3

Women and Their Businesses

The recent reassessment of the position of female business owners in late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century England, and new data emerging from the USA, argues that whilst industrialisation may have caused some economic and social changes, it did not necessarily result in women losing the opportunity to inherit, establish, own and operate business enterprises.[1] Data from mid-nineteenth-century Birmingham and London and late nineteenth-century America shows that women continued to own businesses beyond 1850,[2] contradicting the story that by the mid-nineteenth century, the opportunity for women to exercise economic agency had passed and their fate had become inextricably bound to the private, domestic sphere.[3] The data presented in the following chapters will demonstrate that Birmingham and London were in fact only small sections of a much bigger picture, one where women

[1] H. Barker, *The Business of Women*; N. Phillips, *Women in Business*; J. Duffy, 'A Surplus and Depressed Minority?'; A. C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship;* E. Sparks, *Capital Intentions;* S. Lewis, *Unexceptional Women.*

[2] J. Duffy, 'A Surplus and Depressed Minority?'; A. C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*; E. Sparks, *Capital Intentions*; S. Lewis, *Unexceptional Women.*

[3] L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes.*

J. Aston, *Female Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century England*,
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continued to trade, and use their position as business owners to play an active role in nineteenth-century society.

This chapter analyses data collected from the trade directories of Birmingham and Leeds and presents fresh information about the businesses of women who traded in two towns with very different economic structures between 1849 and 1901. There are two stages to this analysis. In the first stage, the trade directory data is analysed using existing historiographical categories, thus providing an indication of the numbers of female business owners in each town, and the different trades and sectors where they operated. In the second stage, the data is then reanalysed to reveal the types of businesses that women owned according to whether the purpose of their firm was to physically create a product, regardless of sector. These two methods of data analysis will reveal whether factors such as economic structure, population size and geographical location influenced the numbers of female business owners and their business practices. Examining the number of female-owned businesses that manufactured or made a product will shed new light on the ways in which women engaged in business and allow the experiences of those women who operated in these allegedly 'masculine' trades to be considered in the context of wider female business ownership, rather than as exceptions.

Before embarking on these two strands of analysis, it is crucial to briefly explore the history and culture of the towns of Birmingham and Leeds, and to understand the towns where the women whose lives play out in the following pages lived and worked. The town of Leeds can be traced back to the Doomsday Book where it is recorded as a 'vill made up of thirty-five families, a priest and a mill'.[4] After gaining its borough charter in 1207, Leeds acquired manorial and borough courts, a market and the right to build workshops; developments that served to turn Leeds into an important regional centre.[5] By the 1550s, the population of Leeds had reached 3000 people and the town centre had expanded beyond the Briggate into Marsh Lane, Vicar Lane, Quarry Hill, Mabgate, the Upper and Lower Headrow, Boar Lane and Mill Hill; streets that by the nine-

[4] G.C.F. Forster, 'The Foundations: from the earliest times to c.1700' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.] (Manchester, 1980), pp. 2–23.

[5] G.C.F Forster, 'The Foundations', p. 5.

teenth century formed the commercial heart of Leeds. The geographical location of Leeds on the Chester to York road that traversed the Pennines contributed to the town becoming a hugely important centre for the finishing of the raw cloth, as well as an important market for those selling their wares. The town's geographical advantage was further boosted in the late sixteenth century by river works that made the River Aire navigable from Leeds to Wakefield and Weeland. The introduction of water transport to the town enabled merchants and manufacturers of woollen cloth in Leeds to transport their goods across the country but, most importantly, also to export to the continent, particularly to the Baltic and Low Countries.[6]

There has been a settlement on the site of Birmingham since the sixth or seventh century and, like Leeds, the manor of Birmingham features in the Doomsday Book.[7] In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries, Birmingham received grants that permitted the villagers to hold a fair and a market, but, unlike Leeds, however, the small manor of Birmingham did not have its own court, and the nearby town of Aston was considered the larger and more important commercial centre until the fourteenth century. After a series of premature deaths and a lack of legitimate heirs, the land owned by the manor of Birmingham was slowly sold off and control over what the land was used for was lost. This was a key turning point in the history of the settlement because the control of the guilds crumbled, and after 1545 they had ceased altogether.[8] This created an opportunity for people to establish trades away from agriculture and the area quickly became famed for its metalwork and textile production.

These new trades boosted Birmingham's economic importance and gave it a reputation for invention and innovation.[9] The importance of textile production to the Birmingham economy was increasing and in the seventeenth century, the town, like Leeds, became an important producer of wool. During the eighteenth century, however, the textile industries in

[6] R.W. Unwin, 'Leeds Becomes a Transport Centre' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 113–141, pp. 113–9.

[7] C.R. Elrington & P.M. Tillot, 'The Growth of the City' in *VCH Warwickshire VII, VII*, (Oxford, 1964), pp. 4–25, p. 4.

[8] C.R. Elrington & P.M. Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 6.

[9] C.R. Elrington & P.M. Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 6.

Birmingham declined to such an extent that leather and wool manufacture virtually disappeared, and those textile businesses that did remain were satellite firms supporting the town's other industries such as the metal trade, for example, producing cloth to make bellows.[10] These metal trades, together with toy making, button and buckle manufacturing and, most famously, gun making, turned Birmingham into an internationally important centre of manufacturing.[11]

At the same time that Birmingham was developing its manufacturing trades, it was also experiencing a rapid population expansion, growing from approximately 11,400 people in 1720 (approximately double the size of Leeds[12]) to 23,688 in 1778 and 73,670 in 1801.[13] The houses built in Birmingham during the eighteenth century reflected the growing importance of manufacturing in the local economy and new properties mostly consisted of dwelling houses with workshops attached for the production of small metal goods. By the nineteenth century, these combined dwelling and workshop premises, and the pollution associated with the metal manufacture, were encouraging those who could afford it to move out of Birmingham town centre and into the newly emerging purpose-built suburbs, such as affluent Edgbaston.

The eighteenth century also saw the emergence of new trades in Leeds. Brick manufacture, woodwork, shoemaking, tailoring and printing expanded and embraced new methods of factory production. The importance of the textile and other established trades to the Leeds economy did not diminish but new industries were emerging such as pottery making, linen manufacture, soap boiling, sugar refining and chemical manufacture. The processes involved in these new trades were reliant on the innovative machinery and associated factory-based production techniques, rather than small hand-produced processes, and by 1842, there were approximately 200 factories in Leeds.[14] Businesses in Leeds there-

[10] C. Gill, *History of Birmingham*, Vol I, (London, 1952), p. 63.

[11] D.E.C. Eversley, 'Industry and Trade 1550–1880', in W.B. Stephens [ed.], *VCH Warwickshire VII*, pp. 81–139, p. 82.

[12] C. Gill, *History of Birmingham*, p. 48; R.G. Wilson, 'Georgian Leeds' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 24–45, p. 24.

[13] C.R. Elrington & T.M. Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 8.

[14] R.G. Wilson, 'Georgian Leeds', pp. 27–8.

fore tended to be physically larger than in Birmingham and there was much more opportunity for the residents of Leeds to become workers in the new factories rather than owners of the enterprise.

Due to the size of the buildings that housed the machinery, the factories of Leeds were located away from the home whereas Birmingham, whose economy remained rooted in piecemeal manufacturing methods, continued to see production being carried out in workshops attached to the home. Birmingham firms producing metal products such as brass goods and guns largely ignored the advent of steam, gas and electric powered machinery and continued to manufacture by hand, thus keeping business sizes small.[15] The importance of small businesses in Birmingham is that they were normally part of a longer production chain and fulfilled one intricate or skilled industrial process. This means that they had relatively low start-up costs and low barriers to entry, both of which could potentially make it easier for someone to establish him (or her) self in trade compared to the high start-up costs of establishing a large-scale factory like those found in Leeds. The small manufacturers of Birmingham also found economic security in being just one stage of the production chain; they could respond quickly to changing market conditions and utilise their skills to diversify according to product demand. Between 1841 and 1850, 26.5 % of all British patentees lived in Birmingham, reflecting its importance as a town of innovation and invention.[16] However, Birmingham was also an important commercial centre and by 1900 it was the primary urban centre for over half a million people,[17] thus creating an ideal market for establishing a service or retail business.

By 1800, the economic structures and characteristics of Leeds and Birmingham that were to shape the towns into the modern age had been established. Leeds was an important centre of increasingly factory-based textile and leather manufacturing, supplemented by industries such as brick making, woodworking, dressmaking and tailoring whilst Birmingham had become a world leader in small metal manufacturing including buttons, pens, buckles and guns. Both towns were also

[15] D.C. Eversley, 'Industry and Trade 1500–1880', pp. 81–139, pp. 138–9.

[16] C. Gill, *History of Birmingham*, p. 292.

[17] C.R. Elrington & P.M. Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 14.

important regional urban centres with the retail facilities and service industries that were essential for the rapidly expanding populations.

The economic developments experienced in Birmingham and Leeds occurred in tandem with, and in some cases caused, marked social and cultural changes that affected the inhabitants of the towns and shaped the opportunities available to business owners, both male and female. One of the most important factors that influenced the economies in Birmingham and Leeds was the transport links forged during the nineteenth century. Between 1837 and 1849 Leeds gained railway links to Selby, Manchester, Thirsk and Derby and the local stations served by those lines. On the waterways, the completion of the Leeds to Liverpool Canal in 1816 enabled ships of up to 100 tonnes to reach the town's wharves and docks. Nineteenth-century Leeds was a vibrant and bustling town with excellent access to the road network; by 1830 there were over 100 coaches leaving the coaching inns on the Briggate every day, transporting people all over the country.[18] Bankruptcy records from late nineteenth-century England and Wales show that even the smallest of trades had national or even international networks which were heavily reliant on transport networks such as these.[19]

Birmingham also had excellent transport links; the town's canal network linked it to Dudley, Worcester, Stourbridge, Coventry, Warwick, Stratford-upon-Avon, Wolverhampton, Hull, Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol and London.[20] Furthermore, Snow Hill and New Street train stations were opened in 1852 and 1854 respectively, which provided Birmingham with rail links to Liverpool, London and beyond from the very centre of the town rather than having to travel to the old Curzon Street station which was on the eastern outskirts. These fast and reliable transport links made it easy to visit Leeds and Birmingham and with so many people passing through, there was an obvious demand for the hospitality and retailing trades as well as the ability to trade afield. As might be expected, many women took advantage of this such as Elizabeth Clark who owned the Bull and Mouth Hotel at 138 Briggate, Leeds and

[18] R.W. Unwin, 'Leeds Becomes a Transport Centre', p. 123.

[19] J Aston & P Di Martino, 'Risk and success'.

[20] C.R. Elrington, 'Communications' in *VCH Warwickshire VII*, VII, pp. 26–42, p. 34.

Penelope Wakefield who owned The Swan Hotel at 93 High Street, Birmingham.

The ever-increasing population of nineteenth-century Leeds and Birmingham sparked a flurry of building activity designed to improve both retail provision and civic amenities in both towns. In 1806 the markets in Birmingham moved from Dale End to High Street, with a further market established in 1817 selling hay, straw, cattle, horses, sheep and pigs, known as the Smithfield Market. The first fish market opened in 1869,[21] and there was a surge in the number of fried fish dealers registering in the Birmingham directories after this date. In 1857 the Leeds Briggate Markets moved from their original location on the Briggate to much larger accommodation on Vicar Lane, under the name of 'Kirkgate Markets'. The Kirkgate Markets covered an area of 4040 square yards and had forty-four shops outside, thirty-five inside and then four rows of stalls, as well as 5000 square yards of open market ground.[22] Although much larger than the Briggate Markets, there was enough trade in Leeds to warrant a further ninety shops being added in 1875. The Corporation of Leeds also replaced the dilapidated old Corn Exchange with an impressive new building that housed several weekly markets and permanent stalls.

