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Gendered "Relations" in Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719–1742

Douglas L. Winiarski

In the spring of 1724 Hannah Duston stood in a modest framed church along the banks of the Merrimack River and listened as Haverhill, Massachusetts, minister John Brown read a short written statement outlining her religious experiences (*Appendix 1*). "I Desire to be thankful that I was born in a Land of Light & Baptized when I was Young," intoned the young, black-clad pastor on behalf of his aging parishioner. Although Duston cited her pious upbringing and the "Good Education by My Father," she also acknowledged that she had taken "but little Notice of it" as a child. She was "Thankful for my Captivity," moreover, claiming "twas the Comfortablest time that ever I had."¹

The unusual statement stood out from the rest of the narrative and recalled for the congregation the traumatic and sensational events of 15 March 1697, when Haverhill was decimated by a Wabenaki war party. Recovering from the ordeal of childbirth a few days earlier, Duston watched in horror as her newborn infant was bludgeoned to death by the raiders. She was dragged into captivity, only to rise up several nights later and butcher ten of her Native American tormentors with the help of her midwife and a young captive from Worcester. Returning to Boston with the scalps neatly folded in cloth woven on her own loom, Duston eventually received the accolades of ministers and élites and a handsome bounty from the Massachusetts government.²

During the next quarter of a century Duston owned the covenant and presented her surviving children for baptism. She welcomed Brown to Haverhill in 1719, and her husband joined the church in

1. Relation of Hannah Duston (31 May 1724), "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719–1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass. The author would like to express his gratitude for the help provided by the late Gregory H. Laing, former curator of special collections at the Haverhill Public Library, who first introduced him to the Haverhill relations more than a decade ago and generously shared his extensive knowledge about the history of the town. All relations cited in this essay may be found in this collection. Duston's relation is currently on display in the Buttonwoods Museum at the Haverhill Historical Society. The author would like to thank Susan Juster and the members of FLEA, the Fall Line Early Americanists reading group (Woody Holton, Mark McGarvie, Brent Tarter, Marion Winship, and Mark Valeri), for providing helpful suggestions on an earlier draft of this essay.

2. For Cotton Mather's account of Duston's captivity and escape, see Alden T. Vaughan and Edward W. Clark, eds., *Puritans among the Indians: Accounts of Captivity and Redemption, 1676–1724* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1981), pp. 161–64. See also Laurel T. Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650–1750* (New York: Knopf, 1980), pp. 167–72, 184–85, 234–35.

full communion a few years later.³ Although she later acknowledged that she had desired "to Come to the Ordinance of the Lords Supper a Great while," Duston held back from the communion table, fearful of her "Unworthiness" to partake in the sacrament. Now, living under the "present Ministry," Duston began to reconsider her "Delays and fears." Reading a "Book concerning [Christ's] Sufferings Did much awaken me," Brown explained on her behalf. So, too, did studying "Encouraging" passages from the Bible and listening to sermons by the Haverhill minister and his visiting colleagues. Finally, she resolved "to offer my Self" to the church in full communion and stood humbly before the assembled congregants earnestly desiring that they would "receive me" and "pray for me." It was, according to Brown, the "Eleventh hour." The most famous woman in New England had finally closed with the church.⁴

Duston was typical of her generation in expressing her reluctance to participate in the Lord's Supper. Men and women voiced identical concerns in their autobiographical church admission narratives, or "relations," as they were called in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Consider the virtually indistinguishable statement of Duston's brother, Jonathan Emerson, who covenanted with the Haverhill church on the same day in 1724 (*Appendix 2*). Brown composed both narratives on paper that he had trimmed to a uniform size specifically for the task. Both were endorsed on the back with identical notations. They were of roughly equal length (242 and 258 words, respectively) and, with the notable exception of Duston's description of her Indian captivity, they consisted of similar rhetorical statements. Like his more famous sister, Emerson claimed to have been born "in a Land of Light" and received a "religious Education." He, too, yearned to join the church but had neglected his "Duty" out of fear of consuming his own damnation by participating unworthily in the Lord's Supper. Other "places" of "God's Word" eventually quelled his doubts, and Emerson offered his written testimony to the church partly in the hope of preventing "Others from Delaying to come to the Ordinance." He concluded his testimony by stating that he was willing to submit himself to the "fellowship and Watch" of the church and requested prayers from the congregation that he might "have Grace to walk inoffensively & Exemplarily, & profitably to my own Soul & the Good of my Neighbours."⁵

The two autobiographical narratives—so similar in content, structure, and physical appearance—raise intriguing questions regarding the degree to which Puritan gender norms shaped the religious

3. Mary F. M. Raymond, comp., "Records of First Parish, Haverhill, Vital Records," 1895, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass., pp. 55, 75, 88.

4. Relation of Hannah Duston (31 May 1724).

5. Relation of Jonathan Emerson (31 May 1724).

experiences of laymen and laywomen in early New England. Historians remain divided in their analyses of this issue. Two decades ago Charles Cohen posited a spiritual equality in Reformed theology that rendered "androgynous" the language that laymen and laywomen deployed in the oral church admission testimonies recorded by Cambridge, Massachusetts, minister Thomas Shepard during the seventeenth century. Elizabeth Reis recently challenged Cohen's argument by highlighting the "subtle but significant ways" in which women internalized Puritan preaching on the doctrine of original sin.⁶ Similarly, Barbara Epstein and Susan Juster have traced the emergence of two distinct models of conversion early in the nineteenth century, although they disagree on the social consequences of these divergent narrative structures. Both maintain that the Great Awakening revivals of the 1740s had a leveling effect on church admission narratives. Relations from the mid-eighteenth century were "remarkably similar," according to Epstein, and they reflected what Juster has called the "rough equality of the sexes within the evangelical community." To date, however, no study explores the gendered conventions of the relation of faith genre during the critical decades between the founding era of New England Puritanism and the rise of eighteenth-century evangelicalism.⁷

The essay that follows fills an important chronological gap in this interpretive controversy by examining 235 relations from John Brown's pastorate (1719–1742). The preliminary results of this research—which is part of a larger project involving a computer-assisted content analysis of more than 1,000 testimonies spanning three centuries—generally support Cohen's, Epstein's, and Juster's positions.⁸ To be sure, there were important variations in the relations composed by or on

6. Charles L. Cohen, *God's Caress: The Psychology of Puritan Religious Experience* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), pp. 223–24; Elizabeth Reis, *Damned Women: Sinners and Witches in Puritan New England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1997), pp. 37–45; Reis, "Seventeenth-Century Puritan Conversion Narratives," in *Religions of the United States in Practice*, 2 vols., ed. Colleen McDannell (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2001), pp. 24–25. Other important studies of this unique genre of New England devotional literature minimize gender issues. See, for example, Edmund S. Morgan, *Visible Saints: The History of a Puritan Idea* (New York: New York University Press, 1963); and Patricia Caldwell, *The Puritan Conversion Narrative: The Beginnings of American Expression* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

7. Barbara L. Epstein, *The Politics of Domesticity: Women, Evangelism, and Temperance in Nineteenth-Century America* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1981), pp. 11–64; Susan Juster, "'In a Different Voice': Male and Female Narratives of Religious Conversion in Post-Revolutionary America," *American Quarterly* 41 (1989): 34–62; Juster, *Disorderly Women: Sexual Politics and Evangelicalism in Revolutionary New England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1994), pp. 46–74, 180–217.

