

THE FAMILY IN UTOPIA: CELIBACY, COMMUNAL CHILD REARING, AND CONTINUITY IN A RELIGIOUS COMMUNE

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The Shakers sought to replace the nuclear family with the Shaker family through their unorthodox family practices of celibacy and communal child rearing. Although these practices may have been beneficial in some respects, they contributed to the numerical decline of the Shakers. A quantitative analysis of the children (joined with parents or adopted by the society) in Shaker communities between 1850 and 1870 shows that children with natural family ties were more likely than other children to persist in Shaker communities, and a significant fall in the proportion of those who were more likely to persist contributed to the decline in total membership.

Widely recognized as one of the most successful utopian movements in American history, the Shakers have been the subject of much curiosity and admiration for their unorthodox family practices of celibacy and communal child rearing. Prescribed by their founder, Ann Lee, and based on their interpretation of passages from the New Testament, Shaker celibacy was associated with the rejection of preexisting marital ties between members, controlling of all relationships between sexes, and separation of their activities. Although celibacy prevented procreation among the Shakers, the society still housed many children because some adult members joined with their children and the society accepted children from orphanages and from parents or guardians who could not provide care themselves. For the care and education of these children, the Shakers adopted a communal system. Through the practices of celibacy and communal child rearing, they sought to replace the nuclear family with the Shaker family.

Although the family practices of the Shakers have received serious scholarly attention, the consequences of these practices for membership continuity have been left largely unexplored. Studying the relationship between religion, sexuality, and women's roles in comparative settings, researchers have shown various ways in which celibacy and communal child rearing contributed to spiritual union and sexual equality among the Shakers.¹ The question remains, however, whether celibacy and communal

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child rearing had any connection to the numerical decline of the Shakers. Although some writers have summarily asserted that celibacy may have caused the numerical decline of the Shakers, historians of the Shakers have generally refrained from claiming causal connections between the unorthodox family practices and the numerical decline of the sect because these practices had begun several generations before the beginning of the numerical decline and no direct evidence has been found to substantiate their connection at the time of the decline.

This article will examine the impact of unorthodox family practices on the numerical decline of the Shakers by focusing on the children in Shaker communities and using the manuscript schedules of the U.S. censuses as sources of data. The first objective of the article is to examine the characteristics of children in Shaker communities. What proportion of the Shakers were children, and what was their distribution in terms of natural family ties? The second objective is to examine the role of unorthodox family practices on the persistence of children in Shaker communities. What role did the presence of natural family ties with other members have on the children's decision to stay as Shakers? Identifying whether each child stayed in a Shaker community between two consecutive censuses, I determine the factors that affected the likelihood of staying among the Shakers and focus on the influence of parents and siblings.² The changing proportion of children with natural family ties and the role of parents and siblings on the children's decision to stay as Shakers indicate a strong relationship between the unorthodox family practices and the numerical decline of the Shakers.

CELIBACY, COMMUNAL CHILD REARING, AND THE SHAKER FAMILY

As a Christian communal society, the Shakers, whose official name is the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, have been well known for their commitment to communalism, sexual equality, celibacy, and communal child rearing. In addition, they have enjoyed a national reputation for some of their products such as furniture, brooms, garden seeds, and medicinal herbs and roots. Recently, there has been a resurgence of interest in the Shakers and their history, as can be observed by the increasing attention they receive both from the general public and from scholars in a variety of disciplines.³

The sect began when founder Ann Lee and a handful of followers arrived in the United States in 1774. By the year 1800, the society had established eleven communities in New York and New England, with a total membership of 1,373 individuals.⁴ In 1850, their numbers reached 3,872 individuals living in twenty-one communities scattered between Maine and Kentucky. From 1850 on, however, the total population of the Shakers started to decline. In 1860, the U.S. Census recorded a total of 3,520 members, falling sharply to 2,645 members in 1870, and to 855 by 1900.⁵