The Corporation of Leeds had built new council buildings in 1857 and the Corporations of both Birmingham and Leeds began ambitious building programmes to house council chambers, town halls, public libraries and art galleries. The erection of grand, neoclassical public buildings built for the purpose of serving the community, provided the public face to nineteenth-century towns and cities. These buildings were an important manifestation of the middle class's collective desire to improve and modernise their hometown and raise the standard of living for its inhabitants, and in a better way than neighbouring towns; something the historian Asa Briggs termed 'civic pride'.[23]

[21] S. Reynolds, 'Markets and Fairs' in *VCH Warwickshire VII*, pp. 251–253, p. 253.

[22] K. Grady, 'Commercial, Marketing and Retailing Amenities 1700–1914' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 177–199, p. 192.

[23] A. Briggs, *Victorian Cities,* (London, 1993 edn), Chapter Four.

Public subscriptions played a central role in raising the money required to construct these buildings and the town councils were adept at capitalising on the civic pride of their citizens, raising significant sums of money. In 1879 a public subscription in Birmingham raised over £15,000 for the Birmingham Central Library after it lost the majority of its collections in a devastating fire.[24] The library in Birmingham had first opened in 1865 and issued some 230,340 books in the first year alone, indicating that the nineteenth-century inhabitants of Birmingham valued the opportunity to access learning and literature.[25] Leeds had a much longer tradition of literary institutions: its first library had opened in the 1690s, and in 1810 a circulating library opened at a cost of £5000.[26]

Facilities that provided worthwhile and meritorious leisure pursuits were established and expanded throughout the nineteenth century. Living in important provincial towns such as Birmingham and Leeds allowed people with enough money to access libraries, art galleries, museums, theatres, music festivals, dance halls and exhibitions. In 1867 Birmingham opened a municipal art gallery, furnished largely by donations from the private collections of wealthy Birmingham residents that attracted approximately 100,000 visitors in 1870.[27] Leeds did not open a permanent art gallery until 1888, yet the town had a long tradition of holding successful ad hoc art exhibitions for the purpose of selling works of art, whereas Birmingham failed several times to hold profitable shows.[28] It was not just high culture where Birmingham and Leeds Corporations spent money; in 1859 Birmingham Corporation built the first of several public swimming baths, which were open to the public for a small fee. The swimming baths were hugely popular with Birmingham's inhabitants, used by 151,061 people in 1861 alone.[29]

[24] A. Briggs, 'Social History Since 1815' in *VCH Warwickshire VII*, pp. 223–245, p. 233.

[25] J.T. Bunce, *History of the Corporation of Birmingham: with a sketch of the early view of the town,* Vol 2, (Cornish Brothers: 1885), p. 221.

[26] R.G. Wilson, 'Georgian Leeds', p. 32.

[27] J.T. Bunce, *History of the Corporation*, p. 238.

[28] R.J. Morris, 'Middle Class Culture' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 200–222, p. 209.

[29] J.T. Bunce, *History of the Corporation,* p. 192.

The burgeoning cultural opportunities in both towns were vitally important in creating and maintaining the social status of the town within a national context. The construction of new buildings such as the classical Birmingham Town Hall and the Gothic Leeds Central Library ensured that the towns appeared prosperous and at the forefront of architectural styles. Residents and visitors alike would have been aware of these changes and many of the new improvements were accessible for all, such as new parks, libraries and music halls. These new facilities allowed people to develop their interests and set upon a 'self-improvement' programme, thus fulfilling the Victorian ideal of advancement through education. Perhaps more importantly for the business owners of Birmingham and Leeds, the town Corporations began programmes of regeneration and modernisation in the commercial districts. This involved demolishing existing buildings to widen streets, clearing poorly constructed properties and building smart new business premises.

Although the Corporation of Birmingham was improving the infrastructure of the town, they were slower than the Corporation of Leeds to begin widening streets. When they did start to change the town centre, however, the Corporation of Birmingham tackled the very worst town centre slums, tearing through them in 1882 to make way for the construction of the grand Parisian-boulevard-style 'Corporation Street'. It was said that by 1884 Chamberlain had 'parked, paved, assized, marketed, gas and watered, and improved' Birmingham, removing the majority of the undesirable areas and making the town a shining example of modern living.[30] In contrast, although the Corporation of Leeds improved one of the most dilapidated shopping streets, Boar Lane, in 1866 there were no serious attempts made to deal with the desperately poor slums located in the town centre until the late 1890s.[31] Builders continued building the poor-quality back-to-back houses with no sanitary provision that were so common in Leeds, despite laws passed in 1866 that were supposed to regulate their construction because of serious health concerns.

[30] C. Gill, *History of Birmingham*, p. 442.

[31] B.J. Barber, 'Aspects of Municipal Government 1835–1914' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 301–326, p. 302.

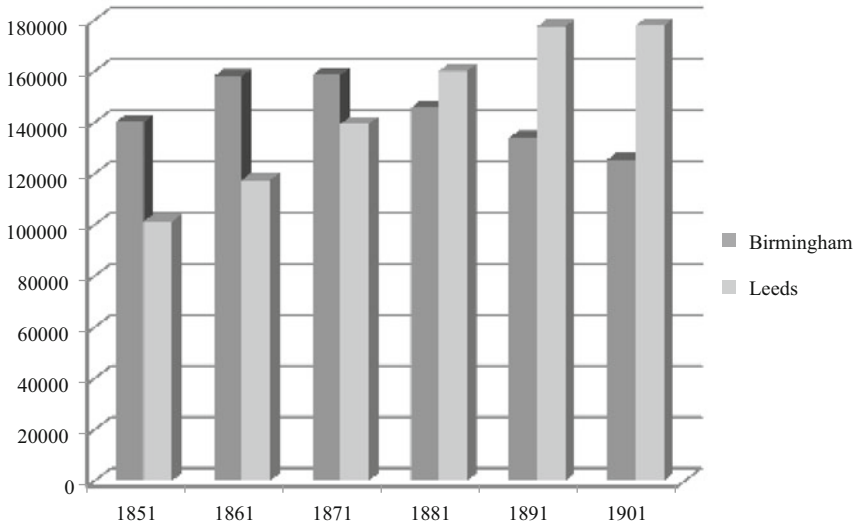


Chart 3.1 Population of Birmingham and Leeds town centres between 1851 and 1901 (Birmingham data: C.R. Elrington & T.M Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 14; Leeds Data: C.J. Morgan, 'Demographic Change 1771–1911' in *A History of Modern Leeds,* D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 46–71, p. 48)

This policy—or lack thereof—is reflected in Chart 3.1 which shows that the population of Leeds town centre continued to rise throughout the late nineteenth century whereas the population of Birmingham town centre dropped consistently after 1881. This can be explained by the delay in Leeds Corporation clearing the town centre slums compared to Birmingham, meaning that the men and women of Leeds continued to live in unsanitary and cramped conditions for far longer than their Birmingham counterparts. The growing population of Leeds and Birmingham placed pressure on the sanitation provisions of both towns and by 1855 the Corporations of both towns were implementing plans to build sewers and pipe fresh water into the town centres to try to prevent outbreaks of diseases such as dysentery, typhoid and cholera. Both towns were loud, dirty, unhygienic places, and the business women would have experienced the sights, smells and sounds first-hand. The illnesses and diseases caused by poor sanitation played a central role

in the lives of many of the women; Birmingham Carver and Guilder Martha Capella's first husband, Patrick Campini, died of consumption in 1838, and a number of women lost children at a young age. These experiences were all too common, and may well have provided motivation for the women to succeed in business in order to better their living conditions.

These conditions, coupled with the pollution from the factories in Leeds and the workshops in Birmingham, led to the middle classes taking advantage of the improved local transport provisions and moving away from the town centre to the quiet rural villages surrounding the towns, and purpose-built housing estates that eventually became suburbs. One of the first housing estates in Birmingham was laid out by the Gough family and was quickly held up as an example of 'what not to do' for the property developers of the mid- to late nineteenth century. The plots of land owned by the Goughs had been marked out with different sizes next to each other meaning that houses of vastly different status would be immediate neighbours. Furthermore, the Gough family had failed to restrict the residents from building workshops in their gardens, which led to increased pollution in what was meant to be an exclusive development. It very quickly became apparent that the development was a failure because no affluent family would choose to build a home designed to impress society, next door to a working forge or carpenter.

When the Calthorpe family came to develop their land in Edgbaston, they were very careful to learn from the Gough's mistakes and ensure that their estate maintained its exclusivity. Plots of land were leased with a number of conditions dictating the building materials, architectural style, and size of the properties, as well as the use of premises. Following the pollution associated with the Gough estate, it was a condition of buying a house on the Calthorpe estate that no business could be conducted from the premises, including the sale of afternoon teas. Securing a leasehold plot on the Edgbaston estate was not as simple as merely having the necessary funds; prospective residents were required to meet with estate officials in an effort to ensure that the area would retain its sense of style, identity and, most importantly, desirability.

The middle-class desire for an identifiable space, both physical and imagined, was also apparent in Leeds, and Morris has shown how the

middle classes used the location of their residence in the town centre as a way of identifying their social status.[32] By moving to the west and north-west of the town and away from the factories that occupied east Leeds, the middle classes were able to escape the harsh reality of poor accommodation and pollution associated with industry and the slums of the town centre. The increasingly popular phenomenon of living away from the place of business is closely linked with the arguments of the separate spheres theory explored in Chap. 2. It is important to remember, however, that as desirable as moving to the suburbs and away from the bustle of the business community might be, it was an expensive exercise due to the financial constraints of maintaining multiple properties and because travelling even a short distance was time consuming and costly. Therefore, it was only the wealthier members of the business community and middle classes who were able to separate their work and personal lives in this way. For those who could afford it, however, the increasing number of local coach, train and tram services available in the late nineteenth century made it possible for some business owners. Leeds confectioner Alice Philipson moved from the town centre to the suburb of Roundhay and commuted to her business using the Corporation tram service that ran from 4.30 am until 12.30 am.[33] The relationship between businesswomen, domestic living arrangements and the way this manifested as social class will be explored in later chapters.

Although Chart 3.1 shows that the population of Birmingham town centre declined after 1871, Chart 3.2 reveals that the population of the Birmingham and Leeds boroughs as a whole continued to rise and did so at approximately the same rate. Leeds was considerably smaller than Birmingham in 1851 and Chart 3.2 shows that the population of Birmingham was roughly twenty years ahead of that of Leeds, so in 1871 the population of Leeds was close to that of Birmingham in 1851 and so on. Despite the difference in size of the two towns, we will see that the experiences of each were remarkably similar.

The data extracted from eleven trade directories published between 1849 and 1901 in each town has been interrogated to show the num-

[32] R.J. Morris, *Men, Women and Property*, p. 232.

