

**'A Particular Spirit of Enterprise': Bristol and Liverpool Slave Trade
Merchants as Entrepreneurs in the Eighteenth Century**

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Abstract

It is well known that Liverpool surpassed Bristol as Britain's premier slave trading port in the mid-eighteenth century, but the reasons for Liverpool's dominance remain debated. In this comparative research, the theoretical framework of entrepreneurship and various notions of capital, including financial, human and social, accessed through merchants' associational networks is employed to determine whether or not Liverpool merchants were more entrepreneurial in the trade which in turn made them more successful. An interdisciplinary methodology that embraces concepts from both economic and business history as well as social network and socio-cultural analysis is used to ascertain how slave merchant networks in both ports operated and managed their trade.

Entrepreneurship has quickly become a popular field of study in economics, sociology and business, and provides a new avenue to explore the organisation of the slave trade in both merchant communities. Additionally, by applying the notion of entrepreneurship within Liverpool slave merchant networks, a more convincing and satisfying explanation for their relative success besides their often-argued but little-explained "business acumen" is offered. An examination of nominal data sources, including the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database and club membership as well as qualitative sources such as merchant correspondence and parliamentary papers are used to map trends in business organisation between the two cities and over time, and to draw conclusions on the relative strength and nature of business partnerships. It is argued that Liverpool merchants managed slaving voyages within comparatively larger investment groups; thus, the business network a Liverpool merchant was part of was also larger. From these larger networks, Liverpool merchants had greater access to knowledge, skills and resources, collectively known as capital, and this larger pool of expertise offered more competitive advantages to

their trade. Because of this, Liverpool merchants, as entrepreneurs, were able to surpass their counterparts in Bristol to become the leaders in the slave trade.

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Chapter One: Introduction

On his tour through England and Wales in 1720, Daniel Defoe described the city of Bristol as:

The greatest, richest and best port of trade in Great Britain, London only excepted. The merchants of this city not only have the greatest trade, but they trade with a more entire independency upon London, than any other town in Britain. And 'tis evident in this particular, that whatsoever exportations they make to any part of the world, they are able to bring the full return back to their own port and dispose of it there.¹

More than seventy years later, and describing a city about two hundred miles to the north, Dr. William Moss depicted the port city of Liverpool in his 1797 edition of *The Liverpool Guide* as follows:

The advantages the town possesses in its near connexion and ready communication, by internal rivers and canals, with the extensive manufacturing town and neighbourhoods of Manchester; the coal country of Wigan: the unrivalled potteries of Staffordshire; the exclusive export of Salt; its central situation on the western coast of the kingdom, thereby communicating readily with Dublin and the northern parts of Ireland; and finally, the goodness of the Harbour and the very superior accommodation for Shipping; have all conspired to form it into a vortex that has nearly swallowed up foreign trade of Bristol, Lancaster, and Whitehaven.²

The above quotations demonstrate the passing of the torch from one commercial centre to the next, each being able to call themselves England's second city at different points in their history. While these two bustling ports of the eighteenth century enjoyed several advantages which contributed to their overall commercial prosperity, they also shared leading roles in a trade that contradicts twenty-first century sensibilities: the Atlantic slave trade. This dissertation seeks to explore those at the heart of the slave trade in England, the men of the merchant

¹ Daniel Defoe, *A Tour through the Whole Island of Great Britain Vol. 2* (1778) (reprinted London: Dent, 1962), p. 36.

² William Moss, *Georgian Liverpool: A Guide to the City in 1794* (reprinted Lancaster: Palatine Books, 2007), p. 7.

communities in Bristol and Liverpool who entered into and organised slave trading ventures. It is well known that Liverpool surpassed Bristol as Britain's premier slave trading port in the mid-eighteenth century, but the reasons for Liverpool's dominance remain debated. While factors have been put forth including Liverpool having a more industrialised and better connected hinterland, as well as a more modernised port, this dissertation employs the theoretical framework of entrepreneurship and various notions of capital accessed through associational networks to determine whether or not Liverpool merchants had a "particular spirit of enterprise" which enabled their success.³ To achieve this end, a methodology that embraces concepts from economic and business history, as well as social network and socio-cultural analysis is utilised. For both port cities, qualitative and quantitative data have been analysed to ascertain the associational networks that comprised the interwoven business and social relationships of these merchants. Through an examination of how the slave trade was organised in each city, and the social and political roles the prominent slave merchants held in each, a more comprehensive and, importantly, a comparative picture of the successes and failures of the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade emerges.

The methodology and structure of the project are discussed in a later section. The eighteenth-century Atlantic world will first be reviewed including a discussion of the slave trade, followed by a review of the business history and mercantile culture literature that informs this project's understanding of the eighteenth-century trans-Atlantic merchant. Special attention will be given to the scholarship on entrepreneurship and networks as they factor greatly in this interdisciplinary methodology.

³ Liverpool merchant James Penny informed the Privy Council investigating the slave trade in 1788 that Liverpool slave merchants owed their success in the trade to a "spirit of enterprise which is peculiar to the British merchant". Examination of James Penny, 27 Feb 1788, The National Archives (hereafter TNA), Board of Trade (hereafter BoT) 6/9.

The Atlantic Context

The Atlantic Ocean is more than thirty million square miles, and explorers, adventurers and merchants have mapped out its geography and complex system of trade winds and currents since the fifteenth century.⁴ Influenced by the North East trade winds, the slave trade was part of the wider movements of people, goods and ideas that comprise the larger theoretical perspective known as the “Atlantic World”; one which is claimed to be one of the most important historiographical developments in recent scholarship.⁵ This perspective identifies the Atlantic world as a conceptual historical unit whereby the political, economic and cultural interactions among the peoples of Europe, Africa and the Americas are studied comprehensively and not as separate or isolated interactions.⁶ While ships engaged in Atlantic trade utilised various shipping patterns, including bilateral, multilateral, shuttle and direct voyages, it is easy to see how the slave trade fits within this framework because its traditional tool of analysis, that of “triangular trade”, easily conforms to Atlantic world methodology.⁷ Although not without its criticism for its simplicity, this now well-known triangular framework describes how ships loaded with goods left the British Isles for Africa, where the goods were then exchanged for slaves. Slaves were transported across the Atlantic to the West Indies and the North American mainland

⁴ Thomas Benjamin, *The Atlantic World: Europeans, Africans, Indians and their Shared History, 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 67-68.

⁵ David Armitage and Michael J. Braddick (eds.), *The British Atlantic World, 1500-1800* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), p. 11. Miles Ogborn also places the Atlantic world in a larger context of comparative global history. *Global Lives: Britain and the World, 1550-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001). The Atlantic perspective is richly debated in the historiography. For a good discussion of the evolution of this perspective see William O’ Reilly, “Genealogies of Atlantic History”, *Atlantic History*, 1 (2004), pp. 66-84. For a discussion of the challenges from other theoretical perspectives, see Paul W. Mapp, “Atlantic History from Imperial, Continental and Pacific Perspectives”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 63 (2006), pp. 713-724.

⁶ Robin Law and Kristen Mann, “West Africa in the Atlantic Community: The Case of the Slave Coast”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 56 (1999), pp. 307-334.

⁷ See Kenneth Morgan, “Shipping Patterns and the Atlantic Trade of Bristol, 1749-1770”, *William and Mary Quarterly*, 46 (1989), pp. 506-538. Only about two thirds of ships made the complete triangular journey, indicating the variety of shipping patterns vessels utilised. Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 328.

colonies, where they laboured to produce goods which were then shipped back to Britain, thus completing and maintaining this triangular pattern of trade. This "triangular trade" framework is representative of one of three concepts David Armitage identifies of Atlantic history at large, that of circum-Atlantic history, which focuses on the Atlantic as a zone of exchange.⁸ All three concepts, including trans- and cis-Atlantic however, are interrelated and draw on the common themes of connection and identity that arise out of these movements created by exchange. Most useful for this study, though, is the approach known as "cis-Atlantic" history. According to Armitage, this concept "studies particular places as unique locations within the Atlantic world and seeks to define that uniqueness as the result of the interaction between local particularity and a wider web of connections (and comparisons)".⁹ He notes that obvious locations for a cis-Atlantic study include port cities and mentions Bristol as an example.¹⁰ In addition, Pierre Gervais claims that trading links should be the primary unit of analysis when studying the eighteenth-century merchant, as merchant activity, and the wealth derived from such, was central to these networks of exchange that created the Atlantic world.¹¹ Because the cis-Atlantic approach emphasises the comprehensive analysis of particular places, comparisons can thus be made between different places studied within this framework. Moreover, combined with the idea that merchant networks are the key concept from which to study and ascertain merchant behaviour, it becomes clear that this framework can inform a comparative and comprehensive study of Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants and of how their behaviour contributed to their overall success in the eighteenth-century commercial world.

⁸ Armitage and Braddick, *British Atlantic World*, p. 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 21.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 23-24.

¹¹ Pierre Gervais, "Neither Imperial nor Atlantic: A Merchant Perspective on International Trade in the Eighteenth Century", *History of European Ideas*, 34 (2008), pp. 465- 473; Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 66.

Formed on the basis of merchant capitalism, the Atlantic system spawned the "development of overseas productive enterprises, ports, cities and entire colonies".¹² This Atlantic perspective as it relates to the slave trade underscores the commercial connections that linked Britain with both Africa and the Americas, and thus the way in which enslaved persons played a significant role both as commodities of the trade and as producers of commodities in the trade. Kenneth Morgan has noted that the slave trade was an integral part in the growth of the British Empire in that it stimulated shipbuilding, helped to develop ports, shaped attitudes towards capital accumulation and sparked the growth of long-distance oceanic communications and trade.¹³ Furthermore, the slave trade facilitated innovations in commercial organisation and finance, as seen in extensive credit arrangements and remittance procedures, further discussed in Chapter Two as it relates to the trades of Bristol and Liverpool specifically.¹⁴ All of this was made possible by the beginning of the eighteenth century, when a strong commercial sector in the English economy facilitated a dramatic growth in commerce and overseas expansion.¹⁵ A link thus developed at this time between commerce and political power, and British merchants, as agents of commerce, can be seen as key factors in further developing the nation's power and prestige.¹⁶ It is in this context of increased trade through state sponsorship that "modern" ideas of entrepreneurship and of the entrepreneur

¹² Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 349.

¹³ Kenneth Morgan (ed.), *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol. 1* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. xi.

¹⁴ Paul Butel, *The Atlantic World* (London: Routledge, 1999), p. 138; R. C. Nash, "The Organization of Trade and Finance in the British Atlantic Economy", in Peter A. Coclanis (ed.), *The Atlantic Economy during the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries: Organization, Operation, Practice and Personnel* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2005), pp. 95-152; Kenneth Morgan, "Remittance Procedures in the Eighteenth Century British Slave Trade", *Business History Review*, 79 (2005), pp. 714-749; K. G. Davies, "The Origins of the Commission System in the West India Trade: The Alexander Prize Essay", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 2 (1952), pp. 89-107.

¹⁵ See Ralph Davis, *A Commercial Revolution: English Overseas Trade in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century* (London: Historical Association, 1967), p. 3.

¹⁶ H. V. Bowen, *Elites, Enterprise and the Making of British Overseas Empire, 1688-1775* (London: Macmillan Press, 1996), p. 82. See Chapter Six for the relationship of Bristol and Liverpool merchants to the state.

emerge in the eighteenth century, which is discussed further below.¹⁷ Additionally, growth and expansion facilitated the “urban renaissance” of the eighteenth century, impacting upon the commercial and social life of merchants, discussed further below and in Chapter Five in particular.

This growth in commerce and expansion in turn was accompanied by the emergence and growth of plantation slave labour in North America and the Caribbean, as staple commodities such as tobacco and sugar required cultivation on large-scale plantation complexes.¹⁸ These economic changes further stimulated great social change. Imports and exports were traded on an unprecedented scale, and Britain experienced an increased standard of living while at the same time producing a net outflow of population.¹⁹ Thus, new political and economic relationships among countries and colonies were forged and connected in a vast web of trading networks. Ralph Davis attributes the development of this boom in the availability of new consumer goods to the growth in trading activity. He notes that in 1570, England’s only major export was woollen cloth, which accounted for around four-fifths of the trade, and was concentrated on the Atlantic coasts of Europe and places around the North Sea. However, by 1770, Britain not only had a more diversified range of goods for export, but re-exported large quantities of colonial and Asiatic goods and had extended its trade to much of the globe.²⁰ Indeed, throughout the century, customs records reveal that British exports increased almost sixfold

¹⁷ Martin Ricketts, “Theories of Entrepreneurship: Historical Development and Critical Assessment”, in Mark Casson, Bernard Yeung and Anuradha Basu (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Entrepreneurship* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 33-59.

¹⁸ Kenneth Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy, 1660-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 1; Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, pp. 373-419.

¹⁹ Stanley Engerman, “Mercantilism and Overseas Trade, 1700-1800”, in R. Floud (ed.), *Economic History of Britain since 1700: 1700-1860 Vol.1* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), pp. 182-205.

²⁰ Davis, *Commercial Revolution*, p. 3.

while imports rose over fivefold.²¹ The bulk of these exports were in the form of manufactured goods, particularly textiles, which is reflective of Britain's technological advantage in production. Meanwhile, throughout the 1700s, imports were primarily in foodstuffs such as sugar and tea, which highlights the importance of Britain's overseas colonies and foreign trade in the development of the economy.²² Furthermore, Britain's previous position as a net importer of capital shifted to that of a net exporter of capital, primarily to the Americas.²³ This again emphasises the increased economic importance of the colonies and the increasingly significant role played by merchants, as much of this capital and investment came from them. The details of Bristol and Liverpool's trade, as well as their merchants' participation in it, are discussed at length in Chapter Two.

This transition from primarily importing to exporting capital was indicative of mercantilist policies that were protected by the Navigation Acts, a series of legislation first enacted in 1651 and then codified in 1660, that were passed in an attempt to regulate colonial commerce for the benefit of the Crown.²⁴ At this time European powers fiercely competed with one another in trade and as the Spanish, French, Dutch and British all had similar commercial aims, the protection of trade was largely pursued by war.²⁵ Indeed, between 1660 and 1800, Britain was at war for fifty-five of those years, with most of them having a colonial component.²⁶ War often had damaging effects on Britain's trans-Atlantic trade and consequently, Britain's slave trade. Queen Anne's War (1702-1713), the War of Jenkins' Ear (1739-1748), War of Austrian Succession (1744-1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756-

²¹ David Richardson, "The Slave Trade, Sugar and British Economic Growth, 1748-1776", in B. Solow and S. Engerman (eds.), *British Capitalism and Caribbean Slavery: The Legacy of Eric Williams* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 103-133.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 195.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 194.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

²⁵ Benjamin, *Atlantic World*; Susan Amussen, *Caribbean Exchanges: Slavery and the Transformation of English Society, 1640-1700* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), p. 39.

²⁶ Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, p. 16.

1763) were four conflicts that were fought among these colonial powers to protect and expand trading interests.²⁷ Fought during the formative period in the British slave trade, these wars certainly impacted upon the trade of the Bristol and Liverpool slave traders, as analysed in Chapters Three and Four. Because trade and warfare were the “unholy twins of commerce” the connection was made between financial gain and maritime defence as the cornerstone for the burgeoning empire’s success.²⁸ The Navigation Acts were thus intended to siphon revenue from colonial trade, but more importantly to protect it as well; not only were they designed to increase British shipping activity, but the number of skilled seamen was supposedly increased to give strength to the British Navy in time of war.²⁹ As will be seen in Chapter Six, one argument in support of the slave trade was that it served as a training ground for seamen, indicating the link between trade and maritime defence. Although these laws were notoriously and widely circumvented, they placed restrictions on both the export and import of goods to and from countries other than England, as well as restricted the carriage of goods to and from the colonies to British vessels. Moreover, they insisted on the enumeration of some colonial exports, particularly tobacco and sugar, to be sent to Britain before their re-sale to the Continent.³⁰ Britain thus became the primary benefactor of its trade.

Britain’s control of the Atlantic was strengthened after the Dutch War of 1664-1667; however, Britain’s absolute supremacy in the Atlantic region was arguably not achieved until 1759, during the Seven Years’ War, after decisive

²⁷ Ogborn, *Global Lives*, p. 68.

²⁸ Malcolm Balen, *Secret History of the South Sea Bubble* (New York: Harper Collins, 2005), p. 30.

²⁹ Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, p. 13.

³⁰ Engerman, “Mercantilism and Overseas Trade”, p. 198. For an examination of excise in England, see William J. Ashworth, *Customs and Excise: Trade, Production and Consumption in England, 1640-1845* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

victories against the French in the Caribbean and in present-day Canada.³¹ With the Dutch losing their stronghold on a variety of trades, including the very profitable trio of tobacco, sugar and furs by the latter half of the seventeenth century, Britain increased its trading activity in these staple commodities. The “Americanisation” of Britain’s trade thus was a large source of its wealth later in the eighteenth century. Tobacco, first grown commercially in Virginia’s tidewater region in the 1620s, and sugar, grown on West Indian plantations from the 1650s, initiated the development of monocrop cultivation in the Americas, in which large-scale plantations were used to raise these cash crops for export. In turn, the development of plantation agriculture also Africanised the labour force of the western hemisphere, as millions of Africans were forcibly brought to the colonies to labour under European plantation owners.³²

The Seven Years’ War ended with the signing of the Treaty of Paris in 1763. The resulting “complex series of territorial exchanges” established British North America’s territorial and commercial dominance as the empire effectively stretched from Nova Scotia to Florida.³³ British territory now encompassed both topographically and ethnically diverse colonies from New Hampshire and Massachusetts in New England, to Pennsylvania and Delaware in the Middle Atlantic, and South Carolina and Georgia in the South. Virginia, however, was Britain’s largest, richest and most populous mainland colony because of the cultivation of its staple crop, tobacco. In the 1620s, Britain imported 65,000 pounds of Virginia tobacco; by the 1670s this figure had jumped to 220 million pounds.³⁴ While Virginia

³¹ See J. H. Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World: Britain and Spain in America, 1492-1830* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006); Frank McLynn, *1759: The Year Britain Became Master of the World* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2004); Butel, *Atlantic World*, p. 156.

³² Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, pp. 381-382; D. A. Farnie, “The Commercial Empire of the Atlantic, 1607-1783”, *Economic History Review*, 15 (1962), pp. 205-218.

³³ Elliott, *Empires of the Atlantic World*, p. 295; Bernard Bailyn, *The Peopling of British North America* (London: Tauris, 1986), p. 75.

³⁴ James Walvin, *Britain’s Slave Empire* (Stroud: Tempus, 2000), p. 22.

was certainly an important colony, the whole Chesapeake region, consisting of the present-day states of Virginia and Maryland, was significant for tobacco cultivation and thus the slave trade. Between 1698 and 1774, when Virginia and Maryland ended their transatlantic slave trade, London, Bristol and Liverpool merchants delivered 82,500 slaves to the region, with Bristol delivering almost half of this number.³⁵ Bristol and Liverpool's presence in this region is further explored in Chapter Three.

Although the Chesapeake may have been an important region early in Britain's commercial empire, it was the sugar plantations of the West Indies that were to become the most profitable, and the West India interest had the most influence back in Britain out of all the colonies. Indeed, the sugar plantations produced three times more wealth than all other plantations and the majority of the slaves sent on British ships were delivered to the Caribbean islands.³⁶ The islands of St. Kitts, Barbados, Nevis, Montserrat and Antigua were settled in 1624, 1627, 1628 and the 1630s respectively, while Jamaica was taken from the Spanish by 1655.³⁷ Sugar was the West Indies' staple crop for two centuries and as early as the 1660s, it surpassed tobacco as the most valuable single source of imports into England.³⁸ West Indian sugar planters not only accrued a significant amount of wealth, they also garnered political influence, particularly between the 1730s and 1760s. Certainly in Bristol, the most economically and politically powerful men in the city were linked to

³⁵ Lorena S. Walsh. "Liverpool's Slave Trade to the Colonial Chesapeake: Slaving on the Periphery", in David Richardson, Suzanne Schwarz and Anthony Tibbles, (eds.), *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), pp. 98-111.

³⁶ Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 373. See also Herbert S. Klein, *The Atlantic Slave Trade* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999).

³⁷ Richard S. Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (London: Cape, 1973), pp. 9, 10. Britain's early ventures in Atlantic trade included "clandestine" voyages to Spanish and Portuguese America, circumventing the Iberian monopoly. In particular, supplying slaves to Spanish America later in the eighteenth century became a profitable avenue of trade, particularly for Liverpool slave traders. This is discussed in Chapters Three and Four. Nash, "Organization of Trade", p. 95; James Wallace, *General and Descriptive History of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Printed for R. Phillips, 1795), Available at: Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, University of Nottingham, pp. 216-217.

³⁸ Farnie, "Commercial Empire of the Atlantic", p. 210.

the West India interest which shaped the commercial profile of the port, as discussed in Chapter Two.³⁹ The West Indian political lobby is further analysed in Chapter Six when its influence on the defence of the slave trade is discussed. English sugar consumption increased dramatically at the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth centuries, from 6.5 pounds per head in 1710 to 23.2 pounds in the early 1770s.⁴⁰ Viewed in another way, in 1700 Britain imported 23,000 tons of sugar from the West Indies and 245,000 tons by 1800.⁴¹ This increase was in conjunction with an increase in the consumption of other beverages including beer, spirits, and particularly tea. As the imports of sugar increased over the eighteenth century, so did those of tea. In the 1720s, nine million pounds of tea were imported to Britain and just twenty years later, this figure rose to twenty million pounds.⁴² This is reflective of a striking development in consumer purchasing during the early-modern period, in that certain non-European grocery items were bought and consumed in mass quantities by the English and their colonial counterparts.⁴³ These groceries included tobacco, tea, coffee, chocolate and sugar, all of which were exotic to Western Europeans at this time.⁴⁴

Sugar was thus “probably the most valuable commodity in all the world’s trade of the eighteenth century” and because of this, the West Indian islands were

³⁹ See Kenneth Morgan, “Bristol West India Merchants in the Eighteenth Century”, *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 3 (1993), pp. 185-208; Madge Dresser, *Slavery Obscured: The Social History of the Slave Trade in a Provincial Port* (London: Continuum, 2001). Historians have debated the extent of political influence the West India interest had in Parliament. Taking different arguments into consideration, Andrew O’Shaughnessy estimates that any one session would have forty or fifty members linked to the West Indies in “The Formation of a Commercial Lobby: The West India Interest, British Colonial Policy and the American Revolution”, *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 71-95. David Beck Ryden cautions against the “myth” of their political power given that there were 558 seats in the Commons in *West Indian Slavery and British Abolition, 1783-1807* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), p. 193.

⁴⁰ Richardson, “The Slave Trade, Sugar and British Economic Growth”, p. 113.

⁴¹ Walvin, *Britain’s Slave Empire*, p. 23.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁴³ Carole Shammas, *The Pre-industrial Consumer in England and America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), p. 77.

⁴⁴ Carole Shammas, “The Revolutionary Impact of European Demand for Tropical Goods”, in John J. McCusker and Kenneth Morgan (eds.), *The Early Modern Atlantic Economy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), pp. 163-186.

Britain's most valuable colonies.⁴⁵ Indeed, Robert Fogel asserts that between 1600-1800, sugar was the "single most important" commodity internationally traded, "dwarfing" in value the trade of other products including grain, fish, tobacco, spices and cloth.⁴⁶ Shortly before the War of American Independence, sugar accounted for about a fifth of British imports; additionally, Jamaica was the wealthiest British American colony, while the British West Indies as a whole constituted 32.2 per cent of the wealth of British America. This large proportion of wealth was in spite of having a significantly lower population than the mainland colonies.⁴⁷ Additionally, British slavers disembarked the vast majority of their slaves in Jamaica, and, as discussed in Chapter Three, the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade conformed to this national trend.⁴⁸ Unlike the mainland southern colonies whose slave population increased from natural increase, the demand for slaves in Jamaica was particularly high as planters typically lost two and three per cent per year on account of deaths outstripping births. As Trevor Burnard has noted, wealth and slavery were thus "inextricably linked" in British America as the areas where slavery thrived were the most prosperous.⁴⁹

The importance of the sugar islands because of their prodigious wealth is further underscored by the numerous conflicts fought by foreign powers for their control. Britain's long-standing rivalry with the French during the eighteenth century is particularly noted among Bristol and Liverpool slave traders, who periodically

⁴⁵ Richard B. Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery: An Economic History of the British West Indies, 1623-1777* (Barbados: University of the West Indies, 1974), p. 11.

⁴⁶ Robert William Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract: The Rise and Fall of American Slavery* (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1989), p. 21.

⁴⁷ Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*, p. 21; Trevor Burnard, "'Prodigious Riches': The Wealth of Jamaica before the American Revolution", *Economic History Review*, 54 (2001), pp. 506-524.

⁴⁸ David Eltis, Stephen D. Behrendt, David Richardson, Manolo Florentino (eds.), *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*, available at: www.slavevoyages.org.

⁴⁹ Burnard, "'Prodigious Riches'", p. 521.

spoke against French competition, and the perceived threat of it, in the trade.⁵⁰ Sugar required substantial capital investments as well as a large labour force due to the intensive nature of its cultivation; planters thus turned to cheaper sources of labour and imported African slaves in larger and larger numbers as the eighteenth century progressed, instead of relying on white indentured servants or Indian labour.⁵¹ Europeans utilised two approaches in the organisation of the slave trade: monopoly joint-stock companies and free, independent traders.⁵² The joint-stock companies established trading forts at various points along the Western coast of Africa from which they carried out their trade initially in gold. From 1672, the British slave trade was run by the Royal African Company with its headquarters at Cape Coast Castle along the Gold Coast. It lost its monopoly on the trade in 1698, however, and the trade was thus opened to free traders. The Company then experienced managerial difficulties until it was formally dissolved in 1752 and replaced by The Company of Merchants Trading to Africa.⁵³ Independent traders, especially those from Bristol and Liverpool, however, enjoyed the most success in the British slave trade. Between 1624 and 1807, an estimated 2,292,269 slaves were delivered to the Caribbean on British vessels.⁵⁴ Jamaica received the most slaves with over 997,879 delivered in this period; Barbados was second in terms of disembarkation, with around 328,879 slaves delivered. For comparison, the Chesapeake region received only around 115,024 slaves, while South Carolina had around 125,538 slaves delivered in the period.⁵⁵ More slaves were traded in the Caribbean to both meet the labour requirements of large sugar plantations but also

⁵⁰ These conflicts are discussed in Chapter Four as to their implications for the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade. Competition and the perceived threat by the French thereof are also examined in Chapter Six.

⁵¹ Farnie, "Commercial Empire of the Atlantic", p. 209.

⁵² Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 343.

⁵³ See Kenneth Morgan (ed.), *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol. 2: The Royal African Company* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. xxi; K. G. Davies, *The Royal African Company* (London: Routledge, 1960).

⁵⁴ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

to sustain the slave population itself, creating a disproportionately higher population of blacks than whites in the British Caribbean. For instance, in 1660, the white population of Barbados and Jamaica was 22,000 and 3,000 respectively, with the black population around 20,000 and 500; by 1713, however, the white population in Barbados and Jamaica was 16,000 and 7,000 respectively while the black population had soared to 45,000 and 55,000.⁵⁶ Thus, by mid-century, masters were outnumbered by their slaves four to one in Barbados, ten to one in Jamaica and seven to one in the Leeward Islands.⁵⁷ Britain also supplied slaves to Spanish America when they held the *Asiento* contract.⁵⁸ As discussed further below, much in the historiography of the slave trade relates to this “numbers” aspect of the trade, including its volume and distribution and debates on its profitability. Its particular organisation in terms of business and entrepreneurship are not as richly debated, a point which this project seeks to address.⁵⁹

Merchant Culture: History and Theory

This study assesses how entrepreneurship, or a particular spirit of enterprise, impacted on the developments within the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities. In so doing, the concepts of entrepreneurship, networks and the theoretical notions of capital must be understood and applied to current understanding of eighteenth-century business practice. The urban and commercial context of the eighteenth-century transatlantic merchant is considered first and is informed by the literature on merchant culture. This will be followed by an analysis

⁵⁶ Dunn, *Sugar & Slaves*, p. 312.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 313.

⁵⁸ See Davies, *Royal African Company*, pp. 327-335. The *Asiento* contract is further discussed in Chapter Four.

⁵⁹ This line of inquiry was initiated by Philip D. Curtin, *The Atlantic Slave Trade: A Census* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1969).

of entrepreneurship and capital, which is applied to this understanding of the eighteenth-century merchant and establishes the theoretical foundations of this dissertation.

It was mentioned above that the commercial growth and expansion of the eighteenth century established the merchant as a key agent of political power and prestige. Additionally, this growth facilitated the "urban renaissance". Chapter Five discusses more specifically how features of the "urban renaissance" were exhibited in the Bristol and Liverpool communities; however, the predominant features are outlined here. Eighteenth-century towns, and particularly provincial ports such as Bristol and Liverpool, significantly grew in population and this growth was accompanied by corresponding developments in commerce, industry and services. With an emphasis on transformation and renewal, these changes in the urban landscape also ushered in notions of improvement and the development of a civic identity.⁶⁰ Thus, while a sense of "civic pride" has long been associated with the nineteenth century, its origins are in the eighteenth century and arguably can and should be considered in this context of growth and change.⁶¹ Neil McKendrick et al. argue for the "democratisation of consumption" during this period in which the broadening of the market altered the relationships among producers, distributors and consumers while simultaneously transforming economic and social values.⁶² Social mobility and status could be achieved through purchasing power and not necessarily by birth alone.⁶³ Successful merchants enjoyed the elevated status attributed to their economic situation, and with this change in status came political involvement.

⁶⁰ Peter Borsay, *The English Urban Renaissance: Culture and Society in a Provincial Town, 1660-1770* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1989), pp. 43, 22.

⁶¹ Jane Longmore, "Civic Liverpool: 1680-1800", in John Belchem (ed.), *Liverpool 800* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006), pp. 113-171. Chapter Five further discusses notions of civic pride, reputation and status as it relates to Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants.

⁶² Neil McKendrick, "The Consumer Revolution of Eighteenth Century England", in Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb (eds.), *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth Century England* (London: Europa, 1982), pp. 9-34.

⁶³ McKendrick, "Consumer Revolution", p. 16.

As already mentioned, merchants played a key role in the development of the early-modern state, particularly because commercial expansion required merchants to look to the state for protection and encouragement of its interests.⁶⁴ Thus, with more economic power, merchants also increasingly took part in politics. This in turn fostered a relationship between business success and civic reputation and impacted upon merchants' self-perceptions and status in the eighteenth-century urban world. Because of this democratisation, certain ideas regarding taste, decorum and standards were also propagated along with these notions of improvement to ensure these developments served to "refine rather than corrupt"; indeed, the eighteenth century is also sometimes characterised as "a century of taste" on both sides of the Atlantic.⁶⁵ Reformation societies, charities and almshouses consequently arose to "prove" that this new wealth was honourably spent and to justify these new commercial developments.⁶⁶

While social changes reflected commercial expansion, physical changes in the landscape did the same. Some of the most notable improvements made during this period include developments in communications infrastructure connected with inland trade. Bridges, turnpike roads and wider, more uniform streets were built to both facilitate trade and cater to the increase in traffic.⁶⁷ Specific transportation improvement schemes, particularly in regards to river transport in Bristol and Liverpool, are noted in Chapter Two and port improvements are discussed further in Chapter Six. In addition to transport, improvements also took place in the form of

⁶⁴ Perry Gauci, *The Politics of Trade: The Overseas Merchant in State and Society, 1660-1720* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), pp. 2, 10.

⁶⁵ John Styles and Amanda Vickery (eds.), *Gender, Taste and Material Culture in Britain and North America, 1700-1830* (New Haven: The Yale Centre for British Art, 2006), pp. 14, 19.

⁶⁶ See Natasha Glaisyer, *The Culture of Commerce in England, 1660-1720* (London: Royal Historical Society, 2006); Jonathan Barry, "Bristol Pride: Civic Identity in Bristol c. 1640-1775", in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton: Radcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 25-48.

⁶⁷ E. L. Jones and M. E. Falkus, "Urban Improvement and the English Economy in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries", in Peter Borsay (ed.), *The Eighteenth Century Town: A Reader in English Urban History* (New York: Longman Group, 1990), pp. 116-159.

public building programs, in which these new buildings were more uniformly constructed in the classical style. The most impressive of these new public buildings were commercial structures such as the merchants' Exchanges based on the model of the Royal Exchange in London, completed in 1671.⁶⁸ The Exchanges in Bristol (1741-1743) and Liverpool (1749-1754) were built by the distinguished Bath architect, John Wood the Elder and both were arranged around a central courtyard and fronted by monumental Palladian facades. These commercial structures were vitally important for conducting business in the city. Merchants arguably received their most valuable pieces of information from informal and formal interactions with colleagues, and thus merchants spent ample amounts of time in the merchant Exchanges and patronising local coffeehouses and taverns.⁶⁹ Coffeehouses in particular were new and important commercial and social spaces. Because certain coffeehouses catered to specific trades, business became socialised and merchants would often conduct business in coffeehouses as well as at the Exchange or counting house.⁷⁰ Coffeehouses also hosted informal drinking clubs and societies, further discussed in Chapter Five as it relates specifically to Bristol and Liverpool. These social groups were important, as they worked to promote solidarity and maintain commercial networks.⁷¹ Like coffeehouses, counting houses were situated in areas that "facilitated shopping around, bargaining and acquiring information" as well as being close to the water where goods were being loaded and unloaded on and off ships.⁷² Both formal and informal meeting places were areas where merchants could

⁶⁸ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 104.

⁶⁹ David Hancock, *Citizens of the World: London Merchants and the Integration of the British Atlantic Economy, 1735-1785* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 88. Madge Dresser shows many prominent members of the Bristol merchant community were also neighbours in *Slavery Obscured*, p. 106.

⁷⁰ Brian Cowan, *The Social Life of Coffee: the Emergence of the British Coffeehouse* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005), p. 169.

⁷¹ Longmore, "Civic Liverpool", p. 141.

⁷² Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 88.

not only conduct business, but access various forms of capital as well, as further discussed below.

While the urban environment of the eighteenth-century English merchant is well understood, the historiography is still rich with discussions of what is meant by “business community” and those that participated in one.⁷³ For example, the term “businessman” was not used in the late colonial period due to the general nature of trade; however, “going into business” and “going into merchandizing” were used by merchants to mean commercial participation.⁷⁴ Additionally, Sheryllynne Haggerty’s study of the British-Atlantic trading community examines contemporary notions of “merchant”, “trader” and “dealer” among others, placed in the context of the commercial community at large. She remarks that merchants enjoyed the position of being at the “top of the trader status tree” and by 1755, the term “often, but not always, implied someone ‘who trafficks to remote countries’” and thus was “implicitly concerned with mercantilist concerns”.⁷⁵ In observing such difference among these contemporary definitions, Perry Gauci cautions that it is “unwise to use terms as ‘business community’ without paying tribute to the diversity of experience within the urban elite”.⁷⁶ Differences and implications in defining what is meant by merchant or a business community impact upon historical studies and scholarship appreciates the nuance involved in historical conceptions of business and business practice.

While much of the scholarship on eighteenth-century business appreciates nuance in the concepts of “merchant” and “business community”, historians are less cognisant of that of entrepreneurship and how this impacted upon the eighteenth-

⁷³ See Sheryllynne Haggerty, *The British-Atlantic Trading Community, 1760-1810: Men, Women, and the Distribution of Goods* (Leiden: Brill, 2006); Gauci, *Politics of Trade*; Richard Grassby, *The Business Community of Seventeenth-Century England* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Hancock, *Citizens of the World*.

⁷⁴ Robert. A. East, “The Business Entrepreneur in a Changing Colonial Economy”, *Journal of Economic History*, 6 Supplement (1946), pp. 16-27.

⁷⁵ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 41.

⁷⁶ Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, p. 7.

century commercial world. This is in part due to the fact that the term "entrepreneur" was not used by merchants themselves at this time. The French economic theorist, Cantillon, coined the term in the mid-eighteenth century and it was not introduced into English economics until the latter part of the nineteenth century by John Stuart Mill.⁷⁷ Although not specifically in use in England however, a more modern conception of entrepreneurship had in fact developed by the eighteenth century, in conjunction with the aforementioned link between an increase in trade and the power of the state. Merchants were at the crux of this relationship, and as Martin Ricketts explains, terms such as "buccaneer" and "privateer" were instead used to connote those engaged in what may now be considered entrepreneurial activity.⁷⁸ Historical studies that fail to define what is considered entrepreneurial are problematic, especially because contention still remains in modern studies of what constitutes an entrepreneur. Economists rarely try to define what is meant by an entrepreneur and instead often rely on the stereotype of a "swashbuckling adventurer".⁷⁹ With regard to the Bristol and Liverpool merchant communities, historians have also used the terms "entrepreneurship" and "entrepreneur" to describe relative commercial success and failure, but have not adequately explained what is meant by these terms. For example, Steve Poole labels part of the commercial community in Bristol as the "entrepreneurial bourgeoisie", but he does not establish his criteria for determining what makes these men entrepreneurial.⁸⁰ Morgan also suggests "entrepreneurial failure" on the part of Bristol merchants, but again, the criteria are not clarified.⁸¹ Likewise, David Richardson notes that the "major entrepreneurs" in the Liverpool trade were

⁷⁷ Ricketts, "Theories of Entrepreneurship", pp. 41, 40.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

⁷⁹ Mark Casson, *The Entrepreneur: An Economic Theory* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2003), p. 1.

⁸⁰ Steve Poole, "To be a Bristolian: Civic Identity and the Social Order, 1750-1850", in Dresser and Ollerenshaw, *Making of Modern Bristol*, pp. 76-96.

⁸¹ Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, p. 221.

instrumental in exploiting new sources of slave supply on the Western coast of Africa; while one can interpret that the exploitation of new resources can be entrepreneurial, there is still a degree of assumption regarding its meaning.⁸² Thus, although entrepreneurship is discussed in historical works, it is rarely grounded in a meaningful and contextualised definition. Moreover, by relying on assumptions that readers understand what is meant by entrepreneur and entrepreneurship, such historical studies have not achieved the more nuanced analysis of eighteenth-century business communities that studies with such a contextualised definition and discussion would accomplish.⁸³

While entrepreneurship is not adequately treated in current literature on the eighteenth-century commercial world, the concept of networks is well known and widely studied. It was mentioned above that networks of exchange created the Atlantic world. Accordingly, the transatlantic commercial world of the eighteenth century was a connected set of markets and merchant networks. This highlights the issue of the importance of communication with, and the cultivation of, business contacts. Indeed, merchant networks in a slaving voyage included not only the merchants who invested in the voyage, but also the suppliers of goods for barter, captains used, factors and agents in the Americas, and the traders on the African coast. Networks, seen as intermediaries between markets and firms, were particularly important to ensure “efficient economic activity” especially in the relative absence of formal institutions and communication systems at this time.⁸⁴ It is accepted that successful merchants became so by developing solid commercial

⁸² David Richardson, “Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade: The Accounts of William Davenport, 1757-1784”, in Roger Anstey and P. Hair (eds.), *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade, and Abolition: Essays to Illustrate Current Knowledge and Research* (Widnes: Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire, 1976), pp. 60-91.

⁸³ Such a definition is discussed further below.

⁸⁴ Jon Stobart, “Personal and Commercial Networks in an English Port: Chester in the Early Eighteenth Century”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30 (2004), pp. 277-293; see also Mark Casson, “Entrepreneurial Networks in International Business”, *Business and Economic History*, 26 (1997), pp. 811-823.

relationships with the merchants and traders with whom they dealt. Thus, trust and reputation were requisite factors in building and maintaining these commercial contacts. Trust and reputation were developed and maintained through reciprocal and repeated interactions and exchanges among the members in merchant networks. Thus, networks formed from "something that may not improperly be called a commercial friendship ... which takes its rise from a long correspondence and is established by a punctual and steady integrity on both sides".⁸⁵ This notion of commercial friendship echoes Adam Smith's observation that "colleagues in office, partners in trade, call one another brothers; and frequently feel towards one another as if they really were so".⁸⁶ Additionally, Sir Alexander Grant, a London merchant, noted that an "Association in Trade was the very next thing to Matrimony" which required "similar or well adapted tempers & dispositions & even personal friendship and affection".⁸⁷

Often, these associations were familial. Richard Grassby notes that an organisational chart of any firm "reads like a genealogy" and client lists and correspondents were passed down through the generations.⁸⁸ The importance of family connections in international trade is often noted. Peter Mathias argues that businesses often operated within a "family matrix", which called for extended kinship networks because the accumulation of significant wealth rarely occurred in one generation by the actions of one merchant, and capital and connections were required at the outset of a business venture to overcome its initial risks.⁸⁹ Personal connections could be created through marriage, which often cemented alliances

⁸⁵ Quoted in Peter Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship in Early Modern Enterprise", in McCusker and Morgan, *Early Modern Atlantic Economy*, pp. 15-36. See also Paul E. Lovejoy and David Richardson, "Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History: The Institutional Foundations of the Old Calabar Slave Trade", *American Historical Review*, 104 (1999), pp. 333-355.

⁸⁶ Quoted in Alan Silver, "Friendship in Commercial Society: Eighteenth Century Social Theory and Modern Sociology", *American Journal of Sociology*, 68:3 (1990), pp. 1474-1504.

⁸⁷ Quoted in Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, pp. 25, 26.

⁸⁸ Grassby, *Business Community*, p. 19.

⁸⁹ Mathias, "Risk, Credit and Kinship", p. 17.

between families with similar business interests, or through family wealth and influence, which initiated potential businessmen into “the insider’s world of personal contacts, confidential relationships, personal trust and status in the trade”.⁹⁰ The “family matrix” and issues of trust also extended to apprentices. Gauci notes “the apprentice could not fail to recognise the potential importance of the master for his future career in trade”.⁹¹ Through the master, the apprentice would learn the intricacies and nuances of the trade, but also make the same contacts as the master. Moreover, many apprentices married into their masters’ families, thereby representing not only “personal attachment, but also enduring commercial priorities”.⁹²

Some historians, however, caution against over-emphasising the importance of kinship for the commercial success of merchants. Haggerty argues that in “an increasingly impersonal world, in which trade was already global, there was no way that traders could know everyone that they dealt with” and that in some cases, “familial networks could often be a burden rather than a help”.⁹³ The eighteenth century witnessed the evolution of the business firm, so many partnerships were open-ended and informal; a merchant could be a partner with another merchant for one or two ventures and then partner up with other individuals or groups at the same time for different ventures.⁹⁴ Merchants often worked in partnership to spread both knowledge and costs, as well as to combat risk, but formal contracts or articles binding these partnerships were few. This is indicative of the importance of trust and personal integrity for the success of individual merchants. Perhaps besides family connections, then, the most important factor in creating partnerships is what David

⁹⁰ Mathias, “Risk, Credit and Kinship”, pp. 19, 18.

⁹¹ Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, p. 73.

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 109. David Hancock’s study of Scottish networks in the Madeira wine trade also addresses this issue. David Hancock, “The Trouble with Networks: Managing the Scots Early Madeira Wine Trade”, *Business History Review*, 79 (2005), pp. 467-491.

⁹⁴ Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 11.

Hancock describes as the “complementarity of business strengths”, which could be geographical or operational in nature.⁹⁵ Whatever reason merchants chose to align with their partners, from an entrepreneurial standpoint, it must be considered how certain partnerships led to commercial success or failure in the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities.

As mentioned above, network relationships were maintained through repeated interactions which in turn built loyalty and trust, and helped to combat risk. Networks also played a crucial role in information transfer and commercial knowledge was spread through merchant correspondence. Letters of introduction and likewise letters of recommendation were particularly important in eighteenth-century business practice because they “included the bearer in the merchant’s established business network and opened up the benefits that came with it”.⁹⁶ These letters often expressed that merchants, agents and captains possessed the desired qualities for good business practice, which are outlined below. Letters were not only vital for information transfer, but important for the propagation of reputation due to their public nature as well. It has been argued that letters had a “critical place in the system of oral and written communication in port cities” precisely because of the disclosed information.⁹⁷ Merchants shared and discussed information provided by newspapers, personal experience and indeed, letters, and so the implications on an individual’s reputation are made particularly clear. Stories of both good and bad business practice, as well as tales of praise and criticism were shared through merchant networks. Toby Ditz’s study of mercantile representations of failure in eighteenth-century Philadelphia demonstrates that merchant correspondence, shared in the public sphere, used certain stock phrases to comment on the merchants’

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁹⁶ Stobart, “Personal and Commercial Networks”, p. 278.

⁹⁷ Toby L. Ditz, “Shipwrecked; or Masculinity Imperiled: Mercantile Representations of Failure and the Gendered Self in Eighteenth Century Philadelphia”, *Journal of American History*, 81: 1 (1994), pp. 51-80.

reputation, honour and masculinity.⁹⁸ The use of stock phrases as it relates to entrepreneurship is worth mentioning here, as it is illustrative of how “story-telling” operates as a key ingredient in social network theory as way to foster solidarity and identity. In the modern context Robert Putnam, as well as Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak, espouse the notion that dense social ties facilitate gossip and other means of developing reputations. Cohen and Prusak argue that “verbal codes” are created throughout networks that help develop a sense of shared identity; in this way, if one were to ask several investment bankers about their worst plane trip, “the stories seem to merge into one common tale of woe”.⁹⁹ No doubt Philadelphia merchants’ representations of failure through their correspondence operated in the same way. In one respect, using stock phrases, or “verbal codes” was simply part of the business practice, in that letters of instruction, for instance, followed a particular template. However, such as in the case of the Philadelphia merchants, their usage is also indicative of ways in which trust and solidarity are promoted and maintained through networks and thus had a deeper social and cultural meaning.

There were, however, other important ways in which merchants received the required information. Commercial publications, such as bills of entry, exchange rates and marine lists gave valuable day-to-day information. John McCusker notes these types of tracts developed when merchants decided it was to their best advantage to share information that was “previously thought more valuable for being kept secret”.¹⁰⁰ By publishing these “secrets”, efficiency was increased and businesses could be more productive because merchants had more regular, comprehensive

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 54.

⁹⁹ Don Cohen and Laurence Prusak, *In Good Company: How Social Capital Makes Organizations Work* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 2001), p. 61.

¹⁰⁰ John J. McCusker “The Demise of Distance: The Business Press and the Origins of the Information Revolution in the Early Modern Atlantic World”, Reprinted from *American Historical Review*, 110 (2005), pp. 295-321.

knowledge of the different markets.¹⁰¹ This is further indicative of the importance of knowledge in the commercial world. Other print sources include manuals. Haggerty asserts, "some elite merchants often had a whole library consisting of items such as 'how-to' guides, reference works, town histories and literary works".¹⁰² These commercial tracts taught merchants how to apply techniques such as double entry bookkeeping, but perhaps more importantly, discussed the *personal* attributes merchants should possess. Craig Muldrew discusses these important socio-cultural aspects of merchant and commercial life when he notes that with the nature of risk in trade, "the stress on trust as a necessary social bond meant that increasingly a good reputation for honesty and reliability in obligations was of great social importance".¹⁰³ Reputation, trust and credit were thus synonymous and commercial manuals taught merchants what was expected of them.

The eighteenth-century merchants' particular urban and commercial context thus shaped their business practices. Merchant communities, as the "social base of the merchant universe" arguably retained their own culture and ties of solidarity, which were propagated through correspondence, commercial manuals and, as will be seen later, formal and informal interactions.¹⁰⁴ As will now be discussed, this context allowed for entrepreneurship and the application of various types of capital to influence their commercial success. While the "urban renaissance" is discussed above as it relates to the Bristol and Liverpool experience, economic and sociological studies explore other theoretical constructs that shape the socio-economic context. Mark Granovetter facilitates a discussion of both general business history and economics with a social dimension. While specifically targeting "modern industrial

¹⁰¹ McCusker, "Demise of Distance", p. 305.

¹⁰² Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 114.

¹⁰³ Craig Muldrew, *The Economy of Obligation: the Culture of Credit and Social Relations in Early Modern England* (Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998), p. 148.

¹⁰⁴ Frederic Mauro, "Merchant Communities, 1350-1750", in James D. Tracy (ed.), *The Rise of Merchant Empires: Long Distance Trade in the Early Modern World 1350-1750* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 255-287.

society", he raises the issue of the extent to which "economic action is embedded in structures of social relations" and addresses the question of how institutions and human behaviour are influenced by social relations and interactions.¹⁰⁵ This issue, however, is also applicable to the eighteenth-century Atlantic world. Trading networks grew in both breadth and sophistication during this period and merchant behaviour within these networks should be analysed to ascertain to what degree this behaviour was indeed informed by embedded social structures. Granovetter also uses the concept of oversocialisation in his discussion of economic behaviour. An oversocialised person is one who is "overwhelmingly sensitive to the opinions of others and hence obedient to the dictates of consensually developed systems of norms and values, internalised through socialisation so obedience is not perceived as a burden".¹⁰⁶ Economically speaking, oversocialisation works to internalise "normative standards of behaviour as to guarantee orderly transactions".¹⁰⁷ Again, Granovetter uses this term for modern applications, but it could equally be used for early modern and eighteenth-century merchants as well. As mentioned above, business and economic historians note that reputation and trust were crucial in forging and maintaining business contacts in merchants' networks. Like Muldrew, Joel M. Podolny and Karen C. Page note that in a network, actors pursue repeated and enduring exchanges in a context with no legitimate authority to regulate any disputes that arise from these exchanges.¹⁰⁸ The guiding principle behind this form of organisation is a "spirit of goodwill". This "spirit" gives members a sense of obligation to each other rather than a desire to take advantage, much like

¹⁰⁵ Mark Granovetter, "Economic Action and Social Structure: The Problem of Embeddedness", *American Journal of Sociology*, 91 (1985), pp. 481-510.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 488.

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁸ Joel M. Podolny and Karen C. Page, "Network Forms of Organization", in Richard Swedberg (ed.), *New Developments in Economic Sociology Vol. 1* (Cheltenham: Edward Elgar, 2005), pp. 481-500.

Granovetter's argument of a context of embeddedness.¹⁰⁹ Eighteenth-century business ethics were thus embedded in market activities "wherein relations of obligation and dependence forged commercial bonds tempered by sociability" and these moral factors "provided strong reasons for stressing cooperation within marketing structures of the period".¹¹⁰

As mentioned above, historians' more ably deal with what businessmen and merchants were, than they do in regards to their entrepreneurship. However, definitions by business historians are in agreement with those concepts elaborated upon in the literature of eighteenth-century enterprise, which can be used to comment on entrepreneurship. Stanley Chapman asserts that merchants included general traders rather than specialists, while Robert A. East describes a colonial merchant as one having a broad interest in imports and exports in a "quasi-international" economy—or, specific to this study, the Atlantic economy.¹¹¹ Some studies define entrepreneurs as economic opportunists and "jacks of all trades" who are sufficiently good at many skills, which although applied to current understanding, are closely aligned with the idea of eighteenth-century traders operating in a general commercial context.¹¹² *The London Tradesman*, first published in 1747, described commerce as "the Sphere of the Merchant" that "extends itself to all the known World and gives Life and Vigour to the whole Machine".¹¹³ Due to the worldly nature of the profession then, a merchant "ought to be a Man of an extensive Genius" with an understanding not only of "Goods and Merchandize in general ... but he must know Mankind and be acquainted with the different Manners and Customs of all the

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 403.

¹¹⁰ Beverly Lemire, *The Business of Everyday Life: Gender, Practice and Social Politics in England, 1600-1900* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 24.

¹¹¹ Stanley Chapman, *Merchant Enterprise in Britain: From the Industrial Revolution to World War I* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), p. 35; East "Business Entrepreneur", p. 16.

¹¹² George Herberton Evans Jr., "A Theory of Entrepreneurship", *Journal of Economic History*, 12 (1942), pp. 142-146.

¹¹³ Robert Campbell, *The London Tradesman* originally published by T. Gardner (1747) (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1969), p. 284.

Trading Nations”; therefore, he must be “as well acquainted with the Manners and Customs of all the Nations he trades with as his own”.¹¹⁴ These descriptions imply what the merchant did (his role) and what kind of person the merchant was (his personality), which are two considerations tackled by entrepreneurial theory.

Indeed, these considerations of eighteenth-century business practice are supported by current notions of entrepreneurship. Contention exists in current studies of entrepreneurship and entrepreneurs, particularly because entrepreneurial theory is analysed from two different approaches, each with their own limitations.¹¹⁵ The first approach is functional, in that the specific role of the entrepreneur is defined. The second is indicative, whereby the entrepreneur is described in terms of his or her personality.¹¹⁶ Economists have typically utilised the functional approach while economic historians have adopted the indicative; thus most entrepreneurial studies have not integrated these approaches into a single, cohesive framework. Mark Casson’s recent work has achieved such integration, as his definition of an entrepreneur as “someone who specialises in taking judgmental decisions about the coordination of scarce resources” encompasses both the entrepreneur’s role and requisite personal characteristics.¹¹⁷ This dissertation also seeks an integrated approach. An analysis of the entrepreneur that encompasses both his role and his personality falls under the umbrella term of “management”, and slaving voyages required particular managerial skill.¹¹⁸ When applied to the context of eighteenth-century slave trade merchants, Casson’s definition embodies the notion of slave

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 292-293.

¹¹⁵ For a discussion of the limitations see Howard E. Aldrich and Catherine Zimmer. “Entrepreneurship through Social Networks”, in Donald Sexton and Richard Smiler (eds.), *The Art and Science of Entrepreneurship* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1986), pp. 3-23; Casson, *The Entrepreneur*.

¹¹⁶ Casson, *The Entrepreneur*, p. 19. These two approaches are also known as demand and supply, further explored in Patricia H. Thornton, “The Sociology of Entrepreneurship”, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 25 (1999), pp. 19-46.

¹¹⁷ Casson, *The Entrepreneur*, p. 20.

¹¹⁸ Joseph Schumpeter, “Entrepreneur”, in Swedberg, *New Developments in Economic Sociology*, pp. 267-298.

merchants as decision makers, for example, in terms of assessing market opportunities, and as coordinators of resources, by for instance gathering the necessary capital, knowledge and experience from a group of investors in order to conduct a voyage. Entrepreneurial studies define the role of the entrepreneur as one who assumes risk, supplies financial capital, is an innovator, decision maker, coordinator of resources, and engages in arbitrage, which fall in line with the slave trader's role. Studies additionally note such personal characteristics as initiative, foresight, courage, imagination, optimism and low risk aversion, which also encompass the traits of successful slave merchants.¹¹⁹

Eighteenth-century sources also note similar traits. Baron Hawkesbury asserted that "spirit" and "diligence" combined with "vigour" and "industry" contributed to the success of Liverpool merchants.¹²⁰ "Spirit" in particular was often cited as a requisite quality for good commercial practice. Liverpool merchant James Penny informed the Privy Council in 1788 that Liverpool slave merchants owed their success in the trade to a "spirit of enterprise which is peculiar to the British merchant".¹²¹ John Tarleton of Liverpool also attributed success to the "*enterprising spirit* of the people" that enabled Liverpool "to carry on the African slave trade with vigour".¹²² Certain qualities were also seen as necessary in building trust and reputation for commercial success. Upon establishing a new partnership in Jamaica, Francis Bright emphasised the importance of "transacting all our affairs with

¹¹⁹ See Robert F. Hebert and Albert N. Link, "Historical Perspectives on the Entrepreneur", *Foundations and Trends in Entrepreneurship*, Vol. 2 (2006), pp. 261-408; Robert Baron, "The Cognitive Perspective: A Valuable Tool for Answering Entrepreneurship's Basic 'Why' Questions", *Journal of Business Venturing*, 19 (2004), pp. 221-239; Mark Casson, *Entrepreneurship and Business Culture* (Aldershot: Edward Elgar, 1995); Nigel Wadeson, "Cognitive Aspects of Entrepreneurship: Decision Making and Attitudes to Risk", in Casson, Yeung and Basu, *The Oxford Handbook of Entrepreneurship*, pp. 91-114.

¹²⁰ Examination of Baron Hawkesbury 27 Feb 1788, BoT 6/9.

¹²¹ Examination of James Penny, 27 Feb 1788, BoT 6/9.

¹²² Gomer Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers and Letters of Marque with an Account of the Liverpool Slave Trade, 1744-1812* (Reprinted by McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004), p. 610.

prudence and punctuality” to become a “more established name”.¹²³ Not having these qualities, on the other hand, resulted in poor business practice, as described in a letter from Jeremiah Meyler in Kingston to his cousin Richard back in Bristol: “in regard to our partner Mr. Hall he is not the industrious man he was some time past” as he spent much of his time “in bed & visiting the fair sex”.¹²⁴ Fortunately for the partnership, two years later, Charles Hall began “to apply himself to business” so Jeremiah Meyler was able to relinquish more responsibilities in the firm.¹²⁵ Such characteristics as industry, prudence, spirit and vigour thus reinforce the idea that eighteenth-century merchants, although not necessarily using the term “entrepreneur” recognised similar attributes that were essential for commercial prosperity. Therefore, there is no danger of anachronism in using modern notions of entrepreneurship as an analytical tool. This interwoven relationship between a merchant’s entrepreneurial role and the desired character traits for business is perhaps best encapsulated by Bristol merchant Isaac Hobhouse’s agents in Montserrat when they attributed a successful voyage in 1722 to his “good management and to [the] conduct of Captain Holland who proved to be a very honest man and no ways short of the character you gave him”.¹²⁶ These ideas are further explored in Chapter Four.

Casson’s definition emphasises that an entrepreneur is an individual, but teams or firms can be comprised of “coalitions of entrepreneurs”.¹²⁷ Recent themes in entrepreneurship, particularly from a sociological standpoint also highlight the nature of the group. It has been argued that organisations are “culturally embedded and historically specific” and are thus reflective of social conditions at a particular

¹²³ Francis Bright to Bright, Whatley & Co., 15 Dec 1752 in Kenneth Morgan, (ed.), *The Bright-Meyler Papers: A Bristol- West India Connection, 1732-1783* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 273.

¹²⁴ Jeremiah Meyler to Richard Meyler, 26 Nov 1752 in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 271.

¹²⁵ Richard Meyler to Jeremiah Meyler, 27 Mar 1754 in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 296.

¹²⁶ Agents in Montserrat to Isaac Hobhouse, 5 Jan 1722, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, Bristol Reference Library (hereafter BRL).

¹²⁷ Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 79.

historical point; entrepreneurs can both reproduce or challenge the existing social order depending on the diversity of skills or points of view they may bring to the organisation.¹²⁸ Therefore, entrepreneurs act or react in a particular cultural context, singularly and as a group. The impact of organisations which acted as a focus for entrepreneurial activity will also be seen in the examination of Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants. Moreover, in a given context, entrepreneurship is not static. It is instead a “continuing function” rather than a “once-for-all, or possibly intermittent activity”.¹²⁹ Entrepreneurship as a continuing function gives rise to the notion of a life-cycle in that an entrepreneur’s career path is marked by various stages. Typically it would start with an entry-level but specialised position, then rising through the ranks increasing responsibility and broadening networks, achieving a leadership position, and retiring at which point his position becomes largely symbolic.¹³⁰ Likewise, the idea of a life-cycle or particular career path was noted by contemporaries. James Wallace asserted that the “usual gradation” for Liverpool merchants was “to take poor boys apprentice for long terms ... became good seamen, were then made second mates, then first mates, then captains, and afterwards factors on the islands”.¹³¹ While this process did not necessarily occur for all slave trade merchants, successful business practice was developed through experience, which Wallace certainly intimated. Because entrepreneurship was developed through experience, the idea that the entrepreneur is “the ruggedly independent self-employed individual” is largely “of popular myth”.¹³² This notion of a life-cycle of entrepreneurship, particularly in regards to networks, is considered in this dissertation.

¹²⁸ Howard E. Aldrich, “Entrepreneurship”, in Neil J. Smelser and Richard Swedberg (eds.), *Handbook of Economic Sociology* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), pp. 451–488.

¹²⁹ Casson, *The Entrepreneur*, p. 22.

¹³⁰ Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 100.

¹³¹ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 216.

¹³² Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 100.

As entrepreneurship is embedded in a social context, and organisations are thought to be a vehicle for entrepreneurial activity, merchants' associational networks are integral to the discussion of entrepreneurship in the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade. Current business literature comments on different levels of organisation, which must be mentioned here. As noted above, the entrepreneur acts singularly or as part of a group. Likewise, individuals in a business enterprise can be further organised into networks, firms and clusters. This dissertation, however, emphasises the network organisation of the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant community, particularly because firms and clusters are more prominent in the literature after the advent of industrialisation; as such, firms and clusters are more difficult to contextualise in the eighteenth-century business context. There are, however some useful links in the theoretical presuppositions of each type of organisation. Casson identifies firms as an extension of the personality of the entrepreneur, whereby its competitive advantage lies in its expert decision-making.¹³³ Additionally, Edith Penrose defines a firm in its most basic sense as a "collection of resources".¹³⁴ As will be defined more specifically below, and emphasised throughout the dissertation, the particular resources (collectively known here as "capital") Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant networks had access to shaped their performance in the slave trade. Additionally, it took the entrepreneur, or the merchant with a particular spirit of enterprise to use these resources to his trading advantage. Lastly, a cluster is defined as a "wider agglomeration of industries that may be connected by common products, technologies, markets or institutional frameworks".¹³⁵ What is most useful about this concept is the life-cycle model of clusters in which clusters experience four stages, culminating in saturation.

¹³³ Mark Casson, "The Nature of the Firm Reconsidered: Information Synthesis and Entrepreneurial Organization", *Management International Review*, 36 (1996), pp. 55-94.

¹³⁴ Edith Penrose, *The Theory of the Growth of the Firm* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 77.

¹³⁵ John F. Wilson and Andrew Popp, *Industrial Clusters and Regional Business Networks in England, 1750-1970* (Hampshire: Ashgate Publishing, 2003), pp. 3, 7.

It is argued here that the business networks of Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants also exhibited a life-cycle pattern relative to access to capital. Indeed, Chapter Five demonstrates that the Liverpool slave merchant networks became saturated by the end of the period. All of these types of organisations can thus be used to comment on entrepreneurship, however, for the case of Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants, discussing how entrepreneurship is accessed is best conducted through an analysis of their networks.

Entrepreneurship and capital are interconnected concepts. Entrepreneurship is embedded in a particular social context in which various forms of capital also exist and can thus be accessed. Capital exists in various forms, three of which are pertinent to this study, economic, human, and social. Economic capital includes financial resources. In the slave trade, economic capital financed the full scope of slaving voyages, including the cost of outfitting ships, purchasing goods for barter and hiring crew members. Human capital equates to knowledge and skills. Stephen Behrendt's recent work on Liverpool slave ships' captains as human capital demonstrates that knowledgeable and experienced captains in the Liverpool trade comprised a significant advantage for Liverpool slave traders.¹³⁶ Social capital, however, is more nuanced, with facets of the theory debated in business and socio-economic literature. Indeed, Putnam asserts that the term "social capital" has been "independently invented at least six times over the twentieth century", highlighting the nature of the debate.¹³⁷ Pierre Bordieu, however, defines social capital as "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources that are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalised relationships of mutual

¹³⁶ Stephen D. Behrendt, "Human Capital in the British Slave Trade", in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 66-98.

¹³⁷ Robert D. Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of the American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2000), p. 19.

acquaintance and recognition".¹³⁸ Put simply, social capital includes the resources, "real or potential, gained from relationships".¹³⁹ At the core of this theory is the idea that social networks have value; access to social capital exists in networks and is inclusive of the "norms of reciprocity and trustworthiness that arise from them".¹⁴⁰ Whereas economic capital refers to a tangible resource and human capital refers to properties of individuals, social capital rests in the connections among people. Thus, the sources of social capital are varied, leading some sociologists to define social capital by its function and outcome rather than its sources.¹⁴¹ Indeed, merchants in the eighteenth century built relationships with each other not only through their business practice, but through political involvement, membership in both cultural and social clubs and by patronising the same taverns and coffeehouses. It is this access that is what is important, and not necessarily the resources themselves; as Alejandro Portes warns, equating social capital with resources is "tantamount to saying the successful succeed".¹⁴²

Much like the building of trust and reputation in the eighteenth-century commercial context, social capital is built through what Putnam, Lewis Feldstein and Donald Cohen refer to as "multistrandedness".¹⁴³ This relates to the notion that people have numerous opportunities to network, for instance, through membership in political, social or religious clubs and associations. These different opportunities can be seen as foci around which individuals organise their social lives and create their social context, reinforcing the diversity in the sources through which social

¹³⁸ Pierre Bourdieu, "Forms of Capital", in John Richardson (ed.), *Handbook of Theory and Research in the Sociology of Education* (New York: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 241-258.

¹³⁹ Lin, Nan, *Social Capital: A Theory of Social Structure and Action* (Port Chester: Cambridge University Press, 2001), p. 23.

¹⁴⁰ Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, p. 19.

¹⁴¹ James S. Coleman, "Social Capital in the Creation of Human Capital", *American Journal of Sociology*, 94 (1988), pp. 95-120.

¹⁴² Alejandro Portes, "Social Capital: Its Origins and Applications in Modern Sociology", *Annual Review of Sociology*, 24 (1998), pp. 1-24.

¹⁴³ Robert Putnam, Lewis Feldstein and Donald J. Cohen, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2003), p. 291.

capital can be accessed.¹⁴⁴ Furthermore, multiple opportunities for interaction create a “redundancy” in interaction, reinforcing social ties by strengthening feelings of loyalty, trust and obligation.¹⁴⁵

Access to social capital can be either bonding (exclusive) or bridging (inclusive). Bonding capital often refers to the relationships among family members, close friends, or those connected through religious and ethnic ties. In contrast, bridging capital refers to acquaintances or colleagues.¹⁴⁶ Granovetter and Ronald S. Burt have theorised similar and useful concepts related to bonding and bridging capital. Granovetter discusses the idea of strong and weak ties. This argument asserts that the more acquaintances, or weak ties, one has in his social (or merchant, in this case) network, the more access to information he will receive. This is because weak ties serve as bridges among different networks and knowledge can be spread among groups more readily. Conversely, if one’s network was comprised simply of close friends, or strong ties, this information would most likely stay within the group.¹⁴⁷ Burt expanded on this notion by espousing the idea of “structural holes”; a person at the “hole” of a social structure can effectively broker across different groups, thus spreading alternative ways of thinking and behaving.¹⁴⁸ In this way, social capital has both positive and negative outcomes.

For the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchant, then, social capital was accessed from the other people in his network besides himself. Besides commercial interactions, redundancy in contact was achieved for merchants through membership

¹⁴⁴ Scott L. Feld, “The Focused Organization of Social Ties”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 86 (1981), pp. 1015-1035; Michael Woolcock, “The Place of Social Capital in Understanding Social and Economic Outcomes”, available at <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/5/13/1824913.pdf>, pp. 1-36, accessed 1/1/2010.

¹⁴⁵ Putnam, Feldstein and Cohen, *Better Together*, p. 291. Redundancy in interaction would occur for two merchants, for instance, if they both sat on the Town Council, were members of the same drinking club, attended the same church and met each other regularly in these different settings.

¹⁴⁶ Woolcock, “The Place of Social Capital”, p. 7.

¹⁴⁷ Mark Granovetter, “The Strength of Weak Ties”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 78 (1973), pp. 1360-1380.

