MEDIA USE AMONG MENNONITES: FRAME

ALIGNMENT PROCESSES AND GROUP

IDENTITY MAINTENANCE

BY

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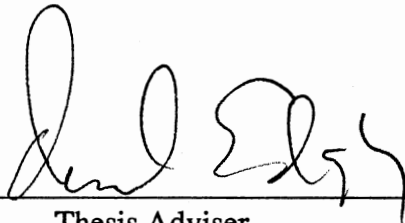Norman, Oklahoma
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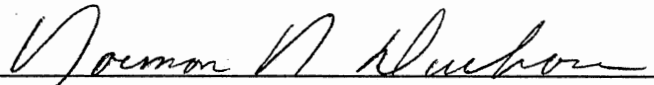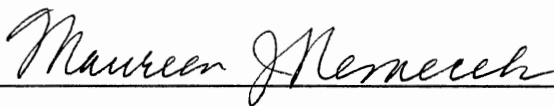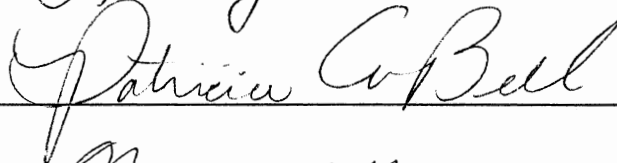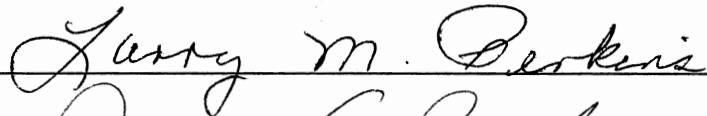DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Mennonites form a small fellowship of Christians who currently number approximately one hundred thousand nation wide (United States Bureau of the Census, 1989). About thirty thousand of these people are located in the southwest part of the United States. Congregations of the group are located in small cities and rural communities that dot the sparsely populated plains of Northwest Oklahoma and Kansas, a region known for its fertile soil and abundant wheat crops.

It was during the later part of the nineteenth century that Mennonite farmer-immigrants seeking homesteads began to settle near Oklahoma in southern Kansas. They were drawn to the area largely by the cheap farm land offered for sale along the route of the newly built Santa Fe railroad and because the climate and geography of the area resembled that of their homeland. At the opening of the Cherokee Outlet in 1893, hundreds of settlers rushed across the state line to Oklahoma to take advantage of available government land. Among these pioneers were Mennonites, most of whom immigrated to the area by a circuitous route.

Many of these Mennonite emigrés traveled first from their homes in Switzerland where their church originated to Germany and Prussia, then to Russia where their colonies were located for over one hundred years, and finally to Oklahoma. Some, those who had migrated a few years earlier or their children, came by way of Canada and the northern plains states and Kansas. Others were descendants of still earlier Northern European Mennonite migrants who had located in Pennsylvania and the Midwest. As a group, they

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formed a visible and distinctive part of the pioneer population in Oklahoma. The story of these people—their lifestyle, their belief system, the events that led them to Oklahoma, but, most importantly, their adaptation to the demands of a modern, media oriented, rapidly changing society—is the subject of this research. This research moves beyond a purely descriptive study of Mennonite group life. Qualitative methods are used to explore social psychological and mass communication perspectives in relation to the group's culture. The study examines the ideational and expressive methods Mennonites use to preserve their religious/ethnicity in today's world.

For much of their history the Mennonite people worldwidewere largely rural agriculturists. Today, Mennonites are part of a large migration away from rural areas. Mechanization, increased production, and economic conditions that encourage corporate agriculture have greatly restricted family farming, once the principle occupation of Mennonites. A growing population coupled with increased educational opportunities and diversification in employment has resulted in the rapid urbanization of many Southwesterners, including Mennonites. Altered economic structures, including the entry of women into the work force, have affected Mennonite families as well as the larger population. The post-industrialized society has transformed the insular, rural lifestyles of early Mennonite settlers almost beyond recognition, yet the Mennonite tradition continues to survive.

In coming to America, the separated and isolated social structures that had defined the Mennonite settlements in Russia were altered as Mennonite congregations relocated in the prairie states. Encouraged by the Mennonite tradition of adaptation and innovation in farming practices as well as the geography of one hundred and sixty acre homesteads, a gradual move away from the closed associations and proscribed behavior that had defined the earlier, German-speaking, Mennonite communities in Russia began. A strong emphasis on education for their members and a long history of worldwide service to aid suffering people were among many social forces within Mennoniteism that extended

Mennonite interaction with the general population. Issues emanating from the larger community forced change in the Mennonite community as well.

Unlike the Amish who reject almost all contact with "the world," today many branches of the Mennonite faith work cooperatively with the larger society. These Mennonites consider themselves "plain people" who no longer appear "plain." Most are tied to the group largely by self-identification and shared beliefs rather than by dress, language, or insular associations. For the most part, they comprise the more acculturated and assimilated of the group and are considered the more liberal element within the Mennonite movement. Rather than reject all electronic and most forms of printed communication as some conservative Mennonite denominations, these Mennonites purchase printed material, own radios, televisions, video cassette recorders, and other types of electronic media ware. Some congregations have begun to videotape religious services to replay for those not in attendance. And, during the past year, at least one Mennonite fellowship has used public access cable television to broadcast a locally produced, member-filmed documentary about their church. The film is a graphic demonstration that these people do, indeed, live in a modern, ever changing, information-based society.

Today, a worldwide flood of media for mass and individual use impacts on all Americans, including those in insular groups such as the Mennonites. Media technology has become almost instantaneous, direct, and global, and it appears to be expanding exponentially. Multiple outlets for information are being produced in unprecedented amounts. Mediated communication has become pervasive. Furthermore, the messages offered by modern media impact differentially on Mennonites often in direct contrast to the traditional Mennonite esthetic, which includes valuing nonresistance, pacifism, thrift, and self-denial. The aim of this dissertation is on establishing the ways Mennonites manage their traditions and identity in the face of complex social change. The research is designed to define the relationship amongst group identity, Mennonite life, and media use.

While a complete analysis of the dynamics of the modern Mennonite community and

its place in the context of the larger social world is beyond the scope of this research, a focused analysis of the role of mediated communication in sustaining cultural identification of individuals is addressed. Of interest to this research is how the processes of mediated communication are involved in cultural identification. The creation and continuation of ethnic group identity is an interactive process. In studying the relationship of Mennonite religious/ethnic identification and mass communication, it is not the amount and type of media content currently presented to audiences that is of interest, but the relationship of individual Mennonite's cognitive frames of reference to mediated communication and consequently what bearing that relationship has in sustaining the group's identity. Research interest is focused on process, the process of group identity and the process of media utilization. Specific interest centers on the interplay of media and person in working out a sense of religious/ethnic identity. Attention is directed toward the relationship between mass communication and the quality of Mennonite life. The aim is to explicate a fruitful line of inquiry among conceptions Mennonites hold of their religious/ethnic group life and uses Mennonites make of media, concerns not addressed by any of the previous research.

Past research has addressed the nature of the Mennonite response to social change in terms of type and degree of adaptation to the larger society. In general, these studies locate the ability of Mennonites to maintain their identity in terms of acculturation and/or assimilation into the larger society with little understanding of values in Mennonite culture from the perspective of the individuals that make up that culture. Previous research also has neglected the processes of communication involved in sustaining cultural identification.

To provide insight into ways that Mennonite group life is conceptualized and maintained, the work of Fredrik Barth (1969) is followed. Throughout his writing, Barth emphasized a boundary maintenance orientation to the study of ethnicity. He sought to describe the dynamic nature of ethnic boundaries as the critical aspect of minority groups.

It is not necessary, according to Barth (1969), for groups to depend on the absence of interaction to maintain their identity. Interaction can actually support differences between groups. Boundaries may persist despite a flow of information across them. This theoretical orientation is applied to the present problem by explaining the relationship of mass communication to the constructs that individual Mennonites employ to maintain their religious group boundaries.

How individuals deal with, or "frame," group identity in the context of maintaining the boundaries of Mennonite ethnicity is explored through the development of Erving Goffman's (1974) work. Goffman (1974) used what he called "frame analysis" to explain structures, or invisible frames, beyond the common sense realities of life. These invisible frames serve as a system of rules that govern the arrangement of communication and determine how everyday situations are experienced by individuals. Whereas, Goffman's research focused on media frames (1974) and media content (1979), the focus of this research is turned toward the audience. The strategies, or frame alignments (Snow et al, 1986), that locate media in relation to traditional Mennonite values are revealed in the ways Mennonites mold media through accepting, rejecting, modifying, or producing their own mediated communication. Because the research centers on person's intentional orientations to their life situations and the relationship of many forms of media in ongoing, everyday life experiences, a qualitative approach has been chosen for the study. Simply talking to people seemed to be the best way to learn about their media habits and get at their notions. Further, a qualitative method is compatible with the interpretative paradigm which undergirds the design of the study. In-depth interviews, participant observation, and nonreactive primary and secondary sources have been used as research strategies.

This dissertation borrows much of its methodology from methods Aaron Circourel (1974) used to research demography and fertility in Latin America. Like Circourel's (1974) research, this research begins with a general problem in a substantive area and

contrasts traditional theoretical explanations and quantitative methodological approaches with a qualitative research design based on social psychological theory. Following this general orientation, this study enters into research concerning the theory of ethnic group viability—from the viewpoint of social psychological theory, and through the use of qualitative methods. The setting, in this case, Mennonite society, is used as a basis for pursuing additional issues. The substantive focus of the research is therefore, naturalistic inquiry into the everyday use of media by Mennonites in order to understand the context of group boundaries. The grounded theory approach to social research analysis (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) followed. From the complex array of interrelated issues associated with Mennonite culture, this research explores the actual accounts that people give about themselves.

The study first provides an overview of research related to the adaptation of Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group to the larger society. The next chapter provides a theoretical orientation for the research. The third chapter describes the sample and methodology in more detail than presented here. The fourth chapter gives an historical and ethnographical account of Mennonites in Oklahoma to enable the reader to locate the changes in group life. Cognitive frames of reference that account for changes in Mennonite group life also are pointed out in chapter four. The final chapter offers some impressions on the importance of mass communication in the maintenance of religious and ethnic values and practices among Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma. It is a discussion of the efforts Mennonites make to mold media, to construct and reconstruct meaning, to "keep their faith" in a changing world.

CHAPTER II

MENNONITES, RELIGIOUS/ETHNICITY, AND

SOCIOLOGICAL THEORY: REVIEW OF

LITERATURE

The study of religious/ethnic group identity often has been linked to minority status which, in turn, often has been identified as a type of asymmetrical relationship within the macrosystem of society. In general, the body of this research has perceived ethnic groups as subordinate with membership ascribed rather than based on conscious self-identity. Because of this, a large amount of research has presented social life of religious/ethnic groups variably, as a "melting pot" or in a state of assimilation or pluralistic or segregated or enclaved or symbolic, with attendant issues located in terms of degree of acculturation and/or assimilation into the larger society.

The emphasis of this dissertation is not on social integration or intergroup relations of Mennonites. This study is restricted to understanding individuals' conceptions of their relationship to religious/ethnic group culture. The study attempts to move forward the understanding of how individual members of a religious/ethnic group develop and maintain their identity. The emphasis is on the ability of individual Mennonites to recreate their culture and centers on ways Mennonites manage their values and identity in the face of complex social change. Communication is used as a vehicle for this purpose. Specifically, emphasis is on members' personal accounts of how they incorporate mediated communication in their lives and how they adapt media to appropriate Mennonite

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values. Beliefs or opinions, whether held by Mennonites or generated by media are not at issue. The issue, instead, is explication of the relationship among media use, Mennonite life, and group identity.

What follows is a section that summarizes the relevant literature regarding the sociological factors involved in analyzing Mennonite life. Much of the past research on Mennonites has been devoted to analytical essays and historical comparison. These studies are reviewed in this chapter together with the more limited number of published quantitative and qualitative research available. Developing a comprehensive overview of this minimally researched subject was difficult, not only because of the scarcity of available literature, but because of other problems. They are: lack of clear theoretical direction in studies of Mennonites, competing theoretical orientations to the study of religious/ethnic groups, and the difficulty of situating Mennonites as a subject within the framework of sociological investigation.

Among researchers of Mennonites there is not sufficient agreement on issues as basic as a comprehensive definition of Mennonites as a subgroup. This poses a problem in the manner in which the group should be addressed sociologically. Redekop and Hostetler noted one of the major difficulties associated with such lack of consensus in a 1977 study of "plain people." They pointed out that analyses of Mennonites as social groups have variously been conducted as studies of sects, social movements, ethnic groups, communal societies, and protest movements.

Lack of specific theoretical orientation of studies is another problem, as is competing theoretical perspectives. The subject of Mennonites, in the past, has been addressed many times substantively without or with vague theoretical reference, making it difficult to access a comprehensive body of literature on the group. Other studies of Mennonites are theoretically grounded but suffer from another problem. They are difficult to categorize or synthesize because, though situated theoretically, there are so few of them and they come from several different perspectives.

Both the problems of theoretical orientation and specific identification are addressed in the following discussion. Literature regarding the general characteristics of Mennonites and basic sociological issues involved in analyzing their social life are presented first in this chapter. The conceptual concerns and competing theoretical orientations that shape the study of Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group are addressed in the later part of the chapter. A presentation of ethnic assimilation theory, ethnic pluralism, and ethnic group boundary maintenance theory, three general theoretical explanations of ethnic groups and their relationship to the larger society are outlined. After each general theory is addressed, then studies of Mennonites which explicate that particular theory are reviewed. Some of the studies of Mennonites explicitly state the theoretical perspective from which they are developed. Other studies reviewed do not explicitly state a theoretical orientation, but do state and apply terms derived from the theoretical orientations of assimilation, pluralism, and boundary maintenance. Both types of studies, those with explicit and those with implied theoretical associations are reviewed in this chapter. Both types of studies are grouped under the theoretical perspective with which their research statements are associated.

Studies that Define and Describe Mennonites and Mennoniteism

Part of the problem of studying Mennonites, as stated above, is the difficulty in defining this religious/ethnic group. Mennonite identification covers a broad spectrum of religious doctrine. Moreover, several ethnic subgroups can be found among Mennonites as a whole. Social organization and norms of individual behavior vary from group to group. Simply describing the group has presented researchers an impressive challenge.

To clarify conceptual concerns followers of the Mennonite faith have been divided into several denominations that have been organized to form a continuum (Barclay, 1967;

Fretz, 1977) ranging from those who reject technological advances and live in communal, closed congregations to those who ascribe to strict dress and behavior codes but associate marginally with the outside world through public education and employment, to those who integrate with the larger society and define their association as Mennonites through religious belief and practice. The latter are General Conference Mennonites, Mennonite Brethren, and others. The middle positions on the continuum are occupied by Hutterites, Amish, Old Colony Mennonites, and others; and the Holderman Mennonites, Molokans, and others tend to group toward the other extreme of the continuum. It is important to consider at this point the multilinearity of Anabaptist identification and the multidimensionality of structural elements within and among groups of Mennonites. The complexity of Mennonite social groups precludes any simplistic interpretation (Driedger, 1977) such as the placement of Mennonite denominations on a continuum. The continuum is a descriptive device, presented for clarification only and should not be mistaken, as Driedger's (1977) work on Anabaptist identification aptly showed, for a descriptive model.

Mennonites over many years have tended to grow as a group with the largest in membership and numbers of congregations being those tilted toward the acceptance-of-prevailing-cultural-norms end of the continuum. The "plain people," those who occupy the more insular position on the continuum, isolate themselves from contact with nonbelievers and can be identified by symbols of separation that include plain dress; distinctive hair styles; use of beards and/or mustaches by men; restriction of printed material; prohibition of radios, television, movies, recordings, and other "worldly" entertainment, as well. These groups are not reviewed here or included in the present research endeavor. However, it should be noted that the work of Eaton (1952), Barclay (1967) Redekop and Hostetler (1977), and Hostetler (1980) have brought clarity to description and classification of this segment of Mennonite culture.

The focus of this research, instead, is on those Mennonites who comprise the

denominations and congregations that more nearly ascribe to prevailing cultural norms. The characteristics of these groups, are presented in a seminal work on Anabaptists published in 1975 by Kauffman and Harder. In *Anabaptists: Four Centuries Later: A Profile of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations,* Kauffman and Harder (1975) used an extensive questionnaire distributed to a large sample as the basis for their re-search that has organized the most comprehensive view of Mennonite social life to date. The authors examined the traditional Mennonite religious beliefs, rituals, and forms of worship including adult baptism, communion, ministry of the laity, personal evangelism, and personal and monetary commitment to "relief" of others' suffering. Questions on religiosity range from amount of church attendance to a number of theological concerns of orthodoxy that extend to inquiries about the impact of fundamentalism on Mennonite doctrine. Also examined are social practices and norms, such as abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs and dancing. A chapter on moral issues deals with these and other topics relating to sexual activity, gambling, etc. Trends in family life, including changes in the tradition of authoritarian family order, early marriage, and prohibition of divorce are addressed.

There are measures of the traditional values that stress economic life based on agriculture and related activities and the values that reject materialism through downgrading the profit motive and commercial endeavor. Norms that discourage indi-vidualism and encourage exclusive, in-group social relationships also are studied. In addition, the survey covered current political issues, such as abortion and homosexuality. The political ramifications of beliefs that traditionally separate Mennonites from the larger society, such as pacifism and restrictions on voting, holding public office, and other forms of participation in government also are explored. Information on these activities offer insight into the underlying cultural patterns of five denominations: the Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite Church, Mennonite Brethren Church, Brethren in Christ Church, and Evangelical Mennonite Church. Frequency distributions

and scales were constructed to reflect these differences through responses of the groups based on sex, occupation, Canadian or American nationality, rural or urban residence, and other indicators.

The authors' summary expresses the hope that the statistics, which are extensive, will speak for themselves, presenting a portrait of Anabaptist life. However, in allowing only the statistics to speak, the authors have limited their work to a portrait left somewhat unfinished. The statistics alone are without power to offer understanding of the authors' own selected research variables. The work is a weighty description of Mennonites and Mennoniteism. The amount of information provided on the subject is appreciable, yet the findings inconclusive. The authors' make no attempt to explain "why" the characteristics they found about Mennonites are the way they are or "why" the ongoing statistical changes that describe the group are moving the way the way they say. Instead the authors offer no real conclusions. They write the portrait of Anabaptists four centuries after their founding is one that is "neither all positive nor all negative with respect to the normative vision. . . revealing less faithfulness to that vision than some readers may have expected and more genuine commitment. . . than other readers may believe to be true to reality," (Kauffman & Harder, 1975). The authors offer no conclusions from the statistics they gathered and they express same ambiguity with regard to assimilation as an overall trend of the group, although the authors do view assimilation as a threat. They find urbanization, individualism, and economic affluence growing and a real, but perhaps overstated, challenge with mixed affects on the central doctrines of Anabaptism.

So it remains that while some important relationships arise in the study, the significance of these relationships to Mennonite culture and the explanation of the relationships with regard to maintenance of the Mennonite ethic are left unexplored. Nevertheless, the importance of the study, despite its shortcomings, should not be slighted. Its wealth of information on a wide range of topics has served as a benchmark for further substantive and theoretical research. In addition, the data from the text has provided researchers

opportunity to extend analysis.

For example, a Driedger and Kauffman (1982) study of urbanization that concluded residence had little affect on Mennonite beliefs and practices either when defined in terms of size of community or when defined in terms of national and regional differences is an example of secondary analysis uses of the Kauffman and Harder (1982) data. Perhaps even more important, because it is the only study to date that addresses Mennonites' relationship to mass communication, Umble's (1990) research on television's power to "cultivate" mainstream, or prevailing cultural, attitudes in heavy viewers also draws on the Kauffman and Harder (1982) data. Umble (1990) applied regression analysis across and within several demographic groups divided among light, moderate, heavy, and non-viewers. On many, but not all, responses extracted from the data, television viewing was found associated with moderate attitudes, while heavy viewing contributed to already liberalized perspectives.

Despite the scope of the Kauffman and Harder (1975) study or its usefulness to other research endeavors, lack of inference in the design of *Anabaptists: Four Centuries Later : A Profile of Mennonite and Brethren in Christ Denominations,* remains a problem, and opens the data to convenient and over-simplified interpretations. By using descriptive statistics based on survey information, the authors have encountered the same problem that has plagued much of the research on Mennonites. In allowing the statistics speak for themselves, the results obtained may be construed, if not by the authors by others through interpretation and secondary analyses, to support competing hypotheses. Urbanization, increased levels of education, shifting family structures, changes in employment patterns—any or all of the preceding can be interpreted interchangeably as examples of assimilation or as evidence that the Mennonite ethic has prevailed despite significant change in social life.

Comparison of Characteristics and Changes in Demographics

In other studies of Mennonite religious/ethnicity some analysts (Barclay, 1967; Ed-
iger, 1984) of Mennonite culture have addressed the study of the group by identifying
proscriptive and prescriptive behavior of various denominations of the Mennonite faith,
then contrasting these subcultures on values, beliefs, goals, and other characteristics,
thereby creating typologies or categories which are then compared on membership size
and other variables. Other analysts of religious/ethnic culture begin their discussions of
Mennonites with some demographic characteristic of the group followed by an interpreta-
tion that refers to "changing" roles, norms, or social structures. For example, Driedger
(1968) related type of community, location, family, religion, occupation, and other social
variables. Currie et al (1979) found Mennonite drinking norms and consumption of
alcohol increasing but still much lower than the general population. Driedger et al (1983)
recorded a growing trend in intermarriage nationally, regionally, and intergenerationally
in Canada, even though eighty-five to ninety percent of marriages were endogenous.
And although Mennonite divorces compared to other religious groups were found to be
low, Driedger et al (1985) correlated a significant rise in the divorce rate with urbaniza-
tion, industrialization and education.

While demographic trends, identified changes in the characteristics of the group, and
other variables may be aggregated and cited as affecting or affected by acculturation and
assimilation, little of this research can be designated causally relevant or show how indi-
viduals conceive of their relationship to religious/ethnic group culture. This has created a
methodological and substantive gap in research endeavor that is addressed by the present
study which seeks to understand the everyday activities of reproduction and describe
abstract relationships that appropriate Mennonite identity.

Driedger's and Jacob's (1973) research on religion, endogeny, and German language
use among students who were Mennonite and students who were German ethnics of other
religions, the Weinstein et al (1988) study of purpose in life as a function of religious

versus secular beliefs, and Kurokawa's (1969) study of mental adjustment and behavior patterns of Mennonite children have attempted to bridge the gap in the research literature by linking attitudes obtained from social surveys to measures of social identification, and psychosocial roles. But surveys are designed to elicit information about attitudes at the neglect of securing information about underlying values, beliefs, and norms of conduct. Surveys also are inadequate data sources of processes that underlie attitude formation. The interest of this research is to close in on in these discrepancies by demonstrating the importance of conscious activity in ethnic self-identity and value maintenance at the micro level.

Studies of Mennonites and Ethnic Assimilation Theory

Some scholars have attempted rectify this problem of data integration and explanation by locating their studies of Mennonites within the more general orientations of ethnic group theory. By emphasizing a specific approach, aggregated statistical information has been used by these researchers to formulate theoretical explanations of how social activities could have produced the effects identified. For example, Sawatsky's 1978 study is based on the perspective of the oldest and one of the most popular (Aguirre et al, 1989) theories of minority/ethnic group relationships—assimilation. Gordon's (1964, 1975) explication of ethnic group assimilation provided Sawatsky (1978) with a conceptual framework for the study of Mennonites. Gordon (1964, 1975) identified seven assimilation dimensions (cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identification assimilation, attitude receptional assimilation, behavior receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation) and argued members of minority subcultures may gradually become like majority group members as they overcome cultural and structural barriers that block their full membership in mainstream society. Of interest to the study of Mennonites as an ethnic group is Gordon's (1964) proposition that assimilation does not necessarily occur at the same rate across all dimensions, but cultural assimilation

takes place first and once structural assimilation occurs, the remaining assimilation subtypes follow. Sawatsky (1978) studied demographics of Canadian and American Mennonites and noted acculturative forces that influenced Mennonites within specific national environments. He found that demographic data acting in concert with denomi-nationalization resulted in progressive assimilation of Mennonites in American society. He then suggested a linear mobility leading to adaptation of Mennonite lifestyles to those of the larger social world.

Sawatsky's (1978) work has been criticized by Bolt and Roberts (1979) who point out inadequate attention was devoted to the type of denominational patterns enjoined by Mennonites and the strength of the demands of denominations on their members. But criticism aside, both the Sawatsky (1978) and Bolt and Roberts (1979) analyses are lodged squarely within the framework of assimilation theory earlier presented by Gordon (1964).

Looking at Mennonite group life from Gordon's perspective of assimilation is beneficial because it offers theoretical guidance needed to explicate findings, but as a theory, assimilation suffers some severe shortcomings. It neglects to address ethnicity at a micro level and also tends to blur the basic premise of Mennonite identity. Gordon's (1964) theory of assimilation essentially focuses on minority groups rather than religious/ethnic groups. Its unidimensionality and linearity assume assimilation as positive. Whereas, the essence of Mennonite identity is not integration but separation. Still another basic contradiction to assimilation theory with regard to Mennonites is that Mennonites have in some ways tended to survive better as Mennonites when society treated them with hostility or indifference than when they were accepted by society.

Studies of Mennonites and Ethnic Pluralism Theory

For some researchers, an attractive alternative to assimilation as an approach to the study of Mennonites has been the ethnic pluralism perspective. Pluralism is efficacious

as a conceptual framework to understand Mennonite society because it emphasizes the persistence of group distinctions. While Gordon's (1964) overarching principal of assimilation does center on prejudice, discrimination, and separatism, the explanatory trust of the argument moves toward conciliation of groups. Glazer and Moynihan (1975) on the other hand, recognize that ethnic distinctions among many groups are developed in the host society rather than existing as cultural dimension of any group. This approach argues that familiarity with the dominant culture and socioeconomic success of some minorities allow an accurate understanding of limits between groups and the host society. Should cultural assimilation occur it is not automatically a stepping stone to full societal assimilation. The central theme of Glazer's and Moynihan's (1963, 1970) work is the political interests of minority groups and the strategies used by groups to gain various objectives. Access to mainstream society may—but not necessarily always—be a primary objective.

The ideas surrounding pluralism have been developed by Novak (1971), Newman (1973), Sowell (1981), and Yancy et al (1976) among others, including Greeley (1972, 1977). Greeley turned his attention to the study of American Catholics, not primarily as a religious group, but as an ethnic minority. Greeley's (1972, 1977) work is useful here not because of his insights into Catholicism as a social ethic, or because of his efforts to mark out the limits of Catholic participation in the larger society, although both are significant, but because of his exploration of the distinctiveness of religion as a basis for minority group identity. Greeley (1977) questioned the basic assumption of Catholicism as an avenue of mainstream Americanism. He provided evidence, instead, of Catholicism as one element present in pluralistic American society which he described as a "mosaic with permeable boundaries."

"Religion in the creation and preservation of sectarian culture areas: A Mennonite Example" (Heatwole, 1974) extends the notion of religious/ethnic group factions as a part of pluralistic society by suggesting that religion, Anabaptism particularly, facilitates crea-

tion of sectarian culture areas. This study notes that religion endorses separation of minority groups from the society in the physical and/or cultural sense and in so doing validates the larger social world. At the same time, religion may preserve the sectarian culture area. By attaching transcendental meaning to the distinctive values, culture, and structure of a religious/ethnic group, while concurrently condemning the alternatives offered by the broader society, the religious sect is preserved.

More recently, another way of approaching the pluralism perspective, ethnic competition (Aguirre et al, 1989; Portes, 1984; Portes & Stepick, 1989), has evolved. According to this conceptualization, the higher the rate of assimilation of minorities, the higher their perception of separatism. In particular, consistent association with the host society contributes to a rise in perceptions of social distance by minority groups. No research to date has focused on ethnic competition as a factor to be examined in relation to Mennonite culture. However, a discussion of the ability of Mennonites to simultaneously be nonconformists and involved in world need through evangelism and service efforts is presented in an article by Chandler (1970). And many studies of closed communities of Mennonites including Erasmus's (1981) work on Hutterites, a denomination related to Mennonites in tradition and religious heritage, provide other examples of opposition as an incentive to strengthening religious/ethnic identity.

A corollary attendant to the ethnic competition extension of pluralism emphasizes locating studies of ethnicity geographically within what are referred to as ethnic enclaves, almost always in urban, industrialized settings. While no comprehensive description of an ethnic enclave has been formulated, Zhou and Logan (1989) have developed three operational definitions—as a place of residence, place of work, and industrial sector. These definitions would exclude the historical Mennonite settlements that originated in Europe and Russia and were transported to North America in the late nineteenth century. Some of the isolated, rural, agricultural Mennonite settlements are still in existence in various parts of the United States.

