A CRISIS OF MASCULINITY: NORTH AMERICAN MENNONITES AND WORLD WAR I

by

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World War I caused a crisis in the ethics of masculinity for North American Mennonites. It marked their first continent-wide forced contact with militant states involved in a popular mass war. As an internally divided, secluded, pacifist, and primarily German-speaking people, they did not respond effectively. In particular they were not prepared for the challenge the militant masculinity of the American and Canadian states posed to Mennonite men.

As revealed in *The Mennonite*, General Conference Mennonite teachings on the war were consistent with a long term depiction of masculine humility and did not emphasize pacifism. This was part of a larger pattern of ethical failure through the refusal to address substantively the Mennonite war experience. Despite failing to deal with the war, the ethics held by men did not remain static. They responded to the war by developing new concerns for church doctrine and for global relief work, interests that marked a distinct divergence from female contributors who responded to the war by limiting their writings to domestic concerns. The effect of the broader community’s failure was to leave young men without resources to address their own circumstances as the targets of military recruiters and a society that said good men fought in the war.

The damaging impacts of the crisis are reflected in the demographic records of the Mennonite men who were still forming their masculinity at the time of the war. These records reveal earlier deaths, a higher ratio of marriages ended by the wife’s death, and higher levels of exogamy. The most startling is the changed sex ratio among their children,
with a markedly higher ratio of sons to daughters especially for the first born child. The earlier discursive failure in ethics correlated with a long term behavioural failure.

Keywords

Mennonite, World War I, masculinity, nonresistance, gender, sex ratios, pacifism,

General Conference Mennonites, *The Mennonite*, ethics, demography
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INTRODUCTION

On April 23, 1918, Daniel Teuscher wrote home to his parents in Fisher, Illinois, from United States Army Camp Travis, Texas, “I believe that the farther I can get away from the public the better.”¹ He had hoped to come home on agricultural furlough as a World War I Conscientious Objector (C.O.) and was worried about the way people would treat him. He would never find out. In November of that year he died in Fort Leavenworth military prison in Kansas, having been court-martialed only a few months earlier for refusal, as a nonresistant Mennonite, to obey orders.

At the same time as Daniel Teuscher and more than a thousand other “absolutist” Mennonite C.O.s were languishing in prison or military camps, or working on agricultural furlough in the United States, thousands of Old Colony Mennonites were preparing to leave their homes in Manitoba and Saskatchewan. After exploring a number of areas they found the most suitable conditions in northern Mexico. Many of their cousins, the Sommerfelder Mennonites, were also preparing to leave Canada and their destination would be Paraguay in South America.²

What Daniel Teuscher and the Old Colony and Sommerfelder Mennonites had in common was strong opposition to military conscription in World War I. Mass war called

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for the participation of all citizens, and the governments of both the United States and Canada required military participation by young men. Those who believed war was wrong, as these Mennonites did, found themselves unable to fully comply with the demands of their respective governments. While some Mennonites signed up as combatant soldiers, most were restrained by the Mennonite doctrine of nonresistance and its pacifist consequences. Neither the American nor the Canadian governments were comfortable with these positions, despite their historic tolerance of these people. The demands of mass war and the popular support for the war were such that great pressure was put on Mennonites as individuals and communities to comply with government demands.

These demands were unprecedented in North American history. Mennonites had come to the United States and Canada with the expectation that freedom of religion would include freedom from military service. British and then Canadian law had specifically exempted Mennonites, along with Quakers and Tunkers, from militia service. Mennonites coming to Canada in the 1870s had received an Order-in-Council from the federal government exempting them from all future military service. In the United States repeated assurances had been given over the centuries that military service would not be necessary and, until World War I, some type of provision for exemption had almost always been

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3 Mennonites, along with the Brethren, Quakers, and Hutterites, are the historic peace churches. Along with the Hutterites, Mennonites owe their origins to the Protestant “Radical Reformation” of the 1500’s. Mennonites take their name from Menno Simons (ca. 1496-1561), one of the second generation of Anabaptist leaders. Simons was a Dutch Catholic priest who saw the need for leadership in the fledgling Anabaptist movement. A key component to the Anabaptist perspective was the separation of church and state, and the consequent need for Christians to obey God and love their enemies, not kill them.

4 Mennonites of Russian origin were understood to be “exempted” from the act under the provisions of the Order-in-Council and thus not subject to the draft. There was much confusion around whether other Mennonites also were exempted, or instead “excepted” under the non-combatant provisions of the act. The latter was eventually deemed to be the case. Hartzler, Mennonites in the World War, 70-85; Ens, Subjects or Citizens?, 172-173; Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920, 367-386.
provided. But in World War I both countries required universal registration of draft age men and in the United States all Mennonite men of draft age were subject to conscription. While Canadian law officially exempted some Mennonites, this did not necessarily apply to all Mennonites and especially early in the draft a number of Mennonites were conscripted. In both countries, drafted C.O.s were offered the possibility of non-combatant service in one of the military support services such as the quartermaster, engineering, or medical corps.

In both Canada and the United States young Mennonite men were forced to register with their local draft boards. For many this was their first contact with the realm of government, and for many it was their first contact with institutional English existence. While many of the young men appear to have been relatively fluent in English, others had only the barest grasp of the language which meant that for them this was a foray into a world where they were unable to communicate effectively. In the United States they faced a board of formal inquiry where they were required to demonstrate their draft qualifications—letters of membership in Mennonite churches, marital status, number of dependents—and indicate that they were conscientious objectors. Part of the induction process was a health inspection, something that can be humiliating for anyone, but no more than when it is part of an alien process run by hostile strangers.

In many cases in the United States, the Mennonite male was forced to respond to some variant of the question, “What would you do if some brute attacked your mother/wife/sister?” Responses themselves varied from roté repetition of scripture to the

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position that assault of a loved one was less evil that assaulting the perpetrator. Though draft boards did not know it, in forcing these young men to reply to this question they were leading them to articulate a type of masculinity that was both “manly” and “Mennonite”.

This question regarding the defence of women was not the only challenge to Mennonite masculinity. The verbal abuse they received, by the general public on the street, or from officers and soldiers within the training camps, commonly accused them of being cowards, an “unmanly” characteristic. For those drafted, some of their commanding officers saw them as substandard (“bovine”) humans and suggested they should not have been drafted since they were not good enough for that.

Reading the diaries and stories generated by their experiences does not leave the impression that these young men perceived their treatment as an attack on their masculinity. Most seemed intent on downplaying the violence they experienced and none articulated any challenge to their masculinity. However, that does not mean they did not experience such a challenge. The difficulty is in unmasking it. Since they did not apparently verbalize this challenge, their response must be looked for in their behaviour. Since

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7 Melanie Springer Mock, *Writing Peace: The Unheard Voices of Great War Mennonite Objectors* (Telford, PA: Pandora Press US, 2003), 67. Mark May records that the bulk of the religious objections, primarily from Mennonites, was that participation in the war was forbidden by scripture. C.O.s also identified that it was forbidden by church, by Christ, and by commandment. May refused to deal directly with the question, what would you do if? though he identified it as so commonly asked as to be ubiquitous. Mark May, “The Psychological Examination of Conscientious Objectors,” *The American Journal of Psychology* 31 (1920): 152-165.

8 Walter Kellogg, *The Conscientious Objector* (New York: Boni and Liveright, 1919), 44-49. However, May, “The Psychological Examination,” 153, notes that the typical C.O., half of whom were Mennonites, was above average in intelligence.

9 In Mock, *Writing Peace*, none of her subjects include in their biographies any description of direct violence, though in her interviews they did indicate it took place. Nor do any of her subjects report that they felt unmanly. One of her subjects reported that another C.O. burst into laughter when threatened with rape (200).
masculinity can be behaviourally expressed in ways that do not necessarily leave an imprint in the historical record; this creates a significant research challenge.

For draft-age Canadian Mennonites the situation was much different. Their experience of the war was one of waiting to see what would be negotiated between church and government officials, as each side disputed the other's interpretation of the relevant legislation. The worst that happened was that a few Mennonite young men were drafted by zealous draft boards eager to test the scope of the legislation. To date, no material related to the experience of any of these men has become available and assessing their response to their participation in this experience requires a different kind of approach.

While registration and military service were demanded of the young men, the larger Mennonite communities in both countries came under great pressure to support the war in other ways. War bond drives pointedly included Mennonite communities. In order to obtain compliance verbal abuse was common as some enthusiastically patriotic citizens sought to “encourage” the Mennonites to do their national duty. In some communities there was violence as particularly ardent patriots took out their anger on Mennonite individuals or their buildings. The anger against Mennonites for their perceived and actual recalcitrance could be extreme and while no one was killed, in Michigan a church was burned and two more went up in flames in Oklahoma. In Oklahoma a Mennonite college was also torched. In many locations in the United States Mennonite ministers and community leaders were threatened with violence, tarred and feathered, or otherwise

10 Hartzler, Mennonites in the World War, 150; Juhnke, Vision, Doctrine, War, 221-228; Homan, American Mennonites and the Great War, 81-98; Ens, Subjects or Citizens? 183-185.
harassed.\textsuperscript{13} In Kansas laws were passed against the speaking of German.\textsuperscript{14} A number of ministers were harassed, and two were put on trial for sedition.\textsuperscript{15} In Canada violence was not typically as extreme and no churches were burned. However, laws were passed against the use of German language in schools in Manitoba and nationally Mennonite men were stripped of their franchise.\textsuperscript{16}

All over the United States and Canada the Mennonite communities went into shock. They were not prepared for this experience. In the United States the Wilson government had promised to keep the nation out of the war. In Canada the Borden government had promised no conscription. In both countries Mennonites had existed as widely tolerated, even respected, dissident minorities. Until 1917 they had looked upon the war from a distance, hardly aware of it except for the rise in grain prices. Of far more concern to them, and at the point of crisis working against them, had been the myriad divisions among and between Mennonite groups. It was a time of internal conflict. They were unable to work together, let alone to effectively reach out to other religious groups such as Quakers who were also experiencing the same conflict between their beliefs and the demands of the state. When the call to arms was issued by their governments they did not know what to do.\textsuperscript{17}

It was in the midst of this state of shock and confusion that Daniel Teuscher submitted to his draft call in early 1918. In doing so he was carrying out the one thing

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Homan, \textit{American Mennonites and the Great War}, 63-64.
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almost all Mennonites in the United States and Canada agreed upon. The church leadership told Daniel to meekly comply with the directives of the government, but not to engage in actions that would lead to the deaths of others. Complying with registration and draft, they told him, was what it meant to be a Mennonite C.O. This he did, and thus he died, doing his best to live between the competing demands of church and country.