¹⁴⁸ Ronald S. Burt, “Structural Holes and Good Ideas”, *American Journal of Sociology*, 110 (2004), pp. 349-399.

in associations and clubs and the access of various types of social capital were simultaneous processes in the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities. Additionally, as mentioned above, feelings of loyalty and trust were also perpetuated through frequent correspondence in addition to face-to-face contact. It has been argued that the associational world of merchants became more complex and impersonal as the eighteenth century progressed, particularly with the advent of more formal payment institutions such as the bill system; as a consequence, these relationships formalised and the importance of social capital declined.¹⁴⁹ However, it is argued here that the importance of social capital was not lessened in this period, rather formal institutions and arrangements only altered network dynamics. The access to social capital and its importance in the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchant networks is further explored in Chapter Five.

All three types of capital relate to resources and relationships and the theory of entrepreneurship can be seen as an umbrella framework that binds them all. Current business literature discusses the various types of capital and indeed the access to it as sources of competitive advantage; competitive advantage can be further defined by a firm's "core competencies", or particular bundles of skills and technology that are unique and add value.¹⁵⁰ The comparative advantages Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants had in terms of accessing various resources can be used to discuss their relative success and failure in the trade.

¹⁴⁹ David Richardson and Robin Pearson, "Social Capital, Institutional Innovation and Atlantic Trade before 1800", *Business History*, 50 (2008), pp. 765-780.

¹⁵⁰ See Jay B. Barney and Patrick M. Wright, "On Becoming a Strategic Partner: The Role of Human Resources in Gaining Competitive Advantage", *Human Resource Management*, 37 (1998), pp. 31-46; Gary Hamel and C. K. Prahalad, *Competing for the Future* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1994).

The Project

Gaps in Literature

This dissertation is a comparative project that examines the slave trade merchants of Bristol and Liverpool in their economic and socio-cultural contexts. The theoretical framework of entrepreneurship and various notions of capital applied within associational networks lies at the crux of this analysis in determining whether a “particular spirit of enterprise” led to Liverpool’s ultimate success in the slave trade. An interdisciplinary approach is therefore utilised and draws on previous work from different methodological frameworks in order to achieve a more comprehensive analysis. Thus, not only does this work aim to address certain gaps in the historiography, it also seeks to serve as a bridge between these different frameworks in the attempt to achieve such comprehension through an interdisciplinary approach.

Eric Williams’ perhaps controversial study instigated intense debate on the profits of the slave trade and the implications of the capital invested in the trade. However, as mentioned above, the bulk of the scholarly attention on the Atlantic slave trade over the last fifty years has primarily focused on the economics of the trade, such as the volume and distribution of slave sales. Scholarly debates have thus arisen out of this attention. Philip Curtin’s seminal study initiated discussions and debates on the volume of the trade, which has subsequently sparked inquiry into such issues as the distributions of the age and sex of slave cargoes, mortality rates, and pricing strategies.¹⁵¹ Historians have also considered the commercial aspect of

¹⁵¹ See Klein, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; Curtin, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; David Richardson, “Slave Exports from West and West-Central Africa, 1700-1810: New Estimates of Volume and Distribution”, *Journal of African History*, 30 (1989), pp. 1-22; David Eltis, “Mortality and Voyage Length in the Middle Passage: New Evidence from the Nineteenth Century”, *Journal of Economic History*, 44 (1984), pp. 301-308; Herbert Klein and Stanley Engerman, “Slave Mortality on British Ships, 1791-1797”, in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition*, pp. 113-126; D. P. Lamb, “Volume and Tonnage of the Liverpool Slave Trade, 1772-1807”, in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition*, pp. 91-113.

the trade, both in how appropriate cargoes were assorted for trade on different parts of the African coast and how trade was conducted between the English merchants and African traders.¹⁵² Thus, there is much in the literature which focuses on the “numbers aspect” of the trade. These considerations are further explored in the following chapters.

There is also extensive historiography on eighteenth-century commerce in general, the Atlantic slave trade specifically, and English merchant communities that this project draws on, and the gaps in current knowledge influenced the research questions and focus for this current study. As demonstrated in the business history and mercantile culture section, an important piece of the commercial discussion is in regards to the themes of trust, personal reputation (especially with reference to securing credit) and kinship, and these themes are well documented in business literature and are common themes in merchant correspondence of the time.¹⁵³ There is still, however, relatively little research which places the economics of the trade in the context of a broader business culture. This project weaves together commercial and socio-cultural material to form the much needed comprehensive and comparative analysis of Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities.

As noted above, there is something of a void in the socio-cultural analyses of the Bristol and Liverpool slave traders. Recent strides have been made, however, to address the void in this type of analysis. The recent work by Madge Dresser and Sheryllynne Haggerty has informed this study.¹⁵⁴ Dresser has conducted important work on the Bristol slave traders in terms of their involvement in the civic culture of

¹⁵² See Lovejoy and Richardson, “Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History”; Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn, “The Economic Costs of West African Participation in the Atlantic Slave Trade”, in Henry A. Gemery and Jan S. Hogendorn (eds.), *The Uncommon Market: Essays in the Economic History of the Atlantic Slave Trade* (New York: Academic Press, 1979), pp. 143-163; Richardson, “Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade”; Francis E. Hyde, Bradbury B. Parkinson and Sheila Marriner, “The Nature and Profitability of the Liverpool Slave Trade”, *Economic History Review*, 5 (1953), pp. 368-377; Williams, *Capitalism and Slavery*.

¹⁵³ See Mathias, “Risk, Credit and Kinship”; Hancock, *Citizens of the World*.

¹⁵⁴ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*; Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*.

Bristol, yet her focus is on the link between urban development and the wealth accumulated by those involved in the slave trade; similarly, while Haggerty has defined and described the Liverpool merchant community, an emphasis on the social involvement in the city of the prominent slave traders and how this contributed to business performance is lacking. Additionally, in-depth studies by Kenneth Morgan, David Richardson, Patrick McGrath, Walter Minchinton, Francis Hyde, Paul Clemens and Diana Ascott on the ports of Bristol and Liverpool have provided context for their commercial development and raised questions regarding the reasons for Liverpool's dominance in the slave trade.¹⁵⁵ These studies of the Bristol and Liverpool merchant communities on a macro-scale have provided guidance for this comparative project.

On a micro-scale, exemplary case studies have also been conducted that have helped lay the groundwork for this project. David Richardson and Kenneth Morgan have conducted the most comprehensive work on the Bristol and Liverpool slave trades and possibly eighteenth-century British-Atlantic trade in general. Richardson's study on the Liverpoolian slave trader, William Davenport, and Morgan's work on the Bristolian slave trader, James Rogers, demonstrate the insight that can be gained from a detailed analysis of an individual merchant who has left more complete records behind.¹⁵⁶ From these more in-depth studies on a micro-scale, questions emerge regarding the larger patterns that existed in the respective merchant communities. Richardson's study of Davenport, a relative specialist in the

¹⁵⁵ See for example Kenneth Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); David Richardson, *The Bristol Slave Traders: A Collective Portrait* (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Society, 1975); Patrick McGrath, *The Merchant Venturers of Bristol: A History of the Society of Merchant Venturers of the City of Bristol from its Origin to the Present Day* (Bristol: Western Printing Services Ltd., 1975); Walter E. Minchinton, *The Port of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1972); Diana Ascott, Fiona Lewis and Michael Power, *Liverpool 1660-1750: People, Prosperity and Power* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2006); Francis Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey: An Economic History of a Port, 1700-1970* (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1971); Paul G. E. Clemens, "The Rise of Liverpool", *Economic History Review*, 5 (1952), pp. 211-225.

¹⁵⁶ Richardson, "Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade"; Morgan, "James Rogers and the Bristol Slave Trade", *Historical Research*, 76 (2003), pp. 189-216.

trade, led Richardson to question the organisation of slaving ventures and how merchants organised themselves among ships' husbands and sleeping partners. Morgan's study on Rogers also invites questions of the organisation of the slave trade at large, particularly because James Rogers went bankrupt, and so his experience is not typical of the slave merchant's experience. Whilst these studies lack the comparative aspect, they have established precedents for this study, not only because they highlight important research questions, but because they influenced the objective to analyse several merchants in depth to develop this much needed comprehensive picture. Influenced by these aforementioned studies, this project's approach is one that analyses the slave trade in Bristol and Liverpool on the macro- and micro-scale, adding further comprehension to this comparative examination.

Research Questions

It is well known that Liverpool surpassed Bristol as Britain's premier slave trading port in the mid-eighteenth century, but the reasons for Liverpool's dominance are still a cause for great debate. The limitations of the historiography in answering why Liverpool became Britain's leading slave trade port influenced the primary question of this dissertation; did Liverpool slave merchants have a more "enterprising spirit" than the slave merchants of Bristol which caused them to be more successful in the trade?

The answers to subsidiary questions will contribute to the discussion of this main question. Some of these questions refer to the organisation of the trade while others address socio-cultural patterns in the two ports. First, it is important to ascertain the size and structure of both slave trade merchant communities. Once this is distinguished, it is then key to determine how the slave trade was organised in both ports. Thus other questions addressed include what was the size and

composition of investment groups in both ports? Did these change over time? Were these patterns similar for the case study merchants in each port?

Secondly, in determining the organisation of the slave trade in both cities, it is also important to address to what degree these networks were integrated and how this integration was established, particularly in light of demographic changes in both ports over the course of the eighteenth century; was there an importance placed on “fresh blood” being initiated into these communities? Did these demographic implications affect Bristol and Liverpool merchants’ enterprising spirit?

These first questions relate to the organisation of the slave trade, and how an enterprising spirit contributed to and affected the organisation of the trade in both ports as well as their success in the trade. The following questions look at the socio-cultural aspects of the slave merchants’ enterprise and how this contributed to the creation and maintenance of merchant networks: in what types of cultural and political organisations were Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants involved? Where did merchants reside in the community? Did this change over time? Lastly, how did this impact upon their business practice? Did a merchant’s life outside the commercial world contribute to an entrepreneurial character?

These questions fall into two general categories, encompassing the business side of the trade and the socio-cultural side of the merchant communities. They work together to create a comprehensive profile of the communities. These categories inform the structure of the dissertation which is discussed below.

Methodology and Sources

This project analyses the men involved in slave trading ventures from Bristol and Liverpool in the eighteenth century, specifically from 1725-1807. The start date was chosen because Bristol entered the slave trade well before Liverpool and had its

highest points of investment in the period between 1728-1732 and 1737-1738.¹⁵⁷ This is before Liverpool's participation in the trade really accelerated in the mid-century. Therefore it is important to recognise that the major participants in the Bristol and Liverpool trades were not necessarily contemporaries trading at the same time, and trading practices and circumstances would have developed over time. Moreover, 1807 is the logical choice to mark the end of the period of study as it coincides with the abolition of the British slave trade. Importantly, the established timeline also covers the height of Britain's involvement in the Atlantic slave trade.

One of the most important sources used for this project is the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade database, which has been updated from the CD-ROM version and is now accessible online.¹⁵⁸ Extensive queries were made of this database to ascertain the trends in organisation of slaving ventures, as well as the specific information on the trading networks of the case study merchants. Specifically, an important category for research queried from this database was that of ownership for slave ventures. It is important for this study to see who the prolific slave merchants were in terms of primary ownership, but also who these merchants entered into partnerships with as secondary owners. From this, business relationships can be understood as it can be shown who merchants worked with most often and over what periods of time, signifying the trends in the organisation of the trade. Relationships were further analysed and graphically represented using social network analysis and a program called Pajek. The details of how this was achieved, including a discussion of particular considerations when using the database, is found in the Technical Appendix.

These investigations helped to identify the main individuals who form the case studies for the project. Twelve merchants, six from Bristol and six from Liverpool,

¹⁵⁷ David Richardson, *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth Century Slave Trade to America Vol. 2 1730-1745* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1987), p. xv.

¹⁵⁸ Eltis, et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

were selected to demonstrate how they fit in with the general patterns discussed. Michael Becher, Henry Bright, Isaac Hobhouse, John Fowler, James Laroche and James Rogers represent the merchants from Bristol while Foster Cunliffe, William Davenport, Thomas Earle, Benjamin Heywood, William James and John Tarleton are those from Liverpool. These merchants were selected as they represented the trade in both cities at different points in time and each participated in a significant number of voyages. The points in time were selected from Richardson's four-volume *Bristol, Africa, and the Eighteenth Century Atlantic Slave Trade*, which established four significant time periods as well as commented on the core groups of merchants in each period. These time periods include 1698-1729, 1730-1745, 1746-1769, and 1770-1807; he labels these periods for Bristol as the years of expansion, ascendancy, decline and lastly, the final years. These volumes identified core groups of slave traders that were responsible for managing the most voyages in the given period. The first volume lists nineteen traders who organised about sixty per cent of Bristol's voyages; the second volume asserted that about twenty merchants dominated the trade throughout the period, although the importance of different individuals fluctuated over time; the third volume noted that about half of the slaving voyages were managed by thirteen agents, and in the final volume, about seventy-five per cent of the voyages were managed by a group of just ten.¹⁵⁹ Merchants were selected from Bristol who engaged in roughly the same amount of voyages as primary owners during these established time frames. An analysis of Liverpool's core merchants, however, particularly in different time periods, has not been as thorough as Richardson's work on Bristol. Wallace commented in 1795 that in the latter period between 1783 and 1793, the trade was supported on "average by ten houses"; likewise, J. E. Inikori has tried to establish the core merchants Wallace was referring

¹⁵⁹ David Richardson, *Bristol, Africa and the Eighteenth Century Slave Trade Vols. 1- 4* (Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing Limited, 1986, 1987, 1991, 1996).

to, however, his source material makes it difficult to corroborate.¹⁶⁰ David Pope's recent work lists the top 201 Liverpool merchants in the period between 1750-1799. His criteria of ownership or part ownership on at least eighteen voyages coupled with residence in Liverpool for part or all of the period, however, leaves this merchant pool fairly open; arguably, a merchant who only invested in eighteen voyages in his career cannot be in the same "top" category as a merchant who both led and invested in significantly more voyages.¹⁶¹ This project does not intend to establish, or re-establish these core groups; however, the chosen case study merchants here are useful in a further analysis of the organisational patterns of the slave trade in both ports because qualitative data on them is also extant. Furthermore, as the slave trade was dominated by a relatively select few, having six key merchants from both ports represents a statistically acceptable sample size. Substantiating the data of these case study merchants from the database with the available manuscript sources also facilitates a more in-depth discussion of trends in the trade that is not conducive in larger samples. The case studies also allow for commentary on the merchant networks, network behaviour, and their operation within the trade, which previous studies do not.

Additionally, a large amount of nominal data has been collected from trade directories, as well as political and club membership lists. Slave trade investors listed in trade directories, as well as the case study merchants in particular, were cross-referenced with membership lists of social clubs and political organisations to create a more complete picture of merchants' overall civic involvement, and whether or not this social involvement influenced commercial or entrepreneurial action. This

¹⁶⁰ Wallace, *General and Descriptive History*, p. 231; J. E. Inikori, "Market Structure and the Profits of the British African Trade in the late Eighteenth Century", *Journal of Economic History*, 41 (1981), pp. 745-776.

¹⁶¹ David Pope, "The Wealth and Social Aspirations of Liverpool's Slave Merchants of the Second Half of the Eighteenth Century", in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 164-227.

also lends itself to comment on the level of integration merchants had in their respective communities, how it might have affected their commercial success, and facilitates their associational networks to be ascertained.

Other sources, particularly merchant correspondence and business papers, meeting minutes, parliamentary papers and other contemporary sources including town guide books, histories and newspapers are used to infer the merchants' socio-cultural context and how this contributed to an entrepreneurial spirit in both Bristol and Liverpool. For instance, merchant correspondence is particularly vital in gathering information on merchant attitudes towards commerce, including how they dealt with and responded to the major commercial issues such as risk and trust, and how they developed and maintained their reputations. Meeting minutes revealed what commercial concerns merchants felt were important and how they defended these concerns; additionally, town guide books and histories promoted images of the port cities that helped shape their larger reputation. The answers to the research questions were thus based on the combination of quantitative and qualitative data; the quantitative data provided the "bones" of the Bristol and Liverpool merchant communities while the qualitative data fleshed out the study by providing the socio-cultural foundations of these communities.

Like many historical studies, the limitations of this project lie in the sources. The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database is an incredible resource, which significantly helped the research of this work. It, however, has its own set of limitations and a particular methodology which must be taken into consideration when using it. This is discussed further in the Technical Appendix. Additionally, an equal number of manuscript sources from both slave trade merchant communities covering a similar time period simply do not exist. As the height of Bristol's participation in the trade was much earlier in the period, manuscript sources are not as available as they are for Liverpool, which became much more active in the trade later in the eighteenth

century. There are notable exceptions. The Jefferies collection holds much of Bristol merchant Isaac Hobhouse's correspondence from early in the period, however much of it includes copies of letters sent from his agents in the Americas. While this is still valuable, the collection is not as reflective of the "voice" of one of Bristol's more prominent early slave traders and extrapolation of Hobhouse's actions and words from these letters thus had to be conducted. Likewise, the papers of James Rogers from Bristol are wide in scope, however, because he was most active when Bristol's participation in the trade was in decline, as well as that he ultimately became bankrupt is demonstrative of the fact that it may not be a fair representation of the Bristol slave trade at large. Lastly, the recent publication of the Bright-Meyler papers offers further insight, but as this was not a specialised slaving partnership a large portion of the correspondence does not specifically address the slave trade. In contrast, the collections from Liverpool merchants are far more representative: the collections of William Davenport, David Tuohy, Robert Bostock, Thomas Leyland and the Earle and Tarleton collections cover much of the period and offer a far more representative picture of the trade. Of course, as more than four thousand individuals participated in the Liverpool slave trade, six collections are not as representative as would be ideal. Thus, collecting information from trade directories and various club membership lists of the merchant community at large helped to strengthen representativeness.

Structure

This dissertation is divided into two major sections, the first labelled "Inside the Counting House" and the second, "Outside the Counting House".¹⁶² The first section addresses the formal business side of the Bristol and Liverpool slave

¹⁶² These titles are influenced by Frederick B. Tolles, *Meeting House and Counting House: The Quaker Merchants of Colonial Philadelphia 1682-1763* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1948).

merchant communities and answers the questions regarding the patterns and trends in the organisation of the slave trade and the structure of the merchant communities, both in the context of entrepreneurship and social networks. The second section addresses the social, or informal, side of the merchant communities by analysing merchant involvement in associational networks including social and political clubs, as well as how merchant networks operated and responded to political issues. Both sections include the merchant case studies. Because of the nature of a merchant's network, life inside and outside the counting house often merged in a merchant's career and cannot be seen as discrete entities. Thus, these two sections are integrated and work together to create a more comprehensive picture of the merchants in the Bristol and Liverpool slave trades, by analysing their professional and social lives as an integral discussion of how they contributed to a spirit of enterprise.

Chapter Two discusses the port cities of Bristol and Liverpool specifically, giving an account both of their rise as prominent commercial centres and their involvement in the slave trade. Thus, a discussion of Bristol's relative decline is included in comparison to Liverpool's dominant position as a slave trading port. It also introduces their wider merchant communities; therefore discussions of the primary trading issues and how the Bristol and Liverpool merchants dealt with them are highlighted. This discussion of the rise and decline of the two ports' trades posits historiographical debates for the reasons behind their commercial success and failure. The rest of the project, however, will argue that these reasons outlined correspond with the larger and proposed argument that entrepreneurship and their ability to access key resources really determined Liverpool merchant's success in the slave trade.

Chapter Three presents trends in the organisation of the slave trade specifically in Bristol and Liverpool and is based predominately on extensive queries

conducted of the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database. Additionally, the structure of both merchant communities is explored through social network analysis. Moreover, the twelve merchant case studies and their own business networks as they relate to the overall patterns are analysed. Change over time is also considered.

Chapter Four analyses the trends presented in Chapter Three through the prism of entrepreneurship and the various notions of capital. While the trends were presented using quantitative data in the previous chapter, qualitative sources such as merchant correspondence are used to explain the trends, specifically addressing how merchant partnerships within their larger networks managed and conducted slaving voyages. This chapter thus exemplifies the integrated theory of entrepreneurship in that both the slave trade merchants' characteristics and their roles are examined to assess how this contributed to success and failure. These two chapters comprise the "Inside the Counting House" section.

Chapter Five considers the merchants' social lives outside of their profession in the characteristic environment of the eighteenth-century "urban renaissance". The locations of the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants' homes, businesses, and the social organisations in which they were involved are mapped to demonstrate how physical and social proximity can be used to comment on the creation and maintenance of their networks. How their social lives contributed to this question of entrepreneurial spirit and success in the commercial world is thus demonstrated.

Chapter Six explores the notion of merchant representation to the state and the response of Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchant networks to port improvement schemes and their defence of the slave trade throughout the period. These case studies thus analyse the operation of these merchant networks in contexts other than the slave trade, but ones that nonetheless impacted upon their trading performance. The cohesiveness of these two communities is further examined in this analysis and it is demonstrated that Liverpool networks exhibited

more entrepreneurship in these regards. These final chapters encompass the “Outside the Counting House” section.

Chapter Seven will conclude the study, summarising the answers to the primary questions of the study. This study argues that Liverpool merchants managed slaving voyages within comparatively larger investment groups; thus, the business network a typical Liverpool merchant was part of was also larger. Liverpool merchants had greater access to knowledge, skills and resources, collectively known as capital, and this larger pool of expertise offered more competitive advantages to their trade. In contrast, Bristol slave trade merchants managed voyages in smaller, more atomised networks with consequently less access to necessary human and social capital. Because of this, Liverpool merchants exhibited a greater spirit of enterprise and as entrepreneurs, were able to surpass their counterparts in Bristol to become the leaders in the slave trade.

Chapter Two: Bristol and Liverpool in Comparison

To study the eighteenth-century merchant, one must arguably study the merchant's trading links and the wider networks in which he was involved.¹⁶³ As discussed in the Introduction, the transatlantic merchant's network at this time became increasingly global, and for the slave trade merchant, members in his network included not only other merchants investing in voyages, but the suppliers of goods for barter, captains used, merchants on the African coast, and factors and agents stationed in the Americas among others.¹⁶⁴ These networks were also embedded in complex localised networks that linked both the regional and national economies.¹⁶⁵ The Atlantic trade encouraged the development of ports and thus a specific type of economy; therefore, analysing merchants in port cities such as Bristol and Liverpool adds a further dimension in the comprehension of business networks during this period. Branches of history that address port cities in particular consider how physical geography, occupational structure and commercial factors such as the volume of trade contributed to the growth and development of this specific type of urban environment.¹⁶⁶ In this sense, studies of port cities can be extremely useful, because, by their very commercial nature, they cannot be studied in isolation from their interactions with the outside world. This supports the adoption of a cis-Atlantic approach, outlined in the Introduction, because of its focus on a location's interaction with other places in addition to its own uniqueness.¹⁶⁷ All ports exist as a "two-way exchange of traffic between land and water"; however, there is much differentiation among port cities, particularly in terms of the variety of

¹⁶³ See Introduction, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ See Introduction, p. 20.

¹⁶⁵ Stobart, "Personal and Commercial Networks", pp. 277-293; Casson, "Entrepreneurial Networks", pp. 811-823.

¹⁶⁶ David Harris Sacks, *The Widening Gate: Bristol and the Atlantic Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ See Introduction, p. 4.

functions they fulfil.¹⁶⁸ F. W. Morgan notes that a classification of ports by their function is essential when studying them, yet a strict classification is difficult as ports rarely perform just one.¹⁶⁹ In his study of colonial American port towns, Jacob M. Price distinguishes between ports' functions as shipping points, processing centres, limited and general marts as well as communications and financial centres. He is careful to assert that no certain feature may be considered a given. Instead they were "reflections of the character and trade of the port and of the institutional arrangements produced by the marketing requirements of the goods traded".¹⁷⁰ While ports certainly differed, general criteria may be assumed. These characteristics include maintaining a safe haven for ships, allowing easy access by having both a time and space advantage on a variety of sea routes, providing a convenient centre for both the collection and distribution of goods as well as supplying the needs of the port's hinterland.¹⁷¹

These features were certainly present early on in the ports of Bristol and Liverpool, and both ports further developed in the eighteenth century to have their own distinct character as well as to grow into prominent and prosperous commercial centres. By the seventeenth century Bristol was the second largest port in England, and by 1700, it was also the second largest town with 21,000 inhabitants.¹⁷² By the end of the century, the *New Bristol Directory* was able to hail the city as the "largest, richest and best port of trade, London only accepted".¹⁷³ Moreover, as the hub of the economic, social and cultural life of the southwest of England and southern Wales,

¹⁶⁸ James Bird, *The Major Seaports of the United Kingdom* (London: Hutchinson of London, 1963), p. 24.

¹⁶⁹ F. W. Morgan, *Ports and Harbours* (London: Hutchinson University Library, 1958), p. 70.

¹⁷⁰ Jacob M. Price, "Economic Function and the Growth of American Port Towns in the Eighteenth Century", *Perspectives in American History*, 8 (1974), pp. 123-186.

¹⁷¹ Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 10. Bird also provides a description of the common developmental features of a typical British seaport labelled, "Anyport". Bird, *Major Seaports*, pp. 21-37.

¹⁷² Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 1; Kenneth Morgan, "The Economic Development of Bristol, 1700-1850", in Dresser and Ollerenshaw, *Making of Modern Bristol*, pp. 48-76; E. Anthony Wrigley, "Urban Growth and Agricultural Change: England and the Continent in the Early Modern Period", in Borsay, *Eighteenth Century Town*, pp. 39-83.

¹⁷³ John Reed (ed.), *The New Bristol Directory for 1792* (Bristol, 1792).

Bristol's status as "metropolis of the West" was easily cemented.¹⁷⁴ While the eighteenth century has been lauded as Bristol's "Golden Age", as an outport, and particularly when compared to Liverpool, it suffered from a relative decline in commercial importance.¹⁷⁵ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, its population of around 60,000 made Bristol only the sixth most populous British city, while it ranked eighth as an outport in terms of vessels, tonnage and men.¹⁷⁶ In contrast, although Liverpool emerged later than competing port cities, by 1800 it was "as large or larger than most provincial ports in Britain and Europe" and was even compared to "another Venice upon the water" for its great commercial prosperity.¹⁷⁷ With only seven medieval streets comprising the town in the 1660s, Liverpool's population in the century between 1650 and 1750 grew more quickly than other major provincial cities including Hull, Glasgow and Bristol.¹⁷⁸ Liverpool had only around 5,500 inhabitants in 1700, but by 1800, the port had over 80,000, and surpassed Bristol in terms of population and commercial importance, and was only behind London and Manchester in terms of population.¹⁷⁹ The rapid growth in population can be mostly attributed to in-migration, which in turn, impacted upon the economic development of the port by bringing in human capital and shaping the town's commercial profile and development.¹⁸⁰ The implications of such demographic changes on the slave merchant networks for both Bristol and Liverpool are further discussed in Chapter Five. The seemingly unprecedented rapidity in the rise of Liverpool's population and its link with commercial development was not lost on

¹⁷⁴ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 3; Walter E. Minchinton, "Bristol: Metropolis of the West in the Eighteenth Century", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 4 (1954), pp. 69-89.

¹⁷⁵ Minchinton, "Bristol: Metropolis of the West", p. 88.

¹⁷⁶ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 49.

¹⁷⁷ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 9; John Gore (ed.), *Liverpool Trade Directory* for 1796 (Liverpool, 1796).

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁹ J. Langton and P. Laxton, "Parish Registers and Urban Structure: The Example of Late-Eighteenth Century Liverpool", *Urban History Yearbook*, 5 (1978), pp. 78-84; Wrigley, "Urban Growth", p. 43. Bristol and Liverpool's population is further discussed in Chapter Five.

¹⁸⁰ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 15.

contemporaries. Richard Brooke commented on the city's transformation, noting it grew from "a place comparatively unimportant" to "one of the most populous and prosperous commercial towns in Europe".¹⁸¹ The 1794 *Liverpool Directory* asserted that "the town has so much increased in trade since the commencement of the present century, that it is now the greatest seaport in England except London, having exceeding Bristol considerably of late years".¹⁸² With the noted increase in both population and commercial expansion in the two ports, this chapter discusses the development of Bristol and Liverpool as important eighteenth-century commercial centres. Their geographical locations, manufactures and industry are analysed to ascertain how they contributed to their trade. Bristol's relative decline in commercial importance compared to Liverpool's rise is also explored. Specific attention will be given to their Atlantic trade and the importance of the slave trade in each city. How entrepreneurship impacted upon their particular commercial development within the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities is also addressed.

Geography, Industry and Manufacture

Bristol and Liverpool were well placed geographically to become successful commercial centres. They were both located at the hub of land and water communication systems, facilitating access to industrious hinterlands, which in turn fostered trade. Specifically, being situated on the west coast of the country allowed the outports to participate in, and benefit from, the "Americanisation" of British foreign trade that had developed and increased during the eighteenth century.¹⁸³

¹⁸¹ Richard Brooke, *Liverpool as it was 1775 to 1800* (1853) (Reprint: Bristol: Cedric Chivers, 2003), p. 3.

¹⁸² John Gore (ed.), *Liverpool Trade Directory for 1794* (Liverpool, 1794).

¹⁸³ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 2.

Bristol's eighteenth-century "Golden Age" has therefore been attributed to a combination in an import trade of plantation products such as rum, tobacco and sugar as well as in an export trade based on local industries and the products of its hinterland.¹⁸⁴ Likewise, it is argued that Liverpool's successful linkage of a well-connected hinterland, particularly with the coal and salt industries, to a developing Atlantic entrepot made Liverpool even more successful than Bristolians in capitalising on commercial opportunities.¹⁸⁵

Merchants' utilising the advantages from the geographical situation of both ports is strongly linked to their development and their commercial success. However, their harnessing of seemingly "natural" advantages to form commercially competitive advantages is reflective of an entrepreneurial outlook. Bristol stood at the meeting point of five main roads. To the north, roads led to Wales and Gloucester, to the south, Wells and Bath, while London lay to the east, thus linking Bristol with the rest of the kingdom.¹⁸⁶ The rivers Avon and Frome form the city's harbour, and as Richard Bright described in his 1788 *Draft of the Particulars of the Trade of Bristol*, "meet each other at right angles" and "form three sides of a square upon the inward shores of which the quays are formed".¹⁸⁷ Much of the River Avon, although nearly ten miles in length, was not navigable without manual improvements, one of which allowed for small barge traffic in 1727.¹⁸⁸ The Frome "was itself the handiwork of man", as the channel was re-made in the thirteenth

¹⁸⁴ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 107; Jon Stobart, "In Search of Causality: A Regional Approach to Urban Growth in Eighteenth Century England", *Geografiska Annaler. Series B, Human Geography*, 82 (2000), pp. 149-163; J. Langton, "Liverpool and its Hinterland in the Late Eighteenth Century", in B. L. Anderson and P. J. M. Stoney (eds.), *Commerce, Industry and Transport: Studies in Economic Change on Merseyside* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press: 1983), pp. 1-26.

¹⁸⁶ Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁷ Richard Bright, "Draft of the Particulars of the Trade of Bristol", in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 663.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid*; Alan F. Williams, "Bristol Port Plans and Improvement Schemes of the 18th Century", *Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society*, 81 (1962), pp. 138-188.

century to expand the number of docking places near the city centre.¹⁸⁹ Although the port required improvements to accommodate the increase in trade throughout the period, these improvements were not swiftly made. The inconvenience to merchants and shipping, as well as particular problems associated with a lack of improvements were noted throughout the period. Bright observed that “all vessels lie aground supported only by the mud in the bed of the river for fourteen hours out of each twenty four & large ships are not completely water born except at high water for about six days in every fortnight”.¹⁹⁰ Complaints were made with more urgency in the latter half of the century when the lack of improvements, coupled with the hindrance in river navigation caused by mud, dirt and stones were linked to a decline in trade. In 1786, haven master John Shaw complained to the Society of Merchant Venturers that “there still remains a number of large stones on the bank ... which is really dangerous to the navigation” and, speaking of a particular incident regarding the *Amelia*, indicated that if the ship’s captain would have run ashore further down the river “he must have ruin’d the ship”.¹⁹¹ Three years later a Mr. Claxton further described the “shameful state” of the floating dock in a letter to Richard Bright, mentioning that “the *Hercules* was forced out, owing to the place being either full of mud or not having enough water in it” [emphasis in original].¹⁹² Additionally, Claxton reported in 1792 that “a large Jamaica vessel ... deeply loaden with sugars nearly upsetting ... between the mud docks” in which “some little damage have been received by the ship and cargo”; incidents such as these made merchants hopeful, but also increasingly adamant that “the spirit of improvement would prevail” and “operate in favor of floating the harbour” as well as make other needed

¹⁸⁹ Sacks, *Widening Gate*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁰ Bright, “Draft of Particulars”, p. 664.

¹⁹¹ John Shaw to Society of Merchant Venturers, 14 Jun 1786, SMV 7/1/2/1, Bristol Records Office (hereafter BRO).

¹⁹² Mr. Claxton to Richard Bright, 7 Nov 1789, SMV 7/1/3/11, BRO.

improvements.¹⁹³ This "Spirit of the Inhabitants" in Bristol, believed to have "been too long dormant" needed to be "roused into a generous emulation of the fellow-subjects of London [and] Liverpool" so that the port would recover and trade could continue to increase.¹⁹⁴ Various schemes for port improvements had been proposed and considered, yet little had been done. This is reflective of the fact that Bristol did not use their environment to be commercially competitive and consequently, Bristol's indecision and delays throughout the eighteenth century regarding port improvement ultimately hindered expansion in trade. Conversely, Liverpool's more active role in improvement schemes, aided by better organisation and finance of the dock system stimulated the development of the Merseyside.¹⁹⁵ In contrast with Bristol, Liverpool thus recognised their particular environment needed to be shaped and re-shaped to form a competitive advantage and made the necessary steps to ensure this was done. Bristol's relative indecision and caution towards making necessary port improvements compared to Liverpool's initiative is further discussed in Chapter Six.

In turn, the ports' industries and manufactures were also shaped by their geographic position and demonstrate the importance of Bristol and Liverpool's hinterlands to their development. Defoe observed that Bristol had "so great an inland trade among all the western counties, that they maintain carriers just as the London tradesmen do, to all the principal countries and towns from Southampton in the south, even to the banks of the Trent north".¹⁹⁶ As the centre of the southwest, Bristol carried out an extensive coasting trade, sending goods to the five large counties that surrounded the port, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire, Devon and

¹⁹³ Thomas Southey to Richard Bright, 8 Sept 1792, 11168/ai, BRO; Bright, "Draft of Particulars", p. 664.

¹⁹⁴ Printed Letter for Reduction of Town Dues and Dock Improvements, 20 Aug 1800, 28048/p4, BRO.

¹⁹⁵ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 32. Sacks maintains that inquiries into the history of an early modern English city must take into account a "reciprocal relationship between its political and economic life". *Widening Gate*, p. 4. Clearly, this is the case in terms of port developments in both cities, examined in Chapter Six.

¹⁹⁶ Defoe, *Tour through the Whole Island*, p. 36.

Cornwall.¹⁹⁷ Linked to 117 towns by ninety-six separate carriers by the mid-eighteenth century, Bristol was also the primary market for agricultural produce brought in from the surrounding areas. Improvements to turnpike roads in and around the port allowed for grain from the Midlands, dairy and meat products from southern Wales and vegetables from Evesham and Glamorgan to be brought in and sold.¹⁹⁸ Bristol was also the leading market in the region for raw industrial materials. It served as a distribution point, supplying the shipbuilding industry with timber from the Forest of Dean, the textile trades with teazles from Somerset, the woollen industry with wool from Milford and Cardiff, as well as the tinplate works with tin from Cornwall.¹⁹⁹ In addition, Bristol's trade provided raw materials for local industries, including unrefined sugar from the West Indies for the sugar refineries as well as Chesapeake tobacco for the snuff mills.²⁰⁰ In this sense, it can be said that Bristol was "not more a commercial than a manufacturing town".²⁰¹

Richard Bright echoed this statement when he commented that it is "difficult to say whether the internal manufacture or external commerce of Bristol is to be considered as the most valuable".²⁰² Bright mentioned the sugar refineries as one of the "most extensive" local industries, with "fifteen or sixteen sugar houses generally at work"; by the end of the century, this figure numbered twenty.²⁰³ With the West India trade being a profitable branch of Bristol's commerce, it is no surprise that sugar refining was also an important subsidiary industry. The sugar refineries themselves were also very lucrative, as Bright remarked, "the value of this raw

¹⁹⁷ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 63.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*; Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 6.

¹⁹⁹ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 6. Teazles are bristled flowerheads used to produce a napped, or 'fuzzy' surface on wool and other fabrics.

²⁰⁰ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 64.

²⁰¹ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 6.

²⁰² Bright, "Draft of Particulars", p. 656.

²⁰³ *Ibid*; Minchinton, "Bristol: Metropolis of the West", p. 77.

material amounts to from four hundred & fifty to five hundred thousand pounds".²⁰⁴ Bright also mentioned the glass trade as an important industry for Bristol's commerce, employing eleven large houses in the city.²⁰⁵ Indeed, on his tour of the country in 1720, Daniel Defoe counted no less than fifteen, "which is more than there are in the city of London".²⁰⁶ At the beginning of the eighteenth century, Bristol had five glasshouses that made a variety of bottles, window glass, flint glass and ordinary glass.²⁰⁷ Again, Bristol's trade with the West Indies impacted upon the success of the glass industry, as Bristol's "great expence" of glass bottles were sent "fill'd with beer, cyder and wine to the West Indies".²⁰⁸ Bristol was a centre for this industry as the raw materials, including sand, limestone and red lead were easily accessible in the area, and the trade, particularly in decorative glass, flourished for much of the century.²⁰⁹ The sugar and glass industries were dependent on the coal industry, thus the existence of the local coalfield at Kingswood was crucial for the industrial development of Bristol.²¹⁰ Besides sugar and glass, Bristol was also host to a number of other industries, including the copper and brass trades, brandy distillation, soap, gunpowder, bricks and tiles, lead, iron and cheese.²¹¹ Many of these products, such as brandy and gunpowder in particular, were bartered for slaves in the African trade. Moreover, because sugar, produced from slave labour in the West Indies, was a principal industry for the city, the significance of the slave trade to Bristol's development and commercial success becomes more apparent. This can also be said for Liverpool.

²⁰⁴ Bright, "Draft of Particulars", p. 656.

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 656.

²⁰⁶ Defoe, *Tour through the Whole Island*, p. 115.

²⁰⁷ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 60.

²⁰⁸ Defoe, *Tour through the Whole Island*, p. 115.

²⁰⁹ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 60.

²¹⁰ Peter Aughton, *Bristol: A People's History* (Lancaster: Carnegie Publishing Ltd., 2001), p. 85.

²¹¹ Bright, "Draft of Particulars", pp. 657-660.

Like Bristol, Liverpool was well connected to an industrial hinterland that was bolstered by a series of improvements of river navigation systems and roads. Liverpool's links with the Lancashire coal industry and the Cheshire salt mines were especially significant in both its rapid growth and commercial prosperity, supporting the argument that the "coal-canal nexus" was instrumental in the development of towns in the north and midlands.²¹² The timing of these developments was important. Indeed, as J. R. Harris asserts, Liverpool was profiting from its canal facilities before canals had even appeared in most regions, indicating an early advantage for the port.²¹³ Liverpool's connection with the Manchester textile industry was also pivotal, particularly with regards to obtaining goods, and credit for those goods, to be used in the slave trade.²¹⁴ In terms of the textile trade, Alfred Wadsworth and Julia de Lacy Mann state that the "situation and opportunities" of Bristol were similar to those in Liverpool yet cotton piece goods did not spread in Gloucestershire. Thus, in line with arguments regarding a sense of "spirit", Wadsworth and de Lacy Mann attribute "the *energetic* man [in Lancashire] who could obtain credit" could make a career as a merchant "more easily than in the more static conditions which were usual in the south".²¹⁵

Liverpool's relationship with Manchester was particularly important, and the development of the two was closely intertwined.²¹⁶ Wallace emphasised the important relationship Liverpool forged with Manchester when he commented that the

²¹² Stobart, "In Search of Causality", p. 154.

²¹³ J. R. Harris, "Early Liverpool Canal Controversies", in J. R. Harris (ed.), *Liverpool and Merseyside: Essays in the Economic and Social History of the Port and its Hinterland* (London: Frank Cass and Co., 1969), pp. 78-97.

²¹⁴ See Alfred P. Wadsworth and Julia de Lacy Mann, *The Cotton Trade and Industrial Lancashire, 1600-1780* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1931); Kenneth Morgan, "Liverpool's Dominance in the British Slave Trade, 1740-1807", in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 14-43.

²¹⁵ Wadsworth and de Lacy Mann, *Cotton Trade*, p. 172. My emphasis.

²¹⁶ Stobart, "In Search of Causality", p. 157.

manufactures of Manchester advanced the exports of Liverpool to so great a degree as to have annually for many succeeding years paved the streets of both towns with SILVER, strengthened the abilities of both Liverpool and Manchester to enlarge their undertakings and to explore the lucrative path which ultimately led them to their present flourishing state of trade, respectability and credit.²¹⁷

Put more succinctly, C. N. Parkinson notes that “while Manchester created Liverpool by giving it goods to export, Liverpool created Manchester by finding markets for all it made”.²¹⁸ Highlighting the important relationship between Liverpool and Manchester, Liverpool merchants were allowed two year’s credit from Manchester textile merchants while Bristol was only allowed nine months.²¹⁹ This was one competitive advantage Liverpool had over Bristol in the slave trade.

In order for Liverpool to emerge as a successful port, however, it also had to overcome natural disadvantages. While Brooke praised the pool as a “convenient and comparatively secure harbour for vessels”, in actuality, *lifrig pol*, meaning “clotted pool” was “a turbulent river estuary with high tides, treacherous sandbanks and shifting channels” and “a flat windswept shore”.²²⁰ A high sandstone ridge two miles from the shore also made communication with the hinterland difficult and hazardous in the winter.²²¹ To combat these difficulties, between 1719 and 1721, “there was something of a boom in acts for river improvement schemes”, with improvements made on the rivers Mersey, Irwell, Weaver and Douglas.²²² In this sense, a “virtuous circle” was created in which the development of industries and transport led to the creation of corresponding industries and better transport.²²³ In addition, the construction of the pioneering “Old Dock” on the Liver Pool first

²¹⁷ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, pp. 205-206.

²¹⁸ C. Northcote Parkinson, *The Rise of the Port of Liverpool* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1952), p. 57.

²¹⁹ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 143.

²²⁰ Brooke, *Liverpool as it was*, p. 16; Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 1.

²²¹ Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 1.

²²² Sheila Marriner, *Economic and Social Development of Merseyside* (London: Croom Helm, 1982), p. 13; Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 18.

²²³ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 13.

authorised in 1709 and in use by 1715, was the first commercial wet dock in Great Britain, elevating Liverpool's commercial capabilities and providing the port with particular advantages over other ports.²²⁴ By the beginning of the nineteenth century, Liverpool had twenty-eight acres of docks, greatly facilitating its trade and, as argued by Langton, making it "the best connected port in England".²²⁵ Contemporaries also noted Liverpool's advantages associated with its docks and hinterland communication. William Moss's 1797 *Liverpool Guide* boasted that Liverpool's docks "possess magnitude, convenience and a harmony of parts unrivalled throughout the world".²²⁶ Noting that they were created by necessity, the "spirit of the town" had "brought them to their present state of perfection, and induced a desire in the metropolis to copy after them".²²⁷ Thus, unlike in Bristol, where the "spirit of the town" was dormant and apathetic, the spirit in Liverpool inspired the necessary improvements to bolster and enrich the growing port's trade and is reflective of an entrepreneurial outlook. Richard Bright also described the comparative efficiency of Liverpool's canal networks. He commented on the reliability of goods reaching Liverpool via the canals from Staffordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire, and lamented the delays on the River Severn caused by inclement weather and variable tides that hindered the delivery of goods from those counties to Bristol.²²⁸ Liverpool's superior communications system also led the sundry merchants of Bristol to note that "Liverpoole is become so formidable a rival, and now meet us at markets that were formerly wholly supplied from Bristol", indicative of Bristol's relative commercial decline.²²⁹ These observations by Bristolians

²²⁴ Michael Power, "Creating a Port: Liverpool, 1695-1715", *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society for Lancashire and Cheshire*, 149 (2000), pp. 51-71.

²²⁵ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 30; Langton, "Liverpool and its Hinterland", p. 7.

²²⁶ Moss, *Georgian Liverpool*, p. 78.

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 78.

²²⁸ Bright, "Draft of Particulars", p. 663.

²²⁹ Memorial respecting inconveniences of attending landing and floating dock from sundry merchants and traders, 28 Feb 1788, SMV 7/1/3/11, BRO.

demonstrate that not only did the lack of improvements hamper Bristol's commercial development, but it actually benefitted Liverpool's trade by diverting traffic through to Liverpool's superior communication systems.

It has been noted above how both Bristol and Liverpool's hinterlands contributed significantly to their developments as successful commercial ports. However, by the mid-nineteenth century, Bristol's hinterland failed to grow sufficiently in order for Bristol to continue to assume national economic importance.²³⁰ Additionally, Liverpool invested directly into its hinterland, whereas Bristol looked farther afield to Shropshire and South Wales.²³¹ Liverpool's hinterland rapidly industrialised in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, with better transport services being developed, "enabling home demand and foreign demand to be harnessed together more effectively".²³² Liverpool was better adapted to industrial change, and as Langton and Laxton note, a shift occurred in the port's ever-changing economy towards being a major manufacturing centre in the "canal age".²³³ As noted above, better communication between Liverpool and the adjacent counties of Lancashire and Cheshire was also fundamental to Liverpool's commercial development. Coal from west Lancashire fields and salt from Cheshire saltmines were Liverpool's primary exports. By 1791, Liverpool exported 79,000 tons of coal, of which 57,000 tons went to foreign ports while the rest was used in coastal shipping; additionally, 100,000 tons of salt were unloaded in Liverpool by 1796.²³⁴ These trades grew hand in hand, in turn leading to improved communications and fostering local industries and trade. A contemporary noted that the salt trade in particular "contributed more to the first rise, gradual increase, and present flourishing state of

²³⁰ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 64.

²³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

²³² *Ibid.*, p. 64.

²³³ Langton and Laxton, "Parish Registers", p. 82.

²³⁴ Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 30.

the Town of Liverpool than any other article of commerce".²³⁵ Salt was an important commodity exchanged in Liverpool's coasting trade, while local metal works, iron foundries, salt refiners and glassmakers increased their demand for coal.²³⁶ By the 1780s, Liverpool counted among its industries three cotton mills, eight sugar refineries, two distilleries and fifteen roperies.²³⁷

Like Bristol, these trades supported and benefitted from the town's transatlantic trade. Additionally, craft industries were important in eighteenth-century Liverpool, particularly pottery and china manufacture and clock and watchmaking.²³⁸ Liverpool's proximity to copper and brass manufactures in Lancashire and Ireland made it possible for local companies that manufactured African trade goods such as manillas to carry on a prosperous export trade, which it has been argued, gave Liverpool a competitive edge in the trade.²³⁹ Moreover, shipbuilding was a significant part of Liverpool's commercial profile and was closely linked with Liverpool's involvement in the slave trade. Around 1750, when Liverpool began to dominate the slave trade, the port started to construct custom-built slave ships. In 1792, there were nine yards for ship construction, and between 1787-1807, Liverpool shipwrights built 469 vessels, averaging to about twenty-one a year.²⁴⁰ Thus, it appears Liverpool merchants had "natural" advantages in terms of their location in relation to key industries; however, it was their "spirit" which induced necessary improvements in transport and communications and really placed Liverpool in a superior position to conduct trade more readily and with greater efficiency.

²³⁵ Quoted in Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 27.

²³⁶ Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 28.

²³⁷ Gail Cameron, *Liverpool: Capital of the Slave Trade* (Liverpool: Picton Press, 1992), p. 25.

²³⁸ Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 19.

²³⁹ B. L. Anderson, "The Lancashire Bill System and its Liverpool Practitioners: The Case of a Slave Merchant", in W. H. Chaloner and B. M. Ratcliffe (eds.), *Trade and Transport: Essays in Economic History in Honour of T. S. Willan* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1977), pp. 59-97.

²⁴⁰ Marcus Rediker, *The Slave Ship* (London: John Murray, 2007), pp. 52-53.

Trade

The above section highlights the link between geography and local manufacture, and these aspects were also strongly linked to the ports' trading capabilities. As mentioned above, the location of the ports on the west coast of Britain facilitated access and involvement in the "Americanisation" of British trade that developed in the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, and it was the goods that both ports received from their hinterlands that made up the bulk of their exports in this trade. The Americanisation of the trade arguably led to commercial distinction among the trading communities in both ports, with arguments made of the increasing specialisation of merchants in the eighteenth century. As R. C. Nash asserts, transatlantic merchants tended to specialise in trades in which they had the greatest expertise. This human capital was usually acquired by being stationed overseas as agents or factors.²⁴¹ Additionally, trades increasingly became dominated by fewer merchants throughout the period.²⁴² This is argued primarily for the major commodity trades, including tobacco and sugar, further discussed in Chapter Four. The implications for merchant networks of human capital residing in the hands of fewer merchants, is also discussed specifically for the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade in Chapters Four and Five. Historians have observed specialisation and classification in the Bristol and Liverpool merchant communities in specific points of time. For instance, Morgan notes four categories of exporters in the shipping data for 1773 in which the various categories exhibited a degree of specialisation in terms of the goods they exported and the markets to which they were sent; likewise, Elizabeth Baigent has analysed Bristol's trade directory in 1775 and identified 10.9

²⁴¹ See Introduction, p. 31.

²⁴² Nash, "Organization of Trade", pp. 114, 113.

per cent of the listings as involved in the shipping trade.²⁴³ Additionally, Haggerty's study of the Liverpool and Philadelphia trading communities in the period between 1760-1810 identifies the major categories of traders in both ports, while Langton and Laxton's analysis of Liverpool in the late eighteenth century provides a breakdown of occupational structure based on analysis of parish registers.²⁴⁴ This speaks to the notion of particular concepts of a "business community" noted in the Introduction. Further analysis of trade directories in terms of slave investor representation is conducted in Chapter Five.

Trade in this period was fostered by significant developments in merchant organisation and other services ancillary to trade. Services such as banking were significant developments in Bristol and Liverpool, in which, again, their geographic and commercial prominence played a role. Indeed, the Atlantic trade fostered a "miniature banking revolution" in the outports, with many colonial merchants becoming prominent partners in the first established banks.²⁴⁵ In Liverpool, of the fourteen banks listed after 1750, ten were founded by merchants, highlighting this important link between banking and trade.²⁴⁶ Merchant organisation, in terms of the size and structure of business firms, as well as financial mechanisms that developed such as the commission system, bills of exchange and the nature of credit is discussed below as it relates to Bristol and Liverpool's organisation of the slave trade, as well as entrepreneurship. It is important to comment here, however, on

²⁴³ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, pp. 95-96. The first group specialised in sending specific products to different colonial destinations; the second group sent specific products to just one destination; the third group was relatively unspecialised in both the goods they sent and the markets in which they were traded while the fourth group sent varied cargoes to one or two colonial destinations; Elizabeth Baigent, "Economy and Society in Eighteenth Century English Towns: Bristol in the 1770s", in Dietrich Denecke and Gareth Shaw (eds.), *Urban Historical Geography: Recent Progress in Britain and Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988), pp. 109-124.

²⁴⁴ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*; Langton and Laxton, "Parish Registers".

²⁴⁵ Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, p. 77. See also John Hughes, *Liverpool Banks and Bankers, 1760-1837: A History of the Circumstances which Gave Rise to the Industry* (Liverpool: Young, 1906).

²⁴⁶ Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 18.

the significance of the commission system and the use of bills of exchange in the operation of the Atlantic trades. The commission system arose out of the growth of large-scale sugar cultivation and the consequent rise of the wealthy planters in the West Indies. Under this system of organisation, planters were given full responsibility for the marketing of their own products, who consigned them to an agent back in London.²⁴⁷ As argued by K. G. Davies, the commission system became the means whereby credit, "the very life-blood of the West Indies in the eighteenth century" was supplied by Britain and bills of exchange were the mechanisms in which these accumulated funds were drawn upon.²⁴⁸ Slave merchants in particular were drawn to banking as slaves were also purchased by planters in the West Indies by bills of exchange, with the number of bills increasing in the latter half of the century. By 1750, a system arose known as the "guarantee system" in which bills of exchange were issued by factors (rather than planters) in sets of varying maturity, with terms of payment comprising three, six, nine or twelve months, or four, eight, twelve and sixteen months.²⁴⁹ The system was named as such because factors had to name a surety, or "guarantee" to deal with their letters of credit in England.²⁵⁰ By connecting a variety of people, including merchants, factors, planters and guarantors, these changes in remittance procedures allowed for greater economic integration in the Atlantic economy and helped to protect the credit extended by merchants in Britain.²⁵¹ In this way, British slave traders had an advantage over the French and Dutch traders. Indeed when asked as to what Britain owed its success in commanding a majority of the share in the African slave trade, not only did Liverpool merchant James Penny cite a "spirit of enterprise" but "credit which the British

²⁴⁷ Davies, "Origins of the Commission System", p. 94.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 92, 95.

²⁴⁹ Morgan, "Remittance Procedures", p. 731.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 731. See also Jacob M. Price, "Credit in the Slave Trade and Plantation Economies", in Barbara L. Solow (ed.), *Slavery and the Rise of the Atlantic System* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), pp. 293-340.

²⁵¹ Morgan, "Remittance Procedures", pp. 718, 743.

merchant has with manufactures which no other merchant in Europe enjoys".²⁵² This section will review Bristol and Liverpool's trade, with attention given to their Atlantic trade. A specific discussion of the slave trade will be in the following section.

Bristol and Liverpool ships engaged in similar trades. Both Bristol and Liverpool exports were exchanged in Spain, Portugal and other destinations in the Mediterranean for oil, fruit and wine, as well as Newfoundland for fish.²⁵³ Ships also engaged in the north-western European and the Baltic trades. For Liverpool especially, its salt exports were important in several trades, including the Baltic, Denmark, Norway and Hamburg trades, with the return product being mostly timber.²⁵⁴ For both ports however, the most constant overseas trade throughout the eighteenth century was that with Ireland. As Defoe noted, Bristol traded "chiefly to the south and west parts of Ireland; from Dublin in the east, to Galloway west" while Liverpool had "all trade of the east shore and the north from the harbour of Dublin to London Derry".²⁵⁵ In the beginning of the century, about seventy Bristol vessels travelled to the southern ports of Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Youghall to trade manufactured goods and colonial products for dairy produce, salted beef and pork, linen and yarn, leather hides and timber. By the end of the century, however, 120 vessels were engaged in this trade.²⁵⁶ Liverpool's proximity to Ireland also made the Irish Sea the focus of its shipping as far back as the Middle Ages, and made it the backbone of its commerce. Both Dublin and Drogheda were popular trading ports in which the Irish traded agricultural produce, herrings, linen and flax in exchange for Liverpool's staple commodities of salt and coal, as well as copper, soap and re-exported foreign luxury goods.²⁵⁷ Southern Irish ports also served as victualling

²⁵² Examination of James Penny, 27 Feb 1788, BoT 6/9.

²⁵³ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 3.

²⁵⁴ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 36.

²⁵⁵ Defoe, *Tour through the Whole Island*, p. 257.

²⁵⁶ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 2.

²⁵⁷ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 36.

stations in the oceanic trades, with ships heading for Africa, the West Indies and the Americas calling on these ports for provisions.

Proximity to Ireland, however, also raises an important historiographical point. For Liverpool, closeness to Ireland not only facilitated a profitable trade, but also provided a relatively safe route that allowed Liverpool ships less chance to be captured by French privateers in times of war.²⁵⁸ This safer route arguably allowed Liverpool to enter into trades despite turbulent times. Indeed, the less exposed route provided for the expansion of Liverpool's trade during the war years between 1689-1713 and 1739-1748.²⁵⁹ As mentioned in the last chapter, in the 120 years between 1660 and 1800, Britain was engaged in five international wars, meaning Britain was involved in war for fifty-five of those years.²⁶⁰ Protecting trade was thus of vital importance to merchants and navies, particularly in relation to the North American and West India trades in which competing European powers were involved.²⁶¹ While Liverpool was certainly not immune to privateering, it has been argued that Bristol's participation in it, coupled with a corresponding decrease in normal trading voyages during war years, meant that Bristol lost vital ground to other outports, such as Liverpool and Glasgow.²⁶² Indeed, Bristol emerged as the leading mainland port of privateering during the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) in which they had eighty-one condemnations versus Liverpool's fourteen.²⁶³ At the height of their involvement in privateering during the War of American Independence, 157 Bristol vessels carried letters of marque, certainly indicative of a break in normal trading activity.²⁶⁴ How

²⁵⁸ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 20.

²⁵⁹ Jacob M. Price and Paul G. E. Clemens, "A Revolution of Scale in Overseas Trade: British Firms in the Chesapeake Trade, 1675-1775", *Journal of Economic History*, 47 (1987), pp. 1-43.

²⁶⁰ Morgan, *Slavery, Atlantic Trade and the British Economy*, p. 16.

²⁶¹ David J. Starkey, *British Privateering Enterprise in the Eighteenth Century* (Exeter: University of Exeter Press, 1990), pp. 117-118.

²⁶² Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 20; Kenneth Morgan, "Bristol and the Atlantic Trade in the Eighteenth Century", *English Historical Review*, 107 (1992), pp. 626-650.

²⁶³ Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 181. See also Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers*, pp. 1-465.

²⁶⁴ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 5.

the diversion from privateering specifically affected the slave trade of Bristol and Liverpool is discussed in Chapter Four.

Both Bristol and Liverpool's Atlantic trade, however, made up an increasingly significant branch of their commerce in the eighteenth century. In the period 1700-1701, North America and the West Indies received eleven per cent of English exports; this figure rose to sixteen per cent in 1750-1751, thirty-eight per cent in 1772-1773 and fifty-seven per cent in 1797-1798.²⁶⁵ Bristol ships engaged in a wide variety of commodity trades with the Americas, the most important being the export trade in manufactured wares, textiles and enslaved laborers, and the import trade of colonial bulk staples, including tobacco and sugar.²⁶⁶ Overall, the volume of transatlantic shipping arriving at Bristol more than doubled between 1700 and 1800.²⁶⁷ Broken down regionally, 36.8 per cent of the import tonnage came from Jamaica, while 22.3 per cent came from the other West Indian islands; 11.7 per cent came from the colonies in the mainland Upper South, while 10.7 per cent, 8 per cent, 5.3 and 5.2 per cent came from the Middle Colonies, the Lower South, New England and Canada respectively.²⁶⁸ The higher percentages from the Upper South, Jamaica, and other West Indian islands reinforce the importance of tobacco and sugar as staple imports brought to Bristol in the period.

Benefitting from early established trading connections, Bristol, along with London, secured dominant places in the Chesapeake tobacco trade by the mid-seventeenth century. They were also the primary suppliers of European manufactures and indentured servants in the region until the 1680s.²⁶⁹ The tobacco trade fluctuated through four phases, beginning in the 1630s when rapid settlement in the Chesapeake was accompanied by a boom in tobacco production and ending

²⁶⁵ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 89.

²⁶⁶ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, pp. 1-4.

²⁶⁷ Morgan, "Bristol and the Atlantic Trade", p. 628.

²⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 630.

²⁶⁹ Walsh, "Liverpool's Slave Trade", pp. 99-100.

during the War of American Independence when the trade finally collapsed.²⁷⁰ Throughout this period, the leading ports in the trade changed. London led the trade up until the decade before the War of American Independence, when Glasgow overtook the capital in tobacco importation to become the overall leader; Glasgow also surpassed Bristol in imports by the 1720s, while Liverpool overtook Bristol though not Glasgow in 1738.²⁷¹ Liverpool's tobacco trade was at its height by 1750, just when the port secured its dominance in the slave trade, indicating the port's growing success in commercial endeavors.²⁷² Bristol and Liverpool tobacco merchants catered to different markets in the Chesapeake region. Bristol merchants concentrated their efforts in Virginia, on the banks of the James, York, Rappahannock and Potomac rivers whereas Liverpool merchants, like those in London and Glasgow, concentrated in Maryland and the backcountry areas of Virginia.²⁷³ Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants also concentrated their efforts in similar regions to where they participated in the tobacco trade, as will be shown in Chapter Three. The majority of the crop Liverpool imported was, like London and Glasgow's imported tobacco, mainly re-exported to European markets. In contrast, Bristol was the only significant port where more than fifty per cent of the crop was consumed in the home market.²⁷⁴

Another staple colonial crop, sugar, was a significant import for both ports and was indeed the most valuable commodity imported to Britain from anywhere in

²⁷⁰ Jacob M. Price, "The Imperial Economy, 1700-1776", in P. J. Marshall (ed.), *The Oxford History of the British Empire Volume II* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), pp. 78-104.

²⁷¹ Jacob M. Price, "The Rise of Glasgow in the Chesapeake Tobacco Trade, 1707-1775", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 11 (1954), pp. 179-199.

²⁷² Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 154.

²⁷³ Lorena Walsh, "The Chesapeake Slave Trade: Regional Patterns, African Origins and some Interpretations", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (2001), pp. 139-177; Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 169.

²⁷⁴ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 153; K. G. Davies, *The North Atlantic World in the Seventeenth Century* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1974), p. 146.

the world between 1670 and 1820.²⁷⁵ The Introduction outlined the economic and political importance of sugar to eighteenth-century Britain. Surpassing linen by mid-century as the most valuable British import, sugar retained this position until raw cotton took over in the first quarter of the nineteenth century.²⁷⁶ British sugar imports rose steadily throughout this period, with an importation of 8,176 tons in 1663, over 25,000 tons in 1710 and over 97,000 tons in 1775. Britons at this time experienced an increase in real wages and improvements in internal infrastructures which made possible the consumption of new goods such as tea, cocoa, and, indeed, sugar. The increase in the importation of tea in particular certainly helped sustain the demand for sugar as much of the tea was consumed in the home market. Overall, the increase in consumption of these goods, known collectively as groceries, is statistically striking. In 1700, groceries accounted for 16.9 per cent of all imports, whereby this figure had risen to 34.9 per cent by 1800.²⁷⁷

For Bristol, there is a strong link between the wealth of the city and its West India interest. As mentioned above, the city had twenty sugar refineries by 1750, which was more than other British outport.²⁷⁸ By 1650, Bristol merchants stood at the hub of the plantation economy, as many sugar importers had also lived in the Caribbean at some point in their career or owned sugar estates as absentee landlords, thus reinforcing the early web of connections Bristol merchants forged with the Americas.²⁷⁹ An immediate link was also established with the slave trade because many Bristol West India merchants had knowledge of slave regimes as they owned plantations themselves. Moreover, the wealth and commercial standing of these merchants were "complemented by their prominent role in local social,

²⁷⁵ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 184.

²⁷⁶ Price, "Imperial Economy, 1700-1776", p. 81.

²⁷⁷ See Shammass, "Pre-Industrial Consumer", pp. 77-78; Shammass, "Revolutionary Impact", p. 170.

²⁷⁸ See above, p. 57.

²⁷⁹ See Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, pp. 15-23; Morgan, "Bristol West India", pp. 191-195.

business and political life".²⁸⁰ Bristol's concentration in the West India trade, however, is also linked to its declining importance in the slave trade, further discussed in Chapter Four. The sugar trade, like the tobacco and slave trades, also experienced fluctuations, largely due to war and competition, and particularly from competition with the French.²⁸¹ The British had been the leading sugar makers from 1680 to 1735, until the flood of sugar produced on the French island of Saint Domingue undersold that of the British. By the 1780s, Saint Domingue was the "plantation powerhouse of the Caribbean" with 655 listed sugar plantations.²⁸² Despite the French having an advantage in the trade, sugar imports increased in both ports throughout the century. The annual average of Bristol's sugar imports rose from 13,604 hogsheads in 1728-1732 to 21,094 in the years between 1798-1801.²⁸³ Liverpool merchants also engaged in the sugar trade, but not to the same degree for much of the eighteenth century. Jacob M. Price and Paul Clemens note that in 1706, Liverpool had thirty-one sugar importers, while just four years earlier, Bristol had 313.²⁸⁴ In terms of hogsheads, Liverpool imported 16,042 in 1773, compared to Bristol's 20,896.²⁸⁵ While Liverpool did not engage in the sugar trade as widely as Bristol, they traded with a greater degree of independence than Bristol. The sugar market fluctuated in the different ports and Bristol in particular was influenced by the price trends set in Liverpool and London. For example, Liverpool offered lower prices, which engrossed the domestic market normally served by Bristol. Bristol's market could then only recover once the Liverpool market was drained or the prices in other markets fell. Bristol was also dependent on the prices

²⁸⁰ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 186.

²⁸¹ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, pp. 116-131, 179.

²⁸² Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 395.

²⁸³ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 191.

²⁸⁴ Price and Clemens, "Revolution of Scale", p. 36.

²⁸⁵ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 196.

set in London, as they “broke” after the opening of the London market.²⁸⁶ Writing to William Wells in St. Kitts, Richard Meyler observed “the Liverpole and Scotch vessells that saile cheap and pay out little commissions & no more other charges that are actually needfull” can “by that means dispose of their sugar in London or in Bristoll on lower terms than we can gett”; likewise, “some proffitt by degrees takes that trade from our city”.²⁸⁷ Liverpool’s independent practice thus served as a competitive advantage, and is indicative of Liverpool’s “spirit of enterprise” which benefitted its trade, and especially its slave trade, throughout the period.

The tobacco and sugar trades were therefore significant branches of both ports’ Atlantic commerce, but they also have implications for their involvement in the slave trade, particularly due to the argument put forth by Price and Clemens on specialisation in trade, or a “revolution of scale”.²⁸⁸ As noted above, this argument asserts that major commodity trades, such as that in tobacco and sugar, became increasingly specialised as the eighteenth century progressed, with both trades in the hands of fewer and fewer firms. Similar patterns may be observed to a degree in the slave trade, however, it is important to consider that Price and Clemens’ thesis has not been empirically tested across trades.²⁸⁹ The trend towards specialisation occurred to a greater degree in Bristol, which is reflective of the fact that the Bristol tobacco and sugar trades were conducted by discrete groups of merchants, and little overlap in personnel existed between the two.²⁹⁰ Conversely, Liverpool’s flexibility in commerce arguably allowed her to prosper.²⁹¹ The implications of commercial specialisation in contrast with commercial flexibility as it relates to both human capital and performance in the slave trade will be discussed further in the next two

²⁸⁶ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 209; Butel, *Atlantic World*, p. 144.

²⁸⁷ Richard Meyler II to William Wells, Dec 1732, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 156.

²⁸⁸ Price and Clemens, “Revolution of Scale”.

²⁸⁹ Nash, “Organization of Trade”, p. 114.

²⁹⁰ Clemens, “Rise of Liverpool”, p. 219.

²⁹¹ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 19.

chapters. The slave trade will now be analysed in its general context, with a focus on the importance of entrepreneurial qualities in voyage management.

The Slave Trade

Like trade above, the following discussion of the slave trade from the ports of Bristol and Liverpool is conducted in a comparative framework, often espousing the particular advantages Liverpool had over Bristol which ultimately made the port more successful in the trade.