[33] *Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894.*

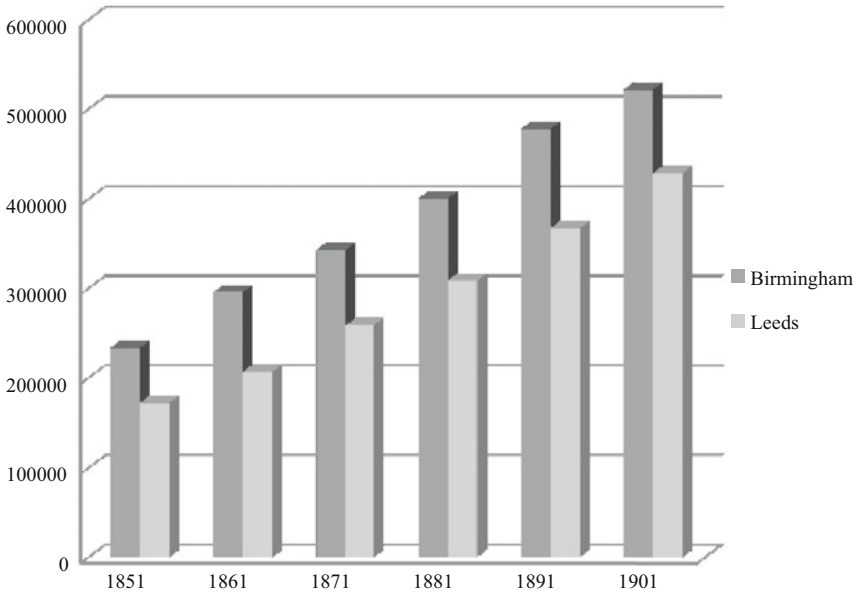


Chart 3.2 Population of Birmingham and Leeds Boroughs between 1851 and 1901 (Birmingham data: C.R. Elrington & T.M Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 14; Leeds Data: C.J. Morgan, 'Demographic Change 1771–1911', p. 48)

ber of female business owners registered in each directory, the types of businesses they operated, where they traded from and how these numbers changed over time. This information is critically important for being able to demonstrate conclusively that businesswomen formed an integral part of the English urban economy in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In addition to the data about the types of businesses that the women carried out, the trade directories also provide the names and addresses of businesswomen, enabling the information to be linked to other sources such as census returns and probate records that illuminate further aspects of their lives. Examining the lives of the businesswomen using a wide variety of sources brings the quantitative data to life and adds detail and colour to the picture of women who owned and operated businesses in late nineteenth-century Birmingham and Leeds.

As well as providing more information about the lives of the businesswomen, the record-linkage between the trade directory data and other sources explored in the coming chapters also serves as a 'test' of how accurate the trade directories are. Inclusion in the directories was through subscription and therefore it was the subscribers themselves who chose the wording of their entry, which obviously creates the chance that people could engage in a little 'creative licence' in their description. There appears to have been little evidence of this, however, and common sense would prevail that a business promising more than it could deliver, and a trader breaking the trust of his or her community, would not survive for long in a busy and competitive marketplace.[34] As was described in Chap. 1, only the data of those women whose business premises were located within the town centres of Birmingham or Leeds and who registered their firms using names that were clearly identifiable as female were included in the data collection. Therefore, the number of female-owned enterprises captured in the data collection is almost certainly an underestimation of the true levels of female enterprise. However it is still important to view the firms whose information has been gathered in the wider context of the trade directories.

Table 3.1 shows that the percentage of businesses owned by women in the two towns was remarkably similar despite their different geographical location and economic structure. It is only in the years 1890 and 1900 that there is a significant difference in the results, with the percentage of female-owned businesses in Birmingham being approximately double that of Leeds in both cases. The data presented above is also extremely similar to Barker's findings from Manchester, Sheffield and Leeds between 1773 and 1828, which show that between 4.3% and 9% of all urban businesses were owned by women.[35] Similarly, new research into the bankruptcies and financial failure of women in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Britain shows that approximately 6% of the trading community was female.[36] Being able to gain some understanding of the extent of female enterprise in late nineteenth-century England is crucial

[34] H. Barker, *The Business of Women,* pp. 50–1.

[35] H. Barker, *The Business of Women,* p. 56.

[36] J Aston & P Di Martino, *Risk and Success.*

in demonstrating that women did continue to play an important role in the urban economy, even after the historiography suggests that their economic power had waned. Regardless of the figures given in Table 3.1 almost certainly underestimating the true number of businesswomen in the two towns, female-owned firms still represented a significant minority of the urban economy. Furthermore, as will be explored in later chapters, the visibility of female-owned firms in the town centres belies the idea that businesswomen were anything other than commonplace in the late nineteenth-century town. Therefore, the overall picture that emerges from Table 3.1 is one of continuity, with no dramatic decreases in the

Table 3.1 Percentage of total trade directory entries owned by women and located in the town centres of Birmingham and Leeds between 1849 and 1900

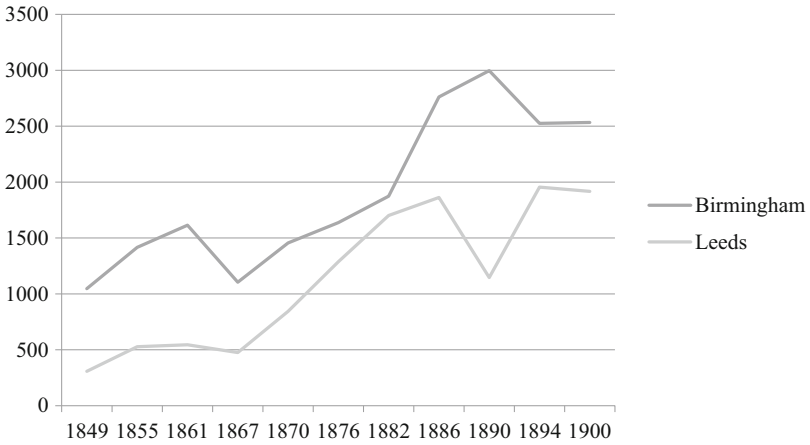
Directory year	Birmingham (%)	Leeds (%)
1849–50	6.8	6.2
1855/6	7.1	7.0
1861	6.1	5.5
1866/7	3.9	3.5
1870	7.2	6.6
1876	5.5	5.1
1882	4.4	3.3
1886	7.3	6.7
1890	8.2	3.8
1894	6.7	6.5
1900	6.2	3.9

Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer, 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900*

White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1, 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*

percentage of women registering their businesses in the directories in the closing years of the nineteenth century.

Graph 3.1 shows a significant increase in the actual number of women registering their businesses in the trade directories in both Leeds and Birmingham, until approximately 1884, after which there was a dip in Leeds. This is reflected in the growing size of the directories themselves, with the Leeds directories growing from approximately 4928 entries to 49,088 between 1849 and 1901 and the Birmingham directories for



Graph 3.1 Number of female-owned businesses registered in trade directories in Birmingham and Leeds between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

the same period growing from 15,392 entries to some 40,448 entries in 1901. These figures are interesting as they suggest that the directories of Leeds were comparable in size to those of Birmingham despite the significant difference in population. However, the Birmingham directories do not encompass as wide a geographical area as the Leeds directories; so, although the directories are the same size, the Birmingham entries are only for the town centre and not the town centre plus the outlying areas.

The directories published in certain years, however, such as the *Post Office Directory of Birmingham 1867* and *Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894*, show a marked drop in the number of female-owned businesses registered. The *Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894* is simply a very small directory, it is possible that another directory might have just been published, or one publisher might have offered a lower subscription rate and therefore attracted more entries. The *Post Office Directory of Birmingham 1867* however, shows a decrease in the percentage of female-owned businesses registered. Although it could be argued that this is reflective of the wider domestication of women and their withdrawal from the public sphere, the rest of the directories belie this, indicating that despite the lack of a complete set of trade directories printed by one publisher for either town, the percentage of women trading in towns remained broadly consistent.

Using directories from different publishers has also meant that the entries are presented in several different ways, for example, some directories such as *McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876* always used the feminine prefixes of Mrs or Miss for its female entries whilst others such as *Hulley's Directory of Birmingham 1870* used its subscriber's first and last names or, in some cases, the first initial but no gender prefix. This meant that in the *McCorquodale's* directory, the details of female business owners were obvious but in the *Hulley's* directory, they could have been concealed because subscribers sometimes only used their initial. In cases such as these the entry would not be extracted and therefore not included in the data collection. Although the different ways in which information was registered has resulted in a further underestimation of female business ownership in the two towns, the different ways in which women are represented in the directory reveals that there was no hard and fast rule in the way that the businesswomen were addressed in the public sphere. Of course terms such as 'Mr' and 'Mrs' were (and still are)

used as terms of polite conversation, something that was central to the cultivation of a middle-class identity, but they don't seem to have been considered essential in the business world. The fact that women were self-registering their business enterprises, and were deliberately making them identifiable as their own, points to a far more nuanced society that might have been assumed.

The data extracted from the trade directories of Birmingham and Leeds demonstrates a relatively consistent percentage of women paying a subscription fee to promote their businesses under their own names in the public sphere. In total, the details of over 20,000 female-owned businesses in Birmingham and more than 12,500 female-owned businesses in Leeds have been extracted from the trade directories and, although this includes women who registered their businesses repeatedly over several years, the data from each directory provides a snapshot view of the position that businesswomen held in the urban market place in that particular year. The data extracted from the trade directories of Birmingham and Leeds also allows the examination of *how* women were trading, for example, as sole traders or following the historiographical stereotype of two unmarried or widowed women braving the public sphere as a partnership by pooling resources and binding their economic future together in a business.[37]

Charts 3.3 and 3.4 show that the number of businesses with one or more female partners who registered in the Birmingham and Leeds trade directories between 1849 and 1901 was minimal and, compared to the number of women who registered their businesses as sole traders, represented a very small proportion of the total number of female-owned firms. There does not seem to be a relationship between the number of women registering in the directory and the number of partnerships, or the year that the directory was published. Rather, there are always a small number of partnerships registered irrespective of the total number of businesses.

The data presented in Charts 3.5 and 3.6 below, expresses the figures in Charts 3.3 and 3.4 as percentages, reinforcing the relative rarity of

[37] L. Davidoff & C. Hall, *Family Fortunes,* p. 352; A.C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*, p. 92.

