

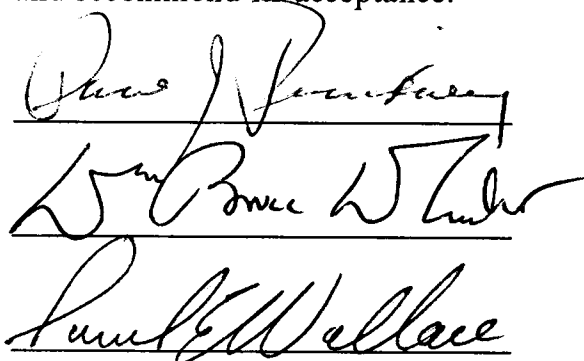
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I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by James L. Rogers II entitled "Domestic Shopkeepers in Mid-Victorian Lancashire: Middlemen and Women of the Working-Class Community." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in History.



John Bohstedt, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:



Accepted for the Council:



Associate Vice Chancellor and
Dean of the Graduate School

**DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPERS IN MID-VICTORIAN LANCASHIRE:
MIDDLEMEN AND WOMEN OF THE WORKING-CLASS COMMUNITY**

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

James L. Rogers II
August 1995

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to

Cynthia Jeansonne Rogers

without whom this work would have been impossible.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I am grateful for the efforts of many people during the course of this dissertation. John Bohstedt read every part of this work many times, made many recommendations, and gave invaluable advice. W. Bruce Wheeler, Paul J. Pinckney, and Samuel E. Wallace also read this entire work, and their impact on this work is substantial. Robert G. Hall gave innumerable suggestions and copious advice, and was especially helpful with Ashton material. Carolyn Malone, Robert Mayer, and Cynthia Rogers helped with many comments. Any remaining faults in this work belong to me alone.

The following people and organizations deserve my thanks: the staff of the University of Tennessee Hodges Library Interlibrary Loan Department; the staffs of the Bolton Public Library, Rochdale Public Library, Lancashire Record Office, Public Record Office, and the Ordnance Survey; the Galen Broeker Fund and the W. K. McClure Fund; the UTK Department of History; and Ann Lacava.

I owe a debt beyond repayment to my parents, James and Patricia Rogers. The rest of my family, especially Heuiette and Elaine Jeansonne, supplied abundant encouragement. The Unified Team deserves credit for my sanity. E. Wayne Cutler encouraged me often. Richard W. Hepler supplied sorely-missed humor. Innumerable other colleagues and friends deserve credit for their support.

ABSTRACT

This study has tried to rescue domestic shopkeepers from historical neglect by showing their pivotal roles in the politics, society, and economy of three mid-Victorian Lancashire towns, Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale. Rather than being a sub-class of the *petite bourgeoisie* whose property ownership alienated them from the working class, domestic shopkeepers were a margin of the working-class community and a bridge to those beyond. Domestic shopkeepers were not a stable class at all. Rather, the role of domestic shopkeepers represented a social status and economic function through which some working families passed at some time in their lives, a status and a function generated by the evolution of urban industrial society.

Domestic shopkeepers were small retailers in the general trade of basic foods and household goods which they sold out of their homes. They found their own economic niche among their working-class neighbors by granting credit and dividing provisions into very small quantities. Domestic shopkeepers served as leaders of their community, both politically and socially. Although the typical domestic shopkeeper was an adult male head of household, single and widowed women found the shop a respectable occupation, while the wives of working-class husbands were also shopkeepers in significant numbers.

The domestic shop tended to be a precarious, usually short-lived, enterprise. Often domestic shopkeeping served as a supplemental, part-time, or

casual means of income. Domestic shopkeeping offered members of the working class a chance to fulfill aspirations for respectability through property ownership and economic independence.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	INTRODUCTION	1
	Definitions and Sources	4
	The Setting	17
	Historians and Shopkeepers	31
II.	THE GEOGRAPHY OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING	44
	A Tale of Two Towns' Geography	52
	Domestic Shopkeeper Dispersion	66
	Domestic Shopkeeper Road Locations	86
	Conclusion	96
III.	THE ECONOMICS OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING	99
	Domestic Shopkeepers and the Retailing Revolution	100
	Domestic Shopkeeping and the Economics of Working-Class Communities	112
	Small Quantities and Credit	134
	Conclusion	155
IV.	THE SOCIAL MILIEU OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING . . .	160
	The Domestic Shopkeeping Household	162
	Domestic Shopkeepers and Their Community	176
	Irish Domestic Shopkeepers	197
	Conclusion	205
V.	WOMEN AND DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING	208
	Women Domestic Shopkeepers	213
	Domestic Shopkeeping and Gender Roles	224
	Gender and Domestic Shopkeeping	236
	Conclusion	249
VI.	THE POLITICS OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING	251
	Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers and Local Government	254
	Domestic Shopkeepers, Chartism, and Radical Popular Politics	258
	Domestic Shopkeepers and Parliamentary Politics	269
	A Rationale for Domestic Shopkeeper Politics	284
	Conclusion	298

CHAPTER	PAGE
VII. CONCLUSION	299
BIBLIOGRAPHY	310
VITA	332

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE		PAGE
1.1.	Decennial Population and Index of Proportional Increase, 1821–1871	27
1.2.	Numbers of Small Shopkeepers in Trades Directories, 1824/25–1871/72	29
1.3.	Numbers of Small Shopkeepers Per Thousand Population, 1831–1871	30
1.4	Numbers of Domestic Shopkeepers, and Numbers of Domestic Shopkeepers Per Thousand Population, 1841, 1851, and 1861	32
2.1.	Statistical Summary of Ashton Domestic Shopkeepers, By Wards and For the Total Census Sample, 1851	67
2.2.	Ward Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, 1851	72
2.3.	Statistical Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, By Wards and For the Entire Borough, 1851	74
2.4.	Statistical Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, By Wards and For the Entire Borough, 1861	75
2.5.	Ward Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, 1851 and 1861	77
2.6.	Statistical Summary of Rochdale Domestic Shopkeepers, By Civil Division and For the Entire Borough, 1851	81
2.7.	Statistical Summary of Rochdale Domestic Shopkeepers, By Civil Division and For the Entire Borough, 1861	84
2.8.	Domestic Shopkeepers Located on Through Roads in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale in 1851	88
2.9.	Domestic Shopkeepers Located on Through Roads in Bolton and Rochdale in 1861	88

TABLE	PAGE
2.10. Comparison of Ashton and Bolton Samples of Cross-Street and Back-Street Domestic Shopkeepers, 1851 and 1861	90
2.11. Estimated Percentage Distribution of Domestic Shopkeepers By Road Location, Ashton and Bolton, 1851, and Bolton, 1861	92
2.12. Road Locations of Ashton Domestic Shopkeepers Compared to Other Food Dealers in 1851	93
2.13. Through-Road Location of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers Compared to Other Food Dealers in the Early 1850s	95
3.1. Bolton Small Shopkeepers with Additional Occupations, 1861-1871	118
3.2. Domestic Shopkeeper Households With Other Sources of Income, 1851	120
3.3. Small Shopkeeper Property Values, Great and Little Bolton, 1831 and 1837	122
3.4. Examples of Working-Class Annual Rents in Nearby Industrial Towns, 1830s and 1840s	123
3.5. Probate Records of Bolton and Rochdale Small Shopkeepers, 1830-1870	158
4.1. Domestic Shopkeeper Households Headed By a Married Couple, Widow, or Single Person, 1851 and 1861	163
4.2. Domestic Shopkeepers' Households with Children, 1851 and 1861	165
4.3. Domestic Servants in Domestic Shopkeeping Households, 1851 and 1861	169
4.4. Ages of Domestic Shopkeeping Heads of Household, 1851	170

TABLE	PAGE
4.5. Comparison of Domestic Shopkeepers' Age to the Age of the Adult Population, Bolton, 1851	173
4.6. Domestic Shopkeeper Nativity, 1851 and 1861	174
4.7. Occupations of Grooms and Fathers of Brides or Grooms, When One or Both Fathers are Small Shopkeepers, Bolton and Rochdale, Between 1837 and 1850	180
4.8. Occupations of Grooms and Fathers of Brides or Grooms, When One or Both Fathers are Domestic Shopkeepers, Bolton and Rochdale, Between 1855 and 1870	181
4.9. Occupations of Non-Conformist Brides, Grooms, and Fathers of the Non-Domestic Shopkeeping Spouse, Bolton, 1860-1870	183
4.10. Occupations of Fathers When Grooms Were Domestic or Small Shopkeepers, Between 1837 and 1870	185
4.11. Non-familial Executors of Small and Domestic Shopkeepers' Wills, Bolton, Oldham, and Rochdale, 1830-1870	196
4.12. Irish Domestic Shopkeepers, 1841, 1851, and 1861	202
5.1. Women Domestic Shopkeepers' Marital Status, 1851 and 1861	215
5.2. Women Domestic Shopkeepers Taking In Lodgers, 1851 and 1861	219
5.3. Women Domestic Shopkeeper Households with Children, 1851 and 1861	220
5.4. Women Domestic Shopkeeper Households with Domestic Servants, 1851 and 1861	223
5.5. Domestic Shopkeeping Households and Married Women's Occupational Listings, 1851 and 1861	227

TABLE	PAGE
5.6. Married Women Domestic Shopkeepers and Children, 1851 and 1861	232
6.1. Bolton Small Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, 1832-1865	271
6.2. Rochdale Small Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, 1832-1852	273
6.3. Ashton Small Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, 1841	273
6.4. Small and Domestic Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, Ashton, 1841	274
6.5. Small and Domestic Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, Bolton, 1852	276
6.6. Small and Domestic Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, Rochdale, 1852	276
6.7. Small Shopkeepers Voting in 1841, By Political Category	278
6.8. Bolton Small Shopkeepers Voting, By Political Category, 1832-1865	281
6.9. Rochdale Small Shopkeepers Voting, By Political Category, 1832-1857	283

LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE		PAGE
1.1	Facsimile of Census Manuscript From the Ashton Census of 1851	15
1.2	Facsimile of Census Manuscript From the Ashton Census of 1851	15
2.1.	Facsimile Map of a Portion of Bolton	56
2.2.	Facsimile Map of the Charlestown Area of Ashton	61
2.3.	Facsimile Map of Central Ashton	63
2.4.	Facsimile Map of Most of the Borough of Bolton	69
2.5.	Facsimile Map of Most of the Borough of Rochdale	79

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

<i>BC</i>	<i>Bolton Chronicle</i>
<i>BFP</i>	<i>Bolton Free Press</i>
BLS	Bolton Local Studies Library
HO	Home Office Records
LRO	Lancashire Record Office, Preston
<i>NS</i>	<i>Northern Star and Leeds General Advertiser</i>
OS	Ordnance Survey Office
<i>PP</i>	<i>Parliamentary Papers</i>
PRO	Public Records Office, Kew
RG	Registrar General's Papers
RLS	Rochdale Local Studies Library
TLS	Tameside Local Studies Library, Stalybridge

LIST OF ENGLISH MONEY

Abbreviations

d	pence or penny
s	shilling
£	pound

Conversions

12 pence = 1 shilling

20 shillings = 1 pound

Money Terminology

crown	worth 10 shillings
guinea	worth 21 shillings
half-crown	worth 5 shillings
ha'pence	one-half pence
ha'porth	one-half pence worth
penn'orth	one pence worth
tuppence	two pence

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

"What is true of a shopkeeper is true of a shopkeeping nation."

Josiah Tucker, Dean of Gloucester, *Tract Against Going to War for the Sake of Trade* [1763]

Since Tucker's time many observers have echoed the view of British society as a "shopkeeping nation," but until recently few historians have followed up on Tucker's insight. Nearly two decades ago, Geoffrey Crossick sought to promote historical research on the nineteenth-century lower middle class, which had been unfairly neglected due to a lack of notable heroic activity. Crossick argued that the lower middle class served as a social and cultural bridge between the working class and the middle class of industrial society. The lower middle class represented a large number of people who performed an important, if poorly understood, function in industrial society.¹ My study will examine "domestic shopkeepers" in their pivotal role between classes in the industrial society of Victorian Lancashire. I have chosen to study "domestic shopkeepers" in three medium-sized cotton towns, Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale, in the early- to mid-Victorian era (1830–1870). These towns certainly exemplified the newly-formed

¹Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 11-12; Geoffrey Crossick, "The Petite Bourgeoisie in Nineteenth-Century Britain: The Urban and Liberal Case," in Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London: Methuen, 1983), pp. 63-65.

urban industrial society that emerged from the industrial revolution. But before I explore these towns, I want to clarify the often-muddled identity of "domestic shopkeepers." My study will focus specifically on "*domestic shopkeepers*": small, fixed-site retailers of small quantities of food and general household goods who operated out of their home's front room or ground floor, and who thus earned the title "domestic" by combining shop and home in one place.

As industrial society matured, shopkeeping diversified into a variety of distinct trades. Different kinds of shopkeepers had distinct functions, and I will attempt to demonstrate that each distinct kind of shopkeeper possessed a distinct role and identity in his community. Previous historical studies have focused much more on the activities of larger, more specialized "principal shopkeepers," when historians made any distinction among shopkeepers at all. Assumptions that "principal shopkeepers" represented the variety of shopkeepers seems misplaced. The real diversity of shopkeepers' identities and functions suggests that they need to be studied as distinct groups. Therefore, I have chosen to study "domestic shopkeepers" as a pivotal group in the working-class communities of Victorian industrial towns.

Chris Hosgood took up Crossick's challenge and studied one large segment of the lower middle class, the shopkeepers of late Victorian and Edwardian Leicester. Hosgood divided Leicester retailers into two distinct groups: "small shopkeepers," who were thoroughly integrated into the working-class community, and "principal shopkeepers," who exhibited a distinctive identity and

formed active associational groups. In contrast to "principal shopkeepers," Hosgood concluded that the extensive social and economic ties of "small shopkeepers" to the working classes made them incapable of any significant political action in their own interests.² My study will test Crossick's assumptions about the lower middle class, as well as Hosgood's theses about "small shopkeepers."

Did these Lancashire "domestic shopkeepers" act as bridges between the working class and the middle class in these towns? Did their apparent lack of class identity prevent their association or activity with either the working class or middle class? Did these "domestic shopkeepers" exhibit the same close ties with the working-class community as in Leicester, and did these ties prevent any recognizable political activity? Rather than being a full revision of previous historiography about shopkeepers, my study represents an attempt to provide one foundation for a more precise and nuanced understanding of the variety of shopkeepers, who have been characterized by both contemporaries and historians as a very amorphous group.

²Christopher Hosgood, "Shopkeepers and Society: Domestic and Principal Shopkeepers in Leicester, 1860-1914," (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1987), p. 4. Hosgood uses the term domestic shopkeepers to refer to the small general shopkeepers found in trades directories, rather than the more narrow definition that I use in my study. Therefore, I will use my definitions to characterize his and other historians' studies of shopkeepers.

I. Definitions and Sources

The orthodox Marxist view of class in industrial society separated the propertied middle class from the propertyless working class. Ownership of the means of production, income-producing property, was the basis of social and economic power for the middle class. Members of the working class owned only their labor, which they sold to middle-class capitalists for wages. The middle class dominated industrial society and the working class could only struggle towards the socialist revolution.

But this picture of a dichotomous class society has obscured a large group of people who were both essential to the functioning of working-class communities and who possessed a social identity to which the working class might aspire — a social identity which provided the dream of respectability and the relative economic security of small property as an alternative to labor. "Domestic shopkeepers" owned and profited from their small property, the commodities of the shop, and thus were in some sense capitalists in the Marxist terminology, members of a *petite bourgeoisie*. I will argue that, far from making "domestic shopkeepers" independent, their capital made them even more dependent upon both their own households' labor and their working-class neighbors. By more clearly identifying "domestic shopkeepers," I hope to show some of the limits of this orthodox class view of industrial society.

The industrial lower middle class has been divided between independent petty capitalists and dependent petty wage-earners.³ Master artisans and shopkeepers were independent retailers, while white-collar workers such as clerks and technicians were dependent, if well-paid, wage-earners. Further divisions existed among the ranks of what contemporaries referred to as "the shopocracy." Master artisans engaged in retailing along with the production of goods, such as shoes or metal goods.⁴ On the other hand, shopkeepers engaged in retailing goods produced by others. As I will explain below, shopkeepers further divided into two basic groups, "principal" and "domestic." Lack of distinctions among the varieties of the lower middle class has led to faulty generalizations about their economic interests, social compositions, and political expressions.

Most historians refer to shopkeepers in general terms. But some historians who have looked more closely have found different kinds of shopkeepers with different functions beginning with the swiftly-maturing industrial society of the eighteenth century. The leading analyst of shopkeeping, Chris Hosgood, uses contemporary trades directories to distinguish between "principal" and "small" shopkeepers. Trades directories were, however, not precise censuses of the inhabitants of the towns. They provided much useful information regarding

³Arno J. Mayer, "The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem," *Journal of Modern History* 47 (September 1975): 426-431.

⁴For the master artisans, see Crossick, "The Petite Bourgeoisie in Nineteenth-Century Britain," pp. 65-71, and Clive Behagg, "Masters and Manufacturers: Social Values and the Smaller Unit of Production in Birmingham, 1800-1850," in Crossick and Haupt (eds.), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, pp. 138-154.

public facilities, such as post office mailing times; transportation schedules, such as coaches and trains; and governmental functions, such as regular county and borough court meeting places and times. We do not know how people came to be included or excluded in trades directories, or even whether they paid to be included. Contrary to the expectation that trades directories might have included only prosperous retailers, trades directories included substantial numbers of "domestic shopkeepers." Trades directories also possess the advantage that many of them survive, often for non-census years, and that they provide information on hundreds of business people in each town.

For the purposes of my study, "shopkeepers" represent a heterogeneous group of retailers, with a very general connotation. I have typically used this term to refer generally to urban retailers, making no distinction among the various categories in the shopkeeper hierarchy. Often I could not provide a more specific identity when contemporary observers or accounts use the term "shopkeeper." Part of the difficulty of my study has been enhanced by historians' similarly imprecise use of the term "shopkeeper." Much of my historiographical commentary on other historians' works is therefore confined to their usage of "shopkeepers." Much of this imprecision in terminology has resulted from Karl Marx's influential view of industrial class society, and this imprecision has continued under Marx's intellectual successors.

I will use "principal shopkeepers" to represent specialized larger shopkeepers, a terminology based on Hosgood's duality among the Leicester

shopkeepers, and which is reflected by usage in contemporary trades directories. Contemporaries often referred to these "principal shopkeepers" as "tradesmen," and I will use these terms interchangeably. "Principal shopkeepers" possessed a function in the industrial economy distinct from their "domestic" counterparts, and the social and political identities of "principal shopkeepers" were very different. "Tradesmen" established their shops away from their homes, in keeping with the Victorian ideal of respectability that home and work remain separate spheres.⁵ They traded in specialized goods, operating exclusive clothing stores or tea and coffee emporiums, for instance. "Principal shopkeepers" tended to have more capital invested in their shops and goods. "Tradesmen" advertised extensively in newspapers, emphasizing the quality and value of their goods. Their shops stocked a wide variety and a large quantity of goods. "Principal shopkeepers" employed waged shop assistants. They also catered to a middle-class clientele. "Tradesmen" located in the most well-traveled streets of the town and clustered in genteel shopping districts. Their shops were respectable places of business.

Besides "principal shopkeepers," Hosgood's other category is what I shall refer to as small general shopkeepers, or simply "small shopkeepers." For methodological reasons, I have had to distinguish my central category of "domestic shopkeepers," identified through census records, from "small shopkeepers" listed in contemporary trades directories. These "small shopkeepers" represent an amorphous group of retailers, including some

⁵F. M. L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society: A Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1988), p. 197.

"domestic shopkeepers" together with other retailers engaged in the general trade of food and household goods. Like "domestic shopkeepers," these other retailers traded in general groceries and perishable commodities, but differed in having shops or market stalls separate from their homes. This difference suggests that they probably had social and economic characteristics different from domestic shopkeepers, which I will discuss later. Only census manuscripts allow me to identify "domestic shopkeepers" with a high degree of certainty. Statements about the broader, somewhat mixed category of "small shopkeepers" can only be applied in a more general sense to "domestic shopkeepers." Trades directories simply do not provide the information necessary to clearly distinguish "domestic" from other types of "small" shopkeepers. Many previous studies of shopkeepers have rested on information from contemporary trades directories, hence their analyses of the social, economic, and political characteristics of "small shopkeepers" have not always picked out the specific characteristics and functions of the "domestic shopkeepers" I have identified through census records. Even Hosgood relied on trades directories to distinguish between "small" and "principal" shopkeepers. Only census records allow me to detect whether members of the former were "domestic" in the sense of operating out of their homes, rather than selling out of separate shops or market stalls.

I identify those persons listed with shopkeeper occupations in trades directories as "small shopkeepers," unless they or another member of their household also appear in my census data, when they will be identified as

"domestic shopkeepers." Trades directories identified "small shopkeepers" both under categories, such as "Shopkeepers & Dealers in Groceries & Sundries," and alphabetically, by name, such as "Atkinson, Sarah, shopkeeper, 48 Chorley St. Lit. Bolton."⁶ One of the goals of my study has been to determine more precisely the divisions among shopkeepers, and census records allowed me to identify more clearly "domestic shopkeepers." But the limitations of census records mean that I rely to some extent on trades directories, especially for much of the evidence of shopkeeper political activity.⁷ While I treat "domestic shopkeepers," identified from census records, as distinct from "small shopkeepers," identified from trades directories, many people appeared in both groups. Trades directories were public commercial ventures, and therefore they were not necessarily dedicated to accurate counts or careful categorization. I compared the results of my 1851 census data for Bolton and *Slater's* 1851 trades directory for Bolton. Out of the 231 "small shopkeepers" listed in the directory, only 117 appeared in my census data total of 225 "domestic shopkeepers," or 52%. "Domestic shopkeepers" from my census data represented just over 50%, 117 out of 231, of the "small shopkeepers" listed in *Slater's* directory.⁸ This overlap between "domestic" and "small" shopkeepers revealed that the two groups were distinctive enough to necessitate a methodological distinction between these two groups for my study.

⁶Examples come from *Slater's General and Classified Directory. . . for 1851*, and *Slater's General and Classified Directory. . . for 1843*. See Bibliography for complete trades directories' citations.

⁷Censuses were only taken every decade (1831, 1841, 1851, 1861, and so forth).

⁸HO 107/2208-2211; *Slater's General and Classified Directory. . . for 1843*.

The chief, but not exclusive, focus of my study is "domestic shopkeepers." They were small general retailers, operating out of the front rooms of their homes, dependent upon household labor to keep the shop open long hours, and intimate with the working-class community that they catered to and lived in. By combining work and family, "domestic shops" challenged the Victorian ideal of respectability, which viewed work and home necessarily distinct and separate. These shops were household enterprises; all members of the family and other residents of the home, such as domestic servants, contributed to the labor of the shop. A "domestic shopkeeper's" wife was as likely to be at the counter as her husband. Indeed, these shops provided an important income source for single and widowed women, as well as for wives of working-class husbands. Because their chief customers were their working-class neighbors, "domestic shopkeepers" were inseparable from their working-class neighborhoods, and located wherever most convenient to their customers — in the well-known corner shops. Poorly capitalized "domestic shops" operated on very small margins, with little or no advertising beyond the good word of their customers. Their customers depended on "domestic shops" for convenience in both business hours and location, for consumer credit, and for providing small quantities of cheap food and essential household goods. These shops carried small inventories and depended on fast turnover of goods, much of which were perishable foodstuffs. Often "domestic shops" served as working-class community centers, as local exchanges for gossip, news, and political talk.

Since census records most clearly identify my central category of domestic shopkeepers, I will now discuss these records and explain how domestic shopkeepers appear in them. The availability of census manuscripts provides a unique historical source for investigating Victorian English society. Census manuscripts were the original forms filled out by the volunteer census-takers as they went door-to-door during the day of the census in 1841, 1851, and 1861. Following a standard set of instructions, they recorded the names, ages, relationships, occupations, and birthplaces for all members of every household. I base much of my study on the set of data I have gathered from a search of the complete census manuscripts for Bolton and Rochdale in 1851 and 1861. I have also searched the surviving census manuscripts for Ashton in 1851, though they account for only about one-third of the town. It is impossible to estimate the bias of the incomplete 1851 Ashton census. I have also searched the complete 1841 Ashton census, using the same criteria for identifying domestic shopkeepers that I used with the 1851 and 1861 censuses. While the information gathered from 1841 census manuscripts is less complete than later censuses, the 1841 census provides useful information for many comparative purposes.

Only a complete search of census manuscripts for each town fully reveals the presence of domestic shopkeepers. For example, the presence of married women as domestic shopkeepers might have been missed by a search that concentrated only on heads of households, for a number of wives were listed as domestic shopkeepers when their husbands were listed with a different

occupation. And census-takers occasionally recorded "shopkeeper" as an additional or secondary occupation to some other primary occupation, which might have been missed by a more cursory search through the census records. This additional or secondary occupation indicated the presence of a wife and family keeping a domestic shop while the husband continued working in some other occupation. The results of my search through the census manuscripts provides the basis for understanding domestic shopkeeper households. Even at that, census records only reveal the presence of domestic shopkeepers for that day of that year. An unknowable number of domestic shopkeepers would appear and vanish between census-takings, leaving no trace in the census records of their passing. Perhaps the census years function as a kind of rough unscientific sample of their presence. That is the most compelling reason for supplementing census records with trades directories, published much more frequently, though as I explain above the socio-economic identity of these small shopkeepers is somewhat imprecise.

Beginning in 1851, British census-taking became much more thorough, and a detailed set of guidelines directed the gathering of census records. Every household had a designated "Head," and the census recorded the relationship of every other member of the household to its head, including "Aunt," "Nephew," "Visitor," or "Lodger." Census-takers recorded occupations for each member of the household, even obscure ones such as "At Home" or "Shopkeeper's Wife." Children in their minority were often assigned the occupation of "Scholar"

beginning at age five, regardless of actual attendance at a school. The census listed each person's birth, by town and county in England, Scotland, or Wales; other birth locations, such as Ireland or a foreign country, received only a general notation. Census-takers also recorded the age of each person. Regarding occupations, the General Register Office directed census-takers to ask,

Persons engaged in Commerce, as Merchants, Brokers, Agents, Clerks, Commercial Travellers, to state the particular kind of business in which they are engaged, or *the staple in which they deal*.⁹

This instruction explains the number of domestic shopkeepers recorded as "grocers" or "provision dealers," since these shopkeepers retailed grocery items such as sugar and tea, and also perishable provisions, such as bacon and milk. By the 1861 census, the occupational designation "shopkeeper" had disappeared, since the General Register Office considered it an insufficiently specific occupation. Therefore occupational listings of "grocer" or "provision dealer" denote domestic shopkeepers.¹⁰

In my search of census records, I defined domestic shopkeeper households as being those of small general food dealers, whether listed as "shopkeepers," "grocers," or "provision dealers" in the census records. Occasionally members of the family besides the adult head of the household were listed with shopkeeper designations, and I also recorded these households as domestic shops. Wives represented the vast majority of these domestic shopkeepers. I only counted

⁹PP 1851 [1339] XLIII *Forms and Instructions. . . For the Use in Taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain*, p. 6. Italics supplied.

¹⁰Occasionally "provisioner" appeared as an alternative to "provision dealer."

domestic shopkeeper households, rather than counting each individual within a household as a different domestic shopkeeper. Figures 1.1 and 1.2 show two pages from the 1851 Ashton census manuscripts which contain domestic shopkeeper households.

I distinguish domestic shopkeepers from other retailers with more specific occupational listings in the census records. Such occupations suggest larger and more specialized trades, often with a place of business outside of the home. With greater capital, often a High Street address, and a wealthier clientele, principal shopkeepers possessed a different social identity and had different relationships within industrial society than domestic shopkeepers. So I exclude any household containing a person with an occupational listing that suggests any exclusive branch of food retailing, such as butchery, bread-baking, or greengrocery. I also exclude any itinerant traders, or anyone who kept a shop or market stall outside of the home. Itinerants and market traders possessed a distinct retailing function from domestic shopkeepers in industrial society, serving as distributors of marketplace goods. I will discuss these distinctions further in Chapter Three. My census data exclude any shopkeeping household which included anyone listed as a "shop assistant" beyond minor children, or any shopkeeper whose occupational title included the regular census phrasing ". . . employing x men [boys, assistants, etc.]," because listings suggest principal shopkeepers. My designation of domestic shopkeepers thus represents a somewhat conservative estimate of the number of

*Figure 1.1: Facsimile of Census Manuscript from the Ashton Census of 1851. Reproduced from HO 107/2233, Folio 174 [microfilm]. This figure details Samuel Ashton, a "grocer" at 70 Cavendish Street; his wife Betty; daughter Sarah, a "cotton spinner"; and son John, a "cotton weaver." Note that Betty Ashton's occupation was recorded as "House Wife," and the Ashton children were engaged in the cotton industry at an early age while still living at home. I have had to truncate the reproduction, cutting off the birthplaces of the Ashton family. The Ashton family represented many domestic shopkeepers, dependent on the work of the entire household, whether in the shop or not. *Slater's General and Commerical Directory. . . for 1851* listed Samuel Ashton among the small shopkeepers.*

*Figure 1.2: Facsimile of Census Manuscript from the Ashton Census of 1851. Reproduced from HO 107/2233, Folio 328 [microfilm]. This figure details Hannah Massey, a "shopkeeper" at 60 Margaret Street; her husband James, a "cotton dresser"; their sons Alfred, an "Errand Boy," and William, a "Scholar." Cotton dressers held well-paid positions in weaving sheds. I have had to truncate the reproduction, cutting off part of the house address as well as the birthplaces of the Massey family. The Massey family illustrates importance of women to domestic shopkeeping. *Slater's General and Classified Directory. . . for 1851* listed James Massey among the small shopkeepers.*

FIGURE 1.1

Parish or Township of		Incorporated District of		City or Borough of		Rank, Profession, or Occupation
Name of Street, Place or Road, and Name or No. of House		Name and Surname of each Person who abode in the house, on the Night of the 30th March, 1851		Relation to Head of Family		
				Condition		Age of Males Females
28 1/2 Riverside St.	Lewis & Parker	Head	38	Mar	38	Green
	Betty do	Wife	37	Mar	37	House Wife
	Lewis do	Son	24	Mar	24	Station Master
	John do	Son	14	Mar	14	Carton Maker

FIGURE 1.2

Margaret	James Alcock	Head	40	Mar	40	Teacher
	Hannah do	Wife	38	Mar	38	Shop Keeper
	Arthur do	Son	12	Mar	12	Boys and Boy
	William do	Son	8	Mar	8	Scholar

domestic shopkeepers in these towns, since some domestic shopkeepers might have been overlooked or disregarded due to census occupational designations.

In addition to my census data, trades directories, and printed poll books, explained below, I used available Ordnance Survey maps to provide information on domestic and small shop locations. I surveyed marriage records for Bolton, Rochdale, and Ashton to help determine social relationships of domestic shopkeepers. I surveyed probate records, including wills, and a few surviving rate books from Bolton and Rochdale to add to the economic story of domestic shopkeeping. I sought information about often generic shopkeepers' lives and politics through extensive use of Bolton's and other contemporary newspapers, which provided news, crime reports, and editorial letters and commentary. A number of contemporary accounts added important first-hand accounts on domestic shopkeepers and their world. Other useful contemporary records included some reports in the Parliamentary Papers and Home Office records, which added to the domestic shopkeepers' story.

II. The Setting

My study focuses on the four decades from 1830 to 1870, when domestic shops attained a reasonably secure place in the retailing spectrum of the industrial town. Rather than conducting a predominantly class investigation based on economic function, I focus on the place of domestic shopkeepers within the

broader social milieu of industrial towns. The technical maturity of the Lancashire cotton industry reached its peak in the Victorian period.¹¹ This era also witnessed the emergence of an industrial class society.¹² I also chose this period because of the unique conjunction of historical events shaping industrial Lancashire. Due to short-term fluctuations in the cotton trade, Lancashire cotton towns passed through periods of economic prosperity and depression over these forty years. This changing economic climate provided a backdrop for many important political movements, including the rise of a major working-class political movement, Chartism. Prominent local political battles, including struggles over the formation of incorporated self-governing boroughs, reflected the growing economic importance of these towns. With the expansion of the electorate in 1832, Great Britain witnessed the rise of populist movements in national and Parliamentary politics. The expanding industrial economy attracted Irish immigration, which in turn created ethnic tensions in the cotton towns. The Anti-Corn Law movement represented a national middle-class reform program, directed from Manchester and centered in the cotton district, designed to increase the pace of English industrialization. All three of these Lancashire cotton towns

¹¹François Crouzet, *The Victorian Economy*, trans. A.S. Forster (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), pp. 193-213; Stanley D. Chapman, *The Cotton Industry in the Industrial Revolution* (London: Macmillan, 1972), pp. 17-27; John H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol. 1, *The Early Railway Age, 1820-1850*, reprint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, orig. 1926, repr. 1959), pp. 143-148; 441-444.

¹²Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, reprint (New York: Vintage Books, orig. 1963, repr. 1966), p. 194; Robert J. Morris, *Class and Class Consciousness in the Industrial Revolution, 1780-1850* (London: Macmillan, 1979), pp. 9-11; Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society, 1780-1880* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1969), pp. 176-183, 340-347.

received Parliamentary representation from the 1832 Reform Bill, and electoral activity in these towns reflected national debates. Surviving poll books from these towns thus provide one important means of measuring shopkeeper participation in the political world of Victorian England.

During the late eighteenth century, domestic shopkeepers emerged as a result of two simultaneous and interconnected processes in southeast Lancashire. A revolution in commercial activity resulted in the rise of a sophisticated retailing economy; while the process of industrialization, centered on the cotton textile industry, created an urban proletariat dependent upon retailers for the most basic goods. A consumer revolution began to encompass England in the later seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The English people were not only increasingly drawn into a market economy, but the ideology of consumerism became more and more dominant in the minds of the English. Specialization of production became more common, as agricultural and industrial production became increasingly capitalistic and market-oriented. The English people became more accustomed to producing goods for a consumer market, and they simultaneously became more accustomed to procuring their own goods from that market. Once limited to the elite, consumerism became widely established in English society by the beginning of the nineteenth century. This consumer orientation accompanied an economic revolution that steadily transformed English

society into one dominated by specialization of production and a dependence on retail distribution for nearly all consumption.¹³

A growing diversity and sophistication in retailing represented one important aspect of this industrial consumer society. Largely unchanged from medieval times until the mid-seventeenth century, retailing gradually became more specialized and diversified as the numbers of market-oriented consumers increased. The medieval triad of fairs and markets, itinerant sellers, and craftsmen-retailers was no longer adequate to fill the rapidly expanding demands of eighteenth-century consumer society.¹⁴ Population growth contributed to the demand for fixed-site retailing, but a major impetus to the expansion in shop retailing came from a growth in the availability of retail credit. Wholesalers and distributors extended credit to retailers, and retailers subsequently granted credit to their customers. As retailing diversified and expanded, even the smallest of shopkeepers extended retail credit. This petty retail capitalism created a precarious existence for all shopkeepers, but domestic shopkeepers were especially vulnerable, given their limited capital and narrow margins.¹⁵ As we

¹³Neil McKendrick, "The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth-Century England," in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer, and John H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Europa Publications, 1982), pp. 9-33.

¹⁴Hoh-Cheung and Lorna M. Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (Kingston, Ont.: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1989), pp. 148-149; Ronald M. Berger, "The Development of Retail Trade in Provincial England, ca. 1550-1700," *Journal of Economic History* 40, 1 (March 1980): 123-128.

¹⁵Fernand Braudel, *Civilization and Capitalism, 15th-18th Century*, trans. by Sian Reynolds, vol. 2, *The Wheels of Commerce* (New York: Harper and Row, 1982), pp. 71-75.

shall see, when economic downturns struck the Lancashire cotton industry, domestic shopkeepers suffered immediately.

Domestic shopkeepers filled a crucial role in the economy of the industrial towns. Urban locations witnessed the emergence of a consumer economy earlier and more thoroughly than rural ones.¹⁶ Working families shifted from the self-sufficiency of the small farm or craft household to a waged labor household. Consequently, workers faced the necessity of purchasing even the most basic goods, such as food, clothing, and fuel. This process extended over two centuries, beginning slowly but gaining momentum as industrialization drew more and more workers into the towns. As waged laborers concentrated in cities in the later eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, demands for continued consumer service through retailing escalated rapidly.¹⁷ By the eighteenth century, domestic shopkeepers in towns had probably gained their niche in retailing by dividing tea and sugar into small quantities to sell for the few pennies allowed in working-class budgets.¹⁸ Chapter Three details further this aspect of domestic shopkeeping. As growing numbers of urban laborers continued to expand the urban retailing spectrum in the early nineteenth century, the unique characteristics of domestic

¹⁶The most recent case study of the expansion of food provision is Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester, 1770-1870*, ed. by W. A. Armstrong and Pauline Scola (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992).

¹⁷Mui and Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping*, pp. 150-159; Ian Mitchell, "The Development of Urban Retailing 1700-1815," in Peter Clark (ed.), *The Transformation of English Provincial Towns, 1600-1800* (London: Hutchinson, 1984), pp. 260-264, 270-278; David Alexander, *Retailing in England During the Industrial Revolution* (London: Athlone Press, 1970), pp. 3-12.

¹⁸Mui and Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping*, pp. 201-220.

shopkeepers guaranteed them a continued presence among the retailing spectrum in the growing industrial towns: besides their provision of small quantities, they included extension of credit to working-class consumers and intimate knowledge of the working-class neighborhoods. No part of England better exemplified this symbiosis between domestic shopkeepers and urban proletarians than the cotton towns of southeast Lancashire.

Centered on the commercial and financial hub of Manchester, three such towns, Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale, provide exemplary case studies of the role of domestic shopkeepers in the first industrial society. Each town contained concentrated working-class communities with their domestic shopkeepers. The industrial success of these towns in terms of size and wealth resulted in their gaining Parliamentary representation as boroughs in the Reform Act of 1832. Similarly, each gained municipal corporations, that is, autonomous elected town governments, at some point following passage of the Municipal Corporations Act in 1835. Before incorporation, these towns had no ancient chartered status, and local government was a haphazard mix of feudal remnants and stop-gap Parliamentary permissive acts.¹⁹ Parliamentary representation and incorporated municipal governments guaranteed an urban political arena of conflict in which domestic shopkeepers were to play a role. I shall inquire whether domestic shopkeepers acted as tools of an organized proletariat, and how far they acted as

¹⁹For some indication of the difficulties of local government, even after municipal incorporation, see John Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 85-104.

communication channels for the interests of working-class communities to the dominant middle class of these industrial towns.

An original locus of the "Manchester trade" in woollen textile production, Bolton²⁰ had been a center of the manufacture of fine and coarse woollens by handloom weavers since at least the sixteenth century. Bolton's earlier woollen weaving expertise translated into the handloom weaving of cotton cloths, especially fine cloths such as muslins, quilts, and counterpanes. Bolton's coal mines, in production since that time, also served to attract the cotton industry.²¹ The easy availability of coal to power steam engines was a major factor in the urbanization and technological advance of the cotton industry in Lancashire. Two Bolton natives, Richard Arkwright, who improved the spinning jenny and the water frame, and Samuel Crompton, inventor of the spinning mule, added to Bolton's reputation as a center of fine cotton spinning.²² John Aiken noted Bolton's role in the cotton industry at the end of the eighteenth century:

This original seat of the cotton trade is still the centre of the manufacture of ornamental or fancy goods. The muslin trade is that which seems to answer best at present. . . spinning factories have been erected throughout all the surrounding country. . . Much water is also occupied by the bleachers, who have extensive crofts

²⁰Also called Bolton-le-Moors, to distinguish the town from Bolton-le-Sands in the West Riding of Yorkshire.

²¹Edward Baines, *Baines's Lancashire*, vol. 1, reprint (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, orig. 1824, repr.1968), pp. 529-531, 533-534.

²²John Aiken, *A Description of the Country from Thirty to Forty Miles Round Manchester*, reprint (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, orig. 1795, repr. 1968), p. 262; H. B. Rodgers, "The Lancashire Cotton Industry in 1840," in Alan R. H. Baker, John D. Hamshere, and John Langton (eds.), *Geographical Interpretations of Historical Sources* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1970), p. 350.

here. . . .²³

The completion in 1795 of the Manchester, Bolton, and Bury canal reinforced Bolton's dominant position as Manchester's primary mule-spinning outlet. The invention of the power loom threatened many of Bolton's large numbers of skilled handloom weavers in the early nineteenth century, and Bolton became a center of handloom-weaver activism, trying to forestall the destruction of their living by the power loom. As the cotton industry grew, Bolton came to host a wide range of cotton support industries, including bleaching, dyeing, chemicals, iron works, and machine-making.²⁴ In 1836 Bolton, with a total population of 49,500, was home to 8,621 cotton mill workers (mostly in spinning), 3,500 bleachers, 2,000 print millworkers, 4,300 handloom weavers, 1,358 quilt and counterpane weavers, and nearly 2,000 workers in iron foundries and works that created cotton manufacturing machinery.²⁵ Those workers associated with the growing cotton industry accounted for nearly 44% of the entire population of the town.

Rochdale had long been a center of woollen textile manufacture, and its products had been exported to Europe for centuries. "Rochdale flannel" was a byword for this woollen (later wool and cotton blend) cloth in the Manchester textile trade. Rochdale's ample supply of coal provided fuel for a growing cotton

²³Aiken, *A Description of the Country. . . Round Manchester*, p. 263.

²⁴Aiken, *A Description of the Country. . . Round Manchester*, p. 260; *Whellan and Co.'s Directory: 1853 Bolton*, reprint (Manchester: Neil Richardson, 1982), p. 56-58.

²⁵Edwin Butterworth, *A Statistical Sketch of the County Palatine of Lancaster*, reprint (London: Longman, orig. 1841, repr., 1968), p. 12.

textile industry by the later eighteenth century. The Rochdale Canal, connecting the town to Manchester in 1795, provided an additional incentive for the cotton industry. Coarse spinning and handloom weaving dominated Rochdale's contribution to the cotton trade, including a substantial hat-making sector.²⁶ Rochdale's prosperity also derived from the quality of stone and slate quarried from the area, in addition to its textile and coal interests.²⁷ In 1838, the parish of Rochdale contained 117 cotton and 56 woollen mills, employing over 22,000 workers, out of a population of perhaps 65,000.²⁸

Ashton-under-Lyne developed into a center of the textile industry later than either Bolton or Rochdale with their older connections to woollen textiles. Largely a creation of the cotton industry connected to Manchester, Ashton emerged in the eighteenth century as a spinning center for Manchester's weavers, and at the end of the century a larger proportion of Ashton's population were engaged in cotton manufacturing than at either Bolton or Rochdale.²⁹ Ashton's cotton industry took on a more independent character in the nineteenth century, with a mix of fine and coarse spinning along with powerloom weaving.³⁰ Like

²⁶Rodgers, "The Lancashire Cotton Industry in 1840," p. 352.

²⁷Aiken, *A Description of the Country. . . Round Manchester*, pp. 248-249; Baines, *Baines's Lancashire*, vol. 2, p. 531.

²⁸Butterworth, *A Statistical Sketch. . .*, p. 119. PP 1843 [496] XXII, Pt. 1, *1841 Census of England and Wales: Enumeration Abstract*, p. 147 gives a population total of 67,889 for the parish of Rochdale in 1841.

²⁹Aiken, *A Description of the Country. . . Round Manchester*, p. 233.

³⁰Baines, *Baines's Lancashire*, vol. 1, p. 495; Rodgers, "The Lancashire Cotton Industry in 1840," p. 352.

Bolton and Rochdale, nearby coal mines and canal links to Manchester combined to foster the continued development of Ashton's cotton industry, and fostered other support industries.³¹ In 1838, the parish of Ashton contained 82 cotton factories, which employed over 12,000 mill hands, out of perhaps 43,000 population.³²

Cotton textile industries led British economic expansion, as imports of raw cotton quadrupled during the forty years of my study, 1830–1870.³³ With the rapid expansion of the cotton industry, each of these towns witnessed explosive population growth during the early nineteenth century, with all of the attendant problems and prospects, as Table 1.1 illustrates. The index of their growth, centered on 1851, the mid-point of my study, permits comparisons between the phases of population growth of all three towns despite their different sizes. Ashton's population more than tripled from 1821 to 1851, while the populations of both Bolton and Rochdale nearly doubled in the same time period.

The numbers of small shopkeepers increased to serve the needs of this rapidly growing population, most of whom were textile workers and their families. In order to give some general idea of the presence of domestic shopkeepers in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale, I examined a number of trades directories for

³¹Aiken, *Description of the Country. . . Round Manchester*, p. 227.

³²Butterworth, *A Statistical Sketch. . .*, p. 4. PP 1843 [496] XXII, Pt. 1, *1841 Census of England and Wales: Enumeration Abstract*, p. 145 gives a population total of 46,304 for Ashton parish in 1841.

³³Phyllis Deane and W. A. Cole, *British Economic Growth, 1688-1959: Trends and Structure*, 2d ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1967), p. 187. Raw cotton imports have generally been used as a reliable statistic to measure growth in the cotton industry.

Table 1.1: Decennial Population and Index of Proportional Increase, 1821–1871.
Index in 1851 = 100.0

Census Year	Ashton	Bolton	Rochdale
1821	9,222 (31.0)	32,045 (52.4)	21,127 (50.9)
1831	14,035 (47.1)	42,245 (69.1)	27,899 (67.2)
1841	22,678 (76.1)	51,029 (83.4)	35,604 (85.8)
1851	29,791 (100.0)	61,171 (100.0)	41,513 (100.0)
1861	34,886 (117.1)	70,395 (115.1)	53,308 (128.4)
1871	31,984 (107.4)	82,853 (135.4)	63,483 (152.9)

SOURCE: *PP 1873 [872–I] LXXI Pt. 2, 1871 Census England and Wales, General Report*, Appendix A, pp. 28–29.

NOTE: The populations of Ashton and Bolton are based on the municipal boundary; the population of Rochdale is based on the parliamentary boundary. The 1871 census used these boundaries to allow for historical comparisons, and municipal and parliamentary boundaries were drawn contiguously. For example Parliament defined Bolton's parliamentary boundary in 1832; Bolton's 1838 charter of incorporation defined the municipal boundary as contiguous with the parliamentary boundary.

these towns. A listing of the trades directories consulted and the number of small shopkeepers listed in each directory follows in Table 1.2. The table demonstrates the growth in small shopkeepers throughout the period under study, as well as the unusual drop in the numbers of Rochdale small shopkeepers in the 1850s and 1860s. While trades directories give numbers of small shopkeepers, not domestic shopkeepers, changes in numbers of small shopkeepers would probably imply similar changes in the numbers of domestic shopkeepers.

Some indication of the numbers of domestic shopkeepers in these towns can be inferred by comparing the number of small shopkeepers to the population of the town. For each census, I compared each town's population to the number of small shopkeepers derived from the trades directory closest in time. The results of this comparison are in Table 1.3. Small shopkeepers seemed to enjoy varying degrees of success in each town. Ashton's small shopkeepers increased at a faster pace than its population through 1861. Rochdale's small shopkeepers, on the other hand, seemed to have suffered from the success of the Toad Lane Pioneer Cooperative Store beginning in the 1850s, as discussed in Chapter Two. Both Bolton's and Rochdale's small shopkeepers appear to have been hurt by the effects of the Cotton Famine of the early 1860s as well. Bolton's small shopkeepers probably suffered from the steep decline in the numbers of handloom weavers during the 1840s, but probably recovered somewhat during the 1850s, which were prosperous times in the cotton industry.

Table 1.2: Numbers of Small Shopkeepers in Trades Directories, 1824/25–1871/72

Directory and Year	Ashton	Bolton	Rochdale
Baines' 1824/25	54	102	82
Pigot's 1828	---	129	105
Pigot and Sons' 1832	66	---	---
Pigot and Sons' 1836	---	154	---
Pigot and Slater's 1841	131	260	207
Slater's 1843	---	328	---
Slater's 1851	236	231	337
Whellan's 1853	---	602	---
Drake's / Slater's 1861	288	456	---
Slater's 1869	---	428	211
Worrell's 1870/71	---	465	---
Slater's 1871/72	---	---	316

SOURCES: Indicated trades directories; see Bibliography for complete citations.

Table 1.3: Numbers of Small Shopkeepers Per Thousand Population, 1831–1871

Census Year	Ashton	Bolton	Rochdale
1831	4.70	3.05	3.76
1841	5.78	5.10	5.81
1851	7.92	3.78	8.12
1861	8.26	6.48	(6.13)
1871	---	5.61	4.98

SOURCES: *PP 1873 [872–I] LXXI Pt. 2, 1871 Census England and Wales, General Report*, Appendix A, pp. 28–29; indicated trades directories.

NOTE: In all cases, I determined the numbers of small shopkeepers from trades directories for that year. For 1831, I consulted the nearest pre-1831 trades directory, *Pigot and Sons' Directory for 1832*. . . . for Ashton, and *Pigot and Co.'s National Commercial Directory for 1828–9*. . . . for Bolton and Rochdale. For Rochdale in 1861, I interpolated the number of small shopkeepers, 327, by taking the mean of the numbers of small shopkeepers from *Slater's General and Commercial Directory*. . . for 1851 and *Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory*. . . for 1871–2. No Ashton trades directory was available for 1871. See Bibliography for complete citations.

In order to show numerical differences between the numbers of small shopkeepers and domestic shopkeepers, Table 1.4 gives the numbers of domestic shopkeepers from Bolton and Rochdale in 1851 and 1861, as well as Ashton in 1841. The table also provides the numbers of domestic shopkeepers per thousand population in those towns. There were consistently fewer domestic shopkeepers than small shopkeepers, substantially so in the case of Rochdale. Changes in the numbers of domestic shopkeepers between 1851 and 1861 for Bolton and Rochdale, however, parallel the changes in small shopkeepers. The numbers of Bolton domestic shopkeepers increased both in absolute terms and relative to population; Rochdale's domestic shopkeepers suffered the reverse fate. Because I define domestic shopkeepers rather conservatively, and trades directory listings for small shopkeepers have proven so amorphous, this probably accounts for much of the difference between Tables 1.2 and 1.3 and Table 1.4.

III. Historians and Shopkeepers

What was the role of domestic shopkeepers in the first industrial society? While many historians mention shopkeepers in their studies, frequently shopkeepers play only a minor role in their main story. Marxist historians have viewed shopkeepers as tools of both middle and working classes; they were petty capitalists caught between more organized and mutually-antagonistic power blocs. Even non-Marxist historians tend to deprecate the role of shopkeepers in

Table 1.4: Numbers of Domestic Shopkeepers, and Numbers of Domestic Shopkeepers Per Thousand Population, 1841, 1851, and 1861

Census Year	Ashton	Bolton	Rochdale
1841	99 (4.37)	----	----
1851	----	225 (3.68)	175 (4.13)
1861	----	287 (4.08)	126 (2.36)

SOURCES: My census data — HO 107/532; HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046; *PP* 1873 [872–I] LXXI Pt. 2, 1871 *Census England and Wales, General Report*, Appendix A, pp. 28–29.

