

SURVIVAL STRATEGIES IN MID-NINETEENTH CENTURY BOLTON

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The 'physical and moral' condition of the urban working-class had attracted considerable attention from 'respectable' society following the revelations of sanitary investigators during the 1830s and 1840s. Little understood at the time, however, were the causes of poverty and how they related to living conditions within urban slums. Modern scholarship, involving economic and social historians, has engaged the debate over incomes and standards of living, while important contributions have been made in the fields of class and gender relations. The aim of this article is to relate threads from these debates to the specific area of family survival strategies in mid-nineteenth century Bolton. While a wide range of sources have been used, a heavy reliance has been placed upon the 1851 census, both for the investigation of a town centre district and a sample of the borough population.

The publication of James Entwisle's 'Sanitary Survey of Bolton' in 1848 provided the first detailed investigation into the town's condition and health of the order of Kays'¹ and Chadwick's² investigation of social conditions in Manchester. The 'fever nests' of the town were exposed and the deadly living conditions of the town-centre poor fully revealed. Amongst the worst, and thereafter the most infamous, were the overcrowded lodging houses, the filthy courts and alleys situated behind the town's major thoroughfare, Deansgate. People, donkeys and pigs were all cellar dwellers here, while refuse from dung collectors and the military hospital were regularly swilled by storms through cottages situated lower down by the banks of the river Croal.

Yet it had not always been like this. As late as 1770, the district was almost rural; an idyll made up of bleaching crofts, orchards and a spattering of garden cottages. Before the century was over, however, water-powered textile production and engineering works, both succumbing to early steam power, had drastically altered the landscape. Multi-storeyed mills and large machine works were already threatening the 'domestic workshops' which had become part and parcel of urban expansion in the district. The 'Enclosure Map' of 1793 reveals that little open space was left by that time, as indeed was the case in many other parts of the town centre.

In the district of North Deansgate, between Salt Pie Yard and Ridgway Gates, several prestigious streets had been built. Amongst these were King Street and Ridgway Gates where local elites, often with manufacturing interests locally, were close neighbours of cottage dwellers, some of whom lived in the backyards of these elegant town houses. The population of the district had grown to an estimated 1000 by 1801, most of the 250 houses enjoying single family occupancies, regardless of size. Twenty years later, the district had embarked upon a trend of decline as the population grew to over 1700 with very little increase in the housing stock. Many of the local elites, recognising the social costs of living in the town centre, moved to the suburbs, leaving their properties to become common lodging houses or subdivided apartments. Together with the conversion to dwelling houses of the earlier small workshops and warehouses, the trend towards mid-century involved falling rents and a deterioration of the hous-

ing stock. An increase in migrant numbers (particularly Irish-born) saw a growing proportion of poorer families relying upon casual, or unskilled labourers' wages. Against a background of inadequate sanitary provision, the undernourished population easily succumbed to illness and disease. With meagre, locally administered relief funds the only alternative to the workhouse, the majority of the working class population of the town could expect to live at least some of their life in poverty. Periodic trade slumps threw many out of work, while illness, death or old age could result in complete destitution. Most families suffered severe strain during the 'child-bearing' period, when dependants were most numerous and providers fewest. Many of the town-centre districts of Bolton were occupied by those engaged in the poorest paid and most precarious trades so that low or irregular wages were endemic. Beyond this, the most vulnerable groups such as widows, the aged, and single-parent families seldom had choices beyond living in the squalor of the town-centre 'backsides' where rents were lowest, and opportunities for casual work most frequent. To survive these periods, working class families variously took opportunities to increase their household incomes in ways that seemed best to them at the time. The most usual of these 'survival strategies' included working wives, working children, taking-in lodgers, and establishing kin relationships beyond the nuclear family group. It is important to remember, however, that working class families seldom had any real 'choice' in terms of the survival strategies they adopted, but would have made use of any that were available to them as their needs arose.

Household needs

Assessing the economic needs of individual households poses considerable difficulties for modern historians, not least because it quickly engages the 'standard of living' debate. This centres around using data from nineteenth century censuses where interpretation and accuracy have posed considerable problems. Elizabeth Roberts, amongst others, has highlighted the tendency of census enumerators (always men) to judge women as 'dependants' and so record them without an occupation, irrespective of actual economic activity.³ Women themselves, often involved in casual, seasonal or part-time work, may also have responded to enumerators' questions by describing themselves as 'housewife'. The contribution of unwaged work within the home – as housewife, lodging house keeper or in a domestically organised trade – was routinely ignored, though often crucial to the economic well-being of the family unit.

Roberts has argued that where women didn't have recorded occupations, the standard of living of their families may not have been so adversely affected as supposed, because of the savings that could be made by avoiding the costs of childminding, convenience food and cleaning services. Further, families on similar incomes (whether high or low) may well have experienced very different standards of living based upon how profligate the breadwinner was. It is with some caution, therefore, that the census reports for 1851 have been used to investigate family income levels in the town centre district of North Deansgate and used as a pointer to

