Living on the Edge: Old Colony Mennonites and digital technology

by

Kira Turner

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Author's Declaration

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. This is a true copy of the thesis, including any required final revisions, as accepted by my examiners. I understand that my thesis may be made electronically available to the public.

Abstract

Technology does not stand alone in any society. Each society negotiates its own relationship with technology and places its own value on it. Each chooses its own path. This thesis considers the path taken towards technology in the 21st Century by Old Colony Mennonites in Southwestern Ontario. Drawing on Coleman, relationships created by digital technologies are difficult to study as they extend or embed themselves into everyday life. While research into traditional Mennonite usage of static technologies exists, new forms of digital technologies – Smartphones, Texting, and Web 2.0 in particular – have not received the same attention. Initially, I asked whether a divide based on a volitional rejection of digital technology exists within the Old Colony. Ancillary questions surround issues of separation from mainstream society and economic disadvantages due to limited technology usage. Research consisted of interviews and observation. Four themes were identified that underpin this thesis; migration, economic, education and technology. Challenging stereotypes surrounding technology usage, evidence suggests it is not a digital divide Old Colony Mennonites negotiate but a continuum. Digital technology usage expands and contracts the walls surrounding isolation and separation from mainstream society. It allows ideas to flow between groups and for the shrinking of space locally and globally. It may lead some to move away from the church but it also may strengthen their ties. Increased literacy skills are identified as a stepping-stone, not towards the mainstream world but toward the desired better life, they left Mexico to pursue.

Acknowledgements

Dedication

For my grandfather, Arthur Alfred Duncan 'Donuts' Wright

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Chapter 1 – Introduction

I have a tremendous opportunity to observe a Low German speaking or LGS woman's literacy group north of Waterloo. Turning off the busy highway, I travel along a typical country road, all twists and turns and farmland. The fall foliage is stunning – spectacular reds, oranges and yellows line the roadway. One after another, I pass small waiting shelters that Old Order Mennonites maintain at the end of their laneways. They look like miniature gatehouses standing at the ready blocking, I imagine, the mainstream world from entering the traditional. Abruptly, rising above the farmland, I spy my destination. Thomas meets me at the door and time slows down. There are women, children and babies everywhere dressed in the traditional style of Old Colony Mennonites. Amidst the confusion, Thomas shows me the various makeshift schoolrooms. The first stop is a large gymnasium. To one side a temporary play area is set up for the youngest members. Next to that, a circle group is in session. From there we tour the two classrooms for beginner and intermediate students then pop our head into the computer room. A makeshift card table set up with seven laptops and exercise books awaits the arrival of the day's 'trailblazers'; seven women interested in computers and who, in turn, are pushing the boundaries of maintaining separation from the outside world.

Technologies, both digital and analog, embed into our daily lives and affect how we perceive and experience the world. It is a complex body entwined around us wherever we awake. It is the first thing we encounter each morning – the blast of a six a.m. alarm clock, the beep of a new email, the flip of a light switch – all before leaving the warm comfort of bed. Yet, each society negotiates its own relationship with technology and places its own value on it. Each chooses its own path and follows its own course. This thesis considers the path Old Colony Mennonites[1] are taking towards digital technology in the 21st Century. It specifically investigates their relationship with it in the context of a digital divide. It is found that rather than a traditional divide, the Old Colony negotiates the digital in terms of a continuum.

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[1] In order to simplify the terminology afforded to the many different kinds of Mennonites mentioned throughout this thesis I make a distinction between Old Colony Mennonites and traditional Mennonites. Traditional Mennonites encompasses all Mennonites that follow the traditional lifestyle from either the Swiss or the Dutch lineage. They dress in the "peculiar" or plain style of the 18th Century as opposed to progressive Mennonites who dress in 21st Century style. The Old Colony traces their ancestry back to the Dutch lineage and consists of those who migrated from Canada to Mexico and back again; they are sometimes referred to as Mexican Old Colony Mennonites or LGS (Low German Speaking) Mennonites.

My interest in the Old Colony stemmed initially from an interest in new digital technology and the digital divide. I wanted to know if there is a new digital divide being created not based on a divide between the have and have-nots but between those who choose to use digital technologies and those who choose not to use them. I entered into my research with possibly the same stereotypes that I am sure many have about traditional Mennonites. I wondered why some drove horse and buggy while texting or why it was okay to have a computer in the barn and not in the house. On the outside, it seemed contradictory and hypocritical. This thesis provides a different narrative concerning the complex relationship afforded by traditional and specifically Old Colony Mennonites towards technology in the 21st Century. It begins with a short historical overview (see Draper 2010; Driedger 1988, 2000; Hershberger 2011; Kraybill 1998; Loewen 2008; Quiring 2003; Schroeder 1990 for more detail) in order to place the reader within the framework of an Old Colony lifestyle. From there it examines literature from the fields of anthropology, Mennonite history and technology studies explicitly focusing on digital technology usage amongst Old Colony Mennonites.

Technology, in the form of the printing press, was one of the catalysts that prompted the early Anabaptist movement in which contemporary Mennonites are rooted. This single piece of revolutionary technology altered worldviews by extending the written word to the everyday person, setting off a chain reaction that launched the Protestant Reformation (Schiere and Schiere, 2009). From Quan-Hasse we learn that the printing press facilitated the spread of literacy and new ideas vital to shaping religious, scientific and secular thought (2013:26). It allowed for reinterpretations of the Bible, which in turn fashioned unconventional ideas and the Anabaptist movement. State based intolerance for these people scattered the Anabaptists throughout Europe in turn dispersing their radical beliefs and sparking what would become an

entrenched and lengthy history of migration. Two main factions resulted from the widespread

persecution: the Swiss and the Dutch. The former dispersed throughout Switzerland and

Southern Germany, Pennsylvania and eventually to Ontario. The Old Order, David Martin and

Waterloo Markham Conference Mennonites[2] can trace their lineage to this Swiss group. The

latter Dutch movement travelled from Holland to Prussia – Northern Germany where the Low

German dialect (*Plattdietsch)* originated – and to the Russian Steppes. Intent on preserving

their deep-seated beliefs and values, the most conservative of the Russian Mennonites made

their way to Manitoba, to Mexico and back to Southwestern Ontario (SWO). These are the

Old Colony Mennonites and the focus of this thesis.

While there are many different ways of being Mennonite, they share a number of

fundamental beliefs. Traditional Mennonites choose to remain in keeping with the practices of

their ancestors rather than accept, adapt or assimilate within the dominant or mainstream

culture (Johnson-Weiner 2007:vii). To the untrained eye, David Martin Mennonites may be

indistinguishable from Markham Waterloo Conference, the Old Colony from the Old Order.

With attention to the very fine details, one can begin to differentiate between sects. There are

those that wear black kerchief head coverings, and those that wear white caps. Some wear a

cloak over their shoulders or an apron around their waists. The men are less easily identifiable

typically wearing straw hats in the summer and black felt hats in winter. Dress however is not

the only distinguishing factor amongst traditional Mennonites. Separation from the

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[2] See Appendix A for a description of Mennonites referred to within this thesis.

mainstream world,[3] non-resistance and pacifism, control over education and the cautious use of technology are ideological differences imperceptible to the human eye. They believe in a simple lifestyle of humility and reject any sort of individualism (Driedger 1988). Schroeder sums it up well,

> Right from their Anabaptist beginnings in sixteenth-century Europe (Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Holland), the Mennonites wanted only to be left in peace, to live a simple life resolutely 'separated' from the world...they wanted nothing to do with the world's wars, its politics, the invariably destructive ambitions of its eccleastical [sic] and secular leaders and institutions (1990:2).

These are the fundamental beliefs that all traditional Mennonites share yet, they negotiate them in varying ways. The levels of complexity amongst the Mennonite population are extensive with fine lines drawn between which aspects of the mainstream world are accepted, rejected or indigenized. This next section will focus on Old Colony Mennonite's beliefs in terms of separation for the world, education as the impetus for migration, the process of change and digital technology within the context of navigating the mainstream world.

Separation from the World

> From their origin in the Netherlands, to the lowlands of Polish Prussia, to the steppes of the Ukraine in Russia, to the prairies of western Canada, to the deserts of Mexico, the Old Colony Mennonites have been quick to seek a

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[3] In keeping with the body of Mennonite literature investigated, I will use the terms mainstream world or mainstream society to refer to the (Canada or Mexico) dominant culture. See below for a definition of dominant culture:

"Whereas traditional societies can be characterized by a high consistency of cultural traits and customs, modern societies are often a conglomeration of different, often competing, cultures and subcultures. In such a situation of diversity, a dominant culture is one that is able, through economic or political power, to impose its values, language, and ways of behaving on a subordinate culture or cultures. This may be achieved through legal or political suppression of other sets of values and patterns of behaviour, or by monopolizing the media of communication" http://www.encyclopedia.com/doc/1O88-dominantculture.html - accessed November 14, 2012

country where they would be granted the freedom to live their faith as they deemed best (Called to Mexico, 2011:1).

Local historian Barb Draper asserts that the rationale behind the differences between the dominant or mainstream culture and traditional Mennonites is challenging to understand (2010:7). The choices made by these people historically were not framed by a desire to stay stuck in time as some stereotypes suggest, but represent, rather, a conscious decision to not adopt certain 'worldly' constructs found within mainstream society. Old Colony Mennonites define their own identity in opposition to mainstream society. They achieve this by maintaining separation through lifestyle, dress, and with their complex relationship to technology (Johnson-Weiner, 2007:viii). This main principle of separation derives itself from a literal interpretation of the Bible, "…do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind…" (Romans 12:1-2). Schroeder gives us a sense of how vital separation is to the traditional culture,

> …virtually every argument within the Mennonite Churches has always led back, directly or indirectly, to the question of 'separateness'. About how separate one should (must) be. About what separateness even means. About whether this dress, that car or the use of this or that language has or will compromise a member's (or church's) sacred separateness (1990:28).

Yet traditionally Mennonites did not always avoid the mainstream world. A rapidly changing 19th Century landscape led church leaders to begin moderating dress and technology by closely adhering to the values of the 1870s (Draper, 2010:150). Perhaps, as Latour writes, individuality of religion within the mainstream, the ascendancy of science, and the increasingly secularity of society challenged Old Colony Mennonite beliefs (1991:33). The Old Colony church discouraged individualism and modernism favouring instead the value of a plain

lifestyle, modesty and humility (Draper, 2010:188). In this way, the degree to which each Mennonite group accepts or rejects elements of mainstream society is determined by its own beliefs, values, customs and behaviours. The Old Colony specifically embraced an extreme model by favouring isolated colonies, strongly opposing higher education, and separating themselves not only from mainstream society but also from the more progressive Mennonite factions in order to maintain their traditional values (Quiring, 2003:17; Driedger, 1988:204). In Mexico, they sought to re-create the same boundaries by establishing isolated colonies that worked to restrict outside contact and in turn preserve their traditional way of life (Driedger, 1988:173).

Education as Impetus for Migration:

In each place they settled, the Old Colony were granted special privileges by the host state that included military exemption, freedom of religion and freedom of education (Quiring 2003; Draper 2010) — themes that would recur throughout their history. Yet in each case, changing political climates placed pressure upon the Mennonites to assimilate into the dominant culture (Quiring, 2003:16), leading many of them to look for new land and opportunities. These stresses were the impetus for the Old Colony to immigrate to Canada. In the 1870s, the Canadian government, looking for settlers to populate the newly acquired West, invited the Russian Mennonites to come. About 8,000, including many from the Chortitza Colony chose to leave Russia. This consisted of a more conservative faction who were, consequently more concerned with maintaining the traditional ways (Hershberger 2011; Draper 2010). Additionally, the Canadian government granted the Old Colony many of the same privileges they had seen in Russia.

In the late 19th Century, conflict in Western Canada arose between the more progressive thinkers and a conservative group. Higher education was at the centre of this conflict and a major schism resulted within the colony. The progressive members established their own high school in 1891 while the conservative group separated and according to Hershberger neglected education in favour of adhering to their traditional values (2011:11). The latter group felt that farmers did not require more than a basic education and a grade six level of literacy was adequate (Driedger, 1988:41), an opinion that quickly imbedded itself within the Old Colony ethos.

In the early 1900s, the Canadian government sought to integrate its minority populations. Although Canada lived up to its promise of military exemption, the draft of World War 1 was a real threat to the long-established pacifists. Additionally, public resentment grew against the Old Colony who spoke German and little to no English. The Government implemented policy that required Canadian schools to teach English. Schools that did not meet the new standards were closed while new government-operated schools were built and Mennonite children were expected to attend (Hershberger, 2011:11). The progressive Mennonites conformed and either accepted the public schools or modified their curriculum to government standards. The conservative Mennonites were caught between two worlds. The parents that did not send their children to the government schools were fined and some were jailed (Driedger, 1988:79). The parents that did send their children were excommunicated by the Old Colony church (Hershberger, 2011:11). Education and military service were the biggest concerns and once again, these Old Colony Mennonites began searching for a new home that would allow them the freedoms they so fervently desired. In 1922, they left on mass for Mexico. In Mexico, they believed they had found the freedom to live the way their

ancestors had lived in Russia, to be in control of their own churches, schools and communities in order to remain separate from mainstream society. The isolation of their new colonies allowed them the protection from the world they so desperately sought in Holland, Prussia, Russia, Manitoba and now in Mexico (Hershberger, 2011:14).

The Process of Change

Although Peters writes specifically about Old Order Mennonites, the following can be extrapolated to include the Old Colony. He states, "while the old orders see themselves, and are perceived by others to be 'separate and peculiar', their practices do change; separation has shades, colours and texture differences" (2002:3). There is an expectation of change; however, artefacts or ideas that Old Colony Mennonites adopt will generally conform to prescribed rules. It is thought that change, without taking the time to really understand how it will affect the society is dangerous to both the individual and to the community as a whole (Peters, 2002:4). As long as the technology is useful but not harmful to the community and fits within the traditions of the church it is accepted. Yet, it may take years before Old Colony leaders make a decision one way or another, whether to accept or reject a new idea or technology. Owing to this often lengthy process, when technologies that have been in use for a long time – possibly on the church's 'strongly discouraged' list – suddenly become forbidden a rift often is created within the community. Many splits within the traditional Mennonite groups resulted from prohibitions of technologies already embedded into people's lives. Furthermore, telephone and electric wires provide a literal connection via physical wires to the outside world and are in conflict with the central Old Colony tenet – to remain separate from the world. Communication technologies that provide direct access to the outside world – televisions, telephones, radios and the newer digital technologies such as computers and the Internet – are

seen as open doors to contemporary mainstream culture. Moreover, wireless digital

technologies are a quandary as they do not attach via wires and yet they offer connection to the

outside world. They comprise a loophole and a technology that church leaders are closely

monitoring and considering. When and if a decision is made, many[4] are interested in the social

ramification that verdict will make within the Old Colony community. It has the capacity to

instigate a split within the church.

Digital Technology

Public perceptions of traditional Mennonites tend towards labeling them as 'horse and

buggy' people. Categorization concerning technology further identifies them as a) the people

who do not use any technology b) the people who use technology only in the barn but not the

house c) the people who shun technology but paradoxically can be seen texting and using cell

phones in the stores or other public places. There are many different ways of being Mennonite

and many different acceptances of technology, whether digital or not, depending on the sect to

which one belongs. The Old Colony does accept digital technology more readily than other

traditional Mennonites. Yet much of the Old Colony has had little experience navigating the

digital world beyond texting on cell phones. Many of my informants commented on the

prevalent pastime of texting by the Old Colony. My own observations, within the confines of

Thomas' church, confirm its inclusion as a digital practice embedded within everyday society.

Today, the simple task of filling out a tax form entails online computer knowledge and skills

and increasingly, alternative solutions to mainstream requirements will be harder to locate.

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[4] Both within the traditional Mennonite community and those invested in their wellbeing in SWO such as outreach workers, educators, and progressive church leaders.

Furthermore, this lack of digital skills is only one of several difficulties faced by Old Colony Mennonites. Their history of determined migration has resulted for many in extreme poverty, landlessness, housing problems, and health & safety issues. Moreover, a low value placed on education in favour of farming led to a disintegrating education system in Mexico and an ethos of fear concerning mainstream schools. Given this, I turn to the research questions.

