Women and Intercultural Cooperation: Moravian, Delaware, Mahican Women and the Negotiating Space, 1741-1763

THESIS

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By

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Abstract

This project describes a cross-cultural system created and maintained by Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women. This study begins in the early 1740s, when the Moravians established a settlement in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and ends in 1763 with the end of the French and Indian War. The Moravians had a unique outlook on the conversion of Native Americans; rather than preaching at the Delaware and Mahicans, they integrated themselves into the everyday life of Native American communities and established mutual bonds before imparting their religious message. This conversion effort resulted in a rare situation for Delaware and Mahican women and girls. These women experienced a chance to form lasting, reciprocal relationships and a connection with their Moravian peers by the creation of a flexible cross-cultural community.

This project makes use of ethnohistory; the most successful approach to doing Native American history. Ethnohistory uses both historical and ethnological sources, such as anthropological studies of a group’s origins and social structure. The meeting of “Indian and white” is usually portrayed as a “clash of cultures,” however the Moravians, Delaware, and Mahicans illustrate a different interpretation of this paradigm. Historian Richard White’s term “middle ground” is usually used to illustrate the negotiations between colonists and Native Americans. However, while the middle ground does not discount the participation of women, it does not place them at the center as equal to male actors. In the case of the Moravians, the term “negotiating space” is a more apt way to describe their relationships with their Native American
converts. The negotiating space was the system of cross-cultural exchange, survival, and cooperation created by Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women.

The Moravian religion claims its origins in the fifteenth-century and experienced rejuvenation in the 1720s through Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf of Saxony. Soon, missions were started worldwide, including the colony of Georgia. The mission later moved to Pennsylvania where they purchased 500 acres along the Leigh River. The Delaware originally inhabited parts of New Jersey. However, they encountered constant obstacles in maintaining a permanent settlement after signing the Walking Purchase of 1737. The Mahicans traditionally lived in central New York State, however, colonists overtook Mahican land because it was valuable in the fur trade. In the 1740s the Delaware and Mahicans joined the Moravians of Bethlehem.

The negotiating space can be divided into two fronts, each with a unique social and cultural environment. The first front was populated by Native American and Moravian women who lived in Native American dominated mission towns. The second front refers to the Native American girls who attended dominantly white and urban Moravian schools. Despite vast cultural differences, the women of the mission towns were able to negotiate strong friendships. However, the majority of Native American girls living in Moravian schools experienced obstacles which complicated their likelihood of forming strong relationships with their Moravian peers. This project seeks to outline the formation, evolution, and progression between these two fronts within the geographic and cultural environments of the negotiating space.
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Introduction

Between the years of 1741 and 1763, a unique set of relationships emerged between a group of Euroamericans and Native Americans in the Leigh River Valley of Pennsylvania. Scholarly and popular understandings of Colonial and indigenous contact tend to focus on conflict between Euroamericans and indigenous peoples, especially in the realm of religion. However, historian Rachael Wheeler reminds us that the meeting of “Indian and white” is not always a story of discord. Instead, she encourages scholars to “unearth the diverse paths forged by Indians in early America” and “humanize what has too often appeared in history books as a faceless ‘clash of cultures.’”¹ Inspired by Wheeler’s approach, my study examines how the Moravians, a German Pietist sect which settled in Pennsylvania, formed significant and meaningful connections with the Mahicans and Delaware, two native communities from Upstate New York and Western New Jersey respectively. The Moravians of Bethlehem, due to their unique theology, rich rituals, community life, and social practices contained far more elements of attraction than elements of repulsion for the Mahicans and Delaware.² By living together and sharing daily duties as well as cultural practices Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women formed meaningful bonds. When these three groups, particularly the women in each community,

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² The terms Moravian community and Bethlehem community, for the purposes of this paper, refer to the peoples, Moravian and Native American, who lived in Bethlehem, its sister town Nazareth, and the surrounding mission towns.
came together in western Pennsylvania they succeeded in forming a cross-cultural negotiating space which enabled each society and its members to fulfill personal and communal needs.

This study begins in the early 1740s, when the Moravians started a mission at Gnadenhütten and established larger settlements in nearby Bethlehem and Nazareth, and ends in 1763 with the closing stages of the French and Indian War. The Moravians had a unique outlook on the conversion of Native Americans; rather than preaching at the Delaware and Mahicans, they joined Native American communities and established mutual bonds before imparting their religious message. Living by a choir system which divided the community by age and gender, and gave those groups certain levels of autonomy, the members of the Moravian community worked closely with the nearby Native American populations.3 The Moravians established mission towns, day schools, and boarding schools all with the intention to convert the surrounding Native Americans and white settlers. This conversion effort resulted in a rare situation for Native American women and girls. Delaware and Mahican women experienced a chance to form lasting, reciprocal relationships and a connection with their Moravian peers. In the mid to late 1740s, eastern Pennsylvania was considered the backcountry, a “frontier;” in order to survive these three communities banded together. Consequently, the women of these different communities were able to create a cross-cultural social and religious space which they then used for their mutual benefit. However, as this paper will argue, social and cultural factors shaped the power dynamics within the negotiating space and the effectiveness of these relationships.

3 The Moravians divided Bethlehem society into the following choirs during the General Economy period: Young Girls, Young Boys, Older Girls, Older Boys, Single Sisters, Single Brothers, Widows, and Widowers. Married Sisters and Brothers usually lived together if they were not acting as missionaries.
My concept of “negotiating space” expands upon Richard White’s idea of the “middle ground.” However, White’s study of colonial-Native American relationships tends to focus on white male settlers and Native American men. In fact, the middle ground’s effectiveness diminishes when white settlement, particularly the number of white women, increases. In contrast, the negotiating space surrounding Bethlehem was strengthened by the relationships between Moravian and Native American women; successfully binding them together. Women living in the Bethlehem community founded, nurtured, and sustained the negotiating space, which only began to fail as the women of both groups began to lose power in their individual communities. In order to understand the nuances of the Moravian community’s union with the Mahicans and Delaware, the background of the Moravians, Delaware, and Mahicans needs to be discussed.

Three Transient Groups: A History of the Moravian Settlements in the Leigh Valley

The Moravian settlement of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania and its surrounding towns and missions was comprised of three transient groups who resettled in the Leigh Valley and began to work together to rebuild their communities. A negotiating space was created around Bethlehem where the Moravians, Delaware, and Mahicans came together and created a thriving community and settlement. The negotiating space lasted from 1741 to 1763 when it was destroyed by the fallout of the French and Indian War and the changing internal power structures within Bethlehem. However, for a short period of time, the negotiating space was an essential part of a

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viable community which was sustained by the relationships between the Moravian and Delaware and Mahican women.

The Moravian religion, known for its “blood and wounds” terminology and positive view on women’s participation in the Church, claims its origins in the fifteenth-century with Jan Hus. After a long period of secretive worship the Moravian religion experienced rejuvenation in the 1720s through the passion of Count Ludwig von Zinzendorf of Saxony. Zinzendorf’s vision and religious beliefs greatly shaped the group as missions were sent to Greenland, Africa, the West Indies, and the fledgling colony of Georgia. The Moravians began their mission to Georgia in 1734 at the urging of the colony’s trustees, but were later expelled for refusing to fight against the Spanish. The mission then moved to Pennsylvania where they eventually purchased 500 acres along the Leigh River in 1741. The resulting town, named Bethlehem, was to be a base congregation and settlement for missionary couples and future satellite congregations.

Directly after the founding of Bethlehem the community began the economic and social system they called the “General Economy.” In the General Economy members lived a communal lifestyle separated by gender into “choirs,” or groups based on age and sex. The

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5 “Blood and wounds” terminology is known for its graphic references to the wounds Jesus suffered on the cross. For example, Rachel Wheeler, in “Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village,” recounts words spoken by Rachel, a native convert, to Maria Spangenberg, a Moravian Sister on September 9, 1746. “When I give my child suck and I think about the blood and wounds of our Savior I feel my heart sometimes very wet and so I think my child sucks the blood of our Savior and I feel the angels look after me and my child.”

6 Rachel Wheeler, “Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village,” Religion and American Culture, 13, No. 1. (Winter 2003). Moravian “blood and wounds” terminology is comprised of three elements. First, a “pervasiveness of familial metaphors.” Second, an “emphasis on spiritual and physical sustenance from Christ’s wounds,” and, third the “believers’ experience of Christ’s nearness.” Also, the Moravian Holy Trinity includes a female element, rather than three male elements.

General Economy, along with Zinzendorf’s religious direction, provided women with power and autonomy in their own lives and also in the greater community. Within their choirs women could serve in the posts of Eldress, Choir Helper, Deaconess, Choir Laboress, Acolyte, and Servant. Within the community women worked as nurses, teachers, cooks, gardeners, and seamstresses. Native American women converts often took leading roles in the mission communities and worked alongside the missionary women as well as sharing in their religious duties. Women were responsible for the spiritual education and relationships with Christ of the women within each of the female choirs. Their participation reached its peak in 1758 when fourteen women were ordained as priests by Count Zinzendorf. After his death in 1760, however, women were denied this status and were slowly pushed out of leadership positions within the Moravian community.

During founding years of Bethlehem, roughly 1741 to 1748, the town’s inhabitants “sensed that they represented the pinnacle of development in the Moravian Church.” Under the leadership of August Gottlieb Spangenberg, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania developed a reputation amongst the colonies as a peaceful escape from the dangers and wildness of the colonial culture which surrounded the city. In 1742 the population of Bethlehem was a mere 50 people, but by

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8 Ibid. Faull writes that Count Zinzendorf “considered women to be more receptive vessels for the kind of feeling that constituted his notion of religion… ‘Women are…stronger than men in that they are more faithful, more responsive, and more watchful.’” However, women were not “natural leaders and thinkers.”

9 Ibid. Furthermore, the men in charge of the Spiritual direction of the Moravian communities in the colonies began to limit women’s roles and abilities to participate in religious services and the decision making process of the Moravian community. These men also voted to end the General Economy, started to institute a more economically driven community, and also worked to gain social acceptance and legitimacy in the early founding years of the United States.

1759 over 600 Moravians called the place home.\textsuperscript{11} Bethlehem was meant to be a self-sufficient community which would house only Moravians, though visitors and travelers were welcomed. To reach this goal the people of Bethlehem built an astonishing amount of buildings to house themselves as well as the industries they would use to make a living. Between 1742 and 1745 a millwork, sawmill, blacksmith shop, tannery, grist mill, pottery, and a linseed oil mill were built.\textsuperscript{12}

Moravians believed missionary work would bring them closer to the Savior. Therefore they established mission towns and sent out missionaries to the Native Americans of western Pennsylvania. The Moravians did not fit the profile of the usual missionary working to convert the Native Americans. According to Rachel Wheeler, “the safest generalization to be made about the Moravian missionaries is that they confound all generalizations about colonial missionaries.”\textsuperscript{13} Usually married couples who worked together, these missionaries learned native languages and took part in the everyday Native American activities.\textsuperscript{14} Missionaries preached God’s love and included music and images in daily worship. This can be compared with missionaries such as George Whitefield who preached God’s anger and Puritan churches which frowned upon the use of images. Furthermore, the Moravians shared the Native American

\textsuperscript{11} Ibid., 27.

\textsuperscript{12} Ibid., 87-89. Many of these buildings are still standing and even used in Historic Bethlehem, Pennsylvania today.


\textsuperscript{14} The Moravian mission towns include Gnadenütten and Shamokin.
distrust of the Euroamerican colonists who lived near their missions and towns. Women played a major role in missionary work; between 1742 and 1764 at least 276 Delaware and Mahican women and girls were baptized compared to 229 men and boys. According to Jane T. Merritt, “Moravian women’s participation led to more Indian baptisms than any early Protestant missionary effort in the colonial northeast, especially among women.”

The Delaware, or Lenni Lenape, also relative newcomers to the Leigh Valley, were some of the Moravians first converts. The Delaware were originally part of the Algonquian peoples of the Northeast coast. The Algonquians were comprised of 36 tribes and each tribe was also divided into clans. Lenni Lenape translates to mean ‘real men’ or ‘native, genuine men,’ and they were often referred to as “grandfather” by other Algonquian peoples. In fact, their origin story has much in common with the Mahican, Nanticoke, Conoy, and Shawnee. Lenni Lenape villages were made of families related by matrilineal lines, which resulted in a matriarchal social order where male leaders were chosen from a female line. Therefore, “although councils of head chiefs and old, wise men decided the public affairs of the tribe it was the great ancestress who controlled the sachem’s length of service.” This fact, combined with Native American

15 The Moravians were often persecuted due to their religious beliefs concerning the Holy Trinity and the use of music and images. These last two factors often labeled them as evil Papists in colonists’ eyes, especially during the numerous wars against Catholic France.


17 The Lenni Lenape’s three principle clans were the Wolf, Turtle, and Turkey which became known as the Munsee, Unamis, and Unalachtingo, respectively.


women’s role as cultural mediators explains women’s great control in the Lenni Lenape’s actions as a tribe, and also helps to set the background to their eventual relationship with the Moravians.

The Lenni Lenape’s downfall started before heavy colonization due to the fact that the Lenni Lenape were among the tribes that experienced first contact and the steady push back of the Native American coastal tribes. In 1609 Hudson navigated the Delaware River, which then became a starting point for further colonization and the surrounding land was eventually granted to William Penn. Penn used this land grand for his “Holy Experiment” in which he invited “Christian dissenters from over the world [who were] anxious to sow seeds of godliness,” to settle in Pennsylvania. However, diseases and alcohol overwhelmed the Lenni Lenape taking away their influence within the Native American community. The Iroquois took over the power vacuum left by the retreating Lenni Lenape, now known to the Europeans as the Delaware. Further problems plagued the Delaware after they were tricked into signing the Walking Purchase of 1737, which relinquished the best and most fertile lands surrounding the Delaware River.

The Mahican, or Mohican, Indians traditionally lived in central New York State in the area surrounding Albany, NY. A war with the Mohawk during the arrival of Dutch colonists forced the Mahicans to move south from their traditional holdings around Albany. In 1730 they

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(21) Ibid., 14-16.
moved to the watershed of the Susquehanna River near the Delaware and Munsee. Several Mahicans joined the congregational mission town names Stockbridge.\textsuperscript{22} The Mahicans, also considered part of the Algonquian peoples, were matrilineal as well. In fact, matrilineality became even pronounced “among the Delaware and Mahican, both of whom had three matrilineal phratries or clans respectively since at least the 18\textsuperscript{th} century.”\textsuperscript{23} Just like the Delaware, Mahican women played major roles in tribal decisions and the ruling male was chosen from a “royal” female line, not a male line.\textsuperscript{24} Furthermore, young women decided when they wished to marry, at which time a formal arrangement was made, whereas “widows and widowers were left to their own inclinations.”\textsuperscript{25} The women of the tribe occupied traditional women’s roles such as childcare, cooking, and handling planting and crop care. However, going against the popular image of the squaw drudge who is worked to exhaustion by her lazy husband, the women “did not feel overburdened.”\textsuperscript{26} The mothers of the tribe also negotiated marriages, which gave them control of the males entering their clan and tribe.\textsuperscript{27}

The Mahicans had been the residents of an early mission town, named Shekomeko, in New York State; however, Euroamerican settlers desired the Mahican lands because they were

\textsuperscript{22} Hodge, \textit{Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico}, 786.


\textsuperscript{24} Elma E. Gray and Leslie Robb Gray, \textit{Wilderness Christians: The Moravian Mission to the Delaware Indians}. Traditionally, the Delaware and Mahicans, like other Eastern Woodland Native Americans, lived in “wickwams” and used the naturally occurring resources such as metamorphosed slate, flint, and jasper to make arrowheads, spear points, knives, “scrapers, hatchets, hammers, drills, pestles, pipes, and amulets.”

\textsuperscript{25} Hodge, \textit{Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico}, 787.


\textsuperscript{27} Ibid.
strategic holdings in the valuable fur trade. King George’s War which lasted from 1744-1748 was in fact a foreshadowing of events to come for these Native Americans and their Moravian allies during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. The Mahicans and Moravians were labeled as papists, and thus in league with the French enemy, because Moravian religious practices departed from traditional Protestant beliefs and aggravated the staunch Puritans and Protestants of the area. After a period of increasing violence and confrontation with other Hudson Valley Native Americans and English and Dutch settlers, the Mahicans and Moravian missionaries left New York to join the Moravian community in Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.  

