

**DEVELOPING AN UNDERSTANDING OF THE KANADIER MENNONITE
AND IMPLICATIONS FOR EDUCATION**

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To Don, Cassandra and Michelle: My truest and most unfailing source of joy

ABSTRACT

The project focuses on a unique migrant population in Horizon School Division called the Kanadier Mennonites. The Kanadier Mennonites who depart Mexico and other Latin American countries present a number of educational challenges to a school division. A number of historical and cultural factors, language acquisition and illiteracy are entwined with the issue of education and schooling. Education is also impacted by school avoidance, absence due to work and migration, and early drop out. The first purpose of the project was to develop a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonite population, their culture and the values and beliefs that underlie educational decisions and choices for their children. Historical and descriptive research was used to ascertain information to address the first purpose. Historical data deriving from literary sources focuses on history and culture. Descriptive interview data that focuses on contemporary Kanadier attitudes and values specific to education and schooling derived from two small, purposive samples. The second purpose of the project was to assemble more accurate data regarding Kanadier children's attendance patterns. An enrollment survey was used to ascertain attendance data. Discussion of the research results includes an attendance summary delineating identified patterns. A number of historical, cultural and contextual factors that impact the children's educational experience are considered. Implications regarding the future of the children given current practice are examined. The research discussion also delineates a host of needs that should be addressed in order to better facilitate the education of the children. Finally, recommendations are made for further research and the development of an educational program within the public school setting for Kanadier Mennonite children.

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THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Over the past few years Southern Alberta has experienced a significant increase in the migrant population of Mexican Mennonites. This group of Mennonites, called Kanadiers for the purpose of this project, arrive primarily for the purpose of attaining agricultural employment or other forms of manual labor. In Southern Alberta, the sugar beet, dairy, potato and onion farms, the seeding and livestock operations, have become common places for Kanadier Mennonites to work. Reasons for leaving Mexican colonies range from lack of agricultural land or crop failure to accessibility to a higher wage to dissatisfaction with the ultraconservative Old Colony Church in Mexico and other Latin-American colonies. As has traditionally been the case, many continue to make a seasonal pilgrimage, but an increased number appear to have decided to remain in Canada. Whether for economic or religious reasons, motivation is strong for they were taught that if they left Mexico, they would be rejecting God (Janzen as cited in Kulig, 1995). Taking such a risk shows the desperation experienced by those returning to Canada. While numbers fluctuate yearly and seasonally, an estimated 7,000 to 10,000 Kanadier Mennonites presently reside in Southern Alberta (Janzen, 1997). Horizon School Division is found within the heart of agricultural production in Southern Alberta. Consequently, a number of Kanadiers have obtained employment and settled within the boundaries of the Division, primarily in the Vauxhall, Taber/Barnwell and Grassy Lake areas.

Generally perceived as industrious and resourceful, this unique population presents a number of educational challenges to Horizon School Division. For those who continue the seasonal pilgrimage, the migration cycle is determined by agriculture. Because it does not correspond to the school year, this means that these Kanadier children often start the school year in the fall, are absent during the winter months and return in the spring. The lengthy period of absence seriously inhibits the ability of the child to experience educational success and academic progress. In addition, the Kanadier children are ESL students whose first language is German. Horizon School Division has attempted to address the educational needs of these children through elementary ESL programs and personnel, a variety of school-based programs and individual program plans for students.

While there has been a concentrated effort to meet the educational needs of the Kanadier children who are in school, there remains what may be a significant problem that has yet to be assessed and addressed: school attendance. Within the school communities of Horizon School Division and surrounding areas, there appears to be a growing awareness that a number of Kanadier children do not attend any school nor consistently receive home education. Besides lack of attendance at all ages overall, it is evident that the number of children attending decreases as the grade level increases. It seems that most of the dropout occurs before grade nine with relatively few Kanadier youth enrolled in grade nine or at the high school level. This is indicative of dropout occurring well before the age of sixteen. An early dropout rate is not unusual, and in fact has been recognized as acute, in some migratory student populations (Helge, 1993; Perritt 1987).

The degree or scope of the Kanadier attendance problem is largely speculative and

primarily based on isolated observations and subsequent comments. Members of the mainstream population will note school-aged children out playing on school days, boys under the age of sixteen working as farm laborers or girls staying home to care for younger siblings. Most of the observations are not validated through any kind of follow-up or confirmation. While working on a Community Development project targeting the Kanadier Mennonite population in the Bow Island area, Babcock (1998) conveyed surprise at encountering more than twenty new families who had no records in Community Health Services and whose children had not been in school over the winter. During the course of her work, Babcock expressed concern for the number of youth observed on street corners and staying at home, not attending school. There is little community pressure to “check out” such situations; confirmation may force the community to take action to remedy the situation. Employers are happy, Kanadier parents who do not want to have their children schooled through a public system are happy and Kanadier children who may have difficulty fitting in within the school milieu are happy. Why tip the apple cart? Research shows that this type of community response is not atypical. Following a review of a variety of studies, Helge (1993) concluded that lack of mainstream culture interest in getting involved to solve problems related to migrant communities is common, as is actual denial of concerns or problems. The inability or unwillingness to move beyond speculation may also be due to the migratory nature of the population and the resultant difficulty of tracking children’s whereabouts and educational progress. Also, while some Kanadier children are enrolled in the public system, others attend one of the private Mennonite schools or arrange for home schooling. It is therefore easy to assume that a

child is receiving an education through one of the three alternatives. In addition, the Kanadier population is somewhat insular, almost “invisible” in the eyes of the mainstream culture. Generally, they are not socially interactive with the rest of the community. Having developed their own support system, bonded by language, culture and religion, they stay to themselves. For the most part, the population is employed and self-sustaining. They are not public in their demands on the system and the mainstream population is generally unaware of the existence of social problems. They seem to want nothing more than to be left alone.

Raised in isolated colony villages, the Kanadier Mennonites depart Latin-America from an ultraconservative lifestyle. They are part of a religious ethnic minority and most aspects of their culture derive from religious belief and doctrine. Embedded in the culture is a strong belief in separation from the world, including such secular institutions as public schools and such worldly influences that may derive from a liberal education. There are undoubtedly a number of historical and cultural factors, and deeply held beliefs and convictions that are entwined with the issue of schooling in general and school attendance in particular. There is probably little doubt that the factors that direct the educational experience of Kanadier children are sensitive in nature. Any examination of the issue needs to be approached with care and understanding. One must respect the Kanadiers’ desire to maintain their own culture and keep their values in tact.

Rationale

It may fairly be asked why there is any need to move beyond speculation about a problem that is invisible to the mainstream culture and unarticulated by the group in question. The answer lies in the intent of the investigation. One could approach the problem with the intent of using data to enforce accountability or responsibility. The parents are legally responsible for their children until age sixteen and accountable for school attendance. At the same time, the School Act mandates that a board shall make all reasonable efforts to ensure a resident student attends school. Parent and board, then, have a joint responsibility. The benefit of forced accountability, however, is questionable. In the experience of this writer, forced accountability is not conducive to creating a cooperative environment where, if necessary, effective, long-term change can be made. Fingers cannot be pointed, blame placed or beliefs attacked. The intent needs to focus on better facilitating the education of this unique population. In order for this to occur, one needs to eliminate speculation with more accurate data, attempt to understand the surrounding factors, both historical and contemporary, and utilize the information in a positive, pro-active manner. I believe that as educators, we have a moral obligation to move beyond speculation to make as reliable an assessment as possible when we are dealing with the education of children. Whether few or many children are not receiving an adequate education, the problem deserves some attention.

Provincially, there has been an increasing focus on high school completion and dropout rates. With a seemingly unyielding focus on accountability, the Alberta Ministry of Learning will be examining and reporting high school completion as part of its

performance measures. While such a numerical reporting ignores an understanding of context, and may not have enough meaning to affect change, the focus on dropout rates is not without reason or merit. In many instances, social and personal costs can be attached to a dropout. Less skilled and less able to compete in the job market, the individual may have to be retrained or supported by society. Now some may argue that the Kanadier Mennonites are not a social cost and personal cost is unlikely because they are nurtured and mentored to assume future roles that are suitable within the context of their own culture. This may or may not be true, for the time being. It is important, however, to consider long-term ramifications, both socially and personally, for individuals who may not reach a level of functional literacy due to lack of school attendance or early dropout. The need for agricultural and other areas of manual labor could easily decrease. A good example lies in the area of sugar beet production where mechanization has eliminated the past need for intensive farm labor to hoe the crop. Similar advancements are being made in the production and processing of other crops. A certain level of literacy is required before one can retrain and pursue an occupational path outside manual labor. Even in the broad area of what has traditionally been called manual labor, literacy and educational requirements are increasing.

Horizon School Division is not the only division in Southern Alberta that is faced with the challenge of finding ways to best accommodate this population. Bow Island and the surrounding rural area, the geographic focus of a recent Kanadier project (Babcock, 1998), is within Prairie Rose Regional Division, and contains a high number of Kanadier Mennonites. Palliser and Wild Rose School Divisions are also seeing an increase in the

number of Kanadiers moving into their area for the primary purpose of obtaining agricultural employment. Any research related to the education and schooling of the Kanadier Mennonite population can provide some meaningful baseline data for all divisions endeavoring to provide a culturally appropriate educational experience for the children.

While study and literature pertaining to the Kanadier population is relatively scarce, three recent studies (Babcock, 1998; Kulig, 1995; Petker, 1993) identify a host of needs particular to this group and strongly recommend further study. Even though education obtained through schooling was not the focus of any of the studies, all three identified education as a priority need. In the area of schooling, Kulig (1995) recommends a research study that attempts to develop an understanding of the “relationship between transiency and child development and educational attainment”(p.4). She perceives the community assessment as only offering baseline information that needs to be built on. Babcock points to the need for the educational system to better understand this unique population and collaborate with them and other agencies to develop an approach to schooling that is more responsive to their needs and cultural manifestations. Petker concludes that addressing the need of education should begin by working toward a readjustment of attitude toward education, citing distrust of the system as the motivator for leaving Canada in the first place. At the same time, it appears that Babcock encountered some individuals who were “open to, and even requesting assistance to establish educational programs that will help them make the changes they desire”(p.2). For people closed to change of any kind, sustainable change can only occur once all parties

understand the complexities of the process and show a willingness to work together. This is especially important if one maintains the belief that the parent is the primary educator. While schools may attempt to provide an invaluable service in extending each child's educable and personal potential, fundamental values and beliefs are rooted in the family and the culture to which the family adheres. Findings from a recent national study (Kobayashi et al., 1998) confirmed the hypothesis "that a child's experience varies more according to the characteristics of the household than those of the individual child"(p.1). They related the significance of the household to the strong dependence a child necessarily has on parental abilities and choices, including access to such services as education. In more generalized terms, if one is concerned with the acculturation of the children within Canadian society, researchers have recognized the educational context as having fundamental significance for the adaptation and socialization of children from immigrant families (Kobayashi et al.).

Purpose of the Project

The purpose of the project was, first, to develop a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonite people. An understanding of the population's history and culture, past and present values, beliefs and attitudes will facilitate a more informed approach to decision-making regarding the schooling of Kanadier children. One cannot isolate institutional decisions or deal with pragmatic concerns regarding the schooling of a particular population separate from the myriad of factors that direct the population's response to those decisions. With a religious ethnic minority, such as the Kanadier Mennonites, factors embedded in their history and culture shape values, beliefs and goals,

and ultimately a response to matters of education and schooling that may be unique to the mainstream culture. Characteristics that are generally distinct from mainstream culture but common to migrant work groups contribute to their overall uniqueness.

The second purpose of the project was to assemble more accurate data regarding Kanadier children's attendance patterns, including type of educational program and the nature of actual attendance. Attendance is one of the most visible responses to schooling and is linked to the values, beliefs and goals of the population. Finally, the project examines the implications of both for the education of Kanadier Mennonite children. As well, some recommendations that Horizon School Division can take in the development of a program that will provide school opportunities that better meet the educational goals of this community are formulated. It is hoped that the outcome of this project will be to contribute to the improvement of education for the Kanadier Mennonite children by informing and encouraging appropriate response to their needs.

Questions Guiding the Project

1. Can an examination of the historical and cultural context of the population contribute to a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonites?
2. Can an investigation into contemporary attitudes and values of the population regarding education and schooling furnish a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonites?
3. Are there recognizable attendance patterns of the Kanadier children in Horizon School Division?
4. What are the implications of the above for the education of Kanadier Mennonite

children? Are there directions or initiatives that Horizon School Division can take to better facilitate Kanadier children attaining an appropriate level of schooling?

Definition of Key Terms

In this project, the term Kanadier refers to those individuals of the Mennonite faith who lived in Canada in the early 1900's then moved to Mexico, and now they, and/or their descendants are returning for primarily economic reasons. It should be noted that Kanadier is a name recently suggested to refer to this group. A community assessment report completed by Kulig (1995) points out that the Kanadier Mennonites refer themselves as Mennonites from Mexico or Mexican Mennonites. The term Mexican Mennonites is misleading, however, because this group includes those individuals who have migrated from Central and South American colonies. Hamm (1987) suggests that historically, Kanadier was a term used after the second wave of Russian immigration during 1920-1930 to distinguish themselves from the Rüssländer or Russian immigrants of a later time.

Permission to Conduct Project

Permission for this study was granted by the Human Subjects Research Committee of the Faculty of Education, at The University of Lethbridge. Permission to access Zone 6 schools in Horizon School Division was granted by the superintendent, Eric Johnson.

Limitations

There are several limitations of this project:

1. The literary sources used to compile the data for the historical research exist independent of this project. As such, they may be subject to opinion, bias or

judgement unknown to this writer.

2. Due to the migratory nature of the Kanadier Mennonite population and the inconsistent methods used to track the general population and school attendance of the children, the attendance data, at best, is an estimate.
3. The small sample size for both key and household informants was small and not randomly selected. The household informants may not adequately represent the entire population nor accurately reflect the range of beliefs, values and practices held by the Kanadier. The key informants represent a small percentage of those who work with the Kanadier Mennonites in an educational context and may not accurately reflect the range of experience and understanding that actually exists.
4. An interpreter was necessary because of the limited English language skills of household informants; some intent and meaning of response may have been lost in the translation.
5. The trepidation that has historically accompanied the population's interaction with the public school system may have had an impact on the response of household informants.
6. The findings of this research apply only to the particular Kanadier population that was the subject of this project. The results cannot be generalized to other Mennonite groups residing in Canada for different lengths of time or in different locations.

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURE

Introduction

In order to address the project's purpose, a combination of approaches was required. Although described in isolation below, the approaches were interconnected; information overlapped and findings in the different areas informed ongoing decisions regarding pursuit of data. The use of triangulation in the discussion facilitated the synthesis of the information into a more complete picture.

The Historical Approach

Introduction

Gay (1996) describes historical research as “the systematic collection and evaluation of data related to past occurrences in order to describe causes, effects, or trends of those events that may help to explain present events and anticipate future events”(p.185). Historical data can contribute to an understanding of contemporary issues. Given their strength of adherence to traditional values and beliefs, an investigation into the history and culture of the people was necessary for the development of an understanding of the Kanadier Mennonite population in present day Southern Alberta.

Subjects

The Kanadier Mennonite population in Southern Alberta and their ancestors.

Data Collection and Procedure

Gathering of historical data focused on addressing question #1: Can an examination

of the historical and cultural context of the population contribute to a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonites? As well, the data was used to address question #4: What are the implications of the above for the education of Kanadier Mennonite children? Are there directions or initiatives that Horizon School Division can take to better facilitate Kanadier children attaining an appropriate level of schooling?

The writer focused on the presentation of two themes: historical development and culture. The data was principally derived from literary sources. Data also stemmed from the writer's attendance at meetings focusing on Kanadier concerns. Data was presented and utilized to formulate a discussion aimed at identifying historical and cultural factors that direct the educational experience of the Kanadier Mennonite children in Southern Alberta

The Descriptive Approach

Introduction

Gay (1996) tells us that descriptive research involves collecting data in order to answer questions concerning the current status of the subject of the study (p.249). In other words, the purpose is to determine and report the way things are. The descriptive data in this project is concerned with the assessment of conditions, attitudes, opinions and demographic information specific to the Kanadier population in Horizon School Division. Two methods were utilized to gather descriptive data: interview and an attendance survey.

Interview Data

Introduction

The purpose was, first, to collect data that addresses question #2: Can an

investigation into contemporary attitudes and values regarding education and schooling of the population furnish a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonites? As well, the data was used to address question #4: What are the implications of the above for the education of Kanadier Mennonite children? Are there directions or initiatives that Horizon School Division can take to better facilitate Kanadier children attaining an appropriate level of schooling?

Subjects

Key informants.

Key informants were individuals who are currently in an occupation and position directly related to the education of Kanadier Mennonite children. Selection of subjects was purposive in order to obtain data from individuals involved in different schooling delivery systems. Five interviews were conducted that included individuals representative of public, private and home schooling systems, as well as an individual who works in an agency that provides services to the Kanadier Mennonite community.

Household informants.

Household informants were parents of Kanadier Mennonite children who reside within the boundaries of Horizon School Division. Selection of subjects was purposive in order to obtain data from parents who chose different schooling delivery systems. Five interviews were conducted that included individuals representative of parents who chose the following methods of schooling: public, private and home schooling. While it was not possible to obtain an interview with parents who chose not to enroll any children in a schooling system, one household informant couple chose to keep children out of school

after age 12.

Instrument

Two interview guides with delineated questions were constructed to provide interview structure. One guide was used for the key informants (Appendix A), a different guide was used for the household informants (Appendix B). Questions focused on gathering data that would reflect contemporary Kanadier attitudes and values specific to education and schooling as well as current practice and perceived success of those practices.

Procedure

The writer of this project conducted the interviews. Prior to the interview, key informants were apprised of the intent and nature of the project and provided with the written consent form (Appendix C). The key informant was provided with whatever time was desired to read and review the form, ask any questions or make inquiries before signing. Prior to the interview, household informants were apprised of the nature and intent of the project and provided with the written consent form (Appendix D). In all household informant interviews, an interpreter assisted with the communication of the intent of the project and the information contained in the written consent form. For many Kanadier Mennonites, the vernacular of everyday communication is the unwritten dialect, Plattdeutsch, a form of Low German. One household informant was comfortable with reading the consent form without assistance. In all other cases, the interpreter communicated the content using the Low German vernacular. The household informants were provided with whatever time was desired to read and review the form, ask questions

or make inquiries before voluntarily signing.

In the case of the household informants, an interpreter to assist with communication of questions and responses accompanied the interviewer. Household informant interviews took place in the home and key informant interviews took place on work site locations. All interview responses were manually recorded. This was to ensure sensitivity towards the issue of technology; some Kanadier Mennonites are strongly opposed to the use of technology of any kind. While an interview guide was used during each interview, the approach was semi-structured to accommodate clarification of questions and responses. The intent was not only to allow for clarification and better understanding, but to provide opportunity for the respondents to provide further insights. Data gathered from interviews was coded, organized and summarized into themes pre-determined by the guide questions. The theme summaries are presented in the results.

Attendance Survey

Introduction

The purpose was to collect demographic and attendance data in order to present a more accurate accounting of the current status of the attendance of Kanadier Mennonite children. This data was used to address question #3: Are there recognizable attendance patterns of Kanadier children in Horizon School Division?

Subjects

The population included Kanadier Mennonite children between the ages of 5 and 18 who resided within the boundaries of Horizon School Division.

Instrument

An attendance survey was constructed for the purpose of collecting and organizing data (Appendix E). The survey delineated a total population estimate and differentiated educational programs (public, private, home schooling), grade divisions and nature of attendance (permanent or seasonal).

Procedure

The total population estimate was based on demographic data provided by the Lethbridge Mennonite Central Committee. Public school and public home school attendance estimates were based on attendance records of schools within Horizon School Division. Private school and private home school attendance was based on attendance data voluntarily provided by the schools through contact and personal communication with the writer. Results were tabulated and presented. Identification of trends or patterns of school attendance are included in the discussion summary.

RESULTS

Historical Research

Historical Summary

Prior to Russia

The Mennonites were a part of the Anabaptist movement which emerged during the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the early 16th century. In 1529 Anabaptism was declared illegal and its followers were persecuted. Nevertheless, the movement spread throughout Northern Europe and in 1536, Menno Simmons, a Dutch Catholic priest, renounced Catholicism, was baptized in the new faith and became a member of the Dutch nonresistant Anabaptists. Through an energetic and fearless proclamation of his faith, he became the established leader of the Dutch Anabaptists and thus gave his name to the entire movement. Due, in part, to Simmons' writings and leadership at a crucial time, Mennonites became distinct from other Anabaptists (Edmunds, 1993 & Kulig, 1995). Four principal beliefs guided the original distinction from other Anabaptist groups: (a) separation of church and state in order that the church could be pure and autonomous; (b) church membership based on adult confession of faith and adult baptism; (c) literal interpretation of the bible and disciplined life in the church; and (d) obedience to Christ which required such activities as nonresistance, simplicity, mutual aid, honesty, love, and ultimately suffering (Redekop, 1969, p. 4).

From its inception to present day, the Mennonite movement has exhibited an

amazing capacity to divide and reunite. Tracing the various divisions, migrations and settlements is a complex task. This historical summary will focus on surveying the movement of one particular stream of the Mennonite family, namely the Dutch Mennonites who migrated to Poland (Prussia), Russia, Canada and Latin America. The Kanadier population, the subjects of this project, derive their origin from this stream. Although separations occur along the historical path, collectively this stream can be referred to as the Conservative Mennonites. The term alludes to the dividing processes in which some groups separated in order to conserve or maintain the old ways or the old order, the Ordnung ("Conservative Mennonites," 1990). The primary group that eventually migrated to Mexico, the Old Colony Mennonites, is considered to have remained the most conservative and the most closed to interaction with both the host culture and other Mennonite groups (Redekop, 1969).

Seeking economic opportunity and protection from religious persecution, groups of Mennonites, by mid-sixteenth century, migrated to areas surrounding the Vistula and Nogat rivers near Danzig, then under the Polish kings. This was to begin a series of migrations spurred by the ongoing search for the freedom to practice their own religion, including pacifism, church separation from the state and control over education. For more than 200 years the colonies flourished under the religious protection provided by "letters of grace" endorsed by the king. During this time of relative security, the Mennonites established the cultural solidarity and folk identity (*Gemeinschaftssinn*) which have marked their group coherence ever since (Sawatsky, 1971, p.3). Low German was adopted as the oral language; High German became the written language and was used during religious

services (Edmunds, 1993, p.126).

Migration to Russia

This period of security, however, came to an end with the partition of Poland in 1772 and the advent of Prussian rule. Pressure from the established Lutheran Church, alarmed at the growing Mennonite acquisition of land, resulted in the imposition of severe restrictions upon further Mennonite land purchases. This, combined with growing Prussian nationalism, hindered economic life and threatened the future integrity of their spiritual and social organization (Sawatsky, p.3). This provided sufficient motivation for the Mennonites to accept Catherine the Great's invitation, and migrate in mass to South Russia. Catherine had invited farmers from Western countries to settle in the area of the Ukraine and was willing to provide the Mennonites with free land, perpetual exemption from military and civil service, freedom of religion, and the right to control their schools and churches. The approximate number that emigrated to Russia starting in 1787 was 1,907 families, with a total of some 8,000 persons. The first settled became known as the Old Colony ("Migrations," 1956).