NOTE: The numbers given in parentheses represent the numbers of domestic shopkeepers per thousand population for that census year. I excluded census data for Ashton in 1851 since that census record was incomplete.

industrial societies, primarily because shopkeepers failed to exhibit unique cultural, social, or economic characteristics. And since historians have largely failed to acknowledge the divisions within the shopocracy, shopkeepers have continued to be ignored or obscured; as one historian noted, they were part of a larger lower middle class "historical problem."³⁴ I hope that by using more careful definitions of the variety of shopkeepers, I can contribute to a growing historical awareness of the inconsistencies of categorization and generalization, Marxist or not, of such a diverse group of people as shopkeepers. Marxist historical studies which view shopkeepers as inconsequential have provided one jumping-off point for my study of more carefully defined domestic shopkeepers. Were they hopelessly trapped with the rest of the lower middle class between the Scylla of middle-class dominance and the Charybdis of working-class numbers? Did they lack a social identity and, if so, did this mean that they were incapable of independent action? If domestic shopkeepers had a distinct social identity, how can historians distinguish it among such a diverse group as shopkeepers or the lower middle class?

Marxist conceptualization consistently incorporated shopkeepers into the lower middle class, rather than recognize that this lower middle class might be composed of many distinctive social groups. This categorization has resulted in obscuring important distinctions among the varieties of shopkeepers. Domestic

³⁴Mayer, "The Lower Middle Class as Historical Problem," pp. 409-411. One historian has noted that Marx did appreciate that the lower middle class acted as "a crucial swing group in three major phases of bourgeois society." Jonathan M. Wiener, "Marxism and the Lower Middle Class: A Response to Arno Mayer," *Journal of Modern History* 48 (December 1976): 666.

shopkeepers have been almost totally obscured. In his survey of emerging class society in industrial Lancashire, Friedrich Engels mentioned, almost in passing, evidence of the close ties between "petty tradesmen" and the working-classes of Lancashire cotton towns:

These towns are purely industrial and conduct all their business through Manchester upon which they are in every respect dependent, whence they are inhabited only by working-men and petty tradesmen, while Manchester has a very considerable commercial population, especially of commission and "respectable" retail dealers. Hence Bolton, Preston, Wigan, Bury, Rochdale, Middleton, Heywood, Oldham, Ashton, Stalybridge, Stockport etc., though nearly all towns of thirty, fifty, seventy to ninety thousand inhabitants, are almost wholly working-people's districts, interspersed only with factories, a few thoroughfares lined with shops, and a few lanes along which the gardens and houses of the manufacturers are scattered like villas.²⁸

Engels concentrated his attention on the capitalists and proletariat, and largely obscured the role of the "petty tradesmen" (Engels probably referred to small shopkeepers and master artisans). The toiling lower middle class of handicraft and retail were destined for extinction, he thought, via the inexorable advance of history; shopkeepers would be crushed into the proletariat by industrial capitalism. Without an avenue for the proletariat to advance into the ranks of the propertied, no matter how petty, the proletariat would form a true class consciousness.²⁹ Engels' search for class society in industrial towns has been continued by subsequent generations of historians and, even when they came to

²⁸Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, reprint (Moscow: Progress Publishers, orig. 1892, repr. 1973), p. 81.

²⁹*Ibid.*, pp. 55-56.

conclusions different from Engels, they continued his lack of attention to shopkeepers' role in industrial society. Incapable of becoming a Marxist class, shopkeepers joined the rest of the *petite bourgeoisie* of artisans and clerks to await conjunction with the proletariat. I will test this theory with my study of domestic shopkeepers.

Many historians have followed the Marxist interpretation of shopkeepers as part of a politically-insignificant lower middle class. In his analysis of industrialization and class society, John Foster recognized a distinctive lower middle class, only to dismiss their significance in the face of class pressure from both the industrial middle class and the organized proletariat. Harold Perkin's influential study identified a social structure consisting of entrepreneurial and professional middle classes, along with a landed aristocracy and wage laborers, leaving no room for a class of small urban property-owners. Robert J. Morris' study of middle class formation in Victorian Leeds, while describing the diversity among the urban middle class, found shopkeepers incapable of independent action or existence. R. S. Neale's examination of class society uncovered a non-deferential "middling class" of shopkeepers, aspiring professionals, and artisans, yet his five-class model was mostly theoretical, and the "middling class" status provided only a temporary respite while rising into the middle class or falling into the working class. Robert Gray's investigation of the labour aristocracy as a class

specifically excluded shopkeepers, despite their admitted social and economic proximity.³⁰

Geoffrey Crossick's plea for a renewed study of the British lower middle class reflected some increase in studies of shopkeeping which were not concerned with the issue of class.³¹ Michael Winstanley's pioneering study of the shopkeeper's world, dealing mainly with the period from 1890 to 1914, consigned small shopkeepers to political ineffectiveness and economic vulnerability, and focused primarily on principal shopkeepers.³² And yet evidence exists in the historical literature for significant shopkeeper activity before 1860. Thomas Nossiter found that small shopkeepers played a significant role in political radicalism in Newcastle.³³ Christopher Godfrey identified a number of shopkeepers among the Chartist prisoners.³⁴ Neale's study of Bath revealed that

³⁰John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), pp. 133-136, 205-212; Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society*, pp. 218-270; Robert J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), pp. 318-332; R. S. Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 15-40; Robert Gray, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c. 1850-1914* (London, Macmillan, 1981), pp. 41-42.

³¹Geoffrey Crossick, "The Petite Bourgeoisie in Nineteenth-Century Britain," in Crossick and Haupt (eds.), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth-Century Europe*, pp. 63-65, 71-88. Crossick's own research focuses on the skilled artisans in the latter part of the nineteenth century.

³²Michael J. Winstanley, *The Shopkeeper's World, 1830-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 1-49.

³³Thomas J. Nossiter, "Social Basis of Radicalism: Politics and the Shopocracy in the North-east, 1832-60," in Thomas J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion, and Political Idiom in Reformed England* (Hassocks: Harvester Press, 1975), pp. 144-161.

³⁴Christopher Godfrey, "The Chartist Prisoners, 1839-41," *International Review of Social History* 24, 2 (1979): 196-197.

his politically-active "middling class" radicals included shopkeepers.³⁵ John Knott found evidence of shopkeeper support for anti-New Poor Law movements, and Mick Jenkins uncovered shopkeeper support for the working-class general strike of 1842.³⁶ I hope to test these findings in my study of domestic shopkeepers in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale. Did domestic shopkeepers act similarly, or do the differences in defining shopkeeper mean that a more nuanced understanding of the variations in shopkeepers will be necessary to explain their political behavior?

Three historians have attempted to understand distinctions among shopkeepers, and examined small and domestic shopkeepers apart from their principal counterparts. John Benson noted that domestic shopkeeping provided an important avenue for working-class entrepreneurs. Much of his evidence comes from the later Victorian and Edwardian periods, so I will test his assumptions for the early and mid-Victorian period. Christopher Hosgood's work on Leicester shopkeepers was a direct antecedent to my own, and I have detailed his contribution to the theses of my study above. His study began in 1860 and went to 1914, and while Leicester was an industrial town, so I will test his conclusions about small shopkeepers for industrial Lancashire during my earlier time frame, 1830–1870. Zoe Lawson's detailed case study of the social and economic world of small and domestic shopkeepers in a working-class

³⁵Neale, *Class and Ideology*, pp. 41-61.

³⁶John Knott, *Popular Opposition to the 1834 Poor Law* (London: Croom Helm, 1986), pp. 70, 84; Mick Jenkins, *The General Strike of 1842* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 178-179, 247-248.

neighborhood of industrial Preston contains important parallels to mine. While her investigation was also based on census records, it also covered a later period, 1860–1880, than mine. Lawson noted the economic vulnerability of small shopkeepers and the importance of domestic shopkeeping to women, especially widows. I will test her findings about the social and economic bonds between domestic and small shopkeepers and the working-class neighborhood.³⁷

European and American historians have studied the significance of shopkeepers who might or might not belong to a class. Most recently, Jonathan Morris' work on the shopkeeper organizations of Milan in the forty years before Mussolini has shown a surprising amount of *esercenti* (shopkeeper) political autonomy. Morris claimed that shopkeeper economic self-interest and *realpolitik* motivated shopkeeper alliances with various political parties, rather than incorporation into the forces leading to Fascism. Milanese shopkeepers had no desire to return to a real or imagined communal past, but rather wished to make the best of a changing economic and political milieu.³⁸ Did domestic shopkeepers find some autonomy in a similarly dynamic urban setting like industrial Lancashire towns?

³⁷John Benson, *The Penny Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Entrepreneurs* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), pp. 114-127; Hosgood, "Shopkeepers and Society"; Hosgood, "The 'Pygmies of Commerce' and the Working-Class Community: Small Shopkeepers in England, 1870-1914," *Journal of Social History* 22, 3 (1989): 439-460; Zoe Lawson, "Shops, Shopkeepers, and the Working-Class Community: Preston, 1860-1890," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire for the Year 1991* 141 (1992): 309-328.

³⁸Jonathan Morris, *The Political Economy of Shopkeeping in Milan, 1886-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 285-292.

Morris' thesis represents a revision of the more accepted European historians' view of the history of late nineteenth-century lower middle class movements, such as the work of Robert Gellately on Imperial Germany and Philip Nord on Third Republic France. This historical view argues that shopkeepers joined class movements rooted in an idealized communal past of the *mittelstand* or *petite bourgeoisie*. Despairing of their place in a changing industrial society, German shopkeepers claimed a role in the disappearing corporatist ideology of the pre-industrial Volk. The *Ligue syndicale* of the Parisian retailers in 1888 represented a similar reaction to a changing society; once liberal *petit-bourgeois* shopkeepers, pressured by status anxiety and relative deprivation, were co-opted by the radical right nationalism of anti-Semitism, anti-Dreyfusism, and Christian Democracy.³⁹ Did domestic shopkeepers participate in distinctive reactionary lower middle class movements?

Other historians have focused on small shopkeepers' social connections to explain their political activity. Samuel Clark found that small shopkeepers were full participants in the Irish Land War of 1879–1882. The religious, marriage, and kinship networks between small shopkeepers and small farmers were added to the economic ties of credit to create strong bonds between these respective members of urban and rural society. Along with publicans, small shopkeepers were

³⁹Robert Gellately, *The Politics of Economic Despair: Shopkeepers and German Politics, 1890-1914* (London: Sage Publications, 1974), pp. 8-11; Philip Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 5-12; 486-491. The existence of a united *mittelstand* in Wilhelmine Germany has been effectively questioned by David Blackbourn, "The *Mittelstand* in German Society and Politics, 1871-1914," *Social History* 4 (January 1977): 409-433.

prominently represented in arrest records, mostly for acts of boycotting and inciting violence. Small shopkeepers actively supported the Land League, "because they were socially integrated into the rural society and enjoyed strong social bonds and cooperative economic relationships with farmers."⁴⁰ If parallel ties existed between domestic shopkeepers and workers in urban Lancashire, perhaps these ties would help explain the political behavior of domestic shopkeepers as well.

A number of American case studies have demonstrated the significance of shopkeepers as part of a larger social community, sometimes middle-class and capitalistic, sometimes working-class and laboring. Paul Johnson portrays early nineteenth-century Rochester as a growing capitalist community centered on its shops, with its propertied citizens seeking an orderly moral society through religious revivalism. Thomas Doerflinger places the shopkeepers of eighteenth-century Philadelphia within a larger group of mercantile entrepreneurs that later became an important part of democratic and egalitarian revolutionary committees during the 1770s. Did Victorian Lancashire domestic shopkeepers join with more prosperous shopkeepers and merchants to change their society, as in early republican America? Francis Couvares' work on late nineteenth-century Pittsburgh's plebeian culture includes neighborhood small shops as centers of working-class society. Though economically dependent on a working-class clientele, these small shops provided an important political force in support of

⁴⁰Samuel Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 125-134, 262-272, 275.

Pittsburgh's growing organized labor movement.⁴¹ Was this supportive role by small shopkeepers in Pittsburgh's working-class neighborhoods reflected in working-class neighborhoods in industrial Lancashire towns like Bolton?

Despite Crossick's plea and Hosgood's work, domestic shopkeepers' lives and world remain largely unexplored. Domestic shopkeepers were an integral element of the working-class society of the cotton towns. Domestic shopkeepers were bound to the working-class by intimate ties of kinship, neighborhood, and mutual need. Yet they occasionally displayed a limited social and political independence from their working-class neighbors and kin. From the point of view of individual domestic shopkeepers, economic autonomy represented one of the chief attractions of petty retailing, even though the extent of this independence could be quite restricted. Domestic shopkeeping represented an attainable dream of social mobility and respectability for many working-class families.

Given these contrasting historical views of shopkeepers, how did domestic shopkeepers fit into industrial society? Were they so integrated into the working-class community that they had no separate identity? Did domestic shopkeepers, envious of middle-class status, proceed to adopt middle-class values? Or because

⁴¹Paul E. Johnson, *A Shopkeeper's Millennium: Society and Revivals in Rochester, New York, 1815-1837* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1978), pp. 46, 59, 177; Thomas M. Doerflinger, *A Vigorous Spirit of Enterprise: Merchants and Economic Development in Revolutionary Philadelphia* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Institute for Early American History and Culture, Williamsburg, Va. by the University of North Carolina Press, 1986), pp. 52-54, 252; Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 33-34, 43-46, 63, 73-74, 92.

of their connections to both working-class and middle-class society, could they have created their own place as intermediaries between these two titanic forces, and bridged the gap between workers and capitalists?

Chapter Two discusses the place of domestic shopkeepers in the context of the geography of Victorian industrial towns. I will use my census data and Ordnance Survey maps to investigate the locations of small and domestic shops in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale. Did domestic shops appear in all parts of the town or only in certain shopping districts or streets? What did their location imply about their social and economic relationship to the larger city and the working-class community?

Chapter Three examines the economics of shopkeeping. In an urbanizing industrial society like Lancashire cotton towns, the distribution of food had become a sophisticated and multi-layered economic system. What was the domestic shopkeeper's niche in this retailing spectrum? What distinctive characteristics enabled domestic shopkeepers to survive and flourish? What economic rewards did these shops offer domestic shopkeepers? How far were these prospects realized? What economic ties bound domestic shopkeepers to their working-class customers?

Chapter Four discusses social characteristics of domestic shopkeepers. How far did domestic shops function as a family/household economy? What sorts of social bonds existed between domestic shopkeepers and their working-class neighbors and customers? Were domestic shopkeepers so immersed in working-

class culture and society that they had no distinct social identity? Did they have sufficient social autonomy to form a bridge between the middle-class world of property and the working-class world of labor? In particular, did Irish domestic shopkeepers display special relationships with Irish working-class neighborhoods?

Chapter Five analyses the importance of women in domestic shopkeeping. By the Victorian era a paternalistic separation of spheres between that of the male breadwinner and that of the domestic female was spreading among the industrial working class.⁴² In that context, how and why did domestic shops provide an economic role for Victorian women in the urban household economy?

Finally, Chapter Six examines the political activity of small and domestic shopkeepers. Heretofore many historians have regarded these shopkeepers as politically insignificant. Some have assumed that their economic dependency on their customers made small and domestic shopkeepers into political pawns, victims of either working-class customers or middle-class suppliers or both. I will test the political activities and views of these shopkeepers using the public Parliamentary voting record over forty years. This will also allow me to test the frequent assumption that as members of the *petite bourgeoisie*, small and domestic shopkeepers were predictably conservative. What political interests can I find these shopkeepers expressing and supporting?

⁴²Sonya Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 132-150.

CHAPTER II

THE GEOGRAPHY OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING

Behind some decent working-class houses on the main way lay a long straggling maze of streets, courts and alleys, and in the middle of it all stood our corner shop.¹

Roberts' description of his boyhood Edwardian working-class "village" contained many clues to the importance of domestic shop location. While his shop was not on the "main way," it was on the corner of Waterloo Street, a road intersecting the major through road in Salford. Their shop's location provided easy access to their chief customers, Roberts' working-class neighbors, who lived in the packed tenements just behind Waterloo Street. Roberts described the cattle drives to the Salford market along the nearby through road, where occasionally cows would lose their way and pass by their shop. Roberts remembered the nightly parade of the poor, straggling towards the lodging houses near the cattle sidings, who stopped at the shop to buy or beg some food.² Roberts' shop was both a physical as well as a social crossroads of the slum neighborhood.

Domestic shops of nineteenth-century industrial towns were physically linked to working-class neighborhoods. Like Roberts, Friedrich Engels noted that

¹Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), p. 7.

²Ibid., pp. 11, 13.

the shops of a Manchester main street reflected the status of the neighborhoods immediately behind the shops:

For the thoroughfares leading from the Exchange in all directions out of the city are lined, on both sides, with an almost unbroken series of shops. . . So, for instance, Deansgate. . . is lined first with mills and warehouses, then with second-rate shops and alehouses; farther south, when it leaves the commercial district, with less inviting shops, which grow dirtier and more interrupted by beerhouses and gin palaces the farther one goes, until at the southern end the appearance of the shops leaves no doubt that workers and workers only are their customers. . . In this way any one who knows Manchester can infer the adjoining districts, from the appearance of the thoroughfare. . . .³

Engels had a first-hand knowledge of which he speaks, since he would have passed along these same roads from his Manchester factories to the Exchange district. Many of Engels' working-class shops, unlike Roberts' fifty years later, were sited on the major streets. It would be difficult to imagine the shops of the southern end of Deansgate, Manchester, attracting any passing customers. Their customers were predominantly, or even exclusively, their working-class neighbors. Whether located on major thoroughfares or side streets, domestic shops were closely tied to the working-class neighborhoods on which they depended for their patronage.

This chapter describes the complex urban environment of Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale that domestic shopkeepers lived in. I will examine the physical locations of domestic shopkeepers in Lancashire cotton towns as indicated by the census record. Later chapters will confirm the intimate economic and social links

³Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, reprint (Moscow: Progress Publishers, orig., 1892, repr. 1973), pp. 85-86.

that bound domestic shopkeepers and their working-class neighbors in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale in 1851 and 1861. The first section compares the different physical appearances of well-planned Ashton and poorly-planned Bolton, and determines whether these differences explain any distinctions in domestic shop locations between the two towns. In the second section of this chapter, census records are examined to determine if any patterns of domestic shop location appear in these towns. Did domestic shopkeepers cluster at and around the town center, often referred to as the "central business district," as did many of the larger, wealthier, and more specialized principal shopkeepers dealing in higher-priced goods, or near the various marketplaces, as many of the dealers in fresh fish and meat? Or, did domestic shopkeepers, as Roberts and Engels suggest, locate wherever the workers lived, scattering throughout the working-class residential sections of the town, heedless of the commercial attraction of a concentrated downtown business district or marketplace? A wide dispersal of these shops throughout the entire town would indicate that domestic shops followed working-class neighborhoods, which were also dispersed throughout the town. Victorian towns did not exhibit integrated neighborhoods, mixing middle- and working-class housing. Working-class neighborhoods were scattered throughout the town because workshops and factories were scattered, and workers had to live near their worksites, given a lack of transportation and long working hours.

The third section of this chapter uses three different types of road locations to verify the type of trade domestic shopkeepers relied upon.⁴ If they relied primarily on passing customers, most domestic shopkeepers would set up shop predominantly on the town's through roads, in order to capture the majority of this trade. But if, as Roberts and Engels suggested, the majority of domestic shopkeepers' customers came from the shop's surrounding neighborhood, then convenience of access to the neighborhood would represent the most important determinant of shop location. In this case, domestic shops would locate along the entire range of road types, from the working-class areas bordering main roads such as Manchester's Deansgate, to the adjacent and connecting minor roads such as Salford's Waterloo Road, the thoroughways of the slum neighborhood, and even on other roads deep within the working-class warrens of the ill-planned residential zones that plagued the quick-grown towns of the industrial era.

Four studies of shop locations have found that small shopkeepers followed the working-class neighborhoods. Using trades directories to determine shop types, Roger Scola's study of nineteenth-century Mancunian food outlets revealed that small shopkeepers were "retailing pioneers," ahead of tradesmen butchers, bakers, and greengrocers in opening the retailing frontier to all parts of the city and all types of streets. Despite the advantages of central shopping areas such as

⁴Note on terminology: I use the following terms consistently throughout this chapter: "Through Roads" are main thoroughfares into and out of the town proper, as well as their extensions into the town despite any name changes, and finally any locations included within a market; "Cross Streets" are streets that cross or connect to, via an uncovered passageway, a "Through Road;" "Back Streets" are all other passageways in the town. I use any other terms, such as thoroughfare, or modifiers such as main, in a general sense.

markets, Mancunians shopped primarily with retailers within a short walking distance of their homes; small shops were conveniently located.⁵ Like Scola's study of Manchester, M. T. Wild and Gareth Shaw used trades directories to study retail locations in Kingston-upon-Hull in 1823, 1851, and 1881. They found that small shopkeepers led all retail traders in dispersion throughout Hull. Wild and Shaw also concluded that the least specialized retailers, led by small shopkeepers, located in developing working-class residential areas of Hull outside of the Old Town, while more specialized tradesmen concentrated in a centralized shopping zone in the Old Town.⁶ In his study of mid-century Leeds, David Ward found very few distinctive middle-class or working class housing areas. This lack of distinctively class-segregated housing zones meant that, until 1851 at least, Leeds' residents had yet to create in social space beyond the neighborhood the class divisions that existed in the Victorian mind.⁷ Since small shopkeepers depended on working-class neighbors for their custom, their shop locations

⁵Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester, 1770-1870*, ed. by W.A. Armstrong and Pauline Scola (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 234-246; Scola, "Food Markets and Shops in Manchester, 1770-1870," *Journal of Historical Geography* 1, 2 (1975): 155-159; Scola, "Retailing in the Nineteenth-Century Town: Some Problems and Possibilities," in James H. Johnson and Colin G. Pooley (eds.), *The Structure of Nineteenth-Century Cities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 164-167. In this last article, Scola analyzed the locational behavior of food shops using a "major-minor-other road" terminology, but he failed to define his usage of these terms.

⁶M.T. Wild and Gareth Shaw, "Locational Behaviour of Urban Retailing During the Nineteenth Century: the example of Kingston upon Hull," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 61 (1974): 108-116.

⁷Richard Dennis also concluded that industrial English towns were generally characterized by a lack of segregation by class, with only the very wealthy creating segregated suburbs; Richard Dennis, *English Industrial Cities of the Nineteenth Century: A Social Geography* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984), pp. 211-221.

followed working-class neighborhoods dispersed throughout the town.⁸ Richard Dennis' study of the Hillhouse working-class district of Huddersfield in 1871 uncovered a similar pattern of small shop locations dispersed throughout the district.⁹ This dynamic locational relationship between the housing of an increasingly numerous working-class clientele and small shops reinforces the idea that a special relationship existed between domestic shopkeepers and working-class communities.

Were Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale domestic shopkeepers dispersed throughout the various parts of their towns? Census records for 1851 permit comparisons among all three towns, and census records for 1861 allow comparisons between Bolton and Rochdale, as well as a means for understanding changes, if any, in domestic shopkeeper locations over a decade's time. The census record provides the most objective record of physical location available for the social composition of Victorian towns. Census enumeration districts did not necessarily reflect social neighborhoods, nor were they completely uniform in either size or population. I used contemporary Ordnance Survey maps to provide the physical landscape for census records.¹⁰ The resulting spatial framework

⁸David Ward, "Environs and Neighbours in the 'Two Nations': Residential Differentiation in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Leeds," *Journal of Historical Geography* 6, 2 (1980): 153-155.

⁹Richard Dennis, "Class, Behavior and Residence in Nineteenth-Century Society: The Lower Middle Class in Huddersfield in 1871," in Nigel Thrift and Peter Williams (eds.), *Class and Space: The Making of Urban Society* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987), pp. 90-94.

¹⁰Available Ordnance Survey maps (Southampton: Ordnance Survey Office) include: for 1:10,560 scale (six inches to one statute mile), Bolton (1850) and Rochdale (1851); for 1:1,056 scale (five feet to one statute mile), Ashton (1852), and a partial map of central Bolton (1848). In addition, I possess an undated map of the "Town of Rochdale" (Manchester: Falkner, n.d.) on the

created from census records and maps demonstrates the close relationship between domestic shops and working-class neighborhoods, which Chapters Three and Four will confirm and reinforce by demonstrating the powerful economic and social ties between the working-class and domestic shopkeepers.

The spatial relationship between retailers and consumers is often explained through "central place theory."¹¹ This theory rests on the concept that consumer demand for goods largely determines the location of retailers. Retailers of "higher order" goods, more costly items such as jewelry and furniture, need not locate near their customers, since such purchases are infrequent. These retailers situate based on recognizability of location, lower labor and shop costs, and effectiveness of on-site advertising. "Higher order" retailers tend to establish themselves in recognized shopping centers and along frequently-traveled routes. Retailers of "lower order" goods, less costly but more frequent purchases such as food and basic household goods, choose shop sites based on accessibility to the customer. "Lower order" retailers are found on much wider range of locations, with the chief concern being convenience.

If central place theory is accurate, then domestic shopkeepers fall within the "lower order" retailers, and they should demonstrate a wide dispersal in shop sites. Domestic shops should also locate on a wide variety of streets, from the

1:10,560 scale (six inches to one statute mile) that shows the mid-nineteenth century borough. This map had superior street identifications to the Ordnance Survey map.

¹¹The literature concerning aspects of central place theory is vast and complicated; most of the following is gleaned from Peter Scott, *Geography and Retailing* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing Co., 1970), pp. 12-36.

main thoroughfares to side streets. The dominant feature of their locations should be customer convenience, and their customers would be their working-class neighbors. This diversity in shop locations would tend to correspond to any pattern of working-class housing in nearly every industrial town.¹² Working-class neighborhoods tended to be scattered within mid-century industrial towns for a number of reasons. A lack of urban planning and zoning regulations allowed housing and other buildings to be built in any part of the town. Working-class houses often appeared next to work sites. Rapid growth in urban population pushed land prices higher, creating an acute lack of affordable working-class housing. This housing shortage led to the overcrowding of available working-class housing, the construction of shoddy, short-lived houses, and the continued occupation of cellars as living space. Dr. Lyon Playfair felt that these economic pressures created many housing problems in urban Lancashire in the 1840s, and resulted in poor public health:

Most of the large towns in Lancashire have rapidly increased within the last 20 years, and the value of land for manufacturing purposes has offered many inducements to the builder to construct streets and houses so as to obtain the greatest return for the land used in their formation. Hence narrow streets, blind alleys, and courts, are of frequent occurrence in all large towns in this county. . . .¹³

¹²John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815-1985*, 2d ed. (London: Methuen, 1986), pp. 10-11, 20-24.

¹³Dr. Lyon Playfair, "Report on Their [Large Towns in Lancashire] Sanatory Condition," *PP* 1845 [610] XVIII, *Second Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts*, Appendix, pt. 2, p. 20.

Lack of affordable intra-city transportation determined that working-class housing sites would be scattered throughout the town. Housing could be dispersed only as far away as workers could walk to the mills. Easy accessibility to work and high costs of housing represented major housing concerns for workers. Domestic shopkeepers exhibited a similar concern for their customers' convenience, and sited their shops as accessible to the working-class neighborhoods as possible.

I. A Tale of Two Towns' Geography

Bolton and Ashton's physical layouts demonstrate the profound differences that could arise between unorganized and planned urban development. Domestic shopkeepers adapted to the number of available street locations. In Ashton the street layout resulting from planned development gave domestic shopkeepers very few options in location. In contrast, Bolton's maze of streets allowed for much more discrimination in street location by domestic shopkeepers. In many ways, Bolton represented a typical cotton-district town. Journalist Angus Reach criticized Bolton in 1849 as particularly squalid:

The former town [Bolton] is as bad a specimen of a nucleus of cotton manufacture as can be conceived. It is an old spinning and weaving station, and the great mass of the houses are built in the oldest and filthiest fashion. Cellars abound on every side, and I saw few or none unoccupied, while the people appeared to me to be fully as squalid and dirty in appearance as the worst classes are in the worst districts of Manchester.¹⁴

¹⁴Angus Bethune Reach, *Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849*, ed. by C. Aspin (Helmshore: Helmshore Local History Society, 1972), p. 65.

Bolton's urban expansion had been largely unregulated since the eighteenth century. The two Lords of the Manor, Lord Bradford and the Earl of Derby, together owned one-half of the borough, and they seemed to have exerted little control over the actions of their lessees and agents in the borough. A large number of other landholders, including many prominent industrialists, owned smaller tracts in the older parts of Great and Little Bolton, and strongly resisted attempts by public authorities to regulate their property.¹⁵ Playfair cited this lack of regulation as resulting in the poor physical state of Great Bolton:

Great Bolton labours under the disadvantage of being governed by a defective Act, which does not contain any efficient provisions for regulating buildings or other structural arrangements in the town; and, in addition to this, the extreme want of a system in the regulations for the sewerage and cleansing of the town renders the site of houses extremely unhealthy.¹⁶

Town Councillor John Entwistle also criticized the poor physical state of Bolton in 1848:

Andrew-street and Back Andrew-street are exceedingly objectionable, both in the construction of dwellings and in the means of cleanliness and decency afforded to the inhabitants. They are chiefly back to back houses, and the streets, which intersect the block, are much too narrow; in the centre are placed the necessities for the use of the whole of the inhabitants. . . 16 necessities. . . for the use of about 900 people. . . but the disregard which has been shown by builders and owners of cottage property to the comfort

¹⁵Edward Baines, *Baines's Lancashire*, vol. 1, reprint (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, orig. 1824, repr. 1968), p. 530.

¹⁶Playfair, "Report on Their Sanatory Condition," p. 21. Rochdale's streets and housing also came under criticism in Playfair's report on page 21.

and health of the tenants, and to the preservation of morals, is most infamous.¹⁷

Andrew Street was part of the Irish New Town part of Church Ward. In order to correct these problems, the Bolton Improvement Act of 1850 granted the Town Council exclusive authority over borough public improvements. The Act particularly authorized the elimination of cellar dwellings and the regulation of lodging houses.¹⁸ The Town Council made little improvement through the 1850s due to political pressures from landholders and the agents of Lords Derby and Bradford.¹⁹

Before incorporation, the Bolton Moor Enclosure Act of 1792 authorized the trustees of Great Bolton to sell tracts of land in the Bolton Moor, and to use the income for public improvements. The Moor, more than 250 acres of land in Bradford Ward, developed as a largely working-class residential and industrial section through the mid-nineteenth century.²⁰ But the efforts of the trustees, and their successors the Town Council, had noticeably little effect in correcting the problems of organic development in Bolton through the 1850s. Joseph Nicholson remembered that, "Baths were very rare — only being in the better

¹⁷John Entwistle, *A Report of the Sanitary Conditions of the Borough of Bolton, In a Letter Addressed to Thomas Ridgway Bridson, Esq. Mayor* (Bolton: n.p., 1848), pp. 56-57. Located in BLS.

¹⁸William Gray et al., *Watch Committee Minutes: Rules for Common Lodging Houses*, February 5, 1851. Copy in BLS.

¹⁹John Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-80* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 194-198.

²⁰Baines, *Baines's Lancashire*, vol. 1, p. 539.

class houses and back-to-back and cellar dwellings were very common."²¹ James

Waring echoed Nicholson's concerns:

The town was at that time in a sad state from a sanitary point of view. Where I lived, in the Hulme St. [East Ward, Little Bolton] neighbourhood, the houses were back to back and there was only one [water] closet for the accommodation of the whole row of dwellings. Those were the days of rubble drains and the water could not get away. The Croal [River] was then little better than an open sewer, a receptacle for the carcasses of dead cats and dogs, the effluvia spreading throughout the town.²²

Commenting on the cotton towns of the mid-1840s in general, Engels noted that,

Among the worst of these towns after Preston and Oldham is Bolton. . . It has, so far as I have been able to observe in my repeated visits, but one main street, a very dirty one, Deansgate. . . Here, as everywhere, the older part of town is especially ruinous and miserable.²³

The Deansgate-Churchgate through road runs parallel to and south of the River Croal in Great Bolton. Twenty-one domestic shopkeepers lived on this road on 1851 census day, about one-fourth of all these Bolton through-road shopkeepers and nine percent of all these Bolton shopkeepers.

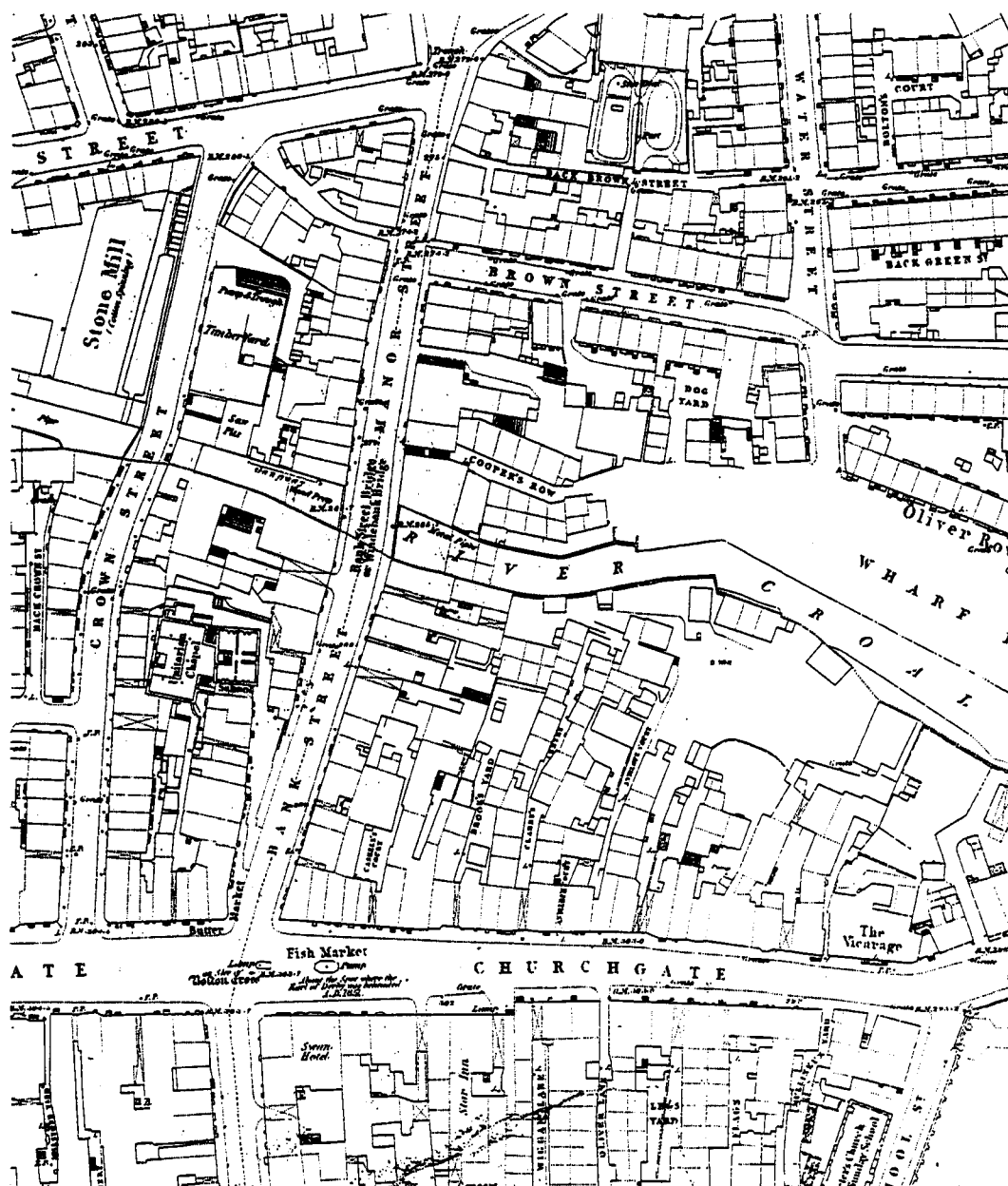
The main crossroads of Bolton, the Deansgate-Churchgate through road intersection with the Bradshawgate-Bank Street through road, is shown in Figure 2.1. The Croal River runs left-to-right near the top of the figure. Back Crown Street, far left, represents Bolton's lamented back streets. The small continuation of Crown Street south of Deansgate, lower left, and Cooper's Row in Little

²¹Joseph Nicholson, "Shopping 70 Years Ago," *Bolton Journal*, May 28, 1909. Copy in BLS.

²²James Waring, "An Old Man's Memories," *Bolton Journal*, January 2, 1905. Copy in BLS.

²³Engels, *Condition of the Working-Class in England*, p. 82.

Figure 2.1: Facsimile Map of a Portion of Bolton. Reproduced from the 1848 Ordnance Survey map. Covered walkways are denoted by crossed-markings.



Bolton, top right, whose entrance is via a covered walkway from Manor Street represents Bolton's many small alleyways and yards. The north-south dashed line is part of the ward boundary between Exchange, left, and Church, right, Wards in Great Bolton, south of the Croal, and West, left, and East, right, Wards in Little Bolton, north of the Croal.

The planned layout of Ashton's streets contrasted with Bolton's jumble. Edward Baines noted in 1833, "The principal new streets are well built, and contain many good and even elegant houses; but the old streets are narrow and inconvenient, indicating their ancient origin."²⁴ By mid-century, these same streets continued to characterize Ashton, as Reach noted:

In searching, however, for minor shades of social distinction, I find some two or three characteristics which separate Ashton-under-Lyne from its spinning neighbours. . . The nucleus of the place is indeed old, filthy and dilapidated in the extreme; but [in] nine-tenths of the town. . . the houses are more comfortable, the streets more open, and better drained than in the great majority of industrial Lancashire towns.²⁵

Ashton escaped the worst physical effects of industrialization due to a conscious effort at urban planning by the Lord of the Manor, the Earl of Stamford and Warrington, and his agents. Lord Stamford planned for a westward expansion from the older center of Ashton towards a "new town," built on a rigid grid pattern of crossing streets with no alleys or courts. Ashton's planned physical layout represented a great improvement over the court yards and twisting alleys of

²⁴Baines, *Baines's Lancashire*, vol. 1, p. 490.

²⁵Reach, *Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849*, p. 71.

Bolton. Workers benefitted from easier access, better ventilation, and lesser crowding.²⁶ Lord Stamford's yearly Court Leet, which his tenants were required to attend, issued orders and exacted fines regarding the upkeep of streets and buildings.²⁷ Regarding the state of Ashton in the 1840s, John Ross Coulthart reported that,

Generally speaking, however, the town may be said to be built in regular, well-formed, healthy streets; and as the old parts of the town, including the cellars of the new, do not comprehend more than one-eighth of the population, they do not materially affect this general description. . . Lord Stamford takes especial care to have all new buildings erected in airy, well-formed streets; and in all cases where leases expire of premises in the old town, his Lordship invariably binds the new tenants to widen the streets when necessary to relieve the overcrowding.²⁸

Regarding Ashton's street layout in the 1840s, Engels noted its "much more attractive appearance than that of most factory towns."²⁹ The older part of the town was not part of the surviving 1851 census. Even the working-class residential district of Charlestown, while far from Coulthart's ideal with a number of covered entrances to back alleys and garrets, demonstrated Ashton's orderly street layout. At least ten Ashton domestic shopkeepers lived in the Charlestown

²⁶Sylvia A. Harrop, "Nineteenth Century Housing in Ashton," in Harrop and E.A. Rose (eds.), *Victorian Ashton* (Ashton: Tameside Libraries and Arts Committee, 1974), pp. 29-30.

²⁷John Ross Coulthart, *A Report of the Sanatory Condition of the Town of Ashton-Under-Lyne* (Ashton: Luke Swallow, 1844), pp. 9-15.

²⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 14-15.

²⁹Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, pp. 82-83.

neighborhood in 1851, illustrated in Figure 2.2.³⁰ Bolton's crowded and scattered courts, alleys, yards, and back streets, characteristic of the physical layout of most Lancashire cotton towns, were exceptional in Ashton.

This planned and rational layout of Ashton resulted in a high percentage of domestic shopkeepers locating on the cross streets. Ashton had fewer of the back streets so characteristic of other industrial towns. Long cross streets connecting through roads characterized Ashton's physical layout, both north-south as well as east-west. This regular checkerboard pattern of roads meant that people living in Ashton's back streets had easy access to the cross streets. More than one-half of Ashton's domestic shopkeepers, forty-one out of seventy-seven, located on cross streets, while only eight shopkeepers located on Ashton's back streets. The section of the Ashton map corresponding to the census area contained only twenty-six cross streets, and twenty back streets.³¹ Ashton's regular street pattern meant fewer streets, but a healthier town. With so few street options, domestic shopkeepers appeared on every cross street and nearly every back street. Domestic shopkeepers chose cross-street locations because they were so convenient to Ashton's neatly-squared neighborhoods. Figure 2.3 depicts Ashton's regular street pattern, and demonstrates the proximity between working-class neighborhoods and cotton mills so typical of nineteenth-century Lancashire industrial towns.

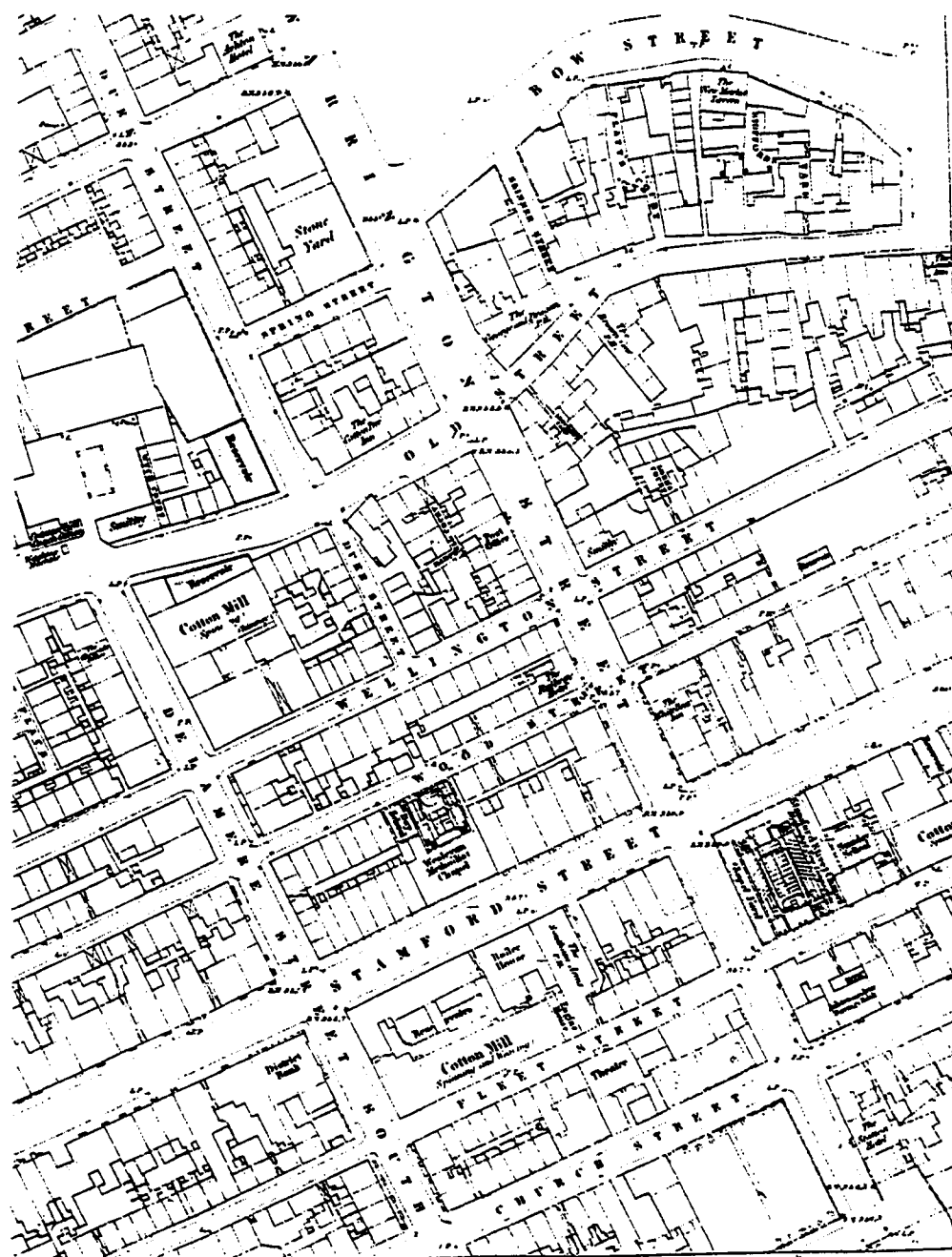
³⁰HO 107/2233, District I, Subdistricts Z. and A.A.; Reach, *Manchester and the Textile Districts in 1849*, pp. 73-75; Coulthart, *A Report of the Sanatory Conditions*, pp. 27-29.

³¹Ashton contained a total of eight through roads.

Figure 2.2: Facsimile Map of the Charlestown Area of Ashton. Reproduced from the 1852 Ordnance Survey map. There were approximately thirty covered walkways in the Charlestown area. Two domestic shopkeepers lived on the east side of Oldham Road adjoining Charlestown, and at least two domestic shopkeepers lived on the south side of Wellington Road adjacent to the neighborhood. Canning and Water Street each had two domestic shopkeepers, and one domestic shopkeeper lived in each of Duncan and Pitt Streets. Three more domestic shopkeepers lived on the south side of the Wellington Road, either in the Charlestown zone, or in the adjacent (right) Boston neighborhood. The maps, census data, and trades directory do not provide sufficient information to precisely locate domestic shops. In the terminology of this study, Oldham Road was a through road, Wellington Road and Water Street were cross streets, and Canning, Duncan, and Pitt streets were back streets.



Figure 2.3: Facsimile Map of Central Ashton. Reproduced from the 1852 Ordnance Survey map. This area is just south and east of the Charlestown area in Figure 2.2.



In contrast to Ashton, Bolton's organic pattern of streets, alleys, courts, and rows presented vastly more opportunities for domestic shopkeepers to situate on nearly any type of road. While guided mainly by the accessibility and convenience of the neighborhood to the shop, domestic shopkeepers in larger towns like Bolton had more choice in location. A detailed map of a small portion of central Bolton revealed fifty-five cross streets, and seventy-eight back streets. A comparison of these detailed sections of the two towns reveals that Bolton had nearly twice as many cross streets, and four times as many back streets as Ashton.³² Domestic shopkeepers were selective about the roads they located on. In 1851, Bolton's twenty-seven cross-street domestic shopkeepers selected eighteen cross streets for their shops, or only one-third of the fifty-five cross streets available. Bolton's thirteen back-street domestic shopkeepers proved even more selective, locating on seven back streets, only one-eleventh of the seventy-eight back streets available. Bolton domestic shopkeepers continued their selectivity in 1861, choosing only nineteen cross streets and ten back streets as suitable locations. Bolton domestic shopkeepers, like their Ashton counterparts, favored cross-street locations over back street ones. The main difference between the two towns lay in the much larger numbers of Bolton's back streets, among which domestic shopkeepers chose the most favorable back-street locations.

³²Bolton had twenty-one through roads, more than two-and-one-half times as many as Ashton.

II. Domestic Shopkeeper Dispersion

According to central place theory, census records should demonstrate a wide dispersal in domestic shop locations, with little or no clustering of these shops into central shopping districts, since domestic shops retailed basic goods from convenient locations. The surviving 1851 Ashton census record of fifteen census enumeration districts, out of thirty-six total, or about 42% of the census districts, encompassed the northern and western parts of the town, including all of St. Peter's Ward and two-thirds of Market Ward, six out of nine census districts. The tabular results listing Ashton's domestic shopkeepers by census districts follows in Table 2.1. Market Ward seemed to have a slightly greater density of domestic shops than St. Peter's, but the statistical differences could be misleading, since the missing three districts in Market Ward might lower the average. Some conclusions seem to hold for both Ashton wards. No Ashton census district had fewer than two domestic shopkeepers, and only one had more than seven — District I C.C. had nine. The mean number of domestic shopkeepers per district was approximately five. Only three districts fell outside a basic range of three to seven domestic shopkeepers; two had two each, and one had nine. Eighty percent of census districts had numbers of domestic shopkeepers within one standard deviation of the mean, and all of the census districts fell within two standard deviations of the mean. These statistics demonstrate some degree of variance in numbers of domestic shopkeepers in each census district, and possibly among the

Table 2.1: A Statistical Summary of Ashton Domestic Shopkeepers, By Wards and For the Total Census Sample, 1851

	N	M	SD	R	O
Market Ward (six census districts)	34	5.7	1.9	5 ($\geq 4 \leq 8$)	1
St. Peter's Ward (nine census districts)	43	4.8	2.2	7 ($\geq 3 \leq 7$)	2
Total (fifteen census districts)	77	5.1	2.0	12 ($\geq 3 \leq 7$)	3

SOURCE: HO 107/2233.

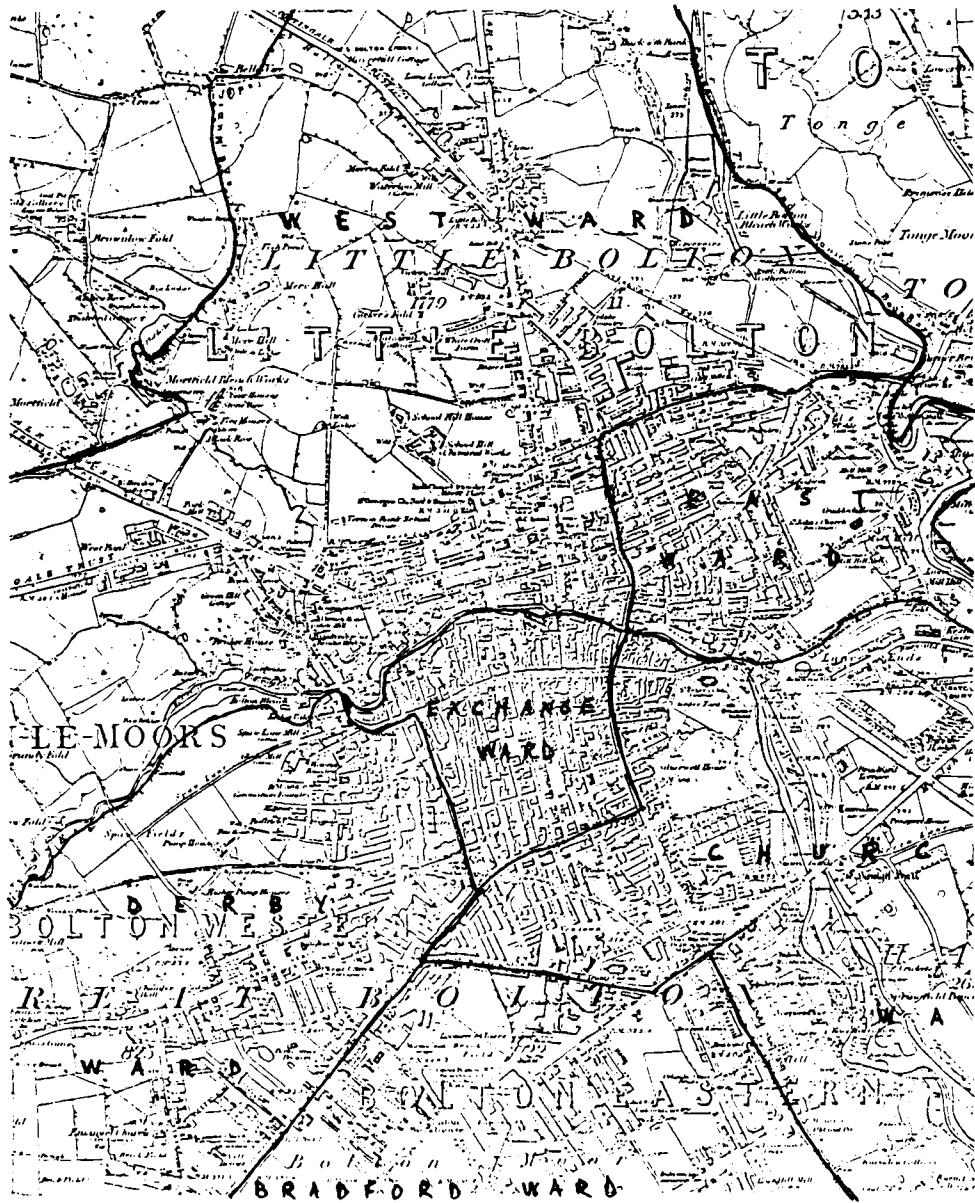
NOTES: The following table heading abbreviations have been used: "N" = the Number of Domestic Shopkeepers; "M" = the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "SD" = the Standard Deviation of Shopkeepers per Census District; "R" = the Number of Census Districts within the Range of the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers plus or minus One Standard Deviation ($R = M \pm SD$); "O" = the Number of Census Districts with Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers Outside the Range. The upper and lower numbers of the Range were rounded to the nearest whole number.

two wards. There seems to be no evidence that domestic shopkeepers clustered into central shopping districts, nor that any part of the town suffered from a lack of a ubiquitous domestic shop.