Unfortunately the Moravians, Mahicans, and Delaware could not escape the stigma of being Papists and allies with the French. Eventually, after the French and Indian War, the Moravians and the remaining Delaware and Mahicans would be forced to relocate to Ohio.


29 Information on the early Delaware and Mahicans is very difficult to find and several authors and ethnographers attest to this fact. Daniel K. Richter, in “The First Pennsylvanians” writes that archeological evidence of Late Woodland Lenape “has been almost thoroughly obliterated” due to the fast and continual urbanization of the Delaware/New Jersey area between Wilmington, Delaware and Trenton, New Jersey. Anthony Gregg Roeber writes, “any discussion of Delaware ethnography and moder scholarship on the Delaware faces a number of difficult and controvercial issues. Partly these are the result of different approaches of historians and ethnologists.” In: Anthony Gregg Roeber, *Ethnographies and Exchanges: Native Americans, Moravians, and Catholics in Early North America,* (University Park: Pennsylvania State Press, 2008), 42. Ted J. Brasser writes of the Mahicans, “a detailed reconstruction of other aspects of early Mahican culture is out of the question. Factual information is very limited and predominantly related to the visual facets of Mahican society.” In: Ted. J. Brasser, *Riding on the Frontier Crest: Mahican Indian Culture and Culture Change,* (Ottawa: National Museum of Canada, 1974), 6.

Lastly, and perhaps most eloquently Francis Jennings explains, “the whole corpus of this mythology [the Iroquois “empire”] is false...that the notion of ‘empire’ in Pennsylvania distorts reality as much as that in Ohio. Like all enduring myths, the foundation of this one lay in tendentiously selected data, and it factual contradictions have been ignored or suppressed by various interested parties.” In: Francis Jennings, ““Pennsylvania Indians” and the Iroquois,” in *Beyond the Covenant Chain: The Iroquois and Their Neighbors in Indian North America, 1600-1800,* ed. Daniel K. Richter and James H. Merrell, (University Park: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1987), 75.
Other churches were also active in running missions aimed at converting Native Americans. In the Middle Atlantic States, the first mission was started by the Spanish Jesuits in Virginia in 1570. However, the whole party, except for one boy, was killed by hostile Native Americans. The next Jesuit mission began in 1633 by English Jesuits in Maryland. In 1642 a mission was started among the Mohawk in New York. This mission experienced periods of volatility and periods of peace while the mission catered to the Hurons who had also migrated to the area. A mission was also started, around 1755, in western Pennsylvania among the Delaware living at Sawcunk, but it ended quickly due to the French and Indian War. The Episcopalians, at the request of the Church of England, worked mainly with the Iroquois of New York until 1777. While the Quakers had no formal missions activities until 1791, they “cultivated kindly relations” with the Native Americans they encountered.\textsuperscript{30}

Puritans in New England also worked to convert Native Americans, though the first mission was started by the Jesuits in Mt. Desert Island, Maine in 1613. The two most successful missions were started in 1642 by Congregationalists Thomas Mayhew Jr. in Marthas Vineyard and John Eliot in 1646 near Boston. Mayhew’s mission remained active until 1758 and in 1720 counted at least 800 inhabitants along with several churches and schools. In 1651 Mayhew’s mission received permission to construct a school building at Harvard College, though only one Native American boy is recorded as finishing. Eliot’s mission lasted until his death in 1690. The Stockbridge mission was also very successful and was started in 1734 by Rev. John Sergeant, who was also a Congregationalist. The Stockbridge mission housed several Mahicans, and had a strong following until 1785 when war, disease, and land encroachment sent the

\textsuperscript{30} Hodge, \textit{Handbook of American Indians North of Mexico}, 877-879.
mission into decline. 31 The Puritans of New England also housed Native American children who were “bequeathed to Puritan control,” however sparse records do not offer any other information about these children’s lives. 32 Many of these children were probably sent to schools, however, “New England’s schools and colleges played a diminishing role in the efforts to acculturate New England Indians.” 33

The Two Female Frontiers of the Moravian Community

As stated previously, the larger narrative of Colonial History usually refers to antagonistic relationships between colonists and Native Americans and the problems of daily survival in a politically crowded environment; however, cross-cultural negotiations did not always have negative results. The Moravians and their Mahican and Delaware coverts, especially through the women of each group, created a social frontier and cross-cultural community. This social frontier was the meeting place of Delaware, Mahican, and Moravian cultures which resulted in unique situations and outcomes for the women of each community. Based on practical and spiritual attractions as well as survival; it was a place where Delaware, Mahican, and Moravian women’s personal and communal needs could be addressed. The practical and spiritual attractions which brought the communities together will be discussed in more detail in the following chapter.

31 Ibid., 881-883.
33 Ibid., 222.
A social frontier was created around the Moravian settlement of Bethlehem and its surrounding mission towns due to the unique religious and social practices of the Moravians and their appeal to the Delaware and Mahicans. This social frontier only lasted about twenty years (1741-1763), however, it is not the length of time the frontier existed, but the dynamics of the frontier that determine its success and are therefore important to study. The goals of the community were personal and community survival in an uncertain social, political, and geographic environment. The Delaware and Mahicans, as well as the Moravians, were outsiders in a tension filled colonial system, due to increasing hostility between France and Britain. However, the negotiating space, and women’s success in maintaining it, due to internal and external changes, experienced relatively short term success. The negotiating space, specific to this project, will be discussed in more detail below.

Upon meeting the Moravians, the Delaware and Mahicans evaluated the Moravians’ social and religious practices and found many aspects of the Moravian lifestyle appealing. A religion of the heart, Count Zinzendorf’s description of the Moravian faith, would have been very appealing to the Delaware and Mahicans. These two Native American groups were traditionally matriarchal and relied upon kinship ties and support networks. The Moravian choir system was also built around a sense of community and mutual support. Furthermore, neither group divided the religious from the mundane tasks of everyday life. Rather, religion and worship were constantly present and interwoven into the community’s lifestyle. The negotiating space was founded upon these similarities between the Moravian and Delaware and Mahican communities, and sustained by women’s ability to create and maintain a cross-cultural community.
The relationships, or social frontier, between Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women can be divided into two fronts, each existing in a unique social and cultural environment. The first front, which lasted roughly from 1741 to the late 1750s, was populated by Native American women who experienced close relationships between themselves and the Moravian women who acted as missionaries in Native American dominated mission towns. The second front, comprised of the Native American girls who attended Moravian boarding schools roughly between 1742-1763, experienced the cultural and social environment of a more dominantly white and urban settlement. Despite vast cultural differences between these two groups the women of the mission towns were able to negotiate strong friendships which served each woman and her respective community. However, the majority of Native American girls and young women living in Moravian Boarding schools experienced obstacles in the Euroamerican dominated social environment which complicated their likelihood of forming a strong relationship with Moravian women and girls.

This project seeks to outline the formation, evolution, and progression between the two fronts of Native women’s and Moravian women’s relationships within the geographic and cultural environments of the negotiating space. The difference between the two fronts is not the difference between the extremes of love or hatred. Rather, as the negotiating space and women’s power in the Moravian and Native American communities decreased, women’s personal views and needs within and between each generation evolved and were influenced by factors from inside and outside each community’s specific social and cultural environment.
Methodology and Significance

This project makes use of a relatively new methodology; ethnohistory, which is the most widely used and successful approach to doing Native American history. Ethnohistory, or the union of history and anthropology, according to historian James Axtell, “is essentially the use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of change in a culture defined by ethnological concepts and categories.” Ethnohistory is a branch of anthropology which involves comparing and contrasting different cultures and is often associated with cultural anthropology. Ethnohistory, therefore, makes use of both historical and ethnological sources; essentially it is a hybrid. Examples of ethnological sources include anthropological studies of a group’s origins, technology, social structure, language, and religion. Ethnohistory also makes use of sources such as maps, folklore, and oral histories. The combination of these two disciplines, or sub-disciplines, is essential for Native American history because it provides historians with a larger source base and wider knowledge of the people they are researching.

Native American history often involves “a creative weaving together of contradictions.” This is due to the fact that Native American voices are hard to locate or have been muddled by the intrusion of a European or Euroamerican translator. Therefore, Native American sources and


35 Robert M. Carmack, “Ethnohistory: A Review of Its Development, Definitions, Methods, and Aims,” Annual Review of Anthropology, 1 (1972). Carmack writes, “…most of the authors emphasized that ethnohistory is a method or technique, not a discipline…[which] might serve as a means for combining the generalizing aspects of ethnology with the careful evaluation of sources and interest in time sequence history.”

Native American history must be handled with extra care. Specifically for this project, ethnohistory is extremely useful as a method to carefully evaluate available sources in order to locate Native American and Moravian women’s experiences. Ethnology provides historians with a way to evaluate emic sources, or sources written by an “insider” of the culture being studied.\(^{37}\) The sources being used in this project were written by Moravians, and therefore ethnohistory provides a way to read between the lines of the sources for the experiences of Delaware, Mahican, and Moravian women.

Ethnohistory, according to James Axtell, is comprised of several elements, two of which are culture and “emphasis of socio-cultural change,” and is most useful when “two or more cultures [are] in contact.”\(^{38}\) Due to its acceptance and use of ethnology, ethnohistory provides a basis for helping historians to understand concepts such as kinship, community, identity, and historical consciousness as they apply to Native Americans.\(^{39}\) Again, ethnohistory as a methodology, proves essential to this project in understand the concepts of kinship and community as they applied to Delaware, Mahican, and Moravian women. Finally, this project builds off of Daniel K. Richter’s understanding that ethnohistory provides a way for historians to study the cultural forms, and the evolution of those forms, that developed between Native


\(^{38}\) Axtell, “Ethnohistory: An Historian’s Viewpoint.”

Americans and Euroamericans rather than focusing on the tension between the two groups. The negotiating space, based on Richard White’s middle ground, is how this project attempts to analyze the relationships between Delaware, Mahican, and Moravian women. This project will replace the middle ground with the negotiating space, discussed in more detail below, as constructed and occupied by Moravian and Native American women between 1741 and 1763.

Historians of Native American women face many obstacles, mainly with the challenging and complex tasks of locating Native American women’s voices and uncovering their agency, which are often shrouded in harmful stereotypes. Historians must see Native American women’s roles as being comprised of “a number of statuses.” Delaware and Mahican women had multiple identities, as any woman does; they were mothers, daughters, and sisters, as well as influential members of their communities who maintained essential bonds of kinship and community. According to historian Betty Bell, a Native American women’s degree of status or power is a matter of the particular cultural, historical, and situational positions surrounding her place in her community. Therefore, a Delaware or Mahican women coming to Bethlehem was not a two dimensional figure wanting to join the Moravians simply for religious reasons. Rather, these women had multiple motivations to join the Moravians. These motivations had direct links to the specific roles Delaware and Mahican women hoped to be able regain or recreate by joining the Moravian community.


43 Ibid., 308.
Another aspect involved in Native American women’s history is overcoming the common stereotypical images associated with Native American women. Examples of these damaging stereotypes include the beautiful princess who abandons her community to “rightly” aid a group of Euroamericans, and the squaw drudge who is an overworked slave to her lazy husband. Clara Sue Kidwell, a well-known Native American scholar, claims that “the mythology of Indian women has overwhelmed the complexity of their roles in the history of Indian and white contact.”44 A goal of Native American women’s history, then, is to restore Native American women to their multiple statuses and deconstruct harmful stereotypes. By placing women at the center of the negotiating space this project will attempt to overcome stereotypical images of Native American women, provide them with agency, and recognize their multiple motivations in joining the Moravian community of Bethlehem.

Richard White’s concept of the “middle ground” is well known and widely used. However the model of the middle ground does not always accurately explain all relationships between a Native American and Euroamerican community. While the middle ground does not discount the participation of women, it does not place them at the center as equal to male actors. In the case of the Moravians, the term “negotiating space” is a more apt way to describe their relationships with the Delaware and Mahicans. According to White, the middle ground allowed colonists and Native Americans to “construct a common, mutually comprehensible world…Here…their mixture created new systems of meaning and of exchange.”45

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45 White, The Middle Ground.
negotiating space allowed Native Americans and the Moravians to do the same, except the space was created and maintained chiefly by the women of each community.

The negotiating space was the system of cross-cultural exchange and survival, which fostered intercultural cooperation, created by Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women. Thus, the negotiating space recognizes the essential contributions made by all the women living in the Bethlehem community and focuses on women as active survivors. The negotiating space further expands upon the concept of the middle ground in that the negotiating space was not “the place in between: in between cultures, peoples, and in between empires,” which is how White describes the space of the middle ground. 46 Rather than taking place in the middle of two worlds, the negotiating space existed as part of two worlds, binding them together. The negotiating space was not something between the Moravians and their Native American converts, it was a slow, interweaving force created by the female members of the communities. It was not always a steady or stable force, sometimes threads twisted or tangled and needed to be smoothed, as in any new relationship. However, while the middle ground was often destroyed “when Indians ceased to have the power to force whites into the middle ground,” the negotiating space successfully bound the Moravians and their Native American converts together until a combination of internal and external forces disrupted the space in the 1760s.47

This project has significance to many fields of history, mainly those of Early American History, Women’s History, Regional and Religious History, and Native American History. An examination of the Bethlehem community between 1741 and 1763 opens up the perspective of

46 Ibid.
47 Ibid.
Colonial American History by presenting three groups which are either left out of the larger narrative or grouped into the seemingly all encompassing terms and paradigms of colonist and Native American. However, a nuanced account of the cross-cultural relationships between the Moravians, Delaware, and Mahicans reveals the mistakes made by generalizing and universalizing the categories of Colonist and Native American. This study also emphasizes the central role and essential contributions of women, who are often glossed over in a discussion of the French and Indian War. This project also helps to illuminate not only the latent consequences of the above mentioned narrative on three marginalized groups, but also the brief window of a successful cross-cultural system of exchange and survival built and maintained by women.

The field of Women’s History often looks at cross-cultural relationships and the systems of survival created by women. This project is an example of such a study and sheds light on the experiences of three groups of marginalized women during the colonial period of American History. The cross-cultural system, or the negotiating space, was created by Moravian and Delaware and Mahican women for several reasons. Native American women hoped to restore lost spiritual power and community influence and to help their ravaged communities survive in a politically crowded era. Moravian women hoped to meet the goals of their religious mission and gain personal spiritual power as well, and later to prevent their roles in the Moravian religious system from disappearing. This project also looks at how women maneuvered in a patriarchal colonial system to ensure their community’s success. In the case of the Bethlehem community, it is the women who ensure the groups’ survival on the social frontier of the colonial system.
This project also adds to the regional and religious scholarship on Pennsylvania. Colonial Pennsylvania was unique in its religious composition and tolerance, which made the era of the Great Awakening and the French and Indian War even more politically and socially crowded for the Moravians and their Delaware and Mahicans converts. In a more direct sense, this project adds to the scholarship on the Moravians in the United States and their experiences and evolution as a religious group as well as the religious practices and motivations of the Delaware and Mahicans who chose to join the Moravians in Bethlehem.

Finally, this project is significant to Native American History. It is an example Native Americans’ deft ability to manipulate the environment of the colonial system and to make their own choices in alliance building. Here, the Delaware and Mahicans chose to ally themselves with the Moravians and partake in the building of a negotiating space for their own reasons; mainly cultural survival. Furthermore, this project helps to reveal Native American women’s roles and experiences in making personal and communal choices, and their effort to rebuild what they and their communities had lost due to colonization.

The following chapters expand upon and attempt to explain the two fronts of the Moravian social frontier. The following chapter on mission towns first explains the practical and spiritual attractions which led the Delaware and Mahicans to join the Moravians. The chapter then goes on to explain the specific temporal and spiritual benefits Delaware and Mahican women gained by joining the Moravian community. The final chapter of this project analyzes the experiences of Delaware and Mahican girls who attended boarding schools in Bethlehem or Nazareth. These girls did not always seem to be able to make as successful use of the negotiating space as their counterparts in the missions towns. The final chapter concludes by
recounting the internal and external factors which led to the destruction of the negotiating space, and its effect on the women of the mission towns, girls living in Moravian boarding schools, and the Moravian community as a whole.