8. For a general discussion of content analysis theories and methods, see Robert P. Weber, *Basic Content Analysis*, 2d ed., Quantitative Applications in the Social Sciences, vol. 49 (Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage Publications, 1990); and Kimberly A. Neuendorf, *The Content Analysis Guidebook* (Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications, 2002).

behalf of Haverhill men and women. Occasionally, male and female candidates referenced different events or favored particular rhetorical tropes. Other variables, including the age and marital status of the applicant, also account for differences in the data. Overall, however, church membership candidates of both sexes constructed their religious experiences from a shared vocabulary in the decades prior to the Great Awakening revivals of the 1740s.

It is important to note at the outset that joining the church in provincial New England was itself a distinctly gendered event. Over the course of the seventeenth century, church affiliation had evolved into what Anne Brown and David Hall have termed a "family strategy"—a decision that coincided with the imperatives of family formation. Parents like Duston and Emerson desired the right to baptize their children, and yet they deeply feared participating in the Lord's Supper. Lay scrupulosity, in turn, impelled many lay people to forestall their decision to join the church until they were well into their adult years. Increasingly, the responsibility for securing the privileges of full church membership fell to women rather than men.⁹ Between 1660 and 1740, young mothers constituted more than two-thirds of all communicants in virtually every church in New England. Most female candidates were married and in their mid-twenties at the time they covenanted with the church, and more than half presented at least one child for baptism within a month after they were admitted to full communion. They joined earlier than their husbands or, in many cases, were the sole family member affiliated with the church.¹⁰ Their decisions, more-

9. Edmund S. Morgan first suggested the "rise of an extraordinary religious scrupulosity" as an alternative to Perry Miller's declension thesis in "New England Puritanism: Another Approach," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 18 (1961): 241–42. Recent studies that combine Morgan's hypothesis with an analysis of family strategies include Gerald F. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis, "The Puritan Family and Religion: A Critical Reappraisal," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 39 (1982): 29–63; Mary M. Ramsbottom, "Religious Society and the Family in Charlestown, Massachusetts, 1630–1740" (Ph.D. diss., Yale University, 1987); Anne S. Brown, "'Bound up in a Bundle of Life': The Social Meaning of Religious Practice in Northeastern Massachusetts, 1700–1765" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1995); Brown and David D. Hall, "Family Strategies and Religious Practice: Baptism and the Lord's Supper in Early New England," in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. Hall (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1997), pp. 41–68; and Hall, "Puritanism's Progress from 'Religion and Society' to Practices: The New Religious History," in *Possible Pasts: Becoming Colonial in Early America*, ed. Robert B. St. George (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2000), pp. 148–59.

10. In addition to the works cited in n. 9 (above), numerous studies document the demographic prominence of female communicants in churches throughout New England. See, especially, Mary M. Dunn, "Saints and Sisters: Congregational and Quaker Women in the Early Colonial Period," *American Quarterly* 30 (1978): 583–601; Richard D. Shiels, "The Feminization of American Congregationalism, 1730–1835," *American Quarterly* 33 (1981): 46–62; Gerald F. Moran, "'Sisters' in Christ: Women and the Church in Seventeenth-Century New England," in *Religion, Family, and the Life Course: Explorations in the Social History of Early America*, ed. Moran and Maris A. Vinovskis (Ann Arbor, Mich.: University of Michigan Press, 1992), pp. 85–108; Stephen R. Grossbart,

over, were sanctioned by a new body of prescriptive literature in which ministers extolled the virtues of pious Puritan matrons.¹¹

Demographically, the Haverhill church was no different. What makes this parish unique is the unparalleled literary record of the life experiences, theological knowledge, and church affiliation strategies of Brown's parishioners over a two-decade period. The 80 men and 155

Table 1. Haverhill Relations (1719–1742), Grouped by Sex and Marital Status.

Marital Status	Men		Women	
	N	%	N	%
Single	27	33.8	54	34.8
Married ^a	50	62.5	100	64.5
Unknown	3	3.8	1	0.6
Total	80	100.0	155	100.0

^a Includes widowers/widows.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719–1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

women represented in the collection of relations now on deposit at the Haverhill Public Library (Table 1) include several notable figures, including Duston, the prominent Haverhill surveyor Richard Hazzen, and future Congregational clergymen Amos Main and Timothy White. Most of the documents, however, describe the religious experiences of ordinary townspeople who rarely left footprints in the historical record, such as town drunkard Stephen Dow or Mary Weed, a single woman from neighboring Amesbury who lived with her sister's family.¹² Brown

"Seeking the Divine Favor: Conversion and Church Admission in Eastern Connecticut, 1711–1832," *William and Mary Quarterly* 3d ser., 46 (1989): 696–740; and Douglas L. Winiarski, "All Manner of Error and Delusion: Josiah Cotton and the Religious Transformation of Southeastern New England, 1700–1770" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 2000), pp. 120–31, 412–27.

11. Laurel T. Ulrich, "Vertuous Women Found: New England Ministerial Literature, 1668–1735," *American Quarterly* 28 (1976): 20–40. See also Margaret W. Masson, "The Typology of the Female as a Model for the Regenerate: Puritan Preaching, 1690–1730," *Signs* 2 (1976): 304–15; Gerald F. Moran, "The Hidden Ones: Women and Religion in Puritan New England," in *Triumph over Silence: Women in Protestant History*, ed. Richard L. Greaves (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1985), pp. 125–49; Amanda Porterfield, "Women's Attraction to Puritanism," *Church History* 60 (1991): 196–209; and Porterfield, *Female Piety in Puritan New England: The Emergence of Religious Humanism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992).

12. Few Haverhill church admission candidates are represented in other sources. Only Hazzen kept a personal diary (Journal, 1750–1751, New England Historic Genealogical Society, Boston; see also Henry A. Hazen, ed., "The Boundary Line of New Hampshire and Massachusetts," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 33 [1879]: 323–33). A few letters and other miscellaneous documents survive from the hand of Timothy White, who served as a minister and an Indian missionary on Nantucket (White to Benjamin Colman, 3 November 1731, 15 May 1733, and 28 February 1737, Benjamin Colman Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston; White Family Papers/Dover, N.H., Library Collection, 1727–1804, and Timothy White Papers, Nantucket Historical Society,

drafted two out of every three relations. The rest were written by the candidates or on their behalf by a family member or neighbor. One narrative was even composed on the back of an order for hard cider.¹³ Although Brown occasionally emended the relations that were brought to him by his parishioners, the content of these documents remained constant regardless of authorship.¹⁴ The autobiographical testimonies ranged in length from Hazzen's verbose 882-word manifesto to the three-sentence relation of Mary Duston, daughter-in-law of the famed Indian captive.¹⁵ Overall, 55 percent of all men and women admitted to full communion during Brown's pastorate are represented in the Haverhill collection. It is the second largest known group of Congregational church admission narratives and contains what is arguably the richest assortment of manuscripts pertaining to the religious experiences of women of any town in New England prior to 1750.