Some of the utopian movements in American history are well known for their unorthodox family practices. Whereas the Mormons practiced polygamy and the Oneida Perfectionists introduced a form of group marriage, the Shakers were committed to celibacy and communal child rearing as the distinct and unchanging practices of their established order.⁶ For the Shakers, the primary goal of these practices was to replace the nuclear family with a communal family. Indeed, the Shakers crystallized this

notion by calling their basic communal unit a “family.” Each community consisted of two to six Shaker families, units ranging in size from about 10 to more than 100 persons. Members of a Shaker family lived, worked, and worshipped together, referring to each other as “brother” and “sister” and to their prominent leaders as “father” and “mother.” By joining the Shakers, an individual was thus expected to leave behind natural family ties and establish an identity as the member of a Shaker family. As Stephen J. Stein writes, “The fundamental step for every member was separation from the natural family and integration into a Shaker family.”⁷

Celibacy was a key component of the Shaker family system. The doctrine was gradually developed by Ann Lee during the early period of Shaker history. As Edward D. Andrews describes, as a result of a series of traumatic and visionary experiences in the 1770s, she became convinced that “‘cohabitation of the sexes’ was the cardinal sin, the source of all evil.”⁸ The Shaker doctrine of celibacy is also based on the Shakers’ interpretation of a passage in the New Testament that true believers “neither marry nor are given in marriage.” To implement a celibate system, in addition to rejecting preexisting marital ties, the Shakers carefully controlled all relationships between the sexes and separated their activities. Men and women slept in separate quarters and worked in separate occupations, and strict codes of conduct were imposed to regulate their contact.⁹

Although celibacy prevented procreation among the Shakers, it did not mean that the Shaker communities consisted of adult members only. Many adult novices were married prior to membership, already had children, and brought them along into the society. In addition, many children were left to the care of the Shakers by parents or guardians who were unable to provide proper care themselves. The Shakers also adopted children from orphanages with the hope that they would remain Shakers upon reaching adulthood. Children younger than the age of sixteen were formally indentured to the Shakers, which legally bound them to the society until the ages of eighteen for girls and twenty-one for boys. Although the age sixteen marked the beginning of adulthood, only upon reaching the age of twenty-one could they sign the covenant and become full adult members.

The Shakers adopted a communal system for the care and education of the children.¹⁰ Boys and girls were separated from each other and from their parents, and they were placed under the supervision of adult caretakers. As part of the indenture agreement, the society was obligated to provide these children with food, clothing, education, and occupational training. Divorced from natural family ties and raised by the society, the children became part of the Shaker family.

Researchers have noted several beneficial consequences of the unorthodox family practices of the Shakers. In his monumental treatise on American communes, John H. Noyes, the founder of the Oneida community and a contemporary observer of nineteenth-century American communes, noted that the Shakers were the most successful community and cautiously argued that “in general it seems probable . . . that there is some rational connection between their control of the sexual relation and their prosperity.”¹¹ Several more specific connections between celibacy and communal success have since been suggested. For example, Rosabeth M. Kanter views celibacy as a “sacrifice,” one of the mechanisms to build commitment in a successful commune.¹² Celibacy has also been argued to facilitate the development of communal bonds and reli-

gious conviction by eliminating divided loyalties and channeling familial devotion toward community and religion.¹³ Moreover, celibacy can facilitate sexual equality. As Lawrence Foster argues, "Shaker celibacy made possible this remarkable system that gave women a degree of equality in leadership that even the most militant socialist advocates of women's rights were unable or unwilling to achieve in practice."¹⁴

As a complementary practice, communal child rearing also contributed to achieving some of these benefits by freeing parents from child care obligations and allowing them to pursue religious, occupational, and leadership objectives. In addition to benefits to the parents, communal child rearing is also argued to have benefited the children. For example, Andrews argues that "it seems that the lot of Shaker youth compared favorably with that of the sons and daughters of farmers in rural America of the period."¹⁵ Orphans and abandoned children particularly benefited from the communal child rearing of the Shakers by receiving the care and training that their parents or guardians could not provide. The society may also have benefited because of the much needed labor that the children provided. Examining the benefits of the Shaker apprenticeship system from an economic perspective, John E. Murray argues that "the community actually benefited from the efforts of the apprentices, despite the net loss they entailed in their very young years."¹⁶

