

# Regional Differences in the Size and Composition of Communal Membership: The Shakers, 1850-1870

BRADLEY B. ANDREW  
AND  
METIN M. COSGEL

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Based on personal observations of the “communistic” societies of the United States in the nineteenth century, Charles Nordhoff described the Shakers as “the most thoroughly organized, and in some respects the most successful and flourishing” of the American communal societies.<sup>1</sup> Students of American communes would generally agree with Nordhoff’s assessment because of the Shakers’ ability to establish and maintain a large number of settlements in several diverse regions of America for long periods of time. Having established several communities in the Northeast at the end of the eighteenth century, the movement soon expanded westward by adding new settlements in Ohio and Kentucky after the missionary expedition of 1805. By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Shakers had established twenty-one communities scattered between Maine and western Kentucky, most of which survived for much of the century.

Although the diversity of Shaker communes has probably been instrumental in generating serious scholarly interest in Shaker history, most of the literature has in fact paid little attention to regional differences among the Shakers. Notable exceptions notwithstanding, the usual tendency has been to seek generalizations about the Shakers that would presumably apply to all communities equally.<sup>2</sup> These generalizations typically focus on an individual community (or group of communities) in isolation, sometimes for its own sake, but mostly as representative of all Shaker communities, in order to reach general conclusions. This phenomenon may have been caused by the powerful influence of Edward D. Andrews, the pioneering scholar of the Shakers, who preferred to focus on specific communities in the east as representative of all Shaker communities.<sup>3</sup> Although there have

been others studying Shaker communities as a whole, the result has often been the same: an attempt to reach general conclusions, with little or no emphasis on regional differences. While generalizations can certainly be useful in their own right, when we exclusively seek general conclusions, we risk producing interpretations that overlook regional differences. Generalizations at some point need to be checked against works that also attend regional differences.

One area where regional differences among Shaker communities have received insufficient emphasis is the quantitative analysis of membership. Membership decisions of the Shakers have been the subject of a variety of pioneering quantitative studies. These range from studies of membership levels and duration in a single community<sup>4</sup> to studies of retention and demographic structure in groups of communities<sup>5</sup> or in all Shaker communities.<sup>6</sup> These studies have contributed greatly to our general knowledge of Shaker membership both by correcting some of the previously mistaken notions about Shaker membership, such as gross exaggerations of total membership figures, and also by producing previously unknown information, such as apostasy rates and determinants of membership levels. Because of their common tendency to seek generalizations for all Shakers, however, regional differences in membership have been left largely unexplored.<sup>7</sup>

This paper will explore the regional differences between the eastern and western Shaker societies in terms of the size and composition of membership during the period between 1850 and 1870. Using the enumeration schedules of the US Censuses as the primary source of information about Shaker membership, we aim to contribute to literature in two ways. The first is to introduce some previously unknown information about Shaker membership, such as membership statistics for western societies in 1870. The second is to examine the differences between the eastern and western Shakers, concentrating on changes in the size and composition of membership between 1850 and 1870. Significant differences that we find not only supplement the existing knowledge of the demographic structure of the Shakers, but also suggest revisions in the existing accounts of the nature and timing of their decline.

### **Shaker Demographics and Membership Decline**

As a Christian communal society, the Shakers, whose official name is the United Society of Believers in Christ's Second Appearing, are well known for their commitments to common property and egalitarian compensation of members.<sup>8</sup> In addition, they have always received much curiosity and admiration for their commitment to celibacy and enjoyed a national reputation for some of their products such as furniture, brooms, garden

seeds, and medicinal herbs and roots.