Research Questions

Initially I asked,

1. Whether a volitional choice not to engage with digital technologies was creating a new digital divide – not between the have and have-nots but between those who choose to use it and those who choose not to use it.

This question was posed prior to conducting any research into the community. After conducting interviews, new questions arose:

2. Historically, the Old Colony's motivations for group migrations have been more about maintaining isolation than about rejecting mainstream technology. Yet, digital technologies blur the lines between boundaries and create tensions within the community while at the same time extend social networks. Will digital technologies break down the walls of separation for the Old Colony in SWO or change them into something else?

3. With respect to their economic outlook in an increasingly digital world, are Old Colony Mennonite disadvantaged in comparison to mainstream?

Public Issue

The public issue, for the Old Colony, surrounds the choice to pursue a nontraditional path out of economic necessity, in light of community tensions to remain faithful to traditional practices. An economic migration from Mexico to SWO has necessitated a transformation from an isolated traditional lifestyle to one that includes some form of mainstream society. For

many it entails vocational certification, which necessitates higher education, enhanced literacy skills, and in some cases the acquisition of digital skills. The higher standard of living in Canada places pressure on the Old Colony to enhance their skills in order to attain higher paying work. Many Old Colony members are choosing to engage with digital technologies such as cell phones, Smartphones and computers. These digital technologies blur the lines between separation and the mainstream world. As digital technology becomes more pervasive, Old Colony members will require better digital skills. Added tensions exist within the community as many view higher education as a stepping-stone into the mainstream world which likely means stepping away from the traditional Mennonite lifestyle. For this reason, the Old Colony lives on the edge. For those choosing to take the path towards better education, higher paying jobs, and technology the divide may be too great for them to catch up with their non-Mennonite counterparts. For those choosing not to pursue more education, they may never alleviate their situation of extreme poverty and realize the better life they left Mexico to pursue.

Many might question whether the Old Colony cares about a perceived disadvantage between them and the mainstream or whether they care to acquire better digital skills. Based on analysis of the interviews conducted it is evident that an economic migration from Mexico to SWO in search for a better life has necessitated a shift from a solely isolated lifestyle to one that includes some form of a relationship with mainstream society. To qualify, nearly all of my informants mentioned the term "better life". What that better life entails differs from family to family depending in part on the level of conservatism. This public issue, uncovered through my research, comes from the informants themselves. I want to be clear on this point.

It is not me saying the Old Colony needs to acquire higher education and literacy skills but my informants.

Research Methodology

I went into this research with what I call an aberration of Grounded Theory. In Grounded Theory, researchers use a mostly inductive approach to draw on a set of systematic techniques in order to discover patterns in the data and to identify themes that hold true for the society or people being studied (Bernard, 2011:435). Prior to commencing data collection departmental guidelines and the University of Waterloo ORE (Office for Research Ethics) required a detailed outline of who I would interview and how. This proved difficult, as the Mennonite community is vast and differentiated. Determining which group to study was only one of the problems I encountered. A second issue was the age group – should it be youth that use digital technologies or the older educators, health workers, and other community members that observe the usage? A third issue stemmed from how to gain access to the community. Consequently, although I had an idea of the questions I wanted to investigate I did not go into this research with an explicit hypothesis. Therefore, through a mostly inductive approach, I sought to understand how traditional Mennonite communities navigate digital technology in the 21st Century. To this end, I employed a snowball methodology as traditional Mennonite groups consist of what Bernard calls a 'hard-to-find' population (2011:147). To begin, I contacted a variety of well-known Mennonite establishments including a local farmer's market. From there I identified a number of people who provide outreach services to traditional Mennonites. Each person I spoke with readily agreed to an interview and was interested in my research. I used traditional qualitative ethnographic approaches to gather the data. Over a

five-month period, I employed one-on-one interviews, observed a Low German literacy group and wrote field notes. The variety of methods allowed me to reach a larger group of informants over a short amount of time. Via these research methodologies, I teased out the people I would end up investigating –Old Colony Mennonites living in SWO (see figure 1 for a map of the area investigated within this thesis).

The four main themes that underpin this thesis emerged from my analysis of the interviews that I conducted. These four themes – migration, economics, education and technology – form the foundation for the research questions and the following discussion on Old Colony Mennonites and their relationships with digital technologies. The themes are interconnected; no one chapter exists without reference to the others.
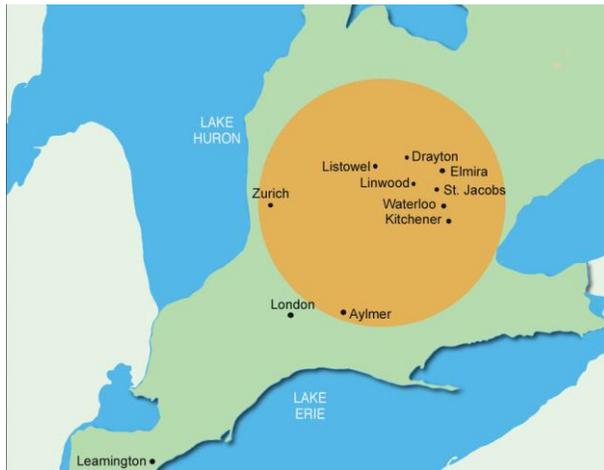
Figure 1. Map of South Western Ontario – K. Turner

Data Collection

One-on-one Interviews

One-on-one interviews were the key data collection method used and consisted of twelve sessions lasting approximately one hour and two shorter sessions of 25 minutes each.

Informants included Mennonite church leaders, alternative high school educators, traditional public school educators, outreach workers, ESL teachers, public health nurses and with former and current Old Colony members. All informants had some connection to the Mennonite church either formally or informally. My initial contacts consistently pointed me towards the Old Colony and they eagerly supplied additional names. This is a small community of people dedicated to helping LGS (Low German speaking) Mennonites and many of the names offered overlapped. The referrals often started with, 'have you talked to x yet?', 'y can fill you in on everything about that' and ended with 'you must talk to z'. Regrettably, due to time constraints I was not able to contact all of the people suggested for an interview.

Questions were semi-structured and open ended with narratives centred on digital technology ownership, use and access, education, language, literacy, economic issues and migration. I used an interview guide to remain on target, to ensure an efficient use of time and to provide comparable data. I recorded the interviews on my iPhone, downloaded them via iTunes to my computer in MP4 format and then saved to a USB drive for storage. I used Scribe software and Dragon Dictation to transcribe the interviews.

Observation

Late in the research, I was invited to observe two literacy groups, a Low German woman's and a mixed traditional Mennonite literacy group. I took the necessary steps to revise my ORE and obtained ethics approval to proceed. Due to scheduling conflicts with the coordinator I did not attend the second group. However, I did observe the woman's group which consisted of three levels of classes; beginner, intermediate and advanced. Subsequently, I conducted individual interviews with two of the young women from the literacy group. These

interviews helped to contextualize and clarify some of my observations from the group meeting.

Ethical Considerations

To protect the identity of the informants all names are pseudonyms. As the community is small, I omitted all identifying references to churches, schools, community offices, *et cetera* and to specific locations. All interviews took place in SWO.

Coding of Interview Data

In keeping with Grounded Theory, throughout the interviewing and transcription process, a number of themes revealed themselves. Very simply, I colour coded sections based on reoccurrences of specific words around the topic of technology. The keywords often overlap and many fit equally under multiple themes. Each column, read sequentially, ends with 'better life'. The term 'better life' is not my own but that many of my informants. This desire for a better life is the initial motivating factor behind Old Colony migration to SWO. It then expands to include increased employment opportunities, better or higher education, and literacy enhancement – themes that increasingly rely on digital technology skills and knowledge in the 21st Century. As each member works their way through the issues whether it is overcoming traditional values in favour of higher education or better employment or something else, the end place is a better life.

Chapter Overview

The aim of this chapter was to familiarize the reader with traditional Mennonite relationships to technology since the very beginning. There are many different kinds of

Mennonites ranging from progressive to ultra conservative, and each group maintains its own particular connection with technology. While many studies investigate this rejection of technology (see Driedger 1995, 2000; Driedger and Redekop 1998; Kraybill 1998, 2006; Rohrer 2004) none that I came across examines the new digital technology of the 21st Century – Smartphones, iPads, and Web 2.0[5] to name a few. The effect of these new technologies within the Old Colony provides an opportunity for further investigation. This chapter address several topics including, separation, migration, education, the process of change, and digital technologies. It closes with consideration of the research questions, public issue and the methodology.

Chapter 2 discusses the theoretical perspectives that underpin this thesis. Many opinions and views of technology and its relationship to contemporary society exist. The central perspective adopted throughout this thesis is that of Technology as Society in which it acts as an agent of change and therefore wrestles with the complex interconnection between society, culture and technology (Quan-Hasse, 2013:6). Technology is no longer just a tool that one owns or borrows; it becomes a force embedded within society regardless of whether one chooses to use it or to reject it. In this way, a relationship is created with technology regardless of the level of usage.

Chapter 3 considers the first of four themes identified within this thesis. As stated above, the Old Colony as a group migrated across Europe, to Manitoba and south to Mexico before individual families returned north to Canada and more specifically to SWO. Migration,

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[5] Web 2.0 refers to the changes from static to interactive websites made by software developers and to changes in the way end-users access the internet. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0 - accessed October 25, 2012. See Coleman 2010:489 for a more complete description.

as a means to maintain cultural beliefs, figures prominently within the Old Colony identity. Within this thesis, I identify three groups of Old Colony Mennonites who have returned to Canada: Settled, Newcomer and Transient. The Settled have been in the Aylmer and Leamington area for a long period, some up to fifty years. The Newcomer population have arrived within the last five to ten years and have elected to stay, for now, rather than return to Mexico. The Transient population, travel back and forth between Ontario and Mexico primarily for work opportunities. They pick up seasonal farm work in Canada then return home to Mexico. I argue migration between Mexico and SWO has led the Settled and Newcomer population to accept some form of mainstream society.

Chapter 4 examines the economic situation faced by Old Colony Mennonites in SWO. Higher standards of living in Canada has necessitated better employment opportunities setting off a chain reaction whereby a prerequisite for higher wages is better education in the 21st Century mainstream world. For those who remain in Ontario, supporting a typical Old Colony family with six or more children, with a Canadian minimum wage is insufficient. In Mexico, typically, the husband works and the wife attends the home and children, whereas in Canada often, both must find employment. Many of the preferred occupations, such as welding entail certification. Those without the required certification make significantly less. Low levels of literacy and education perpetuate the low earning potential for the Old Colony. Yet, for many, steady work in Canada, even at the minimum wage level is a welcome change from Mexico where land shortages, drought and other forces[6] challenge employment stability. This steady employment at a minimum wage, as suggested by some informants, is okay for this generation

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[6] Other forces consist of corruption, illegal trade and drugs trafficking – factors outside the scope of this thesis.

growing up in Canada but will not be for the next. Yet, without the technology skills, increasingly required by 21st Century world standards, the next generation will continue to struggle for the better life they left Mexico to pursue.

Chapter 5 focuses on the issues of education and more specifically issues of separation, fear and literacy. A cultural memory located in an ethos surrounding fear of mainstream education has led to a disintegration of the Old Colony education system in Mexico and has placed a low value on higher education in SWO. Low German is an oral language spoken mainly in the home. When entering school, children arriving from Mexico are often tackling English for the first time. They may also be encountering written work for the first time. Maintaining separation from mainstream school and keeping true to traditional practices creates tension within the community. For those wishing to pursue higher education, those tensions mount pushing some to move away from the church.

Chapter 6 explores the cultural anxiety felt over accepting or adopting digital technologies. Digital technology utilized as a tool to access information, complete homework assignments, fill out paperwork required by the government, *et cetera* is slowly becoming accepted. Digital technologies also allow the Old Colony to maintain ties locally and globally with family members and friends, further blurring the lines of isolation and separation.

Finally, chapter 7 recaps the research question and provides further avenues for research. It is found that rather than a traditional or volitional digital divide, the Old Colony negotiate their daily digital technology practices in terms of a continuum.

Chapter 2 - Theoretical discussion

This chapter offers an overview of the differing views of technology, from its simplest structure to its more complex iteration today in the form of the digital. It takes into account choices surrounding technology usage, its influence on societal elements, and ethnographic approaches to digital technology. It then considers the digital divide and identifies a possible new volitional divide based on the extent that a marginalized or developing society wishes to be on the "right" side of the divide. Finally, it suggests that the complexity of Old Colony Mennonite identity with regards to digital technology usage cannot be understood as a divide but as a continuum.

Views of Technology

Technology, as defined by Quan-Hasse is, "an assemblage of material objects, embodying and reflecting societal elements, such as knowledge, norms, and attitudes that have been shaped and structured to serve social, political, cultural and existential purposes" (2013:7). This is in contrast to a tool which, simply said, is an object or artefact used to carry out a particular function such as a hammer to hit a nail or a washing machine to launder clothes. In keeping with Quan-Hasse, Lenk writes,

> Single-factor theories of technology, highlighting just one trait (e.g., the domination of nature) are much too global and offer skewed interpretations that are hardly sufficient to cover all the different levels and aspects either of modern technology or of technological societies (1998).

In other words, a limiting view is to perceive technology primarily as a tool that does not take into consideration any societal elements. Tools, in this manner, are seen as passive or neutral and do not acquire any more significance than an object to be utilized by its owner.

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Alternatively, technology is not just a tool that we use to simplify our lives but is a means to realising human needs (Quan-Hasse, 2013:6). These two views differ in many ways yet neither speaks to how technology alters societal views. The first regards technology as an object and the second as a means to an end. A third view, Technology as Society addresses the complex interconnection between society, culture and technology (Quan-Hasse, 2013:6). Adding to that, Postman posits that every culture, at some point has had to navigate the effects of technology and that some do so more thoughtfully than others do (1993:5). In this way, mainstream Western society is one that has not given a lot of consideration towards how it adopts technology nor how it affects or influences our lives. In contrast, Old Colony Mennonite culture is one that has given technology much deliberation. In step with Postman, Old Colony Mennonites resist the integration of technology into everyday society as they "… attack the culture… become the culture [and] as a consequence, tradition, social mores, myth, politics, ritual, and religion have to fight for their lives" (Postman, 1993:28). When this happens, the new technology threatens the community and in turn, the community finds itself in a crisis (Postman, 1993:18). His simplistic solution to this crisis, identified through the rapid growth of technology, is to provide students with a sound education on the effects of technology on society so they may learn to use it astutely.[7] Franklin views technology not only as an agent of change but also as an agent of power and control (1999:3). In this way, technology has not only restructured social relationships between groups but also between nations and their environment (1999:4). To Franklin, redefining the criteria of what is

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[7] http://www.pbs.org/newshour/forum/january96/postman_1-17.html - accessed November 14, 2012

acceptable and not acceptable is required to shape, direct and limit the power and control of technology (1994:5).

Much of Old Colony culture sits somewhere between Postman and Franklin's views of technology. Although, Pfaffenberger writes that technological heterogeneity allows for its reinterpretation in which the adoption of a technology does not imply an adoption of the society's values that created the artefact (1992:511), differing views on acceptable levels of technology usage lead to mounting tensions within the Old Colony. Moreover, just as there are many ways of being Mennonite, there are many different levels of acceptance of technology. As Johnson-Weiner reminds us, in the past, many of the splits within the church were "over daily life practices and uses of technology rather than over worship practices" (2008:249). Often these splits were in response to a specific technology that a group has adopted into daily life such as a car or bicycle. The acceptance of the technology for some is an acceptance of the system of logic that produced it and in many cases, a mainstream construct. Similar to how facts are created in a laboratory (Latour and Wooglar, 1986:77-79), a new technology goes through a series of stages before it is embeds within society and naturalizes requiring no further explanation, or collapses and is disregarded in favour of a better solution. Remaining separate and isolated from the mainstream is a central tenet to the Old Colony way of life. Digital technologies[8] that embed into daily life are a threat to the social cohesion of a separate Old Colony Mennonite lifestyle. They allow for the transfer of ideas, thought, beliefs and

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[8] Many use the terms tools and technology interchangeably. When a new technology has embedded into society, the next generation considers it a tool yet, the current generation tends to continue to think of it as a technology. An example of this is the computer. For my generation the computer remains a technology, for my daughters' generation it is a tool.

ways of being across boundaries blurring the lines of separation the Old Colony historically has fought to maintain.