Nevertheless, a considerable amount of research on Mennonites has developed in the past identifying the urban Mennonite enclave as a conceptual orientation. The incidents of the existence of such enclaves in the United States, however, may be few. Driedger (1968) studied the rural-urban population shift of Manitoba Mennonites and identified types of Mennonite urban communities as the following: 1) urban accommodation, or lack of a physically identifiable Mennonite community; 2) ethnic urbanism, or limited neighborhood and kinship ties; and 3) urban satellites, a type similar to ethnic enclaves, that Driedger (1968) identified as a Mennonite subculture distinguished by German language use and other characteristic forms of group exclusiveness.

Segregation of Mennonites in Canadian urban areas is common (Driedger & Church, 1974; Letkemann, 1968). Peters' (1968) article, "Martensville: Halfway House to Urbanization," is representative of Mennonite enclaves located near urban areas. The community of Martensville at the time the article was published, was described a homogeneous settlement, a typical, conservative Mennonite village adjacent to, but separated from, urban life and involvement, offering little in the way of services provided in the larger society. Almost all employment was located outside the community. Average income was just above poverty and the effects of cultural conflicts with the larger, urban society were evident.

From the research available, it appears ethnic competition and enclave patterning are far more useful in explaining Canadian Mennonite lifestyle than Mennonite groups in the United States. And again, it should be emphasized that even though some of these metropolitan enclaves may exist in the United States, no specific studies as yet have related American culture to ethnic competition, enclave, Mennonite social structure, or, most importantly for the purposes of this study, the significance of enclavement in relation to maintenance of group values.

In the analytic framework of pluralism, the host society is considered the determining factor in the relationship. This type of counteracting relationship between

Mennonites and American society at large has been pointed out in a variety of articles including those by Redkop (1974), Redkop and Hostetler (1966), and Newman (1973). From the standpoint of these sociologists it is precisely the long history of struggle with the host society that validates the integrity of the religious group. Reality rests in the struggle between the groups rather than in some innate quality of the religious sect, according to Redkop (1974).

Newman (1978) in writing about the Canadian ethnic mosaic, makes clear that minority groups organize to promote their own social mobility. At the same time the minorities create new associations they preserve and symbolize their group distinctiveness. These are two processes that facilitate each other in different ways and together produce an ethnic identity.

The basic tenants of pluralism, then, move forward the investigation of Mennonite culture by focusing on social conflict as basic to any understanding of the group in the larger society. Nevertheless, concentrating on a pluralist explanation of Mennonite identity exclusively overlooks other equally important conceptual considerations. Despite the fact that historically Mennonites lived in closed communities and ethnic enclaves have been identified in modern metropolitan areas, some degree of acculturation and assimilation seems to have occurred. In looking at the qualities that distinguish groups, pluralist interpretations often overlook significant movement toward integration of groups.

And although the "permeable mosaic" Greeley (1977) described and the reciprocal relationships noted by Newman (1978) consider the symbolic and interactive nature of ethnicity, the prominence of structure and stratification restricts pluralism to a static interpretation of group life. Pluralism does not allow for the dynamic, multidirectional nature of groups to be considered nor does it lend itself to interpretation of minority groups from the viewpoint of their members. In particular, pluralism avoids the processes that individuals and groups undergo in creating ethnic group life.

Studies of Mennonites and Ethnic Boundary

Maintenance Theory

Interactive processes that identify ethnicity have been incorporated in numerous studies of Mennonites which build on a theoretical perspective developed by Barth (1969). Barth (1969) considered the dynamic nature of ethnic boundaries to be the critical aspect of minority groups. His main interest was in developing an understanding of the ways that ethnic groups maintained their identity. He noted that the perpetuation of strong ethnic boundaries accounted for the persistence of groups and pointed out four necessary characteristics of minority groups: 1) biological self perpetuation; 2) shared fundamental cultural values; 3) a field of communication and interaction; and 4) a membership which identifies itself, and is identified by others. The maintenance of boundaries is carried out in part through reinforcement by social organization, language, biology, and ecology. Barth's (1969) theory is action oriented allowing for processes of expanding or contracting boundaries within groups. And the theory has been extended by Horowitz's (1975) identification of possible combinations of boundary changes that could occur among groups including: 1) amalgamation, or the uniting of two or more groups; 2) incorporation, or the loss of one group's identity to another group; 3) division, or the separation of one group into two or more groups; and 4) proliferation, or the creation of a new group from within the ranks of one or more groups.

The recognition that ethnic groups are often built on interaction with other social systems is a distinction of Barth's (1969) theory important to the study of Mennonites. From Barth's perspective, it is not necessary for groups to depend on the absence of interaction to maintain their identity. Interaction can actually support differences between groups. Boundaries persist despite a flow of personal and information across them, and boundaries may also shift. Acculturation and assimilation are important considerations but represent only two of many types of boundary shifts. Macro-level boundaries

correspond to sets of role constraints that equate with identities available to individuals. The study of ethnicity is, for Barth (1969), inclusive in the study of boundary maintenance.

One of the earliest sociological analyses of Mennonite culture, an essay written in 1948 by Frances, also provides one of the best illustrations of the ideas presented by Barth's theory. In *The Russian Mennonites: From Religious to Ethnic Group* Frances (1948) traced the history of German settlement in Russia and showed how the Russian Mennonites who segregated themselves originally because of their religious beliefs, after only a short time in isolation from the outside world, were transformed into a ethnic and folk group. The religious system, that afforded orientation in the formative stage of development, later changed and even lost much of its appeal; however, "the identity and cohesion of the group did not suffer materially" (Frances, 1948). Frances' (1948) depiction of change in the Russian Mennonite settlements, written long before Barth's boundary maintenance theory was formulated, may be identified, nevertheless, as a classic example of group boundaries maintained through shifts in boundary definitions.

In more recent times, Barth's influence has directly guided a good deal of research on Mennonites. For example, the influence of Barth's conceptions of ethnicity shaped Driedger's(1975) long standing interest in urbanization and rate of assimilation of Mennonites toward the study of boundary maintenance. Were urban Canadian Mennonites ethnic villagers or a relocated remnant of their sect? Driedger examined the urbanites as *Gemeinschaft* focusing on the dimensions of territorial control, institutional completeness, cultural identity, and social distance, which he concluded were boundary strengthening. He then turned his attention to several other dimensions: historical identity, ideological vision, social sophistication and intergroup mobility, and discovered the evidence inconclusive to either support or deny the erosion of these boundaries between the group and society.

Measures of boundary maintenance and measures of systematic linkage were ana-

lyzed by Kauffman in an effort to present findings on cultural assimilation not included in the original text of *Anabaptists Four Centuries Later*. Kauffman (1977) correlated scales representing Mennonite norms to test the limits of boundary maintenance. He sought to determine whether an increase of linkages between Mennonites and other social systems resulted in cultural assimilation of Mennonites, whether traditional Mennonite norms were being altered to conform to general American norms, and whether those Mennonites most linked to nonMennonite systems were the most deviant from Mennonite norms. The lack of longitudinal survey data was pointed out by Kauffman as a deficiency of the research and he pointed to untested intervening variables as limitations, as well. Nevertheless, his findings from the correlated data showed that when boundary maintenance mechanisms are weakened and systematic linkages are increased, adherence to Mennonite norms will greatly diminish and substantial assimilation will take place.

After reviewing Driedger's (1977) Anabaptist identification ladder (cited above) and Kauffman's (1977) data on system linkages, boundary maintenance, and norms Bolt (1979) suggested that both Driedger and Kauffman as well as others have overlooked the importance of structural associations in their findings. Bolt's (1979) essay maintains that successful boundary maintenance rests primarily on structural tightness of the religious/ ethnic group. He predicted the Mennonites' inevitable assimilation due to inability of individuals to maintain boundaries without the support of specific organizational structures. Modern, urban society, he claimed does not permit Mennonites the degree of institutional completeness necessary to reinforce their identity.

In still another study, field work was undertaken to identify boundary maintenance in urban settings. This qualitative research design encompassed an historical account of the migration of Swiss Mennonites across Europe to Russian and their eventual location in East Freeman, South Dakota. The central concern of the study (Rose, 1988), boundary maintenance and change, was focused on the reciprocal action between modern migration to urban areas and ethnic identity. Rose (1988) wanted to learn the effect of ethnicity on

migration decisions and the persistence of ethnic identity following migration. Through a questionnaire and interviews of migrants and their next-of-kin, she found that, for the most part, migration was precipitated by perceived educational and occupational opportunities of individuals, but feelings of disillusionment and dissatisfaction with in-group restrictions were said to motivate the relocation of some emigrés as well. She concluded that regardless of reasons individuals state for moving to urban areas, people willingly take with them the "cultural baggage" of their Mennonite heritage; that accommodation to the outside system occurs; and that ideology, beliefs, and values, serve to differentiate boundaries and not merely as "cultural trappings" of a particular group (Rose, 1099).

Boundary maintenance as a conceptual tool for analyzing Mennonite religious/ethnic identity is useful because it integrates a wide range of competing concepts. Above all, it is dynamic. It encompasses assimilation, separatism, and the possibility of expansion and contraction of collective identity over time, and it allows for the permeability of boundaries. It is dynamic and multidimensional. That is, it defines group membership not simply as ascribed but on an wide and evolving spectrum of identifying characteristics with differing levels of salience. It also legitimizes micro-level cultural boundaries by recognition of inter and cross group communication and by recognition of ethnic self-identity as well as ethnic identification defined by those outside the group.

Barth's (1969) theory recognizes the linkage of processes among the micro and group levels. His explanation centers on the manner in which boundaries constrain the relations of groups. Yet little research using Barth's (1969) theories has demonstrated ways ethnic boundaries are changed or maintained by processes occurring at the individual level of analysis. No matter how significant Barth's (1969) dynamic explication may be, lack of research attention to tie the micro level with integrative levels of boundary processes opens boundary maintenance theory to criticism.

Up to now a large portion of social research concerning ethnic identity has centered on the relationship of the ethnic group to the society at large and placed emphasis on

boundaries and change at the group level. This is because until a short time ago little or no importance was given to conceptions of individual's relationships to their culture. Overall, scant research attention has been paid to ethnic identity, religious participation, or value maintenance as a major factor in explaining the general nature of ethnicity.

In academic investigation of Mennonites or of any group, ethnicity keyed to expressive behavior, rather than any physical, ecological, or other descriptor, is important to a basic understanding of group life. There is general agreement among researchers that, "What is needed is detailed research on the intensity of ethnic identity and the forms that it takes" (Alba & Chamlin, 1983). This is particularly true for studies of white, ethnics of European descent, where, as in the acculturated lifestyles of many third and fourth generation emigres, religion may be a principal mode of ethnic identity. Attention needs to be directed to individual and structural processes and their relationship. Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group provide an excellent opportunity for further study of this nature.

Taken together explanations of boundary maintenance, pluralism, and assimilation theory have considerable power to explain Mennonite life. Acculturation and assimilation have taken place. Few Mennonites today speak German in their everyday life. Most attend public schools. And perhaps more significant, Mennonites as a group are no longer rural agriculturists. They face a rapidly changing world. Lifestyles of many Mennonites have altered drastically over the years but the basic religious beliefs of the group have remained stable boundaries. Other boundaries, however, have been penetrated. Endogenous marriages decline while divorce rates climb. Mennonite people now often vote, hold public office, and sometimes serve in the military. Political and social attitudes of Mennonites at times, parallel mainstream America, yet outsiders and Mennonites themselves continue to identify and set the Mennonite apart as somehow different.

Continuity and change can both be used to interpret the Mennonite ethic as can

self-identity to the group through symbol use. Whether Mennonites are in the "twilight of ethnicity" (Alba, 1988) like other Americans of European ancestry or whether they are viable entity is the major concern of past research devoted to the topic of Mennonite life. Almost all of the sociological research about Mennonites as an ethnic group has sought to interpret the lifestyle change. The basic research question was "Are Mennonites losing their identity?" The answer has been "yes" and "no" and at times, both. This research moves away from the debate over the assimilation of Mennonites. The question which this research addresses is not, "Are Mennonites losing their identity?" But, "How are Mennonites constructing their identity?" a topic not addressed by any previous research nor lodged within the theoretical orientations of ethnic group relationships.

The task of the research that follows is to understand how individual's conceptions and the use of mediated communication are interrelated. The task is to study how ethnic identity takes form. The relation of individual level structural processes that recreate ethnic identity and their connection to other integrative processes is sought through the study of individual's use of mediated communication. By using communication as a vehicle, the ability of individual Mennonites to recreate their culture can be explored. In the research to follow, mediated communication serves as a structural representation through which the ways Mennonites manage their values and identity are studied. The forthcoming research effort is directed toward understanding individuals' conceptions of their relationship to religious/ethnic group culture.

CHAPTER III

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The basic underlying premise of the research to follow is taken from the work of Barth (1969) and that of Goffman (1974). From Barth (1969), the social processes involved in creating and sustaining ethnicity are developed. Barth (1969) provided a set of explanations for defining ethnicity as the construction of social boundaries among groups. From Goffman (1974), the idea of "frame analysis" is applied. By "framing" Goffman (1974) meant the means by which individuals orient themselves and, more specifically, situate identities for themselves. Through frame analysis, Goffman (1974) showed how a system of rules or structures on a micro level facilitate interpersonal and intergroup organization. The two theories, boundary maintenance and frame analysis, as will be shown later in this chapter, compliment and enhance each other. Together, the related characteristics of these theories offer considerable power in explaining ongoing religious/ethnicity.

As the past chapter provided a comparison and analysis of published research on Mennonites, it is the work of this chapter to provide a theoretical foundation for this particular dissertation research on the relationship of ethnic group identity and mediated communication among Mennonites. The chapter gets underway with a review of Barth's (1969) boundary maintenance theory and Goffman's (1974) frame analytic perspective. An explanatory discussion of the basic themes associated with each theory is provided to ground Goffman's (1974) frame scheme and Barth's (1969) boundary maintenance conceptualization for elaboration in the research to follow. The complimentary nature of

the two theories is outlined in this chapter and used as a bridge to understanding the nature of religious/ethnicity as a subject of sociological inquiry. The aim of the research is to deal with process of religious/ethnicity systematically. Study is concentrated on a particular significant interaction, the role of mediated communication in relation to group identification. The last task of this chapter, therefore, is to focus the application of the study's theoretical orientation by associating boundary maintenance theory and frame analysis within the body of research on mass communication. After that, some general problems associated with conceptualization of research on religious/ethnic groups within the perspective of the sociologies of everyday life are noted.

Altogether, the theoretical orientation of this research is designed to amplify understanding of the interactive processes of ethnic identity. By looking at the ways Mennonites use media in their daily lives through the perspectives of boundary maintenance theory and frame analysis, some understandings about the creation and recreation of religious/ethnicity can be approached. Further, through the application of social psychological concepts to communication processes, this type of study can benefit certain aspects of mass communication theory.

Boundary Maintenance and Ethnic Group Salience

Sociological analyses of religious/ethnic groups in the recent past have moved away from theoretical orientations that place emphasis on defining the status of the group in the larger social system. Instead, much of the current research focuses on religious ethnicity in terms of social process. These studies have developed from theoretical links going all the way back to Cooley's (1962) "primary groups." In the conceptualization of ethnicity as social process Fredrik Barth's (1969) idea of boundary maintenance has stood as a benchmark. It was first articulated in an introductory essay, *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*, which preceded a series of articles in a book Barth (1969) edited that bears the same

title. Barth (1969) sought to understand the persistence of ethnic groups and their relationship to the larger society not through a recitation of cultural characteristics or through the development of social structure, as many anthropologists and sociologists had done previously. Barth (1969) did not disregard these major analytical themes, but rather moved away from them as static formulations. The considerable explanatory value of culture and structure instead were incorporated into a dynamic and alternative viewpoint that understood ethnicity as a social process.

The basic underlying rationale of this study incorporates the interval approach of Barth (1969) and applies it to the study of Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group. Ethnicity, viewed as social process relocates the study of group life from earlier functionalist, as well as conflict, based theories which, in the past, have identified minority status as an asymmetrical relationship of a group to the larger society. The application of both conflict and functionalist theoretical schools of thought to various religious/ethnic collectives, including Mennonites has led, in the past, to the articulation of ethnicity variously as ascribed, subordinate, problematic, and evolving. Acculturation, assimilation, integration, and separation have comprised the principal variables that have characterized ethnic groups in such interpretations and formed the basis for explicating relationships, whether pluralist or assimilative.

These constructs—acculturation, assimilation, integration, and separation—as features of ethnicity are, in effect, the major tenants of Barth's (1969) analysis, but Barth (1969) deals with them quite differently. Rather than using the constructs implicitly as static variables, the full implications of a truly dynamic conception of these phenomena are grasped. The theme of Barth's (1969) work is the understanding of differences between cultures through the study of the boundaries that separate groups. In this way a thoroughgoing process driven theory of ethnicity is advanced. Such an approach widens knowledge of both social process and ethnicity.

This theoretical approach is especially appropriate for examining Mennonites as a

group, since it expands the conceptualization of assimilation and acculturation, as well as other terms that historically have been used to locate the Mennonite experience. And at the same time it transcends the simplistic view that geography and social isolation have been the critical factors in sustaining the Mennonite ethic. Instead of discussing Mennonite group life as segregated or integrative or relating rates of acculturation and/or assimilation to the larger society, this focus allows investigation to center on the study of boundaries that serve to distinguish the ethnic group. The great debate over whether modernity is destroying Mennonite culture then becomes a mute issue. As an intellectual argument, the thrust of the controversy over Mennonite ethnic viability henceforth can be turned away from competing issues of whether or not Mennonites are losing their identity. By defusing the either/or debate over Mennonite identity, empirical and theoretical observations can be reformulated as an intellectual inquiry into how and through what means ethnic identity is shaped.

The persistence of ethnic groups from Barth's (1969) perspective rests not on isolation from, or assimilation into, the larger society, but on interaction with a shared common culture. Ethnic groups are not seen as the result of objective differences between themselves and the larger society. On the contrary, Barth's (1969) view of ethnicity maintains that groups are organized and persevere through a continuous expression of social interaction among groups. Social interaction creates, shapes, and changes the distinction between ethnic and societal groups. Through the processes of boundary maintenance the boundaries that emerge from interaction define the group and are both permeable and fluid. Barth (1969) explains:

First, it is clear that boundaries persist despite a flow of personnel across them. In other words, categorical ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of mobility, contact and information, but do entail social processes of exclusion and incorporation whereby discrete categories are maintained despite changing

participation and membership in the course of individual life histories. Secondly, one finds that stable, persisting and often vitally important social relations are main tained across such boundaries, and are frequently based precisely on the dichotomized ethnic statuses. In other words, ethnic distinctions do not depend on an absence of social interaction and acceptance, but are quite to the contrary often the very foundations on which embracing social systems are built.

The group maintains its identity by interaction among members and with interaction among those outside itself. The locus of group identity is the maintenance of the boundaries between the group and others outside. Contact with the larger society does not always mean a weakening of ethnic identity. In some cases or at some times this kind of contact may strengthen the subsociety.

Culture is therefore a result of interaction rather than a defining characteristic of a group. Barth notes it is not what the boundary encloses, i.e. culture, but the boundary itself that indicates the ethnic group. Differences between the groups may persist despite assimilation, acculturation, or any change in either dominate or minority groups. "Ethnicity is an *acquired* and *used* (emphasis of authors) feature of human identity" (Lyman and Douglas, 1973).

The interplay of shared ingroup understandings and common interethnic conventions are the focus of boundary maintenance theory. The main theoretical principle, however, is comprised of several interconnected dimensions. The first dimension rests on the idea that separate groups are built from differences that actors see in themselves as significant. Groups form around what individuals regard as ties. Even when ethnicity is ascribed from outside the group, as is often the case, self identification is, nevertheless, the critical feature through which the group is validated. Self Identification is formed around two analytical orders: 1) overt signals and signs and 2) basic value orientations.

Signals and signs serve as a social cement binding the ingroup. They are both overt

symbols obvious to all and shared understandings that constitute a code readable only to group members. Dress, language, and lifestyle are among the major overt symbols that reinforce ethnicity to group members and the outside world. A good deal of empirical research of late (Royce, 1982; Warner, 1985; Alba and Chamlin, 1983; Alba, 1999) has focused on what has come to be called "symbolic ethnicity" (Gans, 1979). It centers around the cultivation of identifying symbols that individuals present publicly to proclaim ethnic allegiance. Symbolic ethnicity has been associated most often with third and fourth generation descendants of European immigrants to America. In many instances these children and grandchildren of immigrants are identifiable as ethnics only through their public display of symbols and practice of inherited rituals. Acculturated lifestyles and lack of obvious physical differences leave little more than the socialization process as the significant barrier that perpetuates ethnicity. Many Mennonites find themselves in a similar social milieu, particularly since a majority of the group no longer live in closed communities or dress in plain clothes or speak German exclusively. Attempts to affirm and reaffirm boundaries separating themselves from the larger society therefore rest, to a large degree, in Mennonites' ability to create identities for themselves rather in an overall evaluation fostered by the society at large.

Signals and signs may also be covert. Lyman and Douglas (1973) point to a kind of "ineffableness" with which individuals define the boundaries of their own ethnic group. These signals and signs are unspoken, implicit messages that constitute a "symbolic estate 'inherited' by the ingroup." An outsider cannot "read" these signals or even understand that they are being communicated. "Moreover, the outsider signals his non-membership by his ignorance of precisely those ethnic things that cannot be explained but only silently apprehended" (Lyman & Douglas, 1973). Covert signaling and signing are a kind of cultural literacy that can be read and responded to successfully only in the ingroup. Lyman and Douglas (1973) use the term, "soul," an expression made popular by black Americans during the late 1960s as an example. The designation of "soul"

refers to an intangible understanding. And although whites might, over time, work to become a "soul brother" by developing an empathic insight as to the meaning of "soul," only blacks could ever completely experience "soul." "Soul" constitutes the kind of understanding insiders alone can share. Understandings that can never be adopted by those remaining on the outside.

The second order of self identification encompassed by the boundary maintaining perspective is basic value orientations (Barth, 1969). Values are the standards of morality and rules of behavior by which group members are judged. They are rules enmeshed in codes of conduct and shared understandings of members. Values are the official culture of groups. They are most often supported by a high degree of consensus and, in the case of Mennonites, many group values are articulated in religious doctrine. Overall, values and beliefs are commonly agreed upon generalizations for the organization and execution of daily life, but individuals may not actually be cognizant of many of them as conventions. Values may work at conscious and subconscious levels. What is important is that group members "feel" the constraints of values, whether articulated, unspoken, or subliminal.

Since the essence of Mennonite group life revolves around religion, religious values play a major part in the way Mennonites orient themselves to their own and the larger social world. Because their ethnic and religious identity in modern society is invisible, the salience of their religious values is a primary factor separating Mennonites as a group. The traditional Mennonite esthetic, which includes valuing nonviolence, objection to service in the armed forces, thrift, and self-denial is a direct contrast to many mainstream American conventions and this heightens group visibility. Separation itself has been a positive and cultivated value for Mennonites who strive to "be in the world but not of the world." The conscious orientation of Mennonites outside mainstream society is illustrative of the way values may be used by the group. Values affirm a mental state; they serve as a potential ploy in interactive encounters with the nonbelieving general public;

and ultimately values become in themselves an important group boundary marker.

Summary

Values, signals, and signs as symbols allow for boundaries to be maintained and the continuation of ethnic group life. Together they constitute the primary "cultural contents" of ethnicity (Barth, 1969). They are not the only features that mark ethnic differences, but they are those that individual members of the group find significant. Boundary maintenance theory proposes that cultural units exist because, and not in spite, of interaction across ever changing, penetrable boundaries that mark differences among ethnic groups and the society at large. The theory of boundary maintenance rests on the basic proposition of process as the nexus of social life. Attendant to that proposition is the corollary that groups are formed and reformed through self identification by individuals as social actors.

Frame Analysis and Social Processes

Barth (1969) emphasized that the separation of ethnics from society on the group-level corresponded to systematic sets of role constraints on the individual-level. These observations place Barth's (1969) directly in line with the theoretical orientation Erving Goffman (1974) first discussed in *Frame Analysis*. In this insightful work, Goffman (1974) explicated the disciplined nature of everyday social action and interrelationship of organized social experiences. In doing this Goffman (1974) took a step back from observing what transpires in social interaction to look at the enterprise of interaction itself. The discussion which follows describes the concept of frame analysis and indicates points where frame analysis theory intersects and enjoins boundary maintenance theory.

Goffman proposed that in the course of social interaction people make use of elaborate symbolic devices. Of these symbolic devices, an underlying awareness of interaction itself is paramount (Cuzzort & King, 1980). Goffman's (1974) ideas on the construction of reality center on sets of related concepts that frame the ways people integrate thought and activity (Gamson, 1975). His insights build on the work of Alfred Schutz (1962) whose phenomenological orientation stressed that human beings "preselect and preinterpret this world, which they experience as the reality of their daily lives," to whom Goffman is deeply indebted. To Goffman (1974) the organization of experience is accomplished through "frame." Individuals experience the social world by "framing" a slice or part of an ongoing activity.

A characteristic of social interaction is that it can be said to occur within a framework. "This framework is formal and abstract. . . it is not, however, merely a static classification" (Goffman, 1959). Behind the activities of daily life certain "structures" or invisible rules situate everyday behavior as it unfolds. These structures Goffman (1974) calls "frames." Goffman (1974) used a traffic code as an example to illustrate his point. The traffic code imposes restraints that govern travel, but the traffic code does not establish where we are to travel, why we should want to, or what may transpire during the trip. A frame is put together from a set of components, the elements of which are essential, but the situation itself may be conceived as loose or even accidental.

"Frames are not be thought of as empirical in the way that situations are" (Gonos, 1977). Whereas a given situation may be described by interaction and content, a frame is described by stable rules of its operation. Frames make activity possible by providing an acknowledged set of rules for structuring social relations, but frames are not social relations. "To Goffman, it is unthinkable that social reality might undergo a construction and reconstruction at every encounter. . . The structure of a frame, unlike that of a situation is fixed and left essentially untouched by everyday events." (Gonos, 1977).

Some frames are "natural" or unguided events and others are "social" or guided

goings (Goffman, 1974). All frames have rims or outer borders that contain activity, just as a picture might be enclosed by a picture frame. And just as the framed picture might be hung on a wall giving it still another border, the rim of one social frame may be set within one another. For example, within the rim of a public school class, another rim, a dialogue between two students may take place. Frames can change, sometimes very rapidly, as when the class bell rings, and they can be reworked and redefined which might happen should the status of an accredited course be changed to non-credit. The interchanging of frames Goffman (1974) called "footing." "Keying" and frame disputes are other operations of framing.

Organization of activity, in Goffman's argument, rests on rules that govern social interaction. These rules are something that we discover and to which we gear ourselves (Davis, 1975). We operate within the dictates of a frame. There are many different aspects of frames including location of frames within other frames, changes in frames, and the movement between frames. Shared frames of reference allow for organized and cooperative activity. But since framing is the work of individuals, it often occurs that individuals operate within frames of reference that are not shared. One response to the mismatch of frames is for participants in interaction to move back and forth switching frames in an effort to align their interaction. Tannen's and Wallat's (1987) analysis of talk examples how frames are shifted and aligned. By recording the course of a conver-sation between a pediatrician and the mother of a child being examined, the researchers were able to discern how the participants moved back and forth between play and seri-ousness, between the trivial and the important. Through verbal and nonverbal negotiation among mother, doctor, and child there was a continual revision of what the examination was all about. This is what Goffman meant by "footing." "Another way of talking about a change in our frame for events. . . (is) a change in the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we manage the production or reception of an utterance" (Goffman, 1974) Goffman (1974) illustrates this adjustment as the ability to

jump back and forth among different circles in play.

Goffman's (1974) concept of footing, or frame switching among individuals during interaction is a means to adjust discrepant definitions of situations. Footing allows for alignment of meaning for congruency among interactants. Another means to adjust frames is "keying." Keying is a way to define what has already taken place. Keying is a "systematic alteration" (Goffman, 1974) in which participants may redefine situations. Here what is already meaningful from one standpoint or frame is seen by others as something else. Keyings may vary according to the degree of transformation they produce. Goffman (1974) examples the conversion of a novel into a movie. The adaptation of the work may be "loose" or "faithful," depending on how much liberty has been taken with the text. Different people may detail different versions of the same situation. Cocktail parties in Washington D.C. may be converted to arenas for political decision making, or settings for sexual conquests, or a number of other things. Keying is tied to activities, events, biographies, etc. that are already meaningful in a primary framework. Keyings transform meanings, although the degree of transformation may vary.

Frame disputes on the other hand occur when the primary framework is in question. When there is clash over fundamental agreements of the situation. For example, what some might pass off as a childish prank others would regard as vandalism. Judicial bodies are authorized to make judgments as a means of dealing with some kinds of frame disputes (Goffman, 1974). Frame disputes complicate the smooth transaction of everyday life. Frame disputes involve ambiguity, uncertainty, or conflict.