While slaves laboured to produce the colonies' most profitable commodities, they too, were in fact profitable commodities as human cargo themselves. The Atlantic slave trade began with the Spanish, Portuguese, and Dutch in the early seventeenth century; however, Spain and Portugal had engaged in trade, exploration and slaving activity on the West African Coast since the late fifteenth century.²⁹² England was keen to follow in the footsteps of Spain and Portugal in their trade with Africa, but initially, their interest was only in acquiring other goods such as gold. As early as the latter part of the sixteenth century, both London and Bristol were actively seeking to develop commercial links with Western Africa and between 1618 and 1660, several trading companies were chartered to pursue trade with Africa along those lines.²⁹³ Therefore, although London did not enter the slave trade until the 1660s, knowledge of the African coast and the use of slave labour in Spanish and Portuguese colonies had spread to merchant communities in port cities throughout Europe.²⁹⁴ Table 2.1 shows the clearances of slave ships by the five major national carriers over a three hundred year period. It is clear the Spanish and Portuguese

²⁹² Hugh Thomas, *The Slave Trade: The History of the Atlantic Slave Trade, 1440-1870* (London: Picador, 1997), p. 76.

²⁹³ Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol. I*, p. xii.

²⁹⁴ April Lee Hatfield, "A 'Very Wary People in their Bargaining' or 'Very Good Merchandise': English Traders' View of Free and Enslaved Africans, 1550-1650", *Slavery and Abolition*, 25 (2004), pp. 1-17.

dominated the trade early on, as well as in the latter period after Britain abolished the trade in 1807. In the intervening years, however, the English controlled the trade. The numbers carried by the French and Dutch traders seem to pale in comparison with the English; this is interesting when it is considered that many British merchants perceived the French to be Britain’s major rivals throughout the period, which is further explored in Chapters Four and Six.

Table 2.1: Clearances of slave ships by national carrier

	England	France	Netherlands	Spain	Portugal
1550-1600	19	1	4	70	68
1601-1650	28	2	26	315	231
1651-1700	645	76	431	46	12
1701-1750	3,179	1,126	332	0	110
1751-1800	5,515	2,168	549	12	436
1801-1850	1,057	451	10	82	238
Total	10,443	3,824	1,352	525	1,095

Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

It was only with the rise of tobacco and sugar plantations that British traders first began to seek slaves, or “black gold”. As Table 2.1 demonstrates, Britain’s participation in the trade greatly increased in the second half of the seventeenth century and the beginning of the eighteenth, coinciding with the increase in these commodity trades. As mentioned in the Introduction, European powers’ early efforts to organise the slave trade were conducted through the establishment of trading

companies; modelled on previous joint-stock companies, the establishment of the Royal African Company was an early attempt by England to control and manage the trade. Davies' comprehensive study on the Royal African Company ascertains four phases in the organisation's history. Its history was marred by inefficiency, complaints of high costs, and arguments against its monopoly organisation, which characterise changes made in the different phases. The first phase, from 1672-1689 comprises the period when the royal charter granting the rights of the Company was intact and a monopoly on the trade was enforced. In the second phase, from 1689-1698, the charter was seen as defective but nothing was achieved to re-organise the trade. An Act of Parliament granted in the beginning of the third phase from 1698-1712 permitted private persons to engage in the trade after a nominal payment was made for the upkeep of Company forts on the African coast. In the last phase, after 1712, the trade was open to all without restriction.²⁹⁵ Free traders from Bristol therefore entered the trade from the 1690s while Liverpool joined early in the eighteenth century. Based on the noted problems of the Royal African Company, a new Company was organised, known as the "Company of Merchants Trading to Africa" under the African Trade Act of 1750. Bristol and Liverpool merchants are largely credited for proposing a bill for the reorganisation of the trade in which admission to this new Company was open to all British subjects on the payment of forty shillings. Representative groups were established in London, Bristol and Liverpool and three men from each city were annually elected to sit on a committee which was now responsible for the management of the African forts previously under the purview of the Royal African Company.²⁹⁶ Bristol and Liverpool merchants' relationships with the Royal African Company and the established Company in 1750

²⁹⁵ Davies, *Royal African Company*, pp. 100-101. For the decline of the Royal African Company, see also Ann M. Carlos and Jamie Brown Kruse, "The Decline of the Royal African Company: Fringe Firms and the Role of the Charter", *Economic History Review*, 49 (1996), pp. 291-313.

²⁹⁶ Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol. 2*, p. xxxi.

are further explored in Chapter Six. Throughout its history, the British slave trade at large was also characterised by phases, experiencing peaks and troughs throughout the period. Richardson has noted three major expansionary phases; 1650-1683, 1705-1725 and the year 1746. These phases were accompanied by shorter periods of expansion that occurred during 1690-1701, 1734-1738 and 1780-1792.²⁹⁷ War was the most disruptive factor, but market fluctuations in sugar prices also affected trading activity. Expansion and decline in the slave trade is discussed in the next chapter when the specific clearance patterns are addressed as they relate to both ports' organisation of the trade.

As highlighted in earlier sections, there is a strong link between the slave trade and the staple commodity trades of sugar and tobacco.²⁹⁸ Local manufactures in both ports and their surrounding hinterlands boomed throughout the eighteenth century, and their products made up the majority of the cargoes, both to be bartered on the African coast for slaves as well as traded on the North American mainland and the West Indian islands for colonial products. Thus, those engaged in the trade from both ports usually were those who gained from providing goods and services to slaving ventures or those who locally profited from dealing with the products of slave labour. In this way, the trade in slaves was interwoven in the wider commercial fabric.²⁹⁹ The prospects for profit in slave trading ventures were enticing. While Bristol merchant James Jones famously described the "precarious trade" where "sometimes profits good, sometimes not so good", a profit of around ten per cent

²⁹⁷ David Richardson, "The British Empire and the Atlantic Slave Trade", in Louis, *Oxford History*, pp. 440-465. See also David Eltis, "The Volume and Structure of the Atlantic Slave Trade: A Reassessment", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (2001), pp. 17-46; Stephen D. Behrendt, "The Annual Volume and Regional Distribution of the Atlantic of the British Slave Trade, 1780-1807", *Journal of African Study*, 38 (1997), pp. 187-211.

²⁹⁸ The close relationship of the slave trade with these commodity trades was highlighted as a primary argument against the proposed abolition of the slave trade by Bristol and Liverpool merchants, as further explored in Chapter Six.

²⁹⁹ David Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'", *Slavery and Abolition*, 26 (2005), pp. 35-54; Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, pp. 7-53.

was considered acceptable for the risk involved.³⁰⁰ Dresser has argued that for Bristol, its urban development and the wealth merchants generated were inextricably linked to the slave trade and slave produced goods.³⁰¹ Likewise, Jane Longmore makes a similar argument when she assesses the validity of the contemporary assertion (albeit a drunken one) made on stage at the opening of the Theatre Royal in Liverpool in 1772 that “there is not a brick in your dirty town but what it is cemented by the blood of a negro”.³⁰² Additionally, Wallace asserted that, in Liverpool, “almost every order of people is interested in a Guinea cargo” and that it is “well known that many of the small vessels that import about a hundred slaves are fitted out by attornies, drapers, ropers, grocers, tallow-chandlers, barbers, tailors, etc”.³⁰³ This contemporary observation demonstrates that many Liverpoolians who invested in the slave trade were not necessarily specialists in it, thus reinforcing the argument above that, unlike Bristol, more Liverpool merchants had diverse commercial interests. Cargo lists for both Bristol and Liverpool ventures that indicate beef, vinegar, tobacco, beer, cider, manillas, beads, powder and Manchester goods among other items certainly attest to the wide variety of products that needed to be obtained either locally or from the hinterland to supply a slaving venture.³⁰⁴

As noted in the Introduction, Richardson has conducted an in-depth analysis for Bristol’s slave trading activity throughout its participation. In his analysis,

³⁰⁰ Examination of James Jones 16 Jun 1788, in Sheila Lambert (ed.), *House of Commons Sessional Papers of the Eighteenth Century Vol. 68* (Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1975); See Hyde, Parkinson and Marriner, “Nature and Profitability”; Richardson, “Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade”. Trade in sugar and tobacco was conducted on a commission basis, usually with a 2.5 per cent charge on sugar and tobacco imports and exports. Richardson, “Slavery and Bristol’s ‘Golden Age’”, p. 48.

³⁰¹ See Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, pp. 96-129; Madge Dresser, “Squares of Distinction, Webs of Interest: Gentility, Urban Development and the Slave Trade in Bristol, c. 1673-1820”, *Slavery and Abolition*, 21 (2000), pp. 21-47.

³⁰² See Jane Longmore, “‘Cemented by the Blood of a Negro?’ The Impact of the Slave Trade on Eighteenth Century Liverpool”, in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 227-252.

³⁰³ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 229.

³⁰⁴ Jeremiah Meyler to Richard Meyler, 21 Sep 1752, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 264; shipping account book of the snow, *Fanny* Apr 1777-May 1791, 12162 BRO. See also David Richardson, “West African Consumption Patterns and the English Slave Trade”, in Gemery and Hogendorn, *Uncommon Market*, pp. 303-333.

Richardson noted that it grew from small beginnings to substantial levels in the period between 1725-1740, with the following thirty-five years being a period of contraction and stabilisation. Finally, following a partial revival after the War of American Independence, the trade in Bristol almost completely ended in the decade before British abolition in 1807.³⁰⁵ In terms of percentage share in the trade, Bristol peaked in the 1740s with a forty-five per cent share of Britain's trade, while it decreased to around twenty-five per cent in the 1750s. By the 1790s, Bristol's share had shrunk to just two per cent.³⁰⁶ However, despite the fact that slave trade clearances from the port accounted for only four to nine per cent of all the ships leaving the port in the eighteenth century, the trade was more important than these percentages suggest when the amount of capital invested in the trade is considered.³⁰⁷ It is estimated that Bristol slave merchants invested at least £100,000 per year in slaving voyages in peace time and £150,000 when Bristol slaving activity was at its peak, reflecting the large amount of financial capital required.³⁰⁸ While a substantial sum, it has been estimated that in the 1780s, Bristol merchants invested £400,000-£500,000 in the sugar trade, demonstrating that the sugar interest was indeed the port's primary transatlantic commercial enterprise.³⁰⁹ While such a comprehensive analytical coverage of Liverpool's slave trade has not been conducted, Liverpool came to dominate the trade. In the period between 1750-1807, Liverpool merchants financed fifty-five per cent of all British slaving voyages and no less than seventy-five per cent between 1780-1807.³¹⁰ Liverpool annually invested £264,000 in the trade in the period between 1748-1784, significantly more

³⁰⁵ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 3.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁰⁷ Morgan, *Bristol and Atlantic Trade*, p. 131.

³⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 131.

³⁰⁹ Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'", p. 47.

³¹⁰ Richardson, "British Empire", p. 447.

than Bristol’s annual share, signifying Liverpool’s greater participation in the trade.³¹¹ Tellingly, in the final decade of the eighteenth century, over 960 ships cleared the port of Liverpool for Africa while only 135 left Bristol, further indicating the prominence of the slave trade in Liverpool’s larger commercial profile.³¹² Table 2.2 lists the clearances of slaving vessels from both ports. While this is analysed more comprehensively in the next chapter, Liverpool’s tremendous growth in participation in the trade in the mid-eighteenth century is readily observed, in contrast with Bristol’s decreasing participation from that point.

Table 2.2: Clearances of slave ships from Bristol and Liverpool

	Bristol	Liverpool
1699-1709	45	8
1710-1719	186	58
1720-1729	319	48
1730-1739	396	192
1740-1749	250	267
1750-1759	220	496
1760-1769	248	704
1770-1779	169	711
1780-1789	94	558
1790-1799	135	969
1800-1807	20	930
Total	2, 082	4,941

Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

³¹¹ Richardson, “Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade”, p. 65.

³¹² Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

A slaving voyage necessitated an "Atlantic-wide" perspective in its planning and coordination and its operation is well known in the historiography. This perspective revolved around a cyclical supply and demand of commodities, trading goods, and people in order to minimise risks and maximise their potential for profits.³¹³ Some of the considerations in a slaving venture included procuring slaving vessels, which were usually purchased from other trades, recruiting a "seasoned" labour force, including carpenters to outfit the slaving vessels, produce and foodstuff supplies in regional African markets, and the harvest periods in the Americas when slaves would be most desired for purchase.³¹⁴ By keeping this Atlantic-wide perspective and organising voyages around the most auspicious timing, the organisation of the slave trade required merchants to coordinate with several different parties and have knowledge of goods and people at various stages of the venture and around the Atlantic. Because a slaving voyage typically took a year to eighteen months to complete, timing was especially important in its successful completion. Most slaving voyages were fitted out between June and September and quick turn-around times were necessary both on the African coast and in the Americas.³¹⁵ Contemporary opinion stressed conducting quick purchases along the coast. As Liverpool merchant William Earle wrote to agents Kenyon and Southworth, "long purchases make sickly ships" and "unless one would expect slaves to spring and grow like mushrooms it is not to be expected from the great number of ships employed in the African trade that it should be otherwise".³¹⁶ Mortality rates indeed varied, and more time spent on certain places along the coast, particularly Old

³¹³ See Stephen D. Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles and Profits: Merchant Decision Making in the Slave Trade", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 58 (2001), pp. 171-205.

³¹⁴ Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles and Profits", p. 173.

³¹⁵ Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles and Profits", p. 180; B. K. Drake, "The Liverpool-African Voyage, c. 1790-1807: Commercial Problems", in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition*, pp. 126-157; Klein and Engerman, "Slave Mortality", p. 116.

³¹⁶ William Earle to Kenyon and Southworth, 22 Apr 1761, Earle Collection, Liverpool Public Records Office (hereafter LivPRO).

Calabar and Bonny, experienced much greater mortality.³¹⁷ The nature of the slave supply in the various regions arguably influenced mortality, thus it becomes further apparent that venturing during the most auspicious trade cycle was imperative for the success of the voyage.³¹⁸ Other factors beyond the merchants' control could also affect the timing of a voyage and thus its success. For example, Earle also mentioned that, owing to bad winds, the voyage of the *Calypso* from Jamaica was prolonged and thus "throws us behind for next season".³¹⁹ Poor harvests, competition from other traders, and planters defaulting on payments were other such factors that affected the profitability of the trade. A slaving voyage thus involved risk on all three legs of its "triangular" journey and the success of a slaving voyage depended largely on the merchant's knowledge of these risks and his ability to problem solve.³²⁰

The management of slaving voyages required particular entrepreneurial skill because of the decision-making that was needed, the necessary coordination of resources and financial capital, and the risk inherent in each slaving venture that merchants had to respond to. Haggerty argues that Liverpool merchants were acutely aware of the unique risks of the slave trade, such as those surrounding the purchase of slaves on the coast, slave mortality, market fluctuations and receiving remittances, and were largely able to manage these risks.³²¹ The ability to successfully manage risks was consequently linked to having knowledge of what goods were desired in different areas along the African coast and being able assort

³¹⁷ Sheryllynne Haggerty, "Risk and Risk Management in the Liverpool Slave Trade", *Business History*, 5 (2009), pp. 817-834; Klein and Engerman, "Slave Mortality", pp. 117-119; Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, "'This Horrid Hole': Royal Authority, Commerce and Credit at Bonny, 1690-1840", *Journal of African History*, 45 (2004), pp. 363-392.

³¹⁸ Drake, "Liverpool-African Voyage", pp. 130-135; Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles and Profits", p. 173.

³¹⁹ William Earle to John Darbyshire, 14 Mar 1761, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

³²⁰ Drake, "Liverpool-African Voyage", p. 126.

³²¹ Haggerty, "Risk and Risk Management", pp. 819, 823-828.

the appropriate cargoes to barter for slaves in these different markets.³²² African coastal dealers from the different parts of the coast were particular in, and had their own preferences for, specific quantities and qualities of European, Asian, and American textiles, manufacturers, firearms, gunpowder and alcohol and thus, agents had to assort specific cargoes for each port they visited.³²³ For example, merchants had to make sure that they had manillas, or small brass bracelets, in the eastern Niger Delta, cowrie shells on the Slave Coast, and guinea cloth on the River Senegal to barter for slaves in conjunction with other merchandise.³²⁴ These preferences likewise changed over time and merchants needed to be kept abreast of these changes. Speaking of bugles in particular, Richard Camplin from the African Office in London wrote to Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers stating that "that article is subject to many changes of fashions ... what the Negroes like one year they dislike the next year".³²⁵ Indeed, merchants such as Liverpoolian Robert Bostock regularly implored their captains to "be very particular [in their correspondence] in mentioning ... what goods is most in demand on the coast" to ensure they were well informed of the specific types of cargo needed for individual markets.³²⁶

The trading goods exchanged with the African coastal dealers usually fell into the categories of cloth, beads, metals and hardware (including iron bars, brass rods and brass bowls), alcohol and tobacco, and firearms and gunpowder. Knowing the precise assortments of cargoes for different regions and being able to procure them thus required merchants to have developed strong connections in the trading world, which in turn required an honest reputation. Timing was also important in obtaining these goods; orders were often requested "as early as possible" because items were

³²² Richardson, "West African Consumption", p. 304.

³²³ *Ibid.*, p. 304; Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles and Profits", p. 126.

³²⁴ Marion Johnson, "The Atlantic Slave Trade and the Economy of West Africa", in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool, the African Trade Slave Trade, and Abolition*, pp. 14-39.

³²⁵ Richard Camplin to Society of Merchant Venturers, 21 Apr 1773, SMV 7/2/1/11, BRO.

³²⁶ Robert Bostock to Captain Peter Burns, 10 Jun 1788, Robert Bostock Letterbook, LivPRO.

"not to be got for many unless ordered sometime" in advance.³²⁷ Additionally, some of the preferred trading goods, particularly bar iron, beads and certain textiles, were manufactured by foreign markets and re-exported by British merchants. British manufactures could not imitate these goods to the satisfaction of the African merchants, indicating that British merchant networks for trading goods were indeed widespread in order to meet their trading demands.³²⁸

Knowledgeable merchants attuned to the wants of various African ports were important for success in the slave trade, but English merchants also had to take into account the different political structures along the West African coast. These different coastal polities further shaped the nature of the trade in that region. The seven primary regions to which British merchants traded were Senegambia, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast, Gold Coast, Bight of Benin, Bight of Biafra and West-Central Africa.³²⁹ These regions had multiple ethnic groups, languages, and social systems; moreover the social, political and economic networks of these African cultures were also embedded in a larger framework of slavery, of which the Atlantic slave trade was only a part.³³⁰ The Gold Coast, Bights of Benin and Biafra as well as West-Central Africa were the principal sites for much of the slave trade generally in the eighteenth century. For the British trade in particular, the Bight of Biafra became an increasingly important site towards the end of the period, and British shipments from that region accounted for eighty-five per cent of the total slave shipments from the Bight.³³¹ The Gold Coast was also a vitally important region. With the largest European presence on the West African coast, the Royal African Company occupied ten castles on the Gold Coast, including their headquarters at Cape Coast Castle.

³²⁷ William Earle to Sparling and Bolden, 20 Feb 1760, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

³²⁸ Richardson, "West African Consumption", p. 308.

³²⁹ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

³³⁰ As will be discussed in Chapter Three and Four, preferences changed throughout the period for slaves from different ethnic groups.

³³¹ Paul Lovejoy, *Transformations in Slavery: A History of Slavery in Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 50, 59.

Britain's early involvement in the trade was shaped by the patterns established by the Royal African Company to this region.³³²

Throughout the period, changes occurred in market preferences, with expansion in exports taking place in West Central Africa and particularly the Loango Coast. As Paul Lovejoy and Richardson argue, the changes that took place throughout the eighteenth century, but especially after 1725, were dependent upon "the negotiation of new Afro-European working relationships".³³³ This highlights the importance for English merchants in building and maintaining solid network relationships with both African leaders and merchants. How the Bristol and Liverpool slave traders utilised these various markets is reflective of aspects of entrepreneurship and is discussed further in Chapters Three and Four. Generally speaking, however, small guineamen were sent to politically decentralised coastal markets while larger ships slaved at more politically centralised ports with the commercial infrastructure to provide large-scale slave shipments.³³⁴ The Kingdom of Dahomey as well as Old Calabar and Bonny, located on the Bights of Benin and of Biafra respectively, are prime examples of trading sites with different political organisations that influenced the trade with English merchants. Dahomey operated as a large, politically-organised military state that acquired slaves as tribute payments and through warfare and kidnapping. The political elites of these large-scale states controlled the supply of slaves by levying tribute payments, establishing commercial towns and trading centres, as well as collecting turnpike fees along major trading routes.³³⁵ In contrast, the slave trade at Old Calabar operated on an

³³² Benjamin, *Atlantic World*, p. 338.

³³³ Paul Lovejoy and David Richardson, "African Agency and the Liverpool Slave Trade", in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 43-66.

³³⁴ Behrendt, "Markets, Transaction Cycles and Profits", p. 188.

³³⁵ Paul Lovejoy and Jan Hogendorn, "Slave Marketing in West Africa", in Gemery and Hogendorn, *Uncommon Market*, pp. 213-239.

adapted form of the local institution of debt bondage, or “pawnship”.³³⁶ Thus, English merchants needed to be aware of the different local practices for securing slaves in order to effectively conduct business.³³⁷ The sound relationships English merchants had to cultivate with their counterparts on the African coast is emphasised in correspondence. Letters of instruction to captains often advised “prudent management with the Natives”; writing of the Africans in Old Calabar in particular, William Earle wrote that he “carefully avoid[s] having disputes with them”.³³⁸ Earle also wrote in very friendly terms to Duke Abashy of Old Calabar regarding the accidental capture of the Duke’s sons as slaves. Writing that the Duke “know[s] very well I love all Calabar”, Earle pledged to find and return Duke Abashy’s sons safely, and mentioned his own wife and sons to intimate their common family ties. Additionally, written to perhaps “save face”, Earle asked the Duke to “tell everybody you know that knows me I remain Duke Abashy’s friend”.³³⁹ Furthermore, speaking in Parliament, John Tarleton discussed how the children of principal African elites and tradesmen were sent to England to be educated. This practice was encouraged because it “not only concilitates [sic] their friendship and softens their manners, but adds greatly to the security of the trader, which answers the purposes of interest and humanity”.³⁴⁰ These examples attest to the importance of fostering strong

³³⁶ See Lovejoy and Richardson, “Trust, Pawnship, and Atlantic History”, pp. 349-355.

³³⁷ Different African polities and ethnic groups were often at war with each other, which in turn affected British trading activity along the coast. In a letter from Cape Coast Castle regarding trading conditions, the committee noted an impending conflict between the Ashantees (Ashante) and the Fantees (Fante). They observed: “... that as most of our Forts are situated in the Fantee Country, and that Nation having always lived in friendship with us, we will grant them every assistance in our power consistent with reason should their adversaries the Ashantees attack them, this Council being clearly of opinion that the Fantees (a people long used to the manner of the Europeans and pretty much civilised) are as neighbours, far preferable to the Ashantees who are a rude unpolished set of Men”. This highlights the nature of developing sound relationships with the Africans as well as the idea that ethnic groups were considered by Europeans’ as discrete groups, with both desirable and undesirable qualities. This further relates to market preferences merchants and planters had among the different ethnic groups. Cape Coast Castle, 11 Aug 1772, Conditions in the Forts and in trade, SMV 7/2/1/11, BRO.

³³⁸ Owners of the *Chesterfield* to William Earle, 22 May 1751, Earle Collection, LivPRO; William Earle to Anne Winstanley, 30 Aug 1751, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

³³⁹ William Earle to Duke Abashy, Feb 1761, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

³⁴⁰ Examination of John Tarleton, 16 Apr 1788, in Lambert, *House Vol. 69*.

relationships among the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants' wider networks. How strongly these relationships were cemented impacted upon the respective ports' entrepreneurial activity and is further discussed in the next chapter.

Core issues embody the transatlantic commercial world and the organisation and operation of the slave trade exemplifies these issues, particularly in regards to risk awareness and management, as well as the consequent importance of trust and reputation. A contemporary noted that the slave trade was "a commerce of enterprise and risque", encapsulating both the notion of enterprise as well as risk as a noted facet of trade.³⁴¹ The proper management of slaving ventures was crucial in determining the success of a voyage and it is in the management of the voyages where entrepreneurial qualities are expressed by leading owners and the impact of human and social capital is observed. This will be more specifically analysed in Chapters Three and Four when the trends in the organisation of the trade for both port cities are discussed. Generally, however, within slave voyage partnerships, it seems that most of the responsibility was usually delegated to one of the partners, who was referred to as "ship's husband", "purser" or "agent", and it was this person who represented the particular merchants' firm or network group. This person was responsible for supervising the outfit of the ship, preparing the cargoes, corresponding with captains at sea and with commission houses in the Americas as well as the general bookkeeping for the voyage.³⁴² Usually these partners owned the slave ships as well, which was not necessarily the case in other trades.³⁴³ There were obvious benefits for this type of organisation, both in terms of spreading risk and earning profits. Outfitting a vessel for a slaving venture was expensive; at the

³⁴¹ Edgar Corrie to Baron Hawkesbury, 27 Feb 1788, Liverpool Papers (hereafter LP), Vol. CCXXVII, Papers relating to the Slave Trade, 1787-1823, British Library (hereafter BL).

³⁴² Richardson, "Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade", pp. 68, 69.

³⁴³ Slave ships were specifically designed and constructed for the trade, and were used on a fairly regular basis. For instance, in the year and a half before abolition, 114 of the 155 slaving vessels in Liverpool had been regularly engaged in the trade. Cameron, *Liverpool*, p. 12. See also Rediker, *Slave Ship*, pp. 50-56.

beginning of the eighteenth century, it cost around £3,000 to prepare a ship for the voyage and by the end of the century, this figure had risen to £8,000 or more.³⁴⁴ It thus follows that it would be more advantageous for agents if the voyages were backed by a number of investors. Leading agents relied on the virtue of their reputation to attract investors, or "sleeping partners" to help spread the costs of the voyage; the attraction for the investors was the potential to make profits from the voyage without necessarily having an in-depth knowledge of the trade or too much responsibility in its overall management.³⁴⁵ Interestingly, around the mid-eighteenth century, changes in those involved in slave trading voyages occurred in both port cities, most likely affecting the course of the slave trade in Bristol and Liverpool. By the 1740s an "infusion of new men" entered the Liverpool slave trade from the West Indian trade. Likewise, by 1750, there was a noted change in the key investors in the Bristol slave trade from "old" to "new" wealth or from "insiders" to "outsiders".³⁴⁶ This change had implications for the access slave trade merchants had to both human and social capital, discussed further in Chapters Four and Five. Moreover, the timing of this process is notable, considering this is around the time when Liverpool came to dominate the slave trade. This issue of timing, also noted by Clemens is thus important to consider when analysing factors for relative success and failure in the slave trade.³⁴⁷

³⁴⁴ Richardson, "British Empire", p. 447.

³⁴⁵ Richardson, "Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade", pp. 68, 69.

³⁴⁶ Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'", p. 40.

³⁴⁷ Clemens, "Rise of Liverpool", pp. 211-225. This is further discussed in Chapter Five.

Conclusion

This chapter has established the commercial context of the ports of Bristol and Liverpool, demonstrating the interwoven relationship among the hinterland, local manufacture and the staple commodity trades including tobacco, sugar and slaves. While both ports were well placed to benefit from the “Americanisation” of trade that occurred in Britain in the eighteenth century, Liverpool’s commercial prosperity far out-stripped that of Bristol. Leading abolitionist Thomas Clarkson asserted that it was a mistake to attribute Liverpool’s wealth to its participation in the slave trade alone. Instead, he posited the following reasons: admission of strangers to Liverpool’s trade, the salt trade, the increase in Lancashire’s population, manufacturing in Manchester as well as canals.³⁴⁸ As outlined above, multiple reasons have been put forth by historians for Liverpool’s success that include Clarkson’s observations, such as the mutually-beneficial relationship Liverpool forged with Manchester, the improvements made in transportation and communications throughout the century and the human capital that existed in Liverpool’s mariner community. What was intimated in this chapter and what will be elaborated upon and further developed in the following chapters is that Liverpool’s success can also be attributed to the entrepreneurship of its merchants accessed within associational networks, encapsulated by the contemporary notion of “spirit”. Writing in 1773, Lowbridge Bright of Bristol commented, “the Liverpoole people go on with such spirit. I wish we could get more into that track, as they keep their business more to themselves”.³⁴⁹ Not only did Bright recognise a certain “spirit” of the Liverpool merchants, but also a

³⁴⁸ Clarkson’s observations are included as a footnote in the “Petition of Liverpool to the House of Commons”, 14 Feb 1788, in Elizabeth Donnan, *Documents Illustrative of the History of the Slave Trade to America Vol. 2* (Washington D.C.: Carnegie Institute of Washington, 1931), p. 575.

³⁴⁹ That is, Liverpool merchants engrossed trade. Lowbridge Bright to Henry Bright, 5 Nov 1773, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 450.

certain manner of business practice to emulate for success. By saying the Liverpool people “keep their business more to themselves”, Bright also distinguished a particular business practice the Liverpool merchants possessed that enabled their success. As will be seen, Liverpool’s slave trade was organised in such a way that utilised and benefitted from a greater access to local knowledge, skills and resources which offered more competitive advantages to their trade. Because of this, Liverpool merchants, as entrepreneurs, were able to surpass their counterparts in Bristol to become the leaders in the slave trade.

Chapter Three: Trends in the Organisation of the Bristol and Liverpool Slave Trade

Chapter Two outlined the development of Bristol and Liverpool as important commercial centres, discussing the interplay between their geography, manufactures and industry, and trade. Specifically, their commerce was analysed in its Atlantic context, with a discussion of the slave trade. This chapter examines the organisation of the slave trade in both port cities more specifically, and includes an examination of the twelve merchant case studies and their business networks as they relate to the overall patterns analysed. These patterns and the relationships of the merchants operating within their networks are explained graphically using social network analysis, which by visually representing these merchant networks, provides a more nuanced and comprehensive comparison between the two ports. In addition, the changes in the organisation of the trade in terms of the major traders and their associated networks, as well as changes in market preference both on the African coast and in the Americas, are described, demonstrating a change in practice over time in both ports. By demonstrating trends and patterns, both on a macro-scale (the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities) and micro-scale (the merchant case studies), conclusions can be made as to how entrepreneurship and social capital were utilised through merchant networks and contributed to the overall success of the trade for both ports. This chapter details the trends, while the following chapter explains and analyses these trends using the established framework of entrepreneurship and the notions of various forms of capital.

Clear trends are revealed by the analysis in this chapter. The Liverpool slave merchant community was much larger and more inter-connected whilst Bristol slave merchants were more atomised and their community smaller. It thus follows that the Liverpool case study merchants generally invested in slave voyages as part of larger

networks, which themselves were also more connected. Therefore, through these larger and more connected networks, Liverpool merchants had access to more knowledge, skills and capital which facilitated their entrepreneurial position as leaders in the trade. This chapter is divided into three sections. The first section provides a general analysis of the slave trade from both Bristol and Liverpool. The number of slaves taken to the Americas by Bristol and Liverpool ships is given, including a breakdown of the major embarkation and disembarkation regions. Change over time is also demonstrated, in terms of peak periods in the trade as well as the changes in market preference. The second section presents trends in voyage management and investment. The slave merchant communities in both ports are graphically represented over time, and trends in primary and secondary ownership among investors are discussed. The third section analyses the case study merchants and shows how they do or do not conform to the patterns outlined in the first two sections. This is shown through an analysis of their own particular patterns of ownership and associational networks.

General Analysis³⁵⁰

In the period between 1725 and 1807, a total of 494 Bristol merchants participated in 1,691 voyages and delivered approximately 483,259 slaves to the Americas. By comparison, Liverpool engaged in significantly more voyages, sending out 4,604 ships and delivering 1,313,865 slaves. Likewise, a much higher number of merchants were involved in Liverpool, with a total number of 2,025 participating in these voyages. As demonstrated below, these voyages largely conformed to national

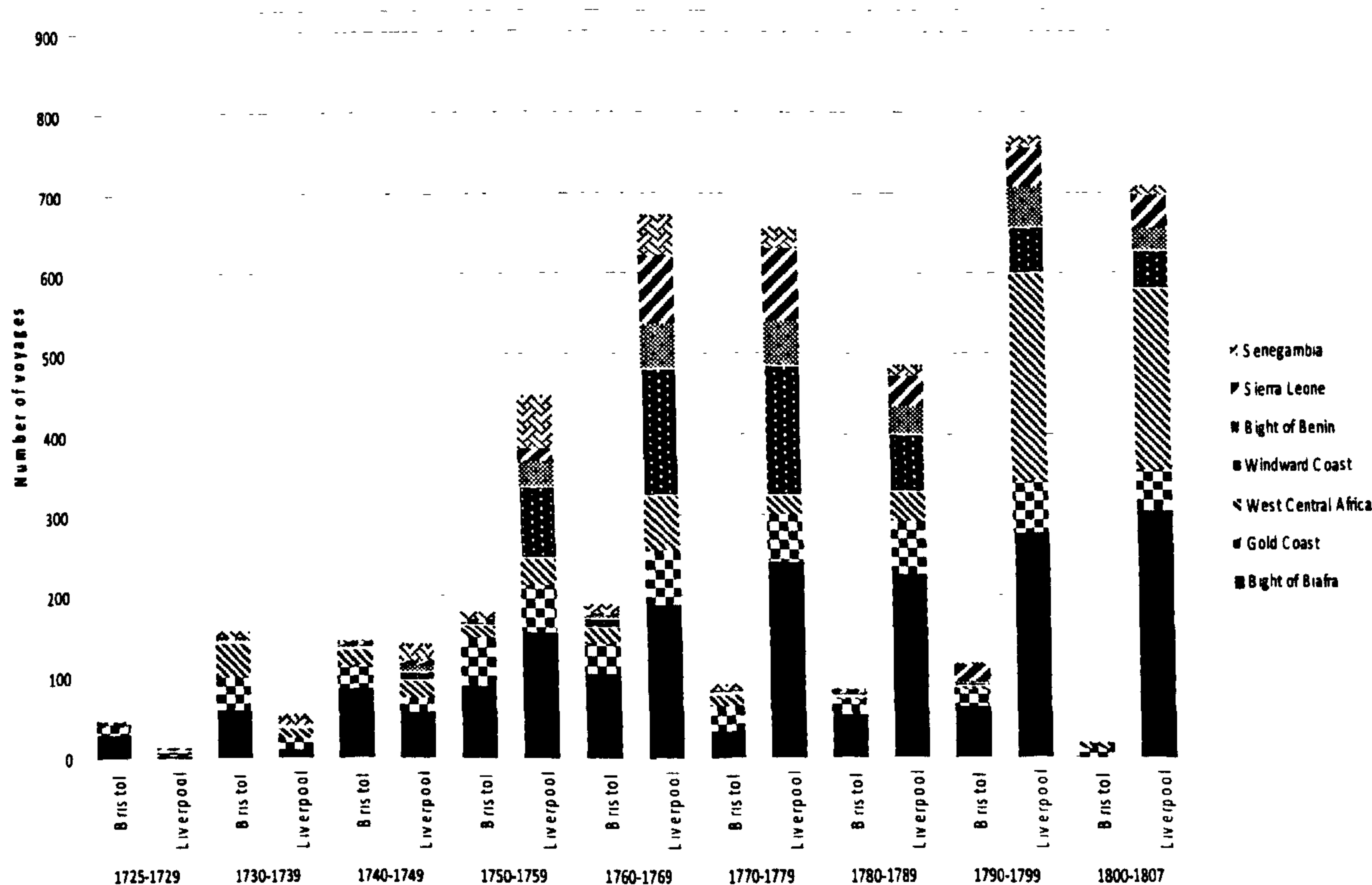
³⁵⁰ All of the tables and figures in this chapter have been produced based on data found in Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*. How the data has been specifically derived, particularly for the social network analysis, may be found in the Technical Appendix.

patterns. The following tables provide a summary of the seven primary embarkation regions for voyages leaving from both Bristol and Liverpool in the given time period. Chapter Two discussed that these different African regions had multiple ethnic groups, languages, different political systems and desires for specific trading goods which the British merchants had to be aware of when trading; their knowledge of these various factors thus facilitated and drove their trade. Market preference and slave supplies on the African coast, and the availability of the preferred goods for trade, such as textiles, firearms, cowries and manillas were particular considerations which contributed to the operation of the trade. The Bristol and Liverpool merchants' management of these factors thus contributed to their success. Voyage management, in terms of the decision-making on the part of the merchant, is particularly linked with notions of entrepreneurship when an entrepreneur is viewed as someone who specialises in making judgmental decisions.³⁵¹ Decision-making implies a leadership role, which has been argued to have a function only when something new needs to be carried out. For example, seeking new markets on the African coast or in the Americas that have not yet been exploited, and thus which had not been established through previous experience and routine.³⁵² These entrepreneurial considerations, and the particular managerial decisions made by Bristol and Liverpool merchants are considered in the following chapter.

³⁵¹ Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 80.

³⁵² Schumpeter, "Entrepreneur", p. 248.

Table 3.1: Major embarkation regions for Bristol and Liverpool slavers, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Table 3.1 underscores Liverpool’s larger presence and supremacy in the trade throughout the period. Bristol’s early predominance, however is evident. In the five years between 1725-1730, seventy-nine Bristol ships arrived on the coast compared with only fourteen vessels from Liverpool. In the following twenty years Bristol sent 284 vessels and while Liverpool still sent out less at 217 ships, it is clear the port’s presence in the trade was growing. Liverpool finally and significantly overtook Bristol by mid-century in the decade between 1750-1759. During this period, 470 Liverpool voyages were recorded on the African coast, surpassing Bristol by over 300 ships. This also exceeded the number of Liverpool ships in the previous decade by over 200, indicative of Liverpool’s increased interest and participation in the slave trade. As noted above, trade along the African coast was highly specialised and merchants

had to be aware of the specific local conditions in order to be able to successfully conduct business; merchants would thus instruct captains to venture to the same regions consecutively to trade with African merchants with whom they had developed relationships and where they had gained experience of the local practices and conditions.³⁵³ As also mentioned in the Introduction, Liverpool mariners and captains in particular had a wealth of human capital based on accumulated experience in the slave trade which served as a competitive advantage. Behrendt cites that the availability of well-trained "Guinea mariners" in Liverpool throughout the year allowed for faster turn-around times and more market options in Africa because these mariners also had more experience in the different regions from which to draw. Thus, Liverpool merchants had the manpower to participate in more voyages and were able to access more varied markets than London and Bristol merchants.³⁵⁴ Captains, who had a "knowledge of the wants of the coast and possess an influence with the Black Traders" were thus important members of merchant networks, which is further discussed in the next chapter.³⁵⁵ As demonstrated in Table 3.1, Bristol and Liverpool slavers had preferences for certain markets, indicative not only of these established connections, but also of their knowledge of the desired trading goods in different regions of the coast and their ability to meet these demands. Similar patterns are also found with the case study merchants, discussed below.

As Eltis argues, the coastal regions of Africa all experienced a rise in numbers of Africans taken in the trade followed by a plateau; this was largely influenced by "pushing regions across a threshold of supply".³⁵⁶ Early patterns of embarkation, particularly for Bristol, were shaped by the patterns established by the Royal African Company, while Liverpool merchants were more enterprising in exploiting new

³⁵³ Eltis, "Volume and Structure", p. 32.

³⁵⁴ Behrendt, "Human Capital", p. 67.

³⁵⁵ Edgar Corrie to Baron Hawkesbury, 27 Feb 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXVII, BL.

³⁵⁶ Eltis, "Volume and Structure", pp. 33, 34.

markets along the African coast later in the period.³⁵⁷ This is discussed further in the next chapter. Generally speaking, in terms of specific embarkation regions, the Bight of Biafra was the principal location for both ports; however, Liverpool ventured there on almost three times as many occasions as Bristol. The region's popularity with Bristol and Liverpool's slavers mirrors the larger trend of British merchants at large, who by 1740 also preferred to trade in this area.³⁵⁸ Indeed, the Bight of Biafra accounted for thirty-six per cent of Liverpool's activity on the African coast, while Bristol merchants sent almost fifty per cent of their ships to that region. Richardson notes Bristol merchants had a competitive advantage in the Bight of Biafra, as Bristol's local copper and brass industry could more readily satisfy the demands of that region which sought kettles, basins and copper wires and rods.³⁵⁹ Other major locales for both ports included the Gold Coast and West Central Africa, while Liverpool also traded significantly along the Windward Coast. By the mid-century, Liverpool secured and never relinquished its position in five of seven regions: the Bights of Benin and Biafra, Sierra Leone, the Windward Coast and West Central Africa.³⁶⁰ This corresponds with Richardson's characterisation that Bristol merchants were seemingly more conservative in their approach on the African coast by this time and may have "lacked the enterprise" of some contemporary Liverpool traders.³⁶¹ This notion is further developed in the next chapter.

As expected, however, decline in slaving activity for both ports can be seen during war years, as war accounted for the most detrimental aspect of the trade. As with the slave trade for Britain at large, the trade for both ports slumped particularly during the War of American Independence in the 1770s and conflicts with the French in 1780-1782 and 1793. These latter conflicts saw a reduction in the British slave

³⁵⁷ Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 1*, p. xxiii.

³⁵⁸ Morgan, "Liverpool's Dominance", p. 27. See also Lovejoy, *Transformations*, pp. 59-60.

³⁵⁹ Richardson, "Slavery and Bristol's 'Golden Age'", p. 44.

³⁶⁰ Morgan, "Liverpool's Dominance", p. 26.

³⁶¹ Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 3*, p. xxi.

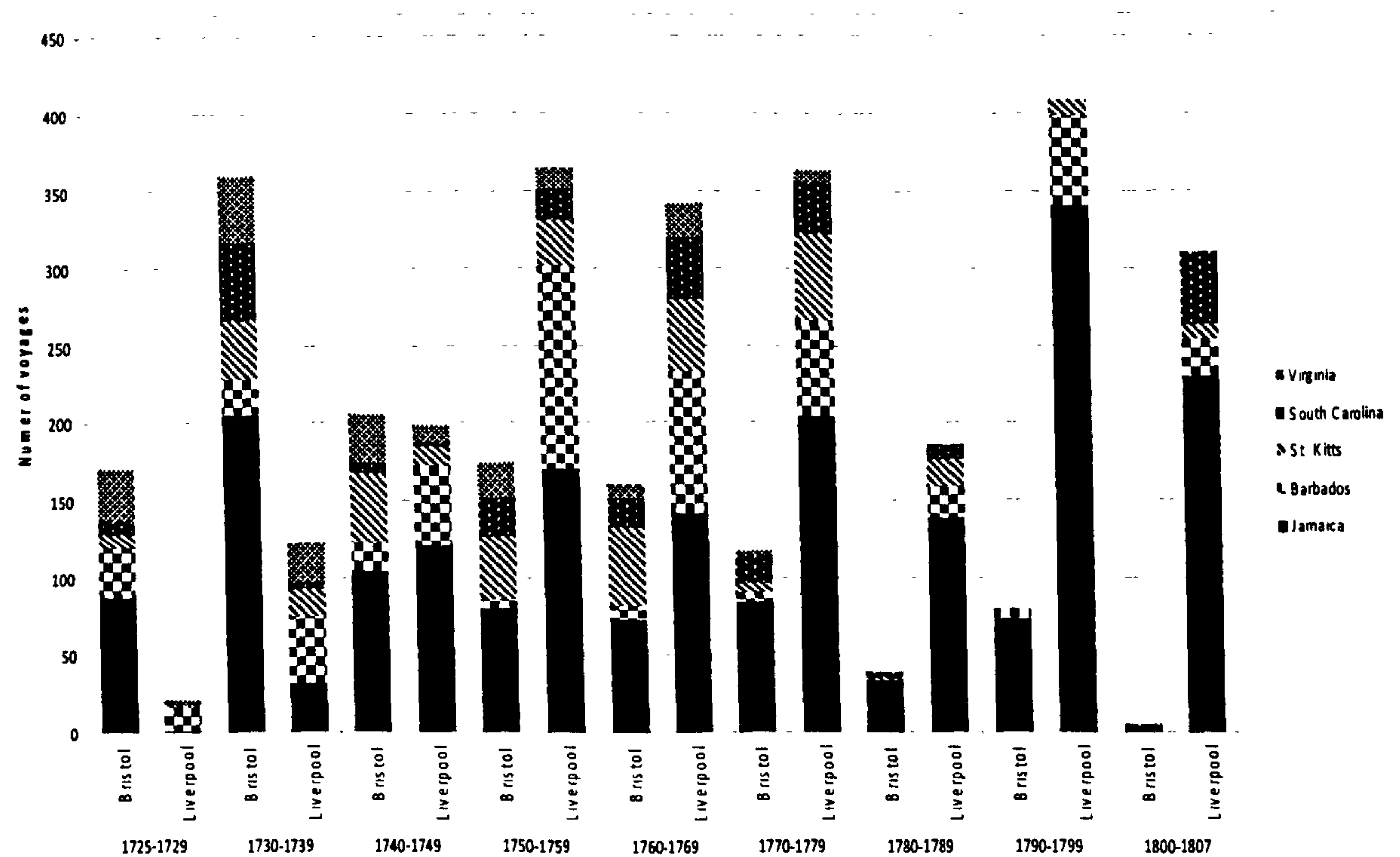
trade by more than fifty per cent.³⁶² This trend is reflected for Bristol and Liverpool in the table. Both ports' trading activity along the African coast decreased in the decade 1770-1779, coinciding with the War of American Independence and on the eve of war with France. The trade to the Windward Coast in particular declined, supporting the general trend that decline started to occur in that region by 1780 due to French squadrons threatening British shipping.³⁶³ The trade recovered somewhat in the next decade, but while Bristol slavers never returned to the coast in similar numbers as the first part of the century, during the period between 1780-1789, Liverpool slavers actually surpassed their peak of the previous twenty years. Additionally, the last seven years of the trade clearly demonstrate Bristol's relatively inconsequential presence in Africa, with only thirteen recorded ventures compared to Liverpool's still sizable 585. Thus, Liverpool merchants not only recovered more effectively from the effects of war than their counterparts in Bristol, but they were also able to further expand their own trade. How both ports responded during times of war, such as engaging in privateering, ultimately affected their success in the trade, and as these numbers hint, Liverpool's response demonstrates a spirit of entrepreneurship.

Turning from the primary regions of embarkation, Table 3.2 shows the principal areas where Bristol and Liverpool disembarked their slave ships.

³⁶² Behrendt, "Annual Volume", pp. 197-199.

³⁶³ Eltis, "Volume and Structure", p. 35; Behrendt, "Annual Volume", p. 191.

Table 3.2: Major disembarkation regions for Bristol and Liverpool slavers, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

As with the major embarkation regions, the places of landing for Bristol and Liverpool ships conform to the established national patterns, with Jamaica receiving significantly more ships than any other region. For Bristol, the decade between 1730-1739 comprised the highest number of voyages sent to Jamaica, coinciding with the peak of Bristol’s involvement in the trade. Conversely, Liverpool sent the highest number of ships to Jamaica in the last full decade before the abolition of the trade, well into period when Liverpool’s prime position in the trade was secure. Significantly, Liverpool delivered more slaves to that island than Bristol and London combined, as well as twice as many slaves than those ports combined to Barbados.³⁶⁴ As Table 3.2 shows, however, the trade to Barbados declined. As with patterns of

³⁶⁴ Morgan, “Liverpool’s Dominance”, p. 28.

embarkation, the effects of war and local conditions impacted upon the popularity of the region. A general decline in the sugar colonies was noted during the War of American Independence when West Indian planters were cut off from the supplies from the American mainland. Additionally, a financial crisis in the period between 1780-1787 led to famine, in which Barbados particularly suffered. It was in this context that David Beck Ryden asserts, "planter interest in slavery waned".³⁶⁵ Liverpool's commercial exploitation of Jamaica, however, has already been established. Morgan calculated that twelve of the leading fifty Liverpool merchants disembarked over half of their slaves there, thus bolstering the numbers significantly.³⁶⁶ On mainland North America, most Bristol voyages went to Virginia, followed closely by South Carolina. Again, the decade between 1730-1739 was when most of these voyages occurred, indicating not only Bristol's strength at this time as a major slaver, but corresponding with Bristol's involvement in both the Chesapeake tobacco interest and the servant trade, having forged trading connections there in the late seventeenth century. Like Bristol, most of Liverpool's ships were sent to Virginia in the decade between 1730-1739, while no ships were sent there in the last twenty years of the trade. Liverpool's slave trade to the Chesapeake region, however, was only marginal at best. Just over half of the merchants who sent a slaving vessel to the region by 1748 only invested in one slaving venture to the Chesapeake, and Liverpool's interest in the trade had diminished completely by 1772.³⁶⁷ This decline was linked to a slump in overall trade to the region at the close of the Seven Years' War, as well as a decrease in demand for imported slaves due to the natural increase of the slave population.³⁶⁸ The South Carolina market, however,

³⁶⁵ David Beck Ryden, "Does Decline Make Sense? The West Indian Economy and the Abolition of the Slave Trade", *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 31 (2001), pp. 347-374.

³⁶⁶ Morgan, "Liverpool's Dominance", p. 29.

³⁶⁷ Walsh, "Liverpool's Slave Trade", pp. 102, 105.

³⁶⁸ Walsh, "Liverpool's Slave Trade", p. 115.

still relied on imported slaves and Liverpool sent the most shipments out of all the slave ports in the final seven years of the trade, with forty-six voyages.

Perhaps what is more revealing is the percentage breakdown of these regions. In the period, Liverpool sent ninety-two per cent of its vessels to the Caribbean, while just under seven per cent went to the North American mainland; in contrast, eighty-one per cent of Bristol ships went to the Caribbean while about eighteen per cent were sent to North America. In the context of a declining North American market, it is clear that the bulk of slave ships went to the Caribbean (which had a greater need for enslaved labour due to the aforementioned fertility deficit among slaves), yet Bristol's share in the North American market was more than twice that of Liverpool's. This may be indicative of Bristol's early trading connections with the North American mainland, and particularly those in the Chesapeake, which accounted for Bristol's larger interest in this region. As highlighted in Chapter Two, Bristol's transition to the "Americanisation" of its trade was facilitated by the trading connections cemented between Bristolian and American merchants, in part due to the number of Bristol merchants who were born or trained in British North American cities or in the West Indies.³⁶⁹ Bristol dominated this market early in the period, particularly concentrating on the York River where they had well-established business contacts. In the years between 1718-1727, over eighty per cent of Bristol slave imports went to this region.³⁷⁰ Bristol later shifted to the expanding tobacco area of the upper James River Valley. Having entered the market relatively late, however, Liverpool focused on the Rappahannock River region for its entire involvement in the Chesapeake trade. Bristol's activity in the slave trade declined coinciding with the time the trade declined to the Southern colonies, indicating that Bristol merchants perhaps were not prepared to diversify their markets. As little

³⁶⁹ Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, p. 10.

³⁷⁰ Walter E. Minchinton, "The Slave Trade of Bristol with the British Mainland Colonies in North America, 1699-1770", in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool, the African Slave Trade and Abolition*, pp. 39-60.

overlap existed in personnel across trades, the switch to other markets (such as where Bristol merchants had connections in the sugar trade) may not have been easily facilitated given the discrete nature of the groups who managed these different trades. Furthermore, Morgan asserts that Bristol slave traders did not take advantage of “shifts in the centre of gravity” of the trade over time, which further supports the notion that Bristol slave merchants were more conservative in exploiting markets.³⁷¹ In this way, Bristol merchants could not compete with Liverpool or even London traders in expanding markets such as Jamaica and South Carolina between 1730-1770.

Liverpool merchants, however, also showed more enterprise than their Bristol and London competitors by supplying slaves to both foreign and conquered colonies in larger numbers. Despite war with the Spanish and French hindering their general trade, Liverpool merchants benefitted from supplying their markets and proved to be more entrepreneurial in this regard. Liverpool merchants sent more slaves to markets such as Guadeloupe and Martinique, St. Lucia, San Domingo and Cuba than their Bristol and London counterparts.³⁷² For instance, while Bristol disembarked seventeen voyages at Martinique, Liverpool disembarked ninety-four. Additionally, in terms of supplying the Spanish market, Liverpool engaged in 126 voyages, disembarking at the Spanish American mainland, Santo Domingo and Puerto Rico; 108 vessels were sent to Cuba alone. On the other hand, Bristol engaged in just twenty voyages to the Spanish market. Exploiting new market opportunities demonstrates both entrepreneurial initiative, and the ability to make judgmental decisions in a trade fraught with risk. Later in the chapter, an analysis of the case study merchants demonstrates whether or not they conform to the overall patterns established here.

³⁷¹ Morgan, “Bristol and the Atlantic Trade”, p. 640.

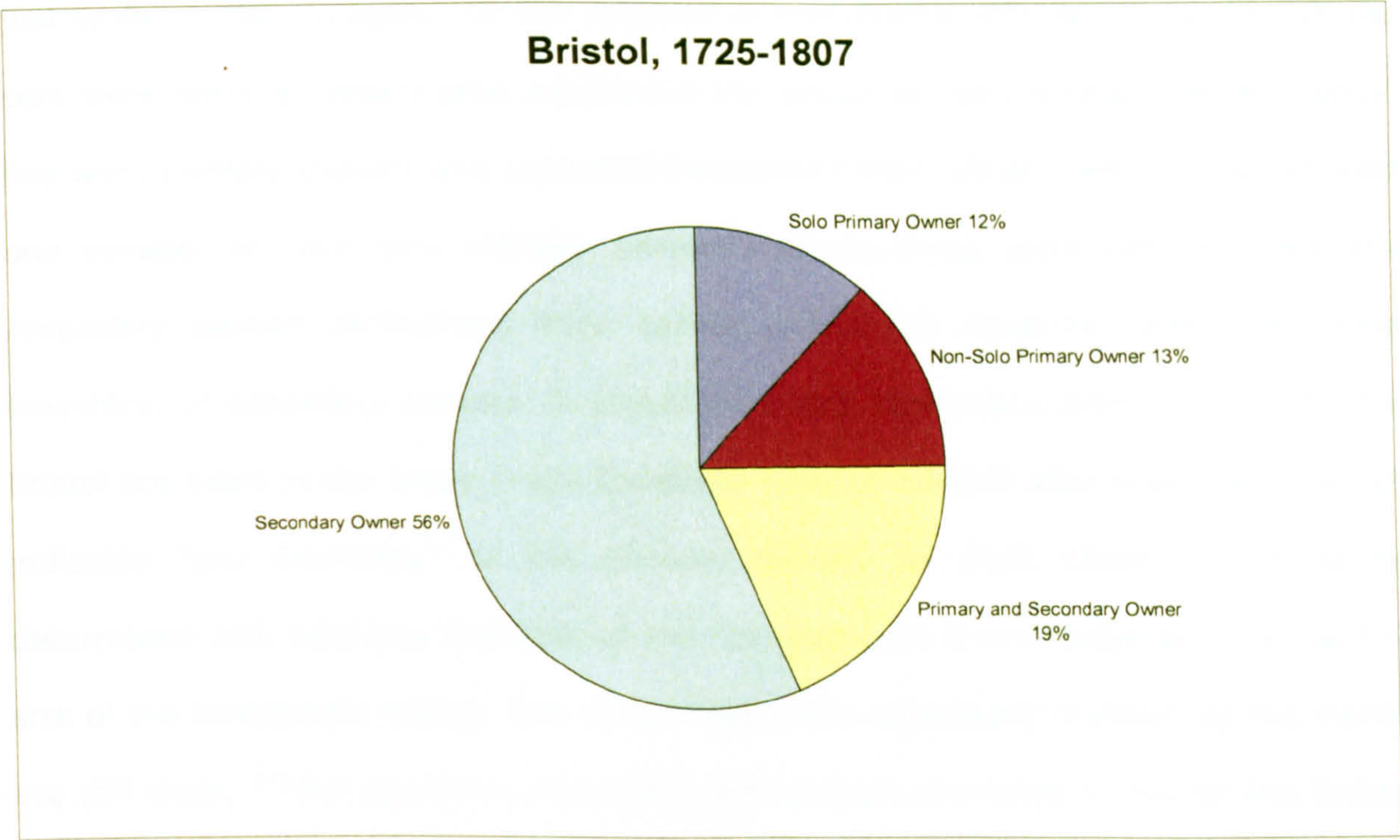
³⁷² Morgan, “Liverpool’s Dominance”, p. 28.

Ownership and Investment

Before discussing the patterns of voyage management, or ownership, and investment in slaving ventures in both Bristol and Liverpool, it is necessary to define a few terms. *Merchant* denotes any actor from Bristol or Liverpool involved in any slaving voyage, whether he was a primary or secondary owner. The Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database lists a *primary owner* as “Owner A” while *secondary owners* are listed as Owner B, C, D etc.³⁷³ *Investors* are defined by their secondary ownership only, or the total number of owners in a voyage that they were not the primary owner, or “Owner A”. Lastly, *Relationships* identify when two merchants worked together on a voyage, for example, one is the primary owner and the other is an investor, or they are both investors. These relationships are analysed in the following figures and demonstrate notable differences in the organisation of the trade in both ports.

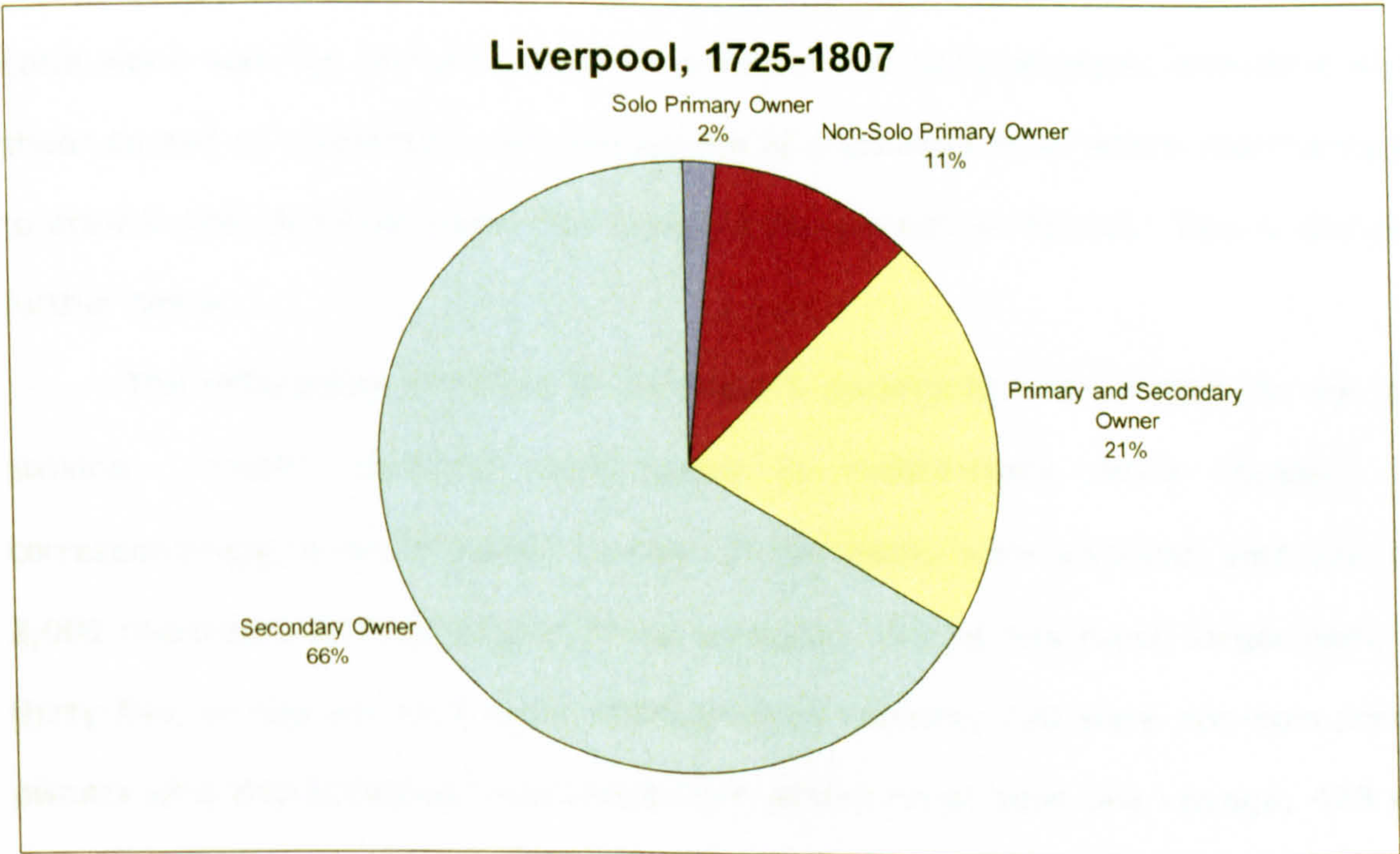
³⁷³ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Figure 3.1: Breakdown in the ownership of Bristol slaving voyages, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Figure 3.2: Breakdown in ownership of Liverpool slaving voyages, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

As mentioned above, during this period 494 Bristol *merchants* participated in just under 1,700 voyages. Of the number of merchants, fifty-seven, or twelve per cent were *primary owners* only, labelled in the graph as “solo primary owner”; sixty-five were *primary owners* who accepted investment from other merchants on at least one voyage, or “non solo primary owners”; ninety-three were both *primary* and *secondary owners* throughout their career, while the majority, 279, were only investors, or *secondary owners*. It should be noted that many primary owners from Bristol are listed in the Slave Trade Database with an * listed after their name, which indicates “and Company” of the primary owner. In most cases, it cannot be determined who else is a member of the Company, so it is impossible to know the size of the investment group. This is not taken as a significant problem as the trends are still clear.³⁷⁴ For example, when the partnerships are listed in full for the Bristol voyages, they are still generally smaller than those in Liverpool. Out of all the voyages that cleared from Bristol between 1725 and 1807, there are only nine voyages listed with eight owners; however case study Liverpool merchant Thomas Earle alone was the primary owner in seventeen groups of eight, indicative of the sheer spread of investment and the wealth of resources from which merchants had to draw in the Liverpool trade that was just not present in Bristol. This is discussed further below.

The differences in terms of Liverpool’s ownership and investment are quite striking. Again, Liverpool participated in substantially more voyages, and correspondingly, a much higher number of merchants were involved, with just over 2,000 merchants participating in these voyages. Out of this much larger pool, just thirty-five, or two per cent were solely *primary owners*; 220 were non-solo primary owners who also accepted investment from others on at least one voyage; 428 were

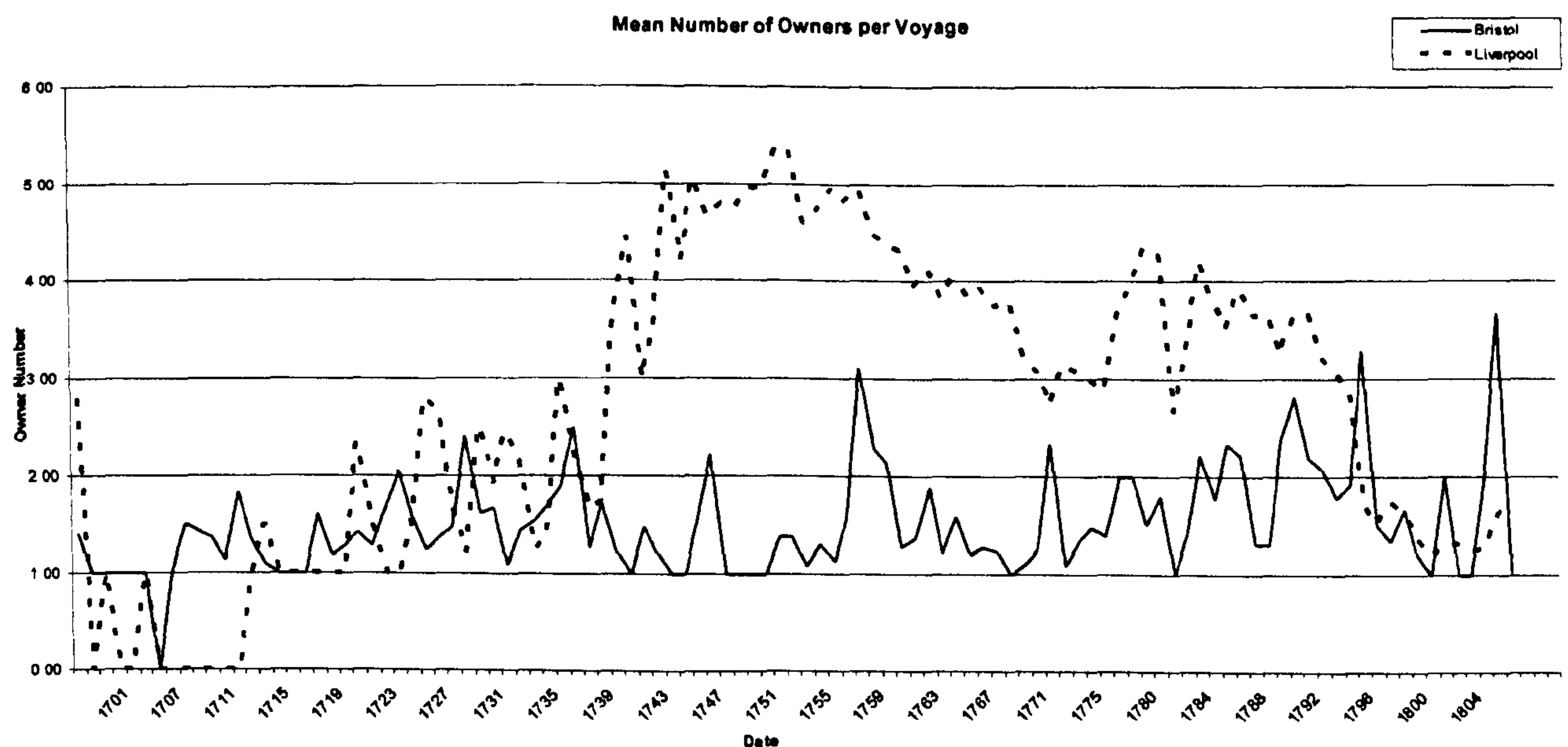
³⁷⁴ The Technical Appendix discusses the nature of the database further. See also Katie McDade, “Liverpool Slave Merchant Entrepreneurial Networks, 1725-1807”, *Business History* [forthcoming].

both *primary* and *secondary* owners throughout their career, while, similarly to Bristol, the clear majority of 1,342 were only investors. The differences between the two ports are most apparent in regards to primary ownership. Twelve per cent of Bristol merchants did not accept investment from others, compared to just two per cent of Liverpool merchants. It follows that more Liverpool merchants had investors, and more of them, in their voyages, making a slaving venture far more of a group enterprise. Thus, the Liverpool slave merchant community had a larger, sought after and shared pool of knowledge, skills and capital. These core competencies provided Liverpool slave merchants with a strong competitive advantage.³⁷⁵ This is explored further in this chapter and in the next, in terms of the nature of these networks and how they facilitated access to skills and capital as well as opportunity.

The next few figures support the established argument that a higher number of Liverpool merchants accepted investment from other merchants over the period. Figure 3.3 shows the average number of investors for slaving voyages in the two ports, demonstrating that Liverpool voyages were managed by a higher number of investors per voyage throughout much of the period. Likewise, the figure shows that changes in these investment patterns, in terms of the number of owners, occurred over the course of the period for both port cities. The changes in Bristol's investment patterns, however, were more erratic, with more peaks and troughs in the number of owners throughout the period. These peaks and troughs generally correspond with changes in Bristol's operation of the slave trade, such as demographic changes in the merchants who participated in the slave trade by mid-century, in response to war time conditions, and the proposed abolition to the slave trade in the latter part of the period. These factors are explored further in the next two chapters.

³⁷⁵ See Introduction, p. 36.