By making use of ethnohistory and a close reading of available sources this project recounts a unique social frontier present between 1741 and 1763 in the then western reaches of colonial Pennsylvania. Furthermore, this project describes one of many cross-cultural systems women created and maintained for their community’s survival. Between 1741 and 1763 Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women actively challenged and reshaped the social environment they were presented with through intercultural cooperation in order to secure their community’s success.
Chapter One

Mission Towns

During their city’s founding years, roughly 1741 to 1748, the inhabitants of Bethlehem “sensed that they represented the pinnacle of development in the Moravian Church,” Under the leadership of August Gottlieb Spangenberg, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania developed a reputation as “the embodiment of Zinzendorf’s vision.” A main goal of the Moravians was to work with the Native Americans of Pennsylvania. Two groups, the Delaware and Mahicans, chose to join the Moravian community based on three categories of attractions. Practical attractions, such as protection, theological attractions such as the fusion of the temporal and religious, and attractions specific to Native American women such as the chance to rebuild the community influence they had lost. In order to understand the basics of these attractions, and how they formed the basis of the negotiating space and first front of the social frontier, basic Moravian theology will first be discussed.

The Moravians of the eighteenth century wanted to make Christianity a vital and essential presence in society as well as in people’s individual, everyday lives. As pietists, they incorporated the ideas of repentance, sanctification, new birth, and a hope for a better future, into

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their theology and religious practices. Zinzendorf also drew upon other pietist doctrines, such as Philipp Jakob Spener’s *Pia Desideria*, which encouraged groups to “(1) read more of the Bible individually and in small groups, (2) make the priesthood… effective through small groups, (3) recognition that Christianity is a matter of practice, not of knowledge, (4) avoid destructive religious controversies, (5) reform… ministerial training in order to teach piety in addition to doctrine, [and] (6) preach simple and edifying sermons for the laity.” The Moravian religion, by combining these ideals with Zinzendorf’s “theology of the heart,” became an institution where theology, religious experience, and social practice were combined and practiced as one in the everyday lives of its followers.

Three aspects of Zinzendorf’s “theology of the heart” stand out as unique when compared to other religions present in colonial Pennsylvania. First, Jesus’ blood and wounds were primary objects of devotion in Moravian theology. Zinzendorf and the Moravians believed humankind was redeemed when Jesus first became human and was physically wounded; the actual outpouring of Jesus’ blood saved humankind. According to Zinzendorf, “Since we could not become like God, he became as we are,” in order to deliver mankind’s souls from condemnation. Second all followers, female and male, were married to Christ through a mystical marriage, and had a close, personal relationship with the Savior. Third, the Holy

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50 In short, many pietists groups believed that by repenting their earthly sins, purifying the self though good works, and experiencing a new birth though baptism they could bring about a new and better world shaped by their religious world view.

51 Atwood, 29.

52 Ibid., 6.

53 Ibid., 79.

54 Ibid.
Spirit was characterized as female. This belief led to a language of motherhood throughout Moravian theology and writings. The Holy Spirit was a mother not only because she was the mother of Jesus, but because of her actions. For the Moravians the Holy Spirit was a mother because she prepared souls to receive the gospel and was the protector of “the Saviour’s household here on earth.” Furthermore, Zinzendorf also believed that religious language should be simple, without double meanings, and based on feelings. Followers were not asked to analyze a sermon or text, rather, they were asked to speak about their personal feelings of a text or sermon.

Zinzendorf’s theology of the heart also provided for universal redemption; because Jesus became human, all souls belonged to God. Therefore, “no race, no people, no nation is automatically excluded” from redemption. All a person need to do was to accept the Savior and his message. Thus, Zinzendorf’s Christology created a religious group which considered all peoples possible converts and began missions throughout the Atlantic world. When the Moravians of Bethlehem encountered the nearby Delaware and Mahicans they saw possible converts, and when the Delaware and Mahicans saw the Moravians, they saw a religious group which was unlike the others they had already encountered and rejected. The Moravians’ unique theology, language, and social practices appealed to the Delaware and Mahicans while other colonial religions did not. Unlike other Christian sects and preachers, such as the Presbyterians and George Whitefield, the Moravians were not as concerned with instilling traits of “civility” into Native American converts, such as ending traditional Native practices like the male

55 Atwood, 68-69.

56 Ibid., 82.
dominated hunt and female dominated agriculture. Additionally, Moravians recognized cultural differences between themselves and Natives and did work to acculturate their converts, but “downplayed the inequalities that other Euro-Americans emphasized.” Also, the Moravian religion never developed a strictly structured theology. Rather, it remained, “a religion based not on understanding, but on feeling,” where missionaries would first insert themselves into the community they were working with and live by example rather than preaching harsh sermons of hellfire and condemnation.

For the Delaware and Mahicans, like the Moravians, the secular and the religious or spiritual went hand in hand. Moravian theology and religious practice was “akin to native traditions in which religion was not a set of doctrines…but a way of life.” The Delaware and Mahicans believed in powerful spirits which were linked to nature, called Manitous. A Manitou could be called upon for guidance and provided their “worshippers” with spiritual power and authority within the community. A group could have several Manitous, and may have had other lesser objects of spiritual power, like the leather and wampum idol kept by the convert Jsihop’s mother-in-law. For Native Americans, there were only faint and indistinct lines between the sacred and the secular. The Moravians operated on the same belief, “Nearly every aspect of life in Bethlehem was incorporated into communal rituals in order to bring the secular into the sacred

58 Merritt, At the Crossroads, 95.
60 Wheeler, To Live Upon Hope, 96.
61 “Copy of a Letter dictated by Jsihop an Indian to Zinz. 19 [?] 1741,” 1741, Indian Missions, box 319, file 1, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
sphere by connecting daily life to the life and death of Jesus.” Everyday occurrences, like dreams or visions and signs or portents from nature held spiritual significance for both Native Americans and the Moravians. These points of theological similarity helped to draw the three groups together.

Various elements of the Moravian religion, in theology and in practice, would have been appealing for Native American groups like the Delaware and Mahicans. These “attractions” can be grouped into three basic categories, practical attractions, basic theological attractions for the Native American community, and attractions specific to Native American women and their own, personal spiritual and temporal needs. Practical attractions include access to land, food, shelter, and work as well as protection from groups of other Native Americans and colonists. For example, by allying themselves with the Moravians at Bethlehem, the Delaware and Mahicans were making a choice to stay near their ancestral lands and ensure that their children would have access to a new spiritual power as well as a European education and an alliance with, and thus the protection, of a European group. Basic theological attractions include the Moravians use of rituals and complex imagery as well as the actions of key members of the Moravian community and the dynamics of the community itself. For example, the Moravians approach to conversion, which was unlike the approaches other colonial religious groups had used, acted as a force of attraction when the Native Americans first encountered Moravian missionaries. Additionally, Brother (Br.) Spangenberg’s role as leader of Bethlehem cannot be overlooked as he was an essential member of the Moravian community and kept the missions to Native American groups

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62 Atwood, 157.
in the forefront of the community’s concerns. In Bethlehem, it was Br. Spangenberg who prioritized the Moravian goal to convert any willing people they encountered. Finally, the Moravians unique beliefs concerning gender and women’s roles within the Moravian community acted as forces of attraction specifically to Native American women. The Delaware and Mahicans, both part of the Algonquin language grouping, were traditionally matrilineal. Women held positions of power and influence within their communities, just as Moravian women held important positions within their communities. Delaware and Mahican women were looking to rebuild the kinship networks and recreate sources of spiritual power they had lost due to the colonization of North America.

Each of these three categories would have appealed to individual converts in a unique, personal way. For example, a Delaware woman would have joined the Moravians for different reasons than a Mahican woman. A Delaware woman looking to rebuild her kinship ties and recreate a source of personal spiritual power would have different personal motivations than a Mahican woman attempting the same end goals because they had come from different

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63 The titles “Brother” and “Sister” were often used in conjunction with someone’s first or last name. The titles were common usage for the Bethlehem Moravians, and denoted respect for other members of the community as well as their position within a choir or marital status, in the case of women.

64 Atwood, 115-121. Br. Spangenberg and his wife Eva Maria were the leaders of the Bethlehem community during its founding decades. The Spangenbergs were a key reason why the Moravian community was able to keep its mission effort a primary focus. Br. Spangenberg had looked at Pennsylvania as a place for a future settlement in 1739 and decided then it was an ideal place for a mission to the Native Americans and other colonists who lived in the area. His initial plan for the Pennsylvania settlement “included preaching stations…schools…. Indian missions, and a town to be the center of all activity and organization…surrounded by farms so that the community would not be dependent on trade with outsiders.” After the Bethlehem community was founded the community members were dived into two groups, a Hausgemeine, or a home community, and a Pilgergemeine, or a pilgrim community. Each group had its own duties and goals. The Pilgergemeine was to devote itself “to evangelistic work among the Indians and white people, adults and children.” The members of the Hausgemeine were instructed to “tarry by the stuff” (I Sam. 30:24)” or to develop material resources for the community as a whole. According to Craig D. Atwood, in July of 1742 there were a total of 131 people living in Bethlehem. Of the total population, thirty-nine were missionaries.
communities. Generally, women and men had different goals as well. Men would most likely have wanted to secure hunting grounds and an alliance as well as access to food and shelter. Women would have wanted these same goals, but they would have also been looking for a community where they could regain their old status as community leaders and influential decision makers. Generational differences would also have played a part on each individual’s choice to join the Moravians. Older Native Americans may have been looking for a community where they could end their lives close to traditional lands and maintain what power they had left in their communities. Younger converts would have been looking for new ways to gain influence within the community and to ensure the success of their children, or family’s future.

Despite personal differences in joining the Moravians, the transition to the Bethlehem community would have been less harsh than a transition to a community led by other colonial religious groups. These groups, unlike the Moravians, would have demanded converts’ total assimilation to a Western lifestyle. The existence of the negotiating space also eased the transition of converts into the Moravian community. Within the negotiating space, Native Americans would have been more able to pick and choose which practices they adopted and which practices they would adapt to meet their needs. The rich ritual lifestyle of the Moravians and the mobility and avenues of communication present in their communities made the negotiating space flexible and open to both Native American and German Moravians as a place of mediation, compromise, and understanding.
Practical Attractions

More practical, or secular, aspects of the Moravian community also led the Delaware and Mahicans to join the Moravians of Bethlehem. Both the Mahicans and the Delaware had been displaced from their traditional lands, the Mahicans from the Hudson Valley in New York and the Delaware from northern New Jersey. Therefore, neither group was in a dominant position to make a firm and lasting alliance with the other Native American groups which had helped to displace them. The Delaware in particular would have been unable to ally themselves with the Iroquois, a powerful Native Alliance of the time, because it was the Iroquois who used the Delaware as a bargaining chip and later as a scapegoat in their own deals with the English. By allying themselves with the Moravians the Delaware and the Mahicans gained access to hunting and farming land, protection, food, and help with familial problems as well as access to a new spiritual power.

The 1740s and 1750s were a turbulent time for western Pennsylvania, especially as tensions with the French increased. The Moravians and their Native Americans allies repeatedly came under suspicion as being in league with the French. For example, Brother (Br.) C. Brockden of the Shamokin mission, while visiting Philadelphia in June 1746, asked the governor for permission to send a smith to the Native Americans associated with the Moravians. The governor replied that it was “a matter of considerable Importance to supply them a smith when we know not whether they, [the] Indians, will take up arms for us or against us.” Permission for a smith was not given until November of the same year after the Five Nations had allied

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65 Letter by C. Brockden to Governor of Pennsylvania, 27 June 1746, Indian Missions, box 121, file 8, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
themselves with the English colonists against the French. However, suspicion against Native Americans associated with the Moravians was a constant issue. An encounter with an Irish Volunteer Company on 20 September 1763 was typical of how outsiders regarded the Moravians and their Native American converts. Br. Grube recorded in his journal,

an Irish Volunteer Company came, but they did not behave themselves as they ought, for they [threatened] to kill our Indians, if they should be in the Woods…I told them that these Indians were under the Gouv. Protection, but they said nobody would regard it. I told them too, such people were indeed not Christians, who would kill innocent people…The Indians seemed to me very afraid therefore I comforted them.  

Neither the Moravians nor their Native American converts could escape suspicion and the watchful eyes of their neighbors who were constantly on the lookout for French raids despite the fact that by joining the Bethlehem community the Mahicans and Delaware came under the protection of the Pennsylvanian governor. However, this protection did not always prevent outside attacks; both Shekomeko and later Gnadenhütten had to be evacuated after deadly assaults.

The Moravian missionaries also went to great pains to protect the Native American members of their community. They compiled a list of defining features of Moravian Native Americans and sent it to their neighbors. The Moravians wrote, “It is to be taken Notice, that the peacable Indians residing with the Brethren at Nain & Wechquetanc may be known by the following Marks.” They wore no paint or feathers; rather they wore “Hats or Caps.” Moravians Native Americans would also wear their guns on their shoulders, “whereas others, that come

66 Journal of Bernard Grube (September to 11 October 1763), 15 September 1763, Indian Missions, box 124, file 4, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
with a bad Design, hide it.” Moravian Native Americans would also “wear their Gun either
down, or on the Shoulder” when they saw “white People.” Furthermore the Moravians asked
that their Native American converts “be not upbraided with the Actions of other Indians, nor
spitefully treated or threatened to be shot after.”\(^67\) They also tried to work out a new, stronger
agreement with the Pennsylvanian governor. However, the plan “was laid befor Governer
Hamilton, just about the Time when Governor [-] Penn, who succeeded him, arrived. The said
Governor Penn, in Council with the provincial Comissioners, [-] that the Indians should be
brought down to Philadelphia.”\(^68\) When trouble was more localized the Moravians often let the
Native Americans living near them take shelter in their homes and set up night watches to warn
of attacks.

Delaware and Mahican women who joined the Moravian community could also hope for
protection from a violent husband or male relative. The Moravians outlawed alcohol in their
communities and often sheltered women and children when nearby peoples participated in
drunken rages. A 1747 journal entry from Shekomeko states, “The Indians continued very
drunken, women & children ofs made our House their Refuge.”\(^69\) On March 20\(^{th}\) of the same
year the journal entry records that a young Delaware woman asked the Moravians to hide “a
Kegg of Brandy,” however, they told her no, and to throw it in the Susquehanna, “being the

\(^67\) Letter from Moravian Native Americans to Governor of Pennsylvania, 27 July 1763, Indian Missions, box 124,
file 7, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

\(^68\) “A Plan for protecting and supporting the Christian Indians at Nain near Bethlehem,” 1763, Indian Missions,
box 124, file 7, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

\(^69\) Shekomeko Journal, 4 January 1747, Indian Missions, box 121, file 4, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem,
Pennsylvania.
justest way for hir to be set free from [ ] poor way of living."\textsuperscript{70} This “poor way of living” probably refers to the personal and communal damage that alcohol abuse can cause. Alcohol abuse had caused earlier concern for the Moravians and the Native Americans living with them on 27 December 1743. After “all the Indians were baptized [we] had a lovefeast which was greatly blesst.” However, after the ceremony, “there came some Drunken Indians and made a great noise, but we…shut up secure in the wounds of the Lamb. Our Poor Indian B\textsuperscript{f}. and S\textsuperscript{fs}. were very much troubled with them.”\textsuperscript{71}

The Delaware and Mahicans had a different type of violence to fear as well. Native American slavery, while often down played or thought of as a “frontier phenomenon” was also a reason the Delaware and Mahicans may have joined the Moravians.\textsuperscript{72} While there was a gradual movement to end Native American slavery in the eighteenth century, conflicts which resulted in Native Americans as captives still took place. Native American slavery was nothing new to the northern colonies. During King Philip’s War 400 Native Americans were taken as war captives, then kept or sold by their captors. These captives outnumbered the enslaved Africans in the area. War was often used as a tactic by New England governments to enslave Native Americans. War was also used to dissolve any power still wielded by Native American groups as well as to clear land for settlement. The Delaware and Mahicans would most likely have known about a conflict between the Abenaki and some New Englanders, which took place in the 1720s, where

\textsuperscript{70} Ibid.


enslavement was again an end result. The Delaware and Mahicans were marginal in the Native American community, they had no way to protect themselves from capture. Joining the Moravians would have provided them with a way to escape that fate.