An examination of the census enumeration districts of Bolton shopkeepers in 1851 reveals a varied distribution of domestic shop sites similar to Ashton's. The borough of Bolton consisted of six civil divisions: Derby, Exchange, Church, and Bradford Wards in Great Bolton township, and East and West Wards in Little Bolton township. Church Ward contained Haulgh, a part of the village of Tonge-with-Haulgh. The wards, like the census districts, should not be considered uniform or representative taken singly. Exchange and Church Wards encompassed all of the central part of Great Bolton, near the river Croal, with a great number of mills and other industrial buildings, leaving Derby and Bradford Wards, south of the town center, less built up in 1851. East and West Wards split Little Bolton into unequal parts. East Ward possessed a larger portion of the older part of the town, while West Ward contained more area, with greater room for the expansion of industry and housing. Haulgh, with a small village center at Lane Ends, was predominantly rural in 1851 though it was part of Church Ward, one of the most built-up wards of Bolton. Figure 2.4 illustrates most of the borough of Bolton, with the ward divisions outlined.³³

³³In the 1851 census, Haulgh consisted of nine census enumeration districts, despite the overwhelmingly rural nature of the entire village; for the purposes of Tables 2.2 and 2.3, Haulgh's census districts, with two domestic shopkeepers, were combined into one.

Figure 2.4: Facsimile Map of Most of the Borough of Bolton. Reproduced from the 1850 Ordnance Survey map. From east to west, Great Bolton (south of the Croal River) included Church and Exchange Wards, then south, Bradford and Derby Wards. Little Bolton (north of the Croal) was divided into East and West Wards.



The overall picture of Bolton domestic shopkeeping locations resembles the findings in Ashton. Bolton domestic shopkeepers were widely distributed throughout the town, with some variation by individual census districts and by ward divisions. Since Bolton's census record is more complete than Ashton's, some distinctions among the wards emerge in Table 2.2. Domestic shopkeepers appeared in substantial numbers in all wards, but not evenly distributed among all the wards. Church and Bradford Wards balanced each other outside of the expected numbers of domestic shopkeepers, high and low respectively, though both easily lie within two standard deviations of the mean. Interestingly, Church and Bradford Wards were adjacent, Bradford lying south of Church and encompassing the Bolton Moor. Exchange, East, West, and Derby Wards lie within the expected range of plus or minus one standard deviation of the mean for Bolton wards. The ward statistics demonstrate that domestic shops were fairly evenly distributed throughout the civil districts of the town.

An analysis of the individual census districts in Bolton reveals patterns like those found in Bolton's wards. Out of fifty-nine census districts, only three contained no domestic shopkeepers, one each in Derby, East, and West Ward. Perhaps this lack of domestic shopkeepers represents a fluke of the census districting, or that these districts had little or no working-class housing. Only heavily built-up Exchange and Church Wards had one district each with more than eight domestic shopkeepers, thirteen and eleven, respectively, and both of these districts border the Deansgate-Churchgate through road. More domestic

Table 2.2: Ward Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, 1851

Number of Wards	6
Total Number of Domestic Shopkeepers in All Wards	225
Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Ward	37.3
Standard Deviation of Domestic Shopkeepers per Ward	13.4
Number of Wards with Numbers of Domestic Shopkeepers within the Range of the Mean Plus/Minus One Standard Deviation	4 (≥ 24 and ≤ 50)

SOURCE: HO 107/2208-2211.

shopkeepers, as noted by the higher means and upper range numbers, tended to be found in census districts of the older and more built-up wards, Church, Exchange, and East, than in the less-developed wards of West, Derby, and Bradford. Just as in Ashton, Bolton domestic shopkeepers were widely represented in all parts of the town, though not uniformly distributed. A statistical summary of Bolton's domestic shopkeepers in 1851 follows in Table 2.3.

Evidence of the wide dispersal of Bolton domestic shopkeepers in 1851 appears to be part of a pattern that continued into 1861. Table 2.4 provides an examination of domestic shopkeepers by individual census districts. Only one West Ward district was devoid of domestic shopkeepers, while eight districts reported only one domestic shopkeeper, with West Ward containing four of those districts. On the other end of the spectrum, three census districts had ten or more domestic shopkeepers, two in Exchange Ward and one in Church Ward, two of the oldest and most developed wards. The vast majority of the census districts demonstrate the ubiquity of domestic shopkeepers.

Domestic shopkeepers appeared much more evenly distributed by ward in 1861 than a decade earlier, with greater numbers appearing in Derby, Bradford, and West Wards, wards that had many fewer shopkeepers in 1851. Church Ward went from the ward with the greatest number of domestic shopkeepers in 1851, with fifty-seven, to third-place in 1861, with forty-eight. Despite more shopkeepers overall and average per ward than in 1851, the standard deviation among the wards in 1861 was less than one-half of this same measure of variation

Table 2.3: Statistical Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, By Wards and For the Entire Borough, 1851

	N	M	SD	R	O
Derby Ward (nine census districts)	26	2.9	1.9	7 ($\geq 1 \leq 5$)	2
Exchange Ward (ten census districts)	44	4.4	3.5	9 ($\geq 1 \leq 7$)	1
Church Ward (ten census districts)	57	5.7	3.0	7 ($\geq 3 \leq 9$)	3
Bradford Ward (eight census districts)	21	2.6	1.2	8 ($\geq 1 \leq 4$)	0
East Ward (twelve census districts)	45	3.7	1.9	11 ($\geq 2 \leq 6$)	1
West Ward (ten census districts)	32	3.2	2.9	8 ($\geq 0 \leq 6$)	2
Bolton (fifty-nine census districts)	225	3.8	2.7	49 ($\geq 1 \leq 7$)	10

SOURCE: HO 107/2208-2211.

NOTES: The following table heading abbreviations have been used: "N" = the Number of Domestic Shopkeepers; "M" = the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "SD" = the Standard Deviation of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "R" = the Number of Census Districts within the Range of the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers plus or minus One Standard Deviation ($R = M \pm SD$); "O" = the Number of Census Districts with Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers Outside the Range. The upper and lower numbers of the Range were rounded to the nearest whole number.

Table 2.4: Statistical Survey of Bolton Shopkeepers, By Wards and For the Entire Borough, 1861

	N	M	S	R	O
Derby Ward (twelve census districts)	54	4.5	2.0	10 ($\geq 3 \leq 7$)	2
Exchange Ward (nine census districts)	44	4.9	4.5	7 ($\geq 0 \leq 9$)	2
Church Ward (ten census districts)	48	4.8	3.0	8 ($\geq 2 \leq 8$)	2
Bradford Ward (twelve census districts)	54	4.5	2.6	9 ($\geq 2 \leq 7$)	3
East Ward (nine census districts)	42	4.7	2.3	9 ($\geq 2 \leq 7$)	0
West Ward (fourteen census districts)	45	3.2	2.7	11 ($\geq 1 \leq 6$)	3
Bolton (sixty-six census districts)	287	4.3	2.8	49 ($\geq 2 \leq 7$)	17

SOURCE: RG 9/2815, 2820-34.

NOTES: The following table heading abbreviations have been used: "N" = the Number of Domestic Shopkeepers; "M" = the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "SD" = the Standard Deviation of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "R" = the Number of Census Districts within the Range of the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers plus or minus One Standard Deviation ($R=M\pm SD$); "O" = the Number of Census Districts with Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers Outside the Range. The upper and lower numbers of the Range were rounded to the nearest whole number.

in 1851. Three wards contained expected numbers of domestic shopkeepers in 1861, the mean plus or minus one standard deviation, but the three statistical outliers, Bradford, Derby, and East Wards, only missed inclusion in this small range by one domestic shopkeeper each. This lower incidence of variation in domestic shopkeeper presence represents a much more even distribution among the wards than in 1851. Church, Exchange, and East Wards maintained only a very slight advantage in mean domestic shopkeepers per census district, reflecting a diminished level of domestic shopkeeper presence in these wards from 1851. Much of the expanding population of Bolton between 1851 and 1861 occurred in Derby, Bradford, and West Wards, and these new communities attracted domestic shopkeepers.³⁴ Table 2.5 illustrates that Bolton domestic shopkeepers were even more dispersed in 1861 than 1851. This pattern of population growth and domestic shopkeeper expansion parallels the results of Wild and Shaw's study of Hull, as their small shopkeepers abandoned the Old Town districts for the emerging outer growth zone.³⁵

Like Bolton, Rochdale also developed along largely unplanned lines. A statistical examination of domestic shopkeepers in the 1851 Rochdale census record, a town containing about two-thirds the total population of Bolton in the same year, reveals findings similar to those in Bolton and Ashton. The borough had three main civil divisions: Castleton, Spotland, and Wardleworth townships.

³⁴Bolton's population had grown by more than 15%, more than nine thousand persons, between 1851 and 1861. See Table 1.1 above.

³⁵Wild and Shaw, "Locational Behaviour of Urban Retailing," pp. 113-115.

Table 2.5: Ward Summary of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers, 1851 and 1861

	1851	1861
Number of Wards	6	6
Total Number of Domestic Shopkeepers in All Wards	225	287
Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Ward	37.3	47.8
Standard Deviation of Domestic Shopkeepers per Ward	13.4	5.2
Number of Wards with Numbers of Domestic Shopkeepers within the Range of the Mean Plus/Minus One Standard Deviation	4 (≥ 24 and ≤ 50)	3 (≥ 43 and ≤ 53)

SOURCE: HO 107/2208–2211; RG 9/2815, 2820–34.

The parliamentary boundary was based on a circle of three-fourths of a mile in radius drawn from the old marketplace at the central ford across the Roche River. Rochdale's civil divisions consisted of irregular portions of each of these three townships.³⁶ Castleton consisted of most of the borough and nearly all of the built up portions of the town south of the Roche. Wardleworth consisted of approximately two-thirds of the urban portion and about one half of the borough north of the Roche. Spotland was more rural than either Castleton or Wardleworth, and the portion within the borough boundaries, referred to as Nearer Spotland, included a small part of the main urban center of Rochdale north of the Roche. Each of these townships contained small village communities within the borough boundaries. Figure 2.5 shows the uneven division of the built-up part of Rochdale, along with the township boundaries.

The locations of Rochdale's domestic shopkeepers in 1851 indicate characteristics similar to Bolton and Ashton. Table 2.6 demonstrates that domestic shopkeepers favored Rochdale's built-up areas, represented in the civil divisions by Castleton and Wardleworth. These two townships display a higher mean number of domestic shopkeepers per census district, 3.7 and 4.3, respectively, compared to more rural Spotland, with a mean of 2.6 shopkeepers per district. Rochdale's domestic shopkeepers were spread throughout the entire

³⁶Edwin Butterworth, *A Statistical Sketch of the County Palatine of Lancaster*, reprint, (Manchester: The Lancashire and Cheshire Antiquarian Society, orig. 1841, repr. 1968), p. 119. The township of Weurde-with-Wardle, a very small part of which, named Heybrook, was included within the borough of Rochdale, has been ignored for the 1851 segment of this study. It was totally rural and contained no domestic shopkeepers. I included Heybrook's one domestic shopkeeper in the statistical survey of Rochdale in 1861.

Figure 2.5: Facsimile Map of Most of the Borough of Rochdale. Reproduced from the "Town of Rochdale" map in author's possession. Castleton is mostly south of the Roche River. The Spotland and Wardleworth township line runs up (north) from the Roche along Toad Lane and Heights Lane off the top-left edge of the map. Heybrook is just off the right (east) map edge, along the Roche.



Table 2.6: Statistical Summary of Rochdale Domestic Shopkeepers, By Civil Division and For the Entire Borough, 1851

	N	M	S	R	O
Castleton (seventeen census districts)	63	3.7	2.2	14 ($\geq 2 \leq 6$)	3
Spotland (sixteen census districts)	42	2.6	2.2	15 ($\geq 0 \leq 5$)	1
Wardleworth (sixteen census districts)	69	4.3	1.7	13 ($\geq 3 \leq 6$)	3
Rochdale (forty-nine census districts)	174	3.6	2.1	38 ($\geq 2 \leq 6$)	11

SOURCE: HO 107/2244-2246.

NOTES: The following table heading abbreviations have been used: "N" = the Number of Domestic Shopkeepers; "M" = the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "SD" = the Standard Deviation of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "R" = the Number of Census Districts within the Range of the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers plus or minus One Standard Deviation ($R = M \pm SD$); "O" = the Number of Census Districts with Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers Outside the Range. The upper and lower numbers of the Range were rounded to the nearest whole number.

borough, if not particularly evenly. No Rochdale census district had zero domestic shopkeepers, while eight districts had one each (two districts each in Castleton and Wardleworth, and four districts in Spotland). Two census districts had ten domestic shopkeepers each, one in Castleton and, somewhat surprisingly, a Spotland district that covered that much Spotland's share of the built-up part of Rochdale.

Despite a continuing growth in population, the numbers of Rochdale's domestic shopkeepers had declined between 1851 and 1861.³⁷ Perhaps Rochdale's shopkeepers faced severe competition from various sources, including the Toad Lane Pioneer Co-operative Store, located in Spotland Ward. Founded in 1844, the Pioneer Co-op had reached yearly sales of over £100,000 in 1859, and over £150,000 in 1860, prior to the Cotton Famine years. In that year, nearly 3500 Rochdale families spent an average of 14s per week each at the Co-op.³⁸ Only those domestic shopkeepers prepared for this extraordinary growth in competition could withstand the impact of such an institution. The success of the Pioneer Co-op must have driven a number of nearby domestic shopkeepers out of business. Spotland and Wardleworth bore most of Rochdale's domestic shopkeeper losses between 1851 and 1861. The Co-op probably contributed to this decline, since its Toad ("The Old") Lane shop was on the Spotland-

³⁷Rochdale's population had grown by more than 30 percent, more than 11,000 persons, from 1851 to 1861. See Table 1.1 above.

³⁸W. Henry Brown, *The Rochdale Pioneers: A Century of Co-operation* (Manchester: The Co-operative Union, 1944), p. 28.

Wardleworth township boundary line. Some shopkeepers recognized the economic threat posed by the Co-op, and decided to act during the 1857 Parliamentary election campaign in Rochdale. Liberal candidate Richard Cobden encouraged the expansion of the Co-op's activities. "A Shopkeeper" urged his fellow electors to vote against Cobden: "Will the shopkeepers still go on aiding the men who are fostering the system [Co-operation] which is destined at no distant period to snatch their daily bread from their very jaws?"³⁹

Of the domestic shopkeepers that remained in 1861, those located in either Castleton or Wardleworth still outnumbered those in Spotland, but the mean numbers of domestic shopkeepers per census district had closed substantially among the three divisions. Rochdale's domestic shopkeepers lagged somewhat behind the example of Bolton in their expansion into more rural Spotland. This unevenness might have resulted from the overall decline in domestic shopkeepers. Perhaps Rochdale's population growth expanded roughly equally among the three townships, rather than concentrating in certain newly built-up districts like Derby and Bradford Wards in Bolton. Perhaps expansion and contraction of key industries in the different townships of Rochdale continued this discrepancy in the numbers of domestic shopkeepers. For whatever reasons, an examination of Rochdale's individual census districts in 1861 reveals statistics similar to 1851, given in Table 2.7. No district had zero domestic shopkeepers, though eight districts had one each. Two Castleton census districts had more than five

³⁹Cited in Ibid. Cobden won election to the Parliamentary seat for Rochdale in 1857. Unfortunately the poll book for 1857 has not survived.

Table 2.7: Statistical Summary of Rochdale Domestic Shopkeepers, By Civil Division and For the Entire Borough, 1861

	N	M	S	R	O
Castleton (sixteen census districts)	52	3.3	2.0	14 ($\geq 1 \leq 5$)	2
Spotland (nine census districts)	27	3.0	1.6	9 ($\geq 1 \leq 5$)	0
Wardleworth (fifteen census districts)	46	3.1	1.3	10 ($\geq 2 \leq 4$)	5
Weurdle-with-Wardle (one census district)	1	---	---	---	---
Rochdale (forty-one census districts)	126	3.1	1.7	39 ($\geq 1 \leq 5$)	2

SOURCE: RG 9/3036-3040, 3044-3046.

NOTES: The following table heading abbreviations have been used: "N" = the Number of Domestic Shopkeepers; "M" = the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "SD" = the Standard Deviation of Domestic Shopkeepers per Census District; "R" = the Number of Census Districts within the Range of the Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers plus or minus One Standard Deviation ($R=M\pm SD$); "O" = the Number of Census Districts with Mean Number of Domestic Shopkeepers Outside the Range. The upper and lower numbers of the Range were rounded to the nearest whole number.

shopkeepers, six and eight. This pattern of continued dispersal throughout Rochdale, while not uniform, befits the domestic shopkeeper image of following their working-class customers throughout many parts of the town.

This examination of the census records for Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale in 1851 and 1861 seems to verify the findings by Scola for Manchester, Ward for Leeds, and Wild and Shaw for Hull. Domestic shopkeepers were dispersed widely throughout all parts of the town. This pattern of domestic shopkeeper disaggregation, as measured by census districts or civil divisions, does not appear uniform. Domestic shopkeepers tended towards a preference for the more built up parts of these boroughs, though hardly exclusively. As in Bolton between 1851 and 1861, domestic shopkeepers followed an expanding working-class population into newer residential zones of the borough. Domestic shopkeepers' choice of locations in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale seem to reflect a pattern of diversity throughout the towns, similar to and accompanying the dispersed working-class neighborhoods throughout the towns. Domestic shops represented spatial extensions of working-class communities, which paralleled and reinforced these shopkeepers' economic, social, and political links to these communities.

III. Domestic Shopkeeper Road Locations

Like the near-ubiquity of domestic shopkeepers throughout the towns, their road locations should be easily accessible to the local neighborhood. Following the contemporary descriptions of Engels and Roberts, domestic shopkeepers accompanied the working-class neighborhood, and located their shops for convenient access by the neighborhood customer. Engels noted that small shops were located on through roads like Deansgate, Manchester, while fifty years later the Roberts' domestic shop was ideally situated in the middle of a Salford slum village on a cross street. Jerry White found that domestic shopkeepers of the intimate London East End Jewish community in the Rothschild Buildings during the Edwardian Period shunned the great through road of Commercial Street. These shopkeepers instead preferred the easy accessibility of the cross streets of Flower and Dean or Thrall Streets, and Lolesworth Street, a back street, which connected these two streets. Ease of access represented a major advantage for Israel Garfinkle, who established his domestic shop on the corner of Flower and Dean and Lolesworth, across Lolesworth from the Rothschild Buildings.⁴⁰

A picture of domestic shopkeeper road locations emerges from Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale census data. Approximately one-third of domestic shopkeepers located on through roads, while the remaining two-thirds located on

⁴⁰Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1887-1920* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 104-116.

either cross or back streets. For these mid-century industrial towns, the attractions of through roads and cross streets usually overrode the intimacy of the other roads. The actual road layout of these towns probably played a major role in the selection of road locations. The effects of Ashton's planned development encouraged a majority of domestic shopkeepers to locate on the cross streets, while Bolton's maze of poorly-planned streets similarly encouraged domestic shopkeepers to locate wherever ease of neighborhood access was best served. Perhaps the availability of appropriate shop property determined much of domestic shopkeeper's choice, since many shop sites possessed larger window space, as well as gas and water fixtures, that many working-class residences lacked.

How much variance of through-road domestic shopkeepers existed among these three towns in 1851 and 1861? About one-third of domestic shopkeepers located their shops on major roads, with Bolton's domestic shopkeepers leading those in Ashton and Rochdale, as expressed in Tables 2.8 and 2.9. The easy access between neighborhoods and through roads resulting from Bolton's unplanned development seemed to have encouraged more domestic shopkeepers to locate on through roads than in the other two towns. Bolton's much larger size might also explain some of this discrepancy. Bolton's through roads carried more traffic through the town, as the town acted as an important gateway between Manchester and many of the smaller northern Lancashire weaving towns, such as Bury and Blackburn. Numbers of domestic shopkeepers on through roads had

Table 2.8: Domestic Shopkeepers Located on Through Roads in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale in 1851

Ashton	Bolton	Rochdale
23 out of 72 31.9%	86 out of 225 38.2%	41 out of 133 30.8%

SOURCES: HO 107/2209–2211, 2233, 2244–2246.

NOTE: Unidentifiable road locations, five in Ashton, and forty-two in Rochdale, were ignored for this table. Many of the unknown domestic shop locations in Rochdale represent small villages lying outside the built-up section of the borough.

Table 2.9: Domestic Shopkeepers Located on Through Roads in Bolton and Rochdale in 1861

Bolton	Rochdale
102 out of 287 35.5%	30 out of 126 23.8%

SOURCES: RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

fallen substantially in Rochdale to less than one-fourth in 1861, while falling only slightly in Bolton. The decline in through-road domestic shopkeepers in Rochdale coincides with the overall drop in domestic shopkeepers. Perhaps competition from the Pioneer Co-operative Store had driven many domestic shopkeepers out of through-road locations and into more neighborhood-intimate cross streets or back streets.

About two-thirds of domestic shopkeepers situated on either cross or back streets. In order to determine the approximate distribution of these shopkeepers, the available detailed maps of Ashton and Bolton were compared to the census data. No comparable detailed map is available for Rochdale. Ashton's domestic shopkeepers favored cross-street locations, probably due to easy access to shops on cross-streets made possible by Ashton's urban planning. Bolton domestic shopkeepers seemed to have preferred cross-streets over back streets, but less so than their Ashton contemporaries. Bolton's unplanned street layout encouraged domestic shopkeepers to locate on whichever street possessed the most easily accessible routes to nearby neighborhoods. The partial detailed map of central Bolton revealed 40 cross- and back-street domestic shopkeepers (out of a possible 142 for the entire borough, or 28.2%) in 1851, and 66 cross- and back-street domestic shopkeepers (out of a possible 185, or 35.7%) in 1861. Table 2.10 illustrates the results of this comparison for Ashton and Bolton in 1851, and Bolton in 1861.

Table 2.10: Comparison of Cross-Street and Back-Street Domestic Shopkeepers, Ashton and Bolton, 1851, and Bolton, 1861

	Ashton 1851	Bolton 1851	Bolton 1861
Number of Minor-Road Domestic Shops (Percentage of Non-Major Road Domestic Shops)	41 (83.7%)	27 (67.5%)	47 (71.2%)
Number of Other-Road Domestic Shops (Percentage of Non-Major Road Domestic Shops)	8 (16.3%)	13 (32.5%)	19 (28.8%)
Proportion of Minor-Road Domestic Shops to Other-Road Domestic Shops	5.1 to 1	2.1 to 1	2.5 to 1

SOURCES: HO 107/2233, 2208–2211; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834.

These proportions result from the availability of the census and map data, and should not be considered definitive without qualification. The results from Tables 2.8, 2.9, and 2.10 allow for an estimated street location distribution of domestic shops for Ashton and Bolton in 1851, and for Bolton in 1861. Despite the physical differences between Ashton and Bolton, domestic shopkeeper road locations appear similar. About one-third of domestic shopkeepers chose through-road locations, about one-half chose cross-street locations, and the remainder chose back-street locations, as summarized in Table 2.11. The main determinant in choosing road location does not seem to be what type of road, but rather customer access to the domestic shop. In the case of domestic shopkeepers, the customers would be their working-class neighbors.

A comparison between domestic shopkeepers and other food dealers illustrates these shopkeepers' concern for neighborhood accessibility through a variety of street locations. With the exception of butchers, and possibly confectioners, no other Ashton food dealers were so situated. Ashton's bakers and greengrocers clustered in the minor roads almost exclusively. The majority of the more specialized grocers, tea dealers, and corn dealers situated on the major roads. Table 2.12 illustrates this flexibility of location demonstrated by domestic shopkeepers, who needed to be easily available to local customers. Like domestic shopkeepers, Ashton's butchers also seemed to move away from marketplaces and towards more convenient locations. Perhaps butchers were facing demands of greater accessibility, and were responding to this customer demand. Also,

Table 2.11: Estimated Percentage Distribution of Domestic Shopkeepers By Road Location, Ashton and Bolton, 1851, and Bolton, 1861

	Ashton 1851	Bolton 1851	Bolton 1861
Percentage of Through-Road Domestic Shopkeepers	31.9	37.7	35.5
Percentage of Cross-Street Domestic Shopkeepers	56.9	42.1	45.9
Percentage of Back-Street Domestic Shopkeepers	11.1	20.2	18.6
Totals	99.9	100.0	100.0

SOURCES: HO 107/2233, 2208–2211; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834.

NOTE: Ashton's 1851 total varied from 100.0 due to rounding error.

Table 2.12: Road Locations of Ashton Domestic Shopkeepers Compared to Other Food Dealers, 1851

Food Dealer	Through Road	Cross Street	Back Street	Total
Domestic Shopkeeper	31.9% (23)	56.9% (41)	11.1% (8)	99.9% (72)
Baker and Flour Dealer	0.0% (0)	83.3% (5)	16.7% (1)	100.0% (6)
Butcher	28.4% (19)	62.7% (42)	9.0% (6)	100.1% (67)
Confectioner	40.0% (4)	50.0% (5)	10.0% (1)	100.0% (10)
Corn Dealer	53.3% (8)	46.7% (7)	0.0% (0)	100.0% (15)
Greengrocer	5.0% (1)	85.0% (17)	10.0% (2)	100.0% (20)
Grocer and Tea Dealer	57.1% (16)	32.1% (9)	10.7% (3)	99.9% (28)

SOURCE: HO 107/2233; *Slater's General and Classified Directory. . . for 1851* (Manchester: Isaac Slater, [1851]).

NOTE: Unidentifiable locations were ignored; some totals vary from 100.0% due to rounding error.

Ashton's public authorities might not have been forthcoming in providing adequate marketplace sites.

A comparison of through-road Bolton domestic shopkeepers to other food dealers in Table 2.13 reveals some similarities to Ashton. Bolton domestic shopkeepers led other food dealers in the variety of road locations. Lacking the complete detailed maps of Ashton, this summary focused only on the through-road locations of food dealers. As partial compensation for this lack of detail, complete census data allowed for borough-wide comparison of domestic shopkeepers to food dealers. Only Bolton cheesemongers, a category lacking in the Ashton directory, had a through-road location percentage similar to domestic shopkeepers. A majority of all other Bolton food dealers located their shops in major traffic lanes and areas. Bolton's butchers seemed to have been better provisioned with marketplace sites than in Ashton.

These Ashton and Bolton food dealer comparisons indicate the predominantly local basis of domestic shopkeeping, especially compared to principal shopkeepers, such as grocer and tea dealers and corn dealers. These two trades in particular must have been much more dependent on large-scale weekly or monthly purchases by middle-class households, if, as predicted by central place theory, their through-road location indicated a measure of customer base. The through-road locations of these tradesmen also lend weight to a proposition that they filled an important role in distribution of food supplies to

Table 2.13: Through-Road Location of Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers Compared to Other Food Dealers in the Early 1850s

Food Dealer	Located on Through Road	Percentage
Domestic Shopkeeper	86 out of 225	38.2%
Baker and Flour Dealer	18 out of 26	69.2%
Butcher	45 out of 65	69.2%
Cheesemonger	3 out of 8	37.5%
Confectioner	15 out of 22	68.2%
Corn Dealer and Flour Merchant	17 out of 30	56.7%
Fruiterer and Greengrocer	11 out of 16	68.8%
Grocer and Tea Dealer	38 out of 57	66.7%

SOURCES: HO 107/2209–2211; *Whellan and Co.'s New Alphabetical and Classified Directory. . . for 1853*, reprint (Manchester: Neil Richardson, orig. [1853], repr. 1982).

smaller dealers, such as domestic shopkeepers.⁴¹ Many of these principal shops would continue to evolve into wholesalers with commercial travelling salesmen in the latter nineteenth century, as described by Roberts.⁴² Some of the differences between Ashton and Bolton butchers, bakers and flour dealers, and greengrocers (the majority of these Bolton dealers are found in major roads, while their Ashton equivalents are more prominent in minor roads) have at least some basis in the differences between the two towns, as already examined in the comparison between these two towns above.

IV. Conclusion

From the examples of Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale, a few general conclusions might be ventured about domestic shopkeeper geography. In an average cotton town in south Lancashire in 1851, about one-third of its domestic shopkeepers situated on through roads and one-sixth on back streets. Cross-streets domestic shop locations dominated the industrial towns with half of all of these shops. Perhaps this is because cross streets represented the highways of the working-class neighborhoods, just as Waterloo Street in Roberts' Salford neighborhood, or Flower and Dean Street in the Jewish East End later in the century. These roads served as connectors to the through roads of the town,

⁴¹See Chapter Three.

⁴²Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, pp. 142-147. A similar process was occurring in the retail textile trades, featuring the "scotchman" as the commercial traveller.

which in turn served as the major avenues for workers getting to work, and provided ideal sites for many domestic shopkeepers seeking the best possible location for serving the neighborhood conveniently.

Domestic shop physical locations, then, were best characterized as disaggregated throughout the borough, tending towards the more urban parts, with some street location patterns evident. These conclusions seem to verify the findings of Scola's study of Manchester, as well as Engels' observations and Roberts' remembrances of his Edwardian youth.⁴³ This diversity of shop locations, both in dispersal and in road location, is consistent with domestic shopkeeping's economic necessity to be convenient to their customers. Prior to the emergence of cheap mass transportation, the limited mobility of the working-class represented the major determinant in domestic shop location.⁴⁴ In the modern world of mass transportation by automobile, domestic shops have transformed themselves into "convenience" stores, no longer chiefly concerned with neighborhood custom, but rather serving anyone with a wide-range of common goods easily available in one location.

The distribution of shops along street-types also confirms the neighborhood basis of domestic shopkeeping. The street locations of two-thirds of domestic shopkeepers, in cross- and back-street shops, determined that their trade would be entirely local. As indicated by Engels for Manchester, most through-road

⁴³Scola, "Retailing in the Nineteenth-Century Town," pp. 164-165.

⁴⁴Wild and Shaw, "Locational Behaviour of Urban Retailing," 102.

domestic shopkeepers in the mid-nineteenth century would have depended upon the neighborhood behind the street, accessible by alley or cross street, for their custom. While a middle-class shopper might stop in a shop on a major thoroughfare or marketplace, only a lost or adventuresome one would find himself purchasing goods from a domestic shop on a cross or back street.

CHAPTER III

THE ECONOMICS OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING

Between 1830 and 1870, industrialization and unprecedented population growth brought many changes for the people of Lancashire towns. The economies of these industrial towns diversified and grew to match this industrial and demographic growth. One of the most significant of these economic changes involved a retailing revolution, especially in the food distribution system. Chapter Two has shown how Victorian Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale exhibited working-class communities scattered through the towns, and with them went the nearly ubiquitous domestic shopkeeper. This chapter details the role of domestic shopkeepers in the economy of these industrial Lancashire towns. Domestic shopkeepers filled a specific and distinct niche in the retailing spectrum. They specialized in selling small quantities of basic food and general household goods to their working-class neighbors, and granted retail credit to their customers. These economic ties bound domestic shopkeepers closely to their communities. Domestic shopkeepers complemented, rather than competed with, the other retailers of the industrial town: marketplace traders, itinerants, and principal shopkeepers in the grocery and provision trades.

Domestic shopkeepers, despite their unique place in the retailing world of the industrial town, faced many obstacles to economic success. Many domestic shops lasted only a short while, due in part to the nature of the economic ties

with their working-class customers as well the cyclical instability of the industrial economy as a whole. For many families, domestic shopkeeping represented a part-time, casual, or temporary means of employment. Domestic shopkeeping in the Victorian period era represented a continuation of the pre-industrial family or household income, and family members represented the only labor available for exploitation. As the household changed, so too would the economic fortunes of the domestic shop. The economic difficulties of domestic shopkeeping did not deter many from taking up the shop. Despite poor prospects for success, the ideal of economic independence represented by the domestic shop attracted many recruits to the shopkeeping ranks. Perhaps the chance to obtain a measure of economic independence, however small, was preferable to the acceptance of a dependent laboring income. Perhaps many families saw the domestic shop as a means of upward social mobility and a way to attain Victorian respectability. The image of domestic shopkeeping's relative independence seems to have been worth the risk of failure for many working-class families in nineteenth-century industrial Lancashire towns.

I. Domestic Shopkeepers and the Retailing Revolution

The time span of this study includes the period of the greatest expansion of small and domestic shopkeepers in urban Britain. There is much evidence to support the view that from 1830 until 1860, the number of small and domestic

shopkeepers in Lancashire towns increased dramatically. Based on trades directory listings, not only did the numbers of small shopkeepers increase, but often they did so faster in relation to their growing population.¹ The numbers of shopkeepers steadily increased until the 1860s, when there seems to have been a leveling off, both in raw numbers and in proportion to population. The greatest increases seem to have occurred between 1830 and 1860.

The historiography of the nineteenth-century retailing revolution supports the idea of a growing community of domestic shopkeepers. Confirming J. H. Clapham's general conclusions on the growing sophistication in the food trades before 1850, David Alexander found that trades directory evidence indicated an explosive growth in small shops throughout urban England in the period from 1820 to 1850, while growth in the "better class shop trade in groceries," meaning principal shops, was less significant.² Other historians have pushed the foundation of domestic shop retailing back into the late eighteenth century, if not earlier.³ These conclusions have modified the earlier views of James Jefferys and

¹See Tables 1.1 - 1.4 above.

²John H. Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol. 1, *The Early Railway Age, 1820-1850*, reprint (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, orig. 1926, repr. 1959), pp. 225-226; David Alexander, *Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution, 1820-1850* (London: The Athlone Press, 1970), pp. 97-99, 234.

³Roger Scola, *Feeding the Victorian City: The Food Supply of Manchester, 1770-1870*, ed. by W.A. Armstrong and Pauline Scola (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), pp. 256-258; Janet Blackman, "The Corner Shop: The Development of the Grocery and General Provisions Trade," Derek Oddy and Derek Miller (eds.), *The Making of the Modern British Diet* (London, Croom Helm, 1976), pp. 152-153, 155-159; Hoh-Cheung Mui and Lorna Mui, *Shops and Shopkeeping in Eighteenth-Century England* (London: Routledge, 1989), chapters 2 and 5 *passim*.

Dorothy Davis, who concluded that the entire retailing sector of the economy was underdeveloped until the latter nineteenth century.⁴

The growth in domestic shopkeeping appears to have been associated with the increasing consumer demand, based on rising population and increasing discretionary incomes, in the new towns. Domestic shopkeeping expanded along with other forms of retailing, including specialized grocery and provision trades, itinerant selling, and marketplaces. Rather than competing against these other retailers, domestic shopkeepers complemented them, adding to the diversity of Victorian retailing.⁵ This complementary aspect allowed for an increase in domestic shopkeepers without threatening other retailers. The English experience seems to correspond to that of other nations. Studies of retailing in cities in other developing countries reveal a similar continuum of change as metropolitan areas grew: from the dominance of periodic markets, to a system mixing markets and fixed-site shops, to dominance by shops.⁶ Victorian cotton towns, with active markets and many shops, seem to fit into the transitional stage of these conceptualizations.

In the Victorian era, Janet Blackman found that urban marketplaces dealt mostly in provisions, such as perishable meat, vegetables, and fruit, while shops

⁴James B. Jefferys, *Retail Trading in Britain, 1850-1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), *passim*; Dorothy Davis, *Fairs, Shops, and Supermarkets: A History of English Shopping* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1966), p. 252.

⁵Alexander, *Retailing in England*, p. 128.

⁶Peter Scott, *Geography and Retailing* (Chicago: Aldine Publishing, 1970), pp. 135-139.

retailed mostly non-perishable groceries, such as sugar and tea, basic household goods, such as soap and candles, and a few basic provisions, such as potatoes and bread. Markets also tended to sell in larger quantities, leaving the shop and itinerant traders to deal in smaller quantities.⁷ Joseph Crook, writing as "A Free Trader" in 1843, complained about the public subsidy of the "trades beginning with F: Fish, Flesh, Fowl and Fruit," since the Bolton corporate government funded the construction and maintenance of the Bolton New Market Place, where such provisions were sold, while other retailers received no such subsidy. Crook was apparently unaware of the role of public marketplaces in the distribution of fresh food. Marketplaces functioned as a wholesale outlet for shoppers as well as other retailers like domestic shopkeepers. Marketplaces also kept the sale of provisions away from already crowded streets and made distribution easier. An anonymous writer "X" echoed this point when he refuted Crook's *laissez-faire* argument the next week, on the grounds that both the general public and the shopkeepers were well-served by the new marketplace, since market carts could be moved off the streets.⁸ Joseph Nicholson, a Market Street domestic shopkeeper at the time, described marketing in Bolton before the new marketplace:

The business of the town, a great deal of which was carried on in the streets. . . In Churchgate. . . was the fish market. . . the farmers

⁷Blackman, "The Corner Shop," p. 151.

⁸*BFP*, February 25 and March 4, 1843. Crook apparently did not find the vending of vegetables in the market offensive to Free Trade principles. In March 25, 1843, editorial Crook attacked the public Gas Works monopoly.

had stands with butter, eggs and chickens for sale. The cheese market was held. . . the cheese being laid out in the street on the flags and partly on the road. . . On the opposite side of the road were the butchers stalls kept by notable men of Bolton who afterwards had stalls in the Market Hall. . . .⁹

As Nicholson noted, the building of the New Market gave the Bolton corporation the opportunity to move the marketing of fresh foods from the streets, relieving congestion from some of the busiest streets in the town. The main location for street marketing in Bolton was at the crucial crossroads of the town, the Deansgate-Churchgate intersection with Bradshawgate-Bank Street described in Chapter Two, Figure 2.1. Removing congestion here could only have been beneficial.

Itinerant traders, also known as hawkers, street-sellers, or costermongers, carried a large amount of the marketplace produce into the streets. Marketplace traders and larger producers exploited urban casual labor through street trading in order to increase the range of sales. The availability of cheap labor in the industrial towns of this era encouraged hawking.¹⁰ Itinerants complemented the other retailers, distributing marketplace goods throughout the town. Felix Folio's description of hawkers revealed a sympathy for the majority of honest and hard-working itinerants in industrial towns:

⁹Joseph Nicholson, "Shopping 70 Years Ago," *Bolton Journal*, May 14 and 28, 1909. Copy in BLS.

¹⁰Henry Mayhew, *Mayhew's London*, ed. by Peter Quennell (London: William Kimber, 1951, 1851), pp. 30-31; David R. Green, "Street Trading in London: A Case Study in Casual Labour, 1830-60," in James H. Johnson and Colin G. Pooley (eds.), *The Structure of Nineteenth-Century Cities* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), pp. 130-134; W. Hamish Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market, 1850-1914* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1981), pp. 94-101; John Benson, *The Penny Capitalists* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, Ltd., 1983), pp. 98-115.

For I have seen quite enough of hawkers to know that, whilst many of them earn money enough by imposition and fraud . . . to live well, and spend a great deal of money in intemperance and dissipation, there are many more who just manage, by hawking a few trifling articles from door to door, to keep themselves, and sometimes their families out of the workhouse. And it is for this reason that I cannot agree with the wailing cry of certain shopkeepers, who are continually grumbling and lamenting that these persons should be allowed to hawk, or stand with stalls in the streets, selling occasionally the same description of goods or wares that they do themselves. . . .¹¹

Hawkers did compete with domestic shopkeepers to a certain extent, through the sale of small quantities of necessities to a predominantly working-class clientele who had little money to spend at any given time. Folio reported that many of the "lower orders," the working poor, preferred buying from street-sellers. He suggested that hawkers sold goods more cheaply than shops, but the poor paid a much higher price for the quality of those goods, due to hawkers' innumerable deceitful practices.¹² Hawkets also did not possess domestic shopkeepers' other main retailing advantage, the granting of retail credit. Every retailer, whether hawker, marketplace-seller, domestic shopkeeper, or tradesman served a more-or-less distinct retail need within the Victorian urban community, with little overlapping of competition.

Despite these essential differences, domestic and principal shopkeepers sometimes viewed itinerants as a threat to their niches in the retailing world. Street-sellers gained a reputation for dishonesty, which shopkeepers did not

¹¹John Page [Felix Folio], *The Hawkers and Street Dealers of the North of England Manufacturing Districts*, 2d ed. (Manchester: Abel Heywood, 1858), p. 14.

¹²*Ibid.*, pp. 32-33; Mayhew, *Mayhew's London*, pp 96-97.

hesitate to emphasize to their customers.¹³ Borough police, exhorted by domestic shopkeepers and tradesmen, harassed hawkers for obstructing streets or violating public order with loud calls. But the most effective weapon used against itinerants, resulting from campaigns by town officials and encouraged by local merchants, required them to purchase and carry a hawking license.¹⁴ Robert Roberts recalled that at regular intervals Salford policemen rounded-up poor women hawking small items door-to-door without a licence. These poor hawkers were commonplace in Salford's streets, and incarcerated at nearby Strangeways prison.¹⁵ Folio thought that the actual number of itinerants amounted to at least five times the number of licensed hawkers. As Lancashire had nearly two thousand licensed hawkers according to the census of 1841, Folio's estimate would put at least ten thousand itinerants in Lancashire.¹⁶ According to one Parliamentary report, Lancashire accounted for over one-fourth of the total hawkers' licenses issued in 1840.¹⁷ Bolton alone had 150 adult hawkers and 30

¹³Page, *The Hawkers and Street Dealers*, pp. 18-19; Mayhew, *Mayhew's London*, pp. 64-65.

¹⁴Green, "Street Trading in London," pp. 141-142.

¹⁵Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 76.

¹⁶Page, *The Hawkers and Street Dealers*, p. 13.

¹⁷PP 1844 [123] XXXII, *Return of the Number of Hawkers Licensed in England, Scotland, and Ireland in Each of the Years 1800, 1810, 1820, 1830, 1840, and 1843*.

more under the age of 20 in 1851.¹⁸ Itinerants occupied a very prominent place in the industrial towns of Lancashire.

The various responses of public authorities to unlicensed hawking implied an assumption of respectability for domestic and principal shopkeepers, as rate-paying property-owners, that did not attach to itinerants. Bolton shopkeepers' complaints to borough magistrates resulted in the assignment of two borough policemen to check hawking licences, and make arrests for non-compliance.¹⁹ Prosperous shopkeepers in London waged a campaign against Sunday trading aimed at expelling hawkers.²⁰ "Localis" identified a number of complaints against itinerants in Bolton, and claimed it was "illegal trading":

Stocks of goods generally inferior, damaged, and imperfect, are often brought to town, and sold night after night by strangers, who do not contribute one six-pence towards the relief of the poor, the civil administration, or any of the charitable institutions of the town.²¹

Such a damning statement encompassed the respectable voice of rate-paying shop retailers, including domestic shopkeepers. Once again, Folio voiced his complaint against hawkers for escaping the rates:

. . . for, be it remembered, they escape all the other taxes, but local and general, which the shopkeeper has to pay, and to my own knowledge there are many hawkers who entirely elude the

¹⁸PP 1852-53 [1691-II] LXXXVIII, Pt. 2, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces, Volume 2*, pp. 124, 128.

¹⁹BFP, August 31 and December 7, 1839; May 13 and September 9, 1843; February 3, 1844.

²⁰Green, "Street Trading in London," pp. 142-151. Note that small shopkeepers were also targets of Sunday trading campaigns.

²¹BFP, May 22, 1841.

taxgatherer, and at the same time carry on a more extensive business than many shopkeepers, for whom there is no chance of exemption.²²

Despite all of these condemnations, the hawkers remained a visible and necessary part of the diverse urban economy of nineteenth-century industrial England.

Although impossible to calculate, some of these itinerants might have eventually joined the ranks of domestic shopkeepers. Domestic shopkeeping would have represented a step-up from hawking in social respectability and economic security, and the itinerant's familiarity with working-class economics would have made them ideal candidates for setting-up their own domestic shops.

Principal shopkeepers, including grocers, greengrocers, bakers, and provision dealers, often served as wholesalers to domestic shopkeepers.²³ Tradesmen and domestic shopkeepers complemented each other; though they sold many of the same goods, each had a distinct clientele. Domestic shopkeepers catered to working-class customers, while principal shopkeepers served middle-class customers. Alexander has suggested that the demands of small shopkeepers forced grocers to add wholesaling functions to their retail business.²⁴ Other evidence suggests that High Street grocers, provision dealers, and bakers welcomed domestic shopkeepers' wholesale business. Domestic

²²Page, *The Hawkers and Street Dealers*, p. 13.

²³Winstanley points out that the terminology dividing tradesmen from small shopkeeper began to emerge in the 1820s with Baines' directories. Michael Winstanley, *The Shopkeeper's World, 1830-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 9-15.

²⁴Alexander, *Retailing in England during the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 116-121.

shopkeepers' sales to the working class did not threaten the middle-class custom of principal shopkeepers, and no tradesman could resist an opportunity to increase sales. Thomas Lipton remembered urging his parents to expand their small grocery business, but it took a providential consignment of hams and bacon to provide the means to fulfill Lipton's dream of multiple store success. Lipton made £18 profit selling the pork to Glasgow's side-street shopkeepers.²⁵

Tradesmen's newspaper advertisements included notices of wholesale transactions with domestic shopkeepers for flour and groceries.²⁶ With the arrival of commercial travellers later in the century, tradesmen grocers began heated rivalries for domestic shopkeepers' business. One author has speculated that increasing centralization of distribution through grocery wholesaling, along with the provision of credit by commercial travellers, spurred a late Victorian and Edwardian era growth in the number of small shops.²⁷ Roberts' domestic shop attracted no less than eight competing grocery salesmen at one time.²⁸

Economic links between principal and domestic shopkeepers were not without risks. Tradesmen shared the pain of domestic shopkeepers' business

²⁵Thomas J. Lipton, *Lipton's Autobiography*, 2d ed. (New York: Duffield and Green, 1932), pp. 84-86.

²⁶*BFP*, October 24, 1840, and November 6, 1841.

²⁷Evidence of research by Myra Marsh from the industrial village of Denton, near Manchester, cited in W. R. Mitchell, *By Gum, Life Were Sparse: Memories of Northern Mill Towns* (London: Warner, 1991), p. 149.

²⁸Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), p. 142.

failures. During 1840s trade depression, Stockport flour and provision dealer Samuel Walker reported that,

I supply a great many small shopkeepers, who sell by retail to the operatives in their respective localities. These small shopkeepers are now very irregular in their payments, and their credit with me is almost annihilated; I have suffered great loss by some of them; it was only a fortnight ago that one of them failed, owing me £128.²⁹

Of course domestic shopkeepers also suffered from these wholesale arrangements.

On the eve of the Great War, one Birmingham registrar of the county court expressed sympathy for the domestic shopkeeper:

Being without capital, he drifts into the hands of one wholesale grocer to whom he always owes £15 or £20, a far larger sum than he can pay, the grocer thus securing the custom and preventing any disputes as to prices.³⁰

Domestic shopkeepers carried on trade in bread and sweets, bought in quantity from bakers and confectioners; they sold tea, sugar, coffee, and spices purchased from grocers; they sold bacon, milk, cheese, and butter purchased from provision shops.³¹ Domestic shopkeepers bore the burdens of working-class consumer credit, as well as supplying the small quantities necessitated by their customers' working-class incomes.

Tradesmen grocers and provision dealers, of course, had their own difficulties resolving the demands of their middle-class customers for credit. Even

²⁹PP 1842 [158] XXXV *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Population of Stockport*, p. 216.

³⁰W. H. Whitelock, "The Industrial Credit System and Imprisonment for Debt," *Economic Journal* 24 (March 1914): 34.

³¹Alexander, *Retailing in England*, pp. 116-125.

a High Street principal shopkeeper, represented by "A Shopkeeper," could complain of the economic distress caused by delayed payments from those who could easily afford to pay promptly.³² Selling goods to domestic shopkeepers on credit was probably common, as suggested by the fact that a great majority of the debt of bankrupt tradesmen grocers was in amounts below five pounds.³³ Even in the early twentieth century, domestic shopkeepers had to keep one step ahead of tradesmen creditors:

In the struggle for solvency corner-shop economics demanded a wily system of trading. My mother kept grocery travellers from two different wholesalers on what she gleefully called the 'hop'. . . By getting goods from all these, then settling with one until the others grew restive, she stretched her credit to the uttermost, a necessity in a shop with so many doubtful 'trust' customers.³⁴

The economic difficulties of domestic shopkeepers certainly made credit relationships with tradesmen suppliers a constant source of tension and even deception.

The post-1850 retailing revolution had little effect on the survival of the domestic shopkeepers. The diversity of retailing remained relatively constant until the 1920s. Department stores appealed almost exclusively to the middle class; cooperatives captured only about eight percent of the market, mostly among the "labour aristocracy" interested in the respectable thrift of cash-only purchases; and multiples, or chain stores, made inroads only in extensively advertised

³²*BFP*, January 4, 1840.

³³Alexander, *Retailing in England*, pp. 175-181.

³⁴Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 82-83.

specialized products such as Lipton's tea.³⁵ Even in 1931, British multiples and department stores accounted for only about one-fourth of retail outlets, while more than half were family-run shops with no paid shop assistants.³⁶ Domestic shops survived virtually intact well into the twentieth century because of their unique place in the economy of the working-class community. Consumer credit, small quantities, and working-class community relationships guaranteed a continued domestic shopkeeper presence in English towns.³⁷

II. Domestic Shopkeeping and the Economics of Working-Class Communities

Beginning in 1969, a group of sociologists, spurred by public concern that there was a crisis among small family businesses, conducted a study of small shopkeepers in Edinburgh. The findings of this study strongly echoed an era thought long-past. According to the study, a belief in the independence of shop life, even more than the desire to get ahead or earn a good living attracted working-class recruits to small shopkeeping. At that time, the failure rate among Edinburgh small shopkeepers over a one-year span was estimated at 20%,

³⁵Charles More, *The Industrial Age: Economy and Society in Britain, 1750-1985* (London: Longman, 1989), pp. 125-127; Winstanley, *The Shopkeeper's World*, pp. 33-39; Lipton, *Lipton's Autobiography*, pp. 109-115; Carl Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1880-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p. 74.

³⁶Data cited in Paul Johnson, *Saving and Spending: The Working Class Economy in Britain, 1870-1939* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), p. 145.