poverty levels. Specifically, two streets were selected for close study whose populations displayed the variety of working-class features found in the district as a whole. Joiners Square was made up of 31 cottage dwellings, where tenants, predominantly single-family occupants, paid around 2s 3d a week in rent. The residents were overwhelmingly non-migrant and enjoyed high tenant continuity rates, no doubt based upon the secure and well-paid occupations of the male household heads (48 per cent had 'higher factory' employment, principally as mule spinners).⁴ As a consequence, all but five of the Joiners Square families enjoyed per capita weekly incomes which placed them above the level of 'primary poverty,' a rough guide established by S. B. Rowntree during his study of York in the 1890s. Rowntree, using prices and wages not significantly different from Bolton in the 1850s, balanced the living costs of adults and children within a household, against the family's income from all sources. Allowing for the minimum of dietary needs, a family with a budget deficit was deemed to be living below his standard of 'primary poverty.' The situation in Grime Street was very different from that in Joiners Square. Here, a more migrant community lived in the subdivided houses and cellars, and were chiefly employed in the more precarious and poorly paid occupations of hawking, labouring and and loom weaving. Female household heads were far more common than in Joiners Square, and they survived chiefly by sewing, charring and taking-in lodgers. Two thirds of the Grime Street households lived on or below the poverty line, the rest little better off. Amongst the worst was Jane Assid, an Irish seamstress who had migrated to Bolton some time after 1847. A widow, she had six children under the age of twelve, two of whom worked in a cotton mill. The family income, estimated at around 14 shillings a week, would have provided them with less than 1s 6d each, after the rent was paid.

The occupational patterns seen in the district a whole, though quite varied, were much closer to those found in Grime Street rather than Joiners Square, so that we might assume the majority of families would need to employ survival strategies at some stage during their developmental cycle.

Survival Strategies: Working Children

The most commonly seen method of raising family incomes was to ensure that children were employed from as early an age as possible. In North Deansgate, around 20 per cent of all children under the age of 16 lived in one-parent families (usually female), and in their case the need to work was most pressing. The growing textile industry in Bolton provided numerous opportunities for child labour, though under 13 year olds worked part-time in the industries that could be regulated. Few of these very young workers were recorded in factory employment in 1851, and there is evidence to suggest that many large cotton mills preferred to avoid part-timers altogether. In the context of factory legislation, it is not surprising that most young workers were found in small workshops, domestically organised trades such as hand loom weaving, or as apprentices and servants. How many others were involved in casual employment, running errands or helping parents when trade was brisk will never be known, but it can be assumed that much of childrens' irregular or part-time work went unrecorded, particularly when it involved the very young. Beyond this, many children, especially girls, looked after younger siblings or neighbours' offspring. This allowed others to work and contributed not only to the income of the family, but of the whole neighbourhood as part of a 'hidden economy', which may have left living standards

somewhat higher than the census data suggests.

The point at which children were required to work related to family income; the balance between providers and dependants. While families with highly-skilled (male) breadwinners might delay sending their children to work until fourteen or fifteen, most working class families found themselves under considerable financial strain during the child-rearing phase. The least favourable situation was when a family had several children, none of whom were working. These were found in Life Cycle Stage 3, as used by Michael Anderson in his study of Preston:⁵

L.C.S.

- 1 couples with a wife under 45, no children at home
- 2 wife under 45, one child at home
- 3 more than one child at home, none working
- 4 more than one child at home, more than half working
- 5 wife over 45, no children at home, or only one over 21

Families in Grime Street that can be classified into a Life Cycle Stage (LCS) usually found themselves living on, or below the primary poverty line, a state of affairs some rectified as children began work:

Weekly per capita income after basic expenditure	Life Cycle Stage
In Deficit	1 2 3 3 3 3 3 3 4 4 4
0d - 1s 11d surplus	1 2 2 2 3 3 3 4 4 5
2s - 3s 11d surplus	2 3 5
4s - 6s 0d surplus	1 3
Over 6s surplus	None

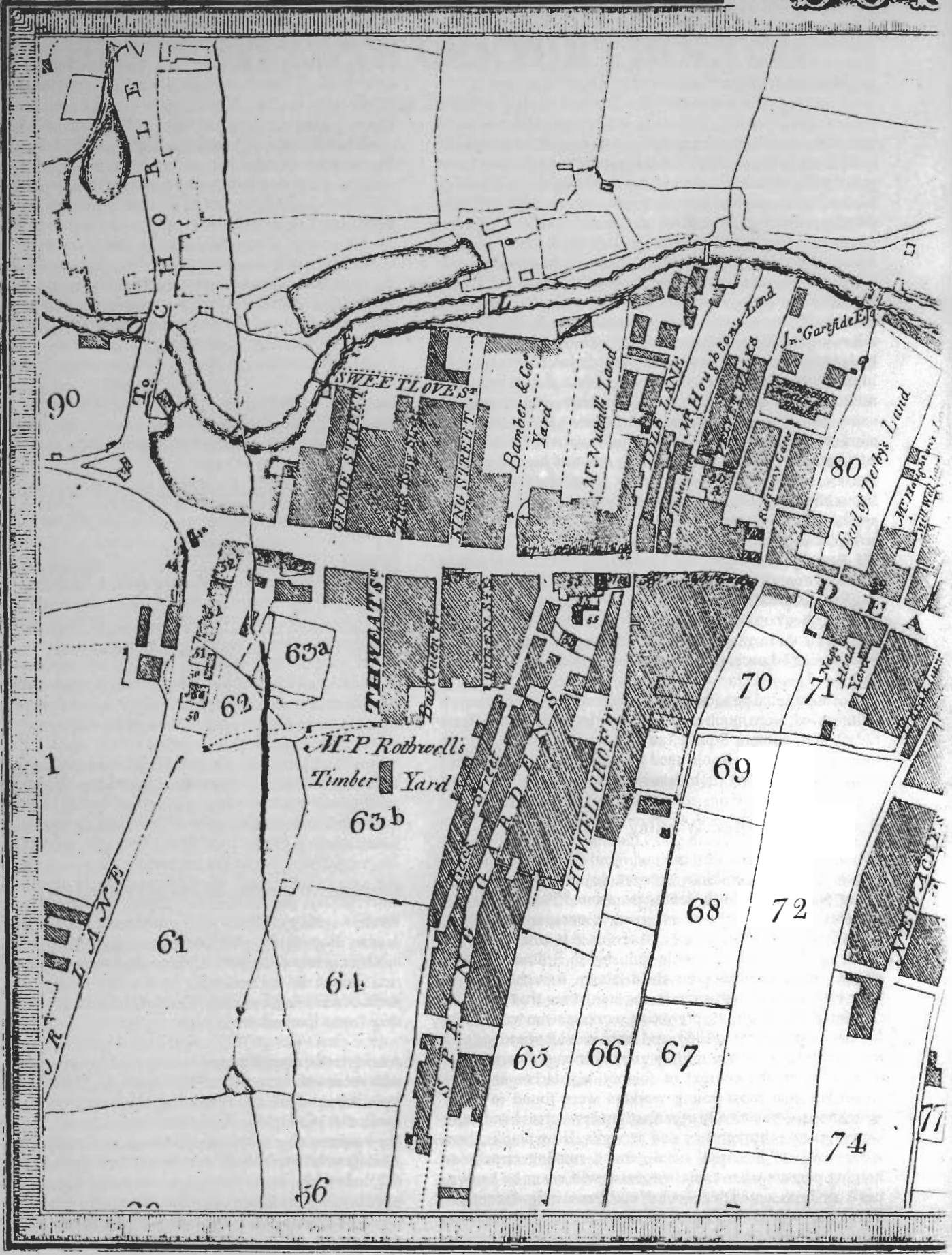
Table 1, Life cycle stages of families in Grime Street, 1851