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 1373 individuals.<sup>9</sup> Following the missionary expedition of 1805, the Shakers began to expand westward and added several new communities in Ohio and Kentucky. By 1850, their numbers reached to 3,827 individuals, living in twenty-one communities scattered between Maine and Kentucky. From 1850 onward, however, the total population of the Shakers started to decline. In 1860, the US Census recorded a total of 3,520 members, falling sharply to 2,645 members in 1870, and to 855 by 1900.<sup>10</sup>

The implication of the decline in Shaker membership has been a controversial topic in the literature. Some of the earlier writers took the membership decline as the sign of a general decline, in both spiritual and numerical terms. Andrews, for example, in a chapter titled "Decline of the Order," noted the rise and fall of membership as signs of overall success and decline.<sup>11</sup> More recently, however, Brewer has criticized this position by arguing that "total membership figures do not necessarily reflect the Society's spiritual condition" and that other indicators of turmoil and instability existed long before the numerical decline.<sup>12</sup> Although Andrews and other scholars had noted some of the other signs of the overall health of the Society, such as demographic changes and internal dissent, they did not carefully distinguish between the quantitative and qualitative aspects of the decline.

The relationship between quantitative and qualitative aspects aside, the peak of the Shaker population and the timing of its decline have also been controversial topics. Andrews had asserted, without actually offering a source for the estimate, that the Shaker population "reached its zenith ...when there were some six thousand members."<sup>13</sup> Using census enumeration schedules as a source, however, Bainbridge has found that the Society peaked at approximately four thousand members.<sup>14</sup> Although part of the difference between the two estimates may have been caused by those Shakers who lived away from the community and others who may have been somehow absent on the day of the census, the difference of one-third is too large to be attributed to such factors alone.

In terms of the timing of the membership decline, Andrews was somewhat vague, when for instance he used terms like "the decade before the Civil War" to describe the time when the population reached a peak. He nevertheless seemed to have in mind the Civil war as the turning point, when he argued that "[b]y the end of the War of the Rebellion it was clear that there were increasingly fewer people who preferred the cross to 'the flowery path of nature'."<sup>15</sup> Others, however, have argued that the decline

started much earlier. In fact, although most scholars have generally agreed that the decline started roughly around the middle of the nineteenth century, specific estimates have varied from 1840s to 1860s.<sup>16</sup>

Estimates of the beginning of the decline vary not only because of differences in the reliability of sources, but also because of differences in regional focus. Whitworth, for example, argued that “southern societies declined sooner than those in the north.”<sup>17</sup> In this case, differences in opinion about the timing of general Shaker decline are bound to exist because they are based on information about communities or groups of communities rather than all shakers.

Indeed, as we show in more detail below, the eastern and western Shakers experienced the numerical decline at different times. We also show that the pattern of demographic transformation experienced by the Shakers during the period between 1850 and 1870 was in many respects significantly different between the two regions. In addition to resolving issues surrounding numerical decline, emphasis on regional variations also highlights regional differences in the qualitative decline of the Shakers.

### **Regional Differences in the Quantitative Decline of the Shakers**

As mentioned above, some of the more recent and reliable analyses of Shaker membership have employed the enumeration schedules of the US Censuses as the primary sources of information. Each census year enumerators combed the nation, recording detailed information about each household on standardized schedules. These schedules are particularly useful after 1850, because they include information about each individual separately. Prior to 1850, enumerators only recorded each household as a separate entry. Using this information, Bainbridge was able to estimate total Shaker membership between 1840 and 1900, and recruitment and defection patterns after 1850.<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Brewer examined the demographic characteristics of eastern communities.<sup>19</sup>

Using the same source of data, we focus on regional differences between the eastern and western Shakers.<sup>20</sup> Consistent with conventional categorization, we consider eastern communities as consisting of those in New England and New York, and western communities as those in Ohio and Kentucky. Although our own analysis focuses on the period between 1850 and 1870, Table 1 also includes the regional distribution of the population in 1840 and 1880, in order to show the longer term trend.<sup>21</sup>

**Table 1:** Regional Differences in Shaker Membership

Year	Eastern Shakers	Western Shakers	All Shakers
Number of members			
1840	2491	1117	3608
1850	2430	1397	3827
1860	2183	1337	3520
1870	1500	1145	2645
1880	1224	625	1849
Percentage that stayed between censuses			
1850-60	48	47	48
1860-70	37	37	37

*Sources:* 1840 and 1880 figures are from Bainbridge (1982). 1850-1870 figures are from the enumeration schedules of the Federal Population Censuses.