³⁷Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market*, pp. 85-86, 101-102; More, *The Industrial Age*, p. 126; Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 9, 81. Roberts (p. 83) mentions an interesting point about cooperative customers using their quarterly dividends to pay shop debts.

indicating the concerns that prompted the study. Small shopkeepers in the study suffered from poor capitalization, long working days with the burden of work placed almost entirely on the family, and an income about the same as a manual laborer. More than 50% of these shopkeepers had other sources of income. Surprisingly, the attraction of small shopkeeping was not diminished by past or present dismal economic prospects. The authors of the Edinburgh study remarked on the anachronistic aspects of their study of small family shopkeepers: "Theirs, it seems, is a freedom to establish an extraordinary form of self-exploitation. . . The small shop frequently is a family shop."³⁸ These results matched the informal results of a number of interviews with English shopkeepers conducted in the late 1960s:

The majority of shopkeepers came either from retailing families, or from working-class or lower middle-class backgrounds. To them, shopkeeping is a means of upward social mobility. They are 'their own boss'. The fact that they have few holidays, long hours, and sometimes a very low income does not worry them.³⁹

Domestic shopkeepers in both contemporary and Victorian eras operated on very small margins. Using their own families as cheap labor, they paid small rents and owned even less capital equipment, but faced fierce competition in prices which forced them to ruthlessly control costs by working longer hours.⁴⁰

³⁸Frank Bechofer et al., "Small Shopkeepers: Matters of Money and Meaning," *Sociological Review* 22, 4 (n.s.)(November 1974): 473-474, 479, and *passim*.

³⁹Grenville Havenhand, *Nation of Shopkeepers* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1970), pp. 164-165.

⁴⁰Alexander, *Retailing in England*, pp. 173-174.

The supposed anachronism of modern small shopkeepers would not have been lost on Edwardian domestic shopkeepers, fifty years after the central focus of this study, and fifty years prior to the Edinburgh study. The elder Robert Roberts, weary of a working-man's dependence and obviously encouraged by the success of two shopkeeping brothers-in-law, invested in a domestic shop.⁴¹ Though the Roberts' shop was ultimately a success, a string of conspicuous fiascos resulted when other working-class families opened such shops in the Roberts' neighborhood:

By entering into any business at all a man and his family grew at once in economic status, though social prestige accrued much more slowly. Fiascos were common; again and again one noticed in the district pathetic attempts to set up shops in private houses by people who possessed only a few shillings' capital and no experience. After perhaps only three weeks one saw their hopes collapse, often to the secret satisfaction of certain neighbours who, in the phrase of the times, 'hated to see folk trying to get on'.⁴²

John Wade, reformist political philosopher, identified domestic shopkeepers in his "Political Economy" as members of the working class, since their gain was,

. . . little more than the fair wages of labour received for the trouble of standing behind the counter, and for weighing, dividing, and measuring out commodities in quantities suited to the buyer. . . The great apparent profit charged on their goods by keepers of chandler-shops, and those in what is called a general line of business, is more properly the wages of labour necessary to compensate them for trouble and loss of time in weighing and measuring out their articles in the small quantities required by their customers.⁴³

⁴¹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 15.

⁴²Ibid., p. 19.

⁴³[John Wade], *History of the Middle and Working Classes*, reprint (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, orig. 1833, repr. 1966), pp. 175-176, 189.

Perhaps domestic shopkeepers were even closer to the working class than Wade speculated. Even in Edwardian Birmingham, a domestic shop represented the working-class dream:

They [domestic shopkeepers] form a favourite investment with the working man, who is induced to lay out his savings in the purchase of such a business on the representation that it is a little gold-mine, which can be easily worked by his wife.⁴⁴

Domestic shopkeepers were intimate members of their working-class communities, with a number of economic and social ties to the working people of the industrial town. These ties to community represent a crucial aspect of the role of domestic shopkeeping in urban Lancashire. Such social ties receive more discussion in the next chapter, but the economic links between domestic shopkeepers and their working-class customers deserve a thorough examination here.

In a letter critical of Chartist disruptions of public meetings during the 1841 trade depression, small shopkeeper William Taylor identified himself with the suffering of his working-class community:

[He is motivated to write] by an earnest and sincere wish for the social, moral, and political improvement of the labouring portion of the community, of which I myself am one, . . . In addition to being myself a sufferer, the nature of my employment brings me in contact with upwards of two hundred families of the poorer classes every week. . . .⁴⁵

⁴⁴Whitlock, "The Industrial Credit System," p. 33.

⁴⁵*BFP*, October 9, 1841.

Three teenaged children of one Ashton small shopkeeper worked as powerloom weavers. Of the ex-mule spinners in the Ashton area in the early 1840s, sixty-one had taken up some form of small shopkeeping.⁴⁶ In a case involving a thirteen-year old son of a "Mrs. Jane Scott," the factory inspector refused to certify the boy for factory work as a hardship case, and reported to the public:

P.S. It turns out that this "poor widow" is, in fact, the wife of Michael McGuire, who works at Mr. Hick's foundry. They are living about the fourth door down Taylor Brow, and keep a provision shop.⁴⁷

These examples show the integration of shops into working-class communities, and also show how these communities sometimes considered domestic shopkeeping a casual source of income supplementing waged labor, a more respectable income source than manual labor. Domestic shopkeeping was often insufficient to support a family; Roberts described the privations of his Edwardian domestic shopkeeping family when his father's engineering income was not available.⁴⁸

The Bolton directories for 1861 and 1871 provide unusual evidence suggesting that small shopkeeping often accompanied other employment, especially beer-selling and other retailing, as well as a variety of artisanal working-class occupations such as joinery, clogmaking, and brushmaking. In these Bolton

⁴⁶Cited in Robert G. Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics in Ashton-Under-Lyne 1830-1860," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1991), p. 94.

⁴⁷*BFP*, September 7, 1844.

⁴⁸Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 92.

directories, 14% of small shopkeepers in 1861, and 17% in 1871, have other occupations listed. Trades directories rarely listed a person with multiple occupations, and only listed occupations for heads of households. Evidence of multiple sources of income demonstrates that often small shopkeeping was a casual or supplementary occupation for the entire household. This evidence also illustrates the familial nature of the small shop. While the head of the household could work in another occupation, the rest of the family could watch the small shop. Nearly all of the non-retailing occupations for these trades directories' households could be considered working-class, with the possible exceptions of an accountant, an artist, a farmer, and a teacher of French, though this last multi-talented individual was also a toymaker. Table 3.1 contains a compilation of Bolton small shopkeepers with more than one occupational listing.

Census records for 1851 show an even greater reliance by domestic shopkeeping households on other sources of income. Census records detail the distribution of labor in a domestic shopkeeping household beyond the head of household, unlike the more limited trades directory listings. Comparing data from 1851 census records of Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale reveals a great deal of information on domestic shopkeeping economics. The family shop meant a family income. Employment of family members, including spouses, children and other relatives living in the same household, beyond the shop indicated a necessity for such income. Domestic shopkeepers' households that included lodgers, with the

Table 3.1: Bolton Small Shopkeepers with Additional Occupations, 1861 and 1871.

	1861	1870-71
Total Number of Small Shopkeepers	456	465
Number of Small Shopkeepers with Other Listed Occupations	65	79
Beer-Retailer	26	15
Artisan	20	28
Other Retailer	19	29
Other Occupation	2	10

SOURCES: *Drake's Commercial Directory of Bolton. . . for 1861* (Sheffield: E. S. Drake, [1861]); *The Bolton and District Directory for 1870-71. . .* (Bolton: J. Worrall, [1870]).

NOTE: In 1861, two small shopkeepers had two additional listings; in 1870-71, three small shopkeepers had two additional listings.

Artisan occupations included: toolmaker, clogger, cooper, cabinetmaker, brushmaker, tailor, stonemason, umbrella-maker, boot and shoemaker, counterpane manufacturer, artist, plasterer, joiner and builder, blacksmith, toymaker, overlooker, flymaker, mechanic, engine tender, whitesmith, coppersmith, turner, and blacking manufacturer.

Other Retailer occupations included: rag dealer, victualler, stationer, baker, fishmonger, coal dealer, travelling draper, draper, butter dealer, clothes dealer, fent dealer, bone dealer, general dealer, hardware dealer, bowl dealer, fruiterer, hairdresser, newsagent, and earthenware dealer.

Other Occupations included: house agent, teacher of french, postman, cart owner, undertaker, warehouseman, accountant, and farmer.

exception of domestic servants, indicated a need for an additional income source. Comparing the three towns in 1851, Table 3.2 shows that over eighty percent of Ashton domestic shopkeeper households had additional sources of income, and nearly fifty percent of Bolton and Rochdale domestic shopkeeper households needed additional income.

In all three towns, most of the additional income resulted from other forms of family employment, rather than from taking in lodgers. Working-class occupations represented the majority of this other employment. Twenty-two Bolton heads of domestic shopkeeper households had other occupations, including four beersellers, five artisans, seven other retailers, and six other occupations, including one prostitute. Bolton domestic shopkeepers' spouses who had other occupations recorded included one beerseller (a husband), fourteen artisans (two wives, twelve husbands), three other retailers (two wives, one husband), and one farm laborer (a husband). In addition, five wives of domestic shopkeepers were also listed as domestic shopkeepers.⁴⁹ Sixty-seven percent, or 91 out of 136, of Bolton's domestic shopkeepers' children with recorded occupations worked as artisans, while fifty-four percent, 33 out of 61, of other related children in domestic shopkeeper households worked as artisans.

Surprisingly, these results resemble the findings of the Edinburgh study of 120 years later. Does this parallel explain their discovery of a strain of

⁴⁹Ten Bolton domestic shopkeeper's wives had occupations recorded as "housekeeper," "shopkeeper's wife," and "domestic duties." A discussion of these census occupations follows in Chapter Five. These occupations were ignored for the purposes of this discussion.

Table 3.2: Domestic Shopkeeper Households With Other Sources of Income, 1851.

	Ashton	Bolton	Rochdale
Number of Shopkeeper Households	77	225	175
Other Family Employment (A)	58 (75.3%)	91 (40.4%)	81 (46.3%)
Lodgers (B)	14 (18.2%)	38 (16.9%)	17 (9.7%)
Both A and B (C)	10 (13.0%)	18 (8.0%)	11 (6.3%)
Neither A nor B (D)	15 (19.5%)	114 (50.7%)	88 (50.3%)
Total (A+B+D-C)	77 (100.0%)	225 (100.0%)	175 (100.0%)

SOURCES: HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246.

NOTE: Lodgers do not include domestic servants. Numbers do not include "Visitors."

traditionalism among late-twentieth century small shopkeepers? Perhaps the economics of domestic shopkeeping represent the continuation of a pre-industrial conception or necessity of a family or household economy. Have many people assumed that industrialization and the male-breadwinner image has destroyed this household economy? This conjunction of home and business has not gone unnoticed, and Alexander's study of small shops in the early decades of the nineteenth century assumed that the household economy of domestic shops represented a traditionalist holdover from an earlier craft tradition.⁵⁰

The survival of two sets of ratebooks for Great and Little Bolton from 1831 and 1837 enables another examination of the relative prosperity of small shopkeepers.⁵¹ Table 3.3 summarizes the rateable value of small shops for Bolton in the 1830s. Properties were assessed local taxes, or rates, based on the value or income the property would produce or cost annually, and these rateable values corresponded closely to yearly rents. Table 3.4 provides evidence from a number of contemporary studies of working-class rents in the 1830s and 1840s. These studies recorded average or sample rents of working-class housing, which one study defined as "all those [inhabitants] below the rank of shopkeepers."⁵²

⁵⁰Alexander, *Retailing in England*, p. 185-189.

⁵¹The cause of the rating differences between Little and Great Bolton shops is unclear; perhaps it was due to differences in rating practices, or in general property values, between the two parts of the town.

⁵²Manchester Statistical Society (ed.), *Report of a Committee of the Manchester Statistical Society on the Condition of the Working Classes in an Extensive District in 1834, 1835, and 1836* (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, 1838), pp. ii, x, 5.

Table 3.3: Small Shopkeeper Property Values, Great and Little Bolton, 1831 and 1837

	Great Bolton	Little Bolton
Median Rateable Value, 1831	£6 15s 0d (N = 28)	£5 11s 4d (N = 11)
Median Rateable Value, 1837	£15 0s 0d (N = 46)	£10 0s 0d (N = 27)

SOURCE: Poor Rate Books, Great and Little Bolton, 1831 and 1837. PRO.

Table 3.4: Examples of Working-Class Annual Rents in Nearby Industrial Towns, 1830s and 1840s

Town and Year	Annual Rent
(a) Manchester, 1833	£9 2s 0d
(b) Manchester/Salford, c. 1835	£7 11s 8d
(c) Bury, c. 1835	£6 1s 2d
(d) Ashton/Stalybridge, c. 1835	£6 14s 3d
(e) Manchester, 1836	£9 15s 0d
(f) Dukinfield, 1836	£8 13s 4d
(g) Manchester, 1841	£7 16s 0d
(h) Dukinfield, 1841	£6 18s 8d
(i) Ashton, 1843	£9 2s 0d

SOURCES: (a) John Burnett, *A Social History of Housing, 1815–1985*, 2d ed. (London: Methuen, 1986), p. 76; (b, c, d) Manchester Statistical Society (ed.), *Report of a Committee of the Manchester Statistical Society on the Condition of the Working Classes in an Extensive District in 1834, 1835, and 1836* (Manchester: Manchester Statistical Society, 1838), pp. ii, x; (e, f, g, h) William Neild, "Comparative Statement of the Income and Expenditure of Certain Families of the Working Classes of Manchester and Dukinfield, in the years 1836 and 1841," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 4 (January 1842): pp. 323–332; (i) John Ross Coulthart, *A Report of the Sanatory Condition of the Town of Ashton-under-Lyne* (Ashton: Luke Swallow, 1844), p. 33.

NOTE: In all cases where the data was presented in weekly rents, they have been converted to yearly sums.

While these working-class rents did not meet the £10 voting qualification, or the small shop valuations from Table 3.3, they were not much lower either. The rateable values of small shops in 1831 were quite close to the rents paid by working-class families. By 1837, small shopkeepers' rateable property values had climbed substantially, while working-class housing rents had changed little. Perhaps shop property valuations increased to ensure shop owners of voting qualifications, £10 for Parliamentary and borough voting. The rateable values of eleven Bolton small shopkeepers, six in Great Bolton and five in Little Bolton, who appeared in both 1831 and 1837 rating books, had doubled between 1831 and 1837. This comparison nevertheless demonstrates that many working-class families could probably afford domestic shops. These shops would have had an outward appearance similar to working-class housing, and so would have fit quite well in working-class neighborhoods. Charles Booth's study of London poverty, based on the number of persons per room, placed the "general shop-keepers" on the same level of crowding with cabinet-makers, boot- and shoe-makers, and blacksmiths.⁵³ Domestic shops continued to be affordable for many working-class incomes into the Edwardian era. Charles Booth found a London shop which

⁵³Charles Booth, "Crowding and Apparent Poverty," reprint, ed. by Harold W. Pfautz, *Charles Booth On the City: Physical Pattern and Social Structure, Selected Writings* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, orig. 1902-03, repr. 1967), pp. 256-264.

could be taken up for 40s in fixtures, and a weekly rent of 3s 6d.⁵⁴ The Roberts' Salford domestic shop was started with a £40 loan.⁵⁵

If shopkeeping was well within the economic reach of many working-class Victorians, small and domestic shopkeepers found themselves subjected to a number of economic challenges, which stemmed from their working-class locations and clientele. Shop robbery was a constant problem in the Bolton Borough Court, and nearly all reported cases resulted in the conviction of some or all defendants. Most of the losses were less than a pound, some less than a shilling, but these shopkeepers operated on the narrowest of retail margins, and any loss was potentially disastrous.⁵⁶ Fraud, or claiming credit on false pretenses, particularly roused small and domestic shopkeepers' ire, since such fraud struck directly at customer credit, one of the shop's chief reason for existence. The *Bolton Free Press* reported a man named Oldham, with a woman and child in tow, had practiced such frauds in Blackburn, ". . . and was suspected to have come to Bolton to exercise the same disgraceful practice."⁵⁷ Sarah Howarth was convicted of fraud for obtaining credit three times at the small shop of William Hart, and then re-selling the items received on credit. Though

⁵⁴Cited in Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market*, p. 103. The annual rent for this shop was therefor £9 2s 0d.

⁵⁵Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 15.

⁵⁶Between 1840 and 1844, the *Bolton Free Press* reported sixteen cases of shop robbery heard by the Borough Court; in 1857, the *Bolton Chronicle* reported five cases of shop robbery heard by the Borough Court.

⁵⁷*BFP*, September 7, 1839.

middle-aged and claiming to have been deserted by her husband, and thus desperate, Howarth was committed for trial.⁵⁸ Catherine Dagnall, claiming a non-existent working husband and two working children, defrauded shopkeeper James Cheetham of Bury of 11s 2d of goods, and was committed to trial.⁵⁹ The Bury Court of Requests ordered William Rostron, a sawyer, to begin paying his £2 4s debt to shopkeeper Alice Howarth, or face imprisonment.⁶⁰

Domestic and small shopkeepers refused to prosecute some cases of petty crime, particularly when committed by youths or women. Though a young James Calderbank was caught with a stolen four-pound loaf of bread from the domestic shop of Betsy Challinor, she refused to prosecute and the case was dismissed.⁶¹ Esther Chadwick found goods stolen from her domestic shop in the room of her lodger, Ellen Harrison, but Chadwick refused to prosecute the case and Harrison was cautioned from the bench.⁶² Ann Carroll refused to press robbery charges against Sarah Walsh for stealing one-and-one-half pounds of butter, though the magistrates reprimanded Walsh. Walsh had three young children, and thanked both Carroll and the court for their leniency.⁶³ Small shopkeepers were not always lenient to young till robbers; in two separate cases, borough courts

⁵⁸*BFP*, January 18, 1840.

⁵⁹*BC*, July 25, 1857.

⁶⁰*BFP*, October 5, 1844.

⁶¹*BFP*, December 21, 1844.

⁶²*BC*, July 18, 1857.

⁶³*BC*, June 6, 1857.

committed two young men, one each in Bury and Bolton, to two months in prison.⁶⁴

Small and domestic shops were also convenient places to pass debased coins, a popular form of counterfeiting with a metallic currency. In two cases, small shopkeepers received base shillings for two-penny loaves of bread.⁶⁵ The Bolton Borough Court committed Margaret O'Neil for trial in 1853 on a charge of passing a bad six-pence coin at the domestic shop of Mrs. Ann Holden in Deansgate and a bad shilling at Mrs. Sharples' domestic shop in Hotel Street.⁶⁶ A young Joseph Pulling was released on a promise to leave Bolton after being caught attempting to pass a base half-crown at Richard Greenhaulgh's small shop on Lever Street.⁶⁷ Elizabeth Hagle attempted to pass the same base half-crown in two shops in Bury for small amounts of groceries, 5d and 3½d respectively; both shopkeepers, and the mint, refused to prosecute her.⁶⁸

Bolton's shopkeepers found themselves at the center of a short war of letters to the editor over gold coins that might be light weight, with some gold shaved off and then restruck. "Q" wrote to the editor of the *Bolton Free Press* to complain that a shopkeeper had charged three of his workers 2d to change a gold sovereign, and that he knew of many similar instances. "A Lover of Fair Play"

⁶⁴BC, February 21, and April 11, 1857.

⁶⁵BFP, October 12, 1842; July 26, 1844.

⁶⁶BC, January 1 and 8, 1853.

⁶⁷BC, August 22, 1857.

⁶⁸BC, April 2 and 9, 1857.

defended the interests of shopkeepers who discounted the value of the so-called "light gold" coins, claiming that,

Some of these workmen probably owe *shop scores*, and to pay these the light gold is again tendered, and the small shopkeepers in most instances *dare* not refuse it, for the best of all possible reasons — ie. they must either have that or nothing.⁶⁹

"Lover" also noted that banks typically charged 6d for changing a light sovereign, and 4d for a light half-sovereign, and asked that if "Q" were so concerned about his workers, why did "Q" not pay his wages in silver?⁷⁰

Small and domestic shopkeepers faced many other economic challenges. A crackdown on weights and balances in Bolton resulted in thirteen small shopkeeper convictions for defective scales and incorrect weights in the first six months of 1844, as reported by the *Bolton Free Press*. A half-century later, the Roberts' domestic shop narrowly escaped paying a penalty on their chronically out-of-balance scales. A number of Boltonian small shopkeepers charged for incorrect scales and balances made the same claim as Roberts' mother — no deception of customers was intended, but balances and scales were notorious for needing constant adjustment. Adjusting scales and balances required taking the machine to the inspector's office for adjustment, at the expense of sales and inconvenience.⁷¹ One small shopkeeper was fined twenty shillings and costs for

⁶⁹*BFP*, February 3, 1844. Italics in original.

⁷⁰*BFP*, January 27, and February 3, 10, and 17, 1844.

⁷¹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 106-107.

selling sugar by quantity, rather than weight.⁷² Nearly a score of shopkeepers in Rochdale in 1842 were convicted of selling underweight candles. The case of the underweight candles was important enough to be deliberated by the Bolton Town Council in 1844. Domestic shopkeepers sold candles by quantity, in lots of twelve or sixteen, rather than by the pound as required by law. Councillor Joseph Skelton complained that similar illegal sales occurred in soap and sugar. The Mayor announced that the Council had no authority to force customers to purchase by weight, only to regulate weights through the borough inspector.⁷³ It seems that domestic shopkeepers circumvented the law regarding candles, soap, and sugar in order to provide the necessary small quantities their working-class customers needed and could afford.

Small and domestic shopkeepers were also vulnerable to unscrupulous dealers. Four cases in Bolton describe some of the hazards of retailing. One small shopkeeper bought a bad side of bacon, but the court reluctantly refused to convict the bacon supplier, since it was not a "public offering for sale." Similar circumstances and results applied to domestic shopkeeper Ann Crompton's purchase, from a good sample, of 8 cart loads of mostly rotten potatoes, a loss estimated at £1 12s. Several shops were raided in 1844 by the borough inspector, who seized cooked meat sold as "joules," provided by a dealer in Deansgate, which were in fact "slink veal" and declared unwholesome by the inspector.

⁷²*BFP*, May 13, 1843.

⁷³*BFP*, June 4, 1842; February 17, 1844.

Doubtless Bolton authorities felt that boiled pig's cheeks were a more proper working-class food than the parings from a pig's back. The news report passed over the implications of this case for the quality of the working-class diet, and instead exhorted shopkeepers, "not be too indolent to *boil their own cheeks*."

Once again, the costs of compliance with the law fell on small shopkeepers, rather than the suppliers of bad goods.⁷⁴ A decade later, Bolton's borough court fined small shopkeeper Charles Grimshaw 40s plus 10s court costs for selling diseased bacon, while his supplier, Francis Wooley, lost 20s plus 10s court costs and suffered one month's imprisonment at hard labor.⁷⁵ Fifty years later, Mrs. Roberts continued to be especially careful when purchasing meats and cheeses, lest they go bad too soon for sale. Mrs. Roberts would have nothing to do with cheating her customers in quality, and her shop would absorb any such losses.⁷⁶

Domestic shopkeepers also participated, however unintentionally, in some of the abuse of their working-class customers, through the sale of adulterated food. This tactic concerned many Victorian observers, and domestic shopkeepers received a share of the criticism for this practice. Friedrich Engels echoed the typically harsh condemnation of the extent of adulteration and its costs to workers, but also included a hint of sympathy for the plight of domestic shopkeepers as well:

⁷⁴*BFP*, July 22 and December 16, 1843; August 24, 1844. Italics in original.

⁷⁵*BC*, October 17 and 24, 1857.

⁷⁶Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 113.

But the poor, the working-people, to whom a couple of farthings are important, who must buy many things with little money, who cannot afford to inquire too closely into the quality of their purchases, and cannot do so in any case because they have had no opportunity of cultivating their taste — to their share fall all the adulterated, poisoned provisions. They must deal with the small retailers, must buy perhaps on credit, and these small retail dealers who cannot sell even the same quality of goods so cheaply as the largest retailers, because of their small capital and the large proportional expenses of their business, must knowingly or unknowingly buy adulterated goods in order to sell at the lower prices required, and to meet the competition of others.⁷⁷

The poorest suffered most from purchasing adulterated goods, both in economic and physical costs, especially given the overall poverty of their diet.⁷⁸ The *Lancet's* investigations of the extent of food adulteration revealed an interesting phenomenon. In addition to publishing the results of their investigations, in a typically Victorian attitude of public service, *Lancet* noted the locations of the places where adulterated food was purchased. Many prominent London tradesmen were revealed as responsible for adulterating their own goods.⁷⁹ Some hawkers practiced similarly harmful deceptions on their working-class customers, such as the boiling of oranges to improve their color.⁸⁰ Since few domestic shopkeepers had the necessary time, effort, or facilities for grinding

⁷⁷Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, reprint (Moscow: Progress Publishers, orig. 1892, repr. 1973), p. 110.

⁷⁸John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England from 1815 to the Present Day* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), pp. 87, 88-89.

⁷⁹The *Lancet* investigations began in 1851, and continued for a few years. The earliest publications of the results of these investigations in 1851 included the adulteration of coffee, *Lancet*, January 4, pp. 21-26, and April 26, pp. 465-471; green tea, *Ibid.*, August 30, pp. 210-213; and bread, *Ibid.*, April 12, pp. 419-425, October 25, pp. 398-400, and November 8, pp. 445-446.

⁸⁰Page, *The Hawkers and Street Dealers*, p. 33; Mayhew, *Mayhew's London*, p. 96.

coffee, baking bread, or other food preparation, they relied upon their tradesmen suppliers for such services, and instead concentrated on the distribution of appropriate working-class quantities. Thus domestic shopkeepers unwittingly passed the costs of adulteration on to their customers.

Along with the adulteration of food, Victorian public health concerns included the use of opiates on young children. Domestic shopkeepers were among the most prominent suppliers of "Godfrey" or "Godfrey's Cordial," a common name for these opiate syrups, which they sold in their typical small quantities. These drugs could result in death for the children of working women, as happened to the infant son of Mary Ann O'Hara, a single Irish mother in Bolton in 1845. Betty Entwistle kept the infant while the mother worked, and bought a paregoric, an opium-based syrup, from domestic shopkeeper James Hardiker. Hardiker testified before the borough coroner that Entwistle regularly bought one pence worth of his syrup, $\frac{1}{4}$ ounce, per week. Hardiker added that he bought the paregoric ingredients from a local druggist. The coroner sternly cautioned both Entwistle and Hardiker against their respective practices involving opiates, since neither had broken the law.⁸¹ Such opiates were widely used throughout the cotton districts, and vended chiefly through domestic shops. One

⁸¹*BFP*, March 8, 1845.

investigator estimated one-half of all working-class children were subjected to the practice.⁸²

Sunday trading was also a prominent issue in Bolton. Along with a continuous crackdown on public houses and beershops, sabbatarians naturally targeted small and domestic shops for Sunday retailing. Seven Little Bolton small shopkeepers were cautioned and fined two shillings court costs by the Borough Court in 1840 for violating the sabbath. The Watch Committee of the Bolton Town Council issued a report favoring the relief of weary domestic shopkeepers, as they kept hours after midnight on Saturday, only to open again at noon on Sunday. Though no action was taken, the *Bolton Free Press* received a number of letters questioning the necessity of persecuting these shops. One author castigated the public authorities for ". . . too much of a puritanical spirit. . . ." In two cases of apparent Sunday trading by small shopkeepers in 1845, Bolton's magistrates dismissed one case due to lack of evidence and the other because the sale of bread, butter, and other goods was permitted under statute as necessary items.⁸³

⁸²Coulthart, *A Report of the Sanatory Condition of the Town of Ashton-Under-Lyne*, pp. 21-23; PP 1845 [610] XVIII, Lyon Playfair, "Report on the Sanatory Condition of Large Towns in Lancashire," *Second Report of the Commissioners for Inquiring into the State of Large Towns and Populous Districts*, Appendix, pt. II, pp. 61-67; Jules Ginswick (ed.), *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales, 1849-51: The Letters to The Morning Chronicle*, vol 1., *Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire* (Totowa, N.J.: Frank Cass, 1983), p. 53, 55-56.

⁸³*BFP*, October 3, 1840; August 17 and 24, 1844; January 4 and 25, February 1, 1845.

III. *Small Quantities and Credit*

Domestic shopkeepers' economic place in the diverse retailing world of Victorian Britain rested on two foundations. These shops provided the working-class family with the credit necessary to purchase groceries in accordance with their ability. Secondly, these shops provided the necessary small quantities, usually by the ounce, to match the working family's ability to purchase and consume groceries. Small quantities and credit were inextricably linked together. Angus Reach summarized the *raison d'être* of the shopkeepers' economy, and the underlying economic relationship between shopkeepers and their working-class customers, in mid-Victorian Manchester:

I have taken some pains to ascertain in what way the mill operatives conduct the purchase of the tea and sugar which form so large a portion of their nourishment. I find that these are very generally purchased in pennyworths in small chandler's shops. The customers commonly buy on credit, paying on Saturday night for what they have had during the previous week; but frequently requiring longer trust. They are always very particular in having a good pennyworth — that is having the draught of the scale in their favour; so that, with the credit demanded and the risk run, the profit of the vendor would be small indeed, were it not that he usually sells at 6s. a lb tea which the regular dealer sells at 4s. a lb. Thus the poor mill operatives pay higher by 33 per cent for their tea than their masters.⁸⁴

Hence the relationship between domestic shopkeepers and their customers was an ambivalent one. The increased costs to the customers due to small quantities

⁸⁴Ginswick, *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales, 1849-1851*, vol. 1, p. 79.

balanced against the domestic shopkeepers' costs of the division of quantity and the provision of credit.⁸⁵

A great deal of a domestic shopkeeper's work consisted of meeting their customer's need for the daily purchase of goods. One Victorian observer concerned with the problems of poverty noted that

The poor, partly of necessity, partly by habit, make their purchases in minute quantities. A single family has been known to make seventy-two distinct purchases of tea within seven weeks, and the average purchases of a number of poor families for the same period amounted to twenty-seven. The groceries are bought largely by the ounce, their meat or fish by the half-penn'orth, their coal by the cwt., or even by the lb.

While concerned for the poor, John Hobson continued by absolving domestic shopkeepers of much of the blame for such a system:

Undoubtedly they [the poor] pay for these morsels a price which, if duly multiplied, represents a much higher sum than their wealthier neighbours pay for a much better article. But the small shopkeeper has a high rent to pay; he has a large number of competitors, so that the total of his business is not great; the actual labour of dispensing so many minute portions is large; he is often himself a poor man, and must make a large profit on small turnover in order to keep going; he is not infrequently kept waiting for his money, for the amount of credit small shopkeepers will give to regular customers is astonishing.⁸⁶

From his boyhood, Robert Blatchford remembered the costs to the poor of small quantities:

⁸⁵Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives*, pp. 73-74.

⁸⁶John A. Hobson, *Problems of Poverty: An Inquiry Into the Industrial Condition of the Poor* (London: Methuen, 1891), pp. 11-12.

I know all about those small purchases, and big prices. . . I have gone out many a time to buy a quarter of an ounce of tea and a farthing's worth of milk. They taught stern lessons in my school.⁸⁷

Helen Forrester remembered walking miles to a shop which would divide a two-penny half-pound package of margarine into one-penny quarter-pound sales.⁸⁸

Domestic shopkeepers bore the costs of serving small quantities to those who could only afford small costs, and made their living upon the profits of such sales. A one pound jar of jam, bought for six pence, sold for one penny per ounce, a profit of 167% on the whole jar.⁸⁹

The ambivalence of this relationship between domestic shopkeeper and customer could result in hostility on both sides, as Blatchford intimated above. Even in a close-knit pre-war Jewish community like the Rothschild Buildings, tensions between domestic shopkeepers and their customers erupted in harsh words and actions. Residents often purchased fish, pickles, jam, and milk in small quantities, often one penny's worth, a "penn'orth," while supplying their own containers. Some residents claimed neighborhood domestic shopkeepers Israel Garfinkle and Anne Levy cheated on the books, as well as the quality of their goods, while other residents were more sympathetic to the plight of the local domestic shopkeeper. Neighborhood customer sympathies and antipathies

⁸⁷Robert Blatchford, *Merrie England*, reprint (New York: Monthly Review Press, orig. 1894, repr. 1966), pp. 52-53.

⁸⁸cited in Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives*, p. 64.

⁸⁹Ibid.

revolved around loyalties to a particular domestic shopkeeper.⁹⁰ In the Edwardian Salford domestic shop, absolute honesty was the rule for Mrs. Roberts, but Mr. Roberts' measures depended upon his mood. The Roberts refused to sell less than two ounces of meat or cheese at a purchase, despite demands by their poorer customers, claiming too much loss in division. Even so, Roberts' shop sold half-penny's worth, "ha'porths," of bread, tea, and sugar, though they refused to split a tin of two herring.⁹¹

Working-class customers relied on small portions and daily purchases for reasons other than poverty. All adult members of the industrial working-class family worked, if possible, leaving little time and energy for any extensive cooking; only the main Sunday meal involved cooking, usually a pie or stew in a single pot.⁹² The extravagance of Sunday meals stood in stark contrast to much more meager meals on Thursday and Friday, as the weekly pay cycle clashed with the necessary daily purchase of food.⁹³ Conditions in the typical working-class house did not encouraged food storage or preparation. The example of one entire family suffering from food poisoning, due to a leftover pie spoiling overnight, was not lost on the rest of the working-class housewives. The daily purchase of food

⁹⁰Cited in Jerry White, *Rothschild Buildings: Life in an East End Tenement Block, 1887-1920* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1980), pp. 109-114.

⁹¹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 105.

⁹²Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, pp. 33-34; Eunice M. Schofield, "Food and Cooking of the Working Class about 1900," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire for the Year 1971* 123 (1972): 154.

⁹³Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 37-39, 47-48.

also represented one additional way that mothers could save money, by only having enough food on hand for each day's meals. One frugal mother fed a family of twelve on six pence, purchasing ½ pound of meat, a half-penny of herbs, a penny's worth of suet, and 1½ penny's worth of potatoes.⁹⁴

Few homes had sufficient safe food storage places, and cooking facilities tended to an open coal pit with a grate, as cast-iron gas or coal ranges cost too much for working-class families until the later Victorian period.⁹⁵ Many working-class families could not afford cooking utensils beyond a pot or two, a frying pan, and a kettle. Bread remained a staple of the working-class diet, mostly due to its convenience.⁹⁶ Even so, working-class families could hardly afford much ready-to-eat food beyond cooked meat and bread, and so most meals needed some kind of preparation.⁹⁷ Typical daily meals involved little cooking beyond boiling potatoes, toasting bread, and frying bacon.⁹⁸ One Edwardian wife discovered that mice would cross the length of her one-room home on a drying line during the night to reach any food leftover, no matter how well-covered.⁹⁹ In the Jewish East End, the Sabbath family's *cholund*, a casserole,

⁹⁴Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31, 52.

⁹⁵Burnett, *A Social History of Housing*, p. 215.

⁹⁶*Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

⁹⁷Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives*, p. 63.

⁹⁸Schofield, "Food and Cooking," pp. 156, 158-159.

⁹⁹Maud S. Pember Reeves, *Round About a Pound a Week*, reprint (New York: Garland, orig. 1913, repr. 1980), pp. 105-106.

could often only be cooked at the ovens of the neighborhood baker.¹⁰⁰ For a one or two penny charge, many local bakeries would cook the standard English one-pot Sunday meal.¹⁰¹ This effort not only saved a long, and often frustrating, cooking effort at home, but also saved on fuel costs.

Along with trade in small quantities, the granting of credit defined the domestic shopkeeper-customer economic relationship in the working-class community. By the mid-nineteenth century, the availability of working-class credit had begun to expand greatly.¹⁰² Growing working-class incomes resulted in a general expansion of consumer credit, based on a growing demand to purchase items rather than make them. Such consumer credit varied from cash-granting arrangements such as pawning and borrowing, to term-payment plans, such as furniture and boot clubs. Each had a distinct place in the growing diversity of working-class credit. Middle-class observers saw some, such as the various clubs, as a beneficial and respectable form of credit for the working classes. These observers attached a much lower respectability, and correspondingly more harm, to both the practice and its practitioners of other forms of working-class credit, such as borrowing and pawning.

¹⁰⁰White, *Rothschild Buildings*, pp. 111-112.

¹⁰¹Schofield, "Food and Cooking," pp. 155-156; Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives*, p. 63.

¹⁰²Much of the following description is taken from Helen Bosanquet, "The Burden of Small Debts," *Economic Journal* 6 (1896): 212-225; Whitelock, "The Industrial Credit System," pp. 33-40; and Johnson, *Saving and Spending*, Chapter 6, "Credit," pp. 144-192.

Helen Bosanquet identified one type of credit as "not-paying," by which she meant that the customer received goods without any guarantee of the businessman receiving even partial payment. The costs for those who could pay, therefore, would be much higher than they might be without granting credit. The domestic shopkeeper represented the most well-known example of this type of consumer credit. Along with the travelling draper, or "talley-man," and the landlord willing to grant a hard-pressed renter a temporary respite, domestic shopkeepers provided the most basic human necessities on very risky economic terms. The economic price for granting such credit included increased numbers of business failures, court-ordered restitutions, and ultimately a higher cost for working-class consumers.

Francis Place, at the time a small London clothier in 1797, recognized this classic dilemma of the small retailer:

I was obliged to give credit even in my small way and to charge low prices. . . Had I increased the number of my customers and consequently the credit I must have given I should have gone deeper into debt, and not have received payment from my customers fast enough to enable me to make my payments to the mercers and drapers as regularly as I had hitherto done. . . .¹⁰³

The provision of retail consumer credit, even for small businesses, served as the crux of a continual problem — how to attract and keep enough customers, while maintaining the solvency of the business. For domestic shopkeepers in industrial

¹⁰³Mary Thale (ed.), *The Autobiography of Francis Place* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), pp. 173-174.

towns, certainly credit decisions involved not only the success of the shop, but defined its very existence.

The provision of credit in purchasing basic supplies made domestic shopkeepers a necessary part of working-class economic life. Alexander noted that these shopkeepers could only compete in the retail market on the basis of service; the only service not provided by any other food retailer was granting credit.¹⁰⁴ With some justification, well-intentioned middle-class observers and experts decried working-class credit as sure to lead to disaster for both retailer and consumer. Hugh Shimmin cast a critical eye on domestic shop credit in Liverpool, chastising working-class wives for improvidence in using credit to supply their households with food and other necessary items.¹⁰⁵ One observer of the effects of the Cotton Famine hoped that the economic disaster would help destroy domestic shops:

It will not be wonderful if, in a few years, these co-operative stores succeed in banishing the small shops, at which a large proportion of the working classes now deal; and in destroying the foolish system of credit, which leads to so much demoralisation of workmen, and which ruins so many shopkeepers.¹⁰⁶

The added costs of credit-granting are always passed on, in some form, to all consumers. And the increased economic burden on working-class families created

¹⁰⁴Alexander, *Retailing in England*, pp. 174, 181-185. Alexander's view is echoed by More, *The Industrial Age*, p. 126; and Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market*, pp. 85-86, 101-102.

¹⁰⁵John K. Walton and Alastair Wilcox (eds.), *Low Life and Moral Improvement in Mid-Victorian England: Liverpool Through the Journalism of Hugh Shimmin* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 110, 112, 230.

¹⁰⁶John Watts, *The Facts of the Cotton Famine*, reprint (London: Frank Cass, orig. 1866, repr. 1968), p. 76.

by domestic shop credit was costly. By increasing the costs of the most basic household goods, including food, to those who could least afford it, domestic shop-based consumer credit helped limit the opportunity of working families to achieve Victorian respectability through saving. The necessity of this shop-based credit did not lessen its negative impact on the working-class household economy.

Bosanquet noted in 1896 that,

Under the best of circumstances a man who is in debt is only half a man; his future is not his own. . . Thrift is made an impossibility, for apart from the facilities for satisfying all desires without previous effort, how can you save with your creditors on the watch for every penny? . . . There is something also almost incompatible with self-respect in the scenes into which people are brought by their indebtedness. . . My only conclusion is, therefore, that the amount and facility of credit (or as I should prefer to call it — indebtedness) among the working classes is an almost unmixed evil.¹⁰⁷

An American authority on retailing in 1915 mustered an astonishing number of arguments against credit, including placing the blame for periodic nineteenth-century national financial crises on retail credit. He notes that, "Granting retail credits is a matter of vital importance to the whole country."¹⁰⁸

Given the withering attacks directed against retail credit, the respectability of middle-class debt becomes difficult to understand. For example, bankruptcy proceedings required a £10 filing fee to protect personal property from seizure following a business failure. Numerous newspaper reports of seizures of workers'

¹⁰⁷Bosanquet, "The Burden of Small Debts," 223-225.

¹⁰⁸Paul H. Nystrom, *Retail Selling and Store Management* (New York: D. Appleton, 1915), p. 264.

furniture attest that the benefits of bankruptcy applied only to those with enough money to file for court protection. Paul Johnson's study of nineteenth-century debt records revealed that working-class debtors faced a very unfriendly justice system, while middle-class debtors achieved protection through bankruptcy and limited liability. Working-class credit was based on presumed future earnings, while middle-class credit had its basis on existing personal property, which could be protected from debt. Nineteenth-century legal approaches to credit and debt reflected a class-based society, with different moral standards for each class.¹⁰⁹ In the early twentieth-century, a registrar of the Birmingham county court noted that,

. . . frequently after a few months the business is sold by an agent, if a purchaser can be found, or, otherwise, closed. As the people [domestic shopkeepers] are mostly too ignorant of legal procedure to know who to get in their book debts, the purchase and collection of such debts has become a regular trade, the price paid varying from 25 per cent. to 40 per cent. of their face value.¹¹⁰

The Victorian legal system afforded little protection for domestic shopkeepers, a lack they shared with their working-class customers.

Consumer credit at domestic shops provided working-class customers with at least one advantage over other consumer-credit systems — a mutually-reinforcing economic relationship between shopkeepers and customers. Working-class credit systems had a long history before the nineteenth century. The system

¹⁰⁹Paul Johnson, "Class Law in Victorian England," *Past and Present* 141 (November 1993): 157-163.

¹¹⁰Whitelock, "The Industrial Credit System," p. 34.

of "truck" or "tommy" was one of the earliest examples of working-class shop credit. In rural mines, ironworks, and mills, some proprietors offered a portion of their workers' pay in the form of credit at the only shop available — the proprietors'. Some employers would give part of the worker's pay in tokens or scrip which had to be redeemed at the company shop. The possibilities for exploitation of the workers' needs were great, and widespread abuses resulted. Truck systems had generated legislation at various times since the reign of Edward IV, including the Truck Act of 1831. The obvious potential for evil in this system, as well as its illegality, did not deter proprietors, even in manufacturing towns. The system of truck gave all working-class credit systems a bad reputation among both workers and sympathetic observers.¹¹¹

Pawnbroking was one of the best-known examples of other forms of Victorian working-class credit. Pledge shops were a vital working-class resource in a consumer cash economy. Many observers vilified pawnbroking for preying on those least able to bear the loss; yet many working-class families relied tremendously on this form of credit. And like shopkeepers' credit, the costs of pawn credit were high. Industrial working families lived weekly, from payday to payday, and the regular weekly pledge enabled the family to make it to Saturday. On Saturday night, families redeemed their respectable clothes to be worn to

¹¹¹Engels, *The Condition of the Working Class*, pp. 218-220, 291-292; Thomas S. Ashton, *Iron and Steel in the Industrial Revolution*, reprint (New York: Augustus M. Kelley, orig. 1963, repr. 1968), p. 189; Clapham, *An Economic History of Modern Britain*, vol. 1, pp. 562-565; Burnett, *Plenty and Want*, p. 35. Ashton and Clapham agree generally with Engels' condemnation of truck systems and tommy shops.

Sunday services and holiday outings. On Monday morning, the pledge bundle went right back to the shop.¹¹² Pawnshops also functioned as holding places for family valuables when no safe place existed at home; pawnshops acted as working-class banks.¹¹³ During the 1842 trade depression, one survey of Bolton discovered that the median number of pawn tickets held by laboring families was between fifteen and twenty.¹¹⁴ The pervasiveness of pawnshop credit among working families, in good times and bad, demonstrated the narrow margin of working-class survival in a hostile economic climate. In a similar way, domestic shopkeepers played a vital role in working-class survival in mid-nineteenth-century towns.

Domestic shopkeepers' most distinguishing feature as a source of working-class credit was their intimate links to the working-class community. Unlike truck systems, domestic shopkeepers' entire existence rested upon the working-class community. The community provided a number of customary checks on domestic shopkeepers' economic behavior, not the least of which was the expectation of credit. These shopkeepers were expected to supply small amounts of credit, tiding many families over gaps in paydays or occasional hardships. While

¹¹²Roberts noted that his mother had kept a close watch on pawning by her customers, in order to measure their credit-worthiness. Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 25; Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, pp. 104-105.

¹¹³Melanie Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet: Pawnbroking and Working-Class Credit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 6-7, 9-10, 16-20.

¹¹⁴Henry Ashworth, "Statistics of the Present Depression of Trade at Bolton; Showing the Mode in Which It Affects the Different Classes of a Manufacturing Population," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 5 (April 1842): 80.

domestic shopkeepers' status was considered among the elite of the working-class slums, the reciprocity of the relationship between domestic shopkeeper and customer bound the two together with strong mutual economic interests.¹¹⁵

The credit systems of domestic shopkeepers and pawnbrokers complemented rather than competed against each other. The same money made the rounds between domestic shopkeepers and pawnbrokers.¹¹⁶ Pawnbrokers typically charged a half-penny for every two or two-and-one-half shillings, or part thereof, on pledges, returning about 2% per week.¹¹⁷ One estimate of an Edwardian domestic shopkeeper's profits found the least return at 14%, for bread and sugar, while 33% and 50% returns were typical.¹¹⁸ Another reported an estimated return on domestic shop credit in 1842 at two shillings and six pence on the pound, or 12.5%.¹¹⁹ While domestic shopkeepers produced better gross profits than pawnbrokers, these shopkeepers faced significantly greater economic disadvantages. Most of this difference lies in domestic shopkeepers' ultimate lack of a guaranteed return, while pawnbrokers could at least auction pledges for some return. This lack of recourse also explains the need for a skilled assessment of

¹¹⁵Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 17-18.

¹¹⁶Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet*, pp. 20-22.

¹¹⁷Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet*, pp. 9, 14-15, 126.

¹¹⁸Charles Booth, *Life and Labour of the People in London: Industry*, vol. 3, 2d ser. (1903), p. 254, cited in Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market*, pp. 104-105.

¹¹⁹Joseph Adshead, *Distress in Manchester* (London: Henry Hooper, 1842), p. 45.

credit-worthiness by domestic shopkeepers, at least the successful ones.¹²⁰ The working-class need for small quantities mandated higher profits per sale.¹²¹

While money from pledged goods could be spent in any number of ways, domestic shop credit would most likely be applied only for basic household necessities.

Mrs. Roberts' tick customers received no more than five shillings credit, ". . . all 'fancy' provisions such as biscuits and boiled ham were proscribed."¹²²

That both pawn and shop were necessary parts of continued working-class life attests to the need for credit. A working-class witness testified in 1833 that he thought Stockport laborers purchased one-half of all commodities on credit. The problems accompanying this level of purchasing on credit were also expressed:

. . . I estimate it in more ways than merely by the money paid. When a person begins with a huckster, he is generally more inclined to consume above his income than when he has to pay ready money; he generally gets bound to the huckster, and when it is so, he cannot always insist upon having the weight, or an article of proper quality, and it is always higher in price besides. . . .¹²³

W. Felkin reported that he knew many of the factory workers in Hyde who lived,

"a week too fast," and are always more or less indebted to the shopkeeper. . . I saw some families who had never been out of debt

¹²⁰Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 81.

¹²¹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 105-106; Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market*, pp. 101-102.

¹²²Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 81-82.

¹²³PP 1833 [690] VI *Select Committee on Manufactures, Commerce and Shipping: Minutes of Evidence*, pp. 624-625.

to the same tradesmen during 30 years, and these were among the best-paid work people.¹²⁴

"A week too fast" seems an understatement for many working-class lives in this era. The seasonal nature of the employment of Middleton silk-weavers resulted in delayed payment of winter debts until the spring fashion season.¹²⁵ Evidence produced by an investigation into Edwardian rural workers' family budgets indicated a dependence on domestic shop credit that was not only seasonal, but nearly continual.¹²⁶ Ann Bristol complained bitterly to Bolton's Poor Law investigators in 1841 that her inability to get credit at any shop contributed to her unemployed husband's death. William Bolling, her deceased husband's employer and one-time Bolton M.P., paid her grocery bills for a time at the nearby domestic shop of Thomas Yates. When Bolling stopped paying her bills, Bristol resorted to washing clothes for Mrs. Yates to help pay off her bill.¹²⁷

Melanie Tebbutt wants historical estimates of working-class standards-of-living, especially for women, revised downward due to the costs and necessity of pledging. Evidence of domestic shopkeeping credit suggests a similar reexamination of the role of working-class credit in this debate. If the costs of

¹²⁴W. Felkin, "An Account of the Situation of a Portion of the Labouring Classes in the Township of Hyde, Cheshire," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 1 (November 1838): 418.

¹²⁵Reach, *Labour and the Poor in England and Wales*, p. 108.

¹²⁶B. Seebohm Rowntree and May Kendall, *How the Labourer Lives: A Study of the Rural Labourer Problem*, reprint (New York: Arno Press, orig. 1913, repr. 1975), pp. 43, 66, 77, 135, 143-146, 230, 245, 263-264.

¹²⁷PP 1842 [77] XXXV *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners: Distress, Bolton*, p. 5, 8, 27-29; *Times* (London), October 10, 1841.

widespread pawning deserve recognition in a reassessment of working-class living standards, as Tebbutt has argued convincingly, so too should the costs to customers of domestic shop credit.

Many Victorian small debt proceedings took place in county courts. While justices voiced concerns about the costs of working-class credit, they also admitted the necessity of such domestic shop credit. Even given the apparent odium of imprisonment for debts, justices in the industrial districts realized the need for credit, and the necessity of legal recourse to recoup bad debts. J. St. John Yates, whose circuit included Ashton, noted that,

A system of credit is absolutely necessary in the manufacturing districts. Seasons of distress recur periodically in these localities, where, but for the facilities which are afforded by the shopkeepers, whole families must starve or become inmates of the workhouse; and it is to this power of imprisonment to which the shopkeeper looks for security when prosperity returns. Without it a higher price would be charged for articles sold on credit, as an insurance against the debtor's dishonesty.¹²⁸

J.S.T. Greene, of Circuit 10, which included Bolton, denied that revoking imprisonment for debt would benefit working families:

In times of commercial distress the poor would suffer greatly from this semblance of kindness, so would ratepayers; many a wife and family who had drunken husbands and fathers could get no trust; but drunkards are sometimes good workers, and in good times will wipe off the debts of hard ones from fear of imprisonment.¹²⁹

¹²⁸*PP 1867 [209] LVII Return of the Questions Addressed by the Committee of County Court Judges to the Judges of those Courts. . .*, p. 16.

¹²⁹*Ibid.*, p. 17.

These judges agreed that, for better or worse, many working-class families needed domestic shop credit, whatever the moral case for debt imprisonment. Twenty years earlier, Bolton small shopkeepers joined a meeting of tradesmen to petition Parliament to revoke the 1844 act abolishing imprisonment for small debts, less than £20.¹³⁰ According to county court records from 1847 onwards, the vast majority of small debt complaints entered into court were quite small, averaging £2 10s between 1847 and 1869.¹³¹ For the Bolton circuit in 1850, more than one-third of complaints were entered for £1 or less.¹³²

In the worst of times domestic shopkeepers' credit was most necessary, and therefore its effect in the working-class community most easily discovered. The trade depression of the early 1840s provides a good example. Even Friedrich Engels, a harsh critic of domestic shopkeepers, noted that, "If the small dealers did not sell to the working-people on credit at such times as long as possible. . . every crisis would remove a multitude of the surplus through death by starvation."¹³³ William Neild noted the same trend in 1841, though as an Anti-Corn Law advocate he had a substantially different reason than Engels:

. . . and when a time of suffering comes, arising from reduced wages, want of employment, dear food, or the combination of all three, as is the case at present, they become more and more

¹³⁰*BFP*, March 22 and 29, 1845.