What did the Shakers have to give up to achieve these benefits? Many Shakers, particularly married members and their children, must have incurred a private cost from sexual abstinence or separation from nuclear family. More important for the purposes of this article are the social costs to the Shaker society as a whole, some of which have been noted in the literature. For example, it has been shown that the discovery of forbidden relationships often caused internal tension and difficulties, significantly disrupting peace and order in Shaker communities.¹⁷ Celibacy and communal child rearing were also sources of frequent criticism and attacks by outsiders, sometimes resulting in lengthy legal battles.¹⁸ In addition, noting the economic implications of celibacy, William A. Hinds finds it to be "expensive and uneconomical" because the separation of the sexes in all activities requires "many and large buildings."¹⁹

As for the implications of these practices for the continuity of Shaker membership, some writers have argued that celibacy significantly prevented the growth of the Shakers. For example, as a contemporary observer of the Shakers in the nineteenth century, Hinds argues that "celibacy places the Shakers at a disadvantage in respect to the increase of their numbers." Similarly, Foster argues that "the entire Shaker organization was celibate and was thus totally dependent on converts from the outside world. No consistent or reliable system of recruitment was ever developed by the group, and after the Civil war, the organization went into a sharp decline."²⁰ Given that Shaker communities actually housed children, these arguments seem to presume that the numbers of these children were insignificant and that they typically did not stay in Shaker communities upon reaching adulthood.²¹ For example, having stated that "the possibility of internal recruitment was not open to the Shakers," John M. Whitworth qualifies his statement by arguing that "children were occasionally adopted, but few of these children remained in the group after they had attained maturity."²² Although these arguments might seem reasonable, their weakness is that they make quantitative claims about Shaker membership without providing any quantitative support. Other than citing scattered pieces of anecdotal evidence found in the journals, diaries, and publications of the Shakers, they provide no systematic analysis of the number of children and their consequences in Shaker communities.

Historians of the Shakers have been generally careful not to reach unwarranted conclusions about the causal connections between unorthodox family practices and the numerical decline of the Shakers. Because celibacy and communal child rearing were unchanging practices throughout Shaker history, attributing the numerical decline that started in the middle of the nineteenth century to these practices would have been simply a biased and selective application of the argument. Moreover, no quantitative evidence has been found so far to substantiate the existence of a direct connection between them. A satisfactory support for the existence of such a connection would have to uncover the exact nature of the relationship between these practices and the continuity of membership and show why the relationship caused the decline after the middle of the nineteenth century and not earlier.

As the previous arguments about the relationship between the unorthodox family practices and the numerical decline of the Shakers make clear, the clue to understanding such a relationship lies in examining the number of children and their consequences in Shaker communities. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of William S. Bainbridge and Priscilla J. Brewer, more recent scholarship has discovered various quantitative information about the children in Shaker communities.²³ For example, using the enumeration schedules of the U.S. population censuses, Bainbridge shows that the proportion of those under the age of nineteen ranged between 29 percent and 36 percent of total Shaker membership between 1840 and 1900.²⁴ These figures indicate that the proportion of children was far from being negligible in Shaker communities.²⁵ Questions remain, however, about the characteristics of these children and the factors that caused some to leave and others to stay in Shaker communities. What was the role of the unorthodox family practices in shaping the number, distribution, and consequences of the children in Shaker communities?

CHILDREN IN SHAKER COMMUNITIES

This study addresses these issues by using the enumeration schedules of the U.S. population censuses as the primary sources of data. Each census year, enumerators combed the nation, recording on standardized forms detailed information about every household. Whereas until 1840 enumerators recorded each household as a single entry, from 1850 on, they entered information about each individual separately. Focusing on the period between 1850 and 1870, I first identified Shaker colonies in the census enumeration schedules. Because full adult membership began at age twenty-one, I recorded the information about those younger than twenty-one to construct data sets consisting of Shaker children only, separately for each of the censuses of 1850, 1860, and 1870.

Census schedules provide information about each individual's name, age, sex, occupation, and birthplace. In addition, because the records identified each individual by both first and last names, shared last names within a community can be used as an estimate of natural family ties.²⁶ Table 1 reports the number of children in Shaker communities and their distribution by age, sex, birthplace, and natural family ties. Because the enumerators did not record the occupation of those younger than sixteen, distribution by occupation is not reported.