Not counted in terms of 'Life Cycle Stages' were the many families in the district not headed by a married couple. These single parent families often relied totally upon the meagre wages of children and adolescents in an environment where other survival strategies may have been closed to them. They were most likely to live as lodgers, and be unable to benefit from kin aid due to the lack of control they had over their living space.

Survival Strategies: Working Wives

While working children were considered the norm in mid-century Bolton, the position regarding working wives and mothers is more complex. Unlike single women, most married women did not undertake paid work, irrespective of the socio-economic group of their husbands or the life cycle stage they found themselves in.

A sample of the population saw only 19.1 per cent of all wives with recorded occupations.⁶ The figure for North Deansgate was 18.6 per cent, a little over half of these working outside the home, principally in textile factories or as charwomen. Here the number of wives involved in factory work was actually very low (only 21 were found) being principally non-migrants living in households where other family members were involved in factory-based textile production. For example, a man employed as a stripper and grinder might be married to a carder or frame tenter, while a better paid mule spinner might have his wife and children employed as piecers. They shared a 'factory culture' of regular hours, wages and discipline which was probably continued from their adolescent work experiences.

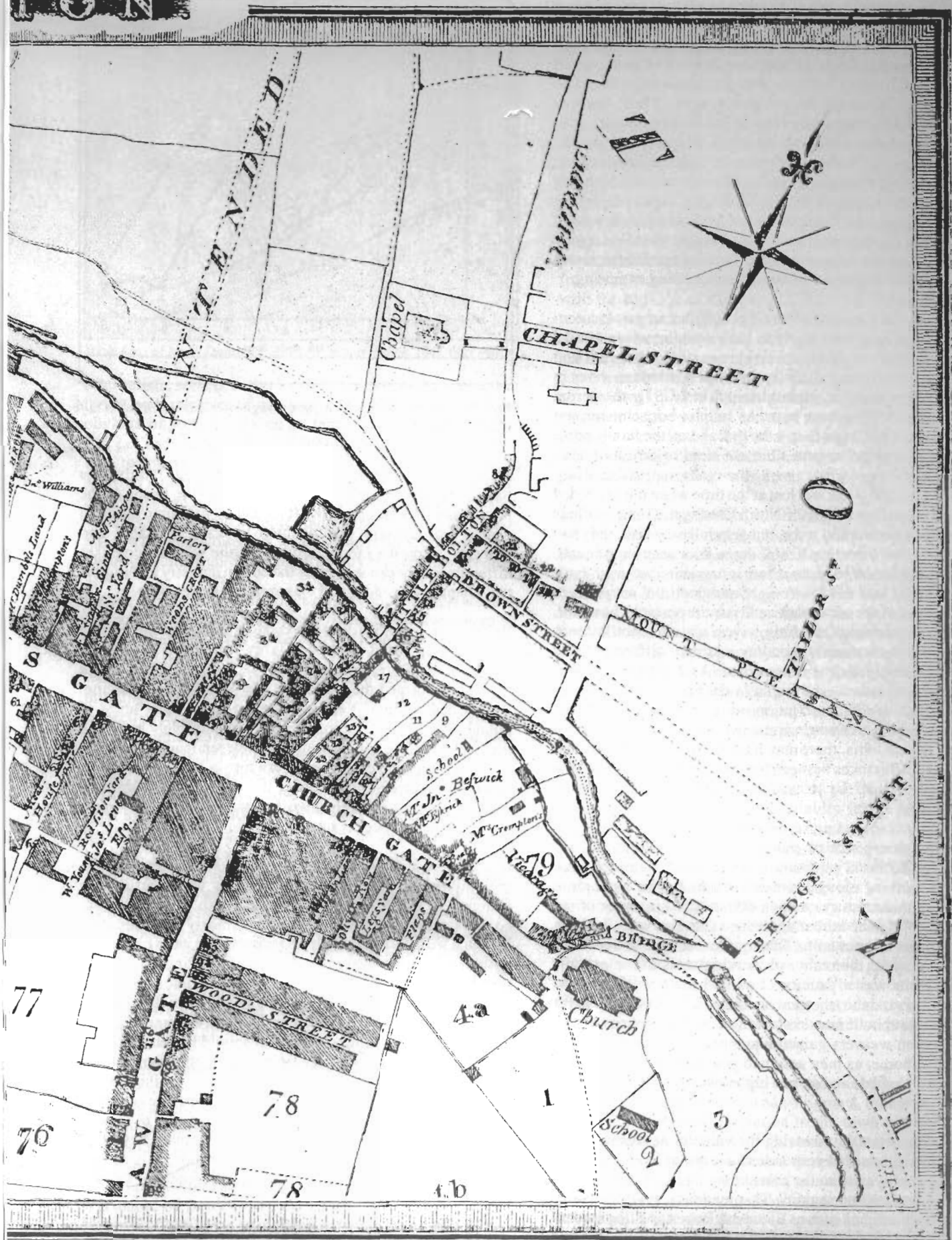


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Map of Bolton in 1793, enlarged from the original

Scale of reproduction

1793 'Enclosure' Map of Bolton



Survey by the Great Bolton Improvement Trustees
 to 70 yards approx

From the collection in the Bolton Local Studies Library

Men working in cotton factories were in a better position to secure work for their wives, particularly when they had authority to hire and fire, as did overlookers and mule spinners. It was thus the case that wives in relatively secure and well-paid jobs in cotton mills, had husbands, and quite often children, in similarly advantageous work. These occupational patterns, frequently seen in the Bolton sample, gave some households substantially raised standards of comfort based upon the 'two-income family' where there was no necessity for the wife to work. Such instances were very rare in the slum district of North Deansgate, however, where factory organised cotton production occupied very few adult males. Here, labourers, hawkers and artisans had few opportunities to secure factory work for their wives and they were left to undertake casual work such as cleaning or sewing.