¹³¹*PP* 1870 [224] LXIII *Return From Every County Court in England and Wales*. . . , p. 81.

¹³²*PP* 1851 [545] XLVII *Return from Each County Court in England and Wales*. . . , p. 296. Out of 1,700 total complaints entered, 665 (or 39%) were for £1 or less.

¹³³Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class*, pp. 127-128.

involved with the shopkeeper. This class of persons (the shopkeepers) are generally the first to feel reverses in manufacturing districts; and in all instances of considerable depression in trade numbers of them are ruined.¹³⁴

In 1841, Bolton small shopkeeper William Taylor bemoaned the sight of his customers, noting, ". . . the cases of distress, misery, and privation, which I daily and hourly meet with are truly heartrending, and defy description."¹³⁵ Poor Law Commissioner Tufnell, investigating the distress in Castleton township, Rochdale, reported that,

I inquired of some of the worst off whether they had applied for relief, and they declared they had not, and appeared to me to have a pride in endeavouring to keep off the parish as long as possible.¹³⁶

The ability of these unemployed workers to avoid poor relief, though Rochdale had not yet implemented the workhouse qualification of the New Poor Law, must have been due, at least partially, to the credit systems of domestic shopkeepers. John Bright reported to a 1841 meeting in Manchester that domestic shopkeepers in Rochdale sell only in penny and half-penny worths due to the trade depression. A reported cited one anonymous shopkeeper's comments:

Debts cannot be collected. Knows that many of his customers are short of food; hears many a curse as the destitute part with their last coin for half a meal for themselves and their children. Wishes

¹³⁴William Neild, "Comparative Statement of the Income and Expenditure of certain Families of the Working Classes of Manchester and Dukinfield, in the years 1836 and 1841," *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society* 4 (January, 1842): 322.

¹³⁵*BFP*, October 9, 1841.

¹³⁶*PP* 1842 [89] XXXV, E. Carleton Tufnell, "Report addressed to the Poor Law Commissioners. . . on Distress in Rochdale," *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, p. 4.

Sir R. Peel might stand in his shop for one day, and will gladly let any gentlemen do so who doubts any part of this statement.¹³⁷

First-hand knowledge of workers' distress reinforced domestic shopkeepers' economic ties to their neighbors and customers during the worst of times.

During the trade depression, the litany of domestic shopkeepers' own suffering was just as long and as well publicized as the problems of their customers. While domestic shopkeepers had plenty of economic challenges without a trade depression, such an event led to catastrophic effects on these shopkeepers that reflected the suffering of their working-class customers. Joseph Adshead collected a number of reports and statistics on the trade depression in Manchester. One report of a domestic shopkeeping couple, economically destroyed by the decline in trade and emotionally devastated by the death of their only daughter, had only a piano forte to comfort their poverty. Adshead calculated that 200 credit-granting small shopkeepers had lost twenty-three thousand pounds in the three years prior to mid-1840, or on average about one-hundred and ten pounds each. One agent reported that, ". . . the dealers attribute the scanty earnings of the poor and their being out of employ as the main cause of their not being paid." Another agent reported the concern of small shopkeepers: "What will become of the poor in the ensuing winter is a matter of seriousness, as shopkeepers say they cannot assist them as formerly, many of them being almost ruined by giving credit."¹³⁸

¹³⁷"Statistics of Distress in the Cotton Districts," reported in *BFP*, December 16, 1841.

¹³⁸Adshead, *Distress in Manchester*, pp. 37, 43, 44.

John Finch, Jr., conducted a similar study in Vauxhall ward, Liverpool, in 1842, and compiled similar results. Small shopkeeper testimonials read like recitations of bad times: business off by one-half, customers buy worst quality at lowest prices, best remedy is repeal of the Corn Laws. The reports of the agents collecting the statistics give an even clearer picture. John Holme reported that, "Many families. . . were dependent on small shopkeepers, who were letting them have herrings and potatoes until they could get work. . . ." Thomas Sammond gave a worse report:

Many of the shopkeepers informed me, that they had not taken sufficient ready-money of late to pay their rent and taxes. One shopkeeper stated, he only took 8s. during the week previous; and on the day I called, from morning until one o'clock, he had received one penny. Several shopkeepers stated, that they were under the necessity of pledging various articles to pay their rent and taxes.¹³⁹

Even the salutary efforts of relief committees to distribute food to the unemployed poor could have a deleterious effect on domestic shopkeepers. While bemoaning his own economic difficulties, including wholesale credit to domestic shopkeepers, Samuel Walker of Stockport felt it necessary to say that,

. . . I may add, that another injury to the small shopkeepers has resulted from the quantities of flour, bread, oatmeal, and potatoes which have been distributed by the committee of the relief fund; they buy these things wholesale from the millers, and other contractors; and this is a material injury to the small shopkeepers.¹⁴⁰

¹³⁹John Finch, Jr., *Statistics of Vauxhall Ward, Liverpool* (Liverpool: Joshua Walmsley, 1842), pp. 50, 53.

¹⁴⁰PP 1842 [89] XXXV, *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners*, Appendix, p. 291.

Even with the best of intentions, the relief agencies could injure the most consistent friend of the working poor during bad times.

The depression brought on by the Cotton Famine of the early 1860s in Lancashire resulted in a repetition of stories from twenty years earlier. Edwin Waugh reported on the gloomy state of the Blackburn small shopkeepers in 1862:

And yet they durst not complain; but had to contribute towards the relief of their starving neighbors, sometimes even when they themselves ought to be receiving relief. . . . The paymaster [of the relief works at the stone quarries] told me that one-half of the man's wages was paid in tickets for bread — in each case given to the shopkeeper to whom the receiver of the ticket owned most money — the other half was paid to them in money every Saturday.¹⁴¹

Bolton shopkeepers of all levels were outraged by the establishment of a Relief Store in 1863, to which tickets were granted to the poor by charitable citizens. Retailers objected that the consumers would prefer to patronize their regular shopkeepers, who had granted credit when it was needed in 1862.¹⁴² Lord Derby, as part of the 1863 report recommending relief, included domestic shopkeepers,

whose sole capital is his little stock in trade; and who, if from the distress of his customers, he does not realize a sum sufficient for the subsistence of his family, may fairly be considered to have a claim on the relief fund.¹⁴³

¹⁴¹*Blackburn Standard*, June 4, 1862.

¹⁴²*BC*, January 3, 10, 24, and 31; February 7, 1863.

¹⁴³Cited in Watts, *The Facts of the Cotton Famine*, p. 85.

Richard Cobden reported that one domestic shopkeeper in Rochdale had to pawn her son's clothes in order to pay the poor-rate, and then received a relief ticket.¹⁴⁴ The Relief Committee recorded 167 small shopkeepers, with 472 dependants, chargeable to the poor rates on June 20, 1863.¹⁴⁵

IV. Conclusion

Victorian domestic shopkeepers must have found economic survival very difficult. The very economic niche that they filled created the conditions for their high failure rate. Their dependence upon working-class custom probably determined that domestic shopkeeping would be a hazardous economic venture. "A Truth Seeker" ventured to the industrial village of Heywood, near Bolton, during the depths of the trade depression of the early 1840s, and noted that,

Most of the shopkeepers. . . sold their goods on credit, and took pay by instalments; when a family was thrown out of employment, or partially so, the payments would cease, unless work was again obtained speedily. In that case the debt would be worth very little, factory hands being in the habit of removing to other places, and their habitations being rarely so well furnished as those of operatives working at their own houses.¹⁴⁶

Alexander concluded that small shopkeepers' difficulties were exacerbated by a traditionalist outlook that led to resistance in making necessary changes in

¹⁴⁴Cited in *Ibid.*, pp. 174-175.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 229.

¹⁴⁶*Manchester Chronicle*, December 11, 1841.

retailing, such as fixing prices, increasing advertisement, and limiting credit. The phenomenal consumer demands of the fast-growing of industrial towns contributed further to an abnormally high casualty rate.¹⁴⁷

That the difficulties did not deter the increasing numbers of domestic shopkeeping recruits represented a clear indication of the necessity of these shops in the working-class neighborhoods. The economic necessity of domestic shops reinforced the working-class dream of Victorian respectability through property ownership. Few alternatives to property and a moderate prosperity existed within the reach of the mid-century working-class family. With careful planning and good luck, the promised ideal of working-class independence through domestic shopkeeping was a possibility. Success did not come easily, or often, though. In the Roberts' domestic shop in Edwardian Salford, the pre-World War average weekly gross income was only seven pounds, or five pence for each of the four hundred customers.¹⁴⁸ Roberts' father was disappointed with the pre-war earnings of his shop, which was clearing just seven shillings per week, hardly enough to pay for his beer.¹⁴⁹ Charles Booth's example of a London domestic shop averaged £2 15s in gross weekly take, leaving less than one pound net income for an average week.¹⁵⁰ An 1843 newspaper report of the death of

¹⁴⁷Alexander, *Retailing in England*, pp. 236-237.

¹⁴⁸Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 216.

¹⁴⁹Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, p. 8.

¹⁵⁰Cited in Fraser, *The Coming of the Mass Market*, pp. 102.

Thomas Atherton, a domestic shopkeeper in Ashburner Street, Bolton, illustrates the catastrophic failure possible in domestic shopkeeping. Atherton died from a self-administered laudanum overdose. The coroner's jury returned a verdict of "Temporary Insanity, occasioned by extreme poverty." Despite having a widowed lodger in the cellar, Atherton's home and shop had no food or candles and was in very poor condition. The coroner and jury were so shocked at the family's poverty that they raised 23s for the widow and five children.¹⁵¹

Evidence for successful small shopkeepers is presented most clearly in the probate records, summarized in Table 3.5. Among Bolton and Rochdale small shopkeepers who left wills, or whose survivors filed for administration of estates, relative prosperity was possible. The victims of small shopkeeping economics were not likely to have needed or to have left either wills or administrations. The relative scarcity of small shopkeeper successes reflected the long odds against economic prosperity.

As a measure of small shopkeeping successes, the probate records present a picture of property and prosperity. In one example, Thomas Crossley, a small shopkeeper at Lower Place, Rochdale, left his widow and three children an estate valued under £100, with over £26 in shop stock and 15s in cash upon his death in 1839.¹⁵² Crossley was a small shopkeeper for over a decade, according to continuous listings in trades directories. Though neither his wife nor his children

¹⁵¹*BFP*, July 1, 1843.

¹⁵²Probate Records, LRO.

Table 3.5: Probate Records of Bolton and Rochdale Small Shopkeepers, 1830–1870.

	Median Value of Estates	Number of Records
Bolton, 1830–1857	£450	18
Rochdale, 1830–1857	£250	24
Bolton and Rochdale, 1858–1870	£450	16

SOURCE: Probate Records, LRO.

NOTE: Probate Records, wills and administrations, give estimates of the value of the estates in the terms "less than £ ____." The estimates discovered for small shopkeepers were: 10, 20, 50, 100, 200, 300, 450, 600, 800, 1000, 1500, 2000, and 3000.

followed Crossley in business following his death, and even assuming that all of the small shop stock was indebted, it seems clear that the Crossley left a reasonable legacy for his widow and children. Crossley represented a domestic shopkeeping success story; though successes were rare, there were enough to encourage an increasing number of recruits into domestic shopkeeping, and enough to replace the casualties of the economics of domestic shopkeeping and more.

CHAPTER IV

THE SOCIAL MILIEU OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING

The economic ties of community were an important element in defining the place of domestic shopkeepers in industrial Lancashire. The social identity of these shopkeepers involved a number of diverse relationships. The social world of Victorian domestic shopkeeping seemed to have two defining foci: the family, for their shop was a family enterprise; and the community, for economic relationships made up only one part of a complex picture of communal life. This examination will explore the somewhat ambiguous social world of domestic shopkeeping, as suggested by previous reviews of the social position of small shopkeepers and the *petite bourgeoisie*.¹ John Foster placed small shopkeepers socially with the "labour aristocracy" in Oldham, while Thomas Nossiter separated small shopkeepers from "craftsmen" in the Northeast, demonstrating that small shopkeepers were more socially proletarian.² Christopher Hosgood's study of late nineteenth-century Leicester shopkeepers portrayed small shopkeepers as having some measure of autonomy — within the community, but not entirely of it.³ Hosgood echoed the view of the Roberts family in the Edwardian slum of

¹Geoffrey Crossick and Heinz-Gerhard Haupt (eds.), *Shopkeepers and Master Artisans in Nineteenth-Century Europe* (London: Methuen, 1984), p. 17-18.

²John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1974), p. 163, 238; Thomas J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion, and Political Idiom in Reformed England* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975), p. 145.

³Christopher P. Hosgood, "The 'Pygmies of Commerce' and the Working-Class Community," *Journal of Social History* 22, 3 (1989): 439.

Salford: "Our own family was in the slum but not, they felt, of it: we had 'connections.'"⁴ Hugh McLeod noted that petty capitalists, including small shopkeepers, of the various districts of Late Victorian West End London seemed to occupy an ambiguous middling position between working-class localism and middle-class associationalism.⁵ Zoe Lawson stressed the working-class characteristics of domestic shopkeepers in Victorian Preston, referring to "working-class shopkeepers."⁶ Thea Vigne and Alun Howkins' study revealed that differences in the social position of respondents resulted in differing views of the social status of domestic shopkeepers. Skilled workers tended to perceive domestic shopkeepers as similar in social status to themselves, with no special distinction, while unskilled workers recognized that these shopkeepers possessed a distinct social superiority in their communities.⁷ Caught between working-class characteristics and community, and the aspirations of independence and autonomy, the domestic shopkeepers' social milieu was a diverse and complicated one. This social ambiguity represents one reason for the varying views of domestic shopkeepers and their society.

⁴Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 14.

⁵Hugh McLeod, *Class and Religion in the Late Victorian City* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1974), pp. 14-15.

⁶Zoe Lawson, "Shops, Shopkeepers, and the Working-Class Community: Preston, 1860-1890," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire for the Year 1991* 141 (Liverpool, 1992): 309-310.

⁷Thea Vigne and Alan Howkins, "The Small Shopkeeper in Industrial and Market Towns," in Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), pp. 189-195.

I. The Domestic Shopkeeping Household

Joseph Nicholson illustrated the importance of the family in domestic shopkeeping in his recollections of mid-Victorian Bolton:

Fifty years ago I lived with my wife and adopted daughter in the cellar of my shop in Market Street and I was as happy as a prince. We had a kitchen and sitting room in the lower part of the premises, and we had to go through the shop to go to bed. Nearly all tradespeople at that time used to live on their own premises.⁸

Just how typical of domestic shopkeeping was the Nicholson household? Table 4.1 depicts a summary of my census data of domestic shopkeepers' households by marital status. The numbers of domestic shopkeeping households headed by a married couple in 1851 is close to the 73% of all Preston households reported in a similar 1851 census search.⁹ Households headed by married couples appeared to be the norm among domestic shopkeepers, accounting for about 70% of their households. A significant minority, about 20%, of domestic shopkeeper households were headed by a widow or widower, nearly twice as many as in Michael Anderson's study of Preston households in 1851.¹⁰ Single household heads accounted for the remaining 10% of domestic shopkeeper households. Domestic shopkeeper families varied somewhat from the married couple ideal of

⁸*Bolton Journal*, May 14, 1909. Copy in BLS. Nicholson's referred to himself as a tradesperson, despite his humble domestic shop beginnings. Nicholson's shop was a success, and grew into the specialized grocery trade, and Nicholson was later elected an Alderman of Bolton.

⁹Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), p. 44, Table 8.

¹⁰*Ibid.*

Table 4.1: Domestic Shopkeeper Households Headed By a Married Couple, Widow, or Single Person, 1851 and 1861

	Married	Widowed	Single	Totals
Ashton 1851	65 (84.4%)	6 (7.8%)	6 (7.8%)	77 (100.0%)
Bolton 1851	141 (62.7%)	57 (25.3%)	27 (12.0%)	225 (100.0%)
Rochdale 1851	119 (68.0%)	39 (22.3%)	17 (9.7%)	175 (100.0%)
Bolton 1861	202 (70.4%)	58 (20.2%)	27 (9.4%)	287 (100.0%)
Rochdale 1861	95 (75.4%)	20 (15.9%)	11 (8.7%)	126 (100.0%)
Totals, 1851 and 1861	702 (71.0%)	192 (19.4%)	95 (9.6%)	989 (100.0%)

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

the Nicholson family. The existence of so many widowed and single men and women domestic shopkeepers demonstrates the importance of these shops as a viable occupation for such people, especially those with children or other dependents.

The majority, over 70%, of domestic shopkeeper households also contained dependent children. Three-quarters, 144 out of 192, of all widowed domestic shopkeepers had dependent children in their households. Widowed domestic shopkeepers represented significant numbers of such households in Bolton, with nearly one-third of all domestic shopkeepers household with children in 1851, and one-fourth in 1861. Less than one-third of the number of single domestic shopkeepers had dependent children, although five out of six Ashton single domestic shopkeepers in 1851 had children in their households. Many widows and widowers with children, along with single parents, faced with the challenge of child care, turned to domestic shopkeeping as an important way to earn a living. Table 4.2 summarizes domestic shopkeeper households with children in these three towns.

Domestic shopkeeping households sometimes contained a domestic servant, particularly if there were no children old enough to help keep house and shop, or the female parent was employed outside the house. Edward Higgs' study of mid-nineteenth century Rochdale revealed that many shopkeeping households employed domestic servants, predominantly young women who had migrated from

Table 4.2: Domestic Shopkeepers' Households with Children, 1851 and 1861

	Married Parents	Widowed Parent	Single Parent	No Children	Totals
Ashton 1851	51 (66.2%) [83.6%]	5 (6.5%) [8.2%]	5 (6.5%) [8.2%]	16 (20.8%)	77 [61] (100.0%) [100.0%]
Bolton 1851	98 (43.6%) [62.4%]	49 (21.8%) [31.2%]	10 (4.4%) [6.4%]	68 (30.2%)	225 [157] (100.0%) [100.0%]
Rochdale 1851	93 (53.1%) [76.2%]	25 (14.3%) [20.5%]	4 (2.3%) [3.3%]	53 (30.3%)	175 [122] (100.0%) [100.0%]
Bolton 1861	134 (46.7%) [69.4%]	49 (17.1%) [25.4%]	10 (3.5%) [5.2%]	94 (32.8%)	287 [193] (100.1%) [100.0%]
Rochdale 1861	74 (58.7%) [81.3%]	16 (12.7%) [17.6%]	1 (0.8%) [1.1%]	35 (27.8%)	126 [91] (100.0%) [100.0%]
Totals, 1851 and 1861	450 (50.6%) [72.1%]	144 (16.2%) [23.1%]	30 (3.4%) [4.8%]	266 (29.9%)	890 [624] (100.1%) [100.0%]

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: Some total percentages vary from 100.0% due to rounding error. The percentages in parentheses represent categories based on the total number of domestic shopkeeper households. The numbers and percentages in brackets represent categories based only on domestic shopkeeper households with dependent children.

nearby rural areas.¹¹ Higgs found that, for shopkeepers, a domestic servant was not a sign of middle-class wealth and status. Instead, the servant's cheap labor formed a vital part of the shopkeeping pattern of incorporating the labor of the entire "family" into the household economy of the shop. The domestic servant became a family member, as in apprentice systems, save that there was no pretense of educating the servant into the skill of the shop.¹² The low cost of young women employed as domestic servants encouraged this pattern in 1851, with servants helping in the shops as well as relieving adults from other household and childcare duties that took away from time minding the shop. By 1871, however, the availability of this cheap labor had declined greatly, chiefly due to industrial employment, and the cost of domestic service in Rochdale had increased significantly. Higgs found that this shortage of available domestic labor reversed the trend of shopkeeping households employing domestic servants.¹³ In Anderson's survey of Preston in 1851, he found that 33% of lower middle-class households employed domestic servants.¹⁴

Looking at nineteenth-century domestic service from the viewpoint of the servant, Theresa McBride concluded that young women emigrating from the countryside used service as a means of adapting to a startlingly new urban

¹¹Edward Higgs, *Domestic Servants and Households in Rochdale, 1851-1871* (New York: Garland, 1986), pp. 98, 101, and Table 58.

¹²Ibid., p. 124.

¹³Ibid., pp. 105-106, 238-239, and Table 63.

¹⁴Anderson, *Family Structure*, p. 46, Table 10.

industrial life prior to marriage. For many young female servants, domestic service represented an educational experience in upward social mobility. After a few years' tenure, many servants married skilled workers, white-collar workers, or small retailers.¹⁵ Servants in domestic shops would gain access to a whole gamut of information about the working-class world of the industrial town, since these shops often were community cornerstones, Roberts' "market place and village well combined."¹⁶ Important economic skills of the market culture of the town, including credit relations and marketing, and social integration into the community represented some of the vital knowledge necessary to succeed in the industrial town. The value of this experience, in addition to the practical skills of urban housekeeping learned, would have made service in domestic shops an attractive prospect. Richard Barnes, a widowed domestic shopkeeper and beerseller of 34 Blackburn Street, Bolton, hired young female domestic servants to help in his shop and home. On one occasion one of these unnamed servants caught a young Mary Smith's hand in the till while drawing a quart of ale for her. The court report makes it obvious that this servant was in charge of the shop while Barnes was otherwise occupied.¹⁷

¹⁵Theresa McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976), pp. 10-11, 14-15, 84-95, 120-121.

¹⁶Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, p. 9.

¹⁷BC, June 25, 1853. Barnes' household contained "house servant" Jane Schofield, age 25, in the 1851 census. HO 107/2011, Subdistrict 1b, f. 119.

My census data on domestic shopkeepers appears to confirm Higgs' conclusions about these shopkeepers for Rochdale and possibly for Bolton as well. As shown in Table 4.3, many domestic servants were not relatives, but rather were brought into the household to fill a necessary role that probably would otherwise have been filled by a family member — cheap household labor. Occasionally relatives other than children, listed as domestic servants in the census records, filled this important role in the household economy of the domestic shop. Presumably their labor would have fallen to a child or hired servant under other circumstances. For example, domestic shopkeeper Mary Jackson of Oldham Road, Castleton, Rochdale, the wife of Joseph Jackson, a joiner, employed her niece, Ann Jane Seddon, age 21, as a "house servant" in 1861.¹⁸ The number of servants employed by Rochdale domestic shopkeepers dropped substantially between 1851 and 1861. Employment of servants by Bolton domestic shopkeepers declined as well, though only slightly. These results seem to verify Higgs' conclusion, that when the expense of domestic servants in Rochdale began to rise after 1851, the number of domestic shopkeepers able to afford paid domestic service fell correspondingly.

In Table 4.4, my census data in 1851 indicates domestic shopkeeping was an occupation for mature adults, concentrated in the ages from 30 to 50 with clustering around the forties age group. Few engaged in domestic shopkeeping while in their twenties or earlier. The minority of domestic shopkeepers aged 60

¹⁸RG 9/3038, Subdistrict 12, f. 16.

Table 4.3: Domestic Servants in Domestic Shopkeeping Households, 1851 and 1861

	Non-Relative Servants	Relative Servants	Total Servants
Ashton 1851 (N=77)	14 (18.2%) [87.5%]	2 (2.6%) [12.5%]	16 (20.8%) [100.0%]
Bolton 1851 (N=225)	42 (18.7%) [87.5%]	6 (2.7%) [12.5%]	48 (21.3%) [100.0%]
Rochdale 1851 (N=175)	35 (20.0%) [79.5%]	9 (5.1%) [20.5%]	44 (25.1%) [100.0%]
Bolton 1861 (N=287)	41 (14.3%) [78.8%]	11 (3.8%) [21.2%]	52 (18.1%) [100.0%]
Rochdale 1861 (N=126)	13 (10.3%) [72.2%]	5 (4.0%) [27.8%]	18 (14.3%) [100.0%]
Total, 1851 and 1861 (N=890)	145 (16.3%) [81.5%]	33 (3.7%) [18.5%]	178 (20.0%) [100.0%]

SOURCES: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: Domestic shopkeepers' children listed as domestic servants are excluded from this table. Percentages in parentheses are proportions of the total number of domestic shopkeeper households; percentages in brackets are based on the number of domestic shopkeeper households with domestic servants.

Table 4.4: Ages of Domestic Shopkeeping Heads of Households, 1851

Ages	Ashton		Bolton		Rochdale	
20--29	9	11.7%	26	11.6%	18	10.3%
30--39	18	23.4%	49	21.8%	42	24.0%
40--49	25	32.5%	63	28.0%	37	21.1%
50--59	15	19.5%	45	20.0%	43	24.6%
60--69	10	13.0%	34	15.1%	24	13.7%
70--79	--	--	6	2.7%	8	4.6%
Over 79	--	--	2	0.9%	3	1.7%
Totals	77	100.1%	225	100.1%	175	100.0%

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246.

NOTE: One Rochdale shopkeeper, aged nineteen, was included in the 20--29 category. Some totals vary from 100.0% due to rounding error.

or greater indicates that these shops represented a viable method of income for some older Lancastrians. If past the age of physical labor, older Lancastrians could have saved enough money to get started in domestic shops, and they certainly would have plenty of experience and knowledge of their community, invaluable to any domestic shopkeeping success.

The maturity of domestic shopkeepers in towns like Bolton demonstrate that many of these shopkeepers had achieved a certain stability in their life cycle, and often past the age of factory work. Older domestic shopkeepers had more chances to develop the ties of family and community so necessary to succeed in these endeavors. The adult population of Bolton, like most industrial towns, was quite young, as illustrated below. Starting up a domestic shop took a certain amount of savings for use as capital, a prospect more difficult for young families with small children. Young men and women could make good incomes working in industrial jobs, without the capital or experience needed for a successful domestic shop. A more mature family with some savings, or a household with working children, could more easily manage the start-up capital for a domestic shop. Starting a domestic shop was not closed to younger families with some luck. A small legacy funded the Roberts' domestic shop while the couple was young and expecting the birth of their first child, and Bob Roberts had good chances of finding steady engineering work.¹⁹

¹⁹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 14-15; Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), pp. 2-5.

Vigne and Howkins found that domestic shopkeeping represented a part of people's work experience, moving to or from other occupations, usually manual work. Domestic shopkeeping was also an occupation for those who had experienced a dramatic change in their lives, such as a sudden widowing or career-ending maiming. Domestic shopkeeping, in both age and experience, seems to have been a more mature occupation. Table 4.5 seems to support this finding for the mid-nineteenth century.²⁰

Domestic shopkeeper birthplaces might indicate other important relationships between them and their communities. Domestic shopkeepers most familiar with the social landscape would be more familiar with the intimate links between community and domestic shops that might make the difference between success and failure. The cotton towns of Northeast England attracted significant emigration from rural areas. These emigrants had problems integrating into these urban communities, learning new jobs and joining new communities. Anderson's survey of Preston in 1851 found only 30% of the adult population were Preston natives.²¹ The results of my census data presented in Table 4.6 provide a somewhat mixed picture of domestic shopkeeper nativity. Of the three towns, domestic shopkeepers in Rochdale were more likely to have been born in the town than Bolton's. The percentage of domestic shopkeeper nativity in each town were in inverse proportion to the relative size of the town's general population.

²⁰Vigne and Howkins, "The Small Shopkeeper in Industrial and Market Towns," pp. 187-188.

²¹Anderson, *Family Structure*, pp. 34-37.

Table 4.5: Comparison of Domestic Shopkeepers' Age to the Age of the Adult Population, Bolton, 1851

Ages	Domestic Shopkeepers		Adult Population	
20--29	26	11.6%	11,362	34.6%
30--39	49	21.8%	8,439	25.7%
40--49	63	28.0%	6,084	18.5%
50--59	45	20.0%	3,765	11.5%
60--69	34	15.1%	2,240	6.8%
70--79	6	2.7%	828	2.5%
Over 79	2	0.9%	152	0.5%
Totals	225	100.1%	32,830	100.1%

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211; PP 1852–53 [1691–II] LXXXVIII, Pt. 2, vol. 2, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Condition, Occupations and Birthplaces*, p. 617.

NOTE: Totals vary from 100.0% due to rounding error.

Table 4.6: Domestic Shopkeeper Nativity, 1851 and 1861

	<u>Town Natives</u>
Ashton 1851 (N=77)	42 (54.5%)
Bolton 1851 (N=225)	85 (37.8%)
Rochdale 1851 (N=175)	121 (69.1%)
Bolton 1861 (N=287)	139 (48.4%)
Rochdale 1861 (N=126)	83 (65.9%)
Totals, 1851 and 1861 (N=890)	470 (52.8%)

SOURCES: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

Bolton's larger size provided more opportunities for non-native domestic shopkeepers than smaller communities, such as Rochdale or Ashton. In each town, however, domestic shopkeepers were much more native in 1851 than Anderson's average Prestonian. Domestic shopkeepers needed the advantages of intimate knowledge of the social landscape that nativity provided.

This review of domestic shopkeeper households helps to delineate the social identity of these shopkeepers. A typical profile of a domestic shopkeeper's household would include a mature adult, most likely married, as the head of household. The household would contain two or three dependent children. If the domestic shopkeeper were widowed, or one adult had an occupation outside the home, or the wife's domestic duties with young children meant less time for shop and home duties, a domestic servant would be employed as part of the household, though that was less likely in 1861 than 1851. If the domestic shopkeeping household needed domestic help, a relative might take the place of a hired servant. Domestic shopkeepers, male and female, were more likely to be natives of the town, and thus more knowledgeable of the social landscape of the community.

II. *Domestic Shopkeepers and Their Community*

Domestic shopkeepers seemed to define their status in society in terms of their concrete social relationships, rather than according to an abstract view of class structure. In their survey of personal interviews, Vigne and Howkins contended that small shopkeepers seemed not to have a marked sense of class consciousness. They were nevertheless keenly aware of their own social status based on their own community experiences. Small shopkeepers recognized that they had a distinctly lower status than the High Street tradesmen from whom they bought goods for resale. Small shopkeepers similarly understood that most working families had a lower social status, an understanding shared by these families who bought from these shopkeepers.²² The Roberts' shop in the Salford slum community illustrated this recognition of their social status among their neighbors, and domestic shopkeepers represented part of the slum elite. Roberts remembered the humiliation of many families of skilled workers, whom he recognized as having a similar socio-economic status, who failed in attempts to take up domestic shopkeeping:

'CURRAN CAKES! 3 FOR 2d' advertised one neighbour on a little pile of grey lumps in her house window. Nobody bought. We children watched them growing staler each day until the kitchen curtain fell again on the venture like a shroud.²³

²²Vigne and Howkins, "The Small Shopkeeper in Industrial and Market Towns," pp. 186-187, 194-195.

²³Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 19.

A successful domestic shopkeeper household like the Roberts family gained a nearly unmatched prestige in their community.

Bolton's magistrates fined two women in 1844 for an "all out fight in Mrs. Crompton's shop" over one's failure to return a newspaper to Mrs. Crompton's domestic shop promptly. Mrs. Crompton's shop functioned as a neighborhood community center, a clearinghouse of information for and about the neighborhood.²⁴ This scene echoed Roberts' recollection of his mother's shop as a center of the community matriarchy and a wellspring of gossip.²⁵ "A Shopkeeper" wrote a letter to the editor of the *Bolton Chronicle* on June 3, 1853, complaining of dirty chimneys in his Deansgate neighborhood.²⁶ His concern for community safety and respectability reflected domestic shopkeepers' awareness beyond his family and business. One of the key aspects of the social identity of domestic shopkeepers lay in their relationships with the rest of community, especially voluntary social associations beyond the economic bonds of shop credit and working-class custom. A number of different sources support this view of the domestic shopkeepers' social world.

Marriage registers represent an important source for understanding domestic shopkeeper's voluntary social relationships. In addition to providing data about the occupations of the married couple, the registers provided fathers'

²⁴*BFP*, May 11, 1844.

²⁵Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 42-43.

²⁶*BC*, June 4, 1853.

occupations. Marriage information reveals general social trends and patterns, and should not be relied on for conclusions without reinforcing information.

Aggregate marriage data nevertheless provides a general sense of the voluntary social contacts of domestic shopkeepers and their children, and other sources of social relationships confirms these findings. The tables that follow represent data gathered from Bolton and Rochdale parish registers, as well as two Bolton non-conformist registers.

In his survey of Oldham marriages from 1846–1856, Foster examined the social affiliations of Oldham society, which he divided into thirteen social categories. Foster found that shopkeeper families were most likely to marry into the families of, in descending order: other shopkeepers, farmers, building craftsmen, and carters.²⁷ A survey of Bolton and Rochdale marriage registers provides a different picture of domestic shopkeepers' social connections.

Domestic shopkeepers' male children, and young male domestic shopkeepers, most often married into the families of artisans and textile workers. This should not seem surprising, since shopkeepers were so physically and economically tied to the working-class community of industrial towns. Yet these findings are inconsistent with Foster's results for the nearby cotton town of Oldham.

Domestic shopkeepers' social associations, as demonstrated by marriage register data, indicated a strong preference for the working class, from artisans to textile workers to laborers, by two-to-one over other occupations ranging from clerical

²⁷Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, p. 268, Table 20.

workers to retailers to farmers. Bob Roberts, a skilled metalworker, married an cotton mill worker, and together they opened a domestic shop.²⁸

In the St. Peter's, Bolton, and St. Chad's, Rochdale, parish registers for the first half of this study, from 1837 until 1850, small shopkeepers' children were likely, about 60% of the time, to marry the children of the working class: textile workers, laborers, and artisans. The grooms in these marriages, including small shopkeepers' sons, were overwhelmingly employed in working class trades when they married, 75% being so employed. Retailing and farming families made up only a minority of small shopkeeper family marriages, in contrast to Foster's results for Oldham. Table 4.7 summarizes the results from Bolton and Rochdale parish marriage registers for the sample years 1837, 1840, 1845 and 1850. As one example of this pattern of workers marrying into small shopkeeping families, the registrar at St. Chad's, Rochdale, in November 1840, recorded that Thomas Mills, a cotton spinner at Drake Street (Castleton) and son of Edmund Mills, a twister, married Eliza Greaves, daughter of Thomas Greaves, a shopkeeper at Broadley.²⁹ The registers revealed many more such examples.

Table 4.8 summarizes the results from Bolton and Rochdale parish marriage registers for the years 1855, 1857, 1860, 1865, 1869, and 1870. The results show the dominant pattern of marriage between the children of domestic shopkeepers and the working class continued from the earlier survey of these

²⁸Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 14-15; Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, pp. 2-6.

²⁹St. Chad's Parish Register of Marriages, RLS.

Table 4.7: Occupations of Grooms and Fathers of Brides or Grooms, When One or Both Fathers Were Small Shopkeepers, Bolton and Rochdale, Between 1837 and 1850

	Groom's Occupation	Non- Shopkeeping Father's Occupation
Artisan	12 (27.3%)	4 (9.1%)
Textile Worker	17 (38.6%)	14 (31.8%)
Laborer	4 (9.1%)	9 (20.5%)
White-Collar Worker	3 (6.8%)	0
Retailer	6 (13.6%)	7 (15.9%)
Farmer	2 (4.5%)	5 (11.4%)
None	0	5 (11.4%)
Totals	44 (99.9%)	44 (100.1%)

SOURCES: St. Peter's Parish Register of Marriages, BLS; St. Chad's Parish Register of Marriages, RLS. Samples from the years 1837, 1840, 1845, and 1850.

NOTE: When both fathers were shopkeepers, only one shopkeeping father was included in this table. Totals vary from 100.0% due to rounding error.

Artisan occupations included clogger, joiner, ribbon manufacturer, muslin manufacturer, engineer, spindle maker, moulder, fustian cutter, brickmaker, sawyer, plumber and glazier, gunsmith, block cutter, tailor, tin plate worker, boilermaker, iron turner, smelter, machine grinder, smith, tallow chandler, rope maker, and shoemaker;

Textile Worker occupations included spinner, weaver, mechanic, dyer, bleacher, overlooker, warper, fuller, calico printer, twister, slubber, dresser, mangler, finisher, and fitter;

Laborer occupations included carter, warehouseman, gardener, collier, porter, excavator, coachman, groomsman, and servant;

White-Collar Worker occupations included policeman, auctioneer, traveller, police inspector, timekeeper, cashier, bookkeeper, surveyor, contractor, tax collector, reporter, and barber;

Retailer occupations included shopkeeper, innkeeper, publican, miller, butcher, green grocer, grocer, beerseller, chemist, and bread baker.

Table 4.8: Occupations of Grooms and Fathers of Brides or Grooms, When One or Both Fathers Were Domestic Shopkeepers, Bolton and Rochdale, Between 1855 and 1870

	Groom's Occupation	Non- Shopkeeping Father's Occupation
Artisan	10 (43.5%)	2 (8.7%)
Textile Worker	7 (30.4%)	10 (43.5%)
Laborer	2 (8.7%)	3 (13.0%)
White-Collar Worker	3 (13.0%)	5 (21.7%)
Retailer	1 (4.3%)	2 (8.7%)
Farmer	0	0
None	0	1 (4.3%)
Totals	23 (99.9%)	23 (99.9%)

SOURCES: St. Peter's Parish Register of Marriages, BLS; St. Chad's Parish Register of Marriages, RLS. Samples from the years 1855, 1857, 1860, 1865, 1869, and 1870.

NOTE: The occupational categories are as in Table 4.7. Totals vary from 100.0% due to rounding error.

marriages. Domestic shopkeepers' children continued to marry working-class children, and working-class grooms made up over 80% of marriages involving domestic shopkeeper families. Notable other changes in domestic shopkeeper family marriage patterns from the first half of this marriage survey include: the complete disappearance of farmers as either grooms or fathers; a decline in the numbers of retailers as grooms and fathers; and a rise in the numbers of white-collar workers as grooms and fathers. In one typical relationship, the registrar of marriages at St. Peter's Church, Bolton, recorded that in July 1865, Joseph Mather, an iron moulder of Chorley Street, and son of John Mather, a factory timekeeper, married Ellen Tomlinson of 19 Shaw Street, the daughter of domestic shopkeeper Richard Tomlinson.³⁰

Table 4.9 summarizes the results of a survey of two Bolton non-conformist registers for years between 1860 and 1870. These marriages continued the overwhelming dominance of working-class occupations for brides, grooms, and fathers marrying into domestic shopkeeper families. Notable differences from the parish marriages of the same time, given in Table 4.8, included the total lack of farmers and white-collar workers. These differences might be accounted for by the limited number of marriages, only ten, or perhaps these two Bolton chapels attracted few members in such occupations. In a typical case, the Fletcher Street Independent Chapel's registrar recorded that, in June 1868, Elizabeth Wright, a 21 year old weaver and daughter of William Wright, a domestic shopkeeper at

³⁰St. Peter's Parish Register of Marriages, BLS.

Table 4.9: Occupations of Non-Conformist Brides, Grooms, and Fathers of the Non-Domestic Shopkeeping Spouse, Bolton, 1860–1870

	Bride's and Groom's Occupation	Non- Shopkeeping Father's Occupation
Artisan	3 (15%)	1 (10%)
Textile Worker	10 (50%)	5 (50%)
Laborer	5 (25%)	1 (10%)
White-Collar Worker	0	0
Retailer	1 (5%)	1 (10%)
Farmer	0	0
None	1 (5%)	2 (20%)
Totals	20 (100%)	10 (100%)

SOURCES: Higher Bridge St. Primitive Methodist Church Register of Marriages, BLS; Fletcher St. Independent Chapel Register of Marriages, BLS.

NOTE: Occupational categories are as in Table 4.7. In non-conformist registers, grooms and brides are given occupations, so the data presented are from only ten marriages.

142 Deansgate, married Christopher George Stott, a 20 year old warehouseman and son of James Stott, a Fletcher Street overlooker.³¹

Table 4.10 further illustrates these social connections between small and domestic shopkeepers and the working class by a separate examination of these shopkeeping grooms in Bolton and Rochdale parish marriage registers. Their brides came from predominantly working-class families, by a two-to-one margin. The variety of grooms' fathers' occupations is interesting. Perhaps this indicates that the fathers of many of these shopkeeper grooms could help establish their shops, whether through retailing experience, if his father was a retailer, or through access to certain amounts of capital and goods, if his father was a farmer.

Other evidence from non-conformist church records provided further hints that domestic shopkeepers went to chapel with artisans and workers, reinforcing these social connections. Unfortunately, church records which include occupational listings are rare. Other sources, however, reinforce the links between domestic shopkeepers and working-class dissenters. Seven small shopkeepers were among the thirty-one trustees at the founding of the St. George's Road Chapel in 1863.³² Thomas Hudson, a Little Bolton domestic shopkeeper, was a trustee at the laying of the foundation stone of the New

³¹Fletcher Street Independent Chapel Register of Marriages, BLS.

³²F.W. Peaples, *History of St. George's Road Congregational Church* (Bolton, 1913), pp. 69-70, cited in Paul T. Phillips, *The Sectarian Spirit: Sectarianism, Society, and Politics in Victorian Cotton Towns* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1982), p. 15.

Table 4.10: Occupations of Fathers When Grooms were Domestic or Small Shopkeeper, Bolton and Rochdale, Between 1837 and 1870

	Father's Occupation	Father-in- Law's Occupation
Artisan	1 (6.7%)	6 (40.0%)
Textile Worker	3 (20.0%)	2 (13.3%)
Laborer	1 (6.7%)	2 (13.3%)
White-Collar Worker	1 (6.7%)	3 (20.0%)
Retailer	5 (33.3%)	1 (6.7%)
Farmer	3 (20.0%)	1 (6.7%)
None	1 (6.7%)	0
Totals	15 (100.1%)	15 (100.0%)

SOURCES: St. Peter's Parish Register of Marriages, BLS; St. Chad's Parish Register of Marriages, RLS.

NOTE: Occupational categories are as in Table 4.7. One total varies from 100.0% due to rounding error.

Jerusalem Church in 1844.³³ The numbers of domestic shopkeeping parents found in the baptismal records in Bolton's dissenting churches, ranging from Quakers to Presbyterians, demonstrate that these shopkeepers were deeply involved in their communities through non-conformist religions.³⁴ The baptismal records of the Little Moor Independent Chapel, Ashton, demonstrated shared social relations between domestic shopkeepers and the working class. One author noted that the leadership of Ashton's Independent chapels were thoroughly proletarian, ranking at the bottom of the social 'pecking order' among the non-conformist chapels.³⁵ From 1830 through 1837, four small shopkeepers had their children baptized at the Chapel, along with forty-eight operative cotton spinners, thirty-one other cotton operatives, ten hatters, four joiners, five tailors, and eight mechanics.³⁶ Small shopkeepers figured prominently in the membership lists of the Bolton Bank Street Chapel in the 1840s and 1850s, along with tradesmen and factory workers.³⁷ These records indicated close ties between small and domestic shopkeepers and their working-class neighbors.

³³BFP, June 11, 1844.

³⁴*Society of Friends Birth Register, Register of Baptisms. . . New Jerusalem Church, Baptism Register for Duke's Alley Later Congregational Church, and St. Andrew's Presbyterian Church Baptism Register*, all at the BLS, were consulted.

³⁵E. A. Rose, "Ashton Churches and Chapels," in Sylvia A. Harrop and E. A. Rose (eds.), *Victorian Ashton* (Ashton: Tameside Libraries and Arts Committee, 1974), pp. 68-69.

³⁶*Register of Baptisms in Little Moor Independent Chapel, Parish of Glossop*, RG 4/859, TLS. There were a total of 153 fathers with occupations listed.

³⁷Phillips, *The Sectarian Spirit*, p. 14.

Domestic shopkeepers participated in the friendly societies, mutual insurance societies, that had such a prominent place in industrial English community. The Manchester Union of the Independent Oddfellows attracted the better-paid among the working men of the industrial districts like southern Lancashire.³⁸ George Bolsover gave a Poor Law investigator a complete listing of members' occupations of the Stockport District of the Independent Oddfellows, Manchester Union, in 1840. Although one hundred trades were listed, only thirty-nine occupations had ten members or more. Alongside trades with more than fifty members, cotton trades, hatters, cordwainers, laborers, and mechanics, shopkeeping Oddfellows numbered among the artisans, other retailers and publicans, and clerical workers — with shopkeepers tying the moulders and butchers at seventeen members each.³⁹ A number of small and domestic shopkeepers chaired, co-chaired, or otherwise participated in Bolton area Oddfellows' lodges. Bolton small shopkeepers James Hall chaired, and James Whitehead vice-chaired, a meeting of the Ancient Order of Druids in June, 1843.⁴⁰ Bolton's shopkeepers even formed their own friendly society; small shopkeeper Robert Lever chaired an anniversary dinner of the Shopkeepers' Mutual Protection Society on August 24, 1844.⁴¹

³⁸Peter H.J.H. Gosden, *Self-Help: Voluntary Associations in 19th-Century Britain* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1974), pp. 39-48.

³⁹PP 1842 [158] XXXV, *Report of the Poor Law Commissioners on the Population of Stockport*, pp. 223-224.

⁴⁰BFP, August 20, 1842; June 17, July 8, and November 11, 1843.

⁴¹BFP, August 24, 1844.

While friendly society membership demonstrated strong communal ties, similar associational ties to the working-class appeared in small shopkeeper memberships in the Mechanics' Institutes, adult education societies that sprang up in industrial cities.⁴² Mabel Tylecote noted that by 1851, a general educational program, aimed at a wide-range of subscribers, and focused on reading, writing, grammar, and arithmetic had replaced the original mission of the institutes, continuous practical education in scientific and engineering knowledge for workers. Recreational use of newspaper, magazine, and book libraries of the institutes also attracted members.⁴³ These changes attracted small shopkeepers, who were less interested in mechanical advances and more interested in basic academic skills necessary to the world of small retailing: bookkeeping and calculating interest and profit margins. Tylecote's survey of the Manchester Institute demonstrates a fairly steady membership of small shopkeepers, who averaged six percent of total membership from 1835 to 1844.⁴⁴

The membership of the Bolton Mechanics' Institute in the second quarter of 1838 included nineteen small shopkeepers out of two hundred and twenty-

⁴²While many Mechanics' Institutes records list numbers of "shopkeeper" members distinctly from "tradesmen," it is impossible to determine further who these "shopkeepers" represent. This study assumes that these "shopkeepers" included many domestic shopkeepers. I have used small shopkeepers to represent these members, since the records distinguish them from principal shopkeepers.

⁴³Mabel Pythian Tylecote, *The Mechanics' Institutes of Lancashire and Yorkshire Before 1851* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1957), pp. 87-111.

⁴⁴*Ibid.*, p. 297. The shopkeeper category included shop assistants.

seven members, or eight percent, slightly higher than in Manchester.⁴⁵ Small shopkeepers in 1836 numbered nineteen out of two hundred and fifty-six, or seven percent, in the Ashton-Dukinfield institute. At that time, the executive committee for 1837 included three domestic shopkeepers — William Courtman, Thomas Dyson, and James Etchells — out of the thirty members, or ten percent, of the committee.⁴⁶ Unfortunately, further membership listings combined small shopkeepers with other categories of members in Ashton and Bolton, making it difficult to assess the membership of shopkeepers in the institutes.⁴⁷ An assumption of at least five percent of the membership would probably be fair for small shopkeeper participation in the 1840s. Bolton's Institute reported fifty-seven "Shopkeepers and Tradesmen" among its 266 members, or twenty-one percent, in 1857.⁴⁸ Evidence of domestic shopkeeper activity in friendly societies and mechanics' institutes demonstrated a wide range of working-class community involvement and association.

Domestic shopkeepers participated in other aspects of community life. A vestry meeting of Tonge-with-Haulgh ratepayers in 1843 appointed domestic

⁴⁵*BFP*, April 21, 1838.

⁴⁶*Report of the Committee and the Proceedings of the Annual Meeting, 1836* (Ashton: George Orme, 1836), pp. 6-7, 15. Ashton-under-Lyne Mechanics' Institute Minute Books, TLS.

⁴⁷The Ashton Institute had a mean of twenty-three percent of its members in the "Shopkeepers, and other Master Tradesmen and their Assistants" category in 1843 and 1844. *Ashton and Dukinfield Mechanics' Institute: Report* (Ashton: T. Cunningham and Sons, 1843, 1844). Ashton-under-Lyne Mechanics' Institute Minute Books, TLS. The Bolton Institute had a mean of twelve percent of its members in the "Tradesmen and Principals" category in 1841, 1843, and 1844. *BFP*, October 2, 1841; October 14, 1843; October 12, 1844.

⁴⁸*BC*, February 21, 1857.

shopkeeper John Bleakley township constable, at six pounds salary per annum, and nominated him as a poor law guardian for the township. Though Bleakley did not serve as a guardian, he was something of a Lane's End, Haulgh, community leader.⁴⁹ At a meeting of Little Bolton ratepayers called to protest the costs of the Bolton Police Act of 1839, an anonymous commentator protested against the establishment of a permanent police force, noting that special constables had proven able to keep the peace:

Under the old system, there was not one-quarter the expense incurred and the town was then equally peaceable as now and if any emergency should call for assistance, the shopkeeper was ever ready to step forward.⁵⁰

In an effort to make more gains among the working class, Joseph Livesey asked for domestic shopkeeper leadership in the cause of temperance:

Beginning with those that are spoken of as the "heads of the town," and descending through every grade above the working class to the lowest shopkeeper, the ruin which drink has left is manifest to all. . . And yet we can get but few of the shopkeepers, or the higher and middle classes, to come out boldly and help on the cause of temperance.⁵¹

Domestic shopkeepers sometimes provided a variety of political and moral leadership in their communities, even if they did not cooperate with certain campaigns like temperance.

⁴⁹*BFP*, March 11, 1843. See Chapter Six for further evidence of Bleakley's community involvement.

⁵⁰*BFP*, July 2, 1842.

⁵¹Joseph Livesey, *A Friendly Address to Shopkeepers, Tradesmen, and the Middle Classes Generally* (Preston: C. Greenall, 187[2]), pp. 1, 2.

Shopkeepers' political activity demonstrated their community leadership.⁵²

Collectively and individually, domestic shopkeepers sympathized with the working community in times of labor-management disagreements. On some of these occasions, workers applied the pressure of exclusive dealing to shopkeepers to get favorable support. During most such disputes, however, workers were unemployed and needed the economic support of domestic shops' credit system the most. One-hundred-ninety-nine "Shopkeepers, Publicans, Victuallers, and others engaged in Mercantile business" petitioned the Earl of Derby on January 11, 1831, concerning a turnout of operative cotton spinners in the Ashton area. Shopkeepers joined to ask that Derby intervene in the labor dispute in favor of the workers, and end the disruption of the district's economy:

The difference of Prices of Wages for Labor betwixt Man and Master is the sole cause of our Distress and common ruin, and not, as some have ventured to assert, Political or revolutionary disturbances. This difference is easy to ascertain & equalize without Anarchy or Bloodshed: An Equalization (that is a Standard Price as Wages of Labor in Cotton Mills) is therefore the cause of dispute between Man & Master in this particular District, there being fifty two Master Spinners in Contention with from twenty to thirty thousand operatives of the Wages of Labor, as the said Number of Master Spinners have combined together to shut up their mills against their operatives because they would not consent to work considerably below the Standard Price as Wages of Labor which is now established throughout the Trade.

It is then to an interference betwixt Man & Master by way of Mediation which your Lordship's Petitioners humbly beg your attention; An interference which the Magistrates in this District have refused by Public Notice; and without such interferences or

⁵²A more complete analysis of domestic shopkeeper politics follows in Chapter Six.

mediation which your Lordship's Petitioners humbly beg we see no probability of the struggles being soon ended.⁵³

Shopkeepers certainly would have benefitted from an advance in operatives' wages, and took a public stand in their favor.