In a 1986 study Snow et al expanded on some of Goffman's (1974) notions about framing. The Snow (1986) study has moved forward Goffman's (1974) idea of framing among interactants at the individual level to the associate the term as a bridge between individual frames of reference and group level action. Thus the concept is broadened to encompass social psychological and structural organizational factors which Snow et al (1986) have conceived as "frame alignment." Frame alignment is proposed as an

interactional and ongoing accomplishment. It is not a verbal effort to restore or assure meaningful interaction, as illustrated in the Tannen and Wallat (1987) research, but an individual or collective mode of interpretation that defines actions on various levels. Frame alignments render individuals' values and beliefs complementary and congruent through several means, one of them being the transformation of frames, a process akin to Goffman's (1974) idea of keying.

Frame alignments render individuals' values and beliefs complementary and congruent with group activities, goals, and ideology. Frame alignments, as presented in *Frame Alignment Processes, Micromobilization and Movement Participation,* (Snow et al, 1986) connect defined individual rationales to actions of groups at the level of social movements. Subjects accounts of how they came to adopt their particular perceptions are the empirical basis for the analysis. Through the Snow et al (1986) study the ways that people interpret and come to participate in religious movements, the peace movement, and various neighborhood movements are shown as frame alignment processes. The most striking contribution of the Snow et al (1986) study for the purpose of research on religious/ethnic groups is the analysis made at the individual level which connects framing processes to group level processes. This connection provides a new opportunity for the analysis of ethnic self-identity and boundary maintenance.

The nature of frames is that they structure experience so that individuals may locate and label what is happening about them. They are "schemata of interpretation" (Goffman, 1974). The juxtaposition of frames allows for rationales, individual and collective, to coincide as has been demonstrated in the Snow et al (1986) research. Goffman (1974) discussed the framing of social reality as a workable problem, one that has "to do with the camera and not what it is the camera takes pictures of." This is a logic similar to Barth's (1969) notion of how boundaries designate ethnic groups for people. Barth (1969) expressed the idea that "It is not what the boundary encloses but the boundary itself" that defines an ethnic group. Thus the perspectives of Barth (1969)

and Goffman (1974) are interrelated. Barth's (1969) abstraction of boundaries and Goffman's abstraction of frames are each conceived as a structuring that denotes for individuals what is in the world.

The Interface of Frame Alignment and
Boundary Maintenance Theories

Cultural differences exist. Ethnic groups persist. Yet despite these obvious considerations, it is generally expected, by sociologists and the public as well, that when people of different cultures interact differences between groups will diminish. Simple contact between groups on a regular ongoing basis, it is thought, should result in some kinds of congruent relationships. Sociologically this expectation develops from the perspective of social interaction. Because social interaction is based on an interchange and emergence of shared meanings, the meeting of different cultures implies a merger of cultures. What then accounts for the persistence of ethnic groups? The group value systems, symbolic representations, and identifying actions noted by Barth (1969) and others (Lyman & Douglas, 1973) certainly play a part, but beyond these there exits organization and regular patterns of social life. The concept of boundedness, or boundary maintenance, of social entities itself assumes that certain rules govern the operation of the social world. These rules or structures situate ongoing social interaction. They provide unity and stability to the processes that organize social life.

Boundaries are a product of ethnic identification that shape cultural differences at the group level. Frames and the alignment of frames are structures through which the process of ethnic group boundaries are formed and reformed by individuals. In all organized social life, what can be made relevant to interaction in any particular social situation is prescribed (Goffman, 1959). While the constant activity of society may appear in perpetual flux, Goffman (1959) conceived of and demonstrated the social world

as a systematic and bounded entity. In Goffman's (1959) conceptualization, rules of operation or frames of reference set up patterns of social experience. For without some means to abstract meaning from the continuous processes of experience, life truly would be chaos. The nature of all social interaction is evanescent, ongoing, processual, but also lodged in structure. Barth (1969) considered this and elaborated the patterns of interaction which established ethnicity.

The persistence of ethnic groups in contact implies not only criteria and signals for identification, but also a structuring of interaction which allows the persistence of cultural differences. The organizational feature which, I would argue, must be general for all inter-ethnic relations is a systematic set of rules governing inter-ethnic social encounters (Barth, 1969).

To Barth (1969) structural transactions and constraints were fundamental to ethnic group formation and continuation. In other words, he perceived the process of boundary maintenance as bounded.

Barth (1969) explained how ethnic structure conformed to rules of action among individuals. He did this by referencing Goffman's (1974) analysis of the organization of social life (Barth, 1969). Barth (1974) described how group boundaries constrain social transactions in much the same way that Goffman (1959) described the way agreement on codes that govern behavior extend beyond situated experiences. The structure of interaction includes rules for proscribed and prescribed behavior which "canalize" ethnic group life, according to Barth (1969). Canalized behavior, like the behavior of stigmatized persons (Goffman, 1963), stems from statuses ascribed and roles enacted. Both are extensions a shared definition of situations built on similar ingroup and outgroup viewpoints about the nature of individuals that comprise a group. Stable relations between groups are structured through frames of reference, emerging from values and agreed upon

codes of conduct. But stable relationships should not be interpreted as static relationships.

Ethnic group identity, regarding Mennonites or any other group is bound up inseparably in structure and process, boundaries and content, frames and interaction. The maintenance of boundaries signifies ethnicity even though people and ideas may flow across the boundaries and the boundaries themselves are always subject to change. Boundaries may be stable, but never static. The maintenance of boundaries rests on social interaction which is sustained through the symbolic representations of signals and signs and values held important by those inside and outside the ethnic group. Further, the maintenance of boundaries is organized through structure of social interaction which is built within ongoing frames of reference. Interaction takes place in the empirical world. Frames, however, are form of social structure and are an abstraction. Frames provide links between micro-level action—what individual ethnic group members do—and macro-level relationships—what ethnic groups are.

Media Use and Ethnic Identity

In an effort to locate the relationship between social psychological and organizational factors, between frame alignments and ethnic group boundaries, the dissertation research which follows concentrates on the relationship between mediated communication and the quality of Mennonite life. Mediated communication has been selected as the nuclear vehicle for this research for two reasons: first, because media provide a structure received and accessible at the individual and group level and second, because mass media provide a comprehensive representation of the dominate social milieu that challenges the Mennonite culture. In addressing the ways Mennonites use media in daily life, mediated communication serves instrumentally as a focal point. By studying the relevancy of media use to religious values and ethnic identity, progress can be made in understanding

social psychological links to group identity maintenance.

Among the earliest studies of media and ethnic group assimilation in American society is Robert E. Park's (1920) essay on *The Foreign Language Press and Social Progress*. Park noted the reciprocal relationship between the press and the immigrant population as well as the multidirectional influence of the ethnic press on language and tradition. It was Park's observation that the foreign language press was used by ethnic groups simultaneously to encourage ethnic bonding through common language and cultural representations and the Americanization of immigrants through promoting literacy and disseminating ideology. In the years since Park's (1920) study, interactional analyses of religious/ethnic group life have largely ignored the part mass media play in the creation and recreation of group culture. If mentioned at all, media is almost always discussed briefly and usually in regard to the content of publication or the number and type of publications found to be used by the group. Recently, however, research in the interactionist tradition (Fine & Kleinman,1985; Corzine, 1987) has emphasized the importance of media in cultural transmission. And further, Liebes's (1988) investigation of the different perceptions of television fiction found among homogeneous groups from five distinct cultural backgrounds associates media use and interpretative processes among ethnic groups.

Although no studies reviewed have addressed the nature of religious/ethnic group use of mass media from the frame analysis point of view, a variety of studies have illustrated how frames order media representations. The most notable of these is Goffman's (1974) own description in *Frame Analysis* of the manner in which messages broadcast over the radio are framed. Other analyses of framed media messages and the subsequent ways audiences are led to interpret messages originating from media frames can be found in Combs and Mansfield (1976), Davis and Baran (1981), and Meyrowitz (1985). The purpose of this study, however, is not directed at media messages or to the ways the media organization, technology, or personnel influence content, the purpose is, instead, to

investigate rationales that Mennonites construct and use to "make use" of media in their lives. In other words, this dissertation is about explanatory frameworks of Mennonites that direct mediated communication.

This research seeks a connection between articulated frames of reference and structure, between the social actor and ethnic identity. Nevertheless, the introduction of mediated communication to the study provides opportunity for extending knowledge about mass media. The issue of media in relation to social consequences has long been a theme central to the study of mass communication. And a broadening of the perspective of mass communication theory in recent years has led to the understanding of mass media as a communicative process (Schramm, 1983; Touchman, 1988; Mander, 1983; McQuail, 1985) and reconceptualized the role of the audience as active participant (Libes, 1988; Lindlof, 1987; Lull, 1980; Mcquail & Gurevitch, 1974; Rubin & Rubin, 1985). The design of the present research, with its focus on media allows the areas of uses and gratifications theory (Berelson, 1949; Blumler & Katz, 1974; Katz, Blumler, & Gurevitch, 1974; Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955) and the connection of uses and gratifications to media effects (Rosengren, 1974; Palmgreen, Wenner, & Rosengren, 1985; Rosengren & Windahl, 1977) to be informed by this study. Recent research in the substantive area of media and ethnic groups (Blosser, 1988; Eastman & Liss, 1980; Greenburg et al, 1982; Jeffres, 1983; O'Guinn & McCarty, 1987) that has neglected to address the interactive association of media and minorities, including media use among Mennonites, may be benefited as well.

Theory and Research Design

The theoretical orientation of this dissertation research is set in within the sociologies of everyday life. To further theoretical and empirical understanding of religious/

ethnic group salience, the research is directed toward media use among Mennonites. In this way the analytic scope of the research is focused on locating any important connections among mediated communication and processes of ethnic group identity. The directness of the plan provides opportunity for a unique insight into the construction of Mennonite life. But the directness of the plan is not without its drawbacks. Both social psychological and structural organizational factors need to be considered.

First is the overall problem of ethnic identity. The reader should take into account that ethnicity is rarely, if ever, the sole referent of self operating in any given social relationship. Other dimensions: age, gender, sense of socioeconomic status, etc. are almost always real or a potential influence in social interaction. The force of many dimensions, rather than ethnicity alone, might well affect individual behaviors and interpersonal relationships and uses of communication.

Another, related problem encountered in locating the theoretical orientation involved is the myriad of social structures that exist between the dominate society and any ethnic group. Ingrained dominate cultural patterns also play a significant part in intergroup relationships. Barth incorporated the aforementioned considerations into his theory and noted the influence of biology and ecology on group viability as well. The study at hand is not intended to be comprehensive, but consideration of the many social and cultural factors that impinge on religious/ethnicity should be taken into account when assessing this research effort.

In addition to the all the above, there are limits to study of religious/ethnicity as constructed by group members. A certain amount of ethnicity is ascribed. No group of people is totally beyond the constrains of society. Identity is product that is not self developed entirely. Individuals have only limited ability to manipulate their identity, just as certainly as there are many facets of an individual's "social self." However, the interest of this study is not in looking into the limits forced on the group by the larger

society or on the salience of the competing multiple roles that impinge on these people, even though his study does not ignore these factors.

A complete analysis of the dynamics of ethnicity or all aspects of Barth's theories or Goffman's theories or a treatise on the modern Mennonite community and its place in the context of the larger social world is not attempted in this research. Instead, the design of the work is to concentrate a systematic examination on a particular significant interaction. The study looks to ways in which Mennonites frame and reframe personal perspectives and how the viewpoints of individuals work to shape ethnic identity. This research is centered on the dovetail relationship of frame alignment and boundary maintenance. The interactive processes of a significant aspect of Mennonite life, group identification through media communication use is the subject of the investigation.

A systematic and focused theoretical strategy similar to this dissertation research in scope was used successfully in the past by Lyman and Douglas (1973) in their work on collective and individual impression management of ethnicity. Nevertheless, there are limitations to empirical research approached from this theoretical basis. The following work should be addressed with a consideration of the limitations mentioned above.

Summary

People interact within the social world. Interaction is sustained through symbolic representations and values held important to individuals. This interaction is an ongoing social process which is, in some manner, structured. Framing (Goffman, 1974) is a kind of structure that makes experiences meaningful to individuals. Framing operates at the individual level and framing also allows for the ordering of individual and collective experiences. The linkage of individual orientations and ethnic group boundaries is made possible through frame alignment (Snow, et al, 1986). Ongoing, individual and collective

. frames of reference create and maintain ethnic group boundaries. Frame alignment and boundary maintenance (Barth, 1969) are processes which, when identified and elaborated, further the understanding of ethnic groups in general and Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group in particular.

The design of this research is to examine continuity and change among people of Mennonite heritage for the purpose of learning how individuals establish and preserve their religious/ethnic way of life. The study is located within the theoretical orientation of social action and draws on frame analysis and ethnic boundary maintenance as theoretical constructs. Implicit in this theoretical conceptualization is a recognition that ethnic self-identity is not the sole referent of self and that large scale societal structures, cultural constraints, and many social forces other than self-identity bear on religious/ ethnicity. Given those considerations, the theoretical basis of this dissertation research rests on the premise that "frames" allow individuals to perceive occurrences in their social world and that rules which govern activity are something to which we gear ourselves. Given this premise, the study moves forward to investigate the interactive and communicative processes that individuals use to shape the boundaries of religious/ethnic identity.

The concept of framing applied to Mennonites' use of media offers an opportunity for a theoretically informed investigation of religious/ethnic group life. The frame perspective involves individual level analysis and a conceptual bridge to link micro and macro process and structure and tie both to the interpretation of ethnicity as cultural boundary maintenance. A general understanding of individuals' conceptions of mass media and their relationship to religious/ethnic group culture is the aim of the dissertation. The emphasis is on members' personal accounts of how they incorporate media in their lives and how they use media to appropriate Mennonite religious/ethnicity. It is the aim of the research to connect, both empirically, through media use, and, conceptually,

through frame alignment, the relationship of Mennonite self identification and ethnic

group boundary maintenance.

CHAPTER IV

Method

The methodology used to research this dissertation is modeled after Aaron Cicourel's (1974) classic, *Theory and Method in a Study of Argentine Fertility,* and the work of Glaser and Strauss (1967) who believed strongly in direct personal observation as the way to build insights into how individuals perceive their social world. My study is based on in-depth interviews with supporting research from participant observation and several different primary and secondary sources. The subjects I have chosen for the study are a group of Mennonites. My investigation crossed two substantive areas, Mennonite religious/ethnicity and mediated communication. My overall purpose is to tie together social-psychological approaches. In so doing, my dissertation research will center on the theories of frame analysis (Goffman, 1974) and group boundary maintenance (Barth, 1969). The study focuses on media use among Mennonites. I have selected qualitative methods to use in this research because they allow for the understanding of Mennonites' frames of reference and shifts in those frames of reference to be related to media use as a type of social structural association. Through interviews supported by observations and nonreactive sources of culture and history, I outline group members' personal accounts of Mennonite life as well as their selection and use of media. I develop concepts and draw conclusions about Mennonite religious/ethnic identity based on dense, grounded data. In this way, I approach the question of how it is the Mennonite culture has sustained itself as a distinctive element in a rapidly changing, technological society.

The Researcher's Perspective

As a journalist and a native Oklahoman, I have held a longstanding interest in the history and culture of the state. The Mennonite contribution to the state's past social and economic development was known to me before I came to live in Northwest Oklahoma fifteen years ago. Over the years, I had become acquainted with several individuals of Mennonite heritage and had the opportunity to gain some limited knowledge about the Mennonite way of life. Although a small religious/ethnic minority, as a group, Mennonites are a distinctive part of the total population of the area. Several branches of the religion are represented by numerous congregations in the small towns and rural areas of Northwest Oklahoma.

My interest in Mennonites as a group for study was matched by my interest in mass communication as an area of sociological inquiry. As a sociologist, I was interested in mass communication as an agent of socialization. As a journalist, I was interested in mass communication as the theoretical foundation of my profession. My goal for my dissertation research was to develop a sociological approach to the study of mass communication. Opening myself to direct contact and personal association with the subjects of my research was a way I could utilize my journalistic skills and expand my investigative and research techniques. Analysis of a concentrated area of social psychological theory, I believed, would broaden the base of my intellectual orientation to mass communication. Pragmatically, I thought all of this together would enhance my ability to teach at the university level.

As my sociological studies progressed I researched and wrote two papers, "Keeping the Faith: The Mennonite Brethren in a Changing Society" (1988), a social history of Mennonites in Oklahoma covering the years 1875 to 1893; and "TV Viewing and the Reduction of Diversity in Political Opinion Among Religious Groups" (1989), a quantitative study based on data from Roper Public Opinion Polls. Through the process of preparing

the papers, I developed an increasing interest in the Mennonite community and media use among Mennonites. I decided to learn more about the lifestyle and belief systems of these people and devote my dissertation research to the topic. It was not my intention, however, to embrace the Mennonite social world through my research, nor did I want to become an "ethnic" specialist or create an ethnography. My research interests, instead, centered on the processes of individual's frames of reference and the maintenance of group identity and what part, if any, media played in these processes.

I wanted to know how it is that Mennonites establish and preserve their way of life in a rapidly changing, communication oriented, technologically based, society. Managing cultural identity amidst complex social change became the most important concern of my research. How was it that individual Mennonites balanced their religious and ethnic values and functioned under what appeared to be overwhelming social pressures in their communicative environment? A thoroughgoing analysis of the dynamics of Mennonites in the contemporary community and their location in the context of the larger social world was beyond the scope of my dissertation research project. But a limited and focused analysis of one aspect of Mennonite life, mediated communication, appeared manageable. I had selected Mennonites for the subjects of my research because they form a distinct and identifiable group and were accessible to me. But more important than convenience, the Mennonites were an ideal group for this study because of their peculiar relationship to mass communication. This group of Mennonites at one time rejected mass communication. However, the strict rules of conduct that forbade the use of mass media by church members were relaxed gradually over the years, and today mass communication use is part of the everyday world of these Mennonites. Like the subjects Goffman (1961, 1963) often chose for his research, Mennonites were selected for this study particularly because they are an atypical group. Their history and belief systems have not been representative of the overall population. The distinctiveness of the Mennonites' past social marginality is in stark contrast to the extensiveness of their present

acculturation and assimilation. Their uniqueness thus facilitates the study of accultura-
tion and assimilation, media use, and religious/ethnic group identification.

Conceptualization

Because mass media seemed one of the most comprehensive representations of the
changes in Mennonite life and because it was the central vehicle for communication
within and outside the group, I directed my research toward the relationship between the
preservation of Mennonite religious/ethnicity and mass communication. I believed a
fruitful line of inquiry could be established to study frames of reference Mennonites hold
in relation to their beliefs and values and the connection of these frames of reference to
the maintenance of group identity concerns not addressed by any previous research.
Further, it should be noted that almost all previous research has neglected the part media
play in the processes that mold religious and ethnic group boundaries.

It is unusual that qualitative studies of groups and their relationship to mediated
communication have been so neglected, since some of the earliest research in mass media
was concerned with the social psychological ramifications associated with mass commu-
nication. Both Blumer (1933) and Herzog (1941) used qualitative methods to seek
subject's accounts of media influence. Another early qualitative study of interest to this
research is *The Invasion from Mars* by Hadley Cantril (1940) which was developed from
in-depth interviews. Cantril explored the psychological reasons why some who listened
to Orson Welles' Halloween eve dramatization of H.G. Wells' classic fantasy became
panic stricken and unable to deal realistically with the broadcast.

Beginning during World War II and continuing into the last quarter of the twentieth
century, the majority of research interest in mass communication turned turned toward
the use of quantitative methods as a major avenue to the study of media. Qualitative
studies and the conceptualization of the audience as a primary area of analysis, were each

equally ignored as research agendas (Czitrom, 1982). In recent years, however, several major developments have occurred in the study mass communication. Among them, the reintroduction of the "sociologies of everyday life" to media studies has awakened interest in mass communication as interaction and has broadened the definition of what constitutes the audience for mass media. The concept of an active media audience has challenged the established, mid-century premise of a passive one. The idea of an active audience is a reversal of generally held opinion which, for many years, conceived of a mass, uncritical, easily influenced viewing public (Schramm, 1983; Tuchman, 1988; McQuail, 1985). Recent research projects coming from the, "active audience" perspective are generally qualitative and several have focused on the audience as a participant in mass communication (Libes, 1988; Lindlof, 1987; Lull, 1980). Nevertheless, no mass media research using qualitative methods to examine audiences of religious/ethnic groups could be located. In fact, very little qualitative research work in mass communication as yet has been undertaken. Of the few studies published, Morley's (1986) research, *Family Television*, brought to the fore the idea that television is a phenomenon serving a whole range of social purposes. Morley's work did this by using family members' accounts of their television viewing rather than using records of viewing behavior as most other audience studies have in the past. Studies like Morley's are rare, and when undertaken, often they are tied to a mass communication interpretation rather than to broader social-psychological perspectives of the kind that inform this research.

Communication is an interactive process. And mass communication is no exception. Of interest to this research was the type and use of current media. The design of the research is unusual in that it incorporates two areas of substantive interest—Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group and mediated communication. This type of research design, while uncommon, is not impossible to undertake and has been approached, in the past, through quantitative analysis (Umble, 1990).

My research is operationalized by a design that sets up investigation of individual's

frames of reference and the relationship of those frames of reference to media use as a dynamic element in religious/ethnic identification. The intent of this research was to show how interactive frames of reference relate to media use and group boundary maintenance. My specific methodological interest was analysis of social action through individual's personal accounts. My research interest was the interplay of media and person in sustaining a sense of religious/ethnic identity. My theoretical interest was in the connection between the alignment of frames of reference and religious/ethnic group boundary maintenance.

The Research Questions

From the complex array of interrelated issues associated with Mennonite culture, my research explored the actual accounts that people give about themselves. The research questions were: What kind of perceptions do Mennonites hold about their ethnicity? How do their perceptions reinforce or reorganize group boundaries? What kind of media do Mennonites use? How does media reinforce or reorganize group boundaries? How is the Mennonite world kept separate from the outside world? What relationship does media have to Mennonite group life?

The Methodological Perspective

Because I wanted to look at person's intentional orientations to their life situations and because I wanted to look at the interconnection of many forms of media in ongoing everyday life experiences, I chose a qualitative approach for the study. Simply talking to people seemed to be the best way to learn about their media habits and get at their notions. Building a rapport, engaging in lengthy conversation, getting close enough to people to discover their habits and understand their world from their perspective—my

repertoire of investigative techniques was developed from the methodological insights of Glaser and Strauss (1967). Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocated the direct, personal study of interactional processes by which actors construct meaning in their lives. From this perspective, in-depth interviews are valuable for uncovering information about how people really use different kinds of media and how they incorporate or reject or modify media with regard to their individual circumstances. Further, a qualitative design was compatible with the interpretative paradigm which undergirded the original premise of my study. The design allowed me to view mass communication as an activity and the audience as interpreters.

For *Media use among Mennonites: Frame alignment processes and group bound-ary maintenance,* I borrowed much of the methodology Aaron Cicourel (1974) used to study demography and fertility in Latin America. In the same manner that Cicourel (1974) had studied Argentineans, I planned to study Mennonites. Like Cicourel (1974), I felt a need to immerse myself in a setting. Also, like Cicourel (1974), it was my plan to use the setting to provide a basis for pursuing additional issues. In his case, the issues were fertility, theory, and method. In my case, the issues were sociological approaches to the study of communication.

I did not plan to replicate the research strategies used in *Theory and Method in a Study of Argentine Fertility*, nor did I attempt, as Cicourel (1974) did, to review my own research procedures or examine methodology. I did, however, intend to explicate the basic design of Cicourel's (1974) research. Circourel (1974) began with a general, demographic, problem in a substantive area, fertility, and contrasted traditional theoreti-cal explanations and quantitative methodological approaches with a qualitative research design based on social psychological theory. Following this general orientation, it was my intent to enter into research concerning religious/ethnicity—the maintenance of groups—from the viewpoint of social psychological theory and through the use of

qualitative methods. The substantive focus of my research was naturalistic inquiry into the context of the everyday lives of Mennonites and their use of media.

The Basic Design of the Research

My study was based principally on in-depth personal interviews held with persons of Mennonite heritage. To verify and augment the data gathered in the interviews, I entered into participant observation of the group. In addition, I researched primary and secondary sources to check the reliability and validity of the data I had gathered and to provide background for a summary of Mennonite culture, social organization, and history. During and after the information gathering process, I employed the technique of "constant comparison" (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) to organize and analyze the data. The results of the research are an overview of the development of the Mennonite community in Northwestern Oklahoma from 1893 to the present. Conclusions about media use and the maintenance of Mennonite group identity drawn directly from observations and statements of Mennonites themselves.

Sample Selection and Sampling Strategies

My study was confined to those Mennonites who live in Northwest Oklahoma. Northwest Oklahoma, is a generic term commonly used to refer to the inclusive locale. This area coincides roughly with the original boundaries of what was once designated the Cherokee Outlet. The legal boundaries of the Cherokee Outlet were formed by an arbitrary decision of the United States government made during the 1800s in treaty negotiation with the Cherokee Nation. Subsequent to the opening of the outlet for settlement in 1893, the boundaries were redrawn to make several counties and the total area subsumed under Oklahoma state government. The people who live in Northwest Oklahoma at

present share many common characteristics, in part, due to federal authority over the area during its early development. The area is geographically and ecologically homogeneous, and a substantial degree of continuity in the evolving economic environment exists as well.

The present research on Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma is directed toward individuals, persons of Mennonite heritage. They serve as the primary unit of analysis. I interviewed more than forty subjects selected purposefully from a large pool of potential interviewees in the area. Participation was voluntary and subjects were assured anonymity. To ensure the reliability and validity of the data, the subjects were selected to represent a wide range of individuals of Mennonite heritage. Some were active members of Mennonite congregations. Some were currently members of other Protestant denominations. Some lived in urban areas. Some lived on farms or in small towns. For purposes of verification by comparison, I interviewed several members in each of two Mennonite congregations of different denominations located in the same city. The majority of the interview participants were above average in socioeconomic status and education. This is reflective of the majority of Mennonites in the area. All interviewed were adults, about half of them men and half women. There was no set interview schedule, although I guided the conversations and asked enough questions to make sure certain topics were covered.

Gathering Data: The Interview Process

I began the interviewing process by using my acquaintances in the Mennonite community as key informants (Denzin,1970) to put me in contact with people said to be "good" to interview. Through friends, I also was introduced to the minister of the Mennonite Brethren congregation and both the minister and assistant minister of the Grace Mennonite Church in Enid. Each of these men were interviewed and later they set up

several additional interviews with other church members for me. In this way I was sponsored into the group in a manner similar to that of Liebow (1967). Like Liebow I gained the acceptance of my research subjects through my association with a person(s) who occupied a respected position of authority and leadership in the group.

Early on, at the suggestion of one Mennonite pastor, I met with a Bible class for a group interview. Near that time I began doing individual interviews too. As word of my project spread about the area, the number of willing informants snowballed and I began to interview a number of Mennonites from several groups. I presented myself straightforwardly as a graduate student doing research into the social history of Mennonites. The group accepted me readily. I did not feel as if I needed to become "like" them in any way. I fit in, possibly because of the Anabaptist influence in my own religious heritage or perhaps it was because of my lengthy residence in Northwest Oklahoma. My acceptance more probably was due to the high community visibility of my husband's business and the press coverage of the sports activity of my school-aged children. I was questioned about both of these during a number of the interviews. Interviewees would ask, "Are you the one who is . . .?" I operated from an extensive network of business associations, volunteer group associations, and social acquaintances. Although unintended, my life in Northwest Oklahoma had established my public identity and that, in turn, led to a broad base of public support for my research. I received names of Mennonite people who were willing to be interviewed from many sources throughout the community. Those who were interviewed contributed even more names for contact by their own, intentional suggestions. My problem was not in getting entry to the group or in building rapport or in finding sufficient numbers of informants. My problem was selecting those best suited for the research task from the huge pool of potential interviewees.

I decided the interests of the research were best served by interviewing a wide cross-section of people who had lived in Northwest Oklahoma over a period of many years. Since studying acculturation and assimilation was a large part of my study, I wanted to

talk with those who had experienced change in the Mennonite way of life. I concentrated on interviewing people who were from fifty-five to seventy-years of age, but I interviewed many older and some younger. Some of the interviews were conducted at Mennonite churches, either before or after church services, but most were made in the homes of the interviewees. I found this beneficial because it allowed me to observe first hand the media environment—the access to books, magazines, television, video recorders, and other media owned by group members. I conducted only one group interview, the rest were individual interviews or interviews where I talked to both a husband and a wife together. Interviewing married couples was an advantage in that each seemed to feel more comfortable with an ally present at the interview. These interviews were most often quite open, lengthy, and produced large amounts of information. The couples would amplify each others' statements, question each other's memory of events, and even prod each other to reveal certain information or recount specific scenarios. The interviewing of couples garnered much material, yet it presented a problem. There was no way for me to gauge how one of the partner's comments may have affected the other. It is possible that a couple's statements may not have reflected their individual conceptions solely, due to the influence that each partner had over the other's communication. This problem was somewhat mitigated by the use of many other interviews done with only one participant.