Two main settlements, Chortitza and Molotschna, were established. Along with complete religious freedom came the obligation of agricultural colonies to be locally autonomous (Sawatsky, 1971, p.4). As such, the colonies were required to establish local civil organizations which were to be responsible to the Department of the Interior. The local Mennonite civil organizations were responsible for roads, bridges, and other municipal affairs, as well as local administration of justice ("Conservative Mennonites," 1990). This meant that the colonies had to contend with the issue of establishing civil

organizations while maintaining the religious principle of separation of state and church. Two key issues, administration of discipline and control of education, resulted in a splitting into different factions. The conservers of the “old order” believed that the church should administer church discipline with the traditional patterns of admonition, ban, and re-acceptance upon confession. They also believed the church should control the education of children, and that education’s goal should be preparation for church and community membership. The progressives, on the other hand, felt that the quality of the schools should be upgraded and the curriculum broadened. To achieve this end, they were willing to see the civil administration assume responsibility for schools. Unwilling to yield to the increasing role of civil administration, conservers split and established new colonies: Bergthal and Furstenland, both from Chortitza, and Kleine Gemeinde, from Molotschna (“Conservative Mennonites”).¹ While this may be the first time the issue of control over education was significant enough to contribute to the formation of factions, education continues to play a primary role in the determination of further splitting and migration.

The Mennonites enjoyed approximately one hundred years of relative freedom and peace in South Russia. A time of relative prosperity, they developed an extremely productive agriculture and accompanying industries (e.g., flour, mills, creameries, farm implement factories; “Rural Life,” 1999). By the 1860s, however, the political and social climate in Russia was undergoing change. The past hospitality afforded to many colonies of foreigners was beginning to be withdrawn. Two dominant sentiments emerged which

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Numerous other splits occurred (2 in Chortitza and 6 in Molotschna), but the three identified above were primary sources for migration to Manitoba.

worked against the continued autonomy of the Mennonites: ideals of Western liberalism including equality, individual rights and public participation in state affairs; and a romantic movement determined to purge the Russian soil of all foreign influences (Janzen, 1990, p.8). By 1870 the Russian government developed policy which demanded military service through a compulsory alternative service program and implemented a Russification program of education which included administration of schools by the Russian government with Russian being the main language of instruction (“Migrations,” 1956).

Migration to Canada - The First Wave

Because of the belief in migration as a means whereby freedom to propagate the Mennonite way of life could be achieved, delegates were sent to America in 1873 to investigate the feasibility of emigration (Redekop, 1969, p.5). This interest in migration coincided with the interest of the new Canadian Dominion to attract settlers to the western prairies (Janzen, 1990, p.8). The Dominion had recently assumed sovereignty over Rupertsland, was gravely concerned over U.S. expansion aimed at the western territories and was desperate to expand the economic hinterland (Sawatsky, 1971, p.8). The Dominion’s needs resulted in negotiations that were extremely attractive for the Mennonites. The Mennonites were offered land, received assurances of broad educational freedoms, and guarantees of religious freedom and exemption from military service (Suderman, 1998).

The Mennonites were offered two reserves, one on either side of the Red River in southern Manitoba. This land mass consisted of twenty-five townships or over one-half million acres, one of the most fertile areas in the province (Redekop, 1969, p.5). Those

who elected to come to Manitoba were among the most conservative and economically least well-endowed of the Russian colonies (Sawatsky, 1971, p.9). All hoped to establish settlements in Canada in which the church would have control over education and discipline, and in which civil authority would be subordinate to religious authority (“Conservative Mennonites,” 1990). In 1874 the East Reserve was settled by the Bergthal, a daughter colony of Chortitza, and the Kleine Gemeinde, a conservative group who had separated from Molotschna. Conservers from the Old Colony Chortitza and members of the daughter colony Furstenland established themselves on the West Reserve in 1876. While this group called themselves Reinlander Mennoniten Gemeinde, they also maintained the title Altkolonier meaning Old Colonists (“Old Colony,” 1990).

Each of these groups was noted for its ultraconservatism and strictness aimed at separation and isolation from worldly influences and maintained by stern church discipline (Sawatsky, 1971, p.12). As time went on varying levels of conservatism became apparent once again as different groups exhibited differentiating responses to the new and changing Canadian context. Acculturation centered around civil organizations, and education once again became the issue around which divisions occurred. The Bergthal Mennonites proved to be more progressive in their approach and outlook. They were able to respond and adapt to the 1880 Manitoba Municipal Act which necessitated the reorganization of the Mennonite reserves into municipalities (Kulig, 1995, p.43). As well, a new theology was shaped through higher education with the establishment of a secondary school and teacher training school. The Bergthal who opposed such secular influence separated in 1893 and became the Sommerfeld Mennonites (“Conservative

Mennonites,” 1990). The Old Colony Mennonites on the West Reserve, however, maintained an ultraconservative stance. Redekop (1969) points out that the crucial factor in the development of the Old Colony on the West Reserve was “a frame of mind, a way of looking at the world with the more orthodox members exhibiting a black-and-white perception of various issues” (p.6). Influence from progressive Bergthals who had assumed open land on the West Reserve, opposition to both the municipality concept and the newly proclaimed (but not yet universally imposed) Manitoba Schools Act prompted the migration of some Old Colonists further west to the Hague and Swift Current areas in Saskatchewan as early as 1890 (“Old Colony,” 1990).

The majority of the Old Colony remained on the West Reserve but found it increasingly difficult to sustain their insulated life. Universal enforcement of the Manitoba Public Schools Act came into effect in 1916. The Act called for compulsory attendance of all children ages 7 to 14 in provincially accredited schools; private schools had to meet the requirements of the department of education. This meant the imposition of a curriculum which included such worldly subjects as history and geography and the subordination of German to English as the language of instruction (Sawatsky, 1971, p.21). Enforcement came in a climate of postwar militarism and anti-German sentiment with inspectors visiting the Old Colony Mennonite schools and imposing many fines for use of the Mennonite curriculum (Edmunds, 1993, p.126). Some parents were even sent to jail because they refused to send their children to the newly established district schools in their communities (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). Sawatsky contends that the impact of the manner in which secular schools were imposed during this school crisis was traumatic and led to a

decline in standards of secular learning. The Altkolonier (Old Colony), in order to present a unified front in opposition to these intrusions, used the disciplinary powers of the church to restrain dissident members. Disciplinary action often meant shunning or even excommunication if children were sent to public schools (Ens, 1980). To the Altkolonier leaders it was a test of the faithful by which unity and like-mindedness could once more be established (Sawatsky, p.23).

In 1919 a description of the Old Colony way of life and a petition asking permission to continue to conduct their own schools were sent to the Manitoba government (Redekop, 1969). The school issue became political. The Manitoba Free Press published the Mennonite brief along with the delineation of a view that was contrary to the Mennonite's perception of the purpose of education. "The Free Press held that the modern democratic state cannot agree that the parents have the sole right of determining what kind of education their children shall receive" (Janzen, 1990, p.97). It was further contended that it was the duty of the state to see that children are properly educated as they are destined to be future citizens of the state. The government followed the Free Press philosophy and denied the eloquent request submitted by the Mennonites (p.97).

Migration to Mexico

Unwilling to compromise, it appeared that emigration was the only alternative for the Altkolonier. In 1921, the Mennonites obtained a Privilegium from the government of Mexico. The Privilegium included complete religious freedom, the right to sectarian schools and exclusive use of German, exemption from oath and military services, and autonomy in the administration of property (Sawatsky, 1971, pp.39-40). Following

numerous visits to Mexico, negotiations were finally consummated for the purchase of 230,000 acres in the state of Chihuahua and 35,000 acres in the state of Durango (Redekop, 1969, p.5). The first trainload of Old Colony members left Manitoba in 1922. Over the next four years approximately 6,000 people moved to the colonies in Mexico (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). The majority of Old Colony adherents from Manitoba left, including all the ministers, and established the Manitoba Colony in Chihuahua. The daughter settlements in Saskatchewan departed from Canada and established the Swift Current Colony in Chihuahua and the Patos (Hague) Colony in Durango ("Old Colony," 1990). As well, approximately 600 Sommerfelder left to form the Santa Clara Colony ("Sommerfeld Mennonites," 1990). The Sommerfelder were near the end of the mass migration, reaching the decision to emigrate only after it became evident that not the least conciliatory gesture from the government of Manitoba would be forthcoming (Sawatsky). The scattering of Old Colony members who chose to remain reorganized but have never been recognized by the Mexican church leadership (Mennonite Central Committee). The Mennonites left Canada to stay pure and unmixed with the world and what they predicted would happen, has; the Old Colony members who remained have gone modern while the Old Colony members in Mexico have retained much of their original character (Redekop, p. 19).

Migration to Canada - The Second Wave

A second wave of Russian Mennonites migrated to Canada soon after the Russian Revolution in 1919. With the emergence of the new communist government, they faced an uncertain future not knowing whether they would be able to live, worship and farm as they

wished. Approximately 21,000 Mennonite people moved to Canada between 1922 and 1930 (Suderman, 1998). The term Rüssländer was developed to distinguish the new immigrants from those who arrived earlier in the 1870s. A comparatively small group of Rüssländer, approximately 4,000 in number, also made their way to Mexico, Brazil and Paraguay (“Migrations,” 1956). In Mexico, they settled in a number of locations in the states of Guanajuato, Durango and Chihuahua (Sawatsky, 1971, p.29). Following World War II, another 12,000 Russian Mennonites found their way to Canada and South America (“Migrations”).

Migration to Latin-America Continues

Many of those who remained in Canada following the 1922 mass migration to Mexico hoped to retain their conservative ways through compromise or avoidance. This proved to be difficult, and eventually the strong secular influence motivated the more conservative groups to migrate. In 1927 a group comprising 357 Sommerfelder, 227 Saskatchewan Bergthaler and East Reserve Chortitza established Menno Colony in Paraguay (“Sommerfeld Mennonites,” 1990). In the late 1940s, revived unrest resulted in a group consisting of Kleine Gemeinde and Altkolonier from both Saskatchewan and Manitoba purchasing land at Los Jagueyes, Mexico (Sawatsky, 1971, p.94). A group of Manitoba Chortitzer established Bergthal Colony in Paraguay in 1948. A Sommerfeld Colony in Paraguay, consisting of Manitoba Sommerfelder, was set up the same year (“Sommerfeld Mennonites”).

Migration Within Canada

Avoidance of the threat of secularization was achieved within Canada by

homesteading beyond the fringes of built-up settlement, on the agricultural frontiers of northern Saskatchewan and in the Peace River region of Alberta and British Columbia. When the secular world, and particularly the public schools, penetrated their settlements, the more conservative would move on ("Old Colony," 1990). It was the candid hope of the leaders that by moving to such frontier areas, "away from school inspectors," they would be able to solve the school problem (Redekop, 1969, p.22). Upon the consolidation of the schools and raising of compulsory attendance to age 16 in the late 1950s and early 1960s, this strategy was no longer workable, and a substantial number emigrated to new frontier settlements in Belize and the Santa Cruz region of Bolivia ("Old Colony").

Mexican Expansion and Migration

The Mennonites who colonized Mexico beginning in 1922 experienced great hardships in the face of many obstacles: interrupted equipment supplies, drought, modified farming techniques, the depression of the 30s, and lawless disorder during the post-revolutionary era in Mexico. The population proved to be resourceful and resilient, managing the difficult times primarily through expansion into cattle and cheese production. Some of the original settlers returned to Canada. An Altkolonier group from Chihuahua re-entered Canada to homestead in the Peace River district in 1938 (Sawatsky, 1971). Other members of the Altkolonier and Sommerfelder returned to districts where they had formerly had their homes. By the end of the first decade in Mexico, in spite of disappointments, epidemics and numerical attrition through return to Canada, it was evident that the Mennonites numerical and economic strength was great enough to absorb these reversals. It was also evident that their commitment to the colonization attempt and

their accommodation to the new homeland were sufficient to promise their survival (Sawatsky, p.158).

Since 1944, there has been considerable expansion within Mexico with more than 17 colonization ventures in five states ("Old Colony," 1990). By 1958 the pressure for new land in Mexico was becoming so great that general unrest prevailed. The possibilities for expansion into the area around the settlements in Chihuahua and Durango had been fully exploited, and many were landless in every village. The Mennonites were forced to look beyond the borders of Mexico for suitable locations. A major migration began in 1958, British Honduras (Belize) was its goal (Redekop, 1969, p.22). By 1966, more than 3,000 Altkoloniers and Kleine Gemeinde had relocated. In the mid-1960s another minor exodus, involving some 2,000 persons, mostly from the Chihuahua Altkolonier colonies, occurred with eastern Bolivia as the destination (Sawatsky, 1971, p.189). Further migrations have occurred to Paraguay (1972), Argentina (1986) and Seminole, Texas (1977, Sawatsky). Of the approximately 7,000 Mennonites who emigrated from Canada in the 1920s, some 5,500 remained in Mexico. Their net reproduction rate has consistently been one of the highest documented for any group, averaging more than 4 percent per year. Despite emigration of at least 10,000 to Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay, Argentina, the United States and Canada, by 1988 the population in Mexico had grown to some 40,000, representing a doubling time of approximately 16 years ("Old Colony," 1990).

Despite the expansion efforts, land hunger of the Mennonites in Mexico continued to intensify, particularly in Chihuahua and Sommerfelder colony of Santa Clara (Sawatsky, 1971, p.198). The difficulty residing in population expansion has been compounded by

diminishing productivity of the land due to soil erosion and drought. In recent years, the falling value of the peso, high interest and inflation rates, and the introduction of the North American Free Trade Agreement have contributed to an increasingly uncertain future for young Mennonites in Mexico (Kulig, 1995, p. 44). Since the 1970s, there has been a persistent flow of people of Old Colony background to Canada, capitalizing on retained Canadian citizenship or that of immediate forebears ("Old Colony," 1990). Most come from Mexico, but a few have also returned from the other Latin American countries (Babcock, 1998, p.21). Longhurst (as cited in Babcock) estimates that 27,000 have returned to Canada in the last twenty-five years. The relatively high cost of land, combined with the lack of available tracts of land in Canada, has prevented any mass or organized migration into agricultural settlements beyond the small settlement in the Peace River area. The largest number have settled in southern Ontario while others have returned to Manitoba. A saturated labor market in Ontario and Manitoba, however, is leading many to Southern Alberta where they are able to locate seasonal agricultural work, particularly in the areas east and north of Lethbridge. Due to the seasonal nature of the work, it is common for families to return to Mexico during the winter and return in the spring. Those who are unsuccessful in the search for work are often eligible for social assistance (Kulig, 1995, p.44). As well, unemployment benefits are available to those who secure prior employment for an appropriate period of time.

The Kanadier Culture - Values and Beliefs

Beliefs About Migration

From an examination of the historical path of the Old Colony Mennonites it is clear that this unique population is one that is tied through a belief system, not geographic location or national identity. It appears that migration is not only inherent in belief enactment, but in fact enhances the core that maintains the system as a whole. As was pointed out in the historical review, separation and isolation achieved through migration facilitated the ability of ultraconservative groups to stay pure and unmixed with the world, including more progressive Mennonite members or groups. Voluntary migration to more isolated areas has provided a mechanism for siphoning off the faithful from those who were inclined to yield to accommodation (Driedger, 1973, p.267). Historically then, ideology, recognized as dependent on the maintenance of certain social structures, has been the motivating factor in the migration of the conservative Mennonites. Driedger calls this a form of survival migration, with survival being dependant on developing a social structure which will resist the larger society (p. 267).

The primary resisting social structure is the village pattern. For the conservatives, however, it proved to be insufficient when secular forces invaded their territory. Further isolation and segregation through migration became the only line of defense (Driedger, 1973). While defensive in nature, Old Colony migration can also be perceived as a search for another opportunity for a fresh start. The social organization, including village settlement and church leadership, remains intact and reestablishes in the new location (Babcock, 1998, p. 25). Whether deemed as defensive or opportune, the nature of this

pattern of migration is flawed by its cyclical nature. According to Canan (as cited in Babcock), sub societies have “never been able to live independently of the core society” (p.25). Eventually, the integrity of the social system breaks down through unavoidable exchange with the host culture and the cycle is repeated.

Redekop (1969) identifies freedom to conduct schools as the primary cause for Old Colony migration due to the belief that schools are the surest instrument to break down the barriers between the Old Colony and the world (p.24). He points to freedom from military service and various government programs as the second leading cause. In the case of the Kanadier population recently migrating to Southern Alberta, neither the primary nor secondary causes are motivating factors. In fact, migration is occurring in spite of the primary cause. While the Old Colony church maintains control over education in Latin America, at least for the time being, the same cannot be said of the educational requirements in Canada. This recent migration, then, is fairly unique to the historical pattern of Old Colony migration with economic factors being the primary motivation (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). The Kanadier household informants interviewed in Kulig’s (1995) recent community assessment, all admitted that their reasons for migration were economic (p.20). As was pointed out in the historical review, the ability to attain suitable land in Latin America has reached a critical point and caused some unrest among the youth who are unable to foresee any future for themselves. In the case of the elderly, some members who are Canadian citizens and who are now of an age that makes them eligible for the Old Age Security pension return for that reason (Sawatsky, 1971, p.318). Redekop (1969) identifies a desire to break away from strong group discipline and

restrictions as a motivation in some cases as well as a desire for new experiences and adventure (p.24).

Beyond motivation, there are some other essential differences in the recent migration to Southern Alberta. The migration is not planned, or even sanctioned by the leadership of the Old Colony church (Edmunds, 1993, p.127). The leaders continue to encourage members to remain in order to “maintain the spiritual beliefs, customs, language and hard-working ways which have turned them into a strong and distinct people” (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). As well, the migration is primarily independent, as opposed to group, and settlement within the traditional village structure is not possible. In the past, the Mennonites were able to commence settlement as land owners; in their trek to Southern Alberta, they arrive as land laborers. Finally, the Kanadier migration is not usually deemed as “permanent” or accompanied by the attitude that Canada will be their new “home” (Sawatsky, 1971, p.318). With the ability to sustain themselves in Mexico with money earned in Canada, Sawatsky points out that few “returnees” make a clean break with Mexico; the common pattern is one of seasonal migration that may continue for many years. Cultural shock, problems encountered in coping with life in a strange country and worry over the disapproving attitude of the mother church perpetuate seasonal return. As time goes on, however, the attraction of higher wages and the experience of personal freedom, not to mention comparatively generous social programs, are beginning to result in longer stays and, eventually, permanent settlement.

The differences in the Southern Alberta migration, then, are significant in their relationship to the maintenance of resisting host social structures. The avoidance of

secular influence will be much more difficult, if not impossible. Only time will tell if the Kanadier population is able to continue with the ideal of being separate, distinct and untouched. Canon (as cited in Babcock, 1998) suggests it is not possible to avoid a certain level of accommodation and secularization. On the other hand, Driedger and Kauffmann (1991) contend that “secularization can be counteracted by strong religious, family, and institutional identity that provides a sense of peoplehood” (p.271). At present, it appears that most are making a strong effort to resist worldliness and establish peoplehood even without much of the past cohesive social structures. Cohesiveness in their new Canadian setting is primarily obtained through family and church membership, with the accompanying reinforcement of religious and cultural values.

Seemingly ingrained in the belief system, there remains a suspicion, even fear, of the public schools in Canada. This fear, when combined with retained migratory characteristics, presents a formidable challenge to the public school system. Some Kanadier Mennonites keep their children out of Canadian schools by going from Mexico to Canada in the late spring and returning in the late fall. By the time they come to the attention of the authorities and action is taken to require attendance of their school-age children, summer vacation has begun or they are ready to leave for Mexico (Sawatsky, 1971, p.319). For some of those who remain year round, internal movement serves the same purpose. If school authorities attempt to “close-in,” the family simply relocates to a different residence where authorities can continue to be avoided for an additional period of time. Uncompromising beliefs and relative ease of movement with few material possessions facilitate a seemingly endless ability to relocate. This being the case, the

traditional approach of using “authority,” such as truancy officers and principals, to threaten noncompliance is essentially ineffectual.

Religion

While the Southern Alberta Mennonites who have returned from Latin America have been amalgamated and referred to as one population, Kanadiers, for the purpose of this project, it should be noted that they depart Latin America from four different groups: Sommerfelders, Klein Gemeinde, Rüssländer, and the Altkolonier (Old Colony).² They have each established their churches in Southern Alberta, and each family is expected to attend and follow the teachings of their particular church (Babcock, 1998, p.21). Five main Mennonite churches exist in Southern Alberta with other smaller churches developing from groups breaking away (Babcock, 1998; Kulig, 1995):

1. Sommerfelder: The Sommerfelder are perceived as the most traditional with an emphasis on more power being held by the bishop and ministers.

2. Old Colony Mennonite Church: This group is somewhat comparable to the Sommerfelder, but the bishop and minister have less power and control. Within the Old Colony Church, there is an emphasis on authority figures, being strict and judgmental and ridiculing those who do not conform. In both the Sommerfelder and Old Colony Church, education is not emphasized, especially for women (Kulig, 1995, p.25).

3. Klein Gemeinde (meaning small congregation)

4. Evangelical Mennonite Church

²

Origin and Latin American settlement of these different groups is delineated in the historical summary.

5. General Conference Church: Along with the Klein Gemeinde and Evangelical Mennonite Church, they are considered more progressive or liberal in their focus. Education for both men and women has more of an emphasis and the worship and services are congregation oriented with the bishop and preachers having less power (Kulig, 1995, p.25).

As has historically been the case, the churches delineated above encompass a range of conservatism with the Sommerfelder and Old Colony sustaining the most conservative practices, including separation and opposition to public education. While the statements regarding religious beliefs described below generally apply to all the groups, it should be noted that they are primarily based on information pertaining to the more conservative Sommerfelder and Old Colony churches. The rationale for this emphasis is based on the finding in Kulig's (1995) assessment that conservative religious values are the norm for the Kanadier population residing in Southern Alberta (p.31).

Organization.

The concept of the Gemeinde is central to the life of the Mennonite colonies. Among the Mennonites in the United States and Canada, the term refers to the church community alone but, in Latin America, it signifies both the church and the secular community since in terms of their populations these are essentially the same (Sawatsky, 1971, p.265). In Mexico, the church influences almost every aspect of life: clothes, house styles, mode of transportation, level of education, size of families and the spoken language (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). The church Gemeinde is usually led by its own Elder and lay minister(s), referred to as Lehrdienst. Local church matters are dealt with at a general

meeting, a Bruderschaft, of the men (Sawatsky, p. 266). In the Latin American colonies, each village has an appointed summoner, a Kroagha, whose duty is to detect behavior or innovations which are at a variance with the official church position or covenant, and to report such matters to the clergy. The covenant consists of a promise to remain true to God and the Gemeinde, and to serve the Lord with righteousness and holiness (Redekop, 1969, p.29).

In the Old Colony philosophy, once conventions are decided upon and sealed with prayer, they constitute a covenant with God which can never be altered (Sawatsky, 1971, p.300). This is a source of doctrinal rigidity and a barrier to innovation, but is applied somewhat differently amongst the groups. The varying application of “unalterable” covenant is illustrated through a rubber tire example described by Sawatsky. The use of rubber tires was placed under interdiction in the Latin American colonies because it was believed their use would tempt the young people to visit the towns and ranchos where they would learn to mingle socially with the worldly population. The Old Colony church attempted to exact compliance by invoking the ban. Sawatsky notes that invocation of the ban is becoming less effective as time goes on because the use of rubber tires is becoming more widespread. The Sommerfelder and Kleine Gemeinde, however, do not forbid “utilitarian” innovations, and thus more easily avoid difficulty in maintaining orthodoxy among their members (pp.300-301).