At the heart of this struggle was a core Mennonite belief. From the earliest origins of the Mennonite movement in the 1500s it had been a conviction that killing was something Christians did not do. This was a conviction Mennonites had in large measure managed to maintain, though it had led to the development of a martyr and migratory tradition as local authorities reacted antagonistically to this dissident Christian perspective. Next to the Bible the most common book in Mennonite homes was The Martyr's Mirror, a collection of stories of those who died for their Christian faith, many of them Mennonites. They had also moved from country to country and continent to continent seeking refuge from states that required Mennonite participation in violent institutions. This struggle was also a conflict of masculinities. Most human killing takes place in wars and, as Michael Kimmel has put it most eloquently, all wars are meditations on masculinity. Traditionally men have gone to war against other men for goals determined

19 Historically, most Christians have found military service consistent with Christian belief. See “War, Christian Attitude to,” The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, editor F.L. Cross (London: Oxford University Press, 1974), 1459-1460.
21 Mennonites originated in Switzerland, South Germany, France, and the Netherlands in the 1500’s. Persecution led to their migration from those countries to Germany, Russia, the English colonies, the United States, and Canada. See C.J. Dyck, editor, An Introduction to Mennonite History (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967), 145-160.
by men. By opposing killing Mennonites articulated a counter-masculinity, one which
denied the legitimacy of male violence. Since the invention of mass war it has been a
masculinity in conflict with the hegemonic masculinity of the state.\textsuperscript{23} Every time the nation
has gone to war in the last two centuries Mennonites have faced the problem that their
definition of what it means to be a man is in conflict with the world around them. This was
especially true in the twentieth-century when rural isolation no longer protected most
Mennonites from the state.

Despite the on-going conflict between militaristic and Mennonite masculinities,
there has been no sustained Mennonite attention to this conflict over the centuries.
Tolerated by the state and choosing primarily to live in rural isolation, until World War I
Mennonites ignored the conflict. The result was that when young Mennonite men
registered and then were drafted, their families, congregations, or church institutions did
not fully understand what they were going through or what they needed. Instead of
perceiving and dealing with the psychological and ethical needs of these young men, the
Mennonite world seemed embarrassed by their experiences. Daniel Teuscher may have
died a martyr's death, but it was a performance the church was not prepared or able to
identify as manly. It forgot him, just as it tried to ignore the others who died or were
incarcerated, or, for that matter, those who elected to serve their country in combatant or
non-combatant roles.\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{23}Stefan Dudink and Karen Hagemann, “Masculinity in politics and war in the age of democratic revolutions,
1750-1850,” \textit{Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History}, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen
Hagemann and John Tosh. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004, 3-21; John Horne,
“Masculinity in politics and war in the age of nation-states and world wars, 1850-1950,” \textit{Masculinities in
Politics and War: Gendering Modern History}, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh

\textsuperscript{24}Examining \textit{The Mennonite} during the war and after found almost no attention to the experience of these
young men.
Unfortunately for Mennonites, the lack of support for these young men left them vulnerable to a dilemma of masculinities. On the one hand, their traditional masculinity was one of submission and suffering through nonresistance in the name of God. On the other hand, the state called for a violent masculinity directed to the protection of women and children (and motherland and democracy). One question, asked repeatedly, starkly revealed the conflict between these masculinities. This question was, what would you do if some brute attacked your mother or sister? Mennonite men could expect to face this question on the street, at the enlistment centre, and in the military camps.

The intent of this question was to place the pacifist in a dilemma. Either he agreed to an act of barbarity or he renounced his pacifist convictions. John Howard Yoder has effectively deconstructed this question philosophically. As he shows, the assumptions within this question are dubious at best and it is relatively easy to debunk if one is alert to these assumptions. However, in his analysis Yoder passes over almost without notice the challenge the question poses to the masculinity of the men of whom it is asked. How they answered was a question of their gender identity as much as their pacifism. At its heart, this question asked, are you the type of man who allows the innocent to suffer or are you the type of man who is prepared to sacrifice yourself to protect the innocent? It was an emotional appeal to one of the fundamentals of masculine existence, how will you take care of those who need your manliness?

The failure of North American Mennonites to understand this dilemma and provide the resources to meet it was a discursive failure. As this dissertation will demonstrate, Mennonites failed to grasp what they were facing and to articulate adequate

responses. They did not see the depth of the tension between their world and a North
America caught in the grip of mass war. They did not see how their gender experience was
both similar to and different from the surrounding culture, and especially they did not see
how their young men might be caught in a devastating dilemma, unable to conform to
either masculinity.

Daniel Teuscher died in military prison. As an American Mennonite this may have
been the easy way out. In the long term the men who felt the demands of the American
state would have to live with the consequences of being caught between the masculinity of
church and the masculinity of state. This was especially true for those who were younger at
the time of the registration or draft and still in the process of finding their way to adult
masculinity. For these younger men the impact, as revealed by genealogical records, would
shorten their lives, lead to troubled marriages, and produce a masculinity demonstrated
through the births of sons, even at the expense of the lives of their daughters.

The Canadian experience was different. There the state generally kept Mennonites
out of the war, either through agricultural deferments or through direct exemption from
the draft. Despite this, requiring their men to register for the draft was one of the last
straws for the Old Colony Mennonites in their weakening relationship with Canada. They
began looking for a new place in which to live where they would not face this dilemma. For
most of these Mennonites the future would be in a different land where they would
maintain their isolation and not need to send their men into the maw of the military. Their
young men would develop into adults within the framework of a community that drew
strict lines against a world gone mad with militarism.26

26 Frank H Epp, Mennonites in Canada: A People's Struggle for Survival, 1920-1940 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1982),
94-129.
The crisis of World War I was a case of a theologically determined masculinity confronting the hegemonic masculinity of two states committed to mass war. In the American case the church failed to provide the resources to allow young men to successfully negotiate their way between the two. In the Canadian case the church responded to a weaker set of demands through a strategy of opposition. In the former case, the failure led to serious long-term changes in the behaviour of those men most affected. In the United States Mennonite pacifist masculinity under the pressure of World War I was unable to provide a positive way forward for the young men most affected. It was the failure of a religious discourse that avoided one violence but did not prevent another. The verbalized ethics of Mennonite masculinity were not capable of responding effectively to the challenge of the war, especially as it was experienced by young Mennonite men.

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27 Preliminary research into the Sommerfelder Church records indicates there may have been a somewhat similar destructive impact among their young men. That this occurred among the more isolated Canadian Mennonites of Western Canada indicates the powerful impact of the war on both sides of the border, even though Canadian government policies were more liberal to conscientious objectors than were the American policies.
1. APPROACH

The crisis of Mennonite masculinity due to World War I arose at the intersection of the traditional Mennonite belief in nonresistance, the nature of the conscription experience, existing Mennonite patterns of masculinity, and the character of Mennonite discourse. As this collection of religious beliefs, historical circumstances, cultural patterns, and language interacted, the conditions were created for a crisis in masculinity, a crisis that, though hidden at the time, is visible under analysis in the discourse of the community as a whole and in the subsequent behaviour of the men most affected by it. Studying this crisis opens a window into the strengths and weaknesses of Mennonite beliefs and masculinity in the first part of the twentieth-century. It also provides a window into the complex world of religious ethics as it reveals how beliefs and actions interact in real world circumstances. It has the potential to demonstrate how masculinities in general change in response to historic circumstances. In its depths as a human tragedy it can illustrate how human beings struggle with the powerful forces of history and put their own mark on their circumstances.

That the crisis of masculinity arose at the intersection of a collection of interacting forces and events means that its exploration must cross many disciplinary boundaries. Religious history, theology, social history, biblical analysis, historical demography, discourse analysis, masculinity studies, ethnography, religious ethics, and developmental psychology are all relevant to the study of this complex situation. Studies with such a broad range of disciplinary components have inherent weaknesses and strengths. The primary weakness is that in as much as many disciplines are relevant, only a few can be developed to the level needed by the researcher. Decisions regarding approach will select from the researcher's...
own strengths, necessarily glossing over other approaches and subsequently losing the insights other approaches would provide. However, if the researcher has selected the correct tools, such studies produce the ground for new insights into the human condition, insights that can give rise to a wide range of future studies. At their best interdisciplinary studies open the way to the development of completely new methods of study and definitions of human experience. In some cases the urgency of the issue is such that even with the weaknesses clearly revealed, the importance of the knowledge gained makes the study worthwhile. In this case the importance of the knowledge, affecting as it does the lives of existing Mennonites and their communities and kin, makes the risk worthwhile.