As Table 1 shows, contrary to Whitworth's assertion, western Shakers experienced numerical decline later than the eastern Shakers.<sup>22</sup> In fact, population changes in western communities followed a pattern that was identical to those in eastern communities, but with a lag of one decade. Whereas the population of eastern Shakers peaked in 1840, that of western communities peaked in 1850 after a 25 percent increase during the previous decade. Following the peak in 1840, the population of eastern communities declined slightly during the next decade, by 10 percent between 1850 and 1860, and then sharply by 31 percent between 1860 and 1870. The population of western Shakers experienced an identical trend of ever increasing rates of decline during the three decades following the peak, but each stage happened with a lag of a decade compared to eastern Shakers. The largest decline in the west came one decade after the largest decline in the east. As a result, whereas over two-thirds of the total Shaker population was living in the East in 1840, the proportion had fallen to 57 percent by 1870, only to increase again to 66 percent during the next decade as the population of western communities declined sharply.

By listing each individual separately after 1850, census schedules made it possible not only to calculate the numbers of Shakers in a specific census,

but also to identify those who stayed between two consecutive censuses. We first recorded all information available about an individual (name, age, sex, occupation, birthplace) in computer files, separately for each of the censuses of 1850, 1860, and 1870. Employing a procedure similar to that used by Bainbridge, we then used computer software to trace each individual present in one census to the next census in order to determine whether he or she stayed as a Shaker or left.<sup>23</sup>

Our results, presented in Table 1, show a remarkable similarity between the eastern and western communities: both groups were able to retain about 48 percent of their members between 1850 and 1860, decreasing sharply to 37 percent between 1860 and 1870.<sup>24</sup> This information helps to explain the differential trajectories of membership between the eastern and western communities during this period. Although both groups lost the same proportions of members, the effect on total membership was felt less in western than in eastern Shakers because of differences in the proportions of new members. It is easy to calculate from the information presented in Table 1 that the proportion of new (i.e., joined since 1850) members in 1860 was 47 percent in eastern communities and 51 percent in western communities. The difference grew wider in the next decade, as the proportions changed to 46 and 56 percent, respectively. Although both groups were equally “successful” in retaining existing members, western communities attracted a greater proportion of new members.<sup>25</sup>

Regional differences aside, Table 1 also has implications for the timing of the quantitative decline of the Shakers as a whole. As mentioned above, Andrews and some of the earlier scholars emphasized the period around the Civil War as constituting the turning point in total membership. Our results show that, despite grossly overestimating total membership, these scholars were nevertheless justified in their temporal emphasis. Although decennial “snapshots” of the population by census enumerators show an increase in 1850 followed by a decrease in 1860, the population between 1840 and 1860 appears much more stable from a long-term perspective compared to the period after 1860.<sup>26</sup>

### **Regional Differences in the Composition of Membership**

Regional differences in total membership raise questions about the changing demographic structure of the Shakers during this period. For example, Bainbridge and Brewer have argued that Shaker membership underwent a gradual change toward more females and elderly during the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>27</sup> How differently did eastern and western Shakers experience these and other changes in the composition of their membership? To address this question, we used all information (name, age, sex, occupation, and birthplace) available about the Shakers in census

enumeration schedules in order to calculate various aggregate statistics of membership that summarize its composition. Table 2 reports the results.