Church services are an important part of community life. Ministers are elected by the congregation from the male members and are expected to preach from books of prepared sermons that are passed on from previous ministers (Edmunds, 1993, p.128). With the

exception of the ministers, emotional expression of beliefs during the religious service is forbidden. Beliefs of the laity can be expressed through informal discussion, singing, recitation of the catechism, participation in special services and living the Old Colony life (Redekop, 1969, p.39). The church is to contain no pictures or displays of wealth in order to reflect the values of a modest and non-materialistic life (Edmunds, p.128). During the service, the men sit on one side and the women sit on the other side of the church. The minister reads from the Bible and preaches and the congregation sings songs. Children do not attend church until they are past six, an age when they are considered capable of sitting still and paying attention (Kulig, 1995, p.26). Baptism and subsequent acceptance into the congregation, the Gemeinde, do not occur until adulthood, when a young person is able to feel and understand the need for and desirability of becoming a church member (Redekop, p.58).

Separation.

According to Redekop (1969), the most widely held and significant belief is that the Old Colony is God's chosen people, the elect (p.29). Salvation is not personal, but collective, and as such it is imperative that all members of the church follow the correct path (Edmunds, 1993, p.128). The one absolute truth dominating their faith is that man is born a sinner and cannot achieve salvation except through "heart" faith in the only Son of God, Jesus Christ (Bargen, 1953, p.101). Within the world there is absolute good and absolute evil. Between these two extremes exist the amoral elements which may be used either for good or evil. Worldly contact is perceived as sinful, offering temptations that must be resisted (Edmunds). There is a strong belief in punishment for unfaithfulness and a

countering trust in the providence of God. God is their personal benefactor and will take care of them in every area of life as long as they, collectively, are faithful to Him (Redekop, p.30).

The Mennonites are a Bible-centered group whose church boundaries are defined by the concepts of regeneration, obedience, fellowship, and brotherhood (Kulig 1995, p. 42). Congregational decisions have always been biblically based (Edmunds, 1993). The declaration that the church is in the world but not of the world and the ideal of maintaining a pure church contribute to the devotional necessity of separation (Kulig, 1995). Separation from the world includes separation from the state, for the state is of the world. Klassen (1981) points out three distinct ways that separation from the state has been enacted: refusal to take the oath of allegiance; refusal to accept or fill public office or any position in the government; and refusal to bear arms even if threatened by death. Opposition to participation in such secular institutions as public schools also upholds the concept of separation from the state. There is support for the laws of the nation's governing body, but only under the condition that the requirements of human laws are not contrary to the word of God. God is obeyed rather than man because the rule of life must always be the word of God (Bargen, 1953, p.119).

Because they are insular in their separation, they are not concerned with the redemption of the outside society (Hostetler, 1971, p.7). The concern lies in the effect outside society can have in the preservation of their own. Shielding impressionable children against secular influence has been important to the Kanadiers throughout their history (Babcock, 1998). This was clearly illustrated by the unwillingness to compromise

church control over education during the Manitoba school crisis. Keeping the children within the church is important as there has been no history of welcoming potential converts. The church support of endogamy effectively keeps the members within a closed context supported by their beliefs and traditions (Edmunds, 1993, p.128). Separation and the perception of a common enemy also serve the end of creating a climate of solidarity, a strong unity within (Babcock, 1998). In practical day-to-day living, separation has frequently meant no interaction with worldly people, and no cars, trucks, telephones or radios that would bring the world closer to them (Redekop, 1969).

Conformity.

Redekop (1969) identifies the ability to live the Old Colony way of life as an ultimate goal among Old Colony members. Inherent in achieving this goal is the belief that conformity will preserve the Old Colony way of life and contribute to its quest for salvation. Religious life can be practiced only within a community where the self-will is submerged. As such, the rules of behavior are designed to achieve a loving brotherhood rather than personal holiness. Smucker (1986) identifies such aims as antithetical to individualism. Regulations that maintain conformity, including the roles, behavior and dress of women and men, are based on scriptural interpretation. As it is sinful to take undue pride in one's appearance, dress for both sexes is modest and plain without jewelry or cosmetics (Edmunds, 1993, p.128). Married women wear head coverings called ducks at all times as symbols of their status in the community and in order to pray. The women's hair, which represents love, is to be left long (Kulig, 1995, p.26). Marriage and children are viewed as part of God's plan with no sanction for birth control. Interfering with child

bearing would be going against God's will (Edmunds).

Individuality is minimized. Even the floor plans and architectural style of the houses, household furnishings, farm practices and equipment are determined by conformity to tradition. Redekop (1969) points out that lack of conformity creates tension and misunderstanding. Conformity, then, seems an essential component in the maintenance of the existing social structure within the conservative Mennonite colony as it still exists in Latin America.

Social control.

When combined with the high regard for church leaders, the "spokesmen for God," the church structure optimizes social control. The Lehrdienst, responsible for religious matters, ensures conformity to religious and social norms (Babcock, 1998, p.221). The behavior watchdog, the Kroagha, reports deviant behavior to the clergy who, in turn, have a number of formal avenues to ensure compliance. Brought before an assembly consisting of the Lehrdienst and Elder, an errant individual is instructed to abjure the forbidden practice or face sanctions (Sawatsky, 1971, p.267). Sanctions can range from denial of church sacraments and surveillance to the extreme social consequences of shunning or excommunicating (Babcock, p.22). If excommunication is applied, reinstatement can only be obtained after the accused has renounced the offending practice and begged the pardon of the Gemeinde (Sawatsky, p.267).

Being banned by the church is a powerful negative sanction. Others may not greet banned individuals, speak to them, worship with them, or sit down to eat with them. They cannot attend family reunions, engagement parties, weddings or funerals. Given the

traditional closeness within the Mennonite community and the high value placed on family ties, this proves to be a serious strain for all individuals (Sawatsky, 1971, p.316). Being banned can also have serious economic consequences. During the Manitoba school crisis, Mennonite shop owners who sent their children to public schools in town and were subsequently banned found themselves without patrons. The economic necessity of sharing or trading equipment is also hampered. Redekop (1969) points out that continued deviance is an exception rather than the rule primarily because the “costs” involved, both social and economic, are too great (p.100). Family members, caught in the awkward position of having to choose between church and family, often pressure the ex-communicant to “make his case” to the Gemeinde at whatever cost in pride or dignity (p.100). According to Sawatsky, the Old Colony church has progressively become less liberal in its exacting of excommunication as a sanction. The Lehrdienst is well aware of the possibility of a break away through new group formation of a large group of excommunicants. As well, there is the possibility that an individual, along with the family, may apply for membership with another group, usually less conservative. While the Sommerfelders and Kleine Gemeinde have similar sanctions, the incidence of “shunning” is lower because they have fewer proscriptions pertaining to secular matters (p.267).

Redekop(1969) identifies youth membership, a voluntary act accompanied by a promise to remain within the church, as an important Old Colony goal. While voluntary, church control is inherent because membership is a prerequisite for marriage (Babcock, 1998, p.22). Outside the church structure, the village social structure acts as a sphere of social control. Social control can be exercised informally through discussions and

disapproval. Within the village organization, many economic, social and ecological processes are rigidly controlled (Redekop, 1969, p.103). When this village sphere of influence is not in place, as is the case in Canada, the church is generally unable to exercise the same degree of control (Babcock).

Technology

The utilization of technology is carefully guarded, although it is becoming more prevalent. In Mexico, technology is used primarily for agricultural production and distribution. Although uncommon, technologies such as cars and electricity are also being introduced with their use frequently discussed and debated (Edmunds, 1993, p.132). Some view the use of technology as a direct threat to dependency relationships while others argue that more sophisticated forms of machine technology enhance the stewardship of the Mennonite farmer (Smucker, 1986, p.267). In her work with Old Colony people, Edmunds encountered an acceptance of health care technologies. While the folk health system continues to be valued, there were no sanctions against receiving professional medical treatment or services that would require laboratory tests, surgery or anaesthetics. In Canada, living outside the village structure, most Kanadier Mennonites have witnessed the use of technology on a regular, day-to-day basis. Observational notes in Kulig's (1995) community assessment identified the presence of such technologies as televisions, walkmans, radios and coffee-makers in some homes, and a telephone in all homes. Within the Latin-American Mennonite households, however, technological luxuries and work-saving amenities are rare. Many homes have no space heating despite chilly temperatures, often below 50° F during the winter months (Sawatsky, p.286). Given the dearth of water,

even the joint ownership of a well is considered fortunate.

Social Relationships

The Community.

The strong ties, and cohesive and interdependent nature of the Mennonite village in Latin-America has already been described. Within the church and village community, individualism is minimized with emphasis being placed on spiritual maintenance of the whole. While communal ownership is not part of the traditional philosophy, the principle of mutual assistance is thoroughly a part of the social fabric (Sawatsky, 1971, p.293). Sawatsky contends that the principle of mutual assistance, more than any other single factor, guaranteed the survival of colonization efforts despite difficult agricultural frontiers and resultant hardships. Care for the poor is also an important component of the Mennonite belief system. Each Gemeinde maintains a fund to assist those in need (Redekop, 1969). Because all members of the group are striving for a common end, no one within the group should be allowed to starve (Kulig, 1995, p.43). Outside the realms of the immediate community, a larger organization called the Mennonite Central Committee formed in order to address the needs of the poor on a global scale. The MCC is fairly active in providing assistance to the communities within Latin America. The service is a direct extension of the Mennonite convictions that word and deed must be one and that love must be visible (Redekop, 1969). Key informant reports in Kulig's (1995) assessment, however, appear contrary to this conviction. Two groups of Kanadier Mennonites were noted: "the haves and the have-nots, with financial success determining divisions within the community" (p.15). The Kanadier Mennonites were perceived as more

intent on individual success rather than helping each other.

According to Redekop (1969), a system of social ranking occurs within the Old Colony despite the belief that it is wrong to classify one person as more or less important. Rank is determined by a number of factors including age, gender, wealth accumulated by traditional means, occupation, and an ability to use one's personality in informal influence or leadership. The *Lehrdienst* containing bishops and ministers occupies the highest rank. The second class is made up of farmers who are land owners, *Wirtes*, and the third class includes the landless laborers called *Anwohner*, teachers and cowherds (Sawatsky, 1971, p.302). Within the Kanadier population in Southern Alberta, such stratification is not as readily apparent. In terms of "class," there seem to be more similarities than differences. Most of those who leave Mexico are landless, relatively young, and have not abandoned a highly esteemed position within the *Vorsteher*. As has been pointed out, divisions appear to be the result of the ability to successfully adapt economically as opposed to the cultural value placed on particular occupations.

Edmunds (1993) identifies visiting as the main kinship activity of the Old Colony culture in Canada with importance being placed on maintaining contact with relatives who are visited as often as time and distance will allow (p.129). In Kulig's (1995) assessment the majority of the household informants had extended family in Canada, it was noted that there is little leisure time for Kanadier Mennonites but, when time is available, it is most often spent visiting with extended family. In Canada, some families watch television. One of the more liberal Mennonite churches, the General Conference, allows television, radios and tape recorders (p.20). For some conservative Mennonites, the term amusement

contradicts the strong work ethic and implies idleness, vanity, waste and worldliness (“Amusements and entertainment,” 1998). Within the Mexican village system, amusement is tightly controlled; restriction on social activity provides an effective means of limiting social interaction with the larger society (Redekop, 1969). While some of the same restrictions apply in Canada, lack of time and money determine amusement activities to a large extent (“Amusements and entertainment”).

Maintaining close social relationships within the Gemeinde is much more difficult in Southern Alberta than it is in Mexico since the traditional village structure is not intact. Living in hamlets, towns or on farm land, some of the household informants in Kulig’s (1995) assessment indicated they missed the reassurance to which they had become accustomed in Mexico and related feelings of isolation. Feelings of isolation and loneliness are reiterated by some of the Mennonite women involved in Babcock’s (1998) Community Development Proposal. Many, if not most, of the women do not drive and are dependent on their husbands for transportation.

Dating usually begins to occur around the age of 16 for girls and 17 for boys and can be considered fairly “innocent” with time being spent together talking and getting to know each other (Kulig, 1995, p.21). Premarital sex is forbidden by church law and intermarriage in Mexico results in excommunication (Redekop, 1969). This is not to say that it is not becoming more prevalent. Common-law marriage is not acceptable and divorced individuals cannot receive communion (Kulig, 1995).

Language.

Every Kanadier household in Kulig's (1995) assessment most frequently spoke Low German (p.24). According to Babcock (1993), the German language is a strong part of the Mennonite heritage, and a feared loss of the mother tongue threatens the bond within the family (p.131). Sawatsky (1971) contends that "any diminution of the German being taught would seriously threaten the continued functioning of the church, based as it was on the use of the German language" (pp.15-16). On the other hand, Barga (1953) notes that the Mennonite population has had to learn and assume a new language in the past, German being one. He points out that maintenance of the language for the time being is important because it serves to facilitate communication between the young and old.

The family.

The family is characteristically a strong unit within which there has traditionally been a high degree of functional interdependence (Smucker, 1986, p.274). Considered to be the will of God, large families are generally the rule (Redekop, 1969). As has been pointed out, the population growth rate in Mexico represents a doubling each 17 years (Sawatsky, 1971). The pregnancy history of the female household informant in Kulig's (1995) assessment cites 5.5 as the mean (with n=24) with the children being close in age (1-2 years apart). In an agricultural setting, children are viewed as an asset for work on the farm, since they do not need to be sent to higher schools for education (Driedger, 1973, p.266). Within the farm labor environment of Southern Alberta, it is common for a Kanadier father to contract with a farmer or company and fulfill the contract with the assistance of his family. The provision of free, or relatively inexpensive health care, and

other government programs such as unemployment and child tax credits also help to sustain large families. Even so, feeding, housing and clothing a large number of children can be economically challenging, especially since most of the Kanadier men secure low paying jobs that are often seasonal in nature (Kulig, 1995, p.27).

A strong belief in tradition and conformity has resulted in fairly delineated roles and expectations among the family members. The family unit is supported by a patriarchal structure (Kulig, 1995, p.31). The father, provider and spokesman, is the head of the home and can expect respect, obedience, support and encouragement from his wife (Redekop, 1969, p.68). The direct power-holder, the father determines what his children may do, their privileges, rights and duties. According to Redekop, the extent of the father's power can be far-reaching and his actions severe (p.105). Fairly conventional in nature, the father's responsibility is to adequately supply all the material provisions necessary for family sustenance. The Old Colony church forbids the use of alcohol, smoking and crude language and although the women must comply, the rules are stretched for a man "because of his superior authority" (p.69). In Kulig's (1995) assessment, some key informants indicated that women were subject to physical abuse from both the husbands and sons, a contradiction to the Mennonite religious doctrine that emphasizes pacifism (p.13). Some also noted physical abuse of children. Alcohol abuse among the men, with wages going to alcohol rather than necessities, was also an identified concern.

The wife is expected to respect and obey her husband, meet his physical needs and care for the home (Babcock, 1998, p.26). Women are expected to comply with rules, and attitudes toward them result in limitations on freedom. In the Latin American colonies,

most women think of themselves mainly as servants to their husband (“Gender roles,” 1999). While women are considered almost equal to men in church, they are not allowed to express their ideas in public or hold office. The interviewers in Kulig’s (1995) assessment noted that generally, women made little eye contact and appeared more submissive. As well, it was noted that if the husband was present, the women were “more reticent” and often waited for him to answer questions (p.16). Daily decision making in the home may fall to the woman, but the authority is attributed to the man (Babcock, p. 26). According to some writers, many churchmen condition women to believe that their prime duty is motherhood and household care (“Gender roles,” 1999). The role of being the main care giver in Canada is a somewhat different experience for the women than it was in Mexico. Lacking the support of extended family and neighbors in close proximity, mothers of the Kanadier children are often perceived as overwhelmed with rapid and successive pregnancies and not always able to provide the time needed for each of their children (Kulig, 1995). Gender role teaching and practice are characterized by headship for a husband, silence for women and primacy of male experience (“Gender roles”). It should be noted that the seemingly extreme nature of the above-described feminine role is not necessarily assumed by all women. Kulig’s assessment noted Kanadier households that appeared to have more balanced or “interdependent” relationships.

The role of the child carries with it the obligation of complete obedience to parents (Redekop, 1969). Children are taught to first obey and respect their parents and other adults (Edmunds, 1993, p.129). With large families and a never-ending array of chores, “girls are taught from an early age how to care for their younger siblings, how to cook,

sew and manage the household” (Kulig, 1995, p.22). From an early age, boys become responsible for chores outside the home. In Mexico, boys accompany their fathers and learn the skills necessary for farming. Depending upon the size of the family and the number of girls, however, boys may also have to assume some household duties (Redekop, 1969). In Kulig’s (1995) assessment, children were described as “well behaved and shy, requiring little attention from their parents” (p.19). It was also noted that the church assists in setting particular rules and expectations (p.23). In terms of discipline, both parents assume responsibility, although the father actually gives the punishment in some homes. “Discipline includes talking with the child and explaining what he/she had done wrong, putting the child in the corner and asking him/her to write a note of forgiveness, or physical discipline” (pp.23-24). Some informants interviewed in the study also indicated that they are less strict with their children than their parents were with them.

Since the Mennonites practice adult baptism, it is important that the religious socialization of children is successful. Primarily conservative, the Kanadier Mennonite view of parental responsibility is that it is the task of each generation of parents to train up children in the way they should so that when the children are older they will not depart from the church. In Mexico, various social and cultural boundaries (language, church-operated schools, denial of television, and access to other media) are maintained in order to limit the child’s contact with the outside world (“Childrearing,” 1989). “The whole socialization process is based in the assumption that the outside world is evil, and children can be safely reared only within the limits of the isolated colony or religious community in which the children receive a clearly defined and unmixed message as to what is right and

what is wrong with respect to how life is to be lived and how one should think and believe” (p.7). In Southern Alberta, the inability to reside in a collective geographic boundary, makes it difficult for the Kanadier Mennonites to maintain strict social boundaries. The family and church present the only “safe” opportunities for interaction.

Public school, with its curriculum and secular individuals is a direct threat to the inculcation of religious values. The family unit, however, is strong. Interestingly, Hamm (1987) points out the family solidarity that still exists among families who did not leave Canada for Mexico. With only a remnant of the village structure remaining, public school and a depletion of the ministry, he credits this to the Biblical view of family. Despite the lack of supporting boundaries, the family continues to serve as a haven in an uncertain and secular world.

Occupations

Implicit in the culture stemming from Anabaptism is the view that “nature is a garden, that man was made to be a caretaker (not an exploiter) in the garden, and that manual labor is good” (Hostetler, 1971, p.7). Based on this belief, farming has traditionally been considered the only real way to achieve Old Colony objectives (Redekop, 1969). Redekop points out that landowner farmers rank high in social status and the ability to reflect agricultural skills is important in determining the success of an individual. “A successful farmer is one who is able to pay his debt, keep an orderly farm, and acquire more land so he can help his children get started on the farm” (Babcock, 1998, p.27). Given these fundamental values regarding work, occupational choices are very limited for those who adhere to the traditional beliefs. If one is unable to become a

landowner, out of economic necessity, he will attempt to obtain employment in a related field such as mechanics, welding fabrication, implement dealing and working at a cheese factory. The Anwohners may hire out as farm hands or cowherds or be appointed as a teacher for the village (Redekop). For women, the only acceptable occupation is that of a housewife. In Mexico, as well as Canada, women are also known to work on the farms. "If she does not marry, she remains in her parents' home and cares for her aging parents, or serves as a maid for another Mennonite family" (Babcock, p.27).

The rural community is also believed to provide some protection from threatening worldly forces perceived as inherent in city life but less problematic and somewhat controllable in rural life. The ideal for traditional Mennonites is a rural community based on close, intimate ties of blood, land and kinship; "a community where people respect tradition and prefer to remain and interact with their own group" ("Rural life," 1999, p.4). Born, raised and trained in Latin America, the Kanadier men in Southern Alberta appear to have adhered to the traditional occupational choice of agriculture. In Kulig's (1995) community assessment, the majority of the men were working on farms or in the agricultural sector. Other jobs included welding and driving trucks. The assessment does not indicate whether the men obtained primarily agricultural employment out of choice or necessity. Even if an individual desired to move beyond the traditional choice, lack of schooling and training in areas outside agriculture may hamper opportunity.

Health

Diet and nutrition habits, health and illness beliefs of the Southern Alberta Kanadier Mennonites are described in detail in Kulig's (1995) community assessment. In general,

the assessment pointed to a lack of understanding of a balanced diet or nutrition. In Canada, the Kanadier find groceries more expensive and, accordingly, primarily eat hamburger for meat and have less access to fresh fruit. The description of health and illness beliefs points to a kind of folk health philosophy which can lead to inappropriate actions when a sick individual requires care, for example. Redekop (1969) identifies lack of education as playing a role in the health and welfare of Old Colony members. For people who are receptive to rumor, folklore and superstition, some illnesses are more serious than they realize, while others are less serious than they imagine. A fatalistic attitude, "it is God's will," toward illness is common (Kulig, 1995, p.29). Good health was referred to as a "balance of the spirit and physical body, a lifestyle that incorporates hard work, good food and adequate sleep" (p.29). Prayer was identified as playing an important role in wellness and home treatment is usually given prior to visiting a physician.

Education

The significance of the education issue in determining the historic path of the Kanadier Mennonites was pointed out in earlier sections. The belief in church control over education resulted in the splitting of factions in Russia and, in part, motivated the mass exodus from Russia to Canada following the implementation of the Russification program. In Manitoba, the question of educational control was again a significant factor in splitting, as well as the primary motivator for migration to Mexico. For the conservative Mennonite who remained in Canada, the response to encroaching public education was migration to frontier areas within the country and, for some, eventual departure to Latin America. For those returning to Canada, suspicion, even fear of public education is prevalent and

variable strategies are utilized by some to continue avoidance.

Educational beliefs.

In order to better understand the seemingly uncompromising stance on public education by some, one needs to examine some of the underlying educational values and beliefs.

The basic educational philosophy hinges on Romans 12:2 and 16: “And be not conformed to this world . . . Mind not high things, but condescend to men of low estate. Be not wise in your own conceits.” It is fixed by the admonition contained in I Corinthians 7:20: “Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called.” The latter passage is interpreted to mean that a person is born into the faith and calling of his forefathers, and must remain therein or risk divine retribution. For the Mennonite, then, it requires that he accept unquestioningly the religious rationale of his forbears and that he follow the traditional agrarian way of life. (Sawatsky, 1971, p.308)

The ability to realize these goals falls into the previously discussed religious/cultural manifestations of separation, conformity and social control. There is a strong contrast between the Old Colony philosophy, education for persistence, and the philosophy perpetuated by public schools, education for change. Redekop (1969) points out some views expressed by Old Colony members that reflect the resistance to change: “if our people got more training, they would probably become higher minded and not come back” (p.49); “farming and higher education are not compatible . . . we feel our calling is to till the soil” (p.78). According to Redekop, education is sufficient if one gains enough knowledge to farm and read the Bible; sustenance of the religious fellowship, the culture and simple life style is the primary goal. “The more learned, the more perverted” (p.10), or the further away one may deviate from the established practices on the colony. Another

philosophical difference lies in the emphasis on individualism. The public school's emphasis on individualism and personal growth is disparate from the Colony's emphasis on conformity, interdependence and collective conscious.