Land was also an issue for the Mahicans and Delaware. After being displaced from their traditional lands they had no other land to lay claim to, leaving them to encroach on lands held by other Native Americans or by colonists. Mahican and Delaware men would be trespassing when they went on hunts, and women could not plant corn and other staple crops. Joining the Moravians helped to solve this problem. The Moravians had purchased a five hundred acre tract in western Pennsylvania, and those who joined their community would be able to live off the purchased land. The Shekomeko diaries, and other mission town diaries, often recorded Native American men leaving to hunt and also recorded the harvesting or preparation of crops. An entry from July, 1752 states, “The Indian Brothren and Sisters make bussi in there Plantations I began the Skool with the Children.” By joining the Moravians, the Delaware and Mahicans were ensuring they had access to food and land.

The Moravians missionaries, due to their communal lifestyle, also contributed to the welfare of the Native Americans living with them. Native American converts were allowed to leave the community to make an income and missionaries regularly requested more supplies from Bethlehem so that they could provide for their communities without their new converts having to leave and work for a wage. In a 1744 letter to Br. Büttner, Henrick Joachim Senssmann wrote that the Native Americans living in Shekomeko “are gone abroad to work for

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73 Ibid.
the white People, for their Indian Corn is at and End.” Senssmann asked Büttner to call a conference “to get advise how it is best to menage this affair” because the mission was having trouble feeding its inhabitants as well as the many people traveling through the area. Senssmann feared for the Native Americans who had to leave the mission and he asked for money and food to buy supplies. Missionaries also paid Native American men for work. Two receipts for work from 1757 and 1759, paid to Anton and Nicodemus respectively, show that each man was paid for clearing land. Anton received “The Sum of One Pound for Grubbing & Clearing One Acre of Land in Gnadenthal.” Nicodemus, “Received the 10 March 1759. The Sum of Two Pounds Eighteen Shillings & 6d for Grubbing and Clearing Two and a quarter Acres Land in Nazareth.”

Native American parents also saw membership in the Moravian community as a way to ensure a more positive future for their children. These children would be provided for physically, mentally, and spiritually. They would be fed, housed, and cared for in the Moravian choir system, educated in Moravian schools, and raised in the Moravian spiritual tradition. These were three aspects of raising children which many Native American communities were finding increasingly hard to provide their children with. Land encroachment by colonists took away from traditional hunting and planting grounds, leading to food shortages. Also, Native American parents were powerless to protect their children from European diseases such as smallpox.

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76 Receit for work, 21 June 1757, Indian Missions, box 311, file 7, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
77 Receit for work, 10 March 1759, Indian Missions, box 311, file 7, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
pox. Finally, many Native American parents realized that their children needed a European style education to give them an entry into the colonial world.\textsuperscript{78}

Acting as a link between more practical reasons for the Mahicans and Delaware to join the Moravians of Bethlehem and attractions based on theological aspects of the Moravian system is the Moravian approach to conversion. The Moravians did not fit the profile of the usual missionary working to convert the Native Americans. Usually married couples who worked together, these missionaries learned native languages and took part in the everyday Native American activities.\textsuperscript{79} Missionaries preached God’s love and included vibrant rituals, music, and images in daily worship. When compared with missionaries such as George Whitefield who preached God’s anger and stark Puritan churches, the Moravians stand out as exceptional.

The Moravians had a unique outlook on conversion. They did not immediately start preaching to the Native Americans they encountered, rather they let their actions speak first. Moravian missionary couples integrated themselves into the Native American community. They slept in Native American huts or tents, ate the food they were offered, and participated in various other cultural activities. Missionary women especially shined here, they shared Native American women’s daily duties and attempted to get to know the Native American women on a personal level. In fact, women were instructed to do this and then report their findings back to the community leaders in Bethlehem. Missionary women often acted as interpreters for their

\textsuperscript{78} Rachel Wheeler, “Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village.”

\textsuperscript{79} The Moravian mission towns include Gnadenütten, Shamokin, and Shekomeko.
husbands, as in the case of Sister (Sr.) Mack who had grown up in the area around Shekomeko and was familiar with the Mahican language.80

Imagery

Moravians made great use of imagery, using it as a tool to enhance their relationship with Christ, to assist the understanding of God’s message, and as a tool to express their own feelings. The language used by the Moravians is saturated with imagery, and often referred to as “blood and wounds terminology” or “blood and wounds theology.” For the Moravians, “Christ’s blood [was] thus symbolic of the healing of the soul and the release from sin and death.”81 It was Christ’s blood which redeemed mankind; “it brought new life to everything that God made and restored all things to their original purity.”82 Zinzendorf used the Gospel of John to formulate the Moravian belief in the redeeming powers of Christ’s blood and the side wound Christ received while on the cross. John’s Gospel says that the way to God is through Jesus, therefore, for Zinzendorf and the Moravians, “the side wound is the narrow door, the portal to paradise, the means of entry into the body of Christ.”83 This language, awash with images of a savior bleeding blood of redemption, was most popular during the 1740s, and coincided with the Moravians’ largest period of worldwide outreach of evangelism and community building.84

80 Wheeler, To Live Upon Hope.
81 Atwood, 100.
82 Atwood, 101.
83 Atwood, 107.
84 During the 1740s the Moravians had missions across the Atlantic World, including Africa, the Caribbean, Greenland, and Alaska. The Moravians of Europe were also experiencing what is usually referred to “The Sifting
Therefore, the Delaware and Mahicans met the Moravians at a time when the Moravian religious language was at its peak of using vibrant imagery in everyday worship.

Native American women may have been especially drawn to this blood imagery. As previously stated, the Moravians regarded the Holy Spirit as female. This belief was expressed in image rich language where the female Holy Spirit is tied directly to the redeeming powers of Christ’s blood. In his *Einundzwanzig Diskurse* Zinzendorf writes, “When the dear Savior had died and his blood poured out, when his side was opened up, then the Holy Spirit, like a dammed stream, broke out again. She burst through and made the entire earth a streambed.”\(^85\) In other words, Christ’s blood, and humankind’s redemption, was spread though the world by a woman. The Moravians also fashioned and employed an androgynous figure in Christ. Zinzendorf’s Christology transformed Jesus’ side wound into a breast where followers gained Christ’s spiritual nourishment.\(^86\) Therefore, Native American women, as well as men, most likely would have found an androgynous Christ appealing because he could give both genders access to gendered spiritual power.

The image of Jesus’ side wound was also expanded to explain how souls were born into the world. “Little souls are created or ‘begotten’ in ‘the matrix’ (womb) of the side wound and then proceed through that orifice into the world and the bodies of the believers.”\(^87\) As a result of

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85 Atwood, 101.

86 Atwood, 110.

87 Atwood, 111.
this belief, Native Americans’ souls gained a new spiritual element because their souls were birthed directly though Christ himself. New, increased, or renewed spiritual power was a major goal and attraction for Native Americans because they were slowly being pushed into the destructive cycle of colonialism. Furthermore, Native American women would have doubly been looking to gain more spiritual power because they were losing power within their own communities. As war and hunting became more dominant practices over diplomacy and agriculture, and as Europeans refused to recognize Native American women’s political power Native American women lost influence in their communities. The Moravians, on the other hand, recognized Native American women’s political and spiritual power because they did not consign women to the identity of the lesser gender in their own communities and social practices.

Ritual

The Moravians had a rich and vibrant iconographic tradition which was accompanied by both simple and complex rituals. Some rituals involved movements which were almost dance-like and others were processional. During rituals the Moravians made use of their image rich language and “Preachers…were encouraged to use graphic and affective language to paint Christ before the eyes of their listeners.” Rituals like baptisms and lovefeasts would have included sermons full of “graphic and affective language.” The act of conversion itself can also be seen as informally ritualized. Moravians employed a “pastoral theology,” with a standard path to salvation and placed great stress on conversion through repentance and struggle. The usual steps

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88 Atwood, 86.
of a person’s conversion were, “awareness of one’s sins, anxiety over one’s sins, doubts, desire for salvation, struggling in prayer, [and a] sudden enlightenment and certainty concentrated in a violent conversion struggle.”

Two Native American women, Sarah and another unnamed woman, actively used this pastoral theology to express themselves to the Moravian community. Sarah was one of the Moravian’s first converts and became a very influential and important woman in the community. Sarah was welcomed into the Helpers Conference in October 1743, and in December she spoke out at a Helpers meeting about a recent religious experience. The document recounting this event demonstrates how Sarah spoke about her doubt, fervent prayers, and a sudden enlightenment during which she felt Christ’s presence. The 11 December 1743 entry of a journal kept by Br. Büttner while in Shekomeko states,

Sarah told us she had a mind to Relate to us how it was with her in her Heart [-] ‘For these last 5 Days, it was always so in her Heart that she would gladly know how she stood with her Saviour, and she would gain Experience more of his Blood, Whereupon in the last night such a Hunger seised after it, which she could not Express, and at last it was so in her heart, as if she [saw] the Saviour with his Wounds, She saw nothing with her Eyes, but her Heart believed so in the Saviour as if she had seen him, and she has then such a feeling of it, that she thought, that if any one should Pull the Flesh from her Bones, she would never-there so abide

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89 Atwood, 31.

90 Upon their baptism Native American converts chose a new, Anglicized, name. Choosing a new name linked converts to their new community and symbolized the break with their old life. Typically married women were called by their husband’s surname along with the title of Sister (Sr.). However, Native American women, married or single, were usually called by their first name only. In some instances Native American men were referred to as Brother (Br.) followed by their newly chosen first name.

91 The Helpers Conference was made up of the Moravian missionaries and those members of the community who acted as Helpers, similar to lay people who assist Roman Catholic priests during the distribution of the Eucharist.
with him, and said she, I believe I should not have felt it neither, For my whole 
Body and Heart felt a power from his Wounds and Blood.'

Sarah clearly modeled her speech on the pastoral theology mentioned above. Her narrative starts 
with her feelings of anxiety over her relationship with the Savior, then tells of her internal 
struggles and physical pain, and ends with her feeling the Savior’s power and influence. Sarah’s 
description of her religious experience illustrates her understanding of the Moravian theology, 
which she successfully used to gain an important place in the church.

Later that month Br. Büttner spoke with a Native American woman who also expressed 
her feelings about Christ and the Moravian community. On December 23rd Br. Büttner recorded 
his conversation with a Native American woman who had already been baptized five years ago 
by another Christian group, but was unhappy with her life and wanted to join the Moravian 
community in an attempt to restore her relationship with Christ as well as the quality of her life. 
Büttner writes that the woman

told me how it had been with her in her baptism, for the first 2 years she refrained 
herself from outward Vices, and thereby always thought she was not so very bad. 
Afterwards The other Baptized Indians Envited her to a Feast, to which she w.d 
not go, because she thought if she went she must Dance; but her Mother 
persuaded her to go…and she was no sooner there, but she danced again, the other 
said , there was not harm in dancing, yes, even the Minister himself said, ‘that 
when it was done nightly it was no Sin, But afterwards she fell into Whoredom 
and all manner of Sins, and lived in that way of life for 2 years, the Last spring 
she came to Shekomeko, and was convinced there she was in her Nature an 
unhappy Person, and would reform herself when she came home again, but it 
went with her [-] as hereto fore, till within these 14 Days, she became so full of 
Anguish and Trouble, and clearly [-] that she could not be helped out of it where 
she was, if she did not go to Shekomeko. now she was here and felt truely that our 
Saviour worked on her Heart, but was not so with Her as with our Srs. I ask’d her

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how long she would stay here, she said, if her Father would permit her, she would always stay here. 93

The unnamed Native American woman, like Sarah, used traditional paths of Moravian theology to strengthen and create bonds with the Moravian community. The unnamed woman felt lost and out of place in the changing colonial system, and many Native American women must have felt the same way. Joining the Moravian community, and mapping out her path of conversion to explain her feelings of loss, confusion, and personal turmoil, this woman was able to regain control over her life. These two women adapted Moravian pastoral theology to reform their lives, which seemed out of control, and work towards creating new bonds of community and spiritual power.

A convert’s baptism was also a major ritualistic event for Moravians. Baptism signified acceptance and incorporation into the Moravian community, which would have been especially important to Native American women looking to recreate or rebuild community networks and kinship ties. The baptism of adults included a reading of special liturgies, a reception into their respective choir and a reading of the convert’s personal application for baptism. 94 If the convert was a Native American, she or he would also be given a new name “to stress their break with tribal religion” and formalize their membership and place in the Moravian community. 95 The liturgies used spoke symbolically of Christ’s blood and wounds, and spoke of a convert’s access to Christ’s power. According to Craig D. Atwood, the following hymn was often sung at

93 Ibid.

94 Atwood, 159. “This document put forth the person’s religious experience and reasons why she or he felt called by God to be part of the Bethlehem community.”  

95 Atwood, 160.
baptisms. “The Eye sees Water, nothing more, / How it is poured out by Men; / But Faith alone conceives the Pow’r / Of Jesu’s Blood to make us clean: / Faith sees it as a purple Flood, / Colour’d with Jesu’s Blood and Grace / Which heals each Sore, and makes all good, / What Adam brought on us his Race, / And all what we ourselves have done.”

Native American converts may have interpreted this hymn as giving them official access to the spiritual power they were seeking. According to the hymn their new faith would enable them to see Jesus’ blood (Faith sees it as a purple Flood) while others could not (The Eye sees Water, nothing more).

Ending the ceremony, a convert would have been welcomed into her or his choir with a kiss from the current choir members.

Sources from the Moravian’s early years in Pennsylvania mention many baptisms; and baptisms of Native Americans were especially noted and written about with great excitement and happiness. Br. Gottlieb Büttner’s 1743 Shekomeko journal from February 22nd to April 9th mentions a Native American baptism. In March the first “Indian Communion,” or baptism was held. Three couples and four Native American men were baptized, Abraham and Sarah, Thomas and Ester, Jacob and Rachel, John, Jonathan, Joshua, and Jonah. Later that month, on the 26th, a conference decided to baptize three more Native Americans from outlying settlements. They would be named Jeremiah, Luke, and Elizabeth. These baptisms were often followed by a lovefeast, either for the whole community or with just the new convert and her/his choir.

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96 Atwood, 159.

97 Atwood, 160.

Smaller rituals, such as lovefeasts, were often held by the Moravians. Lovefeasts were meetings of a few friends, a whole choir, or the whole community in general, and were unique to the Moravian religion. Other colonial religions may have had similar meetings, but a lovefeast was a shared meal with “liturgical action…[where] ‘worldly’ talk was not permitted.” A lovefeast was not a social meeting, but a special, personal religious ritual used to strengthen the bonds within the community as well as to celebrate special occasions like baptisms and marriages. Atwood describes a typical lovefeast as follows, “While the [servers] distributed beverages and some type of bun, the participants sang or listened to specially prepared music. Lovefeasts gave an opportunity to celebrate specific aspects of the [Community’s] life while reaffirming the fundamental beliefs of the [Community.]” Images were also used during lovefeasts to focus participants’ attention on Christ and his presence in their lives.

Native American converts also played key roles in lovefeasts, such as the General Lovefeast held on Christmas day and December 26th of 1743. On Christmas day Br. Büttner wrote, “I preached’d and there was a great company of Indians present, and our Log House or Church was quite full…afterwards we had a General Lovefeast at which there were 91 grown Indians. Isaac, Jonathan, Joshua, Deborah and Salome were Serv.” The role of a server was not a job lightly done or considered, rather, it was an important role and one that bestowed honor on the one to server. The following day another lovefeast was held after “B. Jonathan and Ann

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99 Atwood, 161-162.
100 Atwood, 161-162.
101 Atwood, 162.
were married in the Presence of their Friends and the Member of the Conference.” And later that evening after the lovefeast, “our B.’ Samuel and Mary were married.”

A footwashing, or *pedalavium*, was another typical ritual practiced by the Moravians in their effort to follow the example set by Jesus. Footwashings were only given between members of the same choir and were often seen as a way to include or absolve a person. For example, a footwashing was held on October 31, 1743, twenty-five Native Americans “besides our own B.’ and Sr.” attended. Following the entry is a list of the Native American Brothers and Sisters listed by married couples and single persons; they number fourteen men and eleven women. These men and women would have participated in the footwashing as Moravians, not Native Americans, and by doing so helped to strengthen their ties to and within the Moravian community.

The Moravian rituals of baptism, lovefeasts, and footwashings all served to reinforce community ties and were a way for Native American converts to create a strong base within the Moravian community. All three rituals were rituals of inclusion and in mission towns Native American women were included side by side with white Moravian women. Native American women even held important roles in rituals, for example, besides acting as servers, Native Americans also gave lovefeasts, such as the lovefeast held by Deborah on 11 April 1745. One month before, the women of Shekomeko gathered to “husk Indian corn, they made a Lovefeast

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103 Ibid.