Early-eighteenth-century church admission relations typically consisted of six parts and generally followed a similar structure. Candidates began by establishing their *religious pedigree* through an interlocking series of statements that referenced their pious upbringing. After acknowledging that they had failed to "improve" the means of grace offered to them as children, applicants chronicled a series of *awakening events*—illnesses, family deaths, Indian raids, or natural disasters—that they interpreted as the providential "voice" of God calling loudly to perform their Christ-commanded "Duty" to participate in the Lord's Supper. Most expressed concern and even terror at

Nantucket, Mass.; selections from the latter collection have been published in Samuel Myron Dudley, ed., *Timothy White Papers, 1725–1755*, vol. 1, *Bulletin of the Nantucket Historical Society* [Nantucket, Mass.: Nantucket Historical Society, 1898]. Clifford K. Shipton examined "a few surviving manuscripts" by Amos Main, but they appear to have been lost. For biographical information on the three Harvard College graduates in the Haverhill collection, see Shipton, *Sibley's Harvard Graduates: Biographical Sketches of Those Who Attended Harvard College*, 18 vols. (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1873–1999), 6:186–91, 417–21; 8:599–602. No relations survive for members of the Saltonstall family, although a wealth of information on Haverhill's prominent founding clan may be found in Robert E. Moody, ed., *The Saltonstall Papers, 1607–1815*, vols. 80–81, *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society* (Boston: Massachusetts Historical Society, 1972–74).

13. Relation of Rebecca Davis, 9 February 1729.

14. Evidence from the Haverhill collection does not support Erik R. Seeman's contention that ministers actively modified relations received by their parishioners ("Lay Conversion Narratives: Investigating Ministerial Intervention," *New England Quarterly* 71 [1998]: 629–34). Of the eighty-three relations written in a hand other than Brown's, only three (3.6 percent) showed signs of significant editorial intervention, while fifty-four (65.1 percent) were read to the congregation as originally composed. Brown made minor or modest revisions—mostly spelling and grammatical changes—to the remaining twenty-six testimonies (31.3 percent). For a suggestive discussion of the process by which ministers collaborated with their parishioners to compose suitable church admission statements, see Ross W. Beales Jr., "Literacy and Reading in Eighteenth-Century Westborough, Massachusetts," in *Early American Probate Inventories: 1987 Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife* (Boston: Boston University Press, 1989), pp. 41–50.

15. Relations of Richard Hazzen (5 August 1722) and Mary Duston (19 November 1727).

the prospect of consuming Christ's body and blood, but they also quoted or alluded to one or more *encouraging scriptures* that buttressed their decision to join the church before closing their relation with a *request for prayers* on their behalf. As the eighteenth century progressed, a growing number of candidates infused their relations with statements of Reformed *theological doctrines* on subjects ranging from the nature of the Trinity to the significance of the sacraments, while a minority of lay men and women were required by the church to incorporate a *confession of sin* into their testimonies as a prerequisite for admission.

All of the Haverhill relations conformed closely to these strict generic conventions. Selecting from a narrow range of literary patterns and tropes, candidates for full church membership constructed their religious experiences through narratives that both reflected and reinforced established communal norms and values.¹⁶ The resulting documents were formulaic, to be sure, but it is precisely the patterned nature of the Haverhill relations that provides measurable data for the content analysis which follows.

Nearly half of all men and women—45 and 47 percent, respectively—began their relations with one or more statements in which they sought to justify their candidacy by establishing familial and social connections to the church, or what we might call a religious pedigree (*Table 2*). Mary Eaton's narrative was unique only insofar as she catalogued nearly all of the tropes that appeared with varying frequency in the relations of other prospective church members. "I desire to be thankful that I was born in a land [of light]," she began, "where the glorious go[s]pel is so plentifully preached, where we enjoy the prevelidge of having the bible which contains gods will and our duty, that I was babtized in infancy, [and] that I have had the advantage of a good Education from my parents."¹⁷ Statements like these reflected the tribal nature of New England Congregationalism in which the majority of full church members in each generation hailed from an intermarried network of core parish families with deep roots in the community.¹⁸

16. An underlying assumption of this study is that all religious experiences are encoded in—indeed, constituted by—language, a point eloquently made by Robert H. Sharf in his essay "Experience," in *Critical Terms for Religious Studies*, ed. Mark C. Taylor (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), pp. 94–116.

17. Relation of Mary Eaton (1 December 1727).

18. Gerald F. Moran, "The Puritan Saint: Religious Experience, Church Membership, and Piety in Connecticut, 1636–1776" (Ph.D. diss., Rutgers University, 1974), pp. 174–79; Moran, "Religious Renewal, Puritan Tribalism, and the Family in Seventeenth-Century Milford, Connecticut," *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3d ser., 36 (1979): 251–54; Moran and Vinovskis, "The Puritan Family and Religion," pp. 31–38. Edmund S. Morgan introduced the concept of "Puritan tribalism" in *The Puritan Family: Religion and Domestic Relations in Seventeenth-Century New England*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper and Row, 1966), pp. 161–86.

Table 2. Opening Statements of the Haverhill Relations.

Statement Type	Men						Women					
	Single		Married		All		Single		Married		All	
	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a
Awakening Event	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	1.3	1	1.9	2	2.0	3	1.9
Doctrine	8	29.6	15	30.0	23	28.8	11	20.4	19	19.0	30	19.4
Original Sin	5	18.5	8	16.0	15	18.8	12	22.2	23	23.0	36	23.2
Pedigree	13	48.1	22	44.0	36	45.0	24	44.4	48	48.0	72	46.5
Sacramental Obligation	1	3.7	1	2.0	2	2.5	4	7.4	1	1.0	5	3.2
Specific Sin	0	0.0	3	6.0	3	3.8	0	0.0	4	4.0	4	2.6
Other	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	3.7	3	3.0	5	3.2

^a Percentages based on total relations grouped by marital status listed in Table 1.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719-1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

References to New England as the gospel "Land of Light" were most common, followed by statements in which prospective church members expressed thanks for enjoying access to regular preaching and the means of grace (Table 3). Gender concerns in combination with the candidate's marital status may have influenced the selection of minor tropes within this category. Single men, for example, accented pedigree events—especially their baptismal status—with greater frequency than any other group, and married women, who constituted the largest pool of applicants, focused more on their religious education and the formative influence of their parents in raising them within the community of the faithful. Data from the Haverhill relations, in other words, reinforce the hypothesis first articulated by social historians in the 1970s that men envisioned full church membership as a marker of social status and maturation.¹⁹ Female candidates, on the other hand, highlighted the interpersonal dimensions of their religious pilgrimage and emphasized events that would have taken place principally in the home. This subtle distinction may have reflected a conscious decision and perhaps even a certain degree of pride in their educational achievements, especially since women typically received less training in the fundamentals of reading and writing in their early years but frequently took the lead as young mothers in educating their own children.²⁰

19. J. M. Bumsted, "Religion, Finance, and Democracy in Massachusetts: The Town of Norton as a Case Study," *Journal of American History* 57 (1971): 823-24; Gerald F. Moran, "Conditions of Religious Conversion in the First Society of Norwich, Connecticut, 1718-1744," *Journal of Social History* 5 (1971): 334-35; Philip J. Greven Jr., "Youth, Maturity, and Religious Conversion: A Note on the Ages of Converts in Andover, Massachusetts, 1711-1749," *Essex Institute Historical Collections* 108 (1972): 127-30.