It was not the case, however, that families in greatest economic need were most likely to have working wives. Unlike Ancoats, where working wives were most likely to be found when families were in Life Cycle Stage 3, working wives in Bolton were most commonly found in LCS 1, the period before any children were born. As couples bore children and moved into LCS 2 and then 3 the demand on the family purse increased. But at the same time, the need to care for young children saw more wives give up their jobs, so that the advantage of a second wage was lost at the time when it was needed most. In the slum district of North Deansgate, some mothers did choose to return to work, but generally not until they had reached a later developmental stage than seen in Ancoats. Why this should have been so is unclear, but may have reflected the lack of kin or neighbourhood 'aid' networks to provide child care opportunities. It is quite possible, however, that the incidence of working wives, and the contributions they made to the family economy was very different to that indicated solely by the census data. As mentioned earlier, some of women's waged employment may have gone unrecorded, beside the contribution made by many through the 'hidden' incomes of wage supplements and household economies⁷. Beyond this, there may have been important regional and class differences between how respondents described the work performed by wives, based on prevailing social 'norms'.

With the emergence of power looms from the 1820s, the weaving districts, particularly in north Lancashire, saw women working alongside men and earning the same piece rates. By mid-century, women dominated this sector of the industry, and joined the struggle for a standard wage list in an atmosphere of mutuality. Their role became increasingly redefined under the reality of working-class life, especially where there was a paucity of skilled male work. Gender antagonism and the 'rhetoric of domesticity' gave way to the struggle to uphold *household* wages. This is not to suggest that women weavers gained equality in the workplace, nor indeed at home, as men assumed positions of power within the weaving sheds and earned higher wages through working more looms.

This is important in assessing the value of census data, because it suggests that respondents were not likely to 'hide' female employment to the extent that may have occurred in other industries and regions. This tendency, highlighted recently by historians such as Elizabeth Roberts,⁸ Ellen Jordan⁹ and Tilly and Scott,¹⁰ suggests that notions of patriarchy and female domesticity assigned very different roles to the husband and wife within the household. The 'model' husband was the sole provider, agitating increasingly for a 'family', or