Choice in Matters of Technology

According to Quan-Hasse, not only do we have a choice about which technologies we use, we also determine the value placed on that technology (2013:46). The Old Colony bases the importance placed on technology by its ability to keep true to the beliefs, values and traditions of their society. They are very much aware of the impact of technology and many struggle to keep it separate, as they do mainstream society. Yet, Pacey argues, "technology is not culturally neutral as it 'is seen as a part of life, not something that can be kept in a separate compartment'" (1983:3 as quoted in Quan-Haase, 2013:9). For both mainstream and Old Colony Mennonites then, social influences shape the value placed on technology. Marshall McLuhan argued that "[mainstream] society tends to approach technological developments with a rear-view mirror approach, where '[w]e march backward in the future' and a new social order is not perceived until it is already in place" (McLuhan and Quentin, 2003:68 as quoted in Quan-Haase, 2013:37). Old Colony Mennonites' slow adaptation and wariness of technology and their thoughtful approach in many ways is a more sensible way of accepting technology into our everyday lives. Nevertheless, in today's digital world, economics, education and technology are interconnected and separation from the modern world is increasingly difficult.

Ethnographic Approaches to Digital Technologies

Coleman writes extensively on ethnographic approaches to digital technologies. She states,

> Whenever and wherever individuals and groups deploy and communicate with digital media, there will be circulations, reimagings, magnifications, deletions, translations, revisionings and remakings of a range of cultural representations, experiences and identities, but the precise ways that these dynamics unfold can never be fully anticipated in advance (2010:488).

Relationships created by these technologies are difficult to study as they have extended or embedded themselves into everyday life, yet they are rich areas for anthropological inquiry (Coleman, 2010:488). In examining current ethnographic work, Coleman identifies two areas relevant to this thesis – cultural politics and the prosaics of digital media. Ethnographic work in cultural politics examines how diaspora and indigeneity shape and reshape cultural identities via individual and group engagement within the digital world (Coleman, 2010:488). Further, she identifies the prosaics of digital media and the ways the mundane aspects of it shapes social practices such as economics and worship (Colemen, 2010:488). Education, although not mentioned by Coleman can be added to this list as increasingly, digital technologies are finding their way into the classroom. Coleman then considers the complex relationships between local practices and global implications, with respect to digital media and its multifaceted presence in everyday society (2010:489). She positions digital media as, "…central to the articulation of cherished beliefs, ritual practices, and modes of being in the world… [and that it] is necessary to push against peculiarly narrow presumptions about the universality of digital experience" (2010:488). In examining the four themes identified within this thesis – migration, economics, education and technology – I challenge narrow presumptions concerning Old Colony digital practices and usage. Unlike popular conceptions that place all traditional Mennonites under an umbrella of technological rejection, the Old Colony, to a cautious degree, accept digital technologies and indigenize them. Tensions surrounding usage within the community continue to exist, nonetheless they do use them while the line between what is accepted and rejected is a

line that is beginning to swing. Although, extensive studies on traditional Mennonites in the context of the global village, the Mennonite canopy, and digital technology usage exist (see Driedger 1995, 2000; Driedger and Redekop 1998; Kraybill 1998 and 2006; Rohrer 2004), these investigations look at static technologies such as television, radio, telephones and older non-networked computers or cell phones. New forms of digital technologies – Smartphones, Texting, and Web 2.0 in particular – have not received the same attention. The effect of these new technologies within the Old Colony provides an opportunity for further investigation, particularly in the context of separation and boundaries.

Reconceptualising the Digital Divide

The concept of a digital divide is founded on a principle of technological inequality and generally refers to "…discrepancies between social groups in access to, use of, and empowerment by networked computers and other digital tools" (Quan-Hasse, 2013:128). This divide is typically located between those with and without access to technology (lack of infrastructure, economic barriers), skill level (literacy, computing skills) and societal pressures (cultural barriers, support) to use it (Quan-Hasse, 2013:135; Mossberger et al., 2003:1). Access to and technology usage is thought to be a necessity for survival in an increasingly competitive digital world (Hess and Leal, 2001:765), and yet according to Aduwa-Ogiegbaen and Iyamu, many societies are finding themselves on the wrong site of the digital divide (2005:104). McMullin (2011) states that a growing number of those lacking technological skills are unable to find suitable employment thus creating further socio-economic divides (in Quan-Hasse 2013:217). Lack of infrastructure and basic utilities such as access to electricity, the financial wherewithal to purchase computers, the knowledge base to train staff or the skill

set to use the equipment, and education are fundamental issues for developing countries. Yet, Quan-Hasse writes, "We cannot ignore technology because it affects every aspect of human existence. The far-reaching effect is such that rejecting technology, or being excluded from technological progress, has social, economic, and political consequences" (2013:9). For many the divide locates itself in binary opposition between the global north and south, the have and the have-nots, the rich and the poor, and is located within marginalized populations. Looker and Thiessen (2003:476), take a different approach discussing a dual digital divide identified by Reddick et al. (2000). This divide exists between users and non-users and has an added dimension consisting of the value, and the extent to which that value is granted to digital technologies. This dual divide therefore does not exist between have and have-nots but is located within the value placed on the technology. The higher the value afforded to the technology, the higher the usage and *vice versa*. Yet, Reddick et al. found, "… the majority of individuals will need some level of access to maintain a competent level of participation in society, particularly where individual economic and social needs are involved, for example, employment, access to important information and services" (2000:58). In other words, the higher the value placed on digital technologies, the greater the advantages a user acquires over time.

Considering a Volitional Divide

The divide, whether framed as global or closer to home, is often based on the assumption that a marginalized or developing society wishes to be on the "right" side of the divide. Whereas in North America inequality exists amongst poor and geographically remote communities from a lack of access to digital technologies (Warschauer 2003; Witte 2010; Mossberger 2003), many traditional Mennonites, actively reject digital technologies or choose

to use them sparingly. This desire not to be involved with the mainstream, to disallow technology's infiltration into their society, to remain separate from the world, and to use technology only after careful consideration and deep thought results in a volitional divide between users and non-users of digital technology. As stated previously, traditional Mennonites do not reject all technology. They do however, choose very carefully, which to accept and which to disregard. The basis for the rejection of mainstream technologies stems from their mandate to remain separate from the world. Yet, this voluntary choice to disallow digital technologies can, according to Quan-Hasse, result in hardships for those without access, "The developing world falls behind in terms of opportunity, health, and standard of living simply because of the gap in technological sophistication" (2013:9). Much of the literature, discussed above, deals with the digital divide in terms of a lack of something such as access. While a shortage exists of available research addressing the effects of a volitional choice not to adopt digital technology, my investigation suggests it is not a digital divide Old Colony Mennonites negotiate but a continuum. Old Colony Mennonites challenge the very notion that a conventional definition of the digital divide exists between them and mainstream society. The complexity of Old Colony Mennonite identity and the choices they make in terms of digital technology usage, while remaining faithful to traditional practices, are negotiated daily. Maintaining those practices in the context of migration, economics, education and technology are examined more closely in the following chapters.

Chapter 3 – Migration

> *I could tell whether their hearts were in Mexico or whether they had transplanted their hearts to Ontario. – Francis*

Migration as a means to maintain isolation figures prominently within Old Colony heritage. The following chapter provides an overview of two differing patterns of migration that emerged – the first church sanctioned and the second founded out of economic necessity. Historically, much of the movement of the Old Colony, culminating in Mexico and South America[9], lay within the most conservative members desire to maintain their traditional lifestyle which they viewed as being threatened by the host nation. Conversely, migration from Mexico to SWO challenged prescribed notions of church authority and separation.

Life in Mexico was very difficult for the Mennonites who were used to the farming conditions in Northern climates. Drought and poverty are only some of the factors that hampered them. Land scarcity, both in price and in quality, pressed many into moving further out to Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay and British Honduras (Canas Bottos, 2008:220). Other reasons, such as the sudden high cost of oil needed for irrigation, forced successive migrations (Canas Bottos, 2008: 227; Hershberger, 2011:198). According to Good Gingrich and Preibisch, structural inequalities within the Old Colonies made it difficult to sustain themselves (2010:1504). Over the years, repeated division of the land has rendered some farms a half acre in size – not nearly large enough to sustain a family of eight or more (Castro, 2004:29). Further, Mennonite expansion in Mexico has reached its limits and a lack of available land has hampered the Old Colony's ability to sustain itself indefinitely (Castro, 2004:28). This

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[9] Although I focus on the Mexican migration, it is important to note that a more conservative group continued further southward into Belize, Bolivia, Paraguay and British Honduras.

landlessness and persistent drought necessitated some to either find work in other industries

within the Mexican Mennonite community, or to migrate back to Canada to seek employment

opportunities. Good Gingrich and Preibisch write, "Their migration to Canada seems to be,

first and foremost, a strategy for physical survival" (2010:1504). My informant Margaret, a

current Old Colony member in her early 20s recounts her family's reasons for leaving Mexico,

"My parents came up here because they weren't able to make enough money out there to support their family [as farmers]. I was the 6th so they already had 6 children and so making a living was too hard for them." - Margaret

As an outsider looking in, Castro perceives the Old Colony Mennonite future in Mexico

as problematic due to the resistance of the community to accept the outside world and thereby

denying new economic opportunities in Mexico (2004:31). He states,

> They don't seem to understand the disadvantage of excluding themselves from the changes that take place in the world. Economic diversification is marginal…low levels of education…and religious orthodoxy plays its part in fostering attitudes that operate against a necessary adaptation to the outside world. The Mennonite community needs a better agricultural perspective and professionals of all kinds to solve the complex problems that affect any society (Castro, 2004:31).

Castro isolates a noteworthy point regarding the persistent migratory nature of the Old Colony

Mennonites. He asserts the Old Colony has run out of places to which they can turn. There

are no tracts of farmlands large enough left to cultivate that can sustain a mass migration like

the ones from Russia to Canada or from Canada to Mexico. Thus, the migration southward

from Canada is likely the last migration as a group (Castro, 2004:38). Some view this

potentially final group migration to Mexico as leading not to salvation but to economic ruin

and cultural upheaval. Along that line, Epp indicates that often a search for utopia does not

succeed (2008:52). Yet migration does still occur within the Old Colony, built out of economic

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necessity and a desire for a better life. In Mexico, Epp writes, "economic and social conditions, combined with intolerable levels of rigidity and legalism in their particular church subgroups, prompted return migration to Canada beginning already in the late 1950s" (2008:53). This migration started with families returning to Canada temporarily to work in the fields as migrant workers in the summer. Over time, it developed into a transnational process that to this day still sees families trading one set of socio-economic obstacles in Mexico for another set in Canada (Epp, 2008:53).

Canas Bottos, writing about transnationalism, asserts that by maintaining isolation from the host culture, Mexican Mennonites restrict any governmental attempt to enforce national identities (2008:215). This statement holds true for all migrations undertaken by the Old Colony. Their desire to remain separate from the modern world, in Russia, Canada or in Mexico, is a motivating factor to reject assimilation into the dominant society. Canas Bottos argues that the Old Colony forms a trans-statal community due to their migratory nature and that while they accept citizenship they reject the ideology of the host nation (2008:215). Similar to the Sociotechnical View of Technology (see Pfaffenberger, 1992), they accept the nation (tool) but not the values or beliefs (technology). Both tactics (rejection of dominant national identities and rejection of mainstream beliefs including technological values) affords the Old Colony the opportunity to maintain their desire for separation and to move freely between nations thus continuing their pattern of migration.

Driedger describes two mechanisms the Old Colony historically employed to resist change: the first is the persistent migration of the principal conservative group and the second is the transition of those who remain behind into a more progressive group (1988:174).

According to my informant Victor, a former Old Colony member and educator in his late 40s, the latter is accurate as in Manitoba the remaining Old Colony has assimilated into the dominant culture: *"Many stayed but over generations have evolved out of the traditional Old Colony lifestyle."* Yet, the subsequent migration from Mexico to SWO resulted in a reversal. In this case, against the wishes of the church, a number of Old Colony members have chosen to leave behind the extremely poor living conditions in Mexico to create a new life in Canada. Historically, the Old Colony employed migration as a survival mechanism to maintain their belief system and cultural values. This type of migration is church sanctioned and entails an entire community leaving its adopted home in search of a new host nation. It is exemplified by the Old Colony migrations across Europe, to Canada and finally to Mexico. Yet, in contrast, the migrations to SWO are a survival mechanism motivated by economic necessity and are not church sanctioned. Rather than an entire community, individual families leave in search of better employment opportunities and to alleviate the poverty many suffer in Mexico. They may or may not settle permanently in Canada. They may stay for a short time or they may travel back and forth between Canada and Mexico regularly. A long-standing pattern of migration is an inherent part of the Old Colony identity. From here on, I will refer to the primary migratory pattern as church-sanctioned and the secondary migratory pattern as an economic migration. Figure 2 attempts to portray the different patterns of migration.[10] It is important to note the varying levels of progressive Old Colony economic migrations to SWO, as I will discuss the significance of this in the next section. In the past, migrations were set in

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[10] There are many more complexities to the Swiss side, which do not fall within the scope of this thesis. See Draper (2010) for a more detailed exploration of their history.
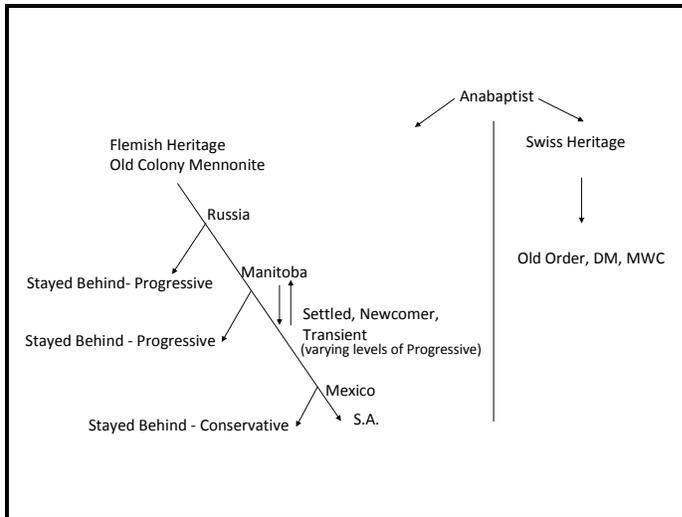
Figure 2 – Old Colony Patterns of Migration

motion due to social pressures and sanctioned by the church. The migrations back to Canada

however, rest solely on economic factors challenging the Old Colony's ability to stay in their

most recently adopted homeland. Some who left Mexico for Canada quickly settle others

travel back and forth to work as seasonal labourers, while a number come for a few years with

the desire to return home once they have improved their economic situation (Draper 2010;

Quiring 2003). In contrast to earlier migrations, this one is continuous in nature and has been

in motion since the 1950s (Quiring 2003:93). It did not begin as a whole congregation

migrating but with families moving in drips and drabs. Francis, a progressive Mennonite and

ESL educator of Old Colony Mennonites gives the following perspective.

"There were those who were here just to try and get a little bit of money to go back and live in Mexico. Then there were those who saw themselves and their children as settled in Ontario or at least in Canada. The first ones were planning to go back to Mexico and they tried to avoid being pushed into anything by anyone; 'just leave me alone I just want some money and to go back to Mexico'. The ones who saw themselves as working for a better life for their children were the ones who were planning to stay. And essentially I think the majority of people who are Old Colony now in Ontario have said, 'we want to live in Ontario; we want to live in Canada – it's better for our children'" – Francis

Migration as a means to achieve separation through isolation from the dominant culture is an extreme mechanism meant to contain the movement of ideas across boundaries. Yet, the persistent economic migration between SWO and Mexico challenges that notion. Based on data collected from the one-on-one interviews, I have identified three distinct groups of migrants that take part in this migration in search for a better life: Settled, Newcomer and Transient. While, there is overlap within these designations they are presented for analytical clarity and came out of my analysis of the interviews.