Figure 3.3: Mean number of owners per voyage in Bristol and Liverpool, 1725-1807

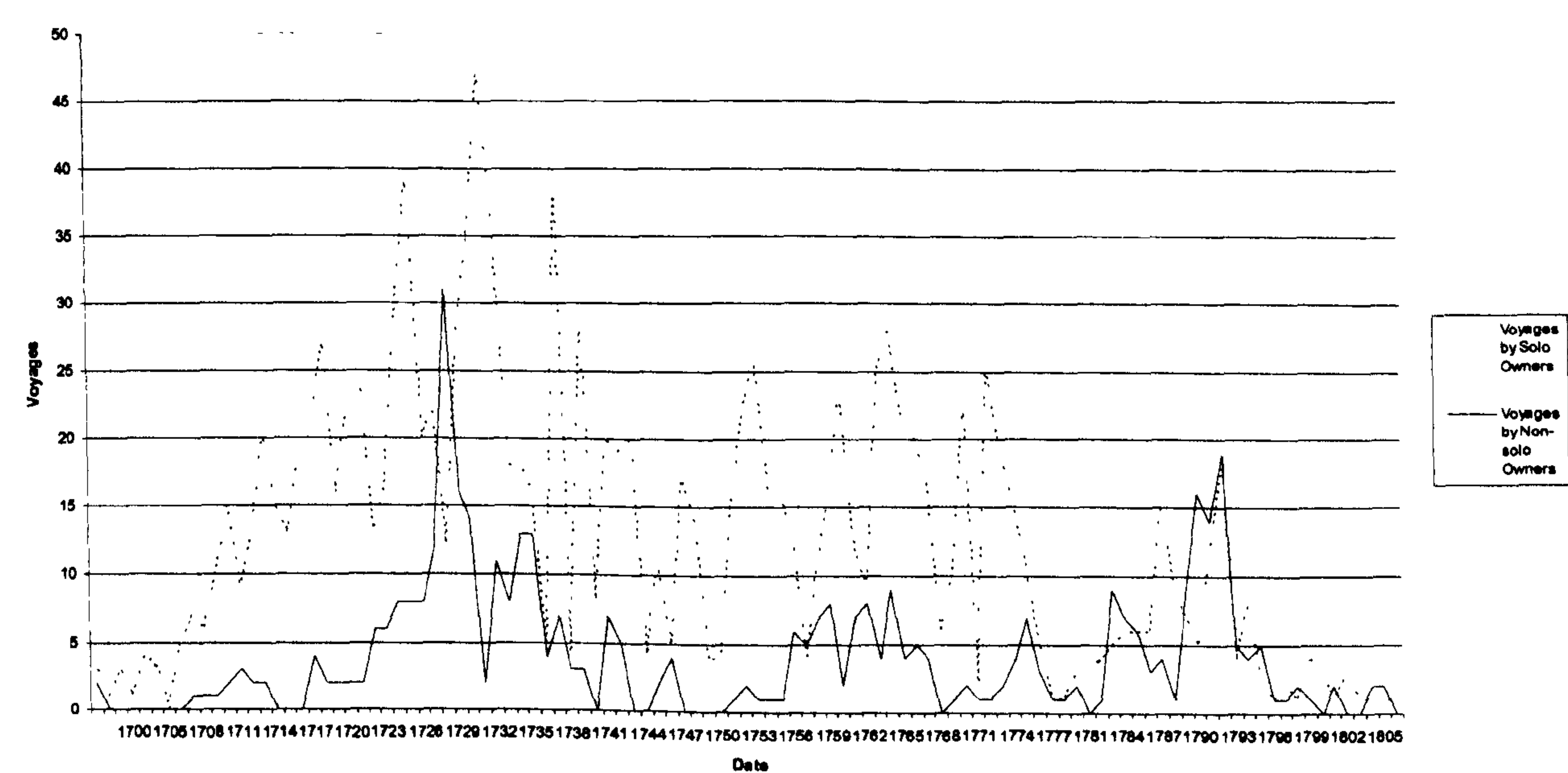


Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Noticeably, the period of highest investment in Liverpool, in terms of the number of investors involved in slaving voyages, occurs when Liverpool began to dominate the trade by mid-century. An argument can be made that this spread of secondary investment contributed to Liverpool edging past the competition. These larger investment groups may also signify that Liverpool merchants were in a better position to alleviate risk because it was spread among more people. This changes by the end of the period; Bristol's investment groups became larger while Liverpool's groups became smaller. As argued more in depth in the following chapters, this change in investment groups is largely due to the varying degrees of access to social capital in both merchant communities, and the different purposes this access served. This will also be explored further below when the merchant case studies are examined, along with consequent implications for the operation of the merchant networks in the two ports.

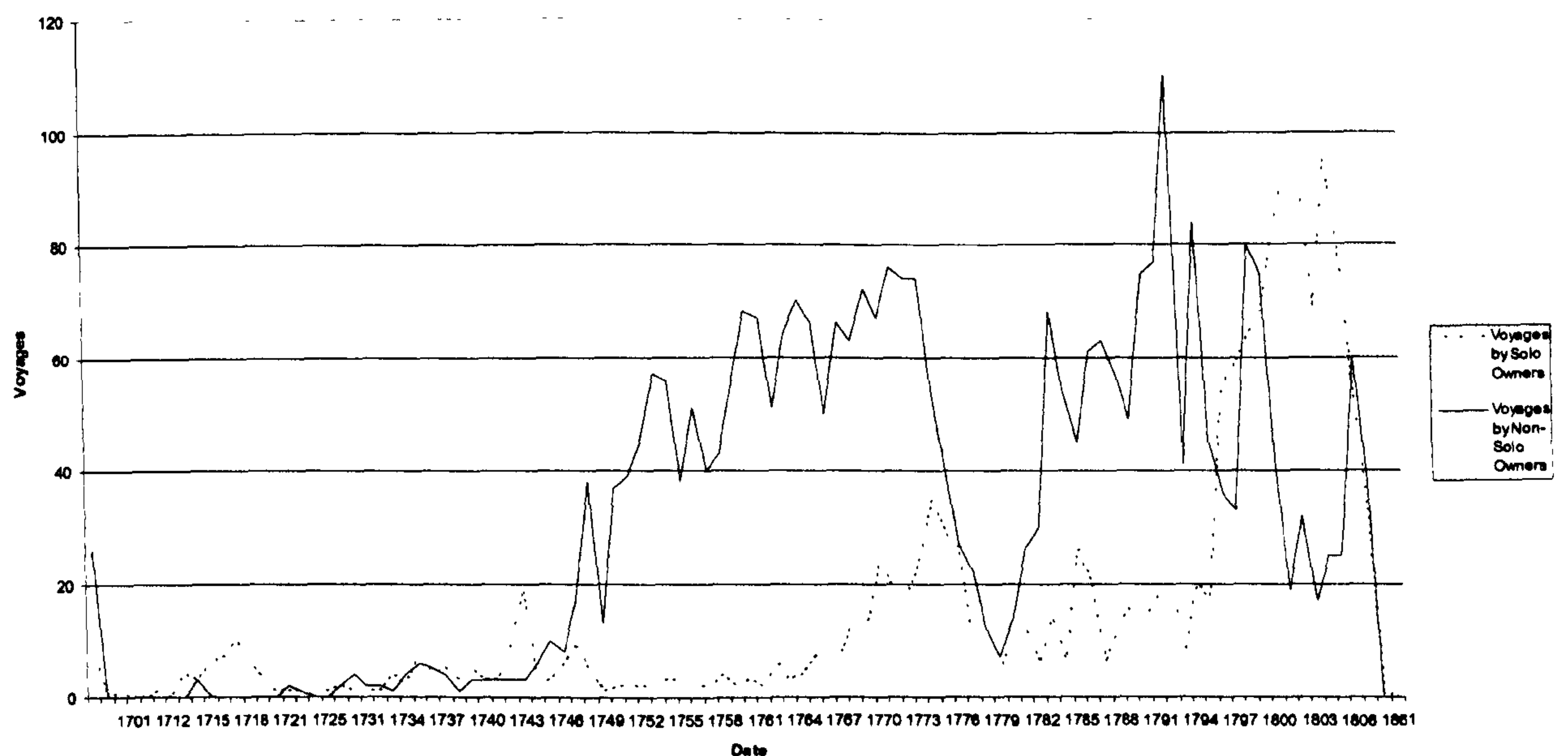
The next two figures compare the trends in voyages managed by a solo owner versus voyages managed by more than one owner, or a *primary owner* with *investors*. The differences between Bristol's ownership patterns and that of Liverpool are extraordinary when represented in visual form.

Figure 3.4: Bristol solo versus non-solo managed voyages



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Figure 3.5: Liverpool solo versus non-solo managed voyages



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

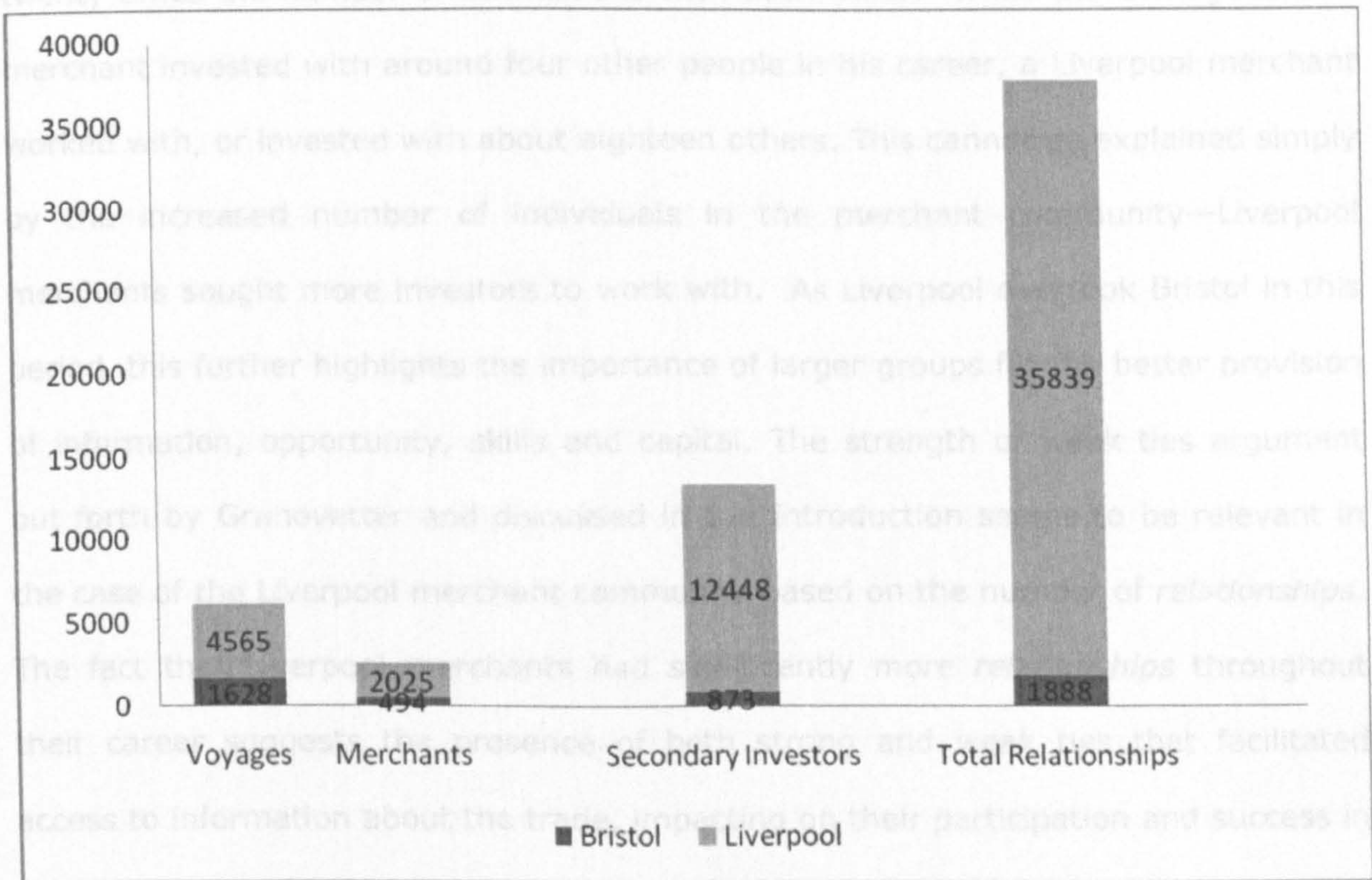
While Figure 3.3 demonstrated that Liverpool voyages had a higher number of investors on average per voyage, Figures 3.4 and 3.5 show that Liverpool also had far less voyages managed by just one *primary owner* when compared with Bristol. This typifies the notion that Liverpool voyages were more of a group enterprise, both spreading risk as well as sharing knowledge, skills and capital. The trends in the size of investment groups, as well as in voyage management offer further insight into the nature of network behaviour when the mean number of voyages per year is considered. Taken from Table 2.2 in the previous chapter, it is noted that in the decade between 1750-1759, Liverpool finally surpassed Bristol in terms of clearances, sending out 496 vessels compared to Bristol's 220. As mentioned above, this occurred when Liverpool's slaving ventures had on average, the most number of investors compared to any other point in the period. This is also when Liverpool voyages managed by just a single owner were at its lowest. After experiencing a decline in the numbers of investors per voyage during the 1760s, Liverpool's

investment groups grew again during the decade between 1770-1779. In this decade, 711 slave ships sailed from Liverpool for Africa, in contrast to Bristol's 169. Thus, high numbers of voyages coincided with larger investment groups. However, this changed in Liverpool by the end of the period. Between 1790-1799, the port cleared 969 ships for Africa, but the size of Liverpool's investment groups dropped dramatically. Thus, far less investors participated, but in far more voyages. Additionally, this is also when the number of voyages managed by just one person was at highest point. This pattern is different in Bristol. Richardson has argued for a sharp decline in resource pooling by leading Bristol merchants in the 1780s, coupled with a decrease in the number of investors in voyages after 1790, leaving the primary owners with more of an assumed risk.³⁷⁶ However, Figure 3.4 demonstrates a divergence from Richardson's assertion. The number of investors per voyage in the Bristol trade increased, even though the port only cleared 135 slaving vessels between 1790-1799 and just twenty in the last seven years. For Bristol, then, the reverse of Liverpool's case occurs: more investors participated in less voyages. Likewise, this period also coincided with the first time Bristol's voyages managed by more than one person surpassed the voyages made by a sole owner, again in contrast with Richardson's assertion. Further analysis on this feature of Bristol and Liverpool's slave merchant networks is presented in Chapters Five and Six, where it is argued that access to social capital impacted on the structure of merchant networks.

The next figure describes the relationships between the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants further, specifically in terms of how close-knit the merchant communities were.

³⁷⁶ Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 4*.

Figure 3.6: Association of merchants, investors and relationships in Bristol and Liverpool, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Figure 3.6 shows the association among merchants, investors and relationships in Bristol and Liverpool, and it is again evident that Liverpool had significantly higher numbers in each of these categories. Liverpool had three times as many *primary owners* as Bristol, but five times as many *secondary owners*. Tellingly, Liverpool's *secondary owners* made fifteen times the number of investments as the Bristol owners. In Bristol there were a total of 1,888 *relationships* between its merchants, meaning merchants investing in one another or working together to invest in someone else. In Liverpool, however, there were 35,839 *relationships* between its merchants.³⁷⁷ This is an incredibly significant result; with only about four

³⁷⁷ These relationships are scalar in that the relationship is only counted once and the direction is ignored. Merchant A and Merchant B are said to have had a relationship when they have both invested in the same

times the number of individuals investing in the trade, Liverpool investors had twenty times the number of connections with each other. While the average Bristol merchant invested with around four other people in his career, a Liverpool merchant worked with, or invested with about eighteen others. This cannot be explained simply by the increased number of individuals in the merchant community—Liverpool merchants sought more investors to work with. As Liverpool overtook Bristol in this period, this further highlights the importance of larger groups for the better provision of information, opportunity, skills and capital. The strength of weak ties argument put forth by Granovetter and discussed in the Introduction seems to be relevant in the case of the Liverpool merchant community based on the number of *relationships*. The fact that Liverpool merchants had significantly more *relationships* throughout their career suggests the presence of both strong and weak ties that facilitated access to information about the trade, impacting on their participation and success in slaving voyages. Simply put, because Liverpool merchants had more *relationships*, they also had more opportunity, skills, capital and knowledge from which to draw.

It is obvious that the Liverpool slave merchant community was both larger and more connected than that of Bristol. Being able to trace the development of and the fluctuations within the two communities as a whole and over time provides insight into the organisation of the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade that has not been produced before. The next section analyses the structure of the Bristol and Liverpool merchant community using social network analysis. Graphing the slave merchant communities using social network analysis illuminates their structure and how connected the merchant investors were to one another. Seen over time, the changes in this structure and the relationships among the merchants are exhibited. As asserted by John Wilson and Andrew Popp, networks have an organising logic,

voyage on one or more occasions. Therefore, “*Merchant A* has a relationship with *Merchant B*” is synonymous with “*Merchant B* has a relationship with *Merchant A*”.

governing the relationships among social actors; thus, as outlined by Wouter de Nooy, Andrej Mrvar and Vladimir Batagelj the primary purpose of social network analysis is detecting and interpreting these patterns of social ties among actors.³⁷⁸ While the theory behind networks and how they may be applied to business enterprise has been discussed in the Introduction, it is necessary to reiterate some of these key themes in the analysis of the Bristol and Liverpool networks. It is important to view the changes in the structure of these two communities because networks are as much a process as they are a system of organisation. They are grounded in their own temporal, social and cultural context and it is natural that they experience change.³⁷⁹ This idea is in keeping with theoretical presuppositions about entrepreneurship and it is this interplay between entrepreneurship and networks that is the crux of the argument for the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities. Howard Aldrich and Catherine Zimmer argue for entrepreneurship through social networks, indicating that, like networks themselves, entrepreneurship is also a process that must be viewed in dynamic terms. In addition, entrepreneurship requires linkages or relations between components of the process; through these linkages, then, social capital can be accessed.³⁸⁰ In the case of the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant networks, this would include resources such as financial capital, human capital in the form of knowledge and skills, as well as information. As discussed in the Introduction, eighteenth-century business partnerships were fluid; this was also the case for merchant networks. For example, Laurel Smith-Doerr and Walter M. Powell argue that networks are created for project-based work and their formation stems from personal networks based on loyalties and friendships maintained over time. They argue that these forms of

³⁷⁸ Wilson and Popp, *Industrial Clusters*, p. 9; Wouter de Nooy, Andrej Mrvar Vladimir Batagelj, *Exploratory Social Network Analysis with Pajek* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), p. 5.

³⁷⁹ Wilson and Popp, *Industrial Clusters*, p. 5.

³⁸⁰ Aldrich and Zimmer, "Entrepreneurship", pp. 4, 20. For more on economic dynamism, see Joseph Schumpeter, *Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy* (London: Unwin, 1942).

repeated exchange amount to much more than a “series of bilateral relationships but are entangled with concerns of friendship, status and reputation”.³⁸¹ It is clear that business and social contexts were far from being separate for Bristol and Liverpool merchants in the eighteenth century.

The figures below show the connections between the merchants who invested in slaving voyages in Bristol and Liverpool. The circles (vertices) on the figures represent a *merchant*, or actor, while the lines between the circles represent a relationship (edge or arc) between the merchants. As defined above, the *relationship* is indicative of merchants working together on a slave trade voyage; for example, one is the *primary owner* and the other is an *investor*, or they were both investors. Social network theory espouses the assumption that social networks generally have dense pockets of people who “stick together” and likewise argues that the people involved in these cohesive subgroups are joined by more than just interaction. It is also assumed that these groups foster norms, identity and collective behaviour, or what Granovetter called embeddedness, in specific socio-historical context.³⁸² These types of networks have important implications for access to social capital in that they can serve both positive and negative purposes, discussed further in Chapter Five when the slave merchants in their urban and social context is considered. In this business context, however, as Figure 3.6 demonstrates in terms of relationships, large and connected groups provided a wealth of resources in the Liverpool merchant community, offering strong competitive advantages. An individual’s position in a network is of vital importance for information transfer and the notion of centrality is crucial. The more a person can serve as a “go-between” or a bridge between networks, the more central he is in the network or networks; in this way, bridges can be thought of as Granovetter’s “weak ties”.

³⁸¹ Laurel Smith-Doerr and Walter M. Powell, “Networks and Economic Life”, in Smelser and Swedberg, *Handbook of Economic Sociology*, pp. 379-403.

³⁸² De Nooy et al., *Exploratory*, p. 61; Granovetter, “Economic Action”, pp. 481-482.

The figures below show the structure of the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities in the decades of the 1730s, 1750s, 1770s and 1790s. In Bristol, case study merchant Isaac Hobhouse was a central merchant in 1730, while James Rogers held that position in 1790; tellingly, no one Bristol merchant was central in 1770. In Liverpool, each of the decades outlined had a central merchant in the overall merchant community. It is no surprise that William Davenport held this position in 1770 considering the number of people he invested with throughout his career. Additionally, bridges between groups have also been determined for each of these time periods, and the implications for this are even more striking. These bridges link one group to another, thus their removal would mean a complete separation between the two groups. Six bridges were established in Bristol in the decade between 1730-1739 when its slave trade was at its height, but only one, James Rogers, provided a bridge in 1790-1799. No-one, however, served as a bridge in 1750-1759 or 1770-1779.³⁸³ In contrast, no-one served as a bridge in Liverpool in 1730-1739 when the trade was still in its relative infancy; however, in 1750-1759 and 1770-1779, ten bridges were identified while in 1790-1799, there were eight.³⁸⁴ In terms of network behaviour, it seems logical that when Liverpool's participation in the trade increased rapidly, taking over London and Bristol's previous position of dominance, that this was accompanied by merchants within an already connected group acting as go-betweens among the networks. These merchants were not necessarily "big players" like Davenport. In fact, none of the Liverpool case study merchants served as bridges. However, investors participating in multiple groups

³⁸³ In 1730, the Bristol bridges were Henry Fitzherbert, Isaac Hobhouse, Joseph Iles, Joseph Jefferies, and Edmund Saunders.

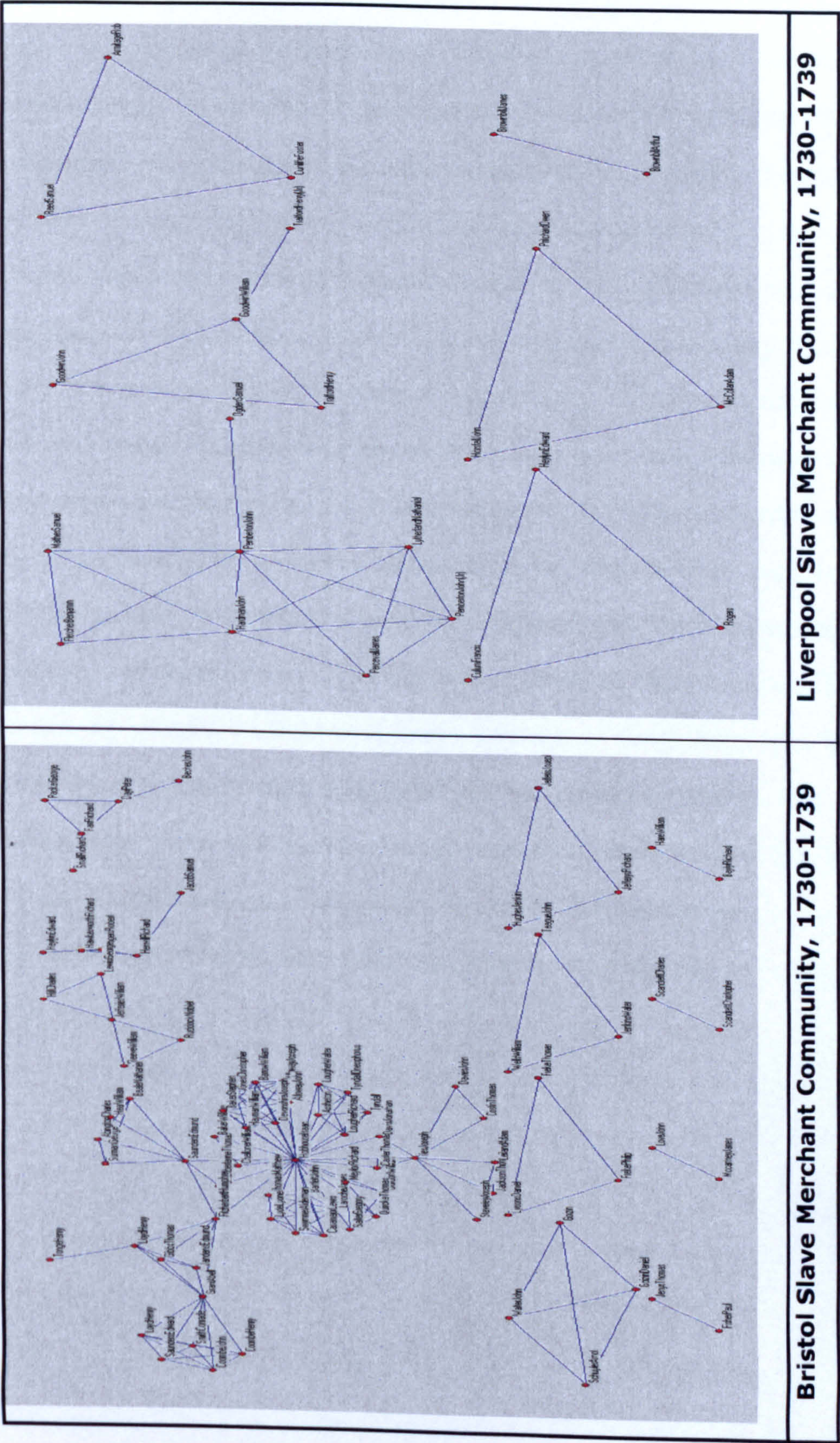
³⁸⁴ In 1750, the Liverpool bridges were Joseph Brooks, Edward Forbes, Thomas Pennington, Richard Savage, Thomas Seel, William Haliday, James Gildart, Richard Golding, George Campbell Sr., and George Campbell Jr. In 1770, they were Thomas Moss, John Tarleton, John Knight, William Dennison, John White, William Woodville, John Roberts, Edward Mason, Robert Grimshaw and William Dingman. In 1790 they were John Hind, Thomas Rodie, Jonathan Ratcliffe, Francis Ingram, John Bolton, Joseph Birch and Moses Benson.

simultaneously can naturally share information, skills and capital across these groups. Likewise, the Bristol merchant network not having these bridges reinforces the idea of a less connected group; without more opportunity and access to crucial resources, Bristol's trade lagged behind Liverpool, particularly by mid-century.

Generated using the social networking software called Pajek, the figures below demonstrate all the investors with connections; however, only those merchants who worked with other merchants on slaving voyages are shown, while solely primary owners are not, purely by virtue of the fact that they are not connected to another investor.³⁸⁵

³⁸⁵ Pajek is free and available to download at: <http://vlado.fmf.uni-lj.si/pub/networks/pajek>.

Figure 3.7: Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities, 1730-1739



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Figure 3.7 compares the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities in the decade between 1730-1739. In this decade, Bristol merchants participated in 396 slaving ventures, while Liverpool cleared 192 slaving vessels. These numbers are reflective of the fact that Bristol was at the peak of its slave trading activity while Liverpool was just starting to make concerted efforts in its participation. Likewise, the Bristol slave merchants are at their most connected throughout this decade. This is indicative of the crucial link between connectivity among merchants that is conducive to the resource-sharing imperative for successful slaving ventures. Bristol merchants were organised in several different groups, yet many of these groups had three or more merchants in them; many of these groups were also connected through investment by merchants serving as bridges to the largest connected group. As established, this is the period when the Bristol slave merchant community had the most number of bridges, facilitating Bristol's position of dominance. On the other hand, Liverpool merchants were organised into six disparate groups, four of them consisting of only three members. With no merchant serving as a bridge in the Liverpool slave merchant community at this time, the link between connectivity within the slave merchant communities and degree of participation in the trade is made clear.

The Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities by mid-century are radically different from just two decades previously as shown in Figure 3.8. The Bristol merchant community is smaller in terms of connections, coinciding with Bristol's waning participation in the trade. During this period, Bristol cleared 220 slaving vessels, a decrease of over one hundred ventures than twenty years previously. As Figure 3.3 demonstrated, Bristol slaving ventures during this period were managed in smaller investment groups, further demonstrative of the fact that connectivity and resource-sharing is linked to a higher participation and greater success in the trade. Conversely, the Liverpool community has grown significantly, with a much larger number of merchants involved in the trade. They were organised in a densely connected core of investment, with many merchants connected to one another through investment sharing. In contrast with the previous period highlighted when there were no merchants acting as bridges, there were now ten merchants acting as bridges.³⁸⁶ Related to this vast increase in resource-sharing in this period, Liverpool cleared 496 slaving vessels and took the leading position in the trade. Likewise, Figure 3.3 showed Liverpool voyages were managed by the largest investment groups of the period. Judging by the dense web of connections in the Liverpool merchant community, and the lesser number of connections among merchants in Bristol, these graphs further demonstrate the established phenomenon that more Liverpool merchants accepted investment from others and participated in larger investment groups. Additionally, Chapter Five discusses demographic changes in both communities during this period that factor into these changes of the organisation in the merchant communities.

³⁸⁶ See footnote 384.

The structure of Bristol's merchant community changed yet again during the 1770s. Figure 3.9 shows that while there were a number of partnership groups in the early years, during this period there were only three. Likewise, no Bristol merchant served as a link between groups to facilitate the spread of information. This again corroborates the argument that Bristol merchants did not spread their investment in slaving voyages as did the Liverpool merchants. Bristol's participation in the trade was consistently declining throughout this period and Bristol merchants only participated in 169 voyages in this decade, a significant drop from the previous decade which cleared 248. Demographic changes, as well as the merchant networks' response to war accounted for the decrease in connectivity in the merchant community, as further explored in the next two chapters. Liverpool's slave merchant networks, however, retained their structure, including the densely packed core of connected merchants. While there were still some disparate groups, these separate groups had at least four other merchants, while twenty years previously they were made up of only pairs. Liverpool cleared 711 slaving vessels during this decade, its highest number of clearances to date. The fact that the structure of the Liverpool networks did not change also suggests a certain degree of continuity in organisation.

Figure 3.10 shows that the structure of the merchant networks in 1790-1799 is most interesting for Bristol. The graphs for 1750-1759 and 1770-1779 indicated that the Bristol slave merchant community was becoming less connected, and the largest connected group became smaller. This changed toward the end of the period. The Bristol merchant community as a whole had two primary connected groups and these groups had more members. Bristol cleared 135 ships for Africa, an increase of forty-one from the previous decade; this change in structure also aligned with the increased number of non-solo voyages made by Bristol merchants in the latter part of the period. Thus, the phenomenon that greater connectivity allows for greater participation in the trade is further supported. The increased connectivity is linked to access to social capital as a response to the proposed abolition of the slave trade, as further argued in Chapters Five and Six. On the other hand, the structure of the Liverpool merchant community looks relatively maintained, with a few disparate groups on the periphery of a densely connected core group. Liverpool cleared 969 ships in this decade, the highest number of clearances for the period. This however also corresponds with Liverpool merchants' organising slaving ventures in smaller investment groups, although as a community they are still well-connected. This is also argued to be a function of access to social capital, explained in Chapters Five and Six.

The contrasting size and interconnectedness of these networks raise important questions which will be dealt with in the next chapter. The patterns in the management of slaving voyages of case study merchants will now be analysed to ascertain how they conform or do not conform to the above established patterns.

Case Studies

Twelve case study merchants, six from Bristol and six from Liverpool, have been selected to help frame the analysis of the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities. The merchants from Bristol are Michael Becher, Henry Bright, John Fowler, Isaac Hobhouse, James Laroche and James Rogers while the merchants representing Liverpool are Foster Cunliffe, William Davenport, Thomas Earle, Benjamin Heywood, William James and John Tarleton. James Laroche and William James were two of the most prolific primary owners in Bristol and Liverpool respectively. James Laroche participated in 127 voyages, and was sole owner of eighty-seven while William James participated in 140 voyages, in eighty-four of which he was listed as the sole owner. Thus, they both had experience in a vast number of voyages as well as in sole primary ownership. The other merchants participated in a significant number of voyages throughout the period and represented the trade in both cities at different points in time. The analysis of the case study merchants here allows for commentary on the merchant networks, network behaviour, and their operation within the trade, which previous studies do not.

Case studies: General Analysis³⁸⁷

The first two tables in this chapter established the primary embarkation regions and disembarkation regions for Bristol and Liverpool ships in the period. The following two tables will do the same for the Bristol and Liverpool case study merchants. The Bristol case study merchants follow the general pattern of the Bristol merchants as a whole, with slight variations. Table 3.3 demonstrates that, in accordance with the general trend of all British slave merchants, the Bight of

³⁸⁷ As with the tables and graphs, all of the merchant data given in this section, i.e. the number of voyages they participated in, their investment partners, and ships and captains used were taken from Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

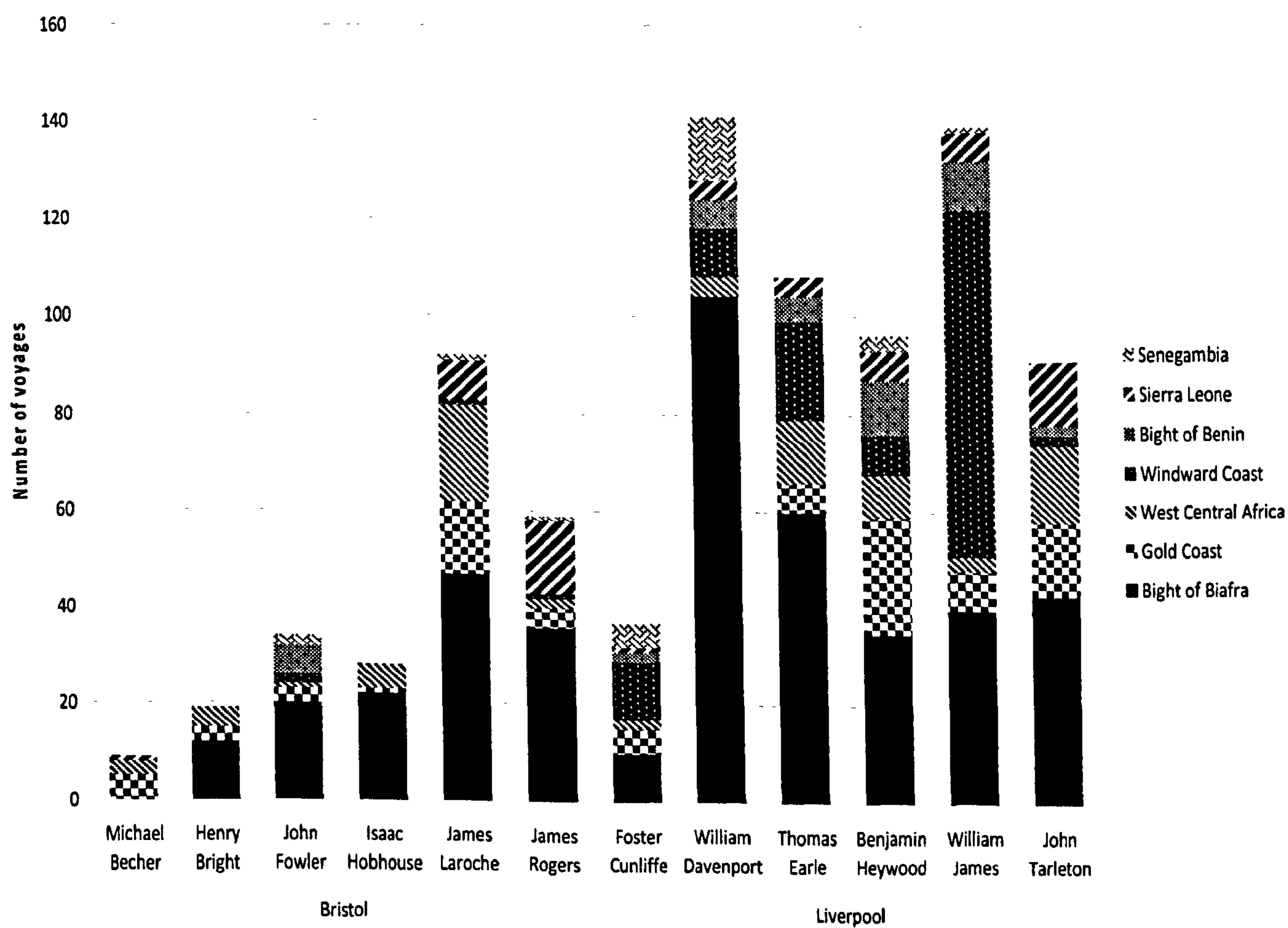
Biafra was the most popular embarkation region, accounting for fifty-seven per cent of the case studies' presence on the African coast. James Laroche made just over half of his slave purchases in that region. While Bristol merchants as a whole favoured the Gold Coast over West Central Africa, sending 116 more ships to the first region over the course of the period, the case study merchants ventured to West Central Africa just slightly more than the former. As mentioned in the last chapter, the Royal African Company established forts and castles along the Gold Coast and thus the early British slave trade was directed there; Richardson argues that Bristol merchants in the early years of the trade (1698-1729) demonstrated a willingness to innovate and promote changes in these established patterns.³⁸⁸ The case study merchants, however, do not necessarily conform to this spirit of innovation. No single Bristol merchant ventured to all seven areas, although both James Laroche and James Rogers went to six, indicating they were perhaps more open to exploring market options. Given that they were more prolific traders in terms of the number of voyages they participated in, this openness could have contributed to their success. Michael Becher, Henry Bright and Isaac Hobhouse only voyaged to three places, and for Bright and Hobhouse, the Bight of Biafra was the region where they most frequented. Moreover, fluctuations in where these case study merchants ventured occurred over time. For both John Fowler and James Laroche, their ventures to the Bight of Biafra decreased throughout the period. John Fowler participated in fourteen voyages that were sent to that region between 1760-1769 and only five between 1770-1779. Likewise, Laroche participated in eleven voyages to that area between 1740-1749 and only one between 1780-1789. This conforms to national patterns, as the decades in which Fowler and Laroche embarked on fewer voyages to the region coincides with times when Britain was at war. On the other hand, Rogers' trips to the region increased throughout his career, sending thirteen there between 1780-1789 and eighteen in the three years between 1791 and 1793.

³⁸⁸ Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 1*, p. xxiii.

As with the Bristol case study merchants, those for Liverpool also follow the general patterns established by the Liverpool merchants as a whole, but again, with certain distinctions. In line with the general trends, the Liverpool case study merchants participated in substantially more voyages than the Bristol merchants, sending out 612 vessels to the African coast, compared to Bristol's 241. Likewise, the case study merchants frequented the Bight of Biafra the most, with that region accounting for about forty-eight per cent of their trade. This percentage of trade to the Bight of Biafra is lower than Bristol, reflecting the fact Liverpool merchants had a greater spread along the coast. For instance, the Liverpool case study merchants went to Senegambia and the Windward Coast on twenty-two and 123 voyages respectively, while the Bristol case study merchants only sailed to those regions four times each. This seems to support Richardson's above assertion that the Bristol merchants were relative conservative in exploiting market opportunities. The second most popular region for the Liverpool case study merchants was the Windward Coast, while for the Liverpool merchants as whole, West Central Africa held this position. What most likely accounts for this is that William James participated in seventy-one voyages to the Windward Coast, or just over half of his total voyages. This makes the total number of Bristol's voyages there of only twenty-three seem even more insignificant. Furthermore, unlike Bristol, three of the Liverpool case study merchants went to all seven parts of the coast. These included Foster Cunliffe, whose career was relatively early in the period, starting from 1729 and spanning until his last voyage in 1761. As mentioned above, his contemporaries, Michael Becher and Isaac Hobhouse, only ventured to three parts of the coast. The remaining three Liverpool case study merchants still visited six of the seven regions. The implication is that Liverpool merchants exploited more and varied market opportunities. William Davenport in particular is credited for developing new sources of slave supply on the coast, especially to the Cameroons, which did not

have a strong English presence until mid-century.³⁸⁹ Like Bristol, however, fluctuations in preference also occurred over time. Seventy-four of the voyages William Davenport participated in went to the Bight of Biafra; while twenty-four were sent in the decade between 1760-1769 and fifty-three in the decade between 1770-1779, only sixteen were sent in the latter period between 1781-1786. This is in keeping with Fowler and Laroche from Bristol, whose voyages to that region decreased in the latter half of the period, conforming to the national trend.

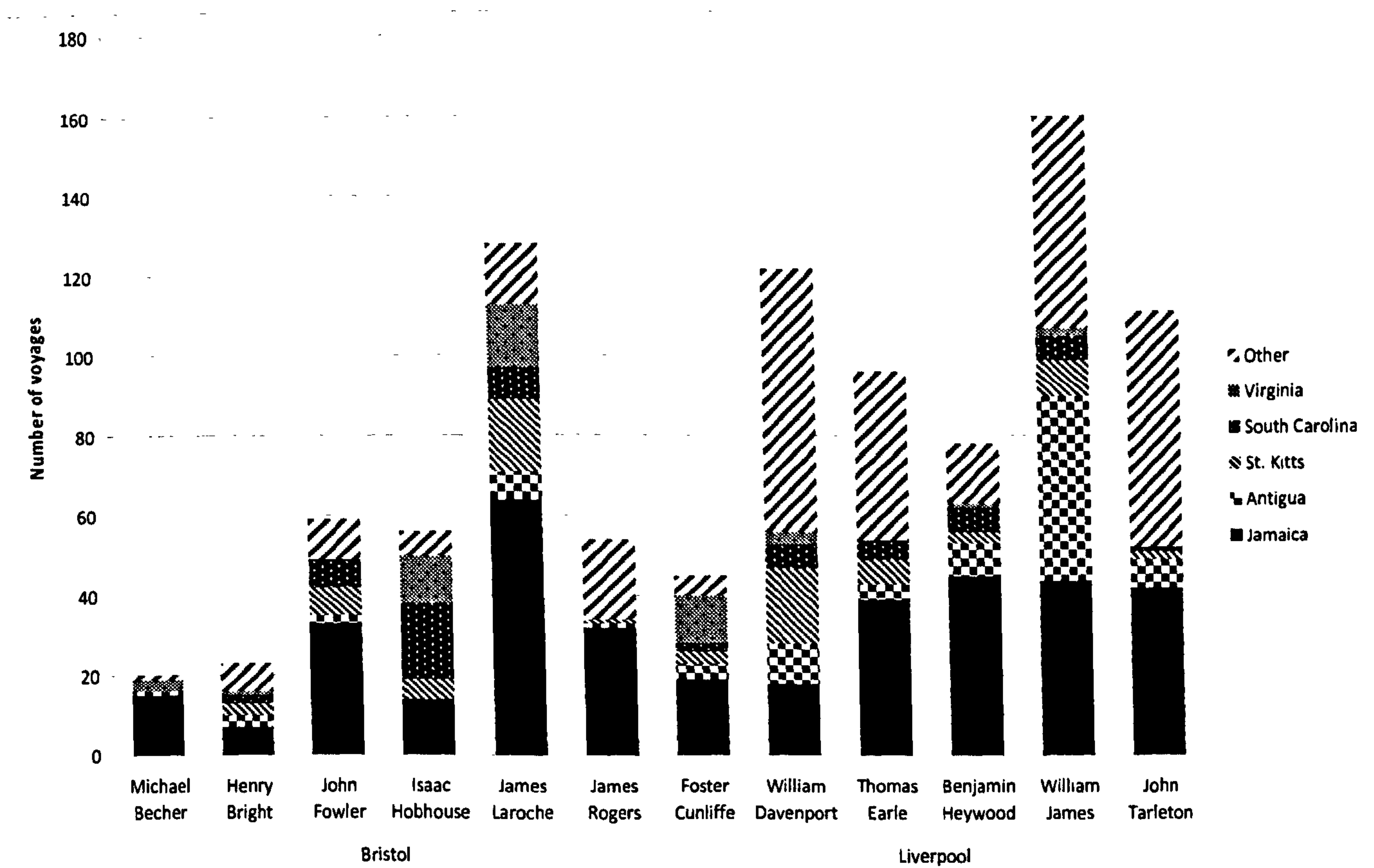
Table 3.3: Major embarkation regions for Bristol and Liverpool case study merchants, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

³⁸⁹ Richardson, “Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade”, p. 65.

Table 3.4: Major disembarkation regions for Bristol and Liverpool case study merchants, 1725-1807



Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

The data for the Bristol case study merchants in terms of major disembarkation regions does not fall as nicely in line with the general trends as they did for embarkation regions. The case study merchants favoured South Carolina slightly more than Virginia, whilst the opposite was true for the Bristol merchants as whole. Moreover, Barbados was not nearly as popular for the case study merchants as it was generally, as Michael Becher, Henry Bright and John Fowler did not go there at all. Jamaica, however, was still the most popular destination, with the case study merchants sending just about sixty per cent of their vessels there. Table 3.2 showed the most popular regions for Bristol merchants as a whole; however, different regions were more significant for the

Bristol case study merchants, as shown in Table 3.4.³⁹⁰ For instance, while Barbados was a significant region for Bristol merchants as a whole, the case study merchants ventured to Antigua more. The case study merchants made fourteen voyages to Antigua while disembarking at Barbados only thirteen times. James Laroche went to Antigua seven times alone. For the Bristol merchants as a whole, however, Antigua counted for thirty-four less voyages than Barbados. James Rogers also did not conform to the patterns established by Bristol merchants as a whole. While he did not participate in any voyages to the North American mainland, he sent twelve voyages to Grenada (or twenty-four per cent of Bristol's total voyages to the area), four to St. Vincent and three to Tortola. Of all the Bristol case study merchants, Rogers had the most varied disembarkation pattern.

The disembarkation data for the Liverpool case study merchants aligns with the general trends more closely than that for Bristol. The voyages to Virginia and South Carolina are just about proportional to the general trend, while again, most of the voyages disembarked at Jamaica. This is in keeping with the noted decline in North American trade throughout the period and the higher demand for slaves in the Caribbean to augment the population. Similarly to the Bristol merchants, the Liverpool case study merchants also had more numerous destination points than the Liverpool merchants as a whole.³⁹¹ Antigua, again, had the edge slightly over Barbados, with sixty-nine vessels sent there; William

³⁹⁰ The "other" category for the Bristol case merchants in Table 3.4 includes the following: Cuba and "other British Caribbean" as is labelled in the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database for Henry Bright; Maryland, Cuba, Dominica, Grenada, Tobago and Martinique for John Fowler; Montserrat, Nevis and Barbados for Isaac Hobhouse; Puerto Rico, Tortola, Barbados, St. Vincent and Grenada for James Laroche; Tortola, Dominica, Barbados, St. Vincent and Grenada for James Rogers. Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

³⁹¹ The "other" category for the Liverpool case study merchants in Table 3.4 includes the following: Barbados and Spanish Central America for Foster Cunliffe; Cuba, Tortola, Nevis, Montserrat, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, 'other British Caribbean', Martinique, Guadeloupe, "other French Caribbean" and Danish West Indies for William Davenport; Cuba, Tortola, St. Lucia, Barbados, St. Vincent, Grenada, Martinique and Danish West Indies for Thomas Earle; St. Vincent, Dominica, St. Lucia, Barbados, Guadeloupe, Grenada, Maryland and North Carolina for Benjamin Heywood; Montserrat, St. Vincent, Grenada, Barbados, Guadeloupe, Cuba, Martinique, Dominica, and "other British Caribbean" for William James; Grenada, Dominica, St. Vincent, Barbados, Santo Domingo, St. Lucia, Martinique, Danish West Indies, and "other French Caribbean" for John Tarleton. Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database*.

James alone participated in forty-six of these voyages. While the Liverpool merchants as a whole disembarked significantly more voyages at Barbados, Antigua was only one vessel behind St. Kitts in terms of popularity, with 202 voyages disembarking at that island. Table 3.4 demonstrates that the Liverpool case study merchants had a more varied disembarkation pattern than not only their Bristol counterparts, but the Liverpool merchants as a group. John Tarleton participated in twenty-nine voyages to Grenada, ten to Dominica and nine to St. Vincent. William Davenport also sent twenty-three voyages to Dominica, which was five more than he sent to Jamaica. Thus, Liverpool case study merchants demonstrated remarkable enterprise in both regions of embarkation and disembarkation.

Case Studies: Ownership and Investment

The second section of this chapter outlined the trends in ownership and investment for the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities at large. It was demonstrated that the Liverpool slave merchants were a much larger group as a whole, and participated in substantially more voyages in larger investment groups than Bristol. Additionally, Bristol merchants tended to manage more voyages solely as opposed to with investment groups over much of the period. Social network analysis also established the structure of both communities over time, demonstrating change in both the size of the community and the connections within the slave merchants. This section will consider to what extent the established trends held true with the case study merchants.

The following tables outline several ownership characteristics of the Bristol and Liverpool case study merchants.

Table 3.5: Ownership characteristics of the Bristol case study merchants

From Bristol	Number of Voyages	Number of times listed as sole owner	Number of times listed as primary owner	Number of times listed as investor
James Laroche	127	87	100	27
Isaac Hobhouse	68	23	32	36
John Fowler	63	49	60	3
James Rogers	60	13	43	17
Henry Bright	21	15	19	2
Michael Becher	19	14	19	0

Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Table 3.6: Ownership characteristics of the Liverpool case study merchants³⁹²

From Liverpool	Number of Voyages	Number of times listed as sole owner	Number of times listed as primary owner	Number of times listed as investor
William Davenport	147	2	65	82
William James	140	84	123	17
John Tarleton	108	1	56	52
Thomas Earle	82	0	50	32
Benjamin Heywood	72	2	26	46
Foster Cunliffe	64	10	15	49

Source: Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

It is immediately apparent that these characteristics conform to the established patterns. The Liverpool case study merchants in general participated in more voyages, were investors a significant amount of times in their career and were not sole investors very often. To analyse the above data further, the merchants have been divided into comparison groups, each comprised of case study merchants from Bristol and Liverpool representing different points in time throughout the period between 1725-1807. While there is obvious overlap among the different time periods, the group representing the early part of the period is

³⁹² From the number of voyages these merchants participated in, Pope's categorisation of eighteen voyages as a requisite for "top" merchant seems rather low. See Introduction, p. 44.

Michael Becher, Henry Bright and Isaac Hobhouse from Bristol, and Foster Cunliffe from Liverpool. The second group from the middle part of the period is John Fowler from Bristol and William James and Benjamin Heywood from Liverpool. The third group from the latter part of the period consists of James Rogers from Bristol and Thomas Earle and John Tarleton from Liverpool while a fourth group consists of Bristolian James Laroche and Liverpoolian William Davenport. This group is used particularly for their uniqueness; Laroche's career spans the majority of the entire time period, which helps make him Bristol's most prolific slave trader while Davenport was a relative specialist in the trade.

Group one: c. 1725-1766

As the son of John Becher, another slave trader, Michael Becher was from an established Bristol commercial family who took over his father's slaving firm.³⁹³ Like his father, Michael Becher had interests in the West India trade, in which he was most active during the periods between 1728-1749 and 1754-1757.³⁹⁴ In the slave trade, he participated in nineteen voyages in the years between 1727-1753. He was the *primary owner* in all of these voyages and was listed as the *sole owner* in fourteen. He did not invest with any other primary owner in his career as a slave trader. He participated in four groups with one other person, his father, John Becher being the other investor in two of these voyages. Most of his voyages occurred in the period 1731-1740, and sixteen of them disembarked in Jamaica. Thus, even though Becher was participating in the slave trade at its height in Bristol, he was not participating in groups conducive to spreading risk and sharing a wide variety of resources, typical of the pattern of Bristol merchants established above.

³⁹³ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 23; Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 101.

³⁹⁴ Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 207.

Henry Bright took part in twenty-one voyages in the period 1747-1766. At the age of sixteen, he was apprenticed to Richard Meyler, a hooper, and this forged a long period of business interactions between the Bright and Meyler families. In the late 1730s, the partnership established a business in the West India trade, where Henry Bright was sent to Jamaica to serve as a factor.³⁹⁵ On his return to Bristol in the 1740s, Henry Bright became a prominent sugar importer, most active in the trade in the periods between 1746-1748, 1754-1768 and 1773-1777.³⁹⁶ Henry Bright was most active in the slave trade between 1747-1766, and so his interests in the sugar trade were more lasting.³⁹⁷ As a slave trader, he was the *primary owner* in all but three of his voyages, and similarly to Becher, he was listed as the sole owner in fifteen ventures. Unlike Becher, however, he invested with two other primary owners while eleven others invested with him. Contrary to the general trends already established, Bright participated in fairly large investment groups. He was the *primary owner* in voyages that had groups of five, six and seven other members while he was the *secondary owner* in voyages with six and eight other owners respectively. Most of his voyages occurred at the end of his slaving career, with ten trips made in the five years between 1761 and 1766. This is perhaps indicative of resources and connections Bright had established in the trade, particularly in conjunction with his sugar interests. Following the general trend, most of these voyages went to Jamaica.

Isaac Hobhouse had a variety of commercial interests throughout his career. He participated in and entered into numerous commercial partnerships with those engaged the West India, Virginia, South Carolina and African trades and also held shares in a local sugar refinery.³⁹⁸ He was most active in the West

³⁹⁵ Kenneth Morgan, "Henry Bright", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* available at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50515?docPos=1>. Accessed 1/1/10.

³⁹⁶ Morgan, "Bristol West India", pp. 197-199, 207.

³⁹⁷ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

³⁹⁸ Walter E. Minchinton, *The Hobhouse Papers, 1722-1755: Letters and Other Papers of Isaac Hobhouse & Co. Bristol Merchant* (East Ardsley: Micro Methods Ltd, 1971), p. 1.

India trade in the period between 1728-1749 and 1754-1758, and in the slave trade from 1725-1744, coinciding with the height of Bristol's involvement in the slave trade. Like Henry Bright and Bristol in general, then, his interest in sugar outlasted that in slaves.³⁹⁹ As a slave trader, he participated in sixty-eight voyages, of which he was the *primary owner* for thirty-two, and was listed as the *sole owner* for twenty-three voyages. Seven others invested with him as a *primary owner*, while he invested with thirteen others among thirty-six separate voyages. The pattern of Hobhouse's investment, unlike Bright's, followed the general patterns established for Bristol slave merchants, in that, compared with Liverpool, investment groups were fairly small. As a *primary owner*, he participated in five groups of two and three groups of three; as a *secondary owner*, he participated in seven groups of two and seven groups of four. Most of the voyages he participated in took place between 1731-1740, late in his career as a slave trader and at the height of Bristol's slave trade. Just under half of his voyages disembarked in Virginia and South Carolina, reflective of the connections he forged with those engaged in the tobacco trade, and when trade with these regions was at its height. By 1740, however, his activity in the slave trade declined, coinciding with the time when Bristol also started to lose ground to Liverpool in the tobacco trade. This indicates that not only were Hobhouse's slaving and tobacco interests linked, but it also conforms to the trend that Bristol merchants as a whole failed to diversify their market options.

Foster Cunliffe, along with his sons, Ellis and Robert, became some of Liverpool's leading slave traders, with Foster being active in the port's formative years.⁴⁰⁰ Foster also had commercial interests in Virginia, and Ascott categorises him as "an Isle of Man specialist" early in his career, with most of his shipments being to and from that island.⁴⁰¹ As a slave trader, he took part in sixty-four voyages between 1726-1761. Of these, he was *primary owner* of fifteen, but was

³⁹⁹ Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 207.

⁴⁰⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴⁰¹ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 153.

listed as the sole owner of only ten voyages, less than the number of times that Becher, Bright and Hobhouse were sole owners. Only four other people invested with him as primary owner, and he participated in two groups of two and two groups of three as the primary owner. He, however, invested with thirteen others, and as a secondary owner, took part in larger groups. He was a *secondary owner* with ten groups of five, twelve groups of seven and nine groups of eight. The composition of these groups varied slightly, in keeping with a recognised feature of eighteenth-century business practice that partnerships were fluid. When investment groups were the same, though, more often than not they invested in the same ship, and even the same captain was used. For instance, Cunliffe invested in four voyages between 1756 and 1761 with the same five investors, where this was the case. Of these voyages, the *Young Foster* under the captaincy of Henry Hayston, went to the Windward Coast on three out of four occasions, and disembarked at Jamaica each time. This is reflective of the fact that merchants relied on trustworthy captains who became so by experience in the trade.⁴⁰² By voyaging to the same parts on the African coast, Hayston would also most likely have established crucial relationships with the African merchants there, thus facilitating the barter for slaves. Like Hobhouse, Cunliffe participated in the most voyages in the last decade of his career when he had built up capital, skills and resources. Cunliffe disembarked twelve voyages in Virginia, relating to his interest in tobacco as well. Lorena Walsh argues he sold most of his slaves in the labour-short Potomac Basin, the region where he also purchased tobacco.⁴⁰³ In an analysis of African region of origin for Chesapeake slaves, Walsh further argues that Bristol and London merchants were discriminate in their market choices. They sent slaves from Gambia and the Windward and Gold Coast to the Rappahannock River while Biafran slaves were sent to the York and Upper James. In contrast, Liverpool merchants were not as selective, sending ships from

⁴⁰² This is discussed further in Chapter Four.

⁴⁰³ Walsh, "Liverpool's Slave Trade", p. 105.

different West African regions to all of the sites where they traded.⁴⁰⁴ Cunliffe supports this trend as he slaved on all seven major regions of the West African coast. Additionally, Walsh argues he was typically able to complete the triangular journey in one year, allowing him to outfit the same ship for another voyage the following year. This is evidenced by the consistency in ships, captains and partners listed for many of Cunliffe's voyages, and is indicative of the trusted relationships he built with members of his network. Additionally, this reflects Cunliffe's expert managerial skills. By being able to complete a slaving voyage in one year, Cunliffe was able to coordinate goods and people through his networks in a timely and efficient manner.

Group two: c.1750-1782

John Fowler was involved in the slave trade between 1751-1779, both as a captain and as an investor in slaving ventures.⁴⁰⁵ This was a typical career path for successful merchants in that experience, knowledge and network relationships were built in their career early as captains. Richardson lists Fowler, along with John Anderson, Isaac Hobhouse, James Laroche, James Rogers and Noblet Ruddick as the elite of the eighteenth-century Bristol slave traders in terms of their managerial prowess, together managing over 400 voyages.⁴⁰⁶ As a slave trader, Fowler participated in sixty-three voyages, serving as captain twice early in his career in 1751 and 1753. As one of Bristol's elite slave traders, he ventured to six of the seven regions of the African coast, although, like British slave traders at large, he frequented the Bight of Biafra the most. Additionally, about half of these voyages disembarked at Jamaica. Perhaps tellingly, his first recorded voyage as captain in 1751 embarked from the Bight of Biafra and disembarked at

⁴⁰⁴ Walsh, "Chesapeake", p. 151.

⁴⁰⁵ Eltis et al, *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴⁰⁶ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 14.

Jamaica, establishing the general pattern in his trade.⁴⁰⁷ He was the *primary owner* in sixty of these voyages, and in forty-nine he is listed as the *sole owner*. Like Becher and Bright before him, participating in most voyages as the sole owner reinforces the established argument that Bristol traders did not accept much investment in slaving voyages. He invested with two other owners in three voyages, while ten people invested with him in the eleven voyages in which he was not the sole owner. Of these eleven voyages, he managed eight groups of two and three groups of four, also in keeping with the established trend that Bristol investment groups were generally small. He worked with six different merchants in these groups of two, thus no real consistency in partnerships could be established. This inconsistency in partnerships, however, could be suggestive of bridges in Fowler's network, thus allowing him more access to a wide variety of resources and enabling him to be one of Bristol's more successful slave traders. Furthermore, the majority of voyages he participated in took place between 1761-1770, before Bristol's involvement in the trade dropped significantly with the War of American Independence. Similarly to Cunliffe, the groups in which he was *investor* were larger than the ones he managed as the *primary owner*. He was a *secondary owner* in one group of five, and two groups of seven. While a more in-depth analysis of a greater number of individual merchants would be required to establish a pattern, this tendency of investing in larger groups than the ones in which a merchant was the lead owner is interesting. It is logical to assume, however, that investing in larger groups was less risky for the merchant; given that principal merchants often participated in more than one slaving voyage in a given year, investing in a venture in which risk and cost was more widely spread in addition to one in which the merchant did not have primary ownership responsibility would represent a sound commercial decision.

Born in Drogheda, Benjamin Heywood, along with his older brother, Arthur, not only participated in numerous slaving voyages, but owned a banking

⁴⁰⁷ Voyage identification number 17296, Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

business in Liverpool, a sugar plantation in the West Indies, and a cloth manufacturing business in Wakefield.⁴⁰⁸ Heywood was most active in the slave trade in the period between 1745-1782. During this time he participated in seventy-two voyages, was the *primary owner* of twenty-six and the *sole owner* of two. Contrary to Bristolian Fowler, however, he managed groups with a larger number of investors. He was the *primary owner* of fourteen groups of six, a group of seven and eight groups of eight. There was also consistency in the membership of these groups, and their higher numbers indicate a larger pool of resources from which to draw. Five voyages between 1748-1755 and five voyages between 1750-1756 consisted of the same six people, indicating that this network was one of strong ties.⁴⁰⁹ The larger size of investment groups also reinforces Figures 3.8, 3.9 and 3.10 on the structure of the Liverpool slave merchant community and emphasises the greater connectivity of Liverpool's mercantile community. Out of the seventy-two voyages he participated in, he worked with his brother Arthur in sixty-one, also illustrative of family connections within business. As a *secondary owner*, he participated in forty-six voyages and invested with sixteen others. These groups were also fairly large; he took part in seven groups of five, seven, and eight and six groups of six. Between 1754-1765, however, he worked with John Penkett and Arthur Heywood eight times and invested in the same ship, the *Marques of Rockingham*, and used the same captain, George Evans, on seven of these voyages. Drawing on the skills from an experienced captain as well as trusted individuals during the time in which Liverpool overtook Bristol as the leading slaving port illuminates the importance of access to human and bonding social capital in the initial stages of Liverpool's participation in the trade.

⁴⁰⁸ Cameron, *Liverpool*, p. 20; Hughes, *Banks and Bankers*.

⁴⁰⁹ In the five voyages between 1748-1755, Benjamin Heywood invested with Arthur Heywood, Thomas Backhouse, Lev Unsworth, Thomas Ward and Thomas Darbyshire. Voyage identification numbers: 90168, 90169, 90170, 90172, 90173. In the five voyages between 1750-1756, Benjamin Heywood invested with Arthur Heywood, Thomas Leatherbow, Henry White, John Gorrell and John Park. Voyage identification numbers: 90258, 90259, 90260, 90261, 90262. Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

William James was Liverpool's leading slave trader, participating in 140 voyages in a relatively short twenty-six year period between 1750-1776. He was the *primary owner* in 123 voyages, and was listed as the *sole owner* in eighty-four. In this way, he managed voyages more similarly to Bristol merchants, as he did not co-invest with a large number of other investors in his ventures. As primary owner, though, he managed groups with a wide range of sizes. He led groups of three, four, five and seven, but he most often participated in groups with just one other owner. Between 1768 and 1771 he and Henry Ross made five voyages together while between 1771-1776 he and George Evans made ten voyages. Evans thus established himself as an expert captain who worked with Liverpool's leading slave merchants. As a *secondary owner*, he participated in seventeen voyages managed by six other owners. Like Fowler, the investment groups in which he did not assume primary ownership were generally larger than the ones in which he did, representative of an investment strategy with less risk. He was a secondary owner with nine groups of five and one group of eight. The members of these groups, although slightly varied voyage to voyage, were also the same as those who invested in him. Alexander Nottingham, Gill Slater, Thomas Spencer Dunn, Edward Grayson and Charles Ford were just a few of the merchants in which James regularly invested, particularly late in his career, indicating that his networks were well established and solidified.

Group three: c.1775-1804

James Rogers was an insurance broker and merchant, who most likely spent time in London before settling in Bristol. Rogers had a wide range of commercial interests, including the coasting trade, Newfoundland, Mediterranean and West Indian trades.⁴¹⁰ The slave trade increasingly dominated his commercial

⁴¹⁰ David Richardson, "James Rogers", *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* available at: <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/55689?docPos=3>. Accessed 1/1/10.

interests over time, and he was a member of Bristol's slave trading elite, managing voyages in the period between 1775 and 1793. Richardson argues that Rogers, along with James and Thomas Jones, who came to Bristol from South Wales, were largely responsible for sustaining Bristol's interest in the trade after the War of American Independence.⁴¹¹ Thus, Bristol's interest in the trade was invigorated with "new blood" into its merchant community. With interest waning in the Bristol slave trade, however, in the latter part of his career Rogers financed many voyages by himself and eventually went bankrupt. Morgan has conducted an analysis of Rogers' bankruptcy in the wider business context of the British slave trade late in the period. Morgan cites the credit crisis of 1793, competition along the African coast, particularly with the well-connected Liverpool merchants, an over-extension of Rogers' slave trading activities, and poor managerial skills as ultimately leading to the demise of his career.⁴¹² These factors are considered more in depth in the next chapter. As a slave trader, he took part in sixty voyages, in which he was the *primary owner* of forty-three and listed as the sole owner in thirteen. Fifteen merchants invested with him and he led groups ranging in size from two to six. He primarily led groups of two others besides himself, as he managed groups of this size fifteen times. Like James and Heywood, the groups Rogers managed showed a consistency in partnership, as he acted as primary owner in a small group with James Laroche and Richard Fydell eleven times in the short time between 1790 and 1793. During the credit crisis at this time, Liverpool merchants arguably recovered more quickly than other parts of the country, indicative of Liverpool's "spirit" and further argued in Chapter Six.⁴¹³ Interestingly, Rogers, Laroche and Fydell embarked on a slaving voyage from Liverpool on a Liverpool-built ship in 1790, demonstrative of

⁴¹¹ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 24.

⁴¹² Morgan, "James Rogers", p. 186.

⁴¹³ Francis Hyde, Bradley B. Parkinson and Sheila Marriner, "The Port of Liverpool and the Crisis of 1793", *Economica*, 18 (1951), pp. 363-378.

Liverpool's dominance in the trade, even at a time of financial crisis.⁴¹⁴ This also indicates that Bristol's slave trading community was not in a position to facilitate the trade of its more enterprising merchants. Moreover, as a group of four, Rogers led voyages with Laroche, Fydell and Thomas Walker eight times between 1789-1793. He managed these insular groups at the very end of his career, but coinciding with the time Bristol slave investment groups were larger than they were in previous periods. This also corresponds with the time when merchants in Bristol, Liverpool and London were rallying against the proposed abolition of the trade. Merchants coming together to support a cause, particularly in the case of Bristol merchants, served to solidify network connections through access to bonding social capital. This bonding capital is thus reflected in the consistency in Rogers' partnerships towards the end of his career. Contrary to John Fowler and Foster Cunliffe earlier in the period, the groups in which Rogers was a *secondary owner* were generally smaller than the ones in which he served as the primary owner. While he was in a group of nine and eight, he invested mostly with just one other person. Of the nine voyages in which he invested with someone else, he worked with Patrick Fitzhenry three times, and invested with six other people for the remaining voyages. In this sense, who he invested with was more varied than the relatively constant groups in which he managed. This may speak to the fact that, as the principal owner, and thus the person with the greatest control, he felt more comfortable investing with people in which he had a great amount of trust. This is again representative of a less risky investment strategy. When he was investing with voyages in which he was not the primary owner, and thus had a smaller share of the risk, the issue of trust was not as paramount. Most of the voyages he was involved in occurred in the very latter part of his career between 1791-1793, with nineteen out of twenty-eight voyages he participated in during this time disembarking at Jamaica, reinforcing the role of bonding capital in facilitating these investment partnerships.