**Table 2:** Regional Differences in the Distribution of Membership

		1850		1860		1870	
		Eastern Shakers	Western Shakers	Eastern Shakers	Western Shakers	Eastern Shakers	Western Shakers
SEX	Female	58% (2430)	57% (1397)	60% (2183)	57% (1337)	63% (1500)	59% (1145)
AGE	Ages 0-15	22	30	27	26	21	28
	Ages 16-59	56	55	53	54	53	49
	Ages 60-	21 (2430)	15 (1397)	20 (2183)	19 (1337)	26 (1500)	23 (1145)
BIRTH-PLACE	Born Other State	40	49	39	43	40	36
	Born Same State	52	44	49	44	47	50
	Foreign Born	8 (2375)	7 (1394)	12 (2179)	13 (1332)	13 (1467)	14 (1140)
OCCU-PATION	Rural/ Domestic	59	47	56	56	71	84
	Urban/ Manufacturing	37	50	35	39	23	11
	Leader	4 (719)	3 (392)	9 (1202)	4 (559)	6 (885)	5 (861)
KINSHIP	With Kin	59 (2430)	60 (1397)	50 (2183)	57 (1337)	38 (1500)	49 (1145)

*Note:* Figures in parentheses are the total number of observations for which census schedules provide information about the corresponding variable.

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

Although the changing sex and age composition reported in Table 2 generally confirms the observations of Bainbridge and Brewer about increasing proportions of females and elderly, there are noteworthy differences between the eastern and western Shakers. For example, these proportions grew at different rates in the two groups of communities: whereas the proportion of females grew faster in eastern communities, the proportion of elderly (those aged over 60) grew faster in the West. Despite the difference in growth rates, however, eastern communities continued to house consistently greater proportions of both females and elderly than western communities throughout the period. Previous observations about the age and sex composition of the Shakers during this period thus need to be modified in light of regional differences.

The distribution of population by birthplace also followed a significantly different trend between the two regions. We used the information about birthplace as a measure of "nativity" to the geographic location of Shaker communities. For example, what were the proportions of those born in the same state as their community, thus native to the area? This information is admittedly somewhat misleading for those Shaker communities, such as the ones in western Massachusetts and eastern New York, that were located a short distance from another state and thus were equally likely to attract members from both states. With such considerations in mind, it would nevertheless be useful to know the proportions of those born in the same state, in other states, and outside of the United States, as rough estimates of the neighborhood factor in membership decisions. As Table 1 reports, although the proportions of foreign born members rose similarly in both regions, the proportions of those born in the same state decreased in eastern communities and increased in western communities during the same period. This suggests that nativity was becoming a relatively less important factor in membership decisions among the eastern Shakers.

Unfortunately, census schedules did not always record complete and detailed information about the occupations of all Shakers. For example, the enumerator simply wrote "Shakers" in the occupation column for Alfred, Maine, Shakers in 1860. Similarly, the occupations of females were completely omitted in the 1850 census, and no information was entered about children (ages 0-15, some of whom might have been working) in all three censuses. Moreover, enumerators frequently used general terms like "farm worker" for men and "housekeeper" for women as default descriptions for those employed in rural and domestic occupations.<sup>28</sup> Despite such omissions and generalizations, however, census records contain complete and detailed information about occupations in a large number of cases. For example, enumerators often recorded useful information about individuals who had leadership positions (e.g., "elder,"



“minister,” “trustee,” “deaconess”) and about those who had assignments that fit into either such general skill categories as “machinist” and “shoemaker” and also such specific Shaker skills as “hatter,” “broom-maker,” and “herb packer.” It is thus possible to use the available information to construct a general picture of the distribution of the (adult) labor force.

To construct an occupational description of the Shakers, we divided all listed occupations into three general categories. The rural/domestic category consists of different variants of agricultural and horticultural tasks (e.g., farmer, gardener, farm laborer, farm hand) for men and different variants of housekeeping tasks (e.g., domestic, keeping house) for women. The second category consists of leadership positions in religious and business affairs of the Shakers. The third is the urban/manufacturing category, which consists of all other occupations ranging from millers and basket-makers to nurses and schoolteachers.