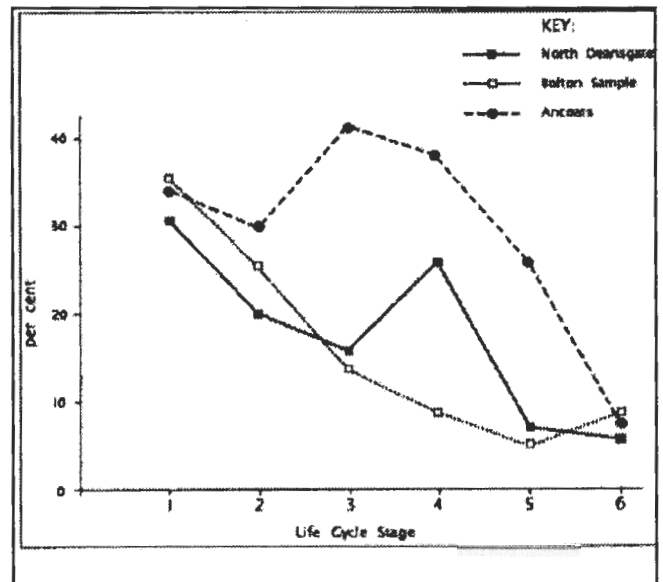


Fig. 1. Working Wives as a percentage of Couples in each Life Cycle Stage

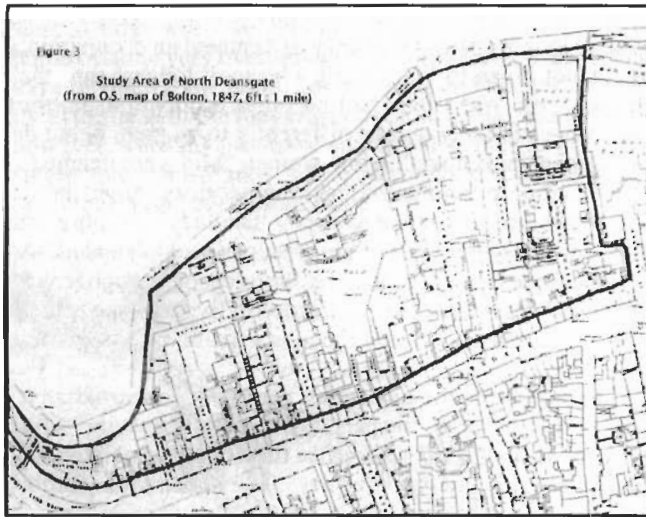
breadwinner's wage to support (and control) his family. The role of the 'model' wife was to minister to the needs of the family and thus be preserved from the moral impurities that waged employment was deemed to bring. Savage¹¹ and Morgan¹² suggest a more complex picture which recognises differences between sectors of the cotton industry and important changes in gender and class relations over time.

Bolton had, by 1850, developed into a centre for medium to fine spinning based upon the highly segregated mule-spinning process. Here, men were the 'labour aristocrats' while women performed the unskilled, low-paid tasks of piecing, tenting and carding. Yet compared to many other areas of female employment, factory wages were relatively high and, for single women, could mean their independence. However, as elsewhere, such cases were very rare in Bolton, and most continued to live at home under the moral supervision of a patriarch-figure and likely gave their wage to the family purse in exchange for 'pocket money'.

In a far more precarious position were single women supporting children or other kin. Such families were particularly common in North Deansgate where cheap, subdivided accommodation was in abundance. Here, nearly a quarter of all families with children under 16 years of age were headed by a single parent; unmarried females outnumbering males six to one. For this group paid employment was common, questioning notions of female domesticity and the view that women worked merely for 'supplementary' wages, a theme explored by Sonya Rose, amongst others.¹³ It should be remembered, however, that in mid-century Bolton, paid employment was not the experience of the majority of wives, while in town centre districts, the example of North Deansgate suggests fewer than 10 per cent were involved in any kind of factory work. Against this background, families looked beyond a mother's paid employment to survive periods of hardship, and amongst their strategies was the development of kinship aid.

Survival Strategies: Kinship

Anderson's investigation into residence patterns in Preston in 1851, concluded that the town formed a "predominantly



Study Area of North Deansgate from O.S. Map of Bolton, 1847, 6ft:1 mile.

familialistic society with around 95 per cent of the population living with relatives of one kind or another." Alongside the obvious importance placed on family life, was the fact that "23 per cent of households contained related persons other than members of the current nuclear family." These figures allowed Anderson to revise previously held notions that industrialisation typically disrupted pre-existing wider kinship systems. The Bolton Sample found 20 per cent of all households with co-residing kin, while in the slum district of North Deansgate, the figure was significantly higher at 26 per cent.

Beside kinship norms of affection and obligation, Anderson maintained that links were more likely to survive where all actors benefited, either in the short or long term. In practice, this would mean an aged widow would be more likely to live with offspring if she could provide a service, say child-minding, though less obvious cases can arise. Patterns of collective reciprocity could unite a wider family group. For instance, an elderly couple might have four grown-up children, all with their own families and separate dwellings. As a group, the five households could live under an umbrella of mutual aid similar to the loose associations which sometimes grew up among neighbours.¹⁴ By giving assistance in times of need, say by caring for parents or an orphaned niece or nephew, families ensured they remained part of the group. Like investing in an insurance policy, they could expect their aid to be reciprocated at some later date, though not necessarily by the same individuals. Whether as recipients or providers, Anderson reminds us that family members made choices and bargains against "a background of shared values, which laid down the rules to be followed by each party to the relationship." Without these shared values, co-residence would move towards the more pecuniary type displayed by lodgers.

The kinship system would have been particularly important to the working classes in the mid-nineteenth century, where personal savings were low, and the likelihood of falling into extreme poverty quite high.¹⁵ Especially vulnerable were the very young, unmarried females, and the very old, who sometimes joined together to assist each other in three generational households. An example found in North Deansgate was the household of Betty Howarth, a seventy year-old widow in Ridgway Gates. Her unmarried daughter Ann, worked as a reeler in a cotton factory, while Betty helped to look after Ann's seven year-old son. Ann supported both her mother and son, while Betty, as a grandparent, was a vital resource in

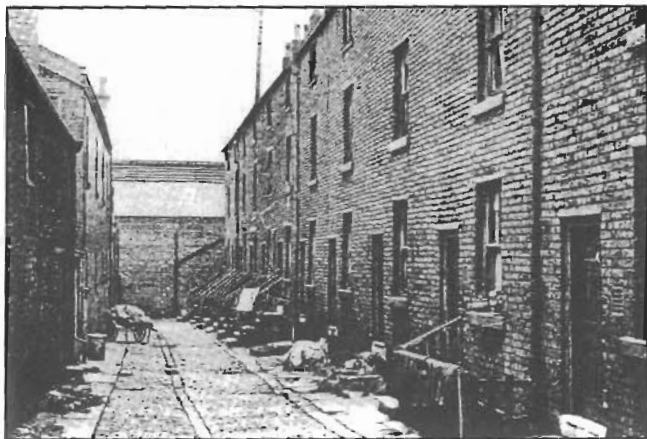
helping a single parent bring up a child. In the district as a whole, grandchildren and parents (or parents-in-law) made up a total 52 per cent of all co-residing kin, though not all of these lived in three-generation households, and not all involved single-parent families.