⁴¹⁴ Voyage identification number 83366, Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

John Tarleton of the Tarleton family was among the elite of the Liverpool commercial families, and they were involved in slave trading and other commercial pursuits for three generations.⁴¹⁵ John Tarleton was a significant supplier of slaves to the West Indies and the American and Spanish colonies. Moreover, he was a principal defender of the slave trade, representing Liverpool interests in Parliament during the proposed abolition of the trade.⁴¹⁶ Along with his brothers, Thomas and Clayton, John entered into a partnership with Daniel Backhouse, becoming one of the leading slave trading firms in the mid to latter part of the eighteenth century.⁴¹⁷ In the period between 1770 and 1802, Tarleton participated in 113 voyages in which he was the *primary owner* in fifty-six voyages and the sole owner in only one. In both the voyages in which he was the primary owner and those in which he was a secondary owner, the groups mostly consisted of three or four members. As a *primary owner*, he managed twenty-two groups of three other members. These groups were the same for each voyage, and included Daniel Backhouse and his brothers, Thomas and Clayton. He similarly invested in voyages where the group members were the same, but one of the other members was listed as the primary owner instead. Like James Rogers, then, a more insular shift seems to have occurred by the end of the period but this could also be attributed to the fact that as an elite and wealthy trader, he did not need to have his investment spread so widely. Having said this, in the same period, Tarleton was also a *secondary owner* in twelve groups of five, seven groups of six, two groups of eight, three groups of nine and even a group of eleven. Thus, Tarleton did participate in several voyages with a greater mix of people. By participating in both insular as well as diverse investment groups, his networks were thus characterised by access to both strong and weak ties, contributing to his overall success in the trade.

⁴¹⁵ Cameron, *Liverpool*, p. 20.

⁴¹⁶ This is discussed more in depth in Chapter Six.

⁴¹⁷ Cameron, *Liverpool*, p. 20.

Thomas Earle likewise came from a prominent commercial family in Liverpool, and his brother and father also participated in the slave trade. His uncles served as mayors of Liverpool and had commercial interests in the Leghorn trade in wine, coffee, hides and marble.⁴¹⁸ He was most active in the period between 1782-1804. The Earles forged numerous commercial relationships with many of the important Liverpool merchants in various ventures. During his career as a slave trader, he participated in eighty-two voyages, in fifty of which he was the *primary owner*. He was never the sole owner of a voyage. Earle exemplifies the established argument that Liverpool slave merchants participated in larger groups. While he managed groups with a range of two to nine members, he was the *primary owner* of seventeen voyages in which there were seven other members. Likewise, the smallest group he invested in had five members while the largest had eleven. Of the groups in which he was the *primary owner*, he was with the same seven members in seven of these voyages. This occurred in the latter part of his career between 1790-1795, indicative of the strong ties he had built up in his slaving career. Of these seven voyages, the same ship and captain were used for four of them, demonstrating consistency and interconnectedness that marked the Liverpool merchant community as a whole. There was also a degree of consistency in the membership of the groups in which he was a *secondary owner* as well as the ships and captains used. As with Heywood, then, connectivity and access to both human and bonding capital characterise Earle's network. These leading Liverpool slave trade merchants managed voyages in trusted networks in which resources and capital had been built over time. On the other hand, this built up and established expertise was not present in the smaller and more atomised networks of the leading Bristol merchants.

Group four: c. 1727-1793

⁴¹⁸ Introduction to the Earle Family Papers, LivPRO; Dawn Littler, "The Earle Collection: Records of a Liverpool Family of Merchants and Shipowners", *Transactions of Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 146 (1997), pp. 93-106.

From a London gentry and Huguenot background, James Laroche was Bristol's most prolific slave trader in the period, managing 127 vessels spanning a period between 1727-1793.⁴¹⁹ Although this is a significant number of voyages over a very long period of time, it is interesting to note that Liverpool's top slave trader, William James, participated in thirteen more voyages in a time span that was forty years less. Laroche was also involved in the West India trade across much of the same period. As a slave trader, however, he was the *primary owner* of 100 voyages and was listed as the *sole owner* of eighty-seven. Most of his voyages took place early in his career, coinciding with the time when Bristol's slave trade was at its height, with forty-two occurring between 1731-1740. This is in contrast with the other Bristol case study merchants, who participated in more voyages towards the end of their career after they had built up suitable connections and capital. Seventeen other merchants invested with him, and as a *primary owner*, he managed groups ranging in size from two to eight. He managed three groups of both two and eight, and again, this was early in his career, between 1729 and 1747. In contrast, he was a *secondary owner* in eleven groups of three and eight groups of four at the tail end of career, in the years between 1790-1793. As mentioned above, these eleven groups of three included Richard Fydell and James Rogers, with Rogers being credited as reviving Bristol's interest in the trade. Furthermore as also mentioned above, Bristol's slave trade experienced resurgence and investment groups were larger at this time in response to the proposed abolition of the trade, which is reflected in the changing patterns of Laroche's trade. That he participated in more voyages with Fydell and Rogers towards the end of his career is suggestive of the bonding capital leading Bristol merchants had access to towards the close of the eighteenth century which bolstered Bristol's activity in the trade. As leading merchants in the trade, Laroche, Fydell and Rogers would have had the most

⁴¹⁹ Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*; Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 101.

expertise in and demonstrated the most enterprise of the Bristol merchant community, as evidenced by Laroche and Roger's exploitation of more varied market opportunities along the African coast and in the Americas.

Born in London to a Cheshire gentry family, William Davenport became one of the leading Liverpool merchants of the period. In 1741, he was apprenticed to William Whaley, a slave trader who most likely initiated him into the trade. He was involved in the trades of beads, ivory, sugar and tobacco as well as the Mediterranean in which he was a partner in a wine firm. He entered into numerous commercial partnerships throughout his career with other prominent Liverpool merchants, including the Earles, Heywoods, as well as Thomas Hodgson and John Copeland.⁴²⁰ Davenport, however, surpassed most other Liverpool slaving merchants in terms of experience and specialisation, investing in 147 voyages throughout the period between 1748-1786.⁴²¹ At the start of his career between 1748 and 1753, Davenport invested with his master William Whaley eight times, indicating that Whaley indeed facilitated Davenport's entry into the trade. Of these 147 voyages, he was the *primary owner* of sixty-five, and was listed as the sole owner only twice. Sixty-one others invested with him, a staggering number compared to all of the other case study merchants and implying his investment groups had a wealth of knowledge, skills and experience from which to draw. His position as the central merchant in the Liverpool slave merchant community also made him well placed to benefit from this access to information and skills. There was some consistency in the people who invested with him. For instance, Ambrose Lace invested with him twenty-eight times while Peter Black and William Earle invested with him in twenty-seven and twenty-six voyages respectively. In particular, William Earle, who served as captain of eight voyages in his career, would have brought considerable human capital to the Davenport's investment groups. Davenport also managed relatively large groups.

⁴²⁰ Richardson, Introduction to Davenport Papers, Merseyside Maritime Museum (hereafter MMM).

⁴²¹ Cameron, *Liverpool*, p. 20; Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Although they ranged in size from four to eleven, he led twenty groups of seven and twenty groups of eight. The sheer number of voyages he participated in also means that he led and participated in multiple groups at the same time.⁴²² Likewise, Davenport participated in a number of voyages with the same group; for instance, he led six voyages between 1770 and 1777 consisting of the same seven members, as well as the same ship, the *Hector*, and five voyages between 1772 and 1777 with the same eight members and ship, the *Swift*.⁴²³ In the eighty-two voyages in which he was a *secondary owner*, the groups ranged in size from three to ten. He was a *secondary owner* in fourteen voyages with ten members, the highest number on both counts for the case study merchants, however, he took part in a group of seven the most, on eighteen different voyages. Like the other case study merchants, these groups varied slightly, as he was in five different combinations of the seven members. Also like the other Liverpool case study merchants, Davenport's pattern of investment is representative of the interconnectedness of the Liverpool slave merchant community and the wealth of resources such interconnectedness facilitated.

Conclusion

The structure of the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchant communities, as well as an analysis of the case study merchant networks provides insight into the operation of the slave trade for both ports. As demonstrated, the Bristol slave merchant community was small and atomised and

⁴²² This, of course, is true for other merchants who participated in numerous voyages in any given year. However, in terms of the case study merchants, Davenport's participation in slave trade voyages was quite remarkable.

⁴²³ In the six voyages between 1770-1777, William Davenport invested with Ambrose Lace, John Washington, Edward Chaffers, Henry Trafford, William Rowe and Nonus Parke. Voyage identification numbers: 91573, 91574, 91575, 91576, 91594, 91595. In the five voyages between 1772-1777, William Davenport invested with Christopher Davenport, Patrick Black, Robert Jennings, William Jenkinson, John Parker, William Earle and Ambrose Lace. Voyage identification numbers: 91790, 91791, 91792, 91793, 91794. Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

this was accompanied by less resource-sharing. Bristol merchants also demonstrated less enterprise in venturing to different regions along the African coast and in the Americas. In contrast, Liverpool had a much larger and well-connected slave merchant community over time and the networks operated in a manner that allowed for a greater spread of knowledge, skills and capital. Tellingly, Liverpool slaving ventures had the highest number of owners on average by mid-century, indicating that this spread of investment, as well as the consequent pooling together of resources, contributed to Liverpool surpassing Bristol as the leaders in the trade. Additionally, when compared with Bristol, Liverpool also had significantly fewer voyages managed by a single primary owner, further contributing to the notion that Liverpool slaving voyages were more of a group enterprise. Liverpool merchants also demonstrated entrepreneurial initiative by exploiting more varied market opportunities. The merchant case studies reinforced these established patterns, with the Bristol merchants typically participating in smaller investment groups than the Liverpool merchants. The next chapter will analyse the role of entrepreneurship and the various notions of capital further, particularly from merchant source material, and how this contributed to their overall success in the slave trade.

Chapter Four: An Analysis of the Trends in the Operation of the Bristol and Liverpool Slave Trade

Writing in 1884, a Genuine “Dicky Sam” relayed the following scene in a Liverpool counting house, in which a partnership was formed to finance a slaving voyage:

In the office of Thomas Clarke, three gentlemen were busily engaged in conversation. One says, ‘Shall it be equal shares?’ ‘Certainly!’ say the other two; ‘and we shall deal fairly this time,’ to which the former replied—‘Let there be no cheating of any kind; here is my hand on it, here is mine and here is mine.’⁴²⁴

Having formed a partnership, these men would thus engage in a venture, which “Dicky Sam” described earlier in his narrative as follows:

Ships were built and loaded; cruel sailors and a more cruel captain, with favourable winds, sped the good ship to the African shores. Here the ship was unloaded of her cargo, which consisted of trinkets, handkerchiefs, ribbons, pistols and cowries; these were bartered for men, women, and children, not too old nor yet too young, but only such as could work hard and toil long.⁴²⁵

While the above descriptions provide somewhat erroneous details regarding a slaving voyage, they do convey relevant issues in the operation of a slaving voyage that are analysed in this chapter. Based on extensive queries of the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database, Chapter Three examined the organisation of the slave trade in both Bristol and Liverpool, and included an analysis of the structure of the slave trade communities as well as the case study merchants’ associational networks as they related to trends in voyage management and investment. This chapter analyses these trends further, by, as the above quotes suggest, specifically addressing how merchant partnerships managed and conducted slaving voyages within their larger networks. Qualitative sources, particularly merchant correspondence, are examined to ascertain how aspects of entrepreneurship, as well as access to various types of capital within the Bristol

⁴²⁴ “Dicky Sam”, *Liverpool and Slavery: A Scouse Press Reprint of the 1884 Account by 'Dicky Sam'* (Liverpool: Scouse Press, 1985), p. 18.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

and Liverpool merchant networks shaped the particular operation of the trade in both ports. As highlighted in the previous chapters, the management of voyages required entrepreneurial skill to ensure success.⁴²⁶ A slaving venture and how it was managed also raises issues much discussed in the historiography of eighteenth-century commerce, including risk, trust and reputation. How these merchants dealt with these issues within their networks is considered here in the context of entrepreneurship.

As established in the Introduction, current entrepreneurial theory assesses the entrepreneur through both indicative and functional approaches, whereby the personal characteristics and roles of the entrepreneur are analysed in determining the degree of entrepreneurship. Characteristics such as initiative, willingness to take risks, courage and foresight are noted as being particularly entrepreneurial, while eighteenth-century merchants often recognised these qualities as a certain type of "spirit". Likewise, the role of the entrepreneur has been defined as, among others, an innovator, decision-maker, supplier of financial capital and coordinator of resources.⁴²⁷ As discussed in this chapter, Liverpool slave merchants possessed these qualities and fulfilled these roles more successfully than their Bristol counterparts, contributing to their superior performance in the trade. The framework for this chapter is structured around merchant networks' response to events of the period established in Chapter Three. The early and established patterns in the trade, the impact of war, opening of new markets, the effect of the Dolben's Act and the lead-up to the abolition of the trade are analysed to ascertain the degree to which entrepreneurship contributed to their respective performance in the trade.

⁴²⁶ See Introduction, p. 28; Chapter Two, p. 82.

⁴²⁷ See Introduction, pp. 28-29.

Analysis of the Trends

Free traders from Bristol entered the slave trade after the Royal African Company lost its monopoly in 1698. The port then dominated Britain's participation in the trade from the 1720s until the end of the 1740s when Liverpool overtook this position.⁴²⁸ Bristol's early activity in the trade was influenced by the patterns established by the Royal African Company. As mentioned in Chapter Two, the British had ten fortifications along the Gold Coast; in the last two decades of its monopoly, about eighty-five per cent of the Royal African Company's coastal exports were divided among the Gold Coast, Windward Coast, Gambia and Sierra Leone.⁴²⁹ Bristol's early activity along the African coast largely mirrored these established markets. Between 1698 and 1725, Bristol embarked on the Gold Coast the most, voyaging there forty-nine times. Bristol also made trips to the Windward Coast and Senegambia, although in smaller numbers with two and ten voyages there respectively.⁴³⁰ Richardson, however, has argued that during this period Bristol's activity on the African coast was marked by a willingness to "innovate and promote" changes in these established patterns, by voyaging further west to the Bight of Biafra and along the Angola coast where the Royal African Company's presence was minimal. As Table 3.1 in the previous chapter illustrated, by 1725 and continuing through the period when the Bristol trade was at its height, Bristol merchants indeed ventured in larger numbers to the Bight of Biafra than they did to the Gold Coast and most certainly the Windward Coast.⁴³¹ This is indicative of early innovation in the Bristol trade. Richardson also noted that a core group of nineteen merchants financed almost sixty per cent of Bristol's slaving ventures in the first three decades of its participation; in so doing, this group was instrumental in promoting these

⁴²⁸ Minchinton, "Slave Trade of Bristol", p. 39. See Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 2*, p. xiv.

⁴²⁹ Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 1*, p. xxiii.

⁴³⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴³¹ See Table 3.1, p. 94.

innovations in the patterns of trade.⁴³² However, Bristol's slave merchants failed to create lasting dynasties, as Morgan has argued that eighteen of the twenty-five leading slave merchants at the height of Bristol's slave trade either died as bachelors, married without leaving a direct male heir or had children die before they reached maturity.⁴³³ While the failure to create trading dynasties has been cited as a factor in the demise of Bristol's slave trade, trading dynasties in Bristol's West India trade are credited for its success. Additionally, while Morgan comments that there was some overlap between the sugar and slave trades, twenty-one out of the fifty leading merchants who engaged in both dropped out of the slave trade by the time of the War of American Independence, leading to the argument that Bristol's trade became "dangerously concentrated in the West Indies".⁴³⁴ Indeed, Wallace posited that Bristol was "so engrossed in her attentions to the supply of her [West Indian] plantations" that it ultimately "impoverished her African trade".⁴³⁵ The last chapter noted case study merchants Henry Bright and Isaac Hobhouse conforming to this pattern. This trend corresponds with the relative specialisation and the discrete nature of those managing Bristol's major commodity trades, noted in Chapter Two, and is important to consider here as it impacts upon the human capital available to slave merchants in both ports. The specialisation that occurred in Bristol's sugar trade also occurred in its tobacco trade. For example, in 1672 there were 467 tobacco importers, but by 1789, the importers only numbered seventeen.⁴³⁶ While a degree of specialisation also occurred in Liverpool's tobacco and sugar trades, Liverpool's flexibility in commerce allowed the port to prosper.⁴³⁷ Clemens comments that Liverpool benefitted from "merchants who dealt as readily in sugar as tobacco" which enabled Liverpool merchants to "switch their main focus

⁴³² Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 1*, p. xxii.

⁴³³ Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 203.

⁴³⁴ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 8.

⁴³⁵ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 215.

⁴³⁶ Price, "Imperial Economy", p. 94.

⁴³⁷ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 19.

in Atlantic trade more easily than at Bristol".⁴³⁸ Liverpudlians were thus in a better position to adapt more easily and quickly to changes in the market. As discussed further below, Liverpool slave merchants were also adept at finding and exploiting new markets on the African coast and in the Americas, demonstrating the fulfillment of an entrepreneurial role. Additionally, Liverpool merchants were particularly good at exploiting price fluctuations; because many slave merchants dealt in both sugar and tobacco, if the sugar prices fell, than slave traders would sell slaves in the tobacco regions. Likewise, if the tobacco prices fell, slaves were sold for sugar in the West Indies.⁴³⁹ Ultimately, Ascott attributes Liverpool's success to the fact that merchants engaged in all major commodity trades and did not specialise in any particular one. This is reinforced by the *Liverpool Memorandum Book* published in 1753, which noted that Liverpool merchants were indeed "universal merchants".⁴⁴⁰

The relative inflexibility in commerce of Bristol merchants, coupled with Bristol slave merchants' failure to create dynasties has implications for the availability of human capital in Bristol's slave merchant community. Entrepreneurship is argued to be a continuing function, yet the Bristol slave merchant community would not have had the ability of fulfilling another entrepreneurial role, that of creating further innovation, because those with the most human capital in the trade failed to leave a legacy.⁴⁴¹ Arguably, then, this crucial and enterprising human capital was not passed on to succeeding generations. Those that shaped Bristol's early activity in the slave trade may indeed have been entrepreneurial in finding new markets, however expertise in the slave trade declined in the atomised Bristol community as merchants turned away from the slave trade to concentrate on the sugar trade and the leading

⁴³⁸ Clemens, "Rise of Liverpool", p. 219.

⁴³⁹ Cameron, *Liverpool*, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁰ R. Williamson, *The Liverpool Memorandum Book or, Gentleman's, Merchant's and Tradesman's Daily Pocket-Journal, For the Year M,DCC,LIII*, 1753. Available at Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, University of Nottingham, accessed 1/1/10.

⁴⁴¹ See Introduction, p. 31.

slave merchants did not pass on their human capital to the next generation. This occurred precisely at the time when Liverpool was gaining momentum in the trade. That the Bristol slave trade merchants later in the period were arguably conservative in their market choices also demonstrates a collective unwillingness to take risks, which stands in contrast with the entrepreneurial characteristic of having low risk aversion.⁴⁴² This is reinforced by the argument further explored in Chapter Six that Bristol merchants also became complacent in their trading performance. While this argument was made specifically for Bristol's West India merchants, it is demonstrative of a general "business caution" that characterised Bristol merchants as a whole.⁴⁴³

Not only did the Bristol slave merchant community lose crucial human capital in the trade by the mid-century, but they were also unable to successfully re-build it. This is most apparent in the case of James Rogers. As noted in the last chapter, Rogers was a central merchant in the Bristol community in 1790. As such, he had a higher degree of access to information, resources and capital. He is also cited as one of Bristol's slave trading elite and is credited with reviving Bristol's interest in the slave trade after the War of American Independence.⁴⁴⁴ The last chapter noted that Rogers ventured to six of the seven primary embarkation regions along the African coast, indicating that, unlike the noted conservatism in the Bristol merchants as a whole, he was more open to diversifying his market options.⁴⁴⁵ Because of his central position in the Bristol slave merchant community and his diverse pattern of slaving ventures, it would seem likely that Rogers had the human capital to conduct successful voyages. Rogers' voyages to the African coast, however, were met with difficulty. Writing from Bonny in 1790, Captain John Goodrich related to James Rogers that he "found after my arrival here that my cargo was badly laid for Callabar" as he was

⁴⁴² See Baron, "Cognitive Perspective", pp. 224-226; Wadeson, "Cognitive Aspects", pp. 103-104.

⁴⁴³ Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 206.

⁴⁴⁴ See Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 24.

⁴⁴⁵ See Table 3.3, p. 126.

“short of articles and iron bars”; additionally, the “great number of vessels both at this place and Callabar makes slaves of a most enormous price”.⁴⁴⁶ Two years later, and writing from the Gambian market, Captain Edward Taylor also remarked that Rogers needed to assort a better and more appropriate cargo for the voyage.⁴⁴⁷ These examples demonstrate that both captains were not only lacking an appropriate cargo, but in the case of Goodrich, he was advised to sell at a glutted market. As owner of the venture, and the central merchant in the Bristol slaving community, Rogers should have had the knowledge of the desired cargoes for these different markets and have assorted the cargos appropriately. Rogers also should have kept the captains informed of market conditions. As discussed below, however, Rogers was often remiss in corresponding with his agents, and thus he was not as informed on market conditions as he otherwise would have been. Therefore, Rogers could not fulfil the entrepreneurial role of coordinating and distributing resources (including information) successfully through his networks.⁴⁴⁸ It stands to reason that if Rogers communicated effectively through his networks to get the most up-to-date information, his captains would not have been sent to glutted markets.

Additionally, Rogers proved to be ill-equipped to handle other matters of the trade. Although he diversified his market options along the African coast more than other Bristol merchants, Rogers still favoured the Bight of Biafra and Sierra Leone more than other British slave traders. However, he found considerable competition in these regions from French and Liverpool vessels.⁴⁴⁹ As noted in the last chapter, Liverpool merchants were particularly skilled at diversifying their market options and cementing connections with African traders, thus those in Rogers’ network noting Liverpool’s significant presence along the African coast is not surprising. Writing from Sierra Leone, Captain William Roper expressed, “I

⁴⁴⁶ Captain John Goodrich to James Rogers, 20 Jun 1790, James Rogers Papers, C107/5, TNA.

⁴⁴⁷ Captain Edward Taylor to James Rogers, 2 Jul 1792, James Rogers Papers, C107/6, TNA.

⁴⁴⁸ See Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, pp. 81, 84; J. S. Metcalfe, “Entrepreneurship: An Evolutionary Perspective”, in Casson, Yeung and Basu, *The Oxford Handbook of Entrepreneurship*, pp. 59-91.

⁴⁴⁹ Morgan, “James Rogers”, pp. 193, 196.

am sorry to inform you that my beads are all charged eighty per cent dearer than any ships either from Liverpool or London” and that he “will have to bring some home”.⁴⁵⁰ This exemplifies that Bristol merchants found it difficult to compete with the well-established connections of their rivals, and particularly those from Liverpool, whose connections facilitated their competitive advantage in terms of pricing. As a leading Bristol slave merchant, James Rogers’s experience in the trade demonstrates that Bristol merchants as a whole simply lacked the human capital throughout the period to successfully compete with Liverpool merchants.

Although they participated in significantly fewer voyages early in the period, Liverpool’s early presence along the African coast also mirrored the patterns established by the Royal African Company and emulated by Bristol. In the period between 1698 and 1725, Liverpool merchants participated in only eighty-six slaving voyages, compared with Bristol’s 397 voyages. They also ventured to the Gold Coast, Senegambia and West Central Africa the most, embarking there seven, two and one time respectively.⁴⁵¹ Liverpool merchants, however, were more enterprising later in the period in establishing new markets along the coast. As Richardson and Lovejoy argue, seventy-five per cent of slaves carried by Liverpool ships came from areas where there was little or no permanent European presence in the formative period between 1701 and 1725. Thus, Liverpool merchants are credited for diversifying the regional patterns in slaving activity along the African coast for much of the eighteenth century, demonstrating their entrepreneurship in finding new markets.⁴⁵² The fluctuations caused by war, foreign competition and African supply conditions triggered individual Liverpool merchants to exert more enterprise in exploiting new markets along the African coast, suggesting that Liverpool merchants responded to such events in a way that boosted rather than hindered their trade. For example, in response to the French levying a fee to access the Benin through the River

⁴⁵⁰ Captain William Roper to James Rogers, 22 Jun 1789, James Rogers Papers, C107/5, TNA.

⁴⁵¹ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴⁵² Lovejoy and Richardson, “African Agency”, p. 60.

Formosa, Francis Ingram established trade at Porto-Novo in the late 1780s. Additionally, the opening of the trade at Old Calabar and the Cameroons is attributed to William Davenport.⁴⁵³ The opening of the trade at Old Calabar, located in the Bight of Biafra, is particularly important because, as has been previously established, the Bight was the region British slavers ventured to the most, underscoring Davenport's important entrepreneurial role as a trailblazer in the trade.⁴⁵⁴ Chapter Two noted that growth in the slave trade necessitated negotiation between Africans and Europeans. Liverpool merchants were especially adept at solidifying links with African merchants from different political infrastructures, which particularly aided the extension and protection of credit in the Bight of Biafra and especially Bonny.⁴⁵⁵ As observed by James Rogers above, this gave Liverpool merchants a competitive advantage along the African coast. Chapter Two also noted these linkages often transcended business relationships, as evidenced by William Earle's demonstration of friendship towards Duke Abashy as well as the fact that children of African elites were often sent to Liverpool to be educated.⁴⁵⁶ By diversifying their market options and making voyages to different coastal outlets in larger numbers, as well as forging strong connections with the African merchants and leaders, Liverpool slave merchants demonstrated greater entrepreneurship by gaining great competitive advantages for their trade.

Just as the early activity along the African coast was shaped by patterns established by the Royal African Company, the markets supplied in the Americas, particularly for Bristol, were also influenced by their early trading connections. Bristol had forged ties in the Chesapeake region due to its participation in the tobacco trade, and as the last chapter demonstrated, the port supplied that region in greater numbers than Liverpool. It was mentioned that case study merchant Isaac Hobhouse had partners with multiple commercial interests, many

⁴⁵³ Behrendt, "Annual Volume", pp. 201-202; Richardson "Profits in the Liverpool Slave Trade", p. 65.

⁴⁵⁴ See Casson's discussion of innovation in *Entrepreneurship*, pp. 88-86, 105-107, 259-260.

⁴⁵⁵ Richardson and Lovejoy, "African Agency", p. 60.

⁴⁵⁶ See Chapter Two, p. 86.

of whom were in the Virginia and South Carolina trades. A principal agent with whom he corresponded in Virginia was Augustine Moore, who was born in England and later purchased land and entered into Virginia's tobacco trade, reflecting the transatlantic connections Bristol and American merchants created with one another.⁴⁵⁷ Demonstrating this connection further, Table 3.2 in the last chapter showed that between 1730 and 1760, Bristol merchants disembarked in Virginia in larger numbers than Barbados, indicating Bristol's stronger presence in this market.⁴⁵⁸ Conversely, Liverpool's embarkations in Virginia decreased throughout this period, and although the numbers fluctuated, Liverpool supplied the Caribbean in much higher numbers. On the whole, however, Liverpool participated in a wider range of markets, which is discussed further below and is indicative of the entrepreneurship of Liverpool's slave merchants, particularly in regards to risk-taking. It is important to note here, however, Liverpool's early performance in the trade was also shaped by an "infusion of new men" from Liverpool's West India trade, who brought their own particular expertise. These men are credited for establishing a market for Lancashire textiles with Spanish contraband traders in Jamaica; after this trade was prohibited, these merchants turned to the slave trade.⁴⁵⁹ The infusion of new men coupled with Liverpool's early activity and enterprise in this Spanish market arguably served as a springboard for Liverpool's later success.

For Britain as a whole, these early trading connections with the Spanish islands were made by the *Asiento* contract, in effect from the Peace of Utrecht in 1713 until the War of Jenkins' Ear began in 1739. Under the *Asiento*, Britain was granted the right to annually supply the Spanish colonies with 4,800 slaves. While this trade was officially conducted by the South Sea Company, whose factors resided in Kingston, clandestine trade certainly occurred.⁴⁶⁰ Indeed, Wallace

⁴⁵⁷ Minchinton, *Hobhouse Papers*.

⁴⁵⁸ See Table 3.2, p. 98.

⁴⁵⁹ Anderson, "Lancashire Bill System", p. 61.

⁴⁶⁰ Sheridan, *Sugar and Slavery*, pp. 218, 317.

posited Liverpool's successful entry into the slave trade to smuggling slaves to Spanish islands. From an entrepreneurial perspective, it may be argued that strict government regulation does not foster an environment for the entrepreneur to thrive.⁴⁶¹ Liverpool's early involvement in trade, albeit illegal at times, thus demonstrates further innovation in their market choices. This attitude is also demonstrated in Chapter Six, when it is argued that, in regards to Liverpool's defence of the slave trade, Liverpool merchants often argued both for keeping the trade open and encouraging diverse market options. By keeping the trade open (that is, less regulated) Liverpool's slave merchants could exert more enterprise in their market choices and in their trade.

Importantly, smuggling slaves early in the period established their credit in the *Asiento* trade and created trading connections with the Spanish, "whereby an easy gradation was formed to the increase of that branch of the traffic in which Bristol had long been without a rival".⁴⁶² Wallace defined the period in which this occurred between 1722-1744, coinciding with the "infusion" of West Indian traders to Liverpool's slave trade and the time in which Bristol's participation in the trade began to decline.⁴⁶³ Therefore, this "infusion" of new men further enriched the Liverpool slave merchant community with human capital. This also contrasts with the notion mentioned above that Bristol's major commodity trades were managed by discrete groups of traders and is reflective of the fact that Liverpool merchants, as "universal merchants", exhibited flexibility in commerce which contributed to their commercial success.⁴⁶⁴

While Bristol merchants benefitted from their established connections in the Virginia market, the previous chapter also noted Bristol merchants' failure to take advantage of shifts in the centre of gravity in the trade, particularly in Jamaica between 1730-1770. This could be attributed to early and unsuccessful

⁴⁶¹ Ricketts, "Theories of Entrepreneurship", p. 36.

⁴⁶² Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 216.

⁴⁶³ *Ibid.*; Anderson, "Lancashire Bill System", p. 61.

⁴⁶⁴ Williamson, *Liverpool Memorandum Book*.

ventures to that market. For instance, in 1729, the Bristol ship, *Aurora*, left Bonny with 337 slaves and arrived in Kingston with 270; the Jamaican agent partnership of Tyndall & Assheton recounted to Isaac Hobhouse of its arrival that it was the "worst cargo of Bonny slaves [that] have been seen this long time" and thus, "the Bristol men will make a poor hand of it" by receiving a poor price in sales.⁴⁶⁵ Because of this, they remarked in a later letter that "the people of Bristol seem doubtful of the Jamaican market for slaves".⁴⁶⁶ As Hobhouse was a central merchant in the Bristol slave merchant community, word of this poor cargo would have certainly spread among the merchant networks in Bristol, thus affecting their decisions of where to venture. Additionally, Bristol merchants' failure to exploit different market opportunities early in the period may be attributed to the failure to heed the advice of factors and agents in the Americas. Hobhouse provides another prime example in that he seemed to ignore Tyndall & Assheton's advice in 1729 that Gold Coast and Angola slaves were preferred in the Spanish market.⁴⁶⁷ This is discussed below when market exploitation is further considered, but is important to mention it here because it is reflective of the conservatism that hindered Bristol's performance in the slave trade. As mentioned in the last chapter, the markets Hobhouse supplied with slaves were those linked largely with the tobacco trade and he did not diversify his market options after the tobacco trade declined.⁴⁶⁸ This, coupled with his failure to heed the advice of his agents who informed him of other market opportunities, indicates both conservatism and also complacency in his trading performance. Furthermore, as with Bristol merchants' conservatism that characterised their trade along the African coast, their neglect of market opportunities in the Americas is also linked to a deficiency in human capital. Again, James Rogers provides a telling example from the latter part of the period. In a letter from

⁴⁶⁵ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*; Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 6 Aug 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁴⁶⁶ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 7 Sept 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁴⁶⁷ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 13 Mar 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁴⁶⁸ See Chapter Three, p. 134.

agent Alexander Macleod in Spanish Town, Jamaica, Macleod expressed frustration with Rogers' seemingly shoddy management in 1791:

in comparing the terms which I have engaged to sell negroes with those you have given my friend Mr. Francis Grant I perceive they are very different indeed ... the fact is that I had not the most distant idea that I was not agreeing to do business on the same footing with him ... you sent me a Windward Coast on Gold Coast terms. Was this our bargain? Was it not the express foundation of our agreement that I was to do business with you on the same terms that my friend did. I must request your immediate and explicit answer ... that I may form another connection in case you do not choose my terms.⁴⁶⁹

Treating a cargo of slaves from the Windward Coast as if they were from the Gold Coast is indicative not only of Roger's lack of knowledge in the market, but also his poor behaviour in a business deal. Macleod clearly felt that Rogers was going against his word and changing the terms of the deal they had originally agreed upon. This would have hurt Rogers' reputation with his contacts in Spanish Town, limiting his opportunity to do business in Jamaica at a time when Bristol's presence there was comparatively minor. If Rogers, however, possessed the necessary qualities to more effectively fulfil the role of entrepreneur, he could have taken advantage of this market opportunity.

As the above examples suggest, factors and agents were important members of slave merchants' networks as they were essential in providing merchants with information regarding the state of their markets, the going prices for slaves and other commodities, what goods were in most demand, who the appropriate people were to sell their goods to, and the arrival of ships into their ports. In effect, they facilitated the role of the entrepreneur by contributing to knowledge transfer, which in turn impacted upon the decision-making of the merchant. Thus, not taking their advice into account in the management of a slaving venture could be at a detriment to the success of the voyage. Likewise, the trends found in slaving voyages were influenced by captains, who were also integral members of slave merchants' networks. Their human capital has been

⁴⁶⁹ Alexander Macleod to James Rogers, 15 Jul 1791, James Rogers Papers, C107/5, TNA.

previously noted to impact upon the success of the voyage, and Liverpool captains in particular were sought by Bristol and London merchants for their expertise in the trade. This underscores the critical role captains had in the operation of a slaving voyage and highlights a reason why Liverpool was more successful in the trade. Albeit an economic one rather than one relating to expertise, Wallace observed an additional competitive advantage Liverpool merchants had in regards to their captains. He commented that Liverpool merchants operated on a "more economic but less liberal plan" by paying their captains yearly rather than monthly salaries, as done in London and Bristol, by not allowing cabin privileges, and not granting any port allowances; this allowed Liverpool merchants to then "sell their slaves to the islanders for four and five pounds per head less than London and Bristol" while at the same time [affording] themselves equal profit".⁴⁷⁰ Liverpool's more economic plan contrasts with the observation that Bristol merchants "treated their captains like young gentlemen on the Grand Tour", relating to contrasting practices of voyage management by Bristol and Liverpool merchant owners.⁴⁷¹ Particular considerations regarding voyage management are discussed further below.

Successful captains became so by experience, and merchants often used the same captain on multiple voyages, reinforcing the trusting relationship that developed between merchant owners and captains over time. Highlighting this trend, the last chapter noted that Liverpool case study merchants Foster Cunliffe, Benjamin Heywood and Thomas Earle managed a number of voyages utilising the same ship and captain, which contributed to their success.⁴⁷² Further emphasising this, the Liverpool partnership of James Clemens & Co. relayed to Captain William Speers that although "misfortunes may to be sure happen that human prudence cannot foresee", many in fact can be prevented "by prudence and

⁴⁷⁰ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 216.

⁴⁷¹ Averil Mackenzie-Grieve, *The Last Years of the English Slave Trade, Liverpool 1750-1807* (London: Cass, 1941), p. 4.

⁴⁷² See Chapter Three, pp. 135, 138, 143.

a proper attention"; they had observed these qualities in Speers on previous occasions and therefore, "doubt not a continuance".⁴⁷³ Speers served as a captain in six slaving voyages between 1766-1775, and he participated in nine voyages as an investor, six of which were managed by James Clemens.⁴⁷⁴ Their working relationship illustrates the importance of repeated exchanges in fostering good business practice and building trust. The recurring exchanges between Speers and the Clemens partnership built trust and confidence in Speers that the slaving venture would be successful, which was particularly important as Speers conducted these voyages during the Seven Years' War and on the eve of the War of American Independence when trade was precarious. In contrast, a captain's inexperience could serve as a detriment to the trade, as evidenced by the case of Bristol captain, Japhet Bird. Although Bird served as a captain in fourteen slaving voyages from Bristol between 1722 and 1754, his first was not successful. On his first voyage to Montserrat in 1722, he buried seventy slaves. Writing back to the owners in Bristol, Bird stated that he was "most dissatisfied that it should happen to a young beginner but thank God it can't be said that it's owing to neglect for I can assure you that it has been the constant care and endeavour of me [to work] for the interest of these gentlemen that have employed me".⁴⁷⁵ Bird's ill-fated voyage underscores the importance of a captain's human capital in the success of a voyage, particularly because he mentioned that he was a beginner. Additionally, it highlights that, as with the fate of the *Aurora*, the risk of slave mortality could plague any voyage. Mortality is discussed further below as it was a risk that merchants had to expertly manage in slaving voyages.

This build-up of capital is also linked to the aforementioned idea of a life-cycle, or a typical career path of those in the merchant-mariner community.⁴⁷⁶ In a study of Liverpool captains in the period between 1785-1807, it was found that

⁴⁷³ James Clemens & Co. to Captain William Speers, 3 Jun 1768, David Tuohy Papers, LivPRO.

⁴⁷⁴ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴⁷⁵ Captain Japhet Bird to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 4 Feb 1722, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁴⁷⁶ See Introduction, p. 31.

the majority came from a commercial background, with around eighty per cent of them having fathers from some commercial employment.⁴⁷⁷ Moreover, most captains' fathers were indirectly connected to Liverpool shipping, as shipwrights, vintners, ironmongers and turners.⁴⁷⁸ After earning capital and gaining experience, many captains settled as merchants and specialised in the markets in which they previously traded.⁴⁷⁹ The human capital captains accrued was essential, especially because merchants left many considerations to the captain's discretion. Because trading conditions on the African coast or in the West Indian or American markets might have differed from the merchants' initial expectations, merchants therefore relied on the captains' human capital to conduct a successful voyage in a constantly changing environment. Indeed, William Earle wrote to Captain William Hindle stating that while "you know our sentiments with respect to your destiny in the West Indies you will be the best judge whether it be to our advantage" to proceed where originally instructed or "going down to Jamaica".⁴⁸⁰ Casson notes a misconception that "no-one who bears financial responsibility for a situation will voluntarily allow someone else to take a decision that affects the outcome".⁴⁸¹ Decision making, however, can indeed be delegated, allowing for the entrepreneurial role to be shared among group members. Importantly, in many cases the captain was also an investor, and as a provider of capital he conceivably had the right to impact on the outcome. Thus, quick decisions, such as where to purchase better quality slaves along the coast, were made by captains who were given authority to do so by their merchant owners. Decision making was therefore shared, highlighting the trust merchants had in their captains, as well as their factors and agents as noted above, and the delegation

⁴⁷⁷ Stephen D. Behrendt, "The Captains in the British Slave Trade from 1785 to 1807", *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 140 (1991), pp. 79-140.

⁴⁷⁸ Behrendt, "Captains", p. 106.

⁴⁷⁹ Behrendt, "Human Capital", p. 74. To a degree, the same can be said of Bristol captains. Case study merchant John Fowler served as a captain from 1751-1757 before becoming a merchant owner, while it has been noted many others had mariner backgrounds as well. Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 20.

⁴⁸⁰ William Earle to Captain William Hindle, 26 Jul 1760, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

⁴⁸¹ Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 108.

of responsibility that occurred in the conduct of slaving voyage. By relying on the human, as well as financial, capital of various people throughout the Atlantic world, slave trade merchants acted in “coalitions of entrepreneurs” when managing slaving ventures.⁴⁸²

The context of the slave trade in the early years of Bristol and Liverpool’s involvement also raises other managerial issues that speak to the notion of entrepreneurship and impact upon success. Frequent correspondence through merchant networks was absolutely essential in the management of a slaving voyage. Some theorists espouse the idea of a “risk horizon”, meaning that risk is embedded in time and includes both short and long term risk.⁴⁸³ To manage these risks, entrepreneurs need access to information; thus, one role of the entrepreneur is “to collect the right information, in the right sequence, and in the right ways”.⁴⁸⁴ Likewise, slave trade merchants had particular risks to manage and regular communication served to reduce these risks. In this way, frequent correspondence among members of the network also helped reduce transaction costs. For both ports, letters back and forth continually expressed the need to be kept informed of opportunities or changes in the market, and frustration was expressed when letters were few and far between. This frustration was often articulated as a sense of unease. An agent in Barbados, Theodore Morris, wrote to Isaac Hobhouse in 1730, saying, “it’s been a long time since there has been any news from Bristol, which makes most people with friends that way pretty uneasy”.⁴⁸⁵ Similarly, writing from St. Croix in 1782, Joseph Rogers expressed to James Rogers, “I am very uneasy on account of your silence not having the pleasure of a letter from you”.⁴⁸⁶ After months of no communication, Joseph wrote again stating, “I am truly sorry you put it in my power always to be reminding you of your remissness of your correspondence, [I] have not had any

⁴⁸² Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 79.

⁴⁸³ Wadeson, “Cognitive Aspects”, p. 105.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁴⁸⁵ Theodore Morris to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 12 Jan 1730, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁴⁸⁶ Joseph Rogers to James Rogers, 10 Aug 1782, James Rogers Papers, C107/1, TNA.

of your esteemd favours since Christmas last ... [this] certainly makes me very uneasy".⁴⁸⁷ It was noted above that two of the voyages Rogers managed were unsuccessful largely because Rogers did not have the appropriate cargoes assorted in addition to advising his captains to sell at glutted markets. His poor managerial skills are particularly cited as a reason for the demise of his career and the fact that he failed to effectively communicate with his partners supports this claim.⁴⁸⁸ Certainly, successful managers keep members in their networks well-informed.

That Hobhouse and Rogers were often remiss in correspondence is especially telling considering they held central and bridging positions in the Bristol slave merchant community. This speaks to the crucial link between communication and commercial success in the slave trade as the leaders in Bristol's slave trade often neglected their duty to correspond while Bristol's success in the trade dwindled throughout the period. In contrast, correspondence shows that Liverpool merchants often pushed their agents to keep them regularly informed. Writing to the partnership of Lightfoot Hill & Co. in 1789, Robert Bostock asserted he had not "had the pleasure of advice" for some time and hoped "to have the pleasure of seeing your writing in a few days or else I shall think you have lost the use of your hands".⁴⁸⁹

Not only were Liverpool merchants proactive with urging correspondence and seeking knowledge, but so were Liverpool captains. An interesting case is provided by Liverpool captain, John Irving, who served as a surgeon in five slaving voyages between 1783 and 1789 and as a captain in two voyages in 1789 and 1792. Coinciding with the time Liverpool captains were particularly sought for their expertise, his correspondence with his wife is revealing. He instructed her to impart precise information to his colleagues back home that would have an impact on slave trading ventures, such as the state of the market and when and

⁴⁸⁷ Joseph Rogers to James Rogers, 14 Oct 1782, James Rogers Papers, C107/1, TNA.

⁴⁸⁸ See Morgan, "James Rogers", p. 202.

⁴⁸⁹ Robert Bostock to Lightfoot Hill & Co., 30 Mar 1789, Robert Bostock Letterbook, LivPRO.

where he planned on travelling. He also desired her to call on certain people who “will tell you all African news”.⁴⁹⁰ These examples illustrate that regular communication was imperative for the smooth operation of the slave trade, particularly in dealing with risk. They also speak to Liverpool’s more effective practice of communication, in contrast with the poor communication that occurred through the networks of Bristolian merchants Rogers and Hobhouse. Liverpool’s effectiveness was due to the nature of its networks within its slave merchant community. Chapter Three demonstrated that the Bristol slave merchant community became smaller and more atomised, and the case study merchants’ networks by and large conformed to this trend. Conversely, the Liverpool slave merchant community was substantially larger and better connected by mid-century, with the case study merchants consequently part of much larger networks. It is therefore argued that Liverpool merchants surpassed Bristol as a primary slaving port because of their greater ability to gather and pass information through these densely interwoven mercantile networks. In other words, Liverpool merchants could more effectively fulfil the entrepreneurial role and “gather the right information, in the right sequence and in the right ways” because of the increased level of connectivity in their networks.⁴⁹¹ A prime example of Liverpool merchants’ more effective communication is provided by the ardent correspondence of case study merchant, John Tarleton, discussed further below and in Chapter Six. As the examples of Hobhouse and Rogers demonstrate, Bristol merchants in contrast were relatively poor at this information transfer. It is also argued below that some Bristol slave merchants even sought knowledge from the more experienced Liverpool merchants, just as they sought the use of Liverpool’s captains. These large networks, in which Liverpool merchants conducted business in “coalitions of entrepreneurs” thus

⁴⁹⁰ Suzanne Schwarz (ed.), *Slave Captain: The Career of James Irving in the Liverpool Slave Trade* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 111, 149.

⁴⁹¹ Wadeson, “Cognitive Aspects”, p. 107.

fostered a practice of regular and effective communication, greatly enhancing Liverpool's performance in the slave trade.

As noted above, mortality was one such risk in the slave trade and voyages with high mortality are generally indicative of poor management.⁴⁹² Of all voyages over the period, Bristol voyages had a slightly higher mortality rate, with an average of 13.3 per cent of embarked slaves who died on voyages compared with 10.9 per cent on Liverpool voyages.⁴⁹³ Mortality rates varied for both ports by region as well as over time, but as the overall percentage of mortality suggests, these rates were not strikingly different. A notable exception, however, is found on voyages to Jamaica, in which the mortality rate to this region for Bristol slavers was significantly higher. In the period between 1725 and 1807, an average percentage of 11.7 died on voyages to Jamaica; in contrast, just 7.7 per cent of slaves died en route to this region on Liverpool slavers.⁴⁹⁴ Early in the period, coinciding with the ill-fated voyage of the *Aurora*, Bristol voyages to Jamaica had their highest mortality rates: 20.1 per cent between 1727-1730, 28.3 per cent between 1731-1735 and 24.7 per cent between 1746 and 1750. In these early years, one way in which Bristol owners tried to manage the risk of mortality was to advise captains to remain watchful of their slave cargo. For instance, in 1725, Hobhouse & Co. instructed Captain Berry to "let your knetting be fix'd breast high fore ... and keep 'em shackled and hand Bolted fearing their rising or leaping overboard".⁴⁹⁵ Remaining vigilant, especially at night, was crucial, as Hobhouse & Co. further cautioned Captain Berry that "sleeping in their Watch has often been fatall and many a good Voyage ... entirely ruined".⁴⁹⁶ Additionally, in 1747, Richard Meyler and Henry Bright gave precise instructions to Captain John Brown to make sure slaves ate well, which would

⁴⁹² Morgan, "James Rogers", p. 186. Management when it came to mortality, however, got better over time as merchants developed strategies to combat high mortality. See Haggerty, "Risk and Risk Management", pp. 825-826.

⁴⁹³ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴⁹⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁹⁵ Hobhouse & Co. to Captain William Barry, 7 Oct 1725, in Donnan, *Documents*, p. 327.

⁴⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 327-328.

“prevent distempers” and ultimately “contribute very much to the success of the voyage”.⁴⁹⁷ These instructions indicate that merchants thus relied on their captains’ ability to maintain the health and safety of the cargo to ensure low mortality.

In contrast with Bristol’s mortality rate, the highest recorded mortality rate for Liverpool voyages to Jamaica was 19.6 per cent, which occurred in the period between 1756 and 1760, coinciding with the Seven Years’ War.⁴⁹⁸ As Liverpool slavers made the most voyages to that region, Liverpool’s slave merchant community would have had a wealth of experience in conducting voyages there, helping to manage and reduce such risks as mortality. As such, their advice to captains regarding the treatment of slaves in some instances differed than that offered by Bristol merchants. Robert Bostock’s advice almost half a century later was to “take care to use your people with great humanity, not to beat or abuse them as you see many voyages overset by ill treatment”.⁴⁹⁹ This is, of course, not to suggest that Liverpool slaving ventures did not experience unrest or that merchant owners never advised their captains to exercise vigilance with the slaves on board. However, this further demonstrates that Bristol merchants’ early experiences in the slave trade were shaped in a context in which crucial human capital was diminishing, and as such, they responded differently to the Liverpool merchants later in the period. This only reinforces the detriment to Bristol’s slave trade that failure of the leading slave merchants to create dynasties would have caused. The human capital needed to adapt to a variety of trading conditions would not have been passed down and merchants would not have the benefit of learning from the experience of their peers.

⁴⁹⁷ Meyler and Bright to Captain John Brown, Mar 1747, in Morgan, *Bright Meyler*, p. 194.

⁴⁹⁸ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁴⁹⁹ Robert Bostock to Captain Peter Burns, 1788, Robert Bostock Letterbook, LivPRO. The Liverpool partnership Matthew Strong & Co. similarly advised Captain Richard Smith in 1771, stating “if you have been so often at Africa its needless to recommend particular care in treatment and usage of your slaves as its much your interest as ours to bring a good and healthy cargo to market”. Matthew Strong & Co. to Capt. Richard Smith, 19 Jan 1771, Tuohy Papers, LivPRO.

While there is no evidence to definitively link the length of time spent on the “middle passage” to an increase in mortality, the length of days spent in transit was also longer for Bristol voyages.⁵⁰⁰ This also comprises an issue which merchants and captains had to manage. On average, Bristol ships spent 66.4 days along the “middle passage” while Liverpool ships spent 59.3.⁵⁰¹ Merchants, however, were aware that ventures required quick turn-around times on the coast to ensure the health of the voyage. Writing from St. Vincent, Captain John Kennedy lamented to James Rogers that he had “a long tedious passage of 13 weeks” in which he “never experienced such a disagreeable passage since I followed the sea”. Kennedy “buried 28 on the passage” in which he largely blamed the doctor who “had not turned out to my expectations”.⁵⁰² Unlike the case of Japhet Bird above, where his lack of human capital had plagued the voyage, in this case the voyage suffered in part due to the lack of expertise in the ship’s doctor.⁵⁰³ Quick turn-around times were likewise influenced by the tonnage of the ship, as smaller ships were faster to load and could thus quickly depart the coast. Furthermore, writing to Hobhouse regarding the voyage of the *Cato* which departed from the Bight of Biafra, Tyndall & Assheton expressed that “we are well content with our concern in the *Cato* but wish she had proceeded for Angola” as they “are afraid she is too big for Old Callabar by reason she will be so long purchasing her cargo”. Likewise, they also opined that if the vessel, the *Swift* were to venture to Africa, she “would do better at Angola” because she “is too big for Old Callabar”.⁵⁰⁴ This example is further reflective of Tyndall & Assheton’s greater knowledge in the trade and Hobhouse’s poor managerial performance in comparison. The *Cato* was 266 tons and indeed the average tonnage for Bristol slaving vessels in the period between 1725 and 1807 was

⁵⁰⁰ See Chapter Two, p. 81.

⁵⁰¹ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁰² John Kennedy to James Rogers, 7 Nov 1788, James Rogers Papers, C107/2, TNA.

⁵⁰³ Kennedy, however, spent four months on the African coast and 89 days on the ‘middle passage’, indicating that it was indeed on a longer voyage than average. Voyage identification number 17997, Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁰⁴ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse, 18 Jul 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

much smaller at 113.8. The average tonnage for Liverpool vessels, at 155 tons, was also larger than the average tonnage for Bristol vessels.⁵⁰⁵

The issue of tonnage became especially important when the Dolben Bill imposing tonnage restrictions was debated in Parliament in 1788. While these debates are discussed more in depth in Chapter Six, merchants argued that ships by this later period of around two hundred tons were thought to be ideal and anything under that tonnage, specifically stipulating the proposed (and later passed) ratio of five slaves per three tons would not be profitable.⁵⁰⁶ Such stipulations, as Bristol merchant James Jones expressed, would “check the ardour of trade and a great number of ships would be laid out instead of being fitted out again immediately as usual”.⁵⁰⁷ John Tarleton likewise agreed against these stipulations, asserting his hopes that “while limits are fixed to extent of tonnage [that] no restraint may be imposed upon discretion of trader in the vessels of smaller sizes”.⁵⁰⁸ These arguments regarding tonnage and profitability were made in conjunction with the health considerations described above. Indeed, Tarleton emphasised that the smaller ships “remain a shorter time on an unhealthy coast” and in fact arrive at their destination with “less loss and with a healthier cargo”, noting the perceived link between quick turn-around times and the health of the voyage.⁵⁰⁹ As Tyndall & Assheton relayed to Hobhouse, “you’ll see the small vessels make the best voyages”, indicating the link among small vessels, quick turn-around times and thus the health and profitability of the voyage.⁵¹⁰

While issues of mortality and tonnage affected trade, war certainly had the most immediate impact. As mentioned in the Introduction, Britain was engaged in five international wars in the period between 1660 and 1800. Four of these wars

⁵⁰⁵ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁰⁶ James Jones to Baron Hawkesbury 26 Jul 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXVII, BL; Investigation of John Matthews, 3 Jun 1788, in Lambert, *House Vol.* 68.

⁵⁰⁷ James Jones to Baron Hawkesbury, 27 Jun 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXVII, BL.

⁵⁰⁸ John Tarleton to Baron Hawkesbury, 25 Jun 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXVII, BL.

⁵⁰⁹ John Tarleton to Baron Hawkesbury, 9 Jun 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXVII, BL.

⁵¹⁰ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse, 13 Mar 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

occurred in the formative period when the British slave trade was opened to private traders and was also when Liverpool surpassed Bristol as the premier slaving port. The danger and conflict slave merchants, particularly those from Bristol, experienced during the trade's formative years had obvious ramifications in the development of how the port organised its trade as it was based on the perceptions formed from these initial experiences. For instance, an account from Jamaica appeared in a Bristol newspaper in 1733 that the "Market for Negroes ... is at a stand in that Island, by reason of the Trade being stopp'd at the Havvanna [sic] and other Places on the Main by the Spanish Governors" due to Spanish ships being taken as prizes. It was concluded that the stoppage of trade would "prove a great Detriment to some Merchants in this City" because "the Merchants of Jamaica, to whom the Cargoes of Negroes are consigned, not knowing what way to dispose of them".⁵¹¹ The time at which this took place is notable. In the period between 1730-1739, Bristol cleared their highest number of slave ships, with 396 bound for the African coast. Likewise, between 1731-1735, their highest number of ships (102) disembarked at Jamaica, the most popular destination as established in the historiography and demonstrated in the last chapter. Between 1736-1740, this number dropped to eighty and throughout the rest of the period, Bristol never sent a higher number than that to the island.⁵¹² As noted above, this period also had the highest mortality rates for Bristol slavers in that region; thus, not only was Bristol trading in a context at this time shaped by uncertainty and war, but also high mortality. In contrast, while Bristol disembarked their highest number of slave ships at Jamaica in this period, Liverpool disembarked relatively few, and so Liverpool merchants might not have been as adversely affected by Spanish interference. Indeed, it has been posited that Britain's war with Spain in 1739 and its extension to France in 1743 was the "watershed moment" in the British slave trade when Liverpool surpassed Bristol in

⁵¹¹ News Item Relating to Slave Trade, Bristol 14 Nov 1733, in Donnan, *Documents*, p. 451.

⁵¹² Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*. This is for the period 1725-1807.

its control.⁵¹³ Relatively safer trade routes around Ireland, coupled with low trading activity in more dangerous areas such as Jamaica, would have made it possible for Liverpool's early trading activity to thrive. Likewise, mortality on vessels to this region was relatively low.⁵¹⁴

An important entrepreneurial point may also be made in regards to this "watershed moment" in terms of the leadership in the Liverpool slave merchant community. As Joseph Schumpeter argues, leadership (and thus the entrepreneurship derived from leadership) has a function when something new must be carried out; as the economy is generally routine, entrepreneurship often occurs during times of disequilibrium, such as disruption caused by war.⁵¹⁵ That the Liverpool merchants entered into the trade in earnest in times of war and uncertainty, as well as supplied the Spanish islands through smuggling, demonstrates their entrepreneurship by their innovation and their willingness to capitalise on opportunities in the face of greater risk. Between 1731-1735, only eighteen Liverpool ships disembarked at Jamaica. This number increased to twenty-five between 1736-1740, and while the numbers fluctuated throughout the rest of the period, Liverpool disembarkations never dipped below twenty-five. In fact, Liverpool disembarked their highest number at Jamaica, 191, right at the end of the period corresponding to the time when they cleared the most slaving ships in general, between 1789-1799.⁵¹⁶ Liverpool merchants' willingness to capitalise on new opportunities is further discussed below, when their exploitation of a variety of markets is explored.

A dip in the Bristol slave trade, and the consequent rise of the Liverpool slave trade, is likely due to early privateering activity, both by Bristol ships as well as European powers, and particularly the Spanish and French. Beginning in

⁵¹³ Richardson, *Bristol Vol. 2*, p. xiv.

⁵¹⁴ There is no recorded mortality rate between 1738 and 1750 for Liverpool slavers to Jamaica. This is not to say that the percentage was zero, but that there are no records during this period to ascertain the mortality. Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵¹⁵ Schumpeter, "Entrepreneur", p. 248.

⁵¹⁶ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

1739 and concluding in 1748, the War of Jenkins' Ear was the first war Britain entered into in which the fighting was exclusively over colonial issues. As such, a major theatre of war was the Caribbean, with Britain, Spain and France trying to strengthen their colonial connections and vying for control of both their respective empires as well as the ocean highway.⁵¹⁷ This was closely followed by the War of Austrian Succession (1744-1748) and the Seven Years' War (1756-1763), and as was established in the Introduction, the Treaty of Paris concluding the Seven Years' War solidified Britain's control of the North American mainland and established its naval superiority.⁵¹⁸ In 1744, Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers drafted a petition stating that Spanish privateers were becoming so numerous in the Caribbean waters that "our trade is rendered daily more and more precarious".⁵¹⁹ This also coincided with the time that, after Britain declared war on France, convoys were introduced to protect British vessels to Jamaica.⁵²⁰ Accordingly, merchants advised their captains to be extra vigilant in transit, as did the Meyler-Bright partnership when they told Captain John Brown in 1747 to exercise "great care and watchfulness at sea to prevent your being surprised by the enemy".⁵²¹

While British vessels came under attack by privateers, they also engaged in privateering activity. Arguably, Bristol was more active than Liverpool in this regard, and indeed this is posited as a reason for their slipping behind in the trade. During the Seven Years' War in particular, Bristol emerged as the leading mainland port for privateering, claiming eighty-one condemnations as opposed to London's seventy-three and Liverpool's fourteen. Bristol fitted out more privateering vessels and claimed more prizes than any other British outport,

⁵¹⁷ Benjamin, *Atlantic*, p. 491; Starkey, *British Privateering*, pp. 117-118.

⁵¹⁸ Introduction, p. 8.

⁵¹⁹ Petition by the Society of Merchant Venturers, Southwell Papers, Vol. 8, 1741-1744, BRL.

⁵²⁰ Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 184.

⁵²¹ Richard Meyler and Henry Bright to Captain John Brown, Mar 1747, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler Papers*, p. 193.

which was done at a detriment to their trade.⁵²² Indeed, in 1759, Jeremiah Meyler wrote from Kingston to Henry Bright in Bristol that he feared “the great attention to privateering out of your city has much hurted the trade of it, for there is ten times business carried on from Liverpool to this island from your city”.⁵²³ Thus, Liverpool gained a stronghold over Bristol in the Jamaican market, a market in which Bristol’s presence had already been declining, while Bristol was otherwise engaged in privateering. Figure 3.3 in the last chapter also showed that during this time Liverpool voyages were owned by the highest number of investors. This is representative of a key strategy in spreading risk, as Liverpool slave merchants were spreading their investment in the trade at a time of war and uncertainty. In contrast, Bristol merchants, particularly during the lead up to the Seven Years’ War, participated in voyages with the smallest number of investors of the period, indicating that costs and risk were not as spread. This is further indicative of their diminishing human capital in the trade at this time.

Once Liverpool had established dominance in the slave trade, however, by the War of American Independence (1777-1783) its privateering activity increased. This did not serve to hinder their trade, but rather it was an appropriate response to protect it. As the Americans closed their markets to British goods, ports with significant interests in the Atlantic staple trades faced rising pressure. In response to this pressure, David Starkey has noted an increase in national privateering activity, not only in the numbers of commissioned vessels, but also the spatial diversity in the ports that engaged in it.⁵²⁴ Liverpool’s licensed fleet of privateering vessels increased over fifty per cent during the Seven Years’ War. In contrast, Bristol’s fleet declined by fifty commissioned vessels from its previous number between 1756 and 1762, indicating the relative decline of the port in the face of competition from

⁵²² Morgan, *Bristol and the Atlantic Trade*, pp. 18-22.

⁵²³ Jeremiah Meyler to Henry Bright, 29 Sept 1759, in Morgan, *Bright- Meyler*, pp. 358-359.

⁵²⁴ Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 201.

Liverpool.⁵²⁵ Thus, while Liverpool merchants were able to take advantage of Bristol's preoccupation with privateering early in the period and establish a stronger presence in markets, Liverpool merchants also engaged in privateering once established, but in a manner which served to protect its growing and thriving trade. Liverpool merchants were simply better able to adjust to the pressures placed on trade due to war by maximising and capitalising on their opportunities.

While Liverpool merchants were better able to adjust, the impact of the War of American Independence, however, should be recognised as a serious blow to both ports' economies. As Parkinson observes, Britain was "at war with our best customers and the whole inter-dependent trade system of the Atlantic trade threatened to collapse".⁵²⁶ Despite Liverpool's protectionist practice of privateering, Gomer Williams further asserted that the "seven long disastrous years" of the war "put an entire stop to the commercial progress of the port".⁵²⁷ In line with the general commercial decline, both ports' participation in the slave trade also decreased. During the war, Bristol only engaged in twenty-five slaving ventures while Liverpool cleared 213 vessels.⁵²⁸ As noted above, it was also during this time that many Bristol merchants who engaged in both the sugar and slave trades left the slave trade to concentrate on the sugar trade, further contributing to this decrease in slaving ventures. Figure 3.3 in the last chapter, however, noted an increase in Liverpool's pattern of investment, in that average number of owners per voyage was higher than it was in the previous decade and was at its highest point of investment since they achieved dominance in the trade. This is demonstrative of an additional entrepreneurial and protectionist strategy, spreading risk at a time of great commercial uncertainty, and contrasts with Bristol's dip in investment at this time.

⁵²⁵ Liverpool's licensed fleet during the Seven Years' War was 390 vessels. Starkey, *British Privateering*, p. 201.

⁵²⁶ Parkinson, *Rise of the Port*, p. 124.

⁵²⁷ Williams, *History of the Liverpool Privateers*, p. 301.

⁵²⁸ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Liverpool's increasing expertise and their entrepreneurial ability to gain information was not lost on Bristol's slave merchants, as it was during this time that some of Bristol's prominent slaving merchants turned to their more connected, knowledgeable and successful Liverpool counterparts for information and expertise. For instance, in 1760, Isaac Elton wrote to William Earle that he would be glad to be of service to him "and in return shall trouble you for a list of your African ships".⁵²⁹ Likewise, thirteen years later, Henry Bright wrote to Richard Bright, who was visiting the Heywoods in Liverpool, asking for a list of that port's African ships and to write "as usuall from Liverpool with as much news as you can collect or your leisure will permit you to write".⁵³⁰ Lowbridge Bright also wrote to Henry Bright while visiting in Liverpool, mentioning that he had delivered the letters given to him for Mr. Tarleton, the Heywoods and Mr. William James, "the most considerable African merchant in this place".⁵³¹ Lowbridge passed on information regarding the Liverpool merchants' latest and intended voyages and noted that their terms of nine, twelve, and fifteen months to remit bills "are much better than I could get in Bristol", reinforcing the historiographical argument that Liverpool did indeed receive better terms of credit than Bristol merchants.⁵³² Moreover, whilst there, Lowbridge intended to "get a personal acquaintance with the principal people here" so that when he required anything in the future "by being known to them I may negotiate by a letter without being obliged to make a personal application".⁵³³ By becoming acquainted with the "principal people", Bright could extend his network to include more knowledgeable, and thus helpful people, which would facilitate his trade.

Cohen and Prusak argue for a strong link between trust and openness within networks, which in turn facilitates knowledge transfer; such openness is

⁵²⁹ Isaac Elton to William Earle, 3 Mar 1760, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

⁵³⁰ Henry Bright to Richard Bright, 23 Dec 1769, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 428.

⁵³¹ Lowbridge Bright to Henry Bright, 20 Aug 1773, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, pp. 446-447.

⁵³² *Ibid.*, p. 447.

⁵³³ *Ibid.*

another reason why trust serves as a binding property of networks.⁵³⁴ Seen in this way, a trusting relationship developed between some Bristol and Liverpool merchants, such as the Brights and the Heywoods, which broadened their own networks and facilitated knowledge transfer. However, that Bristol merchants were keen to be informed of Liverpool's activity suggests not only that Liverpool merchants were more knowledgeable, as success and knowledge were linked, but that Bristol merchants could not necessarily rely on one another for information. Casson argues that a competitive threat to the entrepreneur "comes from the presence of people seeking to acquire knowledge of opportunities at second hand from the entrepreneur", thereby obtaining a "free ride" from the entrepreneur's judgement. It is thus important to distinguish among "follower-entrepreneurs" from "leader-entrepreneurs".⁵³⁵ Bristol's atomised networks were not as conducive for information transfer as the larger and more connected networks of Liverpool; hence, Bristol merchants needed to become acquainted with the "principal people" in Liverpool. In a sense then, Bristol merchants were at best, "follower entrepreneurs" by seeking the expert, first-hand knowledge of Liverpool merchants. Written during the period between 1760 and 1773, these letters are indicative of the time when Bristol did not have central or bridging merchants in its overall slave merchant community, as well as when Liverpool had secured dominance in the trade.⁵³⁶ It is conceivable, then, that the more atomised Bristol merchants would be more trusting of their Liverpool counterparts based on their success.

While war with the Spanish and French certainly hindered and threatened their trade, the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants also benefited from supplying their markets. With territories in the Americas frequently changing hands, merchants, particularly in the latter half of the century, operated in a trading context that included both sanctioned and illicit options for trade.

⁵³⁴ Cohen and Prusak, *In Good Company*, p. 46.

⁵³⁵ Casson, *Entrepreneur*, p. 43.

⁵³⁶ See Chapter Three, p. 114.

