Historians and sociologists of all types have debated the social foundations for the success of Charles Finney's early nineteenth century revivals. Alexis de Tocqueville and scores of others view Finney's Rochester, New York revivals as “... a means of building order and a sense of common purpose among sovereign, footloose and money-hungry individualist” (Johnson, p. 9). Conversely, Paul E. Johnson, in his work, “A Shopkeeper's Millennium” attributes the success of the revivals to the dislocation of social relationships through collapse of the artisanal system and the growth of industrial capitalism. Finney's millennium-focused revival encouraged converts to work toward total societal transformation and facilitated such major changes. By examining a plethora of valuable primary sources, Johnson asserts that Rochester is strongly representative of other New England and Mid-Western cities of the time. In his preface to the 25th anniversary edition, Johnson admits that he may have been too assertive in his approach to revival as simply a means to social control and underestimated the role of women in Rochester's social transformation.

Laying a proper foundation for his argument, Johnson begins his work by examining economic, social and political life in Rochester. He writes thematically and chronologically giving the reader pertinent background on life in Rochester before the population explosion of the 1820s and showing how economic changes led to the dislocation of social relationships. Under the artisanal system, wage earners and
journeymen lived in the home of a master craftsman providing a stable home and creating a manageable mini-community. In fact, men were given watch over their wives, children, and employees. Such an arrangement served as a solid social and economic structure for Rochester citizens and typified pre-industrial life and work across much of America. The development of the Erie Canal brought about major changes in Rochester’s social make up. As new people, goods and ideas rushed down the canal into Rochester, it quickly became a burgeoning commercial and industrial city rising to meet the daily demands of a growing population.

Rochester’s booming economy brought on the collapse of the artisanal system and its social controls. Workshops of two or three turned into small manufacturing operations, displacing workers outside the master craftsman’s home, deskillling labor and creating new divisions of labor. Such operations were often owned by merchant-capitalist rather than skilled artisans, continuing to widen the gap between employer and employee. As the pace, scale and consistency of production increased, masters hired strangers with whom they shared no more than contractual obligations (Johnson, p. 57). As previous social structures dislocated and social controls weakened, excessive drinking and violence became more common. Johnson writes, “... nowhere was the making of distinct classes and the collapse of old social controls dramatized more neatly, more angrily, and in so many aspects of life.” Economic changes in Rochester fueled larger social changes that led to the collapse of the artisanal system and led to the development of a new class system.
As class structure began to change, disparities between the two groups began to increase. The social geography of the city changed, dividing master from worker and business from home. The lives of middle class folks became increasingly separated from the lives of wage earners as their demands for privacy increased. The two worlds existed within yards of each other and quarrels erupted regularly. While the disputes stemmed from many issues, alcohol was a central issue from the beginning. Masters, feeling the loss of social power began to use coercion as a means to change their disorderly neighbors. Temperance advocates encouraged complete societal compliance from the farmers who grew the barley to the storeowners who sold it. The Rochester Society for the Promotion of Temperance was formed in 1828 to promote such ends (Johnson, p. 79). Temperance became a middle-class value, and sobriety a middle-class imperative. Political groups formed in efforts to regain some semblance of social control and in turn divided Rochester’s elite into two hostile groups, dividing every Protestant church in town (Johnson, p. 90).

Johnson argues that such societal conditions facilitated the Rochester transformation. Charles Finney’s doctrine of moral free agency allowed masters and community leaders to lose the chains of moral and social obligation to the droves of wage earners they had let out from under their control. Finney taught that men were not innately evil, but evil was a result of choices made by selfish men and women. No longer was the master responsible for his employees and boarders, each man was given free will and choice. Unfortunately, over 71% of Rochester’s adult male work force was comprised of unskilled casual laborers and journeymen craftsmen (Johnson, p.38). Oddly enough, Finney’s revival most significantly affected Rochester’s entrepreneurs.
who held direct responsibility for dismantling previous social structures through the collapse of the artisanal system. Church attendance among master builders and shoemakers increased 70 percent and 73 percent, respectively (Johnson, p. 104). The numbers are similar across trades among entrepreneurs. The only group to decrease church attendance during Finney’s revival was hotelkeepers, which actually declined 38 percent (Johnson, p. 106). Unfortunately, of all Rochester entrepreneurs, Finney’s converts kept fewer workmen in their homes than other masters dropping from 74 in 1827 to 31 in 1830 (Johnson, p. 107). Converted masters believed Finney’s free moral agency doctrine and put it into practice, ridding their households of wage earners more than those not converted.

Now, Finney did not leave Rochester without societal bonds or obligations. His millennium-focused revival encouraged converts to work toward total societal transformation and facilitated such major changes. Directly following conversion, the question came to each: “Lord, what wilt thou have me do?” For many, the answer was simple—unite with other Christians and convert the world (Johnson, p. 113). Converts were busy working to both proselytize the unsaved and wage war on social evils like alcohol, the circus, the theatre and other workingmen’s entertainments. Christians organized various social institutions like the Rochester Savings Bank to teach thrift and personal discipline to workingmen, and the Female Charitable Society who helped families in need. Denominations began to unite under Finney’s common millennial mission to rid society of sin and speed the coming age. Previous efforts to coerce social change had been replaced with social institutions to assist those in need, prayer to pray in new souls and a strong sense of a social conscience in both business and pleasure.
Christian principles were more than just personal piety; they had become a social gospel to reform society.