During the Chartist decade, 1838–1848, domestic shopkeepers demonstrated a high degree of solidarity with workers. Shoemaker Thomas Berry and domestic shopkeeper Benjamin Rigby co-chaired a 1839 workingmen's dinner in honor of anti-Corn Law lecturer A. W. Paulton, and handloom weaver William Pilling and operative cotton spinner Henry Rothwell gave speeches at the dinner.⁵⁴ Thomas Brindle, a Bolton domestic shopkeeper on James Street and secretary of the Operative Cotton Spinners association, assumed a prominent public stand on the ten-hours question in 1844.⁵⁵ In Mick Jenkins' analysis of working-class consciousness in 1842, he cited a number of cases of small shopkeepers distributing money and food to strikers in Rochdale, Salford, and Manchester, while looting of these shops was almost non-existent:

This collective self-discipline was a menace to the government. The control of looting was not based upon any false respect for property. It sprang from an understanding of the political implications: a knowledge that the shopkeepers and small property holders constituted *indispensable allies* and that in the past it was the small shopkeepers who supplied credit in any industrial dispute.⁵⁶

⁵³HO 52/13, ff. 243-244, Petition from "Shopkeepers, Publicans, Victuallers and others engaged in Mercantile business" to the Earl of Derby, January 11, 1831.

⁵⁴BFP, December 7, 1839.

⁵⁵BFP, March 23, and December 28, 1844.

⁵⁶Mick Jenkins, *The General Strike of 1842* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 247-248. Italics supplied.

As "indispensable allies," small shopkeepers had put their shops behind the actions of the Chartists.

Other reports from industrial areas in 1842 seem to verify Jenkins' assertion. In Bury, shopkeepers and tradesmen helped bring men and masters together to agree on an advance in wages and a ten-hour day.⁵⁷ A procession of Wigan unemployed elicited a public show of charity from shopkeepers.⁵⁸ A reporter from the Scotland mining district noted,

The miners are, in a great measure, supported by the shopkeepers. . . A meeting of shopkeepers was held at which several sums for the support of the colliers were subscribed. At every meeting all acts of violence are strongly repudiated. . . .⁵⁹

When working-class communities were threatened, it seems that shopkeepers were not afraid to take prominent positions in support of their communal interests.

A search of contemporary wills in Bolton, Oldham, and Rochdale, 1830–1870, revealed yet another aspect of the diversity of shopkeepers' social relationships. The assignment of non-familial executors to a will indicated a probable social relationship in addition to an economic and legal relationship. Since the assignment of an executor was voluntary for both the maker of the will and the assigned executor, a will represented social ties as important as legal and economic bonds. Public notice of the death of Joseph Crompton, a small

⁵⁷*BFP*, August 20, 1842.

⁵⁸*BFP*, July 2, 1842.

⁵⁹*BFP*, August 20, 1842.

shopkeeper in Bolton in 1837, illustrated the importance of these non-familial executors. Crompton's widow, Ann, carried on the business under the guardianship of James Parkinson, a moulder.⁶⁰ A moulder was a skilled metalworker and so presumably qualified to act as an economic advisor. Parkinson would also provide a male counterpart for Mrs. Crompton in a distinctly sexist legal world.⁶¹ The texts of thirty-seven wills between 1830 and 1857 for small and domestic shopkeepers in Bolton and Rochdale all provided for the continuing operation of the shop by a widow or son or daughter.

In each case, non-familial executors of small and domestic shopkeepers' wills were of the same approximate social status or above. The large number of retailers, over 40%, as executors for these shopkeepers indicated some social solidarity among the retailing strata, and reflected the economic demands of executors. The social link between small and domestic shopkeepers and workers from this sample is quite weak. Did economic and legal necessities of probate override other community social connections? The vagaries of categorization create some difficulty; was the weaver a proletarian, specialized silk weaver, or an employer? The variety of relations indicated these shopkeepers' ties to a wider community, beyond class and status. Each of these non-familial executors for shopkeepers' wills were from the same town or a nearby locality. These findings reflect a similar study of shopkeepers in nineteenth-century Swedish towns. Tom

⁶⁰*BFP*, October 14, 1837.

⁶¹Chapter Five examines the legal status of single and widowed women domestic shopkeepers.

Ericsson found that shopkeepers favored social relationships with people from a similar or higher social status, as determined by a survey of the occupational structure of witnesses at baptisms. Ericsson concluded that shopkeepers used invitations of witnesses at baptisms as a means of climbing the social ladder.⁶² Perhaps those shopkeepers who left wills tended to be more economically successful, as noted in Chapter Three, and they might have intentionally downplayed their social connections to the working-class communities. The economic connections of small and domestic shopkeeping might have encouraged the naming of shop creditors as executors. Or perhaps these wills represented important economic and legal issues, issues which indicated that non-familial executors have a higher social status. Table 4.11 illustrates this variety in small and domestic shopkeeper social relationships.

This study of domestic shopkeepers' social relations presents a more varied view of their social identity. Domestic shopkeepers were well-known within their community, through organizations such as friendly societies and mechanics' institutes. They married, and otherwise socialized with, a broad range of people within their working-class communities. Much of this social interaction emphasized working-class members of the community. Other data indicated a much less proletarian social picture, including social associations with middle-class tradesmen, as in probate records and some marriages. This element of diversity in social relationships reoccurred throughout statistical and anecdotal sources of

⁶²Tom Ericsson, "Kinship and Sociability: Urban Shopkeepers in Nineteenth-Century Sweden," *Journal of Family History* 14, 3 (1989), pp. 229-239.

Table 4.11: Non-familial Executors of Small and Domestic Shopkeepers' Wills, Bolton, Oldham, and Rochdale, 1830–1870

	Bolton 1830–1857 (11 Wills)	Bolton, Oldham, and Rochdale 1858–1870 (7 Wills)
Artisan	0 (0.0%)	3 (25.0%)
Retailer	11 (47.8%)	5 (41.7%)
Other Dealer	4 (17.4%)	0 (0.0%)
Other	8 (34.8%)	4 (33.3%)
Totals	23 (100.0%)	12 (100.0%)

SOURCE: Probate Records, LRO.

NOTE: Wills might include up to three executors. Artisan occupations included a boiler-maker, a reedmaker, and an ironmonger. Retailer occupations included seven shopkeepers, five grocers, a beerseller, a tripe seller, and an earthenware dealer. Other Dealer occupations included a tea dealer, a flour dealer, a corn dealer, and an innkeeper. Other occupations included two warehousemen, two bookkeepers, an overlooker, a timber merchant, a weaver, a cotton spinner, a manufacturer, a parish overlooker, and a parish tax collector.

social relations. Perhaps this indicates the failure of these sources to adequately distinguish among the variety of shopkeepers. On the other hand, perhaps this study verifies for domestic shopkeepers what Hosgood noted about the social milieu of small shopkeepers — these shopkeepers were among the working-class community, but not entirely of that community. Serving in public offices and actions in support of workers' also indicated that domestic shopkeepers often served as bridges between their working-class community and the rest of the society.

III. Irish Domestic Shopkeepers

Irish immigrants represented one identifiable working-class segment of the Victorian urban environment.⁶³ Constant street fights in the predominantly-Irish New Town neighborhood so irritated Bolton magistrates in 1843 that they swore in eight special constables, including Thomas Morris, a domestic shopkeeper on Markland Street, to keep the peace. His fellow constables included two shoemakers, a furniture broker, a straw hat maker, a chemist, a cooper, and a pawnbroker. Not one of the special constables appears to have been Irish.⁶⁴ Morris certainly had some autonomy from his Irish working-class neighbors, and the associational ties to his fellow English artisans and retailers were evident. As

⁶³Lynn H. Lees, *Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1979), pp. 244-250.

⁶⁴*BFP*, June 24, 1843.

early as 1828, Gustave d'Eichthal noted the ethnic tensions between the English and Irish in Bolton: "When the Irish are mentioned in England they are still spoken of with great contempt even by working men."⁶⁵ A full-scale riot erupted in early August, 1831, between civilians and Irish soldiers of the 18th Regiment stationed in Bolton.⁶⁶ Anglo-Irish ethnic tensions were widespread in industrial Lancashire. Neville Kirk felt that Chartism did much to alleviate ethnic tensions, but Anglo-Irish conflicts superseded class conflict following Chartism's demise after 1848.⁶⁷

The role of the Irish in domestic shopkeeping reflects the usual diversity of contemporary observations. John O'Neill, a Irish London shoemaker, invested ten pounds in a domestic shop in 1842. His bitter description of subsequent failure focused on the economic difficulties of shop credit, but he failed to mention the social ties to the immediate neighborhood necessary for success.⁶⁸ Historical studies of the extent of Irish shopkeeping activity paint a varied picture. Lynn Lees found that small shopkeepers represented 4.3% of Victorian London Irish household heads in 1851 and 3.0% in 1861. One investigator of East

⁶⁵Barrie Ratcliffe and William H. Chaloner (eds.), *A French Sociologist Looks at Britain: Gustave d'Eichthal and British Society in 1828* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), p. 95.

⁶⁶HO 52/13, ff. 199-220.

⁶⁷Neville Kirk, *The Growth of Working Class Reformism in Mid-Victorian England* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), pp. 315-319.

⁶⁸John O'Neill, "Fifty years' experience of an Irish shoemaker in London," *St. Crispin* 1-2 (1869-1870), cited in L. D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialisation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 43.

London in the early 1860s found that, "Those Irish who saved some money invested in a small shop, or a lodging house."⁶⁹ In Bristol, however, domestic shopkeepers failed make the top twenty-six rank order occupations, meaning there were fewer than ten domestic shopkeepers out of over two thousand Irish males in the 1851 census. Bristol seemed to have no "little Ireland," however, which might account for the small, or non-existent, numbers of Irish domestic shopkeepers.⁷⁰ William Lowe found only four male Irish domestic shopkeepers in Oldham in 1851, and seven in Widnes in 1871, and he especially noted the lack of Irish shopkeeping in mid-Victorian Lancashire.⁷¹ Foster commented that Oldham's Irish population, largely non-segregated in 1841, had become segregated by the time of the 1861 anti-Irish riot.⁷² If Oldham possessed ethnic Irish neighborhoods, then some Irish domestic shopkeepers should be serving that community. Kirk found no Irish domestic shopkeepers in his census survey of Stockport in 1851, despite a noted case of Anglo-Irish ethnic violence in 1852.⁷³

⁶⁹Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, Appendix B, Table A.2; William Pollard-Urquhart, "Condition of the Irish Labourers in the East of London," *Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of the Social Sciences* (1862), p. 747, cited in Lees, *Exiles of Erin*, pp. 120-121.

⁷⁰David Large, "The Irish in Bristol: A Census Enumeration," in Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (eds.), *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p. 39, 43.

⁷¹William J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), p. 90.

⁷²Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 128-129, 243-246.

⁷³Kirk, *The Growth of Working Class Reformism*, pp. 319, 326-329.

Contemporary observers also gave conflicting accounts of Irish domestic shopkeeping. In 1836, Edward Peach, Anglican priest of St. Chad's Parish, Birmingham, gave an unsympathetic report:

The Irish never look for any trade or business; they merely seek to get their living, as their fathers have done, by labor. . . They never make fortunes or rise in the world. I never knew an instance of a working man setting up a shop or a public house. The few Irish shopkeepers in Birmingham came over with money.⁷⁴

Charles Middlehurst of St Mary's (Anglican) Parish, Wigan, reported that, "The Irish are chiefly of the working-class; I do not know more than three or four persons in a respectable line of shop business." Perhaps Middlehurst did not consider domestic shops respectable. James Cattnach of St. John's (Catholic) Parish, Wigan, who reported having three thousand parishioners, was even more critical, stating, "The Irish in Wigan exclusively belong to the working class. I do not know an Irish shopkeeper in the town: I believe there is an Irish publican."⁷⁵ Perhaps the lack of Irish domestic shopkeepers stemmed from the lack of segregated Wigan Irish neighborhoods.

Evidence from Liverpool and Manchester presents an alternate view to the Irish in Wigan and Birmingham. Both of these towns contained segregated Irish communities. Thomas Fisher, resident Catholic priest of St. Mary's Parish, Liverpool, for thirty-three years, noted, "Many of the Irish who come over as labourers rise to be small shopkeepers, provision-vendors, and public-house

⁷⁴PP 1836 [1] XXXIV, *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain*, Supplement II, Appendix I, pp. 475-476.

⁷⁵Ibid., Appendix II, p. 563.

keepers."⁷⁶ Observers reported Manchester as a town brimming with Irish entrepreneurship. James Crook, resident Catholic priest of St. Austin's Parish, thought, "There is a fair proportion of them in business of different kinds; these persons have principally risen from the lower to the middle class, and have not brought capital from Ireland."⁷⁷ James Howarth, collector of tolls in the Manchester marketplace, reported that the Irish accounted three-fourths of the stall-keepers, though he thought, ". . . very few get on to be small shopkeepers."⁷⁸ An anonymous shopkeeper "in a part of Manchester much inhabited by the Irish" revealed:

I should think that, take our neighbourhood through, there is not above one out of four of the heads of families who has not got money by him. Most of them have got gold. . . They save with a view of returning to Ireland.⁷⁹

Some of these savings could be spent to set up domestic shops, as John O'Neill did in London.

A summary of my census data results for native Irish shopkeepers follows in Table 4.12. These results present a similarly mixed picture for Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale, as those given by contemporary observers and other scholars. Irish domestic shopkeepers were rare in Rochdale in 1851 and 1861, as well as in

⁷⁶Ibid., p. 497.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 535.

⁷⁸Ibid., p. 547.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 548.

Table 4.12: Irish Domestic Shopkeepers, 1841, 1851, and 1861

	1841	1851	1861
Ashton (1841 N=99; 1851 N=77)	4 (4.0%)	1 (1.3%)	-- --
Rochdale (1851 N=175; 1861 N=126)	-- --	4 (2.3%)	1 (0.6%)
Bolton (1851 N=225; 1861 N=287)	-- --	10 (4.4%)	15 (5.2%)

SOURCES: My census data — HO 107/532; HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: The percentages are for all domestic shopkeepers in each town. Bolton had one Irish female domestic shopkeeper in 1851, and three in 1861; the only Irish Rochdale domestic shopkeeper in 1861 was female.

Ashton in 1851, but they represent a significant minority of all shopkeepers in Bolton, as well as Ashton in 1841.

The evidence from this summary highlights the uneven state of Irish domestic shopkeeping in industrial Lancashire. An explanation may be found in the size and composition of the Irish populations in these industrial towns. In towns with identifiable Irish neighborhoods, domestic shopkeeping became a much more viable occupation. The numbers of Irish domestic shopkeepers in Bolton, with its ethnic Irish New Town neighborhood, echoed Lees' findings for London. One historian found ten Irish shopkeepers in Bolton based on an occupational sample from the 1841 census.⁸⁰ Bolton had nearly 3500 Irish adults, age twenty or more, in 1851, ten percent of the entire adult population and one-sixth of the adults born outside of the borough.⁸¹ The number of Irish domestic shopkeepers in Bolton amounted to one for every three hundred Irish adults in 1851. In a letter to the editor, "An Observer" complained of gangs of Irish youths harassing passersby in the New Town area, and chastised the police for failing to break up games of "pitch and toss" by Irish youths.⁸² An examination of the locations of Irish domestic shopkeepers in 1851 revealed that six out of ten were located either within the New Town area, or within 1 block of

⁸⁰John R. Egan, "The Irish in Bolton, 1841-1871" (Ph.D. diss., University of Sheffield, 1985), p. 38.

⁸¹PP 1852-53 [1691-II] LXXXVIII, Pt. 2, Vol. 2, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces*, p. 664.

⁸²BC, March 21, 1857.

it. Seven out of fifteen Irish domestic shopkeepers were located within or near the New Town area in 1861. In each census year, the remaining Irish domestic shopkeepers appeared to locate regardless of identifiable Irish neighborhoods.

Ashton's 1841 survey also revealed a relatively high number of shopkeepers, conforming to the numbers of the Irish in Ashton. The appearance of only one Irish shopkeeper in 1851 was likely a discrepancy based on incomplete census manuscript survival.⁸³ The 1851 census recorded 5708 Irish adults in Ashton, a sizeable community comprising nearly one-sixth of the entire Ashton-area population.⁸⁴ Ashton had a distinctly Irish "Flag Alley" neighborhood by 1861.⁸⁵ The first resident priest, John Quealy, arrived in 1849, and the first chapel was opened in 1852. St. Ann's Church was begun in 1859, but never completed.⁸⁶ Ashton's Irish community probably supported many more domestic shopkeepers than revealed by the incomplete census of 1851.

In towns like Rochdale, with a small and ill-defined Irish community, fewer Irish domestic shopkeepers appeared. Rochdale had only about 1300 adults of Irish origin out of nearly forty thousand adults in the 1851 registration district, or

⁸³Robert G. Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics in Ashton-Under-Lyne, 1830-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1991), pp. 66-72.

⁸⁴PP 1852-53 [1691-II] LXXXVIII, Pt. 2, Vol. 2, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces*, p. 662.

⁸⁵Kirk, *The Growth of Working Class Reformism*, pp. 330-332.

⁸⁶Rose, "Ashton Churches and Chapels," pp. 67, 72.

about three percent.⁸⁷ Large's 1851 Bristol findings followed this Rochdale pattern. Evidence given to the Irish Poor Commission in 1836 also supported this correlation between domestic shopkeepers and community: Liverpool and Manchester contained established Irish neighborhoods, while Birmingham and Wigan had no established Irish neighborhoods. The vital link between domestic shopkeeping and community is reinforced by this brief survey of the Lancashire Irish; where there was an Irish community, there were Irish domestic shopkeepers.

IV. Conclusion

Domestic shopkeepers' social position matched their precarious economic position. The social ambiguities of domestic shopkeeping has led historians to neglect this group. Recent rescue attempts by Hosgood and Lawson have focused on the latter part of the nineteenth-century. One of the consequences of this study is a realization of the difficulty of homogenizing the social world of domestic shopkeepers — they do not seem to fit into any class or socio-economic category very well. Two fairly solid conclusions, nevertheless, appear from this survey. First, domestic shops were predominantly a household and family affair. Widows, single parents, and the elderly sought refuge in domestic shopkeeping;

⁸⁷PP 1852-53 [1691-II] LXXXVIII, Pt. 2, Vol. 2, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces*, p. 662.

the importance of family represented one dominant social theme of domestic shopkeeping.

Secondly, domestic shopkeepers' communal life was rich and varied, with examples spanning the range from proletarian to middle-class associations. Domestic shopkeepers seem to have possessed a rather fluid social position which allowed them to bridge some class distinctions. This diversity seemed to reflect domestic shopkeepers being part of a working-class community, without being bound by all the demands of that community. One of the powerful attractions of domestic shopkeeping was autonomy and independence, the virtues of the pre-industrial craftsman. This desire for autonomy, if not its achievement, led domestic shopkeepers toward a wide-range of voluntary associations based on individual desires. Even so, domestic shopkeepers could hardly escape most of the social demands of community, any more than they could escape the economic necessities of their customers. The close association of Irish domestic shopkeepers with an ethnic neighborhood in Bolton represented the importance of some communal ties. The diversity of social commitments between voluntary association and involuntary communal ties create a bewildering array of forces for social historians to synthesize. It is not surprising that historians seeking to place domestic shopkeepers into categories of class have met with frustration. Edward Thompson's defined class consciousness as happening when people became aware of a sense of solidarity among themselves and antagonism toward others.⁸⁸

⁸⁸Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1967), pp. 9-11.

Domestic shopkeepers do not fit this notion of class. They could not afford to be excluded from their communities and could not survive in a hostile environment of class conflict for long. Domestic shopkeepers needed to build bridges between classes and did. The diversity of their social and economic relationships, both working-class and middle-class, highlighted this need to create bonds that bridged class boundaries. Indeed, if domestic shopkeepers fit into class definitions, this definition cannot ignore the diversity of interests that made up this shopkeeper's world. Social environment and communal demands often drove domestic shopkeepers in different directions under different circumstances. Economic pressures of creditors and the political pressures of voting did not always result in actions consistent with the social bonds to their neighborhood. The blandishments of respectable middle-class culture did not negate the harsh realities of daily contact with the working-class neighborhood.

CHAPTER V

WOMEN AND DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING

Despite a significant number of women in domestic shopkeeping, Victorian records frequently downplayed the importance of women to the overwhelmingly family and household enterprise that was the domestic shop. Many historians, however, have emphasized the important role of women, both as domestic shopkeepers themselves and as partners in these shopkeeping enterprises. John Benson noted that among the penny capitalist families of domestic shopkeepers and street vendors, entrepreneurial women earned an income by taking in laundry or sewing.¹ Melanie Tebbutt emphasized that domestic shopkeepers, other informal creditors, and their debtors constituted autonomous women's working-class credit networks, networks run and supervised for and by women.² Lilian Shiman noted that English retailing had traditionally been dominated by women, since most shops operated out of the home.³ Chris Hosgood found that small shops represented centers of a distinctly female domestic culture. These shops were network hubs of gossip and an important focus of the community.⁴ Robert

¹John Benson, *The Penny Capitalists: A Study of Nineteenth-Century Working-Class Entrepreneurs* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), p. 135.

²Melanie Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet: Pawnbroking and Working-Class Credit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 62-67.

³Lilian L. Shiman, *Women and Leadership in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Macmillan, 1992), pp. 75-76.

⁴Christopher Hosgood, "The 'Pigmies of Commerce' and the Working-Class Community," *Journal of Social History* 22, 3 (1989): 447-450.

Roberts remembered growing up in his mother's Salford domestic shop fondly: "Here, back and forth across the counters, slid the comedy, tragedy, hopes, fears and fancies of a whole community: here was market place and village well combined."⁵

The importance of women to the economy and culture of a community is not a unique finding. Ellen Ross' study of households proved the versatility and inventiveness of women's networks in working-class communities.⁶ Elizabeth Roberts found that working-class women employed retailing as one of a number of strategies for survival.⁷ Sophie Bowlby characterized women shopkeepers as motivated by mutual needs between shopkeeper and community, rather than actuated by capitalist profits and consumerism.⁸ Mrs. Roberts' shop served as a temporary repository for the neighborhood pawn shop on Saturday night and Sunday, so that women could pay for and collect the weekly pawn bundles after the pawn shop closed. The Roberts' shop was also a center of the community

⁵Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 9.

⁶Ellen Ross, "Survival Networks: Women's Neighborhood Sharing in London Before World War I," *History Workshop Journal* 15 (Spring 1983): 4-27.

⁷Elizabeth A.M. Roberts, "Women's Strategies, 1890-1940," in Jane Lewis (ed.), *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family, 1850-1940* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), pp. 234-242.

⁸Sophie Bowlby, "From Corner Shop to Hypermarket: Women and Food Retailing," in Jo Little, Linda Peake, and Pat Richardson (eds.), *Women in Cities: Gender and the Urban Environment* (New York: New York University Press, 1988), pp. 65-66.

matriarchy and a clearinghouse for gossip. Corner shops filled an important communal role for women in the working-class neighborhoods.⁹

Of course these feminine communities were not idyllic. Washerwomen sometimes pawned their clean laundry before returning it to its owners, needing the earlier cash returns on their labor. Occasionally these laundresses failed to pay the pawn charges on this laundry, leaving the pawn ticket at the corner shop for the embarrassed owners of the clothes to pick up both laundry and pawn charges. The landing of these "butterflies" could result in public shouting incidents, and the offended owner of the clothes might resort to "pushin' her windows in."¹⁰ Failure to redeem the regular Sunday pledge bundle at the Roberts' shop indicated a serious reconsideration of shop credit, since the indebted family might have trouble paying shop charges. On one occasion, a family "midnighted" away from their pawn charges as well as their shop account.¹¹ Bolton magistrates heard a case regarding a fight between Martha Reed and Martha Summer at the domestic shop of Mrs. William Crompton over the possession of a communal newspaper kept at the shop.¹² Margaret Cochrane and Elizabeth Hegin were charged with assault on Catherine McGraff, a small

⁹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 25, 42-43; Robert Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling: Growing Up in the Classic Slum* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976), p. 104; Carl Chinn, *They Worked All Their Lives: Women of the Urban Poor in England, 1880-1939* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), pp. 73-74.

¹⁰Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, p. 104-105.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 105-106.

¹²*BFP*, May 11, 1844.

shopkeeper neighbor, for knocking her hat off by throwing stones.¹³ Bolton magistrates fined Sarah York, wife of domestic shopkeeper John York, for an assault on Catherine Noonan, a neighbor and customer at the shop; the two women had been arguing over the behavior of their children.¹⁴ Despite disagreements, these close-knit women's communities were an important part of working-class life, and female domestic shopkeepers played a role in these communities.

In order to further illuminate the role of women in domestic shops, my census data from the industrial towns of Ashton, Bolton and Rochdale in 1851 and 1861 has been used in conjunction with various contemporary anecdotal information. I have used a precise definition of a woman domestic shopkeeper — any single or widowed woman with a domestic shopkeeper census occupation listing, as well as any wife, regardless of her occupational listing, whose husband's occupation was listed as domestic shopkeeper.¹⁵ The first part of this chapter considers women domestic shopkeepers distinctly recognized in the public records, a important element in understanding domestic shopkeeping. It is a story of women, often widows or spinsters who were heads of their households, with obligations to provide a means of living for themselves and other family members. Domestic shopkeeping provided women household heads with a socially

¹³*BFP*, February 28, 1846.

¹⁴*BC*, September 12, 1857.

¹⁵See Chapter One for definitions of domestic shopkeeper in census records.

acceptable means of supporting a family, according to Victorian mores. While lamenting the disastrous effect of the Cotton Famine of the early 1860s on domestic shopkeepers, Richard Cobden reported that,

There is no doubt but a very large amount of the shopkeeping class are rapidly falling into the condition of the unemployed labourers. When I was at Rochdale the other day, I heard a very sorrowful example of it. There was a poor woman who kept a shop, and she was threatened with a distraint for her poor-rate. She sold the Sunday clothes of her son to pay the poor-rate, and she received a relief-ticket when she went to leave her rate.¹⁶

Cobden was impressed that this woman had done her best to support herself and family and pay the poor rates, but she could not bear both burdens during the current economic crisis.

The second section of this chapter is an effort to at least partially recover the contributions that wives of domestic shopkeepers made when their families joined the shopkeeping world. The census instructions in 1851 reminded recorders that, "The occupations of women who are regularly employed from home, or at home, in any but domestic duties, [are] to be distinctly recorded."¹⁷ While census records generally indicated occupations of single women or widowed female heads of domestic shopkeeping households, discrepancies appeared when recorders assigned occupations to wives of male domestic shopkeepers. Census records, despite the admonitions of the instructions, displayed a regular under-

¹⁶Speech of Richard Cobden, 29 April 1862, at Town Hall, Manchester, cited in Edwin Waugh, *Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine* (Manchester: John Heywood, 1881), pp. 191-192.

¹⁷PP 1851 [1339] XLIII, *Forms and Instructions. . . For the Use of Persons in Taking an Account of the Population of Great Britain*, p. 6.

reporting of the contributions of a large proportion of the women to the domestic shop economy. Despite a widespread awareness of the shared familial burdens of domestic shopkeeping, these wives found their contributions lessened or ignored in the census records. A Victorian gender ideology shaped census records of domestic shopkeepers, an ideology that ignored economically significant work by married women in their home that doubled as their workplace. The third part of this chapter provides some probable explanations for this misrepresentation of women's contributions to domestic shopkeeping. The two ideologies of the male breadwinner image and the domestic ideal help explain Victorian census records' negligence of women domestic shopkeepers.

I. Women Domestic Shopkeepers

Many single and widowed women earned a living through shopkeeping. L. D. Schwarz found that in 1851 these women composed 52.4% of London domestic shopkeepers. A search of insurance registers from the late eighteenth century showed that women chandlers held 17.4% of the insurance policies, the second highest category next to milliners.¹⁸ The Victorian domestic ideal seemed to allow for domestic shopkeeping as a viable occupation for women without spouses. Domestic shops violated the Victorian "separate spheres" ideology which supposed that private households and public enterprises were

¹⁸L. D. Schwarz, *London in the Age of Industrialization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 21. Domestic shopkeepers were termed "chandlers" in London.

separate. But the practical need for single and widowed women's earnings overrode the domestic ideal. Domestic shops kept by such women did not conflict with the male breadwinner ideal, since there was no male household head to threaten. Women domestic shopkeepers combined public image and private concerns into households of both domesticity and industry.

Table 5.1 summarizes my census data for Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale women in domestic shopkeeping. Widows accounted for over half of all of these shopkeepers. Married women domestic shopkeepers, married women with these occupations, account for one-fourth or fewer of the total female shopkeeping occupational listings. That this is undoubtedly an under-reporting of wives' contribution to domestic shops will be discussed later. The listing of these women domestic shopkeepers, nearly one-third of all such shopkeepers for these towns, however, does acknowledge the important role of women in domestic shopkeeping enterprises.

In order to preserve an independent lifestyle, many widows took up domestic shopkeeping. Even in the eighteenth century, small businesses afforded the best security for widows in England and France.¹⁹ According to the general report of the 1851 Census, two-thirds of English widows had occupational

¹⁹Olwen Hufton, "Women Without Men: Widows and Spinsters in Britain and France in the Eighteenth Century," *Journal of Family History* 9, 4 (Winter, 1984): 364.

Table 5.1: Women Domestic Shopkeepers' Marital Status, 1851 and 1861

	Married	Widowed	Single	Total Women Domestic Shop- keepers	Total Domestic Shop- keepers
Ashton 1851	0 (0.0%) [0.0%]	5 (55.6%) [6.5%]	4 (44.4%) [5.2%]	9 (100.0%) [11.7%]	77
Bolton 1851	15 (15.8%) [6.7%]	53 (55.8%) [23.6%]	27 (28.4%) [12.0%]	95 (100.0%) [42.2%]	225
Rochdale 1851	7 (13.2%) [4.0%]	31 (58.5%) [17.7%]	15 (28.3%) [8.6%]	53 (100.0%) [30.3%]	175
Bolton 1861	18 (20.7%) [6.3%]	50 (57.5%) [17.4%]	19 (21.8%) [6.6%]	87 (100.0%) [30.3%]	287
Rochdale 1861	8 (25.0%) [6.3%]	17 (53.1%) [13.5%]	7 (21.9%) [5.6%]	32 (100.0%) [25.4%]	126
Totals, 1851 and 1861	48 (17.4%) [5.4%]	156 (56.5%) [17.5%]	72 (26.1%) [8.1%]	276 (100.0%) [31.0%]	890

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: Percentages of women domestic shopkeepers are presented in parentheses; percentages of all domestic shopkeepers are presented in brackets.

listings.²⁰ J. D. Milne's study of the 1851 census returns for women shopkeepers concluded that,

. . . the individuals returned in this table are almost entirely *widows*, who on the death of their husbands have continued business for the support of themselves and their families.²¹

As Michael Anderson noted in his study of Preston in 1851, widowhood was a critical period, when many women depended on their family and kin for economic support.²² Oral sources confirmed that some women turned to domestic shopkeeping following catastrophic loss.²³ Some widows could maintain some degree of economic independence through domestic shopkeeping.

A few examples from Bolton illustrated the numbers of widows in small and domestic shops. Bolton magistrates mitigated the fine of Betty Hardman, a widow with small children, for having unjust scales in her domestic shop in Churchgate, due to the circumstance of her widowhood.²⁴ Mary Blunt and Sarah Hardman, two more widows with children, did not escape their excise fines for selling beer without a license, despite sympathetic statements from the bench.²⁵

²⁰PP 1852-53 [1691-I] LXXXVIII, Pt. 1, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces, Volume 1*, p. 101.

²¹John D. Milne, *The Industrial and Social Position of Women in the Middle and Lower Ranks* (London: Bradbury and Evans, 1857), p. 177. Italics in original.

²²Michael Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth-Century Lancashire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1971), pp. 144-147.

²³Thea Vigne and Alun Howkins, "The Small Shopkeeper in Industrial and Market Towns," in Geoffrey Crossick (ed.), *The Lower Middle Class in Britain, 1870-1914* (London: Croom Helm, 1977), p. 188.

²⁴*BFP*, February 8, 1845.

²⁵*BFP*, April 29, 1843.

During a Christmas roundup of hush shops, unlicensed beer shops, in 1843, six out of the eleven charged were women.²⁶ Magistrates convicted and fined Margery Fletcher in 1853 for running a hush shop. Her neighbor, domestic shopkeeper James Shuttleworth, pleaded for the court's mercy for Fletcher, saying that, "He had unsuccessfully attempted to dissuade her from it, but she would not comply, urging that if she desisted, she would have no means of obtaining a livelihood."²⁷

Lodgers represented another important source of additional income for women and their families.²⁸ About one-third of women domestic shopkeepers took in lodgers for these census years. The number of these women needing the extra income from lodgers illustrates the precarious economic position of domestic shopkeeping. The results do not indicate much difference among lodging rates for the three categories of women domestic shopkeepers: married women had slightly lower rates, followed by single women, with widowed women having the highest rates. The percentage of women domestic shopkeepers taking in lodgers appears slightly higher in 1851 than in 1861. Additional income from lodgers would help insure the independence that was so characteristic of the domestic shopkeeping ideal for men and women. Victorian working-class social mores accepted widows taking in lodgers, while married or single women taking in

²⁶*BFP*, December 30, 1843.

²⁷*BC*, February 19, 1853.

²⁸For the importance of lodging to the Irish in Lancashire, see William J. Lowe, *The Irish in Mid-Victorian Lancashire* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 58-59.

male lodgers invited unwelcome public scrutiny by the neighborhood matriarchy.²⁹ Table 5.2 illustrates the need for women domestic shopkeepers to combine shopkeeping with lodger incomes.

Women domestic shopkeepers frequently had the help of their children to run the family shop. Married women were most likely to have the help of children. Only slightly fewer widowed domestic shopkeepers had children in 1851, and widows surpassed married women in 1861. A significant minority of single women also had children in their domestic shop households. The number of these single women parents concerned Victorian moralists, though these single mothers' incomes eased Victorian fears somewhat. Once they were old enough to work, children benefitted the household economy so typical of domestic shopkeeping. Robert Roberts' older sister Jane assisted in their shop frequently.³⁰ Women domestic shopkeepers bore significant economic burdens, either as the most important income-earners as widowed or single heads of households, or by contributing to the total household income in the case of married women. Table 5.3 summarizes my census data of women domestic shopkeepers with children.

With children present in so domestic shops, women carried the duties of the shop in addition to all other domestic duties of home, traditionally women's domain. Nearly one in three, 29.7%, of all women domestic shopkeeper

²⁹Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, 88-89.

³⁰Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, pp. 26, 38, 42, 72.

Table 5.2: Women Domestic Shopkeepers Taking In Lodgers, 1851 and 1861

	Married	Widowed	Single	Total Women Domestic Shopkeepers
Ashton 1851	0 / 0 (0.0%)	1 / 5 (20.0%)	2 / 4 (50.0%)	3 / 9 (33.3%)
Bolton 1851	6 / 15 (40.0%)	27 / 53 (50.9%)	10 / 27 (37.0%)	43 / 95 (45.3%)
Rochdale 1851	2 / 7 (28.6%)	13 / 31 (41.9%)	5 / 15 (33.3%)	20 / 53 (37.7%)
Bolton 1861	5 / 18 (27.8%)	16 / 50 (32.0%)	6 / 19 (31.6%)	27 / 87 (31.0%)
Rochdale 1861	1 / 8 (12.5%)	6 / 17 (35.3%)	2 / 7 (28.6%)	9 / 32 (28.1%)
Totals, 1851 and 1861	14 / 48 (29.2%)	63 / 156 (40.4%)	25 / 72 (34.7%)	102 / 276 (37.0%)

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: For each category the first number is women domestic shopkeepers who kept lodgers, followed by the number of these women shopkeepers, and the percentage of them who kept lodgers. Many of the lodgers listed in the census records were listed as domestic servants. However it is not clear whether they were servants in these households who lived on-site, or in the service of other employers. Therefore all lodgers were included in this tabulation.

Table 5.3: Women Domestic Shopkeeper Households with Children, 1851 and 1861

	Married	Widowed	Single
Ashton 1851	0 / 0 (0.0%)	4 / 5 (80.0%)	1 / 4 (25.0%)
Bolton 1851	14 / 15 (93.3%)	41 / 53 (77.4%)	8 / 27 (29.6%)
Rochdale 1851	5 / 7 (71.4%)	21 / 31 (67.7%)	3 / 15 (20.0%)
Bolton 1861	15 / 18 (83.3%)	43 / 50 (86.0%)	8 / 19 (42.1%)
Rochdale 1861	6 / 8 (75.0%)	13 / 17 (76.5%)	1 / 7 (14.3%)
Totals, 1851 and 1861	40 / 48 (83.3%)	122 / 156 (78.2%)	21 / 72 (29.2%)

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: For each category, the first number is the number of women domestic shopkeepers with children, followed by the total number of women domestic shopkeepers, and the percentage of all women domestic shopkeepers with children.

households contained a domestic servant, whether an employee, a relative, or a child. Of the 82 women domestic shopkeepers assisted by servants, widows accounted for 50, or 61.0%, and single women slightly outnumbered married women for the remainder. Even more than domestic shopkeepers as a whole, these women needed the household labor of one or more servants. Only one-fifth, 20%, of all domestic shopkeeper households employed a servant.³¹

Children's household labor also contributed significantly to domestic shops, for those women domestic shopkeepers with children of sufficient age. Did census-takers record Jane Roberts' contribution to the Roberts' shop as "domestic" duties? Census-takers might also have ignored the contributions of a number of domestic servants related to household heads. The unpaid labor of children and other family members in the home and shop contributed significantly to the household income.

Theresa McBride has argued that the employment of domestic servants transformed middle-class housewives into domestic managers by professionalizing housework.³² The effect on women domestic shopkeepers employing domestic servants must have been similar. The professionalization of housework revealed the resourcefulness that women domestic shopkeepers needed to maintain both shop and house. Nearly one-third, 32.1%, of all widowed domestic shopkeeper

³¹See Table 4.3 for domestic servants in all domestic shopkeeper households. Chapter Four includes a discussion of the economic contribution of servants in domestic shopkeeper households.

³²Theresa M. McBride, *The Domestic Revolution: The Modernisation of Household Service in England and France, 1820-1920* (New York: Holmes and Meier, 1976), pp. 27-31.

households contained a servant. These widows relied nearly as much on hired domestic help as on their own children. A substantial number of widowed domestic shopkeepers needed extra domestic help. Married women domestic shopkeepers needed this help almost as much, at 29.2%, as widows. These widows and married women often depended on their children for domestic help, nearly one-third of the time for married women, and almost half the time for widows. Single women domestic shopkeepers relied less on children for domestic help, because less than one-third had children. These single women relied on either paid help or help from another relative. Only one-fourth, 25.0%, of single women domestic shopkeepers needed or could afford domestic help. Table 5.4 summarizes the numbers of women domestic shopkeepers who had domestic help, either an employee, a relative, or a child.

Women played a significant part in domestic shopkeeping. Showing the numbers of women who were heads of domestic shopkeeper households and significant contributors to household incomes has provided some indication of the extent of women's contributions. Previous studies have examined women's roles in the waged economy of factory and homework. This study demonstrates that women made an additional important, if not unexpected, contribution to the mid-Victorian economy. Single and widowed women heads of households could have achieved a degree of economic independence in Victorian Britain as domestic shopkeepers. Illustrating the contributions of women to the household economy,

Table 5.4: Women Domestic Shopkeeper Households with Domestic Servants, 1851 and 1861

	Lodgers	Relatives	Children	Total
Ashton 1851	0 / 0 / 2	0 / 0 / 0	0 / 0 / 0	0 / 0 / 2
Bolton 1851	3 / 11 / 3	2 / 1 / 3	3 / 9 / 1	7 / 19 / 7
Rochdale 1851	1 / 4 / 1	0 / 2 / 2	0 / 5 / 0	1 / 11 / 3
Bolton 1861	2 / 7 / 1	0 / 6 / 2	1 / 6 / 0	3 / 16 / 3
Rochdale 1861	1 / 0 / 1	1 / 0 / 2	1 / 4 / 0	3 / 4 / 3
Totals 1851 and 1861	7 / 22 / 8	3 / 9 / 9	5 / 24 / 1	14 / 50 / 18

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: For each category, the numbers represent married, widowed, and single women domestic shopkeeper households, respectively. For Bolton in 1851 and 1861, one widow had a servant in all three categories; for Bolton in 1851, one married woman had a relative and a child recorded as domestic servants.

even when families lacked male heads of households, make this investigation of women domestic shopkeepers even more valuable.

II. Domestic Shopkeeping and Gender Roles

During the early 1860s Cotton Famine in Lancashire, Edwin Waugh wrote about the pains of domestic shopkeepers, as well as the operatives, since the former relied so heavily on the custom of the latter. At Preston, he visited a "little provision shop," emptied of its contents and the family of seven on relief:

But there was a clean, matronly woman in the place. . . The shop had been her special care when times were good, and she clung affectionately to its ruins still. . . The man was a spinner; and his thrifty wife had managed the little shop, whilst he worked at the mill. There are many striving people among the factory operatives who help up the family earnings by keeping a little shop in this way. . . and the family is still holding together in the empty shop. . . .³³

While a depressing example, Waugh demonstrated the importance of wives' income from domestic shops. One interesting point about women in mid-Victorian England regards the question of gender and occupation. Did domestic shopkeeping reveal a gender bias against women? The evidence of widows and single women in both statistical and literary accounts indicated no bias. Married women domestic shopkeepers whose husbands had some other occupation, such as the Preston shopkeeper and her cotton-spinner husband discovered by Waugh,

³³Waugh, *Factory Folk During the Cotton Famine*, pp. 41-43.

have also seemed clearly recognized. Concerning the important role of shopkeepers' wives, J. D. Milne confidently assumed in 1851 that,

The conclusion is. . . showing unmistakeably, that, according to the views of the compiler of the census, the "wife" takes, in the classes in question, an active part in the business of her husband. . . showing that women of the class comprised. . . have, to a certain extent, some preparation enabling them on the loss of their husbands to carry on the business on their own account.³⁴

According to Milne, census records duly credited married women's contribution to domestic shopkeeping.

A closer examination of the census occupational listings for women married to shopkeepers contradicts Milne's statement. The vast majority of the wives of shopkeepers had no recorded occupation. Many of the occupational listings for the wives of domestic shopkeepers, far from fulfilling the census instructions, did not represent occupational labor. In what way are "housekeeper" and "domestic duties" occupations? Therein lies an important clue to a flaw in the census records regarding these wives. Presumably domestic shopkeepers' wives could not be listed as "domestic servants" or "general servants," categories reserved for employees or dependent children and relatives. Did census-takers recognize that duties to the home would also include occupational labor in the shop, even if not paid, and fail to amend such entries? It seems unlikely that census-takers believed these wives did not actually work in the shop but performed only household duties. Perhaps some shopkeeper husbands

³⁴Milne, *Industrial and Social Position of Women*, p. 177.

encouraged this reporting, possibly fearing a loss of status. Table 5.5 summarizes the census' lack of recognition of wives' contributions to Victorian domestic shops.

Wives' work in domestic shops was greatly under-reported in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale census records. The 1851 census general report noted that many women were recognized for their labor along side their husbands:

Women, however, in certain branches of business at home render important services; such as the *wives* of farmers, of small shopkeepers, innkeepers, shoemakers, butchers; and others carry on businesses of various kinds, or are employed in various ways. Thus Great Britain contained some 3,461,524 wives of whom 830,141 (or *one in four*) were engaged in some extraneous occupation. . . .³⁵

The census record of the occupation of "shopkeeper's wife," about 5%, in these Lancashire towns does not even begin to match this general occupational statistic of 25% recognized labor of wives. Zoe Lawson noted a similar under-reporting of domestic shopkeepers' wives in Preston later in the century, though she believed the number unreported was not very significant.³⁶ The census statistics above indicate quite significant under-reporting. If the labor of shopkeeper's wives merited special attention in the general report, and a separate occupational category, why were shopkeepers' wives in these Lancashire towns so under-reported?

³⁵PP 1852-53 [1691-I] LXXXVIII, Pt. 1, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces, Volume 1*, pp. 100-101. Italics in original.

³⁶Zoe Lawson, "Shops, Shopkeepers, and the Working-Class Community: Preston, 1860-1890," *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire for the Year 1991* 141 (1992): 325-326.

Table 5.5: Domestic Shopkeeping Households and Married Women's Occupational Listings, 1851 and 1861

	Wives as Shop- keepers	Wives Associat- ed with Shop	Wives with Other Occupa- tions	Wives with No Occupa- tion	Total Married Shop- keepers
Ashton 1851	0 (0.0%)	2 (3.1%)	3 (4.6%)	60 (92.3%)	65 (100.0%)
Bolton 1851	15 (10.6%)	9 (6.4%)	10 (7.1%)	107 (75.9%)	141 (100.0%)
Rochdale 1851	7 (5.9%)	5 (4.2%)	3 (2.5%)	104 (87.4%)	119 (100.0%)
Bolton 1861	18 (8.9%)	12 (5.9%)	9 (4.5%)	163 (80.7%)	202 (100.0%)
Rochdale 1861	8 (8.4%)	4 (4.2%)	0 (0.0%)	83 (87.4%)	95 (100.0%)
Totals, 1851 and 1861	48 (7.7%)	32 (5.1%)	25 (4.0%)	517 (83.1%)	622 (99.9%)

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: One percentage total does not equal 100.0% due to rounding error. "Wives as Shopkeeper" have husbands listed in the census records with a non-domestic shopkeeper occupation; "Wives Associated with Shop" were listed as "shopkeeper's wife" or as a domestic shopkeeper along with a husband listed so; "Wives with Other Occupations" include housekeeper (12), domestic duties (5), dressmaker (3), confectioner, hawker, cotton factory operative, plain sewer, milliner, and joiner's wife.

Edward Higgs reminded historians that data taken from census reports has to be considered within the cultural context of the era. Like domestic service, domestic shopkeeping represented a frequently female occupation that crossed the lines between private household and public occupation. Higgs demonstrated that census discrepancies in the Rochdale records regarding family members listed as paid domestic servants could decrease the census record's number of paid servants by one-third.³⁷ Higgs warned of further occupational problems using census records, especially in occupations that might have been considered in the Victorian era as less important than the wives' domestic duties, such as part-time labor in laundering. He also questioned the usefulness of the occupational listing of "wife," as in "shopkeeper's wife," as an accurate representation of women's work.³⁸ Perhaps an inconsistency in applying the occupational category of "shopkeeper's wife" helps explain the discrepancy between my census data with much higher expected figures, such as Schwarz's 1851 finding that over one-half of all domestic shopkeepers in London were women.

The Roberts' domestic shop, clearly a family business and run mostly by Mrs. Roberts, represented only one example of the ambiguous roles of husband and wife in the shop. Bob Roberts made all important legal decisions, and he clearly regarded himself as the proprietor of the shop, despite his frequent

³⁷Edward Higgs, "Domestic Service and Household Production," in Angela V. John (ed.), *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England, 1800-1918* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 132.

³⁸Higgs, "Women, Occupations, and Work in the Nineteenth Century Censuses," *History Workshop Journal* 23 (Spring 1987): 63, 68.

absence working at a metal shop or at the pub.³⁹ Charles Booth's investigator in Edwardian London reported:

Nor have I any information as to those smaller shops in which the proprietor and his family do most of the work. . . With regard to the quite little "general shops," of which many are kept by women, who in this way try to either support themselves or to increase the family income, one may be sure that there is present a great deal of real and even acute poverty.⁴⁰

The language of the investigator contained references to male heads of families as "proprietors," while some women domestic shopkeepers "kept" shops to add to the family income. The eldest daughter of a Jewish baker in London remembered her father's attempt at opening a small shop just after the Great War:

He worked for Slater's because when he'd come back from Russia . . . he used to go on his bike, and he used to come back with loaves and loaves, I can see it now in front of me. He used to sell to shops . . . for supplementary income. And as soon as he came back from Russia, while he was at this job, he said to our mother 'we're going to open a shop' she said 'open a shop?'. We lived in 2 rooms, they never had tuppence, let alone a shop. So he said, 'well, we gotta borrow.' So he borrowed money from wherever he could. But they didn't *buy* a shop, they rented it. . . My mother had a very good character, and people took a chance, (indecipherable) we lived above the shop.⁴¹

Mother's "good character" must have contributed significantly to the success of their small shop. Mrs. Bullen, the wife of a struggling clerk who added to his

³⁹Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 15, 81-82, 92.

⁴⁰Booth, Charles. "Dress, Food, Drink, Dealers, Clerks, Locomotion and Labour," *Life and Labour of the People of London*, 2d series, *Industry*, vol. 3 (London: Macmillan, 1903), pp. 250-251.

⁴¹"How did your mother manage? 1917-23," cited in David Englander (ed. and comp.), *A Documentary History of Jewish Immigrants in Britain, 1840-1920* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), pp. 127-129.

salary by framing pictures, inherited £200 in 1890 and wished to help her husband support the family with the windfall:

Her suggestion, no, it was more than that, it was a demand, was that this money should be laid out in taking a shop. . . To say that I was alarmed would be putting the matter much too mildly. . . But my wife, confident in her powers as a shopkeeper (having had no experience) and fired with a laudable desire to help in the collection of the family income, insisted, even at the length of declaring that if I would not take a shop she would without my help. And that I saw would be avoiding an imaginary Scylla for the terrors of a real Charybdis.⁴²

Mrs. Bullen sold "fancy goods," needlework, applique, and other handmade goods, in one part of their joint shop, to supplement her husband's effort at picture framing. Not long afterwards, with the shop business a dismal failure, Mrs. Bullen pawned the family piano, an anniversary present, so that her husband could afford the £10 bankruptcy filing fee. Despite his wife's considerable contribution to his business venture, Mr. Bullen considered the shop his legal and economic liability, and its failure belonged to him alone.⁴³

Wives labored sufficiently in the shopkeeping family without the burdens of the shop. The general report of the 1851 census waxed eloquently, ". . . it requires no argument to prove that the *wife*, the *mother*, the *mistress* of an *English Family* — fills offices and discharges duties of no ordinary importance. . . ."⁴⁴

⁴²Frank T. Bullen, *Confession of a Tradesman* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1908), pp. 101-102.

⁴³*Ibid.*, pp. 220-221, 223-224.

⁴⁴PP 1852-53 [1691-I] LXXXVIII, Pt. 1, *1851 Census Great Britain: Ages, Civil Conditions, Occupations and Birthplaces, Volume 1*, p. 100.

Table 5.6 indicates the extent that domestic shopkeeping families contained children, whose care usually fell to mothers. Motherhood in domestic shops added childcare to these women's shop responsibilities.

William Blackstone, the eighteenth-century legal commentator, noted that a wife's legal existence was consolidated upon marriage into the legal existence of her husband; married English women ceased to have an independent legal existence in common law.⁴⁵ Legal scholar John Bright stated the nineteenth-century legal relationship between husband and wife in this way:

By marriage, the husband and wife are as one person in law. . . The very being or legal existence of the woman is by the common law suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband, under whose wing, protection, and cover she performs every thing.⁴⁶

This legal status, termed "coverture," meant that married women suffered from a number of legal disabilities, lacking the right to make contracts, deeds, or wills.⁴⁷

Wives could not open shops without the permission of their husbands, and husbands were legally liable for the actions of their wives as shopkeepers.⁴⁸

Wives' legal non-existence extended beyond the court room and into the common culture. The language of Bradfordian John Woods' autobiography illustrated this:

⁴⁵Cited in Jane Rendall, *Women in an Industrializing Society: England, 1750-1880* (Cambridge, Mass.: Basil Blackwell, 1970), p. 34; see also Shiman, *Women and Leadership*, p. 85.