20. On women's literacy rates and responsibilities as family educators, see E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," in *Reading in*

At the same time it is important to keep in mind that the gender differences reflected in the pedigree statements of the Haverhill candidates were more a matter of degree than a qualitative distinction. All of these generic conventions were shared by both sexes—with one notable exception. Four applicants, all of them men (including two of

Table 3. Religious Pedigree Statements in the Haverhill Relations.

Pedigree Statement	Men						Women					
	Single		Married		All		Single		Married		All	
	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a
Baptized as an Infant	6	22.2	6	12.0	12	15.0	7	13.0	12	12.0	20	12.9
Born/Raised in a "Land of Light"	16	59.3	27	54.0	44	55.0	23	42.6	49	49.0	72	46.5
Created a "Rational Creature"	2	7.4	1	2.0	4	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Enjoyed Gospel/Means of Grace	12	44.4	18	36.0	31	38.8	20	37.0	34	34.0	54	34.8
Raised/Influenced by Godly Parents	1	3.7	4	8.0	5	6.3	4	7.4	13	13.0	17	11.0
Received a Religious Education	5	18.5	4	8.0	9	11.3	5	9.3	17	17.0	22	14.2

^a Percentages based on total relations grouped by marital status listed in Table 1.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719–1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

the three Harvard College graduates represented in the Haverhill collection), thanked God for having made them "Reasonable" or "Rational Creature[s]." ²¹ These testimonies capitalized on prescriptive literature that associated manhood with social maturation, emotional self-restraint, and intellection. ²² They resonated with a broader trend among the Haverhill church admission narratives: single men tended to affirm basic Reformed doctrines in their relations at a modestly greater rate than their married counterparts or women of any marital status. ²³

While a few applicants simply assented to the "Articles of the Apostles creed" or the *Shorter Catechism* of the Westminster Assembly, oth-

America: Literature and Social History, ed. Cathy N. Davidson (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989), pp. 53–80; and Ross W. Beales and Monaghan, "Practices of Reading, Part One: Literacy and Schoolbooks," in *The Colonial Book in the Atlantic World*, vol. 1, *A History of the Book in America*, ed. David D. Hall and Hugh Amory (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 382–83.

21. Relations of Samuel Kelly (13 September 1719), Timothy White (21 August 1720), Richard Hazzen (5 August 1722), and Samuel Shepard (21 December 1735).

22. Anne S. Lombard, *Making Manhood: Growing Up Male in Colonial New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), pp. 8–9.

23. See, for example, the relations of William Gutterson (1 August 1725), David Mash (19 March 1727), Elizabeth Griffing (11 February 1728), Joseph Bradley (24 November 1728), Stephen Dow (4 May 1729), Amos Main (7 September 1729), and Joseph Clement (27 June 1742).

ers delved into the intricacies of Reformed theology with remarkable sophistication.²⁴ At the height of the Great Awakening, when young men and women across New England were captivated by itinerant preaching and dramatic, embodied manifestations of the Holy Spirit during protracted revival meetings, twenty-year-old Joseph Clement instead joined the Haverhill church after composing a detailed profession of his beliefs. "I believe there is one god the being of all beings," he began,

and i believe that whatsoever he would have me to believe or do in order to his glory and my hapness he hath revealed to me in his holy scriptures. I believe that as there is one god so this one god is three persons father son and holy gost and i beleive that my person is onely justified by the merit of christ imputied to me and that my nature is only sanctified by the Sprit of christ implanted in me. I believe god entred into a double covent with man the covent of works mades with the first and the covent of grace made with the s[e]cond adam. I beleive that as god enterd into a covenant of grace with us so hath he signd this covant to us by a double seal babtism and the lords supper and forasmuch as thou hast of bottomless mercy offerd most graciously to me wretched sinner to be again accepted by god chirst if i would accept of thy word and ordences i shall have life. I bles god that he hath by his provadnce awaken me to my duty. I hope that i am cencear in [all] i beleve and confess. Therefor i big [beg] the prays of all gods people for me that i may walk acording to wat i belive and confess and nevr hav falling away.²⁵

Clement was a typical example of Haverhill's articulate male "professors" whose relations focused more on issues of catechetical training than life experiences. Even here, however, the data are equivocal, for it appears that doctrinal knowledge occupied an increasingly important position in the relations of all groups of men and women over time. During the second half of Brown's pastorate such theological statements appeared in the testimonies of more than three-quarters of all men and women (*Table 4*). By 1740, professions of belief constituted the largest single component of the relation genre.

When candidates did address the formative events of their lives, they usually emphasized "wonders" or "remarkable providences" that they interpreted as tokens of God's will.²⁶ Prospective communicants frequently addressed chastening moments of affliction in their narratives, especially personal illnesses and family deaths. During the first half of the eighteenth century, the hinterland towns of Essex County

24. Relations of Sarah Silver (26 July 1719), Sarah Hinckley (15 November 1724), Joseph Ames (31 October 1736), and Lydia Page (2 January 1737).

25. Relation of Joseph Clement (27 June 1742).

26. David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1989), pp. 71–116; Ross W. Beales Jr., "The Smiles and Frowns of Providence," in *Wonders of the Invisible World: 1600–1900: 1992 Annual Proceedings of the Dublin Seminar for New England Folklife* (Boston: Boston University Scholarly Publications, 1995), pp. 86–96.

Table 4. Doctrinal Professions in the Haverhill Relations.