This study begins by exploring the context of the crisis Mennonites faced during the war. It examines those aspects of Mennonite identity and existence that clashed with the American and Canadian states over the issue of conscription. As part of that initial work it will outline the sources and methods to be used in the dissertation as a whole. Then it will proceed in subsequent chapters to explore the discourse of the early twentieth-century, English-speaking, General Conference Mennonites through their official organ, The Mennonite. Finally it will examine one group of young men who faced the crisis of the war and changed as a result, changes visible in the historical demographic record. These young men from the Western American Mennonite communities bring to fruition the latent tragedy found through the discourse analysis as it explores themes of military action and masculinity. Throughout this process one set of theological ethical tools developed by the English Christian theological ethicist, Samuel Wells, will be used to guide what each stage of analysis uncovers.¹ In addition, as William Schweiker indicates, religious ethics has

as its goal, “to aid in the articulation and reconstruction of religious outlooks in order that they might serve their own most humane expression.” Since this study is, if it is any one thing, a study in historical, theological ethics of gender, it will conclude by exploring how Mennonites might learn from this set of historical events as they move into their future.

While the story of North American Mennonites and World War I has been told a number of times, to date no one has explored the question of masculinity and theology found in this collision between Mennonite existence and militaristic North American culture. Existing work simply assumes the masculinity of the participants without exploring it. Gender has been a component of analyses of Mennonites and World War II. A number of articles have explored the women’s side of this experience, and Marlene Epp has done some work on male C.O.s.

In seeking to explore this question, there is a substantial body of material available for research including archival collections, microfilmed records of popular press from the period, and a substantial genealogical data-base. Mennonite men journaled during the war and some of these journals have been printed. The Schowalter Oral History Project has developed a significant repository of interviews with veterans of both world wars. Specific

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5 In 1980 there were tapes and transcripts from interviews with 300 World War I C.O.s and veterans. Keith L. Sprunger and James C. Juhnke, “Mennonite Oral History,” *Mennonite Quarterly Review* 54 (1980): 244-247. These interviews do not explicitly explore questions of masculinity.
archival collections include letters and other documents from leaders and institutions during the wars. While a small body of literature has grown up around these sources, primarily exploring those men who refused to go to war, none of it has explored the question of masculinity. No one has attempted to answer the question, what did the church tell the young men to help them resist the war as “manly” men? Nor has the question been asked, how did the Mennonite churches resist the hegemonic, militant masculinities promulgated by the American and Canadian cultures?

The closest anyone has come to this question is Brenda Martin Hurst in her recent doctoral dissertation, “The Articulation of Mennonite Beliefs About Sexuality, 1890-1930.” Hurst explores the discourse on human sexuality in the Old Mennonite tradition. In her work she found a new type of gendering being promoted by the Mennonite leadership, a gendering that emphasized the separate spheres notion of masculinity and femininity. However, unlike early twentieth-century separate spheres thinking which placed women on a moral pedestal, in this case they were separate spheres within a God-ordained framework that required male moral domination over women. Hurst failed to find any impact of World War I on this perspective, though the men who went to war were not the focus of her study. However, she does note that those men who went to war found their elders who supported the separate spheres notion of gender to be out of touch with reality. While this may have meant that the immersion of the young men in the military

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8 Hurst, “Articulation,” 190-195.
environment exposed them to alternative forms of masculinity, Hurst's study did not explore the precise nature of such gendering or how the war or Mennonite peace beliefs might have had an impact on gender.

Mennonites are not the only ones with an interest in this question. Exploring the relationship of peace and masculinity is significant to broader society because not only is the face of war male, but in a world where men and women are developing new forms of relationship, and where war has become so destructive as to defy imagination, finding and dealing with the masculine attraction to (military) violence is essential if the human race is to find a way toward peace. Frances Early's *A World Without War* is the leading study of this issue with regard to World War I. Early explores the feminist and socialist pacifist resistance to the war and conscription in the United States. While the majority of the book is about the feminist resistance, she is clear that the war was construed in terms of masculinity and that bringing alternative masculinities to bear on war is an essential aspect of socialist response.\(^9\)

While not unique in their struggle to articulate and maintain a pacifistic masculinity, the Mennonite ability as a people to maintain a type of anti-war perspective over the centuries speaks of the possibility that they can articulate a masculinity that keeps at least some men out of war.\(^10\) Since young men are especially vulnerable to the negative consequences of heroic propaganda, discursive strategies need to be developed that support them as men in a world that needs their commitment to peace. We need to understand how masculinity can be portrayed in a way that reduces the attractiveness of

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10 Mennonites are included with the Quakers, Tunker/Brethren, and Hutterites as the historic peace churches. Each of these Christian ecclesial communities has centuries of experience resisting war participation.
heroic violence, and how to construct masculinities that can resist hegemonic calls to violence.

The question also touches on the nature of the family. Violent masculinities may foster violence in families. Since war encourages a violent masculinity it may be that Mennonite peace teachings lead to more sensitive or egalitarian relationships between men and women in Mennonite homes. There are those who suspect this may be the case.11 On the other hand, there are those who suspect the Mennonite doctrine of nonresistance, the source of peace teachings, leads to an outwardly repressed masculinity that seethes in violence toward others, especially women, or that it leads women to tolerate violent male partners.12 By exploring the point where this doctrine most powerfully confronts the hegemonic masculinity promulgated by the militaristic American state it should be possible to determine which of these two options, if either, best describes one historic way of being a male in family life.

This study also helps to fill a gap in existing religious studies' scholarship. Religion as a category identifies one of the most powerful experiences in human existence and is a primary marker of human communities. How masculinity is constructed in religious terms tells us much about the way human beings order existence in terms of the perceived


ultimates of human existence. This is an important area of research because gendering is one of the more contentious aspects of religious world construction. However, Randi Warne notes there has been a general lack of studies that explore the interface of gender and religion. Virginia Brereton and Margaret Berdroth indicate that the twentieth-century is a period particularly lacking in such analysis. To my knowledge there are currently no historical or contemporary studies that explore masculinity as a specific communal religious phenomenon. This study begins to explore how one religious community responded to a crisis in masculinity and therefore opens a window into the way religions introduce, reinforce, and change their construction of masculinity under pressure.

1.1 Context

The context of the Mennonite crisis in masculinity at the time of World War I is complex. However, the context can be reduced to three primary constructs, Mennonite beliefs about violence, the way the crisis unfolded historically through the interaction of the various parties, and the cultural pattern of Mennonite masculinity. While these are not the only contextual factors that could be examined, these three and their interaction were

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13 One theologian who has carefully developed this position is Gordon Kaufman. Gordon Kaufman, “Transcendence Without Mythology,” in God the Problem (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972), 41-71. While Kaufman is not specifically concerned with masculinity, he is concerned with how human experiences frame the language through which the concept of God is expressed. More directly concerned with the way gender relations frame theology is Rosemary Radford Ruether, Sexism and God-Talk: Toward a Feminist Theology (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983), especially pages 47-71.


16 In so doing I hope I have been sufficiently responsive to the critique of gender studies in religion raised by Darlene Juschka. I have no intention of trying to make statements about the meaning of gender nor of suggesting the categories are other than social constructions. Nor am I trying to imply that human biology is fundamental to the category of masculinity. In fact this dissertation is based on the assumption that radical changes can and should be made in the way humans do gender in order to address the power imbalance between men and women in Western culture. Darlene Juschka, “The Category of Gender in the Study of Religion,” Method and Theory in the Study of Religion 11 (1999): 77-105.
central to the drama. Understanding them is essential in order to make sense of the crisis as it appears in the discursive and demographic sources examined.

**Nonresistance**

In opposing participation in the war, Mennonites at the beginning of the twentieth century were living out a set of religious convictions they had held for almost 400 years. From the very first gathering of their radically dissident Anabaptist forbears in Zürich, Switzerland in the 1520s, Mennonites had opposed participation in the state's military campaigns and administrative violence. Michael Sattler (? – 1527), a former Catholic priest and Swiss Anabaptist leader, wrote in 1526 to Martin Bucer and Wolfgang Capito, leading Protestant Reformers in Strasbourg, “Christians are fully yielded and have placed their trust in their Father in heaven without any outward or worldly arms.”17 A year later Sattler wrote:

We have been united as follows concerning the sword. The sword is an ordering of God outside the perfection of Christ. It punishes and kills the wicked, and guards and protects the good. In the law the sword is established over the wicked for punishment and for death, and the secular rulers are established to wield the same.18

These radicals held that there was an ontological difference between Christians and non-Christians. They argued that non-Christians were permitted by God to engage in violence (the sword) in order to maintain civil order. However, for Christians the rule was that of nonresistance (sometimes identified as “yieldedness”) in response to evil actions by those outside the church. Within the church, discipline was limited to admonition and banning.

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18 Yoder, *Legacy*, 39. Anabaptist was the name given to this group by its Catholic and Protestant opponents. Anabaptist means re-baptizer and was a capital offence under Catholic Canon law.
What protection these radicals needed from criminals or violent people would be provided by the civil state in the exercise of its legitimate divine order.  

In making this argument these radicals carefully distinguished between the worldly order and the Christian order. Each of these realms of human activity had its own legitimate actions and every human being belonged either to one or to the other. Those within the order of the world, non-Christians as defined by the radicals, were free to use violence on each other and were even to be commended for doing so when the goal was to produce a condition of civil peace. However, for those within the Christian realm violence was not acceptable under any circumstances. Their lot was suffering in situations of violence, their only recourse being appeals to the state to behave as God required either to stop injuring Christians or to police the civil state more effectively.  

This argument of the legitimacy of civil violence while forbidding Christian violence is complex and confusing, but one that is fundamental to the following 400 years of Anabaptist and then Mennonite history. As this movement spread through Europe, and then to the New World, Mennonites would consistently seek guarantees from the state or local authorities that they would not be required to participate in armed service. As a corollary, they would avoid participation in civil government, including not voting in elections.