As Table 1 shows, corresponding to the general numerical decline of the Shakers, the number of children also fell sharply after 1860 even though their proportion to total membership remained fairly stable at about 35 percent. Whereas the distribution of

Table 1
Children in Shaker Communities

	1850	1860	1870
Number			
Children	1,326	1,325	871
Proportion of total membership (%)	35	38	33
Age (%)			
Between 0 and 5	9	6	6
Between 6 and 10	25	22	24
Between 11 and 16	38	43	42
Between 16 and 20	28	29	28
Sex (%)			
Female	52	53	59
Birthplace (%)			
Born in the same state as the Shaker community	58	55	56
Born in other states	37	34	38
Foreign born	5	11	6
Natural family ties (%)			
Entered with mother only	15	17	13
Entered with father only	5	5	4
Entered with both parents	10	5	4
Entered with siblings only	35	31	25
Entered alone	36	43	54

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Enumeration Schedules of the Population Censuses, 1850-1870.

age and birthplace did not follow any clear pattern of change over time, the proportions of female children and those who apparently entered Shaker communities alone rose significantly between 1850 and 1870.²⁷

Changes in the distribution of children by natural family ties show one of the consequences of the unorthodox family practices of the Shakers. In 1823, Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, two Shaker leaders, wrote in the *Summary View of the Millennial Church* that "the children gathered into the Society, are mostly those brought in by their believing parents; tho the Society has, occasionally, taken in the children of others, by the earnest solicitations of their parents and guardians; but this is not common practice."²⁸ The evidence shows how much the common practice had changed by 1850, and even more so between 1850 and 1870, when about four-fifths of the children were entering without parents.

Part of this change may have been caused by the decline in the entry of entire families with children. That the proportions of children without parents and siblings were both rising nevertheless appears to be a direct consequence of the unorthodox family practices of the Shakers. As Brewer also argues, the Shakers sought to admit large numbers of children after the 1840s because they realized that "few new converts were likely to come from the adult ranks."²⁹ Although the question of why adults and families with children were unlikely to convert to Shakerism anymore is important, more important for the purposes of this article is the implication of the argument for the options that the unorthodox family practices made available to the Shakers. Celibacy limited the number of children that the Shakers could have from their own members.

Although because of celibacy the Shakers could not procreate, they could nevertheless fill their ranks with adopted children because of communal child rearing.

INFLUENCES ON THE STAY OF CHILDREN AS SHAKERS

The rising proportion of children entering without parents or siblings, however, tells only half of the story about the consequences of the unorthodox family practices of the Shakers. The other half is the effect of these practices on the numerical decline of the Shakers through the relationship between natural family ties and the decision of the children to stay in Shaker communities. To see this, suppose that children who joined the Shakers with parents or siblings were more likely than others to stay as Shakers. In that case, the rising proportion of children without parents or siblings would have caused a fall in the proportion of children who stayed as Shakers, a direct consequence of the unorthodox family practices. These practices would have caused not only a change in the distribution of children in terms of natural family ties but also a decline in Shaker membership. If, on the other hand, the Shakers had complete success in replacing the nuclear family with the Shaker family, and thus natural family ties played no role in the children's decisions to stay as Shakers, then numerical decline would have been independent of unorthodox family practices. Although these practices would have caused changes in the distribution of children in terms of natural family ties, the causes of the numerical decline would have to be sought elsewhere. To determine the role of the unorthodox family practices of the Shakers on their numerical decline, we thus have to examine the influences on the decisions of the children to stay in Shaker communities.

Because factors other than natural family ties may also affect the children's decisions, a satisfactory quantitative analysis must consider all relevant variables to be able to determine the role of natural family ties in isolation. Previous literature has identified several factors as significant influences on the children's stay in Shaker communities. For example, calculating the distribution of retention by age and sex groups for all children in Shaker communities, Bainbridge finds that girls and children younger than ten were more likely than boys and teenagers to stay in Shaker communities.³⁰ Similarly, studying membership records of the New Lebanon Church family, Brewer argues that the presence of adult role models was also important in retaining young people, and in a quantitative analysis of the indenture agreements of the same church family, Murray finds that the sex, literacy, and year of apprenticeship of children had significant effects on their likelihood of fulfilling the indenture contract.³¹

For a quantitative analysis of the children's stay among the Shakers, I traced each child present in one census to the next census to determine whether he or she stayed as a Shaker or left. A dummy variable (1 if stayed between the two censuses, 0 otherwise) thus represents the decision to stay as a Shaker between two consecutive censuses as the dependent variable.³² I used probit regression analysis to test for the significance of the roles of various independent variables on the decision to stay.