104 Atwood, 163-164.


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together, eat on the Grave Stone & were very happy together.” By participating in these rituals Native American women were strengthening their links to the Moravian community, gaining personal spiritual power, and creating a distinct place within their choirs and the Moravian community as a whole.

Community Life

Moravian rituals, such as the lovefeasts and baptisms mentioned above, made the Moravian community distinct from other colonial religious groups, however, the community in and of itself was also very unique. Many aspects of the Moravian community held great appeal for the Delaware and Mahicans who were looking to reestablish their own communities. Firstly, there was little to no separation between the spiritual and the temporal in the Moravian community because religion permeated most aspects of life for community members. This, as discussed earlier, appealed to Native Americans and also provided them with a community environment which was not totally foreign. Therefore for Moravians, and their Native American converts, a community was based on religious needs first and worldly concerns second. Secondly, the closeness of the Moravian community and women’s place within the community had a special appeal for Native American women who were looking to create new kinship ties and gain a new basis for female power and authority within their communities.

The Moravians’ use of the choir system meant that their communities were divided acutely by gender and less strongly by age. Members of the community would spend most of

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their time with people of the same gender and age group. Therefore, Native American women converts, upon joining the Moravian community, entered into a community system which encouraged and fostered the formation of close relationships within the gendered choirs. For example, a common practice in any Moravian community was the formation of *banden*, or voluntary groups of three to eight people who met to talk “freely about their religious and personal concerns.” Peter Vogt refers to *banden* as a chance within the Moravian community for “congregational discourse [or an] ongoing cycle of communication.”\textsuperscript{107} By participating in a *banden*, Native American women could express their thoughts, concerns, and opinions to a close and private group of other women. They could then use the relationships formed within the *banden* to create kinship ties and support networks within their new community. In this way rituals served a dual purpose, they strengthened members’ religious beliefs and well as bonds within the community and between members. Rituals served to fortify the community as a whole by bringing its members together in familiar and comforting settings, where members could reinforce newly formed ties of kinship, or friendship.

Sarah, the Native American women mentioned previously, used the Moravian community structure to her great advantage. Sarah’s actions in her mission town both corresponded and broke with traditional gender roles for Native American women. Sarah used “individual fortitude, spiritual sustenance, and new tools of Christian ritual and Moravian social structures to bind together her family and community.”\textsuperscript{108} For example, Sarah most likely would have


\textsuperscript{108} Wheeler, To Live Upon Hope, 136.
expressed her thoughts to other women in her choir or even to the other members of her banden before speaking out at the Helpers Conference. Sarah’s speech showed her personal strength while reinforcing her kinship and community ties within the Moravian community. Clearly, Native American women living in Moravian mission towns lived in a community which enabled, rather than prevented, them to recreate the close gendered relationships they would have known pre-contact. While other colonial religious groups would have been suspicious of women forming bonds of camaraderie with each other rather than with the Church and its male leaders, the Moravians (and the Moravian community system itself) promoted closeness and companionship between its members.

More practically, the Moravian community’s system of communication helped many Native American converts express their feelings about colonialism. Rachel Wheeler writes that the Moravian message “enabled many Mohicans to articulate their complaints against colonists in the colonists’ own terms.”\textsuperscript{109} The Moravians, as previously mentioned, were not looked kindly upon by their neighbors in western Pennsylvania. They were often regarded as an enemy, because their distinctive religious practices and beliefs were equated with being Catholic; the Moravians used imagery and song too often and in excess compared to other colonial religions. Furthermore, the Moravians’ contrary beliefs concerning the Holy Spirit and self-enforced separateness from the colonial world only created further suspicion in the eyes of their neighbors.\textsuperscript{110} Native American members of the Moravian community, therefore, likely felt more ease expressing their own feelings of confusion and anger with the colonial governments within

\textsuperscript{109} Wheeler, \textit{To Live Upon Hope}, 103.

\textsuperscript{110} Only members of the Moravian Church were allowed to live in Bethlehem until 1844.
the Moravian community because the Moravians had also experienced discrimination and acts of violence. Mahican and Delaware converts in effect, had gained access to an exclusive colonial group.

The Moravian community centered in Bethlehem also provided its members with substantial geographical mobility within the Moravian community. Native American converts could travel to and from the various mission towns and Bethlehem, and are recorded doing so many times. For example, Br. Büttner recorded in his 1743 journal to Br. Antony, “We sent our Bro. John to Potatick, to tell the Indians there (who are in the Past Naturally related to him) something of our Lord and his Wounds.”111 Later, Sarah is mentioned in her capacity as a missionary. Br. Büttner writes, “Our Indian Sister Sarah came back from Pachgatgoch, hir visit there was Extraordinary blest.”112 These trips could be used to not only to visit friends or family, but to further strengthen their ties to the Moravian community by participating in multiple intimate mission town communities. Letters were also sent to Moravian mission towns outside the Pennsylvania region, and Native American converts used these letters as an opportunity to initiate community ties with their distant Sisters and Brothers. The Native Americans at Gnadenhütten composed a mass letter in 1746 in which a Native American woman called Bathsheba, along with several other Native American women, sent message to her Brothers and Sisters:

Bathsheba- Salutes all the Bm & Sisters heartily & wo. have them know that she is very happy & contented in gnaden Hütten. She thinks much on the Savf & our


d’ Sav.’ has given her what she had pray’d him for. viz’ a contented heart. She said: She thank’d the d’ Sav.’ much, that he had made her so, it was now so with her that her whole heart & her whole Body were the Sav’a what he did with her she wo.d be satisfied with, but it had not been long so with her, she desires the Breth’n & Sisters wo.d think on her constantly & then the Sav.’ would give her still more.113

If converts could not travel personally, they had the ability to send their words and thoughts to their Brothers and Sisters in other missions.

Furthermore, Native Americans would have found social mobility and maneuverability within the Moravian religion. The Bethlehem Diary states, “Our rule must remain that of keeping the door open for everyone to leave us, yet of being more cautious in admitting them.”114 Sarah and her husband Abraham put this belief to the test in the years of the French and Indian War. In 1753 Sarah left the Moravian community to live with Abraham in Wyoming, Pennsylvania. Abraham had been elected Captain of the Mahican Nation and left the Moravians to take up his post. Consequently, Sarah had to decide whether she wanted to stay with her husband and preserve her Native American kinship ties, or stay with the Brethren and maintain the community ties she had worked so hard to create and strengthen. Sarah was torn between the two, and finally decided to follow Abraham. After Abraham died in 1763 Sarah and her daughter returned to the Moravians, rather than follow Jonathan and Joachim, Sarah’s sons, west. Sarah, as a Native American woman and as a Moravian, was forced to make difficult choices “when the multiple layers of [her] identity – as Mohican, wife, mother, and Christian – did not fit

113 Letter by Gnadenütten Native Americans to their Brothers and Sisters, 21 May 1746, Indian Missions, box 319, file 2, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

easily together.” Sarah’s community and kinship ties to the Moravian community sometimes clashed with her ties to the Mahican community, as they did for many Native American women. However, the flexibility that existed in Moravian mission towns enabled Sarah to leave the community in order to keep her family together. Sarah still wrote to her Moravian sisters when she was absent from the community, and when she was ready to return to the Moravian community she was welcomed back as a valued member of the Moravian Church.

**Women’s Spiritual and Temporal Power**

As discussed above, Moravian communities did not draw a concrete line between the temporal and the religious in their communities. Rather, daily activities also had a religious meaning, overtone, interpretation, or goal. Therefore, by gaining access to spiritual power within the Moravian community, Native American women also gained access to temporal power, and vice versa. The negotiating space, created and maintained by the women of the Moravian community, became the focus of women’s temporal and spiritual power. Moravian and Native American women were able to use the negotiating space to work together in order to meet their personal, spiritual, and communal goals. Characterized by give and take, the negotiating space facilitated women’s access to the multiple avenues of spiritual and temporal power in the Moravian system. Gender relations are often complicated, and the relationships between Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women were not an exception. However, through the negotiating space these women were able to cope with change and create a sense of community.

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115 Wheeler, *To Live Upon Hope*, 137-139.
until the combination of events within the Moravian community and the French and Indian War stressed the negotiating space to the point of collapse.

Membership in the Moravian community, and participation in the negotiating space, was very beneficial to Native American women. For example, by becoming leaders in a Moravian community Native American women gained, or rather regained, more control over their families, a power they had been slowly losing due to increased encroachment by colonial settlers and actions of colonial governments. Native American women like Sarah used their position within the Moravian community to keep their families together. After Sarah had left the Bethlehem community to be with her husband, Abraham, she later returned, bringing her young daughter. Sarah was able to bring her daughter into the community because of her membership in the Helper’s Conference, and she was able to convince her daughter to follow her because she had regained influence and power as the matriarch, and leader, of her family.

Moravian theology provides ample space for women’s spiritual power. Basic Moravian practices such as the choir system and basic beliefs such as a female Holy Spirit led to more developed practices and beliefs which women could use to gain personal spiritual power within the Moravian community. According to Craig D. Atwood, “the sanctification of the body (combined with the teaching about the motherhood of the Spirit) let to a strong endorsement of women’s leadership beyond the hearth and the cradle.”116 For the Moravians, conversion causes a person to enter “into a personal and intense marriage with Christ, the Bridegroom of the Soul.”117 Women, therefore, had a spiritual kinship with Christ, and being biologically female

116 Atwood, 95.
117 Atwood, 92.
enabled women to “love and enjoy Christ unreservedly because their physical being and their souls are at one.”

Delaware and Mahican women would have seen this mystical marriage as an entry point to gaining not only spiritual power, but as a concrete base upon which they could start to rebuild community ties and kinship networks. Furthermore, these women could renew their spiritual power and strengthen their link to the Moravian community and the kinship ties within it simply by partaking in communion.

Moravian litanies in use during the eighteenth-century also provided a basis for women’s spiritual power. Two main litanies, the *Te Matrem* and *The Church’s Prayer to the Holy Spirit* (or to *Her Mother*) mention the specific spiritual power of women. The *Te Matrem* gives life to the Holy Spirit by indicating that “The Spirit inspired the prophets and the martyrs to praise Christ, and she is the one who brings people to Christ.” Continuing, the litany later says that the Holy Spirit is “Mother of God’s children” and the mother of Christ. In the *Te Matrem*, the Holy Spirit serves “as the agent of communication between God and his people.” For women, Native American or white, these words must have given them a source of inner strength, knowing that it was a woman’s job to “bring people to Christ” and serve as a messenger between God and his followers. Native American women would have seen this as a chance to regain lost spiritual power, and bring their community back together by using a new spiritual power.

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118 Atwood, 94.

119 Atwood, 165-167. Communion, in Moravian practice, was a chance for members to renew their personal and community-based spiritual links.

120 Atwood, 154.

121 Ibid.

122 Atwood, 155.
Moravian women, interpreting their role and link to the Holy Spirit and mother of Christ, would have concentrated on their missionary and teaching efforts. Both groups of women then, would have been inclined to work together to meet their goals. Furthermore, despite wanting slightly different outcomes, both of these end goals fostered a community which “rest[ed] on bonds of affection and shared experience.”

Women were also honored in their own right, and not because of their gendered link to the Holy Spirit. A 1757 litany book states, “And let those who give suck [mothers], enjoy the Blessing of thy having sucked the Breasts of a Mother,” and later, “Sanctify all bodily Fathers to the Spiritual Father, And all who bear Children, to the Mother of us all.” Therefore, Native American women, because they nourished their young as the Holy Spirit nourished Christ, and because they could bear children and raise them in Christ’s name had access to an exclusive spiritual power within the Moravian system. In Zinzendorf’s idea of mystical marriage women and men were married to Christ, and because women were female, and Christ male, women had the advantage of a direct link, or marriage, to the Savior. According to Atwood, “with conversion a person enters into a personal and intense marriage with Christ, the Bridegroom of the soul.” Therefore, women had a doubly direct link with Christ through marriage. Zinzendorf also proclaimed that all souls were essentially female, thus giving men access to a proper mystical marriage to Christ as well. Marriage and childbirth were not essential in gaining spiritual power, remaining single was also seen as an honorable choice in the Moravian

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124 Atwood, 193.
125 Atwood, 92.
126 Atwood, 93.
world view. For the Moravian community, single life or virginal life, was “not superior to marriage but still holy in its own right,” and served to remind other members of the community, “that they should remain virginal in their own hearts,” because their hearts belonged to Christ.\footnote{Atwood, 189.}

Furthermore, the Moravian religion did not regard women’s bodies as sources of evil. The Moravian’s different views on sexuality, while still drastically different in most aspects from traditional Native American practices, would have been an additional attraction for Native American women to join the Moravian community. Zinzendorf believed that “sex re-creat[ed] God’s love for his people, and thus there is not sin in the sex act itself.”\footnote{Atwood, 185.} However, sexual relations, even between married couples, were still highly regulated and married couples lived in separate choirs. Therefore, while the Moravians removed the shame usually placed on female sexual organs they still feared uncontrolled sexuality, such as premarital sex and causal divorce. These beliefs would have brought some tension to the negotiating space, because they clashed with Native American practices. However, Native American converts learned to balance their own beliefs with Moravian practices within the negotiating space.

Gender relations within mission towns also played a significant role in Native American women’s standing within the community. Missionary women often held a superior position to Native American converts, however, Native American women held positions of influence as well. Furthermore, their relationships are more often characterized by love and friendship than by more antagonistic feelings. For example, Rachel, a Native American woman married to a Moravian missionary, wrote to Sr. Spangenberg several times. Rachel wrote in 1746, “I kiss

\footnote{Atwood, 189.}
\footnote{Atwood, 185.}
thee heartily: How very much I love thee I can’t express,” she then speaks about the troubling
times she experienced before she was with child and how she felt herself the “very weakest &
least of all yᵉ Sisters.” Rachel closes her letter by saying, “Dᵉ Mother think on me.” ¹²⁹ Rachel
used this letter to express her feelings to a woman she felt she could speak to frankly and receive
help from. All women in the mission towns would have done similar jobs, such as spinning,
cooking, home gardening, and laundry, and women used their similar activities to relate to each
other. In both Native and Moravian communities women had control over home production and
consumption, formed strong kin-networks, managed the family, and most importantly had a
strong religious, or spiritual, role in the community.

Delaware and Mahican women could also relate to the women missionaries through
personal circumstances such as domestic and/or marital problems.¹³⁰ Each group of women used
the negotiating space and the relationships they formed with other women to achieve their wants
and needs. Native women were looking to recreate the kinship networks they had previously
used to support each other and their communities emotionally and physically. By building
relationships with Moravian women Native American women gained a vital link which solved
both problems. They could rely on Moravian women for emotional support and to share their
food and material resources. Moravian women missionaries used the negotiating space to bring
themselves closer to god, which they believed they could do by successfully converting Native
women. Moravian women also depended on Native American women converts to help them
reach out to the greater community. Furthermore, survival was not assured in volatile

¹²⁹ “Copy of Sister Rachel (yᵉ Indian’s) Letter to Mother Sp.g.,” 1746, Indian Missions, box 319, file 2,
Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

¹³⁰ Merritt, At the Crossroads.
environment of backwoods Pennsylvania and the Moravian women, especially missionaries, needed Native American women’s agricultural experience and emotional support. Sisterhood between these two groups of women was a complicated relationship which women used to meet their own needs while also becoming close friends.

However, Native American women were sometimes forced to leave the community in order to provide for their families when the community could not support all its members. For example, in a 1744 letter Br. Senssmann writes, “Sara Abrahams Wife has the same thought to go to the River Side with her Children to get some living…Martha would also go away to work for a Blanket.” These shortages happened in Shekomeko, where there would have been fewer missionary women compared to Native women in the community, and children of missionaries lived in the Moravian Anstalten, or boarding schools. Therefore, while treated more equally then they would have been in other colonial communities, Native American women still faced hardships beyond those faced by missionary women.

The negotiating space also contained a layer of power dynamics, between Native Americans and missionaries, and between members of each main choir. Native American women would have been subject to the ruling of the missionaries leading the community, and therefore may have manipulated and worked the Moravian system in order to gain their end goals. For example, a woman could fake a conversion experience in order to be accepted into the Moravian community and receive the benefits associated with the community. However, even if their conversion was not a total truth, these women still formed and fostered bonds of

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friendship with missionary women. Letters like Rachel’s to Sr. Spangenberg succeed in portraying a sense of friendship or a relationship of a convert seeking advice of an older, trusted advisor, not of a woman seeking to gain something more than friendship and a friendly ear by composing a letter.