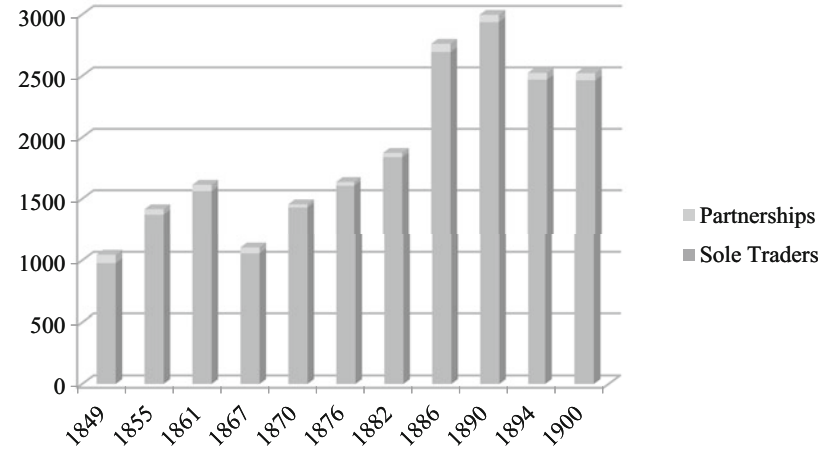


Chart 3.3 Number of female-owned partnership and sole trader businesses registered in Birmingham directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

partnerships. These figures are consistent throughout the period examined, which supports recent assertions that there was far more continuity than change in the way women engaged in business. There is a great deal of similarity between the data of both towns, indicating that most female entrepreneurship in the late nineteenth century, regardless of the economic structure of the town that the business was located in, was carried out by women working alone. This could suggest that women were confident enough in their business knowledge and their ability to

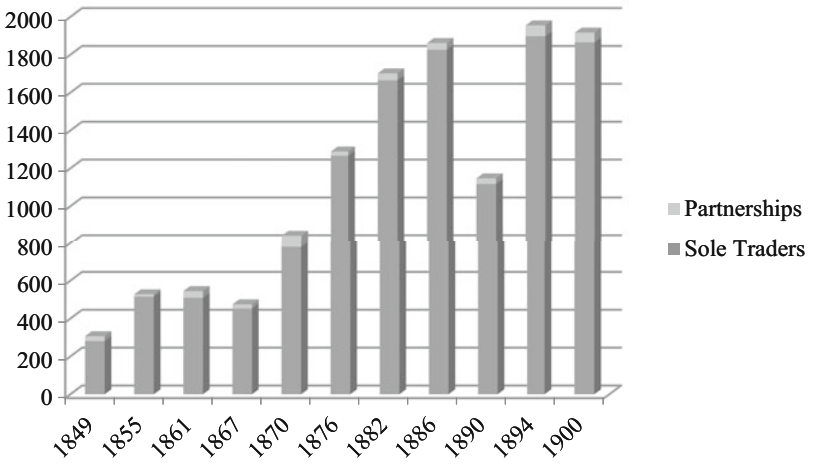


Chart 3.4 Number of female-owned partnership and sole trader businesses registered in Leeds directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

secure credit to trade alone, without the need for a partner. However, it is also possible that the majority of businesswomen tended to have lower financial needs and therefore they could trade adequately without taking a partner or needing to share the risk.

Although they represent a very small proportion of the total number of female-owned businesses, examining the details of the partnerships can provide fascinating insights into the dynamic of small businesses and the role that they played in the lives of nineteenth-century families. An analysis

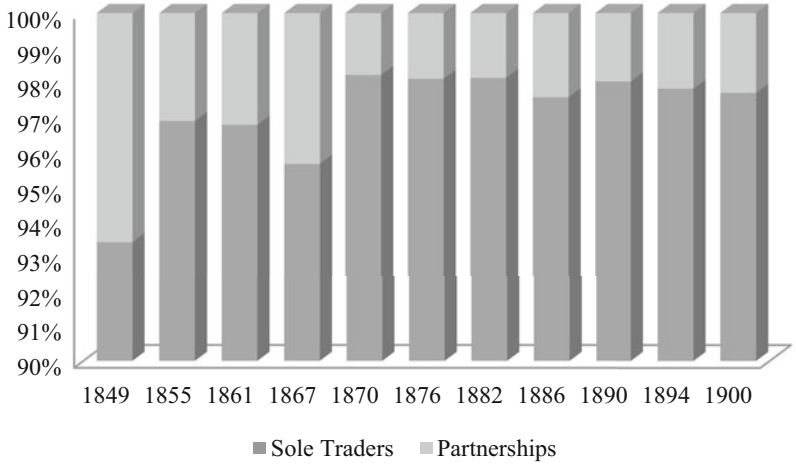


Chart 3.5 Percentage of female-owned partnership and sole trader businesses registered in Birmingham directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

of all the partnerships registered in the trade directories where at least one partner was obviously female shows that the majority of the partnerships in both towns were between female relatives or two unrelated and often unmarried women. However, there were also a small but significant number of partnerships that were between women and men. Some of these were partnerships between mothers and sons, or wives and husbands but others were between women and men who were not bound by a familial or marital relationship but were instead simply business partners.

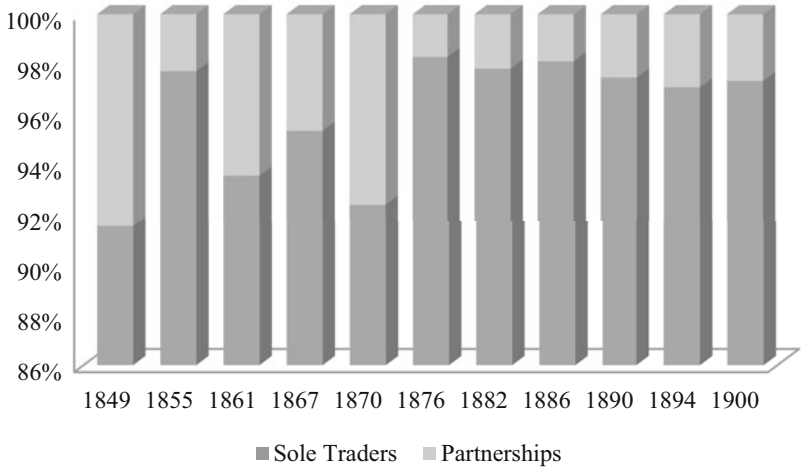


Chart 3.6 Percentage of female-owned partnerships and sole traders registered in the Leeds directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

In the cases where women and their sons traded as a partnership, the mother's name was recorded first in every case, for example, 'Sarah Farmer & Sons' and it was very rare for the names of the son or sons to actually be given in the directory. The phrasing of the trade directory entries and the fact that the woman's name is the only one that the public would have known, shows clearly that the woman was the senior partner in the relationship and indicates that the partnerships followed the same

structure as the more familiar partnership between fathers and sons. The partnerships between the non-related men and women were recorded using both names, signifying equality in the partnership; for example, 'Mrs Mary Ann Cook and Mr Joseph Wakelin' who were registered as boot and shoemakers trading from 57 Briggate, Leeds in the *Leeds Post Office Directory 1882*. Mary Ann and Joseph also lived together in the affluent suburb of Roundhay which is perhaps unusual given that they were not married to each other and unrelated. This relationship will be explored in greater detail in Chap. 4, but the important factor to consider now is that the Cook and Wakelin partnership shows that women traded in ways that might not be expected, but that were apparently accepted by the wider community.

Businesses owned by women, both in partnership and as sole traders, were located in prime retail sites on the bustling high streets of Birmingham and Leeds throughout the fifty years examined. In the 1840s, Rebecca and Jane Traies operated their boot and shoemaking business from 39 High Street, Birmingham[38] and Rachel Inchbold carried out her trade as a bookbinder, machine ruler, bookseller, gold leaf agent and printer from 62 Briggate, Leeds[39]; two of the busiest shopping streets in the towns. Towards the end of the century, Marguerite Hepworth moved her millinery and dressmaking establishment to the newly finished Corporation Street in Birmingham[40] and Hannah Boden opened a third branch of her hairdressing business in the brand new Grand Arcade.[41] Both of these locations were among the most fashionable addresses in town: Corporation Street was specifically designed to allow people to promenade and be seen, and the beautiful Grand Arcade was the predecessor of today's shopping centres; both were the pinnacle of the late nineteenth-century shopping experience.

The number of women who chose to locate their businesses in such fashionable locations shows an awareness that high visibility and regular customer footfall were essential to a successful business. The premium

[38] *White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham,* 1849.

[39] *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory,* 1849–50.

[40] *Houghton & Co.'s Birmingham Post Office Directory,* 1882.

[41] *Robinson's Directory of Leeds,* 1900–01.

commercial locations of Corporation Street in Birmingham or the Grand Arcade in Leeds would have been reflected in the cost of renting or buying property there. It also demonstrates that women such as Marguerite, who traded from Corporation Street for at least five years, earned enough income from their business to cover the expenses of trading from a high-status address for a prolonged period. These factors indicate that female business owners were aware of the market and of the practicalities involved in operating a business, and were therefore exhibiting business behaviour governed by economic concerns rather than any alleged gendered pressures of society. Furthermore, the address data that the trade directories provide, combined with the street maps often included in the front pages of the directories, shows that female-owned businesses were not relegated to the backwaters of the shopping areas in Birmingham and Leeds. Instead, the businesswomen located their businesses on the busiest, newest and most fashionable thoroughfares; places that were best placed to attract customers and generate profits.

The number of women who registered their businesses in the trade directories, together with the public presence of businesswomen in the most modern, fashionable and desirable business locations in both Birmingham and Leeds, strongly suggests that businesswomen could, and did, operate freely within the public sphere during the late nineteenth century, just as Barker, Phillips and Kay have shown they did in earlier decades.[42] This in turn indicates that the experience of the female business owner in nineteenth-century England may not have been terribly different regardless of decade, geographical location and regional economic differences and, in fact, women were able to operate businesses throughout England throughout the nineteenth century.

Knowing what trades businesswomen were carrying out in post-1850 is essential for understanding both the role of women as business owners in the late nineteenth-century urban economy and also how factors such as economic structure, population levels, geographical location and local trade restrictions might influence the types of firm that women were able to, or chose to, operate. The remainder of this chapter will explore the

[42] H. Barker, *The Business of Women*; N. Phillips, *Women in Business*; A.C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship.*

data collected from the trade directories of Birmingham and Leeds using the three focus points of 1849–50, 1876 and 1900.

The data collected from the trade directories has been categorised and analysed according to business type. The sectors below have been chosen as the basis for this analysis because they are broad enough to allow general trends to be identified whilst being specific enough to show different types of businesses owned by women of each town. The sectors of 'Food, Drink and Hospitality', 'Textiles' (including Sale, Manufacturing & Laundry), 'Other Retailing', 'Miscellaneous (including manufacturing trades and including the professions)' and 'Schools', have been adapted from those used previously by Kay and have been deliberately chosen to allow the data from Birmingham and Leeds to be considered using established historiographical categories.[43] The decision to extend the 'Miscellaneous' category to include the professions was made because there were a number of women in the directories of both towns who were professionals in terms of qualifications and training but were also running their own businesses, for example, Miss Lucy Buckley MB & CM, LRCP & S.ED, BSc Vict, Physician and Surgeon, who would be otherwise excluded.[44]

The trade directory data has then been reanalysed according to whether the firms made a product, regardless of the sector in which their business was located, for example, a dressmaker is considered alongside a gas-fitting manufacturer instead of a draper because both made objects and would have had to utilise the same business skills to ensure that the product reached the marketplace. Analysing the data in this way confronts the field's preoccupation with gendered analysis and demonstrates that continuing to use gender as the sole lens through which to view nineteenth-century society will result in a distorted image (Charts 3.7 and 3.8).

The actual number of women who registered their businesses in the *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50* is only 307; a very small sample when compared to the 1046 businesswomen who registered in *White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849*.

[43] This classification has been inspired by the work done by A.C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship*, pp. 135–9, Appendix 1.

[44] *Kelly's Directory of Leeds & Bradford,* 1900–01.