I combined the information from the census records with other known facts about the Shaker communities to construct several independent variables that represent the roles of natural family ties, factors suggested in the literature, and other potential factors that can influence the children's stay. The only quantitative information that the census schedules provide about an individual is his or her age. Because the effect of

age might be nonlinear, however, I also included an age-squared term into the regression analysis. As discussed above, census schedules also recorded each child's sex and birthplace. The information about sex and birthplace can be transformed into two dummy variables: sex (1 if female, 0 if male) and nativity (1 if born in the same state as the community, 0 otherwise).

In addition to the personal characteristics of children, the characteristics of their communities can also affect their stay as Shakers. As discussed above, the relevant community for each child was his or her Shaker family. Census enumeration schedules typically recorded Shaker families within a Shaker community separately, making it possible to identify each child's Shaker family and to generate variables that summarize its characteristics. An essential characteristic of a Shaker family was its status within the local Shaker organization. Within each Shaker society, consisting of two or more Shaker families, one of these families, usually called the "Church" (or "Center") family, typically had the leadership position. Because the Church family thus presumably consisted of spiritually advanced members, one would expect the children in these families to be more likely than those in other families to stay as Shakers between censuses. A dummy variable (1 if member of Church family, 0 otherwise) is included in the regression analysis to test for this expectation. The geographic location of a Shaker community can also be important. One would expect those children who are members of a Shaker community in an urban location to be more likely than others to leave the society for outside job opportunities upon reaching adulthood. A dummy variable (1 if urban, 0 otherwise) tests for the role of geographic location.³³ To test for the significance of Brewer's argument about the importance of the presence of adult role models, I included the proportion of those between the ages of twenty-five and forty-nine in a child's Shaker family as another variable at the community level.³⁴

Natural family ties can exist through the presence of parents or siblings. Some children joined the Shakers with parents and siblings, while others entered with parents only, with siblings only, or alone. Because the presence of parents and siblings can potentially exert different types of influence on the decisions of the children, I generated two different variables to capture the role of natural family ties. The first is whether a child is present with a parent (or parents), represented by a dummy variable (1 if with parent, 0 otherwise). The second is whether a child has a sibling (or siblings), represented by another dummy variable (1 if with sibling, 0 otherwise).

Table 2 reports the results of probit regression analysis of influences on the children's stay in Shaker communities. Other than the changing significance of the role of urban location, the results are generally consistent between the two periods.³⁵ The statistical significance (at conventional levels) of the negative (and decreasing) effect of age and the positive effects of being female and having adult role models in the community confirm the previous arguments about the roles of these variables. The inclusion of age and age-squared terms into the regression analysis makes it possible to estimate the age at which the persistence probability of children was minimized. The coefficients of age and its square in the 1850-1860 regression indicate that the probability of persistence to the 1860 census fell with age until the age of about eleven and rose thereafter.³⁶ Although the age that minimized the probability fell to about eight in the 1860-1870 regression, these results indicate that children in the intermediate age groups were consistently less likely than others to persist to the next census. These results also show that children in Church families were more likely than others to stay

Table 2
Influences on Children's Stay in Shaker Communities

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>1850-1860</i>		<i>1860-1870</i>	
	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Significance</i>	<i>Coefficient</i>	<i>Significance</i>
Constant	-0.69	.009	-1.20	< .001
Age	-0.09	.009	-0.16	< .001
Age squared	0.004	.02	0.01	< .001
Girl	0.42	< .001	0.54	< .001
Born in the same state as the Shaker community	-0.09	.23	0.10	.23
Member of church family	0.15	.06	0.24	.006
Community in urban location	-0.27	.003	-0.09	.36
Proportion of role models (ages 25-49) in Shaker community	1.21	.03	1.67	< .001
With parent(s)	0.29	< .001	0.28	.003
With sibling(s)	0.19	.01	0.22	.01
Sample size	1,309		1,322	
Percentage predicted correctly	68		81	
Likelihood ratio (degrees of freedom)	84.1 (9)		98.8 (9)	

Source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, Enumeration Schedules of the Population Censuses, 1850-1870.