These social gospel principles spread to both the public and private sphere in Rochester. Many owners refused to hire wage earners who drank alcohol and many demanded that their workers attend revival meetings. Applicants at the Rochester Woolen Mills required workers to “be of moral and temperate habits . . .” (Johnson, p. 122). Workingmen who did not attend church had trouble finding jobs; whereas those who attended church became established residents of Rochester. Journeymen and apprentices alike found occupational opportunities increase with regular church attendance. At home, women were taking on new roles as they organized prayer meetings and family visits and engaged in regular prayer for their husbands and other members of their households. Revival meetings became family events at which, women consistently out-attended men often taking on the role of the domestic spiritual leader. Finney helped raise up a new brand of Christians who were determined to change the spiritual and moral climate of Rochester, New York by ridding it of sin and bringing about the millennium.

Johnson, through examination of a variety of valuable sources, asserts that Rochester is strongly representative of other New England and Mid-Western cities of the time. His investigation and presentation is impressive. Johnson not only gives readers a detailed and personal account of the Rochester community from 1827-1834 but also provides a solid historical foundation from which the period can be examined. He details the economic, social and political basis of the community before Finney's revivals and
provides a stunning account of life in Rochester during the renewal. Through careful analysis of church and public records, including city directories, tax lists, census schedules, genealogical materials, diaries, letters and newspaper articles, Johnson recreates life in 1820’s Rochester and presents a convincing case.

Rochester was a likely choice for Johnson because the amount of significant change that occurred in a short time allowed him to study rapid urbanization, religious revival and political and social reorganization in seven quick years. Such changes hit Rochester with unusual force and speed. Finney’s success in Rochester between 1830-31 was the most dynamic of all his revival crusades that year, making it the most thoroughly evangelized American city (Johnson, p. 14). Adversely, it is also possible that such a narrow study cannot effectively represent a much larger sociological phenomenon. The span and scope of the second great awakening is much larger and deeper than Johnson’s “Shopkeeper” offers. While all American cities share commonalities, it is erroneous to assume that all similarities lead to the same conclusions. Rather, the answers found come from the questions asked and the sources chosen.

Mary P. Ryan, in her work, “A Women’s Awakening” takes an in-depth look at the role of women in the revivals of Utica, New York between 1800-1840. Ryan argues that women had a more dominant role in the religious conversions of spouses, children and other acquaintances than often given credit for. To this point, Johnson agrees and notes that women often served as moral authorities within the home, keeping their husbands focused on their spiritual responsibilities and proper conduct. However, Johnson and
Ryan sharply differ as to the demographics of their revival converts. Ryan asserts that especially among males, “the bulk of revival converts was not only mobile but also young and of relatively low social status” (Ryan, p. 607). Ryan also notes that most converts were singles (Johnson, p.607) while Johnson’s focuses on male conversion and believes that Finney’s converts were often Rochester’s wealthiest families.

It is obvious that Johnson has performed a much larger study of Rochester than Ryan has of Utica. Ryan limited her study to church records, while Johnson pulls from a wide variety of sources providing larger scope and breadth. I believe it is possible to reconcile the evidence of the two studies. Ryan writes of women’s social organizations like the Female Missionary Society who formed to help carry the moral and religious responsibilities of their households. Such women were from prominent merchant and professional families. The Female Charitable Society had similar sociological characteristics. Johnson, in his preface to the 25th anniversary edition, admits that he may have underestimated the role of women in Rochester’s social transformation. Considering this, if Johnson were to write his “Shopkeeper” today, he would have included women as a more present source of change among revival communities. While Johnson’s study may have been broader and more inclusive, his focus still remained on white, upper- and middle-class men and should be broadened to include the roles of Rochester women.

While I recognize the role of religion in social control, I do not believe this was the intended end of Finney’s revival pursuits. I would like to believe that good men and women were encouraged to turn their hearts toward God and in turn, made significant
changes in their spiritual lives that, combined with Finney's millennial ideals, led to a
new social-gospel-brand of 19th century Christianity. I think the revival eased the societal pains of the transformation to an industrial capitalist society and helped create a social conscience for many. Still, I would like to see further study of such 19th century revival towns to draw long-term sociological conclusions. Beyond the economic and political information that Johnson draws from, I would have liked to see more first-hand accounts of conversion to get a more intimate look at conversion causality. Neither Ryan nor Johnson provides such information, which may lead to a better understanding of how the revival personally affected the lives of Rochester and Utica residents. It is hard for me to accept a moncausal conclusion to a multi-faceted societal phenomenon. Richard Bushman in his review of Johnson’s work agrees writing, “The revivals in rural places throughout the Burned-Over District suggest many more forces at work than this single one.” (Bushman, p. 926). Both Johnson and Ryan provide convincing studies of 19th Century revival towns yet both lack the depth and breadth needed to make a solid conclusion about the causes and consequences of the Second Great Awakening.

An outstanding job of summarizing, critiquing, and engaging the book. Many of your insights here parallel your fine contributions to class discussions. In particular, you seamlessly interweave change over time with thematic analysis, concrete evidence with broader claims, and your own assessments with those of scholars. My corrections were all minor, but you should pay attention to them for the final paper.

Grade A
BIBLIOGRAPHY