Ultimately, public school is a potential threat to almost every aspect of colony life. Hostetler (1971) points out two possible strategies for dealing with the threat of public education. One can tolerate the public school, attempt to isolate its influence and to counteract the disruption it causes, or one can secure complete control by operating the school (p.23). Historically, the Kanadier Mennonites have chosen the latter, often at great economic and personal cost as evidenced by the move to Mexico. It is interesting that control is not so much an issue of inculcating religious instruction as avoiding a way of life promoted by a secular system. Primary education, religious and occupational, takes place in the home. Schools are expected to reinforce and supplement learning in the home (Edmunds, 1993, p.130). What is omitted from the curriculum is as important as what is taught, for the school functions as one of the boundary-maintaining mechanisms for the culture, keeping children sheltered from the world (Hostetler, 1971, p.47). As was mentioned previously, the Old Colony Mennonites are well aware that public education is potentially a powerful instrument for breaking down barriers between themselves and the world. Continuity with faith, family and community can easily be broken if a child secures close friendships with children from the secular community and becomes comfortable with the ways of the world. According to Hostetler, adolescent years are deemed critical for ensuring future church membership. Adolescents need to remain isolated within the community; formal education is completed and it is a time for them to become skilled in

and to enjoy the work they will actually be doing as adults. Upon completion of elementary level schooling, Kanadier Mennonites become young adults, able to put in a full day's work. To further education beyond elementary level would retain the adolescent's status as a child.

The continuum of conservatism, however, does not cease to exist. Sawatsky (1971) points out that not all who left Canada for Mexico were necessarily ultraconservative in their views regarding education. With the ultraconservatives holding the key religious and secular positions, significant pressure to comply "as one of the faithful" existed (p.308). Some of the ultraconservatives would have done away with formal schooling entirely, believing children could be taught as well at home and that "God imparted knowledge and wisdom directly to persons deserving of them" (p.308). For others, the school question was not a critical issue, but excommunication was the alternative to migration. Keeping in mind the social pressure to conform, in private it appears that the attitude to education can differ from public expression (Babcock, 1998, p.25). In private, "many confess their ignorance and their desire for more education" (Redekop, 1969, p.78). In Mexico, there are at least two elementary schools existing outside the colonies that have been established by a small number of individuals unsatisfied with the quality of education (Sawatsky, 1971, p.313). Those who send their children face excommunication; despite this consequence, enrollments have slowly increased.

Schooling in Mexico.

Redekop (1969) describes the school system as a traditionalized, but seriously degenerated form of what existed in Russia. The Lehrdienst is the direct supervisor of the

system who delegates responsibility to ministers and the village Schultz. Supervision is accomplished through unannounced visits of the Schultz and informal communication in the village by members informing the ministers about any deviant forms of education. Classes are conducted five days a week for six months of the year. Starting school around age seven, girls usually attend until the age of twelve, boys until thirteen or fourteen (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995).

Redekop (1969) tells us that “the teacher is usually a person who cannot make a living in any other way and has to be supported by the village” (p.75). As has been mentioned, teachers, chosen from the male Anwohners, are not esteemed members of the community. Qualifications for the position include a family reference first and, second, the ability to sing and, finally, the ability to do life skills math (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). Receiving no professional training whatever, the teachers are the products of the educational system they serve. This may explain why the level of learning attained by each succeeding generation declines. Some of the teachers recognize the need for training, but there are no opportunities for teachers to improve their skills. Teachers report that they are incapable of teaching children to read by phonics having learned by recitation (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). Even if a teacher possesses the intellectual curiosity to extend his horizons, he is effectively prevented from imparting this to the students by strict ecclesiastical control over subject matter (Sawatsky, 1971, p.309). School attendance is nominally compulsory, but it is common for children of all ages to be kept out of school sporadically or for protracted periods to assist with work in the home or on the farm. Absenteeism is high which, according to Sawatsky, does much to explain

the low levels of erudition attained.

The textbooks, curriculum and teaching methods have remained unchanged for seventy years (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). There are no grades or levels, as such, except for text differentiation in reading according to age. The text for young students is the Fibel, a German reader, for the intermediate years the New Testament, and for the final years the Old Testament (Sawatsky, 1971, p.307). Sawatsky points out the difficulty of the reading and describes an analogous situation as one in which an American or Canadian elementary school replaces all existing reading material with the King James version of the Bible. Other study materials consist of catechism, hymns, a song book and scriptures (Mennonite Central Committee). The curriculum is extremely narrow with few exceptions due to the rigorous supervision of the Schultz. In math, the children learn to work simple problems dealing with weights, measures, areas and volumes; skills they will likely encounter as farmers (Mennonite Central Committee). The Kleine Gemeinde curriculum is somewhat broader with the inclusion of a modicum of geography and elementary hygiene (Sawatsky). Learning is achieved primarily through recitation and rote exercise where the child memorizes the ABC's and then goes on to memorize words with no guides whatever (Redekop, 1969, p.77). According to Redekop, it often happens that a child has learned to read well, but will not know half of what he is reading. Memorization and rote learning is reflected in math as well with most children lacking the understanding to solve even simple problems (Mennonite Central Committee).

Children learn to read and write German Gothic script. The Spanish language of commerce is not taught (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). While German is the

language of the church and instruction in school, the unwritten dialect, Plattdeutsch, is the vernacular of everyday communication. As a result, many never develop a real working knowledge of German which limits access to information of any kind beyond face-to-face exchange (Sawatsky, 1971, p.306). A large number of children in the conservative Mennonite colonies in Mexico, Belize, Paraguay and Argentina are functionally illiterate (Terichow, 1996). The Mennonite Central Committee recognizes illiteracy as one of the most serious problems in Mexico with 70-80% of the Old Colony population being unable to read with any understanding.

Members of the Mennonite Central Committee who have visited the schools in Mexico describe the education system as one of frustration with the underlying assumption that children will continue the traditional way of life on the farm (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). As has been pointed out, the changing times and accompanying economic conditions are forcing members to explore areas outside traditional farm work, yet the education system remains unresponsive to the need for upgrading. The Privilegium remains intact with no governmentally imposed requirements with respect to teachers' qualifications and curriculum content (Sawatsky, 1971, p.312). Sawatsky indicates that there is a general awareness of the inadequacy of the schools, but no appreciation of the magnitude that exists or the creation of a general positive determination to raise educational standards. Appreciation and determination may only come with crisis, either economic or governmental. Some feel that the Mexican government may begin to exert more pressure on the Mennonite schools through a sustained preoccupation with a campaign against alphabetism, with possible culmination being an infringement of the

Privilegium in the area of education. Even if willing, the colonies may be unable to raise standards. Sawatsky believes that it is unlikely the colonies could improve the system on their own and would need outside help to accomplish the prerequisite upgrading of teacher capabilities. The alternative to accommodation or change is, once again, migration with the possibility of wholesale Mennonite exodus from Mexico to countries such as Paraguay or Bolivia.

Schooling in Alberta.

For the Kanadier who returns to Southern Alberta, a number of alternatives are available. Working directly with Kanadiers, Babcock (1998) found that how much education they value seems to vary appreciably. While some Kanadiers supported six grades, others were interested in their children continuing school to grade twelve, but not in the public system (p.133). Public education continues to be an option that is generally viewed with trepidation. The ingrained fear of losing their children to the world as a result of public education is combined with opposition to subject matter contained in the curriculum, and a priority placed on the teaching of the German language and religion (Kulig, 1995; Babcock). In Kulig's assessment, it was noted that "education for children of the Old Colony Church must match what is stated in the bible" (p.26). For example, the concept of sex education disgusted some household informants, and curriculum related to childrearing and pregnancy did not align with what is indicated in the Bible. Generally, the freedom noted in Canadian society and religion is not considered moral. Comments regarding education in Canada were provided by some Kanadier Mennonites during one of Babcock's informal meetings. One individual pointed out that "there are schools here, if

you are willing to go” (p.45). Overall, it appears that the perception of the purpose of schooling remains traditional in that it should “first help in running a farm” (p.45).

Additional schooling concerns included a desire for religion in schools, the teaching of German and an alternate program, opposition to mandatory participation in P.E. and the use of technology. A desire to learn to read was expressed, but the objective in this case was in order to understand rules and farming practices. An employment issue was related that is interesting in light of school attendance: “What should these kids do in the winter when there are no jobs on farms and they cannot collect Unemployment Insurance?” (p.45).

Some public school divisions have attempted to address the particular needs of the population by establishing programs for Kanadier children. Within the schools, teacher assistants and speech therapists work with Kanadier children who have learning and speech difficulties (Kulig, 1995). Program attempts have moved beyond the regular classroom. For example, the Prairie Rose Regional Division worked in partnership with the Hope Center in Bow Island to develop an Outreach Program for Kanadier children. The purpose of the program is to “meet the individual needs of Junior-Senior High aged students currently not in school” (Babcock, 1998, p.166). Beyond basic math and language arts curriculum, program components include religious instruction and work experience. In Horizon School Division, Kanadier parents attracted to a conservative orientation to education responded favorably to the inclusion of their children in the Enchant Colony School located on a Hutterite Colony. Because the Colony needed more children to have their own school, Enchant is somewhat of a special case. Enchant Hutterite Colony

members were open to the attendance of Mennonite children. Not all Colony schools are open to this inclusion.

One alternative to public education is the establishment of private schools where the supervising school jurisdiction maintains direct control over staff and curriculum. Two kinds of private schools are in existence: (a) unfunded *non-accredited registered* school where the supervising body determines the curriculum content that does not have to follow provincial regulations and can choose to hire uncertified teachers, (b) partially funded *accredited* school where the supervising body ensures provincial regulations are followed and certified teachers are employed. Precedent for the first kind of unregulated private school was established in 1978 by a group of conservative Mennonites, known as Holdeman Mennonites, at Linden, Alberta. They received permission to operate a private school because of the provision for freedom of religion in the provincial Bill of Rights (Janzen, 1990, p.302). The court became convinced that the task of educating children in a particular way was a deeply held religious concern. Given this determination, the judge ruled that freedom of religion took precedent over compulsory attendance regulations contained in the School Act. As a result, they were allowed to retain a school that was unauthorized by provincial legislation (Smucker, 1986, p.81). The system is independent and private, and instruction is usually provided by uncertified teachers. The court expressed the sentiment that while the state had a legitimate interest in the education of children, infringement of religious freedom was not warranted because the children were receiving a satisfactory education (Janzen, p.302). While the judgement of satisfactory education may have been accurate in this case, it nevertheless opened the doors for the

operation of unregulated schools that may have varying levels of “satisfactory” education. The schools retain a thin line of accountability to the government as long as they receive no provincial funding. Babcock (1998) indicates that many Kanadier Mennonites are willing to sacrifice and pay tuition for this kind of private education. In the latter type of private school, Alberta curriculum is followed and is supplemented by the teaching of religion and High German.

Private school is an option only for those who can manage to afford it in areas where the numbers warrant its operation. Another alternative is home schooling. Home schooling can be coordinated through a public school division or a private school. In Horizon School Division, all Kanadier Mennonite home school students are registered with a private school. The private school is responsible for providing a qualified teacher to supervise the program. In reality, primary instruction is being provided by volunteer parents who may only have an elementary level education. The home school students gather in groups to receive tutoring from these volunteer parents. Home school tutoring is organized in groups because many of the parents do not have the level of literacy required to assist their children. Some concerns have been raised regarding the health and safety standards of the facilities in which the home school students are meeting. One individual recently described the small basement setting in Vauxhall where home school students meet. It was described as having no windows, being crowded and dangerous with only one exit door (personal communication, community agency worker). Another described a building in Grassy Lake that has no interior running water or bathroom facilities (personal communication, Kanadier Mennonite parent). On the other hand, it appears some parents

are quite attracted to the flexibility and control home schooling affords them. In Kulig's (1995) assessment, some Kanadier parents expressed a positive reaction to home schooling "because their children are not exposed to different values and the children can maintain their assistance with the homes or on the farms" (p.28).

Among others, however, there appears to be a rising concern regarding the educational welfare of Kanadier Mennonite children. Key Informants in Kulig's (1995) assessment noted the lack of emphasis on education. This, combined with disruption due to a transient lifestyle, removal to work in the fields, the low education of parents and lack of encouragement to do homework when in school, leads to the children doing poorly in the structured classroom. The practice of removing children from school to work is reiterated in Babcock's (1998) research.

In the spring some children were taken out of school at twelve years of age to work with their fathers on local farms doing contract work such as picking rocks. Although at the outset the parents spoke of a short period of absence from school, in actuality those students did not return to the classroom. As the fathers obtained contracts on many farms, the children lost interest in returning to school. We were aware of this situation, but could not come up with a way of approaching these families. (p.108)

In the writer's experience, there seems to be a general awareness that having children under the age of sixteen, starting as young as ten or eleven, assist with agriculturally related contract work is a fairly common practice in Southern Alberta. As in Babcock's example, however, awareness has not prompted any concerted action to remedy the situation. Beyond the issue of being in school is the concern for the children's social and personal welfare while they are in school. Informants in Kulig's (1995) assessment indicated that "the children in school may be exposed to teasing and other cruelties from

classmates because of the Kanadier Mennonite clothing, food and sporadic hygienic practices” (p.15).

Reaction to Change

The ability to sustain the traditional village life in Mexico is reaching a critical point. This is evidenced by the continued movement north of Kanadiers, a migration that is expected to increase (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). Longhurst (as cited in Babcock, 1998) estimates that around 35,000 have moved to Canada to find work. The rules that have served the ends of separation and conformity are now resulting in agricultural inefficiency and a deteriorating ability to cope economically. Even though some of the more progressive members recognize and support a need for change, the ultraconservative church leadership continues to prevent compromise and adaptation. The conflict between the need for change and church doctrine remains unresolved. Longhurst points out that the Mennonites in Mexico do not have an adequate process to deal with the subject of compromise or make changes to their traditional life.

While in Mexico, MCC worker Bill Janzen listened to some members express a desire for change - a need for more industry, rubber tires, pick up trucks, electricity for irrigation and other modernizations necessary for competition (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). Some members indicated that they could no longer manage but the ministers don't help or seem to care. When queried as to why the church leadership condemns change, reference was made to the biblical expression, “keep that which you have been taught.” One Ohm explained that, “we believe what our forefathers left us here is good and we will manage without accepting change . . . as long as our loving God

sustains us.” Another expressed the strong belief in keeping the promise and traditions, the rules of the church.

Change is a difficult issue to address because all aspects of lifestyle are inextricably connected to faith. As has been pointed out, the church influences almost every aspect of their life including clothes, hairstyles, transportation, level of education, occupation, farming methods, size of families, vernacular and written language. The Mennonite Central Committee recognizes that problems of poverty, illiteracy, landlessness, unemployment and constant migration are largely due to leaders’ resistance to change (Peters, 1998). In their work with the conservative colonies, the MCC has attempted to focus on trying to help the colonies broaden intellectual horizons and diversify economic means in order to cope more effectively in a rapidly changing environment (King & Yoder, 1997). Many colonies, however, are not open to having MCC in their community; they fear that the MCC may bring changes that result in the development of corrupt modern communities or increase the level of education to the point that their children will desire to live in the world (Peters). The fear of change clouds the recognition that the result of continued suppression may be change that is so swift and uncontrollable that values will be lost. The MCC advises controlled change, a channeling in a direction where they can maintain values; new skills, new ideas and new attitudes are necessary for competing in a global economy, one that is increasingly difficult to be separated from (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995).

For those who feel economically compelled to migrate to Canada, some level of change is unavoidable. Almost all newcomers to Southern Alberta work in the traditional

area of agriculture (Petker, as cited in Babcock, 1998). In most areas of agricultural labor in Canada, however, modern technology and practices are an integral part of farm operations, and thus, are unavoidable. As some of the Kanadier laborers become more comfortable in the culture, they move on to mechanics, welding or construction (Petker). Several maintain the goal of owning their own farm or business (Babcock, 1998, p.30). Modern transportation is a necessary part of life in most areas of rural Alberta, even for such basic things as securing services and purchasing food and clothing. If Kanadier children attend any of the public schools or even a private school, most incorporate some level of modern technology. For example, computers and video machines can be found in most elementary schools. There is no doubt that the Kanadier population is culturally challenged in their exposure to rapid change and new types of decisions.

An additional challenge is the conflict between the modest way of life they have been raised in and their church demands and, if successful in economic terms, the wealth they acquire (Brednick, 1976). For many, it may also be the first time they have experienced a sense of freedom to make personal choices and a vision outside of the pattern of village life in the colony. For those who are able to cope with the change and remain, Brednick suggests there is an increasing tendency to select from core culture only those parts that fit their view of life. As both Kulig (1995) and Babcock(1998) suggest, there is a great range of “selection,” as evidenced by the varying levels of the maintenance of different components of the traditional lifestyle previously experienced in Latin-American colonies. Kulig suggests that “the willingness to change and include innovations in their lives is dependent upon the individual and his/her adherence to traditional religious beliefs” (p.20).

In the assessment, it was pointed out that “some families have been excommunicated from the Old Colony church because of their behaviors or have willingly left and joined the more liberal church” (p.26). Sawatsky (1971) suggests that while initial adjustment and acceptance is extremely difficult, the Mennonite migrating from Latin America eventually “learns by experience to appreciate some of the subtleties that adjustment to life in a modern community requires” (p.323). Not immune to desiring some level of public acceptance to ease the difficulty of adjustment, some informants in Kulig’s assessment (1995) mentioned “giving their children permission to wear blue jeans to school so that they will fit in easier” (p.227). Others admitted to the refusal of young school-aged girls to wear their ducks in order to prevent being teased.

While certainly more isolated than in their traditional village, the Kanadier Mennonites are not without valuable assistance in an effort to facilitate adjustment and cope with culture shock. The Help Centers of the MCC, sensitive to the background and beliefs of the population, assist them in adjustment to the Canadian culture without trying to change their value system (Mennonite Central Committee, 1995). The increasing Kanadier population in Southern Alberta has also spurred other community and government agencies to develop programs aimed at better facilitating cultural adjustment. Literacy programs, such as ESL classes, a variety of health initiatives with interpreters or other designated personnel, and school division initiatives such as the Prairie Rose Outreach Program are some examples. The difficulty inherent in programs initiated by community and government agencies is the degree of Kanadiers’ willingness to participate or access assistance. It appears that members of the Old Colony Church are among the

most reluctant. Babcock (1998) encountered major opposition from this group in the proposal stage of the Community Development Project. The leaders of the group denounced the proposal as dangerous and a threat to their religion (p.61). A leader from a different Mennonite church described this reaction as natural given that they, the Old Colony Church, perceive any formal group as a threat (p.63). "They have been taught that we are evil to be separate from and to view our efforts as intrusion and threat" (p.65). He further explained that while some groups believed in education, at least apart from the secular system, the Old Colony Church "did not want their people to have a good education so they would not be influenced from outside" (p.63). Beyond formal agencies, there is the existence of an informal network among the Kanadier population where those who can speak English and are more culturally adjusted assist newcomers (Edmunds, 1993). For individuals, such as the Old Colony Church members, who refuse to access other services this network is critical during the initial stages of cultural adjustment.

School, both an educational and social institution, has traditionally been a major player in the process of change for migrant populations. In fact, some research points to the school as a place where "necessary" change occurs (Vignaux, 1983, p.39). Crucial firsthand experience of adjustment to a different culture occurs within the migrant child and conversely, experience with their otherness and their differences occurs within the child of the host country. For those Kanadier children whose parents have chosen alternatives to the public education system, adjustment to, or perhaps determined separation from, a new country and culture is particularly unique in the sense that it does not follow this historic pattern. Whether this is right or wrong, good or bad, it is difficult

to determine the outcome or the long term social and individual consequence this will have on these Kanadier children.

Perceptions of the Mainstream Culture

Whether correct or incorrect, the way in which a particular minority population is perceived by the mainstream culture impacts interaction and the relationship between the two groups. Lack of knowledge and overriding assumptions can have a negative influence on decisions made by members of the mainstream culture when placed in an employment, schooling or social context. The recent Kanadier community assessment (Kulig, 1995) is particularly informative in this respect through the illustration of key informants' knowledge and assumptions regarding the Kanadier population. The Kanadier Mennonites were generally perceived as being intentionally separate and isolated from mainstream society. Intentional isolation was viewed by some informants as inhibiting the group's understanding of Canadian society as well as institutions that may assist them on arrival. Maintaining an isolationist stance appears to draw attention to lack of participation in what the mainstream culture may deem as important. Borgen (1953) points out that negative attention is not so much based on social or religious beliefs but the seeking of privileges that reinforce isolation in the areas of education and military service. Sawatsky (1971) indicates that some of the migrant Kaniadiers who return to Mexico each winter are "criticized because they take most of their earnings with them, they spend practically nothing in the Canadian communities in which they work, and they pay essentially no taxes in support of the public services they enjoy while living there" (p.322).

Another area of public criticism identified by Sawatsky is the avid degree to which the

Canadian returnees pursue all forms of public assistance available. From a moral point of view, some individuals feel that a population that perceives Canadian society as evil should not look to Canada for a living. It should be noted that while some of the mainstream culture may perceive certain actions as “taking unfair advantage,” the Kanadier Mennonite, raised within a religion that teaches him not to feel a part of any secular kingdom or nation, does not have a comparable understanding of expectations regarding citizenship. According to Sawatsky, any government assistance would be viewed by the Kanadier Mennonite as a paternalistic gesture from a wealthy country that can afford such “largesse.”

While some informants in Kulig’s (1995) assessment communicated an understanding of the ultra-conservative nature of the religion, most had a poor understanding of the religion itself. The Kanadier Mennonites were described as having a simplistic view of the world which contributed to, among other things, inappropriate medical attention. The most common characteristic attributed to the Kanadier population in the assessment was the patriarchal nature of the culture with women being described as dependant and subservient. Some further issues related to the patriarchal structure were expressed: women’s dependence on the man for transportation and the subsequent impact on leave from work, physical and alcohol abuse. Other issues included poor nutrition, inability to communicate in English, illiteracy in their own language and the gap between the haves and have-nots. While many issues were identified in Kulig’s assessment, the mainstream culture generally maintains the perception of the Kanadier Mennonites as a hard-working, diligent people who make few demands, are polite, friendly and peace-

seeking. As the population increases, however, so does the likelihood of negative social behaviors and public recognition of these behaviors.

Needs Identified by Past Studies

Three projects that focused on Kanadier Mennonites in Southern Alberta can be examined to form a fairly comprehensive list of identified needs: Petker, 1993; Kulig, 1995 & Babcock, 1998. Based on the interview feedback from a number of Kanadier Mennonites, Kulig's assessment concluded that the population itself does not perceive much need for intervention or assistance. Likewise, when reading through the progress of Babcock's community endeavor, one can note the reluctance of the target population to become involved in a project aimed at improving life in Canada. The immediate response to working with a government agency appeared to be one of extreme caution, even mistrust. Involvement of the population was an essential component of success and, because of that, Babcock went through a fairly lengthy process in building community trust and rallying involvement. Rallying support was no easy task given the patriarchal structure, a range of churches whose members seemed to require approval for involvement and the difficulty of communication. Based on Babcock's work and involvement, there is no question that any initiative aimed at this population requires extensive groundwork and networking within the community in order to obtain some level of involvement. Identified needs obtained through discussion or interview with the population itself can be summarized in a few key areas.

Social.

Identification of some Kanadier Mennonite social problems as judged by members of

the mainstream culture have already been delineated: alcohol abuse, physical abuse, rights of women, isolation, economic problems, and adaptation. There appears to be a need to at least examine these identified areas. In order to begin to address such social issues, Petker (1993) suggests that the population needs liberation. Unable to live in colonies in Canada, the Kanadier Mennonites nonetheless bring with them a fortress mentality as a result of a core belief system calling for separation of the church and state. The strong motivation to maintain church membership is often in conflict with new societal or occupational expectations and as a result, an “us” versus “them” situation prevails. The importance of church membership and the overwhelming fear of ex-communication has already been pointed out. Given this strong attachment, there is a tendency towards what Petker calls religious abuse. Just as the church can be extreme, by mainstream standards, the patriarchal family structure can be taken to extreme with women and children afforded no sense of personal freedom or choice. Petker points out that these kinds of pressures may become manifest in the form of alcohol abuse, physical abuse, and even incest within the family. The difficulty in addressing these issues and resultant needs is readily apparent. As Kulig (1995) points out, one must weigh the moral dilemma between the rights of the individual and the maintenance of the integrity of the religion and culture. Even if an outsider weighs in favor of the individual (e.g. elimination of wife abuse), the difficulty of intervention is compounded by the closed and separate nature of the community. In terms of general well being and social adjustment within the community, Kulig identifies a need for advocacy to assist Mennonites in obtaining better housing and employment conditions. As well, she felt it was important that their religious and cultural beliefs be better

understood and respected.