The negotiating space in the Moravian mission towns was characterized by give and take, and thus valuable to both groups; missionaries and Native Americans. It succeeded in mission towns because both groups needed it to survive. Missionaries needed converts for their communities to survive, physically and spiritually, and Native Americans needed the missionaries for the same reasons. Due to the rural setting the negotiating space flourished until the French and Indian War and the Great Awakening severed, cracked, and eroded the bonds which had been used to form and sustain the negotiating space. The coming war between Britain and France increased suspicions of the Moravians and their Native American converts, who were labeled as evil papists. Other colonists persecuted and threatened to kill Moravian missionaries, as well as their Native American converts. In 1744 a “Low Dutch men” came to Shekomeko because the settlers near to the mission town, “were afraid that we and our Indians would come some time or other in the night and kile them.” 132 At the same, the ideas spread by the Great Awakening served to solidify anti-Moravian feelings in Pennsylvania. Combined with changes in Moravian leadership, the negotiating space began to show signs of stress, despite the work of missionaries and Native American converts within the mission towns. Shekomeko and Gnadenhütten were destroyed, and later the war threatened the Bethlehem community more directly.

The negotiating space faced different challenges within more urban Moravian environments, such as Bethlehem and Nazareth, which housed the Moravian Anstalten. Mission towns were located in a more rural setting and most likely at a site chosen by the Native Americans. Mission towns would also have had a higher Native American population than the Moravian towns of Bethlehem and Nazareth. These two factors made mission towns a prime setting for women to act as cultural mediators within the negotiating space. Native American women would have worked together and with their Moravian counterparts for the community’s survival by creating and then sustaining the negotiating space. Therefore, mission towns would have contained more room for give and take between the two cultures and would have made acculturation to the Moravian system less harsh.

Some mission towns did have schools, however, they would have been day schools and children would have returned to their families after the school day was over. However, larger boarding schools were located in bigger towns, like Bethlehem and Nazareth. These towns were dominated by Euroamerican families and lifestyles. Due to this factor, the boarding school front of the social frontier had less room for tolerance and acceptance of the give and take between the two cultures which occurred in the mission towns. Native girls in the boarding schools would have lost access to the negotiating space with its vital kinship networks and most likely felt confined and restricted by their environment. In boarding schools and larger Moravian towns young Native girls were not able to meet their needs; they were able to “give” but were not able to “take.” Therefore, these girls also did not have the control over their lives that their mothers and older female relatives did in mission towns. Rather, they were unable to temper Euroamerican and Moravian culture with elements of Native American culture.
Other factors, those that also caused the downfall of the negotiating space in the mission towns, also played a part in the breakdown of the small negotiating space and companionship which existed for the girls populating the second front of the social frontier. As the Moravian missions of Pennsylvania came to an end and moved further westward these girls would have been left without the already limited contact with their parents and other kin. Furthermore, after 1760 women’s influence, power, and participation in the Moravian Church was declining. Count Zinzendorf died in 1760 and the men who took his place did not hold his progressive ideas about women’s participation in the Church and its government. These men sought to ensure the economic survival of Bethlehem and the Moravian’s social acceptance in colonial society. In fact, the mission towns were already fracturing along racial, generational, and gender lines in the 1750s due to conflicts with what the Moravians considered, the outside world. Therefore, the negotiating space, which the women of both communities had worked to create and sustain, failed due to increased male incursion, from outside and inside the community.

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133 Merritt, *At the Crossroads*; Schutt, “Forging Identities,” 12. The Delaware and the Mahicans were never able to come together and the Moravians often had to settle conflicts between the two tribes. For example, Delaware children would often taunt Mahican children, and conflict between the men of each tribe increased.
Chapter Two

The Anstalten

The Moravian Anstalten, or boarding schools, provide the setting for the second front of the Moravian social frontier. The women living on first front experienced success in relationship building, however, the Moravian and Native American girls living in Bethlehem could not always use the negotiating space to their advantage. Boarding schools for Native American children have received condemnation by scholars for their agenda of forced assimilation. While the Moravians do not escape this stigma, Moravian boarding schools were unique in that Native languages as well as German and English were often taught at first to increase literacy; however their focus on religion and learning a trade imitates other types of Native American boarding schools. This program laid the foundation for possible successful assimilation of Native American children into a white dominated Moravian community. However, many Delaware and Mahican girls who attended Moravian schools found their new social and cultural environment unbearable and were prone to melancholy and desolation. These girls were sent to Moravian schools or had been placed into the care of the Moravian community by their parents, because they hoped their children would gain a place in colonial society that they could not. Despite their parents’ hopes of integration into colonial society, these girls gained a Western education at a great cost; they lost access to the negotiating space of the Moravian mission towns.
Without the balance between the Native American and Moravian communities created by the negotiating space, Delaware and Mahican girls in boarding schools faced difficulties forming successful relationships to meet their needs. Mahican and Delaware girls were first drawn to the Moravian community, seeking opportunities to improve their social situation and move away from dependence on their failing traditional communities. However, without the physical and social environments of the mission towns these young girls experienced different power dynamics than the women of the mission towns. They were at a disadvantage due to not only racial difference but also due to age and social standing within the Moravian dominated Bethlehem. Furthermore, the pull factors which had drawn the girls to Bethlehem often changed to factors which pushed them away. The religious and practical attractions which had appealed to the Delaware and Mahicans in the mission towns often failed to have a lasting appeal to the young Native American girls who came to live in the Anstalten.

**Moravian Education**

The Moravian system of education underwent many of the same changes as other colonial forms of education. The first years of the Moravian education system, roughly from 1741-1762, were characterized by the “prompt establishment and immediate expansion of schools during the communal period.”

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134 Mabel Haller, *Early Moravian Education in Pennsylvania* (Nazareth: The Moravian Historical Society, 1953), 51. Haller has defined three phases of the Moravian education system. The second phase was dominated by a recession, which the whole Moravian community experienced between 1770 and 1785 due to the upheaval caused by the American Revolution. The third phase is called the “academy” or “seminary” era, and began after 1785 when the Moravian community began to recover from the previous recession. Haller also writes that during the recessional period, the Moravian Church was no longer able to fully fund the schools and moved to a tuition based institution. Many children were sent home when their families could not pay the tuition. Therefore, many Native
Economy, schools were funded by the Church and students’ needs were provided for by the community and their own vocational work. Therefore, students, whether female or male, Native American, African, or Euroamerican, did not have to pay for their education. This enabled many Native American parents to send their children to boarding schools in Bethlehem and Nazareth.

The first phase of education in the Moravian community is unique in its inclusion and acceptance of Native Americans into schools alongside Euroamerican children. Most other boarding schools for Native Americans were separate institutions for Native Americans only. Native American children were kept separate so that schools could impose a harsh regime of induction upon the students and where white children would not come in contact with them. Early Moravian boarding schools, or Anstalten, cultivated the innocence and simplicity of childhood, rather than treating childhood “as a corrupt stage of willfulness” as in other religious denominations.\(^{135}\) Therefore, Delaware and Mahican girls attending a Moravian Anstalten experienced a very atypical lifestyle between 1741, when the Moravians founded Bethlehem, and the end of the French and Indian War in 1763. Many Mahican and Delaware girls who were sent to Moravian Anstalten participated in the Choir System and received an education many other groups of colonists wished for their own daughters.

American girls and boys could no longer attend the Bethlehem and Nazareth schools and attendance in country day schools and mission schools dropped as well. Finally, after 1875, the Moravian schools began admitting children of other denominations into the boarding schools which had formerly been exclusive to the Moravian community. The other denominations of New England and Pennsylvania had been seeking their children’s admittance into Moravian schools since shortly after the schools were established. On one hand the move to tuition based admission ensured non-Moravian children entrance into Moravian schools, but on the other hand it fully excluded the admission Native American children.

The Moravian educational system was the exception to the colonial norm in many ways. The first school established by the Moravians was founded by Count Zinzendorf’s daughter, Benigna, on May 4, 1742 in Germantown. Twenty-five girls attended the school. A boys’ school was founded on July 19, 1742. Moravian missionaries usually followed a general pattern in starting a mission school by first preaching and conversing with a local community and “showing they could be useful in many ways,” before establishing a permanent chapel and school. Then the missionaries divided the community into choirs and began religious services and classes in religion, arithmetic, hygiene, music, and reading and writing in both German and Native languages. Classes were also offered in medical and domestic instruction, social and political science, and moral and ethical philosophy.

Bethlehem, since its founding in the early 1740s, was the busy center of the Moravian community. In 1756, according to Mabel Haller, 48 of Bethlehem’s 665 adults were missionaries, 54 were itinerate preachers and teachers to outlying groups of settlers, and 90 children, whose parents were missionaries, occupied the schools of Bethlehem and Nazareth. A group of 62 Moravians worked as teachers and attendants in these schools, caring for and

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136 Haller, 32-33. The girl’s school was founded first because Benigna, being a Single Sister, founded the school almost directly upon her arrival in Pennsylvania. The later founding of a boy’s school was probably due to spatial issues in the young town and assigning Brothers to teach in the school. The importance of education to the Moravian community is quite obvious; the schools were founded within a year of the Moravians arrival in Pennsylvania.

137 Ibid.

138 Students in Moravian schools did not use the Bible in religious instruction because their teachers feared that students would come to treat the Bible as a contemptible text book.

139 Haller, 195.

140 Nazareth was another large Moravian town near Bethlehem. These two towns alternately housed the girls’ and boy’s Anstalten to accommodate fluctuations in available space for the schools.
teaching the children. Furthermore, 82 Native Americans, plus an unknown number of Native American girls who lived with the Single Sister’s choir, lived in Bethlehem. While a day school existed in Gnadenhütten (1746-1755) and was open to the almost 500 people who lived in the mission town, Native American parents still wanted their children to be educated in Bethlehem. However, after Gnadenhütten’s destruction in 1755, Native American children would have been sent to the Bethlehem and Nazareth schools.

The Anstalten employed a daily routine which involved classes in a variety of subjects as well as devotional meetings. Haller includes two sample daily schedules, from 1788 and 1789, in *Early Moravian Education In Pennsylvania*. While these schedules are from a period over twenty years later than the time period for this study, they probably have many similarities to routines used earlier by the Moravian schools. In 1788, the Bethlehem Seminary occupied its pupils from 8am to sometime after 4pm. The morning hours included ciphering school, German reading school, English grammar, and a children’s devotional service followed by “lunch and leisure.” In the afternoon the students learned History, Geography, Tambour and Music, and Drawing and Painting. In 1789 the students in a Nazareth school had similar days filled with learning German and English, History, Latin, Geography, Natural History, Arithmetic, Geometry, Bookkeeping, Mathematical Geography, Writing and Drawing, French, all along with

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141 Ibid., 12-13, 200. These Native American girls would have lived in the Single Sisters choir, as defined by their age and marital status as single women and the Moravian choir system.

142 Ibid., 197.

143 Haller, 240.

144 Ibid.
a morning devotional exercise and children’s meeting. The Moravian educational system aimed to prepare their students for the future with a wide ranging liberal education.

After the initial founding years the girls’ and boys’ schools were located in either Bethlehem or nearby Nazareth. Clearly, the Moravians were able to institute their own version of education in the American colonies due to a lack of official education regulations and/or institutions. The Moravian community, both that of Bethlehem and those of the mission towns, were also made to meet the Moravians own needs and in the fashion they had known in Europe. Furthermore, each part of the Moravian community had specific characteristics which, while Moravian in nature, worked to differentiate the Bethlehem community from the communities of the mission towns.

Delaware and Mahican Girls in the Anstalten and the Bethlehem Community

The city of Bethlehem and the Moravians who lived there differ in key ways from the mission towns populated by Moravian missionaries and their Mahican and Delaware converts. Bethlehem housed few Native Americans compared to Moravian mission towns. Unlike the mission towns, which generally followed a layout similar to a Native American village, Bethlehem, a more formal settlement, was built and structured like a Euroamerican town with stone structures and planned road layouts. Bethlehem also experienced less of the give and take between the Delaware and Mahican communities and Moravian communities that characterized the mission towns. The age and status of the Native American women present was also different.

145 Ibid.
than in the mission towns. These women were generally young school age girls rather than the mixture of older women, young mothers, and children which made up the mission settlements. All of these factors affected the ability of women to form and sustain a negotiating space within Bethlehem. Kept within the schools and city, Delaware and Mahican girls had little contact, besides through letters, with their families and their former lives. Lacking their older relatives’ motivation to join the Moravian community and occupying a more precarious position in the community, the Mahican and Delaware girls followed a drastically different path than the ones taken by Mahican and Delaware women in Moravian mission towns. 146

The methodology of Native American history requires scholars to look for Native American voices where they are not always explicitly present. The case of Delaware and Mahican girls in early Bethlehem presents a further obstacle due to the few sources available for this project.147 In order to overcome these challenges three main accounts which involve Delaware and Mahican girls will be discussed in detail and analyzed in order to uncover and interpret the motives behind these girls’ actions. Each of the three accounts can be looked at from two contrasting view points. The first perspective presumes that the girls wanted to go to the Bethlehem Anstalten, while the second perspective emphasizes the alienation and disinclination of some Native American girls who were living Bethlehem as part of the Moravian

146 These motivations include the practical and religious attractions mentioned in Section Two. Young girls living in Bethlehem may not have been motivated to work towards a position of influence in a Moravian dominated community as they likely would have been unable to translate this power into a position of influence in a Native American dominated community. Furthermore, being already accepted as a member or possible member of the Moravian community these girls did not need to form an alliance with the Moravians in order to gain their protection, rather the girls already had the protection of the Moravian community.

147 Only sources in English could be used for this project. Other sources, written in seventeenth century German script, may hold more information about Native American girls in the Bethlehem Anstalten.
community. However, each account opens an essential window into the mindset of the Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican girls attending the Moravian Anstalten. The first account concerns the reception of Native American girls by their Moravian peers, while the second and third accounts concern the choices made by Delaware and Mahican girls while living in Bethlehem.

As previously stated, the sources used in this project are often viewed as problematic because they concern, first, Native Americans, and second, Native American women. Few sources from pre-contact and colonial eras contain the actual voices of the Mahicans and Delaware; therefore it is necessary for historians and ethnographers to read between the lines of the sources that are available. The study of Native American women presents a further challenge to this study because women, in general, have left fewer sources of their lives. Therefore, the reactions of the Mahican and Delaware girls in this project are intuited, inferred, and based on a thorough reading of primary and secondary sources.

An account recorded by Abraham Reincke can be used to suggest the voices and intentions of Moravian and Native American girls. In May of 1746 Moravian Minister Abraham Reincke, as recounted in the Nazareth Children’s Diary, was present at a lovefeast where he asked the members of the girls’ school in Nazareth “if they wo[ul]d have brown Sisters.”148 After the girls determined that they could accommodate only an additional nine Sisters the girls regretted their decision and ran to Reincke crying, “O that we could but get a great many Brown

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Sisters, We would then lay them in one Bed, & [we] would sleep on the ground.”

The Delaware and Mahican girls may have made the decision themselves to enter the boarding school: many Native American children did in fact choose to enter a Moravian boarding school of their own volition because they saw their parents and traditional Native American culture as being insufficient. In addition, these Delaware and Mahican girls may have gone to the boarding school as a last resort in an effort to escape the poverty and disease which was rampant in their villages.

The above account presents one way in which young Moravian girls thought and spoke about young Native American girls; it also provides a way to assess the willingness and/or ability of young Moravian girls to form a negotiating space. The girls, Br. Reincke writes, at first decided they could only house nine more in their choir, but they later changed their minds. Why did these girls change their minds? Did they see this as an opportunity to work as a type of missionary and thus, in line with Moravian belief, bring themselves closer to god? Did they view Native American girls as lesser beings and thus in need of their tutelage and instruction in the Moravian lifestyle? Or, did these young Moravian girls have more innocent opinions of Native American girls and want to bring more Native American girls into their fold because they truly wanted more “Sisters,” despite (or because of) their race/ethnicity and cultural background?