The largest group of kinship 'recipients' were siblings or siblings-in-law, and they were found overwhelmingly in households headed by married couples. This pattern of co-residence was most usually seen between adolescents and couples in Life Cycle Stage 1. This arrangement saw immediate reciprocation where the adolescent gained considerably more freedom than he may have had living with parents, and the married couple reaped a 'lodger-income' from excess dwelling space. As the couple's own family grew with the addition of children (LCS 2 - 5), sibling kin links reduced markedly. This occurred partly as a result of overcrowding, but also because siblings were less likely to need kin aid as they became older, earned higher wages and became householders themselves. Less than 10 per cent of all co-residing kin were married sons or daughters (or in-laws), nieces or nephews, and aunts or uncles. Where nieces or nephews were found, they nearly always had their parents with them, only one in North Deansgate being an unaccompanied child, possibly an orphan.

In King and Grime Streets, where lodgers were common and the population very mobile, kinship links were seen in less than 10 per cent of households. Here, there were only ten families who had some form of kinship link, six being headed by couples in Life Cycle Stage 3. All but one had very low incomes, putting the families below the 'primary poverty line'. Kinship was far more common in Joiners square, where 'higher factory' work prevailed and tenant continuity levels were very high. However, it was not the spinners and mill managers who lived with kin, but the poorest families. This suggests that poverty encouraged kinship links as a survival strategy, and was certainly not the preserve of the 'comfortably off'.

A relationship was seen in most of the North Deansgate streets whereby high tenant continuity levels and poverty *together* created a favourable environment for kinship links. Conversely, high income families, or those in lodgings, were less likely to be found giving or receiving kin aid. This pattern was only upset in Velvet Walks, where a 'cluster' of Irish families occupied the old four-storey weavers' cottages. Here, 41 per cent of households had an Irish-born head or wife, and half of these displayed some kind of kinship link, despite the fact that they were a very mobile group. Important cultural differences may have created behavioural 'norms' quite different to non-Irish residents, particularly in the wake of the recent potato famine, where actual starvation would have been a familiar sight to many.

Generally, migrants in Bolton were no more likely to be seen living in kinship groups than non-migrants, though it must be emphasised that most migration to the town was short distance (less than 30 miles).¹⁶ This was not the case with the Irish, however, where the Bolton sample found 26 per cent of households displaying kin links, established principally between siblings. Unlike non-Irish households, these siblings commonly lived with their own spouse and children, which suggests their kin links were rather more long term. They were also more often involved in the same trade ('dishonourable' artisan work predominated), probably involving domestically organised work.¹⁷



Weavers' cottages in Velvet Walks

Rushton found that for families in Ancoats, the contribution of kin in familiarly-organised occupations such as hand loom weaving and artisan type trades, led to increased kinship links within these groups.¹⁸ This seems not to have been the case in North Deansgate, or at least not as far as the hand loom weavers were concerned. Kinship links within this group were quite rare (14 per cent), and only three examples were found where kin worked in the same trade. This probably relates to the pitiful wages of the hand loom weavers, which may have precluded them from being aid-providers, but also created a situation where additional weavers within the household may not have contributed much to the family purse. In this environment, the poor hand loom weavers looked to other strategies to increase their chances of survival.

Survival Strategies: Lodgers

As already mentioned, the archetypal nuclear family group rested firmly on the provider - dependent ethos. The presence of lodgers, particularly when found living in common lodging houses, upset this traditional norm, and provided support for the view that urbanisation had contributed to family disruption during the industrialising period. A challenge to this theory highlights the importance of lodgings to a number of occupational groups in pre-industrial society especially for seamen, itinerant workers, seasonal agricultural labourers and, during the eighteenth century, growing numbers of navvies. By the nineteenth century, urban lodgings had increased dramatically in response to the needs of migrants, who were an important ingredient of urban expansion. Leonore Davidoff points to the widespread poverty of the working class at this time, as an explanation of why families became, or took-in lodgers.¹⁹ She saw lodgings as an experience many underwent during their passage through the phases of the family life cycle, rather than as a pointer to family breakdown within the urban context.

An investigation into the incidence of lodgers usually begins with the 1851 census when, for the first time, this label was used to describe individuals who paid for their room to the householder, who was nearly always a tenant. As with 'working wives', however, census data can prove less than reliable due to the confusion at the time over exactly what constituted a lodger. Respondents and enumerators commonly confused lodgers and visitors, while some families living in subdivided houses were given the label of 'household head', while others were not. Domestic servants who 'lived-in' were not classed as lodgers, and neither were apprentices or trade assistants who lived with their master. Problems of interpretation arose

more frequently in the descriptions given to lodger hosts, where 'lodging-house keeper' was assumed an occupation, a status not given to individuals who took lodgers into their homes, even when they had no other occupation. Further, men were routinely treated differently to women, being described as 'innkeepers', while women, who were deemed to be providing cleaning and cooking services, might be described as 'lodging house keeper', 'landlady', or more usually, not given the status of any occupational label at all. All these varieties were seen in the Bolton census, though how far they reliably describe an organisation of living, or the specific role of the household head remains a matter of speculation.