Health.

Some of the common health beliefs and habits of the Kanadier Mennonite population have already been described. A variety of health-related needs are identified in Kulig's (1995) assessment and are evident in Babcock's (1998) research. Given the folk-like approach to health care, lack of knowledge concerning diet and nutrition, and economic difficulties due to family planning, it appears the primary need is for health education. There are inherent difficulties in the provision of education due to the level of illiteracy, possible opposition to particular topics, and on a practical level, simple accessibility obstacles related to transportation.

Education.

There is no question that education is the key issue from which most of the identified needs stem. Recommendations for addressing both social and health needs focus on intervention through education. Key informants in Kulig's assessment (1995) cite public education for children as a concern and need. Based on responses from household informants, it can be concluded that education also needs to target the adult population. Difficulty with language and literacy poses employment difficulties and institutional access problems, while compounding feelings of isolation and an inability to assist children with schooling. According to Babcock (1998), while the population is somewhat reluctant to become publicly involved in initiatives, in an informal setting some expressed a desire for education in certain areas. Some spoke of the need for literacy given recent advances in technology in the agricultural sector. A desire for more English classes for adults was also

expressed. While this desire is expressed by some members of the Kanadier community, addressing the educational needs of this population is difficult given the sensitive nature of the issue of education and schooling. As has been pointed out, attitudes towards the level and appropriateness of content and method of delivery are embedded in a religious based culture that has a long history of opposition to imposed educational programs. Once again, the buy-in and ultimate collaboration of the group will determine the level or degree of success.

Descriptive Research

Interview Results

Key Informants

Key Informant Interviews: Demographic Information	
Nature of capacity with Kanadier Mennonite Children	Number of years in present capacity
#1 Home-School Co-ordinator	1.5 years
#2 Mennonite Agency Director	8 years
#3 Public School Elementary Principal	6 years
#4 Public School Elementary ESL Assistant	5 years
#5 Private School Principal	2 years

Table 1. Key Informant Demographic Information

Demographic information.

While the key informant interview data reflects information gathered from a very small sample, the purposely selected informants are fairly representative of the various systems of schooling delivery: public, private and home schooling. The nature of the work with Kanadier Mennonite children also reflects a range: principals, ESL assistant, co-ordinator, agency director. One of the key informants is an individual from mainstream culture, the remaining four are Mennonite.

Theme 1: Kanadier Mennonite beliefs and values toward education and schooling.

One of the key informants pointed out the difficulty of the interview questions due to the continuum of conservative beliefs within the population. The Old Colony was identified as the most conservative, the Sommerfelder as somewhat conservative, the Klein Gemeinde as conservative/liberal, and the General Conference and EMC fairly liberal by comparison. Another informant commented that even within the same church many opinions are disparate and can lead to splitting.

A key theme ran through the informants comments: the desire of the Kanadier Mennonite people to maintain tradition. The ideal of separateness that is central to the history of the Kanadier Mennonites appears to be perceived as essential to maintenance of tradition. One individual commented that, “The Old Colony is against education ... education in the public system can mix children together ... the Old Colony Church wants to keep their children separate.” Some still strive to locate in isolated communities in a structure similar to the village system in Mexico. One informant indicated that some Kanadier Mennonites just bought tracts of land in the Two Hills area. The sale of the land was promoted in Mexico and there was a lot of interest. Another informant noted that parents seemed afraid of involving their children in mainstream society. In the public school system, the desire on the part of the children to “fit in” was noted. The girls, most often wearing traditional dresses, are somewhat more visible, but some of the boys wear jeans. It was noted that there are mixed feelings among the parents regarding how well the children fit in. While some parents are glad the children can mix and be happy, others worry that they will become part of mainstream society and not want to be seen as

Mennonite.

One informant noted that keeping tradition includes the maintenance of roles within a patriarchal family and community structure. It was expressed that, "Some do not want the children to be above them ... it is important that you don't want your kids to know more than you ... if they know more, you can't keep the religion the same, keep the string tied." Another stated that, "I have found that the father does not want his children to be more educated than he is himself ... he is the *boss*; this is especially true for girls ... it is a patriarchal society." Emphasis on particular roles for the future also maintains tradition. As one informant stated, "The boys are encouraged to be farmers ... the parents don't want the children to be going off in some career venture; they don't want them stepping out of the bounds of their own culture." Based on a number of years experience, another informant explained that, "Learning the minimal amount is okay for what they (Kanadier parents) want for them (children) for the future." One informant felt that the more conservative Kanadier Mennonite parents often did not have a good understanding of the purpose of school or the concept of moving beyond tradition. As one key informant with a Mennonite background explained, fundamental to religious beliefs is the principle that the more you know, the more you are accountable for to God. "If you don't know, then you will not be responsible for it on judgement day."

It appears that some Kanadier Mennonite parents may link unwanted change to the public education system. One informant stated that, "Parents get concerned with children being educated in public school because very few remain Old Colony ... they move to a more progressive church." One informant pointed to the maintenance of the German

language as important to the Kanadier Mennonite people. The German language was identified as important for keeping up communication with relatives and keeping tradition alive. It was pointed out that for the parents, schooling was neither emphasized or held a major role in their lives as children in Mexico. This may explain why parents have a difficult time understanding an emphasis placed on education by others, including their own children.

Another common thread was the emphasis placed on what could be called the functional application of schooling in terms of daily living and life as an adult. As one informant stated, "Some see education as the last thing that a child needs to learn ... a child needs to learn first to do some things that are useful ... a child may need to contribute around the house." Personal life experience as children instill the attitude that "the kids are supposed to help at home ... in Mexico, when you are out of school, you are done, you are supposed to help the family, not do more school." Schooling is not something that you have to work hard at and, "It should never interfere with the operation of responsibilities after school." Again, role expectations are such that "boys are encouraged to be farmers, girls mothers and wives." The expectation is that the children will learn things that will help them fulfill their roles; they do not need to know more. This is not to say that the informants saw Kanadier Mennonite parents as being completely opposed to some form of schooling. There appears to be a recognition among the parents that some level of schooling is important for the development of essential skills in order to function effectively in the culture within which they must earn a living. One informant stated that, "Most parents have the value that they wished they had some school so they

could read.” Another stated that, “The Old Colony church knows that it is important for the leaders to learn English so they can more easily access the other mainstream population, especially for employment or services.” One informant pointed out that even when parents are concerned (that their children get an adequate education), there are no “broad or future goals” beyond traditional roles. The valuing of practical work over educational pursuits seems to extend beyond the parents to the children. As one informant related, “Even when parents allow more school, their children seem to choose to quit if they have the option and can find a job.”

Some of the key informants discussed Kanadier parent opposition to some components and methods of delivery in the public system. The use of television and computers were provided as examples. It was noted that there is a pronounced fear or distrust of the Internet; it simply offers a link to the “worldly ways” of the modern world. Sex education, health and physical education were also identified as problem areas hindering attendance. One school-based informant explained that experience has led them to “assume non-participation” and offer an alternative curriculum during the teaching of health and sex education and alternate delivery from any Internet pursuits to avoid “alarming parents” and creating an issue.

Theme 2: Distinction between education and schooling.

According to the key informants, it appears the distinction between education and schooling is a distinction between life skills and literacy. One informant pointed out that most Kanadier Mennonites would “not really distinguish between the two terms if asked ... but their attitudes reflect a particular emphasis on getting ready for life as an adult in terms

of practical skills.” The informant went on to say that, “They (parents) know that it is important that their children learn to read and write English in Canada because it is something they need for employment and other daily activities.” Another indicated that, “School will teach them to read ... the family will teach about sex or chores or work ... values and beliefs and tradition.” One informant noted an emphasis placed on life skills that are important for working in the agricultural area for boys and helping in the house for girls. The general belief that the most important things are learned at home was reiterated by most of the key informants.

A continuum of interest in school was pointed out with a recognition that the more conservative believe that the more school you have, the more away from tradition you will become. The home school and private school informants indicated that their schooling approach tried to reinforce beliefs similar to home. They also pointed out that (for parents) “it is important to stay separate ... private schools help to minimize immersion in the Canadian culture ... school is seen as a good control.”

Theme 3: Identifying and meeting the needs - schooling program components.

Key informants were asked to identify the educational or schooling needs of the Kanadier Mennonite children, explain how their agency or school attempted to address those needs, their level of success, and suggestions as to how the needs might better be met. A number of needs were identified by key informants that pertain to the delivery of the school program. It should be kept in mind that responses were from individuals representative of the three possible school program delivery systems: public, private and home school.

All five informants identified literacy or knowing how to read and write as essential for the future success of Kanadier Mennonite children. Basic literacy was described as needing to be the major focus in any schooling program. One informant stated that, "Language learning is the priority need of the children." Learning to read was related to future employment. "The children need to learn to read so they can choose to do a certain job in the future." The need for literacy was described as being addressed in one school by the provision of extra assistance through small group instruction programs that address reading skills. An intervention program was described where an assistant was hired to do some diagnostic testing followed by one-on-one remediation. It was explained that while this type of intensive work with children is important, it can be difficult to find the assistant time. Another informant indicated that the issue of literacy required individual attention.

The inclusion of religious instruction or a Christian approach to education was identified as an important component of the schooling program by three of the informants. Both the home school and private school informants indicated that the Christian curriculum was enhanced by the inclusion of bible lessons. One informant stated that, "Not enough (religion) in the curriculum ... we add our own Bible classes to make sure the children are clear and not getting mixed messages." Another informant indicated that it would be nice if they (Kanadier Mennonite people) could pick what is acceptable from the Alberta curriculum and put it with their own religion program. It was made clear that the informant was only speaking for himself in this regard, not necessarily all the people. According to the informant, some are so opposed to public school, the children would not

be getting any schooling if home school or private school was not an option. One informant indicated that a Christian school was able to address what the parents want. It was communicated that the belief that parents did not send their children to public school because of sex education was false. The real issue is that “the public school does not have Godly authors, sovereignty ... it is not a Christian approach ... the real issue stems around being around worldly things, and the influence it may have on the children.”

Instruction in the German language was also identified as a need. “It is very important to them.” A public school on a four day school week that was structurally able to accommodate German instruction for Mennonite children on the fifth day was described as being successful in meeting the people “in-between.”

A number of informants emphasized the importance of stressing practical application in instruction. One informant indicated that the Kanadier children need to have real life application in their learning to see it as relevant. An example of a boy frustrated with math was described. “A boy got really frustrated with a book (math) and couldn’t see the purpose of continuing on with it. I tried to embed it in real life situations. I related measurement of fertilizer to the concept he was doing. I told him how a poor farmer had burned an entire crop from not measuring properly.”

The need for qualified teachers in the home school and private school programs was identified by two informants. It was pointed out that while the teachers (parents, community members) do a wonderful job with the little ones in the Learning to Read program, teacher knowledge does not extend much past the primary grades. “The children would benefit from better educated teachers, but it is not possible ... they (Kanadier

Mennonites) could not afford to pay a real teacher.” The inability to pay qualified teachers was explained further. “Funding at the school is 100% from parents. It costs them \$300.00/month plus more for each child. There are home schooled children who should not be home schooled ... when the parents in the family have no English, it is disastrous ... they do it to stay out of public school, yet can’t afford to be in the private school.” Home school was described as operating by having groups of children get together at set times (one to four times a week) to get tutoring help from parent teachers. It is structured in this way because many parents can’t read or help their children with their lessons. The parent teachers are chosen on the basis of who is willing to do it and can read. A need that was expressed was to find women who did not have their own children volunteer to do the teaching due to time demands. Lack of money was identified as a barrier for some home school parents. One informant pointed to lack of money as the primary source of complaint due to parents’ inability to understand the cost of home school materials and supplies. *Christian Light* was identified as the base curriculum materials for private and home schooling programs. One informant who worked with the materials, described them “as good in most areas.” Math was seen as the “major weak point”, being outdated and unchallenging until it gets to the upper levels where “it is too big of a jump.” “There is no application or problem solving in the math.” Library materials were identified as being insufficient in the private system. This was attributed to a lack of money.

One informant identified the need for a structure that allows the children to stay in the same school. “If they can stay in the same school, there is better luck in keeping them. They don’t go if they have to change to a different school.” Another informant stated, “It

is common knowledge that they will most likely not go on to grade 6, especially if it is a different school which seems even more worldly and foreign .. the middle school.” The solution at one school is to have most of the Kanadier Mennonite children repeat the final year at the school, “In order to try and squeeze in another year of education.” “This is a huge growth year for most of them ... they really excel in their English and reading, primarily because they finally have the confidence.”

While some informants identified integration in a schooling program as a need, others strongly voiced the need for separation. An informant who supported integration indicated that, “They need integration with other children in order to acquire the language more quickly. We find that when they are in a class with other children they have a natural affinity to want to be social and need language to be able to accomplish this.” It was noted that in the public system most kids want to appear integrated, although there is a continuum regarding the level of involvement with mainstream children. “On the playground, some of the kids mix while others stay in the small grouping of Mennonite children.” Integration appears to be a double-edged sword. It was explained that it can be a problem if the Mennonite child who wants to fit in, does. “Some parents don’t want them to because they don’t want them to become like the other (mainstream) children.” One informant who supported separation explained that, “In terms of establishing a Christian school over which the parents have control, including curriculum and religious study, we have addressed the cultural needs and the need to remain separate.” One informant related success with an ability to keep the children away from the mainstream. Another informant identified flexibility as being important to parents. If they need to have

their children at home, they need to be able to do that.

Theme 4 : Identifying and meeting the needs - school climate.

Supportive relationships and the importance of ensuring the Kanadier Mennonite children have a sense of belonging in the school context was identified as key. “The connection to someone who understands and cares means the world ... the children who want to continue with schooling need to feel there is someone behind them.” One informant stated that, “It is important we keep an open mind and always consider the needs of the student first.” The importance of reinforcing and building on success was indicated, as was building on the children’s strong work ethic. Allowing for a comfortable period of transition was identified as important for the development of trust and confidence. One informant stated, “We try to ensure that the children feel welcome ... if a new Mennonite child comes to the school, we try to place them in a classroom where another Mennonite child is already placed.” Another stated that, “We have found part of the key is building confidence and making the children believe they are an important part of the school.” One informant explained that some parents have very negative feelings about public school because of perceived lack of acceptance and actual “bad experiences at public school.” Parents were described as being sensitive to kids being picked on, ridiculed or laughed at. Some have experienced their children not wanting to go because they (the children) did not feel as if they belonged. One informant in the public setting acknowledged that some Mennonite children have experienced some discrimination from other students. “This is always dealt with immediately, and has reduced over the last few years.”

Theme 5: Identifying and meeting the needs - attendance.

Three of the five informants identified attendance as a primary need. One informant related success in school to attendance. "They need to be at school ... inconsistent attendance is always an area of concern. Those who attend and stay end up being average to above average students." One informant expressed the need for better attendance enforcement. "We need more power from Edmonton. They don't know how many kids are affected ... the people know they can do whatever they like when it comes to education. With a lot of families we have a lot of kids. 661 families in eight years, probably at least 400 before tracking ... 6,000 people ... 4,000 kids." The difficulty of tracking the children's attendance at school was related. "It used to be that they (principals) could check and there could be no answer but to go to school. Now the people can stay home and the principal doesn't know any better ... he does not have the right to check or make them go anywhere. I think this is wrong ... Edmonton does not know what they (the Mennonites) are doing."

One informant described the relationship between attendance and migration. "The ones who go back for part of the winter are the ones who don't go to school. When they come back near the end of January, they just don't go back to school. It's an excuse to keep them out. No one seems to track them or interfere with them not going to school." Another informant indicated that, "Migration is a big set back for many of them."

The relationship between school attendance and working was explained by an informant. A specific example of children underage working for an agricultural industry was described. The informant did not want the company named due to possible

connections. The informant was adamant that, “They should be hiring adults, not children ... what life is this for a child?” One informant indicated that, “They get away with making their kids work on farms because of something in the Farmers Act ... the only way to get them (employers of underage children) is Revenue Canada.” Another informant indicated that some Kanadier Mennonite children quit around age twelve for the purpose of employment. Another informant commented that, “There is a major concern regarding young children being away from school for the purpose of working ... some even go to work as young as eight years old.” Contrary to the belief that children are working due to economic necessity to sustain the family in Canada, one informant expressed the belief that economics is not really the factor motivating children working. “They want to make money to go back with a lot of money so they can buy land in Mexico.” One informant pointed out that the labor issue relates to the issue of safety and well-being. “Some of the children are involved in serious farm accidents due to working.” Young girls being pulled from school to help with babysitting or other domestic responsibilities was also noted. As one informant put it, “There needs to be a way to look at the issue and take action.”

Theme 6: Identifying and meeting the needs - communication and involvement.

While some were specific to the children in the school context, many needs identified went beyond the narrow scope of *schooling* to include the entire Kanadier Mennonite community. A central need identified by most of the key informants was the direct involvement of the adult Kanadier Mennonite population. Communication with parents was identified as essential, and where it occurred, was seen as successful. One principal attributed successful involvement of parents to the enabling of communication through a

Mennonite staff member who can speak the language. “The availability of an interpreter on site is critical. The interpreter can make the parental phone calls, assist during parent/teacher interviews, help parents and children with busing concerns, track and follow-up on attendance.” One informant indicated that some parents who had children in public school left because they were “feeling as if they didn’t belong because their ability to communicate in English was lacking.” One informant indicated that, “Breaking through the fear factor is the big thing ... until we get enough information to the parents so they no longer fear, they will not let their children experience it.” The difficulty of communicating with Kanadier Mennonite parents was pointed out. “How to get the information to them is the difficult question ... they are very private, very closed.”

The kind of communication that was described as needed and effective was a two-way system. Not only do the Kanadier Mennonites need to be open to listening, mainstream society also needs to listen in order to develop an understanding. One informant indicated that one of his goals was to try to communicate an understanding of the people (Kandier Mennonites) to those they have to work with. It was said that conflicts usually arise as a result of lack of understanding and communication. To address this, one informant tries to “build bridges and network with people they deal with ... through farm and community meetings ... and assisting with liaison with the school and parents.” Two informants described the need for schools and teachers to understand the context within which the children live. A situation was described where a boy tried to contend with the school requirements of homework by working on it late at night in secret. He felt that if his parents knew he was spending time at home on school, they

would want him to quit. The informant expressed the need for teachers to understand the pressure on the kids to leave school at school. The parents have other priorities and expectations once they get home; school work is perceived as interfering with the home routine. The schools need to help the children finish their work in school time. "One solution might be to build in homework time during school to alleviate some of the conflicting values of home and school."

Where two-way communication was facilitated by adequate personnel and time, it was described as successful. One informant attributed successful parental support to a willingness (on the part of the school) to accept feedback and take action based on the feedback. The key was having adequate German speaking personnel who could spend time communicating with both parents and staff. While there are some success stories, human resources, were described as "essential" and "lacking". One informant indicated a need for a German speaking Mennonite worker who could function outside the school setting. The envisioned role of the worker was described as a "communicator with the community ... someone who could touch bases with the families." The worker was also seen as essential for locating children and getting them to school.

The need for a communication system between agencies was also described. Such a system was seen as something that could facilitate tracking of the children and earlier intervention. "With new arrivals, for example, sometimes we don't know for months they are living somewhere in town or surrounding area." Interagency communication was also described as something that could help cultural understanding and address all community needs.

Related to communication, key informants identified the need for building relationships. One kind of needed relationship described was *between* the different Kanadier Mennonite groups as defined by church affiliation. The conservative continuum was seen as the cause of rifts and splitting. It is a difficult issue to address. One informant stated that, "It is slow trying to build bridges between all the groups ... they are not all the same ... they all have what they think is right, that is why they split in the first place." Building relationships with parents in an understanding, patient way was described as key to the schooling success of students. Positive relationship building with parents enables the "promotion of the school as a great place for their children to be." "We find you have to be patient ... they need time to adjust." One principal described transition in parental trust. At first, the school needed to have separate coffee meetings for the Kanadier Mennonite parents but, over time, the comfort level and trust raised to the point that the parents were comfortable with coming to general meetings.

Theme 7: Identifying and meeting the needs - parent education.

Involvement of the adult members of the Kanadier Mennonite population included addressing their educational needs. Adult literacy was emphasized by most informants. It was recognized that the adult population needed some second language instruction in order to be employable and able to support a family without assistance. One informant stated that, "Workers need to learn to read and write." A story was related about a farmer who lost his whole crop because the Kanadier Mennonite who was working sprayed incorrectly because he could not read the directions. One comment was that, "You cannot even run farm equipment not knowing how to read and follow computers and directions ...

the parents need to learn to read so they can begin to function in our society.”

Educating the parents about the value of education was also cited as a need. “The main thing is meetings to educate parents ... parents need to understand how important education is for the future.” Helping parents identify an educational goal was related as important. “The need to see that they can set a goal and achieve it by hard work.” Another informant indicated that the community and school staff needed to partner to help educate the parents. One informant suggested that the best approach to educating the adults was in small groups. “Big groups do not work ... they are not willing to open up and speak ... if there is a small number, it is usually better ... the message gets out when they network.” An example was described where a small group of parents were invited to a school to learn about computers. The opportunity to see that the computers were not “movies” and could be used to “add and spell” resulted in a positive response that rippled to effect a larger Kanadier community acceptance of the particular program.

Theme 8: Identifying and meeting the needs - personal needs.

One of the informants identified personal needs as one area of concern. “Some of the children have personal needs that need to be met, especially when they first come and are very poor. Some don’t have proper clothing or nutrition due to economics. We do our best to make sure the children are properly clothed for the weather, have some sort of nutrition through the day and obtain extra items like bathing suits and skates ... through donations and the like.” The public school informants indicated that most parents end up paying the school fees, but after this do not have the money to buy school supplies. If this is the case, the school obtains the necessary school supply items to ensure the student has

the proper tools and equipment for classes.

Addressing social needs was also identified as a need. "I know the adult population has a lot of concerns, or social needs. The women often feel very isolated and unsure. More notice is being paid to abuse situations, especially with alcohol."

Interview Results

Household Informants

	Household Informant Interviews: Demographic Information				
Informants	husband/ wife	husband/ wife	wife	husband/ wife	husband/ wife
Time in Canada	19 years	14 years	9 years (migrant)	9 months	1 year
Occupations	welder/ homemaker	farm labor/ homemaker & school helper	homemaker	industry labor/ homemaker	farm labor/ homemaker
Need for interpreter	minimal	minimal	fully	fully	fully
Church	Sommer- felder	Old Colony	Sommer- felder	Old Colony	Old Colony
Schooling program	public	home school	private school	public/ no school	public
#school-age children in school	3	2	5	3	1
#school-age nonattenders	1			3	
# non school-age children	2	2	1	2	1
Total children	6	4	6	8	2

Table 2. Household Informant Demographic Information

Demographic information.