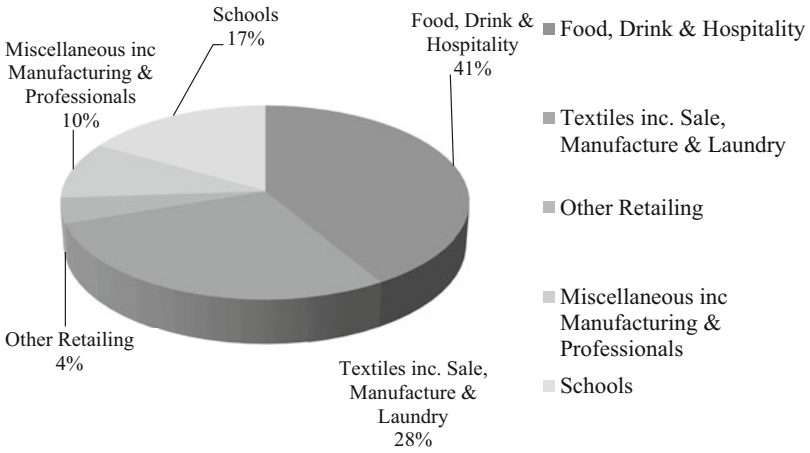


Chart 3.7 Female-owned businesses registered in *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50* by trade sector percentages (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50*)

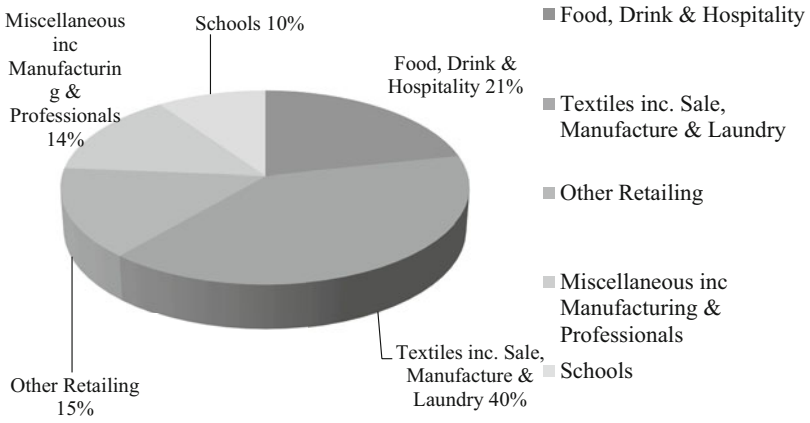


Chart 3.8 Female-owned businesses registered in *White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849* percentages (*White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849*)

At first glance, the data from Birmingham and Leeds appears to be vastly different from each other. There were nearly twice as many businesswomen in Leeds trading in the 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' sector than there were in Birmingham, whilst Birmingham had 12% more female-owned businesses located in the 'Textiles' sector. It is possible that Leeds' position as an important trading town meant that there was greater demand for businesses specialising in refreshments, but Birmingham was also an important commercial centre and therefore this explanation seems inadequate.

Similarly, the percentage of women trading in the textile industries was far higher in Birmingham than one might have expected given the economic heritage and structure of the town. One explanation for this could be that the female business owners of Leeds found it easier to establish themselves in service trades that supported the rapidly expanding town rather than engaging the factory-based trades traditionally found in Leeds. An entrepreneur could establish a greengrocer, a public house or another service industry to cater to the burgeoning population with significantly less capital rather than engaging in the cloth production that had been the mainstay of the Leeds economy for centuries but had become increasingly factory-based. These results could therefore indicate that the numbers of female-owned textile businesses in the two towns followed the economic structure of their respective towns, for example, textile businesses in Birmingham may have been smaller, following the workshop-based model characteristic of Birmingham, whereas the wide use of factory-based production in Leeds would have meant that the textile businesses were larger. This in turn could have resulted in the Leeds textile firms being more likely to be owned by men as women faced greater difficulties in securing the external financial backing necessary to establish or continue to operate a factory-based business.

The percentage of female business owners whose enterprises fall under the 'Other Retailing' category is also dramatically different between the two towns, with only 4% of businesswomen in Leeds active in this sector compared to 15% of women in Birmingham. This difference probably has more to do with the size of the Leeds directory than a marked variance between the retailing facilities in each town. The *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50* is very small when compared to the

Birmingham directories and it is not proportionate to the population differences between the two towns. Rather, it would seem that the *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory* either struggled to attract subscribers in large numbers or Leeds was slower than Birmingham in producing trade directories, and fewer business owners wanted to take a risk and pay to appear in a new venture. Ideally, there would be another directory from Leeds in 1849–50 to compare the *Charlton & Archdeacon* data with but unfortunately the trade directories in Leeds have survived only sporadically and so this is not possible.

Another factor to take into consideration is the fact that businesses in the *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory* have more specific descriptions and instead of being labelled 'shopkeeper', the businesswoman is recorded as a 'grocer' or 'provision dealer' and therefore classified as operating in the 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' sector rather than 'Other Retailing'. Examination of the individual entries made in the *Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory* shows that there are no 'shopkeepers' registered whereas there were eighty-nine listed in *White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham*. Potentially, the Leeds data is much more useful to the historian as it articulates exactly what type of business the women owned and what they sold, whereas the term 'shopkeeper' fails to convey the details of their trade. This is especially important in the investigation of female business owners, as retail is one of the trades which has been considered as typically 'feminine' and, along with dressmaking and millinery, the backbone of female enterprise. Knowing that Leeds businesswoman Rachel Marks was a fruit importer and provision dealer rather than simply a shopkeeper allows us to consider the practicalities of conducting her business and acknowledge that she carried out a far more complicated role than simply selling items made in the home.

Another point to note in the comparison of the 1849–50 directories is the large difference between the percentages of women who owned schools. In Leeds 17% of female-owned businesses were schools compared to just 10% of those in Birmingham. There is no obvious reason as to why 7% more female business owners in Leeds operated schools than in Birmingham. However, as with any business, the most influential factor must have been public demand. The relatively high wages that could

be earned by children working in Birmingham's jewellery and toy trades[45] could have led to them being included as contributors to the family economy earlier than in Leeds, thus leaving them unable or unwilling to go to school. Data shows that in 1851 only 35.5 % of Birmingham's children were enrolled in a school compared to 48 % of the children in Leeds,[46] and Leeds was famous for providing education opportunities to its working class.[47] It is important to note that the directories do not always indicate the size of the school; at one end of the scale could be a woman using her parlour as a schoolroom for a few day pupils, whilst at the other a woman could be operating a school with full boarding facilities for scores of pupils.

The analysis of 'Miscellaneous including Manufacturing & Professional', is extremely interesting, not least because the businesses of a significant minority of women in both Birmingham and Leeds were located in this category. The businesses of 14 % of female business owners in Birmingham and 10 % of businesswomen in Leeds traded in this sector and the difference between the two towns is much smaller than might be expected. Given the small workshop production style of the metal trades in Birmingham, as well as the fact that the metal trades were so integral to the economic structure of the town, the expectation was that there would be a significantly higher number of women in Birmingham involved in manufacturing. One possible explanation is that the importance of factory-produced textile and shoe firms in Leeds has been overstated and in fact, both towns had a very similar industrial structure where, for the most part, the manufacture of products still occurred in small workshop environments.

By 1871, the population of Leeds town centre had grown to approximately 140,000 and the population of the borough of Leeds to 260,000.[48] However, Birmingham remained the larger town as its town centre population increased to nearly 160,000 and the town and surrounding bor-

[45] D.C. Eversley, 'Industry and Trade 1500–1880', pp. 81–139, p. 109.

[46] W.B. Stephens, 'Elementary Education and Literacy 1770–1870' in *A History of Modern Leeds,* D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 223–249, p. 238.

[47] T. Woodhouse, 'The Working Class' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], pp. 351–388, p. 355.

[48] C.J. Morgan, 'Demographic Change', pp. 48–53.

ough population was approaching 350,000.[49] The increasing populations of the towns are reflected in the increasing numbers of female businesses registered in the later directories, although this is not a perfect correlation.

Chart 3.9 shows that the 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' sector which accounted for 43% of all female-owned businesses registered in *McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876*, a 2% rise from the directories of 1849–50. The percentage of businesswomen trading under 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' in Birmingham also rose in 1876 from 21% in 1850 to 26% in 1876. Neither of these are particularly large increases which suggests that there was a core market for the types of trades that fall under the umbrella of 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' such as boarding houses, coffee shops, hotels, confectioners, bakers and pubs. Therefore, although the actual numbers of these businesses would fluctuate depending on the demands of the population and visitors to the town, the actual percentage of the market share that the sector occupied would remain relatively stable.

The percentage of female-owned businesses registered in *McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876* that are categorised as 'Other Retailing' had risen by 11% since 1849–50, still significantly lower than the 25% of 'Other

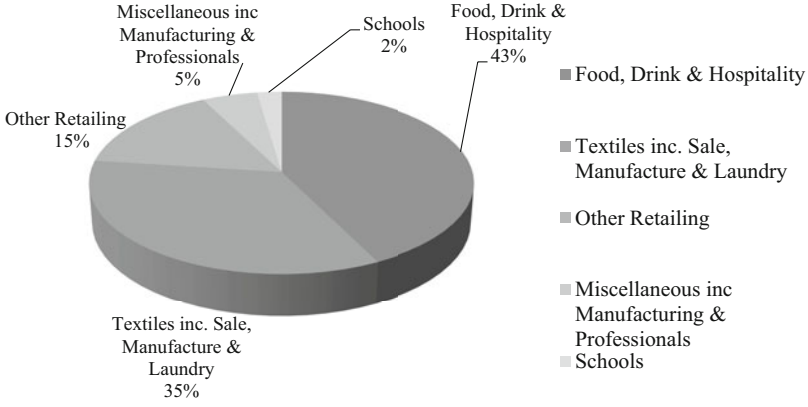


Chart 3.9 Female-owned businesses registered in *McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876* percentages (*McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876*)

[49] C.R. Elrington & T.M. Tillot, 'The Growth of the City', p. 14.

Retailing' businesses registered in *White's Directory of Birmingham 1876*. Again, it is possible that the different economic structure of Birmingham and Leeds is the reason why there is such a discrepancy between the levels of 'Other Retailers' in the two towns. However, it could also be that businesswomen in Birmingham were able to piggyback on the buoyant metal trades, and retail items other than textiles, food and drink because of the small metal goods manufacturers, whilst the textile journeymen travelling to Leeds to peddle their wares might have provided greater opportunity for Leeds businesswomen to operate lodging houses and victualing trades. The way that the Leeds business owners identified themselves should also be borne in mind.

A brief glance at Chart 3.9 shows that there was a dramatic decline in the percentage of businesswomen who owned schools in Leeds between 1849–50 and 1876, dropping from 17% to just 2%. There was also a decline in the percentage of women who owned schools in Birmingham, although this is far less noticeable with only a 2% decline and an actual number increase from 101 in 1850 to 130 in 1876, meaning that in 1876 Birmingham had 75% more female-owned schools than Leeds. This is most probably due to Leeds being one of the first towns to create its own school board under the Forster Act of 1870 and to start creating council-owned and operated schools. In 1870, the Leeds School Board identified that there was a 20,000 shortfall in school places but by 1876 they had made 15,000 new places and created sixteen new schools and by 1880, there were thirty-two new schools and 28,500 school places.[50] Birmingham was somewhat slower to act, for example, the Corporation planned a school for girls in 1878 but it did not open until 1896 and even then it had less places than had originally been planned.[51] With so many free school places available in Leeds it is unsurprising that the number of privately owned schools, be the proprietor male or female, declined during this period.

The percentage of female business owners involved in the 'Miscellaneous' sector halved from 10% in 1849–50 to 5% in 1876. The actual numbers, however, increased from twenty-nine to sixty-seven women, thus suggesting that although the market share they occupied might have shrunk, the opportunity to trade in non-typical, non-feminine trades was still present. This shrinkage is reflected in Chart 3.10 which shows that in 1876, 10% of

[50] A.J. Taylor, 'Victorian Leeds; an Overview' in *A History of Modern Leeds*, D. Fraser [ed.], p. 398.
[51] C. Gill, *A History of Birmingham*, p. 385.