Sex	1719-1729						1730-1742					
	Single		Married		All		Single		Married		All	
	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a
Women	28	68.3%	39	44.3%	68	52.3%	10	76.9%	9	75.0%	19	76.0%
Men	17	77.3%	19	46.3%	37	56.1%	4	80.0%	7	77.8%	11	78.6%

^a Percentages based on total relations grouped by marital status listed in Table 1.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719-1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

witnessed rising death and morbidity rates, as imperial warfare, population growth, and economic development exposed rural villagers to global patterns of disease exchange.²⁷ As a result, nearly one-quarter of all female church membership candidates in Haverhill cited the death of a family member or neighbor as a crucial turning point in their decision to join the church (Table 5). "I desire to be thankful that God has in his Providences in any Measure Quickened me to my Duty," wrote Abigail Ely, for "Above 2 years ago It pleased God to take away My Mother & Sister by Death, which was very Sad & awakening to me." For the recently widowed Elizabeth Hastings, "the Death of my Husband... put me upon more Serious Consideration & preparation for Death," and she hoped to come "unto the Ordinance of [Christ's] Supper before I dy."²⁸ In contrast only 10 percent of all male candidates articulated similar concerns. Half of this group, moreover, cited the "deaths of maney young parsons" during the devastating "throat distemper" epidemic of 1735-1738, which claimed the lives of more than 250 Haverhill children.²⁹ Women, on the other hand, referenced a far greater range of incidents, including the deaths of parents, children, siblings, servants, and neighbors. Even the untimely passing of Brown's youthful predecessor, Joshua Gardner, of a "violent Feaver" in 1716 merited comment by two female parishioners.³⁰

Curiously, the percentage of married men who commented on accidents and experiences of bodily illness actually outnumbered that of women. This is a surprising finding, since early modern Anglo-Ameri-

27. Philip J. Greven Jr., *Four Generations: Population, Land, and Family in Colonial Andover, Massachusetts* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1970), pp. 175-221; Susan L. Norton, "Population Growth in Colonial America: A Study of Ipswich, Massachusetts," *Population Studies* 25 (1971): 433-52; and Patricia T. O'Malley, "Rowley, Massachusetts, 1639-1730: Dissent, Division, and Delimitation in a Colonial Town" (Ph.D. diss., Boston College, 1975), pp. 154-85.

28. Relations of Abigail Ely (7 August 1720) and Elizabeth Hastings (11 June 1721).

29. Relations of Joseph Ames (30 May 1736), John Ayer (30 May 1736), John Boynton (30 May 1736), and Lewis Page (2 January 1737). For a detailed account of the epidemic, see John Brown, *The Number of Deaths In Haverhill* (Boston, 1738).

30. Relations of Judith Sanders (26 July 1719) and Mary Page (2 August 1719); Thaddeus William Harris, ed., "Memoranda from the Rev. William Cooper's Interleaved Almanacs," *New England Historical and Genealogical Register* 30 (1876): 436.

cans emphasized the bodily fragility of the "weaker vessel," and women were the primary health-care providers for sick family members.³¹ Only Abigail Richards explicitly mentioned physical complications arising from pregnancy, a theme that dominated the private devotional writings of New England women in this period.³² Instead, references to ill-

Table 5. Awakening Events Cited in the Haverhill Relations.

Awakening Event	Men						Women					
	Single		Married		All		Single		Married		All	
	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a
Childbirth/Illness/Accident	0	0.0	12	24.0	12	15.0	8	14.8	19	19.0	28	18.1
Death	3	11.1	5	10.0	8	10.0	12	22.2	24	24.0	37	23.9
Dream/Vision	1	3.7	0	0.0	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Indians Raids & Captivities	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	1.3	0	0.0	6	6.0	6	3.9
Thunder Storms & Northern Lights	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	1	1.9	4	4.0	5	3.2
Unspecified Providential Events	1	3.7	0	0.0	1	1.3	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.6
Healing Vows ^b	0	0.0	6	50.0	6	50.0	1	12.5	5	26.3	6	21.4
Earthquake of 1727 ^c	2	14.3	10	35.7	12	27.3	10	33.3	7	17.1	17	23.6

^a Percentages based on total relations grouped by marital status listed in Table 1.

^b Percentages based on frequency of Childbirth/Illness/Accident references.

^c Percentages based on relations drafted between 1 November 1727 and 31 October 1728.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719-1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

nesses and accidents in the Haverhill collection conformed to a narrative pattern that, while shared by both men and women, was nonetheless more commonly found in the testimonies of male candidates. Nicholas White's statement was typical. After opening his relation with a profession of faith in which he acknowledged that "worthy" communicants were "made partakers" of Christ's "body and blod...to their spiritual Norishment and groth in grace," he lamented that he had "no better Improved" the opportunities that he had enjoyed as a child. Then, in 1718, "It pleased god to visit me With sicknes." Fearing his imminent death, White made a solemn "promes that if it should pleas god to spare my life I would spend my time better of the futer" by joining the church.³³ Identical healing vows appeared in half of the relations in which men cited a personal illness or accident. Only 21 percent of women offered

31. Lyle Koehler, *A Search for Power: The "Weaker Sex" in Seventeenth-Century New England* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1980), pp. 28-36; Rebecca J. Tannenbaum, *The Healer's Calling: Women and Medicine in Early New England* (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 2002).

32. Relation of Abigail Richards (10 March 1728).

33. Relation of Nicholas White (16 August 1719).

similar statements. In sum, the data on death and illness in the Haverhill narratives raise an intriguing possibility. As Dorothy Middleton explained, women typically expressed hope that God's "Afflictions have done me good" by instructing them to be wary of worldly attachments. Men demonstrated a greater willingness to bargain with God, and some may have considered church membership as a strategy for preserving their bodies and prolonging their earthly lives.³⁴

Other candidates recalled Haverhill's violent past, especially older parishioners like Duston who affiliated with the church during the early years of Brown's pastorate. Between 1688 and 1708 the town suffered constant losses during New England's bloody frontier wars. More than twenty townspeople were taken into captivity in Canada, while scores were killed in town during devastating raids in 1697, 1704, and 1708.³⁵ Duston may have been the most notable church membership candidate to reference these traumatic events in her relation, but she was not alone. Former captives Isaac Bradley and Rachel Johnson also thanked God for "preserving" their lives and "delivering" them "out of the Enemies hand."³⁶ Four additional applicants—all of them women—acknowledged God's "Distinguishing" providence by which they were "Extraordinarily saved" and "preserved" from their "Barbarous" and "cruel Enemy" when the "Desolation was in Haverhil."³⁷ It is difficult to explain this gendered discrepancy, since more men than women were taken captive on the northern New England frontier, and nearly everyone who came of age in Haverhill during the latter decades of the seventeenth century had witnessed the violence firsthand. At the same time, female captives were more likely to remain in New France for the rest of their lives. Thus, God's sparing mercies during frontier warfare may have been a more poignant religious symbol for Haverhill women. Indeed, at least two of the seven relations that mentioned the town's legacy of violence were composed for female candidates with "unredeemed" siblings and kin who would never return from Canada.³⁸

34. Relation of Dorothy Middleton (23 April 1721).

35. George W. Chase, *The History of Haverhill, Massachusetts: From Its First Settlement, in 1640, to the Year 1860* (1861; reprint, Somersworth, N.H.: New England History Press, 1983), pp. 148–233; Emma L. Coleman, *New England Captives Carried to Canada between 1677 and 1760 during the French and Indian Wars*, 2 vols. (1926; reprint, Bowie, Md.: Heritage Books, 1989), 1:337–360.