The role of the interviewer, inherently, is somewhat distant from the interviewee (Lofland & Lofland, 1984). Some people, who were more than willing to make an appointment to talk with me, showed more than a few signs of apprehension, when I, a stranger, entered their homes holding a tape recorder. A few, like the group of Fundamentalists Ammerman (1987) studied, worried about whether they would know the "right" answers or why I chose them instead of someone who was a "stronger" church member or, in the case of my research, someone who knew more about the history of the church than they did or someone who just "knew more" than they did. After I assured

them that the type of information I needed didn't require remembering any dates, names, or events, and, in fact, there were no "right" answers to my questions, most seemed reassured.

The in-depth, personal interviews with adult Mennonite men and women centered on listening to their narratives on Mennonite life. My questions were general and open ended. I sought to learn their current media activities, everyday concerns, social and church involvements, religious beliefs, life stories, and the like. No predetermined interview schedule was used. I did, however, ask each participant to talk about "changes" in Mennonite life that they had experienced. Further, I asked each to tell me why they thought change had taken place. Sometimes I would bring up the subject of media use indirectly by simply asking whether my visit was interrupting their television time. This generally turned our talk toward issues of personal values and media use. But usually, it was not necessary for me to bring up the subject of media or ask the interviewee's opinion on media use. Most of the interviewees directly offered opinions on media, especially television, when asked to talk about change in their lifestyle. Media was often one of the first topics raised by the interviewees. Near the end of the interview, I requested a verbal schedule of a typical day's routine. I would say, "Just give me a detailed run-down of your normal day. For instance, how do you wake up in the morn-ing? Does the clock-radio go off?" This last question was purposely phrased to elicit a response that would give the subjects an opportunity to discuss how they used media in their everyday lives. As the subjects recounted a typical day they also enumerated the type, amount, and significance of media in their daily routine.

I avoided direct questions about the importance of media. I didn't want to "lead" the interviewees, indicate to them in any way what might be a "preferable" answer (Lofland & Lofland). I relied on bringing the subject of media into the conversation indirectly. If the person being interviewed did not pick up on the topic I would bring it up again the second time, but never more than twice in the same interview. I avoided making media

use the focal point of the interview.

Aside from the actual discussion, many of the interviews were a sources of additional information. As a group, the Mennonites were quite interested in my project and in helping me as best they could. A good many people spent some time preparing for their interviews by gathering materials they thought might be useful to me. Family genealogical records, newspaper clippings, books on Mennonite history and customs, magazine articles, and a variety of unpublished written work are examples of the materials interview participants often had out, ready and waiting for my arrival. Many times, after the interview was over, those I had talked with asked to read my "paper" when I finished it. I arranged to make a copy of my dissertation available for everyone's inspection in the church office of two congregations. I thought this might be some way of repaying the group for helping me (Letkemann, 1980).

One further aspect of the interview process should be taken into consideration at this point. The research project relies heavily on the use of self-reporting of Mennonites' perspectives. In so doing, an assumption is made that members can provide an accurate accounting of their own communicative behavior. This assumption has been called into question in the past by critics of direct contact approaches to the study of social life. The use of self-reports of mental processes has long been a matter of debate among sociological researchers. The major worry was that subjects would reconstruct their past to be consistent with their present outlooks and experiences. In other words, that individuals' accounts would support new beliefs rather than give insight to what precipitated any change in belief. Such criticism is less than justified here, because of the purposes of this study. The object of this research was not to examine how Mennonites have come to adopt the use of media, but how they interpret, or justify, their use of media and how, in turn, this alignment shapes the maintenance of group boundaries. I have sought in this research to ascertain members responses about past activities. I did this in an effort to gain understanding of the strategies involved in adaptive actions. This approach offered

me a way to investigate interpretative orientations and I employed it because the study is concerned with self identity. Nevertheless, despite the usefulness of in-depth interviews in getting to individuals' strategies for their acts and accounts of their daily lives, there are limitations to the reliability of this kind of empirical investigation. The following work should be approached with a respect for those limitations.

Gathering Data: Participant Observation

I began to conduct interviews with individuals of Mennonite heritage and entered into participant observation of the group at about the same time. I utilized participant observation as a peripheral research tool, mainly for verification. Nevertheless, it provided a good many opportunities to expand my knowledge of the group. Through my church attendance and other involvement with the group's activities, I was able to observe organizational networks and use of media at the group level.

Participant observation of the group supported and amplified the data I collected in the interviews. I attended church services, study groups, and, on occasion, the informal gatherings of two separate Mennonite denominations. The annual Mennonite relief sales are held at the Major county fairgrounds, and I drove to Fairview to attended the Friday evening supper and the Saturday auction in 1989 and 1990. I attended church meetings intermittently throughout the time I gathered data for the research. My attendance at meetings was not regular, partly because I was involved with studying more than one congregation and partly because, though I wanted to be accepted by the group, I didn't want to be considered a potential church member. My residence in the community and among these people would continue after the research was finished. I felt it was better in the long run to establish myself in a professional status than to gain acceptance for the period of the research and run the risk later of being considered a voyeur. My marginality may have limited somewhat my ability to contact members. This hindrance may, by some, be considered a limitation of the research design. Despite this difficulty,

the way I presented myself, as marginal to the group with a distinctly separate life, did have one distinct advantage. Because I was never considered a member of the group, I never had to withdraw from it. I thereby avoided an often awkward situation faced by social researchers at the end of fieldwork experience (Maines, Shaffir & Turowetz, 1973).

As my research progressed, I came to know to many of the group and began to encounter my new acquaintances often and in a variety of settings—on the street, at the mall, in attendance at public school programs. I used these meetings as subtle opportunities to look into the everyday lives of these people in a public context. These unanticipated encounters greatly enhanced my understanding of individual group member's activities and interests and my understanding of the group's relationship to the community at large. My interests as an observer involved a great deal more than what my subjects saw.

Gathering Data: Nonreactive Primary and Secondary Sources

Finally, I used unobtrusive primary and secondary sources of information as further support for my research. These sources were used to cross check data obtained from the interviews and participant observation. I wanted to know whether the accounts I was recording from members' stories of their lives were similar to the notions that others had recorded about this group or other comparable groups. Uniformity in accounts of independent sources and my own data increased the likelihood that my dissertation research findings were valid (Denzin, 1970).

While one purpose of working with information found in primary and secondary sources was to confirm reliability and validity, another purpose of the primary and secondary sources was to provide background knowledge. A good deal of information contained in the next chapter which summarizes group's history and culture comes from

primary sources and secondary sources. For both purposes, confirmation and developing the overview of Mennonite history and culture, I relied on published and unpublished material. I used material provided me by the congregations from their local publication. I used material published for congregations by Mennonite denominations. I used unpublished manuscripts provided by individuals I interviewed. I used published works from the personal libraries of the Mennonite participants in the research. I used the resources of the Oklahoma State University library and its adjunct services to gather material. I used information obtained from direct contact with the libraries at Bethel College in North Newton, Kansas and Tabor College in Hillsboro, Kansas, both Mennonite institutions. I used newspaper accounts. I used census data. Wherever possible I checked the accounts given me against published fact. On the whole I found the Mennonites' descriptions of their group's past to be accurate. The accounts of the Oklahoma Mennonites appeared to be in sync with what had been written about them.

Nonreactive primary and secondary sources were used extensively in chapter four of this research. The information gathered from these sources was interwoven with group members accounts to provide an overview of Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma. The nonreactive source material served as the foundation on which a record of the group's development was compiled. Historical information was relied on exclusively for the section dealing with the years prior to 1910. Other historical evidence was used to illustrate, example, and situate group members accounts of events from 1910 to the present. The secondary sources are referenced in chapter four. Out of respect for the anonymity I guaranteed the sources, information taken from group members' personal interviews are not referenced.

Analysis and Reporting of the Findings

All interviews were taped recorded. I took notes during the interviews as well. As soon as I could, after the interviews were over, I took time to review my notes. I made additions and clarified what I had recorded for later reference. If I came away with any overall feelings about the interview, I put those impressions down in the notes too. All the interviews were transcribed in their entirety. Information and thoughts that developed from my participant observations of the group also were recorded in writing.

The data was categorized, coded, and cross-filed utilizing a noncomputerized keyword system. I relied on Glaser's and Strauss's (1967) "grounded theory" method to guide my data analysis. Following the methodological approach advocated by Glaser and Strauss (1967), I searched the data to develop a well codified set of propositions. My emphasis was not in verifying frame analysis theory or boundary maintenance theory. I endeavored, instead, to generate a set of conceptual categories and produce a running theoretical discussion. I wished to create a written report that would explicate and challenge established social psychological theory rather than reiterate or verify it (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Even though my central research purpose was Mennonite religious/ethnic identity, I located my research process within two substantive areas, Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group and mediated communication. My conceptualizations were to be based on data grounded the direct accounts of individuals and real world observations. My first step in working the analysis was to select theoretically useful data, a process which coincided simultaneously with sample selection. Since I was dealing with substantive theory, I devoted some of my interviews to two selected groups of the same type (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). No attempt was made to hold variables constant in order to make independent comparisons (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Simply looking at two congregations of different Mennonite denominations in the same city was an opportunity for comparability of group members' accounts, life experiences, etc. For the same reason

I interviewed men and women, and members of rural and members of urban congregations. Interviews were made with individuals of Mennonite heritage who were no longer affiliated with the church and they were compared with personal impressions gathered in the interviews with group members. All this cross checking helped compile similar incidents and build conceptual categories. Constant comparison, while adding to the data base, eventually resulted in an emergence of explanatory concepts and finally a conclusion about the findings. Selection and sampling permitted the basic concepts to emerge and at the same time verified the reliability of the information obtained from those interviewed. Comparing and contrasting data was the basis for delimiting the theory and a built in reliability check.

The second and related step in the selecting and sampling process was to gather full data. I conducted interviewees averaging more than two hours in length with over forty men and women from a wide cross section of Mennonites in Northwestern Oklahoma. The scope of the interviews was broad and the amount of information gathered large. Collecting large amounts of data was necessary for thorough description of the group and for concept building purposes (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

The data was constantly compared during the collection process and the analysis process presented further opportunity to compare data. A comparison of individuals' accounts of their activities and observations within and across categories of subjects that had begun during the interview process continued. After all the data had been collected and compared, a solid integration of concepts emerged. The final analysis took form from categorizing and reformulating what had been found during the data collection process. Through this kind of analysis, variables were reduced, broad concepts created or modified and logic made clear (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). My aim was to produce a report from my data collection and analysis that was well grounded in direct observation and dense with information and illustration. In so doing, I believed I could directly formulate a written report that could clarify analytic framework in the substantive area of

Mennonite religious/ethnicity. And further, my work could make a contribution to the study of mediated communication. Once the data had been collected, relationships identified, and concepts categorized, most of which took place at about the same time, all that remained for me was to draw up a summary of the research project and write out a general understanding of my findings.

The findings are divided into two parts. Each reported in a somewhat different fashion. Chapter four is in the form of historical data, description, and analysis. In chapter four I wanted to present a social history of Mennonites in Oklahoma. In doing so, I relied heavily on secondary sources, statistical and historical records, newspaper accounts, and other published and unpublished materials. My purpose was to construct a description of the group with emphasis on changes that had developed over the years and what seemed to be general shifts in the way group members perceived major events and issues. I wanted to call attention to points in time at which members of the group began to change their accounts of motivation and causes that lay behind actions of the group. In many instances I used published authority for the articulation of these strategies. However, some of the statements I make about changes in perceptions of the group were drawn from the interviews and participation observation I made. The chapter is devoted to an overall description of the group's life both physical and ideational.

The dominant frame of reference of the group is established in chapter four; chapter five explores the strategies that upholds that frame. The form of presentation used in chapter five is analysis supported with data delineated from interview and observation and categorized data. In chapter five, I enter into a discussion of mediated communication as a boundary maintenance mechanism. The chapter is focused around the strategies that members use to develop the meaning of what it is to be a Mennonite and the practices of media use that reveal what part communication plays in continuing process of religious/ethnicity. Finally, conclusions are drawn as to the importance of mediated communication in the construction of Mennonite group life.

Summary

The individual level of analysis—the interviews—backed by participant observation and secondary research allowed me to undertake naturalistic inquiry and apply it to complex relationships people have relative to their group identity. The constant comparison method of building grounded theory I used included concurrent sampling and cross checking of data. From the cognitive images elicited in the research, dense descriptions were used to build concepts and write the emergent conclusions. Analysis of the three different types of data, tests of sample reliability, and verification of conceptual categories all worked toward creating valid research with useful findings.

Like all research, this study also has its limitations. I was easily accepted by the group, but my marginal status as a self-identified social researcher may have suppressed some information and limited the scope of my research. Overall, the study is strong in deep detail and rich in descriptions of Mennonite life. The weakness of the study lies in its lack of generalizability. The results I found could not necessarily be replicated by another researcher. The specific observations I have made may not be typical of other Mennonite groups or in other settings. The study must stand alone.

The basis of this research is in-depth, intensive interviews. These have provided opportunity for descriptions and actual accounts of Mennonites values and beliefs, their way of looking at the world, their frame of reference. The interviews also revealed the Mennonites' ongoing, daily interaction with media. This technique has allowed insight into the Mennonite way of life and even though the use of self-reports have been criticized by some social researchers, the interviews proved a useful tool in understanding how it is Mennonites come to justify, define, and redefine their faith in the context of a modern, media oriented society.

I begin the next chapter with a general history of the group from their formation in Europe in the sixteenth century to their migration to Russia in the eighteenth century to

their settlement in Northwestern Oklahoma at the opening of the Cherokee Outlet to the present day. In this chapter, the reader is oriented to the study ethnographically and historically. I discuss the changes in the group over time and outline circumstances coincident to the change both within and outside the Mennonite community. I detail the particular points at which a reformulation of the group's perspective on certain pivotal issues seems to have taken place. I draw generic conclusions about the overall nature of change within this group throughout the chapter at points where major shifts in the group's orientation appears to have occurred. The data for this chapter is derived from primary and secondary sources and from information gathered from interviews with Mennonites. The chapter is meant as an overview of the Mennonites in Northwestern Oklahoma during the past century.

In the final chapter, I look to the ways Mennonites explain and justify the change in the group and the lifestyle of group members in recent years. I discuss the accounts members provide about change. Once rejected, now media is incorporated in their lives. A general description of types of media used by the group is included at this point. I then demonstrate how it is individuals accommodate—accept, reject, or modify—media. This is accomplished through a presentation of the kinds of media generated and consumed by the group. I conclude by discussing ways the cognitive strategies of Mennonites relate to media use as a form of boundary maintenance.

CHAPTER V

AN OVERVIEW OF MEMMONITES IN
NORTHWEST OKLAHOMA

In this chapter the history of Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma is traced from the
beginnings of the religion in Europe during the sixteenth century to the present day. The
evolving traditions and culture and social organization of the group, are discussed. In
order to better understand the changes in the Mennonite lifestyle over the years, an
overall appraisal of shifts in the group's common perspective is outlined. In all, the
chapter presents a rough portrait of the Mennonite community and its development in
Northwestern Oklahoma.

The Heritage: "We're very much like the pilgrims."

The saga of Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma begins in migration. On the move,
migrating again and again, the Mennonites, from the inception of their faith in the
sixteenth century, have sought to preserve their belief by relocating their religious com-
munities. In the past, the search for a religious home free from any outside influence was
first and foremost in the minds of the Mennonite people. The history of Mennonite
migration, and thus the beginning of the story of the Oklahoma Mennonites, dates from
the 1520s (Board of Christian Literature, 1984) near the time the church was first organ-
ized.

The Mennonites were a part of the Protestant reformation movement begun by Martin Luther, John Calvin, and Ulrich Zwingli. The Protestants sought reform of many of the practices of the Catholic church. Although agreeing with most major criticisms the Protestants wanted corrected in the medieval church, some early reformists desired more thorough changes. These Christians were called Anabaptists. Their creed emphasized strict separation of church from state, and rejection of infant baptism, hence the name Anabaptist. "Since everyone in Europe in that age was baptized as a child, these believers were called Anabaptist—people who baptize again" (Board of Christian Literature, 1984). Anabaptists believed in membership through conversion and baptism of adult believers.

A group of Anabaptists, under the leadership of Menno Simons (1496-1561), a priest who had converted to Anabaptist belief in 1536, came to be known as Mennonites. The Mennonites emphasized separation from the world and lived together in communities. They opposed forming congregations and living as part of the larger social world as other Protestants did. In separating themselves, the Mennonites advocated a simple lifestyle and modest dress. They disapproved of displays of wealth, dancing, drinking alcohol, gluttony, and other forms of "worldly" pleasure. Mennonites were basically apolitical (Urry 1983b), but they recognized the authority of organized governments and most were willing to pay taxes. Nonresistance, however, was a major doctrine and Mennonites both refused military service and objected to the use of violence in private life. Because they shunned the "everyday world" and withdrew into exclusive communities, they, as other Anabaptists of the era who appeared to reject any type of national loyalty, were severely persecuted.

Fleeing the persecution of dominant cultural groups, many sixteenth century Mennonites relocated in Eastern Germany, Prussia, and Poland, where the political environment was, at that time, more tolerant. The Mennonites in these settlements maintained a life in which their common identity was defined by dress, religious values, exclusive

in-group social activity, and self-sufficient farming (Smith, 1927). And while they used German in religious services, Mennonites commonly spoke a local, "low German" dialect in day-to-day interaction with one another.

But by the mid-eighteenth century, the Mennonites again began to experience difficulties. Prosperous Mennonite farming settlements and an expanding population, juxtapositions against economic decline in the larger public sector, stirred envy in the general population and created a climate of fear in both groups. Tension grew when Prussian authorities supported the disgruntled majority by passing laws that threatened military conscription of Mennonites. Some time later, both Prussian authorities and the Lutheran church imposed restrictions on Mennonites, forcing them to pay taxes to the Lutheran church and prohibiting them from purchasing land without special permission (Bender & Smith, 1964, Rose, 1988).

The Mennonite response to the political pressure in Prussia and to an upsurge of social discrimination in other Eastern European countries as well, was a new wave of migration, this time to Russia. Throughout the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-1796) and continuing during the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1855), emigration to Russia was encouraged. Hugh tracks of unproductive, unoccupied, and/or uncultivated land were opened to settlement and colonists were encouraged to relocate in the new territories. Russian peasants were moved from more heavily populated regions to the new areas, but colonists were sought outside Russia as well, principally because Europeans' farming skills and their knowledge of agricultural techniques were more advanced than those of the Russian peasants (Hale, 1980).

The call to resettle in Russia appeared to be a godsend to the Mennonites. The offer included free transportation to Russia, one hundred and seventy-five acres of free land per family, a loan of two hundred and fifty dollars, religious freedom, freedom of language and schools, military exemption, and no taxes for ten years. The first group of Mennonite pilgrims left Danzig in the fall of 1788 (Wenger, 1949). In all, about six

thousand European Mennonites, many from Prussia, Poland, and Eastern Germany made the move. Although there was no mass exodus from Mennonite communities, a good many groups, families, and individual Mennonites began to leave eastern European and form settlements in southern Russia, the Caucasus, and Siberia.

Here, through hard work, frugality, and, among other things, the willingness to accept innovative advances in farm practices and technology, they enjoyed phenomenal success. The Mennonites flourished in Russia. Their farms began to prosper and their settlements grew. The Mennonites sought converts among their Russian neighbors, but they kept to themselves socially and followed the traditions of the past.

The Mennonites were culturally insular. They practiced self-government within their settlements and operated their own educational system. The German language was spoken and they lived very much the same simple life they had had before in Eastern Europe. They dedicated themselves to hard work. As agriculturalists, they were innovators. New crops, including wheat and other grains, and new methods of farming were introduced as the years passed. Milling and other technological advances related to agriculture were developed. The economy expanded. The once unproductive land produced greater and greater yields. Mennonite institutions grew as well. An extensive educational system was developed and Mennonite supported hospitals and asylums were founded (Bender & Smith, 1964).

As time passed the Mennonites in Russia maintained their distinct lifestyle, dress, language use, and religion. Their success in farming and industry were held up by the Tzarist government as models for the Russian peasant. Russian authorities allowed the Mennonites almost complete autonomy. The Mennonite identity was clearly affirmed.

Then there was crisis. A tide of Russian nationalism was swelled in part by a sense of public uneasiness regarding what affects the political unification of German states that took place during the 1800s might have on Russia. The favored position of Mennonite emigrants began to erode during the later part of the nineteenth century. Although most

Mennonites felt no allegiance to Germany, the fact that they spoke a German dialect and they continued to use forms of German in religious services and their schools, made them targets of suspicion. The fear of Mennonite ties to a rapidly expanding Germanic nation on Russia's western border coupled with attitudes that the Mennonites near-absolute legal autonomy was the basis of their economic gain, fostered a growing resentment toward Mennonites from Russians in general. After 1880 Russian was required as the official language in Mennonite schools, special political privileges were revoked, economic pressures mounted, conscription was reinstated, and immigration, once again, became an option of choice for many Mennonites (Reimer & Gaeddert, 1956; Francis, 1955; Urry, 1983b).

The German speaking Mennonites who settled in Russia to escape persecution were now to suffer again the same persecution they had twice before sought to escape. Where once there were over one hundred thousand Mennonites living in Russia in 1900 (Urry, 1983b), today it is estimated there are twenty-five thousand (Board of Christian Litera- ture, 1984). As their life in Russia became more intolerable, the Mennonites considered alternatives to their situation. Scouts were sent out to look for a new home. Twelve men were designated to travel to North America to investigate opportunities for relocation. They returned with favorable reports of farm land in the Western United States and in Canada (Dyke, 1967). The land available for homesteading was free and, in terms of soil composition and climate, was similar to their homeland in Russia. The governments of Canada and the United States welcomed skilled framer-immigrants to settle the vast, open prairies and guaranteed freedom of religion.

The Great Rush for Land in Oklahoma: "It was a good

place for farming, and this was the principle on which

the Mennonites really, really lived."

Beginning in 1873 as many as eighteen thousand Mennonite pilgrims eventually

found their way out of Russia to the plains states of Nebraska, North and South Dakota,

Colorado, Kansas, and Oklahoma (Haury, 1981). Some of these Mennonites located on

the western grasslands of Canada. This migration of German speaking Russian

Mennonites during the 1870s and 1880s came to be the major determining force in the

settlement of Mennonites in Northwestern Oklahoma. The history of Mennonite settle-

ment in America, however, is much older and it too bears on the distinctive mix of

Mennonite ethnics in Oklahoma.

As early as 1683 about one hundred Mennonites established their first permanent

colony in the new world at Germantown, Pennsylvania. During the colonial and federal

period of the nation's history, other Mennonite pilgrims, seeking religious asylum and

economic opportunity left their homes in Switzerland, Germany, Holland, and other

European countries to relocate to the United States, primarily in the southern Pennsylva-

nia area.

Historically, the Mennonite migrations throughout the world and eventually to the

new world were begun almost simultaneously with the organization of the church. These

migrations, set in motion during the late sixteenth century, eventually have reached

throughout the world and have continued throughout the life of the church, never really

ending. Much of this migration has been to the United States, from the Germantown

settlement onward, but large numbers of the group also have settled in Canada and others

found their way to Central and South America. There has been some limited repetition of

movement between countries in Canada and South America and the United States. And

the Mennonite migrations continue, on a small scale and sporadically, even into the late

twentieth century (DeFrange, 1988).

The largest numbers of Mennonite immigrants entered the United States coincident with the push of particular political and economic events occurring worldwide. As many as eight different waves of Mennonite migration from Europe and Russia to the United States (Dyck, 1967) have been identified. The last identifiable wave, marked those entering the U.S. during World War II. Migration in the years after World War II has been uncommon; nevertheless, one small band of Mennonites settled in eastern Oklahoma as late as 1977. These were emigres from Mexico (DeFrange, 1988).

Important to the story of the settlement of Mennonites in Oklahoma, is the origin and pattern of Mennonite migration to the state. Throughout the history of the nation, numbers of Mennonites have entered the United States from areas outside the country's boundaries, joined established Mennonite communities, or founded their own congregations as westward expansion opened new territories to settlement. In addition, population growth and the never ending search for productive farm land encouraged the descendants of the early Mennonite settlers in Pennsylvania to move westward founding communities in Ohio, Indiana, and other Midwestern states. It was the descendants of these Mennonites who, in turn, moved farther west and joined the Russian emigres in establishing homes and congregations in the northern plains states of Nebraska, North and South Dakota, and Kansas.

Large numbers of German-speaking Russian Mennonites entered the United States in the late 1870s and about ten thousand of them traveled directly to Kansas (Hiebert, 1974). Another four hundred from the Galicia and Volhynia areas of Poland also immigrated to Kansas and Nebraska at this time (Hiebert, 1974). The Kansas climate and geography was suited to the type of farming practiced in Russia and Eastern Europe (Jenkins, 1986) and good land was cheap to buy. Another important attraction of the Mennonites to Kansas were the promotional representatives of the Atchinson, Topeka, and Santa Fe Railroad, men who proved very effective publicists, and who did the job of

"selling" Kansas extremely well (Braun, 1974; Smith, 1927).

In an effort to encourage economic development along the path of the railroad, the Santa Fe management, during the late 1800s, employed German-speaking agents to promote settlement in Kansas. These agents met boats carrying immigrants as they arrived in America, and were first to welcome the travelers by extolling the glories of Kansas and attempting to persuade the newly arrived Mennonites to choose land along the Santa Fe route. Partly as a result of this, a good many of the Russian Mennonites made their homes in central and southern Kansas near the Oklahoma border.

When the Mennonites arrived in Kansas they attempted to transfer their former lifestyle intact and located almost exclusively among others of similar, ethnic background and religious tradition. For example, the Dutch Russian found homes among other Dutch Russian and the Volhynian found homes among others from Volhynia (Haury, 1981). This type of settlement preserved the regional ethnicity of the immigrants and the various religious practices among the groups as well. Over the church's history, differences regarding doctrine, ritual, and personal behavior had set groups apart and created several branches of the church. A good number of the Russian immigrants to Kansas were Mennonite Brethren. The General Conference Mennonites also found followers among the Kansas setters. Other immigrants were Krimmer Mennonites and there were several Mennonite denominations with smaller membership represented as well. Mennonite settlement followed exclusive ethnic patterns and there was little mixing of those from different backgrounds as communities were formed on the Kansas prairie (Haury, 1981).

When the "run" of 1893 opened up some of the last land in Oklahoma territory to individual homesteaders, Mennonite families from Kansas were among the pioneers who rushed to find a home in what was to become the northwestern counties of Oklahoma. Some of settlers came from established Mennonite communities in Pennsylvania and the Midwest. Others came from Nebraska and the Dakotas; many of these were the children

of Mennonite pilgrims who had, only recently, arrived in those states as emigrants from Russia and Germany. But the overwhelming majority of the Mennonites who came to make their homes in the newly opened territory crossed over the border from Kansas. And a great many of the Kansas Mennonites who made the run or purchased property shortly thereafter had been born in Russia (Haury, 1988).

By the time the federal government began to open territory in Oklahoma, Kansas had ceased to be the land of opportunity for which the Mennonites had hoped. The price of farm land was rising to twenty dollars or more an acre (Hale, 1980). Land was in short supply and Mennonite families were large, often seven or more children. Larger farms were more economically viable and divided farms were often too small to sustain a family. But in Oklahoma for a modest fee anyone could homestead on government land or land could be purchased for about dollar and a half acre (Roark, 1979). Thus, the poorer and younger families were drawn to Oklahoma. For the young, the territory offered an opportunity to build a future, for others the territory offered opportunity to rebuild a past. Historically, almost all Mennonite migrations had been launched to escape political persecution, but the escape to Oklahoma was escape from economic destitution.

At the same time the Cherokee Outlet (1) was opened to public land claims, the Pawnee reservation and the Tonkawa reservation also were released from tribal assign-ment (Morris, Goins, & McReynolds, 1986). It was the largest land rush in the nation's history. When the territory was opened to settlement at noon on September 16, 1893, Mennonites were among the huge crowds that surged across the lines which marked the north and south border of the "strip." The settlers rode on horseback and in covered wagons, buggies, buckboards, carts, even surreys. All were intent on staking a claim to a one hundred sixty acre homestead. "Within two hours the tides from the north and south met near the middle of the strip" (Kroeker, 1954). Many Mennonites laid claim to a quarter section of land during the run, but others, "lost choice lands because they were

not willing to 'fight it out' with challengers who falsely asserted prior claims to their staked locations" (Kroeker, 1954). By the end of the day, the settlers had covered all areas of the strip. Mennonites were associated with the settlement of Meno, Deer Creek, Orienta, Fairview, Lahoma, Jet, Lucien, Manchester, Kremlin, Medford, North Enid, and Enid (Kroeker, 1954). The Mennonites had met Oklahoma. The pilgrims had, at last, found a home.