⁴⁶John Edward Bright, *Treatise on the Law of Husband and Wife as Respects Property*, 2 vols. (London: William Benning, 1849), Vol. 1, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁷*Ibid.*, pp. 37-43.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, pp. 292-302.

Table 5.6: Married Women Domestic Shopkeepers and Children, 1851 and 1861

	Total Married Women Domestic Shopkeepers	No Children	One or More Children	Mean per Family
Ashton 1851	2	0	2	4.00
Bolton 1851	24	3	21	3.13
Rochdale 1851	12	4	8	1.83
Bolton 1861	30	6	24	2.33
Rochdale 1861	12	2	10	2.17
Totals, 1851 and 1861	80	15	65	2.51

SOURCE: My census data — HO 107/2208–2211, 2233, 2244–2246; RG 9/2815, 2820–2834, 3036–3040, 3044–3046.

NOTE: This table includes all wives with listed occupations of domestic shopkeeper or shopkeeper's wife; see Table 5.5 for complete descriptions.

On the 28th of July, 1828, I got married to Grace. . . [she] was possessed of a good share of common sense, and was to me truly a help-mete. In the management of her domestic affairs she was particularly systematic, having a time and place for everything. Her advice and counsel I always found to be valuable, and at her death . . . I suffered a great loss. For some time *we* both did the best we could as hand-loom weavers. After a while *I* opened a small grocer's shop. . . .⁴⁹

While "we" had worked as handloom weavers, an artisanal family-based economic existence, "I" later opened a shop. Grace Woods seems to have contributed in many ways to John's life, yet she disappears upon the Woods' assumption of a domestic shop.

Contemporary court cases revealed these vanishing retailing wives.

Thomas Hart owned a counterpane weaving shed and an adjacent domestic shop in Taylor's Brow, Bolton. Mrs. Hart ran the shop, though Thomas appears in trade directories as the proprietor. Daniel Greenhaulgh, a weaver, complained to the borough court that he received some of his wages from Hart in the form of goods from the Hart shop, a variant of the infamous "truck" system. The borough magistrates ruled that Mrs. Hart, who had distributed the food to Greenhaulgh, could not be held responsible for the charge, and dismissed the case.⁵⁰ James Fogg, Bolton market and borough inspector, summoned Jane Pilkington, wife of police constable John, for exposing unwholesome meat for sale in a market stall.

⁴⁹John Wood, *Autobiography of John Wood* (Bradford: Chronicle and Mail Office, 1877), p. 20. Copy courtesy of E. M. Willmott, Bradford Central Library. Italics supplied.

⁵⁰*BFP*, January 13, 1844.

The court quashed the summons for Jane, but fined and cautioned John when he was later summoned on the same charge.⁵¹

In another case, Fogg summoned James Kay, a small shopkeeper on Weston Street, for using unjust scales, and the magistrates fined him. In court Fogg remarked that "Kay's wife behaved herself in an indecent manner" upon his seizure of the scales as evidence. Clearly Mrs. Kay was in charge of the small shop at the time of Fogg's inspection, and probably played a significant role in the shop's concerns.⁵² This incident is reminiscent of Mrs. Roberts' anxiety about the inspector's calls on her shop and the difficulty of maintaining correct scales.⁵³ When an unleashed dog threatened Fergus Ferguson's horse, he went to the small shop of Edward Pilkington, and found Mrs. Pilkington in charge, who promised to control the dog. When Ferguson later found the dog loose again, Edward Pilkington was summoned to court and fined.⁵⁴ Bright noted that,

With respect to the husband's liability to the debts contracted by the wife in her separate trade, it seems that the husband is liable at law. . . for the wife's debts in trade carried on by her with his permission.
 . . .⁵⁵

The legal disabilities of married women shopkeepers through coverture also conveyed on them a degree of individual legal immunity.

⁵¹*BFP*, November 28, 1846.

⁵²*BFP*, February 15, 1845.

⁵³Roberts, *The Classic Slum*, pp. 106-107.

⁵⁴*BFP*, November 1, 1845.

⁵⁵Bright, *A Treatise on the Law of Husband and Wife*, Vol. 2, pp. 300-301.

Bolton court records also demonstrated the importance of wives to the domestic shop, while showing their legal coverture status. Three cases in 1842 revealed that wives were in charge of their small shops when a crime, such as shoplifting, till robbery, or passing a base coin, occurred. Mrs. Joseph Mort caught young Thomas Gladstone in an attempt to pass a base coin for a four-pound loaf of bread. Mrs. James Garrett caught young Robert Ainsworth stealing 3 pence from the shop till. And Mrs. John Brown identified stolen goods from her shop that helped convict three young thieves.⁵⁶ In each case the prosecution of the case depended on the wife's testimony. But responsibility for prosecution of the case lay with her husband.

One further case from Bolton provided another illustration of the importance of the wife to the shop economy. In 1853, Sarah Litterick, wife of greengrocer Robert Litterick, borrowed £4 10s from her neighbor Margery Handley, a mangler along with her husband John. Witnesses remembered Mrs. Litterick pleading that the money was needed to pay for a cart to carry on Mr. Litterick's business. Mrs. Litterick had apparently borrowed money from Mrs. Handley to help the shop business a few times before, and had always paid the money back. This loan, however, was not fully repaid, and meanwhile Mrs. Handley had granted Mrs. Litterick other small loans. In 1857, John Handley took Robert Litterick to the county court for the balance of the loans, a total of

⁵⁶*BFP* November 12, June 25, and October 1, 1842.

£4 13s 6d.⁵⁷ Apparently neither John Handley nor Robert Litterick were aware of this money-lending activity between their wives, although two female neighbors testified about the loans. The court ruled that there was no clear evidence of the loan, and dismissed the case. Mrs. Litterick was later charged and convicted for perjury in the case, since she claimed at the original hearing that Mrs. Handley had never loaned her any money.⁵⁸ This case demonstrated much about the women's world of small shopkeeping: Mrs. Litterick's significant contribution to the shop business, even without Mr. Litterick's knowledge; the existence of an intimate, informal female community which filled Mrs. Litterick's economic needs, though the court ruled that these loans were not legally binding debts; and the strictly male legal enterprise involving the debt, despite neither husband participating or knowing of the exchange.

III. Gender and Domestic Shopkeeping

Elizabeth Roberts noted that working-class women experienced ". . . a close interrelationship between the public and private spheres of life."⁵⁹

Domestic shopkeeping made a close connection between these two spheres, integrating home and work. Women's work in the home sometimes included such

⁵⁷Bright confirmed that a husband was liable for any debts contracted by his wife during their marriage; Bright, *A Treatise on the Law of Husband and Wife*, Vol. 2, pp. 1-2.

⁵⁸BC, May 30 and August 22, 1857.

⁵⁹Roberts, "Women's Strategies," p. 233.

activities as laundering clothes, or renting a spare room to help make ends meet. Since domestic shops were kept in homes, women shopkeepers became embroiled in one of the most divisive cultural issues of Victorian society. English society had begun to embrace a movement toward separate spheres for public and private affairs by the mid-nineteenth century. In this ideology, home and work represented separate spheres of interest: work represented a male occupational location apart from the home, while home was a female domain devoted to the domestic comforts of family. Respectability often attached to the separate spheres ideology; respectable families and individuals adhered to the separate spheres ideal.

For practical reasons, unmarried single and widowed women received a certain reprieve from the separate spheres of home and work and maintained respectability; if these women needed productive employment, better that such work take place in the home, the female domain. Unmarried women domestic shopkeepers successfully defied this evolving Victorian middle-class ideology of separate spheres. Roberts remembered that his working-class community reserved a particularly uninviting place for spinsters:

Spinsters deprived of male protection suffered constantly from the tricks of children trading on parental indulgence, and their lives could be made a misery. Many single women, middle-aged and elderly, through the mere fact of being single had much to put up with from the taunts of youth and the amused contempt of some neighbours. . . .⁶⁰

⁶⁰Ibid.

Despite the lack of an adult male in the household, many Victorians were well aware of the need for unmarried women to find employment, and stay off poor relief. Domestic shopkeeping represented an excellent alternative to challenging men's wage-earning potential by competing for the same jobs. Beyond employment in domestic service, spinsters faced great difficulties in earning enough income to support themselves, given the inadequacy of many female working wages; many single women in the eighteenth century turned to a wide range of makeshift economic expedients in order to maintain their livelihoods.⁶¹ Spinster domestic shopkeepers could maintain a respectable domestic life and stay out of the poorhouse. Harriet Martineau encouraged acceptance of such "female industry" in 1859, and advocated improving it:

The tale is plain enough, . . . So far from our countrywomen being all maintained, as a matter of course, by us 'the breadwinners,' three millions out of six of adult Englishwomen work for subsistence; and two out of the three in independence. With this new condition of affairs, new duties and new views must be accepted. . . the aim must be set before us, as a nation as well as in private life, to provide for the free development and full use of the powers of every member of the community. . . In other words, we must improve and extend education to the utmost. . . This will secure our welfare, nationally and in our homes, to which few elements can contribute more vitally and more richly than the independent industry of our countrywomen.⁶²

⁶¹Hufton, "Women Without Men," pp. 361-363.

⁶²Harriet Martineau, "Female Industry," *Edinburgh Review* 222 (April 1859): 336.

Victorians trumpeted the respectable occupations of small farms, shops, and lodging-houses, and encouraged such domestic economic opportunities for unmarried women.⁶³

While the separate spheres ideology created a respectable place for unmarried women domestic shopkeepers, the ideal became confused when married women kept these shops. Victorians found it difficult to reconcile the separate spheres ideology with married women's work at home, especially in families with children. Due to their legal status wives could not own and operate shops, so trades directory compilers frequently listed husbands as small shopkeepers, regardless of these husbands' actual commitment to the shop business. Census-takers often omitted any occupational listing for wives of domestic shopkeepers; it was assumed that these respectable wives were totally committed to housework and childcare. Edwardian working-class women referred to their husbands as "master" or "boss," and submissively deferred to their wishes, at least in public.⁶⁴ Married women domestic shopkeepers undermined the sexual standard of male labor, which was supposed to be apart from home, and thus brought social and moral criticism upon the family. Edwardian working-class society viewed married couples without children, where both husband and wife worked, as "strange," since the wife would presumably prefer to stay at home and

⁶³Milne, *Industrial and Social Position of Women*, pp. 175-179; Martineau, "Female Industry," 311, 313; Michael Anderson, "The Social Position of Spinsters in Mid-Victorian Britain," *Journal of Family History* 9, 4 (Winter, 1984): 381, 383-386.

⁶⁴Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, p. 75.

raise her children.⁶⁵ The power of the respectable separate spheres ideology probably led to many omissions in trades directories and census records of married women's contributions to Victorian domestic shops.

Despite their contributions to the retailing enterprise, Victorian middle-class women were driven from the workplace by a separation of home and shop by the nineteenth century. Respectable middle-class tradesmen distinguished themselves from domestic shopkeeper by establishing lockup shops away from the home. Even though women often provided a "hidden investment" in the shop economy, middle-class women disdained the shop:

Whatever the reasons, owning or working in a shop, which might have been the height of ambition for the working-class woman, could represent the depths of degradation from the perspective of the upper middle class.⁶⁶

The domestic ideology of middle-class tradesmen clearly did not fit the family-oriented public sphere of domestic shopkeepers.

The confusion that domestic shops created for the separate sphere ideology resulted in these shops forming part of the female culture of the Victorian working-class neighborhoods. Hosgood noted that the constant attendance demanded by small shops excluded male shopkeepers from the working-class male culture of the workshop and pub. The elder Robert Roberts continually reinforced his male relationships at the pub and workshop, even while

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 87.

⁶⁶Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), pp. 279, 283, 304.

unemployed and spending most of his time maintaining the family shop.⁶⁷ By the late Victorian period, Hosgood speculated that male-run small shops were disappearing, and small shopkeeping was becoming part of the feminine domestic sphere of working-class culture.⁶⁸ John Tosh agreed that masculine self-respect demanded women's absence from Victorian workplaces, as well as privileged access to the public sphere through all-male associations, while homes represented a gender-ambiguous place for working-class men.⁶⁹ Domestic shops compromised masculine ideals. In 1857, J. D. Milne felt that women could fill the role of small shopkeeper quite well:

There is no intrinsic reason why shop-business should not be open to the female sex as to the other; and, indeed, it is usually looked on as effeminate for a man to stand behind a counter. . . .⁷⁰

Ross noted a gender-based division within working-class communities, where women's and men's networks rarely overlapped, and occasionally resulted in gender-based conflict.⁷¹ If domestic shops were increasingly part of a separate women's sphere of the community, rather than a male or neutral one, then the contributions of wives should have been more, rather than less, notable. Yet omissions from census records reflected a lessening of wives' role in domestic

⁶⁷Roberts, *A Ragged Schooling*, pp. 8, 19.

⁶⁸Hosgood, "The 'Pigmies of Commerce'," pp. 447-450.

⁶⁹John Tosh, "What Should Historians Do With Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-Century Britain," *History Workshop Journal* 38 (Autumn 1994): pp. 185-189.

⁷⁰Milne, *Industrial and Social Position of Women*, pp. 178-179.

⁷¹Ross, "Survival Networks," pp. 4-9, 16-17.

shops. Perhaps with the decline of the family as a production unit, and an increasing recognition of individuals, census records obscured and marginalized the economic contributions of wives and female domestic servants who worked in homes or domestic shops.

Domestic shopkeeping represented one of the few occupations to survive the process of industrialization in the nineteenth century as a combination of private household and public workplace. David Levine felt that the root of the family income, to which all family members contributed, was found in the proto-industrial handicrafts. With all family members contributing to a household product, especially in the domestic production of textiles, the family earned wages as a unit. The Victorian domestic shop shared this view of the independence of home-based income and the security of small property. The second phase of industrialization, beginning about 1850, dissolved this family household economy, stripping the family of its productive functions by moving work outside the home. With wages earned outside of the home, individual wage packets helped lead to the creation of a male breadwinner image, as men demanded a "living wage."⁷² The male breadwinner image in industrial production had no parallel in domestic shopkeeping. The center of domestic shopkeeping continued to be the home, and household labor the source of productivity. The male breadwinner image affected

⁷²David Levine, "Industrialization and the Proletarian Family in England," *Past and Present* 107 (May 1985): 175-179, 189. Rose claims that the male breadwinner image emerged while the family labored as a unit, especially in agriculture and artisanal trades; Sonya O. Rose, *Limited Livelihoods: Gender and Class in Nineteenth-Century England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1992), p. 138.

the public image of domestic shops; men owned and ran the shop business, regardless of the amount of work done by wives or female domestic servants.

Working-class men began to incorporate the domestic ideology of the male breadwinner image beginning in the middle of the nineteenth century. The ideal of the family wage emerged, so named because male wage earners deserved enough pay at work to support their family on their wages alone. The labor aristocracy of skilled workers might have achieved this family wage, along with many of the ever-increasing numbers of waged white-collar workers, but the majority of Victorian workers never achieved this goal. Male cotton industry workers needed more than one income to support a family, and working wives and/or children frequently provided that additional income. While the working-class image paralleled the middle-class domestic ideal of separate spheres, the presence of women competing for the same jobs, at a lower female wage, helped create the male breadwinner image. Women should not compete in the public arena for waged jobs against men; a domestic female image accompanied the male breadwinner image.⁷³ The domestic ideal was not unique to the middle class.⁷⁴ Harriet Martineau hoped that many working-class wives would reconsider their domestic worth:

⁷³Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 132-150; Wally Secombe, "Patriarchy Stabilized: The Construction of the Male Breadwinner Wage Norm in Nineteenth-Century Britain," *Social History* 11 (January 1986): 53-55, 62-68

⁷⁴Dror Wahrman, "'Middle-Class' Domesticity Goes Public: Gender, Class, and Politics from Queen Caroline to Queen Victoria," *Journal of British Studies* 32 (October 1993): 401-402, 430-431.

The wife who locked her door before daylight, and turned her back upon her home till dark, except on Sundays, obtained a good deal of money. . . but yet there was never any much left over, and generally more or less debt at the huckster's shop. . . This discovery led to inquiry and thought; till the grand idea presented itself that it might answer better, even in regard to money, to stay at home than to work at the factory. No more plates of ham or light loaves!. . . No more hard potatoes, smoky fires, and tea smoked accordingly!. . . If they earned twelve shillings a week less, they saved twelve shillings a week, and much of more valuable things that no money can buy.⁷⁵

Martineau felt that domestic wives could curb shop abuses, and recover their lost wages through efficient household management.

Working-class men increasingly adopted the ideology of the respectable male breadwinner. In Lancashire cotton towns, male factory workers frequently felt that the employment of women and children undercut their wages. In an 1844 return by cotton mill proprietors, the average weekly wage of operatives amounted to only 10s 3d, a reduction of 2d per week from a similar survey in 1833. Women operatives outnumbered men by nearly ten percent, and the average mill employed 49 female and 44 male operatives younger than age 18. Of the nearly ten thousand married women operatives employed at these mills, only half of their husbands had employment at the same mill.⁷⁶

The protracted decline of handloom weaving from the 1830s through the 1850s provided further evidence of this threat to male dominance of the family.

⁷⁵Martineau, "Female Industry," p. 325. Martineau produced an ambiguously feminist version of Victorian political economy. See Ann Hobart, "Harriet Martineau's Political Economy of Everyday Life," *Victorian Studies* 37, 2 (Winter 1994): 223-251.

⁷⁶R. H. Greg et al., *A Return from 412 Cotton Mills in Manchester and Surrounding Districts* (Manchester: n.p., 1844), BLS.

Although the decline of handloom weaving had begun earlier, powerloom weaving moved family work away from the home to the weaving shed, which changed patterns of control over work, confused sexual divisions of labor, and employed wives and children.⁷⁷ Bolton domestic shopkeeper Joseph Nicholson remembered that in the 1830s,

The bulk of trade in Bolton was handloom weaving, muslins, caddows and quilts. The workmen were their own masters as a rule, working four days a week, mostly in cellars, the men having a loom in the front part of the house and living in the back part. . . .⁷⁸

Nicholson felt that male handloom weavers were masters of their work, a situation beginning to be notably changed by the power loom and factory work. Even though men and women received similar piece rates in powerloom weaving sheds, men challenged this equality by working more looms, working more expensive pieces of cloth, and tuning their own looms; only men were allowed to advance to overlooker, the best-paid positions in the sheds. Male powerloom weavers tried to assert a masculine identity of work even in the seemingly egalitarian weaving sheds. Nevertheless, the pay of powerloom weavers was less than that of other skilled workers, and inadequate to support a family.⁷⁹

Workingmen feared a declining standard of living, the blurring of sexual divisions of work in the factory, and the disruption of family life. Many working-

⁷⁷Robert G. Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics in Ashton-Under-Lyne 1830-1860" (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1991), pp. 49-54; Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Vintage Books, 1966), pp. 303-313.

⁷⁸Joseph Nicholson, "Shopping 70 Years Ago," *Bolton Journal*, May 28, 1909. Copy in the BLS.

⁷⁹Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 154-160.

class men embraced a radical politics that harkened back to a "golden age" of working households, headed by men who provided protection for homes and families. Factory production undermined these values. Women and children should return to the home, to a vision of domestic stability, while men strove for decent family wages in the realm of conflict, work. These radicalized workingmen resolved to struggle not only over economic demands, but social and moral ideals of home and work, one that excluded a public presence for women.⁸⁰ By the late Victorian era, this separate spheres argument had created an image of the husband as the household provider, while the wife received a domestic "wage" from the husband. The wife's duties included proportioning her "wage" appropriately in the household, a duty that included little room for error. A "breadwinner effect" emerged in feeding the family, as husbands' status as wage earners demanded a larger portion of families' meal allowance, while wives and children made do with the remainder. Household space and duties increasingly divided along gendered lines.⁸¹

The language of Chartism included the demands of male workers, female homemakers, and the family wage. In Lancashire, women Chartists waged tireless public campaigns to effect a family wage for men until the mid-1840s. Beginning

⁸⁰Marianna Valverde, "Giving The Female a Domestic Turn': The Social, Legal and Moral Regulation of Women's Work in British Cotton Mills, 1820-1850," *Journal of Social History* 21 (Summer 1988): 623-630; Rose, *Limited Livelihoods*, pp. 175-176; Thompson, *The Making of the Working Class*, pp. 294-295, 646-648; Sally Alexander, "Women, Class, and Sexual Differences in the 1830s and 1840s: Some Reflections on the Writing of a Feminist History," *History Workshop Journal* 17 (Spring 1984): 136-146.

⁸¹Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), pp. 33-36, 69-81.

at that time, Chartist demands for female domesticity led to some loss of women's public support. Dorothy Thompson explained this loss of women's political activism as representative of women's reluctant acceptance of the domestic ideal.⁸² Friedrich Engels enumerated some of the unpalatable options of women working in the Lancashire cotton industry: the dissolution of family relationships; higher infant mortality from neglected and opium-dosed children; an immoral role-reversal, as husbands become housekeepers while wives worked; sexual profligacy of young workers; and sexual depredations of young women by factory overseers and masters. Continued employment of women in the factories "unsexed" the male worker.⁸³ Anna Clark has seen the emergence of the Chartist cult of domesticity as a vital tool for mobilizing female support, as well as a rhetorical tool for Chartist men to attack their middle-class opponents who employed women away from the home.⁸⁴ Jutta Schwarzkopf characterized the ideal of Chartist domesticity as an active attempt by women to find security in a capitalist system that promoted competition between men and women in waged labor.⁸⁵ Clark and Schwarzkopf echoed Thompson's view that the effect of the

⁸²Dorothy Thompson, *The Chartists* (London: Temple Smith, 1984), pp. 121-23, 130-32, Thompson, "Women and Nineteenth-Century Radical Politics: A Lost Dimension," in Juliet Mitchell and Ann Oakley (eds.), *The Rights and Wrongs of Women* (London: Penguin Books, 1983), pp. 134-138.

⁸³Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England*, reprint (Moscow: Progress Publishers, orig. 1892, repr. 1973), pp. 181-189.

⁸⁴Anna Clark, "The Rhetoric of Chartist Domesticity: Gender, Language and Class in the 1830's and 1840's," *Journal of British Studies* 31 (January 1992): 64-67, 74.

⁸⁵Jutta Schwarzkopf, *Women in the Chartist Movement* (London: Macmillan, 1991), pp. 246, 281-282.

Chartist cult of domesticity did not eliminate working women's political participation.

Beyond Chartism, some women engaged in the fight for the separate spheres. During the depression of 1840, powerloom weaver Mrs. Wrigley took a stand for the male breadwinner norm:

For herself she had made up her mind never to go into a factory again; she called upon every married woman with two children to do the same, in order to afford their husbands a chance of employment. . . Women! will you stand by the rights of the men for your own benefit (We will.). . . Let mothers consider the welfare of their children. . . and let them resolve to remain at home to look to their necessities, and make room for men. We are wives — not slaves! (Tremendous cheering).⁸⁶

Ten years later, women such as Margaret Fletcher continued to formulate a similar female domestic ideal:

She went now for justice on the wages question — a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, by which she meant that a man should have the means of living comfortably, of keeping his wife at home, and of educating his children. . . in order to obtain proper wages, the labour market must be thinned, particularly by the withdrawal of married women from the factories, and the hours of labour should be shortened. She called upon all married women to stop at home, to nurse their children, and keep their husbands comfortable. To the young woman she had to say that if any young men paid their addresses to them, they should never mind looking at handsomeness of features or of person, but ask them at once if they were able to keep a wife: the young men would then go back to their masters, and say that they *must* have their wages raised (laughter).⁸⁷

While both women noted the importance of the male breadwinner image to wives, their expressions of the domestic ideal seemed to avoid treading upon the rights

⁸⁶NS, May 2, 1840.

⁸⁷BC, December 10, 1853.

of single women to work. John Holley's study of factory work in Scotland demonstrates that the domestic ideal divided working families into respectable and non-respectable. Respectable families embraced the domestic ideal; non-respectable families contained female members working outside the home.⁸⁸ The male breadwinner and domestic female image became the respectable ideal for all Victorian families. Domestic shopkeeping provided one avenue for unmarried women to contribute to the family income, without violating the domestic ideal or the male breadwinner image, and therefore reconciled economic need with the norms of respectability. These ideals also made it more difficult for married women domestic shopkeepers to gain "official" recognition for their respectable contributions to the household economy, however well-known these women were in their neighborhoods.

IV. Conclusion

The role of women in domestic shopkeeping demonstrated the continuation of the family household economy, even if the Victorian mentality was moving towards a domestic image of the family. Domestic shopkeeping preserved the integrity of women's contributions to the family's survival while maintaining the image of domesticity. If domestic shops were not quite respectable, shading the Victorian boundaries of public work and private home,

⁸⁸John C. Holley, "The Two Family Economies of Industrialism: Factory Workers in Victorian Scotland," *Journal of Family History* 6, 1 (Spring 1981): 66-68.

they were recognized as a practical necessity for many unmarried women heads of households. Although public records obscured the contributions of wives to domestic shopkeeping, recognition by many other observers helped to balance an injustice in census records and trade directories.

CHAPTER VI

THE POLITICS OF DOMESTIC SHOPKEEPING

The politics of domestic shopkeepers present a historical problem. Historians have focussed little attention on shopkeepers in general, and the marginalization of shopkeepers has resulted in but few studies of shopkeepers' politics in the Victorian period. As might be expected, those few studies have presented a contradictory picture of shopkeepers' political activity and rationale. The blurring of historical distinctions between domestic shopkeepers and larger, more specialized principal shopkeepers has helped confuse an already complicated story. This study has tried to assess the validity of these historical arguments by a more specific examination of domestic shopkeepers.

John Foster denied that Oldham's small shopkeepers had any political autonomy, believing that they were first dominated by the radicalized working class and then incorporated by middle-class liberalization following 1848. Small shopkeepers' politics reflected the positions of the most active political force in Oldham, either the workers or the bourgeoisie. While Foster recognized the close social ties between small shopkeepers and workers, these ties only served as another tool for the working class to enforce its political discipline upon domestic shopkeepers. Foster portrayed small shopkeepers' power of granting credit to workers as evidence that they had been integrated into the bourgeoisie, since credit-granting represented part of the post-1848 campaign of political

liberalization. Foster's class conflict interpretation placed small shopkeepers in the middle of a political tug-of-war, torn between two opposing forces.¹

As my study has already revealed, however, domestic shopkeepers' social, economic, and physical connections to the working class represented mutual obligations. The granting of credit, while certainly giving domestic shopkeepers some influence over their working-class credit customers, also created a dependence on their customers' good will, continued employment, and continued custom. Any domestic shopkeeper refusing consumer credit turned away a large number of his possible customers. The social bonds of kinship and association between these shopkeepers and workers provided many mutually-reinforcing cultural ideals, including the radical politics that Foster assumed emerged only from within a narrowly-defined working class. This chapter tests the concept that radical politics belonged to a broad range of the members of industrial society, including domestic shopkeepers.

Michael Winstanley challenged Foster's conclusions about Oldham's shopkeepers. He found that shopkeepers had a measure of political autonomy, refusing to surrender either to working-class coercion or to bourgeois economic influence. According to Winstanley, an independent ideal of "government retrenchment" characterized both radical and liberal reform politics of the day, and this ideology dominated shopkeeper politics. An economical government meant lower rates and better profits. Not that shopkeepers were libertarians —

¹John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), pp. 52-56, 132-136, 150, 238, 267-269.

police secured property from theft, and laws restricting hawking and Sunday trading secured the shopkeepers' place in the urban economy. Shopkeepers subscribed to a politics of pragmatism.² Oldham provided a specific example of a militant *petite bourgeoisie*, which embraced the same small-government ideals from the popular radicalism in the 1830s to the "militant grass-roots liberalism" of economy and morality in the 1850s.³

While Winstanley's explanation recognized that shopkeepers had some political autonomy, perhaps he overstates the case, especially as regarding domestic shopkeepers. A lack of precision in defining "shopkeeper" helped to create this problem, just as in Foster's study. Certainly many principal shopkeepers had the economic independence to pursue pragmatic politics of individualism and autonomy. This explanation seems inadequate for domestic shopkeepers, a group so inextricably tied to working-class communities. The economic self-interest of Winstanley's shopkeepers does not match the web of interlocking social and economic interests between domestic shopkeepers and their working-class communities that this study has revealed to this point.

Thomas Nossiter's study of radicalism in the Northeast revealed some of the political strength of small shopkeepers. Newcastle's radical politics were the province of the "shopocracy." For Nossiter, the competing interests of working-

²Michael J. Winstanley, *The Shopkeeper's World, 1830-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 24-30.

³Michael J. Winstanley, "Oldham Radicalism and the Origins of Popular Liberalism, 1830-52," *Historical Journal* 36, 3 (1993): 642-643.

class customers and middle-class landlords and suppliers gave small shopkeepers the freedom to pursue their own politics of radical reform. Small shopkeepers wielded political power not in their own interest alone, but by responding within an atmosphere of compromise between small shopkeeper and working-class customer that benefitted the radical political positions that both shared.⁴ Did domestic shopkeepers in industrial Lancashire act similarly?

This chapter will test these theses in the context of the politics of the three Lancashire cotton towns. The main theme of small and domestic shopkeepers' politics remained their extensive connections to working-class communities that so dominated the other aspects of their lives. These communal bonds led to a reciprocal politics that reinforced the ties between small and domestic shopkeepers and their working-class customers and neighbors.

I. Bolton Domestic Shopkeepers and Local Government

Bolton's main governmental authority, the Town Council, was hardly democratic. Councillors and aldermen had to own and pay rates on £30 worth of property in addition to the burgess requirement. Major struggles occurred every year during the 1830s and 1840s between Liberals and Conservatives over revision

⁴Thomas J. Nossiter, *Influence, Opinion, and Political Idiom in Reformed England, 1832-1874* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 1975), pp. 144-161; Thomas J. Nossiter, "Shopkeeper Radicalism in the Nineteenth Century," in Nossiter, Albert H. Hanson, and Stein Rokkan (eds.), *Imagination and Precision in the Social Sciences: Essays in Memory of Peter Nettl* (London: Faber, 1972), pp. 407-438.

of the burgess lists. Only those burgesses who had been rated and paid the rates for three consecutive years were eligible to be electors. Because of the property requirements, some domestic shopkeepers would have been hard-pressed to stay on the electors list, and in hard economic times such as the early 1840s, many would have fallen behind in the poor rates. These property requirements tended to severely curtail domestic shopkeeper membership in the Town Council.⁵

Despite the restrictions, domestic shopkeepers did play some role in Town Council politics. Peter Lowe, a small shopkeeper on Higher-Bridge Street, served one term as a councillor from West Ward, elected with a master spinner, William Baxter, in 1840. The domestic shopkeeper, Robert Harwood, was nominated to run as councillor from West Ward in 1842, along with the pawnbroker, Nathaniel Wilson, but both lost to a Conservative near-sweep of council elections that year. Harwood served as councillor for one term from West Ward in 1843. The domestic shopkeeper, William Thirlwind, moved a nomination for his fellow domestic shopkeeper, Thomas Scowcroft, and Robert Crook, a tradesman grocer, as candidates for the Town Council at a Church Ward burgess meeting in 1857, but received no second. The Moor Lane domestic shopkeeper, Richard Hadfield, was elected as Derby Ward tax assessor in 1853.⁶

⁵John Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns, 1830-1880* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p. 167.

⁶*BFP*, November 7, 1840; September 24, 1842; *BC*, March 5, 1853; October 31, 1857.

The Bolton Town Council faced competition in governmental authority from a bewildering variety of other sources.⁷ Domestic shopkeepers played a role, if a limited one, in these organizations as well. The manorial Court Leet, which became a Conservative stronghold following Bolton's incorporation, appointed the domestic shopkeeper, John Bradshaw, market-looker among its other "pro-forma" appointments. Bradshaw's position had no actual duties, since the Town Council had authority over market regulation. An 1842 Tonge-with-Haulgh township vestry and ratepayer meeting appointed as constable the domestic shopkeeper, John Bleakley of Haulgh, at a salary of six pounds. The meeting also nominated Bleakley as a poor law guardian, though he did not serve in that office. Bleakley later served as a poor law relief officer for the eastern district of Great Bolton in the 1850s. In addition to being politically Conservative, Bleakley's service recognized his thorough familiarity with his Lane's End neighborhood in Church Ward. The ten Little Bolton trustees, whose chief responsibility consisted of managing the Town Hall, included the domestic shopkeepers, ex-councillor Robert Harwood and John Hamer, in 1845. The 1857 Great Bolton list of nineteen nominees for eight Poor Law guardian posts included the domestic shopkeepers, Wright Sutcliffe and Richard Hadfield, though neither was selected by the magistrates.⁸ In Rochdale, the Blackwater

⁷Garrard, *Leadership and Power*, pp. 164-167.

⁸*BFP*, October 16, 1841; March 11, 1842; October 24, 1845; *BC*, April 23, 1853; April 4, 1857.

Street domestic shopkeeper, Stephen Asquith, served one term as one of five poor law guardians for Spotland in 1846–47.⁹

Not all domestic shopkeepers supported older forms of governmental authority. James Flitcroft, a small shopkeeper and a special constable enlisted by the mayor during the August 1839 Chartist uprising, exchanged verbal and physical fisticuffs with William Swingwood, a constable under the presumed-defunct Court Leet, at the Lord Collingwood tavern. The cursing and blows presumably included appropriate strikes at the other's source of authority, and the confrontation personified the long battle over government authority between Liberal reformers and Conservatives in Bolton.¹⁰ That battle only concluded with the end of Conservative legal challenges to Bolton's incorporation in August 1842.¹¹

As neighborhood fixtures, domestic shopkeepers also engaged in more mundane civic duties, such as serving on coroner's juries. They had sufficiently respectable civic status in the community to serve as leaders of juries in important cases. Thomas Scowcroft, a domestic shopkeeper, served as foreman for an 1843 jury that returned a manslaughter charge against the accused. That jury included another domestic shopkeeper, James Lee, along with a gentleman, a manufacturer, two publicans, three beersellers, a draper, a clogger, a

⁹Poor Union Records 1/4, pp. 140-141, RLS. Asquith gave up his shop for a public house and was re-elected as a guardian in 1847. *Ibid.*, p. 390.

¹⁰*BFP*, September 14, 1839.

¹¹Garrard, *Leadership and Power in Victorian Industrial Towns*, p. 167.

schoolmaster, a plumber, a druggist and a pawnbroker. Thomas Baxter, a domestic shopkeeper, served as foreman on an 1857 jury that delivered a charge of second-degree murder against the accused, and included three small shopkeepers, along with two pawnbrokers, a bread baker, a tripe dealer, a druggist, a dentist, and a clogger.¹² Another domestic shopkeeper, William Coop, presided over a sorrowful coroner's jury. Peter Fulton, a tailor, had died from an accidental fall down his stairs during a hot August night in 1857. His son testified that they had no work in two or three months. A reporter noted that, "The jury was composed entirely of tradesmen, most of whom knew the deceased, and by whom he was much respected."¹³

II. Domestic Shopkeepers, Chartism, and Radical Popular Politics

Domestic shopkeepers' support for radical politics stemmed from their strong social and economic connections with their working-class neighbors. Domestic shopkeepers had a long history of participating in radical working-class politics. J. Frederick Foster, a Manchester magistrate, wrote to Lord Melbourne in 1831 that,

In Manchester there are two Political Unions — The first which has existed nearly two years had amongst its members a few persons of

¹²*BFP* May 20, 1843; *BC*, May 9, 16, 1857.

¹³*BC*, August 7, 1857.

the rank of shopkeeper and small tradesmen, but the greater part were men of low circumstances & character.¹⁴

During the Ashton cotton operatives' strike of 1830–31, shopkeepers joined with other tradesmen to petition the Earl of Derby to mediate the dispute between the master spinners and the operatives. One-hundred-ninety-nine signatures, attested that,

This difference is easy to ascertain & equalize without Anarchy or Bloodshed; An Equalization (that is a Standard Price as Wages of Labour in Cotton Mills) is therefore the cause of dispute between Man & Master in this particular District, there being fifty two Master Spinners in Contention with from twenty to thirty thousand operatives for the Wages of Labour, as the said Number of Master Spinners have combined together to shut up their mills against their operatives because they would not consent to work considerably below the Standard Price as Wages of Labour which is now established throughout the Trade.¹⁵

As noted in Chapter Four, this petition reflected the strong sense of community between shopkeepers and workers. The language of the petition also illustrated that shopkeepers sympathized with the operatives' political action to resist the lowering of their wages. A deputation of tradesmen and shopkeepers tried to directly mediate the differences between masters and operatives. Several Ashton cotton masters responded to sympathetic shopkeepers by threatening to set up a competing general store. A majority of Ashton's shopkeepers joined with other tradesmen in a "Mutual Protection Society" to protect themselves from master spinners' pressures, and continued their support of the operatives. The operative

¹⁴HO 52/13, ff. 483-484, J. Frederick Foster to Lord Melbourne, November 27, 1831.

¹⁵HO 52/13, ff. 243-244, Petition from "Shopkeepers, Publicans, Victuallers and others engaged in Mercantile business" to the Earl of Derby, January 11, 1831.

spinners in turn carried out an effective exclusive dealing campaign against shopkeepers and tradesmen who refused to support the operatives.¹⁶ This tactic consisted of promising to buy from shopkeepers who supported similar political views, while threatening to boycott shopkeepers who opposed these political views. This chapter describes below other examples of this tactic by workers, and the implications of exclusive dealing for domestic shopkeeper politics.

Following the Clitheroe election riot on July 31, 1832, four shopkeepers joined their fellow townsmen in assuring Lord Melbourne that,

. . . no disposition to riot was manifested during the remainder of the day — no injury whatever was done to either person or property — and if apprehension was felt by a few individuals of the unpopular party we believe it was without foundation till the sudden, unexpected, and uncalled for entrance of the troops.¹⁷

Reforming Clitheroe shopkeepers tried to protect their riotous allies from the wrath of their opponents. Shopkeepers, subjected to demands for bread by a parade of unemployed youths following a turnout in Manchester in 1840, sympathized with the workers, ". . . nor could shopkeepers, as they said, identify any of the individuals who had demanded bread of them."¹⁸ These popular requisitions were quite extensive during the 1842 general strike, and cooperation between the disciplined strikers and shopkeepers was often repeated. The typical pattern involved a parade of workers marching to certain mills, pulling the plugs

¹⁶Robert G. Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics in Ashton-Under-Lyne, 1830-1860," (Ph.D. diss., Vanderbilt University, 1991), pp. 107-109.

¹⁷HO 52/18, ff. 285-286. Clitheroe Householders' Petition to Lord Melbourne, [August, 1832].

¹⁸*Times* (London), January 24, 1840.

on the boilers (disabling the steam machinery without causing permanent damage), and then demonstrating through the main streets of the town, with periodic stops at shops to request food, drink, or money.¹⁹ During an 1853 strike of Stockport cotton operatives one anonymous shopkeeper announced that he would support the strikers by giving one month's credit to one hundred of the turnouts, to the loud cheers of the crowd.²⁰

In 1842, Ashton Chartist small shopkeeper James Wilcox served as an intermediary with the agents of the Liberal M.P. Charles Hindley, who sought working-class support for repeal of the Corn Laws. Wilcox could promise no such support without reciprocal support for the Charter from Hindley.²¹ Domestic shopkeeper Thomas Brindle served as the secretary of the Bolton Operative Cotton Spinners, and was active in the ten-hours campaign in 1844.²² Brindle later appeared as the Derby Ward secretary of Peter Ainsworth's 1852 parliamentary election committee.²³ When friendly societies banded together to petition for the repeal of the one shilling "death tax" (the fee paid to registrars for

¹⁹*Times*, August 16, 1842; *BFP*, July 2, and August 20, 1842; Mick Jenkins, *The General Strike of 1842* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 177-180, 247-248.

²⁰*BC*, June 18, 1853.

²¹Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics," pp. 167, 173.

²²*BFP*, March 23, and December 28, 1844.

²³*BC*, May 7, 1853.

a death certificate), domestic shopkeeper Peter Lyne of Little Bolton chaired the meeting.²⁴

Exclusive dealing, a phenomenon most often associated with electoral politics, comprised one important aspect of Chartist political activity beginning in 1839, just as in the 1831 Ashton turnout cited above. Home Secretary Lord John Russell instructed Manchester magistrates to halt the intimidation of all shopkeepers:

. . . attempts have been made to obtain money from shopkeepers, householders, and others, by means of intimidation (as by threatening them with personal danger, or with loss of business, or threatening to mark them down and report them as enemies, and by various other illegal means), and that persons have been combining and endeavouring to injure shopkeepers, householders, and others, in their lawful business, representing them as enemies to the people, and persuading others to leave off trading with them, thereby to prejudice them in their business. . . .²⁵

This notice was in reaction to a campaign of exclusive dealing orchestrated by William Tillman, secretary of the Manchester Political Union. No shopkeeper could be found willing to testify against Tillman when he was brought before the magistrates.²⁶ Robert Lowery, a Newcastle Chartist, also believed that exclusive dealing would garner support from shopkeepers. He felt that Chartists could open cooperative stores in order to escape the influence of credit-granting shopkeepers. Cooperative stores were not common, however, during the

²⁴BC, May 2, 1857.

²⁵Cited in *Times*, August 5, 1839.

²⁶Paul A. Pickering, "Chartism and the 'Trade of Agitation' in Early Victorian England," *History* 76 (June 1991): 232-233.

Victorian era, with the Rochdale Pioneer Cooperative Store being a notable exception. In his autobiography, Lowery was forced to admit that,

Had the idea been practicable, it could only have been so by the proper preparation for it. But the masses had no provisions laid by or money saved; and even where they had the latter, to have ceased work, and lived on their saved moneys, would not immediately have affected the shop-keepers. The largest portion of the working-classes live on credit — when they can get it. In fact, so do the major portion of the trading classes. Nothing, however, had been done but talk about the national holiday.²⁷

Despite the threatening language of exclusive dealing and of forming cooperative stores, the vast majority of workers depended on shop credit for their daily needs. For Chartists, exclusive dealing became a convenient vehicle for gaining the support, through confrontation, of domestic shopkeepers, many of whom were already predisposed to support radical political activity.

Small shopkeeper John Warden, one of the most vocal of the Bolton Chartists in 1839, took the forefront in attempting to mitigate the attacks on Chartism by the Liberal reform-minded *Bolton Free Press*. Warden and joiner George Lloyd were leaders of the national holiday in Bolton, and were arrested as instigators of the riot at the Little Bolton town hall. The Bolton Workingman's Association passed resolutions in support of Warden and Lloyd, blaming the violence on over-reaction by special constables and magistrates, who were opposed to Chartist reform. Warden later lectured to the association on political

²⁷Brian Harrison and Patricia Hollis (eds.), *Robert Lowery: Radical and Chartist* (London: Europa Publications, 1979), pp. 143, 199-204, 245-246.

agitation on October 3, and spoke in favor of the general convention at a public meeting in December.²⁸

The general strike of workers in 1842 received the support of shopkeepers. Ashton's shopkeepers supported the cotton spinners who turned out in early August. A reporter quoted one striker's account of shopkeepers' contributions:

The shopkeepers are going hand-in-hand with us, giving 5l., 4l. and 2l. a piece for men to go to Preston, Hull, and every manufacturing town in Great Britain and Ireland to stop them. . . We get plenty of something to eat; the shops are open, they give us what we want. . .

.²⁹

Shopkeepers promised to support demands of wage advances and a ten-hour workday, to provide the turnouts a fortnight's credit, and to attempt mediation with the manufacturers.³⁰ The magistrates were so disturbed by shopkeepers' pledge of aid that gunpowder and arms in the possession of shopkeepers, presumably cached for a possible call-up of special constables, were removed to the military barracks.³¹

Bolton shopkeepers provided support to the strikers in a number of ways. In addition to popular requisitions of provisions by crowds, shopkeepers joined with other townsmen by refusing to serve as special constables:

There was a very great reluctance evinced by the majority of the electors to take any part in the matter, the more ardent declared

²⁸*BFP*, September 22, 1838; April 6, August 24, October 5, and December 21, 1839.

²⁹*Times*, August 18, 1842.

³⁰*Times*, August 15, 1842; Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics," pp. 175-177.

³¹*BFP*, August 20, 1842.

that they would not risk their lives, and incur popular odium, perhaps for life, to support a government and continue a state of things, which had brought the people of the districts, to this impoverished, alarming, and desperate condition. The dislike is not confined to the inhabitants of this town. . . only two persons publically presented themselves to serve in that capacity.³²

Bolton magistrates summoned the military and armed a small group of workhouse inmates. In response, a small group of shopkeepers and tradesmen called for a meeting to discuss the solutions to the crisis, but the strike ended before any action could be taken. In Bury, a meeting of shopkeepers and tradesmen successfully mediated an advance in wages and a ten-hour workday between strikers and manufacturers. Similar shopkeeper support occurred in the mining districts of Scotland, where,

Their [the turned-out miners] grievances are acknowledgedly great, and the sympathies of the middle classes are, to a great extent, enlisted on their behalf. . . The miners are, in a great measure, supported by the shopkeepers. . . A meeting of shopkeepers was held at which several sums for the support of the colliers were subscribed.³³

During London dockworker strikes later in the century, local newspapers recognized the crucial support of local shopkeepers in extending credit and holding meetings in support of the strikers.³⁴

The year 1842 was an eventful one for the Chartist cause and for shopkeeper participation in Chartism. In Bristol two Chartist meetings were

³²Ibid.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Cited in Ellen Ross, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870-1918* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), p. 53.

chaired by Mr. Newman, "an excellent Chartist and shopkeeper."³⁵ William Hick reported that,

The shopkeepers and bakers are all turning Chartists, for they see plainly if a monopoly of the profit is to be tolerated, repeal [of the Corn Laws] will do no good until they are first removed from class influence and parish monopoly, and therefore, they say "Hurrah for the Charter."³⁶

A meeting of Burnley shopkeepers passed resolutions in support of the Charter as a means of alleviating the current economic distress. This event was hailed as the beginning of a great triumph by Chartists:

Our effort has been for some time back to show the working portion of the middle classes, the honest shopkeepers, that their whole interests are inseparable, even for a moment, from the prosperity of those whose pence fill up their tills. . . .

Feergus O'Connor greeted the news as a personal victory:

Such a union is what I have been long wishing for; and its reception will confirm my oft-repeated assertion — that the working classes were not only not adverse to, but were sincerely anxious for a union with the middling classes upon principle.³⁷

Whether on principle or not, the efforts of many shopkeepers who supported Chartism seemed to confirm O'Connor's opinion. O'Connor took pains to distinguish friendly members of "the working portion of the middle classes, the

³⁵NS, January 1, 1842.

³⁶NS, January 15, 1842.

³⁷NS, July 23, 1842.

honest shopkeepers" and "the middling classes," in both cases referring to shopkeepers, from Chartist enemies like mill-owners.³⁸

Manchester shopkeepers also moved to support Chartism in 1842. Shopkeeper John Bailey of Edward Street was nominated as a representative to the Chartist General Council by a Carpenter's Hall meeting. During the strike days of August, shopkeeper John Saxon spoke to a general meeting of Chartist delegates. He warned that some other shopkeepers were serving as special constables, but ". . . he was no hypocrite — he was heart and soul with the trades in the present movement."³⁹ Many, if not all, shopkeepers supported Chartism in 1842. Serving as a special constable did not necessarily prevent shopkeepers from sympathizing with Chartist demands, but might have reflected their commitment to protect their shops and community from violence.

Shopkeepers were also active in the April 1848 Chartist movement. A Manchester meeting of shopkeepers resolved to support the workers, and John Saxon reappeared to second the resolution in favor of the Charter. Another Ancoats shopkeeper, George Chambers, chaired a later meeting of shopkeepers to carry out the resolutions of the previous meeting.⁴⁰ At an Oldham Chartist meeting, a unnamed mechanic from Bolton spoke concerning the situation in Manchester:

³⁸James Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom: Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist Movement, 1832-1842* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 273-274, 292.

³⁹*Ibid.*; *BFP*, August 20, 1842.

⁴⁰*Manchester Guardian*, April 12 and 19, 1848.

[Prime Minister] Lord John Russell would do all he could to keep the middle and lower classes divided; but many shopkeepers were worse off than the operatives. He had been to Manchester, where there were 800 shopkeepers, who, when they came to be sworn in as special constables to protect the queen, had declared they would not protect the queen, but would protect the poor man's rights.⁴¹

Domestic shopkeepers would have been as deeply affected by the trade depressions as the cotton workers.⁴² As in 1842, Manchester shopkeepers had risen again to support the working people's cause. In Ashton fifty shopkeepers met to support the Charter and petition M.P. Charles Hindley to do the same. A Bury meeting of shopkeepers and electors did the same, petitioning M.P. William S. Crawford in an effort to "alleviate national distress." A Stalybridge meeting of 800 Chartists elected shopkeeper John Crossley, chairman of the meeting, as a delegate to the national convention.⁴³ Other meetings of shopkeepers in support of the workers and the Charter occurred in Middleton and Stockport.⁴⁴

The actions of shopkeepers in support of Chartism illustrate the close ties between domestic shopkeepers and the working class. While impossible to clearly identify the distinctive individuals and groups of shopkeepers who supported Chartism, these statements and actions reflected an understanding of the bonds between domestic shopkeepers and workers' movements like Chartism. Political

⁴¹*Manchester Guardian*, April 15, 1848.

⁴²See Chapter Three for the mutual economic dependencies between domestic shopkeepers and their working-class customers.

⁴³*Manchester Guardian*, April 15 and 22, 1848.

⁴⁴*Manchester Guardian*, April 15 and 19, 1848.

sympathies, social bonds, and economic interdependence, represented by political actions like exclusive dealing, showed the inseparable ties of community between the Lancashire working-class and domestic shopkeepers. Their support of radical politics would seem to argue against Chartism as an exclusively working-class movement based on a narrow socio-economic definition of the laboring people. Chartism instead represented an ideology of popular radical politics, embracing a language that equated the interests of the working class with all people.⁴⁵ Domestic shopkeepers supported radical politics, including Chartism, based on an understanding that such political positions would advance their working-class communities. Exclusive dealing remained a working-class threat to remind ambivalent domestic shopkeepers of their commitments to the working-class community.

III. Domestic Shopkeepers and Parliamentary Politics

A petition began to circulate in 1843 calling for the resignation of Peter Ainsworth, Liberal M.P. from Bolton, for voting against a Corn Law reduction bill. Thomas Baxter, a domestic shopkeeper of Blackburn Street, testified that Ainsworth had personally canvassed his vote in 1841. At that time, although Baxter told Ainsworth that his Parliamentary conduct was unsatisfactory, Baxter

⁴⁵Regarding shopkeepers and Chartism, see Gareth S. Jones, "The Language of Chartism," in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-1860* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 25-28.

would support Ainsworth if he in turn promised to support the repeal of the Corn Laws. Baxter joined 541 petitioners seeking the resignation of Ainsworth in 1843.⁴⁶ This instance illustrates that even domestic shopkeepers, among the least of Parliamentary electors, had political clout in Victorian England.