36. Relations of Isaac Bradley (30 July 1727) and Rachel Johnson (21 January 1728).

37. Relations of Sarah Silver (25 July 1719), Abigail Sanders (2 August 1719), Abigail Rony (6 December 1719), and Abigail Smith (16 May 1725).

38. Alden T. Vaughan and Daniel K. Richter, "Crossing the Cultural Divide: Indians and New Englanders, 1605–1763," *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society* 90 (1980): 23–99. Rachel Johnson was the sister of Joanna Ordway, who was taken captive in 1704, rebaptized into the Roman Catholic Church in 1710, and lived the rest of her life in Montreal. Likewise, Sarah Silver's sister-in-law, Mary Silver, was captured in the devastating 1708 raid and never returned—despite the earnest pleas of her mother for her "Redemption" (Coleman, *New England Captives*, 1:350–58). The paradigmatic example

The defining moment in Brown's career came in the wake of a powerful earthquake that struck the Merrimack Valley on the night of 29 October 1727. According to one report, the tremors created "the utmost Consternation & fright" among area residents, who were "possest with fears that It was the Great Day of the Son of mans appearing in the Clouds of Heaven. People In General were In expectations of sudden destruction." For weeks Brown was "full of Company," counseling distressed parishioners "*rain or shine*; some Days from Morning till 8 a Clock at Night, without so much as time to take any bodily refreshment."³⁹ Over the next several weeks, the Haverhill congregation observed numerous days of fasting and thanksgiving for their miraculous deliverance. In March 1728, Brown led his congregation in a collective ritual of covenant renewal. The results of his labors were stunning. Over two hundred people were admitted to full communion in the twelve months following the "Great Earthquake," while an additional 148 owned the covenant. Baptisms, too, increased dramatically with numerous adults and entire unchurched families receiving the sacrament. Several recalcitrant church members who lay under censure for moral transgressions finally came forward to offer suitable confessions in a desperate attempt to avert eternal judgment. "It has look'd," Brown concluded, "as if we were going into a *New World*."⁴⁰

Nearly half of the relations in the Haverhill collection were drafted during this hectic and anxiety-provoking period, and the terseness of Brown's notations testify to the accelerated pace of religious life in town. Twenty-eight candidates addressed the earthquake in their testimonies, including 24 percent of all women and 27 percent of all men. With larger numbers of single women and married men addressing the chaotic events of 1727 in their narratives, however, gender concerns appear to have played only a limited role (*Table 5*). Instead, lay candidates uniformly followed the lead of Brown and his ministerial colleagues and characterized the earthquake as God's "awfull & Dredfull voice" that was "coling aloud" to the slothful and secure to repent of their sins and close with Christ by joining the church—before it was too late. Hannah

of this phenomenon is Deerfield's Eunice Williams, whose story is powerfully recounted in John Demos, *The Unredeemed Captive: A Family Story from Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1994).

39. Christopher Sargeant, *Commonplace Book, 1727–1788*, Massachusetts Historical Society, p. 18.

40. John Brown to John Cotton, 20 November 1727, in Cotton, *A Holy Fear of God, and His Judgments* (Boston, 1727), Appendix, 3–7; Brown, *Solemn Covenanting with God, One of the Best Means to Prevent Fatal Declensions* (Boston, 1728); Raymond, comp., "Records of First Parish, Haverhill," pp. 53–64, 73–81. Michael J. Crawford examines the earthquake in the context of a transatlantic British revival tradition in *Seasons of Grace: Colonial New England's Revival Tradition in Its British Context* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), pp. 114–17; see also Erik R. Seeman, *Pious Persuasions: Laity and Clergy in Eighteenth-Century New England* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1999), pp. 149–54.

Ford had tarried from the Lord's Supper after owning the covenant in the spring of 1727, "but now under the Great Earthquake," she noted, "I tho't the day of Judgment was come & I was in great Horror." "God having now warned me in a most awful manner to part with my sins," explained John Messer, "if I dont take this I never expect to have another warning in mercy." Likewise, Judith Dow believed that she would be "Surely damned if God should take me" away during the aftershocks. "God has pleased to stir me up very much by these Earthquakes," concurred her father-in-law, Samuel Dow, when he joined the church several months later. "I tho't what would become of me had I been swallowed up by them." The "extraordinary" and "surprising" earthquake, in short, proved to be the defining "awakening" and "quickenning" event in the lives of an entire generation of Haverhill men and women, as candidates such as Sarah Smith prayed that the good "impressions" created by the shocks might "never be out of my Mind."⁴¹

After narrating their religious pedigrees, professing their beliefs, and harkening to the "loud calls" of divine providence, Haverhill candidates typically entered into a series of statements in which they provided a scriptural rationale for their decision to join the church and participate in the Lord's Supper. Here the generic conventions of early-eighteenth-century church admission narratives registered a broader trend in Puritan theology. Seeking to combat a perceived decline in the religious vitality of the rising generation, New England ministers succeeded in engineering what historian Brooks Holifield has called a "renaissance" in sacramental piety. Booksellers hawked scores of sermons, pamphlets, and manuals designed to educate laymen and laywomen on the necessity of communing with Christ at his table. By 1720, Congregational clergymen had transformed the theological meaning of the Lord's Supper from an outward expression of inward grace to a commanded obligation that was incumbent upon all Christians regardless of the state of their souls.⁴²

Sacramental concerns dominated the latter portions of the Haverhill narratives. The word "duty," for example, appeared more than two hundred times in the extant relations, always in the context of receiv-

41. Relations of Judith Dow (26 November 1727), Elizabeth Pattee (26 November 1727), Hannah Ford (1 December 1727), Sarah Smith (3 December 1727), Samuel Greely (31 December 1727), John Messer (7 January 1728), and Samuel Dow (31 March 1728). For ministerial interpretations, see William D. Andrews, "The Literature of the 1727 New England Earthquake," *Early American Literature* 7 (1973): 281-94; and Maxine Van de Wetering, "Moralizing in Puritan Natural Science: Mysteriousness in Earthquake Sermons," *Journal of the History of Ideas* 43 (1982): 417-38. Diary entries and church admission narratives from nearby communities registered virtually identical concerns; see, especially, Kenneth P. Minkema, ed., "The Lynn End 'Earthquake' Relations of 1727," *New England Quarterly* 69 (1996): 473-99.

42. E. Brooks Holifield, *The Covenant Sealed: The Development of Puritan Sacramental Theology in Old and New England, 1570-1720* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974), pp. 197-230.

ing the Lord's Supper. Several Haverhill candidates—including Duston and her brother—claimed to have been influenced by sacramental sermons or to have read "Books about the Lords Supper."⁴³ Of the eight most frequently cited biblical texts, moreover, seven addressed sacramental issues. Conspicuous among these passages was 1 Corinthians 11:29, in which the apostle Paul warned that those who participated in communion without "discerning" Christ's body and blood risked eating and drinking their own damnation. Haverhill candidates universally cited this text with "exceeding dread" and "terror" as a reason for neglecting to join the church.⁴⁴ At the same time they drew "encouragement" from a standard group of biblical passages, including Isaiah 55:1–7, Matthew 11:28, John 6:37, Isaiah 1:18, and Luke 22:19. These classic invitational passages underwrote the innovations in Puritan sacramental literature and promised rest to the "heavy laden," spiritual cleansing to the sinful, bread and wine "without price," and communion with Christ and his faithful disciples.