Note: The dependent variable equals 1 for children who stayed in Shaker communities between censuses, 0 otherwise. See the text for the description of independent variables.

as Shakers, confirming the expectation about the role of Shaker family status in a local settlement.

Among the factors simultaneously affecting children's stay, more important for the purposes of this article are those that show the role of natural family ties.³⁷ As Table 2 shows, the coefficients of being with parents and siblings are both positive and significant, indicating that children with natural family ties were more likely than others to remain as Shakers. The role of natural family ties in the children's decisions to stay as Shakers thus suggests that the Shakers were not completely successful in replacing the nuclear family with the Shaker family. As a result, the unorthodox family practices of the Shakers contributed not only to the rise in the proportion of children without parents or siblings but also to the decline in total membership.³⁸

CONCLUSION

The Shakers hold a distinct place in American culture and utopian history for their unorthodox family practices of celibacy and communal child rearing that sought to replace the nuclear family with the Shaker family. Although scholars have shown various ways in which these practices contributed to the religious conviction, communal bonds, and sexual equality among the Shakers, the implications of these practices for the distribution and continuity of their membership have received insufficient atten-

tion. Similarly, although scholars have suggested various factors as explanations of the numerical decline of the Shakers, the contribution of unorthodox family practices have not been quantitatively examined.

Using census enumeration schedules as sources of data, this article focused on the children in Shaker communities to examine the consequences of celibacy and communal child rearing. A quantitative analysis of the children in Shaker communities yields two results that combine to show the way unorthodox family practices contributed to numerical decline. The first is a significant shift in the distribution of children in terms of natural family ties. Whereas the proportion of children in Shaker communities remained fairly stable at about one-third of total membership during the period between 1850 and 1870, the proportion of those with natural family ties (parents and siblings) fell significantly during the same period, from about two-thirds to less than one-half of all children. As a second result, an analysis of the children's decisions to stay as Shakers shows that children with parents and siblings were more likely than others to stay in Shaker communities. The sharp fall in the proportion of children with natural family ties thus lowered the proportion of those who were more likely to remain as Shakers, causing total membership to decline. These results show that the Shakers were not completely successful in replacing the natural family with the Shaker family and in eliminating the influence of natural family ties on membership decisions. Although celibacy and the communal child-rearing practices of the Shakers may have been beneficial in other respects, these practices nevertheless contributed to their numerical decline.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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NOTES

1. See, for example, Sally Kitch, *Chaste Liberation: Celibacy and Female Cultural Status* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1989); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981); and Lawrence Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1991).

2. Studying persistence with a sample of children should be more accurate than the usual persistence studies because the probability of nonpersistence due to death is much smaller for children than for adults. For an example of a persistence study, see David W. Galenson, "Economic Opportunity on the Urban Frontier: Nativity, Work, and Wealth in Early Chicago," *Journal of Economic History* 51, no. 3 (1991): 581-603.

3. Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 422-32.

4. Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986).

5. The 1900 figure is from William S. Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900: An Example of the Use of U.S. Census Enumeration Schedules," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 21, no. 4 (1982): 355.

6. Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* and *Women, Family, and Utopia*. For a recent analysis of the role of family structure on member commitment and involvement, see E. Burke Rochford Jr., "Family Structure, Commitment, and Involvement in the Hare Krishna Movement," *Sociology*

of *Religion* 56, no. 2 (1995): 153-75. For a general discussion of the relationship between family and religion, see Teresa D. Marciano, "Families and Religions," in *Handbook of Marriage and the Family*, ed. Marvin B. Sussman and Suzanne K. Steinmetz (New York: Plenum, 1987), 285-315.

7. Stein, *Shaker Experience*, 161.

8. Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York: Dover, 1963), 8.

9. For example, the Millennial Laws of 1821 stated that "the gospel of Christ's Second Appearing, strictly forbids all private union between the two sexes, in any case, place, or under any circumstances, in doors or out." In addition, Section V of the laws stated twenty-nine specific "Orders concerning Intercourses between the sexes." Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, 266.