Settled

The Settled group consists of those who left Mexico behind in favour of returning to Canada. They have chosen to forsake Mexico with no desire to return and some have been here for more than 50 years. Few farm as land is scarce and expensive to purchase yet they have successfully carved out an existence in Ontario working in shops, as pickers in the field or as labourers in factories. Victor recounts his family's decision to reject life in Mexico in favour of Canada,

"When my parents came here, I don't believe they had ever intended to stay - they were going to come and check it out. My parents were from Mexico, my grandparents were from here [Saskatchewan] and went down - and they were going down to stay. Then my parents came up to check it out and I went along with them. I was seven. So, I started off my life being isolated and insulated from the world and living on a plateau in Mexico. We came north and I've never been back. There was no transiency." – Victor

Although adhering to the values of their heritage, Victor`s parents were able to see the benefits of living in Canada resulting in achieving a better life than the one they had in Mexico. This settled population have had longer to establish roots in SWO and stabilize within the Leamington/Aylmer area. The have more Old Colony churches and have created a more cohesive presence compared to the Elmira area.

Newcomer

The newcomer population arrived in Canada with the intent to stay, at least for a while[11] unlike seasonal migrant workers who return to Mexico regularly. I designate members of this category as those who have been here between five and ten years. They may transition into a settled group, they may move to another area in Ontario or they may return to Mexico. This group will attempt to integrate, to a cautious degree within Canadian society. By that, I mean they will find ways to exist and earn a living within their own value system. The quotation below illustrates how a family can remain in the newcomer group for a lengthy period. Elizabeth is a former Old Colony member and educator in her late 30s. The motivation for coming was economic; the motivation for staying was to gain citizenship rights and eventually the family lapsed into a transient lifestyle. In due course, they did return to Canada permanently and settled.

"I first came to Canada when I was 5. My parents came for the same reasons that many other parents came during the 1970's - for economic reasons. It was very difficult to survive in Mexico without land and so they came to Canada for an opportunity to do a little bit better. My mom was the daughter of - well her family was born in Manitoba so she had citizenship rights and because of that all of the children had citizenship rights. So, we lived in Canada for approximately 5 years before we headed back to Mexico. Because at that time my dad was trying to get his Canadian citizenship so there was a fear of going back to Mexico and him loosing the opportunity to become a citizenship so we stayed. But then, after that we travelled back and forth to Mexico quite often and lived similarly to what many of the families here - they work in agricultural fields and travel back and forth to Mexico." – Elizabeth

Newcomer immigrants struggle with language, literacy, employment, housing and resources. The children will attend some type of school – either parochial/private, home school or public. Many parents would prefer to have their children attend the parochial

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[11] I use the phrase "at least for a while" to distinguish between the transient population that remain in Canada for only part of the year. This newcomer population does not come up with the intent to return immediately. They may choose to return after a while if they decide life in Canada is less desirable than life in Mexico.

schools but cannot afford to do so. Many struggle to make the right choice and are motivated to accept contact with the mainstream society in order to make a better life for themselves. That contact manifests in the day-to-day – school, work, healthcare, *et cetera*. Income is an ongoing issue in which many lack the education to get higher paying work, which is desirable as the cost of living is much higher in Canada. While Chapter 4 goes into more detail about this situation, I will address it here briefly. Although the Old Colony tend to leave Mexico primarily for economic opportunities, those that stay in Canada as Newcomers realize that a low paying job is not sufficient for a large family to survive. Women are more likely to take on a non-traditional role and work outside of the home. Lack of skills, including language and literacy are some of the issues faced by these women and men. Outreach workers in SWO try to reach this group by offering literacy training, health education and services such as immigration and other resources for low-income earners. Due to the factors listed above, outreach workers identify the newcomer population as high risk.

Transient

The third group consists of a Transient population. They are involved in what Castro describes as a temporary migration (2004:34), largely for employment opportunities. They are landless, resource-less and live in poverty both here and in Mexico.

"They represent one portion of a population. The transient portion of the population are the ones that haven't totally bought into one system over another." -Victor

Quiring (2003) has written extensively of the belief that the Transient population is a detriment to the success of the Old Colony in Mexico by bringing outside/modern ideas into the community. He writes, "possibly the greatest threats to the survival of the Old Colony as a

distinct group in Mexico have not come from Mexico, which has been remarkably hospitable

to the Old Colony vision, but from Canada" (2003:7). He blames the Old Colony for not

cutting all ties with their Canadian past. He confers responsibility on Canadian laws that allow

the Mexican Old Colony to claim citizenship, and on the relative ease of travel between the

two countries (2003:7). He states that the Old Colony church in Mexico lost a significant

number of its members to migration and avows that, "Had the doors to Canada not stood open,

many of those who left for Canada would have had to find alternatives that may have accorded

more with Old Colonist goals" (2003:7). A specific goal isolated by Quiring was "…to live in

homogeneous colonies physically isolated from the world" (2003:6). Yet, this isolation

resulted in extreme poverty for many due to poor land quality and scarcity. Without open

doors to Canada, many would have no hope of surviving in Mexico. Quiring takes his

criticism one-step forward and charges culpability to the Mennonite Central Committee[12]

(MCC), in Canada. He accuses the MCC of needlessly interfering with the Mexican Old

Colony Mennonites and for judging them, "…as biologically prolific, unhealthy, unhygienic,

naïve, poorly educated, illiterate, financially inept, vocationally misguided, and needlessly

poor. The outsiders also have criticized Old Colony leaders for refusing to give their people

choices in vocational, cultural, spiritual and other matters" (Quiring, 2003:7). Yet, due to the

shortage of land and jobs, thousands of Mennonites have no recourse but to travel north

looking for work and may live for long periods of time far from an Old Colony church.

According to Hershberger, "…much unrest and drift in the Old Colony church [is brought

about by] outside influence from more liberal churches and general society" (2011:18). As

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[12] The MCC is a progressive Mennonite organization that is renowned for providing support to people suffering from poverty, conflict, oppression and natural disaster (http://mcccanada.ca – accessed October 8, 2012)

previously stated, the Old Colony church does not sanction these economically pressured migrations. Quiring states, "Those who moved to Canada did so in a disorganized fashion and in defiance of the Old Colony leadership…those who left became lost to the world" (2003:7). This sense of being 'lost to the world' includes the migrant workers who only go for seasonal employment then return back home. One could argue the transient populations have not given up their lifestyle as many remain true to the faith while in SWO. However, the extreme position of the Mexican Old Colony church leadership is they have violated church traditions and therefore are lost.[13]

The constant migrations back and forth transport the outside world to the isolated Mexican colonies much to the displeasure of church leaders. A widespread adoption of trucks as a predominant mode of transportation represents a notable transformation in the degree to which Old Colony members adhere to church doctrine when facing economic crisis. Although Quiring (2003) faults the Old Colony for this migration, economic necessity, in face of extreme poverty, is an overriding factor in directing people to make a choice against church doctrine. In other words, economic pressures far outweighed church mandates leading to a shift within the Old Colony, not quite to the extent of a split within the church yet problematic for the community as a whole, which I discuss below more fully.

Several of my informants mentioned the different Old Colony churches in SWO, which contradicts the above discussion. If the Old Colony church in Mexico does not sanction the migrations northward, how are there Old Colony churches in SWO? Thomas explains it,

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[13] This viewpoint may be indicative of only a small portion of Old Colony leaders as there are many colonies in Mexico and many varying degrees of conservatism.

"I think that they have sort of reluctantly blessed the Old Colony church being founded here. The Old Colony church has stayed quite faithful to Mexico except in terms of…they do not discourage the use of vehicles. They still would strongly discourage technology like televisions and radio and stuff like that. Although, radio is a little bit more allowable but television they would certainly discourage. It's been reluctant but it's better to at least have an Old Colony church in Canada then they go elsewhere."

In other words, the Old Colony church in Mexico has chosen to accept an Old Colony church presence in SWO. This reaction perhaps is a way for the Old Colony to minimize the loss of its membership. In the past, as history tells us, a split within the church would likely have occurred over a non-sanctioned decision by its members. This in turn points to a shift in Old Colony ideology within Mexico. Whereas in the past, a split within the church would have acted to minimize damage by disallowing reintegration into the Old Colony church in Mexico and protecting those who stay, the church is now more concerned with not losing membership.[14] An Old Colony church presence in SWO offers alternatives for the Low German Speaking (LGS) population whereas without a presence, some members may find their way to a church less tolerant of their heritage or to one that offers ideas beyond established doctrine. Traditionally, the Old Colony church teaches that what happens in eternity is more important than what happens here on earth. Peter, a progressive Mennonite educator of Old Colony children in his 40s, elaborates on this further – he states that traditionally staying true to church principles overrules everything else and in Mexico, this often entailed not being able to provide adequately for your family. Some conservative Old Colony members hold to this viewpoint while others are not so eager to follow church doctrine blindly. They are the ones looking for a better life and future for their children then the one afforded by the Old Colony church in Mexico. Old Colony migratory practices in SWO have

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[14] See footnote 14.

resulted in a struggle around faith, identity and the decision to remain within or leave the Old

Colony Church. Thomas, an extremely congenial and caring progressive Mennonite pastor,

counsels many Old Colony members within the confines of his church as they struggle over

these questions of Old Colony loyalty.

"In the Old Colony church when you are baptized you have to promise…that you will not leave the church that you were baptized in. And just this past spring I had one of the participants in the group come and ask if she could talk to me. She asked this very question, 'am I obligated to stay within the church that baptized me?' Because…I think they are very interested in coming [to my church] but there will be hell to pay within the Old Colony Low German church if they come." - Thomas

One in which some Old Colony members are exploring options concerning worship options

and are beginning to accept alternatives choices into their lives all while searching for a better

life.

To sum up, the economic migration and subsequent transformation of some Old Colony

members into either a Settled or Newcomer status in SWO creates a need for better

employment opportunities. The higher standard of living in Canada versus Mexico is the

catalyst for this economic necessity. A prerequisite for higher wages is better education and in

the 21st Century mainstream world that includes digital knowledge and skills. The following

chapters will investigate these themes more fully beginning with the economic crisis

experienced by many Old Colony members in both Mexico and Canada.

The reader may ask what migration has to do with technology usage amongst the Old

Colony. Traditionally the Old Colony was more concerned with maintaining an isolated

existence than with eschewing technology. The concern over pickup trucks was less about the

adoption of technology than about the transmission of mainstream ideas across borders.

Supressing the flow of ideas across borders is one way of maintaining isolation. Yet, this economic migration has not only afforded the movement of ideas via land transportation, it has also contributed to the movement of ideas through space whereby economic immigrants in SWO maintain contact via texting and other forms of digital media with family and friends in Mexico. Although, Quiring faults the MCC and the Old Colony for not cutting ties to Canada he has not written specifically about the flow of ideas through space as either a positive or a detrimental factor to maintaining an Old Colony way of life.

The next chapter focuses more specifically on the economic factors which underpin the patterns of migration discussed above and many of the hardships that Old Colony Mennonites face in SWO. These include, but are not limited to, workplace mistreatment by some employers and a general absence of knowledge concerning the community resources available to them. Previously, separation would have disallowed the flow of knowledge regarding these services – in fact, the Old Colony Mennonites would likely have not sought access to them as that would entail unwanted interaction with the mainstream. Yet today in SWO, a reversal is in effect in which economic pressures places them in the path of the mainstream. As we will see in the next chapter, building a better life in SWO, requires making different choices than in the past. The flow of knowledge gained from increased mainstream interaction, and facilitated through digital technology, allows for increased opportunity and facilitates the spread of ideas within the community.

Chapter 4 - Economics

Economic factors underpin the patterns of migration discussed in the previous chapter. This chapter focuses on the economic conditions and considerations encountered within SWO. Old Colony beliefs place a higher value on certain types of work and on specific aspects of society; for example, work over education, farming the land over working in shops, separation and isolation in favour of connecting to the world (Draper, 2011:201). Yet, the high expense and shortage of land in both Mexico and Canada creates an ongoing tension for many wishing to continue with a traditional Mennonite farming lifestyle. Consequently, many choose to work the fields of others, as the options for land ownership are limited. There is a higher value placed on physical work that leads many to prefer that type of work or alternatively to work with their hands in shops.

"But it could be that they value physical work because that's the only opportunity they have and it's hard to know whether they choose that or whether the choice is made for them" – Francis

Francis offers an interesting point regarding choice. Historically, traditional Mennonites abide by church doctrine with little thought given to matters of choice. Questions surrounding choice, in the past, led to splits within the church, i.e. the choice to drive cars, to use telephones, to install electricity. Yet, traditional Mennonites are motivated workers who prefer to adhere to tradition. Victor, one of my informants from a settled Old Colony community in SWO made this point very clear in the following quotation.

"Their work ethic is impeccable, they're hard workers. We were trained to work hard, to be obedient to our boss and to do the job to the best of our ability and build integrity that way" – Victor

Furthermore, he wanted to be clear that not all Old Colony Mennonites face the extreme

poverty described above. Settled informants spoke very differently of the Old Colony

economic situation,

"There are still plenty of Old Colony Mennonites who do very well in local enterprise here in Ontario, out west and Kitchener Waterloo and in Mexico and Belize and Paraguay - they are well established." – Victor

Yet, when pressed they did acknowledge that there are plenty of Old Colony members who are

not doing well. They face ongoing issues of poverty, exploitive practices in the workplace, in

housing, in education and with basic needs,

"Those issues are absolutely still very prevalent here - very much so. We have many many families that struggle with housing in the area and poverty and education lapses - that's definitely an ongoing concern for service providers in the area and they are working very hard to try and meet some of the needs of the communities." – Elizabeth

Some of these issues stem from within the Old Orders and in particular, the David Martin

Mennonites.[15] I probed this notion and the majority of my informants, whether from a

traditional or progressive background confirmed it. Although, they come from the same

Anabaptist background, the Old Colony within Mennonite society in SWO are placed at the

very bottom of a cultural ladder. Dustin, an educator and outreach worker within the

traditional Mennonite community describes the situation as follows,

"...they are definitely on the low end of the pecking order...There is a lot of hypocrisy that I see specifically in that regard and I really feel for the Low German group... there are some pretty negative attitudes and derogative attitudes." – Dustin

I asked where that attitude stemmed from because when the Old Colony left Canada to go

down to Mexico they likely did not have stigma attached to them. He explains it as a narrow-

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[15] The David Martin Mennonites are an extremely conservative and isolated group. No one enters the David Martin Mennonite community and few leave the community.

mindedness stemming from fear of the unknown but notes that he is still trying to understand

the attitudes himself. Peter attributes this attitude as stemming from a cultural division

between sects. The David Martin Mennonites are mainly shop[16] owners and employ many of

the Old Colony Mennonites thus creating tensions within the two factions which are often

played out in the schoolyard.

"Well they hire them. They're hired hands on the farm. So what you're dealing with is a kid whose dad is a minimum wage hired hand - unskilled labourer." – Peter

Additionally, Quiring as confirmed by my informant Dustin, suggests the David Martin

Mennonites provide poor housing for these employees, "Particularly in Ontario, some lived

year round in poor housing, including in bunkhouses designed for seasonal use, refurbished

tobacco kilns, old school buses, and barns" (2003:99). According to many of my informants,

there is a unhealthy relationship between some of the Old Colony immigrants and their

employers. In this way, some David Martin Mennonites act like slumlords perpetuating a

dependency on the employer by the employee. Although the Newcomer population tend to

have steady employment, they are still financially dependent as their income levels are low and

their families are large.

"The typical story is that the new Low German family – a huge family - move into the shabbiest, smallest, of the doddyhaus[17] - pay for that of course, work for the owner in the shop. It becomes a dependency that isn't always really healthy. But what happens - it's happened three times this summer already, so I know this is playing out over and over - the family will have not even been there that long and they finally have the young kids enrolled in school - and life is very difficult - big family, language barriers etc...Then they hear the owner's son is getting married and they have to be out in two months. Yeah, twice this summer actually I've sat across the kitchen table from - and listened to a kind of a heartbreaking story and they're

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[16] To clarify, within the Mennonite community David Martin Mennonites are referred to as shop owners. This includes a wide range of stores including Home Hardware and other woodworking shops. Additionally, Old Colony workers are employed, for example, as fabricators, welders, in construction or as farm labourers.