Overall, women averaged a slightly higher number of biblical references per relation (4.4) than men (4.1). Beyond this basic distinction, however, gender issues do not appear to have significantly influenced the sacramental renaissance in Haverhill. Male and female candidates cited the same texts in the same ranked order (*Table 6*). The only notable exception to the prevailing pattern involved single women, who referenced more biblical texts than all other groups. They appear to have been more troubled by the terrifying words of 1 Corinthians 11:29, and, perhaps as a result of their marital status, they were more likely to draw special encouragement from the bridal imagery in Revelation 22:17.

Thus far the data have favored Charles Cohen's, Susan Juster's, and Barbara Epstein's arguments regarding the "fundamental sameness" of the relation of faith formula prior to the emergence of eighteenth-century evangelicalism.⁴⁵ When it came to confessing sins, however, gender norms played a critical role in shaping distinctively masculine and feminine narratives. Examining seventeenth-century oral church admission testimonies from Cambridge and Wenham, Massachusetts, Elizabeth Reis has argued that women in early New England internalized feelings of innate depravity to a greater degree than men, who typ-

43. Relations of Hannah Duston (31 May 1724), Jonathan Emerson (31 May 1724), Mary Merrill (22 August 1724), Edward Clark (17 July 1726), and Mehetabel Johnson (4 June 1727), who cited three books by title: Cotton Mather, *A Monitor for Communicants* (Boston, 1716); Theophilus Dorrington, *A Familiar Guide to the Right and Profitable Receiving of the Lord's Supper* (Boston, 1718); and Benjamin Wadsworth, *A Dialogue between a Minister and His Neighbour, about the Lord's Supper* (Boston, 1724).

44. Relations of Sarah Hinckley (15 November 1724) and Mary Whittaker (7 April 1728).

45. Cohen, *God's Caress*, p. 222. See also Epstein, *Politics of Domesticity*, p. 14; and Juster, *Disorderly Women*, pp. 53–57.

Table 6. Frequently Cited Biblical Passages in the Haverhill Relations.

Scripture	Men						Women					
	Single		Married		All		Single		Married		All	
	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a
Isaiah 55:1-7	17	63.0	25	50.0	45	56.3	41	75.9	61	61.0	104	67.1
1 Corinthians 11:23-31	12	44.4	18	36.0	31	38.8	36	66.7	39	39.0	75	48.4
Matthew 11:28	10	37.0	19	38.0	29	36.3	21	38.9	34	34.0	56	36.1
John 6:37	8	29.6	14	28.0	24	30.0	21	38.9	31	31.0	53	34.2
Isaiah 1:18	7	25.9	13	26.0	20	25.0	16	29.6	36	36.0	52	33.5
Luke 22:19	4	14.8	14	28.0	18	22.5	16	29.6	11	11.0	27	17.4
Revelation 22:17	4	14.8	7	14.0	13	16.3	19	35.2	7	7.0	26	16.8
1 Timothy 1:15	3	11.1	8	16.0	11	13.8	7	13.0	10	10.0	17	23.6

^a Percentages based on total relations grouped by marital status listed in Table 1.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719-1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

ically lamented the commission of particular sins.⁴⁶ Her hypothesis is generally applicable to the Haverhill narratives, which were composed nearly a century later.

Brown used church admission practices to enforce moral discipline among his flock. In Haverhill and elsewhere in New England, communicants were expected to purify their souls prior to participating in the Lord's Supper by rectifying disagreements with neighbors and confessing to known sins. In 1725, for example, the church met to consider "Objections against James Mitchell and his wife" prior to "their admission to full Communion" based on their breach of the seventh commandment following the birth of their first child less than six months after marriage.⁴⁷ Over the course of his ministry, Brown kept a meticulous record of church discipline cases, and the Haverhill collection includes numerous ecclesiastical trial depositions and confessions read at the time the guilty parties were restored to communion.⁴⁸ In addition, Brown occasionally noted that individual church admission narratives served as both a "Relation & Confession" or when an individual was "Propounded with Confession."⁴⁹

46. Reis, *Damned Women*, pp. 37-45; Reis, "Seventeenth-Century Puritan Conversion Narratives," pp. 24-25.

47. Raymond, comp., "Records of First Parish, Haverhill," p. 55.

48. There are eight formal confessions in the Haverhill collection: Daniel and Elizabeth Bradley (6 December 1730), John Bradley (4 February 1732), Daniel Gile (1726), Elizabeth Main (7 January 1733), Richard Messer (26 November 1727), Susanna Patee (6 June 1731), Daniel Roberds (26 November 1727), and Elizabeth Sterry (5 September 1736). In addition, depositions survive from the disciplinary cases of Stephen Dowe (1739), Lydia Foster (1732), and Susanna Pattee (1729).

49. Relations of Mary Lad (26 November 1727), Mehetabel Messer (26 November 1727), and Samuel Davis (3 December 1727).

Thirty of the 235 relations included references to specific sins and the data are consistent with Reis's observations (*Table 7*). More than one-quarter of all married men applying for the privileges of full church membership confessed to particular transgressions in their testimonies. Only 12 percent of women made similar statements. Male confessors, moreover, testified to a wider range of scandalous activities. Women's confessions focused almost exclusively on incidents of evil speech and fornication, a trend that reflected perennial fears of village scolds and the emerging double standard in eighteenth-century legal discourse involving female sexuality.⁵⁰ Although speech acts also figured prominently in the confessions of male candidates, they also testified to intemperance, theft, vain company keeping, and neglecting the means of grace, especially Sabbath worship and family prayer. Men cited more infractions per relation as well. Only one woman confessed to multiple sins in her testimony in contrast to five of the eighteen male confessors. Overall, the disparity mirrors the total number of discipline cases reported in Brown's church record book in which male church members were censured more frequently than women. Men comprised only 40 percent of all communicants and 42 percent of all covenant owners, and yet they accounted for two-thirds of all church discipline proceedings in Haverhill between 1719 and 1742 (*Table 8*).⁵¹

Another look at the opening lines of each relation provides a useful measurement of these statistical patterns (*Table 2*). In one suggestive example, Andrew Mitchell Jr. began his narrative by acknowledging that he was "unworthy of any of Gods Mercies." His fears, however, stemmed not from a concern over the innate depravity of his sinful soul but from the "many" discrete sins that he had committed as a young man.⁵² By contrast, 23 percent of all women began their relations by lamenting their sinful natures. "I believe I am a Sinner by Nature, & have continued so all my life long," explained Abigail Sanders in what was a typical example. Others, such as Mary Page, Mercy Bond, Mary Johnson, and Rebecca Peaslee, claimed to have been "born in a State of Sin," "under the power of the Devil," "Guilty of Original Sin & full of Original Corruption," or, citing Psalm 51:5, "shapen in aniquity [iniquity] and in sin did my mother Conseve me."⁵³ Similar statements occasionally appeared in the opening lines of relations by male candidates,

50. Jane Kamensky, *Governing the Tongue: The Politics of Speech in Early New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Cornelia Hughes Dayton, *Women before the Bar: Gender, Law, and Society in Connecticut, 1639-1789* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

51. Raymond, comp., "Records of First Parish, Haverhill," pp. 54-84.

52. Relation of Andrew Mitchell Jr. (3 December 1727).

53. Relations of Mary Page (2 August 1719), Abigail Sanders (2 August 1719), Mercy Bond (5 June 1720), Mary Johnson (24 September 1721), and Rebecca Peaslee (19 November 1727).