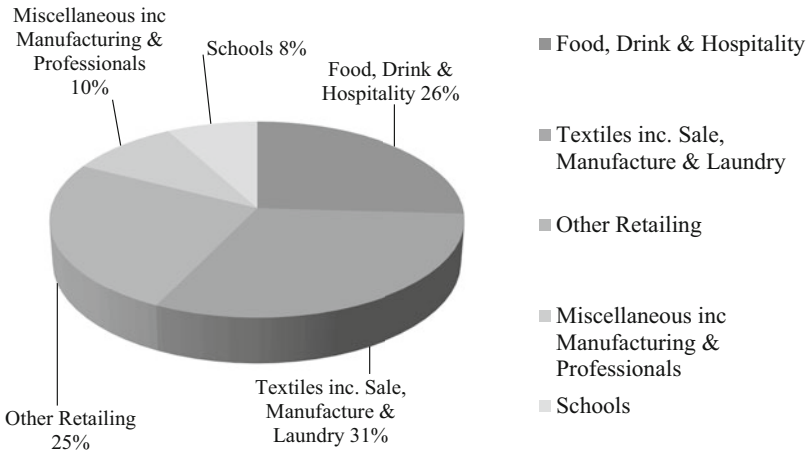


Chart 3.10 Female-owned businesses registered in *White's Directory of Birmingham 1876* Vol 2 percentages (*White's Directory of Birmingham 1876*)

female business owners who registered in *White's Directory of Birmingham 1876* were trading in the 'Miscellaneous' section, a decrease of 4% since 1849–50. The trades that are classified as 'Miscellaneous' are so different from each other that it is extremely difficult to draw any solid conclusions that will explain why the changes occurred. As the sector includes manufacturing businesses that were producing items not covered by 'Food, Drink or Hospitality' or 'Textiles', it is possible that the increasing dependence on machinery and the associated economies of scale that lowered costs and enabled the owner to undercut the price of their competitors, was making the workshop-style manufacturers expensive and obsolete. In the saddlery and leather trades for example, just one Singer sewing machine could replace the work of fifty-five hand stitchers.[52] Whilst these machines might not yet have been widely diffused, especially amongst smaller manufacturers, the entrepreneurs who did use them would have been able to undercut the existing prices meaning that small business owners would gradually be squeezed out of that particular trade.

[52] B.M.D. Smith, 'Industry and Trade 1880–1960' in *VCH Warwickshire VII*, pp. 140–208, p. 146.

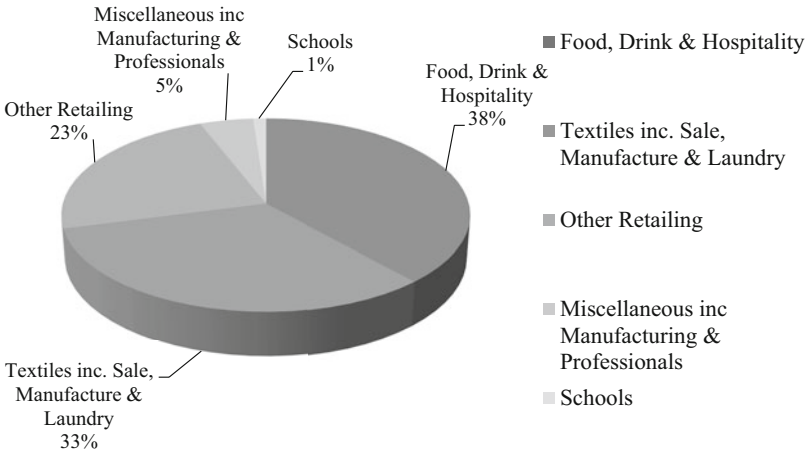


Chart 3.11 Female-owned businesses registered in *Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900* percentages (*Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900*)

The biggest issue for entrepreneurs seeking to expand their business by using modern manufacturing methods was securing the finances to purchase the machinery and buying or renting premises big enough to house it. The most obvious source of capital was a bank loan but it is possible that financial institutions perceived women as higher risk borrowers and were reluctant to lend money to them; therefore businesswomen were squeezed out of the manufacturing industries and instead established themselves in the retail and victualing trades where the overheads were significantly lower. It seems likely that the women who did remain in the 'Miscellaneous' sector were carrying out businesses that were specialised and relied on handwork rather than machine production and as such continued to present a viable business option. This is supported by evidence from Birmingham which shows that the number of workshops in the town was actually increasing during this period.[53] Therefore the situation was not necessarily that women were unable to trade in 'Miscellaneous' trades, but, rather, the businesswomen were adapting to the changing market conditions and engaging in trades that were most likely to generate the most profit for the least investment.

[53] B.M.D. Smith, 'Industry and Trade 1880–1960', p. 146.

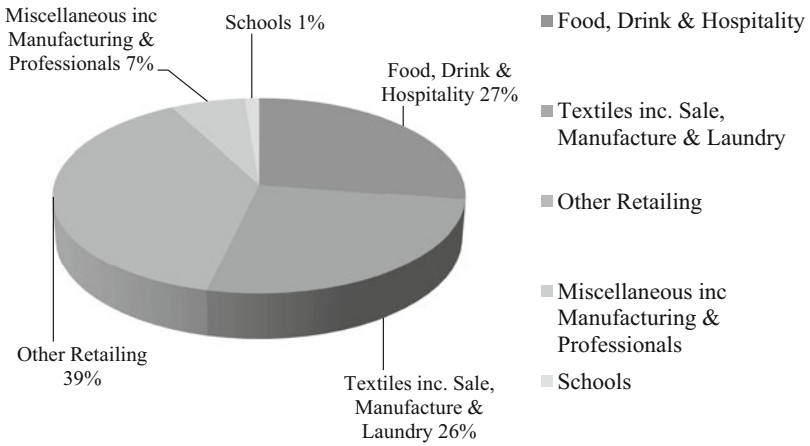


Chart 3.12 Female-owned businesses registered in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*, percentages (*Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

The data presented in Chart 3.11 supports this argument; the percentage of businesswomen who owned businesses in the 'Miscellaneous' sector remained the same as in 1876 although the actual numbers increased from sixty-seven to ninety-one. In Birmingham the percentage of female-owned manufacturing businesses fell from 10 % in 1876 to 7 % in 1900, although, as in Leeds, the actual number of women who owned businesses in the 'Miscellaneous' sector increased from 156 to 165. The percentage of female business owners in *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900* whose enterprises have been classified as 'Other Retailing' increased considerably between 1876 and 1900. This could be as a result of a shift in the distribution of female-owned businesses in the economy, as each of the other sectors shrank, more women moved their enterprise into the 'Other Retailing' sector. This is supported by evidence from the Board of Trade Official Receivers Reports which show small business owners—both male and female—changing their business several times in a short period of time in a desperate attempt to avert financial disaster.[54] Chart 3.11 also shows the same phenomenon occurring in Leeds, the percentage of busi-

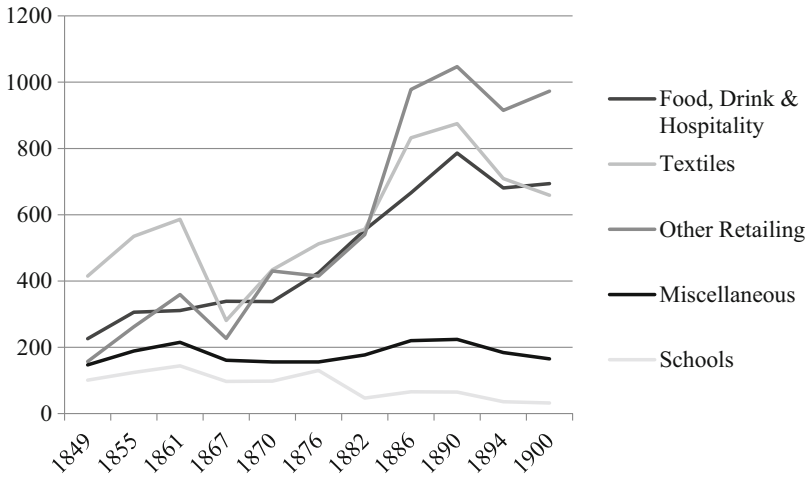
[54] J Aston & P Di Martino, 'Risk and success'.

nesses in 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' and 'Textiles' shrank but 'Other Retailing' increased by 8 % (Chart 3.12).

Although the actual number of female business owners who registered in *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District 1900* and *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900* had increased since 1876, Graph 3.1 reveals that the number of women registering their businesses in the Birmingham directories had been declining since 1890. Declining numbers of women subscribing to the trade directories could be symptomatic of problems with the trade directory itself, for example, the subscription price may have been higher than its competitors or another directory had been published not long before. It is possible that the changing stages of the trade cycle are reflected in the changing numbers of women registering their businesses, for example, if the business cycle went down as it did in the 1880s we might expect to see fewer business owners advertising their trade. However, Table 3.1 indicates that the declining numbers do not necessarily reflect a shrinking in the percentage of female business owners in the marketplace and there is no consistent decline that can be attributed to an increasing number of women entering employed professions such as teaching or administrative work as an alternative to business ownership.

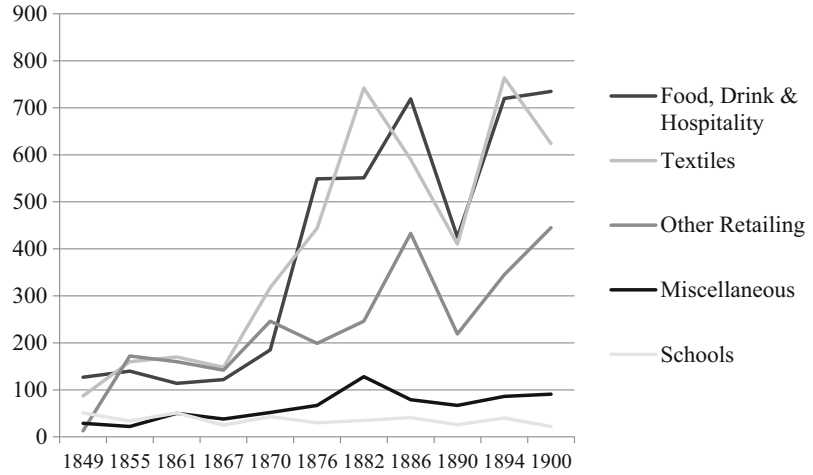
There are clearly some differences between Graphs 3.2 and 3.3, most notably in the low numbers of women who owned 'Other Retailing' businesses in Leeds compared to Birmingham. As mentioned above, this could be due to there being greater opportunity for women in Birmingham to be able to retail goods relating to the small metal trades, or indeed the Leeds directories giving more specific details in their trade descriptions, which allows for more accurate reporting. In spite of these differences, there is a high amount of similarity between the two towns, with the numbers of businesses grouped together under the title of 'Miscellaneous' and 'Schools' following virtually the same pattern in Graph 3.2 for Birmingham as they are in Graph 3.3 for Leeds and the other three sectors remaining by far the most important areas for female business ownership.