Table 2 shows the proportions of Shakers listed in each category between 1850 and 1870.<sup>29</sup> Over time, the proportions of membership in each category followed a clear pattern of change for both regions: a shift from urban/manufacturing toward rural/domestic occupations. Once again, however, there is a significant difference between the two regions in the way they experienced the shift. Whereas the proportion of members listed in the urban/manufacturing category was significantly greater in western communities than in eastern communities in 1850, the proportion declined much faster in the West. By 1870, the eastern communities had a larger proportion of members in the urban/manufacturing category. At the same time, because the proportions of members in various leadership positions remained relatively low and stable in both groups, the proportion of those in the rural/domestic category rose to a remarkably high level of 84 percent among the western Shakers.

A different interpretation of these changes is possible, one that would emphasize the difference between occupational categories in terms of their skill requirements. As noted above, enumerators used terms like “farm worker” and “housekeeper” frequently, apparently as catchall terms to describe various rural and domestic occupations. One reason for this might be that the members thus described had no specific skills. Even if some of the members with rural/domestic occupations might have had more specific skills (listed or not), the fact remains that these occupations generally require lower levels of training and skill compared to those in the leadership and urban/manufacturing categories. This suggests an alternative categorization of the Shaker labor force into two groups: skilled and unskilled. Those employed in rural/domestic occupations would thus constitute the unskilled categories and others in leadership positions and urban/manufacturing occupations would constitute skilled workers. Re-

categorizing the Shaker labor force in terms of skill thus highlights a significant aspect of the qualitative transformation of the Shakers during this period. Between 1860 and 1870, not only did membership decline sharply (Table 1), but its composition changed significantly toward a less skilled labor force.<sup>30</sup>

Noting the dominance of extended families in the early history of the Shakers, Brewer has argued that kinship networks provided considerable stability as a “key factor in the early success of the sect.”<sup>31</sup> Information in census records makes it possible to estimate the changing proportions of kinship networks between 1850 and 1870. 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 kinship ties. Using a similar procedure to that used by Foster (to examine kinship ties within the New Lebanon Second Family) and by Bainbridge (to examine the roles of kinship ties in recruitment and defection patterns of the children) we calculated the proportion of those Shakers who shared last names with at least one other member within their community.<sup>32</sup> There are some obvious elements of potential bias and imperfection in this procedure: shared last names could be purely accidental, there could be kinship ties that did not reflect in last names (for example, cousins), and there could be missed matches because of hard-to-read names in some of the schedules. When dealing with large numbers, however, some of these biases are likely to cancel each other out, and the number of problematic cases is likely to be only a small fraction of total membership. Taken as an approximate measure of kinship, one can see a clear pattern of decline in the proportion of those with shared names in both regions, though the decline is more rapid in eastern communities. The dominance of kinship networks in early Shaker history was thus rapidly disappearing after 1850, more rapidly so among the eastern Shakers.

### Conclusion

Two sets of conclusions emerge from our analysis of Shaker membership during the period between 1850 and 1870. The first is that the Shakers as a whole experienced a significant transformation in membership after the Civil War, in both quantitative and qualitative terms. After a period of relative stability between 1840 and 1860, total membership fell sharply thereafter, accompanied by a sharp fall in the proportion of members who remained as Shakers between two consecutive censuses. Several qualitative changes concurred during the same period. By 1870 the composition of Shaker membership changed toward more females and elderly, a less skilled labor force, and fewer members with kinship ties, compared to the period before the Civil War. In terms of the periodization of Shaker history, the

coincidence of significant qualitative and quantitative changes after the Civil war thus supports the emphasis that some of the earlier scholars had placed on this period as the turning point in Shaker decline.