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20 Church history through the middle of the 20th Century often located Hutterites as a subset of Mennonites. One scholar who lumps both together is C. Henry Smith, *The Coming of the Russian Mennonites* (Berne, IN: Mennonite Book Concern, 1927).
Technically, Mennonites did not hold to a pacifist position. They were not inherently opposed to war or violence, though many Mennonite individuals were indeed opposed and often passionately so. Mennonites could be quite glad that the civil authorities were engaging in police actions or carrying out military actions against threatening invasions, whether against the Turks in Asia or the Bolivians in Paraguay. Similarly, Mennonites were not technically conscientious objectors. They did not object to military participation as an act of individual or collective conscience regarding the immorality of war; they objected because they understood God had commanded them not to undertake any action of violence.

The result of this complexity has been that Mennonite communities in different locales have drawn the line of nonresistance in very different places depending on local interpretation and historical circumstance. Typically the most hard-line nonresisters kept on the move, from the Netherlands to Germany and then Russia and finally to Canada as government policies shifted or wars raged. Or they traveled from Switzerland, France, Netherlands and Germany to the United States and Canada. However, as Mennonites wandered and suffered, there were many variations in perspective. While often nonresistance was a reason to uproot and move, it could also be the basis for a compromise such as alternative civil service during times of war. In a few cases the lines were drawn further along the spectrum at non-combatant service in the wars of the state.


In some cases it was a hope rather than a reality, as Mennonites were forcibly impressed into military service. At rare times the church endorsed combatant military service for its male members.  

**The Conscription Crisis**

When war came in 1914 the general response of the Mennonites of North America was to pray to be kept out of it. Initially this appeared to be a possibility. In Canada the Conservative government of Robert Borden did not intend to conscript soldiers, despite Great Britain’s request. The popularity of the war made the need irrelevant as thousands of young Canadian men volunteered, primarily men of British birth or descent. Mennonites were happy to stay on their farms as their neighbours marched off to war. In the United States, President Woodrow Wilson committed himself to keeping his country out of the conflict. For the Mennonites there, all was well. In many cases the war was an improvement as the prices of agricultural products rose due to war demand and Mennonites on both sides of the border prospered. While a few Mennonite voices spoke against the war, there was no concerted or organized action to resist involvement. Mennonites stayed on their farms and discussed the pros and cons of the various factions from a distance. When first Canada, and then the United States, were caught up in a new kind of war that made new types of demands on nations, it appeared at first to be passing the Mennonites by. It was a war observed. Their prayers were being answered.

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23 J.S. Hartzler states that this was common in the 1800s in Western Europe and particularly true in Germany. Hartzler, *Mennonites in the World War*, 23-37. On the Western European situation see also, Loewen, “A House Divided”, 128-129. There is also the famous case of the armed Russian self-defense corps set up by Mennonites during the chaos of 1918-1919; *Mennonite History*, edited by C.J. Dyck (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1967), 140-141. World War II German SS officer, Siegfried Bartel, tells that in Germany his local Mennonite church fully endorsed the Nazi military program and willingly sent its young men off to war. Personal conversation, October 1991.
This relative quiet came to an end in 1916. In that year the United States began preparations to enter the war in Europe. Then in 1917, under tremendous popular and international pressure, it entered the war on the side of Britain, France and Russia. Very shortly after the U.S. entered the war it demanded the registration of all draft-age males, and subsequently began to conscript soldiers. In Canada the popular demand for more participation from Canadian men who had not volunteered, as well as Great Britain’s demand for still more soldiers for the battlefields of Europe, led to increasing pressure on the government to implement conscription. In 1916 the government of Canada required the registration of draft-age males, and the following year it introduced conscription. The crisis had come.

The Mennonite response in both countries was chaotic. Individual leaders from communities through-out North America made their treks to Ottawa and Washington to make pleas for their groups. In some cases they worked together. More often they made separate pleas on behalf of their specific community. They also made differing demands and differed in their suggestions for government strategies. Officials in both capitols found this response confusing. Given popular sentiment, they also found it hard to cooperate with these pleas. Regardless, in both countries provisions were made for conscientious objection. In Canada additional exemption was given to Mennonites in keeping with the 1873 Order in Council and the old Militia Act, though there was confusion regarding exactly to which Mennonites this exemption applied. In both governments there was a general lack of sympathy for the Mennonites, a lack of sympathy that was stimulated by the popular reaction against these people who were not prepared to join the crusade for Motherland and Democracy. Public sentiment, which had been hostile already due to their existence as mostly German-speaking minorities in countries at war with or antagonistic to
Germany, revolted at the prospect of draft exemption. In Canada this led to legislation stripping exempted Mennonites of their right to vote. In the United States it left the government unwilling to provide the agricultural deferments for drafted conscientious objectors.24

Adding to their difficulties was the inability of Mennonites to work with other like minded groups. While a few voices within the Mennonite communities, such as that of Silas Grubb, editor of The Mennonite during the war years, called for more cooperation with other groups such as the Quakers and Brethren who faced similar struggles, these voices were the exception rather than the rule.25 For the most part Mennonites found it difficult to work with each other, let alone with the larger community of religious objectors. The happenstance of history that had torn these groups of common origin apart found them faced with innumerable minor ethnic and religious differences that obstructed their ability to work together, let alone reach across their own ethno-religious boundaries to others. It would be the painful lessons of this war that would later lead to the creation of the Mennonite Central Committee and enable a unified voice in response to World War II, as well as a framework for cooperating with other peace churches. But as the First World War

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24 A number of historians have examined Mennonite experience and behaviour during the war. With regard to initial Mennonite and government response see, Hartzler, Mennonites in the World War, 49-84; Epp, Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920, 365-386; Juhnke, Vision, Doctrine, War, 209-214; Homan, American Mennonites and the Great War, 44-56; Adolf Ens, Subjects or Citizens? The Mennonite Experience in Canada, 1870-1925 (Ottawa: University of Ottawa Press, 1994), 173-175.

entered forcibly into their communities they were fractured, cut off from each other and from the broader world of Christian opposition to the war.  

Each Mennonite group was forced to develop its own response to the war. Especially they were forced to develop a plan for their young men, first in response to registration, and then in response to the draft. They also needed to determine where they stood with regard to war bond drives, Red Cross drives, and the problem of young men who enlisted and desired to remain part of their communities. Mennonites had not prepared themselves well for this in the early years of the war and, as the war proceeded and they faced registration and conscription, they did not have effective and well developed positions or resources to fall back on.

In the United States Mennonite membership only entitled a young man to conscientious objector status and non-combatant military service. While in many cases their status as agricultural workers would ensure they were not given a high draft rating,

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26 Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War*, 45-56; Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1789-1920*, 368-377. In the United States and Canada Mennonites were divided into a diverse collection of semi and fully autonomous denominations. These collections were divided by ethno-historical factors more than theology, though there were often minor theological differences. For example Mennonites with a French origin would have experienced slightly different historical circumstances from those of nearby German or Swiss regions of Europe, have arrived at a slightly different time in the North American cultural drama, and then come under the influence of its own unique combination of individuals and economic circumstances all leading to a host of minor differences that kept the group apart from neighbouring Mennonites. The rare exceptions to this pattern of immigration and fragmentation were the General Conference Mennonites and the Old Mennonites. The General Conference arose out of the perceived need for a more integrationist approach to the North American cultural milieu, an approach a number of otherwise different immigrant communities found highly attractive. They were originally a collection of Swiss and South German Mennonites who were joined in the 1870's by thousands of Prussian and Russian Mennonites. The Old Mennonites came together to more effectively resist integration into North America. Larger than the General Conference, they consisted of Swiss, South German, and French Mennonites, especially many from the Amish-Mennonite grouping. Some of the other significant groupings of Mennonites were the Mennonite Brethren in Christ, the Mennonite Brethren, the Old Colony Mennonites and the Sommerfelder Mennonites. Because of their differences these groups were often highly suspicious of one another and sometimes even highly antagonistic toward one another. The divisions between the Mennonite Brethren and the General Conference and between the General Conference and the Old Mennonite were especially antagonistic. Couples who married across these boundaries were typically excommunicated by at least one of the source denominations. Dyck, *Mennonite History*, 145-162, 225-238.
there was no guarantee of this. Ratings were the prerogative of the local draft board and
some were extremely hostile to Mennonites. Hutterites, a Mennonite-related group in
South Dakota, came in for particular abuse and were often given a high draft rating despite
being agricultural workers who were married with children, criteria which would otherwise
have left them with a low draft status. 27 Often the boards would subject the Mennonites to
extended inquiry, especially with regard to the sincerity of their convictions and in a
number of instances resorting to practices of deception and entrapment. It could take
significant perspicuity for the young agricultural worker, just in from the farm and
sometimes barely fluent in English, to understand what the draft board was implying by
some of its questions. 28

Even if the local draft board found the young man to be sincere, he could still be
drafted relatively quickly. 29 Conscientious objector (C.O.) status did not free one from the
draft, it only meant that once drafted the C.O. was entitled to participate in the war in non-
combatant roles such as medical, quartermaster, or engineering corps. C.O.s showing up at
training camp were still required to go through all the standard military initiation tests,
participate in drill and training, and otherwise act like standard recruits. Once they had had
their papers processed, something that could take weeks, they would be assigned to a non-
combatant battalion and receive the appropriate training. Before and once assigned C.O.

27 Among these were the notable case of the Hofer brothers, Michael and Joseph, who were drafted despite
being agricultural workers and married with children. Their subsequent internment and torture in Alcatraz
and Fort Leavenworth where they died is one of the darker blotches on the American domestic war
record. This targeting led to the decision by the Hutterite communities to leave the United States and
most emigrated to Canada toward the end of the war. John Herd Thompson, Harvests of War: The Prairie
West, 1914-1918 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1978), 82, notes that they were welcomed in Alberta
despite their nonresistant stance.