[17] Pennsylvania Deutsch term for a 'grandparents' house built on to end of farmhouse.

are trying to find something - they can't afford much so they are having to go further and further out." – Dustin

This distance further isolates Old Colony members from their peers placing them in the path of the mainstream, which as we will see later is a reversal from the social patterns established in Mexico.

Traditional Mennonites have both a history of non-resistance and tend to be unaware of policies such as Landlord/Tenant rights and responsibilities, health and safety regulations and job equality. This lack of information and their disinclination to advocate for themselves stems from a traditional reluctance to engage in individualistic behaviour. This is not to say the David Martin Mennonites, or other Old Order Mennonite employers are knowingly exploiting their workers, only that a lack of awareness, possibly by both actors, is in place. The David Martin Mennonites exist within a very closed and isolated society and although I did not interview any of them for this thesis, comments made by my informants indicate there is some level of awareness at play.

"Some people argue that they are no better than some of the third world places that we would say are not ethical. Poor quality –not poor workmanship, but poor employee treatment. No health benefits, none of that kind of stuff, too many hours, unsafe working conditions, that kind of stuff. But it's very hard to monitor. And the answer isn't necessarily either bringing in whoever is in charge of health and safety and locking them all away. But it is difficult to know how to proceed in bringing them some justice without them all losing their jobs at the same time; because that's not what we're after.

"There's nothing that they're reading that says, 'this is corrosive or you must wear a helmet here or your employer needs to give you a coffee break'. Because, they've got big families to support [they're] not likely to cause a big fuss if these rights are violated...the non-resistance in their background and with large families that need to be fed, they are happy to have a job."
– Evangeline

To clarify, when Evangeline, a public health worker says 'there is nothing that they are reading' she means they cannot read or comprehend health and safety notices or decipher manuals. However, it goes beyond reading notices. There is little understanding that it is not safe to do something. For example, Dustin relayed a story of a student who described working on a heavy piece of farm machinery with no safety equipment. It did not occur to him that an accident might occur resulting in severe injury. According to Dustin, questioning these types of situations is not on their radar yet. With the help of outreach workers, there is a slow recognition by the Old Colony community in SWO that they are entitled to rights in the workplace. Literacy classes, tending to focus on the reading and understanding of health and safety notices, are making inroads to resolve this situation. Fortunately there are community services available to the Newcomers (the Transient population does not participate as much as they do not invest as much into adopting the Canadian system). For the Newcomer groups some of the available resources are ESL classes, alternative learning schools, health education and low-income and immigration services provided by the Canadian government. Public health nurses have been instrumental in identifying issues and targeting those in need. They work tirelessly to connect impoverished Old Colony families with resources. Resources they might not otherwise be aware exist.

Nonetheless, it does not solve the issue of lower compensation for equal work. This tends to be an issue of certification and ultimately higher education. As I will examine more fully in the next chapter, higher education among the Old Colony receives a lower value in comparison to that placed on physical work. This means the credentials, necessary to acquire higher paying employment are lacking, for example a high school diploma or a welding certificate. Some industries require a high school diploma for employment with the provision -

unless you are Mennonite. This is problematic as employment without a diploma often results in a lower wage. Evangeline confirms this with regards to the Old Colony as she comes into contact with them through her job as a service provider.

"So yes, unless you are Mennonite but we're not going to pay you any better. In fact, we're going to pay you quite a bit worse and we're quite happy to take you because you will take quite a bit worse." – Evangeline

These employers may or may not be Mennonite themselves. The employer acquires a reliable worker for less pay while the worker obtains a steady job but at a lower wage. In Canada, employment as a welder requires certification, which may not be necessary in Mexico. For Margaret's husband who was born in Mexico and has only a couple of years of school and marginal literary skills, his employer required certification.

"He works for a farming company threading pipes in the barns. He learned it all right there. He learned as he was going. He has his forklift license now. That came in law a couple of years back that everybody who drove a forklift needs a forklift license." – Margaret

Not all traditional Mennonite employers will require documentation but they will pay higher wages to those who are certified. Victor, in the quotation below isolates a point worth considering. Some desire traditional Mennonite workers for their exceptional work ethic and will hire the Old Colony regardless of certification. This offers the Newcomer or Transient population with stable employment, something they may never have realized in Mexico.

"Well it's the settled ones that are hiring the newcomers. There would be some - human nature is human nature despite what culture you come from. There are nice people and not so nice people everywhere. And there would certainly be some of that - could be perceived as exploiting them as a resource to do whatever. But there are certainly people that have - and I can think of three or four in the area for sure, that hire predominately Mennonites. It's not because they want to provide them with substandard working conditions or anything like that but because they understand that there is an untapped resource there that may not be recognized by the host culture. Because they don't have certification or training or degrees or whatever components but they have the ability to perform well on a given task and demonstrate certain skills and that's good enough for them. So, [there are] three or four industries in the area who are Mennonite owned and they would have been maybe 2nd generation settled

Mennonites that are hiring and keeping employed - gainfully employed - Mennonites who are newcomers who may not speak the language who are settled in the area and who demonstrate the skills. Better that they hire predominately Mennonite." – Victor

Yet, Dustin points out that lower wages may be satisfactory for now, yet the next generation

may find it difficult to accept.

"At this point they seem ok with that role by and large. It's quite striking to me, its quiet striking the level of acceptance. I guess after you've lived a generation or two literally eking out survival in a very subsistence kind of farming life... when you come here and you go to work every day and make $12 an hour ...there's an acceptance of that and I think it's a generational thing. I think that won't be enough for the [next group coming up]." – Dustin

Community outreach workers try to connect with this population of Old Colony workers in

order to make a case for higher education and for better employment opportunities for their

children.

"All our energy should be on the parents to help their kids stay in school because in some ways it's too late for the parents...But if we can convince them that their kids would be better off if they stayed in school - and they know that because they come to Canada for the sake of their children. It is not easy for them here and they come so their kids can have a better life. If you let your son go to high school and he goes and gets his welding papers he can make $25 an hour, now he's making $15." – Evangeline

The concept above outlined by Evangeline may seem straightforward and logical to

mainstream society, however Old Colony tradition and theology embraces what my informants

called, 'a fatalistic approach to understanding life'. Their entire culture revolves around

accepting their lot in life without question.

"...it's the here and now and how do we get through this. That's based on their interpretation of scripture as well - don't worry about tomorrow - tomorrow will have enough trouble of its own - get through today." – Victor

"What is is what will be. What is is what always has been and what always will be. So life sucks and it always will suck. And we just resolve ourselves to make the best of it and not complain to God." – Thomas

Nevertheless, that traditional culture is changing for some,

"When they come to Canada, they are no longer living within those secluded communities and they are starting to have interactions with Canadian society. In looking at the people that first immigrated up – when I was a kid, they didn't have any permission to live differently. The people coming up now, have way more opportunities for choosing different ways of living." – Thomas

One significant way in which it is changing is with health and dental care. Although, not a theological shift but a cultural one, I include it to represent the change in thought pattern, i.e. we do not have to live our lives in the manner presented above. Rather we can choose to seek health or dental care instead of resolving to live in pain from illness or as the quotation below illustrates, with ill-fitting dentures. This is a pushback against a fatalistic outlook to one of human agency, whereby some within the Old Colony in SWO are beginning to make their own choices.

"In Mexico, most of the people by the time they are 35, their teeth are all rotten because they have no concept of dental health and so you get these crappy false teeth when you are in your mid-30s'. They come to Canada and there's people who say, 'take care of your teeth and they will be with you until the day you die'. And if you help your children take care of their teeth…and all of a sudden this concept of, 'my life can be better?'…and that is the first time that has happened. And if you think about it culturally that's an incredible shift. And they're not doing it consciously, they're just experientially realizing this and I think that's what's going on with these women who are saying, 'I can do this. I can make a better life for us'. But they don't have the support of the community in doing that. In the Old Colony church I'm sure there would not be a whole lot of encouragement." – Thomas

This represents a cultural shift from when the first families migrating to SWo in the 1950s.

"When looking at the people that first immigrated up [to SWO from Mexico], when I was a kid. They came up and worked in the fields. They didn't have any permission to live differently. These people, coming up now, have way more opportunities for choosing different ways of living." – Thomas

"As the community in this area, begins to stabilize because of the more permanent nature of the work around here I think that [it] will slowly change attitudes about that. – Dustin

In Canada many are beginning to see that being able to feed your family, understanding dental, health and workplace rights, having a choice and making a better life for yourself and your

children and being to do that and keep your spiritual faith is more empowering then following

the traditional Old Colony church doctrines,

"One of the ethos of this culture is that all singularity and individuality is squelched – you fade into the background – you don't stand out from the crowd. There are aspects of that culture that are very destructive and I think that's one of them. It's a cultural thing. They think it's theological but it's not – it's cultural. Keep the faith, keep the theology but leave behind the cultural - it's destructive." – Thomas

The high cost and poor quality of land in Mexico resulted in poverty for some and was

the catalyst for a continual economic migration northward to Canada. Traditionally the higher

value placed on working the farmland over education, has left many without the required

documentation necessary to access better employment opportunities as necessitated by the

higher cost of living in Canada. Poor housing exacerbates the situation in which some, while

trying to settle, must move further away from resources to make way for others. In this chapter

I suggest that lower wages may be satisfactory for the Newcomer or Transient workers content

with steady employment but not for the next generation. Understanding workplace safety and

healthcare options acts as a means to alter traditionally fatalistic viewpoints in which some are

beginning to see how mainstream customs can lead to a better life. Outreach workers in SWO

are combating the issues of poverty, employment, housing and lack of resources described in

this chapter primarily by enhancing literacy skills. Poor literacy is identified in the next

chapter as a major issue within the Old Colony, in Mexico and in Canada. Without literacy

skills, the Old Colony faces perpetuating the poverty they now face. To touch briefly on this, a

chain reaction is evident in which literacy enhances education which enhances job

opportunities in Canada which in turn increasingly requires digital technology skills and

knowledge.

Chapter 5 - Education

Ji meha jiliehet, ji meha fitchiehet - Called to Mexico
*(*The more learned, the more misguided)

The traditional Mennonite attitude towards education is that a basic understanding of reading, writing and arithmetic, are a necessary and important part of a child's upbringing. The emphasis is on basic skills. This attitude has been a sticking point on many occasions for all traditional Mennonites and has led to many splits and migrations throughout their history. It is thought that too much education leads to confusion. Although basic education is important to Mennonites in general, higher education[18] is often a cause of much concern and anxiety and consequently a fear of mainstream English schools continues to exist. There are too many opportunities for the outside world to sway their children and lead them from the traditional ways. The following quotations reflect the Old Colony's adherence to the traditional Mennonite practices in contrast to the less conservative faction that favoured better education,

"There's an ethos within the Low German community that goes back hundreds of years within their history that is really negative on education and on self-advancement.

"And then when they came to Canada they got promises, 'you can do whatever you like in your schools' and then in the 1920s the Manitoba and Saskatchewan governments said, 'no you have to start following a more standard curriculum'. And rightly so, because the schools were not educating them well. And that's when they decided to go to Mexico and other places." – *Thomas*

Peter offers a perspective of the process by which the Old Colony left Manitoba that is very illuminating and I will take a moment here to examine it in detail. The most conservative of

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[18] Higher education refers to anything past grade 8, which in Ontario means high school, and beyond.

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the Old Colony left behind rich farms, wealth and education in order to remain faithful to the church.

"They went down to Mexico – it was about teaching in German. This is why they went down – this is the reason why people up here were going to hell, because they were teaching their children in English." – Peter

Many who return to Canada hold onto what Peter calls, a cultural memory. This memory, passed down from the previous generation, is not one they experienced directly. Subsequently, when Old Colony immigrants travel to SWO there is an expectation that they will embrace the Canadian education system and learn English. This expectation results in cultural tensions within the Mexican Old Colony community.

"People down there are telling them if you come up here you're going to hell. And if you teach your children English they will go to hell and they will leave the church. The most important thing for the Old Colony is the eternal soul of their children. Nothing else matters. So if you starve to death with a minimum wage job but you speak Low German and go to church that's good. If you go to university to become a doctor and save the world from cancer but you don't speak Low German and you don't go to church you are going to hell." – Peter

Some who migrate to Canada out of economic necessity hold onto this ethos. They do not participate in the Canadian education system yet many cannot afford the more desirable parochial options so they home school.

"I've talked to a parent with 7 or 8 kids, and they're home-schooling. Well there's no education in that family. The grade 8 kid that's got four years of education down in Mexico reading the bible is going to now be teaching these kids. I've got families and they want to go to [the parochial school] because they pray and that's the important thing. That they pray in the school. Those are they families…but they're not even coming to school." – Peter

The above quotation describes a population of Old Colony children who do not make it to the Canadian School system and as such are out of the scope of this thesis. Whether they belong to the Transient population that does not accept the host nation's trans-statal community or one of the other two identified populations is unknown. From herein, I will focus on the Old

Colony members who do, to a degree, accept and interact with Canadian mainstream society. Peter describes his interaction with this group of Old Colony members as positive,

"...they know the value of education and they want it. The ones that don't send their kids are the ones that don't value it." – Peter

Typically, traditional Mennonite youth leave school in grade eight or at age fourteen – whichever comes sooner and often girls leave before that age to help in the home. Although required by Ontario law to remain in school until the age of eighteen, family obligations, economic necessity and a general low value placed on higher education influences a youth's desire to leave school. Typically, there is little encouragement in the home to remain in school. Moreover, as previously stated, there is a higher value placed on work versus education. Boys and girls who do attend high school often maintain part time jobs but with family pressures to contribute to the household income they tend to leave school for fulltime employment. A 2005 report commissioned by the Ontario Ministry of Education and Training, Special Education Branch identifies these same challenges,

> …the concomitant need to have both parents working more than one job and/or seeking additional training or re-qualification, can translate into relatively less parental supervision as well as increased youth responsibility for childcare of younger family members, household responsibilities, and family financial contributions.[19]

The most traditional Mennonites work around the Canadian educational system in many ways. They may withdraw their children from school and move to another community or they may home school their children, which is problematic in its own right. Parents with a background in education can home school quite successfully yet, others struggle,

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[19] Online resource: *Early School Leavers: Understanding the Lived Reality of Student Disengagement from Secondary School* http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/schoolleavers.pdf - accessed November 12, 2012

"I just recently was sitting at a country table and I could see that the mom...she really could see why her kids or could see that her kids were falling really far behind. And yet, there they were not in school and then there's this tension around - the reasons why to this point that she has made the choices that she has made which is to home school but by her own admission she can't do it [because she doesn't have the education herself]." – Dustin

Nonetheless, according to the educators I interviewed, there is a shift happening where more and more parents are allowing their children to stay in school; some students demand to stay while there is a shift whereby many return to school after working for a number of years. There is an expectation that they continue to bring in a wage or help with the seasonal farm work. Some manage with the support of their family but many fail to keep up because of this and abandon their desire for a higher education. They may arrive late in the school year and leave early for farm work with the expectation that they will keep up with their studies. They may attend classes at a local church or community centre or take correspondence courses or they may enrol in a work/learn program called SALEP.[20] Yet, as one informant explained it, the SALEP program is problematic. Although the government requires youth to remain in school, many find jobs through the traditional Mennonite community who may not buy into the mainstream system.