As a second set of conclusions, our analysis shows that the eastern and western Shakers experienced the changes in membership differently. For example, although the population in the two regions followed the same pattern of rise and fall, each stage in the pattern occurred with a decade's lag in western communities compared to eastern communities. Qualitative changes in membership also followed different trajectories. Whereas the proportions of females and members with shared last names were approximately the same in both regions in 1850, females constituted a greater proportion, and those with kinship ties a smaller proportion, of total membership in eastern communities by 1870. Some of the previous conceptions about Shaker membership, such as those about the rising proportions of females during this period, thus apply more accurately to eastern than western Shakers. At the same time, there were significant reversals between the two regions in terms of the relative proportions of certain segments of the population. For example, the proportion of unskilled members was significantly greater in eastern communities than in western communities in 1850. Although the proportion rose over time in both regions, it rose much more rapidly in the West, so by 1870 the situation was reversed—the west had a higher percentage of unskilled workers. Thus, there was a significant difference in both the size and composition of membership between the two regions during this period, illustrating the importance of regional differences in the nature and timing of the Shaker decline.

## NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Charles Nordhoff, *The Communistic Societies of the United States* (New York: Dover Publications, 1966), 117.

<sup>2</sup> For examples of exceptions, see Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America: A History of the United Society of Believers* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992) and John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints: A Sociological Study of Three Utopian Sects* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul 1975).

<sup>3</sup> John B. Wolford, "Shaker Studies and Folklore: An Overview," *Folklore Forum*, 22:1 (1989), 82, also argues that Andrewsian focus on eastern societies is dominant in the literature. See John P. MacLean, *Shakers of Ohio* (Columbus: F. J. Heer Printing Co., 1907) and Julia Neal, *By Their Fruits* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1947) for examples of works that have focused on western societies.

<sup>4</sup> Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 54-58; Priscilla J. Brewer, "The Demographic Features of the Shaker

Decline," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 15:1 (1984), 31-52; and John E. Murray, "Determinants of Membership Levels and Duration in a Shaker Commune, 1780-1880," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34:1 (1995): 35-48.

<sup>5</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers: Evidence from the United States Census," *Communal Societies* 4 (1984): 19-34, and Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1986).

<sup>6</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900: An Example of the Use of U. S. Census Enumeration Schedules," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 21:4 (1982): 354-65, and William Sims Bainbridge (1984).

<sup>7</sup> Although some of the earlier writers, most notably Henri Desroche, *The American Shakers: From Neo-Christianity to Presocialism* (Amherst, MA: The University of Massachusetts Press, 1971) and John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints...*, considered regional differences in membership, we show that their conclusions were incorrect because they relied on incomplete and inaccurate estimates of membership.

<sup>8</sup> Stephen J. Stein, *The Shaker Experience in America* (1992), 133-148.

<sup>9</sup> Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (1986), 215.

<sup>10</sup> The 1900 figure is from William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900: An Example of the Use of U. S. Census Enumeration Schedules" (1982), 355.

<sup>11</sup> Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (New York: Dover Publications, 1963), pp. 224-240.

<sup>12</sup> Priscilla J. Brewer, "'Numbers Are Not the Thing for Us to Glory In': Demographic Perspectives on the Decline of the Shakers," *Communal Societies* 7 (1987), 27.

<sup>13</sup> Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (1963), 224.

<sup>14</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers: Evidence from the United States Census" (1984), 24.

<sup>15</sup> Edward D. Andrews, *The People Called Shakers* (1963), 226.

<sup>16</sup> For example, see Edward F. Dow, *A Portrait of the Millennial Church of Shakers* (Orono, ME: University of Maine Dow, 1931), 42; John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints* (1975), 76; William Sims Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers: Evidence from the United States Census" (1984), 24-25; and Priscilla J. Brewer, "'Numbers Are Not the Thing for Us to Glory In': Demographic Perspectives on the Decline of the Shakers" (1987), 27.

<sup>17</sup> John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints...* (1975), 78. Despite Whitworth's admirable attention to regional differences, the argument is false because it is based on incomplete and incorrect data. Although he provides no citation, Whitworth appears to rely on the scattered membership statistics gathered by Daryl Chase, as reported in Desroche, *American Shakers* (1971), 135. In addition to being fragmentary (and thus inappropriate to form the basis for serial and regional comparisons), these estimates have large margins of error, as compared to figures that Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics, 1840-1900..." (1982) has gathered from the census enumeration schedules.