149 Ibid.

150 For example, Rachel Wheeler, in “Women and Christian Practice in a Mahican Village,” recounts the story of a young Native American boy who questioned his parent’s ability to raise him as being a typical situation. After Philippus and Lydia, a converted Native American couple, struck their son he, “laid a burden of guilt on them, saying ‘Why don’t you give me to Martin [i.e., the missionary Martin Mack]; you are unable to raise me properly for the Savior.’”
One possible angle of interpretation is to assume that the Native American girls mentioned by Br. Reincke wanted to go to Bethlehem; whether they went of their own accord or at the bequest of their parents, they viewed living in Bethlehem positively. The news that they would be accepted into the choir would have been welcome and happy news, and the girls most likely felt grateful for the chance to travel to and live in Bethlehem. Their gratitude may have affected how they interacted with and what types of relationships they formed with the Moravian girls who seemed so willing to have new, “Brown Sisters.” However, the girls must have also felt sad to leave their families behind and may have been worried about how successful they would be at forming new support networks and kinship ties. They may also have been apprehensive of what their new roles would entail; they would be very different than the gender and family roles they had previously experienced.

Native American girls were obviously seen as different and perhaps unusual, hence the name “Brown Sisters.” However, this is not necessarily a demeaning term and does not mean the Moravian girls already in the Anstalten thought poorly of the “Brown Sisters” who would soon join them. If the Moravian girls thought of their new choir mates as possible new members of the Moravian community they would have taken much the same attitude as missionaries did while working in the mission towns. However, rather than incorporating themselves into the Native American community, the girls would have made a sincere effort to incorporate the Delaware and Mahican girls into their choir, the community of the Anstalt, and the community of Bethlehem as a whole. The effort to incorporate the Mahican and Delaware girls into their community, which would have included helping the girls adjust to a new lifestyle, would have been an effort to create a negotiating space. By offering their beds to the incoming Brown Sisters these Moravian girls were making to first move in the creation of a negotiating space.
However, if the Delaware and Mahican girls did not want to become Brown Sisters and join the young girls already in the Anstalten Br. Reincke’s account implies a very different situation.

The internal power dynamics of Bethlehem were drastically different than they had been in the mission towns. As stated above, the Delaware and Mahican girls would have been expected to conform to Moravian society; there was no need for community members to conform to Native American ways while in Bethlehem. Furthermore, the Delaware and Mahican girls’ wants and needs, what they expected and hoped for in their alliance with the Moravian community, were drastically different than Native American women’s wants and needs in mission towns. As young members of the Bethlehem community Delaware and Mahican girls would have been expected to occupy and fulfill the roles of student and child. Neither of these roles required the girls to act a cultural mediators or leaders within their new community, such as their older counterparts had in the mission towns. Rather these girls, like other children, were expected to learn their lessons and prepare themselves to serve the Savior and the community when they came of age.

The possible reactions of the Delaware and Mahican girls to their new lives in Bethlehem should also be considered. The girls may have adjusted to their situation like many other Native Americans did when confronted with Euroamerican society: they altered practices that did not suit their needs and adopted those that would help them. Their initial experiences in Bethlehem and the Anstalten would have been overwhelming, at first, but the girls may have used previous experiences of living in the mission towns to become accustomed to the new practices they encountered in Bethlehem. The girls may have embraced their new lives in the Bethlehem Anstalten because they knew it would give them entry, and eventually incorporation, into
Moravian society. However, it is hard to judge how the girls would have reacted to their new lives as there are few sources concerning Native American girls in the Bethlehem Anstalten during this time period.

One series of accounts from the *Nazareth Diary*, which concern Delaware and Mahican girls in Bethlehem, provides insight to how three Native American girls reacted to their lives in Bethlehem. While some girls may have wanted to join the Moravian community as full members, other Native American girls felt alienated and resented their new situation. The *Nazareth Diary* accounts illustrate the reactions of the Mahican and Delaware girls who, possibly, did not want to go to Bethlehem. They may have been forced to leave the mission towns because their parents wanted them to gain an education and be provided for, or they had been placed in the care of missionaries after their parents passed away. The three girls mentioned in the account, two Mahican girls and another Native American girl entered the Girls’ School of Nazareth in 1746.\(^{151}\)

Upon their arrival the three girls were given the loving nicknames of little worm, little dove, and little chicken by their new Moravian sisters.\(^{152}\) These three girls were often found

\(^{151}\) These may be the same “brown sisters” mentioned in the opening account. Along with my own sources from the Moravian Church Archives I have at least three articles which mention three Native girls and use the Nazareth Children’s Diary as a source. However I am unsure if these three girls are the same three girls throughout all three articles as they use different names and my sources only mention the name of two Native American girls, Magdalena and Ruth, as living in Bethlehem.

\(^{152}\) Nicknames like “little dove” and “little worm” were used by Moravians in general to symbolize their insignificance and smallness in relation to god’s greatness. These names are specifically not capitalized to reinforce this idea. I am unable to identify these three girls as individually being Mahican or Delaware, and have therefore left this identifier out of their accounts. Secondly, the girls’ and boys’ schools, or Anstalten, often moved between Bethlehem and Nazareth depending on how much space was available and/or needed to house the students. In order to simplify, I refer to the Bethlehem community to mean to mean the Moravian town which the Moravian girls lived in. Bethlehem and Nazareth, as mentioned in the section on mission towns, were divided due to their purpose for the Moravian community as a while and were located not far from one another.
having “special meetings in Indian, and little Dove leading in prayer – they often sing Ind. Hymns together.”  Over time, the three girls felt even more distressed and spoke of running away. According to the Nazareth Diary, Martha felt that her “Moravian sisters ‘had formerly given cause, to think her ashamed of her Indian descent; but now after her sickness she seeks the company of [the Indian girls] Maria and of little dove above all others.” Eventually Susanna, a Native American girl at the school, ran away only to be found and returned, and Maria, according to her adoptive parents, “acts some times as if possessed of an evil spirit…like a fury, threatening to strike and stab the sisters, and stirring up the other Ind. girls to be refractory.” These accounts can be used to enrich the discussion on Delaware and Mahican girls’ experiences in the Moravian Anstalten.

The fact that at least one Native American girl tried to run away illustrates the difficulties Native American girls faced when joining the Bethlehem community. Susanna may have run away from the Anstalt because she could not form alliances, or friendships, with the Moravian girls. Perhaps she was hoping to recreate the relationships she had known before moving to Bethlehem, and when she could not she ran away. Maria’s behavior in this account, as recorded by the Moravians, is also interesting: she seems to be acting in a more traditional role, by trying to bind the other Mahican and Delaware girls into a kinship network and alliance, and even taking on the more violent male role of physical rebellion. The lack of a negotiating space is one explanation for these reactions: without a space where these girls could participate in a cultural exchange that entailed mutual understanding, their frustration at being sent to Bethlehem only

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153 A quote from the Nazareth Diary found in: Merritt, At the Crossroads, 162.

154 Ibid.

155 Ibid.
grew more intense. Maria may have had no other outlet for her feelings of alienation and resentment and therefore turned to violence to convey her feelings.

While the evidence for either of these reactions is circumstantial and sparse, I believe these girls’ initial feelings about coming to the Bethlehem Anstalten were a mixture of excitement and apprehension. Furthermore, I think that the reactions of Susanna and Maria can be interpreted as typical examples of how many Mahican and Delaware girls reacted to their lives in Bethlehem and the lack of a negotiating space. However, because more than three Native American girls came to live in Bethlehem, those who “blended in,” or acculturated probably drew little written notice and therefore only the more “extreme” cases, like those of Susanna and Maria, were recorded.

While the Moravian girls mentioned by Br. Reincke were willing to give up their beds for their new Brown Sisters, Delaware and Mahican girls also needed to be willing to create a negotiating space. Delaware and Mahican girls may not have been willing or open to form a negotiating space due to the overwhelming environment of Bethlehem; they had nothing to bargain with, nothing with which to form a reciprocal relationship with the Moravian girls. They also did not have access to traditional Delaware and Mahican practices or the social resources of these communities; they were encompassed entirely by the Moravian system. Additionally, while the Moravian girls may have been willing to create a negotiating space, the Native American girls may have felt inhibited due to their new social status in the community, unfamiliarity with their surroundings, and being an obvious minority. However, as a later account will posit, a Bethlehem negotiating space between Mahican, Delaware, and Moravian girls could have succeeded only for a short while.
Assuming that the three girls mentioned had wanted to join the Bethlehem community, what caused them to change their opinions of and motivations to join the Moravian community? Perhaps the social system which they encountered and were expected to conform to was too shocking and different, causing the girls to rebel. The religious and practical attractions which attracted their family members in the mission towns failed to have a lasting appeal for these girls. When they entered the Bethlehem community, they may have become overwhelmed by the new social hierarchy and their place within the Moravian community. Furthermore, these girls had no access to their traditional practices, gender roles, and kinship networks. While the Moravian religion may have appealed to them, the girls had no need to bargain for an alliance or protection because they were already part of the Bethlehem community, if not full members of the Moravian church. Rather, if the girls did want to go to Bethlehem, that desire was soon overshadowed by their experiences and new place in the social hierarchy of Bethlehem.

The apparent stigma of being Native American may have led these girls to no longer want to live in Bethlehem. As stated above, Martha felt that her “Moravian sisters ‘had formerly given cause, to think her ashamed of her Indian descent; but now after her sickness she seeks the company of [the Indian girls] Maria and of little dove above all others.” If Delaware and Mahican girls were ostracized because of their ethnicity and thought to be lesser peoples, then they would have lost their attraction to the Bethlehem community rather quickly. Instead of being accepted by their Moravian peers, they were treated as obviously different and perhaps disliked. The teachers in the Anstalten may have continued or encouraged these attitudes. In a Delaware and/or Mahican community work was often divided along gendered lines and women


\[156\] A quote from the Nazareth Diary found in: Merritt, At the Crossroads, 162.
taught girls tasks in a hands-on fashion, not in a school setting of instructors and students. If this was the case it is no wonder that the three girls sought each other out and formed a special group of their own, perhaps trying to recreate the kin/support networks they had left.

The sources mentioning Maria, Martha, and Susanne’s behavior can also be interpreted from the standpoint that the girls had never wanted to enter the Moravian Anstalten or to leave their home communities. If they had not wanted to go to Bethlehem then their reactions are what one would expect from Delaware and Mahican girls: acting out, forming their own insular friendships and alliances, and trying to run away and return to their home communities. These behaviors are, in fact, similar to the forms of rebellion that historians have documented of Native Americans in to boarding schools during the 19th century.

In my opinion, these girls arrived in the Bethlehem community expecting an experience close to what they had known in the mission towns but the social situation drastically changed their willingness to become a part of the community. The social geography and environment of the Moravian Anstalten negatively diminished the girls’ eagerness to join the Moravian community. Therefore, they felt the need to run away, act out, or form alliances amongst themselves. The possibility of a negotiating space in the Anstalten seems unlikely when these sources are considered. If the girls were treated as being different and/or badly by their Moravian peers, then a “middle ground” would have been unthinkable. Both groups would have been unwilling; Mahican and Delaware girls felt like and were treated like outsiders, and Moravian girls they saw their “Brown Sisters” as lesser beings than themselves.

The last document mentioning Delaware and Mahican girls is an account of a baptism ceremony. This account is very similar to the account recorded by Br. Reincke because while
the accounts are about Delaware and Mahican girls, they offer minimal evidence of the voices of the girls. The account of the baptism records the Native American girls speaking a simple, “Yes,” in reply to five questions they are asked. The account is titled, “A Relation of the Baptism of three Indian Girls in Bethlehem, the 26th March 1747,” and states that the girls were “clad in white.” The document recounts the event and the words spoken by the priest who officiated over the event and the few words uttered by the girls themselves. The girls were questioned about their religious devotion and were then welcomed into the community and taken by “the Lamb’s Priests & Priestesses” to honor and worship their Savior. The ritual began with a short introduction which was followed by the five question ceremony,

Here are now 3 Indian young Women before us who have been lead by him to his People, & wo. gladly be bath’d in the Blood of Jesus; Whose Desire after holy Baptism, & the Lamb’s pierced Side, will now likewise hear & feel them give a publick Testimony of Whereupon he [the officiating priest] ask’d them in the Presence of Jesus Christ & his holy Church…Is it the Whole Desire of your Hearts to be baptized in the Blood & Death of Jesus?…They all three answer’d with a tender feeling: Yes…

Do you know & believe that without the Blood & Death of Jesus ye must & wo. have perish’d everlastingly?…Ans. Yes…

But do you believe, that by the Blood & Water from our Sav. Side, wch is now at. to be pur’d out upon you in Baptism, all your Sins will be wash’d away & you eternally realeased from all condemnation, Curse & Misery?…Ans. Yes…

Will you for the Future be & remain our Sav’s eternal Property, Body & Soul, & cleave to him alone now & for Ever?…Ans. Yes…

Will ye be led and govern’d by his H. Spirit & be childlikely obedient & faithful to our Sav. & his Holy Church, in wch he now graciously reveiveth you?…Ans. Yes…

[Ending the ceremony] Magdalena, We baptize you in the Name of the Father, Son & Holy Ghost, into the Death of Jesus, with the Blood & Water which flow’d from his side {each one was plentifully overstream’d three Times} that go thro you Body & Soul, thro. Marrow & Bone, to the in most Recesses of the

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157 “A Relation of the Baptism of three Indian Girls in Bethlehem, the 26th March 1747,” 26 March 1747, Indian Missions, box 319, file 5, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.

158 Ibid.
Heart, wash, sanctify, & preserve you clean & unspoiled, to the Day of his Manifestation. Amen.  

Baptisms were very important to the Moravians, however, the ritual was often “subject to variations.” Every baptism ceremony did include certain consistent elements like hymns and special spiritual phrases; children “were buried in death with Christ, so that from that point their lives might be lived with Christ,” and adults were welcomed into their choir and resolved of past sins with the phrase, “The bloody Sweat which with such Heat did from Thee Flow.” Native Americans and African Americans would also choose a new name; this most likely served the purpose of reinforcing their new cultural affiliation and religious identity.

If the three girls participating in the ceremony originally wanted to go to Bethlehem and become a full fledged member of the Moravian community, then this ceremony would have represented the fulfillment of their new life and identity. For the Moravians, baptism meant a person was officially a full and official member of the community. These girls would have seen this ceremony as a mark that they had reached their goal to obtain a new type of personal spiritual power and to ally themselves with the Moravian community. Furthermore being baptized into the Moravian system meant that the person was given the full protection of the community and given an official role; these girls could become missionaries, choir leaders, and/or teachers. Thus, a new set of opportunities was open to these three Mahican and Delaware girls due to their baptism.

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159 Ibid.
160 Atwood, Community of the Cross, 158-159.
161 Ibid.
On the other hand, if these girls had not wanted to come to Bethlehem and join the Moravian community as an official member, their baptism ceremony would have had a different meaning. These girls may not have been able to return to the mission towns, their families may have moved away from the mission towns or died, or they may have felt that they would no longer fit-in or belong in their home communities after living within the Moravian community for an extended period of time. Additionally, this baptism ceremony could have been the end result of a series of events which were beyond the girl’s control; if they were not allowed to leave and encouraged or pressured to conform to the Moravian social and religious norms, the girls may have adopted a “go with the flow” or passive and apathetic attitude which eventually led to their baptism. Or, the girls may have gone through with their baptism because it was what their parents wanted for them. It is hard to picture these girls being Susanna, Maria, or Martha; however it is very possible that both accounts concern at least one of the girls previously named.

In my opinion, the three girls who were baptized illustrate cultural adaptation as a survival strategy. In order to survive these three girls chose what was perhaps the best option open to them. They would have seen baptism as giving them access to personal spiritual power and influence in a community; things they would have attained in their traditional communities but were now out of reach due to the cultural devastation caused by colonialism. They also saw baptism as giving them a solid base of membership in the Moravian community, and therefore protection from the further ravishments of colonialism. However, the possibility that the situation was the culmination of events out of the girls’ control, cannot be discounted. The baptism of three Delaware and Mahican girls could be interpreted to suggest that a somewhat viable negotiating space was present in Bethlehem. However, I think that these girls experienced a limited negotiating space, at best, for reasons which will be later discussed.
Social Environment and the Negotiating Space in Bethlehem

The Delaware and Mahican girls attending Moravian Anstalten in Bethlehem and Nazareth experienced a different social atmosphere and power dynamics than the Delaware and Mahican women of the mission towns like Shekomeko and Gnadenhütten. These girls experienced a more official and formal Moravian community. They could not leave the community to visit kin or to gain outside work because they had no need to; these girls were provided for by the General Economy, which funded the schools and their students. These girls experienced Moravian life in the Moravian ideal, however, this was not always a positive experience. In the Bethlehem community young Mahican and Delaware girls experienced two power relationships, that of student-teacher and youth-elder. They were expected to fully take on the roles of student and child, and in both relationships they occupied the more submissive role. Therefore, neither of these relationships allowed the girls space for negotiation in how they would live their lives.