Table 7. Specific Sins Cited in the Haverhill Relations.

Specific Sin	Men						Women					
	Single		Married		All		Single		Married		All	
	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a	N	% Total ^a
Company Keeping	1	3.7	4	8.0	5	6.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Intemperance	0	0.0	4	8.0	4	5.0	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Neglecting Means of Grace	0	0.0	7	14.0	7	8.8	0	0.0	1	1.0	1	0.6
Sexual	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	1.3	0	0.0	8	8.0	8	5.2
Speech	2	7.4	6	12.0	11	13.8	0	0.0	4	4.0	4	2.6
Theft	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	1.3	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0
Unspecified	0	0.0	0	0.0	2	2.5	0	0.0	0	0.0	0	0.0

^a Percentages based on total relations grouped by marital status listed in Table 1.

Source: "Confessions of Faith of the Members of the First Parish Church, Haverhill, Massachusetts, 1719-1742," Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass.

although such pronouncements lagged five percentage points behind. In addition, only twelve women mentioned specific sins in their testimonies, and yet four situated their confessions at the beginning of their relations. This was more than twice the rate of male confessors, who tended to bury their acknowledgments in the middle or final lines.

Although scattered evidence suggests that women experienced sin as ontological stain, while men focused on their misdeeds, it is important not to overemphasize these rhetorical differences. Paradoxically, more men than women integrated the lines of 1 Timothy 1:15 into their narratives, referring to themselves as the "chief" of sinners (Table 6). This last observation offers a warning to scholars who would push the notion of gender difference too far in their interpretation of church admission narratives, religious diaries, and other life writings from early America.

New England Congregationalism remained a "shared culture" well into the eighteenth century.⁵⁴ Men and women may have focused on different events in their church admission narratives, but the rhetorical conventions they employed in their autobiographical testimonies remained remarkably consistent over time. True, men may have accented their rational knowledge of Reformed theology and lamented their discrete sins, while women highlighted interpersonal relationships, family afflictions, and their sinful natures. Even a casual perusal of the Haverhill relations, however, discloses examples that cut against the grain: men such as Timothy White, who freely admitted that he was "by nature a Child of wrath & a Bond-slave to satan," or women like Sarah Hazzen, who offered an elaborate profession of faith when

54. This phrase is borrowed from Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment*, p. 245.

Table 8. Haverhill Church Discipline Cases (1719–1742)

Specific Sin	Women		Men		Total	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Fighting	0	0.0	2	10.0	2	6.7
Intemperance	1	10.0	6	30.0	7	23.3
Neglecting Means of Grace	0	0.0	5	25.0	5	16.7
Sexual	6	60.0	1	5.0	7	23.3
Speech	1	10.0	3	15.0	4	13.3
Theft	0	0.0	1	5.0	1	3.3
Unspecified	2	20.0	2	10.0	4	13.3
Total	10	100.0	20	100.0	30	100.0

Source: Mary F. M. Raymond, comp., "Records of First Parish, Haverhill, Vital Records," 1895, Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Mass., pp. 54–84.

she joined the church in 1731.⁵⁵ Only after the theological innovations of the Great Awakening had swept away the rhetorical conventions of the Puritan relation-of-faith genre would American evangelicals in the Revolutionary era learn to speak in what Juster has aptly called "a different voice."

55. Relations of Timothy White (21 August 1720) and Sarah Hazzen (24 January 1731).

Appendix 1. John Brown, Relation of Hannah Duston, 31 May 1724.
 Courtesy of the Haverhill Historical Society, Haverhill, Massachusetts.

I Desire to be thankful that I was born in a Land of Light & Baptized when I was Young, and had a Good Education by My Father, tho' I took but little Notice of it in the time of of it:— I am Thankful for my Captivity, twas the Comfortablest time that ever I had: In my Affliction God made his Word Comfortable to me: I remembred ye 43ps. ult—and those words came to my mind— ps. 118.17 I have had a great Desire to Come to the Ordinance of the Lords Supper a Great <while>, but fearing Should give Offence & fearing my own Unworthiness has kept me back, reading a Bood concerning ts Suffering Did much awaken me, In the 55th of Isa. beg. We are invited to come:— Hearing Mr. Moody preach out of ye 3d of Mal. 3 last verses it put me upon Consideration. ye 11th of Mat. 28th has been Encouraging to me— I have been resolving to offer my Self from time to time ever Since the Settlement of the present Ministry; I was awakened by the first Sacramt Sermon (Luk. 14.17) But Delays and fears prevailed upon me:— But I Desire to Delay no longer, being Sensible it is My Duty— I Desire the Church to receive Me tho' it be at the Eleventh hour, & pray for me—that I may honrr God and obtain the Salvation of my Soul

Hannah Duston wife of Thomas Ætat 67.

Appendix 2. John Brown, Relation of Jonathan Emerson, 31 May 1724.
 Courtesy of the Haverhill Public Library, Haverhill, Massachusetts.

I Desire to be thankful that I was born & Lived in a Land of Light <under religious Education> where I have had Liberty of reading God's Word and hearing it preached; It has pleased G. to make me Sensible that I have been a Great Sinner, & that there is no Salvation to be had but in & thro' the righteousness of Christ. I am Sensible it is my Duty to come to the Sacrt of ye Lord's Supper, & it has been a great Burden to me that I have lived So long in the Neglect of it, & I wish I could Say any thing to prevent Others from Delaying to come to the Ordinance; It has been a Shame & a trouble to me to go away from the Ordinance; & I have tho't many a time that before Another Sacrt I wd Offer my Self: There have been Some Scriptures yt were matter of Terror to me as that 1 Cor. 11.29. But then Again other places have been Encouraging to me As Luk. 14.17 Mat. 11.28. <I have been more especially convinced & quickned of late by reading by reading Some Books abt ye Lords Supper.> I hope I desire to Come in Sincerity & not only in a Customary way; and I Desire the Church to recieve me into their ttian fellowship and Watch, & pray for me that I may have Grace to walk inoffensively & Exemplarily, & profitably to my own Soul & the Good of my Neighbours.

Jonathan Emerson