<sup>18</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900..." (1982).

<sup>19</sup> Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (1986). For examples

of works that have used other primary sources to address issues related to Shaker membership, see Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (1981), 54-62; Priscilla J. Brewer, "The Demographic Features of the Shaker Decline" (1995); and John E. Murray, "Determinants of Membership Levels and Duration in a Shaker Commune, 1780-1880" (1984).

<sup>20</sup> Although John E. Murray and Metin M. Cosgel, "Regional Specialization in Communal Agriculture: The Shakers, 1850-1880," *Communal Societies* 19 (1999), include the Groveland, New York, community in the western group (because of its geographical location), for consistency with other studies of membership, we consider only the six communities in Ohio and Kentucky as constituting the western societies.

<sup>21</sup> The 1840 and 1880 numbers are based on the membership statistics reported by Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900..." (1982), 355. Note that the population estimates for 1850 and 1860 reported in Table 1 differ slightly from those reported by Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics, 1840-1900..." (1982). These discrepancies might have been caused by missed individuals or families whose names are difficult to read from the schedules, such as a family in Tyringham, Massachusetts (William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics, 1840-1900...", 1982, 24), or by the difficulty of determining the Shaker affiliation of some individuals, for example those recorded as "farm laborer" at the end of the list, who could also be hired hands. Whenever possible, we relied on other sources and also on our knowledge of Shaker communities to decide on such cases.

<sup>22</sup> John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints...* (1975), 78.

<sup>23</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900: An Example of the Use of U. S. Census Enumeration Schedules" (1982).

<sup>24</sup> David Galenson calculates estimated typical lengths of stay for 19th century urban communities in the United States. The Shaker persistence rate between 1850 and 1860 is significantly higher than Galenson's estimated persistence rates for a comparable time period. See David W. Galenson, "Economic Opportunity on the Urban Frontier: Nativity, Work, and Wealth in Early Chicago," *Journal of Economic History*, 51:3 (1991): 581-603.

<sup>25</sup> John M. Whitworth, *God's Blueprints...* (1975) and William Sims Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers" (1984), have argued that Shaker communities increasingly served as a refuge after the mid-nineteenth century. Even though new members might have thus joined more for social and economic than for religious reasons, the fact remains that this applies more to western than eastern communities.

<sup>26</sup> Note that the emphasis on the period after the Civil War in the timing of the Shaker decline is consistent with recent findings on the declining economic performance of the Shakers during the same period. See Metin M. Cosgel and John E. Murray, "Productivity of a Commune: The Shakers, 1850-80," *Journal of Economic History* (1998) 58(2): 494-510 and Murray and Cosgel, "Regional Specialization..." (1999).

<sup>27</sup> Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (1986); William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900..." (1982); William Sims Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers: Evidence from the United States Census" (1984).

<sup>28</sup> The Shaker practice of job rotation further complicated the task of enumerators. See Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (1986), 81, for an example of an enumerator's difficulty.

<sup>29</sup> For a description of occupations in 1840 and 1880, see William Sims Bainbridge "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900..." (1982): 356-357.

<sup>30</sup> John Murray found that literacy rates of Ohio Shakers fell below those of other Ohioans for the first time between 1860 and 1870. This is consistent with our findings here. See John E. Murray, "Human Capital in Religious Communes: Literacy and Selection of Nineteenth Century Shakers," *Explorations in Economic History*, 32(2) (1995): 217-235.

<sup>31</sup> Priscilla J. Brewer, *Shaker Communities, Shaker Lives* (1986), 23. See also Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (1981) for the dominance of kinship ties in New Lebanon's Second family.

<sup>32</sup> William Sims Bainbridge, "Shaker Demographics 1840-1900..." (1982). William Sims Bainbridge, "The Decline of the Shakers: Evidence from the United States Census" (1984); Lawrence Foster, *Religion and Sexuality* (1981), 55.