<div align="center">
Hard Red Winter Wheat, Hard Red Loam, and Hard Times:

"A Mennonite can look at land and tell."
</div>

The geography of the one hundred and sixty acre homesteads allotted by the federal government and the land-run method of site selection forced a break up of the system of closed community life that the Mennonites had practiced in Russia. Thus, at the outset, the pattern of settlement placed the group in a new situation. Group life as it was known in Russia would be subject to a different form of property ownership in a different social environment. Even though families were distanced from each other on the quarter section plots, the isolation of the scattered homesteads was eased somewhat by the Mennonite practice of settling on farmland adjacent to other Mennonite families. In coming to Kansas, often an entire community migrated almost intact from Europe or Russia (Haury, 1981), but migration to Oklahoma was made up of mostly of young families or couples, or even single men. Nevertheless, an attempt was made by the settlers to find their own kind, to create a sense of community by locating in areas where other Mennonites of the same denomination were known to be homesteading (Roark, 1979). This reordering of community life placed Mennonites, who were unknown to each other, together. The Mennonite settlements in Northwestern Oklahoma were often formed around those who shared similar religious beliefs and practices, but in many instances these people were not of the exact same genealogical heritage or cultural tradition. In locating in Oklahoma, the reshuffling of congregational membership introduced an interval heterogeneity to what

had been a very close knit biological and social ethnicity.

The run that opened the Cherokee Outlet was not coincident with the habitation of the area for either the general population or the Mennonites. Many people were living in the strip prior to the run. Some Mennonites also had come to Oklahoma territory, before the opening of the Cherokee Outlet. They were drawn to the area several years earlier, about the time Mennonite missions were established at Darlington, and near Clinton, and at other sites accessible to the Indian population (Hart, 1988) (2) General homesteading by Mennonites in the northwest section of the state, however, had its beginning with the great land run of 1893. The Mennonite migration to Oklahoma, once begun, continued and even increased after the "strip" was opened.

The run swelled population. Almost all the land in the eastern sector, which was better suited to farming, was claimed by settlers on the day of the run or shortly thereafter. The territory population grew rapidly, but at the turn of the century there was still a certain amount of unclaimed land in the more arid, western sections that for many years had been used as vast open cattle ranges (Roark, 1979). Pioneering in the state was encouraged for years after the run by the railroads and local newspapers. *The Mennonite*. a widely distributed periodical, supported the migration of Mennonites to the area. Large advertisements offering available farms in Oklahoma were printed continuously in a variety of publications, even after statehood. The ads did not stop appearing until around 1920.

The appeal of homesteading was strong and the efforts of business concerns encouraging, but making a life on the prairie was risky. Economic and weather conditions, both equally important, were equally uncertain. As a result, the search for home and livelihood caused many Mennonites and others to move back and forth between Kansas and Oklahoma in the years that followed the opening of the Cherokee Outlet.

In Northwest Oklahoma as it had been earlier in Kansas and still earlier in Russia, Mennonite life revolved around family, farming, and faith (Hale, 1980). And Mennonite

life was hard. The early years in Oklahoma were difficult ones for the pioneers. Many homesteaders in Northwest Oklahoma had never before done farm work, but this did not hold true for the Mennonites. Mennonites knew agriculture. They also knew how to work. For Mennonites, farming was preordained as virtuous occupation. Work was considered a tenet of the religion and idleness, a sin. Mennonite communities were organized around farming. For centuries Mennonite families and individuals were devoted to farm labor. The Oklahoma Mennonites proved no exception to this tradition.

If the Mennonites were willing to spend long hours in the fields, they were willing to devote still more time to learning about and implementing new farming techniques. A good deal of their prosperity in Russia had been built on a willingness to adopt innovative agricultural practices and newly introduced farming equipment (Hale, 1980). This fusion of religious and economic values and agriculture practices, was transported by the group from Russia, and implanted in the Mennonite social organization that developed in the Oklahoma territory.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, wheat was cut with a reaper and bound into bundles by hand. Thrashing the wheat was a arduous undertaking. To accomplish the task, a few Mennonites in Grant County relied on "thrashing stones" that had been brought over from Russia. These were heavy, notched, cylinder-shaped stones that were pulled by horses back and forth across the stalks of wheat to beat out the grain (Kroeker, 1954). The thrashing stones were effective but primitive. They were considered quaint even by the few who worked with them at the turn of the century. Most of the Mennonite settlers in Oklahoma relied on the thrashing machines used by the other homesteaders.

One farming technique of the Mennonites, that proved particularly expedient in the Oklahoma Territory, was a system of plowing the native pasture grass deep and later working the surface soil to a very fine consistency. The Mennonites used this type of plowing to regularly produce high yielding crops (Jenkins, 1986). In addition, they

introduced other farming methods, most of which were productive and better suited to the climate and ecology of Northwest Oklahoma.

The Mennonites were frugal farmers. Their tradition called for plain living. They did not hesitate to invest in fencing, out buildings, and the latest in implements, but they spent little time or money on themselves. On the whole, they followed conservative business practices and reinvested profit in their farming operations rather than using it to enjoy the extras in life. The agricultural skills they had developed colonizing in Czarist Russia, led them to select land based on soil composition, drainage, and elevation. Most were shrewd judges of land values, who prided themselves on the ability to "hold out" until the best deal could be made. To their pioneer neighbors, the Mennonites seemed to be blessed with a skill to select good farming land for their home sites and produce high crop yields from their labor. They were acknowledged to be among the best farmers. After all, they had accumulated over three hundred years experience in the endeavor. Yet despite their expertise, frugality, and diligence, they endured great hardships in Oklahoma. The thick prairie grass still had to be turned, sod broken up, and fields plowed, planted, and harvested.

The Cherokee Strip was sun-baked, flat, and virtually treeless. Only a few settlers were able to build frame houses after the run. And most of those houses were very small. Many people lived temporarily in tents or dugouts. The settlers quickly learned that sod could be loosened, dried, and used for building. Free and plentiful, it became the most common construction material used during the first few years in the territory (Erb, 1974). The Mennonites adopted the use of sod. Later, when lumber was available they adapted the construction of their prairie dwellings to the requirements of their Russian building traditions, rather peculiar to Oklahoma.

It was not unusual to find a Mennonite home, barn, stables, and shed—all built under one roof, just as in Russia. The structures were made with quite steep roofs to allow for a good sized loft or attic for storage of grain, hay, or to provide extra sleeping space

(Suderman, 1987). The plan was economical and efficient and often resulted in the kitchen being uncomfortably close to the cattle stalls. A more amenable atmosphere became a major consideration. Later, when time and financial circumstances permitted, Russian customs and Mennonite austerity often gave way to the construction of a separate house with the original structure given over entirely to the animals.

Pioneer living was crude. The diet of the settlers was simple and extremely limited, consisting mostly of beans and potatoes and fried cracklins, a lard-like substance that contained bits of bacon. Bread was baked daily except for Sunday, the day of rest, when little cooking was done. It was customary to bake *Zwieback*, a divided or double roll shaped in two parts, on Saturday and prepare other simple dishes, sausage, and cheese, for example, so that food needed only to be "put out" on the Lord's day.

Coffee and flour were purchased staples. Gardens provided fresh vegetables, some of which were canned for use during the winter months. *Kleeta Moos*, a pudding which could be made with prunes, cherries, or other fruit was a favorite, treat for Mennonite homesteaders. Fresh fruit was scarce, but bitter, wild, sand plums grew in thickets along the low ridges and in the pastures. Gathered, sweetened with sugar, and cooked down to make preserves, the sand plums were a familiar accompaniment to homesteaders' meals (Suderman, 1987).

Often food was prepared on a cooking range fired up by "cowchips," pieces of manure, that, when dried, burned odorless. Some Mennonite stoves, patterned after those used in Russia, were made of brick with several levels of hot air chambers which radiated warmed air to the entire house (Haury, 1981). Cowchips were the major source of fuel for cooking and home heating during the first, bitter cold, winters the settlers spent in Oklahoma territory. Temperatures often dropped well below freezing and high winds swept across the near-level fields, increasing the severity of the winter weather.

With homestead opportunity had come back-breaking labor, meager living conditions, inclement weather, and trials difficult to endure. There were plagues of

grasshoppers, epidemics of diphtheria and scarlet fever, and prairie fires (Braun, 1974). There were tornadoes, and drought, and sand storms. In summer, the temperature could soar well beyond one hundred degrees. Gophers turned up yearly to attack gardens and prairie dogs tunneled through newly planted fields. The sod houses were dusty and drafty and leaked when it rained. Water from wells often was tainted with foul tasting alkali and gypsum. The Mennonites were tenacious and industrious, but many were not able to overcome the adversity. Some Mennonite families who came to Oklahoma gave up and went elsewhere. A few even returned to Russia (Hale, 1980). Those who re-mained measured prosperity in terms of economic survival.

> Turkey Red: "The Turkey Red was wonderful wheat.
> It would grow tall—as high as a man's waist."

When the Mennonites located in Oklahoma they brought with them a religious belief system, agricultural skills, folkways and a community life, and Turkey Red, a hard red winter wheat. Small sacks of wheat and other seeds were among the few possessions that Mennonite travelers were able to bring from Russia to the United States. These kernels of grain were especially selected for planting on the new farms. Carried west across the Mediterranean and the Atlantic by ship and by rail through America to the western plains states, the tiny kernels of seed wheat, transported from Russia in trunks, baskets, and sometimes sewn into the hems of women's skirts, proved eventually to be a tremendous boon to the austere economy of the pioneers (Hein, 1974). Turkey Red winter wheat was brought into Oklahoma by the Mennonites from Kansas and became one of the first crops planted in the freshly turned, top soil of the Cherokee Outlet.

The early pioneers throughout the American west were subsistence farmers. Until the coming of the Mennonite immigrants, almost all the wheat planted by homesteaders in the western plains states was spring wheat, planted in spring and harvested in fall.

Spring wheat was suited to the soil and in some years yields were plentiful, but crop failures were routine. Spring wheat was not hardy. The lack of a dependable cash crop was a major contributor to the low productivity and the precarious economic position of the original homestead farmers in Oklahoma and elsewhere. It was not many years after the arrival of the Russian Mennonites that winter wheat, sown in the fall and harvested in early summer was introduced throughout the entire great plains area. In only a short time it came to be the major variety of wheat planted on Oklahoma farms.

The Turkey Red winter wheat could withstand extreme changes in weather. It grew thick and tall and produced abundant harvests. Beginning with the immigration of the Mennonites from Russia during the late 1870s and gradually through the years that followed, hard red winter wheat came to support the infrastructure of the farm belt and spur agricultural and economic development from Canada to Texas. Wheat became the major source of income for farmers in Northwest Oklahoma and the foundation for change from subsistence farming to farming for profit in all areas of the American west. Today, Oklahoma is the nation's second largest producer of hard red winter wheat, surpassed only by Kansas (Lilley, 1990). It was winter wheat, together with the introduction of improved harvesting equipment, that made cash-crop farming possible on the great plains.

The great plains, once a sea of grass, by the 1920s had become an ocean of wheat. Winter wheat made a blanket of green pasture during winter that turned into a massive wave of golden grain in June. The winter growth was excellent feed for cattle and allowed a profitable mix of livestock and wheat production.

In the decades that followed 1900, winter wheat substantially infused and balanced the agricultural economy. Today, a farmer may select from literally hundreds of varieties of seed wheat. And Turkey Red, as a distinct variety, is rarely produced, replaced by other, more sophisticated types. However, almost all the varieties of winter wheat developed in the past century have their origin in those choice grains of Asian wheat brought

to America by Russian Mennonite men and women (Hein, 1974). The introduction of hard red winter wheat has proven an invaluable contribution of Mennonite people.

> Living for Jesus: "I was baptized outside in a creek just
>
> south of the church. The sun was so bright. It was in
>
> November. There was a layer of ice on the water,
>
> and they broke it."

At the turn of the century, the Mennonites and other settlers in Oklahoma territory lived a hand-to-mouth existence in the most literal sense. Cattle and hogs were butchered, gardens raised, wheat and other grain grown and harvested. Farming was labor intensive, tools and machinery scarce, and harvests unpredictable. Homesteads were largely self-sufficient. They required almost constant attention. There was little time for relaxation and recreation. Sunday was virtually the only day of rest.

Rest on Sunday, for Mennonites, was mandatory. For Mennonites, work, farming, family—all of life revolved around the church, just as it had for centuries in Russia. The church and its activities were the center of community for the early Oklahoma Mennonites. Within eight months after the run, T.M. Erb, and R.J. Heatwole, itinerant preachers, had visited eighteen different groups of Mennonites in the eastern part of the "strip." They traveled eight hundred miles to do this, half of it by wagon (Erb, 1974). The first established church in the Northwest part of Oklahoma was a Mennonite Brethren congregation located at Fairview (Kroeker, 1954). By statehood in 1907 there were as many as thirty-seven Mennonite congregations in the Cherokee Outlet. Most were associated with the General Conference or Mennonite Brethren group. There were three or four Old Mennonite congregations, two Old Order Amish, and one each Krimmer and Church of God in Christ (Holdeman) Mennonite churches (Erb, 1974; Kroeker, 1954). It is difficult to generalize about the religious practices found among the immigrants, since the Mennonites in Oklahoma were divided into so many different denominations and Mennoniteism varied even within denominations, and among congregations (3). What

follows are some overall observations that tend to hold among most of the groups during the period of settlement in Northwest Oklahoma from 1893 past statehood in 1907.

Basically, the general patterns of church life were undisturbed by the relocation of Mennonite immigrants to Oklahoma. The Mennonites were a community of faith. Life was organized through the church. For individuals the daily routine as well as the cycle of living revolved around religious practices. The pioneer Mennonite families would be considered pious by today's standards (Haury, 1981). Typically, father, mother and their children held devotions daily. Congregations held regular worship services in individuals homes, rural school houses, or churches on Sundays. German was the language of the home and the church.

Shortly after the initial period of homesteading, congregations were formed, and church buildings erected. The church houses were built plain, with little decoration, in compliance with the Mennonite ethic and members' limited financial resources. There were few architectural or decorative frills. Most Mennonite houses of worship consisted of one large room. The the basic design and decor was not unlike that of many early-day territorial churches. The pattern of construction did differ in one respect from the territorial churches of most other Protestants. The Mennonite churches were built with two major entrances, one door for women and one for men. The men and women entered church services separately and once inside, sat segregated, opposite each other, in pews divided by a central aisle that ran the length of the sanctuary (McKee, 1988a).

The sermon often went on for an hour or longer and services could last most of the day on Sunday. In at least one community, sheds were built behind the church to protect the members' highly valued horses from nature's elements during the all-day services. Later the horse stalls were converted to parking garages for members' automobiles.

The churches were served by lay preachers who received no pay for their work. These men supported themselves and their families by farming or doing other work during the week. Their income was supplemented only marginally by what small donations members could give. Often times the preachers served more than one church,

traveling from congregation to congregation in the territory.

The church singing was led by the *Vorsanger* , a man from the congregation who set the pitch for the acappella singing. Few churches owned pianos or other instruments to accompany the congregation's voices (McKee, 1988a). The Hymns were often sung from memory and in German. The entire service was conducted in what church members referred to as "high" German. It was called "high" German by Mennonites because it was the official German language used in printed texts and it differed from the "low" German, or regional dialect, spoken in many of the members' homes.

The King James version of the Bible was studied, but other sources of church litera-ture, which, when available were almost always printed in German, were extremely limited at this time. One publication, *Zionsbote* , a German-language newspaper, carried local news and religious articles. J. F. Harms, a farmer and minister in Medford was the publisher. After several years, Harms left Oklahoma for Canada. The newspaper and printing press then was moved to McPherson, Kansas in 1906 (Kroeker, 1954).

Foot washing, communion or partaking of The Lord's Supper, and holidays, especially Christmas Eve services, were sacred, faithfully observed rituals (McKee, 1988a; Haury, 1981; Erb, 1974) in Mennonite churches. According to the Anabaptist doctrine, baptism and church membership for individual Mennonites usually occurred in early adulthood; for most, the rites were performed during their mid-twenties. Weddings, funerals, and baptisms were chaste observances. Baptisms by immersion were done in farm ponds and creeks. Funerals were commonly held in the home (Kroeker, 1988). As for weddings, the bride often wore black (Kroeker, 1988). Couples did not practice the exchange of wedding rings until the 1930s.

It was customary for Mennonites to practice simplicity in every aspect of their daily lives. This included plain dress. Jewelry, colorful or fancy clothing, gold watches— adornment of any kind was/prohibited. Among religious teachings important to the group, thrift, self-denial, and pacifism were the basic, proscribed values undergirding the

social organization of the church (Hostetler, 1983). To faithful Mennonites, following the Bible meant following a call to withdraw from all worldliness. Just as life on the farm isolated the Mennonite families physically from neighboring communities, church life protected the Mennonite families socially from their neighbors' influence.

Although the Mennonites did not live communally, their social life, during this period, was exclusively in-group. They practiced sharing farm tasks as an opportunity for socialization as well as an expedient way to accomplish large undertakings. Harvest time and the slaughter of hogs and cattle were two occasions that called for gathering of relatives and Mennonite neighbors. During harvest, the males of the family, together with others, including hired hands, worked from sun up until sundown, while the women of the family spent most of the day preparing as many as five meals that were then carried to the fields to refresh the exhausted, hungry crews.

Slaughtering, which was reserved for cooler weather, generally lasted only one or two days and required much more highly specialized labor. Tradition in some communities called for inviting the volunteer crew of helpers to a huge, early morning breakfast served at the site of the activity. The butchering process involved killing the animals, cleaning, cutting, and preparing the meat. A great deal of skill was required to accomplish these procedures correctly. Special training and attention to detail were required for the proper cleaning of intestines to pack the sausage and for gauging the precise amount of boiling time needed to cook cracklins. Women were often assigned to both of these chores. Later, the prepared meats were kept cool during the winter months by hanging them in an unheated shed. Meat also was canned for preservation.

The insular, rural lifestyle comprised of family farming and church related activity was reinforced by strict rules of behavior and patriarchal control. Overall authority for the family belonged to the father, but the line of authority was not rigid. Mennonite women were expected to do their share of the work and they accepted their share of the responsibility. Sex roles did divide farm labor, yet the magnitude of mutual effort

required for successful farming also required respect for the economic input of women. Nevertheless, family roles were well defined with leadership and decision making power assumed by the husband and father. The father exercised authority over the children as well. Mennonite families were quite large; occasionally, families grew to as many as twelve children. Large families were the norm for the general population in the early days of Oklahoma settlement. Children were an economic asset, an additional source of farm labor. Children were taught to respect the authority of their parents and to conduct themselves in the Mennonite way of life. Children were included in family devotions and worship services from infancy.

Just as the male was the head of the household, church leadership rested in the authority of the deacons, bishops, and elders (Haury, 1981). These men enforced the rules of living for the congregation. There were rules of conduct against overeating, drinking alcohol, smoking tobacco, card playing, dancing, or public amusement of any kind. Reading "worldly" literature was strictly denied (Haury, 1981). Newspapers, some classical literature, and other publications were considered acceptable reading material. Reading the Bible was considered essential, and reading what Mennonite publications were available at the time was encouraged.

Those who deviated from the norm were sanctioned in one of several ways depending on the severity of the offense. Doing any kind of work, especially farm work, on Sunday was strictly forbidden and punishable by the group. Often an offender would be asked to stand and apologize before the congregation for his or her misdeeds. Serious infractions of the rules, for example divorce, could be punished by excommunication, what Mennonites sometimes called being "canceled" (McKee, 1988a).

The Mennonites distinguished themselves by dress, lifestyle, closed social relationships and religious affiliation, and were set apart from the general population in Northwestern Oklahoma. The exclusive use of German language served to reinforce their separation from society. The Mennonites actively supported this separateness by avoiding

contacts with those outside their own group. Interaction with the community at large was frowned upon and in-group marriage considered essential to preserve the close-knit group.

The Mennonites quickly learned, nevertheless, that they did not exist in a vacuum. In Europe and Russia they had preserved their ethnicity through completely closed, self-governing cultures that were economically viable. In Oklahoma, the situation was entirely different. The Mennonite settlers were few and scattered in remote areas. The homestead method of land distribution had broken up the old, closed community patterns. The economics of American agriculture demanded a market for Mennonites' farm production. Further, it was impossible to exist for long without needed supplies from the outside world. Mennonites found themselves in a new situation. Still, they made efforts to shun society. They continued to practice a social organization centered around their religious orientation. In doing so, the individual, the family unit and extended family, the relationships with neighbors, farm labor, and social activities—all operated under the auspices of the church. And the church operated on a rationale of exclusion from society. The Mennonite congregations were self-segregated. They engaged only in limited transactions with outsiders whom they referred to as "English."

> Learning vs. Learning in German: "It was harder for my
> folks to send us to high school than for a lot of people
> now days to send their children to college."

Realistically, contacts with outsiders were unavoidable, primarily because of trade and the need to understand what effect economic and political issues outside the congregation might have on the group. The question of education was, early on, an issue of primary concern. While the Amish and "conservative" Mennonite groups continue to this day to support the idea of formal education beyond the elementary grades as

unnecessary, by far the greatest number of Mennonites in Oklahoma were of denominations that supported the advancement of education. These Mennonites, largely the immigrants from Russia, recognized the power of education in perpetuating or destroying the values and traditions of their religious community (Juhnke, 1975). Because the Anabaptist tradition called for informed choice of adults seeking membership and a ministry of the laity, they, like all Mennonite denominations, including the more conservative Amish, considered the ability to read the Bible vital. The Russian Mennonites viewed education also as an enhancement to economic opportunities and a source of reification of the group's historical identity (Urry, 1983a).

In Russia, the Mennonite schools had been a mark of cultural superiority over the peasants in the surrounding area (Juhnke, 1975). The Mennonites had almost complete control over their own schools and the schools were known for their quality of instruction. For many years there was no interference from the Russian government regarding curriculum, consequently the Bible and German both were important subjects of study (Smith, 1927). The school and church were closely connected, but in Oklahoma, it was soon evident that conditions were very different.

Whereas a well-funded and staffed separate educational system provided superior education in Russia, the small and, in many instances, impoverished Mennonite communities and isolated congregations in Oklahoma faced tremendous obstacles in organizing church schools. Maintaining separate educational institutions was a great expense and qualified teachers difficult to find. Free public education was provided by the government and accessible to Mennonite families. In reality, some small, one-room schools in the rural districts were de facto Mennonite schools, since all the children attending were children of Mennonite immigrants.

The public schools were taught in English, but this was not as much a point of contention to the Oklahoma Mennonites as might have been expected. German was spoked in Mennonite homes and used exclusively in church services; nevertheless, by the

turn of the century, many Mennonites had stopped considering the English language a threat to their identity. They saw it instead as a prerequisite for necessary communication (Juhnke, 1975). Most recognized the practicality of learning English and the difficulties involved with private education, yet many Mennonites hung onto the idea of religious education for their children and a number of German schools were organized. The schools were usually taught in the congregation's church building or in a member's home. The curriculum centered on Bible study, German language, reading, writing, and arithmetic. There was no uniformity of texts, in fact, sometimes there were very few texts. Neither were there any uniform qualifications for or standards of performance required of teachers. Lack of finances and problems with attendance and in retaining teachers caused the schools great difficulty. They often had trouble remaining open on a daily basis throughout the term of the school year. The German schools were never a viable alternative to public education.

In some areas the public schools opened their facilities to the Mennonites after hours for supplemental instruction in German and religion. In other areas or at other times, a day-long church service and Sunday School became a way to offer German and religious teaching to the youth of the church (McKee, 1988a). In the years after statehood in 1907, the German schools gradually disappeared and public elementary schools increased in importance as the method of educating the greatest majority of Mennonite children. The majority of Mennonite children continue to be educated in public schools today. Nevertheless, education to preserve the Mennonite faith and way of life free from outside control persisted as a prominent concern of the Mennonites in Oklahoma. The problem centered on how to provide strong basic education and strong religious training at the same time (Juhnke, 1975). The Mennonite response to the issue of proper education for their children worked its way out in an informal compromise that developed gradually over the years, largely due to financial necessity. For the primary grades, Mennonites would use state supported schools. Public schools also would be acceptable for

secondary education, but the Mennonites established their own church-related secondary schools and colleges to serve as many of their membership as possible.

In 1911 the Meno Preparatory School was founded (McKee, 1988b). The Mennonite Brethren Academy at Corn also was established to provide religious training and general education at the secondary level. The Meno school which was begun as a day and boarding school, is currently in existence as the Oklahoma Bible Academy and now is located in Enid. Locating the schools in areas with larger populations and more numerous Mennonite congregations, drawing students from several different communities, and in more recent times, opening enrollment to nonMennonite students, has helped the secondary schools attain financial security.

Although the early years for the schools were difficult, the greater financial security of the later years and the continuing conservative leadership enable the schools to provide students with a strong curriculum in religion, academic courses, and a variety of qualified teachers. The Oklahoma Bible Academy enjoys a reputation for high academic standards. The emphasis that the Russian Mennonite culture historically placed on education, over the years, has resulted in stable church supported secondary schools in Oklahoma. In addition, two Mennonite colleges, Bethel at Newton, Kansas, and Tabor at Hillsboro, Kansas, have drawn students from Oklahoma since the 1890s.

Education was highly significant to Mennonites in Russia and the value of education retained its importance to the group after resettlement in Oklahoma. The Mennonites placed great emphasis on education to preserve their culture and, although the German schools were unsuccessful, Mennonite secondary schools in some areas provide students religious and academic training. What changed over the years was not the emphasis on learning or importance of religion. The change was a shift in priorities away from those that favored Mennonite educational institutions to the exclusion of public education and German language instruction to the exclusion of the English language. Accepting public schooling taught in English and justifying its necessity were variations in group life that

altered the closed system of Mennonite community life. Friendships with nonMennonite class mates, a broader, sectarian curriculum, and the influence of extra-curricular activities were only a few of acculturating influences to which Mennonite children were exposed in public school. Throughout the years that followed statehood in 1907 the shift in priorities that opened Mennonite congregations to public education also opened families to the larger world outside the Mennonite community.

The Meaning of Freedom: "A number of the men in our community who took a position for peace found themselves in prison."

In the decade after statehood, life on the Oklahoma farms did not become much easier; it simply became more bearable. With years of practice and favorable weather, farm yields improved. The introduction of power driven machinery—trucks, tractors, and other labor saving devices began to make farm life less strenuous. Consumer goods were more easily obtained. High quality leather shoes and other needed items were regularly stocked at the local general stores, but cash to purchase the goods remained scarce. Oranges and bananas were considered luxury items, and flour sacks still provided material for most women's wear. Job opportunities outside farming remained limited and wages and farm income were low (Todd & Curti, 1961).

During the years prior to 1917, the Mennonites, as a group, came to be looked upon by the established society as one of the many elements making up the total population mix of Northwestern Oklahoma. Identifiable, there was a certain ambivalence to their identity. Although they dressed plain, their plain dress was not particularly distinctive because the financial position of most of the general population dictated a similar dress. Although their thrift and devotion to simplicity resulted in an austere mode of living,

their austerity was not particularly distinctive, since many around them lived in near poverty. On the whole, their farming endeavors were similar to those of their nonMennonite neighbors and their children attended the same schools. They did not stand out as an exclusive, radical, religious sect. They were noticeable simply because they spoke German, associated with their own kind, and avoided politics. They were viewed by the outside community and their own kind as well, not so much as a group that withdrew from society but a group that moved parallel to it.

The Mennonites considered themselves one hundred percent Americans. They worked hard, paid taxes, stayed out of trouble, and exercised their First Amendment right to freedom of religion. They identified with the American "creed". The First Amendment guarantee of freedom of religion had played a large part in their decision to make America their home (Rippley, 1976). They had come to America on the promise of that freedom. Opposition to war, to capital punishment, and to the taking of human life in any form were fundamental tenets of the Mennonite faith. "It was to maintain the doctrine of non-resistance that the Mennonites emigrated from Russia" (Smith, 1927).

As a group, the Mennonites understood the promise of religious freedom to mean that no one would be forced to do what went against one's own conscience. The United States government never directly granted a request from emissaries of the Russian Mennonites to exempt the immigrants from military service (Smith, 1927), but the guarantee of freedom of religion in the First Amendment, and the assurances of politicians and businessmen interested in promoting settlement in the West, indicated to the Mennonites that they would not be obligated to participate in future wars (Haury, 1981). Mennonites came to America, moved west, and eventually settled in Oklahoma, confident that their particular religion's freedom and its caveat, pacifism, were guaranteed. Not confronted by war, the issue of non-resistance was largely ignored during the first twenty years of Mennonite life in Oklahoma (Haury, 1981).