Attempts were made throughout the period to check enterprise connected with illicit trade. For instance, a series of acts of Parliament were passed in the 1760s in the wake of the Seven Years' War which tried to curb smuggling; thus to eradicate the Spanish contraband trade, the Free Port Act of 1766 established trading parameters and ports in Dominica and Jamaica where legalised trade could occur.⁵³⁷ This was then extended until 1780.⁵³⁸ Additionally, an act of Parliament passed in 1775 prohibited trade with the rebellious colonies, resulting in "an extensive illegal trade" with the rebel colonies. Alternative sources of supply for the West Indies were the established free ports and those held by Holland, Spain, France and Denmark.⁵³⁹ While St. Croix-based agent Joseph Rogers confidently asserted "the British Merchant is never at a loss to supply a market", it was the Liverpool merchant that was the most enterprising in this regard.⁵⁴⁰ In terms of supplying the Spanish market, between 1725 and 1807, Bristol engaged in eighteen voyages, with eight going to the Spanish American mainland and the remaining ten divided among Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and Cuba.⁵⁴¹ In contrast, Liverpool's early enterprise in the aforementioned Spanish market helped establish a trading presence, and the port engaged in 126 voyages in the period. Sixteen were dispatched to the Spanish American mainland and the remaining 110 went to Santo Domingo, Puerto Rico and Cuba; 108 vessels alone were sent to Cuba.⁵⁴² In the final two decades of eighteenth century, when Liverpool merchants did not send any vessels to Virginia or South Carolina, Liverpool disembarked fifty vessels at Cuba, indicative of their more diverse and constantly changing market patterns.⁵⁴³

⁵³⁷ Allan Christelow, "Contraband Trade between Jamaica and the Spanish Main and the Free Port Act of 1766", *Hispanic American Historical Review*, 22 (1942), pp. 309-343.

⁵³⁸ Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 456.

⁵³⁹ Richard B. Sheridan, "The Crisis of Slave Subsistence in the British West Indies Before and After the American Revolution", *William and Mary Quarterly*, 33 (1976), pp. 615-644.

⁵⁴⁰ Joseph Rogers to James Rogers, 14 Oct 1782, James Rogers Papers, C107/1, TNA.

⁵⁴¹ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁴² *Ibid.*

⁵⁴³ *Ibid.*

While there is evidence to suggest that Liverpool slave merchants benefitted from supplying the Spanish market, there is also that which suggests that Bristol merchants neglected this market. With regards to the South Sea Company supplying the Spanish market, Tyndall & Assheton wrote to Isaac Hobhouse in a manner relieving him of any fears that the South Sea Company would engross the trade on the African coast, stating that agents "are more inclinable to contract with merchants to comply with their Asiento contract than to purchase negroes on the coast".⁵⁴⁴ Characteristic of Hobhouse's noted neglect, he did not seem concerned with the activities of the Company, because in their next letter, the partnership remarked, "you say nothing of the South Sea Company, whether they set out for Africa" and they advised him that he "should be cautious and inquisitive".⁵⁴⁵ As mentioned above, Tyndall & Assheton additionally relayed to Isaac Hobhouse the Spanish preferences, as well as those of the South Sea Company, for particular slaves, citing that Gold Coast slaves and slaves from Angola were in demand.⁵⁴⁶ They also imparted the knowledge that the demand for slaves, particularly in Cuba, would continue.⁵⁴⁷ Hobhouse, however, only made one voyage to the Gold Coast and he did not supply the Spanish market at all, indicating that yet again he did not heed his agents' advice. In contrast, Liverpudlian Thomas Leyland corresponded with his contacts in Cadiz regarding the slave trade to the Spanish islands and was keen to make an introduction to the Spanish minister in London in order to venture to Havana.⁵⁴⁸ While he was ultimately unsuccessful, it appears he had no qualms in adopting any measure to ensure success. While discussing this opportunity with Moses Benson in London, he advised, "as you can no doubt get an introduction to this gentlemen I recommend an attempt in this business before you leave ...

⁵⁴⁴ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 26 Oct 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁵⁴⁵ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 26 Oct 1729 and Nov 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁵⁴⁶ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 13 Mar 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁵⁴⁷ Tyndall & Assheton to Isaac Hobhouse & Co., 13 Oct 1729, Jefferies Collection, Vol. 13, BRL.

⁵⁴⁸ Thomas Leyland to Eustace, Barron & Co., 21 May 1786, Thomas Leyland Letterbook, LivPRO.

bribery I believe is the sure line in succeeding in it".⁵⁴⁹ Thus, while it appears Bristol merchants were not as interested in pursuing these foreign markets, Liverpool merchants were eager to initiate these opportunities. In contrast to Bristol's merchants' "business caution", noted above, Liverpool slave merchants took risks in their efforts to expand their market opportunities.

Bristol was not as successful as Liverpool in supplying the French market either. Between 1725-1897, Bristol sent a total of thirty-three vessels to Martinique, Guadeloupe, St. Dominique and the other French islands.⁵⁵⁰ In contrast, Liverpool sent 219 to these islands, including thirteen to French Guiana. Liverpool merchants also demonstrated particular initiative in this pursuit. Writing to his brother Clayton in 1790, John Tarleton discussed his

long conversation with W. H. Le Mesurier respecting his scheme for our future adventures to St. Domingo as a joint concern with the house of Havre, which from continuance of the French bounties, and an uncommon demand for Negroes would, I am persuaded turn out a most lucrative one and far superior in every respect to what we can possibly expect in any of the English islands.⁵⁵¹

Tarleton's mercantile network would thus extend to include some French traders, expanding his knowledge of the trade, and increasing his opportunity for profit. Opening up connections with the French and having a less insular business practice could be attributed to his particular entrepreneurial acumen. The parliamentary debates surrounding the proposed abolition of the trade revealed that many British merchants viewed the French as their primary competition. As such, if the British relinquished the trade altogether, France would most certainly prosper.⁵⁵² That Tarleton sought to work in concert with a "rival" demonstrates his commercial and entrepreneurial position.

Again, the timing of this is notable. Two years after this proposal, Clayton wrote to John Tarleton exclaiming that while "everything in the shape of a ship

⁵⁴⁹ Thomas Leyland to Moses Benson, 22 May 1786, Thomas Leyland Letterbook, LivPRO.

⁵⁵⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁵¹ John Tarleton to Clayton Tarleton, 29 Apr 1790, Tarleton Papers, LivPRO.

⁵⁵² Both Bristol and Liverpool merchants' attitudes as they are revealed in parliamentary debates are analysed further in Chapter Six.

that can be come ... is fitting out for Africa" there is still "no certainty in the African trade".⁵⁵³ This statement is reflective of the fact that, even in the context of uncertainty, Liverpool merchants were still keen to engage in and profit from the trade. Not only was the trading milieu one of uncertainty, but the trade in its final decades was operating in a context of war again with the French, with the resulting unrest in the French Caribbean in the early 1790s affecting trading patterns.⁵⁵⁴ Furthermore, the active campaign of the trade's abolition threatened the livelihood of many of the ports' principal merchants. Abolitionist sentiment began to spread earnestly after the War of American Independence, as the states of Rhode Island, Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Delaware and Virginia banned the importation of slaves.⁵⁵⁵ As will be seen further in Chapter Six, the *Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* was established in London in 1787, and one year later the Dolben Bill was passed, regulating the trade and effectively acting as a precursor to the trade's eventual abolition. While there may not have been any certainty, especially at a time when the trade was under attack, both Bristol and Liverpool merchants sought to defend it, with Liverpool merchants taking the most active lead in the opposition to abolition. Case study merchant John Tarleton played an especially prominent role, as he, along with James Penny, Robert Norris, John Matthews and Archibald Dalzell represented Liverpool in Parliament in the fight against abolition.⁵⁵⁶ Perhaps because of its uncertain future, Bristol and Liverpool merchants increased their slave trading activity. In the decade between 1790-1799, Bristol cleared 135 slaving vessels, which was up from ninety-four in the previous decade. In contrast, Liverpool sent 969 in the period between 1790-1799, up dramatically from 558 the previous decade. There was a corresponding change in the pattern of investment as well. As discussed in the last chapter, at the end of the period, the number of investors in Bristol

⁵⁵³ Clayton Tarleton to John Tarleton, 4 May 1792, Tarleton Papers, LivPRO.

⁵⁵⁴ Dale H. Porter, *The Abolition of the Slave Trade in England, 1784-1807* (Hamden, CT: Archon Books, 1970), p. 110.

⁵⁵⁵ Parkinson, *Rise of the Port*, p. 140.

⁵⁵⁶ Porter, *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 40.

voyages increased, along with the number of voyages managed by more than one owner. In contrast, the number of investors in Liverpool voyages decreased. This is in response to both ports' access to social capital, as discussed in the next chapter.

Conclusion

This chapter utilised qualitative sources to examine the trends that were established in the last chapter in the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade. Issues including risk, trust, reputation, knowledge acquisition and transfer, and the importance of human capital were woven into this analysis to demonstrate how the patterns can be explained using these notions from entrepreneurial theory, particularly in regards to both the characteristics and the role of the entrepreneur. Bristol's early patterns along the African coast and in the Americas were based on the patterns established and the connections cemented by the Royal African Company and Bristol's enterprising merchants. By mid-century, however, the human capital in Bristol's slave merchant community decreased, as its leading merchants failed to create dynasties. Likewise, principal merchants who held bridging positions in the Bristol slave merchant community such as Isaac Hobhouse early in the period and then James Rogers later in the period, were ineffective. They failed to heed the advice of their agents in the Americas and were remiss in correspondence, thereby hindering information transfer. Lacking in expertise, the requisite characteristics for entrepreneurial behaviour, as well as having poor managerial skills thus contributed to conservatism in their choice of markets and ultimately frustrated their success in the trade.

In contrast, Liverpool merchants were far more enterprising. Their entry in the trade was facilitated by an "infusion" of new men whose expertise and connections in the Spanish market allowed Liverpool merchants the early opportunity to diversify their markets. It is also demonstrative of the "universal"

nature of Liverpool's merchant community and thus the availability of greater types of capital to its slave merchants. Utilising the human capital of their captains and factors, and effectively communicating through their networks reinforces the notion that Liverpool slave trade ventures were conducted in "coalitions of entrepreneurs" as the entrepreneurial role was shared. Entrepreneurial strategies such as risk-spreading in times of war and privateering after gaining commercial prosperity further ensured their success, and after mid-century, Bristol merchants turned to Liverpool for their superior knowledge and expertise. As argued here, Liverpool merchants had superior human capital in the slave trade; Chapter Five will examine the access to social capital in both merchant communities to see how this further impacted upon their trade.

Chapter Five: The Bristol and Liverpool Slave Merchants in their Urban Setting

The last two chapters focused on the patterns and trends established by the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants in an entrepreneurial context, or their business practice “Inside the Counting House”. This chapter analyses these merchants in their wider urban and social setting, and thus their life “Outside the Counting House”. Chapter Three noted that networks emerge for project-based work and often this formal collaboration stems from pre-existing informal relationships. These informal relationships are based on repeated interactions and exchanges that in turn build trust, reputation and feelings of loyalty.⁵⁵⁷ These relationships also provided access to social capital. As discussed in the Introduction, social capital includes the resources gained through relationships and therefore, social networks have an intrinsic value.⁵⁵⁸ Social capital can be accessed through various sources, as relationships are formed and maintained in different contexts. Accordingly, slave venture investment partnerships were based on trust and reputation in fellow merchants’ business practice, but these relationships were further cemented by the social capital accessed through informal interactions in places such as coffeehouses, drinking and dinner clubs and political associations. Thus, life inside and outside the counting house merged in a merchant’s career and cannot be seen as discrete entities. The urban setting also allows for a greater discussion of the utilisation of social capital, and the degree to which this impacted on the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant networks, and thus their overall success in the trade.

Because networks exist in, and are shaped by, historically-specific contexts, the context of the eighteenth-century urban and commercial world must also be understood. Over the course of the eighteenth century, both Bristol and

⁵⁵⁷ Smith-Doerr and Powell, “Networks”, p. 385.

⁵⁵⁸ See Introduction, p. 34.

Liverpool experienced tremendous growth, with corresponding economic and social changes that are characteristic of the “urban renaissance”. Using the notions of “space” and “place” also provides another way of thinking about how social capital is accessed.⁵⁵⁹ Therefore, in addition to an examination of Bristol and Liverpool’s urban development, the locations of the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants’ homes, businesses, and the social organisations in which they were involved are mapped to demonstrate how physical and social proximity can be used to comment on the creation and maintenance of networks. This in turn can be used to show how this access to social capital contributed to their business practice. These are considered as snapshots in time. For Bristol, the time periods represented are 1775 and 1794, while the periods for Liverpool are 1766 and 1805. The earlier dates were chosen because they correspond with the timing of the first printed directories in both ports; likewise, the later dates were chosen as representative of the latter part of the period while both merchant communities were still sizable. The maps included in this analysis also correspond with these dates; however, it should be noted that although this analysis uses the trade directory of Liverpool from 1805, the map is from 1795. This is done for ease of comparison purposes, as the orientation of the map from the later period does not match that of the 1765 map and thus comparisons would not be readily seen. By examining both ports from two different time periods, comparison is facilitated, as is analysis of change over time. While the last chapter demonstrated how the particular characteristics and roles of the entrepreneurial merchant shaped Bristol and Liverpool’s slave trade, this chapter focuses on the social relationships within the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant community to assess its impact on their trade. Thus, access to social capital and its meaning for Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant networks is interwoven into this analysis as it relates to their respective performances in the trade.

⁵⁵⁹ Miles Ogborn and Charles W. J., Withers *Georgian Geographies: Essays on Space, Place and Landscape in the Eighteenth Century* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), p. 1.

Part One: The Eighteenth Century Urban Renaissance

The Introduction briefly outlined important aspects of the “urban renaissance”, noting the significant population growth that occurred in provincial ports such as Bristol and Liverpool as well as the corresponding developments in commerce, services and industry. These developments in turn fostered notions of civic pride as well as of self-improvement and status attainment. The values of “polite society”, emphasised progress, order and civility, and thus “transformed both the reality and perceptions of urban society, culture and landscapes”, and improvements were made in Bristol and Liverpool in terms of transport, architecture and cultural institutions.⁵⁶⁰ Some of the most notable improvements made during this period include developments in communications infrastructure connected with a growth in inland trade. Bridges, turnpike roads, wider, more uniform streets as well as street lighting and cleaning were built and implemented to both facilitate trade and cater to the increase in traffic.⁵⁶¹ In addition to transport, improvements also took place in the form of public building programs, in which these new buildings were more uniformly constructed in the classical style. By the mid-eighteenth century, towns were largely reconstructed in brick and tile, which contributed to public safety by reducing fire damage. Indeed, Walter Ison attributes the more uniform building of houses in Bristol’s Queen Square, St. James’ Square and Orchard Street in the early part of the eighteenth century as an adaption of the regulations imposed in London in 1667 after the Great Fire.⁵⁶² By the 1720s, both Bristol and Liverpool had “sizable pockets” of such new architecture, and by the middle of the century, both ports also had monumental Exchanges designed by the distinguished Bath architect, John Wood

⁵⁶⁰ Jon Stobart, “Culture versus Commerce: Societies and Spaces for Elites in Eighteenth-Century Liverpool”, *Journal of Historical Geography*, 30 (2004), pp. 471-485.

⁵⁶¹ See Introduction, pp. 14-15.

⁵⁶² Jones and Falkus, “Urban Improvement”, p. 120; Walter Ison, *The Georgian Buildings of Bristol* (London: Faber and Faber Limited, 1952), p. 21.

the Elder.⁵⁶³ These trends in architecture represented the creation of a new “urban aesthetic”, which is also indicative of a growth in an urban or civic consciousness; not only did it indicate the development of a “common language of architecture” whereby buildings began to resemble one another but public buildings such as charity schools and hospitals were also being constructed.⁵⁶⁴ For instance, nearing the end of the eighteenth century in 1795, Bristol had over 300 almshouses and around 960 children in charity schools while Liverpool had 126 almshouses and 300 children in charity schools.⁵⁶⁵ Building works also constituted new social spaces and, importantly, places to access social capital. For merchants in particular, the business conducted in the merchant Exchanges, coffeehouses and taverns were spaces “animated by new activities, encounters and experiences shaped by ... the ideas and practices of polite sociability” that was characteristic of this new urban consciousness.⁵⁶⁶

In conjunction with communications and architectural improvements, the development of a particular urban consciousness meant that the “urban renaissance” was also characterised by personal improvement and status attainment. This is evidenced by the building of charity schools, and of new leisure facilities such as assembly rooms, pleasure gardens and public walks that served to promote personal display and interaction. The development of intellectual pursuits such as philosophical and literary societies as well as libraries and newsrooms also fostered a sense of personal improvement.⁵⁶⁷ Stobart argues that investments in “such cultural capital” not only contributed to the status of the individual, but also shaped the reputation of the town.⁵⁶⁸ These collective issues of status and identity were not only important for merchants, but

⁵⁶³ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 43, 104.

⁵⁶⁴ Borsay, “The English Urban Renaissance: The Development of Provincial Urban Culture c. 1680-c. 1760”, in Borsay, *Eighteenth Century Town*, pp. 159-188.

⁵⁶⁵ Bryan Little, *The City and County of Bristol: A Study in Atlantic Civilisation* (London: Werner Laurie, 1954), p. 175.

⁵⁶⁶ Ogborn and Withers, *Georgian Geographies*, p. 9.

⁵⁶⁷ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, pp. 117-150.

⁵⁶⁸ Stobart, “Culture versus Commerce”, p. 472.

for Bristol and Liverpool as commercial cities particularly because arguments have been made that commercial interests superseded more cultural and polite pursuits. As a city of business, Bristol merchants in the late-seventeenth century were characterised as “very proud, arrogant and pompous” and their commercial culture could not compete with the sophistication, luxury and leisure of Bath.⁵⁶⁹ Indeed, a contemporary noted of Bristol that, “people give themselves to trade so entirely that nothing of the politeness and gaiety of Bath is seen here”.⁵⁷⁰ Similarly, a Liverpool merchant has been notoriously described as a “mercantilist, a materialist, and an empiricist” with an “indiscriminate rage for commerce”, which was perceived to have hampered the cultural development of the port.⁵⁷¹ The creation of charitable and cultural organisations was thus important for the propagation of a more favourable reputation for both ports.

As individuals, Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants constructed their social reputation through, among other things, their residence, participation in these new civic activities, and their material possessions, which demonstrates the link among trade, consumption and urban growth that is typical of the period.⁵⁷² This link is crucial in ascertaining the socio-political structure of Bristol and Liverpool at this time. The Introduction noted that merchants became increasingly involved in politics throughout the period, as they held positions in power to protect their trading interests.⁵⁷³ Merchants in Bristol and Liverpool also held prominent roles in these new socio-cultural institutions, sitting on the boards of charities, subscribing to subscription libraries and joining social drinking clubs. Merchant involvement in these socio-cultural institutions is discussed more specifically for the Bristol and Liverpool merchants below, while their political

⁵⁶⁹ Thomas Garrard, *Edward Colston, the Philanthropist, His Life and Times* (Bristol: J. Chilcott, 1852), p. 307; R. I. James, “Bristol Society in the Eighteenth Century”, in C. M. MacInnes and W. F. Whittard (eds.), *Bristol and its Adjoining Counties* (Bristol: J. W. Arrowsmith Ltd, 1955), pp. 231-243.

⁵⁷⁰ Quoted in McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 99.

⁵⁷¹ S. G. Checkland, “Economic Attitudes in Liverpool, 1793-1807”, *Economic History Review*, 6 (1952), pp. 58-75; W. Matthews, *The New History, Survey and Description of the City and Suburbs of Bristol, or Complete Guide* (Bristol, 1794).

⁵⁷² Joyce M. Ellis, *The Georgian Town, 1680-1840* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p. 34.

⁵⁷³ See Introduction, p. 5.

involvement is analysed in the next chapter. In analysing these links between urban development and the slave trade, Dresser states that the “urban renaissance” coincides precisely with the time Britain’s involvement in the slave trade and slave-produced goods started to flourish.⁵⁷⁴ Thus, notions of commerce and culture were inextricably linked, with Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants playing leading roles in the political, economic and cultural composition of the respective ports. Moreover, the link between trade and urban development reveals that, as members of “polite society”, merchants could be perceived as having a high status based on wealth and behaviour and not necessarily by birth, contributing to the relative fluidity of social standing at this time.⁵⁷⁵

These types of status-attaining behaviours were captured by the *Liverpool Memorandum Book* of 1753 through its instructions regarding how a merchant should organise and schedule his day. On a sample page of “Engagements”, examples included “At the Custom-house” and “At the Insurance Office” in the morning, while sample evening activities included “At St. Nicholas’ Lecture” and “To go with Mr. H to the Concert”.⁵⁷⁶ It was clearly important for merchants to subscribe to several work and non-work related activities in the construction of their reputation. Importantly, these types of activities also constituted opportunities to access social capital, as having numerous and varied opportunities to network contributed to what Putnam et al. refer to as “multistrandedness” of interaction, in turn creating more access to social capital.⁵⁷⁷ Merchant reputation as constructed through their residence and civic participation will be analysed further later in the chapter.

Urban population growth is a well-known feature of the eighteenth century, and the role of migration is cited as the primary contributor.⁵⁷⁸ Bristol and Liverpool’s population growth was discussed in Chapter Two. As noted, at the

⁵⁷⁴ Dresser, “Squares of Distinction”, p. 22.

⁵⁷⁵ Hancock, *Citizens of the World*, p. 280.

⁵⁷⁶ Williamson, *Liverpool Memorandum Book*.

⁵⁷⁷ See Introduction, p. 34.

⁵⁷⁸ Peter Borsay, “Introduction”, in Borsay, *Eighteenth Century Town*, pp. 1-39.

beginning of the eighteenth century, Bristol was the "second city" behind London with around 21,000 inhabitants; by 1800, Bristol's population had risen to around 60,000 and the port was the sixth largest city.⁵⁷⁹ Liverpool's growth, on the other hand, was quite remarkable. With only around 5,500 inhabitants in 1700, by 1800, there were over 80,000.⁵⁸⁰ In-migration significantly contributed to Liverpool's growth. Argued to be one of the most mobile locales studied by historical demographers, eighty per cent of the port's population increase in the late-eighteenth century was due to in-migration.⁵⁸¹ Stobart's synthesis of historiographical debates in this regard demonstrates urbanisation in the late-eighteenth century was linked to the process of industrialisation. Using Liverpool as an example, Stobart demonstrates that urban growth occurred in the north and west of Britain in "previously peripheral" areas to the country's economic and social life.⁵⁸² The in-migration that occurred in Liverpool was thus typical of north-western, industrialising British cities. However, this influx of people also brought human capital to Liverpool's merchant networks that added competitive advantages to their trade, as it was accessed via social capital.

Additionally, other demographic changes also occurred around this time that impacted upon the slave trade. Richardson notes that before 1750, merchants in Bristol mainly came from the city and the surrounding areas and associations by birth, marriage or apprenticeship largely accounted for the means of recruitment into slaving ventures. However, this changed after mid century. Defoe remarked in the 1778 edition of his *Tour* that people from Wales, Scotland, Ireland and America created a "heterogeneous mixture" in the port so much so that "any general characteristics of its inhabitants cannot be given".⁵⁸³ Furthermore, Richardson observes that after 1750, "men of somewhat obscure origins" managed more slaving ventures as associational ties of marriage and

⁵⁷⁹ Wrigley, "Urban Growth", p. 42; Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 49.

⁵⁸⁰ Langton and Laxton, "Parish Registers", p. 75; Wrigley, "Urban Growth", p. 43.

⁵⁸¹ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 2.

⁵⁸² Stobart, "In Search of Causality", p. 149.

⁵⁸³ Defoe, *Tour through the Whole Island*, p. 239.

apprenticeship among agents declined, indicating a lack of human capital in the slave merchant community at this time.⁵⁸⁴ After 1750, more apprenticeships were given through charities and they consequently lost appeal among the status-seeking wealthier classes as a way to enter business. Thus, while charity was seen to enhance the reputation of the town at large, it appears merchants in particular did not view apprenticeship through these means as a favourable career progression.⁵⁸⁵ Additionally, it has been argued that Bristol slave merchants failed to create lasting dynasties in the trade, impacting upon both the human capital available to slave merchants as well as their access to social capital.⁵⁸⁶ Therefore, outsiders coming into the Bristol merchant community, such as James Rogers and James and Thomas Jones who moved from South Wales before the War of American Independence are credited for reviving and sustaining Bristol's waning interest in the slave trade.⁵⁸⁷

A decline in apprenticeship and the failure to create lasting dynasties therefore impeded long-term network development at a time when Liverpool merchants surpassed Bristol as leaders in the slave trade. These demographic changes should not be ignored; as Coleman argues, having access to social capital in one generation can lead to human capital in the next.⁵⁸⁸ As outlined in Chapter Four, the failure of Bristol slave trade merchants to create dynasties would mean that the crucial human capital of these leading merchants would not have been transmitted to the next generation.⁵⁸⁹ Thus, by mid-century, the Bristol slave merchant community had a dearth of both human and social capital. The arrival of "new blood" such as James Rogers later in the period provided a much needed boost in slaving interests and was crucial in building new networks. While this "new blood" reinvigorated Bristol's participation in the slave trade, it

⁵⁸⁴ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 24.

⁵⁸⁵ Jonathan Barry, "Bristol Pride: Civic Identity in Bristol c. 1640-1775", in Dresser and Ollerenshaw, *Making of Modern Bristol*, pp. 25-48.

⁵⁸⁶ See Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 203.

⁵⁸⁷ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 24.

⁵⁸⁸ Coleman, "Social Capital", p. 109.

⁵⁸⁹ See Chapter Four, p. 151.

must be kept in mind that these outsiders did not necessarily bring with them expertise in the trade. As demonstrated in the last chapter, James Rogers was a relatively poor slaving manager.

To a degree, the Liverpool merchant community also experienced such integration. Pope's analysis of the 201 leading slave merchants found that 41.8 per cent were born in Liverpool or the surrounding parishes; thus, over half were from outside Liverpool.⁵⁹⁰ In corroboration, Gauci argues that the proportion of immigrant merchants in Liverpool remained significant throughout the period, which was indicative of a lack of "home grown recruits with capital and connections".⁵⁹¹ Like Bristol, then, the Liverpool merchant community benefited from the arrival and incorporation of human capital in the slave trade from outside areas. Indeed, for the case study merchants in both ports, the majority were not from Bristol or Liverpool. James Rogers came from Wales, while James Laroche was from London; Henry Bright was born in Worcestershire and Isaac Hobhouse hailed from Somerset. For Liverpool merchants, only John Tarleton and Thomas Earle were born in Liverpool. Clearly, "outsiders" could be absorbed into the networks of the existing merchant community and many became prominent and well-established merchants. Integration, particularly that which occurred in Liverpool, provided not only crucial human capital for the development of commerce, but access to social capital as well in the relationships created between "insiders" and "outsiders". This in turn fostered important commercial and civic relationships. Hyde notes that an influx of "outsiders" in the first part of the eighteenth century brought both financial and human capital to boost manufacturing and early industry, including sugar refineries, copper and iron works. These people obviously had established contacts with others outside Liverpool and eventually "created powerful vested interests in both the

⁵⁹⁰ Pope, "Wealth and Social Aspirations", pp. 194-207.

⁵⁹¹ Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, p. 56.

government and economic prosperity of the port”.⁵⁹² The intermingling interest of politics and commercial expansion illustrates the impact of bonding, or negative social capital as outlined in the Introduction and further analysed in the next chapter. Mariner-merchants from surrounding areas also flocked to Liverpool, bringing human capital and helping to build its commercial community, which prompted a contemporary to observe that “no town in England had so many merchants in it who rose from sailors”.⁵⁹³ For the slave trade specifically, it is argued that merchants and captains from Lancaster moved to Liverpool and contributed substantially to its trade.⁵⁹⁴ For instance, Lancaster native, Ambrose Lace, served as a captain in seven voyages from 1755-1768 for prominent Liverpool merchants such as Edward Chaffers, William Boats, and John and William Crosbie. His career spanned until 1785, in which he invested in fifty-five total voyages, contributing significantly to Liverpool’s slaving activity and providing a contrasting example to the performance of James Rogers, an “outsider” to Bristol’s trade.⁵⁹⁵ By contributing to these established networks in Liverpool, not only did “outsiders” bring beneficial human capital, but also access to social capital was created in the commercial relationships that were developed.

Clubs and societies additionally fostered a cosmopolitan spirit and provided access to social capital. *Williamson’s Liverpool Advertiser* in 1793 publicised the Cymrydorion Society, in which its aim was to render “onto the Welsh residents of Liverpool those Christian advantages their situation in society necessarily require”; society trustees included prominent slave merchant and native Liverpoolian Clayton Tarleton while William Gregson was a treasurer.⁵⁹⁶ The Cymrydorion Society is reflective not only of the “urban renaissance” ideal of clubs and associations fostering improvement and civic reputation, but suggests

⁵⁹² Hyde, *Liverpool and the Mersey*, p. 16.

⁵⁹³ Quoted in Arline Wilson, *William Roscoe: Commerce and Culture* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), p. 12.

⁵⁹⁴ Melinda Elder, “The Liverpool Slave Trade, Lancaster and its Environs”, in Richardson, Schwarz and Tibbles, *Liverpool and Transatlantic Slavery*, pp. 118-138.

⁵⁹⁵ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁵⁹⁶ *Williamsons Liverpool Advertiser*, 3 Jan 1793.

the absorption of outsiders into the Liverpool community and the consequent increased access to social capital available to its mercantile community. Highlighting this notion further, the 1805 *Directory* praised the “liberal spirit of its Body Corporate, in holding out terms of invitation to commercial men to settle here instead of devising means to prevent them”.⁵⁹⁷

However, while the *Directory* may have purported that the Liverpool Corporation valued or boasted about the migrant contribution to the port’s commercial prosperity, contemporary opinion suggested Bristol’s Corporation was not as amenable, despite a considerable number of merchants coming from outside the area. While it was claimed that the Society of Merchant Venturers “always act in conjunction with the corporation for promoting the commerce, trade and improvement of the city”, Defoe criticised Bristol’s “Corporation tyranny” for denying economic advancement to non-Bristolians.⁵⁹⁸ Defoe also linked the “tyranny” of the Corporation to the stagnation in Bristol’s population, as “were it not for this, the city of Bristol, would before now, have swell’d and encrease’d in buildings and inhabitants, perhaps to double the magnitude it was formerly of”.⁵⁹⁹ More specifically, arguments have been made that Jews were more unwelcome in Bristol than Liverpool, evidenced by the Society’s petition to Parliament in 1753 for the repeal of the Act of Naturalisation of the Jews.⁶⁰⁰ Likewise, five years previously, the Society also opposed the Bill for the Naturalisation of Foreign Protestants. This further reinforces claims that Bristol’s merchant community had an exclusive focus, and is one such negative effect of bonding, or negative social capital.⁶⁰¹ Both Bristol and Liverpool merchants’ relationship with their corporation, specifically as it relates to commerce is further

⁵⁹⁷ John Gore (ed.), *Liverpool Trade Directory* for 1805 (Liverpool: Printed by J. Gore, 1805).

⁵⁹⁸ Matthews, *New History*; Little, *City and County*, p. 154.

⁵⁹⁹ Defoe, *Tour through the Whole Island*, p. 37.

⁶⁰⁰ David Cesarani, “The Jews of Bristol and Liverpool, 1750-1850: Port Jewish Communities in the Shadow of Slavery”, in David Cesarani and Gemma Romaine (eds.), *Jews and Port Cities, 1590-1900: Commerce, Community and Cosmopolitanism* (Edgware: Mitchell Vallentine and Company, 2005), pp. 141-156.

⁶⁰¹ Walter Minchinton (ed.), *Politics and the Port of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century: The Petitions of the Society of Merchant Venturers, 1698-1803* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1963), p. 78.

developed in Chapter Six. It is important to note here, however, that as demonstrated in Chapter Three, the Liverpool merchant community was much larger than Bristol's, and thus arguably more diverse, granting access to more and varied types of capital to Liverpool merchants.

Part Two: Bristol and Liverpool Slave Merchants in their Urban Environment

Valuable insights into the considerable population growth and the corresponding link between commerce and urban development in Bristol and Liverpool are provided by trade directories, maps, merchant memorandum books and town guides. Penelope Corfield argues that trade directories in particular developed in order to make sense of such growth; for commercial communities, such as Bristol and Liverpool, directories further served as "business handbooks".⁶⁰² *Sketchley's Bristol Directory* in 1775 provided a separate list of 101 principal merchants and bankers, while *Gore's Liverpool Directory* of 1766 offered "An Alphabetical List of the Merchants, Tradesman and Principal Inhabitants".⁶⁰³ Trade directories not only demonstrated both the growth in population as well as of the town itself, but also indicated its status and that of its residents. Consequently, there were social implications for inclusion in a town directory. While roughly twelve per cent of those listed in *Sketchley's Directory* were of the gentry and professional classes, *Gore's Directory* identified just over three per cent as Gentlemen and Esquires. As Corfield has asserted, it cannot be assumed that all "local bigwigs" were correctly identified, especially during a time when ideas of what constituted or defined a "gentleman" were in flux and social status was a more flexible concept.⁶⁰⁴ However, in spite of the relatively low percentage of high-status residents, the fact that Liverpool had a directory before

⁶⁰² Quoted in Penelope Corfield, "'Giving Directions to the Town': The Early Town Directories", *Urban History Yearbook* (1984), pp. 22-34, p. 24.

⁶⁰³ *Sketchley's 1775 Bristol Directory* with an introduction by Bryan Little (Kingsmead reprints, 1975); John Gore (ed.), *Liverpool Trade Directory* for 1766 (Liverpool: Printed by W. Nevett & Co. for J. Gore, 1766).

⁶⁰⁴ Corfield, "'Giving Directions'", p. 26.

Bristol is indicative of its rapid growth both in population and in commercial importance. Langton even goes as far to attribute its early appearance to “demographic narcissism”.⁶⁰⁵ Clearly, Liverpool was proud of its increasing position as one of Britain’s most prosperous ports.

Growth in the commercial profile of cities is traced through various directory editions, which is far more perceptible in Liverpool. In fact, Bristol directories show an actual decrease in entries. *Sketchley’s Directory* in 1775 had around 4,200 entries including the list of 101 separate merchants and bankers. Bristol’s *Directory* in 1794, however, listed around 3,440 entries with 169 recorded as merchants. The fact that there was only an increase of sixty-eight listed merchants supports the claim that the merchant community failed to grow and even dwindled over the course of the eighteenth century. Patrick McGrath argues that the Bristol merchant community did not have any more than 200 merchants (or those categorised as such in directories) at any one time and that membership in the Society of Merchant Venturers actually decreased throughout the period as did attendance at Society meetings.⁶⁰⁶ Significantly, the decline in membership began in the 1740s and 1750s, coinciding with the aforementioned demographic changes and Bristol’s declining activity in the slave trade.⁶⁰⁷ However, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, the Bristol slave merchant community and the connections among them increased towards the end of the period. In fact, the connections among the merchants were the highest in the last decade of the century. It is argued further below that this increase in connections is due to an increase in access to social capital. The argument is additionally supported in the next chapter when it is argued that the increase in the connections among slave merchants also corresponds with Bristol merchants lobbying the Corporation to respond to the decline in commercial activity, pushing

⁶⁰⁵ Langton and Laxton, “Parish Registers”, p. 75.

⁶⁰⁶ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 93.

⁶⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

for further port improvements and defending the slave trade against the proposed abolition.

In contrast to the fluctuations in Bristol's growth, the growth in the Liverpool community demonstrated by the directories is consistent and profound. The 1766 edition of *Gore's Liverpool Directory* listed 1,134 names, 188 of which were merchants. Compiled nine years earlier than *Sketchley's*, Bristol had around four times the entries, yet Liverpool's merchant community was listed as larger. By 1805, the directory listed over 10,000 entries with over 1,000 merchants. To offer a perspective closer in time with Bristol's 1794 *Directory*, the 1790 Liverpool *Directory* included 7,000 names in which 619 were merchants; thus, it is evident that, in contrast to Bristol, both Liverpool's population and merchant class expanded considerably and consistently throughout the period, at least as they were entered into the directories.⁶⁰⁸ The Introduction noted that by mid-century, the term "merchant" denoted a person who engaged in overseas trade. As such, the term was accompanied by a higher ascribed status. Haggerty has therefore concluded that the increase in those listed as "merchant" in Liverpool directories could be attributed to the perceived status that came with having this label.⁶⁰⁹ Thus, it is important to keep in mind the reasoning behind trade directory listings had much to do with a person's perception of their status and how they wanted to be labelled and thought of in the community. These expanding numbers, however, also indicate diversification within the merchant community and the access to both human and social capital available to merchants. Important for the slave trade is thus Williams' observation noted in Chapter Two that "almost every order of people is interested in a Guinea cargo" and that it is "well known that many of the small vessels that import about a hundred slaves are fitted out by attornies, drapers, ropers, grocers, tallow-chandlers, barbers, tailors, etc".⁶¹⁰

⁶⁰⁸ Wilson, *William Roscoe*, p. 12.

⁶⁰⁹ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 75.

⁶¹⁰ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 229.

A growth in population was accompanied by a corresponding increase in the number of streets, squares and alleyways entered in the directories and as shown in the maps and town plans of the period. The production of maps and prospects increased during the period, symbolising a growing public interest in townscapes and further demonstrating “urban renaissance” aesthetic ideals.⁶¹¹ Studies of Bristol and Liverpool have typically used maps to underscore growth. Dresser compares maps and prospects to show Bristol’s transformation from a cross-shaped medieval town into a large, pre-industrial city, with smoking glasshouses dotting the horizon.⁶¹² Likewise, in their study of Liverpool, Ascott et al. use maps to show its growth from a quiet village consisting of eleven medieval streets to a bustling port with numerous docks crowding the harbour later in the eighteenth century. The Bristol maps used in this chapter also reference public buildings, chapels and meeting houses, as well as schools, charities and almshouses that are reflective of the notions of civic values. Civic values were propagated to improve the reputation of the town, which was particularly important in commercial centres where it was thought commerce took precedence over other concerns. Despite some observations that Bristolians were arrogant and pompous, Jonathan Barry has argued that in Bristol, civic values and activities were seen as crucial elements to social and individual welfare; as a trading city, charity was very important, because it could demonstrate that wealth was honourably spent.⁶¹³ The most prestigious monetary donations were those which went towards education and employment, or those that trained “the poor into the ways of virtue and industry”.⁶¹⁴ Many charities, including Colston’s Hospital, Queen Elizabeth’s Hospital and the Merchant’s Hospital were under the direction of the Society of Merchant Venturers and many council members served

⁶¹¹ Borsay, *English Urban Renaissance*, p. 85.

⁶¹² Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 102.

⁶¹³ Barry, “Bristol Pride”, p. 33.

⁶¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

as trustees, reinforcing the notion of status in being involved in such pursuits.⁶¹⁵ So, just as the later directories praised its merchants for their “liberal and extensive benevolence” who “are generous” and “live well”, Bristol cartographers may have also been trying to indicate this by including such buildings on the map.⁶¹⁶ This in turn, could have also contributed to its reputation as a “City of Churches and Charities” and may have been an especially important exercise when Bristol’s negative comparisons to Bath are considered as well.⁶¹⁷

While the Liverpool maps also label buildings characteristic of “urban renaissance” ideals, besides the Exchange, these buildings are not as obviously differentiated. This is not to argue that Liverpool was not as civically minded; indeed, arguments have been made to support Liverpool’s cultural importance. Moss’s *Liverpool Guide* of 1797 certainly highlighted charities, public concerts and the theatre in its description of the port, while newspapers listed many merchants as leading contributors and trustees of charities and charitable institutions. Moss also noted that to work for a charity and to sit on its board was a sign of status and success. In contrast with many of the Bristol charities, Liverpool charities were largely established by private initiative, such as the Blue Coat School set up by Bryan Blundell in 1708 and the Blind Asylum for which Matthew Gregson is largely credited for rousing public interest and funds.⁶¹⁸ So, while not necessarily referenced on maps, the information was communicated through other means. Cartographers may have chosen to highlight the Exchange and the docks instead of other civic pursuits to show pride in the port’s commercial success, which is perhaps also reflective of this notion of “demographic narcissism”.

It is important to note that both Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants engaged in these activities which demonstrated their benevolence and

⁶¹⁵ *An Account of the Hospitals, Alms-houses and Public Schools in Bristol* (Bristol: printed by H. Farley for T. Mills, 1775). Available at Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, University of Nottingham, accessed 1/1/10.

⁶¹⁶ Matthews, *New History*, p. 37.

⁶¹⁷ James, “Bristol Society”, p. 293.

⁶¹⁸ Moss, *Georgian Liverpool*, pp. 118, 120.

charity; they did not necessarily see these activities at odds with their involvement in the slave trade. Arguments, however, have been made that some slave trade merchants tried to distance themselves from their involvement towards the end of the period before abolition. Dresser notes that merchants such as Henry Bright increasingly preferred to identify their trading interests as American and West Indian rather than African. For Bright, however, this could be just as much due to the fact that his interest in the sugar trade outlasted that in the slave trade than it was to any ideological misgivings.⁶¹⁹ Interestingly, John Powell is the only person listed as a "Guinea merchant" in the Bristol 1775 *Directory*. Therefore, it stands to argue that he, by participating in fifty-one voyages between 1755 and 1790, was one of the port's relative specialists in the trade and chose to be identified as such.⁶²⁰ This conforms to the notion Haggerty observed that merchants increasingly moved towards listing themselves with a particular commodity towards the end of the period, indicating a greater degree of specialisation.⁶²¹ Additionally, "Dicky Sam's" account of Liverpool speaks disparagingly about the slave trade but he tried to contextualise Liverpool's involvement in it by claiming slavery was supported by the Bible.⁶²² His account is dedicated to leading Liverpool abolitionists including William Roscoe, who, along with William Rathbone, James Currie, Reverend William Shepherd, Edward Rushton and John Yates were radical non-conformists who often championed opposing ideological, religious and political positions to those of the Liverpool Corporation.⁶²³ Roscoe, a prominent banker and businessman, was also a botanist, artist, historian and poet and is credited for promoting the cultural life of Liverpool in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.⁶²⁴ As discussed in the next chapter, however, Roscoe's position, and that of his circle of allies,

⁶¹⁹ Dresser, "Squares of Distinction", p. 24.

⁶²⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁶²¹ Haggerty, *British-Atlantic Trading Community*, p. 76.

⁶²² "Dicky Sam", *Liverpool and Slavery*, pp. 13-14.

⁶²³ Stobart, "Culture versus Commerce", p. 479.

⁶²⁴ Arline Wilson, "The Cultural Identity of Liverpool, 1790-1850: The Early Learned Societies", *Transactions of the Historic Society Lancashire and Cheshire*, 147 (1998), pp. 55-80.

against the slave trade was not taken up by the Liverpool merchant community at large during the campaign for the abolition of the slave trade. Thus, while Roscoe was important in the cultural life of Liverpool, his political opinions regarding the slave trade were not as influential in the port.

Charitable organisations, theatres, libraries and coffeehouses that were increasingly featured in directories and maps throughout the period demonstrate the importance of these new social spaces of the "urban renaissance". These spaces became increasingly important for merchants to frequent in the construction of their civic reputation, and in turn provided access to social capital. Coffeehouses in particular underscore the link between commerce and culture. As argued by Brian Cowan, they represent the "primary site for newer, more public, more commercialised and urbanised modes of virtuoso sociability".⁶²⁵ While there were not as many in the provincial cities as there were in London, the coffeehouses that arose in the ports became key meeting places where merchants and gentlemen accessed social capital, by meeting and discussing the affairs of the day as well as exchanging information and gaining access to capital and credit. As a source of display, information and exchange, coffeehouses also catered to notions of improvement and were not just practical business spaces. Cowan argues that a particular "coffeehouse culture" arose by the 1720s, precisely the time Borsay argues that new building projects were developed in Bristol and Liverpool.⁶²⁶ Coffeehouses may have constituted new urban spaces which catered to the growing urban and commercial sensibility, but they were based on "similar templates" of inns and alehouses already established.⁶²⁷ Bristol in particular had over 850 inns and alehouses in the short period between 1752-1764, or about one for every fifty inhabitants.⁶²⁸ Large concentrations were found in certain streets close to the harbour, such as the Quay and Back, and

⁶²⁵ Cowan, *Social Life of Coffee*, p. 112.

⁶²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 4.

⁶²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 79.

⁶²⁸ Patrick McGrath and Mary E. Williams (eds.), *Bristol Inns and Alehouses in Mid-Eighteenth Century* (Bristol, 1979), p. vi.

were good locations for merchants and sailors to meet and exchange information.⁶²⁹ Names of some of these public houses such as the Blackboy and Blackmoors indicate the influence of the African trade and justify the argument that coffeehouses developed which catered for certain trades.⁶³⁰ In this way, business also became socialised.⁶³¹ Dresser argues that Bristol slave merchants tended to meet more in coffeehouses rather than the Exchange to conduct business, while Liverpool social clubs which had a large mercantile membership such as the Ugly Face Club similarly held their meetings in coffeehouses.⁶³² For instance, the Ugly Face Club met at Exchange Coffee House while the Unanimous Society met at the Cross Keys. Liverpool newspapers also frequently featured advertisements by coffeehouse owners for "Gentlemen, Tradesmen and others" to patronise, while auctions and applications to ships' cargoes were advertised to take place at the Merchant's Coffeehouse and the Exchange during the "usual business hours".⁶³³ Thus, at the heart of the Bristol and Liverpool mercantile sector and serving the function of information flow, coffeehouses were ideal locations to access social capital, and build and maintain important commercial networks.

Part Three: The Bristol and Liverpool Slave Merchant Communities Mapped

A comparative analysis of the Bristol slave merchant community in its particular urban context in 1775 and 1794 and that of Liverpool in 1766 and 1805 further demonstrates the link between commerce, urban development and access to social capital. The merchants' homes and businesses were mapped by cross referencing the trade directories with the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database. Likewise, the database was cross-referenced with social and political club

⁶²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. vii.

⁶³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. xi.

⁶³¹ Cowan, *Social Life of Coffee*, p. 169.

⁶³² Madge Dresser, *Slave Trade Trail Around Bristol* (Bristol: Bristol Museums and Art Gallery, 1998); Edward Howell, *Ye Ugly Face Clubb: Leverpoole, 1743-1753* (Liverpool, 1912), p. 30.

⁶³³ *Liverpool Williamsons' Advertiser*, 1756.

membership lists to ascertain which slave trade investors were members. By noting the physical proximity of the merchants' homes as well as their socio-political associations, comments can be made on the particular impact of this access to social capital on both ports' success in the trade.

Figure 5.1 analyses the residential and social space of Bristol based on *Sketchley's Directory of 1775*. *Sketchley's Bristol Directory* in 1775 had around 4,200 entries and included a list of 101 separate merchants. Of these entries, seventy-three invested in the slave trade.⁶³⁴ Thus, in contrast with the point made above in regards to Liverpool merchants, a smaller number than those listed as merchants in Bristol invested in the trade.⁶³⁵ These seventy-three investors lived among forty-two different streets, and only five separate offices were listed. The fact that there were only five separate offices listed at this time is somewhat surprising. This is because in the first part of the eighteenth century, "houses were for trade first and dwelling afterwards" and the notion of merchants moving away from the commercial centres into the countryside for instance, and keeping separate offices in the centre developed later in the century.⁶³⁶ This separation from narrow cobbled streets, from the "numerous street stalls and markets for food and animals, the slaughter-houses and the awful by-products of such places as tanneries and dye-works" was thus another product of the "urban renaissance".⁶³⁷ While the "urban renaissance" ideal of separate residences and offices is not confirmed, Figure 5.1 indicates that concentrations of investors lived in the fashionable Queen Square and on Orchard Street. Seven investors resided in each of these locations, making up about twenty per cent of the slave investors at this time. Queen Square residents included John Anderson and Henry Bright, while it was also home to a West

⁶³⁴ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁶³⁵ It is important, however, to refer back to Corfield's argument for inclusion in the directories. In cross-referencing the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database with the directories for both Bristol and Liverpool, many participants in the trade were not listed in the directory.

⁶³⁶ James, "Bristol Society", p. 232.

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*

Indian merchant as well as a tobacco firm; thus it was a popular spot for those involved in the “Americanisation” of Bristol’s trade.⁶³⁸ Throughout the period, other prominent slave merchants also inhabited the Square, including case study merchants Isaac Hobhouse and James Laroche, as well as Thomas Freke, John Becher and John Day, indicating that it was indeed a high status place to live.⁶³⁹ Its proximity to the docks, as well the Customs House (centrally located in the northern part of the Square), Merchants Hall (on King Street parallel to the Square) and the Back and Quay where numerous alehouses and coffeehouses were located further demonstrate that Queen Square was situated as such to facilitate multiple interactions that would foster network connections and increase access to social capital.⁶⁴⁰ Orchard Street, home to James Rogers, was constructed around 1716 and is argued to be architecturally “a perfect example of the period”.⁶⁴¹ Its location slightly to the west of Queen Square also signifies that its residents would have had the same access to key points of interaction as the residents of the Square. Other popular places for slave investors to live included High Street, Stokes Croft and Cumberland Street, the latter two of which were much further north than the popular Queen Square and Orchard Street.

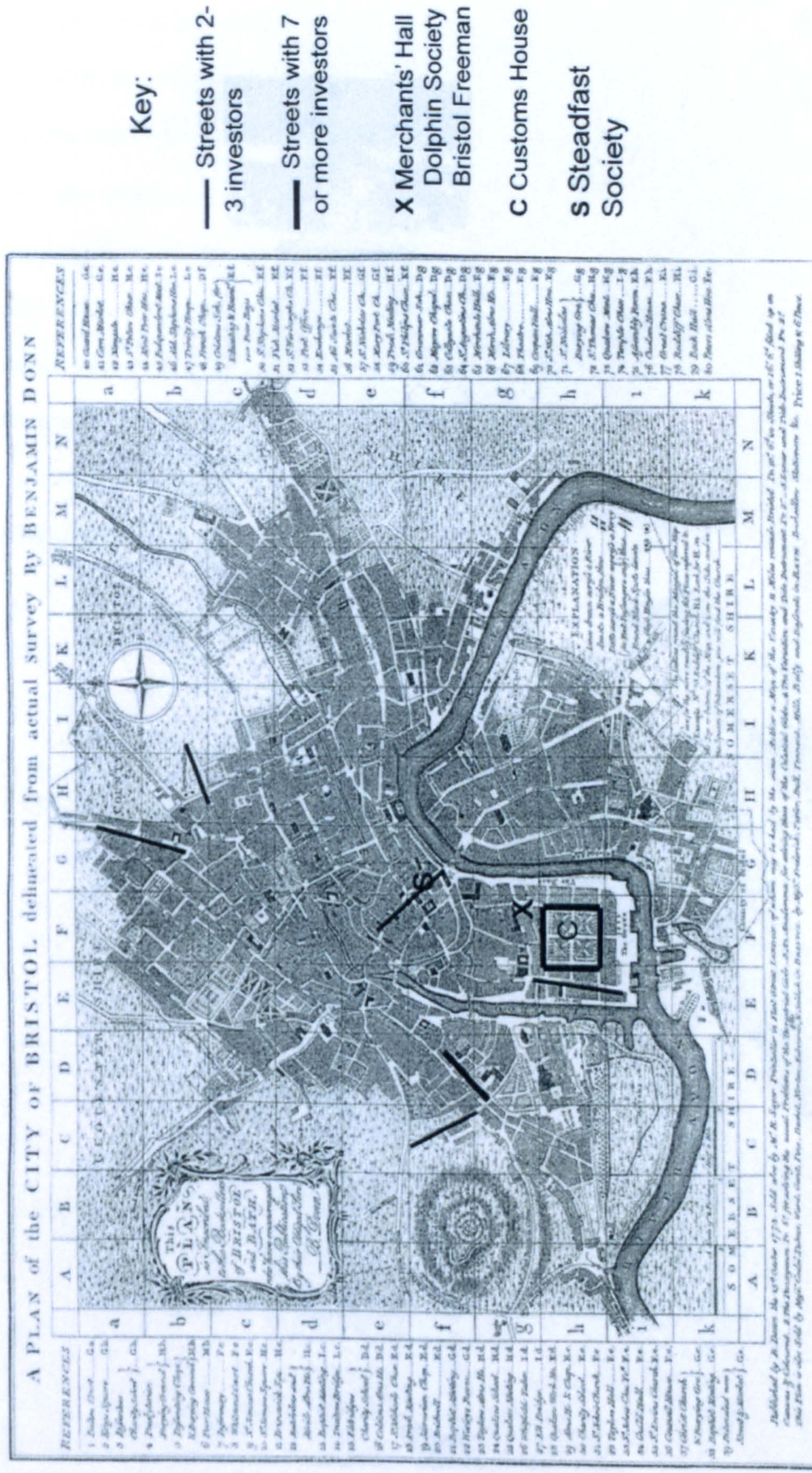
⁶³⁸ *Sketchleys Bristol Directory*; Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 106. Construction of Queen Square, located in an area formally known as the Marsh, began in 1702 after a proposal was brought to the Common Council in 1699 for such an enterprise. Named in commemoration of Queen Anne, it was finished in 1727. Ison, *Georgian Buildings*, pp. 140, 144.

⁶³⁹ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 110.

⁶⁴⁰ Ison, *Georgian Buildings*, pp. 146-148.

⁶⁴¹ James, “Bristol Society”, p. 236.

Figure 5.1: Benjamin Donn's 'A Plan of the City of Bristol', 1773. Slave investor residences⁶⁴²



Source: Non-archival plans/10, BRO.

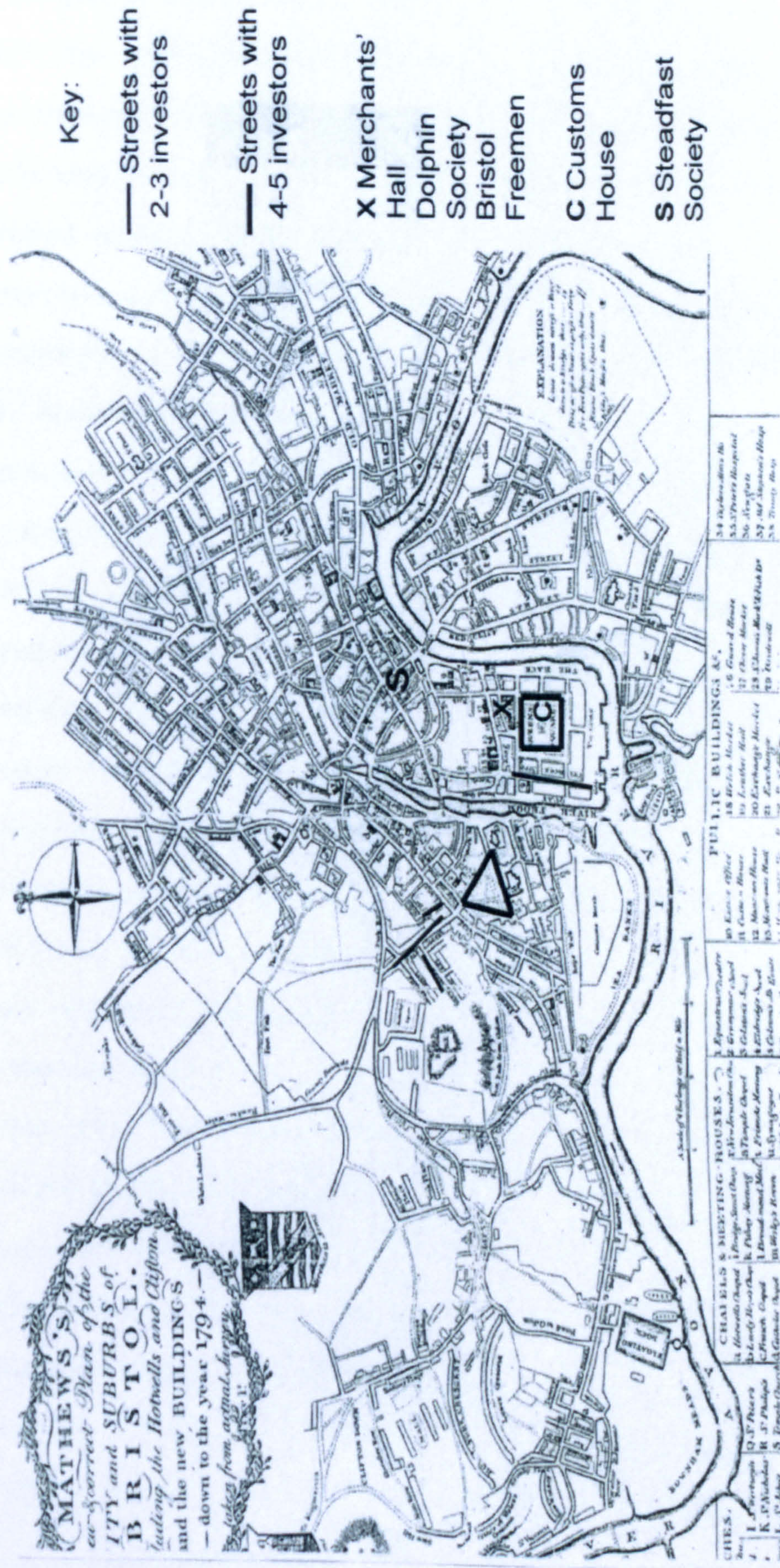
⁶⁴² Printed with permission from the BRO. Non-archival plans/10.

This notion of merchant residential space, however, becomes more meaningful in a comparative context over time. The map from Bristol in 1794 demonstrates growth, particularly towards the north and west of the city as well as in the increase of streets, alleys and squares in the city proper. As McGrath notes, the westward expansion towards Clifton and Hotwells would have been looked upon favourably by the Society of Merchant Venturers due to the potential for land development.⁶⁴³ Indeed, a Bristol newspaper in 1790 boasted that “the increase of buildings on the western side of Bristol and at the Hotwells and Clifton is so great that there is reason to expect a junction of these in a few years”; if this were to be the case, Bristol would become “one of the largest, as it will confessdly be one of the pleasantest cities in Europe”.⁶⁴⁴

⁶⁴³ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 91.

⁶⁴⁴ *Bristol Mercury and Universal Advertiser*, 1 Mar 1790.

Figure 5.2: Matthews's Plan of the City and Suburbs of Bristol, 1794. Slave investor residences⁶⁴⁵



Source: Matthews, *New History*.

⁶⁴⁵ Adopted from Matthews, *New History*.

While Bristol experienced growth and development, the trade directory indicated the growth in its merchant community did not follow suit; in fact, it stagnated. The 1794 *Directory* had around 3,440 entries with 169 listed merchants. Of those listed, just forty-six invested in the slave trade.⁶⁴⁶ It is important to keep in mind that this period coincides with the time when Bristol slave merchant networks were larger and more investors participated in more voyages than in any period previously. Thus, while there were twenty-seven less listed investors than in 1775, they worked in conjunction with one another more frequently. Arguments for this are made later in the chapter when the impact of social capital is discussed. These forty-six investors lived among twenty-seven streets, a smaller number than in the previous period. Again, five offices were listed while only two investors listed a separate home and office address. As in 1775, a popular place to reside was Queen Square, with four investors living there. However, College Green, just west of the Square was the most popular residence with five investors. Prince's Street, Great George Street, and Park Street, were three other popular areas of residence, and as the map indicates, were all in close proximity to one another. Merchant Venturers Hall was located on Prince's Street, which "ensured the street's commercial tone" and most of the warehouses, residential homes and public buildings were directly or indirectly related to the slave trade.⁶⁴⁷

Unlike 1775, then, most of the investors lived close together, granting them more potential for interaction and access to social capital. The implications of this access are discussed further when compared to Liverpool. Because the time period between 1775 and 1794 only spans nineteen years, it is of no surprise that some of the investors in the earlier directory would also be found in the later edition. In fact, of the forty-six investors in this period, fifteen had also been included in the 1775 *Directory*. However, of this fifteen, ten investors moved

⁶⁴⁶ Eltis, et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁶⁴⁷ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 103.

residence. Often, this move was from one place of status and prime location to another. For instance, James McTaggart moved from Orchard Street to College Green, while James Harvey moved from Cumberland Street to Park Street. Moving within high status and advantageously-located areas of the city, as opposed to moving out of the city entirely, would allow these merchants to stay “in the loop” as well as build new contacts.

The patterns in Liverpool were markedly different. “Dicky Sam” described John Eyes’ Plan of Liverpool, and thus Liverpool at this time, as consisting of “thirty-six principal streets, which, for the most part were very narrow, crooked and badly paved”.⁶⁴⁸ He commented that the houses “were small, the ceilings low, the rooms ill-arranged” and like Bristol, “the merchant’s office and house were on the same premises”.⁶⁴⁹ Likewise, in his description of the principal streets in Liverpool between 1775 and 1799, Brooke noted “the streets, squares and places at present almost entirely occupied by shops, warehouses, manufactories, counting-houses or taverns, in the heart of the town, and in some instances, in what would now be considered most disagreeable situations for residences”.⁶⁵⁰ The impression is given, that, as in Bristol, although “urban renaissance” notions encouraged improvement and moving away from the city-centre, up-scale and fashionable residential areas in Bristol and Liverpool were still dominated by commercial concerns. *Gore’s Liverpool Directory* of 1766 had 1,134 entries and 188 people were listed as “Merchants”; however, the number of investors in slave trade voyages was actually 234, indicative of the diversity of investors in Liverpool’s slave trade.⁶⁵¹ As the Liverpool slave merchant community was much larger than that of Bristol, it is not surprising that the number of investors is larger. However, that the number of investors is greater than the number of listed merchants lends itself to an important comparison with Bristol.

⁶⁴⁸ “Dicky Sam”, *Liverpool and Slavery*, p. 2.

⁶⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

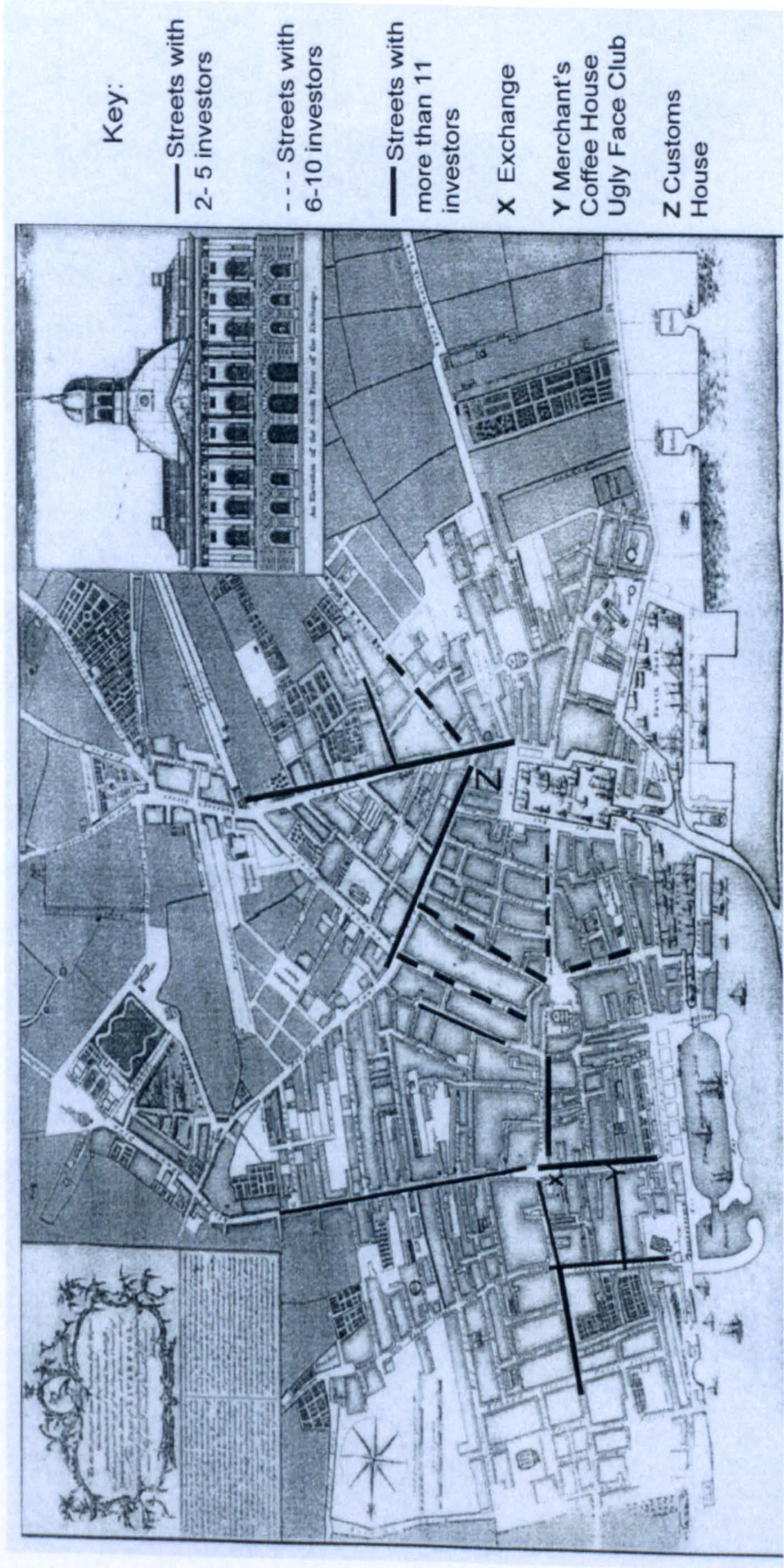
⁶⁵⁰ Brooke, *Liverpool as it was*, p. 464.

⁶⁵¹ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

The types of investors were more diverse and included gentlemen, ships' captains and coffeehouse owners. Cowan refers to the "social cachet" of a coffeehouse keeper because ties could be created with men of wealth and power who patronised his establishment. For slave merchants, the owners of coffeehouses they patronised constituted a source of social capital, as merchants often conducted business, as well as met socially, in coffeehouses.⁶⁵² Having a greater diversity in the types of investors in Liverpool slaving ventures, such as a coffeehouse owner or ships' captain, typifies the assertion noted in Chapters Two and Four that Liverpool traders were "Universal Merchants".

⁶⁵² Cowan, *Social Life of Coffee*, p. 164.

Figure 5.3: John Eyes' Plan of Liverpool, 1765. Slave investor residences⁶⁵³



Source: John Eyes' Plan of Liverpool, 1765, LivPRO (scale not available).

⁶⁵³ Printed with permission by the LivPRO.

While "Dicky Sam" commented that the principal streets numbered thirty-six, the 234 investors resided among sixty-five streets. The greatest concentrations were found on Paradise and Hanover Street, both centrally located, as well as Castle and Water Streets, located near the Exchange. Hanover Street had the most number of investors living there, with sixteen, and included merchants such as Arthur and Benjamin Heywood. Hanover and Paradise Streets, as well as Redcross Street and Pool Lane (together with fifteen investors residing there) were also near the Old Dock, which specifically dealt with ships engaged in the African trade.⁶⁵⁴ Merchant's Coffeehouse, located on Water Street, was a popular meeting spot and, thus, like Bristol, the highest concentrations of investor residences were in logical places to facilitate both business and social interaction and thus access to social capital. These streets also had a number of other prominent merchants and bankers residing on them. Brooke noted Castle and Water streets were home to James Gildart, Virginia merchant and mayor in 1750, John Parr, Jonathan Blackburne, Jonathan Blundell and Thomas Parke; Hanover and Paradise streets also housed Nicholas Ashton, a major salt exporter to America, Joseph Brooks, and the bankers Charles Caldwell and Thomas Smythe among others.⁶⁵⁵ Prominent slave traders lived in close proximity to merchants engaged in other trades and would have had opportunity to network and exchange information with those with wide commercial knowledge. It is also the case that other prominent merchants were members of the social and political clubs, further granting opportunities to network. Their access to social capital granted through residence and club participation is discussed further below.