While the household informant interview data reflects information gathered from a very small sample, the purposefully selected informants represent three avenues of

schooling: public, private and home school. The interviewer was unable to obtain an interview with parents who chose not to have any of their children participate in a schooling program. It can be noted, however, that while one couple had their three youngest school-age children enrolled in the public system, they chose to have their three older school-age children (over 11) work. The sample includes couples from two fairly conservative churches, the Sommerfelder and Old Colony. It should be noted that the more progressive churches are not represented: Kleine Gemeinde, Evangelical Mennonite and General Conference. The majority of the Kanadier Mennonites derive from Old Colony or Sommerfelder churches in Latin America. The sample includes perspectives from individuals who have been in Canada for varying times, the longest period of settlement being 19 years, the shortest being 9 months. Two of the interviewed males were farm laborers, one worked in an agricultural industry, and one was a welder. Four of the women were homemakers and one was a homemaker/ home school helper. The number of children varied. The youngest couple had two children. The largest family had eight children. The average was 5 children. Two of the five interviews required minimal interpretation. These were the two couples who have lived in Canada the longest. The little interpretation that was required was in the clarification of some answers. The remaining three interviews required a large degree of interpretation for communicating the questions, and complete use of interpretation for communicating the responses.

Noted characteristics about the home.

In every case, the informants were very polite and gracious. One couple owned their own home on an acreage, the others were either renting or provided housing on the

employer's land. The homes were modest and sparsely furnished with little adornment on the walls except a calendar. All the homes were neat and tidy. With the exception of one afternoon interview, the interviews took place in the evening. The children were exceptionally polite and well-mannered. In the home with eight children, all eight sat quietly in chairs in the living room where the interview was taking place. None of the children got up or bothered their parents for anything while the interview was taking place. All of the homes had modern appliances and phones. T.V.'s were noted in three of the homes. All of the mothers and girls wore traditional dresses and the mothers wore the traditional head pieces (ducks). One father was wearing the coveralls the men traditionally wear in Mexico, two wore jeans and button shirts, and one was dressed in slacks and a button shirt. The boys wore jeans and button shirts.

Theme 1: Reasons for coming to Canada.

All five informants identified economically related reasons for coming to Canada. One couple indicated that they believed they would make a better living and they needed a place to live since there was no land in Mexico. One couple met in Canada. Both their families had departed Mexico to find jobs. The husband, who was seventeen when he came to Canada, indicated that his family was in poverty in Mexico. Both their families originally settled in southern Ontario, but as a couple they decided to come to Southern Alberta because of the "looks" being more like Mexico. They said they liked Southern Alberta better because in Ontario there were many who pretended not to be who they were; they don't want to admit they are Mennonite. As well, they said they found the people in Alberta easier to deal with; they were not made to feel inferior. Another

informant indicated that while employment in farm labor could be found in Mexico, one worker was not enough to support a family. One couple said they had nothing left after their cattle died from a disease, and some family members who already lived in Southern Alberta said they could find a job. Finally, one couple were told by family members who had lived here for five to six years that they could make a good living. This couple also related that they wanted to make sure that they did not lose their Canadian status as citizens.

Theme 2: Learning priorities at school and importance in preparation for adulthood.

All five informants identified learning English or learning to read as an important function of schooling. Two informants also mentioned learning math. Two informants included the ability to find a job as part of the response. A range of responses related to conveyance of values was also provided. One informant expressed the importance of school teaching honesty, how to live a good life, get along with people and handle problems. Another said that morals and values were first, and after that, everything else comes. Learning from the Bible was also cited as important. One informant added that the teaching of alcohol and what it does is important in school because it is more of a problem now.

Three of the five informants stated that school was “very important” for preparation for adult life. One father explained that he did not know what school could do for you until he went to adult learning. It enabled him to get his Welder’s ticket and make enough money to get his own place. Another father pointed out how his lack of education stopped him from doing some things. The wife thought that with education, maybe she would be a

nurse. She pointed out, however, that sometimes education doesn't matter. She related a story about a friend in Mexico who has more education than herself, but has accomplished nothing. The friend had "trouble with the Lord having children" and sits at home with no babies and nothing to do. She explained that she has more than her friend. She has a Class 1 driver's licence and teaches home school children. "It is not all school ... it is the effort." The other informant who said it was very necessary did not elaborate. One informant said that the children needed to get some school for work. They needed to know how to read and write a little. He (father) wanted his children to learn just like they were used to things, no different. He does not want to send his kids to high school because they learn too many things that are not the way it is supposed to be.

Theme 3: Learning priorities at home and church and importance in preparation for adulthood.

All five of the informants identified "learning the faith" as essential to learning at home. Learning the faith was not really elaborated on by any of the informants. It appeared that there was an assumption that one would know all that learning the faith entails. Following prompting, one informant summarized it by saying, "A lot more, but if a person believes, walks His way, everything else comes ... don't need to know more than that." Learning responsibility, honesty, how to do chores and work were also included in the response. Learning control was identified by one informant and "how to behave when they see their dad" by another.

Learning the faith was also communicated as the priority at church. A few informants extended their explanation of faith to include morals and values, honesty,

helping each other, helping the poor and forgiving. One informant indicated that church was also important for teaching the little ones to sit still and listen. What the children learn at home and church was described as important and/or critical for adulthood by all informants. The teaching of religion in the home and church was described as necessary for the children to live the faith. "The family and church teach what is important ... how to live your life." One informant stated that, "That's what you are going to see when children are grown ... some people you can see what they do not have by persons in the group they hang out with ... not saying my people are perfect, but we get taught the right way, get taught what we need to know for our life." One informant explained that what is learned at home is important because they (the children) learn it is what you do with something. The need to learn to work was also stressed. One mother pointed out the difference in girls in Mexico and Canada. "In Mexico they know they have to help and work. They don't complain, they just do what they know they are to do. If they go to school too long (here), they don't feel like doing any work, they get lazy."

Theme 4: Future goals for children.

The two couples who have resided in Canada for the longest period of time provided responses that seemed to afford their children greater autonomy in choice. One of these respondents indicated that he did not think it is right to make them become something. "It is their choice, whatever they want to do." This couple's oldest son is presently attending university. They were very proud of his accomplishment. The father explained that while some of the people are afraid of children becoming worldly and getting into wrong things, he wanted his children to do what will make them happy. This was qualified with, "As

long as they live the Lord's way." They did not believe that education meant learning things to make you leave the church. Their son in university still went to church and believed. Being happy was important because if they (young adults) are not happy, if they have nothing to do, they drink and get into trouble. A story was related about a friend who would not let his son go on to an inter-provincial level of volleyball. This made the son unhappy, he had nothing to do that he liked, then he got involved in alcohol. The other couple indicated that the children needed to have a proper education to get work. "They will do what they need to do ... what is right for them." This couple made it clear that they supported schooling to get whatever kind of job they wanted, but this did not mean the parents should give everything (financially) for their kid to go on in education. It was up to the child to find a way.

The other three couples related future goals that fit the more traditional role expectations. Working on a farm, or something farming related, was the expectation described by all three for the boys. One informant explained that if he had his own farm, he would set up his own shop and the boys would work with him to learn to be carpenters and farmers. This individual was a furniture carpenter and farmer in Mexico. One informant explained that the girls will learn to be a wife, to sew and cook. The other two informants were less sure about the future goals for their daughters. While being a "good wife" was identified, one informant (mother) indicated that things might change, and another said that the girl "likes working with animals."

The responses to the question regarding how long it was necessary for children to go to school were varied. The informant who has adult education and became a welder

wanted to see his children with a grade 12 education. He explained that this is hard for some Mennonite families who have no land and do not receive high wages. They can't support big families, they need their children to help. Even his wage as a welder is not enough to help his children pay for education past grade 12. They have to be willing to work hard and do it on their own. The other informant who believed that his children can do what they need to do, felt grade nine was adequate for most. He believed that it was no good to go past grade nine unless they had good results and wanted to go on. He pointed out that their (himself and his wife) support of education to grade nine was not necessarily typical of their people (Old Colony). "Some would say only a little education is okay. There are some who register in home school, but do not come. Those who do not like schools the most are newcomers. When you have been here longer, you know you need to know some things first. Some who have been here a long time are even talking about computers and training." He went on to say that for those who plan to go back, he could understand why a school or district has a difficult time to get them to go to school. For those who want to go back, school would not be of any good, they can be taught what they need to know at home.

The other three informants suggested that their children only needed enough to go to work. One informant set the condition that their son could quit at 14 if he found a job. Another indicated that age 15 was sufficient. Lastly, one cited five years as "enough to do book learning."

Theme 5: Reasons underlying schooling choice and the meeting of needs.

Three of the informants sent their children to public school. Each of the three had

different reasons for their choice. In the case of the couple who have been in Canada for 19 years, the children started in public school because “there were no choices then.” When choices became available they continued with the public school because they thought their older children had done fine. Another informant indicated that their younger children were in public school because “a woman came and got them ... they must have heard we were here ... she told us we had to send our younger ones to school.” This woman was a German-speaking ESL assistant in one of the public elementary schools. In the case of the third informant who chose public school, it was because “the boss said it was the best school ... he would know.” Two of the three public school informants indicated that they thought the needs of their children were being met. One couple stated that they really didn’t know, that they had not really come across anything. Two couples expressed a desire for some inclusion of Christianity or catechism in public school.

The couple who chose a home school educational program did so because they “wanted first hand knowledge of what they are being taught.” They explained that public school was not really an option because they were anxious to keep their children apart from influence. They felt that home schooling met their children’s needs. They liked the way in which the children were tested first and placed in a program according to ability rather than age. Examples were given of children who had left public school and did better in home schooling. The only addition they wanted to see with home schooling was something where the children “could learn about how to eat” (nutrition).

The informant whose children went to private school made the choice because they (couple) had looked into it and thought it would be good. They had not tried public

school, but had heard there were no Christian things in public school. This informant was not really sure if needs were being met. She stated that she had not really thought about it, but would see it later by whether or not they are able to get a job.

One couple chose to have their older children (over age eleven) work rather than go to school. It was communicated that this is the way it should be. "They do not need school ... they are ready to work."

It should be noted that with the exception of the home school informants, the informants appeared somewhat unsure of how to respond to the question of whether or not their children's needs were being met. There seemed to be a mixture of surprise and reluctance at being seen as knowing enough about the school to comment on its effectiveness.

Theme 6: Beliefs surrounding opposition to systems of schooling.

In terms of public schooling, there was a general opposition to the lack of a Christian focus or approach. One informant indicated the need for the inclusion of German for their children in public school. One father pointed out that he did not like the way children were taught to spend money and go places in public school. School trips was provided as an example. Teaching children to be better at getting along was also cited as a public school problem. One couple indicated that sex education turns a lot away from the public system. "Public schools hand out condoms ... they say in public school it's okay to have sex if sex is safe. Not safe is the big issue. This is not with us. No sex is the big issue. If children are concerned with being safe, they think it's okay and they think about it." The differing perception regarding sex education was extended with an explanation of how, "Your

women (mainstream women) are much more understanding of husbands who have had kids before and allowing them to see them.” One couple indicated that they didn’t trust high school or know what they learn there. They thought maybe it was all computers and their children didn’t need computers. Two couples (home school and private school parents) were concerned that Mennonite children get teased in public school. A story was told of a couple they knew whose children were teased (“you smell”) in a public elementary school. One mother felt that Mennonite children do not always get the help they need in public school and this makes them feel frustrated by the time they get home. Another felt that public schools have a problem with kids bringing toys to school with them to cause problems. “They fight and do not want to share the toy with other children.” One father felt that attendance at public school would put his children at risk of finding someone in school to marry outside the group. It was pointed out that in home school and private school they do not integrate with other people so it is safer.

The only opposition voiced regarding private school was the cost. One family explained that it costs \$480.00 in addition to \$20.00 more for each child. For some families, the cost is prohibitive. Driving distance to the private school was also a concern.

All but the home school informant communicated that they were opposed to home schooling because of their own inability to help the children with school work. One mother stated that, “Me and homework don’t get along ... they need to get the help at school.” Another said, “We could not do home school because I don’t think I could help ... it is also good they get out of the house.” The third stated that, “Home school would be too hard for me ... I have too many jobs as it is ... better for them to have a teacher, not just

me.” One couple felt that home schooling caused problems in the church. An example was given where a dispute regarding a home school issue ended up in the church splitting. This dispute and accompanying hard feelings affected all individuals in the church, not just home school parents and children. The home school couple indicated that while they were happy with some religion in the Christian Light curriculum, they felt it wasn’t enough and did not emphasize what they wanted. They accommodated this by developing their own Bible study.

Theme 7: The perfect school.

All five informants described the perfect school as one which would have Christian teaching where their children could learn the faith. An emphasis on honesty was included by one informant in this description. The perfect school was also one that included the German language in some way. One informant stated that to “stay with what they (parents) have been taught would be perfect.” A place with harmonious relationships was also alluded to. “A perfect school would teach love among the children. There would be not teasing toward anyone. Kids would all play together, no one would be left out.” “Somewhere where there would be no troubles.”

Two of the informants pointed out that there was no such thing as perfect. “There is no such thing as perfect in this world. Perfect is what we are working towards for after we no longer have life.”

Theme 8: Schooling experience in Latin America.

Children from two of the informants had schooling experience in Mexico. The school was described as very strict and routine. “The same every day.” Both informants

described the same routine. The day begins with catechism with each child memorizing a verse to recite. Later that day each child recites the memorized passage to the teacher. They learn prayers to recite together and read “to remember” from their own books. There are three main texts. The younger children read the *Fibel*, a German reader, and have an ABC book, *Buchstabler und Lesebuch*. Once they are finished with these, they move on to the New Testament and, when finished, study the Bible. They also learn to do some writing in Gothic script and numbers. Both informants indicated that a class has between forty and eighty children for one teacher. The children sit on benches in long rows and use a slate for writing. One informant stated that, “They have a strap to keep them learning.” One parent compared her children’s ability to read after being in Canada. She explained that when they returned one winter her boys could read faster than the other children, even though it was in German. “They found they could do better in German even though they are not part of the school or German all the time. They knew more than the kids who had gone for five years. The kids down there learn to spell the word then say the word. My boys can read faster. They do not spell the words first. It is a better way of learning here.”

Theme 9: Schooling experience in Canada.

The home school informants explained that the children go to group sessions during the week where there is a helper. The helper or teacher is someone who can read English and is able to provide some help. The teacher for this group was a Kanadier Mennonite mother who had a grade four education in a Spanish school in Mexico and was able to work her way through the first levels of readers with the children. The parents said that the children liked to go to these sessions and found them fun.

The private school informant had always enrolled the children in private schools when in Canada. She observed that the children did not complain. They (the parents) liked it because everyone seems to get along, no one is left out.

Two of the parent informants of children in public school explained that they did not know much about what the children did at school, but they seemed to like to go. One parent said that she had trouble convincing the children to stay home when she thought the snow was too deep and it was cold. Both sets of parents were happy that their children had made friends. One stated that they (children) liked being in a school where there were other Mennonite children because they could understand better. One of the public school informants explained that while they thought public school was good for the future of the children, two of their children had some bad experiences with prejudice. The daughter tried to hide the fact she was Mennonite and quit after grade eight.

Attendance Results

Attendance Survey

A. Total Population Estimate: Children between age 5 and 18 was 1,500

B. School Attendance Estimates

Public Schools	E.C.S. to grade 6			Grades 7 to 9			Grades 10 to 12			Total			Total
	S	M	?	S	M	?	S	M	?	S	M	?	
<i>S-stable</i>													
<i>M-migrant</i>													
Barnwell	15	10		1	4					16	14		30
Central	44	26								44	26		70
Chamberlain	12	16		5	3					17	19		36
Ferguson				8						8			8
Enchant School	17	28		2	5					19	33		52
Enchant Colony	9	10		2	1					11	11		22
Lomond	18	12		2	4					20	16		36
Vauxhall	21	15								21	15		36
W.R. Myers							4			4			4
Total Public	136	117		20	17		4			160	134		294
Private Schools			53			15						68	68
Home School			90			10						100	100
Total Enrolled	137	117	143	20	17	25	4			160	134	168	462
	396			62			4						

Note. S=Stable Enrollment: In attendance following the Christmas break.

M=Migrant Enrollment: Students who enrolled in September and returned to home colony in Latin America prior to, or during, the Christmas break and are no longer attending.

C. Total Population Estimate less Total School Attendance: 1,038

Table 3. Attendance Survey Results

Information Regarding the Total Population Estimate

As was expected, actual population figures were difficult to determine. Records of new Kanadier Mennonite immigrant families to Southern Alberta have only been maintained since the Mennonite Central Committee opened its Lethbridge office in 1992. Between 1992 and April of 1999, approximately 4,500 to 5,000 new Kanadier Mennonites have settled in Southern Alberta (personal communication, MCC Lethbridge office). This total is approximate because the MCC office maintains records that track number of families as opposed to number of individuals. Since April, 1999, at least 60 new families have arrived (personal communication, MCC Lethbridge office). It also needs to be noted that not all families necessarily process through the Mennonite Central Committee, although it is assumed that most new families require their assistance with paper work and an employment search. As well, the MCC figures do not reflect families that arrived prior to 1992. A needs assessment (Janzen, 1997) conducted by the Mennonite Central Committee estimate 7,000 to 10,000 Kanadier Mennonites within Southern Alberta. A recent resiliency report prepared for CARA Operations (Kulig, 1999) suggests that the Kanadier population in Southern Alberta is between 12,000 and 15,000. The 1999 Mennonite Central Committee estimates of population distribution by community indicates that approximately 50% of the Kanadier settlement has occurred within the boundaries of Horizon School Division, specifically the Taber/Grassy Lake areas as well as Vauxhall, Enchant and Lomond (personal communication, MCC Lethbridge office). For the purpose of this project, the most conservative population estimate, the MCC April '99 figures of families since 1992, was used. A conservative estimate of the number of children within

Horizon School Division boundaries is 1,500. It must be stressed that this figure is an estimate. Based on the population estimates in the two above cited reports it is, if anything, an underestimate.

Information Regarding School Attendance Estimates

Public schools.

The attendance estimates were provided by each school. While the numbers are probably close, they are most likely not 100% accurate. When Kanadier Mennonite children enroll in public school, they are usually coded as an ESL (English as a Second Language) student. Using Alberta Learning criteria, they can be coded in three different ways: born outside Canada, code 301; born in Canada, code 303; has received three years of funding, code 302. ESL students coded 301 and 303 receive provincial funding that schools can allocate for ESL resources for a maximum of three years. While most elementary schools continue to code Kanadier Mennonite children as ESL 302 even though funding has run out for their own tracking purposes, some do not continue coding once the students have reached the higher grades. Accordingly, using only the students coded as ESL would not have been an accurate accounting of the number of Kanadier Mennonite children in school. For more accurate information, schools were asked to include all children who were known to be Kanadier Mennonite, even if no longer coded as ESL. It is possible that some children were still missed, especially in the upper grades. The schools were able to provide the differentiation between stable and migratory.

Private schools.

The private school total attendance estimate is accurate for the one school that was

willing to provide the information. Another private school in Horizon School Division that some Kanadier Mennonite children attend was not willing to provide accurate enrollment information. This school has up to 30 students in attendance. Total private school enrollment, then, could be as high as 108. The grade divisions are speculative because children are grouped more by level determined by a Christian curriculum that does not necessarily correspond with public school grade divisions. As well, no differentiation was made between stable and migratory.

Home school.

The accuracy of the home school estimate is the most questionable. Because I was unable to obtain the actual figures from the private school providing the home school service to Kanadier Mennonite children, the estimate is based on figures provided by one of the group teachers of home school students. The individual identified five home school groups that operated in the boundaries of Horizon School Division with an average of twenty children each. Other groups exist outside the boundaries. The individual speculated that there may be up to 10 children past grade six, but was unable to differentiate between stable and migratory. It is possible that there may be one or two home school groups that were missed in the estimate.

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The discussion will attempt to triangulate the results of the historical and descriptive research. The purpose underlying the historical research and the interview component of the descriptive research was to provide insight into developing a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonites in Horizon School Division. It was felt that an understanding of the population's history and culture, past and present values, beliefs and attitudes would facilitate a more informed approach to decision making regarding the schooling of Kanadier Mennonite children.

The results of the historical research and interviews point to a number of historical, cultural and contextual factors that are directly linked to the current educational experience of the children. The Kanadier Mennonites' distinctiveness as a minority can be primarily attributed to religion. As information for the historical data was gathered and assembled, and interviews conducted, it became clearly evident that one cannot separate historical progression, contemporary culture and context, values and attitudes from the religious beliefs of the people. The ultra-conservative maintenance of the principal beliefs that served to distinguish the Mennonites from their inception has evolved into a religious belief system that is at odds with mainstream culture's conception of education in general and schooling in particular. While it is difficult to discuss particular aspects of Kanadier Mennonite history, culture and present context that impact education in isolation, some key themes emerged.

The purpose of the attendance survey was to assemble more accurate data regarding

Kanadier Mennonite children's school attendance. Speculation regarding nonattendance was the major issue motivating the initiation of the project. In isolation, the attendance survey simply points out a problem that needs to be contended with. When examined in light of a better understanding of the history, culture and present context, it is easier to understand why the problem exists. As well, one can make informed decisions as to the kind of educational structure that may be the most amenable for addressing the problem in a pro-active manner in order to better meet the needs of the children.

First, the discussion will revisit the issue of attendance and examine the attendance survey results to identify any apparent patterns. Second, factors that impact and direct the educational experience of the Kanadier Mennonite children, including attendance, will be reviewed. Implications for the education of Kanadier Mennonite children will be examined and the needs identified in the historical review and interviews summarized. Finally, the summary will formulate some recommendations for further study and the development of an educational program that focuses on schooling opportunities for Kanadier Mennonite children.

Attendance

As was pointed out in the presentation of the attendance results, reliability of the estimates is in question. Even though there may be a degree of inaccuracy in the population and attendance figures, the numbers are significant enough that some generalizations regarding patterns of attendance are worth noting. While factors that effect attendance will be alluded to in the identification of trends, elaboration will be provided in the discussion that follows focusing on the broader educational experience of the Kanadier

Mennonite children. While attendance may be the most visible result of educational choices, it is embedded in the larger cultural context and belief system of the population.

Nonattendance

At the very least, the attendance results eliminate speculation as to whether or not a nonattendance problem exists. One certainly does. Even if there are 50% more children enrolled in home school or private school, a significant number of school-age children are unaccounted for in terms of enrollment in a schooling delivery system. At least 500 and up to 1,000 children cannot be accounted for. The issue of school attendance was a common theme throughout the historical research as well as the key informant interviews. Past research illustrated that the issue of school attendance, especially the avoidance of public school, has historical roots. Recent studies alluded to growing concerns over children who were not in school and visible in the community. Attendance was identified as a primary need by key informants and was linked to success in school.

Drop-out Rate

It is evident that the number of students enrolled in any form of schooling decreases significantly as the grades increase. 86% of the Kanadier Mennonite children accounted for in the attendance survey are E.C.S. to grade six. Less than 1% are enrolled in high school. The results indicate that many children are dropping out well before the age of sixteen with only 13% of the children accounted for enrolled in grades seven to nine. Given the results of the historical research and interviews, early drop-out is neither surprising or unusual. Early drop-out is in keeping with the future goals of the children and parents that have been molded by history and culture. As was evidenced in the key

informant interviews, educators are well aware of the drop-out issue. One school attempts to keep children in school an extra year by having them repeat the final year of elementary school knowing very well that it will most likely be their last.

Migratory Trends

Lethbridge Mennonite Central Committee indicated that approximately 40% if the Kanadier Mennonite families returned to Mexico for at least a short period of time this winter (personal communication, Abe Fehr). While the stable and migratory differentiation could not be made in the private and home school deliveries in the attendance survey, this appears to hold true for the public school students with 45.5% identified as migratory. It should be noted, however, that while this appears high, Abe Fehr qualified his percentage by indicating it was unusually high, at least double an average year. He felt that the large percentage may have been due to the year 2000 and people being unsure about what would happen.