28 For examinations of this process, Homan, American Mennonites and the Great War, 99-134; and Juhnke,
Vision, Doctrine, War, 229-241.

29 A few evaded the draft by fleeing to Canada. Homan, American Mennonites and the Great War, 183; and
Teichroew, “World War I and the Mennonite Migration.”
status they would regularly be subjected to pressure to join the regular forces and abandon
their non-combatant role. While awaiting processing the young inductee was usually
housed with the regular troops and subject to a wide range of harassment depending on the
awareness and perspective of the other troops and their commanding officers.\(^{30}\)

Once assigned to a non-combatant battalion, the situation did not necessarily
improve. For many Mennonite young men participation as a non-combatant violated their
understanding of Mennonite nonresistance. Some refused to train. Some refused to wear
the uniform. Others refused to accept orders from officers. Some refused to assist in work
around the camp. While they had the formal right to respectful treatment despite this
behaviour, as both Mennonites and military administration knew, this right was often
overlooked, especially in the early part of their stay in the training camp. The absolute
C.O.s, as those who resisted non-combatant military participation came to be known,
could be the victims of harassment ranging from verbal abuse to violent treatment,
beatings, and mock hangings and firing squads. One-hundred twenty Mennonites were
court-martialed and imprisoned at Fort Leavenworth prison in Kansas, where six died.\(^{31}\)
While the deaths were probably due to the flu epidemic, poor conditions, occasional
mistreatment, and depression were almost certainly contributing factors.\(^{32}\)

In Canada, Mennonite membership, once accepted, generally led to either
exception or exemption from the draft, exemption due to status as a Mennonite under the
Privy Council directive of 1873, or exception as an agricultural worker. The latter was


Mennonites and the Great War*, 135-168.

\(^{32}\) Homan, *American Mennonites and the Great War*, 155-156. This death rate seems very high if only due to the
flu and there are no indications in the California Mennonite Historical Society’s GRANDMA 4.1 data-
base of a similar ratio of deaths among their peers.
particularly important in Ontario where the Privy Council directive was commonly interpreted as not applying to Mennonites due to their arrival before the directive.\textsuperscript{33} However, avoiding military service was not a given in either case. Many young men were not baptized at the time of their registration and, while attendance at a Mennonite church since birth was generally accepted in lieu, not all draft boards were equally lenient on this count. Especially in 1917 draft boards sometimes overstepped their boundaries and drafted Mennonites regardless of their right to exemption.\textsuperscript{34} In some cases they questioned the young men to see if their convictions were genuine and usually encouraged the young men to “do their part” for Canada and enlist. For young men operating outside their first language this could be a frightening process, even though they were relatively protected.

While the young men in the camps suffered, they were not alone. Harassment was common wherever Mennonites interacted with the general populace in Canada and the United States. Verbal abuse was common and all Mennonites could expect to receive some of it. This was especially true in Canada where returned veterans were highly antagonistic. Pressure was put on Mennonite communities to support war bond drives and Red Cross fund drives. In some Mennonite communities support for both of these was relatively generous. In others there was a sense of coercion and subsequent resistance leading to more direct harassment. In the United States harassment was more localized and could include the tarring and feathering of significant Mennonite figures. It was common for

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[\textsuperscript{33}] Before the twentieth-century the Militia Act had always excepted Mennonites and some other pacifist religious groups. However the Conscription Act did not directly make reference to this set of exceptions. A. F. Wilson, \textit{Memorandum of laws affecting the members of the Mennonite Religious Society and military service in Canada} (Richmond Hill, Ont.: s.n., ca. 1917). Epp, \textit{Mennonites in Canada}, 1786-1920, 93-108, 368-381; Ens, \textit{Subjects or Citizens?} 172.
\item[\textsuperscript{34}] As John Thompson notes, in Canada on more than one occasion a draft board decision ended up being appealed to court with the draft board decision being overturned. Thompson, \textit{Harvests of War}, 81.
\end{itemize}
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Mennonites employed in towns to lose their jobs, though the shortage of farm workers rarely made this a financial problem.\textsuperscript{35}

Throughout this harassment Mennonites continued to look to their governments to provide relief. Their hope continued to be that if Mennonites demonstrated their loyalty to the country and remained silent about their suffering the authorities would recognize the legitimacy of their claims, end the harassment, and release the young men from the camps and let them go back to their farming. It was relief that did not come until after the war was over, and then grudgingly.

\textbf{Traditional Masculinity Tested}

One of the central points of the harassment was the question of masculinity. In popular terms, Mennonite men were not good males. They were cowards, unmanly, and lacking in the basic sense of national honour all good men held. They were repeatedly and pointedly put on the spot and required to justify their manliness in a world where the national perspective was that all good men signed up for war, or at least went to war when called. This was the ordinary understanding of masculinity, one reinforced by propaganda and institutional processes.

In questioning Mennonite masculinity, the nations were building on one of the most common features of military violence: it is a male activity. While women have contributed to and supported wars, and more recently become soldiers, historically the face of large-scale organized violence has been of a male between the ages of fifteen and forty-five. Not all men have fought in wars. Typically the male who has gone to war has been in the minority. Even in the mass wars of the last two centuries most men have stayed home

due to age, occupation, or fitness. However, despite their freedom from the demands of war, often these men, too, have been vocal war supporters. In the twentieth-century this masculinity was augmented by mass war's demand for large numbers of relatively willing recruits. The governments of the warring nations needed to foster a masculinity that embraced killing and death on behalf of the state. This they did with all the abilities made available by the recent science of psychology and a new understanding of propaganda.

Since the countries involved in World War I almost universally claimed to be Christian, this masculinity was articulated as a Christian one. As Nancy Bristow and Allan Frantzen make clear, a moral ideal of heroic Christian military engagement was the root of the male call to war. Images of pure, self-denying service to the state or democracy in the name of God were widely used and very much a part of public consciousness.

President Wilson’s address to his troops in 1917 illustrates the extent of this imagery.

The eyes of all the world will be upon you, because you are in some special sense the soldiers of freedom. Let it be your pride, therefore, to show all men everywhere not only what good soldiers you are, but also, what good men you are, keeping yourselves fit and straight in everything and pure and clear through and through. Let us set for ourselves a standard so high, that it will be a glory to live up to it and then let us live up to it and add a new laurel to the crown of America.

In the United States 22% of the songs in the soldiers’ song book were Christian hymns.

Thus when Mennonite men refused, in the name of Christ, to follow the state into war,

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36 This is one of the more powerful examples of hegemonic masculinity to be found in recent western experience. Cultures include many masculinities that are in a state of reaction to each other and to the masculinity promulgated by the state and major social institutions. The latter is hegemonic masculinity. See R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt, “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” Gender and Society 19 (2005): 829-859.


38 Quoted in Bristow, Making Men Moral, 18.

39 Bristow, Making Men Moral, 221-226.
they were denying the legitimacy of a powerfully articulated Christian masculinity of violence.

Mennonites responded to this challenge from a different experience of Christian masculinity, one fostered over the previous 400 years in rural villages and communities. Whether in the farmlands of Pennsylvania, the valleys of Switzerland or the steppes of Russia, Mennonites had built strong communities within a framework of mutual collective action. Men and women learned their roles from others in the community to whom they were generally related by blood, and these roles were reinforced by the institutions and economic necessities of their lives. The church, cooperatives and orphans’ bureaus were powerful institutions and they contributed to a form of life where family units were forced into economic interdependency. Non-conformity was punished by varying forms of economic and religious isolation that in the worst case completely cut off offenders from their families. Social conditions changed slowly, often not until there had been long discussion and agreement by leading community members and sometimes votes by the community as a whole. It was not an environment conducive to making changes to something as deep and important as masculinity.

It is difficult to know how patriarchal this tradition was.\textsuperscript{40} In community affairs, as in many other aspects of life, there were strict gender divisions. Women typically could not vote in formal congregational life, though all baptized males could. It was also men who took formal leadership roles in the community. This did not necessarily deny women

\textsuperscript{40} I use the term patriarchy cautiously to describe any economic and social system where men are given formal access to institutions and systems to a significantly greater extent than are women. However, as Ernestine Fried argues, formal patriarchal systems can hide economies which are much more reciprocal or egalitarian. See Ernestine Fried, “The Position of Women: Appearance and Reality,” \textit{Anthropological Quarterly} 40 (1967): 97-108. For a thorough critique of the use of the concept of patriarchy see Pavla Miller, \textit{Transformations of Patriarchy in the West, 1500-1900} (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998).
power in the day-to-day life of the community, but it did confine this power to more informal channels. One characteristic that suggests that Mennonite life might have been more egalitarian than the formal structures would indicate was the use of bi-lateral partible inheritance. Among Mennonites all children inherited equally of their parents’ estate, and since this was often not a legal form of inheritance, it led to a powerful orphans’ bureau that would ensure equal division of the wealth even if, as had been the case in Russia, only the eldest son was legally permitted to inherit the farm. Bi-lateral partible inheritance provides women with real property and thus gives them economic clout in community life. It also leads to endogamous marriage and very high rates of marriage as communities do their best to ensure that resources are not alienated from the community.  

So, while the gender roles were strict, they did not indicate that women were powerless. With the possibility of strong informal systems of power, access to real wealth, and the support of institutions like the Orphans Bureau, women might have played significant roles in the ongoing life of the communities.