In this atmosphere, Mennonite loyalty to their adopted country was taken for granted

by Mennonites and those in the larger society as well. Through the process of living alongside their "English" neighbors, Mennonites had become familiar with the American way of doing things and local customs. Alternatively, Mennonite economic advances through hard work, thrift, prompt retirement of debt, and sound farming practices were admired by the community at large. While the Mennonites did stand apart from society, they, and the larger society, both were comfortable with the pattern of marginality. When war began in Europe in 1914, the Mennonites were suddenly cut off from main-stream America. The United States was flooded with anti-German propaganda. Exported primarily from Great Britain, the propaganda was effective not only against Germany, but turned public opinion away from German culture and German Americans also (Sowell, 1981). Early on, there were Americans who supported Germany's cause in the war, some of them of German heritage, but as the war continued, fewer and fewer expressed a favorable attitude toward the Central Powers (Rippley, 1976).

The anti-German feelings that swept the United States mounted as the war ap-proached America. The nation was caught up in the rising war spirit. Even President Wilson spoke disparagingly of "hyphenated" Americans, meaning Germans, with sup-posed divided loyalties (Sowell, 1981). America was on its way to war.

Meanwhile, the German-speaking Mennonites in Oklahoma remained neutral in their thinking. The Mennonites rejected all war. They had no sympathy with Germany's war policies (Coon, 1988). But despite this fact, they, like many others, were snared by the antiGerman hysteria.

The Mennonites suffered ridicule, coercion, and violence. German-speaking per-sons or ones with German-sounding names were treated like outcasts (Coons, 1988). In Major County, notices were posted on churches reading, " God almighty understands the American language. Address him only in that tongue" (Rohrs, 1980). In Grant County, a civilian council of defense instructed the telephone company officials to prohibit the use of German in telephone conversations (Rohrs, 1980). German-language instruction was

dropped from the curriculum of public schools and the names of towns throughout Oklahoma were changed. Korn became Corn; Kiel became Loyal; and Bismark became Wright (Coon, 1988).

The German-language press was particularly hard hit by the discrimination. Between 1885 and World War I there were at least sixteen German-language newspapers published in Oklahoma. The papers carried local news from German settlements in Oklahoma and Kansas, news from Germany, information about farming and agriculture, and local advertising (Rohrs, 1981). Only two of these papers remained in existence after the war, closed by threats and/or loss of circulation and advertising. Of the two that survived, *Die Enid Post* continued to be printed in Enid until 1935 (Rohrs, 1980). Largely, because the Mennonites from Russia spoke German and because they did not favor America entering into any war, they became a prime target of abuse. They suffered physical violence and harassment; a Mennonite was known to have been taken from his home and painted yellow. They were vandalized and their property destroyed. There was at least one "tar and feathering" (Coon, 1988; Rohrs, 1981). In the eastern part of the state one Sunday afternoon in 1918, the Eden General Conference Mennonite Church was burned to the ground . After that the congregation held their services in a member's barn until it too was burned (McKee, Coon, & Kroeker, 1988).

During this time the buying of war bonds was stressed by the established society as a sign of patriotism and support for the American cause. Some Mennonites bought the bonds. Others did not because to the those Mennonites the bonds represented an investment in military armament.

At the outset of the war, the Mennonite men, just like all other American men of draft age, faced induction into the military. The Selective Service Act of 1917 provided for exemption but it did not define noncombatant service. This was of particular concern to the Mennonites, since about half of all conscientious objectors during World War I were young Mennonite men (Hartzler, 1922). Mennonites found local draft boards in

Oklahoma unsympathetic to conscientious objectors (Coon, 1988). No complete records detail the exact disposition of Mennonite men in Northwest Oklahoma eligible for the draft during World War I. A few were exempt from service, some served in the military as non-combatants and others served in the regular army. Mennonite men, nationwide, were frequently inducted directly into military camps, where they generally refused to wear military uniforms or participate in training (Hostetler, 1983). Some were later furloughed to farm programs, but at least forty-five from the southwestern states were courts martialled, handcuffed, and sent by train to Fort Leavenworth, Kansas to begin twenty-five year sentences (Coon, 1988). One man, at least, from Northwest Oklahoma was a prisoner at Fort Leavenworth.

The reality of World War I demanded change in the Mennonite way of life. Mennonites began to drastically revise their conception of themselves as a religious body and the relationship of their culture to American society. Direct pressure from outside the group was followed by a restructuring of thinking within the group. When Mennonites came to America, the Mennonite theology of religious freedom was interpreted as freedom to establish autonomous communities impervious to governmental control or sanction from the outside world. Life in rural Oklahoma necessitated some adaptation of Mennonite traditions and customs. Time, economics, public schooling, interchange with nonMennonite neighbors, and other circumstances within and outside Mennonite society, over the years, produced a certain amount of Mennonite acculturation. The Mennonites came to consider themselves inside American society and outside worldly society. Cradled in the pioneering spirit of rugged individualism prevalent in the early days of western settlement, it was easy for the Mennonites to exist apart, but along side the social milieu. The vast majority of Mennonites found no conflict between the practice of their religion and their loyalty to America (Juhnke, 1975). They seemed astounded to learn that others did not hold the same opinion.

On the whole, Mennonites were surprised and shocked that their interpretation of the

First Amendment was not an interpretation acceptable to the majority of Americans living in Oklahoma. Most of the people in the general population thought of religious freedom as individual freedom, the freedom of an individual to worship as he or she pleased. From this point of view there was little or no relationship between worshiping and fighting for one's country. This difference in perspective together with anti-German propaganda and rising war sentiment, worked to place the Mennonites at an extreme disadvantage. In the years preceding America's entry and continuing throughout World War I, the Mennonites were an easy target for the fear and anger in America that raged against the German Empire.

Regardless of their own suffering, the Mennonites emerged from World War I strengthened as a religious community. Due largely to the experiences of the war, some Mennonites felt an inner compunction to serve the war needy. When released by the government, a group of these men joined a relief unit in France under Quaker auspices (Hostetler, 1983). This humanitarian effort marked the beginning of combined large-scale, voluntary benevolent programs among the Mennonite denominations to give relief to war victims, victims of natural disasters, and other unfortunate people (Juhnke, 1975). Further, during the return to "normalcy" in the years after the war, many local churches, especially those of the General Conference, formed peace committees to reinforce education among their membership about nonresistance and encourage peace witness. The war, in many ways, prompted a transformation in the practice of Mennoniteism. Mennonites reconceptualized their religion and its relationship to their citizenship, as influences outside pressured the church. English replaced German in church services. Most churches made the switch to English just before or during World War I (Rohrs, 1981). The few remaining German schools were closed about that time as well. For awhile some churches offered two services, one in English and one in German. But is was not until the 1950s that Mennonite churches ceased using the German language in worship services altogether (Haury, 1981). The English language was not accepted for

use in the churches without much debate, but after the use of English became the norm, most Mennonites adopted and began to consciously advance the viewpoint that the German language was not as important to the meaning of their faith as following their religious convictions (Haury, 1981). In another reconceptualization of the Mennonite ethic, Mennonites also began to accept nonresistance to war as a matter of individual conscience rather than an obligation of the group to church doctrine and ritual.

Dust, Bust, and on to the Next War: "It was rough. We
didn't have money. At least Mom made a big garden,
at least we had something to eat."

During the World War I years, it was the visible elements of German culture that attracted prejudice (Rohrs, 1981) against Mennonites. German language and old world tradition and customs came to be a source of liability. From World War I onward, Mennonites began to assimilate more rapidly into the larger society and Mennonite churches began to take on the characteristics of American Protestantism (Engbrecht, 1985). The most dramatic changes occurred when the German language was dropped from use in services and when Mennonite men began to enter the military. Other major changes profoundly effected the church during the 1920s and 1930s. In particular, church activities increased and a pattern of church life that closely followed the organization of other Protestant denominations began to emerge. The Mennonite Central Committee, an agency that embodied all American Mennonite groups in its membership was founded (Smith, 1950). Youth groups and vacation Bible school, and ladies aid societies were organized. Sunday morning services became shorter and Sunday evening and Wednesday services were introduced. The *Vorsanger* gave way to a song leader who led the congregation from English hymnals, held neatly in racks attached to the backs of pews and available for each member. The itinerant preacher gradually

was being replaced by a pastor who devoted full time to his church and was paid for his place in the pulpit. As America's politics moved away from foreign alliances and national sentiment turned toward isolationism in the 1920s, the missionary movement caught hold among Mennonites. In a reversal of the trend in public policy to withdraw from international affairs, Mennonites directed their interest toward world wide expansion. The mission field, which had been established by each of the major Mennonite denominations since the turn of the century, attracted increased attention and additional missionaries were dispatched to Africa, the Far East, and other points of the world (Hostetler, 1986). Church attendance, which had dwindled before the war, began to increase as the youth of the church were attracted and held by all the new endeavor (Hostetler, 1986; Epp, 1977).

The practices which separated the Mennonites from society became less noticeable, both inside and outside the church. The somber weddings which in the past had included a lengthy sermon became more celebrative with more elaborate ceremony. Candles were permitted for decoration and bridesmaids attended the bride. The weddings were still quite solemn, however. Kissing by the bride and groom at the close of the ceremony was highly frowned upon. Marriage of Mennonites to those outside the faith increased during the 1920s and 1930s but was still uncommon.

Nonconformity remained a major tenet of the church. As the differences between Mennonites and the larger community began to disappear on the whole, the differences that did remain became significant boundaries between the church and those "of the world." Proscribed moral behavior served as the major barrier between the Mennonites and other Oklahomans. Attitudes toward alcohol serve to illustrate the Mennonite position on social nonconformity. Even though drinking alcoholic beverages was strictly against the Mennonite ethic, membership in groups such as the Women's Christian Temperance Union, nevertheless, was discouraged (Haury, 1981). As harmful as drinking might be to individuals and families, joining any organized public, political effort

promoting prohibition was not considered appropriate for Mennonites (Haury, 1981). Tradition called for maintaining a church community unaffiliated with social and political activists.

Regarding other morality issues, alcohol consumption, along with smoking and dancing, continued to be banned, as was card playing and most paid public amusement. A good many Mennonites were sending their children to public schools by this time, but whether or not to allow the children to participate in school sponsored sports events was a topic of heated debate within the church. The competitive nature of athletics and the brief uniforms girls wore in play were equally problematic to many Mennonites. As for other types of physical recreation, relief from the blazing, Oklahoma sun during the hot summer months via "mixed bathing," i.e. men, women, and children swimming together, at public parks was definitely not allowed.

The Mennonite men and women did make some adaptation to the changing clothing styles of the era. As women across the country followed the trend to shorter skirts, the Mennonite women raised theirs too, but only to heights somewhat shorter than the preWorld War I fashion of six inches above the ankle. Style of dress among Mennonite women changed slowly. Women were not seen in bright colors or sleeveless blouses even after World War II. Neither were they permitted to wear make up or sport any of the new bobbed or permed hair-dos, until years after most other women did.

Historically, the Mennonites had readily accepted any new inventions that advanced their farming enterprise. They were among the first to make use of power driven machinery and other labor saving devices the industrial revolution made possible for Americans in the 1920s and 1930s. Shortly after their introduction in the marketplace, electric lighting, automobiles, harvesters, tractors, telephones, and other modern conveniences could be found in Mennonite homes or in their barns. Listening to the new radio sets, or attending "picture shows," however, was a different matter. These were considered "worldly," and categorized with dancing and other activities thought to be harmful or

lead to association with persons of "low" character. Radio did break down isolation in the sparsely populated rural areas. It became more acceptable to the Mennonites as the years rolled on partly for that reason and partly because it was a source of news and important information, particularly weather reports which were of vital interest to the Mennonite farmers.

For most of the nation the 1920s was a decade of rising expectations and general prosperity and the 1930s a decade of great economic depression. For most of the people of Northwest Oklahoma, including those who were Mennonites, both decades were years of hardship. Farmers did not enjoy the benefits that Americans in general shared during the golden years of the '20s. Although farm prices increased, land values rose more than three fold (Todd & Curti, 1961). Production increased when power driven machinery became available and most farming shifted from mixed crop production to specialization in wheat and cattle, but these changes did not automatically result in a higher farm income. Unlike the early homesteads, many of the post World War I farms no longer were self-sufficient, and most of the economically successful ones were much larger than the one hundred sixty acre plots the first settlers had claimed a generation earlier. Specialized, one-crop farming and increased use of machinery required more acreage and less manual labor to create the same standard of living. Large farm families became a liability rather than an asset. Young people began to be forced out of farming and into seeking employment in urban areas such as Wichita, Oklahoma City, Tulsa, or Dallas.

Farm prices fell and the price farmers paid for goods rose during those years (Todd & Curti, 1961). Unstable markets in the United States and worldwide helped cause farm prices to continue to fluctuate downward and farm surpluses to build. The 1929 stock market crash, bank failures, and years of below-average rainfall exacerbated the problem. Mortgages were foreclosed, farms failed, and many left Oklahoma for opportunities elsewhere. Schools had to be consolidated and churches boarded up. Whole towns withered away, as sizable numbers of people drifted out of Northwest Oklahoma.

More than a few Mennonite churches disbanded (Haury, 1981). Some Mennonites and their families were among the many who sought a better life away from the Oklahoma farm. California became a popular destination for those leaving Oklahoma and Mennonites found their way to the "golden state" along with many others. Once in California, the Mennonites sought work as fruit and vegetable farmers or in the nut groves or in California industry. Several Mennonite churches served the growing California community and two Mennonite colleges are located in the state (Hostetler, 1983). Some Mennonites who fled the "dust bowl" remained in California. Other Mennonite migrants later returned to Oklahoma. A degree of individual migration back and forth between the west coast and Oklahoma continues to this day and Mennonites are proportionally represented among total number of Oklahomans who relocate.

Not every family in Northwest Oklahoma suffered during the depression. A few escaped economic hardship. Some Mennonite farmers were able to make ends meet by growing most of what their families needed. Others ran fairly successful cash crop production operations, and some, as royalty owners, became rich from the oil boom that mushroomed around the Garber and other oil fields during the early 1920s. Many were not so fortunate. For the most part the decades between the World War I and World War II were not years of prosperity. They marked, instead, the beginning of several economic and social trends in Northwest Oklahoma that have continued to accelerate over the years including: fluctuating farm prices, increasing farm production, increasing farm size, increasing farm debt, and decreasing farm population. These trends have led to a great deal of economic insecurity for farmers that continues to the present.

During the 1930s, the rise of Hitler and the Nazis in Germany and events leading to America's entry into World War II, again brought a wave of antiGerman and, in conjunction with that, antiMennonite feelings in Oklahoma. But this time the situation was entirely different. No one questioned the patriotism of German Americans in the late 1930s (Sowell, 1981). For one thing, there was a fierce antiNazi sentiment throughout all

segments of the American population. The vast majority of German Americans did not identify with Nazi Germany nor was there any political support for German nationalism such as existed in America before World War I. There was little fear of German Americans as a group or fear of Nazi politics finding popularity among Americans (Rippley, 1976). In fact, visible signs of German ethnicity were practically nonexistent (Rohrs, 1981). German language use and almost all symbols of German heritage had disappeared entirely in Oklahoma, eradicated by the assault on German culture during the World War I years. The preWorld War II antiGerman sentiment was directed outside the country, toward the German nation as an aggressor.

Just as during World War I the Mennonites were, again, viewed as disloyal by the established society, but this time it was not because they were of German heritage. The Mennonites were no longer thought of as foreigners as they had been during World War I (Coon, 1981). There had been a considerable degree of acculturation and assimilation of Mennonites into mainstream society in during the two decades after the armistice in 1918. On the whole, Mennonites no longer carried the image of Germans or the image of a religious cult, withdrawn from society.

Whereas, during World War I the German heritage of Mennonites was as much a central problem to the dominant society as was their refusal to bear arms, their German heritage was not central to the problem the group encountered during the World War II years. During the second world war, the Mennonites were again at odds with the general public over the interpretation of the First Amendment, just as during World War I. And just as during World War I, the practice of pacifism was not held out to be a religious value protected by the constitution in the minds of most Americans.

It was the refusal of the Mennonites to fight that attracted negative public reaction. Instead of fearing the Mennonites as Germans and a threat to national security as had been the case in World War I, the Mennonites, during World War II, were thought of as cowards (Coon, 1988). Mennonites who did not serve in the military were stereotyped as

unpatriotic, weak, shirkers whose interest in protecting themselves outweighed their responsibility to fight for their country.

Again, just as during World War I, taunts and vandalism and other forms of ridicule were used against the Mennonites. One Sunday morning members of an Enid congregation entered their church to find that someone had broken in the night before and placed an American flag in the center of their sanctuary. The Mennonites did not remove the flag but left it in place. Visitors to that church today will find an American flag still on display.

In other incidents, eggs were thrown at Mennonite churches, and a brick was thrown through the office window of a Mennonite attorney who represented young Mennonite men before their draft boards. The same attorney also had his office stormed by an angry mob who protested his work with conscientious objectors (Coon, 1981). Once again, also similar to World War I, Mennonites were solicited to purchase war bonds. The bonds were, not only meant to be an investment, but stood as symbolic proof to the community at large that Mennonites were contributors to the American cause.

A significant difference existed between circumstances surrounding the Mennonites in the World War I years and the World War II years. The difference lay not in the treatment of the Mennonites by the general public or in the amount of discrimination dealt the group. The difference lay primarily in the response of the Mennonites to the pressure that was brought to bear. The Mennonites had been totally unprepared for the treatment they received during World War I (Haury, 1981). They were not unprepared for the next world war. Through the years 1925 to 1944 a movement to articulate the Mennonite peace theology developed. A good many churches and their leaders were involved in shaping a statement of the Mennonite position regarding peace (Toews, 1986). A strategy of action was undertaken by the Mennonite Central Committee. Documents were prepared, the assistance of other pacifist groups enlisted, and political lobbying undertaken in Washington to promote the interests of Mennonite young men who were of draft

age. This united, political effort that included organizing, seeking support from constituent groups and sympathetic allies, political negotiation, and compromise marked a decided change from Mennonites' past beliefs about participation in public affairs. Even though they were beginners, the group's activities produced results.

When the Selective Service Act of 1940 was passed it included a provision for Civilian Public Service (Smith, 1950). Civilian Public Service represented a compromise acceptable to those who believed in peaceful nonresistance and to those who demanded all men of draft age serve their country during war. The Civilian Public Service was under the auspices of federal regulation, but organized and administered by the pacifist groups themselves (Smith, 1950). The camps provided work under civilian direction for those whose religious beliefs required nonresistance to war. There were various kinds of camps including agriculture, forestry, and public health work. After the United States entered World War II, more and more of the nonresistants were assigned to work in mental hospitals. Of the fifty-one mental hospital units, Mennonites administered twenty-five (Smith, 1950). And out of the 11,996 persons nation wide who served in the Civilian Public Service a total of 4,665 were Mennonites (Smith, 1950).

Not all Mennonites who were drafted chose to go into the Civilian Public Service as conscientious objectors. Many served in the military as medical corpsmen or in other capacities as non-combatants or they entered into regular service as combatants. When considering overall numbers of Mennonites, about half of all those drafted took up military service (Smith, 1950).

Although no statistics detail the exact disposition of Mennonite men through the Northwest Oklahoma draft boards during the World War II years, *The Daily Oklahoman,* the state's largest newspaper, reported in 1942 that in Washita county in the west-central part of the state only about fifteen percent of Mennonite men who registered for the draft signified they were conscientious objectors. Other reports for the same area show about forty-two percent of General Conference Mennonites as going into Civilian Public

Service (Coon, 1981). Even without complete records, it is almost certain that a majority of Mennonite men from Oklahoma served in the regular army during World War II and a smaller number entered the armed forces as noncombatants or worked in a program for conscientious objectors.

In summary, although federal legislation provided for a Civilian Public Service to accommodate the religious beliefs of Mennonites at the outset of World War II, nation-wide more than half of all Mennonite men eligible for the draft still chose to enter the military, and a good many of those entered regular military service (Smith, 1950). It seems clear that a large number of Mennonites no longer held to the doctrine of nonresistance. The assimilation of Mennonites into the general population can be observed most notably in this respect.

Alternative service was provided to the Mennonites during the Korean conflict and the Vietnam War and some Mennonite men took advantage of the opportunity to serve their country in this way. But even during the Vietnam War, when the numbers of those in the general public claiming conscientious objector status increased dramatically and a substantial percentage of the general public opposed the Vietnam War, the numbers of Mennonites who chose regular service in the military continued to increase.

The Legacy: "The old German men would say, 'a devil's
stick is on top of the house'. But if you wanted, you
could hide your TV antenna in the attic, you know."

The post World War II era, brought an acceleration of extensive social and cultural change in the Mennonite community. Change that had its beginning many years earlier. World War II was the deathknell of the separated, rural society that had characterized Mennonite nonconformity for centuries in Europe and Russia (Epp, 1977). From World War II onward the forces of change expanded and developed exponentially and impacted

directly on the Mennonite church, group social organization, and farming as a way of life. Technology ushered in a different world.

The retooling of post-war industry brought refrigerators, electric ranges, vacuum cleaners, toasters, and other modern conveniences, including indoor plumbing, into farm homes (Todd & Curti, 1961). Far more powerful farm implements that could handle more complicated and strenuous tasks became available. Farm living was made easier. A more complete mechanization of farming and an increased world demand for wheat opened the way for many Oklahoma farmers to enjoy the post war prosperity that swept across the country during the 1950s. As farms prospered, farms grew larger simultaneously. Young people just starting out could little afford the combines to harvest wheat and other expensive new equipment needed. Nor could they afford the cost of what few parcels of farm land came onto the market. With no new land to open up for homesteading as in the past, the trend of farm youth and the trend of farm population overall to relocate from rural to urban areas has continued from the 1920s to this day. One of the most striking features of modern Mennoniteism is the high degree of urbanization of this group that once was completely rural. And the trend of migration to urban areas is on-going.

Farming has ceased to be the principal occupation of Mennonites, the people whose highly resistant strain of wheat seed and innovative farming practices undergirded the large scale production and prosperity of great plains agriculture. Mechanization, increased production, and specialized, one-crop farming worked to displace the diversified family farm operations. Across the board inflation has fluctuated ever upward through nine decades of the twentieth century effecting the cost of land, equipment, and other products farmers need to purchase. Unstable commodity markets at home and abroad and a vacillating national farm program shaped as much by political pragmatism as economic circumstance have operated to the disadvantage of farmers too. All these conditions, coupled with the simple fact that there was no new farmland to open up but there

were new jobs in industry opening to accommodate the growing population, have accelerated the demise of the family farm.

The conditions that worked to the discourage family farming have in turn stimulated the growth of corporate farming. In Northwest Oklahoma the result has been large scale farming as agribusiness. A farming operation of two thousand acres today is considered modest. Many are much larger. However, there is little public shareholder ownership of agricultural properties in Northwest Oklahoma at present. Of the farms that lie in what was once the Cherokee Outlet, many are operated by family owned farm corporations. Some still exist as traditional one-owner, family farms. Others are operated by joint ownership or by individual farmers who farm their own land and in addition the land of absentee owners. Still others, mostly smaller farms, are operated as a supplemental occupation for individuals whose main source of income is not from farming. Mennonites, as part of the total population of farmers, can be found participating in each of these types of farming arrangements.

From the mid1980s to the present the price of wheat has held well below four dollars a bushel creating marginal profits for small farms and generating still greater expansion of the bigger operations. As farms grow larger, the farm population grows smaller. Rural population has been decreasing in Northwestern Oklahoma since "dust bowl" days. The population decrease actually started only about thirty years after the land was first homesteaded in 1893. Through the years, a good many Mennonite men and women as well as a good many of the farm population in general have abandoned farming for life in urban areas.

Urbanization has required employment of Mennonites in jobs totally unrelated to farming. Historically, Mennonites relied on education as an enhancement to church life. Education also was viewed in part as an economic benefit because it was thought that the knowledge gained stimulated agricultural innovation. As urbanization demanded of Mennonites the ability to compete in a skilled job market, the emphasis on education

became increasingly more important. Beginning in the post World War II years and continuing to the present the Mennonite emphasis on education has remained strong but has turned toward an emphasis on preparation for work performed largely outside rural areas. Many Mennonites have sought higher education and many have entered the labor force in areas that require skilled and professional training (Epp, 1977). Education and urbanization also have provided opportunities for the entry of Mennonite women into the working world, although there are no available statistics to document their exact numbers.

Nationwide only about twenty percent of Mennonites are farmers today (Hostetler, 1983). The minister of one congregation in Northwest Oklahoma with both urban and rural members estimated that in 1988 about fifteen out of the three hundred seventy members of his total congregation were actively engaged in farming. Individual Mennonites today work at any number of different jobs. The genealogical records of one Mennonite family show that from the 1940s to the present, members have been employed as farmers, secretaries, teachers, nurses, and public school administrators. There was a commercial artist, a welder, a cook, and a corporate manager, represented as well (Brandt, 1978). Urbanization, a multiplicity of occupations, and a more affluent standard of living characterize the modern Mennonite community.

The group's ongoing adaptation to contemporary American life is reflected in other developments. The influence of Protestantism in the organizational life of the church, beginning as early as the establishment of Sunday Schools at the turn of the century, has continued to develop. Protestantism as an overall influence on the Mennonite church also can be seen in the changing theological orientation and structures of the church.

In adapting to the mode of efficiency in administration of church activities that other religions practiced, the Mennonite denominations began to set standards for church organization in the years that followed World War II. After the war, almost all Mennonite churches were able to salary a full time pastor. And as pastors came to be full-time

employees of the church, it came to be expected that they would have had training at seminary for their calling. And just as the *Vorsanger* was replaced by a song leader in the 1930s, so the song leader in many of the larger churches was replaced by a paid choir director in the 1950s and 60s. The developing pattern of professionalism among the laity was mirrored in the paid employment and standardization of training for the ministry.

The organizational structures of the various Mennonite denominations also tended to grow steadily larger and more complex. Denominational leadership became more prominent and was tied to the local congregations in a variety of ways, including ties through the ministers, conference meetings, and church publications. The *Christian Leader* and *The Mennonite* are two publications that continue, along with other specialized publications, to be produced by the denominations today (Jacquet, 1989).

Another developing trend, the declining age of baptism, continued well into the mid-twentieth century. The age of baptism dropped steadily over the years from baptism of men and women in their mid-twenties which was customary in the early 1900s to the present custom of baptism taking place sometime during the early teen years (McKee, 1988a). The ceremony of foot washing disappeared over the years as did many other church traditions. The system of men and women sitting separately in church services ended for one group when a new church building was erected. The building was designed and constructed with two main entries, but before the congregation relocated to the new building, their pastor suggested that families might want to sit together in the new church. The congregation accepted his proposal, men and women entered the new church through either door, and the segregated seating custom ended at the time the new church building opened.

The authoritarian structure of the church was broadened to allow for more congregational participation in leadership roles (Hostetler, 1987). The wider base of participation opened some of the churches to receive women as deacons during the 1970s and women were asked to speak at meetings and to teach Sunday School classes of teenagers and

adults. In the past, women had not "spoken" during services and their teaching had been limited to the instruction of small children. The entry of women into the decision making levels of the church structure, however, has been slow and most women today still decline or are not offered opportunities for formal leadership positions in their local congregations.

The key values of the church that originally stressed withdrawal from the world, began to shift. A move toward an interpretation that emphasized service programs, missions, and work to relieve the suffering of the world, which had been present in the denomination for many years, became more noticeable after World War II (Hostetler, 1987). More time and effort was devoted to growth and outreach as an aspect of church life. This shift in values contributed to the development of a more complex organizational structure among the various congregations of the different Mennonite denominations. Youth camps, retreats, and inter-group meetings became popular (Haury, 1981). The yearly Oklahoma conventions of the General Conference were well attended. A huge tent was set up to provide extra seating and shade for members during outdoor meetings held each summer. The tent was moved around from year to year as the meeting site changed and was used until 1959 when the meetings began to be held in air-conditioned auditoriums or public school gymnasiums (McKee, 1988b).

Tent meetings and revivals were popular among Mennonite congregations during the 1950s. The mass revivals of Billy Graham and local and national ministries of radio personalities also drew a following among Mennonites as do the televised evangelists of today. Fundamentalism, the primary direction of many of the revivalists' messages has appealed to a sizable number of Mennonites. Certain aspects of Mennonite faith, authority of the scriptures and personal conversion of adult believers, for example, coincides with the theology of Fundamentalism (Haury, 1981; Hostetler, 1987). The Fundamentalist message that places heavy emphasis on the virgin birth and stresses the second coming of Christ also has been strongly voiced by Mennonites in Northwestern Oklahoma. Many

Mennonites joined with Fundamentalists in believing the religious foundations of America in general to be threaten by the teachings of the "modernists" or those, who in more recent years have been termed, "secular humanists."