Migration has been an historical phenomenon since the mid-sixteenth century for the Kanadier Mennonite. As was seen in the historical research, ability to maintain principles and beliefs has taken precedence over any attachment to country or worldly possessions. While temporary or cyclical migration is unique to re-settlement in Canada, the extreme mobility and the apparent ease with which the families can move back and forth is again, not surprising given the history. The historical research indicates that Canada is not generally perceived as home when a family first begins to seasonally migrate. Going home to Mexico is only natural. Seasonal migration begins to reduce the longer a family is in Canada and they begin to see Canadian settlement as permanent. Again, educators appear

well aware of the educational challenge seasonal migration poses. As one key informant pointed out, nonattendance often moves into the pattern of nonattendance upon return to Canada in the spring. If the children do return to school, many experience a set back as a result of their prolonged absence. Schools try to intervene with some one-on-one assistance if they can find the assistant time.

Systems of Schooling

As was pointed out in the discussion regarding nonattendance, at least 500 and up to 1,000 children are not accounted for in any system of schooling. This suggests that “not schooling” is the majority choice of 50% to 70% of the Kanadier Mennonite parents. For the 50% to 30% of parents who do choose to have their children schooled, they have a choice of three different systems: public, private and home school. Of those who attend school, the attendance survey results indicate that more children are attending public school (64%) than private or home school. This figure is not significant enough to make the generalization that more Kanadier Mennonite parents chose public school. Information regarding the school attendance estimates clearly indicate that any children that may have been missed in the survey would, for the most part, be in private school (up to 30 students) and home school systems, or not in school.

Factors that Impact and Direct Educational Experience

Control over Education

The seemingly unyielding desire to have direct control over their children’s education is certainly not a new phenomenon or unique to our recent Kanadier population in Southern Alberta. One needs to keep in mind that opposition to public or secular

control is not necessarily linked to our *modern* conception of schooling or any so-called educational advances. Over 150 years ago, the conservative Mennonites in Russia perceived church control over education as a significant enough issue to motivate splitting into factions and contribute to eventual migration to Canada. It was over seventy years ago that the threat of public education was deemed dangerous enough to be the primary cause for movement to frontier areas within Canada and departure to Mexico.

Church control over education has its roots in the principal belief of separation, not only of church and state, but collectively as God's chosen people. The maintenance of this separation necessitated the development of the church as the most powerful or dominant social institution which superseded and directed all other aspects of social organization and social action. Social organization and action is maintained, in part, through conformity. Conformity establishes both a group identity and sense of belonging. At the same time, it helps to submerge self-will in favor of the whole and enables the group to more easily identify a common enemy. Separation is also maintained through rigorous social controls sanctioned by the church, with the ultimate control sanction being ex-communication. Church control, the ideal of separation and the entire social structure that maintains this is put in jeopardy by the advent of any form of secular education. There very much exists the recognition that schools are one of the surest instruments to break down barriers. Given the threat that education poses not only to their religion, but their entire way of life, one can begin to understand the strength of the conviction to avoid public education.

The present day Kanadier Mennonites in Southern Alberta by no means exist within

the same tightly controlled social structure from which they depart. The unique nature of the recent migration to Canada has not lent itself to traditional settlement in isolated villages. Their arrivals as singular families or small groups, with little or no economic resources, have determined a disparate pattern of settlement dictated by available employment and housing. This makes separation from the larger society much more difficult. One has to remember, however, that these individuals have been raised and encultured within a rigorous system of separation and conformity. Values and beliefs, including those toward education, have been ingrained since childhood. Church remains an integral part of most of their lives in Canada and the degree to which they are willing to participate in aspects of mainstream Canadian culture is very much dependent on the church to which they belong. Most commence membership with a fairly conservative church that aligns most closely with the one at home.

The ideal of separateness as a mechanism to maintain tradition was a key theme that ran through interview responses. In part, opposition to the public system stemmed from an unwillingness to have Kanadier Mennonite children *mix* with children from mainstream society. The fear that children may meet and marry someone from mainstream society exists as does the fear that children will learn worldly ways and stray from the Lord's way. As was pointed out, some still strive to locate in isolated communities. It appears, however, that familiarity reduces the fear of the effect of mixing with mainstream society. The parents of children enrolled in public school did not voice strong concern over their children being influenced. While unfortunate experiences in the public system related to prejudice were communicated, at least one success story of high academic achievement

was related where the child also maintained his religious and cultural integrity. Interview results also pointed out the difficulty of children having to contend with the separation versus integration values. They can be torn between the desire to fit in and become part of the larger school community and the parental expectation of maintaining separateness and traditional values both at home and school.

The degree to which a parent desires to maintain control over educational pursuits and enforce separation appears to be a major factor in the school system choice for the children. To choose to not enroll their children in any system provides the greatest degree of autonomy and control. The research results suggest that home school provides the greatest degree of autonomy and control within the school system choices. As one home school parent explained, they, “Wanted first hand knowledge of what they are being taught.” Non-accredited private school also offers a large degree of control and as one informant pointed out, addresses the cultural needs and the need to remain separate. As has been mentioned, a primary deterrent for enrollment in public school is the belief in separation. This is combined with a fear or distrust of the system and what their children may learn, as well as the natural inclination of parents to want their children to have a sense of belonging and not be picked on. Deterrents to choosing home school or private school did not appear to be based on a belief system. Rather, they were practical considerations. In terms of home school, parents did not feel they had the time or ability to teach their own children. The deterrents to private school were the prohibitive cost for some, and the difficulty of transportation due to distance.

Where the public system has managed to facilitate a degree of separateness, there

appears to be some success. The Hope Centre, an alternative program for secondary Kanadier Mennonite students in Bow Island, has had some success in keeping Kanadier Mennonite children in school beyond grade six. Kanadier Mennonite parents responded favorably to the inclusion of their children in one of Horizon School Division's Hutterite Colony schools. This is a limited option since other colonies are not open to including Kanadier Mennonite children. Mennonite children were allowed to enroll in the particular colony school because viable attendance for school operation did not exist without them. Establishing separate schools within the public system is surrounded by the issue of school viability in small communities. Where attendance of all children is critically important for keeping a school open, mainstream community reaction to pulling the Kanadier Mennonite children who are presently in attendance in order for them to attend an alternative program would most likely be negative.

Future Goals

The issue of church control over education is very much dependent on the perceived goal of education. For the conservative Mennonites who split in Russia, the goal of education was seen as preparation for church and community membership. This view has been historically maintained among the conservative groups in Latin America and now those in Southern Alberta. Education is to fulfill the goal of persistence, which quite literally means no change. There was the recognition among some interview respondents that the more conservative believe that the more school you have, the more away from tradition you will become. Education is to reinforce conformity and interdependence; it is not to promote personal growth or self-actualization. Primary education, religious and

occupational, is seen as taking place in the home. Schools are expected to reinforce and supplement this learning, not move beyond or contradict it. Both home school and private school informants indicated that their schooling approach tried to reinforce beliefs similar to those at home. Public education goals in Alberta, then, are at odds with those of Kanadier Mennonites who uphold this conservative stance.

The curriculum certainly moves beyond the conservative desire for persistence in its offering of worldly subjects, physical education, and sex education. Some public schools attempt to address parental concerns in these areas by assuming non-participation in health and computers for Kanadier Mennonite children. For some Kanadier Mennonite parents, however, it is as much a matter of what the public program does not include. Lack of a *Christian* approach or content was pointed out as a deterrent for some parents. School reinforcement of the home should include reinforcement of the faith; it is a way of life. Parents identified a number of learning priorities that are related to the conveyance of values, including honesty and living a good life. As well, most public schools do not offer reinforcement of the maintenance of the German language, deemed by many as fundamentally important for maintaining tradition and communication both in and out of church.

The fundamental belief in adult baptism has a significant impact on the degree to which parents assume responsibility for ensuring their children do not receive an education or schooling that may deviate from church membership. It is their parental responsibility to ensure their children are trained in a manner which ensures they become church members. This requires some degree of shielding from worldly influences, obviously more difficult to

achieve in Canada than in Latin America. Certainly, curriculum and the use of technology become key issues in the protection arena. Access to information via technology and worldly subjects via curriculum are threatening. The Internet, especially, arouses a great deal of suspicion. Again, non-accredited schooling is the least threatening, and affords the greatest shield, if they send their children to school at all.

Occupational goals are directly linked to educational goals. They determine the value placed on education and the perception of how much education is needed. As Redekop (1969) points out, the primary goal of the Old Colony Mennonite is to live the Old Colony way of life. The ability to live this way of life necessitates the assumption of particular roles and occupations. Girls are to become wives and mothers whose occupational endeavors lie within the home and, upon occasion, in assistance with farm labor. Boys are to become husbands and fathers whose occupational endeavors lie in the area of agriculture. These roles are not only traditional, they have a high social value placed on them. Traditional maintenance of roles also extends to ensuring the integrity of the patriarchal structure. As one key informant pointed out, some fathers don't want their children *above them*, especially girls. Unlike the premise held by mainstream culture and various immigrant groups who commence employment in the agricultural labor market, schooling is not perceived as an avenue for opportunity to advance beyond the occupational and economic level of the parents. The key here is that the conservative Kanadier Mennonites do not buy into the mainstream's definition of advancement. They derive from a culture that perceives educational pursuit and advancement as opening the doors to perversity and as being antithetical to the way of life God has chosen for His

people.

In terms of preparation of the youth for successful adulthood, then, high value is placed on the socialization and practical learning that takes place in the home. The education within the home not only focuses on occupational skills; the priority appears to be on ensuring children learn to live in the way of the Lord. As one informant suggested, this comes first and all else follows. Conversely, learning that occurs outside the home and church is not perceived as having a high level of contribution to preparation as adults. The interview results reflect a range of parental adherence to the traditional perception of future occupations and roles for their children. While three sets of parents communicated the fairly traditional future expectations for their children, two expressed a greater degree of flexibility for allowing their children to have choice. One parent recognized the opportunities education can provide and one pointed out the limitations of a lack of education.

The number of years in school parents saw as necessary seemed to correlate to the future goals they envisioned for their children. For those who saw their children assuming a traditional role, five to nine years of education was deemed sufficient. In one family, the children over age twelve were already out of school and working. For those who saw their children having more choice in their lives, nine to twelve years was regarded as necessary. One of the key informants pointed out that many Kanadier parents do not have broad or future goals beyond the traditional and the present. Schooling for them is not a learning experience aimed at developing individual potential for a range of occupational choice.

This is not to say that all areas of schooling are deemed as unnecessary. The

historical and interview results pointed out that there are Kanadier Mennonites in Southern Alberta who recognize a need for increased literacy, the necessity of knowing how to read and write in English. Experience has taught parents that this is not only the case with their children. Some parents have a difficult time contending with illiteracy and having to function as a worker, parent and community member who may need to access services. In fact, some of the parents interviewed considered schooling as very important. It was perceived as fulfilling a needed function. The needed function, of course, was primarily practical in nature, obtaining employment, accessing services, filling out forms and daily living.

School Delivery Systems

It appears that choice of school system may have an impact on the nature of the educational attainment of the child. The precise nature of the impact of particular choices is not the purpose of this project, but it is certainly an issue drawing more attention in areas that have a growing number of Kanadier Mennonite children. If they are enrolled in the public system, the school is accountable for ensuring all the Learning Outcomes prescribed by Alberta Learning are attended to. This is not necessarily the case with the other two systems of schooling in which Kanadier Mennonite children enroll. Because it receives no provincial funding, a non-accredited private school does not have to follow the Alberta curriculum or hire qualified teachers. In Horizon School Division, the private school operated by members of a particular Kanadier Mennonite church utilizes a program of individualized instruction called *Christian Light*. Interview results pointed to some concerns about the private school, one being the inadequacy of the math program.

Another concern was the inability of the staff to deal with the higher levels of the program. While it was felt that the teachers did a wonderful job at the lower grade levels, it was difficult for them to deal with subject matter beyond grade nine.

Similar concerns were voiced regarding home schooling. While some home school students may be receiving a quality education in a culturally appropriate context, the quality for all students may be in question. One informant alluded to the practice of some parents registering their children to avoid public school, and then not having them attend. The same *Christian Light* program is utilized as with the private school students. As is the case with the private school, also, the ability of the tutor teachers to instruct or assist at the upper grade levels is in question. The health and safety of some of the facilities in which the home school groups gather was also questioned.

Schooling Experience

The Kanadier parents principally came from a system of schooling in Latin America that has resulted in a 70-80% rate of illiteracy in their own language, never mind English. Illiteracy in their own language compounds communication difficulties. Individuals outside of the colonies, such as MCC workers, describe the schooling system in Mexico as one in crisis. The parents' schooling experience is so disparate from the Canadian system that transfer of experience is exceedingly difficult. Suspicion of a public system is enhanced when parents do not have the background to draw parallels or make comparisons. The unknown will more likely be faced with trepidation than the familiar. Some of the parents in Babcock's (1998) study as well as those interviewed in this project expressed frustration with their inability to assist children with schooling. While there seems to be an

awareness that literacy in English in Canada is somewhat of a necessity, many parents lack the prerequisite background experience to help themselves or their children improve.

Compulsory education is an issue with which parents did not have to contend in home colonies. In Mexico, the short school year and hours of schooling center around the agricultural seasons, farming and home necessities. While the expectation that children will attend exists, prolonged absence for work at home is generally accepted. As well, children are only expected to attend until age twelve or thirteen. While mainstream culture in Canada may view the parental decision to subordinate school attendance of their children to home and work responsibilities as negligent, it simply reflects the parents' own schooling experience.

For Kanadier children who have received, and continue to receive some schooling in Mexico, the change to the Canadian schooling context, especially public school, is dramatic. Not only do they have to contend with learning a new language; instructional approaches, materials and classroom expectations are completely different. Generally behind the achievement level of age equivalent Canadian counterparts, they may experience feelings of inadequacy. Conversely, for those children who go back to Mexico, they find themselves better equipped for learning. As one mother pointed out, "It is a better way of learning here."

Kanadier Mennonite children are also entering a new environment where individualism is generally stressed and, as members of a visible minority, they may experience social isolation and nonacceptance. Interview results suggest that while schools may try to deal with it expediently, some prejudicial experiences do occur. Kulig's (1995)

assessment cited some examples of parents yielding to their children's desire to be less distinct in dress. One of the informants in this study noted that the daughter tried to hide that she was Mennonite. Finally, Kanadier Mennonite children may have to contend with potential conflict between what is learned in school and what is valued in the home and church community.

Migratory Characteristics

The migratory nature of the population was examined somewhat during the discussion of the attendance trends, although not in the larger educational context. A number of studies, primarily American, have delineated the relationship between lower levels of school achievement and migrant populations (Helge, 1993). In general, migrant students are impacted by a number of factors including school interruption, forced adaptation to varying contexts, changing expectations, second language acquisition, low economic status, social acceptance and social problems within their own population. As migrant students, many Kanadier children must contend with at least some of these factors. The disparity between the Canadian and home colony school systems has already been pointed out. When many of the children do return to Canada, departing an inadequate system (that is if they go to school at all) it may only be for two or three spring months. Schools attempt to fill the gaps as best they can through the provision of extra assistants, special programs and additional services. The difficulty of tracking such a basic thing as school attendance has been noted.

One cannot underestimate the difficulties for these students experiencing English as a second language. Much work has been done in this area and, once again, schools attempt

to facilitate learning through assistants and special programs. One also has to keep in mind that Kanadier children may not only struggle with literacy in English, many may not even be literate in their first language.

Economic Necessity

It was pointed out that one of the unique characteristics of the Kanadier migration north is that movement is primarily motivated by economic necessity. Land shortage and economic conditions in Mexico have forced young Kanadiers to look elsewhere for economic sustenance. All of the household informants interviewed in this project spoke of economically related reasons for coming to Canada. The move is not generally seen as culturally desirable or permanent, and is made in spite of strong opposition to many values prevalent in mainstream culture.

Some of the household informants in Kulig's (1995) study maintained that economically they were experiencing a higher standard of living in Canada. This was also the case with the household informants in this project. Perception of standard of living, however, is very much relative to the conditions from which they may have come. Even though it may be "better" than Mexico, many Kanadier families live in poor conditions by Canadian standards. It appears that two factors combine to make family sustenance a difficult, if not impossible, task for some families. First, the demographic information provided in Kulig's (1995) assessment suggests that the high fertility rate in Mexico continues when the Kanadier families move to Canada. The average number of children for household informants in this project was five, with three of the five families being young and not necessarily finished having their children. A large number of children in

rapid succession places a great deal of stress on the mother who may be without a system of extended support. The inability to provide the time needed educationally for each child may be secondary to the time needed to provide for the children's basic needs. One can empathize with a mother who may be feeling overwhelmed and incapable of coping without assistance. We should not be surprised then, when Kanadier girls, especially if they are one of the older siblings, leave school at a young age to assist with the younger siblings and household duties. By North American standards, we may think of this as babysitting, an inappropriate reason for dropping out of school. For a Kanadier mother who may be overwhelmed, however, absence or withdrawal of older children from school may be seen as a necessity, not a choice.

The difficulty of contending with a large number of children is compounded when adult men acquire fairly low paying jobs as laborers in the agricultural sector. While it appears that some Kanadier men are able to secure somewhat higher wages in trades related to agriculture, many receive baseline wages that are insufficient for family sustenance. Some relief is found in government support services. Some Kanadier families contend with low economic means by having children, especially boys, assist with farm labor at a young age. A father can assume and accomplish much more contract work in the agricultural sector if he has assistance. Nonattendance in school due to work was cited as a growing concern in Babcock's (1998) project. Child labor was also identified as a major area of concern by key informants in this project. As was pointed out, children working is not only a factor contributing to nonattendance at school, it has health and safety issues attached. While child labor laws may protect a child under the age of sixteen

from being directly employed during school hours, it appears they are not able to prevent a child from working full time during school hours via contract employment or cash payment. While it may be recognized, it is obvious that little has been done to either assess the degree of the nonattendance problem, or address the problem. Part of the difficulty may be a lack of willingness on the part of different stakeholders, including educational institutions and employers, to stir up what could become a very contentious issue. Another difficulty may be the lack of information on how to address the issue. It may not be clear to many, including the writer of this project, what the law is and who is responsible for enforcement. As well, interfering with what appears to be family necessity, rather than a choice, can be a difficult value judgement to make.

Implications

In the end, one needs to ask the question, “What do all the research results really say about the educational experience of the Kanadier Mennonite children and what are the implications for their future if all stakeholders continue with current practices?”

1. There are a large number of Kanadier Mennonite children who are not attending any system of schooling. Some are working, some assume domestic responsibilities and some are simply at home. We know this coincides with a high drop-out rate well before the age of 16 and a migration cycle that interrupts attendance and effects educational achievement. Certainly there are some inherent problems that many Kanadier Mennonite children will have to face if they remain in Canada and are among those that will not have obtained an adequate level of schooling. As adults, these children may face an inability to be economically independent due to lack of skills and lack of labor opportunity in

unskilled areas. Some, who drop out to work at age 13 or 14, may simply need upgrading. Others, who don't receive any schooling, may not even be functionally literate and will probably require an extensive amount of adult education. The social and economic cost to both the individual and society is high.

2. School attendance of Kanadier Mennonite children is exceedingly difficult to track. The combination of three different systems inadequately sharing registration information, seasonal migration, continual re-location within Southern Alberta due to employment, inability of many to communicate effectively in English, and purposeful school avoidance all serve to make slipping through the cracks an easy venture. Children will continue slipping through the cracks unless at least some of the tracking barriers are attended to or a system is developed which accounts for the barriers.

3. It was learned that we cannot paint the adult population or the children's educational experience with one broad brush. Kanadier Mennonites belong to five different churches that fall along a broad continuum from ultra-conservative to liberal. At the same time, while we know that each group and every individual is unique, both the historical and descriptive interview research point to common beliefs and values that are characteristic of the more conservative groups and members.

Generally speaking, the most conservative maintain a separatist philosophy and seek to uphold traditions that go back centuries. Adherence to tradition includes maintenance of roles and opposition to schooling that moves into the worldly or goes beyond the practical. Schooling success and promotion to the higher grade levels is not a priority for those who do not perceive it as having a direct impact on the future beyond providing a

functional level of literacy. A recent Canadian study on immigrant children (Kobayashi, 1998) points to the system of beliefs within the household as having the most significant impact on a child's experience. The educational experience and occupational future of a Kanadier Mennonite child, then, is heavily dependent on the degree to which his/her parents uphold traditional beliefs regarding education and occupation. If we follow Kobayashi's premise, a low value place on schooling in the home will negatively effect the level of educational attainment of the child. If a child strictly adheres to tradition with respect to education and roles, he/she may not be afforded a very broad range of choice for future employment. Certainly there must be a level of respect and understanding for these traditional values and one can hope that these children will be able to continue in a traditional manner in a happy, healthy and self-sustaining way. In reality, however, a narrow range of choice may lead to challenges with respect to employability and economic independence. If a child does stray from tradition, he/she may have to contend with conflicting values and expectations.

Conversely, some of the Kanadier Mennonite parents who are less conservative with respect to educational goals and future role expectations, believe in education and desire their children to complete grade 12 and choose their own future endeavors. These children may experience greater academic success with the potential combination of the home valuing education, a sense of self-discipline and a strong work ethic.

It appears the degree of strict adherence to traditional values regarding education and occupation reduces with the length of time in Canada. Familiarity seems to reduce fear and increase flexibility. Time in Canada builds experience and an awareness that Canada is

not the same as Mexico and, of necessity, expectations change. Some Kanadier Mennonites believe that they have been able to move away from traditional values toward schooling without compromising religious beliefs. Perhaps Canon (as cited in Babcock, 1998) is correct in the assertion that sub-societies cannot live independently of the core society (p.25). As mentioned, there appears to me a noted change in the degree of conservatism with time due to necessity and, perhaps, desire. The change, however, has not yet resulted in complete integration. It may be possible that many of the Kanadier Mennonite children of today will be able to maintain religious and cultural autonomy while adapting to Canadian educational standards and occupational expectations. The issue of course is whether or not educational stakeholders should wait and see if time and natural change results in more Kanadier Mennonite children becoming independent, happy and productive citizens. The children of the Kanadier Mennonites who *have* adjusted to Canadian expectations are not the ones who will be missed if decision-makers allow the passage of time to dictate degree of change necessary for accommodation. It will be the children of the parents who *have not* had the time or inclination to change values regarding schooling and occupations that will be missed and faced with the challenges that come with an inadequate education. Allowing time to dictate change puts all the responsibility and expectations for change on the more conservative elements of the Kanadier Mennonite population. Perhaps other educational stakeholders besides the parents and children need to assume some responsibility for change and accommodation. Meeting parents half way in a cooperative effort to do what is best for children both in the minds of parents and educators may be a more productive and successful approach. There

is nothing stopping the incorporation of flexibility and an allowance for unique cultural characteristics in a quality educational program. Respect for culture and an understanding of values and beliefs can direct the cooperative undertaking of educating Kanadier Mennonite children.

Identified Needs

The purpose of the project was to develop a better understanding of the Kanadier Mennonite people in order to better address the educational needs of the children. As was pointed out in the examination of implications of current practice, educational stakeholders can maintain the status quo with the expectation of one-way change and the hope that time will provide the needed impetus, or become pro-active and attempt to collaborate in a two-way change process that addresses the needs of the children and parents now. The research results point to a number of needs that stem from an understanding of the history, culture and contemporary context of the people. The needs can inform the necessary change. Because the needs are described in detail throughout the research results, they will only be summarized here.

Schooling Program

If a schooling program is to be developed in light of cultural understanding, the delivery needs to include consideration of the following components.