By the middle of the nineteenth century a concerted attack was being made by 'respectable society' upon the whole concept of 'lodging' in the sense that it was associated with overcrowding and immorality. The Chadwick Report, amongst others, had emphasised the link between overcrowding and disease, a theme taken up by James Entwisle in his sanitary investigation of Bolton in 1848. He highlighted the evils of multi-family occupancies as the principal cause of overcrowding in many of the town centre districts. Filth and disease were not the prerogative of the dark courts and alleys which had in-filled the town's 'backsides', but were just as likely to be found amongst the cellars and subdivided properties of large town houses. A case in point was the lodging house at No. 6, King Street, where Ann Brooks's family of five shared the house with 27 lodgers. Across the street a smaller house was subdivided into fifteen apartments and behind, lodged in some old buildings, 'poverty stricken destitutes' added to the hundred or so individuals forced to share a single privy.

Concerns about the morality of common lodging houses had been expressed in 1832 by James Kay, principally because of the mixed sleeping arrangements which normally existed. He described them as "careless of all decency", a theme taken up by the Commissioners of the Common Lodging House legislation of the early 1850s. Their attempt to regulate lodging houses as 'hot-beds of crime and moral depravity' reflected the extent to which these establishments had excited the Victorian conscience by that time. Entwisle's enquiry of 1848 generally steered clear of admonishing the poor, preferring to view them rather as *victims*. The destitute, many of whom were lodgers, 'suffered' overcrowding and unsanitary living conditions, a state of affairs he hoped would be righted by the town's authorities.

The prospect of young single lodgers was always likely to draw criticism, however, because they lived without any recognisable form of adult control. This applied particularly to females, whose ability to find ready employment in the textile mills conferred upon them a degree of independence which many found quite threatening. Previously, urban migration had been to fill occupations in domestic service, an 'acceptable' role for single women because the work was in the home, and their moral conduct overseen by a patriarch figure. In the slum district of North Deansgate, only 33 female lodgers were found living without kin. Most were aged between 17 - 25, and were generally non-migrants working in textile factories. While some of these, no doubt, would have chosen to live in lodgings to increase their personal freedoms, it would also have been the case that some would have had no living kin and been forced totally onto their own resources. Given the subsistence level of women's wages at the time, lodgings would have provided the only affordable accommodation for this group. It was also not uncommon for young-

sters to lodge with a neighbour or work mate when their own home became very overcrowded. In these cases, parents may have retained some moral control or passed that responsibility to the head of the lodger's household. What was not seen, however, were any groups of unmarried women living with a single 'matriarch-figure' where one might suspect a house of prostitution had been established.



East King Street houses (sketched in the 1920s).

More commonly found living without kin, were young male lodgers, many of whom were migrants to the town. They brought very few skills with them and generally filled the ranks of the casual and under employed. But, as far as their accommodation was concerned, very few lived in a household where single female lodgers were present. At number 11, King Street, a young married couple, Charles and Jane Glover, lived with two unmarried lodgers, both men. Across the road at number 18, Ann Barlow, an unmarried woman with an infant, lodged in the house of an elderly couple, together with another lodger, a young unmarried woman. Indeed, of the sixteen King Street households where lodgers were found, only one contained single adults of different sexes living outside a family unit. This is not to suppose, however, that the King Street lodging houses did not excite the moral watchdogs of the time. Under a campaign to regulate lodging houses and raise the standard of premises, two King Street tenants were fined – one for having too many lodgers in his house, the second for admitting women of ill-fame.²⁰

Despite the fact that King Street was renowned locally for its lodger population (32 per cent were lodgers), most displayed considerable family cohesion, despite their obvious poverty. Even in Ann Brooks's large lodging house there were only five unmarried adults (all men), the remaining 22 lodgers all being part of family groups. This pattern was a strong feature

of the district generally, and supports Davidoff's view that 'lodging' was a transient state for many rather than a *disruption* of family life. Similarly, taking-in lodgers was usually performed at specific periods in the Life Cycle Stage. Davidoff's study of Colchester in 1851 found that lodgings were most commonly provided by the middle aged and that women householders were particularly likely to be lodger hosts. This was also the case in Bolton where the sample found women made up 23 per cent of lodger hosts, though they made up only 14 per cent of all household heads. For this group, even where women and children worked, lodgers were often a vital supplement to subsistence wages. Nearly a third augmented their incomes by taking in lodgers, though lodgers were seen rather less frequently in families where some children were working. Rushton's investigation of lodgers in Ancoats in 1851 identified a link between single parent families as lodgers and as lodgers hosts. They were the least successful group in establishing their own households, and 22 per cent of them lived in lodgings. As they became older, and their children began working, they were more likely to establish their own households and take-in lodgers, rather than be lodgers themselves.²¹ The general trend for couples with several children to abandon lodgings and move into their own accommodation (as did single-parent families in Ancoats) was also noticed by Anderson in his study of Preston. He concluded that *overcrowding* precluded large families from living in lodgings, the preference, as seen in Ancoats, being to move into their own dwellings and take in lodgers.

Lodgers were also important to this group in the slum district of North Deansgate, where 48 per cent of all couples with lodgers were found to be in life cycle stage 3. The Bolton sample also found this stage predominated, though the increment was not so great. In North Deansgate, most lodgers hosts were couples with unemployed children (25 in number) who slightly outnumbered the next most important group – households headed by females, where 21 were found to be lodger hosts. Overcrowding in LCS 3 households was not excessive where, upon average, 2.9 lodgers were found. The data shown in the graph (Fig.2) below fails, however, to recognise the size of each life cycle stage group. In North Deansgate, couples in LCS 3 were more than twice as numerous as any other group, while couples in LCSs 2 and 6 were in the minority, being less than half the size of LCS 1 and 5 groups. The disparity of group size determined, to some extent, the shape of the graph.