The Fundamentalist influence on the Mennonite church first became prominent during the 1950s. The two groups have shared several theological and other interests over the years as can be illustrated by both groups' similar reaction to the publication of the *Revised Standard Bible*, in 1952. Many Fundamentalists and Mennonites alike were alarmed by the new translation. A number of passages that undergirded doctrinal stands of both groups, when read in the Revised version, seemed in conflict with interpretations of the same passages taken from the King James version of the Bible (Hostetler, 1986). The Revised version appeared to threaten established teaching. To this day the Revised Standard translation is held in disfavor in many Mennonite churches and the King James version and other newer translations much more often used by members.

The Fundamentalist evangelists' revivals, radio programs, and later television shows were appealing to a certain segment of the Mennonite society. Fundamentalist literature was popular with this group as well. Christian magazines and books, Biblical reference material, and other inspirational reading material came to be used by a sizable number of Mennonites. Literature produced by mainstream Protestant publishing houses also was used by the group. *The Upper Room* , a periodical of daily devotions, has been circulated among church members for many years. Christian music produced, for the most part by Fundamentalist groups, came to be popular as well. The music was played in Mennonite churches and listened to by individuals on radio, on recordings, and later, when it became available, on tape.

Certainly not every aspect of Fundamentalism coincided with Mennoniteism. Many doctrinal differences existed. Whereas emotionalism played central part in conversion for Fundamentalists, particularly in revival settings, Mennonites presented sober sermons and temperate revival sessions that focused on Bible teaching or virtuous living.

Overall, the Mennonites of Northwest Oklahoma did not embrace Fundamentalism in its totality; however, the co-optation of certain Fundamentalist doctrines indicates the influence of other religious groups on Mennonite theological orientation (Haury, 1981). What is important to the social development of Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma is the Mennonites' adaptation of one fundamentalist doctrine in particular—evangelicalism. Belief in the principle of evangelicalism played a major part in the continuing viability of the Mennonite churches and Mennonites as a religious/ethnic group.

Evangelicalism is associated with the revival movement of the 1950s that actively "brought in souls" enlarging membership, but its influence was wider in scope. In addition to gaining new members, it changed the direction of Mennonite church life. For centuries Mennonites had practiced separatism. They withdrew into closed, religious communities. On relocation in Oklahoma, Mennonite congregations expanded to accept many who were of dissimilar ethnic backgrounds and later, those who married into the faith, but recruiting of members from the outside society was not a primary concern of the group. Urbanization forced a scattering of Mennonite individuals and families. Many found themselves in Oklahoma towns and cities where there was no Mennonite congregation. Rural churches lost membership as population dwindled. In addition, the youth began to drift away from the church. By mid-twentieth century, not all Mennonite young people were choosing to remain in the church of their parents. Those who relocated away from their home churches did not always have, or seek, the opportunity to worship with another Mennonite congregation.

In Northwest Oklahoma evangelicalism helped the Mennonite churches survive. Evangelism brought in new members and broadened the base of monetary and personal contributions to the church in general, but beyond that, evangelism loosened the tightly knit, in-group, social life of the church and opened it to broader association with the public at large. Through this change, the churches began to see serving the community as part of their mission. By its basic nature evangelism, the bringing of converts to the

church, necessitated an increased interaction with the public at large. Mennonite churches began to be of service to those in the community surrounding the local Mennonite churches (Haury, 1981; Hostetler, 1986, Hostetler, 1987; Wiesel, 1977).

Twentieth century progress dramatically changed the church. Urbanization, more extensive education, diversified occupations, affluence, shifts in the emphasis of certain church doctrines and practices, all contributed to and reflected the acculturated lifestyles of Mennonites in Northwestern Oklahoma in the later half of the century. Gradually, most times imperceptibly, but occasionally over the protest of the older generation of Mennonites, the taboos placed on members that enforced nonconformity withered completely away. Some of the final conflicts were over dancing, attending movies, and the use of television. At some point in time, a change came to the plurality of Mennonites in a realization that the rules of conduct which separated them from the larger community were interpreted by those outside not as a sign of Mennonite faithfulness to the teachings of Christ. Instead, their abstinence from the amenities of modern life were considered by most to be merely harmless, amusing eccentricities. The more critical in the established society found the Mennonites' restrictive lifestyle to be blatantly foolish.

There was no certain turning point. Mennonite codes of conduct and social taboos were intermittently broken and slowly forgotten. Eventually it became impossible to distinguish Mennonites from other Oklahomans. From the 1960s to the present, the appearance and manner of living of Mennonites has conformed to that of the public in general. In style of dress, in work, in social activity, there is no longer any appreciable difference.

To the majority of contemporary Mennonites, the old church rules that prohibited participation in social activities with nonMennonites and proscribed a certain type of behavior and style of dress now seem quaint relics of a far removed past. Although church doctrine still discourages alcohol and tobacco use and unhealthful dietary habits, a goodly number Mennonite men and women do not disfavor moderate drinking, smoking, and overeating. In earlier times Mennonites refused to dance but now days their children

attend "proms." In earlier times Mennonites refused to attend "picture shows." Today they visit shopping malls where they see movies and many of their homes have complete "media centers" that include radio, stereo, television, and video cassette recorders. Mennonites move in mainstream society and almost all participate fully in the material world of consumer based goods and services.

The world of the modern Mennonite revolves around business ties, civic associations, leisure activities, and even country club memberships for some. The Mennonite life today is no longer withdrawn but enmeshed in public involvement at all levels of interaction. Current political issues and societal problems such as proliferation of nuclear weapons, environmental pollution, the homeless, abortion, divorce, and family issues impose on Mennonite life. These and other pressing public concerns have been addressed in recent Mennonite publications for church members (Bergen, 1988; Epp, 1989; Witmer, 1989) and from the pulpits of Mennonite churches in Northwestern Oklahoma. The extent of material wealth, acculturation, and assimilation into the economic and political structure of society has not gone unnoticed by the church leadership. Much attention by Mennonite scholars, church officials, ministers, and local congregations has been devoted to reflecting on the changes in Mennonite life (Hardwick, 1974; Hostetler, 1986; Hostetler, 1987; Epp, 1977; Driedger & Kauffman, 1982; Kauffman & Harder, 1975; & others). As early as 1955, the western division of the General Conference began to present programs aimed at the situation. "How to Live the Abundant Life" and "The Christian in Business" were the topics of just two of the meetings concerned with Mennonites' attitudes toward materialism and social ethics (Haury, 1981).

Although concerned with the dangers of materialism and the problems other social issues present, the contemporary view of most church members holds that separatism is a liability rather than an asset to Mennoniteism. Instead of setting themselves apart to insure right living, the majority of the Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma today believe the followers of Christ need not isolate themselves. They interpret the Mennonite ethic

to mean the members of their church are not "worldly" simply because they are "in the world." In fact, from this viewpoint the doctrine of Christian living as an example supports interaction with the community at large as a part of Christian witness (Epp, 1977). Hence, living the Christian life necessitates living "in the world." And assimilation and acculturation are considered an advantage to Mennoniteism. This reordering of doctrine has brought forward evangelism and community involvement as valuable to the Mennonite way of life.

Another reorientation of thinking among many Mennonites that has precipitated further interaction with the community at large is the reinterpretation of pacifism. The central focus of the peace mission of the church has shifted away from nonresistance as a form of group protest to war. Instead of nonconformity, the peace emphasis largely has been redirected toward service programs for suffering people. The Mennonite Relief Fund and a variety of other charitable programs organized through the Mennonite denominations have built up the religious and cultural identity of the group while at the same time opening up contacts with the public worldwide.

In Northwest Oklahoma two activities bring together Mennonites of all denominations and have been particularly effective as service projects. One of these is a meat canning project. Mennonites gather at an appointed location to process sides of beef that have been purchased or donated. The bulky canning equipment is trucked from area to area by a trained crew who supervise the volunteers they meet at each location. The meat canning project provides food for Mennonite contributions to those less fortunate.

The second large scale project undertaken by Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma is the annual relief sale held each year at the Major county fairgrounds in Fairview. The sale includes an auction of handmade quilts; hand crafted grandfather clocks, trunks, and children's toys; new and used farm equipment and major appliances; and other items. While the auction is going on Christmas decorations, green plants, some art and craft items made by local Mennonites and some items made in Mennonite missions throughout

the world are sold from booths.

The project is an opportunity to raise money for Mennonite peace programs and an opportunity for the group to reify its ethnic heritage. Men's choral singing and religious services open the festivities. Ethnic foods including new year's cookies, *Verenika,* German sausage and saurkraut, *Zwieback,* peppernuts, and many other kinds of baked goods can be purchased and eaten at long tables set up behind the auction arena. Mennonite literature explaining the use of the proceeds is on display. The auction is attended by hundreds of people. It is a one-day sale, held traditionally on the Saturday after Thanksgiving. It brings together all the Mennonite denominations in the area and, in 1988 alone, netted eighty-five thousand dollars (*Enid Daily News and Eagle,* 1988).

The peace initiative, once a personal and group vow of nonresistance to war or violence in any form, has become at the beginning of the 1990s a multidirectional effort based, for the most part, on interdenominational cooperation of all Mennonite groups to bring comfort to victims of misfortune. While the meat canning project and the relief sale are projects organized and carried out locally, individual commitment of time and personal effort to work at the site of major disasters such as floods and hurricanes, are also representative of the modern Mennonite peace ethic. The question of service in the military has become less a tenet of the religion and more a matter of personal choice for Oklahoma Mennonites as they enter the last decade of the century.

Near the end of the twentieth century, the Anabaptist doctrines of adult baptism, fellowship through partaking of communion, and devotion to the example of Christ's life remain the religious foundation of the group. Symbols of ethnicity, German foods, ceremonial holidays and religious rites preserve time honored traditions within the church family. World service, through charity, and community service, through evangelism, reflect the intentional efforts of Mennonites as a church to interact purposefully in contemporary culture.

The secular has become the social world of Mennonites. These Mennonites of

Northwestern Oklahoma no longer remove themselves from society. Unlike the early settlers who withdrew from public life, most Mennonites today participate fully in the social milieu of everyone's world.

Summary

The Mennonite society in 1990 is vigorous. Large scale, inter-denominational service programs promote peace and humanitarian aid to suffering people world wide. Numerous, well-attended churches located in towns and small cities across Northwestern Oklahoma minister to the needs of local congregations and actively extend fellowship to the public at large. Mennoniteism has undergone a tremendous transformation in the past century.

Beginning in 1893 when the Cherokee Outlet was opened for settlement, many German-speaking Mennonite immigrants and other Mennonites who came from the eastern and the plains states established homesteads and churches in Northwestern Oklahoma. Today, the great-grandchildren of those Mennonites have moved from poverty to prosperity, from nonconformity to integration, from closed congregations to evangelical mission, from nonresistant pacifism to pro-active peace initiatives and, for some, military service. The group has been transformed from the outside and, perhaps more importantly, has transformed itself from the inside.

The German-speaking Russian immigrants came to America looking for a home and religious toleration. They survived the elements to build a community of faith on the Oklahoma plains. The German language was the most obvious symbol of their separation from society. Through the early years of statehood, it served as a major boundary that let Mennonites uphold their ethnicity while at the same time increasing their interaction with the larger society. Scattered on isolated farms, separated from the solid ethnic communities that characterized group life in Russia, and forced to rely primarily on

public education for the instruction of their youth, the church structure itself came to be the principle force binding the group. Nonconformity and closed social activity served as the vehicle for group solidarity.

The Russian Mennonites contributed innovative farming practices and most importantly they introduced hard red winter wheat to the newly opened frontier. This laid the foundation for large scale grain production all across the great plains. The introduction of the hard winter wheat in Oklahoma and throughout the western states was the spark that ignited the rural development of the flat, arid prairies of all of middle America.

The community at large admired the Mennonites for their hard work, thrift, forthright business dealings, and sound farming practices. Yet the events surrounding America's entry into World War I and public reaction toward Mennonites during the war, challenged the very existence of the group. Old world traditions, German language use, and the practice of nonresistant pacifism were radically altered in response to the pressures brought on by the war. The war time persecutions which decimated the German/ Russian Mennonite ethnicity also united the religious Mennonite ethnicity. The Mennonite religion was rejuvenated.

As Northwest Oklahoma suffered through not one but two decades of depression after the first world war, migration from rural areas began. The number of Mennonites leaving the farm and entering occupations in urban areas grew. The group began to borrow from the established society to keep their own society going. A more highly organized church structure developed. A good many practices of mainstream Protestant denominations were adopted by Mennonite churches. Nonconformity as a basic religious symbol still was cultivated by the group. To preserve their identity Mennonites held to norms of moral behavior that were more strict than those of the community at large, they continued to promote in-group marriage and socialized almost entirely with those of their own faith. Secondary education for youth in private religious settings reinforced Mennonite traditions.

When World War II approached, church leadership worked against prevailing public opinion and overt discrimination to generate a selective service provision for conscientious objectors. Nevertheless, many Mennonite men entered the military service during the second world war. With the passing of time, militarism came to be tolerated, if not accepted, by the majority of the group. Today the peace mission of most churches in Northwest Oklahoma is focused on humanitarian aid. Nonresistance is a belief nurtured by the church but an activity open to personal choice.

During the years after World War II, Mennonite life changed dramatically. Mechanization, increased production, and specialized, one-crop farming worked to dislodge the diversified family farm operations that had historically been the major occupation and the foundation of the closed organization that bound Mennonites together as a religious/ethnic group. Largely through urbanization, professionalization of work, and affluence, the Mennonites gradually were assimilated into mainstream society. Political and economic issues and social concerns have become a part of the Mennonites' daily world. The group no longer attempts to shun society; instead, Mennonites actively participate in the larger social world.

At the same time the Mennonites have embraced the outside world, there has been an unprecedented amount of institution building, evangelism, and program activity of all kinds in Mennonite churches. During the post-World War II years there has been reorganization of the Mennonite ethic. The influence of mainstream Protestantism has continued to contribute to church life, as has the influence of Fundamentalism. Some old world traditions live on. Some unique forms of church life have evolved, including a variety of public events and celebrations that cut across denominational ties of Mennonites. These activities contribute substantially to a new sense of vitality and direction for the group. Mennonites today live within the social world. What sets them apart is their not their behavior in the world, but their way of looking at the world.

The history, events, and circumstances the group has encountered have transcended

what is almost a century of life in Oklahoma. The patterns of Mennonite community or-
ganization and individual behavior and changes in those patterns have been discussed
above. The interactions of Mennonites with those in the surrounding society of North-
west Oklahoma were noted when they appeared to connect to shifts in beliefs, values, and
norms of the group. At certain points in the narrative, a recapitulation of key statements
that reflect viewpoints common to most members have been made. These key statements
reflect the accounts given by Mennonites that justify overall changes in the groups'
thinking and disposition.

During their years in Northwest Oklahoma, Mennonites at times have chosen change
or at other times have been forced by the larger society to make change in their group
life. Yet the Mennonite religion and ethnic group continue as a strong influence on
members and a viable part of the community at large. The acculturation of the group has
been considerable, yet the group remains distinctive. To explain the nature of the Men-
noniteism, frames of reference maintained by the group and the alignment of incongruent
reference frames are analyzed in the next chapter. Research is then focused on media use
as a form of structural association through which coherent frames of reference in Men-
nonite life are established and reestablished. Finally, the salience of mediated communi-
cation in preserving ethnicity is addressed. The processes of frame alignment and
boundary maintenance, the coincidence of change and continuity that allow religious/
ethnic groups to persist is subject of the chapter to follow.

Footnotes

(1) The Cherokee Outlet is technically the official term for an area west of the Cherokee Nation ceded to the Cherokees by the United States government to be used for hunting and grazing purposes. The area lies between the ninety-sixth and one hundredth meridian and is bordered on the north by the Kansas state line and on the south by the thirty-sixth parallel. The same area is know colloquially as the Cherokee Strip. The two terms are used interchangeably in this report.

(2) The relationship of Mennonites to the Native American population in Oklahoma will not be addressed in this dissertation. Information about Mennonites and their missionary efforts among two of the Oklahoma tribes can be found in Lawrence H. Hart's Arapaho and Cheyenne meet the Mennonites published in *Growing faith: General Conference Mennonites in Oklahoma* (edited by Wilma McKee). Other information on the subject of Mennonites and Native Americans has been written in Calvin Redekop's Mennonite displacement of indigenous peoples: An historical and sociological analysis published in the *Journal of Canadian Ethnic Studies*.

(3) In the years following the opening of the Cherokee Outlet, the Old Mennonite congregations, Amish, and Krimmer denominations dwindled in size and eventually each disappeared from Northwest Oklahoma. The Church of God in Christ (Holderman) Mennonites still exist in the area. Most Holderman Mennonites are farmers. Members of the group practice nonconformity in dress, refuse education above the eighth grade, and do not permit use of radio, television, or viewing of movies. They are a small denomination. About two hundred fifty (Quinn, et al, 1982) Holderman Mennonites live in Northwest Oklahoma in Major County. This dissertation is concerned primarily with the Mennonite Brethren and General Conference Mennonite denominations. They are the largest groups in the area and they are the groups which permit media use and are groups characterized by a sizable degree of assimilation and acculturation.

CHAPTER VI

ANALYSIS: FRAMES, STRATEGIES,
COMMUNICATION, AND BOUNDARIES

The past chapter presented an overview of the development of Mennonites in
Northwestern Oklahoma from their settlement in Oklahoma territory to the present.
Chapter four also outlined changes in the organization of the group and the orientation of
individual group members to the larger society. The chapter forthcoming first details the
pivotal "frames" of reference, or conceptions, of the Mennonites studied and those of the
larger society that were presented in chapter four. The frames of Mennonites are then
analyzed as strategies of collective reorientation which label the adjustments Mennonites
have made in their religious and ethnic community. In other words, the primary subject
of the analysis to follow is the statements that Mennonites make to justify motivations for
their changed behavior. The study moves forward to explicate the conflicts generated
and the resolutions reached as events and circumstances over the years have resulted in
shifts in "frames" of reference between the Mennonites and the larger society. In addi-
tion, the research will detail ways that strategies of "frame alignment" and integration of
information through mediated communication work together to maintain group bounda-
ries and shape religious/ethnic identity.

What ways of thinking and channels of communication in the urban, technological
society bind together Mennonites as a group and separate them from society? And how
are these boundaries maintained? These are the questions addressed in this chapter.

Frames and Frame Disputes

When the Cherokee Outlet was opened to settlement in 1893, Mennonite settlers staked homesteads in Oklahoma territory and attempted to form socially separated religious communities patterned after Mennonite colonies in Russia. Many of the Mennonites who came to Oklahoma had either migrated from Russia or were the children of Russian Mennonite immigrants. The one hundred sixty acre farm land allotments apportioned by the United States government, the land rush method of settlement, and the movement of single families and individuals rather than the resettlement of intact communities in the territory were barriers to the type of group life that had been known in Russia. Nevertheless, Mennonites sought out homesteads near each other and established local churches.

Mennonites stood out from the community at large. They shunned contacts with those outside their faith. Their work habits and agricultural contributions led to forms of favorable prejudice from the larger community, but they were marked as different from established society. Their German language use and plain dress were distinctive group boundaries. Their belief system and values were invisible boundaries that held the group apart. While Mennonites were pacifists and believed in nonresistance, most other Oklahomans believed in militarism. Despite basic differences between the two groups, it was possible for Mennonites to assimilate and acculturate to some extent and to coexist with the larger society without conflict until the period prior to World War I.

AntiGerman sentiment in the general population was directed toward Mennonites and other German ethnics. Mennonites were subjected to negative prejudice, discrimination, and even violence during this period. Conflict between the Mennonite community and community at large developed from a dispute over what beliefs and actions were appropriate for Americans during wartime. The conflict centered around the meanings of religious freedom and patriotism. To the Mennonite community, in general, the first amendment guarantee of freedom of religion carried with it a guarantee that they would

not be required to fight for their country. To the majority of the established community the responsibilities of citizenship required a willingness to fight for one's country. The conflict over these values, patriotism and religious freedom, reflected a larger, "frame dispute" (Goffman, 1974) between the two groups. One interpretation of reality held that America, the land of freedom and opportunity, accepted diversity among its people and protected the religious beliefs of all. The other interpretation of reality held that America, the land of freedom and opportunity, could exist to offer these benefits only if its people were willing to protect their freedom with their lives. The two groups operated from, not exactly opposite but nevertheless, opposing points of view. Wartime tensions shattered the peaceful coexistence of the past. Frames of reference were no longer compatible. The conception of reality held by those of the dominate group prevailed. The identifiable boundaries that marked Mennonite religious/ethnicity collapsed from the pressure of threats, violence, the draft, and prison sentences. The wartime actions of individuals upheld frames of the dominate society, even though no Mennonite in Northwest Oklahoma was ever indicted as a traitor or found guilty of collaboration by a jury.

The use of German language, German culture, and old world traditions, disappeared. Symbols and signs of German/Russian heritage, the outward indicators of Mennonite religious/ethnicity no longer served as visible boundaries that separated these Mennonite communities from the outside world. The outward appearance of a distinct ethnic group vanished.

In the years after World War I, political action originating in the Mennonite community resulted in federal legislation that provided the group an alternative to being drafted into military service. Nevertheless, during World War II, the Korean conflict, and the Vietnam War growing numbers of Mennonite men chose to enter regular military service rather than noncombatant service in the armed forces or alternative service in the public sector. The number of Mennonite men of draft age who entered military service continued to grow larger even though requests for conscious objector status from men

outside the Mennonite community was increasing during this time, particularly during the Vietnam War. The frame of reference of the dominate society regarding military service appears to have been accepted, by many Mennonites in Northwestern Oklahoma.

A more rapid assimilation and acculturation of Mennonites into mainstream society began in the years after World War I. Changes in the technology and economics of agriculture, urbanization, educational opportunities, diversification in employment, affluence—all were contributing factors. The religious practices of the Mennonite churches changed also. Denominationalism and the influences from mainstream Protestantism and Fundamentalism helped shape the modern Mennonite ethic.

Conspicuous differences between Mennonites and the society at large were no longer identifiable after World War I. Forced by the events and issues surrounding World War I to drop the overt boundaries of group identity, Mennonites in Northwest Oklahoma have, through the years, assimilated into the established society. By the late 1950s almost all of the group had adopted lifestyles within mainstream society. Yet the group not only continued to exist, it thrived. The group has sustained itself.

Boundaries that mark the group's identity (Barth, 1969) have changed. The frames of reference that enable individuals to construct a sense of what is going on in their world, what it is to be a Mennonite, have changed also. A somewhat different frame of reference now supports the construction of reality for the group. A realignment of the overall frames of reference Mennonites held that were in great conflict with the general population during the World War I years has occurred. A reestablished equilibrium has allowed for the continued, vigorous existence of Mennonites as a group within the broader society. In the following portion of this analysis, I show how Mennonites frames of reference have been transformed (Snow, et al, 1986) and rekeyed (Goffman, 1974) to align (Snow, et al, 1974) with the frames of reference present in the larger society. This is done through examining the salient strategies that Mennonites use justify their group activities and keep their group intact.

Keying, Transformation, and Frame Alignment:

As demonstrated in chapter four and above, one dominate frame of reference that permeates the social world of the established society in Northwest Oklahoma associates patriotism with militarism. From this overall perspective, pacifism is an unacceptable alternative to aggression. A second, dominate frame of reference, which is related to the first, upholds conformity and disapproves of nonconformity. Those who deviate from generally accepted norms and stand out are liable to be held accountable for their actions by the established society. Dominate frames of reference present in society and worked out in social action have pressured Mennonites to conform to the beliefs and practices of the majority and most Mennonites complied.

In the 1990s Mennonite religious/ethnicity rests not on any set of identifying group rituals or symbols or on any particular status ascribed by the outside world. In general, Mennonites now are social conformists. In appearance and manner they blend into society. They exist with the frames of reference set by the larger social world. Nevertheless, the group has survived and maintains a clear identity within the general population. Mennonite religious/ethnicity has survived through adaptation. In order to survive Mennonites' have aligned, rekeyed, and transformed their own frames of reference to coincide with the frames existing in the general population. As group members, Mennonites have changed the way they view their group. The process of framing and reframing develops continually and allows Mennonites to act as members of the larger society and retain the identity of the group as well. Mennonites' frames of reference instead of conflicting with the larger group, as happened during the World War I years, are now aligned to dominate frames of reference held by those in the larger society. The beliefs and values Mennonites hold today are, in some instances, only vaguely related to,

or appear to be a reversal of, the beliefs and values that once supported Mennonites' frames of reference.

Verbal accounts that Mennonites use support their religious/ethnic frames of reference and align them with dominate frames of militarism and conformity present in the larger society. These verbal accounts can be organized into sets of strategies of individuals. Together the strategies, beliefs and values support frames of reference that accommodate the larger society and shore up boundaries shared by the group. The verbal accounts include: the peace imitative, separatism, and the ties that bind membership.

The peace initiative is at the center of the Mennonite religious/ethnic heritage. From their founding in sixteenth century onward, Mennonites have sought to avoid violence in their personal lives and have denounced war. Beginning with the small group of Mennonites who joined Quaker volunteers working in France during World War I, the Mennonite peace effort has been turned away from focusing on nonresistance to war and refocused in other directions. The idea of pacifism as nonresistance to war has been "rekeyed" or reconceptualized in Mennonite thinking. Pacifism today is taught in the church as resistance to violence. It is opposition to violent acts in all forms that is brought forward as important. Pacifism as nonresistance to war is no longer the exclusive peace teaching of the churches. Pacifism is taught as participation of group members in activities that promote peace among individuals and nations and alleviate suffering.

The emphasis of church teaching is on individual interpretation of pacifism. Nonresistance to war efforts has become more a matter of personal conscience than a tenant of church doctrine. This has opened the way for Mennonite men to cope with their personal decisions about military service in a variety ways. One Mennonite described the situation:

I know of one of the men in our church who was in the army. He told me that

basically, he had had no particular teaching as to why a person should take a peace position over against a non-peace position . . . But with my own children, there was a very strong anti-Vietnam feeling, very, very strong so that they would not have been in the military at all. That's my own, I can't speak for the other families.

The group life of the congregation is the major concern. There is a strong effort in the churches to support pacifism, but avoid stressing nonresistance. And overall, the direction of church teaching is on following the example of Christ in everyday living. Pacifism as a doctrine is an underlying theme. Sin, forgiveness, salvation, and right living are overt themes. One man ordered the priorities this way:

> Today, we have pastors who have been in the military. Peace is still a very prominent part of the Mennonite culture and faith; however, there is more freedom now. If somebody wants to join our church, we can't say, 'Well, we can't accept your position.' We're not going to keep them out of church because of that. You see, it (nonresistance) is not as important as salvation.

Even though the United States has not been at war during the past fifteen years, the peace initiative as a concern to Mennonites has never been laid to rest. The outside world identifies Mennoniteism with pacifism. By not entirely withdrawing from the original Anabaptists' belief in nonresistance to war and by allowing service in the military to become a personal decision rather than a symbol of religious dedication, Mennonites have been able to position their religious beliefs in a form compatible with the dominant frames of reference of mainstream society. Further, the political compromise that legislated conscientious objector classifications, and the demise of the draft, have shifted dominate frames of reference to more closely align with frames that support pacifism. The Mennonite denominations have not altogether acquiesced to pressure from outside

the group, in leaving nonresistance up to personal choice. The ideas of the group instead have been shifted or rekeyed to align with, but not embrace, the ideology of the established society.

Separatism has highlighted differences between Mennonites and the larger society. During the years after World War I, the old world customs that included speaking German, plain dress, and abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and dancing were transformed into invisible signs of separatism that included taboos against the wearing jewelry or make-up by women, viewing movies and television, and abstinence from alcohol, tobacco, and dancing. Separatism was a major identifying boundary of the group from its inception in the 1600s until the mid-twentieth century. Today Mennonites' living patterns mirror those in the surrounding society. Separatism as a way of life is but a memory of older generations. The tendency today is to embrace life in the mainstream of society and to discount any value that separatism might have had to group life. In the words of one woman:

> Of course, I had to learn German at home. My folks taught high German to us so we would learn it. When really, my mother would have benefited very much if we had talked English to her. The biggest change (in the church), I think, was the negative approach. Now there is a more positive approach to Christianity. That's a big improvement. They (pastors) don't go into detail so much about don't do this, don't do that. Love your neighbor, more on the positive side. I think that's a big improvement.

In the past, Mennonites strove to be "in" the world but not "of" the world. By this they meant their physical lives were bound by the temporal earth; but their spiritual lives, however, could be set apart from worldliness. This rationale led the Mennonites to withdraw into closed communities, to be outside "of" the world. Today, Mennonites still

say they strive to be "in" the world but not "of" the world. But when they say this today their meaning is somewhat different. To be "in" the world means living along side all others. Setting themselves apart from today's world means, for Mennonites, not withdrawal from society, but living the Christian life "in" a worldly atmosphere. The doctrinal rationale for the acculturated lifestyles of modern Mennonites is explained by a church leader:

Yes, you see changes. It's a conviction of individuals, to be exemplary in life, to care for one another. Yes, there have been many changes in dress, costume, and customs, but they have not been detrimental. There are some that don't approve of the changes, but it has become an individual's responsibility to be an example of Christianity.