The similarities in the Birmingham and Leeds data suggest that despite the very different industrial traditions and economic structures of each town, the experience of a female business owner in the late nineteenth century was broadly similar. Given the evidence presented by histori-



Graph 3.2 Actual numbers of female-owned businesses by sector registered in Birmingham trade directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

ans such as Hunt for the late seventeenth and early eighteenth century, Barker and Phillips for the eighteenth and early nineteenth century and Kay for the mid-nineteenth century, this data provides convincing evidence that the women of the mid- to late nineteenth century were not experiencing the passing of a 'golden age' of female entrepreneurship, in actual fact the women were continuing to trade in much the same way as they had pre-1850. Significantly, none of the evidence suggests that the Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 or 1882 had any significant impact on women's opportunity or propensity to trade.



Graph 3.3 Actual numbers of female-owned businesses by sector registered in Leeds trade directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

This is not to deny that there were shifts in the market. The charts and graphs presented in this chapter show that there were sometimes large changes in the types of trades that the women were operating, most notably in the number of schools owned by women. Despite these changes, there is also continuity; the types of businesses that have been considered typically feminine by the historiography such as textiles, retailing and the victualing trades continued to make up the majority of the businesses registered by women in the trade directories in both Birmingham and

Leeds in 1900 as they did in 1849. This first analysis is a reflection of the historiography's own preoccupation with the role of gender as the categories view female-owned businesses in terms of the domestic duties traditionally assigned to women, for example, feeding and clothing other people.

The categories used in this initial analysis of the trade directory data were chosen specifically to mirror the type of analysis carried out in the only other body of research into female business owners in post-1850 England.[55] This allowed the business activities of those female business owners of Birmingham and Leeds to be considered using the paradigms laid down in an earlier historiography and which have continued to be employed. The categories of 'Food, Drink and Hospitality', 'Textiles—including Manufacture and Production', 'Other Retailing' and 'Miscellaneous' carry the inherent assumption that there were common gendered characteristics present in different trades, thus shaping the data into showing that if women did work, it could only be in specific trades that were an extension of the roles of the domestic sphere.

One of the major problems of the categories used is that 'Miscellaneous' trades have no common characteristics other than that they do not fit into one of the 'feminine', categories. The lack of commonality within the sector results in the individual enterprises being discounted as a series of unusual and anomalous enterprises. The randomness of the 'Miscellaneous' sector can clearly be seen in the data collected from Leeds and Birmingham trade directories throughout the period of study. The 1849–50 directory's 'Miscellaneous' category contains entries as varied as horse slaughterer, watchmaker, bonesetter, brick maker, saw mill, chair maker, printer and gas-light apparatus manufacturer. The directories from 1900 tell a similar story with women registering businesses such as bicycle maker, goldsmith, jeweller, photographer, violin makers, hairdressers and sculptors. Perhaps the only element that a number of the 'Miscellaneous' businesses have in common is that most of them were involved with the manufacture or production of items. This said, however, the potential to uncover further information about women's involvement in nineteenth-century manufacture is lost because the 'Food, Drink and Hospitality'

[55] A.C. Kay, *The Foundations of Female Entrepreneurship,* Appendix II.

and 'Textiles' sectors also include businesses which manufactured these products alongside those who retailed them.

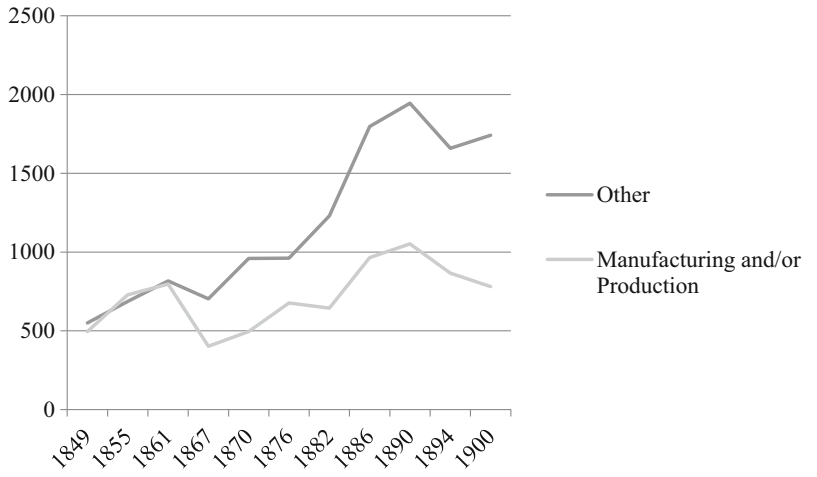
The historiographical notion that any female-owned business involved in 'Food, Drink and Hospitality', 'Textiles' or 'Other Retailing' had inherently 'feminine' qualities, has also meant that the experiences of the women operating these firms have been viewed as typical and therefore overlooked. The business life of Ann Buckley, the cloth cap manufacturer from Leeds who was examined briefly in Chap. 2, shows how a business categorised as 'Textiles' and therefore typically feminine, was actually a large-scale manufacturing enterprise directly contradicting the traditional idea of a woman trading in a small, low-profit way. The example of Ann and her workforce of 140 also demonstrates how inadequate it is to consider businesses as sharing inherent characteristics just because they have a particular material in common. Ann's experiences as a textile manufacturer might have far more in common with manufacturers of other products than with retailers of other textile items. It is therefore important to carry out an analysis that puts any preconceived notions of 'women's work' to one side and instead consider what the female business owners were actually doing in their business enterprises.

Although the historiography does acknowledge that men as well as women owned businesses in the textiles, hospitality and retail trades, the assumption is that a woman would trade in a particularly feminine way, characterised by a very small enterprise, limited or no expansion and small profits. Businesses viewed as typically feminine include millinery, dressmaking, victualing and retail; however, using feminine roles as the categories of analysis reinforces gender stereotypes and unsurprisingly shows an overwhelming number of women trading in expected areas. This means that the full economic role of female business owners in the nineteenth century is obscured and any woman working outside of these narrow categories is regarded as an anomaly. The role of a manufacturer or producer of an item that is neither textiles or food, leads the business to be classified as 'Miscellaneous' yet a maker of furniture would have to go through the same processes as the maker of a dress or a loaf of bread. They would be required to secure the capital to begin the business, rent or buy business premises, source raw materials, purchase or hire machinery and tools, learn the skills to make the product, actually make it, decide

on the product's retail price and, finally, manage to sell it. These processes are the same regardless of the product's alleged 'masculine' or 'feminine' identities or the gender of the business owner.

This chapter's second level of analysis seeks to address this issue by highlighting the ways in which the historiography's use of gender to categorise trades and occupations has obscured economically independent women and distorted our understanding of female entrepreneurship in the 1800s. The same trade directory data that was analysed earlier in the chapter has been reanalysed using the two deliberately broad categories of 'Manufacturing and/or Production' and 'Other', in an attempt to examine the way in which female business owners engaged with the economy rather than how a gendered identity can be imposed on different trades. The category of 'Manufacturing and/or Production' includes every female-owned business that manufactured or produced a product or fulfilled a portion of the production process, regardless of what the eventual product might be. Any businesses that were not involved in manufacturing or producing items, such as retailing, and schools, or any businesses where it is not certain that manufacturing occurred, have been classified as 'Other'. Examining the female-owned businesses registered in the Leeds and Birmingham trade directories using these admittedly crude categories demonstrates that far more female-owned businesses were involved in manufacture and production than has previously been acknowledged and, in fact, manufacturing and production businesses accounted for a significant proportion of female-owned businesses in both towns throughout the late nineteenth century.

Considering the production methods of the business rather than the gender identity of the product manufactured or sold allows the similarities between businesswomen who produced traditionally 'feminine' items—such as dresses, confectionary, bonnets and bread—and businesswomen producing 'masculine' items—such as screws, lamps or paper—to be recognised. By acknowledging that businesses have shared characteristics rooted in the function that they carried out, it is possible to move away from the idea that gender was the most influential force in a businesswoman's life and instead consider that business owners responded to economic factors regardless of whether they were male or female. It was the day-to-day practicalities of running a business that defined a business identity and created common experiences, not the gender of the owner,



Graph 3.4 Actual number of female-owned manufacturing or production and other businesses in the Birmingham trade directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

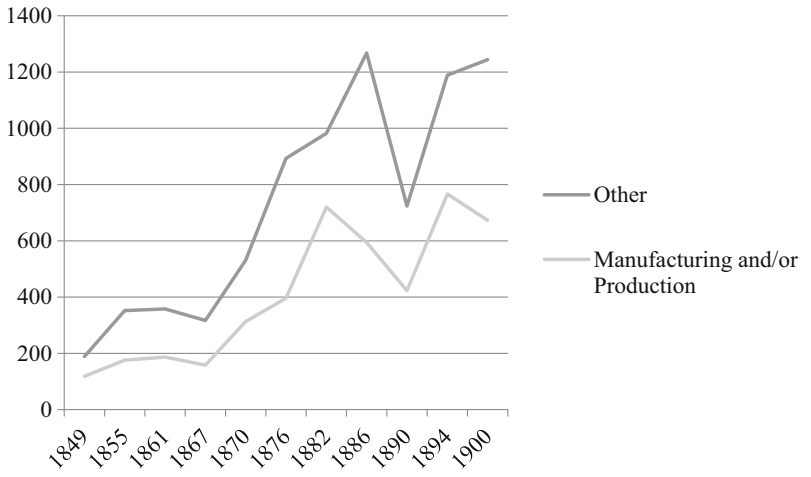
and by considering the nineteenth century only in terms of difference it is impossible to view similarities. Analysing businesses according to what happened in the firm rather than the product that was manufactured or sold allows us to move beyond the limitations of gendered analysis and instead begin to examine the way women engaged with the urban economy in late nineteenth-century England.

Graph 3.4 shows that the number of women registering businesses that manufactured or produced items in the trade directories of Birmingham between 1849 and 1861 was virtually the same as those female-owned

businesses based in other areas. However, after 1861 the manufacturing- or production-based businesses do not equal the rate of growth achieved by other sectors and the number of female-owned manufacturing businesses increases at a far slower rate than the 'Other' businesses. The number of businesswomen who were manufacturing or producing an item in Birmingham peaked in 1890 at 1052 and then declined in subsequent years. This decline is also reflected in a reduced number of women who registered 'Other' types of business in the Birmingham directories after 1890, although there appears to have been a slight resurgence in 1900. Despite the fact that the number of women who owned firms that manufactured or made a product in Birmingham failed to increase at the same rate as those who owned 'Other' enterprises, Graph 3.4 shows that throughout manufacturing- or production-based businesses were far more numerous than the first data analysis would suggest and remained a constant feature of Birmingham's economic structure.

Graph 3.5 suggests that the economic structure of female-owned businesses in Leeds is quite different to that of Birmingham. The number of manufacturing or production businesses was always significantly lower than that of other trades and remained so throughout the period of study. There was a dramatic increase in the number of manufacturing or production businesses from 158 in 1867 to 720 in 1882, not seen in the Birmingham sample, yet there were similarities between the two towns. After 1867 the number of female-owned manufacturing or production businesses registered in the directories of Birmingham and Leeds follows the rise and decline of the 'Other' trades in the towns, indicating that a consistent percentage of women were engaged in manufacturing. There is also a decline in the number of manufacturing or production businesses in both Birmingham and Leeds in 1867 and again in 1900, although the decline in Birmingham had been evident since 1890. This suggests that a relatively constant proportion of the female-owned businesses in Leeds were engaged in manufacturing or production enterprises and that, like Birmingham, these businesses were a constant feature of the Leeds economy.