Small shopkeepers represented a significant minority of the Parliamentary voters in the three boroughs of this study. For the first three tables following, trades directories listings verified poll book data for small shopkeeper voters. Excluded from consideration were any possible discrepancies, due to similarity in names and street addresses for example. Small shopkeeper voters varied between five and twenty percent of all voters in a given election, depending on the election year and constituency. The conditions of each particular election campaign and the constituency's electoral peculiarities, such as property valuations, undoubtedly played some undefined role in the percentage of small shopkeeper participation. As an additional variable, Bolton Parliamentary constituency contained two members; Bolton voters could vote for one or two candidates, and the two candidates receiving the highest vote totals were elected. Typically, two Conservatives and two Liberals or Reformers contested Bolton elections. Bolton voters casting only one vote were said to have "plumped" for a certain candidate. Table 6.1 summarizes the percentage of small shopkeeper voters in nine surviving poll books for Bolton, eight of which represent contests for two members.

⁴⁶*BFP*, February 11, 1843.

Table 6.1: Bolton Small Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, 1832–1865

Election Years	Small Shopkeeper Voters	Total Voters	Percentage of Total Voters
1832	192	936	20.5%
1835	171	927	18.4%
1837	187	1079	17.3%
1841	215	1164	18.5%
1847	123	1310	9.4%
1849	61	1189	5.1%
1852	207	1440	14.4%
1857	157	1649	9.5%
1865	236	1887	12.5%

SOURCES: Various surviving published poll books, BLS; trades directories for 1832, 1836, 1841, 1848, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1861, 1865. See Bibliography for complete poll book and trades directory citations.

NOTE: The 1849 election was a special election for one seat, necessitated by the death of M.P. John Bowring.

Bolton small shopkeepers represented a higher percentage of total voters than those in Rochdale throughout most of the period. Unlike Bolton, Rochdale represented a single constituency borough — the voters elected one M.P. at each election, and each voter had only one vote. Table 6.2 summarizes small shopkeeper voting data for five Rochdale surviving poll books. Ashton was also a single constituency borough. Ashton's 1841 shopkeeper voting percentage (12.7%) was closer to Bolton's turnout (18.5%) than Rochdale's (4.6%) of the same year. Table 6.3 summarizes the data from Ashton's one surviving poll book.

As noted in Chapter One, small shopkeepers listed in trades directories did not coincide with domestic shopkeepers in these mid-Victorian boroughs. This study has focused on a more precise and narrow definition of domestic shopkeeper, using the census records. The decennial census record proved of limited use in checking on the accuracy of using trades directories to account for domestic shopkeeper voting. Trades directories usually represented the only hope of identifying small shopkeeper participation. Since domestic shopkeeping often represented a transitory trade, more than one year's difference between polling data and census data lowered the usefulness of the census significantly.

The existence of the complete Ashton census of 1841 corresponded with the election records of the same year. Table 6.4 summarizes the results of a comparison between domestic shopkeeper and small shopkeeper voters for this election. The Parliamentary elections of 1852 represented an opportunity to check this poll versus my census data for 1851, only a year earlier, in Bolton and

Table 6.2: Rochdale Small Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, 1832–1857

Election Years	Small Shopkeeper Voters	Total Voters	Percentage of Total Voters
1832	41	632	6.5%
1837	50	722	6.9%
1841	34	734	4.6%
1852	72	904	8.0%
1857	108	1020	10.6%

SOURCES: Various surviving published poll books, RLS; trades directories for 1828, 1834, 1841, 1851, and 1869. See Bibliography for complete poll book and trades directory citations.

Table 6.3: Ashton Small Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, 1841

Election Year	Shopkeeper Voters	Total Voters	Percentage of Total Voters
1841	71	557	12.7%

SOURCES: *List of Persons who voted for Charles Hindley, Esq. List of Persons who voted for Jonah Harrop, Esq.* (Ashton: n.p., 1841), TLS; *Pigot and Slater's General and Classified Directory for 1841. . .* (Manchester: James Pigot and Isaac Slater, [1841]).

Table 6.4: Small and Domestic Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, Ashton, 1841

	Charles Hindley (Liberal)	Jonah Harrop (Conservative)	Totals
Small Shopkeepers	48 (67.6%)	23 (32.4%)	71 (100.0%)
Domestic Shopkeepers	27 (62.8%)	16 (37.2%)	43 (100.0%)

SOURCES: *List of Persons who voted for Charles Hindley, Esq. List of Persons who voted for Jonah Harrop, Esq.* (Ashton: n.p., 1841), TLS; *Pigot and Slater's General and Classified Directory for 1841. . . .* (Manchester: James Pigot and Isaac Slater, [1841]); HO 107/532.

Rochdale. Tables 6.5 and 6.6 summarize the distinctions between small and domestic shopkeeper voters for the 1852 elections in Bolton and Rochdale.

Not surprisingly, there were significantly fewer domestic shopkeepers than small shopkeepers among the voters in these three towns. The percentages of the votes given to any candidate, however, remained quite similar between the two shopkeeper categories. Small shopkeepers seemed to provide a reasonably accurate measure of domestic shopkeeper political preference, even if their numbers differed. This study, therefore, has assumed that the voting preferences of small shopkeepers paralleled those of domestic shopkeepers.

The distinction between small and domestic shopkeepers also resulted in differences in the percentages of these shopkeepers participating in the electoral process of these three towns. While a check of trades directory resulted in a 54.2% small shopkeeper participation in Ashton's 1841 election, 71 out of 131, checking the poll results against my 1841 census data provides a lower figure of 44.4% domestic shopkeeper participation, 43 out of 99. Using 1851 trades directory and census data, 49.4% of all small shopkeepers voted in the Bolton 1852 election, 114 out of 231, while 29.7% of domestic shopkeepers voted in that election, 67 out of 225. For the Rochdale 1852 election, 21.4% of small shopkeepers voted, 72 out of 330, while 27.4% of domestic shopkeepers voted, 48 out of 175 shopkeepers. Using these three examples, between one-quarter and one-half of all domestic shopkeepers participated in the electoral process in mid-Victorian industrial towns. And of those domestic shopkeepers voting, their

Table 6.5: Small and Domestic Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, Bolton, 1852

	Ainsworth (Liberal)	Barnes (Liberal)	Blair (Conser- vative)	Crook (Liberal)	Total
Small Shopkeepers	15 (7.2%)	76 (36.7%)	36 (17.4%)	80 (38.6%)	207 (99.9%)
Domestic Shopkeepers	10 (8.0%)	45 (36.0%)	20 (16.0%)	50 (40.0%)	125 (100.0%)

SOURCES: *The List of Persons Who Voted at the Eighth Election of Members to Serve in Parliament*. . . (Bolton: James Hudsmith, 1852); *Slater's General and Classified Directory*. . . for 1851 (Manchester: Isaac Slater, [1851]); HO 107/2208-2211.

NOTE: The small shopkeepers total percentage equals 99.9% due to rounding error.

Table 6.6: Small and Domestic Shopkeeper Parliamentary Voting, Rochdale, 1852

	Miall (Radical)	Ramsay (Conservative)	Total
Small Shopkeepers	54 (75.0%)	18 (25.0%)	72 (100.0%)
Domestic Shopkeepers	34 (70.8%)	14 (29.2%)	48 (100.0%)

SOURCES: *A Copy of the Poll of the Electors in the Borough of Rochdale*. . . (Rochdale: Crosskill, 1852); *Slater's General and Classified Directory*. . . for 1851 (Manchester: Isaac Slater, [1851]); HO 107/2244-2246.

partisanship can be estimated by the use of the trades directories listings for small shopkeepers.

Small shopkeepers in Bolton, Rochdale, and Ashton helped return a group of candidates to Parliament in 1841 pledged to reform, whether Liberal or Radical, despite the Conservative landslide of that year's elections. Two successful candidates, John Bowring from Bolton and William S. Crawford from Rochdale, campaigned in support of many Chartist principles, although they were not declared Chartists. The election results included Crawford unseating Liberal incumbent James Fenton in Rochdale, while in Bolton Bowring swept incumbent Conservative William Bolling out of office, a member from Bolton since 1832. Meanwhile Liberal incumbents Charles Hindley of Ashton and Peter Ainsworth of Bolton maintained their seats by pledging adherence to reforms, though radical or Chartist versions. Ashton Chartists refused to publically support Hindley, since he refused to embrace organic Chartist constitutional change, such as universal manhood suffrage.⁴⁷ Following his election, Crawford immediately began to repay his pledge to Rochdale electors with a Parliamentary campaign to dismantle the workhouse provisions of the New Poor Law, and undermine the authority of the Poor Law Commissioners in the localities.⁴⁸

Table 6.7 summarizes small shopkeeper dedication to voting for reform candidates in 1841, whether the moderate Liberal stripe, or the constitutional-

⁴⁷Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics," pp. 162-166.

⁴⁸*BFP*, October 2, 1841.

Table 6.7: Small Shopkeeper Voting, By Political Category, 1841

Borough	Liberal	Radical/Chartist	Conservative
Ashton (N=71)	48 (67.6%) Charles Hindley	--	23 (32.4%) Jonah Harrop
Bolton (N=215)	83 (38.6%) Peter Ainsworth	77 (35.8%) John Bowring	55 (25.6%) Bolling and Rothwell
Rochdale (N=34)	7 (20.6%) James Fenton	27 (79.4%) William S. Crawford	--

SOURCES: *List of Persons who voted for Charles Hindley, Esq. List of Persons who voted for Jonah Harrop, Esq.* (Ashton: n.p., 1841), TLS; "A Corrected List Shewing How Each Person Voted at the Last Election of Members to Serve in Parliament for Bolton," *BC*, July 14, 1841; *A Copy of the Poll of the Electors in the Borough of Rochdale. . . .* (Rochdale: Jones and Crosskill, 1841), RLS.

NOTE: Votes for the two Bolton Conservative candidates, William Bolling and Peter Rothwell, were combined in this table.

change Radical character. Small shopkeepers gave their votes more than twice as often to reform Liberal or Radical candidates as to Conservative ones in 1841. That election took place in the middle of a severe trade depression that ran from 1838 through 1842. The Parliamentary Whig party dissolved, and number of independent reform movements emerged, including Chartism. Despite the sweep of reformers in these Lancashire towns, Parliamentary political reform seemed unlikely under Robert Peel's Conservative government, which controlled Parliament for most of the 1840s.

Small shopkeeper votes were crucial to the winning reform candidates of 1841. In Bolton, their votes accounted for 12.4% and 12.5%, respectively, of Ainsworth's and Bowring's total votes, while their support for the Conservatives, Bolling and Rothwell, accounted for only 5.4% and 5.8% of their total votes.⁴⁹ In Ashton, small shopkeepers cast 15.8% of Hindley's votes, compared to only 9.1% of Harrop's votes. And while small shopkeepers accounted for less than five percent of Rochdale voters in 1841, they gave Crawford 6.8% of his total votes, while Fenton's small shopkeeper support represented only 2.1% of his total votes. Small shopkeeper demonstrated a clear partisan support for reform candidates in 1841.

Small shopkeepers who could and did vote consistently gave those votes to Liberal or Radical candidates throughout the period of this study, not just in 1841. Bolton small shopkeepers voted overwhelmingly for reform candidates, as

⁴⁹These discrepancies among votes for politically-similar candidates represented the effects of splitting votes between political factions, as well as "plumping."

illustrated by the voting summary in Table 6.8. In most elections, small shopkeepers voted for Liberal or Radical candidates more than twice as often as for Conservatives. An examination of small shopkeeper votes for individual candidates revealed that they favored a winning Conservative candidate only twice; placing William Bolling second to Peter Ainsworth in 1835, and second to John Bowring in 1847. Bolling, a prominent manufacturer, was a fixture in Bolton Conservative politics, and served as Bolton's only elected Conservative MP from 1832 until 1849. He was defeated only once, in 1841, and returned to Parliament after the next election in 1847.

Bolton small and domestic shopkeepers participated in reform through means other than voting. The Liberal Anti-Corn Law League, seeking to promote prosperity through free trade in foodstuffs, gained the support of some Bolton shopkeepers. At an 1839 workingman's dinner in honor of Anti-Corn Law lecturer A. W. Paulton, the domestic shopkeeper, Benjamin Rigby, occupied the vice chair. William Taylor, a small shopkeeper on Grime Street, wrote two letters to the *Bolton Free Press* chastising Bolton's Chartists for disrupting two Anti-Corn Law meetings in 1841. Eight domestic shopkeepers contributed an average of ten shillings each to the Anti-Corn Law League at a New Year's Day soiree in 1844, including councillor Robert Harwood and Thomas Baxter, the unhappy Ainsworth voter noted above.⁵⁰

⁵⁰*BFP*, December 7, 1839; October 9 and 25, 1841; January 6, 1844.

Table 6.8: Bolton Small Shopkeepers Voting, By Political Category, 1832–1865

Election Years	Liberal	Radical/ Chartist	Conserva- tive	Totals
1832	127 (66.1%)	23 (12.0%)	42 (21.9%)	192 (100.0%)
1835	108 (63.2%)	--	63 (36.8%)	171 (100.0%)
1837	143 (76.4%)	--	44 (23.5%)	187 (99.9%)
1841	83 (38.6%)	77 (35.8%)	55 (25.6%)	215 (100.0%)
1847	--	83 (67.5%)	40 (32.5%)	123 (100.0%)
1849	--	40 (65.6%)	21 (34.4%)	61 (100.0%)
1852	171 (82.6%)	--	36 (17.4%)	207 (100.0%)
1857	113 (72.0%)	--	44 (28.0%)	157 (100.0%)
1865	143 (60.6%)	--	93 (39.4%)	236 (100.0%)

SOURCES: Various surviving published poll books, BLS; trades directories for 1832, 1836, 1841, 1848, 1849, 1851, 1853, 1861, 1865. See Bibliography for complete poll book and trades directory citations.

NOTE: Since Bolton was a two-member constituency, small shopkeeper votes were combined for candidates from the same political persuasion. One total percentage varied from 100.0% due to rounding error. The 1849 election was a special election for one seat, due to the death of John Bowring in 1848.

Rochdale small shopkeepers, as shown in Table 6.9, consistently supported reform candidates by at least a two-to-one ratio. In the 1832 election, the radical candidate James Taylor withdrew from the contest during the polling, fearing a split in support between himself and Liberal John Fenton would result in the election of Conservative John Entwistle. The tactic succeeded, as Fenton polled 277 votes to Entwistle's 246, with Taylor's support at 109.⁵¹ In a Parliamentary investigation into the 1857 Rochdale election, domestic shopkeepers Daniel Nuttall and Thomas Schofield testified that they had been solicited by Richard Mills, a chemical manufacturer, who canvassed for Conservative candidate Alexander Ramsay. Nuttall testified that he was offered ten shillings to stay away from the polls. Though the investigation upheld Ramsay's electoral victory, both Nuttall and Schofield voted for Edward Miall, the Radical reformer.⁵²

As approximated by the partisan voting record of small shopkeepers in these towns, domestic shopkeepers participated in the public acts of voting for Parliamentary candidates, and consistently supported reforming Liberal or Radical candidates who espoused reform measures. What remains unclear are the motivations of domestic shopkeeper politics — why did they support reform in Parliamentary elections? Domestic and small shopkeeper support for radical working-class movements, such as Chartism, was also prominent. Evidence of

⁵¹*The List of the Voters for the Borough of Rochdale*. . . (Rochdale: J. Hartley, 1832), RLS. Handwritten remarks by a Liberal sympathizer on the first page accompany the recording of the votes.

⁵²Cited in *BC*, July 4, 1857; *A Copy of the Poll of the Electors in the Borough of Rochdale*. . . (Rochdale: Felix Ashworth, 1857), p. 14. RLS.

Table 6.9: Rochdale Small Shopkeepers Voting, By Political Category, 1832–1857

Election Years	Liberal	Radical/ Chartist	Conserva- tive	Totals
1832	17 (41.5%)	14 (34.1%)	10 (24.4%)	41 (100.0%)
1837	35 (70.0%)	--	15 (30.0%)	50 (100.0%)
1841	7 (20.6%)	27 (79.4%)	--	34 (100.0%)
1852	--	54 (75.0%)	18 (25.0%)	72 (100.0%)
1857	--	29 (74.4%)	10 (25.6%)	30 (100.0%)

SOURCES: Various surviving published poll books, RLS; trades directories for 1828, 1834, 1841, 1851, and 1869. See Bibliography for complete poll book and trades directory citations.

domestic shopkeepers voting for Liberal and Radical reform, and supporting popular reform movements, should be two aspects of the same political views and motivations.

IV. A Rationale for Domestic Shopkeeper Politics

The most prominent reason given by contemporaries for domestic shopkeeper support of reform candidates and popular radicalism has been exclusive dealing. Nearly every election in the 1830s and 1840s mentioned exclusive dealing. And while exclusive dealing was local by its very nature, it had early gained a national stature:

Here [in the towns] prevails the intimidation of the customers, and the goodly system of exclusive dealing. . . Poor tradesmen! reckon up your customers. Which are the most numerous among them, the Reformers or the Tories? for you must make up your mind to lose one party or the other, if you give your vote. . . Perhaps there is hardly a borough in England where exclusive dealing is not the fashion, and where tradesmen are not for ever harassed by the importunate threats of their customers. . . Honesty and ruin are too often inseparable. This is the state of degradation to which they are reduced. And is it necessary to *prove* to them that they are degraded; that their condition is such as none but the most insolent tyrants would impose upon the most abject slaves?⁵³

Despite such inflated language, similar views prevailed about the effects of exclusive dealing on domestic shopkeepers. Stripped of their autonomy, their

⁵³A. Buller, "Bribery and Intimidation at Elections," *Westminster Review* 25 (1836), p. 505. Original emphasis.

votes became tools for whichever political faction could apply the necessary pressure.

Benjamin Grime recalled with distaste the use of exclusive dealing by Oldham's non-electors beginning in 1832:

The whole body of the working class were excluded from the franchise. . . But they did not stand looking on, passively watching the course of events. . . In addition to demonstrations and public meetings, they had other more formidable agencies, and one was exclusive dealing. . . and in large measure served as the substitute for a vote to the unenfranchised.⁵⁴

The sanction of exclusive dealing in Oldham was most extensively threatened and enacted during and after the 1847 Parliamentary campaign.⁵⁵ *The Borough of Oldham Remembrancer* was the tool of the populist party of John Fielden, the incumbent reformer supported by many radical workers, and his prospective son-in-law, John Morgan Cobbett, son of Anti-Corn Law advocate William Cobbett. Despite his father's reform ideals, and Fielden's populist alliance, John Cobbett nevertheless held distinctly more conservative views than either. *The Remembrancer* promised to record every vote given Fielden and Cobbett, and those given to the opposition pair, Tory Conservative John Duncuft and radical reformer William Johnson Fox. The Duncuft-Fox political combination formed in opposition to the Cobbett family dominance of Oldham politics. Many of the reform burgesses disliked Cobbett, yet Fielden refused to consider election

⁵⁴Benjamin Grime, *Memory Sketches* (Oldham: Hirst and Rennie, 1887), pp. 13-15. The extent of exclusive dealing in Oldham's Parliamentary elections is surveyed in Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 52-56.

⁵⁵Grime, *Memory Sketches*, pp. 49-62.

separate from Cobbett. Many conservative burgesses could support Cobbett, but not Fielden. Fielden and Cobbett recognized this problem, and turned to exclusive dealing to bring their strong non-electors following to bear on the race:

Exclusive dealing was practised most bitterly against those who had not recorded their votes favourable to what were termed the most popular candidates — Fielden and Cobbett. . . The Irish Nationalists, with all their bitter persecutions, have not boycotted their victims with more severity than that with which the working classes, or the non-electors, persecuted the tradesmen electors on this memorable occasion.⁵⁶

Grime noted that retaliatory actions were also threatened by the Duncufts and Fox alliance, to counteract the exclusive dealing campaign of the Fielden and Cobbett partisans.⁵⁷ In this case, exclusive dealing failed to achieve its goal because,

The threatened and abused tradesmen coalesced, and, as it were, in a state of desperation, split their votes between the two extreme men [Duncufts and Fox], returned them at the head of the poll, and defeated Mr. John Fielden and his nominee [Cobbett].⁵⁸

Grime attributed the loss of Fielden and Cobbett to shopkeepers' reaction to the threat of exclusive dealing.

Exclusive dealing appeared at other Parliamentary elections as well. In the 1832 Ashton campaign, in which Liberal Charles Hindley narrowly lost to Conservative George Williams, both sides used "intimidation" tactics against

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 57, 59.

⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 60-62.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 56.

shopkeepers.⁵⁹ Feargus O'Connor launched the Chartist campaign of exclusive dealing prior to the election of 1841 in this way:

DEAL, THEN, WITH NONE BUT YOUR FRIENDS, and before an election takes place you will not only hold the balance of power, but you will be the legitimate source of all power. . . I tell you not to buy a pinch of snuff, an ounce of tea or sugar, a hat, a coat, a pipe, or loaf from any man who will not vote for you, and they will soon learn the real value of the people's pence against the treasury gold.⁶⁰

In an exchange of handbills during the 1841 election campaign, some Bolton operatives organized to solicit votes for Conservative M.P. William Bolling. Perhaps this campaign organization represented the politics of factory paternalism, since Bolling, a prominent Bolton manufacturer, had held his Parliamentary seat since 1832.⁶¹ Bolling could put enormous political pressure on his workers, who obviously benefitted from his employment, to act in his political interest. During the campaign, Bolling's opponents cited a handbill that encouraged operative political pressure on shopkeepers to support Bolling:

. . . shop meetings should be called, and that men should be appointed from each Factory and Croft, for the purpose of going in body to the Shopkeepers and Publicans with whom they deal, in order to say to them, that unless the Shopkeepers and Publicans would vote for Bolling, the men would not continue to deal with them.⁶²

⁵⁹Hall, "Work, Class, and Politics," pp. 116-118.

⁶⁰NS, May 15, 1841. Original emphasis.

⁶¹Patrick Joyce, *Work, Society, and Politics: The Culture of the Factory in Later Victorian England* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1980), pp. 201-221.

⁶²*To the Electors of the Borough of Bolton* (Bolton: H. Bradbury, Jun., 1841), BLS.

The chairman of the original Bolling operative meeting, Thomas Glover, denied that the handbill encouraged exclusive dealing:

. . . Individuals have been deputed by their Fellow Workmen, employed at many of the Principal Establishments in the Town and Neighbourhood, who have formed a Committee to wait upon the Electors, and assure them of protection Against Threats & Intimidation; proceeding from whatever quarter they may; and in soliciting the support of the Electors in Favour of their Fellow Townsman, they have done so From Conscientious Motives And Have Received No Commands From Any Person Whatsoever.⁶³

Glover's rejoinder hardly seems a denial at all. Following Bolling's electoral defeat, a number of operatives were fired from his mill and associated works.⁶⁴

The *Bolton Free Press* credited the influence of the non-electors in contributing to the "Free Trade Victory," and the newspaper helped establish a collection for fired Bolling workers. Joseph Reynolds Woods' shop served as one donation site.⁶⁵ The formation of a Non-Electors Association in Rochdale, and its subsequent publication of poll books, probably represented an attempt at an extended campaign of influence, including exclusive dealing.⁶⁶

In summary, exclusive dealing campaigns occurred in conjunction with Parliamentary elections, possibly more often than the evidence indicated. Threats of exclusive dealing, however, often failed to win the electoral success that the

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴*BFP*, July 17 and 31, August 7, 1841.

⁶⁵*BFP*, July 3 and 17, 1841.

⁶⁶John R. Vincent, "The Electoral Sociology of Rochdale," *Economic History Review* 16, 1 (1963): 78-81.

campaigns intended. If exclusive dealing was so effective and widespread, why were Fielden and Cobbett defeated in Oldham in 1847? It would be difficult to argue that more Chartist candidates were elected in 1841 due to Chartist exclusive dealing. Although reform candidates certainly did well in Ashton, Bolton, and Rochdale, Peel's Conservative government remained in power. If the Rochdale Non-Electors Association represented a continuing exclusive dealing campaign, their efforts were defeated in the 1857 election of Conservative Alexander Ramsay over Radical Edward Miall. Political forces from Chartism to party campaigns must have considered small and domestic shopkeeper voters worthy of the concerted action necessary for exclusive dealing campaigns, despite their small (5–20%) percentage of the total electorate. Perhaps in mid-Victorian political battles, these shopkeepers possessed crucial swing votes needed for victory.

Exclusive dealing undoubtedly motivated some domestic shopkeepers to cast their ballots in line with certain popular interests. Exclusive dealing could be effective in mobilizing the electoral support of less-motivated domestic shopkeepers. Exclusive dealing was not the sole province of radical reform or the working-people's interest. Conservatives undoubtedly engaged in similar tactics, as suggested by the 1841 Bolling campaign handbill. To a certain extent, the corresponding pressures from the different campaigns could tend to negate each other, such as the 1847 Oldham campaign. Many domestic shopkeepers would rather stay home than risk the possible losses from either reforming or

conservative workers, and low voter turnout of these shopkeepers might have represented this to some extent. Given the community base of domestic shopkeeping presented in this study, exclusive dealing would seem to have little to recommend it as a sole political strategy. Domestic shopkeepers and their working-class customers were bound by a large and complex community of interest. Social ties of kinship overcame many political divisions. Economic bonds of credit overrode many disagreements over political positions. This community of shared economic and social relationships should translate into expressions of shared political interests without much dependence on the politics of confrontation.

If most domestic shopkeepers acted politically, as they did economically, based on a ideal of community of interest, could this account for domestic shopkeeper votes on the parliamentary record as well as their support for popular radicalism? It would appear so. The politics of confrontation, best exemplified by exclusive dealing, reinforced what appears to be a more likely domestic shopkeeper motivation in the political expression of common interest. A community of interest existed between domestic shopkeepers and their working-class customers. As members of the ten-pound electoral elite, those shopkeepers bore the responsibility to vote according to the wider interests of the community. The ambivalent position of domestic shopkeeping, neither independent of their community nor fully integrated into it, resurfaced in political activities. The public nature of voting prior to the 1873 ballot reform virtually guaranteed that

domestic shopkeepers gave priority to the community of interest that encompassed their lives and livelihood beyond any personal or individual motivation. If a domestic shopkeeper's search for political autonomy should lead him too openly away from the best interests of the community, then the coercion of exclusive dealing could effectively bring pressures against such straying.

The evidence for this community of interest in politics, bound together with a threat of coercion, seems convincing. The Rochdale Non-Electors Association published lists of the polls through the period of this study, including the extant 1841, 1852, and 1857 polls. In a preface to the 1857 published poll, the committee of the association noted that,

The theory of the present representation, according to a great constitutional authority is: — that the ten pound voters have their votes, in trust for the class who do not possess that property qualification, as well as, in their own right. This vindicates the practice of publishing the List of Voters' names, until the time shall come, that every man, untainted by crime, shall have a vote in his own right, and with it the protection of the ballot.⁶⁷

If electors cast their votes for the entire community, then,

The Non-Electors, will "*read, mark, and learn*" who have supported their claim to the suffrage, and *who have not* recognized that right, and will not fail to bring all *legitimate* influence to bear upon the latter, to shew them that the interests of those Electors and the Non-Electors are really identical, and that both are in a wrong position under the present franchise, — the one refusing to give and the other unable to obtain justice.⁶⁸

⁶⁷A Copy of the Poll of the Electors in the Borough of Rochdale. . . , p. 1. The preface was dated April 13, 1857.

⁶⁸Ibid. Original emphasis.

The non-electors might have been more explanatory than usual in their poll listing because of the 1857 strong electoral campaign of Conservative Alexander Ramsay. Ramsay was unlikely to support an extension of the suffrage. The principle behind publishing the poll seems clear. All members of the community should be represented, and non-electors possessed a right to know how the electors represented that community. Nearly three-quarters of voting small shopkeepers supported Miall in the 1857 election.

In Oldham's 1832 Parliamentary election, "Plutarch" justified the use of exclusive dealing by the workers in terms of the community of interest:

The enemies of reform are everywhere alarmed at the non-electors adopting exclusive dealing. . . Surely you have a right to give any person your custom whose conduct you think is for the national good, and who is determined to exercise his elective right for your advantage. . . The electors' franchise is a trust to be used for your benefit; and not a right to be used against you.⁶⁹

Oldham's notoriety for exclusive dealing embraced the ideal that electors held the suffrage in trust for the benefit of all.

Radical or reform politics seemed to best express this community of interest between domestic shopkeepers and workers. In order to preserve the integrity of community interest, and activate the coercion of exclusive dealing if necessary, political reform in the age of a limited electorate demanded an open and public vote. A general meeting of reformers in Bolton gathered in 1837 to express their support of the secret ballot, triennial Parliaments, and household

⁶⁹Cited in Grime, *Memory Sketches*, p. 14.

suffrage. A motion was put forward for each part to form the object of a separate petition to Parliament. Though the motion failed to receive a second, Thomas Myerscough, a manufacturer and Tory radical member of the Town Council, objected strongly to the motion:

The ten pound householder possessed the franchise as a trust, and it was proper the public should know how that trust was exercised. . . he would oppose any attempt to juggle the people of Bolton by persuading them to petition for the Ballot alone.⁷⁰

While the ballot would help to insure the integrity of each vote by eliminating various forms of intimidation including exclusive dealing, Myerscough expressed the popular belief that a limited franchise could only be justified if voting were done publicly. The ballot must be linked to a substantially-broadened electorate.

This issue of linking public voting with a limited franchise occurred following the elections of 1847. During the 1848 debate in the House of Commons on a motion for the ballot in Parliamentary elections, the radical reformer William Fox from Oldham said that,

He should support the motion, but not without regret. He regretted that a proposition of this kind, for an organic change should be brought forward separately, believing, as he did, that the mode of making the representation of the people a reality instead of a sham must be by a judicious combination of measures. . . Looking to the disparity that existed between the class that now enjoyed political distinction and the class that had none — called the slave class — he was decidedly of the opinion that the ballot, to be useful, should be connected with a large extension of the suffrage.⁷¹

⁷⁰BFP, December 30, 1837.

⁷¹Cited in Grime, *Memory Sketches*, p. 76.

Fox supported the secret ballot motion as an installment on the extension of the suffrage.⁷²

Joseph Reynolds Wood, a provision and tea dealer, represented Bolton at the Birmingham National Convention in 1839. Wood responded at a public dinner in his honor to a question about his radical principles. In doing so, Wood perhaps best expressed the view of the political community of interest:

He had been told since he entered the room that there was some who said there was a stain on his political character. He had on one occasion voted for Mr. Bolling [the Conservative MP], and this it was said was inconsistent with his character as a Radical Reformer. Now while he freely admitted that he did vote for Mr. Bolling at the election referred to, it must be remembered that he did so on Radical principles. He was one of those who, as an elector, considered that he held the suffrage only as a trust to be exercised as a majority of the non-electors might require. At the nomination of candidates, a large majority of hands were held up in favour of Mr. Bolling, and, therefore, in accordance with his principles he had given his vote for that gentleman. (Cheers) In doing so he went against his own wishes as he was not satisfied with the principles of Mr. Bolling, but he could not persuade himself that he had any right to oppose the wishes of those for whom he held the suffrage as a trust.⁷³

While any support for Bolling, a Conservative industrialist, was unpopular among the radical reformers, the cheers indicate the support that community-of-interest politics had among those same reformers, even when those same politics produced unexpected or undesirable results. An example of this effect might be also found in the Oldham election of the Tory Duncuft along with the Radical Fox in 1847.

⁷²Ibid., p. 77.

⁷³BFP, February 9, 1839.

Community-of-interest politics pervaded the political culture of the Victorian reformed electorate. Much of the language of the Anti-Corn Law reformers included pleas for middle class electors to consider the benefits for their working-class neighbors. In an 1843 editorial urging the electors to pay their rates and thus maintain the ability to vote, domestic shopkeepers seemed to be among the targets of the reform editor of the *Bolton Free Press*:

It is well-known, that the classes to which the majority of the voters in town belong, have been seriously burdened and severely depressed; but we urge them, for their own interest, for the sake of their poor and suffering brethren, and on behalf of their embarrassed country, to make an effort and maintain themselves on the registry. It is a sacred trust they hold; one who duties they should not, on any account, neglect.⁷⁴

This "sacred trust" included future votes to secure the relief of "their poor and suffering brethren" through reform candidates and measures, particularly repeal of the Corn Laws. During the Bolton Parliamentary campaign of 1841, an election flyer entitled "To the Electors and Non-Electors of the Borough of Bolton" encouraged the support of the candidates who favored repeal of the Corn Laws. In that pamphlet, "An Elector" noted:

. . . but let those of you who are in a position as Voters, consider that it is only yours in part; that it is the Property of the Non-Electors as well, and that you must exercise it not only for your own interest, but also for the interest of that suffering and starving class. . . It is a sacred call from the Non-Electors to you, that this Prerogative, now in your hands, should be done fearlessly and freely,. . .⁷⁵

⁷⁴*BFP*, June 17, 1843.

⁷⁵"To the Electors and Non-Electors of the Borough of Bolton" (Bolton: J. Gadsby, 1841), BLS.

The language aimed directly at middle-class ideals, with its appeal to property, self-interest, and autonomous exercise of the vote. These sentiments were to be engaged for the benefit of the entire community.

Middle-class political reform expressed an ideal of community of interest. The *Bolton Free Press* was the town's platform of reform during the 1830s and 1840s. In an editorial entitled "Union Between the Middle and Working Classes," the editor complained:

. . . but, unfortunately, a large number of shopkeepers themselves are actually ignorant of the fact, that the Reform Bill, as Lord John Russell himself admits, gave the landed aristocracy a "preponderance in the House of Commons," which they are not backward in using to their own advantage, and the ruin of all who live by honest industry.⁷⁶

Following the Chartist disturbances of 1839, the editor attacked Feargus O'Connor for promulgating "Popular Delusions" which might cool the spirit of reform among the middle class:

Of all the delusions which prevail among the people of England at the present day, the most widely spread, and, therefore, the most dangerous, is that which represents the interests of the working men as opposed to the interests of the shopkeepers, manufacturers, and all other sections of that numerous and powerful division of the people commonly designated the middle class.⁷⁷

Despite this attack, O'Connor seemed aware of the common interests between workers and shopkeepers, though he excluded the rest of the middle class from this particular community. At the same time O'Connor called for an

⁷⁶*BFP*, September 12, 1840.

⁷⁷*BFP*, October 12, 1839; see also *BFP*, September 14, 1839.

exclusive dealing campaign against shopkeepers, he encouraged a Chartist educational campaign aimed at the shopkeepers:

You must fight the shopkeepers' interest against the shopkeepers' pride. They now know that a well-fed and well-paid people make a full till and a cheerful wife on a Saturday night, and that a badly-paid people make an empty till and a grumbling spouse; but this they have long borne, from a foolish love of their little social class distinction, in the hope that things would mend, and from complete ignorance upon all political and economical subjects. . . The question has been argued as though the interests of all the middle classes were identical, whereas, the interests of shop-keepers and that of manufacturers are the very antipodes one to the other. . . You must enlighten the shopkeepers and tradesmen of all denominations, and fight against the real enemy — the steam Lords.⁷⁸

O'Connor believed that exclusive dealing was the best method available to "enlighten" their natural allies, shopkeepers, to join in the Chartist assault on the manufacturers.⁷⁹

Of course the community of interest between the electors and the non-electors represented an ideal. An effective realization of this trust would have to rest on shared obligations and benefits. The distinctions between community interests and individual interests could blur without constant reinforcement of interests held in common. Class boundaries, ethnic divisions, physical separation, employer-employee economic relationships, and club vs. pub cultural divisions inhibited community-of-interest bonds. The split between electors and non-electors created another boundary that required reminders to overcome the

⁷⁸NS, May 15, 1841.

⁷⁹Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom*, pp. 273-274, 292.

division. The threat of coercive action via exclusive dealing reminded Victorian domestic shopkeepers of their communal interests.

V. Conclusion

Since much of the evidence of domestic shopkeepers' politics are suggestive rather than definitive, conclusions must also be somewhat tentative. As argued throughout this study, the community of interest between domestic shopkeepers and working people was quite extensive. Economic bonds of credit and convenience tied domestic shopkeepers and their working-class community inextricably. The social bonds of kinship and neighborhood helped guarantee similar views. The local nature of domestic shopkeeping that emerged from these communal bonds encouraged the expression of the very type of community of interest that appeared in Parliamentary electoral voting and domestic shopkeeper support of popular radical movements. Rather than independent actors, or manipulated tools of organized working- and middle-class movements, domestic shopkeepers expressed a politics that bridged the gaps between the great industrial class divide of property and labor.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

This study has tried to rescue domestic shopkeepers from historical neglect by showing their crucial roles in the politics, society, and economy of Lancashire towns, the first industrial society. Rather than being seen as a sub-class of the *petite bourgeoisie* whose property ownership alienated them from the working class, domestic shopkeepers were instead an extension or a dimension of the working-class community. Domestic shopkeepers were not a stable class at all, but in most cases the domestic shop represented a social status and an economic function through which some working families passed at some time in their lives, a function generated by the evolution of urban industrial society.

Domestic shopkeepers were small retailers in the general trade of basic foods and household goods which they sold out of their homes. They lived with and catered to their working-class neighbors and found their own economic niche in the industrial town through the granting of credit and dividing of quantity. The domestic shop represented an example of a traditional household income; all members, family and servants, male and female, contributed to the support of the shop. Aware of their status in the working-class neighborhood, domestic shopkeepers served as leaders of their community, both politically and socially. Prominent in working-class political struggles within their own community, domestic shopkeepers voted for reform and radical political candidates. Although

the typical domestic shopkeeper was an "independent" adult male head of household, single and widowed women, especially those women with families to help support, found the shop a respectable occupation. Though slighted in the official records, married women contributed significantly to the success of their domestic shops.

The domestic shop tended to be a hazardous, usually temporary, enterprise in Victorian industrial towns. These shopkeepers faced many economic problems due to their unique economic niche in the retailing world. Domestic shopkeepers faced challenges from too little available capital, the costs of dividing stock, and the extension of retail credit to their customers. Often domestic shopkeeping served as a supplemental, part-time, or casual means of income, and many times the wife of a working-class husband tended the shop. Domestic shopkeeping attracted the socio-economic aspirations of the working class, especially workers in trades threatened by the forces of industrialization. Changes in industrial technology and workplace battered many skilled textile craft occupations such as handloom weaving and mule spinning. Domestic shopkeeping allowed these threatened workers to retain a place in the Victorian social order and maintain respectability through small property ownership rather than a skill.

Along with the general economic forces of industrialization, the specific socio-economic connections between domestic shopkeepers and workers explained the continued growth in these shops despite the hazards. Many historians have

noted these connections between domestic shopkeepers and workers.¹ They shared with workers a dream of property ownership, economic independence, and a healthy urban lifestyle. For many workers, rapid industrialization and urbanization, the same forces that at one time created the demands for their own skills, were eroding their dream. These workers faced challenges that included the cycles of trade prosperity and depression, the erosion of older skills in favor of the rise of new skilled trades, the vulnerability of small property to the burdens of increasing local taxation, and an environment challenged by disease, poverty, and crime.

Domestic shopkeeping was often not a stable occupation at all, nor a class or sub-class. Domestic shopkeeping might be better conceived, instead, as part of the socio-economic spectrum that an individual or family might pass through at some time, usually on their way to or from the working class.² The same processes that created domestic shopkeepers also created their economic insecurity. Local and national fluctuations in the nineteenth century industrial economy created economic vulnerability for small shops. The disastrous economic effects of the 1842 trade depression and the Cotton Famine of the early 1860s ruined many domestic shopkeeping families. The economic fragility of

¹John Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution: Early Industrial Capitalism in Three English Towns* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1974), pp. 238, 267-269; Christopher Hosgood, "Shopkeepers and Society: Domestic and Principal Shopkeepers in Leicester, 1860-1914" (Ph.D. diss., University of Manitoba, 1987), p. 375; and Robert Gray, *The Aristocracy of Labour in Nineteenth-Century Britain, c. 1850-1900* (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp.41-42.

²This instability in occupation, and the concerns generated thereon, are most succinctly stated in R. S. Neale, *Class and Ideology in the Nineteenth Century* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972), pp. 30-32.

domestic shopkeeping has been one of the chief reasons why historians have minimized these shopkeepers' existence and activity.

The instability of domestic shopkeepers emerges from my census data of Bolton and Rochdale in 1851 and 1861.³ The 1850s were a relatively prosperous decade for industrial England. Nevertheless, only thirty-five Bolton domestic shopkeeper families, twenty-seven males and eight females, appeared in both censuses. Eleven of these families carried on the shop business in the persons of widows and adult children. Only one-fifth, 20.4%, of Bolton's domestic shops survived the decade of the 1850s.⁴ Four-fifths of the families in 1851 had lost their shops by 1861. Rochdale boasted a somewhat better survival rate of domestic shopkeeping families for the 1851–1861 decade. The families of thirty-eight domestic shopkeepers, twenty-eight men, six women, and four widows, appeared in both censuses. Nearly 70% of Rochdale's domestic shopkeeping families had lost their shops within that decade.⁵ This failure rate did not dissuade many workers from aspiring to the respectability of small property through a domestic shop: not in the mid-Victorian period, the Edwardian period, or a century after this study.⁶

³No attempts were made to track domestic shopkeeping families into other occupations, or to other towns.

⁴HO 107/2208-2211; RG 9/2815, 2820-2834.

⁵HO 107/2244-2246; RG 9/3036-3040, 3044-3046.

⁶Robert Roberts, *The Classic Slum: Salford Life in the First Quarter of the Century* (London: Penguin Books, 1971), p. 15; Frank Bechofer et al., "Small Shopkeepers: Matters of Money and Meaning," *Sociological Review* 22, 4 (n.s.) (November 1974): 473-474.

Domestic shopkeeper successes were rare in these mid-Victorian towns, and using trades directory listings in addition to my census data helped demonstrate that some of these shopkeeping families stayed in business for some time. Fifty-six Rochdale domestic shopkeeping families, 21.4%, retained their businesses for at least twenty years; and fifteen continued for at least thirty years, including both census years. Bolton's domestic shopkeepers faced a tougher road to longevity. Eighty-two Bolton domestic shopkeeping families, 17.8%, survived for at least twenty years; and twenty-two survived for at least thirty years including both census years. While domestic shops were a hazardous enterprise, enough survived and prospered to retain the ideal of autonomy and independence through a small family business.

Craig Calhoun has argued persuasively for a renunciation of class as the conceptual framework for collective action among the nineteenth-century artisanate. He instead proposed to substitute community, personal, social, and economic bonds that were able to transcend craft differences and allow for collective action.⁷ In another challenge to the Marxist definition of class, William Reddy contended that class does not arise from social relationships, but rather class represents a description of political relationships brought by a diverse social membership to an organization, movement, or community. Class as relationship,

⁷Craig Calhoun, *The Question of Class Struggle: Social Foundations of Popular Radicalism During the Industrial Revolution* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), pp. 150, 175, 205, 234-235.

then, is not based on social or economic collectivity, or community, as Calhoun would probably define it, but an ideological political convergence.⁸ Both Calhoun and Reddy have accused Marxist historians of overemphasizing class relationships while ignoring relationships based on community. Patrick Joyce has also sought to deconstruct the monolith of class in favor of a spectrum of relationships based on political discourse. Joyce has suggested that populism, an inclusive and consensual ideology, serve as an alternative to class, which he has viewed as an exclusive and conflicted ideology.⁹

The founder of modern class-based English history, Edward P. Thompson, defined class in terms of communal experience: the workers' experience of economic exploitation and political oppression. Rather than excluding community relationships, Thompson's view of class emphasized the role of community as vital to making the English working class.¹⁰ Thus Reddy and Calhoun have continued an unfortunate trend in defining class and community in exclusive terminology based on presumably objective socio-economic factors. This study indicates that domestic shopkeepers bridged the supposed ideological gap between class and community. Rather than being marginalized by being between the middle and

⁸William Reddy, "The Concept of Class," in M.L. Bush (ed.), *Social Orders and Social Classes in Europe since 1500: Studies in Social Stratification* (London: Longman, 1992), pp. 13-25.

⁹Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the Question of Class, 1840-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 1-13.

¹⁰Edward P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, reprint (New York: Vintage Books, orig. 1963, repr. 1966), pp. 9-11.

working classes, domestic shopkeepers used the ambiguities of their social position to the benefit of their working-class community.

Domestic shopkeepers in this study formed part of working-class communities and not a distinct class in themselves based on Thompson's classic definition.¹¹ Perhaps domestic shopkeepers were populists, according to Joyce's definition, because they incorporated consensual and inclusive conditions into their language and actions. Since these shopkeepers are perhaps best known as non-actors, this study has sought a domestic shopkeeper identity by examining their social and economic relationships and their actions, however few.¹²

Domestic shopkeepers demonstrated political awareness in certain instances and took political actions based on that awareness. This awareness and accompanying actions were intimately linked to their socio-economic community. Domestic shopkeepers shared bonds of kinship and economic ties with their working-class neighbors. Occasionally domestic shopkeepers transcended these communal ties to engage in political action unique to their particular interests. But more often their political actions reflected the interests of the working-class community with which they were so intimately tied.

Domestic shopkeepers have been portrayed as dependents upon other forces because of their close socio-economic ties as well as their lack of social

¹¹Thompson wrote about the class consciousness of the "small producers, shopkeepers, artisans, small farmers, and the consumers" as expressed by William Cobbett. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class*, p. 757.

¹²This conceptualization is based on John Seed, "Capital and Class Formation in Early Industrial England," *Social History* 18, 1 (January 1993): 28-29.

identity. Either the tight bonds of community constrained independent action, or the superior organization of other classes absorbed domestic shopkeeper interests into their own.¹³ Domestic shopkeepers' historical identity, then, has been obscured and absorbed by the forces around them. They seem to have no autonomy. But autonomy represented one of the hallmarks that attracted recruits to domestic shopkeeping ranks. They were important enough to be courted by political parties and candidates, and they were vital enough to be targets of coercive activity like exclusive dealing.¹⁴ This dichotomy cannot be explained by recognizing domestic shopkeepers as a social class. Rather, they had an ambiguous and tentative relationship with the working class to whom they were so closely tied.

The issue of consumer credit represents one example of the ambiguity of domestic shopkeepers' role in Victorian urban society. Consumer credit represented one of domestic shopkeepers' chief *raison d'être*. Both contemporaries and historians have noted the disastrous consequences of credit for domestic shopkeepers.¹⁵ The negative economic consequences for the

¹³Foster, *Class Struggle and the Industrial Revolution*, pp. 132-136; Robert J. Morris, *Class, Sect and Party: The Making of the British Middle Class, Leeds 1820-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1990), p. 325.

¹⁴One of the best examples of this view is found in Feargus O'Connor's portrayal of the relationship between Chartism and shopkeepers in 1841 and 1842; see James Epstein, *The Lion of Freedom: Feargus O'Connor and the Chartist Movement, 1832-1842* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), pp. 272-275, 312.

¹⁵For example, see Robert Kemp Philp, *The Shopkeeper's Guide* (London: Houlston and Stoneman, 1853), p. 8; Michael J. Winstanley, *The Shopkeeper's World, 1830-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), pp. 12-15.

working-class consumer have been equally well detailed.¹⁶ How, then, can one explain the persistence of this credit? It could hardly have been a weapon with which working-class consumers threatened domestic shopkeepers; exclusive dealing seems to represent this relationship. These shopkeepers freely extended credit, despite the economic dangers. Both domestic shopkeepers and working-class families needed credit for their respective economic survival. It seems most likely that the granting of consumer credit was part of a leadership role of domestic shopkeepers within the working-class community. The respectability of small property made them an elite within the working-class community. Working-class families were dependent on credit from many sources, including domestic shops.¹⁷ This dependency imposed a community responsibility on these shopkeepers, one that often contradicted their own economic self-interest. Domestic shopkeepers' intimate social connections to the working-class neighborhood transformed an economic debt into a moral obligation. This obligation resulted in domestic shopkeepers' economic existence becoming even more tentative. It seemed to be a price which they were willing to pay for their

¹⁶For example, see Friedrich Engels, *The Condition of the Working-Class in England* (reprint, Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1973), pp. 110-111; John Burnett, *Plenty and Want: A Social History of Diet in England From 1815 to the Present Day* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons, 1966), pp. 33-35, 110-111; John K. Walton and Alastair Wilcox (eds.), *Low Life and Moral Improvement in Mid-Victorian England: Liverpool Through the Journalism of Hugh Shimmin* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1991), pp. 110, 160, 230.

¹⁷Melanie Tebbutt, *Making Ends Meet: Pawnbroking and Working-Class Credit* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), pp. 14-26; David Alexander, *Retailing in England During the Industrial Revolution* (London: Athlone, 1970), pp. 174-183; Christopher Hosgood, "The 'Pygmies of Commerce' and the Working-Class Community: Small Shopkeepers in England, 1870-1914," *Journal of Social History* 22, 3 (1989): 440-446.

role in society. This domestic shopkeepers-working-class neighborhood credit relationship appeared to be an instance of a "moral economy" of personal relationships co-existing with a supposedly impersonal capitalistic market structure.¹⁸

Domestic shopkeepers often promoted the best interests of their community. They were bridge-builders between the respectable values of middle-class society and working-class necessity. The domestic shop itself represented an escape from working-class struggle to the security of small property and family autonomy. This image has remained largely intact, despite evidence that domestic shopkeepers faced a merciless economic challenge, with few chances of continuing in business for more than a few years. Domestic shopkeepers shared with workers an image of autonomy achieved through their own efforts, an image reflected by membership in non-conformist religion, temperance movements, friendly societies, and mechanics' institutes.

Domestic shopkeepers participated in community of interest politics so prevalent in the Victorian era. In more than one country, they fought political battles not only for themselves but also the members of their community, whether battling for Chartist working-class demands, aiding Irish farmers fighting for autonomy and security of their property, or helping struggling steel workers in

¹⁸Napoleonic Era food riots were another example of this moral-capitalistic economy; John Bohstedt, "The Moral Economy and the Discipline of Historical Context," *Journal of Social History* 24, 2 (Winter 1992): 267-268. From these two examples, it seems that there is no necessary dichotomy between a moral economy of values and the market economy of retail capitalism.

Pittsburgh.¹⁹ The nationalization of politics later in the century resulted in a weakening of communitarian politics and created the conditions for marginalizing domestic shopkeepers' activity. Perhaps this increasing political marginalization explained their role in reactionary or traditionalist movements like the *mittelstand* in Wilhelmine Germany or the *Ligue syndicale*.²⁰ Domestic shopkeepers wanted to recreate traditional values of community independence and family autonomy in a society that instead emphasized nationalistic economics, societies, and politics. The activist communitarian role of Milanese small shopkeepers identified by Jonathan Morris seems a better model for the political activity of shopkeepers for the later nineteenth century. The *escercenti* combatted the interests of organized labor and big business to retain their position as community leaders in a changing society.²¹ Too often historians have portrayed domestic shopkeepers as unwitting allies of manipulative actors. Domestic shopkeepers fought for their own anachronistic vision of the world to keep the dream of family autonomy and community welfare alive. They fought not only for themselves, but also for the opportunities of their working-class neighbors and kin.

¹⁹Mick Jenkins, *The General Strike of 1842* (London: Lawrence and Wishart, 1980), pp. 178-179, 247-248; Samuel Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1979), pp. 125-134, 262-272, 275; Francis G. Couvares, *The Remaking of Pittsburgh: Class and Culture in an Industrializing City, 1877-1919* (Albany: The State University of New York Press, 1984), pp. 33-34, 43-46, 63, 73-74, 92.

²⁰Robert Gellately, *The Politics of Economic Despair: Shopkeepers and German Politics, 1890-1914* (London: Sage Publications, 1974), pp. 8-11; Philip Nord, *Paris Shopkeepers and the Politics of Resentment* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), pp. 5-12, 486-491.

²¹Jonathan Morris, *The Political Economy of Shopkeeping in Milan, 1886-1922* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), pp. 285-292.

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