1. Focus on basic literacy. The children are ESL students who may be illiterate even in their own language.
2. Allowance for a Christian approach to some curriculum. One of the major deterrents to public education is the perceived lack of a Christian approach. Many parents

see the inclusion of Christian values as a primary need in schooling. While the private school and home school systems deliver a Christian curriculum, there is some question regarding whether or not the curriculum used addresses the Learning Outcomes prescribed by Alberta Learning.

3. Sensitivity to curriculum that is contrary to values and beliefs of conservative Kanadier Mennonites. Sensitivity towards and, in some cases exclusion from, curriculum areas involving sex education, technology and physical education need to be considered.

4. Allowance for German language instruction.

5. Focus on practical application of subject matter. Both children and parents need to be able to see how what they are learning will benefit them in their adult role. This is especially true if the children and parents have traditional conceptions of future roles.

6. Qualified teachers. While this is not an issue for the public school setting, there is a need for qualified teachers in the home school and private school delivery systems, especially at the higher grade levels.

7. Adjustment of school expectations to make them more in harmony with parental expectations. This is especially the case with such things as homework and after school co-curricular or extra-curricular activities.

8. Flexibility in attendance expectations and accommodation for lengthy absences. Schools and teachers need to account for sporadic attendance or lengthy absences in the case of children who may have work expectations placed on them in the home or whose parents remain in a pattern of seasonal migration. The schooling program needs to ensure that these students still have an opportunity for success.

9. Balance between philosophy of separateness and integration. While it may not be possible to accommodate the children in a separate school, a structure such as dual tracking may be developed that allows for some separateness in program delivery within an integrated school community.

School Climate

A supportive school climate where children have a sense of belonging, experience success and where prejudicial behaviors that lead to negative experiences are not tolerated.

Personal Needs

Attending to the personal needs of the students needs to precede a focus on educational achievement. Certainly this is not unique to Kanadier Mennonite children, but is pointed out since a number of Kanadier children, especially new arrivals, may have more basic needs that must be addressed before they can be expected to be active learners.

Communication and Involvement

Communication with and involvement of Kanadier Mennonite parents is key to the success of any school program. As the primary educators, parents can provide the school with input that will be culturally sensitive and help direct a successful program. As well, communication and involvement will promote acceptance of schooling and a desire to see children succeed in school. In this area, the personnel and time to initiate and support communication and involvement appears essential. Further, the closed nature of the Kanadier community necessitates the inclusion of members of the Kanadier Mennonite population in personnel.

Interagency Cooperation

The education of children extends far beyond the schooling context. A successful educational program will need to be part of a collaborative effort of agencies that are part of a child's support network.

Parent Education

Parent education both for adult literacy and the development of a valuing attitude toward education in general is needed.

Child Labor

It appears clear that the issue of child labor needs to be examined and addressed. This will certainly take a cooperative effort between agencies, employers and parents.

Recommendations

For Further Research

1. Investigation into the relationships between educational achievement and systems of schooling.
2. More accurate study of the population's demographics.
3. A study that focuses on a needs assessment for the education of the adult Kanadier Mennonite population.

Development of an Educational Program

As has been mentioned, a pro-active approach to addressing the educational needs delineated in this project would be the development of a educational program that both ensures a quality that meets Alberta Learning standards and accommodates the cultural uniqueness, attitudes and beliefs of the population. The continuum of values towards

education that exists in the population suggests that the program does not need to focus on all the Kanadier Mennonite children. Many are already receiving an education that will provide future opportunity. Rather, the program should focus on the children who are within an ultra-conservative context and not presently enrolled in a schooling program. This writer believes that this can be accomplished in a public school context. This is not to say that it could not be accomplished through private school or home school delivery systems. As an educator in the public system, this writer's focus is on suggesting changes that can occur in the public system.

It is suggested that the public school program contain two components: first, a formal schooling component for school-age Kanadier Mennonite children that promotes school attendance and meets unique social and cultural needs; second, a component that contains interagency program development and delivery that addresses the needs of the entire Kanadier community in areas of literacy, health, employment and social functioning. The schooling component would be provided in a dual tract structure where Kanadier Mennonite children are placed in the program within an existing school. Besides qualified teachers, school and central office support, the program would require the hiring of Kanadier Mennonite classroom support assistants and a Kanadier Mennonite liaison worker. The classroom assistants would provide cultural continuity in beliefs and language and facilitate communication with children and parents. The liaison worker would build bridges with the community, communicate intent and content of the program, provide feedback to the school division regarding concerns and needs, promote attendance and register students.

Near the completion of this project, a proposal for such a program was written and submitted to Alberta Learning for approval. (See appendix F)The proposal was written by the writer of this project with input from the superintendent of Horizon School Division and personnel from Alberta Learning, with the collaboration of the Board of Trustees, school principals, MCC Lethbridge, Kanadier Mennonite parents, mainstream parents and other agencies. At this time, it is not known if the proposal will be approved, but Horizon School Division has taken steps to implement at least the schooling component of the proposal and has hired a Kanadier Mennonite liaison worker.

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Appendix A
Key Informant Interview Guide

**Interview Guide
Key Informants**

Date: _____

A. Demographic Information

Nature of School/Agency: _____

Approximate number of Kanadier children involved with school/agency: _____

Location: _____

Position of Key Informant: _____

Length of time in position: _____

B. Guiding Questions

1. Can you describe the nature of your work with Kanadier children?
2. What do you understand about Kanadier beliefs or values toward education?
3. From your experience, is there a distinction between education and schooling in the Kanadier culture?
4. Based on your experience, what do you believe are the educational or schooling needs of this population?
5. How does your school/agency attempt to address these needs?
6. How successful do you believe your school/agency is in fulfilling the needs identified in #4?
7. Based on your experience, can you identify any ways that the educational or schooling needs of the Kanadier children might better be met?

Appendix B
Household Informant Interview Guide

**Interview Guide
Household Informants**

Date: _____

B. Demographic Data

Location of Home: _____

Length of Time in Canada: _____

Latin-American Origin: _____

Church Membership: _____

Occupation of Parent(s): _____

Children -Age and Schooling:

Age	Public School	Private School	Public Home School	Private Home School	No School

C. Guiding Questions:

1. Can you tell me about your reason for coming to Canada?
2. What are the most important things a child needs to be taught at school?
Why are they important?
3. What are the most important things a child needs to be taught at home?
Why are they important?
4. What are the most important things a child needs to be taught at church?
Why are they important?

5. What would you like to see your children doing in the future (when they grown up)?
6. How important is the school in preparing your children for life as an adult?
How long does a child need to go to school to prepare for their future?
7. How important is the family and church in preparing your children for life as an adult?
8. Why did you choose to have your children schooled (or not schooled) in the method(s) indicated above (Age and Schooling chart)?
9. Do you believe the needs of your children are being met through this type of schooling?
10. Are there any needs that are not being met?
11. Are there aspects of the chosen system of schooling that you are opposed to?
Are there aspects of the other systems of schooling that you are opposed to?
12. If you could send your children to a perfect school, what would it be like?
13. Can you tell me about your children's schooling experience in (place of origin)?
14. Can you tell me about your children's schooling experience in Canada?

Appendix C
Key Informant Consent Form

*Developing an Understanding of the Kanadier Mennonite and Implications for
Education*

Consent for Key Informants

I am a University of Lethbridge Masters of Education student conducting an educational study of Kanadier Mennonite people in Horizon School Division. The purpose of the study is to develop a better understanding of the Kanadier people. The goal is to provide information that will be used to better meet the educational needs of Kanadier children. I anticipate that Kanadier children and parents will benefit from the study through the use of the information to better inform and direct decisions regarding educational programs for the Kanadier people.

If you agree to participate, you will be interviewed once for about 30 minutes to 1 hour. Interview questions relate to your educational involvement and work with the Kanadier Mennonite children and focus on contemporary Kanadier attitudes and values specific to education and schooling. Your answers to these questions will not only provide a better understanding of the Kanadier people, but will help to identify areas of success and need.

Please note that all information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner. When responses are released, they will be reported in summary form only. All names, locations or any other identifying information will not be included in any discussion of the results. Your participation is voluntary; you may refuse to answer certain questions or stop the interview at any time. You also have the right to withdraw from the study without prejudice at any time. There are no known risks to you. The results of the research will be shared with you and any agencies that care for Kanadier families.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 223-1139. Also feel free to contact the University supervisor of my study, Dr. Cathy Campbell at 329-2459 and/or the chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Richard Butt who can be reached at 329-2434.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Gilmore
University of Lethbridge Master's Degree student
223-1139

Signature _____

Witness _____

Appendix D
Household Informant Consent Form

*Developing an Understanding of the Kanadier Mennonite and Implications for
Education*

Consent for Household Informants

I am a University of Lethbridge Masters of Education student conducting an educational study of Kanadier Mennonite people in Horizon School Division. The purpose of the study is to develop a better understanding of the Kanadier people. The goal is to gather information that will be used to provide better educational services and programs for your children and children of other Kanadier families.

If you agree to participate, I will come to your home to talk to you for about 1 hour. I will be accompanied by a German speaking Mennonite who will act as an interpreter to ensure accurate communication. The interview questions relate to your beliefs about education and the educational choices you have made for your children. The purpose of the questions is not to make any judgement about your beliefs or choices. The information will help decisions in offering better programs that you and others may choose to access in the future.

Your answers will be combined with other information in a report. Your real name or any other identifying information will not be used on any forms or notes. All information will be handled in a confidential and professional manner.

Your participation is voluntary. You may choose to not participate at any time without prejudice. You may refuse to answer certain questions or stop the interview at any time. There are no known risks to you. The results of the study will be shared with you and any agencies that care for Kanadier families.

I very much appreciate your assistance in this study. If you have any questions please feel free to call me at 223-1139. Also feel free to contact the University supervisor of my study, Dr. Cathy Campbell at 329-2459 and/or the chair of the Faculty of Education Human Subject Research Committee if you wish additional information. The chairperson of the committee is Dr. Richard Butt who can be reached at 329-2434.

Respectfully,

Cheryl Gilmore
University of Lethbridge Master's Degree student
223-1139

Signature _____

Witness _____

Appendix E
Attendance Survey

A. Total Population Estimate

Children between age 5 and 18 _____

Estimate will be based on information provided by the MCC

School Attendance Estimates

Public Schools

Estimate will be based on Horizon School Division records

School	E.C.S to grade 6		Grades 7 to 9		Grades 10 to 12		Total		Total
	<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>M</i>	
<i>S for stable enrollment</i>									
<i>M for migrant enrollment</i>									
Barnwell									
Central Elementary									
Chamberlain									
Coutts									
D.A. Ferguson Middle School									
Dr. Hamman Elementary									
Enchant Colony									
Hays									
Lomond									
Milk River Elementary									
Milk River Secondary									
Vauxhall Elementary									
Vauxhall Secondary									
Warner									
Westlake Elementary									
W.R. Myers									
Total									

**Stable Enrollment: The number of students who are still in attendance following the Christmas break.*

**Migrant Enrollment: The number of students who enrolled in September and returned to home colony in Latin America prior to, or during, the Christmas break and are no longer attending.*

**The purpose of differentiating between the stable and migratory enrollment is to better determine a pattern of attendance. If a Kanadier family is within a pattern of seasonal migration, they will generally have returned to Latin America by the Christmas break and will not return before spring.*

Private Schools

Estimate will be based on personal communication with schools requesting current enrollment numbers.

School	E.C.S to grade 6		Grades 7 to 9		Grades 10 to 12		Total		Total
	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	
Total									

Home Schooling

School	E.C.S to grade 6		Grades 7 to 9		Grades 10 to 12		Total		Total
	S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	
Public (Horizon)									
Private									
Total									

Total School Attendance

E.C.S to grade 6		Grades 7 to 9		Grades 10 to 12		Total		Total
S	M	S	M	S	M	S	M	

Total Population Estimate less Total School Enrollment Estimate _____

Appendix F
Horizon School Division Proposal for Alberta Learning

**Proposal for Alberta Learning
Kanadier Mennonite Learning Program
Horizon School Division No. 67**

Contents

Introduction, Background and Rational	2
Proposal: Kanadier Mennonite Learning Program	7

The proposal to Alberta Learning starts on page 7. In order to understand the context and uniqueness of the Kanadier Mennonite population, we suggest the background covered on pages 2 to 6 be considered first.

Note. As indicated by the Table of Contents, the entire proposal that was sent to Alberta Learning included an introduction, background and rational. These were condensed versions of the information contained in those areas in this project. As such, it was not necessary to include that segment of the proposal in this appendix. This appendix starts with what was page seven in the original document, the actual proposal.

Horizon School Division No. 67
Proposal: Kanadier Mennonite Learning Program

Problem

A significant number of Kanadier Mennonite children (estimate between 500 and 1,000) within Horizon School Division are not enrolled with an education authority due to a number of historical and cultural factors that impact education. The historical and cultural factors are described on pages 2 to 6 in the Introduction.

Goal

Implement a Learning Program that:

- Contains a formal schooling component for school-age Kanadier Mennonite children that promotes school attendance and meets unique social and cultural needs;
- Contains interagency program development and delivery that addresses the needs of the entire Kanadier community (literacy, health, employment, social functioning).

Results

- Kanadier Mennonite children who are not presently enrolled begin attending school.
- Kanadier Mennonite children meet provincial standards for student achievement and are prepared for life after formal schooling.
- Kanadier Mennonite parents become active partners in their child's schooling and a valuing attitude toward education is established in the Kanadier Mennonite community.
- An educational program that affords the opportunity for inter-agency communication and links program delivery to meet a variety of personal, social, health, employment and educational needs of the Kanadier Mennonite population.

Measures

- Increase in number of Kanadier Mennonite children enrolled in school.
- Percentage of students who achieve an acceptable standard on the provincial achievement tests.
- Percentage of Kanadier Mennonite parents of children enrolled in the program satisfied with the delivery and quality of education provided to their children.
- Number of interagency programs offered to the Kanadier Mennonite population.
- Percentage of Kanadier parents satisfied with the selection and delivery of interagency programs.

Timeline

Planning and preparation for project implementation to commence as soon as

approval is obtained. The program is to start at the commencement of the 2000/2001 school year. The initial project is scheduled to run for three years with attention to Measures at the conclusion of each year to facilitate any necessary additions or changes. At the conclusion of the three years, the program will be evaluated and a needs assessment will be performed to determine whether continuation is warranted.

Strategies

Program Components Accommodated by Horizon School Division through Regular Student Funding

Schooling Program

- **Certified teaching staff**
Certified teaching staff will be hired for classroom instruction.
- **Classroom Support Assistants**
German-speaking classroom support assistants, at least one per class, will be hired to assist the teacher. The objective will be to hire assistants who are from the Kanadier Mennonite community who will be able to assist the teacher with developing an understanding of the culture, assist with students in the classroom setting, and to facilitate parental communication.
- **Development of Dual Track Structure for Schooling Component**
The schooling program will be provided to the Kanadier children within a dual track structure, essentially a school within a school. The Kanadier classes will operate within two existing elementary schools: one in Vauxhall Elementary School, one or two classes in Chamberlain School (Grassy Lake). The classes will operate on much the same basis as the one-room schools found on Hutterite colonies with the educational program delivered to a range of ages and levels. The purpose of the structure is to respect the desire to remain separate and non-threatened by secular social expectations, and to enable the implementation of a unique curriculum.
- **Instructional Program**
The instructional program will be in line with the expectations stated in Alberta Learning "Guide to Education" (p.2-3). A solid core program will be provided as well as options. The core program and options will attend to the list of basic learning outcomes contained in the Guide. Sensitivity to cultural values will require some accommodations in the areas addressing information technologies and some aspects regarding diversity of life and the scientific approach.
 - **Core Program: Language Arts, Mathematics, Science and Social Studies**
At the present time, Kanadier Mennonite children in the private home school

program and the private school program are using the “Christian Light” program of individualized learning. Feedback from the Kanadier Mennonite parents has strongly indicated that this is the only program parents are willing to accept. Resistance to our regular public curriculum stems from perceived lack of Christian content and fear of worldly content or approach.

The program will utilize these materials as a base for instruction. The qualified teacher will enrich the program as needed. This will not pose a problem in Language Arts. In Math, while the basic skills are addressed, the Christian Light program lacks the problem solving approach to learning emphasized in the Alberta curriculum. To address this, the teacher will need to enrich the basic materials with individual and group learning that is student-centred and emphasizes the problem solving. Similarly, the Science and Social Studies programs will require enrichment, but even so, not all curriculum areas as delineated in the Alberta Programs of Study may be addressed. These two subject areas are the most culturally sensitive and enrichment will need to take this into consideration.

- Options

- Health/P.E. will have modest application dependent on cultural sensitivity.

- German language instruction and religious enrichment: Members of the Kanadier Mennonite community will provide the instructional program in these areas.

- Music, art or other programs will be incorporated along with the core program depending on identified needs and areas of interest.

- ESL Instruction

- Alberta Learning funding that is in place for ESL students will be utilized to provide quality ESL enrichment to the students.

Program Components Needing Support from Alberta Learning

It is hoped that Alberta Learning can, first, recognize the critical nature of the issues surrounding the education of Kanadier Mennonite children and the needs of the Kanadier Mennonite community as a whole; second, be flexible and willing to make necessary accommodations and provide the support that will enable Horizon School Division to meet the needs of this unique population.

It should be noted that services within this program extend beyond the boundaries of Horizon School Division. While Horizon is taking the lead, any work that is accomplished will be available and of profit to surrounding jurisdictions. Horizon intends to extend the services of the valuable Kanadier Mennonite liaison worker to other jurisdictions as need and time dictate. The central office supervisor will attempt to provide services and coordinate efforts. Work in curriculum development and modifications will be shared, as may

some of the specialized resources. As well, inclusion of parents and children from surrounding jurisdictions will be one of the goals of the inter-agency component. Surrounding jurisdictions that have a high population of Kanadier Mennonites include Prairie Rose, Palliser and Grasslands.

Three-year commitment to:

1. Provide full funding for students with recognition of the special accommodations in the instructional program including the use of "Christian Light" materials in core areas and cultural sensitivity in the areas of Science and Social Studies.
2. Provide regular transportation funding support as well as some transportation support to Kanadier children who are outside the attendance boundaries and are attending the Kanadier Learning Program. This would be limited to those students who would not otherwise be willing to participate in the schooling system.
3. Funding support in addition to regular student funding:

Funding Area	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Total
Kanadier Mennonite Liaison Worker: salary and benefits	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$45,000.00	\$135,000.00
Administrative Costs	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$15,000.00	\$45,000.00
Specialized Resources (including human resources)	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$10,000.00	\$30,000.00
Support to Interagency Programs: -2 Family Literacy Projects (50% shared cost with Taber & District Adult Learning)	\$56,000.00	\$56,000.00	\$56,000.00	\$168,000.00
Team Horizon La Crete visitation	\$10,000.00			\$10,000.00
Totals	\$136,000.00	\$126,000.00	\$126,000.00	\$388,000.00

Description of each funding area follows

* It should be noted that Horizon School Division will not be addressing this program in any AISI proposals. Alberta Learning has indicated that AISI proposals need the support of the community. With the funding being based on student count, the community expectation is that the AISI funding will be directed at students who are presently part of the system, not a program directed at students who are outside the system.

Funding Areas

Description of Program Components Needing Support from Alberta Learning

- **Kanadier Mennonite Liaison Worker**
The hiring of a Kanadier Mennonite Liaison Worker who will build bridges with the community, communicate intent and content of the program, provide feedback to Horizon School Division regarding concerns and needs, promote attendance and register students. The worker will also facilitate communication and program development with other agencies. As well, the worker will be available for the provision of services to surrounding jurisdictions that have a Kanadier Mennonite population. Given the closed nature of the community, the worker is essential for any degree of success.
- **Administrative Costs**
As the lead jurisdiction in the development and implementation of a program that will address the needs of the Kanadier Mennonite children and parents, some administrative costs will be incurred. A central office person will be allocated time to supervise the project. Supervision will include the personnel involved in the project (Kanadier Mennonite liaison worker, teacher and classroom support assistants) as well as the delivery of the program. Assistance will be provided in the areas of curriculum modification and implementation, student achievement and professional development. The central office supervisor will also be responsible for initiating and maintaining contacts with other agencies for program delivery. Collaboration with both the Kanadier Mennonite population and the mainstream population in the different locations will also be orchestrated through central office. Already, a number of meetings are being planned with Kanadier and mainstream parents. Finally, the central office supervisor will initiate and maintain liaison with the surrounding school jurisdictions. Requests from other jurisdictions will be addressed by the supervisor. As well, the supervisor will attempt to coordinate efforts to include as many parents and children as possible from other jurisdictions in inter-agency programs for parents and pre-school children.
- **Specialized Resources**
Specialized resources include both program materials and human resources that go beyond a regular instructional program. Modifications will need to occur throughout the curriculum areas for attention to culture and language. Library resources that are unique will need to be acquired and shared between program classes. As well, consultants and resource people from the Kanadier Mennonite population will need to be accessed and compensated for their services. These consultants and/or resource people may work directly with the children, the parents, interagency workers or instructional staff. Where possible, the specialized resources will be made available and shared with surrounding jurisdictions.

- **Interagency Approach**

Utilization of an interagency approach in order to address all the needs of the Kanadier Mennonite community. Horizon School division will collaborate with Chinook Health Region, F.C.S.S., Sun Country, Taber Adult Literacy and Taber and District Community Adult Learning Association to promote life long learning and a healthy life style. Pre-school intervention programs, adult ESL classes, delivery of a health program to adults and the development of job skills are part of what is envisioned.

A primary focus will be the delivery of a “Family Literacy Project” in each of the two schools. Horizon would partner with Taber and District Community Adult Learning to provide a literacy/education program that targets parents and pre-school children . The parents would be provided with ESL instruction while the pre-school age children participate in a pre-school program that would focus on early literacy development. Using this approach, the entire family would be involved in the educational process in the school setting. The studies referee earlier in the report, the Mennonite Central Committee Office and communication with Kanadier parents, all point toward the importance of including the parents as part of the educational process. A “Family” project has a number of benefits that cannot be attained through a regular school program: as partners in the educational process parents become less fearful of the educational system; the fathers are not as strongly opposed to their children surpassing them in knowledge, both parents become better skilled in English and thus, broaden their employability’ pre-school children have the opportunity to be introduced to an educational setting at an early age and have literacy intervention at an early age.

Depending on need and available resources, other adult ESL classes may be offered at different times during the year. Chinook Health Region has a Kanadier Mennonite Liaison worker who will work with Horizon to implement adult health classes and workshops for Southern Alberta Kanadier Mennonite parents. Project workers will liaison with Sun Country to ensure child and family issues are attended to by the appropriate professionals and provide an avenue for personal and group access. With its’ focus on prevention programs for children, F.C.S.S. already partners with Horizon in the provision of a Family School Liaison Counselling program for all children within the jurisdiction. This program would be expanded to include the children in the Kanadier Mennonite Learning Program.

- **Program/ Resource Guidance by Visitation to La Crete**

Within Zone 1, La Crete is a fairly insular Mennonite community that stems from the same conservative stream of Russian Mennonites as the Kanadier Mennonites. Over time, La Crete has developed a solid educational program that meets the unique cultural needs of the people. Alberta Learning has communicated that La Crete would be willing to have some representatives from Horizon School Division visit their schools. This would provide valuable insight into program development and resources.

- **Transportation**
Horizon School Division will accommodate transportation to the two programs by making revisions and/or adding to the busing structure. While the goal will be to try to draw from the attendance areas, there may be some students that require transportation from outside attendance area boundaries. These would be students who would not go to public school unless they are admitted to the Kanadier Mennonite Learning Program.