⁶⁵⁴ Parkinson, *Rise of the Port*, p. 102.

⁶⁵⁵ Brooke, *Liverpool as it was*, pp. 464, 465, 472, 473.

Figure 5.4: Plan of Liverpool, 1795. Slave investor residences⁶⁵⁶



Source: Plan of Liverpool, 1795, LivPRO.

⁶⁵⁶ Printed with permission from the LivPRO.

Like Bristol in 1794, the most striking feature of the Liverpool map in 1795 is the marked growth in urban development, as the periphery has been extended to include substantially more roads and buildings. Growth, however, as it is discussed in the directories is still described in commercial terms and does not necessarily reference the push towards the suburbs. Indeed, the 1794 *Directory* remarked that "this town has so much increased in trade since the commencement of the present century".⁶⁵⁷ However, the 1807 *Directory* revealed that "the commerce of Liverpool has grown too large for some of the Public Buildings ... and although the tobacco warehouse is of a size truly astonishing, it is yet found at times too small".⁶⁵⁸ As will be seen in the next chapter, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, whose first recorded meeting was in 1784, often pushed for more space for both docks and warehouses, indicating the growth in trade necessitated more and improved facilities.⁶⁵⁹

The 1805 *Directory* had over 10,000 entries, of which 1,005 were "Merchants". Of this number, 331 were investors in the slave trade.⁶⁶⁰ This again conforms to the rapid and substantial growth in population as well as the size of the slave merchant community as established in Chapter Three. Unlike what was found in the pattern of residence for the Bristol merchants, this pattern later in the period is noticeably different than that observed earlier. Locations of the investor residences were far more spread out, as there were just over 150 different streets that these 331 slave investors lived on; in fact, many streets are not shown on the map and in some instances only one investor lived on a particular street. This is in marked contrast with the Bristol investors in 1794 that were located among just twenty-seven streets. Also contrary to the Liverpool patterns observed in 1766, larger concentrations of investor residences were found in the north eastern section of the city, outside of the city centre and away

⁶⁵⁷ John Gore (ed.), *Liverpool Trade Directory* for 1794 (Liverpool, 1794).

⁶⁵⁸ Gore, *Liverpool Trade Directory* for 1805.

⁶⁵⁹ Records of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, MMM.

⁶⁶⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

from the Exchange. Some merchant residences were located off this map as well, with three living in West Derby and eleven in Everton, conforming to the “urban renaissance” ideal of moving to estates in the “country”. A useful comparison can also be made with Bristol in terms of having separate addresses, one for their residence and one for their counting house. By percentage, almost seven per cent of Bristol investors in 1775 had separate addresses; while numerically, the number of separate addresses was larger (thirteen) in Liverpool in 1766, it only accounted for five per cent. However, in 1794, ten per cent of Bristol investors listed separate addresses, but this figure jumped to twenty-five per cent for Liverpool investors in 1805. Thus, while more Bristol investors conformed to the “urban renaissance” notion of separate home and work addresses earlier in the period, Liverpool investors did so in much greater proportions later on. Additionally, a significant spatial difference between the location of residence and business was found in Liverpool. As already demonstrated, merchant residences in 1805 were largely concentrated in the north east and outside the city centre itself. In contrast, the merchant counting houses were more centrally located as well as around the docks, which resemble the pattern of residences in 1766. Like popular Bristol residences locations, this was also a logical pattern as the location of a counting house was integral for business—if it were near the Exchange or popular coffeehouses, a merchant would be in a better position to access social capital and obtain clients, through daily interaction, thus building and maintaining his network.

Although the maps only showed the locations of investors’ residences, this coupled with the location of their businesses were important avenues for accessing social capital, of which a few considerations can be made here. As discussed in the Introduction, social capital is built through a redundancy of contact, meaning multiple interactions, or “multistrandedness”.⁶⁶¹ A well-connected individual in a well-connected society is more likely to derive the

⁶⁶¹ See Introduction, p. 34.

benefits social networks can provide. Because connectivity is crucial in both creating this contact and solidifying networks, access to social capital is greater in smaller settings and is in effect hampered by urban sprawl.⁶⁶² A loss of connectivity due to urban sprawl is reinforced by Bristol merchant John Sergeant declining the offer to stand as a representative for the African Company of Bristol, stating that "my residence in the country rendering it impossible for me to discharge the duties of that office".⁶⁶³ By moving away from the city proper, Sergeant would not be in a position to physically fulfil the role as representative, nor would he be in a position to maintain important commercial and social relationships that occur in closer proximity. Smaller settings allow for the creation of relationships, as they provide "easier footholds for initial steps".⁶⁶⁴ Yet they also provide the opportunity to build and rebuild social capital over time, as it is an accumulative process.⁶⁶⁵

As demonstrated, popular residential areas for Bristol investors throughout the period remained centrally located, such as Queen Square. In contrast, many Liverpool investors moved away from the city centre or out of the city entirely. Located within a smaller radius, Bristol investors were thus in a better position later in the period to maintain this needed redundancy of contact and were not as affected by urban sprawl as the Liverpool investors. Because Bristol slave merchants had greater connectivity through their physical proximity, it could be argued that they built, or rather, re-built their access to social capital later in the period, as also evidenced by their greater connectivity in slave venture investment groups by the 1790s. This better accessing of social capital was of paramount interest because the demographic changes noted above indicate that Bristol investors in effect lost a significant amount of social capital when

⁶⁶² Putnam, *Bowling Alone*, pp. 275, 272.

⁶⁶³ John Sergeant to Master of Merchants Hall and Members of the African Committee of the City of Bristol, 17 Jun 1778, SMV 7/2/1/14, BRO.

⁶⁶⁴ Putnam et al., *Better Together*, p. 275.

⁶⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 286.

recruitment into slaving ventures through apprenticeship ties declined and in the absence of established family dynasties.

Access to social capital, however, was most certainly not limited to an investor's address. Participation in civic and social organisations would have greatly contributed to the multistrandedness and redundancy in contact needed to build and maintain network relationships. It is argued that network relationships are most obviously formalised through membership in associations and clubs; likewise, these associations can be seen as foci around which individuals organise their social lives and create their social context.⁶⁶⁶ People can arguably have multiple foci and thus numerous opportunities to network. For merchant investors at this time, their social network and the activities they participated in would not only have benefitted their business practice, but contributed towards their status as well.⁶⁶⁷

As mentioned above, both Bristol and Liverpool merchants were members of many charitable organisations and institutions as part of an "urban renaissance" civic ideal. Membership in social and political clubs as well as in cultural institutions also helped foster a civic reputation and would have worked to maintain social networks. It is further argued that social capital accessed within this group setting also has an evolutionary nature; clubs can become more exclusionary over time, affecting access to social capital as it changes from bridging to bonding.⁶⁶⁸ Indeed, a rule of the Steadfast Society in Bristol stated that "no stranger be admitted" while the Ugly Face Club in Liverpool did not allow apprentices, indicative of an exclusionary policy but also with implications of limited access to social capital for the merchant community at large.⁶⁶⁹ Thus, when analysing the impact of social capital on the Bristol and Liverpool slave

⁶⁶⁶ Mark Casson, "An Economic Approach to Regional Business Networks", in Wilson and Popp, *Industrial Clusters*, pp. 19-44; Feld, "Focused Organization", p. 1016.

⁶⁶⁷ Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 32.

⁶⁶⁸ Casson, "Economic Approach", p. 28.

⁶⁶⁹ Steadfast Society *Book of Rules, Orders and Proceedings, 1737-1802*, BRO; 367 ULG Ugly Face Club, LivPRO.

merchants, Casson's caution is important to keep in mind. That is, the *type* of networking that occurs is more important than whether it occurs at all. Social capital can indeed be negative, and bonding and bridging capital can serve both positive and negative purposes.⁶⁷⁰

Social capital was accessed within this urban setting, as political office and membership in social clubs or cultural societies represented opportunities for merchants to meet, enter into business partnerships, and share commercial knowledge. Bristol's elite Society of Merchant Venturers had 367 merchants admitted between 1701 and 1799 and provided a powerful commercial lobby to local MPs on political and economic issues.⁶⁷¹ Membership in the Society of Merchant Venturers was attained either by apprenticeship, by birth or by fine. Of the 367 new members between 1700 and 1801, 210 obtained membership through apprenticeship, while seventy-five and eighty-two achieved it through birth and by fine respectively.⁶⁷² Minchinton notes that entry by fine in particular helped the Society of Merchant Venturers bring "new blood" into the merchant community without hampering the close-knit structure of its merchant members. This is in contrast with Defoe's observation noted above that Bristol's Corporation denied the inclusion of "outsiders". In the Society, however, many Huguenots and their descendents entered the Society, including James Laroche, while members also included fathers, sons, brothers and those connected by marriage.⁶⁷³ For instance, thirteen members of the Elton family were members of the Society while seven of them were masters of it in the first three quarters of the century.⁶⁷⁴

All six Bristol case study merchants were members of the Society of Merchant Venturers. Michael Becher was the only member admitted by way of

⁶⁷⁰ Casson, "Economic Approach", p. 23.

⁶⁷¹ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 102.

⁶⁷² Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. xii.

⁶⁷³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷⁴ *Ibid.* Jacob Elton participated in three slaving ventures in 1711, 1713 and 1715. Abraham Elton Jr also participated in three voyages, two in 1713 and one in 1717 while Isaac Elton participated in a voyage in 1718 and 1720.

apprenticeship in 1736, while Isaac Hobhouse, Henry Bright, James Laroche, John Fowler and James Rogers each paid a fine. The amount of the fines differed according to changes in policy throughout the century. Bright and Hobhouse each paid £50 when they became members in 1717 and 1724 respectively, while Laroche paid £100 in 1727, Fowler paid £150 in 1765 and Rogers paid £200 in 1783.⁶⁷⁵ Likewise, members of Bristol's Corporation throughout the period included many from the mercantile class. Richardson's profile of the leading slave merchants throughout the eighteenth century noted that thirty-two were members of the Society, while sixteen were masters of it at one time. Additionally, seventeen were common councillors, sixteen of whom became sheriff, while eleven served as mayor.⁶⁷⁶ Thus, Richardson concludes Bristol society was relatively closed and elitist, which is more in line with contemporary observations.

For Liverpool, it is also well known that its Corporation was heavily represented by a merchant oligarchy which served to protect and promote commercial interests in the city, particularly in regards to the construction of dock works. Clemens even argues that the merchant oligarchy in Liverpool was more tightly knit than in Bristol.⁶⁷⁷ As early as 1708, twenty-six of the forty-one council members were engaged in overseas trade, who likewise shared information, expertise and capital investments through similar business and social networks, as many had the same trading interests and residential patterns.⁶⁷⁸ In the last two decades of the eighteenth century, fifty-seven of seventy-three council members were merchants.⁶⁷⁹ It likewise follows, that as in the Bristol Corporation and Society of Merchant Venturers, councillors were also linked by friendship and family ties. The Norris, Johnson and Tarleton families were just a

⁶⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 209-216.

⁶⁷⁶ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 21.

⁶⁷⁷ Clemens, "Rise of Liverpool", p. 217.

⁶⁷⁸ Power, "Creating a Port", p. 64.

⁶⁷⁹ Wilson, *William Roscoe*, p. 14.

few of the examples of the family connections in politics.⁶⁸⁰ In terms of the case study merchants, only Foster Cunliffe, Thomas Earle and John Tarleton sat on the council, however, they held several offices throughout their political career.⁶⁸¹ Cunliffe served as alderman between 1751-1755, but held the position of mayor three times earlier in the century, which was exceptional. Thomas Earle also served as alderman, bailiff and mayor while Tarleton held the positions of deputy recorder, alderman and mayor. While Liverpool's Corporation was praised in directories for having a welcoming ethos in the commercial community at large, the Corporation itself typified the bonding capital council members had access to.

Other status-ascribing bodies included subscription libraries such as the Bristol Library Society founded in 1772-1773, and the Library (later named the Lyceum) established in Liverpool in 1758 and the Athenaeum in 1797.⁶⁸² The Liverpool Library was the first gentlemen's subscription library in England and was later imitated widely in provincial cities. Likewise, the Athenaeum was one of the largest gentleman's libraries built at the time. Because the politically radical William Roscoe was crucial in its foundation, the Athenaeum is considered to be demonstrative "of the merchant elite's willingness to eschew religious and political animosities in the cause of cultural redefinition".⁶⁸³ Additionally, political and social drinking clubs also contributed to opportunities for both redundancy in contact as well as promoting civic reputation. Whilst they certainly had a social element, many of the clubs the Bristol merchants participated in were political or charitable in nature. For instance, many merchants were members of the popular Tory Steadfast Society or Whig Union Club, while societies such as the Colston, Dolphin, Anchor and Grateful regularly held dinners in support of charitable works.⁶⁸⁴ In contrast, the clubs most popular in Liverpool were social drinking

⁶⁸⁰ Power, "Creating a Port", p. 65.

⁶⁸¹ Database of Liverpool Town Council members compiled by Sheryllynne Haggerty.

⁶⁸² Little, *City and County*, p. 204; Wilson, *William Roscoe*, p. 72.

⁶⁸³ Wilson, "Cultural Identity", p. 63.

⁶⁸⁴ Garrard, *Edward Colston*, p. 307.

clubs, or those that revolved around “the pleasures of the table”.⁶⁸⁵ The Ugly Face Club, the Unanimous Club and the Mock Corporation of Sefton met monthly or fortnightly in coffeehouses to drink and socialise.

The timing of the establishment of these Liverpool organisations is notable. The Ugly Face Club, founded in 1743, and the Unanimous Club and Mock Corporation of Sefton, both founded in 1753, were created at the time when Bristol’s participation in the slave trade was waning. The fact that three Liverpool clubs that catered to merchants were established at the time when Liverpool’s participation in the trade increased, speaks to the importance of these clubs for the access to social capital in building and maintaining network relationships. Michael Woolcock argues that the absence of, or the weakness in, formal institutions often results in the creation of informal organisations.⁶⁸⁶ Because the Bristol mercantile community was not only represented and supported by the Corporation but by the Society of Merchant Venturers as well, the need to create informal institutions to foster contacts may not have been as strong. On the other hand, although the Liverpool merchants were also largely represented by its Corporation and various commercial organisations, no such cohesive commercial body as the Society of Merchant Venturers existed throughout the entirety of the eighteenth century to further support Liverpool’s merchant community.⁶⁸⁷ These drinking clubs therefore could have developed in larger numbers as a substitute, and served as forums to establish and maintain commercial relationships. As organisations such as the Chamber of Commerce, and indeed, Liverpool’s dominance in the slave trade were established later in the period, drinking clubs such as the Ugly Face Club and the Mock Corporation may no longer have been as essential in accessing social capital.

⁶⁸⁵ Wilson, *William Roscoe*, p. 17.

⁶⁸⁶ Woolcock, “The Place of Social Capital”, p. 13.

⁶⁸⁷ These organisations include the Chamber of Commerce (1774), the American Chamber of Commerce (1801) and associations of merchants including those engaged in African and West Indian trades.

Although these clubs were both political and social in nature, it is interesting to note some similarities between them and the earlier Reformation societies. Margaret Hunt describes the Reformation societies as concerned with morality, and members kept an eye on each other to ensure they behaved accordingly. If a member transgressed, a fine had to be paid. For example, if anyone was absent from a weekly meeting, a fine of sixpence was issued.⁶⁸⁸ While the rules and fines for the Reformation societies were certainly written and imposed in earnest to foster proper behaviour, an examination of the rule books for the Steadfast Society in Bristol and the Unanimous and Ugly Face clubs of Liverpool also show similar rules and fines. These, however, seem to be written in a spirit of jest as the primary purpose of these clubs was indeed social. This is particularly evident for the Ugly Face Club, which stipulates certain physical features members were to have, such as “a large Mouth, thin Jaws, Blubber Lips” and “little goggyling or squinting Eyes” that “shall be esteemed considerable qualifications in a candidate”.⁶⁸⁹ Furthermore, these descriptions often relayed stereotypical similarities with commodities or areas in which they traded. For instance, Captain Nicholas Southworth, who participated in seven slaving voyages between 1730 and 1758, was described as having “a fine yellow Guinea Complexion” with “Large Nostrils, Negro Nos’d”.⁶⁹⁰ Both Liverpool clubs also charged ten shillings and sixpence when a member got married, presumably to go towards paying for the alcohol for club suppers. Similar fines were also imposed if a member of the Steadfast Society in Bristol used foul or abusive language towards another. Another rule of the Steadfast Society stipulated that “if any member betrays any secret of the Society or otherwise misbehaves” he may be excluded from the society if a majority of members agree.⁶⁹¹ These expectations established by rules that specified marital status or proper behaviour

⁶⁸⁸ Margaret Hunt, *The Middling Sort: Commerce, Gender and the Family in England* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), p. 106.

⁶⁸⁹ 367 UGL Ugly Face Club, LivPRO.

⁶⁹⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*; 367 UGL Ugly Face Club, LivPRO.

⁶⁹¹ Steadfast Society, *Book of Rules*, BRO.

helped to create collective norms within the group, reflective of the access to the exclusionary bonding capital group members shared.

A more in depth analysis of the associational membership of different clubs and organisations in the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities provides insight into the associated access to social capital merchant members had. In Bristol, the organisations are the Society of Merchant Venturers, the Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa, the Steadfast Society and the Dolphin Society. As the representative mercantile body of the Bristol merchant community, the Society of Merchant Venturers was chosen to gauge slave investor membership. Likewise, the Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa underscores the slaving interest. The Steadfast and Dolphin societies were chosen as representative of status-ascribing bodies, as the former is linked with politics (Tory) while the latter is associated with charity. The organisations chosen for Liverpool are the Committee of Company of African Merchants Trading from Liverpool, the Ugly Face Club, Mock Corporation of Sefton, the Town Council, and the Athenaeum. The Ugly Face Club is not represented in the latter period because it existed only between 1743-1753, while the Athenaeum was established in 1798 and so is only included in the latter period.⁶⁹² These organisations are included for similar reasons. The Town Council and the Committee of the Company of African Merchants Trading from Liverpool highlight the slaving interest in the local government as well as Liverpool's commercial community at large. Additionally, the Ugly Face Club, Mock Corporation of Sefton and the Athenaeum represent both informal clubs which catered to Liverpool's merchants as well as cultural pursuits which also brought a degree of status. Likewise, the records of these organisations have complete membership lists, which allowed for cross-referencing with the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database.

⁶⁹² The data for these organisations was compiled by Sheryllynn Haggerty. The membership of the Athenaeum was found in *Laws and Regulations of the Athenaeum in Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1799) Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, University of Nottingham, accessed 1/1/10.

In 1775, there were seventy-three investors in the Bristol slave trade. Table 5.1 demonstrates the percentage of these seventy-three investors that participated in these organisations. Of the seventy-three investors, forty-one, or fifty-six per cent, participated in one or more of these organisations. In terms of numbers, twenty (48%) were in the Society of Merchant Venturers, nineteen (46%) in the Bristol Freeman, fifteen (37%) in the Steadfast Society and twelve (29%) in the Dolphin Society.⁶⁹³ Additionally, of this group, three were alderman, two were former mayors and three had been sheriffs, demonstrating representation in Bristol's corporate body as well. Only two, Henry Bright and John Powell, participated in all four, although forty-one of the group participated in two or three organisations. Thus, those that participated in organisations would have had a degree of contact redundancy that would have contributed to an increased access to social capital and an opportunity to build and maintain network relationships. In 1794, however, only twenty of the forty-six investors, or forty-three per cent, participated in one or more of the organisations. This smaller percentage of investors participating in one or more of these organisations signifies that the investors at the end of the period would have had less access to social capital as their opportunity to have multiple interactions was lessened. The Society of Merchant Venturers, however, had 55% of the listed slave trade merchants, indicating their presence in the representative mercantile body was stronger than in the previous period.⁶⁹⁴ This would be particularly important towards the end of period when the merchants lobbied to prevent the abolition of the trade, especially as the percentage of those in the Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa dropped.

⁶⁹³ Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, pp. 209-216. Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa, BRL. Steadfast Society, BRO. Dolphin Society List of members, 1749-1854, BRO.

⁶⁹⁴ In 1775, 46% of the Bristol Corporation (mayors and alderman) were slave trade investors; in 1794, this percentage decreased to 27%. Thus, by the latter half of the period, more slave trade investors were in the Society of Merchant Venturers than in Bristol's corporate body. *Sketchleys Bristol Directory*; Matthews, *New History*; Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

Table 5.2: Percentage of membership of slave trade investors in organisations in

Table 5.1: Percentage of membership of slave trade investors in organisations in Bristol, 1775 and 1794

Organisation	1775	1794
Society of Merchant Venturers	48%	55%
Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa	46%	30%
Steadfast Society	37%	30%
Dolphin Society	29%	31%

Source: Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, pp. 209-216. Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa, BRL. Steadfast Society, BRO. Dolphin Society List of members, 1749-1854, BRO.

For Liverpool, in 1766, of the 234 investors in the slave trade, ninety-seven investors, or forty-one per cent, participated in any one of the organisations listed in Table 5.2. Table 5.2 shows the percentages of these ninety-seven investors that participated in the organisations. While numerically larger, this percentage is less than that of the Bristol investors who participated in organisations in either period. This has implications for access to social capital as explained further below. Numerically, fifty-six out of these ninety-seven investors that participated in an organisation (57%) were in the Committee of the Company of African Merchants trading from Liverpool, while thirteen (13%) were in Ugly Face Club, thirty-four (35%) in the Mock Corporation of Sefton and thirty (31%) in the Town Council. In terms of a more integrated participation thirty-three per cent participated in two or three organisations.

Table 5.2: Percentage of membership of slave trade investors in organisations in Liverpool, 1766 and 1805

Organisation	1766	1805
Committee of the Company of African Merchants	57%	55%
Ugly Face Club	13%	N/A
Mock Corporation of Sefton	35%	37%
Town Council	31%	31%
Athenaeum	N/A	31%

Source: Sheryllynne Haggerty. The membership of the Athenaeum was found in *Laws and Regulations of the Athenaeum in Liverpool* (Liverpool, 1799) Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale, University of Nottingham, accessed 1/1/10.

In 1805, the percentages of participation are not entirely different; however, only ninety-one of the 331 investors, or twenty-seven per cent, participated in any organisation, a much smaller proportion than in the previous period. Of these ninety-one investors, fifty-three (55%) were in the African Committee, while twenty-nine (31%) were in the Town Council, thirty-four (37%) in the Mock Corporation of Sefton and twenty-nine (31%) in the Athenaeum. By specific organisation, the percentages throughout the period are almost identical, indicating that their proportional representation remained about the same. As demonstrated, the participation in Bristol organisations experienced greater fluctuation. Most interestingly, though, while thirty-three per cent participated in two or three organisations in Liverpool in 1766, in 1805, this percentage increased to fifty-one per cent. Thus, the level of participation in more than one organisation significantly increased in Liverpool throughout the period while it decreased in Bristol. That over half of the slave investors who participated in organisations were involved in more than one may say something about a certain level of exclusiveness that existed in the latter period. Indeed, as John Haggerty and Sheryllynne Haggerty argue, between 1750 and 1810, associational membership (which they refer to as “institutional membership”) in the Liverpool merchant community as a whole coalesced towards bonding networks, indicative

that merchant networks experience a life-cycle.⁶⁹⁵ It may be said that an elite group of slave merchant investors comprised part of the Liverpool slave merchant community at this time. In other words, social capital may have only been available to a limited number of investors, typical of bonding capital and its exclusionary nature.

There are a few considerations to be made in both merchant communities' access to social capital. First of all, it should not be assumed that large group membership or participation in civic or cultural activities indicates greater success in the trade. Rather, it suggests the potential for access to resources that would enable it. Both merchant communities in general were argued to be elitist; it follows that group membership in organisations that catered to merchants as status-seeking individuals would most likely reflect this. The fact that the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers, for example, only admitted 366 members in a one hundred year period certainly supports these claims. The size of the organisations that merchants participated in must also be considered to more clearly ascertain what this representation means in terms of social capital. As mentioned, the Society of Merchant Venturers had 366 admitted members throughout the century; the Bristol Freeman trading to Africa in 1759 lists 231 members while membership lists of the Bristol Steadfast Society and Dolphin Society throughout the period had 161 and 462 members respectively. For Liverpool, there were 184 members of the Town Council in the period between 1750-1807, 280 in the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa from Liverpool, seventy-three in the Ugly Face Club in the ten year period of its existence and 489 in the Mock Corporation of Sefton from 1753-1796. The total size of the groups given over these periods of time suggests that membership in them was also relatively exclusive. Additionally, not every member would be present at every meeting, while the membership numbers varied from year to year. Thus, it

⁶⁹⁵ John Haggerty and Sheryllynne Haggerty, "The Life Cycle of a Metropolitan Business Network: Liverpool 1750-1810", *Explorations in Economic History*, 48 (2011), pp. 189-206.

cannot be assumed that slave investors would be seeing every other group member at each meeting. While the membership of slave trade investors in some organisations might have been smaller than one might expect, other group members with their own knowledge, skills and resources as well as their own respective networks were also part of these organisations. This potential interaction with other group members, or “weak ties”, is not represented by the percentages in the table, but these other group members would have complemented the slave trade investors’ wider networks. Other members of these organisations included those indirectly involved in the slave trade. For example, grocers that supplied provisions for slaving ventures, and brass manufacturers that provided trade goods for barter. For example, in Liverpool, Charles Caldwell, a sugar baker, banker and ship owner was a member of the Mock Corporation of Sefton as well as the Lyceum; additionally, George Dunbar, a major insurance broker and cotton merchant who served both the European and American markets was also in the Mock Corporation of Sefton as well as the Town Council.⁶⁹⁶ Furthermore, West India and American merchants with related concerns also comprised the group membership. Thus, slave trade investors would have the opportunity to network and exchange information with those that could contribute in slaving ventures in other ways besides directly investing in them.

A discussion of group size and membership also lends itself to comment on the notions of structural holes and the impact of bonding and bridging capital. It is argued that redundancy in contact is crucial for establishing and maintaining network relationships. Those that participated in multiple organisations, such as the larger percentage in Liverpool in the latter period, would have had the opportunity to strengthen their network relationships and share and exchange

⁶⁹⁶ Robert J. Bennett, *The Voice of Liverpool Business: The First Chamber of Commerce and the Atlantic Economy* (Liverpool: Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, 2010), pp. 149, 150.

“real or potential” resources gained from these relationships.⁶⁹⁷ On the other hand, non-redundancy also offers the benefits gained from structural holes or weak ties. As noted in the Introduction, Burt argues that people connected across various groups can access different ways of thinking and behaving; if their networks bridge the structural holes between groups then they have a broader diversity of information.⁶⁹⁸ In the case of slave trade investors, the ability to bridge different groups would provide opportunities to benefit their business practice. Haggerty and Haggerty remark that networks in the eighteenth century “were constantly changing and reforming”, lending itself to the idea that merchants had access to different combinations of bonding and bridging capital, which resulted in different outcomes.⁶⁹⁹ Thus, lower group membership does not necessarily indicate poor performance in the trade, but it can indicate the presence of structural holes within networks. The type of networking, that which bridges groups, can also have positive results for slave trade networks as the chances of “identifying and optimising opportunities” are increased.⁷⁰⁰

Conclusion

Redundancy and non-redundancy, and the utilisation of bridging and bonding social capital, were simultaneous processes in the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities that contributed to their respective performances in the trade. The evolution in the uses of various forms of capital as it facilitated success in the trade is most ably demonstrated by the case of the Liverpool slave merchant community. By the end of the period, the Liverpool slave merchants were the leaders in the trade and had the benefit of the established patterns based on knowledge and expertise in its practice. With the support of a

⁶⁹⁷ Lin, *Social Capital*, p. 23.

⁶⁹⁸ Burt, “Structural Holes”, pp. 349-350.

⁶⁹⁹ Haggerty and Haggerty, “Life-Cycle”, p. 190; Woolcock, “The Place of Social Capital”, p. 10.

⁷⁰⁰ Thornton, “Sociology of Entrepreneurship”, p. 21.

Corporation that fostered commerce and encouraged “outsiders”, access to social capital was established through network relationships built and solidified over time through the establishment of informal organisations such as drinking clubs. The sheer size of the slave merchant community indicates that it was rich in human capital and the welcoming ethos of the migrant contribution allowed ship captains, mariners and merchants to be absorbed into the community and contribute to the commercial activity of the port. Those from outside Liverpool would have also served as key weak ties, bridging together those from various networks as well as bringing with them access to their own respective networks. The Liverpool merchant community thus had a wealth of knowledge, skills and capital from which to draw. The relative exclusiveness of the group membership at the end of the period was therefore not at a detriment to the trade, even though it served as bonding capital. This is because the elite in the community did not necessarily need to build these relationships because they were already well established and the community had enough capital of all kinds to draw from for slaving ventures. Social capital was thus no longer needed for entry into the trade, as success and expertise in the trade saturated their networks. This bonding capital at the end of the period merely strengthened relationships among the elite and perhaps served more to foster notions of status and civic identity promoted by the “urban renaissance” than anything else. Smaller investment groups at the end of the period are thus reflective of bonding capital.

In contrast, the size of the Bristol community and its seemingly less accommodating nature to outsiders indicates that it was not as rich in human capital. The failure of Bristol’s leading slave merchants to create dynasties early in the period left the Bristol slave merchant community with a dearth in human capital and necessitated an influx of “new blood” to reinvigorate Bristol’s interest in the trade. The redundancy in contact established, especially in the later period, was thus required to rebuild social capital lost by the mid-century and not to maintain it. This was made easier by the fact that the slave investors lived

relatively close to one another and were not as affected by the urban sprawl characteristic of the period. Living in fashionable areas thus not only supported the “urban renaissance” ideal of status attainment but also worked to foster network relationships. The creation of network relationships would have been facilitated by the redundancy in contact in social and civic organisations, but also through a sense of common purpose established by the end of the period. As argued in Chapter Six, toward the beginning of the nineteenth century, Bristol merchants rallied for common purposes, including the push for port improvements and against the proposed abolition of the slave trade. Bringing merchants together for these purposes would have further stimulated redundancy in contact and aided network relationships. The larger investment groups at the end of the period therefore suggests a re-building of social capital existed in Bristol; however, as argued in Chapters Three and Four, the smaller size of the community coupled with the lack of other forms of capital would mean it still could not compete with the expertise and thus the success of the Liverpool slave merchant community.

The utilisation of social capital, both bonding and bridging as evidenced by both communities throughout the entire period also demonstrates the reliance still placed on it. Contrary to the arguments made by Richardson and Pearson, formal institutions such as credit arrangements actually had little effect on the use of social capital in Bristol and Liverpool, as it was still used to foster and build important network relationships.⁷⁰¹ A product of the “urban renaissance” was status attainment; as such, merchants involved themselves in politics, social clubs and cultural institutions which not only ascribed status, but contributed to a redundancy in contact that would aid building and maintaining access to social capital. Thus, merchants still met one another and cultivated relationships which facilitated their business practice. The next chapter analyses how these merchant networks, cemented in part by access to social capital, mobilised to respond to

⁷⁰¹ Richardson and Pearson, “Social Capital”, p. 766.

issues such as the need for port improvements as well as the proposed abolition of the slave trade. Thus, while this chapter analysed these merchants in their wider social and urban environment, the next chapter examines the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants' relationship to the state.

Chapter Six: Mobilisation of Slave Trade Merchant Networks and their Relationship to the State and London

Through an analysis of the structure of both slave merchant communities, trends in the management of slaving voyages, and the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchants in their wider urban environment, the previous chapters have noted a distinct cohesiveness within the Liverpool slave merchant community that contributed to its success in the trade. The Bristol slave merchant community was smaller and more atomised; slaving ventures were likewise managed by smaller networks of merchants, who did not have the social capital necessary to access skills, expertise and resources. In contrast, due to a much larger and more mobile mercantile population, Liverpool slave merchants generally operated within larger and more inter-connected networks, and had greater access to both human and social capital that facilitated their entrepreneurial position as leaders in the trade. This chapter further explores the notion of cohesiveness within the respective slave merchant communities, by analysing the relationship of the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants with the state. It has been argued that merchants increasingly took part in politics throughout the eighteenth century, which fostered a relationship between business success and civic reputation. Both Bristol and Liverpool's Corporations were well represented by the mercantile class throughout the period, and slave merchants participated in a number of political and social organisations. Thus, not only did their participation impact upon their access to social capital, but their political representation as well. Besides its Corporation, Bristol also had the Society of Merchant Venturers, which worked in conjunction with the Corporation and acted as the most effective voice for merchant interests in the port.⁷⁰² Although Liverpool did not have a comparable organisation which represented the merchant community as a whole, both communities had other more specialised organisations which also catered to

⁷⁰² Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. xv.

and represented merchant interests.⁷⁰³ These specialised interest groups included the Bristol Freeman Trading to Africa and the Committee of Merchants Trading to Africa from Liverpool, highlighted in the last chapter. They also included associations for West India or American traders, and committees that were created for a certain purpose or to support a certain cause, such as those merchants who rallied against the proposed abolition of the slave trade. These groups included members of merchants' associational networks and overlap existed in the membership among these different organisations.

By noting how the merchants' relationship with the state was shaped by a spirit of enterprise, this chapter also examines the slave trade merchants' mobilisation of their respective networks through two case studies. These case studies are the action taken by both ports in regards to dock building and port improvements and the Bristol and Liverpool merchants' defence of the slave trade throughout the period, particularly in response to the Dolben's Act (1788) and proposed abolition of the slave trade. As mercantile communities, effective representation was necessary to foster the development and extension of its commerce. A discussion of dock building and port improvement schemes in Bristol and Liverpool is particularly valuable because it provides insight into the nature of both of their Corporations, in terms of their commercial ethos and the spirit of collective initiative that would facilitate economic expansion. The merchants' defence of the slave trade also offers a gauge to demonstrate merchant action, and it is especially important to see how slave trade merchants defended their particular commercial interest when it was under serious threat. These case studies also facilitate analysis over time. Through this examination, it is demonstrated that Liverpool merchants better utilised the same collective initiative and expertise that allowed them to succeed in the slave trade to further their wider interests. This investigation does not attempt a comprehensive

⁷⁰³ As noted in the last chapter, Liverpool's Chamber of Commerce, American Chamber of Commerce and its West India Association acted as representative bodies of both wider and more specialised merchant interests. Chapter Five, p. 221.

discussion of the issues surrounding both topics for they are equally rich in historiography and argument. Rather these issues are simply used as springboards to further comment on the relative cohesiveness of the Liverpool community in comparison with Bristol, and the action taken by merchant networks in particular. This analysis further reinforces the argument concerning the entrepreneurial spirit of Liverpool merchants.

Part One: The Corporation, Dock Building and Port Improvements

In this section, the Bristol and Liverpool Corporations will be discussed in turn, followed by an examination of their respective port development. Recent themes in entrepreneurship research suggest that entrepreneurs, acting within organisations, can both reproduce and challenge the existing social order; the degree to which these processes happen depends upon the diverse outlooks and skills founding members possess.⁷⁰⁴ As both Corporations had members from the mercantile class generally, and from slave trade networks specifically, it is useful to think of these Corporations as organisations from which entrepreneurship may be derived. This is discussed further below. The Liverpool Corporation was heavily represented by a merchant oligarchy and was arguably more cohesive than in Bristol. This is illustrative of a more exclusive group with access to bonding capital. By the beginning of the eighteenth century, the members of this exclusive group had similar commercial interests, which spearheaded the improvement of the port, facilitating its growth and prosperity. By putting merchant interest at the forefront of their concern, the Liverpool Corporation encouraged the trade and commercial development that was to characterise the port throughout the period. This ultimately helped drive Liverpool's commercial success while Bristol's relatively "lethargic" Corporation hindered its progress.⁷⁰⁵

⁷⁰⁴ Aldrich, "Entrepreneurship", p. 451.

⁷⁰⁵ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 160.

Arguments have been made for the merchant contribution to the development of the early-modern state, particularly because commercial expansion required merchants to look to the state for protection and encouragement of its interests.⁷⁰⁶ The eighteenth century is also a turning point in the modern understanding of entrepreneurship, as it is argued that the role of the entrepreneur emerged at a time when the association between commercial success and political power was strong.⁷⁰⁷ Barry places Bristol's commercial success within a "broader context of civic tradition" in which the merchant was the "central figure activating the energies and talents of the community"; in this context, political activity and commercial life were not separate.⁷⁰⁸ A charter of 1499, with amendments in 1581, in effect "tightened" an oligarchic government in which forty-three burgesses, twelve aldermen, a recorder and mayor comprised the mostly Whig Common Council.⁷⁰⁹ As was the corporate membership throughout England at this time, members of the Bristol Corporation were Anglican. Wealthy and powerful slave-trading Dissenters, however, including Thomas Deane, John Anderson and Richard Bright often "circumvented the law" and became members of the Society of Merchant Venturers in order to have their interests represented.⁷¹⁰ The mayors and aldermen throughout the period were increasingly overseas merchants, indicating that the Corporation became largely dominated by, and identified with, the Society of Merchant Venturers.⁷¹¹ Indeed, most members of the Society of Merchant Venturers were merchants engaged in the African and West India trades while those participating in trades with Ireland and Europe were relatively under-represented.⁷¹² Forty-five of the 104 mayors and seventy-six of the 196 sheriffs throughout the century were Society

⁷⁰⁶ Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, pp. 2, 10. See also Bowen, *Elites and Enterprise*, p. 82.

⁷⁰⁷ See Introduction, p. 16.

⁷⁰⁸ Barry, "Bristol Pride", pp. 25, 26, 27.

⁷⁰⁹ Peter Fleming, "The Emergence of Modern Bristol", in Dresser and Ollerenshaw, *Making of Modern Bristol*, pp. 1-25.

⁷¹⁰ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 140.

⁷¹¹ Fleming, "Emergence", p. 14.

⁷¹² Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. xii.

members, indicative of the close relationship between the Corporation and the Society of Merchant Venturers as well as an overlap in membership.⁷¹³ As mentioned in the last chapter, Bristol's slave merchants were represented, although not dominant, in the Common Council as well as the Society of Merchant Venturers.⁷¹⁴ For the case study merchants in particular, James Laroche was a sheriff in 1734 and mayor in 1750, while Henry Bright served as mayor in 1771.⁷¹⁵ Likewise, Michael Becher was master of the Society of Merchant Venturers in 1749, a position Laroche also held in 1757 and 1782.⁷¹⁶ Although the Corporation became identified with the Society of Merchant Venturers, it would be incorrect to assume, however, that this overlap in membership meant that the Corporation and Society of Merchant Venturers always demonstrated unity in its actions. While Barry notes that "ceaseless lobbying by [the] Corporation and Merchant Venturers was needed to maintain and extend Bristol trade", these groups existed and acted independently from one another. It is argued below that indeed the *disunity* in Bristol's broader leadership caused delays in making these much needed port improvements to extend trade.⁷¹⁷

The Society of Merchant Venturers, incorporated by letters of patent in 1552, was granted complete control of overseas trade by a royal statute in 1566.⁷¹⁸ Although the port also had a number of guilds, as the most effective voice of Bristol's mercantile community, the Society of Merchant Venturers often worked closely with the Corporation to promote Bristol's commercial interests, primarily by lobbying Bristol MPs on commercial matters.⁷¹⁹ This was accomplished by issuing petitions, and in the period between 1698 and 1803, the

⁷¹³ Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. xvii.

⁷¹⁴ See Chapter Five, pp. 217-218.

⁷¹⁵ John Latimer, *The Annals of Bristol in the Eighteenth Century* (Bath: Kingsmead Reprints, 1970), pp. 535, 536.

⁷¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 537.

⁷¹⁷ Barry, "Bristol Pride", p. 27.

⁷¹⁸ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 1; Fleming, "Emergence", p. 14.

⁷¹⁹ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 95.

Society of Merchant Venturers dispatched 154.⁷²⁰ These petitions were largely concerned with the slave trade and other issues concerning the American colonies, as discussed further below.⁷²¹ Additionally, the Corporation delegated power to the Society of Merchant Venturers that would usually have been in the local government's purview, such as collecting wharfage money to construct and maintain quays.⁷²² Thus, the responsibility for the construction of docks and port improvement schemes was that of the Society of Merchant Venturers as well as the Corporation. As an influential body working in concert with the Corporation, being a member of the Society of Merchant Venturers was also prestigious, an important factor for status-seeking merchants.⁷²³

It is important to also keep in mind that, whilst the Whig Corporation and the Society of Merchant Venturers provided the "official expression of civic feeling", Bristol merchants could also represent themselves in informal political clubs, such as the Tory Steadfast Society and the Whig Union Club.⁷²⁴ While often "no business of consequence occurred" at club meetings besides the more social purpose of, for example, finding an "old bottle port wine for the use of [the] society", these societies are reflective of a politically-conscious and civically-minded merchant community.⁷²⁵ Additionally, they were places to access social capital, as highlighted by the Steadfast Society in the last chapter. On the eve of elections, letters were exchanged among some of the clubs, for instance, between the Union Society and the Steadfast Society in which it was "mutually [agreed] not to oppose each other" in terms of the candidates they would support.⁷²⁶ A number of different political organisations thus existed which not only

⁷²⁰ Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. xviii.

⁷²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. xvii, xxx.

⁷²² McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 150.

⁷²³ Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. xi.

⁷²⁴ Barry, "Bristol Pride", p. 43.

⁷²⁵ Steadfast Society *Book of Rules, Orders and Proceedings, 1737-1802*, 16 Jan 1801, 20 Mar 1793, BRO.

⁷²⁶ Steadfast Society *Book of Rules*, 1768, BRO.

represented the varied interests of Bristol merchants, but also facilitated a redundancy in contact for merchants to access different types of capital.

Barry strongly links the notions of civic pride with the activities of the Corporation. He states that the members of the Corporation “were seen by the citizens above all as magistrates, providing justice and thus allowing the social and commercial life of the city to continue”.⁷²⁷ This, along with the contemporary assertion that the Society of Merchant Venturers “always act in conjunction with the Corporation for promoting the commerce, trade and improvement of the city” paints a relatively positive and misleading picture of the Corporation and Society of Merchant Venturers’ active involvement, encouragement and cooperation in commercial affairs.⁷²⁸ However, as is demonstrated further below, Bristol’s Corporation was largely lazy and ineffective, particularly when it came to port improvements.⁷²⁹ Commercial decline throughout the eighteenth century prompted merchants in the 1790s to demand the Corporation’s intervention to revive its commerce. The Corporation, represented by the “old mercantile elite” was further blamed for continued extravagant spending during a time of poor harvests in 1795-1796 and 1800, which contributed to it becoming increasingly unpopular in the latter part of the century for its failure to effectively promote merchant interests in the port.⁷³⁰

The commercial decline Bristol experienced in the latter half of the eighteenth century is reflective of the trends in declining membership of the Society of Merchant Venturers. These trends in membership coupled with the decline in the Bristol merchant community as a whole examined in the last chapter are important because they offer insight into the cohesiveness of the merchant community, and are suggestive of the different types of capital available to merchants. As the Corporation was argued to be an oligarchic, elite

⁷²⁷ Barry, “Bristol Pride”, p. 28.

⁷²⁸ Matthews, *New History*.

⁷²⁹ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, pp. 160-161.

⁷³⁰ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 180.

group, accused of laziness and lethargy in regards to implementing port improvements, the argument of Bristol merchants' complacency is given more credence. Morgan certainly suggests this in his study of Bristol West India merchants, as intimated in Chapter Four.⁷³¹ As an exceptionally cohesive group with a large influence in the local government, the Bristol West India merchants were the richest sector among Bristolians, many of whom, like many members of the Corporation, also lived in the fashionable residential areas such as Queen Square.⁷³² Yet this core group also exhibited a "business caution" due to their large material success by the end of the eighteenth century that not only hindered Bristol's economic progress but "left a legacy of poor adaptability".⁷³³ A very influential and cautious group representing one trade would have impacted upon the merchant community as a whole. This sense of "business caution" is aptly demonstrated in the hesitance to improve the port.

Scholarly discussions of Liverpool's Corporation often centre around its active support of the development of the port and to Liverpool's commercial importance.⁷³⁴ In contrast with Bristol, the perceived "liberal spirit of its body corporate" has already been noted regarding the port's commercial ethos.⁷³⁵ Unlike Bristol, with guilds and other regulatory institutions such as the Society of Merchant Venturers, the Corporation represented the merchant community at large. Likewise, contemporaries asserted the River Mersey "held the foremost rank amongst the Ports of this flourishing kingdom" and that the "superior conveniences of the docks and other local advantages" contributed to Liverpool's prosperity.⁷³⁶ Like Bristol, however, Liverpool's Corporation was also arguably closed and elitist. Yet instead of exercising caution or demonstrating

⁷³¹ See Chapter Four, p. 151.

⁷³² Morgan, "Economic Development", pp. 48-76; Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 108.

⁷³³ Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 206.

⁷³⁴ See Power, "Creating a Port"; Michael Power, "Councillors and Commerce in Liverpool, 1650-1750", *Urban History*, 24 (1997), pp. 301-323; Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*.

⁷³⁵ See Chapter Five, p. 194.

⁷³⁶ Draft preamble of speech by Clayton Tarleton to Common Hall, 1792, Tarleton Papers LivPRO; Mar 1796 Liverpool Town Books, Vol. 13, 1793-1804, LivPRO.

complacency, Liverpool's local government maintained a spirit of activism throughout the century, indicative of a distinct entrepreneurial character. Speaking about a typical Liverpool merchant of the last quarter of the eighteenth century, Stanley Checkland famously described him as a "mercantilist, a materialist, and an empiricist" while Liverpool merchants as a whole believed in a division between statesmen and businessmen, each keeping to their own separate sphere.⁷³⁷ In local politics, however, this was certainly not the case. It is well known that merchants increasingly became involved in local politics and were well represented by town councils; Liverpool was no exception.⁷³⁸ A letter from burgesses offering support for John Tarleton's candidature to Parliament in 1767 showed their belief that Tarleton would offer proper representation because "of his knowledge of trade in general and more particularly what relates to the true interests and welfare of this town".⁷³⁹ Likewise, upon accepting the mayoralty in 1792, Clayton Tarleton pledged "to make it my business to promote in every thing the peace of commerce and by consequence, the happiness and prosperity of Liverpool".⁷⁴⁰ These assertions make clear the link among commerce, political activity and the merchant's role within this as an activist. Additionally, the slave trade merchants became particularly vocal in their defence of the slave trade, further reinforcing the notion that the merchant was heavily involved in politics. This is discussed further below.

A "harmonisation of political and commercial activities" of Liverpool's Corporation in the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries was responsible for establishing Liverpool as an important commercial centre.⁷⁴¹ Michael Power and others note the distinctive character in which merchants rapidly came to dominate local politics, in effect, causing the port to "come of age" in just two decades between 1695 and 1710. This "coming of age" in turn

⁷³⁷ Checkland, "Economic Attitudes", p. 58.

⁷³⁸ Gauci, *Politics of Trade*, p. 95.

⁷³⁹ Letter of burgesses offering support of candidature, 18 Jul 1767, Tarleton Papers LivPRO.

⁷⁴⁰ Draft speech by Clayton Tarleton accepting mayoralty, 1792, Tarleton Papers LivPRO.

⁷⁴¹ Longmore, "Civic Liverpool", p. 121.

was facilitated by the spate of dock building financed by the Corporation.⁷⁴² A charter granted in 1695 put new men in charge, all of whom were townsmen, with a large proportion from the mercantile class, and specifically those engaged in overseas trade.⁷⁴³ This was in contrast to the earlier Corporation in which a mixed group of outsiders, craftsmen, merchants and mariners with little cohesion “perhaps prohibited corporate will” as they did relatively little to improve the port at a time when Liverpool merchants were increasingly turning to Atlantic trade.⁷⁴⁴ The 1695 charter also confirmed the closed nature of the largely Whig Corporation, in which the council was then composed of forty-one members including a mayor and two bailiffs.⁷⁴⁵ Most council members served for life, while the mayor and bailiffs were chosen from the existing council members.⁷⁴⁶ As with Bristol, members of the Liverpool Corporation throughout the period were Anglican. However, Dissenters became members of the Chamber of Commerce, the Committee of Merchants Trading to Africa from Liverpool as well as other social clubs. Case study merchant Benjamin Heywood is a prominent example of a Dissenter who was active in socio-political life without serving a formal political role. Thus, religion did not serve as a major obstacle in civic involvement.

It is argued that with Liverpool’s explosive population growth throughout the period, burgesses became increasingly unrepresentative, creating a gap between the Corporation and the citizenry.⁷⁴⁷ The oligarchic nature of the Corporation, like Bristol, characterised the access to bonding capital this exclusive group had. However, despite claims of becoming increasingly un-representative, particularly in the first part of the eighteenth century, this insular and elite group

⁷⁴² Power, “Councillors and Commerce”; Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 174.

⁷⁴³ Power, “Creating a Port”, p. 54.

⁷⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁷⁴⁵ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 144. The 1695 charter saw the Liverpool Corporation transform from a predominately Tory body to a Whig body, and it remained so until 1760, with the accession of George III. As discussed further below, however, Liverpool councillors for the most part put aside any political, religious or personal differences to promote the interests of the port.

⁷⁴⁶ Power, “Councillors and Commerce”, p. 309.

⁷⁴⁷ F. E. Sanderson, “The Structure of Politics in Liverpool, 1780-1807”, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 127 (1977), pp. 65-89.

actively promoted the interests of the port instead of becoming complacent. This continued throughout the period. Pertinent to the analysis of Liverpool's role in the defence of the slave trade discussed below, F. E. Sanderson notes that a distinct bias in favour of the African trade existed in Liverpool's Common Council. At the beginning of the parliamentary abolitionist campaign in 1787, thirty-seven of the forty-one councillors were slaveship owners, major investors, or suppliers in the trade.⁷⁴⁸ This led the Common Council to be united in its defence of the trade. Throughout the period, however, the Corporation exemplified the access to bonding capital that is typical of an exclusionary group, yet its active promotion of the port's interests negates the supposition that under-representation was somehow detrimental to Liverpool's commercial life. The access to bonding capital, seen to influence the inactivity in Bristol, worked in the opposite way for the Liverpool councillors. Furthermore, any claims of being increasingly unrepresentative, or any political, religious or personal differences that existed among members, were set aside by the Corporation as these were perceived to be "less significant than their shared challenges".⁷⁴⁹ In the case of early port development, these challenges included port improvements, discussed further below.

While Liverpool's success may be attributed largely to the improvements made in communications, and specifically the dock building programs, the decline in Bristol's commercial prosperity may likewise be linked with its failure to do so. In 1792, the Bristol Corporation noted that:

The state of the harbour of Bristol is by nature so far inferior to the natural or improved of many others of the Ports of Great Britain that ships holders of Bristol are not on an equal footing with the ships holders of other ports, either with respect to their security of their ships ... or to the ease and expedition which they can be discharged, landed and proceed again to sea.⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 66.

⁷⁴⁹ Power, "Creating a Port", p. 70.

⁷⁵⁰ Bristol Corporation Minutes, 6 Dec 1792, PBA/Corp/M/1/1 BRO.

Bristol's Corporation was well aware that Bristol shipping was lagging behind that of other ports to such an extent that it served as a detriment to its trade, yet as will be shown they were also hesitant to make these improvements. Besides docks, however, Bristol generally did not make the necessary improvements in communications, and they ultimately lost ground to Liverpool, whose superior canal and river improvement schemes diverted a lot of traffic that would have normally gone through Bristol.⁷⁵¹ Bristol's failure to make improvements made the port and harbour at times difficult to navigate and was a constant threat to safety. Chapter Two noted complaints that the docks and quays were made unnavigable due to stones and mud, so much so that ships were sometimes run aground.⁷⁵² Indeed, in 1789, haven master John Shaw noted that the "danger of the river" made transportation on it "a greater risque than proceeding to the West Indies".⁷⁵³ Liverpool merchants also recognised how the inferior situation of Bristol contributed to poor trading performance. In 1760, writing to Joseph Percival & Co. regarding an order of copper that needed to be sent, William Earle expressed that "the passages are so uncertain from Bristol that I doubt unless you send soon we may be disappointed".⁷⁵⁴

Contemporaries were thus well aware that the state of Bristol's inferior communications system was a detriment to its trade. Chapter Two also noted the situation Bristol and Liverpool had with their hinterlands and how Liverpool, through its communications systems, was better placed to capitalise on this situation. Writing in 1788, Richard Bright observed that the rate of freight from manufacturing counties such as Staffordshire, Shropshire and Warwickshire to Liverpool was greater than to Bristol; likewise "almost the whole of the goods which used to be sent to Bristol to be forwarded to the United States of America & other parts, now are conveyed to Liverpool by the canals, & from thence

⁷⁵¹ Morgan, "Economic Development", pp. 64-66.

⁷⁵² See Chapter Two, p. 55.

⁷⁵³ John Shaw to the Society of Merchant Venturers, 19 Jul 1789, SMV 7/1/3/11 BRO.

⁷⁵⁴ William Earle to Dodding & Co., 26 Feb 1760, Earle Collection, LivPRO; William Earle to Joseph Percival & Co., 10 Oct 1760, Earle Collection, LivPRO.

shipped".⁷⁵⁵ By the late eighteenth century, then, when Liverpool's dock facilities and transport schemes facilitated the port to prosper, Bristol merchants were still hoping that a "spirit of improvement would prevail" and that the Corporation would make every effort to implement commercial improvements.⁷⁵⁶ The success of Liverpool's communications systems was not lost on Bristol merchants. Indeed, a correspondence emerged between the two ports among merchants and engineers regarding the dimensions of Liverpool docks, rates of dockage, and plans of the "relative situation of the docks and how they communicate with each other".⁷⁵⁷ Thus, as explored in Chapter Four, just as Bristol slave merchants turned to Liverpool slave merchants for their expertise, knowledge and connections in the slave trade, the Bristol mercantile community as a whole also turned to Liverpool to learn the particulars of their superior dock system.⁷⁵⁸

As Bristol looked to Liverpool to see how they financed their docks, the issue of dock dues is also an important consideration. Although not directly related to port improvements as such, it links to the commercial expansion of the port and raises another point of comparison with Liverpool. As Minchinton has noted, Bristol's system of port financing seemed to have become more "burdensome" in the eighteenth century and port charges were higher in Bristol than other ports, including Liverpool. This certainly aroused criticism. A "well-wisher" wrote at length against Bristol's dock dues in comparison with the better rates found in Liverpool. The "well-wisher" stated that, indeed, "It will probably be found and proved, in the first Place, that Town-Dues and other local Charges, are partly the Occasion of the Decline of the Trade". For the trade to be revived, it was believed that Bristol must follow the example of Liverpool:

That of the heavy Town-Dues, should be principally attended to, let this, with the Wharfage, be reduced to what they are in Liverpool. Trade will

⁷⁵⁵ Bright, "Draft of Particulars", p. 661.

⁷⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 664.

⁷⁵⁷ J. Gore to Richard Bright, 28 Sep 1789, 11168 3g/(i-ii), BRO; Rogers and Wilson to W. Jessop, 10 Oct 1791, 11168 4a/(i-ii), BRO.

⁷⁵⁸ Minchinton, *Port of Bristol*, p. 17.

then naturally flow to this Port and afford ample Means, nay even require, the immediate attention to and smooth the Way for removing other Difficulties; without this, if all the rest of Accommodation for Shipping, Regulation of Pilots, etc. were attended to, they would, most likely in the End, prove only Half Measures. It may be objected here, that Town-Revenues would be injured; it might be so at first; but this is not quite so certain, and with the Example of Liverpool before us, where, inconsiderable as the Town-Dues are, they amount to 12,000*l.* Annually, there is no Doubt but the temporary Defalcation, if any, would be amply re-paid in a few Years.⁷⁵⁹

As with its leading position in the slave trade, Liverpool was also exemplary for its superior port management, which Bristol needed to emulate if it was to boost its trade.

In fact, port improvements in Bristol during the eighteenth century can be characterised by indecision, reluctance, hesitancy and a Corporation not united behind the common purpose of improvement. Chapter Two noted that the port needed man-made improvements to facilitate trade and shipping, particularly as the port became increasingly congested as trade increased.⁷⁶⁰ The responsibility for many of these improvements was in the hands of the Society of Merchant Venturers and minor improvements were indeed made early in the eighteenth century. In 1712, the quay along the River Frome was extended, while in the 1720s, a wharf was constructed on Welsh Back for the loading of goods and a separate quay was built on St. Augustine's Back for timber and naval stores.⁷⁶¹ In 1717, the construction of a wet dock was completed, however the dock was ultimately of little use by merchants because it was too far from the city.⁷⁶² Quays were also built and extended when the Society of Merchant Venturers's lease to run the port was renewed in 1764.⁷⁶³ However, much to the dissatisfaction of the merchants, none of these improvements were adequate to support the trade of the port. Many improvement schemes were brought forth in

⁷⁵⁹ Printed Letter for Reduction of Town Dues and Dock Improvements from a Well Wisher to the City and Port of Bristol, 20 Aug 1800, 28048/p4, BRO.

⁷⁶⁰ See Chapter Two, p. 55.

⁷⁶¹ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 51.

⁷⁶² *Ibid*; Williams, "Bristol Port Plans", p. 144.

⁷⁶³ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 51.

the last third of the eighteenth century, and it was during this period that the hesitancy of the Corporation is most noted.

Alan F. Williams has comprehensively analysed the later port improvement schemes. In the period between 1765 and 1900, over fifty schemes were put forward, in which there were two distinct phases.⁷⁶⁴ The first phase occurred between 1765 and 1812, in which the schemes were concerned with the quays within the city, and the construction of a "floating harbour". The second phase, terminating at the beginning of the twentieth century, called for the development of docks downstream or on the Bristol Channel shore.⁷⁶⁵ The first phase had proposals introduced by engineers, but also by dock owners and merchants. While it is beyond the scope of this chapter to thoroughly analyse each proposal, it should be remarked that the improvements under this first scheme did not take place until forty-five years after the first proposal was introduced, underscoring the hesitancy and delay that characterised the Corporation's response to the needed improvements.⁷⁶⁶

To further illustrate this, Williams included in his study a chronological list of proposals, counter-proposals and leading objections from this first phase, beginning in July, 1764 and ending in December 1812, of which there were a staggering 102.⁷⁶⁷ Thus, while there were certainly ideas and plans regarding how best to improve the port, these ideas were not put into action. Highlighting this, engineer Robert Mylne remarked on a plan in 1767 that it was "so very desirable for men in your present situation that I am surprised this proposition has not been made in former times and before the trade of the port increased to what it is".⁷⁶⁸ Williams and others attribute this indecision to a lack of united purpose among the merchants, Corporation and ratepayers who could not agree whether

⁷⁶⁴ Williams, "Bristol Port Plans", p. 138.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 138-139.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 180.

⁷⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 182-188.

⁷⁶⁸ Report and Opinion of Robert J. Mylne for Keeping the Ships Afloat at all times in the Harbour of Bristol made by William Champion, 12 Jan 1767, 11168/1a, BRO.

the benefits of the proposed improvements outweighed the costs. This disunity regarding its financial risk is emphasised by a petition of 1803 from the "mayor, burgesses and commonalty of Bristol" urging the House of Commons to authorise improvements in the Bristol Harbour. This was accompanied by a second petition to the House of Lords by a number of prominent merchants petitioning against the scheme.⁷⁶⁹ Thus, unlike the united Liverpool Corporation, those in charge in Bristol were unwilling to take risks, demonstrating a less collective entrepreneurial ethos. Caution was further demonstrated the next year when a draft address by "a Bristol Merchant" regarding problems involved in implementing these docks warned that:

So important a work, in which the welfare of the city and neighborhoods are materially concerned may not be begun until the whole undertaking in all its various parts, bearings and probable consequences be fully ascertained from the most indisputable authority, lest from a precipitate commencement, you should get involved in endless difficulties and expences.⁷⁷⁰

"A Bristol Merchant" goes on to emphasise that the main question of this scheme was whether "the means of carrying the work into execution [are] adequate to the objects proposed".⁷⁷¹ This hesitancy and caution is further reinforced by the assertion that port improvement plans throughout the latter part of the century were "shelved" during periods when "there were affairs of greater moment affecting the interests of the merchant" such as the trade embargo imposed during the War of American Independence.⁷⁷² Improvements were also set aside in between war years and periods of national financial crisis, including 1787 and 1793, when as Morgan claims, the Corporation and Society of Merchant Venturers were reluctant to fund these projects and were opposed to change.⁷⁷³ This is in contrast with the Liverpool Corporation's continued action throughout the period, discussed below. Expressing frustration of their hesitancy, before stepping down

⁷⁶⁹ Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. 189.

⁷⁷⁰ Draft address by "A Bristol Merchant", 25 Feb 1804, 11168/1s, BRO.

⁷⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷² Williams, "Bristol Port Plans", p. 150.

⁷⁷³ Morgan, "Economic Development", p. 52.

as engineer of the project in 1792, John Smeaton lamented, "excuse me when I say that I think you Gentleman take too much *consideration*, if they mean to Act".⁷⁷⁴ Smeaton stepping down as engineer coincided with the time Bristol's Corporation noted the inferiority of Bristol's harbour. Eleven years later, the Bristol Dock Act was passed, and, under the auspices of the Society of Merchant Venturers, the Bristol Dock Company was formed, in which many members also sat on the Council.⁷⁷⁵ The established Bristol Dock Company, however, failed to call their first general meeting "within the time as directed by the Act", which led Serjeant Heywood to opine that the powers of the Act were rendered void.⁷⁷⁶ Therefore, the Society of Merchant Venturers and Bristol Corporation's role in the port improvement schemes was marked by a "spirit of unambitious caution".⁷⁷⁷ This hesitancy and caution combined with the complacency marked the Bristol slave trade community and, in many ways, describes the activity of Bristol's merchants as a whole.

In contrast, as discussed in Chapter Two, an important factor in Liverpool's commercial success was its communication and transport networks, developed and improved upon throughout the eighteenth century. Undoubtedly, a sophisticated network of river, canal, road and later rail networks, coupled with ocean and coastal shipping routes not only connected the port with its industrial hinterland, but to the rest of Britain and the wider world.⁷⁷⁸ In terms of inland navigation schemes, Harris notes that Liverpool's Common Council was "favourable not simply to local schemes, but also those of wider application" which would in turn extend Liverpool's economic hinterland.⁷⁷⁹ For example, the Sankey canal, opened in 1757 was necessary for linking local Liverpool industries

⁷⁷⁴ Quoted in Williams, "Bristol Port Plans", p. 169.

⁷⁷⁵ John Latimer, *Calendar of the Charters etc. of the City and County of Bristol* (Bristol: W. C. Hemmons, 1909), p. 174; Copy of Minute of Meeting of Common Council, 10 Sept 1803, 11168/9_R, BRO.

⁷⁷⁶ Copy of Serjeant Heywood's Opinion on Certain Parts of the Bristol Dock Act, Dec 1803, 11168/9_U, BRO.

⁷⁷⁷ Williams, "Bristol Port Plans", p. 160.

⁷⁷⁸ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 13.

⁷⁷⁹ Harris, "Liverpool Canal Controversies", p. 80.

to the surrounding coalfields. Before the act for the canal was passed in 1755, the “Merchants, Proprietors of Saltworks, Sugar Bakers, Glassmakers, Distillers, Maltsters and other Tradesmen and Inhabitants” of Liverpool petitioned for such a scheme stating that communication was necessary due to the “great increase and improvement of the commerce, trade and manufacturers” of Liverpool.⁷⁸⁰ As such, the petitioners “occasioned a greater demand for and consumption of coal”, reflecting the importance of the “coal-canal nexus” in the port’s economic development.⁷⁸¹ This canal was petitioned for and constructed in conjunction with other dock and harbour improvements, discussed below, increasing Liverpool’s trade by supplying markets previously supplied by Bristol.

The site of the Liver Pool required man-made improvements to facilitate shipping, and a number of dock and river improvement schemes occurred throughout the eighteenth century.⁷⁸² The docks in particular were a source of great pride, boasted of in town guides, praised in town directories and cited by merchants and councillors when seeking protection from Parliament of their trading interests. In its defence of the slave trade, the Corporation stated previous acts of parliament that were passed “at different times for constructing of convenient docks for its shipping and particularly for the African ships”; as such, these docks needed to be constantly afloat and consequently, “your petitioners have been emboldened to lay out very large sums to pledge their corporate seal to a still greater amount for affecting these laudable purposes”.⁷⁸³ These docks, they argued, along with “the enterprising spirit of the people, the trade of Liverpool, and particularly the African trade, which forms the most active branch thereof” gives “strength and energy” to the port.⁷⁸⁴ Boasting about the superiority of the docks and the “enterprising spirit of the people” certainly

⁷⁸⁰ The Humble Petition of Merchants, Proprietors of Saltworks, Sugar Bakers, Glassmakers, Distillers, Maltsters and other Tradesmen and Inhabitants in and near the Borrough and Port of Liverpool in the County Palatine of Lancaster, 9 Mar 1752-28 Feb 1755, *Harper Collection of Private Bills, 1695-1814*.

⁷⁸¹ Stobart, “In Search of Causality”, p. 154.

⁷⁸² See Chapter Two, pp. 60-61.

⁷⁸³ Mar 1796, Liverpool Town Books, Vol 13, 1793-1804, LivPRO.

⁷⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

contrasts with Bristol's noted apathy, indifference and commercial decline in the face of the need for port improvements by this period.

Wallace asserted the docks "may not improperly be called the principal of all the public buildings" as they not only contributed "to the splendor, convenience and safety of commerce, but to the profit of the corporation".⁷⁸⁵ The construction of the Old Dock (as it was later known), first authorised in 1709 and in use by 1715, was the first commercial wet dock in Britain and greatly elevated Liverpool's commercial capabilities by providing the port with particular advantages.⁷⁸⁶ The dock was constructed on the pool, in close proximity to the centre of town, near Paradise and Hanover streets. As demonstrated in the last chapter, these streets were popular places of residence for slave trade investors by the middle of the century, and thus places with access to various types of capital. The site was also advantageous as the land around the dock could be used to construct warehouses for the port's growing trades.⁷⁸⁷ The council that decided to construct the dock in 1708 had twelve major traders, including case study merchant, Foster Cunliffe. Ramsey Muir gave most of the credit, however, to Sir Thomas Johnson, a tobacco merchant and MP, as the founder of the enterprise.⁷⁸⁸ Johnson sought the expertise of engineer George Sorocold concerning building a wet dock, and Sorocold urged Johnson and fellow MP, Richard Norris to obtain an act of Parliament for its construction.⁷⁸⁹ Sorocold died before parliamentary approval was granted, thus Thomas Steers of London ultimately engineered the scheme.⁷⁹⁰ With an estimated cost of £6,000, the construction of the dock was a major financial gamble, but admission fines, revised leases and implemented dock dues covered the costs in the long run; as Power has asserted, this enterprise was ultimately a "revealing test of political

⁷⁸⁵ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 99.

⁷⁸⁶ Power, "Creating a Port", p. 58.

⁷⁸⁷ Power, "Councillors and Commerce", p. 302.

⁷⁸⁸ Ramsay Muir, *A History of Liverpool* (Liverpool: 1907), p. 176; Moss, *Georgian Liverpool*, p. 34.

⁷⁸⁹ Moss, *Georgian Liverpool*, p. 34.