"For an example, an employer should not hire a youth if they cannot also demonstrate they're in learning somehow - but you can imagine, on some back country road, no David S. Martin shop is going to say, let's see your papers." - Evangeline

Another choice is an alternative learning program available in different regions of Ontario. With much thought and consideration, the alternative learning programs are structured to meet the needs of motivated students interested in either receiving their high school diploma, or for those who have returned to school, their GED. I had the good fortune to speak with several

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[20] Supervised Alternative Learning for Excused Pupils

educators throughout SWO that are involved with these unique programs. They typically consist of a separate learning space located on a public high school grounds. This separation is often in the form of permanent "portables". The students attend classes one to two days a week and work for the remainder. The co-op program recognizes work experience and appeals to many of the students and their parents. It allows the student to remain in school, keep with the desire for separation from the mainstream population, and bring in an income to satisfy economic pressures. Although the alternative program has been successful in providing higher education to some students, tension exists between conflicting ethos and adhering to Old Colony norms. According to Marie, a conservative Mennonite educator of traditional students in her late 20s, they are, "*not embracing it – they're tolerating it. They're letting their child come but it's not like they're a 100 percent supportive.*" Yet for some parents, the alternative learning programs located on high school property does not provide enough separation. For these parents another option exists – an outreach model that has educators offering unconventional methods to reach more people. Some programs see the educator go into the home or hold classes in the evening in the high schools or community centers with the single-minded effort to offer ways of remaining separate from the mainstream world.

"[We are] reaching out farther - basically - well if you can't get them to come to the program take the program to them. Even the alternative program is still too much school or too much mainstream [so] we reach out further. It's very hard to live with public school and doing it in the evening and offering teenagers a way to work full time but also come participate... to begin to participate in secondary school." – Dustin

This new model is reaching students who in the past had no other options but to leave school due to traditional practices and economic concerns. There is still a great deal of discussion around the danger of school which goes beyond maintaining separation from the mainstream world. The traditional beliefs over education, described above, are very much in the back of

Old Colony parent's minds when they consider the option of sending their children to school.

Deep-rooted is the fear they are doing something wrong – that their children will suffer their

decision to remain in school.

"And another mom…finally relented midway through the year and thought, 'no my daughter can go - it will be okay'. That was a big thing…'will I be breaking the rules of my faith if I let her go?' So, she really needed huge reassurance in herself, not from me, but in herself that it would be okay. [That] she's not doing a bad thing… that plays a huge part. I think there must be, I don't know this [for certain] but I think there must be endless conversations between families about why one goes and why one doesn't. 'Is that a good idea, it is a bad idea? Are your kids going to be safe?' There's really a fear they are going to turn out bad." - Evangeline

This idea of continuing on to high school and getting a diploma or returning to high school for

GED is a monumental shift in attitude for the Old Colony. I asked Dustin where this

transformation stems from, whether it was of the legal implications to stay in school, the

students pressuring the family to allow them to stay in school, or something else. He

responded,

"A bit of both. Parental fears of mainstream high school and economic pressures but also starting to see value in education re. the workplace.

"Yeah so, I think what's motivating them is the gradual overcoming… gradually the newer/younger generation having spent more of their lives, in some cases here in Ontario. Gradually overcoming this multigenerational fear of high school - gradually accepting that work here is different than in Mexico - that it requires more - they see their own community living in poverty here - and so I think - in some respects it's desirable to get employment - it's a real driver." – Dustin

For some, it is not about higher education but about navigating 21st Century requirements.

"The moms who are attending the program…they're not necessarily seeing as a way to get a better job but they are starting to understand also the connection between education and living life…understanding tax forms…[the] mail that arrives…understanding the connection between health and education." – Dustin

Yet in the case of some students, they are not even at the level to begin thinking about finishing high school. For some their literacy skills are so poor that they are working at the most basic reading and writing levels,

"Not to finish up. Actually in most cases it's to start - yeah it's…it's quite sad to realize how far back you have to go - you are at the far end - it's quite often grade two or grade three literally skill wise." – Dustin

Low German and Literacy

Urry describes Low German as an oral language rich in description - of fun and enjoyment (1991:236). It is the primary language spoken in the home and is an integral part of Old Colony identity (Draper 2010, Hershberger 2011). The Old Colony migratory behaviour, in part, stems from a fervent desire to maintain the Low German language and to keep the right to speak it in their communities. Yet, due to its oral nature, it lacks the necessary written component required in school. In Mexico, many schools follow the traditional *Dorf* system of teaching. The curriculum is in High German, a language that most children will not have heard until they enter school. The textbooks (see figure 3), written with Gothic and German cursive,
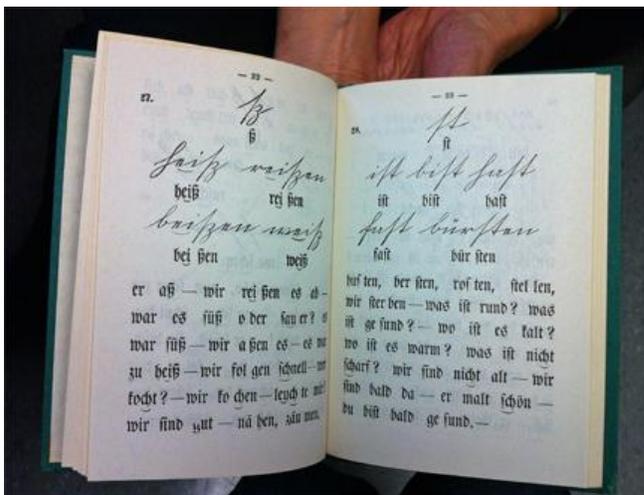

Figure 3. High German textbook featuring gothic script. Photo by Kira Turner

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are for many the first books the students will have handled other than a bible, a hymnbook and a catechism book in their home; all written in High German. The method of teaching is to memorize the words by sight. One teacher explains, "There are no [rule] books. I can't tell you why it works like this, but that's the way I learned it" (Hershberger, 2011:84). Thus, according to Hershberger, nearly seventy per cent of the students leave school at age fourteen unable to read (2011:87). Rather, what they are able to do is recite verbatim scriptures or catechisms from the text. This extends to SWO where High German is still the norm in church. In the following passage, Julie says she can read the words but not understand them – simply put; there is recognition of the words but little understanding of what they mean.

"I can read the German language but I can't understand it very well. At church, we talk German and we learn German…I can read the language but I can't understand it. It's High German." - Julie

In Mexico, the meaning of the words is not important to the teachers. If a student does not know the answer, the child beside them may give it to them or the teacher may do so. It does not matter how the child came to the answer only that he has the right one. At the end of the day, the work is erased and the child's performance is not recorded – it is not known if the student is making any progress.

In the past, higher education was viewed as a dangerous entity that threatened their faith (Hershberger, 2011:74) and over subsequent generations in Mexico, the teaching practices brought down from Canada were lost (Hershberger, 2011:65). There was a systematic disintegration of knowledge transfer from one generation to the next. Several informants described an example of this breakdown to me taken from the book, *Called to Mexico*. In this example, the schoolteachers no longer understood how to compute decimals

and fractions. Their embarrassment led to the abandonment of teaching these concepts. With such loss of knowledge over each generation, one can understand how the breakdown of an educational system that was shaky to begin with would lead to all sorts of problems for the community. This lack of literacy skills has been isolated as systematically problematic: "Hardships caused by drought and lack of money were easy to identify as areas that needed help. But the underlying cause, illiteracy due to their poor education, posed the bigger problem" (Hershberger, 2011:30).   In order to run their own businesses, to make their own way and succeed within the community, the Old Colony needed better education (Hershberger, 2011:13). This fear of education plays a big part in navigating the issue of too much learning versus finding a way out of extreme poverty and living under harsh circumstances in Mexico.

According to the Ontario Ministry of Education, one of the main risk factors for newcomer youth includes difficulties with language.[21] Language issues can stem from frequent classroom interruptions due to migration, inaccurate evaluations, and different cultural expectations. Some of the transient students, the ones that had been to school in Canada spoke English well but their reading and writing skills were poor or non-existent (Hershberger, 2011:143). According to Annette, an educator of Old Colony and traditional children, some in Canada cannot speak English at all,

"We have children here who show up that cannot speak a word of English but they've all...like a lot of our kids, their first language isn't English. It doesn't matter if they are Old Order or Markham - some of them have been raised at home with Pennsylvania Dutch and then you've the Low German families coming when they've done the Dietsch with their children. – Annette

There is little concern felt by Old Colony members in removing their children from school to

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[21] http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/parents/schoolleavers.pdf   - accessed November 12, 2012

work on the farms, as the value placed on work is higher[22]. The continual movement back and forth between two systems results in a disjunctive existence for the children. Elizabeth describes her experiences as a transient Old Colony youth,

"We traveled back and forth to Mexico quite often and lived similarly to many of the families here - they work in agricultural fields and travel back and forth to Mexico. So my elementary education was very...was very divided in terms of the time that was spent actually in the classroom and back and forth so there were a lot of breaks. And it was difficult. I remember as a student feeling very divided because we weren't actually part of Mexico - part of the colony as a community there and yet, not allowed to be fully part of the community here." - Elizabeth

An interesting parallel is playing out both in Mexico and here in Canada. Independently both groups are showing a visible appreciation for education as a crucial factor in making a better life for themselves. Rather than waiting for the church to resolve their economic plight as in the past, they are seeing the need to make their own decisions and to follow their own path out of a life of extreme poverty. While Quiring (2003) is very critical of the MCC involvement in Mexico, the MCC has made great inroads to providing literacy with the long-term goal of providing the Old Colony with the tools to remain in Mexico and overcome their poverty – for those who choose to accept it. Moreover, there are those who continue to migrate back and forth to Canada. Their education is sporadic due to their transient lifestyle. These students will continue to live on the edge between two systems and will continue to fall through the cracks. As economic forces make farming an increasingly improbable occupation for Old Colony Mennonites, schools endeavour to instruct students in a way to prepare them for work that includes closer interaction with the mainstream world and "…at the same time, reinforcing values, beliefs and patterns of language use that will keep the church-community separate from

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[22] http://www.wdgpublichealth.ca/sites/default/files/wdgphfiles/lgs_report_rev_20p.pdf - accessed October 29, 2012

the world" (Johnson-Weiner, 2007:5). Whereas in the past the issue was how to remain

separate from the mainstream, it is developing into how to educate children to succeed in

creating a better life for them and in a way that allows them to keep their faith.

Pushing Back

Some students find their way to higher education, either from support of the parents or

on their own. Changing economic climates and increased competition for jobs become

motivating factors for staying in school, and for some, achieving post high school education

levels while still adhering to traditional roles that value work over education and managing

cultural expectations to bring in an income.

"We still had to stay out late working and leave early in the spring to help bring in whatever spring crops there were, so we missed a considerable amount of school time. So, we'd show back up in October, November sometimes and leave April but still be expected in that window to do all of it that we needed to do to appease this system and to get the recognition for the work we've done here without compromising are involvement in making or bringing in family income." – Victor

The quotations above and below do two things; a) they show the struggle Old Colony students

face when choosing to remain in school, and b) they show a distinction between settled (Victor

- above) and transient/newcomer (Elizabeth - below) Old Colony populations.

"High school was very difficult - by the time I was in grade 10 I had a full time job in a local factory and was trying to juggle high school and working which was a cultural expectation. My parents actually discouraged high school education and thought it would be best if we all worked. And so, by the time I finished - the middle of grade 10 doing both of those things it was too difficult so the high school was left behind and I worked full time. And then years later…4 years later during the time where I was laid off from a local factory I decided that, ' you know, I think I would like to go back to high school.' During this time that I was laid off I came back with a refreshed view of my place in the world and what I wanted from my life. And even through there was still very strong family disproval of continuing my education I really knew that I wanted something different. [I] didn't know exactly what it was but knew that it wasn't - knew that it needed to include a high school diploma." – Elizabeth

Yet, not every Old Colony student desires a university education. I asked what the Old Colony

student population do with a high school diploma.

"So when you see these kids, when they leave here some of them are going off to college, some of them will go of to University when they're done. Some of them will go back and keep the home farm going. We have kids in this building that want to be pickers and there's nothing wrong with that…nothing wrong with it. But you know what? When they go they take books with them, so that's the good piece." – Annette

Those choosing to get a high school diploma, returning for a GED or pursing a University

education do not make this decision lightly. The choice to continue with education leads to

struggles within themselves and against everything taught by their ancestors and their church

leaders.

"Not just in academic - in their academic journey but in their personal journey to find identity themselves. If there's a constant struggle between 'what I want to learn in school as a student' and 'what my parents are saying to me is wrong' - there is a constant struggle between 'whom am I' and finding their place in - are they Mennonites? Is it ok to be Mennonite and be educated and those kinds of things? So when you have the support of your parents and you can still happily identify yourself as being Mennonite but you have the support of your parents to receive education there isn't that inner struggle." – Elizabeth

However, with education comes the very thing the church has fought to suppress. With too

much education comes the potential to drift away from the traditional lifestyle. The question

then becomes, do they stay with the Old Colony church or move away to a more progressive

church? The following quotations discuss this movement away in terms suggesting higher

education necessitates leaving the Old Colony lifestyle.

"I see them embracing both. I see them embracing their culture as a beautiful cultural history but they may not choose to continue to teach their children Low German, They may not continue to attend the same Old Colony church as their parents. But they then have, I think a warmer healthier feeling about what their culture was and what it means to them in their past and in their family.

"But no, not necessarily that they would continue to stay in the Old Colony because staying within the Old Colony has its guidelines or its restrictions - its expectations I should say. And that included the way you physically look like in terms of the way you dress, the way you speak and how you would raise your family. So, if parents are allowing their children to be outside of - to encourage education, many times I think that that influences then that second generation as moving more away from the Old Colony - traditional Old Colony." – Elizabeth

"There's a Low German saying, 'The more educated you are the more mixed up!' And that still holds that that is what happens when you get educated. It is hard to go to university and stay fully conservative Old Colony - I kind of think they're right. When they do go to university, they move away. They're still going to church and they're still people of faith and all that but they're not wearing the garb anymore. It's a tricky one because it's kind of true - university will take your kids away." – Evangeline

The parents that allow their children to remain in school receive a lot of pressure from within the community and from the church,

"That is one thing I do remember personally from my own family. My parents received a lot of social criticism from the community because their daughters were wanting to - you know, were not married young and wanted to seek education - so they received a lot of criticism for that." – Elizabeth

"There were a number of times...I don't know how many but...people would ask them - you know, why are you letting your kids go to school. And there response was, so they can get a decent job and they won't have to pick this or pick that for the rest of their life." – Victor

Yet, it is not only the parents allowing their children to remain in school or to attend outreach programs. Many parents themselves are attending literacy programs either through a local church or with a community service provider. They see their children racing ahead and they want to keep up.

"My mom learned by listening to us coming home. She taught herself [to speak English]. She had to read the papers that came home from school so she taught herself.

"And once my daughter goes to Kindergarten or when she gets older I'd like to be able to help her with it and I was always really hard at learning. I have to do it over and over again to learn so I kind of wanted to learn some things now." – Julie

Some will be fine with the traditional ways – of hiring someone; *"Taxes for example, if they are able they do their own, if not they would hire it done." – Victor.* Others want to be able to understand the reports that come home from the school, they want to be able to read the notices that come in the mail, they want to be able to read to their children. They are trying to give their children more opportunities to lead a better life.

"The other women would see that there is an advantage in this and what they are looking at is how they can make a living here in Canada; make a better living for themselves. Their husbands often have fairly low paying manual labour jobs and as long as they were going back and forth to Mexico, the broader community that worked because what you earn here you could live very well off in Mexico. But if you are staying here year round then $12 an hour doesn't earn you a very good living if you've got 6 kids. And so they are looking at ways to advance their opportunities and they recognize that to get a decent job you have to get the GED. So that would be the primary reason - so they have better employment prospects." – Thomas

Nevertheless, this education does not come easily. The programs do not have the blessing of the Low German church,

"When I first came here I spoke a couple of times with the local minister in the church and invited him to part of some of the things we were working at or to just give his input so we could more effectively serve the community and he said, 'nope. We take care of our own. We don't need that'. I said, we work with nurses, public health nurses, social workers, and even police officers and try to help them better serve your community, interact with your community. And he said, 'no, we don't need that'. And that's been this communities history - trying to stay separate…and it's no longer possible. Once they come to Canada like this they are not living in secluded communities and so they can't do that anymore. But the pressures are still there. – Thomas

Those that have chosen to follow education do so, in many cases, outside of the Old Colony community norms. In Mexico, women traditionally work in the home taking care of the family. In Canada, a single minimum wage income is not enough to support a large family. While there are internal pressures to remain true to the faith, there are external pressures to earn a decent living that often entails working outside of the home for these women.