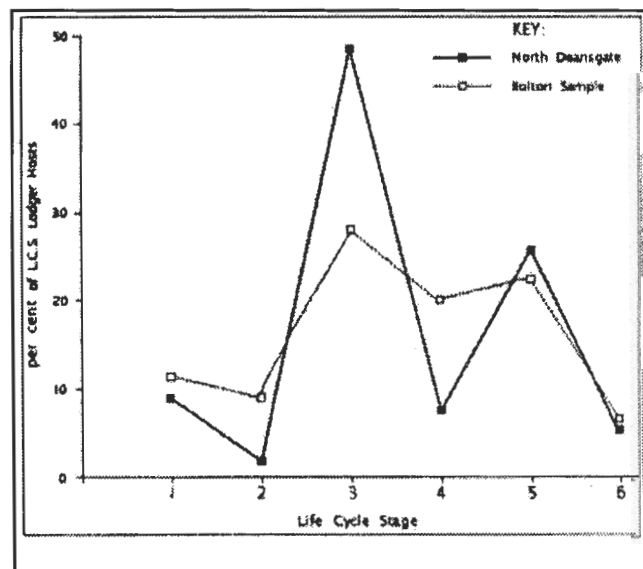


Fig.2. Life cycle stage of lodger traits (couples only)

In relation to the size of each group, couples in LCS 5 and 6 were the most likely to be lodger hosts. They were the eldest and had reached a developmental stage where many of the children had grown up and were leaving the family to live elsewhere, thus making lodger-space available. As these were also the groups with a low incidence of working wives, it would appear some couples were substituting lodger incomes for the wages of the wife, or indeed the income lost as working children left home.

Life Cycle Stage	1	2	3	4	5	6
Percentage	12.2	5.6	24.5	14.8	27.6	28.6

Table 2. Percentage of couples in each Life Cycle Stage with Lodgers

Overcrowding, however, didn't prevent all couples from taking in lodgers, as those with young children (LCS 3) were still important lodger hosts. For this group, lodgers provided essential incomes at a time in their lives when child-minding made work inconvenient for the mother and when, no doubt, infants might share a bedroom with their parents. As children grew, demands upon space increased and lodger-taking diminished, before increasing again when adolescents began leaving home. Couples in LCS 1 & 2 seldom took lodgers, not only because the wives more frequently worked, but also because they were in a developmental stage where they were quite likely to be lodgers themselves.

Beside the cycle of strain that couples found themselves in, the combined wages of the family unit probably had the greatest impact on determining whether or not lodgers were found. As already mentioned, the occupational patterns of the North Deansgate households favoured the low wage groups of hand loom weaving, artisan and labouring work. For the purposes of an investigation into lodgers as a family survival strategy, the occupations of female household heads need also to be considered. These are not normally classified into 'Social Economic Groups', but have been done so here.

Social Economic Group	Occupation of Lodger Host		Lodger Numbers	Percentage of all Lodgers
1	Professional and Managerial	M	1	0.4
		F	0	
2	Clerical	M	0	0
		F	0	
3	Trade	M	13	5.3
		F	0	
4	Higher Factory	M	14	5.7
		F	0	
5	Artisan	M	34	13.9
		F	0	
6	Lower Factory	M	12	5.7
		F	2	
7	Labourer (incl. Charwomen)	M	36	22.4
		F	19	
8	Handloom Weaver	M	47	32.7
		F	33	
9	Unclassified	M	7	4.9
		F	5	
10	Unemployed (incl. Housekeeper)	M	2	9
		F	20	
Total Lodgers			245	100

Table 3. Lodgers, by occupation of male and female lodgers hosts. North Deansgate 1851

Handloom weaver households contained nearly a third of all lodgers found in the district, though surprisingly enough few had occupational links with their hosts. Despite the opportunities for co-residents to assist a hand loom weaver, only a fifth of such households had lodgers in the same trade, most relying upon family members, or more usually working alone while family members had occupations outside the home. This was also the case for the tenants in Velvet Walks, many of whom were Irish migrants involved in tailoring and shoemaking. Here six households contained lodgers, but only one had lodgers and host involved in the same trade. For these families, poverty made lodger incomes crucial for survival, and their dwellings were amongst the most overcrowded in the district. This was not the case for lodger hosts in the 'higher factory' category, where spinners predominated. They displayed strong occupational associations with their lodgers, who were nearly always spinners or piecers, so that their role as lodger hosts may have had other functions beside income raising.

Migrants were frequently seen to have geographical links with their lodgers, whereby accommodation might be offered to friends following a successful relocation, in the same way that kinship links helped individuals find new employment. These were also households where 'visitors' were sometimes recorded and where living arrangements may have been very similar to that experienced by lodgers.

Conclusion

While the middle class might deem 'lodgings' to relate to social degradation, the working classes at least could not have failed to make the connection between lodgings and poverty, with its consequent loss of status. Yet every family and individual faced the reality of survival, and adopted strategies whereby status and social 'norms' were both accommodated and modified to avoid destitution and the workhouse. The most successful working class group were *families*, where a combination of wages might give a period of relative prosperity. But these were often transient states, as the example of North Deansgate has shown, and most families could expect their lives to be punctuated with frequent periods of hardship and distress. Yet it would be wrong to believe that the perception of poverty remained unchanged over time. Real changes in living standards and wage-earning opportunities served to modify the responses of individuals and the survival strategies they chose to adopt, while the least successful group continued to be those without choices.

NOTES

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- 16 Field, 'Development of a Bolton Slum', ch.4.
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- 21 Rushton, 'Housing Conditions', p.310.

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