It was out of this lived traditional experience of gender that Mennonites needed to respond to the alternate Christian masculinity the state was putting in front of them. This response was necessary in order to ensure its men were not inadvertently influenced by the propaganda and led to supporting the war and enlisting. The most vulnerable men were the young unmarried men, those who were not yet formally attached to the church or deeply entrenched in its way of life. These men needed to hear from the community how traditional Mennonite masculinity remained legitimate even when it differed from the one being put forward by the state. Especially they needed teachings from their church that

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would enable them to respond effectively to the question, what would you do if some brute attacked your loved ones? This question brought to bear the full weight of the theological, ethical, and gendered differences between Mennonite and North American culture and it was asked repeatedly, during draft registration, on the streets, in government propaganda, and in the military camps. A line of resistance needed to be found if Mennonites were to put up an effective barrier to the hegemonic militarist masculinity facing them in the surrounding culture.

1.2 Method

The research concerns in this dissertation place it most directly at the intersection of three content fields, Mennonite history, theological ethics and gender history. It applies two types of methodology, discourse analysis and historical demography. In particular it is rooted in the theological ethical perspective of Stanley Hauerwas, who has argued since the 1970s for the development of communal ethics based on the virtue ethics tradition. In his extensive body of work, Hauerwas has argued that character is the central concept in understanding the behaviour of individuals and communities, and that character is centered in the narratives individuals and communities tell about themselves and existence itself, especially the way such narratives place a claim upon their lives that precedes rational

42 Stanley Hauerwas, *Character and the Christian Life* (San Antonio, TX: Trinity University Press, 1975); Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character: Toward a Constructive Christian Social Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981); and Stanley Hauerwas, *The Peacable Kingdom: A Primer in Christian Ethics* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1983). Both Hauerwas and this work owe deep debts to the work of John Howard Yoder, *The Christian Witness to the State* (Newton, KA: Faith and Life Press, 1964); *The Politics of Jesus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1972); *What Would You Do?* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald, 1983); and *The Priestly Kingdom: Social Ethics as Gospel* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1984). The other perspective central to Hauerwas' work is that of Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981). There are a number of criticisms that can be made of Hauerwas' work, most importantly that he is using one Christian tradition, the radically reformed, from which to determine the legitimacy of a wide range of other Christian traditions which have significantly different ontologies. It would be more accurate to speak of Christianities, rather than Christianity, and then allow each of those traditions to explore its own foundational perspective. However, since Mennonites fall within the radically reformed tradition, Hauerwas' perspective is well suited to analysing their history.
According to Hauerwas, for Christians these narratives begin with a foundational narrative in which God engages humanity through the person of Jesus Christ. This engagement is historical, providing communities with a past, a present, and a future. These historical conditions create sub-narratives that can be analysed and appropriated as individuals and communities make their decisions.

In the case of the Mennonites and World War I, there were two narrative traditions. The first was a foundational divine narrative that stressed God's presence in the world as the Prince of Peace. There were also subsidiary narratives of individual martyrdom and communal flight to avoid compromising beliefs. These subsidiary narratives were understood as the correct working-out of the divine narrative. Using Hauerwas' narrative perspective on ethics, the understanding of the Mennonite communities with regard to their identity, meaning, and future can be found in the way these narratives were expressed in their discourse. Their existence as a theologically rooted ethical community can be discerned as they talked to themselves, before, during, and after the war, and integrated their experiences into their foundational and identity narratives.

In taking a narrative ethical approach, the work of Hauerwas' colleague, Samuel Wells, is helpful. Wells postulates that as individuals and communities there are three central types of tactics that Christians can take in responding to the events in their lives.

43 Hauerwas, A Community of Character, 97.
44 Hauerwas, The Peaceable Kingdom, 59-62.
45 While the martyrdom part of the narrative is easy to support as seen above, the migratory part of the narrative is harder to support. Mennonites have moved regularly to avoid persecution, but have not reflected on these migrations in such a way that it is easy to point to historical sources that locate migration within the popular imagination. Every Mennonite history, from Dyck's, An Introduction to Mennonite History, to Royden Loewen's new history of the Kleine Gemeinde Mennonites, Diaspora in the Countryside (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), stresses the migrations as key markers of Mennonite identity and experience. But even when Mennonites are in the process of migration, such as the war related migrations of Mennonites from the U.S.A. to Canada, or from Canada to Mexico, this receives minimal attention and no theological reflection in the Mennonite popular press. This absence is worthy of further research.
These tactics, using the metaphor of improvisational drama, are over-accepting, blocking, and accepting-as-given. These tactics flow from the inherent nature of individuals or communities who guide their behaviour through self-identified stories of identity where the foundational divine story is defined as outside their control. In other words, when people identify the cosmos as within the control of an actively engaged divine power, the tactics of improvisation are the correct tools for understanding and guiding their behaviour.

According to Wells, since Christians live within such a narrative they need not worry about strategies that determine the ultimate importance or perfect nature of their ethical responses. Instead Christians can focus on improvising best responses to their experiences. As will be seen below, when done correctly Christians over-accept their external conditions and integrate them into their own story. Inappropriately, Christians either block their external conditions or accept them as meaning what sources outside the decision making community say are their meaning. Using these three tactics as a set of analytic tools provides insights into how the narratives of Christians are used to engage the external world.46

Over-accepting is the most important of the three tactics and, according to Wells, the only one that fully represents a correct understanding of the ethical meaning of the Christian narrative.47 Over-accepting means that when an external event or set of conditions occurs the respondent takes those conditions as a place from which to extend their own personal narrative. To explain over-acceptance Wells tells the story of a concert pianist who, when interrupted by a child rushing on stage to pluck out notes on the piano, neither chased the child off stage nor stopped his performance, but changed his music to

46 Wells, Improvisation.
47 Wells, Improvisation, 127-140.
incorporate the discordant notes played by the child.\textsuperscript{48} When an individual or a community over-accepts they say to the interrupting external conditions that their own narrative can cope with and transcend those conditions. In the case of Mennonites and World War I, looking for over-acceptance would lead to the question, how have the Mennonites incorporated the war, especially the masculinity of the war, into their own story? Have they responded to it in such a way that the members of the communities, especially the young men, experienced the events of the war, not in terms of the way the various government agencies wanted them to be experienced, but in terms of the way Mennonites have always understood their story? In particular, how have the events of the war been incorporated into the martyr traditions of Mennonites?

According to Wells, the other two tactics, blocking and accepting-as-given, do not appropriately represent the divine narrative. Instead they represent the activities of a community that is relying on its own existence as the foundation of its ethics. Such a community either says “no” to external events, blocking them from incorporation into their story, or allows the external circumstances to determine their own meaning.\textsuperscript{49} In the case of the Mennonites, blocking might be managed by pretending no war was taking place, or that it need not be taken seriously and that registration and draft were not significant events. Accepting-as-given might be managed by focusing on and accepting the government agencies’ understanding of the necessity of obedience to government edicts. These might be understood tragically, but there would be no effort to transform those events into some other meaning. Mennonite young men would be expected to obey the government within the limits of the government’s policies.

\textsuperscript{48} Wells, \textit{Improvisation}, 131-132.
\textsuperscript{49} Wells, \textit{Improvisation}, 116-126.
Wells’ approach to the ethics of narrative allows this dissertation to apply a heuristic grid to the information produced by the sources. While the sources produce a wide range of information and need to be dealt with carefully, their information can be evaluated in terms of how it does or does not demonstrate the tactics of improvisational ethics. Mennonites may have blocked, accepted-as-given, or over-accepted, or all three, in greater or lesser measure as they coped with the war, its propaganda, and consequences.

As a study in masculinity, the type of gender analysis needs clarification. In keeping with the general framework of sexuality and masculinity developed by such diverse scholars as R.W. Connell, Michael Kimmel, Michel Foucault, Pierre Bourdieu, and Judith Butler, this dissertation assumes that masculinity (like femininity) is a social construction that is performed. According to this perspective, any specific performance of masculinity is developed within a cultural framework and subsequently used to allow individuals to function more or less effectively as persons. These masculinities (for there are many) precede and even determine the meaning of “sex,” the biological characteristics related to reproduction that any specific individual carries. In addition, these masculinities are in transition and conflict as individuals perform them in the broader social context and as they are attached to resource access and symbolic social markers. These masculinities are

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51 According to Stephan Valocchi this places this dissertation broadly within the framework of Queer theory. Queer theory argues that all genders are trajectories with multiple dimensions. Any individual may be more or less masculine along dimensions such as appearance, voice, style, personality, activities, sexual practices, and biology. Stephan Valocchi, “Not Yet Queer Enough: The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of Gender and Sexuality,” *Gender and Society* 19 (2005): 750-770.
also sensitive to history and should be thought of as trajectories with historical events that both mark and transform them. 52

On the basis of this theoretical perspective the Mennonite masculinity explored in this study must be understood as a series of social enactments made up of many masculinities. These many masculinities were reflective of the many differing experiences of masculinity of those, both male and female, who directly or indirectly contributed to the constituency of *The Mennonite*. They consisted of masculinities evocative of traditional Mennonite masculinity, rooted in the old agricultural village life, masculinities arising from the early twentieth-century Mennonite interaction with urban, industrial Anglo-North American culture, and masculinities produced by the war experience. These masculinities absorbed concepts and behaviours from each other and conflicted with each other, as well as absorbed and conflicted with the masculinities promulgated by the surrounding culture. Some of these masculinities were those of mature adults, confident in their expression of their masculinity. Others were tentative explorations by those still seeking to determine what their masculinity was. It was a rich and changing conceptual and experiential web.

To undertake this study two sets of methodological tools will be used, discourse analysis and demographic analysis. Discourse analysis is common in the field of religious studies and has a long history of development. Scholars of religion have developed a series of tools to explicate texts with sensitivity to their communities of origin. Once known as the historical-critical method, these tools have been much influenced by philosophical, linguistic, literary, and anthropological methods. Central to these methods is the concept that the world humans live in is constructed by communities of performance through their

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language and symbol systems. Currently, under the influence of deconstructionist philosophical thinking such as that of Michel Foucault, Michel de Certeau, and Jacques Derrida, religious studies scholars have become more sensitive to the need to understand texts and religions in terms of a multiplicity of often conflicting authors and readers involved in the production and interpretation of any text. As this study proceeds it will use these insights to interrogate its primary source, The Mennonite. However, the scope of this study, covering as it does a textual production of approximately 25,000 reports, articles, letters, and columns written from 1900 to 1929, means that quantitative measures and coarse analytic grids will sometimes be necessary.