Birmingham's economic heritage of small workshop-based manufacturing firms compared to the factory-based production that the industries of Leeds favoured would suggest that there would have been more



Graph 3.5 Actual number of female-owned manufacturing or production and other businesses in the Leeds trade directories between 1849 and 1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

opportunity for women to establish themselves in manufacturing- or production-based trades. However, Graphs 3.4 and 3.5 show that this was not the case, revealing that in 1882 there were more female-owned manufacturing or production businesses in Leeds than there were in Birmingham. Moreover, there were five times as many female-owned manufacturing or production businesses in Leeds in 1900 as there had been in 1849 compared to Birmingham where the actual number of businesses in that sector had roughly doubled between 1849 and 1900.

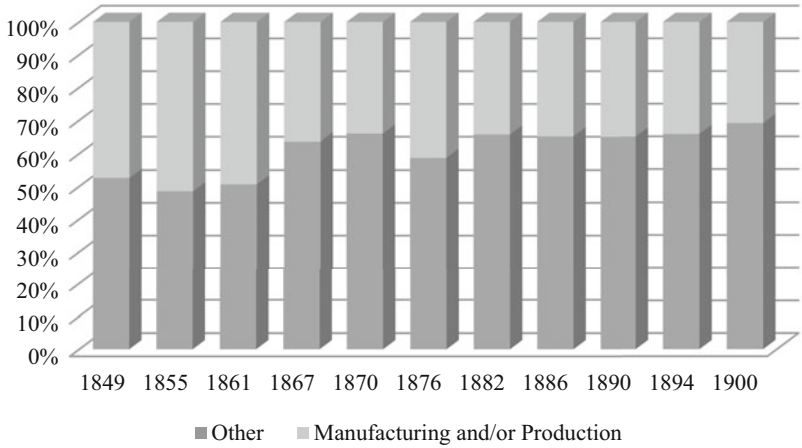


Chart 3.13 Percentage of female-owned manufacturing- or production-based businesses compared to the percentage of other female-owned businesses registered in Birmingham trade directories 1849–1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

Examining these results as percentages of the total number of female-owned businesses in Birmingham and Leeds allows the examination of the role that manufacturing and production businesses played in the economic structure of each town and the way that this role changed over time. Chart 3.13 shows that the first three directories sampled from 1849, 1855 and 1861 were split roughly equally between female-owned businesses that were producing items and those that were not. After this date, however, the percentage of female-owned manufacturing-based businesses consistently

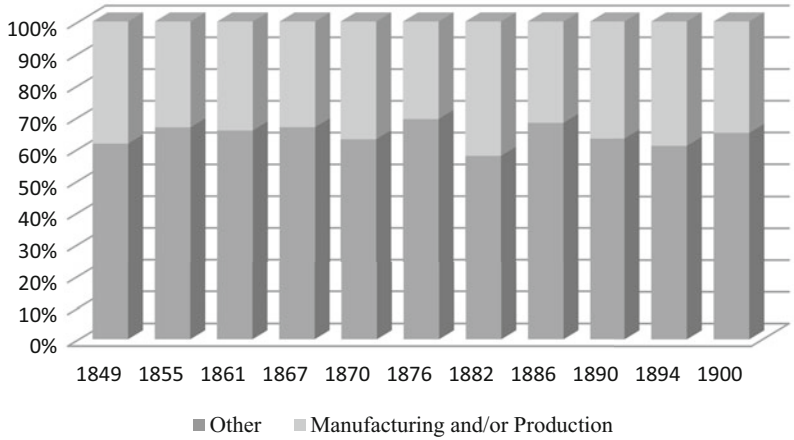


Chart 3.14 Percentage of female-owned manufacturing- or production-based businesses compared to other female-owned businesses registered in Leeds trade directories 1849–1900 (*Charlton & Archdeacon Leeds Directory 1849–50; Gillbanks Leeds and Neighbourhood Directory & Gazetteer,* 1856; *White's Directory of Leeds & Bradford Part 1,* 1861*; White's Directory of Leeds, Bradford etc Part 1,* 1866*; White's Leeds and Woollen District Directory,* 1870*; McCorquodale's Directory of Leeds 1876; Post Office Leeds Directory Part 2,* 1882*; Kelly's Directory of Leeds Part 1,* 1886; *Slater's Directory of Leeds and District, Part 1,* 1890*; Slater's Directory of Leeds 1894; Slater's Directory of Leeds & District 1900. White's History and General Directory of the Borough of Birmingham 1849; White's Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1855*; Corporation Directory of Birmingham Part 1,* 1861*; Morris & Co Commercial Directory and Gazetteer of Warwickshire with Birmingham Part One, 1866; Hulley's Birmingham Directory, 1870; White's Directory of Birmingham 1876; Houghton & Co Birmingham Post Office Directory, 1882; Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1886; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham,* 1890; *Hulley's Birmingham Directory,* 1893–4; *Kelly's Directory of Birmingham 1900*)

represented approximately 35% of all female-owned businesses registered in the Birmingham directories. Given that the analysis carried out earlier in this chapter suggested that less than 7% of female-owned businesses would be classified as 'Manufacturing', it is clear that a large section of the female economy has been overlooked.

Chart 3.14 shows that the female business owners of Leeds had a similar experience to those in Birmingham, with approximately 35% of female-owned businesses registered in the trade directories between

1849 and 1900–01 carrying out manufacturing or production processes. Although there were some slight variations, such as in 1882 when 42% of all female-owned businesses registered in the Leeds directories were manufacturing- or production-based, the average was 35%, very similar to that of Birmingham after 1862. In Leeds, unlike Birmingham, there was never a point where the manufacturing and non-manufacturing trades occupied roughly equal shares of the market. Instead, the percentage of female-owned production businesses registering in the directories remained at approximately the same level throughout the fifty-year period examined.

There was no decline in the percentage of manufacturing businesses that were owned by women in Birmingham, rather, after 1867, the balance between female-owned manufacturing and non-manufacturing businesses in the Birmingham directories remained stable. Given that the data for Leeds shows that between 1870 and 1900–01 the percentages of women who manufactured or produced items were extremely similar to those in Birmingham, it would seem that even an economic structure based on factory production was not enough to prevent women from engaging in such sectors. This would suggest that the overarching idea that women were increasingly squeezed out from manufacturing or production businesses is not correct and, in fact, there was very little change throughout the late nineteenth century. These findings are also reflected in wider reconsiderations of the economies of nineteenth- and twentieth-century Britain, which argue that the structure of industry did not change in the way that it has previously been assumed and, in fact, the economy was still made up of predominantly small businesses carrying out specialised processes, rather than large factories.[56]

Highlighting the businesswomen and enterprises who were involved in the manufacturing process not only encourages the examination of women whose economic endeavours have previously been categorised as 'masculine', but also those perceived as 'feminine' and therefore unexceptional. One example of the importance of uncovering the details of individual

[56] L. Hannah, *The Rise of the Corporation,* (London, 1983); P. Payne, *British Entrepreneurship in the Nineteenth Century,* (Basingstoke: 1988); C. Shaw, 'The Large Manufacturing Employers of 1907' in *Business History,* Vol 25, (1983), pp. 42–60; F. Carnevali, *Europe's Advantage: Banks and Small Firms in Britain, France, Germany and Italy from 1914,* (Oxford, 2005), Chapter 6.

businesswomen's lives can be seen in the case of Elizabeth Onion who inherited her late husband Thomas' coach lace manufacturer business in 1849. Soon after taking over the business Elizabeth registered herself in *White's Directory of Birmingham 1849* not as a coach lace manufacturer, as Thomas had done the previous year, but as a 'Manufacturer of coach and livery lace, fringes, tassels, and importer of Berlin Patterns, Zephyr Wool & German Canvas'.[57] This description of Elizabeth's business shows that although she was working in what might be considered a typically feminine textile trade, she had extended and diversified the business far beyond its standing under her husband's ownership. Further research into Elizabeth's business has also revealed that in 1851 she represented the coach lace manufacturers of Birmingham—most of whom were men—at the Great Exhibition of 1851, with the exhibition catalogue describing her display as:

> '*Velvet drapery valance worked with gold silk braid. Crimson valance fringe. New drapery rope. New diamond valance fringe in silk. Registered bell lever ornaments. Curtain holder. Ornaments for valances. Coach and railway carriage lace and trimmings*'.[58]

The fact that Elizabeth was able to represent a male-dominated industry at a prestigious international trade exhibition demonstrates the success that businesswomen could achieve in terms of both securing a financial income for themselves and negotiating a position in the public sphere, regardless of, not in spite of, their gender. The case of Elizabeth Onion is unusual in that she had the opportunity to participate in the Great Exhibition but her position as a female business owner, active in a seemingly traditionally feminine sector in an untraditional and 'unfeminine' way was not. The business activities of women like Elizabeth Onion in Birmingham and Ann Buckley in Leeds demonstrate this, as does the description used by female business owners when they were registering their businesses in the directories. There are carpet manufacturers, ginger

[57] *White's Directory of Birmingham,* 1849.

[58] *Official Catalogue of the Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of all Nations,* 1851, (Cambridge, 2011), p. 98.

beer manufacturers, wholesale confectioners and sugar boilers, cart cover manufacturers, brewers, wholesale bread makers and silk dyers registered throughout the directories as well as the more expected dressmakers, beer house keepers and laundresses. The female business owners themselves were willing to register their enterprises in a directory in a way that showed them to be working using manual methods, and this suggests that notions of feminine and masculine trades did not affect their business behaviour, but they developed a business identity that operated in tandem with their personal, gender identity.

This is not to say that analysing the data using the two crude categories of 'Manufacturing and/or Production' or 'Other' offers a perfect alternative to the traditional methods of analysis. Clearly, the categories do not allow for the examination of individual trade types and the criticisms levelled against the 'Miscellaneous' category previously can also be made against the category of 'Other' in this analysis. Nevertheless, using this methodology in conjunction with the other analysis adds another layer of analytical detail to the data and highlights the restrictions of the gendered analysis. The shrinking of the 'Miscellaneous' sector in both Birmingham and Leeds between 1849 and 1900–01 in the first analysis suggests that the opportunity for women in manufacturing was diminishing and that there was an increasing number of women moving into the 'Other Retailing' and 'Food, Drink and Hospitality' sectors. The re-examination of the data using a gender-neutral analysis indicates that there were a consistent percentage of women in the urban economy manufacturing products throughout the late nineteenth century and that this occurred regardless of the economic structure of the town and any changes in the law. These findings help to illustrate the point that women's economic endeavours were not inherently gendered, and attributing male or female characteristics to businesses only results in late nineteenth-century businesswomen being viewed as typical or exceptional rather than capable of engaging in many different types of trade in many different ways.

Any quantitative analysis has its limitations and it is therefore necessary to look beyond statistics and instead examine individuals in an effort to give flesh to the bones provided by the trade directory data. The experiences of women like Ann Buckley and Elizabeth Onion, who traded in ways that confound expectations of female economy agency,

have long been overlooked. Reassessing the types of business that women in late nineteenth-century England owned according to the task that they fulfilled allows the experiences of women as manufacturers to be considered as a significant part of the nineteenth-century urban economy for the first time. Chap. 4 will take the findings from the trade directory analysis and begin to reconstruct the personal and professional networks of female business owners to uncover their lives and examine their economic endeavours. Using qualitative sources such as census returns, newspapers, photographs, probate records, Parish Records and Birth, Death and Marriage Indexes will enhance the quantitative analysis carried out in this chapter and enable the women to be considered as real people who exercised economic, political and philanthropic agency, and carved out an identity for themselves as financially independent members of the middle classes.