⁷⁹⁰ *Ibid*; Muir, *History of Liverpool*, p. 176.

unity and nerve of the council".⁷⁹¹ This "nerve" or concerted effort of active promotion, demonstrates the enterprising spirit of a cohesive corporate body. Moreover, while the Liverpool Corporation was improving the port to boost its trade early in the century, the Bristol Corporation was more actively involved in constructing fashionable places of residence, such as Queen's Square, as noted in the last chapter.⁷⁹² This may be reflective of the different priorities the two Corporations had, even if both invested in property.⁷⁹³

With the success of the first dock, other docks followed throughout the century. This spate of dock building was also indicative of the port's commerce becoming more diversified. In 1738, an Act of Parliament was granted for the construction of a second dock, known as the Salthouse Dock (due to its proximity to the salt works), which was completed by 1759.⁷⁹⁴ Ships using this dock mostly engaged in the Irish, French and Mediterranean trades.⁷⁹⁵ St. George's Dock, authorised in 1762 was completed by 1771; Kings and Queens Docks were granted parliamentary authorisation in 1758 and were completed in 1788 and 1796 respectively. St. George's dock catered to the West Indian trade as well as trade with the North American mainland.⁷⁹⁶ Kings Dock facilitated the Baltic trades, but due to its proximity to the tobacco warehouses, also accommodated the American trades, and particularly the Virginia trade.⁷⁹⁷ Queen's Dock also facilitated those ships engaged in the American trade.⁷⁹⁸ Those ships employed in the African trade largely used the Old Dock. Even before the completion of Kings and Queens Docks, however, *A Plan of Liverpool with the Docks*, in 1766 boasted that "ships of any burthern may come up with their full lading and ride before the town; and vessels of eighteen feet draught of water may go into the

⁷⁹¹ Power, "Creating a Port", p. 60.

⁷⁹² See Chapter Five, p. 186.

⁷⁹³ Ascott et al., *Liverpool 1660-1750*, p. 155.

⁷⁹⁴ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, pp. 30-31.

⁷⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹⁶ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, pp. 30-31.

⁷⁹⁷ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, p. 103.

⁷⁹⁸ Parkinson, *Rise of the Port*, p. 109.

docks, which are not inferior to any in Great Britain".⁷⁹⁹ By the end of the eighteenth century, the port thus had around twenty-eight acres of docks including five wet docks, five graving docks and three dry docks.⁸⁰⁰

As mentioned in the last chapter, the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board was established "for transacting the business of the docks", the first meeting of which was in 1784. As a committee, its members included the mayor and bailiffs, as well as prominent merchants with slaving interests such as Thomas Earle, George Case, William Crosbie and John Shaw.⁸⁰¹ The committee meeting minutes indeed show that a concern throughout the latter period was the extension and improvement of docks to accommodate the increase in trade. Proposals were made for the Corporation to purchase timber yards for the extension of docks as well as for ground adjoining docks to be kept as lots for the purpose of shipbuilding yards.⁸⁰² The need for additional space around the docks for the extension of commerce contributes to the changing residential patterns observed in the last chapter; more merchants moved out of the city centre and away from commercial spaces at a time when the Corporation was parcelling off this land to cater to the growing trade. The minutes also revealed that measures were taken to ensure the cleanliness and safety of the docks. For instance, days were set aside for George's Dock and the Old Dock to be let dry and cleared of mud, that tunnels be constructed along the docks for the purposes of clearing mud, that cisterns be made for graving docks "and proper fire engines and buckets be provided" in the interest of safety.⁸⁰³ This stands in contrast with the poor situation of the Bristol quays and harbour as noted above. Additionally, dock master Captain William Hutchinson, "a man of considerable talents and ingenuity", was instrumental in installing the first parabolic reflector for

⁷⁹⁹ *A Plan of Liverpool with the Docks*, 1766. (Liverpool, 1766). Eighteenth Century Collections Online, Gale. University of Nottingham, accessed: 1/1/11.

⁸⁰⁰ Mariner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 31.

⁸⁰¹ 19 Nov 1784, Minutes of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, MMM

⁸⁰² 19 Nov 1784; 2 Apr 1787, Minutes of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, MMM.

⁸⁰³ Brooke, *Liverpool as it was*, p. 102; 27 Jul 1789; 4 Mar 1786; 16 May 1785, Minutes of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, MMM.

lighthouses, reinforcing the claim that Liverpool was at the “forefront of port management”.⁸⁰⁴ In 1788, a year before Bristol haven master John Shaw thought that local navigation was more dangerous than a transatlantic voyage to the West Indies, Hutchinson was ordering new lamps for a new brick lighthouse to be built, contributing to the ease of transport and safety in the port of Liverpool.⁸⁰⁵

The Corporation’s active promotion and encouragement of the port’s trade can thus be seen as a priority throughout the century, as “merchants of this town and port of Liverpool in general being materially interested” petitioned throughout the period for its “general welfare and prosperity”.⁸⁰⁶ Plans for dock construction and the implementation of these plans were carried out even in war years and times of national financial crises when trade in general lessened. Indeed, the initiative of the merchants and Corporation is also noted in their response to the financial crisis in 1793. As outlined by Hyde et al., mercantile communities throughout Britain suffered disproportionately from the crisis caused by a derangement of credit. Yet, the prompt action by leading merchants to petition the Corporation, resulting in the establishment of a Loan office, facilitated the port’s relatively rapid recovery.⁸⁰⁷ In 1793, the Corporation petitioned Parliament that “the trade and commerce of the town of Liverpool and the various manufactures of the neighborhood have of late years greatly increased and have continued to do so till the stagnation of credit”.⁸⁰⁸ Clayton Tarleton, John Greenwood, William Crosbie, George Case, Thomas Earle, John Blackburne, Richard Statham and Thomas Naylor, many of whom also sat on the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, presented evidence in Parliament giving the valuation of the estates and revenue belonging to the Corporation, much of which was

⁸⁰⁴ Richard Woodman, *Neptune’s Trident: Spices and Slaves, 1500-1807* (Gloucester: Stroud, 2008), p. 226.

⁸⁰⁵ 8 Aug 1788, Minutes of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board, MMM.

⁸⁰⁶ Mar 1796, Liverpool Town Books, Vol 13, 1793-1804, LivPRO.

⁸⁰⁷ Hyde et al., “The Port of Liverpool”, pp. 363, 369.

⁸⁰⁸ 24 Apr 1793, Liverpool Town Books, Vol. 13, 1793-1804, LivPRO.

derived from dock and town dues. Some of the evidence given noted that land was purchased with the "intention for the Extension of the Docks", which is in line with minutes of the Mersey Docks and Harbour Board mentioned above that stated land was purchased for such a purpose.⁸⁰⁹ Responding to the petition by the Liverpool merchants, the Chancellor of the Exchequer praised the "liberality and spirit of the corporation", observing that "so laudable an example of liberal support might lead to consequences highly beneficial to the public".⁸¹⁰ This is in line with the contemporary assertion noted above that the "liberal spirit of its body corporate" contributed to Liverpool's success.

The "liberal spirit" of the Liverpool Corporation contrasts with the response by Bristol merchants. As Marshall argues, that "unlike Liverpool, which rallied promptly and effectively to restore its trade and finances by civic action", Bristol conversely, "seems to have accepted the situation".⁸¹¹ This acceptance mirrors the complacency already mentioned of Bristol's merchants, while Liverpool's action is indicative of an entrepreneurial spirit. As explored in Chapter Four, leadership, and the entrepreneurship derived from it, has a function when something new must be carried out and thus entrepreneurship often occurs during times of disequilibrium, such as disruption caused by war.⁸¹² That the Liverpool Corporation carried out financially risky and ambitious projects during these times of relative upheaval indicates the entrepreneurial characteristic of limited risk aversion.⁸¹³ Liverpool's sense of "spirit" thus stands in stark contrast

⁸⁰⁹ Report from the Committee to the petition of Clayton Tarleton, esquire, mayor, John Greenwood, bailiff, William Crosbie the Younger, George Case, Thomas Earle, and John Blackburne, Alderman, and Richard Statham, and Thomas Naylor, all members of the Common Council of the Town of Liverpool, in the County of Lancaster, on behalf of themselves and the rest of the Common Council of the said Town, was Referred, 15 Ap. 1793, Seventeenth Parliament of Great Britain, 13 Dec 1792-21 June 1793. Available at: parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk, accessed: 1/1/11.

⁸¹⁰ 11 Apr 1793, Seventeenth Parliament of Great Britain, 13 Dec 1792-21 June 1793. Available at: parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk, accessed: 1/1/11.

⁸¹¹ Peter Marshall, *Anti-Slave Trade Movement in Bristol* (Bristol: Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1968), p. 3.

⁸¹² Schumpeter, "Entrepreneur", p. 248.

⁸¹³ Casson, *Entrepreneurship*, p. 95.

with Bristol's "business caution". Summarising this notion, a "well wisher" wrote at length in 1800 regarding the necessity of dock improvements citing:

But whilst every liberal mind must rejoice in the prosperity of any part of the empire, no inhabitant of BRISTOL, that reflects and compares those exertions and the *Indifference and Apathy that prevail in this City*, [my emphasis] with respect to the state of its port and declining commerce, can forbear lamenting, that not the least attempt is made to improve the port or revive the trade of this City.⁸¹⁴

Thus, contemporaries observed a sense of indifference and apathy on the part of the Bristol Corporation, which contributed to the decline in the commercial importance of the port. Liverpool's Corporation and principal merchants, however, exhibited a culture of action. They were also to play a more dominant, active role in response to the proposed abolition of the slave trade as well.

Part Two: Bristol and Liverpool Merchants' Defence of the Slave Trade

The collective response of Bristol and Liverpool merchants in the push for port improvements mirrors their defence of the slave trade. This in turn impacted on their networks. As noted in Chapter Five, a re-building of access to capital was observed in the Bristol slave merchant community. Bristol merchants recognised that the port was in decline, and with the slave trade inextricably linked with its West India trade, merchants argued in its defence. Through the establishment of committees and increased meetings among merchants to discuss these matters, a redundancy of contact was established among principal merchants, which helped bolster their networks. This is evidenced by the increased investments in slaving voyages by the end of the period. For Liverpool merchants (as well as the Corporation) banding together against abolition demonstrates the access to bonding capital which facilitated earlier port improvements, and the entrepreneurial spirit of coordinated action that was shown in the response to the

⁸¹⁴ Printed Letter for Reduction of Town Dues and Dock Improvements from a Well Wisher to the City and Port of Bristol, 20 Aug 1800, 28048/p4, BRO.

financial crisis of 1793. Initiative and action by an elite group continued further in this campaign.

While official campaigns for the abolition of the slave trade were conducted largely in the last two decades of the eighteenth century, the Bristol and Liverpool Corporations as well as the ports' merchants generally sought its protection and encouragement throughout the century, particularly against the monopoly of the Royal African Company. Particular grievances were made against the Royal African Company in regards to its monopoly organisation; in the period between 1690 and 1713, around one hundred petitions were presented to Parliament in support of free trade whereas less than twenty supported the monopoly.⁸¹⁵ Those in support of free trade represented a variety of interests, including colonists, private traders and manufacturers, indicative of the variety of interests linked to the slave trade. These similar and separate interests groups, including West India planters and Bristol and Liverpool's manufacturing sector, also voiced their opposition to the proposed abolition of the trade later in the period, which is discussed below. Earlier in the period, however, the petitions of Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers attest to merchants seeking protection of their slave trading interests. For instance, a petition in March, 1726 claimed the African trade was the "principall and most valuable trade of this city in which many thousands of familys in this city and places adjacent imploied and supported".⁸¹⁶ As such, the trade "depends on a great measure on the free commerce" that occurs on the African coast to the plantations in the Americas.⁸¹⁷ While this may simply be rhetoric, the petition was presented at a time when Bristol was engaged in the most voyages to Africa to date, indicating that the trade was indeed important in Bristol's commercial profile.

With the dissolution of the Royal African Company's monopoly in 1698, the slave trade was opened up to private traders. Moreover, in 1750, Parliament

⁸¹⁵ Davies, *Royal African Company*, pp. 129-130.

⁸¹⁶ Mar 1726 petition on the *African Trade* in Minchinton, *Politics of the Port*, p. 21.

⁸¹⁷ *Ibid.*

established the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa, to ensure the maintenance of the coastal infrastructure which was previously the responsibility of the Royal African Company. The lobbying of Bristol and Liverpool merchants was instrumental in the proposal of the Bill which reorganised the trade under the Company.⁸¹⁸ Of the 475 members at its inception, 236 came from Bristol, 147 from London and ninety-two from Liverpool, a perhaps surprising figure given Liverpool's increasing activity in the trade at this time.⁸¹⁹ Noting this discrepancy, Williamson's *Liverpool Memorandum Book* observed three years later that "whereas their Trade to Africa is not so extensive as the Merchants of Liverpool" the Company at this time had 135 merchants from London, 157 from Bristol and 101 from Liverpool.⁸²⁰ As late as 1772, John Arbuthnott MP, informed Bristol merchant Paul Farr of the potential "padding" of the Committee list by London merchants, expressing "that there are upwards of fourteen hundred for the port of London free of the African Company" whereas for Liverpool "there are but eighty-five free of the said Company". This was in spite of the fact that "Liverpool is near four times deeper concerned in the African trade than London".⁸²¹ Contemporaries were thus well aware that the number of members in the Company was not necessarily reflective of the slave trading activity of the ports' respective merchants, especially if committee lists were fraudulent.

Fraudulent lists or not, London merchants had a large presence in the Company of Merchants, and its establishment initiated a lot of clamour by Bristol and Liverpool merchants for the protection of the trade against the attempt by London merchants to monopolise it or organise it in the fashion of a joint-stock company. Both Bristol and Liverpool merchants argued for equal representation in the Company, in that three Committeemen each from London, Bristol and Liverpool should be selected, rather than the proposed four from London and two

⁸¹⁸ Morgan, *British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol. 2*, p. xxxi.

⁸¹⁹ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 36.

⁸²⁰ Williamson, *Liverpool Memorandum Book*.

⁸²¹ John Arbuthnott to Paul Farr, 17 Apr 1772, SMV 7/2/1/10, BRO.

each from the outports. Bristol and Liverpool merchants, however, raised different concerns in the defence of their trade. For Bristol, primary concern was regarding the eligibility of Company members. Responding to the proposed motion that those who were not free of the Company should not be allowed to trade on the African coast, Bristol merchants felt rather that those who were not members should not be allowed to vote for Committeemen, rather than be excluded from trade altogether. Their reasoning was that “many persons residing in *America*, and other places, could not, with Conveniency, make themselves free of the said Company”.⁸²² The exclusion of such persons could in fact work to lessen the trade. It makes sense that Bristol merchants, with early and well-established connections in the Americas, as well as a relative concentration and specialisation in the American and West Indian trades would have this as a primary concern.

In contrast, for Liverpool merchants, a primary concern was losing the trade to foreign powers, and most particularly the French. Liverpool merchants noted that “our greatest Rivals ... have not only laid it open to all subjects of *France*, but give very great Encouragement to it, above any other Branch of Commerce”.⁸²³ As such, Liverpool merchants deemed it necessary that London also keep the trade open to retain and encourage Britain’s position as leaders in the trade. As noted in Chapter Four, keeping the trade open would also facilitate the role of the entrepreneur, as arguably, strict government or bureaucratic intervention, such as enforcing monopolies or licensing and taxation do not foster an environment for the entrepreneur to thrive.⁸²⁴ Additionally, Liverpool merchants wanted the trade open as they felt “it is more proper to have a

⁸²² Copy of a Scheme from the Merchants of Bristol to the Commissioners for Trade and Plantations for Securing, Improving and Extending trade to Africa, 1 Nov 1749, in Lambert, *House Vol. 18*, p. 438.

⁸²³ Copy of a Representation from the Merchants Trading to Africa from Liverpool to Commissioners for Trade and Plantations for Carrying on, Extending and Securing Trade to Africa, 24 Oct 1749, in Lambert, *House Vol. 18*, p. 444.

⁸²⁴ See Chapter Four, p. 158; Ricketts, “Theories of Entrepreneurship”, p. 36.

number of markets to go to than one".⁸²⁵ Liverpool merchants also raised the issue of foreign competition later in the defence of the slave trade. In 1779, the president of the Liverpool Chamber of Commerce, Gill Slater wrote to Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers asserting that Liverpool merchants were "ready to cooperate with you in whatever measures may appear necessary to preserve the freedom of this once valuable branch of commerce" so as not to strengthen the trade in "the hands of our opponents".⁸²⁶ This demonstrates Liverpool merchants' attempt at coordinated action to ensure its interests were protected. The Liverpool Chamber of Commerce was established in 1774 to serve as a commercial voice for the port and lobby on its behalf; in the period 1774-1779, Bristol's Society of Merchant Venturers exchanged at least fifteen letters with Liverpool's Chamber, indicating that the Chamber had become "almost a national voice on some issues".⁸²⁷ However, as is discussed below, the defence of the slave trade was largely in the hands of Liverpool's Corporation; interestingly, case study merchant John Tarleton, a leading opponent of the abolition of the slave trade was a member of both the Chamber and the Corporation, indicative of the bonding capital that characterised Liverpool's elite.⁸²⁸

Arguing for open markets for English merchants and protection from their foreign rivals is further reflective of Liverpool merchants' entrepreneurial attitude in more ably spreading risk by exploiting varied market opportunities, which had facilitated their entrance to the trade.⁸²⁹ As seen in Chapter Four, Liverpool merchants, in the context of both sanctioned and illicit trade, were more enterprising at exploiting and supplying markets than their Bristol counterparts, reinforcing the reasoning behind Liverpool merchants' emphasis on having more

⁸²⁵ 13 Feb 1753 Committee Book of African Company of Merchants trading from Liverpool, 1750-1820, LivPRO.

⁸²⁶ Gill Slater to Michael Miller Jr, 12 Apr 1779, SMV, BRO.

⁸²⁷ Bennett, *Voice of Liverpool*, p. 9.

⁸²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 51.

⁸²⁹ Wallace, *General Descriptive History*, pp. 215-217.

market options.⁸³⁰ Encouraging more market options along the African coast was important, particularly because those in London in support of a joint-stock company complained that Bristol cargoes in particular consisted chiefly of Windward negroes “of little value”.⁸³¹ The truth of this statement is questionable, as Chapter Three demonstrated that Bristol did not venture to the Windward Coast nearly as often as the Bight of Biafra, the Gold Coast and West Central Africa. However, the sentiment corresponds with the argument established that Bristol merchants were relatively conservative in their exploitation of markets, while Liverpool merchants held a dominant position in five of the seven slaving regions along the coast.⁸³² That the Liverpool merchants warned against losing trade to the French is also significant, as this remained a concern towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the abolition of the trade was proposed. The threat of French competition was thus a central argument in the defence of the slave trade throughout the period. This is discussed further below.

The concerted effort to abolish the slave trade was a twenty year campaign, beginning in 1787 and ending with the trade’s abolition in 1807. The campaign is often divided in two phases by historians. For instance, Roger Anstey marks the division in the phases by the year 1796.⁸³³ A degree of regulation was achieved in the campaign’s initial stages in 1788 with the passing of the Dolben Act, which specified legal tonnage ratios and required all slave ships to carry a doctor on board to improve conditions aboard the vessels.⁸³⁴ Much debate surrounded this issue, and Chapter Four noted the perception slave trade merchants had in regards to the relationship among the size of the vessel, the

⁸³⁰ See Chapter Four, p. 177.

⁸³¹ Minchinton, *Politics and the Port*, p. 78.

⁸³² See Chapter Three, p. 96.

⁸³³ Roger Anstey, *The Atlantic Slave Trade and British Abolition, 1760-1810* (Aldershot: Gregg Revivals, 1975), p. 256. In this year, a bill for abolition was defeated by only four votes (70 to 74). This was the closest the abolitionists came to defeating the slave trade until 1807. See also Thomas, *Slave Trade*, p. 538.

⁸³⁴ F. E. Sanderson, “The Liverpool Delegates and Sir William Dolben’s Bill”, *Transactions of the Historic Society of Lancashire and Cheshire*, 124 (1972), pp. 57-84.

health of the voyage and profitability.⁸³⁵ The reasons behind antislavery sentiment are richly debated in the historiography, with causes attributed to changes in religious, socio-political and economic attitudes in the period.⁸³⁶ Likewise, the reasons behind the length of time of the campaign are equally rich, as it was conducted in a milieu of war, upheaval in the West Indies and consequent falling sugar prices and was further dependent on the strengths and weaknesses of both its proponents and opponents. In 1787, the London-based *Society for Effecting the Abolition of the Slave Trade* was formed, coinciding with the pronouncement by Yorkshire MP William Wilberforce that he would initiate a parliamentary campaign for the slave trade's abolition.⁸³⁷ The London *Society* effectively spearheaded the campaign by mobilising the British public and government through a print propaganda and petitioning campaign, in which publisher James Phillips, for example, published no less than forty-five abolitionist tracts in the period up to 1798.⁸³⁸

While antislavery sentiment increasingly spread throughout Britain, attacking the slave trade was easier than to attack the institution of slavery itself. Gathering empirical evidence on the "middle passage" was an easier task than that for the treatment of slaves in the Caribbean; additionally, by ending the trade rather than the institution, Parliament would not necessarily infringe on the property rights of planters or have to deal with issues of compensation.⁸³⁹ As this was an issue directly affecting the West Indian planters, however, the link between the West India interest and that of the slave traders is further

⁸³⁵ See Chapter Four, pp. 169-170.

⁸³⁶ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, pp. 158-159. Ryden also offers a good discussion of the historiography on the West India economy and the abolition of the trade, *West Indian Slavery*, pp. 7-18. For more on the abolition of the trade, see Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*; Fogel, *Without Consent or Contract*; David Eltis, *Economic Growth and the Ending of the Transatlantic Slave Trade* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Seymour Drescher, *Econocide: British Slavery in the Era of Abolition* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1977); David Brion Davis, *The Problem of Slavery in the Age of Revolution, 1770-1823* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1975); Porter, *Abolition of the Slave Trade*.

⁸³⁷ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, p. 163.

⁸³⁸ John Oldfield (ed.), *The British Transatlantic Slave Trade Vol. 3: The Abolitionists Struggle: Opponents of the Slave Trade* (London: Pickering and Chatto, 2003), p. xx-xxi.

⁸³⁹ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, pp. 183, 164.

reinforced. Indeed, the West India interest was arguably the slave trade's most powerful lobby and one of the reasons why the abolition campaign took as long as it did.⁸⁴⁰ Ryden notes the apprehension of the West Indian planters caused by the attack on the trade, particularly because the Commons had traditionally supported the sugar interest by sanctioning Britain's slave traders.⁸⁴¹

While the attack against the slave trade was largely conducted through London, Bristol and Liverpool merchants played a significant role in its defence. As the sugar interest dominated Bristol's commercial affairs, Bristol merchants certainly petitioned against the parliamentary campaign. Liverpool, however, took the most active lead in its opposition. This is not surprising, as in the decade between 1780-1789, Liverpool cleared 558 slaving vessels while Bristol only cleared ninety-four.⁸⁴² Likewise, Liverpool sent the most petitions, sending at least sixty-four to the Commons or the Lords, compared to just twelve from the Bristol merchants and Corporation and fourteen from London.⁸⁴³ Moreover, throughout the period of parliamentary investigations, delegates from Liverpool remained in London at the Corporation's expense, reinforcing the commercial importance of the slave trade to the port and in the eyes of the Corporation. As mentioned above, the vast majority of Liverpool's Common Council in 1787 invested in the slave trade. Thus, Liverpool's Corporation was strongly in favour of the slave trade and adamantly came to its defence.

In spite of the strong bias towards the African interest, the abolitionist campaigning of William Roscoe and his circle, including James Currie and Edgar

⁸⁴⁰ Anstey, *Atlantic Slave Trade*, p. 286. This is certainly true for London. In Bristol and Liverpool, opposition was primarily led by the Society of Merchant Venturers and the Corporation rather than their respective West India Associations. It must also be taken into consideration the point raised in the Introduction that the extent of parliamentary influence the West Indian traders had in Parliament is also debated. It is, however, generally agreed that the major opponents, "West Indian" or not were "a large mixed group of businessmen-landowners who derived part or all of their income from growing or marketing colonial produce". Porter, *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 29.

⁸⁴¹ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, p. 157.

⁸⁴² See Table 2.2, p. 80. At this time, London cleared 119 vessels. Eltis et al., *Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁸⁴³ F. E. Sanderson, "The Liverpool Abolitionists", in Anstey and Hair, *Liverpool, the Slave Trade and Abolition*, pp. 196-239.

Corrie must not be ignored. However, that their correspondence with London had to be conducted anonymously speaks to the fact that the Liverpool abolitionists were a relatively quiet minority.⁸⁴⁴ This is in contrast with Bristol, where a waning interest in the trade was more conducive to abolitionist sentiment. An active Quaker community promoted abolition throughout the century, and numerous articles appeared in the *Felix Farley Bristol Journal* from America regarding the horrors of the trade even before 1787.⁸⁴⁵ Letters printed in the papers urged "Sons of Commerce to withhold ... their daily sacrifices to the idol INTEREST" and to consider, "as Englishmen, had you not rather be served by *Freemen* rather than by *Slaves*" [emphasis in original].⁸⁴⁶ Letters such as this are reflective of the historiographical argument that the rise of industrial capitalism prompted further consideration on the nature of worker-employer relationships. Additionally, consumers were becoming more market-aware and had misgivings as complicit and passive consumers of such slave-produced goods as sugar.⁸⁴⁷ Furthermore, meetings from abolition societies in other cities such as Manchester (an industrial centre) were published. Bristol readers were thus exposed to an abolitionist sentiment and this, coupled with a waning interest in the trade, may explain why fewer petitions against the proposed abolition were sent from Bristol.⁸⁴⁸

Nationally, in terms of the defence of the slave trade, the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa at large were not the trade's official spokesmen, and this, together with the fact that African interests were entangled with those of the West India, American and Mediterranean trades, as well as with banking, sugar refining and manufacturing, made an agreed upon policy on abolition difficult.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁴ Porter, *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 52.

⁸⁴⁵ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, pp. 130-134; Marshall, *Anti-Slave Trade Movement*, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁶ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 26 Jan 1788.

⁸⁴⁷ Ryden, *West Indian Slavery*, pp. 158-159.

⁸⁴⁸ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 12 Jan 1788; *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 6 Dec 1788.

⁸⁴⁹ Sanderson, "Liverpool Delegates", p. 60.

However, the Committee issued a statement in 1788 in defence of the trade that was reflective of these intermingling interests:

This committee makes no scruple that the African trade is so blended with our commerce and so interwoven with our general interests that if at any time through Neglect, Mismanagement or Misfortune this nation should be deprived of its benefits it will suffer a very great and irreparable loss, a Main in its Commerce, Dignity and Power of which it is impossible to recover.⁸⁵⁰

This statement echoes the earlier defences of the trade in which different interest groups argued for the importance of the slave trade in the wider commercial fabric. As already highlighted, the West India interest, particularly that based in London, provided a powerful lobby, arguing that the invested capital in the sugar colonies, land and slaves amounted to seventy million pounds.⁸⁵¹ Defenders of the slave trade also championed other reasons in Parliament, namely that the West India and African trades provided a “nursery for seamen”, and the threat of foreign competition deemed it necessary that Britain continued in this line of commerce for its continued prosperity. This threat of foreign competition demonstrates that ultimately, “the defence of the realm was fused with the defence of the slave trade”.⁸⁵² While the statement above issued by the Committee was forceful, opposition against abolition was achieved largely through the localised efforts of merchant interests to make their own representations to Parliament. These localised efforts, however, reveal that, like the earlier petitions against the Royal African Company, group membership reflects the intermingling interests of the slave trade with other trades, such as that with the West Indies. The various groups that petitioned against the proposed abolition are discussed further below. It is argued here that, while opposition was indeed localised, Liverpool merchants took the initiative in this campaign to engage Bristol in a correspondence against the proposed abolition. Through these letters, as well as the resolutions made by various established committees, the leading position of

⁸⁵⁰ Committee of the Company of Merchants trading to Africa, 19 Feb 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXVII, BL.

⁸⁵¹ Porter, *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 56.

⁸⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 69.

Liverpool merchants in the trade is clearly demonstrated, both in their knowledge of the trade and in their initiative to lead the fight in the proposed abolition of it.

Early in 1788, John Tarleton, Robert Norris, James Penny and John Matthews were chosen to go to London to represent Liverpool's interests and work in consultation with the Company of Merchants to provide evidence in the parliamentary enquiries.⁸⁵³ Demonstrating characteristic initiative, they sent a letter to the Bristol Society of Merchant Venturers on 11 July 1788 asking for Bristol to help with expenses in attending to the opposition of the proposed slave bill. This should not be a problem they argued, considering that "the town of Liverpool has been at a very considerable expence in a cause in which not only yourselves, but the West India Gentlemen and manufactures are deeply interested".⁸⁵⁴ At this, the Society of Merchant Venturers responded that, because Bristol had also sent representatives to London, Liverpool should instead approach the Company of Merchants.⁸⁵⁵ This hints at the insular, complacent outlook that ultimately had detrimental effects on their trade. Undeterred by this seemingly unhelpful response, the secretary of the Liverpool African Committee, Samuel Green, wrote to master of the Society of Merchant Venturers James Jones on 18 February 1789 enquiring about the "intentions of the merchants in your city as to opposing the abolition the trade".⁸⁵⁶ Green was the centre of the lobbying activity in Liverpool, coordinating all of the correspondence and information on the proposed abolition. Green was the secretary for the Chamber of Commerce at this time, as well as the Liverpool African Committee. That he acted on behalf of the Liverpool African Committee (he used the African Committee's address in all of his correspondence) further demonstrates the less prominent role the

⁸⁵³ Sanderson, "Liverpool Delegates", p. 62.

⁸⁵⁴ Letter to Chairman of Committee of Merchants from John Tarleton, Robert Norris, James Penny and John Matthews, 11 Jul 1788, SMV, BRO.

⁸⁵⁵ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 136.

⁸⁵⁶ Samuel Green to James Jones, 18 Feb 1789 SMV, BRO.

Chamber had in officially lobbying against the proposed abolition of the slave trade for Liverpool noted above.⁸⁵⁷ In a passionate plea, Green stated:

a correspondence upon the subject would be satisfactory to the gentlemen here, who are immediately interested in this important business and they are desirous and ready to adopt and support such measures as may be judged most likely to prevent a blow, so fatal to the naval strengths of Britain and so destructive of the liberty and welfare of the human species as the abolition of the branch of commerce would certainly prove.⁸⁵⁸

Like the Committeeman's statement of defence, Green's plea for the defence of the trade highlights the fact that Bristol and Liverpool merchants often defended the slave trade largely by expressing what its abolition would mean for other branches of their own commerce, as well as for the welfare of Britain at large. A piece in *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* asserted that the trade to Africa is the "first principle and foundation of all the rest; the main spring of the machine, which sets every wheel in motion".⁸⁵⁹ Abolishing the trade would mean total destruction of not only Bristol, Liverpool and London, but manufacturing centres such as Manchester, Birmingham and Sheffield. Furthermore, Britain would also lose the West India planters, who "can no longer look to the *mother country* for support, will look for it to *Foreign powers*" [emphasis in original].⁸⁶⁰ A 1789 petition by Bristol West India merchants also echoed the trade's importance, stating that the African and West India trades constituted three-fifths of the commerce of the port of Bristol; another petition by the same group asserted that, specifically, the "sugar-refining trade has for many years been a very considerable branch of manufacture in this city".⁸⁶¹ Additionally, petitions were also presented to Parliament from West India Planters, ship-builders and principle manufactures.⁸⁶² In his examination in Parliament, Liverpool merchant Robert Norris specifically

⁸⁵⁷ Bennett, *Voice of Liverpool*, pp. 52-53.

⁸⁵⁸ Samuel Green to James Jones, 18 Feb 1789 SMV, BRO.

⁸⁵⁹ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 23 Feb 1788.

⁸⁶⁰ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 16 May 1789.

⁸⁶¹ 1789 petition by West Indian merchants, Papers Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade SMV, BRO.

⁸⁶² 1789 petition by Principle Manufacturers, Shipbuilders, Shipholders and Traders, Papers Against the Abolition of the Slave Trade, SMV, BRO.

defended the African trade by emphasising its impact on the West Indies. Norris asserted, "I could approve of no abolition of the slave trade that was not compatible with the West Indian Islands and when the necessities of the Planters no longer require the aid of labourers from Africa".⁸⁶³ Likewise, in a letter to Clayton Tarleton regarding his interview with Prime Minister William Pitt, John Tarleton relayed that the African, West Indian and North American trades were the "principal branches of our foreign and colonial system of commerce" that were "now mutually blended and connected together".⁸⁶⁴ Should there be "complete abolition" of the trade, "the consequences would be a rapid decline in the two latter and total ruin and impending destruction to the former which could not exist without due encouragement from the legislation".⁸⁶⁵ Another Liverpool merchant even calculated that abolition of the trade would mean a financial loss of £7 million for Liverpool, and the resulting unemployment of shipbuilders, sailors and others, as well as the loss in revenue the port would receive from dock dues would cause the town to suffer.⁸⁶⁶

As the slave trade was an integral part of the larger commercial profile of both ports, committees were established to represent various interests to petition against abolition. These committees underscore that opposition efforts were indeed localised. In Bristol, meetings were called for and held in taverns and the Merchants Hall by West India merchants and planters to discuss petitions. The Society of Merchant Venturers, which played the role of coordinator among the various opponents of abolition, also organised three committees, one constituting African merchants, one of West India merchants and planters and one of manufacturers.⁸⁶⁷ The group of manufacturers was the largest, with thirty-four members, followed by the West India group with twenty-one; the group of African merchants, however, only had ten, which included case study merchants James

⁸⁶³ Examination of Robert Norris, 17 Mar 1790, in Lambert, *House Vol. 82*.

⁸⁶⁴ John Tarleton to Clayton Tarleton, 5 Feb 1788, Tarleton Papers, LivPRO.

⁸⁶⁵ John Tarleton to Clayton Tarleton, 5 Feb 1788, Tarleton Papers, LivPRO.

⁸⁶⁶ Holt and Gregson Papers, 942 HOL 10, LivPRO.

⁸⁶⁷ McGrath, *Merchant Venturers*, p. 136.

Rogers and John Fowler. As Dresser has noted, it seems interesting that two Scotsman and two Welshman (Rogers, and Thomas Jones mentioned in the last chapter) were included in this group of ten, reinforcing the point that new blood was largely important in sustaining the latter interest in the Bristol slave trade, having obvious implications for merchant networks.⁸⁶⁸ That the West India committee had twenty-one members, including Bristol's most prolific slave trader, James Laroche, is not surprising, considering the importance of the West India trade to Bristol. The number of manufacturers, however, may be rather unexpected but it has been argued that the Society of Merchant Venturers may have "padded out" the names on this committee to include friends, such as bankers, who were not necessarily manufacturers.⁸⁶⁹ Even in the event of the list being "padded out", the list of manufacturers also included shipbuilders, gunpowder manufacturers, grocers, deal merchants and glass manufacturers that would have benefitted from the trade's survival. Therefore, in any case, members of each committee would certainly have had an interest in seeing the slave trade continue for the general prosperity of the port, as trading interests were inextricably linked.

While Bristol merchants expressed opposition to abolition through established committees representing various interests, both the Corporation and the delegates representing Liverpool in London made the strongest arguments against proposals for Liverpool merchants. As noted above, because the Corporation was largely run by slave traders, they could speak for the Liverpool and African interest perhaps more effectively than the disparate groups organised in Bristol. This is not to suggest that Liverpool was united both politically and commercially with no discord existing among merchants; indeed, one only has to refer to Checkland's study on American and West Indian traders to note factions and disagreements, particularly during the wars with France between 1793 and

⁸⁶⁸ Dresser, *Slavery Obscured*, p. 148.

⁸⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 150.

1815.⁸⁷⁰ However, in terms of the defence of the slave trade, Liverpool's Corporation and merchants for the most part transcended any difference to protect its commerce at large.⁸⁷¹ As noted above, in their defence of the slave trade the Corporation used the docks to make a link among previous actions of Parliament, Liverpool's trade and why the slave trade should not be abolished. By noting the effect the docks had in improving the prosperity of Liverpool and thus "the kingdom in general", the Corporation used similar arguments to Bristol's by stating the impact abolition would have on Britain as a whole. While the Corporation's defence was united and strong, the delegates in London also played a significant role in the opposition to the proposed abolition. As noted in Chapter Four, John Tarleton in particular was an avid defender of the trade and was a persistent correspondent on the matter; "knowledgeable and authoritative" with "painstaking" attention to detail, Tarleton wrote numerous letters to Baron Hawkesbury in London, both supplying him with requested information on the trade but also enquiring as to the actions of Parliament.⁸⁷² Replying to one such enquiry, Baron Hawkesbury expressed a degree of impatience with Tarleton's tenacious letter writing, saying "I can now say no more on the subject than what I have repeatedly written you in former letters".⁸⁷³ As Tarleton also wrote letters to Bristol enquiring after their proposed actions and requesting their support eight years earlier, his persistent contact with Baron Hawkesbury demonstrates the active role he took in defending the interests of Liverpool merchants over a long period.

⁸⁷⁰ See S. G Checkland, "American versus West Indian Traders in Liverpool 1793-1815", *Journal of Economic History*, 18 (1958), pp. 141-160.

⁸⁷¹ Yukihiisa Kumagai also argues that in campaigns against the renewal of the East India Company's charter (1812-1813 and 1829-1833), Liverpool merchants also transcended their political and economic differences to take a leading role in these campaigns by coordinating efforts with other towns. *The Activities of Provincial Mercantile and Manufacturing Interests Against the Renewal of the East India Company's Charter, 1812-1813 and 1829-1833*. Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Glasgow, 2008.

⁸⁷² Sanderson, "Liverpool Delegates", p. 62.

⁸⁷³ Baron Hawkesbury to John Tarleton, 28 Nov 1794, LP, Vol. CXXI, BL.

The letters between Baron Hawkesbury and merchants from both Bristol and Liverpool are of particular value because they reveal insight into how the entrepreneurial considerations of knowledge, expertise and merchant networks were used in the defence of the slave trade. Baron Hawkesbury was interested in gaining as much information as he could from merchants in both ports regarding the trade, particularly with respect to how the French, Spanish and Portuguese were conducting it. When the Dolben Bill was under consideration, specific information was also exchanged about tonnage of the vessels, profitability, the behaviour of the captains and crew as well as the health of the slaves on board. This information was relayed in the House of Commons enquiries and is also found in the Sessional Papers. Again, while it is beyond the scope of this chapter to detail each point raised in the correspondence as well as in the parliamentary debates, a few important examples regarding these entrepreneurial considerations and merchant networks will be mentioned here. An issue that was often raised was the importance of having knowledge and expertise in the trade. Bristol merchant James Jones stated that the slave trade was a "very uncertain and precarious trade, and if there is not a probable prospect of considerable profit, no man of considerable property who hath any knowledge of it would embark or continue in it".⁸⁷⁴ Likewise, Jones noted that restrictions in trade regarding tonnage would render the prospect of profit "inadequate and not encourage the persons in the trade whose knowledge of it has been matured by long experience ... other adventurers that know nothing of it might perhaps start up".⁸⁷⁵ Thus, those with experience in the trade would know these restrictions would be detrimental to the trade and would not embark on voyages, while those who knew nothing of it would ultimately be unsuccessful.

Knowledge and experience in the trade were particularly imperative for the slave trade because of the unique risks involved. Slave traders had to be aware

⁸⁷⁴ James Jones to Baron Hawkesbury, 26 Jul 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXII, BL.

⁸⁷⁵ James Jones to Baron Hawkesbury, 27 Jun 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXII, BL.

of these risks and possess the skills to manage them effectively. The importance of such knowledge and experience is further enforced through these letters as a necessary requirement for success in the trade. Communication with Baron Hawkesbury also emphasised the knowledge and expertise of the captains; indeed, a Liverpool correspondent observed that "the masters of vessels employed in the African slave trade have a knowledge of the wants of that coast and possess an influence with the Black Traders which no new set of man can acquire".⁸⁷⁶ Therefore, knowledge and experience in the trade were closely linked and the success of voyages was largely dependent on the captains' human capital, as well as that of the merchants. Reinforcing this notion, a proposition was introduced in the House of Lords that no one should be placed in command of a slave ship unless he has previously commanded a slave ship or served as chief mate on at least two voyages.⁸⁷⁷ The expressed sentiments of knowledge being "matured by long experience", that new men without the requisite knowledge would be unsuccessful, and that captains must have previous experience to be employed seems to support the idea that an insular, elite bonding group characterised the Liverpool slave trade at this late point in time. Chapter Three demonstrated the average size of Liverpool investment groups decreased in the last twenty years of the trade, indicating that merchant networks were becoming smaller.⁸⁷⁸ It was also argued in Chapters Four and Five that a reason for this was Liverpool's established success in the trade which itself was based on their merchant networks being saturated with knowledge and expertise. The defence of the trade thus acknowledged that the knowledge and expertise, as it existed most predominately in Liverpool, was paramount to its success. This is discussed further below.

Encouragement provided by the government was another issue raised especially with regard to their foreign rivals. That the French, Spanish and

⁸⁷⁶ Edgar Corrie to Baron Hawkesbury, 24 Feb 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXII, BL.

⁸⁷⁷ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 5 Jul. 1788.

⁸⁷⁸ See Table 3.3, p. 127.

Portuguese were not as active in the trade as Britain, but were perceived to be looking to increase their participation may also speak to why British merchants strongly argued for the importance of knowledge and experience in the trade's success. As noted in Chapter Four, the French were a considerable threat to Britain throughout the eighteenth century, particularly in the Caribbean, and this fact was a common argument in the defence of the slave trade.⁸⁷⁹ French merchants' overall involvement in the slave trade was generally less than that of Liverpool's. However, France's highest number of recorded voyages took place in the decade between 1780 and 1789, precisely the time of these debates, and at 619 voyages, the French conducted sixty-one more voyages than Liverpool alone.⁸⁸⁰ Despite France's smaller share in the trade compared with Britain as a whole, Liverpool merchant William Walton noted that the French bounty was "considerably larger than in England" and for "eight years past, France has paid every attention possible to increase her number of slave ships, by removing all obstacles and difficulties to the fitting out and loading of vessels intended for the slave trade".⁸⁸¹ Speaking in Parliament, Liverpool merchant James Penny also testified that the slave trade "is at present languishing from opposition to the French" and that their "liberal bounties and superior prices for slaves in the West Indies" contributed to perceived decrease in trade.⁸⁸² Jones and Tarleton also noted the bounty provided by the French government, and thought it best if Britain would follow their example, thereby encouraging the enterprise of the British traders rather than abolishing it or making it more difficult. These sentiments were also found in newspapers. That the French offered bounties, the *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal* asserted it "ought to awaken our ministers as well as the people of Liverpool and Bristol; or by the encouragement of the French ... the

⁸⁷⁹ See Chapter Four, p. 179.

⁸⁸⁰ Eltis et al., *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*. The next decade, however, the French engaged in 389 voyages while Liverpool participated in its highest number of recorded voyages, 969.

⁸⁸¹ William Walton to Baron Hawkesbury, 4 Feb 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXII, BL.

⁸⁸² Examination of James Penny 16 Jun 1788, in Lambert, *House Vol.* 68.

commerce of Africa will be lost to England".⁸⁸³ Furthermore, "if France has deemed the trade of such importance to her, it must be of much greater to us, who may be said to subsist only as a maritime power".⁸⁸⁴ These arguments were very similar to those made by Liverpool merchants at the middle of the century during the debates surrounding the establishment of the Company of Merchants. In this sense, the defence of the slave trade throughout the period relied very much on the same concerns and reflects the competitive threat France was to British commerce throughout the century.

Even though France embarked on less slaving voyages than Britain as a whole, concern that French encouragement would mean a loss of the African trade in Britain was a genuine concern, particularly because some British slave traders embarked on slaving voyages from France. John Tarleton testified in Parliament that if restrictions specified less than two slaves per ton, "the consequence would be the removal to Port of Havre in France".⁸⁸⁵ Tarleton himself sought partnerships with French traders to increase his chances for profit, as demonstrated in Chapter Four.⁸⁸⁶ James Jones further noted that connections were being formed in France that would "prove very injurious to the trade of this country", while ships from both Bristol and Liverpool were being fitted out for the French trade.⁸⁸⁷ It was also observed that Liverpool captains were sought by the French to command their vessels, further supporting Liverpool captains' increased human capital and expertise in the trade.⁸⁸⁸ Concerns over French competition in particular were most paramount in the first phase of the campaign against abolition; as mentioned above, the late campaign was carried out in a context of war, which was naturally accompanied by uncertainty. The above comments by Walton, Penny, Tarleton and Jones were made before when the French trade was

⁸⁸³ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 18 Dec 1784.

⁸⁸⁴ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 23 Feb 1788.

⁸⁸⁵ Examination of John Tarleton, 16 Jun 1788, in *Lambert House Vol. 68*.

⁸⁸⁶ See Chapter Four, p. 180.

⁸⁸⁷ James Jones to Baron Hawkesbury, 26 Jul 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXII, BL.

⁸⁸⁸ *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*, 9 Feb 1788.

at its height and thus posed a more significant threat. The revolutions in the French colonies of St. Domingue and Guadeloupe in 1791 and 1794, however, not only changed the socio-political structures of those colonies but greatly diminished their sugar production as well, in effect lessening French impact in trade.⁸⁸⁹ Indeed, in the decade between 1790-1799, France only engaged in 389 voyages, while in the last seven years of the trade, the number of voyages was reduced to just twenty-three.⁸⁹⁰ Still, that a threat was perceived remained an important part of Bristol and Liverpool's defence as it related to the commercial interests of Britain at large.

Spanish interests were also deemed to threaten English interests. William Walton relayed to Lord Liverpool that Spain in 1788 was only making "necessary preparations to begin trade" but had not yet "settled her plan of operations".⁸⁹¹ He also communicated that five Spanish merchants looking to enter the trade had come to London. From there, they went to Manchester to enquire after their trading goods and their prices. They also visited Liverpool to "view the town and ships employed in the slave trade" and gather information on the trade's profitability to the port.⁸⁹² Like some of the French traders, they also wondered whether

captains and doctors experienced in the trade could be prevailed upon by proper encouragement to go out to Cadiz and undertake the purchasing of the cargoes, navigation of their vessels and management of their slaves whilst on board their vessels.⁸⁹³

By enquiring after the trade in Liverpool rather than Bristol or London demonstrates that Liverpool slave merchants were clearly seen by merchants at large as the clear leaders in the trade, not only at home, but abroad too.

⁸⁸⁹ Porter, *Abolition of the Slave Trade*, p. 110.

⁸⁹⁰ Eltis et al, *Trans Atlantic Slave Trade*.

⁸⁹¹ William Walton to Baron Hawkesbury, 24 Feb 1788, LP, Vol. CCXXII, BL.

⁸⁹² *Ibid.*

⁸⁹³ *Ibid.*

Conclusion

This Chapter has argued that the Bristol merchant community and its leadership were characterised by hesitancy, caution and atomisation that hindered port improvements and impacted upon its campaigns against the Royal African Company monopoly and, later, abolition. Conversely, the collective initiative, action and expertise that allowed Liverpool merchants to succeed in the slave trade was utilised in Liverpool's efforts to further their wider interests, including implementing port improvements and opposing the proposed abolition of the slave trade. The bonding capital that typified the Bristol Corporation, Society of Merchant Venturers and its merchants manifested itself in a relative complacency and conservatism, which caused perpetual delays in improvements made to the port and commercial decline. This conservatism also mirrored Bristol slave merchants' activity in the slave trade. Bristol's noted conservatism in exploiting new markets on the African coast and supplying foreign markets in the Americas for instance may emphasise a general business culture that fostered caution, or "sticking to what you know". The idea of a cautious general business culture is reinforced by the notion that Bristol's West India merchants also exhibited relative conservatism by the end of the period. The atomisation of merchants and their interests resulted in disparate groups fighting the proposed abolition and a Society of Merchant Venturers who shunned Liverpool's outreach of support.

In contrast, Liverpool merchants demonstrated a collective spirit of enterprise throughout the period. They were represented by a more united, active and commercially-minded Corporation, which made necessary improvements that both facilitated the growth of trade and provided an environment for the port's trades to thrive. Thus, by the time the slave trade in particular was brought into question, Liverpool slave merchants were its recognised leaders, and they led the rally against the proposed abolition of the trade. Liverpool merchants by the end

of the period were sought out not only by Bristol merchants, but French and Spanish merchants for their superior knowledge and expertise, demonstrating Liverpool merchants' collective spirit of enterprise that characterised their performance in the trade.

Chapter Seven: Conclusion

In the eighteenth century, the port cities of Bristol and Liverpool enjoyed a commercial prosperity that was inextricably linked with the Atlantic trade, and particularly that of the slave trade. Both claimed to be England's "second city" at different points in their history, but by the middle of the eighteenth century, Liverpool surpassed Bristol to become the leading British port in the slave trade. The reasons for Liverpool's dominance have been subject to much debate. Chapter Two noted leading abolitionist Thomas Clarkson's assertion that Liverpool's success was due to the admission of strangers to Liverpool's trade, the salt trade, the increase in Lancashire's population, manufacturing in Manchester as well as canal development.⁸⁹⁴ This project discussed the primary historiographical arguments for Liverpool's success, many of which are in line with Clarkson's assertion. Importantly, this project also placed these historiographical arguments together under the umbrella framework of entrepreneurship and the various notions of capital, thus achieving a more comprehensive argument for Liverpool's success.

The admission of outsiders was a noted feature of the Liverpool merchant community. Liverpool's commercial ethos was important in the context of its tremendous population growth, facilitating the integration of "outsiders" and granting Liverpool merchants much greater access to important human capital. In contrast, changes in Bristol's demographic commercial profile limited the availability of human capital to its merchants and affected the port's prosperity in the slave trade. At the same time as Liverpool was growing quickly and establishing itself commercially in the 1720s and 1730s, leading Bristol slave merchants failed to create dynasties in the trade.⁸⁹⁵ Additionally, after 1750, Bristol "men of somewhat obscure origins" managed more slaving ventures as

⁸⁹⁴ Donnan, *Documents*, p. 575.

⁸⁹⁵ Morgan, "Bristol West India", p. 203.

associational ties of marriage and apprenticeship among agents declined.⁸⁹⁶ Another noted advantage for Liverpool, and also in line with Clarkson's reasoning, was that port's relationship with its hinterland. Liverpool's proximity to Lancashire textile mills was certainly an advantage when assorting appropriate cargoes for slaving ventures and in receiving valuable credit terms. Furthermore, the coal and salt fields surrounding Liverpool were instrumental in its development, as they made possible the creation of industries and improvements in transport and communications infrastructure.⁸⁹⁷ Marriner observes a boom in river improvement schemes in the eighteenth century, in addition to Liverpool's pioneering dock building.⁸⁹⁸ Thus, as Clarkson has also noted, superior transport and dock facilities, including the communication provided by the canals, also provided a significant advantage to Liverpool's trade. In contrast, Bristol was slow to improve its docks and implement canal schemes, which proved to be a hindrance for commerce. Bristol's indecision and delays throughout the eighteenth century regarding port improvement ultimately deterred its expansion in trade generally by the beginning of the nineteenth century.

The entrepreneurship framework established in this project weaves together these arguments noted above. This framework takes into account the relationships merchants had within their networks, including how they were established and maintained, as well as how merchants accessed and utilised various resources necessary for the successful operation of the trade. This is inclusive of what may be considered "natural" advantages or resources, such as their respective geography and hinterlands. Both ports had to make man-made improvements to accommodate an increase in trade, and as argued, Bristol merchants exhibited a spirit of "unambitious caution" while Liverpool merchants encouraged and actively sought these improvements. Likewise, the relationships Liverpool merchants forged with the hinterland industries benefitted their trade,

⁸⁹⁶ Richardson, *Bristol Slave Traders*, p. 24.

⁸⁹⁷ Marriner, *Economic and Social Development*, p. 13.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 18, 31.

while, in part due to better transport facilities, Bristol lost much of its hinterland trade to Liverpool. Liverpool merchants thus actively shaped their environment to cater to their trade, further enhancing their competitive advantages. Therefore, by using the theory of entrepreneurship and the various forms of capital accessed within merchants' associational networks, this project achieves the more convincing and satisfying explanation for Liverpool's success besides their often-argued but little-explained "business acumen". This "business acumen" can now essentially be attributed to the entrepreneurship of the Liverpool slave merchants as it was derived from their networks.

The slave trade was one of risk and uncertainty, and as such, it was conducted by merchant networks that were created based on trust and reputation in order to manage these risks and uncertainty. In building that reputation, specific personal qualities such as industry, prudence, vigour and spirit were recognised as essential for success in eighteenth-century commerce. Likewise, the particular role of the entrepreneur as slave trade merchants was defined in this context. For example, as part of this role, slave trade merchants needed to coordinate various resources, correspond with captains, factors and agents and exploit a variety of markets to ensure the success of voyages. Liverpool merchants also demonstrated particular initiative and coordinated action regarding both port improvements and in their defence of the slave trade. This exemplifies Liverpool's "spirit", which drove its success in the slave trade and stands in contrast with Bristol's apathy, hesitation and complacency that contributed to its decline. The particular role of the entrepreneur was most aptly demonstrated through the management patterns of Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants. Bristol slave trade merchants managed slaving voyages within comparatively small investment groups; thus, the business network a Bristol merchant was part of was also smaller. Social network analysis also found that the Bristol slave merchant community was more atomised, which corresponded with historiographically noted trends in Bristol's stagnating population and

decreasing merchant community at large throughout the period. In contrast, Liverpool merchants participated in much larger investment groups and the slave merchant community was much larger and more connected. The merchant case studies for both Bristol and Liverpool largely conformed to these established trends. The ability to coordinate knowledge and resources, an entrepreneurial role, was one such reason for large investment groups in Liverpool that contributed to their success. As Liverpool merchant investment groups were larger, the responsibility was shared among more people and risk was spread. Not only was risk spread, but these larger networks facilitated greater information transfer, keeping Liverpool merchants current with information used to combat problems associated with the uncertainty in the trade. In Bristol, where more owners acted solely, not only did these individuals assume all of the risk and responsibility, but they arguably did not have as much access to information, credit and different types of capital as did the Liverpool merchants acting in larger investment groups. Liverpool merchants thus conducted business in “coalitions of entrepreneurs” while Bristol merchants, in many cases acting alone, did not necessarily have the benefit of new and up-to-date information.

Indeed, evidence was provided to demonstrate that Bristol merchants often turned to Liverpool for their superior knowledge and expertise in the trade. In this way, Bristol slave merchants were “follower-entrepreneurs” rather than “leader-entrepreneurs”.⁸⁹⁹ Spanish and French merchants also recognised Liverpool’s superiority in the trade. Additionally, Liverpool captains facilitated information transfer and demonstrated superior expertise based on experience. Their human capital was sought by London and Bristol merchants, as well as those from Spain and France. That the role of entrepreneur was not fulfilled as successfully in Bristol as it was in Liverpool is further evidenced by Liverpool merchants’ exploitation of new market opportunities both on the African coast and in the Americas. This demonstrates not only Liverpool merchants’ willingness

⁸⁹⁹ Casson, *Entrepreneur*, p. 43.

to take risks, but that Liverpool merchant networks, due to their size, also had a greater ability to gather and pass information within them more successfully than their counterparts. Furthermore, these larger networks facilitated merchants' access to social capital in their particular urban setting.

These noted patterns relating to the business of the trade, or "Inside the Counting House" were also reflected in the social relationships and political roles these merchants had outside of a slaving venture, or "Outside the Counting House". However, life inside and outside the counting house often merged in a merchant's career and cannot be seen as discrete entities. Indeed, it was established that networks emerge for project-based work, such as a slaving venture, and often this formal collaboration stemmed from pre-existing informal relationships. Slave venture investment partnerships were formed based on trust and reputation in fellow merchants' business practice, and these relationships were further cemented by informal interactions in coffeehouses, drinking and dinner clubs and political associations, for example. Social capital, or the potential or real resources to aid a merchant's business practice that existed in network relationships, was also accessed through the Bristol and Liverpool merchants' particular urban environments. Residential patterns, membership in certain clubs and associations as well as frequenting specific coffeehouses not only conformed to ideals of the "urban renaissance" but allowed for merchants to build or re-build relationships that would contribute to better business practice. This project also demonstrated that, contrary to earlier arguments, the importance of social capital did not lessen throughout the century, it only altered network dynamics. With a dearth in both human and social capital after their height in the slave trade, Bristol merchants re-built their access to social capital by the end of the period, contributing to larger investment groups. Conversely, Liverpool's slave merchant networks by the end of the period were saturated by the wealth of knowledge and expertise the community had and thus access to social capital was not as necessary as it was for gaining initial entry into the

trade. Therefore, different types of social capital served different purposes in the Bristol and Liverpool slave merchant communities. The case study examples of port improvements and the defence of the slave trade further commented on the nature of both communities in which the entrepreneurial qualities of action and leadership, coupled with ideas of access to capital and the relative cohesiveness of merchant networks shaped their particular responses to these issues. It was found that the entrepreneurial qualities which made the Liverpool merchants successful in the slave trade were applied to issues of port improvement and the fight against the proposed abolition of the trade. As such, Liverpool emerged as a leading port by the end of the century and its merchants actively led the defence of the slave trade. As Bristol merchants did not collectively possess these entrepreneurial qualities, their trade declined throughout the period.

The limitations of this study were discussed in the Introduction, however, there is great scope for future research. Indeed, each chapter presented issues which could be expanded into larger projects. As mentioned above, the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database is a fantastic resource, which facilitated this research tremendously. Using it, the nature of investment groups in Bristol and Liverpool were ascertained and provided evidence for the argument that Liverpool's comparatively larger groups aided their success in the trade. Questions then emerge regarding the feasibility of such comprehensive analysis across different trades in both ports as well as other locales at this time without such a resource. While this project briefly mentioned them, it would be interesting to conduct a wider analysis using this framework of the West Indian traders, American traders or indeed those trading to other parts of the Empire to see if they too demonstrated these entrepreneurial characteristics. Additionally, Bristol and Liverpool merchants in their particular urban environment can be analysed further, examining their familial and religious ties more closely. Furthermore, a more gendered analysis, including the role of merchants' wives, sisters and mothers and how they may or may not have contributed to the

merchants' networks and business practice would be very useful. The example in Chapter Four of Captain Irving corresponding with his wife as a vital link in knowledge transfer attests to the further research that can be conducted in this vein. Additionally, other aspects which could be explored include the merchants' relationships with the state and their involvement in large political movements such as the proposed abolition of the slave trade.

More fruitful and new avenues of research can also be derived from the frameworks of entrepreneurship and networks. Using the theory of entrepreneurship, various notions of capital as well as social network analysis allows for a much more nuanced and complete study of trade and merchant communities beyond the slave trade and the communities of Bristol and Liverpool. Contemporaries recognised a link between a spirit of enterprise and business success, so there is no danger of anachronism. Additionally, it is well known that eighteenth-century transatlantic merchants conducted trade within networks that were established based on trust and loyalty and maintained through repeated interactions. Furthermore, these networks facilitated trade through knowledge acquisition and transfer conducted both through correspondence and informal meetings at merchant Exchanges, the counting house and coffeehouses. Future research utilising the theory of entrepreneurship and social network analysis can therefore be explored in other merchant communities and across other trades. The Atlantic World has become almost universally recognised as its own conceptual unit; examining networks of, for instance, Caribbean planters, Nova Scotian timber merchants, or Glasgow tobacco merchants utilising this framework would offer a more comprehensive view of these trades and communities. In so doing, a greater understanding of the Atlantic World would also be achieved.

A study of Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants utilising this theory offers the most comprehensive conclusion for Liverpool's success. The project was an interdisciplinary endeavour, as it was informed not only by the historiography

of the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade in its larger mercantile and Atlantic context, but also by current literature on business, entrepreneurship, networks and capital. Additionally, visual analytics tools were applied, facilitating visual representations of the structure of, and connections within, both merchant communities over time that have not been produced before. This, coupled with a spatial analysis of the homes and businesses of merchants, as well as the associational clubs of which merchants were members, offers a more rounded examination of the interwoven mercantile and social context which helped shape the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade merchants' business practice. This project therefore provides an important contribution to the existing literature on the Bristol and Liverpool slave trade and offers further insight into the nature of entrepreneurship and business networks by placing these concepts into an eighteenth-century commercial framework. Adopting these concepts can enrich the study of trade which operated within a network form of organisation that is characteristic of Atlantic trade at large.

An oft-quoted sentiment in the lead up to the abolition of the slave trade was the dichotomy between a "Liverpool man" and a "humanity man"; the implication being that those who opposed the slave trade on humane grounds were humanity men while a Liverpool man was self-interested, willing to engage in any trade as long as there were profits to be had.⁹⁰⁰ After this analysis, however, it seems more apt to argue that what constituted a Liverpool man was his entrepreneurship. This study has demonstrated that Liverpool slave trade merchants had the personal entrepreneurial qualities of initiative, risk-taking, action and leadership. They also fulfilled the role of the entrepreneur by utilising and accessing various resources gained through their associational networks to make them knowledgeable and expert leaders in the trade. In contrast, Bristol merchants simply were not as entrepreneurial. Their performance in the slave trade was marked by conservatism and an unwillingness to take risks, which

⁹⁰⁰ David Samuell to Gregson, Oct 1788, Gregson Papers, LivPRO.

mirrors Bristol's Corporation at the time in its hesitancy to make necessary port improvements to bolster Bristol's lagging trade. Lacking entrepreneurial characteristics and failing to fulfil entrepreneurial roles in the trade thus prompted some Bristol merchants to turn to those in Liverpool for their expertise. Supporting this, it is worth revisiting the comment first discussed in Chapter Two by Lowbridge Bright of Bristol, when he asserted, "the Liverpoole people go on with such spirit. I wish we could get more into that track, as they keep their business more to themselves".⁹⁰¹ Not only did Bright recognise a certain "spirit" had by the Liverpool merchants, but also a certain manner of business practice to emulate for success. Thus, what further constituted a "Liverpool man" was his success in business. These notions of spirit, knowledge and resource pooling, group cohesiveness as well as initiative and action are entrepreneurial qualities that ensured Liverpool's commercial success and enabled Liverpool slave merchants to dominate the trade. In short, what made a Liverpool man was his "particular spirit of enterprise".

⁹⁰¹ Lowbridge Bright to Henry Bright, 5 Nov 1773, in Morgan, *Bright-Meyler*, p. 450.

Technical Appendix

This appendix explains how this project gathered and utilised data from the Trans Atlantic Slave Trade Database (TASTD). The TASTD is an invaluable resource. Based on years of research, and existing now as the updated online version of the CD-ROM created in 1999, it contains records of 34,941 transatlantic voyages, each supported on average by between five and six sources. These sources are often drawn from three or more national archives.⁹⁰² The database is also organic. The online version contains more records than the CD-ROM, and with a function that allows users to contribute data to the site, the TASTD is often updated. Thus, it must be taken into consideration that the data from this project was gathered and analysed largely between 2008 and 2009 and so there will be variations in it in future explorations. The TASTD offers a wide variety of data; among others, users can find the owners of voyages, the captains, tonnage of vessels, place of the vessels' construction and registration, where voyages embarked on the African coast and disembarked in the Americas, the number of slaves taken on board and that which disembarked. Essentially, users can trace the fate of a particular voyage in a significant amount of detail. This is particularly useful when the details of voyages can be supported by merchant correspondence and other manuscript sources. Additionally, users can construct specific queries and create tables and graphs specifying certain pieces of information to cater to the specific interest of the researcher. This project primarily used the database to find both the individuals involved and the number of voyages clearing from the ports of Bristol and Liverpool over different time periods and where they embarked and disembarked. Likewise, this information was found for the twelve case study merchants. To ascertain slave merchant

⁹⁰² David Eltis and Paul F. Lachance, "Estimates of the Size and Direction of the Transatlantic Slave Trade", available at <http://slavevoyages.org/downloads/2010estimates-method.pdf>.

networks and construct the social network analysis, explained further below, lists of the owners of all Bristol and Liverpool voyages were also downloaded.

With such a vast amount of information at hand, corroborated among numerous sources from multiple archives, the construction of the database has its own complex methodology and this needs to be taken into account when using the database. The database offers both a forty-page instructional manual on how to use it as well as essays comprising detailed explanations of how the data was derived.⁹⁰³ Data was taken from records from the three points of the voyage, including from its organisation, the purchase on the African coast and the sale in the Americas. The number of sources used to detail each voyage from these three points is indicative of the fact that few voyages contain complete information on the route taken and the number of captives taken. Discrepancies and gaps in data thus exist. For instance it is noted in that the number of voyages that embarked on the African coast does not match the number of voyages that disembark in the Americas. Thus, the authors of the database summarised the information and made inferences. The data in which inferences were made are labelled as imputed variables, and the explanations from their derivation are made clear in their methodological essays.

Fortunately for this project, however, the records for the British slave trade are more complete than they are for the other national carriers, so the data was analysed with confidence. Because "a close to complete set" of port books exist in Bristol, the authors of the database even assert that the data from Bristol is taken as one hundred per cent complete. One issue that this project had to deal with, however, was how the owners, particularly for Bristol, were listed. From their methodological essay, the authors explain how they listed the owners:

For most of the slave voyages in the data set, however, merchants owned fractional shares of the vessel and trading cargo. The listing of merchants in the set probably reflects the size of each shareholder, though this fact can be confirmed only for a few voyages. For some voyages we only know

⁹⁰³ For the instructional guide, see <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/guide.faces>; for the essay on how the data was derived see <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/guide.faces>.

the principal owner "and Company." This is true particularly for many Bristol (England) voyages. To indicate the fact that the voyage was owned and/or organised by additional owners, we placed an asterisk, *, at the end of the last recorded merchant's name.⁹⁰⁴

From this explanation, this project had to assume that the first person mentioned in the list of owners was the primary owner. When the data is downloaded into Excel, the first person listed in the display is represented "Owner A" while those listed under him are "Owner B", "Owner C" and so on. Cross referencing merchant correspondence with this listing often reflected that the person listed first, the primary owner, wrote to the ship's captain as well as the agents in the Americas. Thus, in analysing the trends in ownership, those listed first were counted as primary owners, or "Owner A", while those under were counted as secondary owners. Their exact share in ownership in terms of financial capital was not an important consideration for the project; what was, however, was the implication that the more owners contributing to a voyage constituted an entrepreneurial strategy, as both risk and profits were spread and investors had a larger pool of resources from which to draw to ensure the voyage's success.

After downloading a list of all the owners from Bristol and Liverpool voyages, a computer code was created to count the following: the number of times they were primary owners, the number of times they were solo primary owners, and the number of times they were investors.⁹⁰⁵ The number of relationships between merchants was also deduced, in which investors worked together on a voyage, whether one was Owner A and the other was an investor or they were both investors. The figures provided the basis for the analysis in Chapter Three.

As mentioned in Chapter Three, the software program used for visual analysis, Pajek, is free and available to download.⁹⁰⁶ There are numerous

⁹⁰⁴ <http://www.slavevoyages.org/tast/database/guide.faces>

⁹⁰⁵ I am grateful for the assistance of Dr. Adam Brown in the creation of this code as well as with the Pajek diagrams.

⁹⁰⁶ <http://vlado.fmf.uni-lj.si/pub/networks/pajek/>.

applications available to users and the book by de Nooy et al. offers a step by step guide in these applications.⁹⁰⁷ For this project, Pajek was used as simply a visual tool in which the slave merchant networks were graphically represented.

⁹⁰⁷ de Nooy et al., *Exploratory*.

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