthermore, it sharpned the contrast to more hierarchical forms of social order, such as those based on duty and roles prescribed by a stratified society, as epitomized by the plantation culture of the south (Genovese, 1992).

To sharpen this point, let me clarify the relationship between my analysis of the the relationship between revivalism, benevolence and abolitionism and Hammond's (1979). While I have drawn extensively on his analysis, my answer to the question of why abolitionism emerged foremost in the revival communities is somewhat different. Hammond writes, "[t]he importance of freedom in the new religious doctrine made lack of freedom in the earthly state unacceptable to the revivalists as it was not to other Christians." While I do not disagree with this statement, the argument I have made here qualifies it in two ways. First, the emphasis on freedom appealed to the common people precisely because it implied a social order in which they did better than the more hierarchical society supported by orthodox religion. Second, the public activity required by benevolence enabled the revival communities to implement a decentralized, and thereby relatively egalitarian solution to a basic problem in maintaining social order, that is of identifying and punishing defectors in the presence of uncertainty.

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Finally, while the principled behavior I have modelled here might be termed "ideological," the logic is different from the argument I have made elsewhere that ideology is the glue that holds a coalition together (Bawn 1999). The latter model of ideologies as coalitions seems to explain the success of the pragmatic anti-slavery as the ideological basis of the Republican party (Foner 1970). The fact that two different models seem to be needed to explain different parts of one event, even an event as complex as the slavery crisis, does seem unparsimonious. Yet there are many important differences between abolitionism and political anti-slavery. The primary difference is the one highlighted by this paper model: while abolitionism may have been individually rational and socially beneficial, it was not, however, instrumental in any political sense. Indeed, abolitionists were accused by less radical slavery opponents of valuing the purity of their own public positions over concrete policy achievements. According to this paper's model, not only was this accusation correct, the behavior that it described was rational. This unwillingness to compromise or go slow is a feature of many types of political behavior that seem to be associated with moral principle. My argument is that this kind of principled behavior arises when it can facilitate a desired form of social order.

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