Compared to Mahican and Delaware women in mission towns, these girls were almost completely disenfranchised of any power they would have traditionally held, the only way they could gain influence in the community was to occupy the submissive roles of student and youth until they were old enough to earn a more important role in the Bethlehem community. Important roles in the church were often not open to these girls because their age meant they had not yet progressed far enough into the Moravian faith. Delaware and Mahican girls occupied and were expected to be content with subordinate positions and a strict school setting just as any younger member of the community would have been. However, this experience was coupled
with the fact that these girls were a minority and culturally unfamiliar, and may have been seen and treated as culturally inferior, to the Euroamerican and Moravian systems.

The success of the negotiating space in the mission towns was in part due to the wants and needs of community members coinciding with each other which then resulted in a successful community. However the Delaware and Mahican girls in the Anstalten had different wants and needs than their counterparts in the mission settlements. Rather than being able to adapt to and adopt from the Moravian system, Mahican and Delaware girls often felt isolated and wished to return to their kin outside of Bethlehem. This is most likely one of the main reasons Susanna tried to leave Bethlehem. Because these girls had different wants and needs they were less willing to create and then participate in a negotiating space. The three young Delaware and Mahican girls who rebelled and the girls mentioned in the baptism ceremony chose divergent paths within the Moravian community. The former were overwhelmed by their situations in Bethlehem, and rather than working to gain a prominent place in the community and gain spiritual power, as the latter did, these girls wanted to return to more traditional ways of life. The attractions of the Moravian community which appealed so highly to Delaware and Mahican women who joined the mission towns also offered a viable path for survival to the girls who chose baptism but only succeeded in alienating little worm, little dove, and little chicken.

The Moravians living in Bethlehem and working in the Anstalten also had different wants, or goals, for the Native Americans they encountered. The Moravians of Bethlehem were not missionaries: rather the Moravians whom the girls had the most contact with would have been their teachers, their choir members, and the heads of the community. These Moravians would also have been less willing to construct a negotiating space because they saw no need for
one. The girls were already members of the community and would follow the path laid out for them by the Moravian faith. After initially offering their beds to the idea of Brown Sisters, they saw no reason to “give and take” with the girls because they expected the girls to follow Moravian cultural norms. Furthermore, they were the dominant population and had no need to act within a negotiating space with the Native American girls living in the Anstalten. When working to convert Native Americans, Moravian missionaries started by integrating themselves into a community by example: they helped with daily tasks rather than giving sermons. However, in Bethlehem, the Moravians working with the Delaware and Mahican girls would not have felt such a need to endear themselves to the girls, because the community was already in place and the girls were already part of the community system; there were no alliances to negotiate.

The Moravian community living in Bethlehem, unlike the Moravian missionaries in the surrounding countryside, was unable to create and maintain a negotiating space with the Delaware and Mahican girls living within the community. The absence of a negotiating space in Bethlehem was due to the girls’ ethnicity as well as their lack of attraction to the aspects of the Moravian religion which had appealed to their counterparts in the mission towns. The girls most likely perceived themselves as different, as outsiders, and as a minority. The Delaware and Mahican girls nicknamed little worm, little chicken, and little dove would not have felt the need to hold private meetings and talk to each other in their native language if they had felt otherwise. Therefore they must have been treated as a separate or special group from the outset, or their actions led to them being considered as different and separate from the other girls in the Anstalten. Without a negotiating space in Bethlehem the girls had no way to mediate their situation in Bethlehem, they had no choice but to assimilate to the community’s norms. Unlike
their relatives in the mission towns, these girls could not choose which aspects of the Moravian system they fully adopted and which they adapted to meet their own needs. Therefore, it is no wonder that these girls felt alienated in Bethlehem, without a negotiating space they may have seen their only option was to leave Bethlehem and look for a lifestyle that would help them meet their needs.

However, not all Native American converts wanted to leave the Moravians. The surviving members of Gnadenhütten, after being provided for by the Brethren and living in Bethlehem wrote the Governor of Pennsylvania asking for permission to remain with the Moravians, near Bethlehem to plant and hunt. Hearing rumors that the Governor was setting aside land in the West for them to settle on they wrote a polite refusal to the land and requested to remain with the Moravian community at Bethlehem. Rather, they wanted “to live with the Brethren who do tell us the good words of our Saviour daily, they do teach us and our children how we may become happy, not only in this life, but also in Eternity, and to be obedient & faithful to the government.”162 These Delaware and Mahican converts, who had populated the mission towns were the Moravians first converts and were still attracted and attached to the Moravian community for the initial practical and spiritual reason discussed in the previous chapter. Therefore, these Mahicans and Delaware were striving to rescue the remaining threads of the negotiating space they had worked so hard to create after their cherished community had been decimated by the French and Indian War. However, in the end this group was forced to move to the Ohio Country with the Moravian missionaries, move West on their own, or flounder and die without any allies, white or Native American, in Pennsylvania.

162 A Letter to Governor William Denny from the Native Americans at Bethlehem, 13 March 1757, Indian Missions, box 323, file 8, Moravian Archives, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania.
Conclusion

Colonial Events Wreak Havoc on the Negotiating Space

After 1760 the Moravian community began to experience internal problems which when combined with the events taking place in the rest of Colonial America led to the destruction of the negotiating space. Count Zinzendorf died in 1760 and the after effects of his death shook the Moravian community as a whole. Zinzendorf had always been a strong supporter of women’s equality in the Moravian church, which had been aided by the Choir system as well. However, after the Count’s death both singularities came to an end. The Choir system did not have the support of the new Bethlehem leaders. Br. Spangenberg, who had ensured that the community’s missions to the Native American remained a priority, lost influence in Bethlehem after 1760. Essentially it was Br. Spangenberg’s leadership which kept the missions to Native Americans from dire failure, and he ensured that the missions received the resources and help they needed, despite the opposition of other influential community members in Bethlehem. Spangenberg held to Zinzendorf’s preaching that “the meaning and entire plan of Jesus Christ’s servants is to serve and thereby to neglect oneself so that others will be helped.”163 After the General Economy ended in the 1760s missions to the Native Americans could no longer survive economically. The dissolution of the General Economy and Br. Spangenberg’s removal from power became another

163 Atwood, 109.
factor in the dissolution of the negotiating space created by Native American women and their Moravian peers.

Furthermore, without Zinzendorf’s backing the Choir system was put to an end. The Moravian community began to live in family units rather than gendered groups in order to conform to colonial norms and take the burden of members’ survival off of the community as a whole and placing it on individual families. The end of the Choir system was also partially due to the poor economic situation of the Moravian community. Without Zinzendorf, the Moravians did not have a source of reliable credit. The businessmen and creditors who had funded the Moravians’ worldwide missions began to call in their debts. The Moravian community, even the prosperous Bethlehem members, had to adjust their expenditures. The Single Sisters, especially, were against the end of the Choir system, they would no longer enjoy the semi-autonomy of living with other women and being able to make their own decisions for the choir. Rather, these women would go home to their families and live under a more patriarchal family system.

Furthermore, the economic situation in the Moravian community also ended the Moravians’ extensive mission efforts to the Native Americans. The Anstalten began to charge tuition, for all school children, Moravian or outsider. Native American families could not afford the charges, and thus their children could no longer attend Moravian schools. Missions to the Native Americans also changed focus; they moved westward into the Ohio Country. The leaders in Bethlehem wanted social legitimacy in the colonies, and later the United States: therefore they left their more controversial practices, such as the use of the Blood and Wounds terminology, the Choir system, and the incorporation of Native Americans into their schools and communities, behind.
Events within the Native American population as a whole, not just the Mahicans and Delaware, also affected the Moravians’ mission activities. The ideas and actions of Pontiac, an Ottawa chief, and Neolin, a Delaware prophet, spread quickly and greatly influenced Native Americans, especially those living in the Ohio Country. Pontiac encouraged Native Americans to rebel against the English, who had won the French and Indian War, in order to bring back the French and the more favorable French trading relationship. Neolin, starting in 1761, urged Native Americans to return to more traditional ways, to give up alcohol, European goods, and return to hunting and traditional agricultural practices. These forces, combined with the death of many Moravian Native Americans due to smallpox and other diseases, destroyed the negotiating space from inside and outside. Without the support of the Moravian community, the Delaware and Mahicans’ need for an alliance with a European group, and women’s influence in both Native American and the Moravian communities, and the negotiating space which had nurtured both communities disintegrated.

Changes in the colonial world outside the Moravian and Native American communities also played a role in the destruction of the negotiating space. Before the French and Indian War, according to historian Eric Hinderacker, most Pennsylvanians practiced accommodation when it came to affairs with Native Americans. However, the war changed most people’s attitudes about Native Americans. The war, along with the 1763 attack by the Paxton Boys, “politicized Indian-hating in Pennsylvania.”¹⁶⁴ Increased migration westward also led to increased levels of tension between land hungy colonists and Native Americans. In 1764 the Pennsylvanian governor

¹⁶⁴ Eric Hinderacker, *Elusive Empires: Constructing Colonialism in The Ohio Valley, 1673-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 159. In December of 1763, fifty men from Paxton attacked a group of Christian Native Americans, killing six. The survivors, all 14 of them, were housed in Lancaster, however the Paxton men later attacked the survivors, killing them as well.
proclaimed the Delaware and Shawnee Indians to be ‘enemies, rebels, and traitors,’” and while he exempted select groups of Native Americans, colonists made no such distinction. The Delaware and Mahicans who allied themselves with the Moravians had few options left, they could remain and risk death or move to the Ohio Valley. After being held in Philadelphia between 1763 and 1765, under the governor’s protection, the remaining Moravian converts chose to move westward.

For multiple reasons both the Moravian and Native American communities were subversive to the greater colonial and English system. Furthermore, the alliance between the Moravians and their Mahican and Delaware converts hurt each group’s chance at acceptance in the larger colonial system. The Moravian religious traditions of the choir system, rich language, and role of women were seen as subversive because they fueled religious differences and suspicions, which were already heightened due to the French and Indian War. The Moravians, due to their religious practices, were labeled as papists, as an enemy allied with the French. After the French and Indian War the leaders of the Moravian community decided to make changes to their religious practices in order to remove the label as “enemy” and become a non-persecuted and accepted part of Pennsylvania.

The Moravian’s links to the Mahicans and Delaware were also interpreted as unorthodox by other colonial groups. The Mahicans and Delaware had also been labeled as French allies, and therefore enemies of the British and their colonies. Native Americans were considered “the

165 Ibid., 160.

166 Ibid., 160-161. Death was a major possibility for the Delaware and Mahicans, or any Native Americans in Pennsylvania for that matter because the Governor reinstated a reward policy in 1764. According to Hinderacker, this policy rewarded a normal colonist (any male who was not a soldier) “150 spanish dollars for an adult male,” $134 for the scalp, “a woman or child brought $130 or $50 for a scalp.”
other” and were unwelcome in colonial society. Rather, Native Americans were encouraged, or forced, to move westward, to the newly set aside Indian Country, or Ohio Valley. The Moravian’s ties to their Delaware and Mahican converts made them an “other” as well. The whole structure of the Moravian system, especially the mission towns, did not fit the colonial norm. Therefore, the Moravian leaders in control of the Bethlehem community after the French and Indian War changed their social, especially their missionary, practices to match the colonial norm. A continued alliance with the Moravians, for the remaining Delaware and Mahicans, also hampered their ability to join or rejoin a Native American community or to be accepted as an autonomous group by the government of colonial Pennsylvania.

The dissolution of the negotiating space was especially detrimental for the women who worked so hard to create and maintain it. Moravian women lost their power and influence in the Moravian Church system when the General Economy ended. Without the Single Sisters and Married Women’s choir women had little access to positions which would give them influence in the greater Moravian community. Also, after Zinzendorf’s death in 1760, women were no longer ordained as priests. When the several missionaries decided to form a mission town in the Ohio Valley after the French and Indian War, women were not asked, or rather permitted, to come to the mission town until their safety and comfort could be guaranteed. Delaware and Mahican women lost the kinship and support networks they had strove to recreate within the Moravian mission towns. Perhaps more importantly, Delaware and Mahican women lost full access to the spiritual power and influence they had gained in the Moravian mission towns. Having already lost their traditional places of power and influence in their communities, the loss of their place in the Moravian mission towns must have come as a great blow.
In certain ways the Moravians were both colonizers and colonized. The Moravians can be viewed as colonizing the Native Americans who became their converts; despite the similarities between the two communities and the creation of a negotiating space they did colonize the Delaware and Mahicans who joined them in the mission towns and Bethlehem. However, the Moravians were also colonized by the other Euroamerican groups of Pennsylvania. In order for their community to be accepted in the emerging republic the Moravians had to give up some of their more radical ideas and practices, one of which was their mission to the Native Americans of Pennsylvania. Those missionaries who wanted to continue this mission moved into the Ohio Country and established a second Gnadenhütten, which unfortunately would also be the site of a massacre.

Micro studies such as this often seem inconsequential to the larger narrative of American History. However, this study brings to light many important concepts and ideas for the future. First, White’s middle ground, while widely used and highly regarded does not always explain the range and depth of the cross-cultural relationships between colonists and Native Americans. The middle ground often fails to appreciate the value of women’s roles within their communities and how women, as cultural mediators, play a major role in cross-cultural encounters. This project uses the term negotiating space to place women at the center of the Moravian and Delaware-Mahican community. Placing women at the center of this project has resulted in two important outcomes. First, this study has illuminated the ways women from different communities joined together to ensure community survival as well as to preserve personal influence in their own communities. Second, this study also looks at the success of these cross-cultural female relationships on a social frontier. Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women joined together on two fronts, mission towns and Bethlehem; however, each front experienced different levels of
success. The women in the mission towns had somewhat more success in creating cross-cultural relationships due to the more flexible social climate of the mission towns compared to women and girls attending the Anstalten. These women were often thwarted from creating a successful negotiating space due to a more strict Eruoamerican social setting, little access to their traditional culture, and lack of influence within the immediate community.

The negotiating space can certainly be used elsewhere as well as in this study of Moravian Bethlehem. For example, the negotiating space could be used to evaluate the Moravian Springplace mission in North Carolina; to analyze Moravian and Cherokee women’s relationships and roles within their community. Did Moravian and Cherokee women play important roles in creating a successful cross-cultural community? Were Cherokee women able to use Moravian theology to gain personal spiritual power in similar ways to the Delaware and Mahican women of Pennsylvania? Finally, what were the experiences of Cherokee girls in Moravian schools? The negotiating space can also be used to revisit, and reread, the events and sources White studied in his noteworthy volume, *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empire, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. The study of women’s roles is essential in understanding the range of relationships between Euroamericans and Native Americans as well as the lasting effects of these encounters.

Finally, micro studies should not be ignored by the grand narrative. Microhistory does not just fill in the gaps and offer more information on topics previously covered. Rather, studies of marginalize groups can provide historians with new ways to read sources, or even open up the source base by utilizing non-traditional sources. In addition to the possibility of revisiting the sources used in *The Middle Ground*, this study also adds to discussions of boarding schools and
the roles they played in Native American communities as vehicles of acculturation and assimilation. Moravian boarding schools, especially those in Bethlehem, differ in key ways from the boarding schools which would open in the 1800s, and thus adds another viewpoint to an important topic. Most importantly, this study illustrates how looking at women’s roles often provides essential and far ranging insights into communities and peoples who have left few sources behind.

The Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women studied in this project demonstrate several valuable concepts. First, women’s ability to maneuver in a patriarchal system; to make their own choices and ensure their needs are realized. Second, this study shows the successes and failures of the negotiating space, and even the middle ground, as a binding force in cross-cultural communities. Finally, this project sheds light on women’s ability to challenge and shape their social environment through intercultural cooperation. Moravian, Delaware, and Mahican women, through the negotiating space, created a system of understanding and mutual aid which increased their ability to cope with the mission town and Bethlehem frontiers.
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