"Yeah…in Mexico all their time would have been providing for the family but, it's definitely a shift and there aren't very many that are doing that yet - where women are working outside the home. My sense is these would be trailblazers." – Thomas

I had the opportunity to meet with two of Thomas' 'trailblazers'; Margaret and Julie. Both have attended English school in SWO up to grade eight and both are pursuing more education yet neither have moved away from the Old Colony church. Julie was born in Mexico and arrived here when she was one year old. She has a slight Low German accent even though she attended school in SWO. She left school after grade eight when her part time job turned full time where she stayed until just before the birth of her daughter. She is married and does not work outside of the home but she does attend the literacy classes. At first, she went for her daughter to socialize and then for herself to both learn and meet with people. Although, she seems more traditional than Margaret does she still is pursuing more education.

On whether she is a trailblazer or not, Julie had this to say,

"Most of us [in the higher level classroom] have gone to school. A lot of the women in the younger classes – they learned most of their English by hearing it from others. A lot of them are just learning how to talk English and write English. Most of those have probably gone to school in Mexico and I never did. So for me it's different. I learned very easily the English language because I didn't have all the other stuff in my head. But I think if they wanted to they could do a lot of the same things we do." – Julie

Like Julie, Margaret could not be more than twenty years old. Born in Mexico, she arrived in Canada when she was just six months old. She grew up speaking Low German in the home but told me she is more comfortable communicating in English. She is married, with two young children at home. In addition, she runs her own home-based business. Although Margaret stated the reason for continuing with the business after marriage and children was financial, I believe she has an entrepreneurial spirit and that she is thinking about the future.

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"I would like to do it [get a GED] just in case I might need it in the future. If I keep on doing what I do know, I probably won't need it but just in case.

"With a lot of people within our church not very many ladies work who have children. But it's a part time job so I can get out when my husband is home watching the children. It is more unusual because cause not a lot of ladies do an outside job. I thought it would be nice to have an income on the side because just one income doesn't cover everything all the time.

"I like that I can get out from time to time but my biggest reason that I started was to be able to have an income on the side. I like doing it and I think I will stick with it as long as it keeps going the way it is." – Margaret

The examples above offer different perspectives on education in the sense of cultural expectations within the Old Colony church in SWO and Mexico. An inherent ethos of placing low value on education, and a cultural memory contextualized by fear have led to a disintegration of literacy skills within the Old Colony. Further themes of separation whether configured around parochial schools, home schools, mainstream schools, alternative learning programs or literacy groups all require negotiating what it means to remain true to the Old Colony practices. These institutions, organizations, establishments, or residences localize separation to specific places in SWO. In the next section, we will examine how these separations manifest within the spatial context of digital technologies.

Chapter 6 - Technology

> *"[there are] those that have decided to involve themselves in technology and those that don't."- Victor*

Cultural Anxiety

> Technology is linked to the mobilizing of desired entities and reconfigurations of identity for humans... [it] serves as the interface that connects one person to another, to a network, or to an object… [and has] been a frequent site of cultural anxiety (May, 2010:54).

This cultural anxiety, evoked in the above quotation, is at the crux of Old Colony Mennonite relationships with digital technology usage. Quan-Hasse states, "Human beings have a choice in selecting and deciding how technologies will be used, as well as determining the value given a particular technology" (2013:46). The value placed on digital technologies in mainstream society is at the high end of a scale, conversely within the Old Colony it tends to be placed at the low end. Mainstreamer tendencies lean towards accepting the latest technology without question: the latest gadget, the fastest network, and the newest upgrade results in a continual struggle to remain up-to-date. In contrast, Old Colony Mennonites tend to think critically about the potential effects that technology has on their society and consequently implement a slow process of adoption (Kraybill and Hurd, 2006:208). Thus, digital technology for both the mainstream and the Old Colony is not simply a tool or a means to an end. Rather, it is a mechanism for realizing the wants and needs of both societies in the context of the values placed on it by its users (Quan-Hasse, 2013: 6 and 49). The tension becomes apparent when the needs and wants of individuals within the society are in conflict with the larger body.

Church Splits

Adding to tensions between differing interpretations of technology is the notion that digital technologies can acquire social significance within the home (Strathern, 1994:8). Although she specifically identifies the Amish in her writings, Strathern's argument is consistent with an Old Colony Mennonite philosophy. This viewpoint is that communication technologies (which today includes cell phones, Smartphones, Internet connections, wireless capabilities, Skype, social media, *et cetera*), surpass traditional face-to-face social relationships by transforming them into something else and by doing so invites exposure to unwelcome influences (1994:9). Such as influences from the mainstream world that challenge the notion of separation. Agre posits that..."culture is not homogeneous, and various tendencies within it are making their own conflicting sense of the technology" (2002a:150). As stated previously, there are many different ways of being Mennonite including new, old, conservative and progressive[23] and within each group there are many ways of negotiating one's identity and varying levels of technological adaptation are accepted. The David Martin Mennonites keep their computers in the barn or shop for business purposes but not in the house while the Waterloo Markham Mennonites have gone to great expense to create their own server so they can manage their members' Internet access (Draper, 2010:274). The Old Colony readily use cell phones and text their family in Mexico. These examples illustrate the length traditional Mennonites go to defining their own relationship with technology. As previously mentioned,

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[23] "New Mennonites, a colloquial name given locally to several schismatic groups separating from older established Mennonite bodies, both by the older group and the general public. Its counterpart designation, "Old Mennonite", was likewise used to designate the original group from which the new had broken off". http://www.gameo.org/encyclopedia/contents/N4942.html - accessed November 16, 2012

technology usage led to many of the splits within the Old Orders. The David Martin

Mennonites maintain their traditional lifestyle by driving with horse and buggy, and producing

their own electricity yet, as shop owners recognize the necessity to have Internet access for

business transactions. The Waterloo Markham Mennonites, although still dressing in the

traditional style, allow car ownership and telephones. Their more progressive attitudes towards

technology led to tensions and a split from the Old Order Mennonites. Today they cautiously

use cell phones and computers, but not televisions or radios. Within the Old Colony, there has

been more acceptance of adopting modern technology. According to Epp, the language of

separation is not as stringent within this group as with some of the other traditional Mennonites

(2002:14). Their motivations for group migration in the past have been more about

maintaining isolation from the mainstream than about rejecting their technology. Each group

justifies their decisions to adopt a piece of technology based on perceived need. Margaret

explains this more fully with respects for owning a computer,

"They allow it. Its not something that you can't have but they try to keep it in business wise. Because a lot of the times if you end up having one but you don't really need it then you are getting more trouble then good. But they won't tell you can't have one because Its really your decision. You can judge on your own what you think is good for you or not." – Margaret

Old Colony Mennonite predominant practices challenge the dominant mainstream values

placed on technology usage and ownership. Yet, digital technology ownership and usage are

increasingly necessary in both contemporary mainstream and Mennonite worlds. As economic

need increasingly requires the Old Colony to engage with the mainstream world, many struggle

to find a balance between the two. Although, the role of technology as an influence on identity

must be navigated within the framework of core Mennonite values (Gray Graffam - personal

communication March 16, 2012) – those values are undergoing change.

Change is fundamental to issues of separation and is a concern Old Colony Mennonites have fought to keep at bay throughout their storied history. It is an ongoing topic of discussion and whereas in the past that discussion has been mostly about how to hold or slow down the process of change, today it is moving toward how to adapt to change and maintain their beliefs and values - both of which are necessary for survival in the 21st Century. Digital technologies, in part, are at the core of shifting notions of identity and self (Escobar, 1994: 218). Adoption of digital technologies, seen as essential for success in the mainstream world, ultimately results in new ways of thinking and being (Escobar, 1994:214). These new ways of thinking, for the Old Colony do not necessarily entail abandoning their heritage – new relationships with digital technology, as we will see in the next section, may allow them to utilize digital technologies on their own terms and still provide the advantages mainstream users afford.

Tech as Tools

In Mexico, the Old Colony upheld their resolute distrust of modern society and technology for many years (Draper, 2010:333). Nevertheless as life in Mexico is very difficult and very different from what they left in Canada, change has inevitably found its way into the isolated colonies. Draper writes that cars, telephones and electricity did not hold the same prohibitions in the Old Colony as other traditional orders yet some technology such as radios, television and personal computers are of concern (2010:333). She states that in church leaders in SWO face a difficult task in deciding where the line is to be drawn. There are tensions between the traditional lifestyle and a progressive realization that, to survive and to create a better life, change is inevitable (2010:334). The technology tolerated by the church has a

direct functionality and while cars, telephones and electricity function to make things easier

they also lead to mixing with the modern world.

"From my experiences, I see them very much as using the technology as a tool to make life easier - or to make like work easier [higher productivity], yeah and survivable. I don't see them embracing technology as a possible way of growing or developing in the technology world. I see it more of the technology world supporting the things that they've already been doing and will continue to do and the way they will continue to keep as part of their cultural identity using it simply as a tool not necessarily as a journey in itself" - Victor.

The Old Colony further distinguishes between useful technology and technology that is for

entertainment such as radios and television. The computer is a separate concern as it fits in

both categories. A desktop computer, located solely in a business, indicates there is some level

of control over access. It is useful for its economic function; spreadsheets, email from

customers, online orders or access to relevant information such as agricultural production,

disease control, and access to current market prices that can increase farmers' incomes.[24]

"The technology that some of the families would be open to are possibly cell phones and some of the families who are starting businesses, and those kinds of things, they may have Internet at home but not as a general use for all the kids to use. Possibly just to network maybe a little bit with other Mennonite business in the area." – Elizabeth

While a laptop that travels with the user can operate both at work and at home, the line

between entertainment and acceptable tool use is a fine one, one that the Old Colony negotiates

on a daily basis. New technologies developed since the introduction of Web 2.0 have

revolutionized not only the way we navigate the Internet but also the way we negotiates the

global world. While Franklin sees this transformation as "profound and violent" (1990:5)

others view it as a gateway to interactivity, collaboration, and transparency (see Quan-Hasse,

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[24] Essentials - Information Communications Technology for Development, Evaluation Office (EO) United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), NY. September 2001. http://www.beta.undp.org/undp/en/home.html - accessed December 3, 2011

2013:115; Davidson 2010, 2011; Tapscott 2009; Carr 2011; Prensky 2001; Headrick 2000).

This manifests itself most aptly with wireless and Internet accessible technology, examples of

which are laptops, tablets, and Smartphones. Cell phones usage has penetrated 87 percent

globally; "The number of mobile phone subscriptions has reached 5.9 billion, an impressive

figure in a world of 7 billion people"[25]. The Old Colony is not immune to this global trend.

Although it is unclear whether any specific statistics exist for traditional Mennonite society,

cell phone technology has clearly embedded itself within their culture.

"From the perspective of the students from my class, probably I would have to say about 85% of them possibly have cell phones but not all of them have televisions in their homes and not all of them have the internet in their homes but almost all of them would have cell phones and use that technology." - Elizabeth

"They love to have their cell phones and they're texting away and all the time." – Dustin

"They have cell phones and they text to people in Mexico all the time. So, cell phones and texting are huge." - Annette

Julie's husband was also born in Mexico. He spent his early years traveling back and forth and

although they attended the same public school in SWO, she says he learned English by texting;

"My husband taught himself by writing on phones – just messages. That's how he learned" - Julie

To take things one-step further we must consider the cell phone and its more contemporary

iteration, the Smartphone. Both are communication devices yet a simple cell phone provides

only what Quan-Hasse calls a clear utilitarian purpose (2012:35). A Smartphone has an

additional layer – it is both a communication device and an entertainment tool and herein lays

the problem; "When technology reaches the point of being embedded in the routines and

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[25] http://news.cnet.com/8301-1023_3-57352095-93/2011-ends-with-almost-6-billion-mobile-phone-subscriptions/ - accessed October 21, 2012

practices of everyday life, it is said to have normalized" (Quan-Haasse, 2013:9). Cell phone

technology has normalized within the Old Colony and Smartphone technology is quickly

embedding itself within the 'next generation'. According to Feenburg, "[t]he introduction of a

new technology into a given social environment is a powerful culture transforming act with

immense political and economic consequences" (1982:17-18 in Quan-Haasse, 2013:9).

Internet access is a direct line to the mainstream society. Tensions exist around whether to

allow it in the home or not. My informant, Julie discussed this at length with me. Although

they have a computer that they use mainly for watching movies and playing games she and her

husband are considering bringing the Internet into their home.

"... things are going up in technology like it would be easier to pay your bills on the computer now. He's [Julie's husband] talking about getting Internet too. It's a big discussion. Our church says it's a big no no 'cause there's way too many people taking advantage of Internet. Doing things they're not supposed to but if it were only work related there would be nothing against it. It's just the way you use it.

"I'm sure if we had Internet we would use it for a lot more things. I'd be researching stuff, there'd always be other things. I know my dad gets around without Internet – he still makes bills and all that but he just has a program. I'm sure it's not necessary. Just something he was mentioning" - Julie

This last statement goes back to the question about bringing Internet access into the home. It

seems the discussion is not just between husband and wife but involves other family members

and is not a light one, as it will likely change the dynamic within her home. Paradoxically,

Julie accesses the Internet via her cell phone with which she searches via Google and utilizes

Kijiji. This type of connection outside of the home does not seem to be an issue for her

household. The discussion surrounding what is accepted and what requires considered thought

alters between home and the outside world. Outside of the home, access is much easier to

obtain as with the teenagers described below, who quickly found a way to get online,

"A year ago, when more of these teenage gals were here hanging out because of the child care one of them found out we had wireless and asked if she could get on our system. And within two weeks they were all asking if they could get onto our wireless. So they often sit in the youth room over there were there's couches on their break and they're sitting there and it's like Canadian kids on their cell phones." – Thomas

Moreover, some Old Colony parents actively encourage their children to interact with digital

technology.

"Three years ago none of them would have it [cell phones] so that is changing very significantly and quickly. It's interesting to observe. And the fact that this very traditional, this mother who gave her daughter a cell phone for Christmas was absolutely traditional. All traditional dress and not very interactive in Canadian society and yet they did this for their daughter." – Thomas

Annette mentioned a voyeurism by some of the parents regarding what their children can

accomplish online. This interest contrasts with Old Colony practices about maintaining

separation and with the quotation below.

"I don't think that some families are aware of the access - as much access as their kids do actually have. And I think there have been some issues that have arose because of that and I think as the community becomes more aware of what cell phones actually are able to do they will become more savvy about that. I don't think they have a complete understanding of what they are all capable of doing." – Elizabeth

While, according to Quiring, the Old Colony leadership has not opposed all modern

technology, it is aware that,

> …'urbanization, industrialization, commercialization, communication and interaction with the outside will lead to the breakdown of a system'. The group accepts new technology, but on their terms. They evaluate new options and then choose those that they believe will not interfere with their goals, at least as much as economic realities allow for choice (2003:37).

The degree that cell phone technology has naturalized within the Old Colony and the degree to

which Smartphones are embedding into the younger generations' concept of their own culture

is the fine line the Old Colony leaders must negotiate. I have arranged the following

quotations in a specific order to illustrate the complexity of feelings surrounding the use of

digital technologies. These feelings range from acceptance to concern with a likely church split

situated in the centre of the narratives.

"There is a huge portion of the population and has settled and has acquired and has adapted their businesses and their lifestyles to reflect technology to the extent that is allowed by the church." - Victor

"There are things that are allowed here in the Old Colony church but would not be accepted in Mexico. But some families would try and get away with it – you have all these layers." - Francis

"Yeah, so there's sure to be a church split when they do" [accept or disallow cell phones] – Evangeline

"But this is a new level because you are carrying it on your hip. It's easy to be deceptive. It's easy to for it to creep in all over the place." - Evangeline

"Well, I can imagine, but it's not black and white…computers are mixing...computers are a big time collision with the world."- Evangeline

Deception, collision, mixing, creeping are fearful words that point to the dark side of the

Internet.