There were, at the time of World War I, any number of German and English official Mennonite denominational organs, printed almost exclusively in the United States, and distributed in both the United States and Canada. Any one of these would carry the official positions of the specific Mennonite group for which it spoke, and also a range of other materials including general news, reprints from other magazines thought to be of interest to Mennonites, reports from congregations, letters to the editor, and articles on a wide range of topics.

The Mennonite was one of three English-language Mennonite news-magazines published during the war period. It represented the General Conference Mennonite

53 See Foucault, The History of Sexuality, Volume 1, and Michel de Certeau, The Writing of History (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988). Jacques Derrida was an extremely prolific writer with many important texts. With regard to religious ethics, the most important work is The Gift of Death (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995). A good introductory summary of the approach to texts suggested by these scholars is Barry Brummett, Rhetoric in Popular Culture (Boston: Bedford, 1994).

54 An excellent current example of this work is Dale Martin, Sex and the Single Savior: Gender and Sexuality in Biblical Interpretation (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006).

Church, the second largest of the North American Mennonite denominational associations of the period. It was the first of the English language Mennonite papers and the only one to publish throughout the twentieth-century. It has been relatively unstudied, unlike its main competitor *The Gospel Herald*, the Old Mennonite English publication. Despite representing a Mennonite sub-group, the news-magazine’s composition shared much with other Mennonite publications. Reprints from other publications, especially *The Gospel Herald* and *The Gospel Banner*, were relatively common. A 1919 evaluation of the grounds for greater inter-Mennonite co-operation noted that in general Mennonite publications used “largely the same material.”

The primary reason for relying on *The Mennonite* in this dissertation was its connection to the Russian Mennonite stream of North American Mennonite experience. Russian Mennonites were those Mennonites who came to the United States and Canada from Southern Russia in a group of about 17,000 in the 1870’s. The large majority of this group of immigrants joined the General Conference Mennonite Church and thus became both audience and contributors to *The Mennonite*. Uniquely, these Russian Mennonite descendants have developed genealogical records in sufficient scope and detail to make it possible to answer questions about the long term impact of the war on Mennonite behaviour.

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56 The nomenclature is confusing. The Mennonite Church General Conference (MCGC) and the General Conference Mennonite Church (GCMC), as the largest and second largest Mennonite groupings identified themselves, were in an antagonistic relationship following the break away of the latter churches in the 1860’s. Both appropriated the name “Mennonite” to refer to themselves. However, the traditional names used by both parties on a day to day basis were “Old Mennonite” to refer to the MCGC, and “General Conference” or GC to refer to the GCMC. In this study “General Conference” will always refer to the General Conference Mennonite Church. Other Mennonite groups will be referred to by their common names.


58 Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920*, 200. They also include a significant number of Mennonites from the colonies in Prussia, but this was a smaller group and since they were also very closely related to the more numerous Russian Mennonites, they were generally included under the label of “Russian.”
In assessing the value of this source, a central assumption is that each of the editors during the study period did not carefully skew the material to reflect his own biases. While the editors did have biases, they appeared more concerned to print the contributions of their Mennonite constituency. Articles, columns, and reports contained a wide range of perspectives, in many cases perspectives contradictory to submissions from other writers.

There were three editors during the study period. For the years 1900 to 1911 the editor of *The Mennonite* was L.A. Sommer of Berne, Indiana. He was an older, unmarried Mennonite minister. Besides *The Mennonite*, he edited a number of other General Conference publications, all but *The Mennonite* printed in German. From the general tone of the content it appears he had a somewhat sentimental understanding of manliness and womanliness. He was joined in 1911 by Silas Grubb, a young married Mennonite minister and son of the founding editor of the magazine. Grubb, who resided just outside of Philadelphia, was given responsibility for some of the columns and much of the editorial content. In 1912 Reverend Carl van der Smissen took over all of Sommer’s many editorial responsibilities. Van der Smissen, assisted by Grubb, continued the magazine very much in Sommer’s vein, and it was Grubb who provided the dominant editorial voice, supplying up to three pages of material in an issue. Due to van der Smissen’s difficulties in maintaining editorship of all the Mennonite papers, Silas Grubb became the full editor of *The Mennonite* in 1915 and continued in that role throughout the rest of the study period.

The magazine was aimed at the English-speaking and therefore the more liberal and culturally integrated membership of the General Conference Mennonite Church. Grubb especially reflected this bias and demonstrated a strong orientation toward themes of cultural integration and social action in his editorial contributions. However, he also held to a conservative view of church doctrine and was obviously under the influence of
fundamentalistically-oriented thought. Under his leadership the news-magazine became an ardent supporter of foreign and home mission work. He also advocated national temperance, higher education, keeping the United States out of the war (though he turned into a supporter at least for a time once the United States entered the war), women's suffrage, and women's leadership in the church. The latter position put him at odds with the General Conference as a whole, though it did reflect a significant minority position in the denomination. Under his editorship, women's groups in the church were given their own column, a recognition of their importance in the church, and especially their strong organizational and fund-raising efforts to support foreign missions. As a younger man (he was forty-one when he took over the senior editorship), Grubb demonstrated some sensitivity to the issues facing younger people, including issues of occupational futures (for women as well as men), gender, and church life. While his few autobiographical comments indicate that he was married, Grubb's own family life never entered the pages. Nor do we learn from him anything about his church ministry or his activity in the broader church, though he was one of the few Mennonite ministers active in the Christian peace movement. Grubb rarely published letters to the editor, a policy found among earlier editors as well. However, he did print articles submitted by members of the constituency even when they conflicted with his point of view. In general he seemed more oriented to filling the pages than to editing out viewpoints, and it was a rare issue that had enough material from constituency members to fill the six content pages.\(^59\) As a whole, Grubb's perspective appears to have been one that was sympathetic to the multiplicity of

\(^{59}\) Throughout most of the study period the magazine was a weekly eight page broadsheet. The last page was advertising and the second last page was divided between advertising and wire news reports.
perspectives among his readership. The news-magazine can reasonably be understood as reflecting the voice of its contributors more than any specific editorial vision.

The other methodology used in this study, though in a secondary capacity, is historical demography. This methodology permits the examination of life patterns seen in the lives of successive cohorts of Mennonite men and, through changes in those life patterns, the effects of historical events. In this case, life course reconstructions in five year cohorts based around draft eligibility, drawn from the GRANDMA 4.1 genealogical data-base, permit us to examine how each cohort experienced and resolved the conflict experienced during the war. Gender issues are easy to observe through the demographic statistics developed from the life course reconstructions since male and female identity are always central to these indicators.

This study proceeds through four steps. The first three will examine The Mennonite, first through the discourse around militarism, then as a gendered text, and finally, through the gender images portrayed in the text. These three steps demonstrate the masculinity that was discursively portrayed by a community confronting a war. The fourth step will examine demographic indicators of war-related change. By examining the lives of those men most affected by the war this study will move beyond the discourse to the lived experience of one of the most significantly affected groups within Mennonite communities at the time of the war. Together these two sources and their respective methodologies will portray both the understanding and the lived experience of the masculinity fostered by the war crisis.


Chapter two, the first step in this analysis, will explore the way war, peace and nonresistance were discursively in play during the war years, 1914 to 1919. By examining the way the war was reported, positions were developed, ethical strategies recommended, and military metaphors and illustrations used, the specific characteristics of the war discourse will be uncovered. An important part of this analysis will be the way masculinity was associated with these characteristics. As a test of masculinity, the most important question will be, how did the magazine's correspondents and contributors respond to the question, what would you do if some brute attacked your loved ones? Together these analyses allow an answer to the question, what did the war mean to Mennonite men?

In pursuing this inquiry into the war it will become evident that Well's three-part division of Christian ethical responses to foundational narratives is not complex enough. As we will find, the vast majority of the war materials fell into the category of the ethical response, accept-as-given. This response took two forms, accepting the military position as given and accepting the traditional Mennonite position as given. Since these were two contradictory narratives, the material took an ambiguous shape. There were a few voices that over-accepted the military perspective. Whether there were members of the supporting community who wished to block the military experience cannot be determined from this perspective since it is hard to interpret the absence of a response.

What this analysis will reveal is that the contributors were caught between two competing narratives, the traditional Mennonite narrative of nonresistance toward evil and a narrative of patriotic American nationalism. As well, contributors were unable to accurately discern the assumptions behind and masculinity within the militant version of

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62 The war experience is taken as ending once the men have returned to the communities of origin, a process completed by the end of 1919.
American patriotism. The result was a discourse which did not produce a coherent response to the war or one that would guide young Mennonite men in determining how to engage the militant masculinity they were confronting.

Chapter three will take the second step of examining the magazine as a gendered document, one that portrayed through its authorship and content a way of gendering human existence. This will be done by comparing the war years to the years immediately before and immediately after, and analyzing who wrote on what topics and how writers and topics changed over time. Exploring the differences between what men wrote about and what women wrote about will provide a picture of how the community understood what was appropriate for women and men to think about. The magazine also provides a window into the gendering of the denomination in its coverage of speaker lists, contributor lists and obituaries. The types of portrayals and the ratios of men to women in these lists say something about the gendering of the denomination as a whole, as well as indicating to the readership how the sexes were valued and in what ways.