10. For the care and education of children in Shaker communities, see Andrews, *People Called Shakers*; John E. Murray, "Shaker Apprenticeship as a Mutually Improving Exchange," paper presented at the Twentieth Annual Communal Studies Association Conference, New Harmony, Indiana, 1993; John E. Murray, "Generation(s) of Human Capital: Literacy in American Families, 1830-1875," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 27, no 3 (1997): 413-35; and Frank G. Taylor, "An Analysis of Shaker Education: The Life and Death of an Alternative Educational System" (Ph.D. diss., University of Connecticut, 1976). For the effect of Shaker childhood on the likelihood to apostatize, see John E. Murray, "Determinants of Membership Levels and Duration in a Shaker Commune, 1780-1880," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 34, no. 1 (1995): 35-48.

11. John H. Noyes, *History of American Socialisms* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1870), 142. Another contemporary observer of nineteenth-century American communes, Charles Nordhoff, disagrees with Noyes. See Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (1875; reprint, New York: Dover, 1966), 388-89.

12. Rosabeth M. Kanter, *Commitment and Community: Communes and Utopias in Sociological Perspective* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 77.

13. Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, 97; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality and Women, Family, and Utopia*; Kanter, *Commitment and Community*, 45; Kitch, *Chaste Liberation*.

14. Foster, *Women, Family, and Utopia*, 31. Gender equality among the Shakers has been a controversial topic. For example, in her "'Tho' of the Weaker Sex': A Reassessment of Gender Equality among the Shakers," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 17, no. 3 (1992): 635, Priscilla J. Brewer argues that "the Shakers were never committed to the complete equality of the sexes." See Kitch, *Chaste Liberation*, for a symbolic analysis of Shaker celibacy in a comparative framework and its relation to contemporary feminism. For the role of Shaker sisters in financial matters, see Karen K. Nickless and Pamela J. Nickless, "Trustees, Deacons, and Deaconesses: The Temporal Role of the Shaker Sisters 1820-1890," *Communal Societies* 7 (1987): 16-24. For a general discussion of women's roles in utopian movements, see Rosemary R. Ruether, "Women in Utopian Movements," in *Women and Religion in America*, vol. 1, ed. Rosemary R. Ruether and Rosemary S. Keller, (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 46-100.

15. Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, 191.

16. Murray, "Shaker Apprenticeship," 23.

17. It is difficult to determine the reaction of remaining Shakers to unexpected apostasies. Some may have felt a greater bond of solidarity. See Murray, "Determinants" 41; Stephen J. Stein, "'A Candid Statement of Our Principles': Early Shaker Theology in the West," *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society* 133, no. 4 (1989): 503-19.

18. For examples of internal and external difficulties faced by celibacy and communal child rearing, see Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, chap. 10; Brewer, *Shaker Communities*, 93-96, 139-40, 148-50; and Stein, *Shaker Experience*, 85-86, 216, 327-28. For examples of legal cases involving American communal societies, see Carol Weisbrod, *The Boundaries of Utopia* (New York: Pantheon, 1980), 46-47, 126-27.

19. William A. Hinds, *American Communities* (New York: Corinth, 1961), 105.

20. Hinds, *American Communities*, 106; Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 244.

21. In "Determinants," Murray shows that the Shakers did indeed suffer from a second-generation problem. Studying the membership records of the New Lebanon Church family, he finds that years spent as a child among the Shakers had a negative effect on the likelihood to apostatize in adulthood, possibly "due to differing levels of commitment in members who chose to join and those who were brought into the community." *Ibid.*, 43.

22. John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints: A Sociological Study of Three Utopian Sects* (Boston: Routledge Kegan Paul, 1975), 85. Admitting that "detailed statistical evidence is unavailable," he nevertheless goes on to make inferences about the average age of the Shakers and argues that young persons increasingly left after the Civil War. *Ibid.*, 76.

23. Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics"; William S. Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers: Evidence from the United States Census," *Communal Societies* 4 (1984): 19-34; and Brewer, *Shaker Communities*; Priscilla J. Brewer, "The Demographic Features of the Shaker Decline," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 15, no. 1. (1984): 31-52. Shaker membership has been the subject of a variety of pioneering quantitative studies. For studies of membership levels and duration in a single community, see Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 54-58; Brewer, "Demographic Features"; Murray, "Determinants". For studies of retention and demographic structure in groups of communities, see Bainbridge, "Decline of the Shakers"; Brewer, *Shaker Communities*. For studies of all Shaker communities, see Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics" and "Decline of the Shakers".

24. Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics," 358. For the age distribution in eastern communities between 1800 and 1900, see Brewer, *Shaker Communities*, appendix, Table 5. Brewer's figures show that, although the children constituted a small proportion of Shaker membership in 1800, the proportion started to rise in 1810 and remained high during the rest of the century.

25. In addition to their quantitative importance, the children played an important role in shaping Shaker history in other ways. For example, a group of young girls initiated the period in Shaker history called "Mother Ann's Work." See Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, chap. 8.

26. Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 55; Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics" and "Decline of the Shakers".

27. In his "Decline of the Shakers", 32, Bainbridge estimates the distribution of children by natural family ties and similarly finds that about one-third of the children in 1850 had entered alone, but he does not examine how the proportion changed over time. For the family structure of apprenticed children at their entry into Shaker communities, see Murray, "Shaker Apprenticeship," 422.

28. Calvin Green and Seth Y. Wells, *A Summary View of the Millennial Church, or United Society of Believers, (Commonly Called Shakers)* (Albany: Packard & Van Benthuysen, 1823), 67.

29. Brewer, *Shaker Communities*, 147.

30. Bainbridge, "Decline of the Shakers," 26. In "Demographic Features," Brewer's study of membership in the New Lebanon Church family also indicates the same roles of age and sex. Bainbridge and Brewer, however, used simple comparisons of aggregates, rather than more sophisticated and reliable statistical techniques, to reach their conclusions about the influences of age and sex.

31. Brewer, "Demographic Features," 44. In "Shaker Apprenticeship," Murray also finds that age, urban residence, nativity, specific trade or indenture, and the presence of mother or father had insignificant effects (at conventional levels) on fulfilling the indenture contract.

32. To what extent were the Shaker children able to decide whether to stay or leave? As mentioned above, the indenture agreement bound children to the society: girls until eighteen and boys until twenty-one. Although children under these ages were thus legally bound to stay, the evidence indicates that indenture agreements were becoming increasingly difficult to enforce by the 1850s. See Murray, "Generation(s) of Human Capital," 417-21. Some children were taken away by parents or guardians, some left the society along with parents or siblings, and others ran

away on their own. For examples, see Brewer, *Shaker Communities*, 148-50, and Foster, *Religion and Sexuality*, 57.

33. I divided the Shaker communities into two groups in terms of their urban or rural location. In the urban category are the following communities (which were near large cities): Harvard and Shirley (Boston), Enfield (Hartford), Watervliet (Albany), North Union (Cleveland), Watervliet (Dayton, Ohio), and Whitewater (Cincinnati).

34. Brewer, "Demographic Features". In a quantitative analysis of the membership in the New Lebanon Church family, she uses the proportion of those between the ages of twenty-five and forty-nine as a measure of leadership resources and adult role models.

35. As seen in Table 2, although urban location had a negative effect on children's stay in both periods, the effect became insignificant between 1860 and 1870. Determining the reasons for the changing significance of the effect of urban location is beyond the scope of this article. As a probable cause, fast industrialization and improved transportation networks in the United States after the middle of the nineteenth century might have reduced the importance of proximity to an urban location. For the impact of urbanization on the numerical decline of the Shakers, see Metin M. Cosgel and Bradley Andrew, "Membership in a Religious Commune: The Shakers, 1850-70" (Economics Department working paper, University of Connecticut, 2000).

36. The age at which the persistence probability is minimized can be calculated as $-\beta/2$ in the $I = \alpha \text{ Age} + \beta \text{ Age}^2 + \varphi$ format, where I is the index used in the probit estimation procedure.

37. Some researchers in the sociology of religion have argued that personal ties are more important than ideology in the conversion and commitment to new religious movements. For a review these approaches and an argument about complementarities between them, see Rodney Stark and William S. Bainbridge, "Networks of Faith: Interpersonal Bonds and Recruitment to Cults and Sects," *American Journal of Sociology* 85, no. 6 (1980): 1376-95.

38. Previous research has identified various other causes of the numerical decline of the Shakers. For other internal and external factors that contributed to the decline of the Shakers, see Andrews, *People Called Shakers*, chap. 11; Bainbridge, "Decline of the Shakers"; and Brewer, "Demographic Features." For quantitative analyses of the causes of decline, see Cosgel and Andrew, "Membership," and Murray, "Determinants".