The Dark Side

There is a community-wide fear of the 'underbelly of society' or the 'dark side of the

Internet'. Kraybill writes, "[Traditional Mennonites] worry that mass media and the Internet

will ruin their souls and lead to the demolition of their communities" (1998:99).

"So many they are quite thrown - smitten by the underbelly of technology - its quick and easy access to some of the worst of our urban modern culture and so the more they tend to do that the more the parents dig in and tell you - see that's why we don't send them to school. They'll junk the acceptable good uses and - it's a bit of a conundrum right now."- Dustin

For some, digital technologies that directly access the mainstream world are strongly

discouraged. However, there are many types of information available through digital

technologies and many different reasons for using it. While some clearly access the digital

world for purposes of entertainment, others use it as a path to education.

The Wild West

As far back as the beginning of mass-produced printed material, there was fear the

printing press would create a population of readers who without proper instruction would be

unable to handle the vast information overload we complain of today (Postman, 1993:16).

Postman states,

> The milieu in which Technopoly[26] flourishes is one in which the tie between
> information and human purpose has been severed, i.e., information appears
> indiscriminately, directed at no one in particular, in enormous volume and at
> high speeds, and disconnected from theory, meaning, or purpose (1993:70).

He paints a dystopic worldview of technology in which society suffers grievously over an

information overload accessible via the Internet and a general lack of mechanisms to control it

(Postman, 1993:70). However, I offer an analogy between the Internet of the 1990s and the

Wild West. The idea that the Internet, when first introduced to the public, was a new frontier;

a lawless land full of opportunity and open for the taking, is not a new one.[27] Agre described it

as a disruptive cultural and economic phenomenon (2002a:149). A phenomenon unleashed on

society without guidance or rules. Those set on taming it had first to learn how to negotiate it

and in turn how to navigate its affect on their non-digital selves, "a thousand dynamics that

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[26] Technopoly is according to Postman, a state of culture and of mind. "It consists in the deification of technology, which means that the culture seeks its authorization in technology, finds its satisfactions in technology, and takes its orders from technology" (1993:71).

[27] http://www.howtogeek.com/62135/geek-rants-why-the-internet-is-like-the-wild-west/
http://www.thefreemanonline.org/features/the-wild-west-meets-cyberspace/
http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/may/26/internet-controls-cameron-sarkozy?CMP=twt_gu

unsettle these patterns and set the culture in search of new equilibria" (Agre, 2002b:171). This new cyberspace, founded by a community of hackers, gamers and others appropriated it for their own use, "Every segment of the culture will test the reality of the medium in its own way. The constitutive mythologies of the society may retreat, but they will not disappear. The culture runs deeper than any technology, and so do its conflicts" (Agre, 2002b:185). In this way, the 'Wild West' in the early history of the Internet was open to an early group of users who defined it for the rest of us, within their own cultural confines. Technology is not culturally neutral (Escobar, 1995:416), as it also represents the varied interests of designers, developers, investors, *et cetera* and reflects this, as well as the relevant historically contingent elements. Hacker culture in particular, as discussed by Agre 2002b and Pfaffenberger 1998, looked to the Internet as a vast, unexplored world to explore. As others began to explore the Internet and its capabilities, they did so under the practices and organization established by this early internet culture. In the early days of the Internet, some complained it was creating socially imbalanced basement dwelling misfits (Palfrey and Gasser 2008; Tapscott 2009). Or as Franklin writes, "these tools have contributed to a world of technologically induced human isolation," and yet she goes onto further state that the ways in which we use technology today need not be the way we use them in the future (1992:46). In contrast to Franklin, I believe there is a transition from Wild West to tamed frontier in effect. Governments, teachers and researchers have now found that educating users to navigate the World Wide Web from a critical standpoint is of paramount importance; take a look at any Ontario school curriculum from the earliest years upward to see this recent trend. New studies indicate that Internet use correlates with other forms of sociality and other forms of literacy (Kraut et al., 2002 and Ito et al., 2009 in Davidson, 2010:176). In the past we were taught in a linear fashion, based on the

idea that the brain learns by accumulating more and more, stacking new information on top of old (Davidson, 2011:56, Jones-Kavalier and Flanningan, 2006:8). Current neuroscientific research suggests the brain lays down pathways that ebb and flow based on usage (Davidson, 2011:56) – a use it or lose it model. Innovative mainstream educators, who questioned whether children were being taught in a way to prepare them for a vast, decentralized yet interconnected online world (Davidson, 2011:56), are today teaching the new rules of the Internet. Our mainstream education system no longer views it as solely a destructive entity. These educators are teaching students to be critical in their thought processes – to examine the vast quantity of information available on the Internet, to assess what is true and what is bad information, and to work interactively and collaboratively (Davidson, 2010:53). The Internet is more than just an element found within the classroom; it is an investigative tool leading to an in-depth understanding of a subject matter.

As rules are established, I wonder if the Old Colony will make a leap from their wariness of digital technology as an entertainment device to accepting it as a valuable and productive tool with rules; 'I can use it as a tool. I can use it in school to gain information, I can use it in my business, I can use it to connect with people in Mexico but I do not have to go anywhere near the dark side of the Internet'. In this way, the positive elements of the digital world are incorporated by those who choose to use it. The following quotations are from an educator of Mennonite children with varying backgrounds of traditionalism including Old Colony, David Martin and Old Order. This public school is a pioneer of digital technology usage at the point of instruction.

"We use a lot of technology in this building to really make sure they are really supporting our kids so that they achieve the best that they can. "We are a school with a culture that's rich in

heritage and history. And bottom line they are all Mennonite. They are all Anabaptists. And ...we need to make sure are getting the same education as if you go over to Aylmer, to Arthur or Elmira.

"There are lots of families that do have computers. There are lots of families that don't. When parents come in and see what we're doing here they are so supportive of all the technology." *– Annette*

The amount of technology used in that school is astonishing in comparison to other mainstream

public schools. Despite the significant integration of digital technology, it is with the utmost

respect for the traditional Mennonite tradition that the school operates, thereby gaining

absolute trust from the parents,

"I think the reason it's so receptive and engaged in what we're doing is that there is an incredible amount of trust of the people in the building. There is that whole relationship building that comes before we can do what we do. Are the kids here going to be thinking and accessing language the same way as their parents do from either side of their brain in terms of using technology - no, because from the time they step in this building until the time they leave - they are involved in technology."- Annette

"Technology is moving at great speed. And people are aware of it. People are using it for business. You have to have some idea. So that's how it's working for us here. And then the skills that they are learning here - if someone puts an iPhone in their hand or puts a cell phone - when they've finished grade 8 at least they will understand the capabilities of that and know how to use it." – Annette

Mennonite Canopy

For some, the literacy group described above is a way of socializing amongst peers. In

Mexico, the isolated colonies offer social unity or an outlet – a tight knight community of their

own to interact with their peers. In Ontario, paradoxically they live scattered and in isolation

from their peers. Epp writes that in late 19th century rural Manitoba, evening classes were held

for the men to learn English, as they were the ones expected to interact with the mainstreamers

and these classes were not considered appropriate for the women (2008:40). Today, the men

are often too busy working long hours to attend the evening classes while the women attend in

part to stave off social isolation. This was Julie and Margaret's motivation for attending

literacy classes after settling their children in with the early learning group.

"I was with the children for a while – for about 4 months before I went to class. I'm sure I didn't have to go into class but I did so to meet other people." – Margaret

"My sister-in-laws are both here and they always talking about how nice it was to come here and get together out of the house sometime. I guess I went because they were here." – Julie

Margaret also mentioned being on Facebook and connecting with family in Mexico through

social media. Both text regularly as did a number of the ladies I observed in the literacy

classes. For Old Colony Mennonites who grew up in Ontario but maintain family in Mexico

these digital technologies work to extend social networks and spatially shortens the distance

between SWO and Mexico. For those living in isolation from their peers in SWO, literacy

groups and digital technologies provide a non-traditional way to interact and to maintain a

connection that otherwise would be lost. Texting, as an example, is very much embedded

within the Old Colony. It functions to extend social networks both locally and globally.

While, historically, the migratory practices of the Old Colony have existed to maintain a

prescribed separation from the mainstream world, texting between Mexico and SWO blurs the

boundaries and allows for the exchange of ideas across vast distances. In this way, digital

technologies work to facilitate intra-Old Colony contact and communication and possibly are

holding together a "traditional" community and its values, rather than threatening it by opening

communication with the mainstream world.

The Digital World Today

The world today is digital. Different regions maybe more so than others, but it is digital

nonetheless. Cell phones technology is everywhere - even in the poorest countries[28]. Digital technology is increasingly prevalent around the globe. It is likely that it   will become more and more necessary to have the skills to be able to navigate it whether traditional Mennonite, African, Native or something else. In Canada, digital knowledge is increasingly necessary to fill out tax forms, to access government immigration laws, to sign up for classes, to do banking, to find employment, to work at many jobs. Moreover, the digital is getting more and more pervasive. As this happens, employers expect their employees to be able to navigate this world. Research indicated that in the United States, up to 60 percent of jobs available to workers with a high school diploma or less necessitates some proficiency in computer skills (Mossberger et al. 2003:65). These researchers write that digital technology has raised the level of skill requirement including basic literacy in order to read training manuals and mathematical skills to perform relevant tasks and to improve employability (Mossberger et al. 2003:66-67). To compete for the same job as a mainstreamer, a traditional Mennonite needs proficiency in the same basic skills. Some may question whether someone from the Old Colony would be interested in such a job yet employment is increasingly requiring digital skills and at the very least it is requiring basic literacy skills. Similarly, a mother filling out her online child tax benefit forms or a family applying for citizenship will need basic literacy and computer skills to navigate the Internet. Still older traditional Mennonites are known for hiring someone to perform the task they cannot - if they cannot drive, they hire someone to take them to the grocery store, if they cannot use a phone they borrow their neighbors, if they cannot fill out a form they ask a community worker to help them. As the very conservative Old Colony

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[28] http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/2012/07/17/mobile-phone-access-reaches-three-quarters-planets-population - accessed October 21, 2012

members rely on their belief system to remain separate from the world and to pass their faith to the next generation (Quiring, 2003:14), as indicated in Chapter 5, the younger generation is not so sure. Through increased exposure to mainstream society, Old Colony Mennonite youth are beginning to see the correlation between higher education and higher pay. Their parents might be okay with making the minimum wage of a steady Canadian job as compared to uncertainty and poverty in Mexico, but they are not. Additionally, they see that job safety and health education is important. Many realize they cannot get by without education and that they do not want to get by without the advantages afforded by digital technology skills. There is a shift among the Old Colony to complete high school and for the 'trailblazers' to continue with higher education. They want the better life and in many cases, their parents want it for them. Navigating a digital world is part of that better life and part of determining their path and future.

Next Generation

"Max Planck…remarked that 'a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it" (in Kuhn, 1962:150). A generation that grew up with analog as its key foundation of familiarity is replaced by a new generation entrenched in the digital. In an open society, each generation throws off their parent's knowledge structures and carves out their own traditions based on the information available or the systems in play at the time. What once was sufficient for an isolated Old Colony Mennonite society is less so for the technology-influenced society of the 21st Century.

Chapter 7 - Conclusion

"We should learn not only about others but also from them."
(Mary Catherine Bateson in Mead, 2001 ed. xi)

Researching this thesis took me to places I did not expect to go. It took me not just to the countryside, replete with horse and buggies, but to the places the themes extracted from my interviews took me. In examining the digital divide and technology usage among Old Colony Mennonites, I did not anticipate trans-statal migratory patterns, extreme poverty and economic pressures, or education, to weigh so heavily in forming and reforming the research questions. Although views of technology differ, there can be no argument that it seeps into every aspect of society – whether we choose to use it or not.

In keeping with the quotation above, the slow adaptation of digital technologies by Old Colony Mennonites and their desire to understand how it will affect their society before embracing it is a lesson we can all learn. Yet, today, the digital world has surpassed the point of no return and, whether it be economics, education, communication, information exchange or knowledge flows, it is interconnected on a global scale the likes we have not seen before and that has changed the way we perceive our world. Old Colony Mennonites utilize digital technologies to keep in touch with their family in Mexico through texting. They are beginning to see how higher education is necessary for accessing greater employment opportunities. They are starting to navigate the Internet to fill out tax forms, finish homework assignments, and conduct online businesses. While tensions between church leaders, members and users of digital technologies still exist, there is a shift in the community to accept these technologies. While issues of illiteracy, exploitation in the workplace, health and safety concerns and

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housing problems have not been solved, there are tireless outreach workers making headway in that direction. Returning to the research questions, initially I asked,

1. Whether a volitional choice not to engage with digital technologies was creating a new digital divide – not between the have and have-nots but between those who choose to use it and those who choose not to use it or perhaps not a divide at all but a continuum.

2. Historically, the Old Colony's motivations for group migrations have been more about maintaining isolation than about rejecting mainstream technology. Yet, digital technologies blur the lines between boundaries and create tensions within the community while at the same time extending social networks. Will digital technologies break down the walls of separation for the Old Colony in SWO or change them into something else?

3. With respect to their economic outlook in an increasingly digital world, are Old Colony Mennonite disadvantaged in comparison to mainstream?

In contrast to traditional views of the digital divide (including dual and volitional as described above), my research indicates that Old Colony Mennonites navigate the lines between prescribed values and 21st Century requirements in terms of a continuum and they do so on their own terms. Concerning the second research question, digital technology usage within the Old Colony expands and contracts the walls surrounding isolation and separation from mainstream society. Although it allows ideas to flow between groups, it also allows for the shrinking of space locally and globally. It may inevitably lead some to move away from the church but it also may lead some to strengthen their ties. Mennonite contemplation and use shows us technology can be used to varied ends. Finally, the economic outlook for those who choose a path towards increased education and certification will only help the Old Colony to extract itself from a life of poverty and assist them in gaining their desired better life, whatever that may be.

Suggestions for Further Research

Researching this thesis has revealed some interesting questions for further study. When speaking with some of the informants, the frequent use of cell phones by traditional Mennonites was raised several times, more specifically, the texting habits of Old Colony members to family or friends in Mexico. Further to that, Pertierra et.al (2006), in a study of cell phones in Philippine society raise an interesting point. This study, on an oral society much like the Old Colony, finds a high value is placed on face-to-face interaction. He asserts that digital technology may afford a new relationship for oral societies, one in which cell phones expand the oral culture outside spatial boundaries (2002:607). In this way, the pattern of texting is like that of a written conversation (Pertierra, 2002:92) unlike email where there is an expectation of full sentence structure and grammatically correct syntax. The reasons why the Old Colony have gravitated towards texting requires further investigation. It is an interesting line of questioning though and leads into the next issue regarding learning ability. Several of my informants indicated that many Old Colony Mennonite students excel in spatial geometry which points to visualization. At the same time, a number of informants pointed out possible learning disabilities with some in terms of learning to read and write. If a lack of literacy anchors early in life impedes later learning, there is a possibility that digital learning technologies based around the oral language as written conversation could address issues for the slower learners. I believe the capabilities of digital language apps could address these types of learning issues. Finally, my interviews with Julie and Margaret point towards further research potential into gender and technology usage amongst Old Colony Mennonites.

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Appendix A – Mennonite Culture

The Mennonite culture has many different Mennonite denominations. Listed below are the ones referenced within this thesis:

Old Colony Mennonite – Drive any colour vehicle. Typically, they have modernized conveniences excluding television and the Internet. They speak Low German in the home.

David Martin Mennonites – Use Horse & Buggy transportation. Produce their own electricity. Avoid most modern conveniences in their homes (television, radio). Tend to be shop owners. Speak Pennsylvania Dutch.

Old Order Mennonites – Use Horse & Buggy for transportation. Tend to be agriculturally based. Avoid most modern conveniences in their homes (television, radio). Speak Pennsylvania Dutch.

Markham-Waterloo Mennonite Conference – Vehicles are usually black. Tend to have more modernized conveniences in their homes, excluding television, radio and Internet. Speak Pennsylvania Dutch.

Sourced from http://www.ugdsb.on.ca/centrepeel/article.aspx?id=8437 – accessed September 5, 2012