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SMALL SHOP SURVIVAL: THE DAIRY-GROCERY AS A
CASE IN POINT

A thesis submitted to
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by

Steve Maharey

ERRATA

Page.

- 20 Markin (1974) should read Markin (1968)
32 "This is being done"
40 "explanatory" should read "exploratory"
140 "stay" should be "say"
142 "begin" should be "being"
146 Ritzer (1972) should be (1971)
165 "extensive pattern" should be "extension pattern"
176 "coluntary" should read "voluntary"
184 "guage" should be "gauge"
197 Hearn and Stoll (1974) should be (1975)
202 "Recapitulation" should be "Recapitulation"
233 F. Parkin (ed) Social Analysis of Class Structures
234 Davis, D. A History of Shopping

ABSTRACT

The study of dairy-grocers presented here goes some way toward filling the gap in social science knowledge of small shops in particular and small businesses in general. The aims of the study were: 1) to outline the broad environmental forces which have, in recent years, provided an unfavourable background for small business operation; 2) to give an account of the experiences of small shopkeepers in the context of their work; and 3) to examine how the experiences in question could best be collated as a theory which might explain the position of small shops and small shopkeepers in society.

It was concluded, from the case study of dairy-grocers, that small shops and their owners are becoming structurally marginal. By structurally marginal is meant:

/....the condition of persons for whom institutionalised roles are not readily available, and who, as a consequence, suffer from a deficiency of social worth (Wittermans and Kraus, 1974:351).

In view of the conclusions reached in the study, it is argued that current attempts to provide aid for the small shop will be unsuccessful in many instances unless small shops can be reintegrated into society as an important component of the retailing hierarchy.

The research was qualitative in nature and took the form of a case study. The case study approach was adopted to allow an in depth analysis of the problems at hand. The major research technique used was that of intensive interviewing.

The research was perceived of as exploratory and was therefore not guided by formal hypotheses. It is hoped that the great deal of descriptive data that was generated in the search for a theoretical explanation of the small shopkeeper in society, will be of use to researchers from the sociological areas of work, occupations, economic activity and the family.

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In carrying out the field work for the research I was dependent on the goodwill of many people. I am especially indebted to the dairy-grocery owners of Palmerston North, particularly those who took part in the longer interviews, and to those people connected with the retail trade who discussed the research with me.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter		Page
I	THE SMALL SHOP IN SOCIETY	1
	Environmental Forces Influencing Small Shops	4
	Small Shopkeepers: Their Position in the Retailing Heirarchy	23
	Efforts to Preserve the Small Shop	27
	Why Preserve the Small Shop?	32
II	DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY	37
	Statement of the Problem	38
	Rationale for Sample Selection	40
	Location of the Dairy-Grocers for the Study	43
	Justification for the Small Sample	47
	Methods of Data Collection	51
	Writing Up the Data	62
	Analysis of the Data	63
	The Sample: A Profile	68
III	ENTRANCE TO THE OCCUPATION	80
	A Symbol of Opportunity	82
	Circumstances Surrounding Entrance to the Dairy	88
	Knowledge of the Occupation	92
	Conclusions	99

Chapter		Page
IV	THE SHOPKEEPER-CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP: PART I	101
	Shopkeeping	104
	On Being a Convenience	110
	On Being Abused	116
	Conclusions	124
V	THE SHOPKEEPER-CUSTOMER RELATIONSHIP: PART II	126
	Knowing the Customer	128
	Impression Management	137
	Bending the Rules	145
	Conclusions	149
VI	FAMILY WORK	151
	The Family Work Unit	152
	Work Characteristics	155
	Work Patterns	161
	Husbands and Wives	167
	Work Adjustments	171
	Children's Work	175
	Conclusions	178
VII	MONEY AND MEANING	179
	Money	181
	Meaning	193
	Conclusions	200

Chapter	Page
VIII SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS	201
The Research Findings: A Recapitulation	202
The Future of the Dairy-Grocery	213
Theoretical Conclusions	216
The Structural Nature of Shopkeeper Marginality in Modern Society	222
Small Shop Survival	227
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 233
 APPENDIX	 241
A. Letter of Introduction	241
B. Scheduled Standardised Questionnaire	243
C. Nonscheduled Standardised Questionnaire	248
D. Extract from Field Notes	254