And from a Mennonite church member:

When I think of the bondage that some people are in about those kinds of things (restrictive codes of behavior), it is so sad to me. It is really sad to me. They know that's not where their salvation lies. They know the facts, but they haven't had the freedom yet.

And from still another Mennonite:

Now the Mennonite Brethren used to be separate. They separated themselves from the world. Although I wasn't brought up that way, some were in some areas, but we were brought up when you accept Jesus Christ, that means it makes a difference in the way you live.

The frames of reference that once held separatism up as a positive demonstration of Mennonite faithfulness have been transformed. Separatism is now regarded as a quaint comment on the group's history, not a viable lifestyle. The acculturated Mennonites interviewed for this research view the proscribed behavior and restrictive norms of conduct practiced in the past as detrimental to the development of the group. The change in frame now presents separatism as inappropriate in today's society. Mennonites say they are more "liberal" now. Old taboos that strictly regulated behavior have been radically revised. Dancing, drinking alcohol, and smoking tobacco are now discouraged and/or tolerated, rather than forbidden.

A shift of frames allow the interpretation of some of the old restrictions to be revised and some others even reversed. For example, movies once were forbidden viewing and ownership of radios prohibited, Mennonites today own all types of media equipment and use mass media in a variety of forms in religious worship. Mennonites' frames of reference have been transformed to align with frames dominant in the established society. Behavior that was once proscribed is now accepted. Other behavior that was once pre-scribed is now a matter of choice. Mennonites today conform to norms of mainstream society and describe their acculturated lifestyles as "positive" or "free" approaches to Christianity. Separatism has been transformed and is today considered a misinterpreta-tion of Christian values.

The ties that bind membership Over the years, as the group developed and member-ship grew, patterns of church organization became institutionalized. Mennonites bor-rowed from Fundamentalist groups and other Protestant denominations. They came to view their group life and church organization as similar to those of other Protestant de-nominations. Shared beliefs, rituals, and structures now are common to those of other Protestant denominations. The association of Mennoniteism with Protestantism is a positive one for group members, and supports the alignment Mennonite frames of

reference with those of the larger society. Mennonites include themselves in the larger religious community. In discounting any marginality of the group one Mennonite woman said:

> When we moved away from here, I attended Baptist churches and Nazarene and we're not any different as far as I know, in our lifestyle, our belief system than any of them.

And from another Mennonite woman:

> Even if you walked into the church, if you didn't see the sign on the door, I don't think you could identify it right away as a Mennonite church.

In times past interaction with "outsiders" or "Englisha" was discouraged. Exogenous marriage was forbidden and on occasion, Mennonites of other denominations were excluded from, or stigmatized by, some congregations. Evangelicalism has broadened the base of the modern church. An "everybody's welcome" rhetoric is the reverse of the exclusive, in-group relationships of churches in the past. Having the "right" last name, i.e. a surname of German extraction common in the Mennonite community, is no longer a prerequisite for entry and acceptance to the group. This frame shift is affirmed by religious doctrine. Mennonites say its not their common heritage that binds the group together, but their faith. The importance of evangicalism was a major recurring theme in many of the interviews.

The keying of the group within the body of other Protestant religions and the evangelicalism that broadens the heterogeneous mix of the congregations is, to some extent, problematic. Complete identification as a religious body would negate the ethnicity of the group. The group struggles to hold evangelicalism and close knit in-group

ethnicity in tandem. Overall, the frame adjustment is toward openness. But while the group has become more receptive to outsiders, some Mennonites still play the "Mennonite Game" to the consternation of some new members. As one convert related:

> When Mennonites get together, they start going through names, who are you related to, that's the big thing, common food, common history, the very similar names, the Friesens, and the Janzens, and the Unruhas, wherever you go around the country, that's the game. Somebody is always related to somebody, it seems. You know you kind of feel like an outsider for awhile.

There is a sense of ambivalence about the value of ethnicity to the group. On the one hand Mennonites stress evangelism and on the other they reify their ethnicity through playing the Mennonite game, common foods, and in-group loyalties. Ethnic history is stressed in worship and taught regularly to children and adults in Sunday School and study sessions. Mennonites attempt to cultivate a strong ethnic identity and openness at the same time, and use Biblical references to support each. For example one woman said:

> Since we have gone over to the English, (language use) we have other people that don't have our kind of names in church, so there's been a change. Mennonites used to feel kind of like the children of Israel—stay with your own people, don't get mixed up with these other people.

Another woman used the same Biblical analogy in a different way:

> You know God says to keep separate, for the Jewish people to stay separate. And the Mennonites seem to be that way too. They are a very loving people, like the

Jewish, if you've got a Jewish friend, he will literally give you the shirt off his back. And they will help their brothers out, extremely, What do they say? seven times they will forgive a debt from a brother. They will go that far. I can see that in Mennonites. Mennonites are extremely helpful to each other.

Modern Mennonites cultivate their religious/ethnic background, encourage strong in-group relationships and at the same time, emphasize evangelism and work to attract new members from the outside community. These two, rather disconcerting lines of verbal accounts and actions, are brought together somewhat in programs of actions that place emphasis on the family. Mennonites value stressing traditional family values. By accentuating the importance of strong, patriarchal, nuclear family units and the church as an extended family, both non-ethnics and ethnics alike can find acceptance in Mennonite churches. One woman's explanation shows how the strategy works. She said:

> There may be some things about our church—our personalities don't welcome people to our services. I think as Christians our church's stand is very strong on the family, structured family, and, of course, a strong stand against divorce.

Another man put it this way:

> I stay with the Mennonite Brethren Church, I believe, because of the distinct iveness. The Mennonites are a very close knit people. Church is almost a second home. When I was a little baby, and when our own children were born, hey, as soon as momma could go, the children were to church.

Family is a unifying theme that brings together two disparate lines of action: evangelicalism and ethnic bonding. By presenting family as the basis for church

structure, both openness to outsiders and devotion to ethnic identity may be worked together. Both values can then be adapted to locate the Mennonite churches within the broader spectrum of Protestant denominationalism. And as a result the group's purpose can align with frames of reference that encourage conformity to the society at large.

The frame that situates group unity is not fully keyed. Evangelicalism and ethnic bonding are somewhat conflicting values. Contradictions within the frame make the inter-frame alignment unstable. The compatibility of Mennonites as a religious group within the overall perspective of Protestantism is upheld by Mennonites. This allows group solidarity as a rekeyed frame to be aligned with the conformity frame present in the dominate society.

World War I was a world shattering experience for Mennonites. The frames within which the Mennonite society had existed were wrecked. The Mennonites, during the years following World War I, adjusted their individual frames of reference to bring them in align with the dominate frames of the established society. In doing so the Mennonites have reinterpreted their religious/ethnicity. World peace, Christian living, and strong group ties, are historical values compatible with the values of the larger society and are at the center of Mennonite life today. What has changed is not the values at the center of Mennonite group life. It is the way the values are framed that has changed over the years. The reports of individual Mennonites reflect changed perceptions: from peace as nonresistance to peace efforts as a personal commitment of individuals, from separatism to life within worldly society, from closed to open church group relationships. The newer perceptions rekey and transform old frames of reference to create and uphold a Mennonite way of life and make it compatible with the frames of reference of those in the dominant society.

Frames and Communication

Framing is abstract and ideational. It is developed from strategies members formulate about beliefs and values of the group. Mennonite ethnicity is generated, in part, through frames of pacifism, faithfulness to a Christ-like way of life, and strong group ties, as it has been for centuries. The frames and the group remain intact. The frames, however, have been altered. The basic tenets of the group have been reformed to align the Mennonite frames of reference to those frames dominant in the larger society. Keying and transformation of frames have aligned Mennonites' interpretative orientations and rendered them congruent and complementary with the Mennonites' past and with the dominate frames of reference present in the larger society. The Mennonite religious/ethnicity is affirmed.

But frames are abstract. Frames are patterns of thinking. Ideation alone cannot support religious/ethnicity. Religious/ethnicity is both ideational and expressive. Group boundaries are both ways of thinking and ways of doing (Barth, 1969). Both frames of reference and expressive acts create boundaries. In the case of the generally well educated and affluent white, third and fourth generation German/Russian immigrant Mennonites of Northwest Oklahoma, ascriptive boundaries do not define the group. Mennonites have assimilated and assumed the culture of the dominant society and very few recognizable boundaries remain to separate them from the larger society. The group's identity, for the most part, certainly does not come from outside itself. Mennonite religious/ethnicity rests largely on self-identity. It is an invisible ethnicity.

Mennonite religious/ethnicity is sustained through frames of reference and expressive behavior that creates and modifies group boundaries. The ideational aspects of framing and the ideational aspects of self-identity locate the maintenance of group boundaries in expressive communication. The process of building and sustaining religious/ethnic group boundaries is centered in communication. Implicit within the peace

initiative, separatism, and group membership frames of reference are programs (Perinba-nayagam, 1985)) of action. Communicative acts, like frames, are processual and on-going, by definition, activity oriented. In the section to follow I consider how mediated communication is used by Mennonites to shape frames of reference and mold boundaries of group identity.

Producing and Consuming Media

Communication is at the center of Mennonite religious/ethnicity. Religious/ethnic self-identity rests on communicative acts. Communicative acts support and create the construction of frames of reference and boundaries that identify Mennonite as a group. Communication is both interpersonal and mediated. Although I do not ignore the importance of interpersonal communication, my study of Mennonites concentrates only on the relationship of mediated communication in shaping Mennonite religious/ethnicity. Mennonite ethnicity is, for the most part, invisible ethnicity. Ascriptine status plays much less a part in the Mennonite identity than does the salience of values. For this reason the study of mediated communicative acts is an efficacious method for ascertaining methods of identity construction, frame building, and group boundary maintenance, all of which are interrelated. By looking at ways Mennonites use mediated communication an understanding of how Mennonite identity is shaped may be explored.

Mediated communication is comprised of acts. Mennonites act and form the boundaries of the group. Mennonites act and express shared beliefs and values of the group. Mennonites act and create individual's frames of reference. In today's world, Mennonites act and advance the efforts to alleviate suffering of victims and sustain the peace initiative frame. Mennonites act and shape their individual lives within rather than outside the established social world. Mennonites act and support ties of group membership.

Efforts to support and shape frames of reference rely to some degree on mediated communication. Park (1967) noted that the influence of media in shaping ethnic groups was processes oriented. He found the foreign language press, which encouraged literacy and focused on American politics and social issues, did as much or more to acculturate newly arrived immigrants as it did to perpetuate old world language and customs. Park (1967) realized the study of media as an independent variable was ill advised. He sought to understand the ways people used the foreign language press in society. The Mennonite religious/ethnics studied in this research, unlike the ethnics Park studied in the 1920s, have at their disposal a myriad of media technologies. The accurate Hurative function of media and the way media functions to sustain groups operate in a much more complex fashion today. In the following section I will discuss the uses Mennonites make of mediated communication, demonstrate the creative aspects mediated communication use, and show how mediated communication is related to group boundary maintenance.

Mennonites as Consumers of Media

The group of Mennonites studied in this research are immersed in a media-oriented, technologically-centered society. High-technology has created a world-wide flood of media and almost instantaneous electronic communication. Mennonites are part of an information based society. They live in a global village (McLuhan, 1964). The emphasis on education and adaptation of technology particularly in farming endeavors early on in the history of the Mennonite church and the continued importance of these themes in Mennoniteism may have had some bearing on the rapid acceptance of media by the group. Many of the homes of Mennonites are "media centers."

It would be uncommon to find a Mennonite home without radio, television, stereos, magazines, books, and newspapers. Video cassette recorders, compact disk players, computers, and the like are found in fewer, but still a sizable number of Mennonite

homes. Without exception, all those interviewed for this research said they used media in a variety of forms daily. Many start their day being awakened by a clock radio. Many said they read a newspaper daily, and a clear majority indicated at some time during the day they read the Bible or used some other form of published religious devotional material. Few of the Mennonites interviewed considered themselves to be heavy television users. On the other hand, few said they restricted the use of media in any way in their homes, although many at some time had restricted their children's television use.

Most commented on the poor quality of television programming and pointed to violence and sex as disagreeable; but few could recall a specific instance when they had "turned off" a program because it was offensive. Most regarded a lot of what is in the media as valueless, and a few thought television was actually harmful in some instances; but those who did said they didn't know exactly "how" media harmed people.

One woman indicated that media, its quality and its forms, was simply part of the "environment." This rationale for indiscriminate media use seems to fit within the Mennonites' broader frame of reference that conform to those of mainstream society. Mennonites believe they must now live within the world. The acculturative influence of all this media use was illustrated by one man:

We had our three granddaughters with us last week. Well, I have a VCR. Grandpa! we want to watch the movie. The first movie we saw—cute, interesting movie, trick photography in that thing like you wouldn't believe. The language was not that bad. Next next movie we got, in terms of lifestyles, was very, very far fetched from any Christian values. I had three grand kids that in less than twenty-four hours saw that movie three times. And, of course, to them the fun thing was the baby. Well, they just howled. They didn't realize that baby was born out of wedlock. I mean that kind of issue was not in the kids heads, but you know, for me, that's not where I'm at.

The overriding perception is that media, in its various forms, is acculturating. Much media is distasteful to Mennonites and many think, probably harmful, but to attempt to disassociate one's self or one's family from it would be futile. On the other hand, media is also perceived as an enjoyable past-time that offers some kind of information.

Instead of attempting to restrict the acculturating influences in media that may or may not be affecting them, Mennonites actively select and use certain types of media that reinforce their own value system, the daily devotional, for example. Printed material published by the Mennonite denominations, *The Christian Leader* ,*The Mennonite,* and other periodicals are circulated widely. In addition, many books, pamphlets, take-home Sunday School workbooks for children and adults put out by the Mennonite denominations also are found in Mennonite homes. Religious books and music printed by Protestant publishing houses or by Fundamentalist groups are widely used, as well as videotaped religious subject matter. Periodicals and other kinds of printed and video material that relate to the special interests of individuals are used by Mennonites. For example, literature from peace organizations and from anti-abortion groups is circulated to members of the group. Special interest information geared to hobbies, sports, and/or business and professional people also can be found in Mennonite homes.

Not only are the materials produced by other religious groups found in the homes of Mennonites, such materials are used in church services as well. In one church, a series of video lectures on the subject of family life distributed by the Presbyterian church was viewed regularly by a group of about forty adult members. Discussions over the material presented in the video was held after each viewing session.

The Mennonite denominations also prepare and distribute video material to local congregations. Movies on church history are popular and shown regularly. Movies that show mission efforts of the Mennonite denominations also are distributed widely to individual congregations.

A good many of the Mennonites interviewed, particularily women, mentioned that

they spend time watching "Christian television." By this they meant the sermons and other programming offered by Fundamentalist religious stations and broadcast over cable television. Some of those who lived in rural areas where cable television was not available indicated they listened to religious programs on the radio. One woman said that she viewed religious programming daily and exclusively with but a single exception. She also made a habit of watching a network, daytime-television soap-opera, daily during her lunch hour.

In summary, Mennonites, as a group do not appear to restrict the flow of mass media into their homes in any regulated way. Although they often criticize it, they seem to involve themselves with many forms of media content and types of media technology. Individual members of the group actively seek out media that reinforce their own denominational beliefs and group values, the religious values of constituent religious groups, and/or material that appeals to other special interests that they might have. Outside their homes, in their churches, Mennonites avail themselves of materials, especially visual media produced by Fundamentalist, or mainline Protestant organizations. Their own denominations make available movies and other kinds of printed and visual materials for use in local churches. In short, Mennonites appear to involve themselves with masses of mass communication and special interest material.

Mennonites as Producers of Media

Mennonites create media as well as consume it. As farmers, they were among the first to adopt new agricultural technologies. Today, they, just as readily, adopt new media technologies. Video cameras provide the group opportunity to make movies. One congregation put together a script about their church, taped several different activities of their members, edited their work, and produced it all as a video that was broadcast on public access cable television. Another congregation regularly videotape its Sunday

morning church services for replay at a local nursing home in which several elderly members of the congregation are confined. Almost all Mennonite churches produce a weekly newsletter that contains information about congregational programs and events that is mailed to member's homes.

One minister of a congregation in an urban area uses a darkroom he has set up at the church to produce a series of slides that he uses to accompany his weekly sermons. He said:

I had never been into photography before and I took a class on it. I desperately wanted to communicate. I love the Bible, and am thoroughly convinced that it's God's word to us, as old as it is. The principles are still the truth. I desperately wanted to communicate it. And I just realized the traditional sermon of a half-hour monologue wasn't doing it. I felt that having some kind of visual effect would help. That's basically my motivation and I really ought to think about other ways, you know.

Ministers or church lay leaders are usually involved in the media creation processes, often directing or organizing the work of others. The creation of mass media is a multi-faceted operation, and is unique. Every congregation is involved on its own. The production of media at the local level is limited and not undertaken by all congregations.

Media is also produced by joint effort of churches. For example, the annual Mennonite relief sale is highly publicized. Through news releases sent to local, area, and statewide publications; brochures; and announcements, an organized effort of volunteers uses public channels of communication to attract attention for the sale. At a higher level of organization, the General Conference of Mennonite Brethren Churches and the Mennonite Church General Conference each maintain a publishing house. One Mennonite woman living in Northwest Oklahoma has published a book of religious

stories for children through her denomination's press.

The amount of media produced by individual Mennonites for their local congregations or denominations is very limited especially when compared to the amount of commercial media consumed by Mennonites. The production of media is obviously a creative act. Onemain purpose of the media Mennonites produce is to create or extend the group's identity. The production of media is social interaction built within ongoing frames of reference of pacifism, separatism, and group bonding. Taking a video of church services to the rest home can strengthen group ties. Producing a television film about church life can heighten the group's identification with the general public. Writing children's books and making photographic slides to accompany sermons have instructive value. The production of media allows for the ordering of individual and collective experiences that shape group boundaries. The creation of media is an expression of the group, and about the group, that reinforces the group.

Media and Boundary Maintenance

The history of Mennonite life in Oklahoma reveals the high degree of acculturation that has taken place over the years. From the early days of frontier settlement onward the Mennonites have, in practically all facets of their social life, adapted to the demands of the larger social world. Mennonites, for the most part, have assimilated into the mainstream of society. The taboos that forbade use of radio, attendance at movies, and reading some printed materials have been replaced with relaxed group controls that accommodate the use of many forms of mediated communication. The group's early and continued emphasis on education, which resulted in individual's exposure to altrnative perspectives as well as the group's early adoption and innovative uses of technology, perhaps has influenced their acceptance of media. Pressures from both within and outside the group influenced changes in the group members' attitudes toward media use.

Today, Mennonites embrace mediated communication in virtually all its forms and use mediated communication as a method to reinforce and shore-up group boundaries.

Both the consumption and production of media serve as processes through which the religious/ethnicity of the group is maintained. Just as the ideational aspect of group boundary maintenance has been explained as a process of keying and rekeying individual frames of reference to align with dominant perceptions present within the organization of the larger society, the communicative aspects of group life may be explained in similar fashion. In a manner which may be described as compatible rather than parallel communicative acts, in this instance mediated communicative acts, are viewed as instruments of community organization and symbolic representations.

The behaviorial aspect of Mennonites religious/ethnicity emerges from, and may be said to resemble, the ideational constructs of group life. Media use allows the group members to build boundaries that establish and maintain the group's identity. There are symbolic and organizational aspects to the group's uses of mediated communication.

The daily devotionals and shared Bible reading serve as examples of symbolic expression of media use. These religious activities are often ritualistic. Devotions are generally held at breakfast, at the night-time dinner hour, or before retiring in the evening. The devotions are most usually observed in a ritualistic manner consisting of Bible reading, the study of a "lesson" from printed material, and prayer addressed in a proscribed manner and particular order.

Group television, video tape and movie viewing have ritualistic and symbolic significance as well. The gathering of the group in the church to share in media use is a late twentieth-century representation of the group's bonding in the mid-sixteenth century. The viewing of films on church history , including the re-creation of the deaths of the early martyrs, as a means to instill in viewers the lessons of group identification as well as church doctrine. The review of the migrations of the group in search of religious freedom reinforces an historical association with Mennonite ethnicity that serves as a

badge of identification that is a positive, albeit self-imposed and entirely conceptual, label of marginality.

Not all group viewing is restricted to lessons in ethnic history and church doctrine. A good deal of videotape watching is devoted to topics related to every day life. The subjects range from lessons on how to build a good marriage to effective estate planning. The willingness to make use of video tapes produced by a variety of Protestant religious denominations is reflective of Barth's (1969) view that groups persevere even though group boundaries are permeable and may be crossed often and in many ways. The example also is illustrative of Barth's (1969) theory that ethnicity is a continuous expression of social interaction. Much of the religious material consumed by the group is produced by Mennonites and much of the religious material consumed by the group is produced by other Protestant organizations.

Both the media created by Mennonites and that coming from Protestant denominations have the effect of "canalizing" (Barth, 1969) group activity. The historical accounts of ostracism and suffering at the hands of the dominant society channel the group and encourage a positive association with the group's social distinctiveness. The visual and graphic reiteration of the Mennonite doctrine provide members an opportunity to identify Mennoniteism with separatism. The media creations of Protestant denominations generate support for a Christian ethic that is directly applicable to Mennonites' every day life. Media present symbols of Mennoniteism and media use can be a symbol of group integration as well as a ritual of group life.

The consumption of media is indeed an act of boundary maintenance which embodies ritualistic and symbolic expressions and at the same time reflects how people and ideas may flow across boundaries with the boundaries remaining intact. The acts of media consumption and production also are a part of the process of community organization. The act of creating sermons that integrate self-prepared, photographic

slides, the work of videotaping Sunday services for replay in convalescent homes, the communal effort involved in the preparation of church newsletters--all play a role in building and reinforcing the purposes of the group. Not only are they major endeavors in the life of the churches, they offer an opportunity for members to act out the communal values expressed in their religious doctrine. The activity of preparing the newsletter, which often involves the participation of several members as well as the activity involved in the work of sermon preparation and videotaping, is each an interaction with a direct influence in building support within the group and reinforcement of the values and identity.

From the viewpoint of this research, perhaps the most striking example of media use as an integrative function of the group was the production of the videotape that recorded the activities and purposes of one local congregation. The videotape represented the organization of the group, it involved a goodly number of the congregation in its filming, and it provided opportunity for the outside community to identify and identify with Mennonites. The use of media, its production and its consumption, creates meaning for the Mennonites as a group and for Mennonites as individuals. Media use is an individual experience, but it is not only an individual experience. It is, at times, a shared experience, and it appears to be an experience that creates meaning for group members. Media use in the life of the church members has symbolic and ritualistic aspects and is one means the group has to organize itself.

In the experience of religious/ethnic group boundary maintenance, the production and consumption of media use is multidimensional. The popular view of media as a force that encourages homogeneity is not an entirely accurate conceptualization. Many view media use as Park (1967) viewed the influence of newspapers and the foreign language press in the first decades of twentieth century. Park's (1967) judgment was that printed communication, even those publications written in the native language of immigrant groups, was not particularly unifying, but served largely as an acculturating

influence. The press, including the nonEnglish press, socialized ethnic groups by encouraging literacy, democratic ideology, and the American way of life. The influence of media in the acculturation of minorities and ethnic groups certainly cannot be denied. nevertheless, the uses of mass communication are hardly unidirectional. Park, himself, made a point of stressing the multidirectional influence of media. Mediated communication use, as this study shows, not only served to acculturate minorities, it also may be a way to reunify in-group bonds. In a group whose members accommodate the frames of reference present in the dominant society, group boundaries are invisible and form around means of communication. Media use, even in its most general form can unify the subgroup as well as unify the society in general. An urban Mennonite alluded to the concept this way:

> Well, you know, there are some that might be shocked that I go to a movie now and then. There are those that don't have TV. Not that I know of, though. Now, I know a few families who will watch just Christian TV exclusively, and I think I would rather have them watch something secular than some of the things they watch that come from that viewpoint. I think by and large our folks interact with the culture. They know right from wrong, they know the Christian world view, and that's not bothered by other things. I think we can enjoy the plot and the characterization and the artistic value of something that has a diametrically-opposed world view.

The process of selecting media for use, the consumption of its content in various forms, the integration of different types of media, and the budgeting of time spent with media are interactive acts. Media presents opportunity for acculturation, but it also presents opportunity to "cannalize" (Barth, 1969) group behavior through adjustment in the way media is used. In a similar manner that the Mennonite ethnics studied in this

research aligned, keyed, and transformed their own individual frames of reference to accommodate the demands of the greater social world, these same Mennonites adjust media use. While much of their media use is nonselective, these people do actively select some types of media for consumption and produce their own media. The Mennonites who were the subjects of this research were able to accommodate media in all its forms and at the same time actively seek out media that reinforce their own peculiar group ethic. They accept the media of the dominant culture and they adjust their use of media. This is one way they are able to uphold the values and norms of their religious/ethnic group.

Media use presents an opportunity for acculturation of Mennonite ethnicity and an opportunity for individuals to put together fragments of information to build their own group identity. By picking and choosing from content and technologies, individual Mennonites form the boundaries of their group and create their religious/ethnicity. They use technology creatively to their own purposes.

Mennonites accept, reject, and manipulate their media use. Both producing and consuming media can involve improvisation. Both are expressive acts and acts upon which boundaries are established. In 1964 McLuhan observed the impact of media technology and stressed its unifying effect. McLuhan's analysis emphasized the power of the electronic technologies of the twentieth century to connect the farthest corners of the world and tie disparate populations together in a global village. An analysis of the Mennonites studied in this research both affirms and rejects McLuhan's (1964) premise. Indeed, McLuhan's (1964) concept of a global village built by technology is true; it is also possible that life in that global village built by technology is carried on in clans; clans that are connected electronically. For the Mennonites, at least those observed in this study, mediated communication is a way that individuals in the group express self-identification to the group, sustain beliefs and values, shore-up frames of reference, and

maintain group boundaries. At the same time mediated communication acculturates, it can cultivate religious/ethnicity.

Conclusion

Mennonites have undergone a tremendous change in the almost one hundred years the group has spent in Oklahoma. Mennonites have changed from a closed community to an open one, from plain dress and restrictive codes of behavior to assimilation and acculturation into mainstream society, from pacifism as religious doctrine to pacifism as personal choice. The events and issues surrounding World War I precipitated a change in the group's use of German language, in the group's response to war, in group culture overall. Mennonites live in a complex and rapidly changing society. Adaptation has permitted survival. As codes of dress and conduct for the group were broken, the ascriptive nature of Mennoniteism gave way to a religious/ethnicity based largely on self-identity.

Self-identity, shared beliefs and values, frames of reference through which members interpret their world, and group boundaries are interrelated abstract concepts that explain how the group can exist amidst great change. The basic tenets of Mennonite religious/ ethnicity have not changed over the years. But changes have been made in the way Mennonites interpret their religious/ethnic life. Frames of reference have been rekeyed and transformed to align with frames in the dominant society. For example, nonresistance to war has been rekeyed to pacifism as an individual's personal interpretation of nonviolence. Separatism from the larger social world has been transformed to separatism from sinful, worldly behavior. Strong group ties based on kinship and heritage have been keyed to strong group ties based partly on kinship and heritage and primarily on sense of purpose.

Mennonite religious/ethnicity is an invisible ethnicity. It is largely ideational and shaped by beliefs and values that take form in communicative acts. Mennonites involve

themselves with virtually all types of mediated communication. They use a variety of religious and secular printed materials as well as radio, television, and various types of other electronic media ware. Mennonites produce media in many forms including church newsletters, advertisements for their activities, videotapes, and illustrated sermons. As these Mennonites consume and produce media, they use mediated communication as symbols, develop rituals around media use and shape their social organization through media use. Media use is one way Mennonites promote lines of action that define the group to itself and others. Through the way they select media and produce their own media, Mennonites use mediated communication creatively.

Mennonites shape frames of reference that allow their group to adapt and exist within the context of the larger society. Mennonites also interact with mass communication to shape group boundaries that allow for the group's continued existence within the context of the larger society. Patterns of alignment shape frames of reference and patterns of interaction shape group life. With regard to the Mennonites studied in this research, a degree of similarity exists among these patterns and processes. In both framing and in interaction that shapes group boundaries, the dominant trend toward assimilation, acculturation, and acceptance of the larger social world is undergirded by a strong effort to reunify the group's religious/ethnicity. Both frame alignments and mediated communication are processual. Frame alignment processes and mediated communication use are creative endeavors; they are acculturating and at the same time provide for cultivation of strong in-group boundaries. The media that acculturates also delineates. The Mennonites of this study have emerged from their past as a group intact. Today, in an era of instant communication that has turned the world into a global village, the Mennonites of Northwest Oklahoma live in an electronically connected clan.

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