Wells’ three-part form of ethical analysis is somewhat helpful in identifying what step two will reveal. Overall, The Mennonite was a male dominated text by a ratio of eight male contributions for every female contribution. This ratio varied by time and topic and these variations are very informative in terms of Wells’ model. Declining publication levels during the war demonstrated that Mennonite contributors, both men and women, partially blocked their responses to all topics. Women wrote nothing about the war itself while men wrote a little less about every topic during the war years. The total number of contributions and ratios between the sex of contributors on post-war topics revealed that both men and women adopted the tactic of accepting-as-given as well as the tactic of over-acceptance. In particular women either accepted-as-given or over-accepted a new orientation to domestic
affairs. Men both accepted-as-given and over-accepted new commitments to the world outside of Mennonite communities. It will become evident that as a result of the war experience the contributing community came to understand masculinity and femininity in new ways, ways that were more differentiated and somewhat in keeping with a separate spheres notion of the sexes.

Chapter four will take the step of examining the way gender itself was portrayed, how manliness was described, especially the depictions of “good” masculinity. In doing so, from time to time femininity must be analyzed in some respects in order to obtain the full scope of masculinity being portrayed. The chapter will proceed by examining the way men were described, the types of activities they were reported as doing, and the types of attributions they were given.

As used in chapter four, Wells’ model is effective in identifying the way masculinity was discursively portrayed. While the Mennonite communities were highly gendered with sharp sex-role distinctions, the portrayals of masculinity in *The Mennonite* did not match this gendering. Nor did they engage militaristic masculinity or popular separate spheres masculinity. There was also a strong continuity of portrayal from the pre-war through the post-war periods. It was a case of blocking the masculinity actually experienced by Mennonite men and encountered in the world around them. Instead, we will find the discourse was of a manliness of a wide range of character, including many feminine characteristics. While it was an encouragingly rich discourse of masculinity, its users did not use it to present images that would be helpful to young men struggling with their masculinity in a militant and changing world.

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63 Masculinities must be understood in relation not only to other masculinities but also in relation to femininities. Through these comparisons the specific characteristics and range of meanings become visible.
Chapter five will seek to answer one of the critical questions discourse analysis leaves open, what impact did the crisis have on the lived behaviour of Mennonites? Using demographic analysis this chapter will explore those Mennonites most affected by the war, the men of draft age at the time of World War I. These were the men who had to most directly face the collision of masculinities. These were the men whose theological ethics were forced into the most prominent position as they made painful decisions about the direction of their lives, directions where death was a possible outcome. As their demographic characteristics are examined, changes that took place in their behaviour can be evaluated and the effects of the war can be observed. How these men made new life decisions based on what they encountered during the war will become visible.

The GRANDMA 4.1 data-base provides a wide range of information for demographic analysis of these young men. The data-base is a collection of over 700,000 Mennonites that provides basic life information including in the fullest of cases, date and location of birth, date and location of baptism, date and location of marriage, date and location of death, and the dates and locations of all their children's births. These Mennonites have dates of birth between the late 1500's and 2002 and are scattered around the globe, though concentrated in the United States and Canada. The information will be analyzed to produce birth-cohort, aggregated life-course records for the men most influenced by the war and, for comparison purposes, their older and younger brothers. Random sampling will produce five cohorts of approximately 350 men each who were born in the United States between 1883 and 1907. Cohort comparisons are a standard tool for examining changes over time in response to historical events. Four sets of statistics, life expectancy, marriage patterns related to exogamy and marriage termination, and child sex-ratios, demonstrate that the young men who were of draft age were strongly affected by the
war. These men had shorter lives and more troubled intimate relationships than did their older brothers. Their child-sex ratios shifted distinctly into a pattern of boy-preference. These characteristics demonstrate that the war was a major challenge to their masculinity and one that produced changes that made their lives different from that of their older brothers. These changes also had long term implications since subsequent cohorts were influenced by these new patterns of masculinity.

While Wells’ model does not explain the behaviour of the men who faced the draft, it does raise questions about the response of the community and the connection of its discourse to the subsequent behaviour of the young men. The community did very little of what Wells calls over-accepting, the type of discourse which he says denotes correct understanding of the Christian narrative. While speculative, this failure may have contributed to the subsequent negative impact of the war on the long term behaviour of the men who faced the draft. Certainly the type of resources that would have been helpful for the young men were few. The blocking that took place created conditions where it would have been difficult to raise and deal with the conflict of masculinities the young men experienced. While it is impossible to say for sure what the connection was between the discourse and the behaviour, it suggests that it would have helped had the discourse been one that embraced and interpreted the conflict of masculinities. In many respects it is not surprising that they failed to carry out this interpretation of masculinities. As Albert Keim notes, it was not until the Vietnam War that American Mennonites began to fully understand the relationship between their beliefs and the American state.\(^64\) At that later time they were an urbanized people with decades of very sophisticated intellectual analysis

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of war and Mennonite peace teachings. Even then there was minimal recognition that this was an encounter of masculinities. Fifty years earlier, how could they understand, let alone cope with, their experience of World War I?

However, it was a story of a setback, not of a complete failure. Mennonites were not destroyed as a people by the war. While the masculinity for some went in a destructive direction, the war also led to a new outward vision and the first steps toward constructing the institutions that took North American Mennonites through the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. They continued to be nonresistant, and built on that foundation a powerful social witness that changed the attitudes of governments in North America toward them and took them into all corners of the planet with programs that reflected a post-war identity as a community of service. Their failure to understand and deal effectively with World War I left them with an enriched narrative and the basis of a better future. Son-based masculinity would become a minority perspective and in the 1970s Mennonites would regain their openness to women in ministry. This is the story of one theological ethical failure with serious consequences, but it is not the story of a failed community. Daniel Teuscher may have gone to his grave in shame, but his descendants learned from their overall experience and in the process demonstrated that hegemonic masculinities, even when backed by the full force of the state with every legal recourse and psychological and mob tool at its disposal, cannot be given the last word.

Finally, as Victor Seidler maintains, we need to understand masculinity as arising from specific male experiences. Mennonite men and the First World War provide the opportunity to see how one group of men came out of a specific discourse and set of

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experiences to create a new pattern of masculinity. That theirs was a destructive masculinity only makes clear that better and worse masculinities can be constructed. We are left with the challenge of seeking to understand the male discourse and experiences of our world and then constructing those better masculinities.
2. MILITARISM

On November 7, 1918, just before the Armistice that ended World War I, The Mennonite ran excerpts from the letters of six young Mennonite males in the US Army.¹ At least three of the letters were written in France, probably by non-combatant soldiers. What is striking about the letters was their uniformly upbeat tone. One wrote from France of having joined the “Anti-swearing club.” Another remarked on the quality of French music. A third, still in the United States, wrote of the importance of religion in the day to day life of the military training camps. You would not know from these letters that a hellish war was underway or that these young men were part of that hell in one way or another. Instead, the letters sound as if they came from a summer camp. Voices that spoke of the hell these men endured would not be heard in the news-magazine until after the war was over. This absence was symptomatic of a much larger failure during the war, a failure to deal with any North American Mennonite suffering during the war.

This contrast between the upbeat communal discourse during the war and the painful reality experienced both at home and overseas is something that emerges powerfully during the period under study. The horror of the actual war was avoided as much as possible until it was over and even then the horror did not get significant treatment. When we take into account the shock experienced by Mennonites this may not be surprising. It would have taken time to adjust to something which cut to the heart of Mennonite beliefs and challenged the fabric of a very conservative, rural existence. It could

¹ “Religion as Some Boys in the Camps Regard It,” The Mennonite, 7 November 1918, 1-2.
be that by the time Mennonites understood what was happening to them the war was over. However, the evidence suggests Mennonites did not want to admit the horror, that the experience was too dissonant with the world they were trying to maintain, and therefore they kept silent about their reality.

When reviewing the discourse of the war period it is not clear if by late 1914 Mennonites across North America were aware that something significant had happened to the world. While in 1914 the editors of the magazine were deeply worried by the war, there was little interest demonstrated by other contributors until 1916 when it became clear that the United States was preparing for active combat. At this point the magazine began to carry war news relevant to the readership, and the news reflected widespread concern. After the war, related events continued to be followed through 1919 and beyond as the world refused to settle back into its pre-war tracks and Mennonites continued to be concerned by what was happening globally and militaristically.

To reveal the full scope of *The Mennonite*'s discourse on the war requires the examination of the magazine from four perspectives, war reporting, theological statements, ethical directives, and metaphor and illustration. Each of these perspectives reveals a strand of material regarding the war, from the news of the war thought to be most relevant to Mennonites (War Reports), to the way the war was interpreted as a religious event (Theological Statements), to the types of actions seen as appropriate for (or by) this religious people (Ethics), to, finally, the way military metaphors and illustrations were present in their thinking (Metaphors and Illustrations). In addition, two topics cut across the period and call for their own attention: the Americanization of Mennonite identity, and the ethical crux of masculine pacifism, what would you do if a brute attacked your loved ones? Admittedly this was all discourse approved by the editors and senior men within the
General Conference Mennonite Church, but this was also the discourse used by the community to reflect to itself its public persona. This was the Mennonite world in some key respects.

In examining the articles in the news-magazine over the period 1914 through 1919, each article was assigned to one of four categories. With only a few exceptions, each of these articles was examined only in terms of that category even though it might carry more than one of the types of content suggested here. That is, a news article could contain a theological perspective, or a theological analysis could include numerous facts related to current war events. However, in order to ensure manageability of the approximately 5,000 war era articles examined, this secondary level of analysis was ignored except in a very few cases that offered something new to the discussion.

What this review leads to is the conclusion that the constituency of The Mennonite did not want to deal with the war and avoided the challenge of the war to Mennonite masculinity. The primary reason appears to be their desire to perceive the world within an American framework. Mennonites discursively abandoned their own story of separateness and martyrdom. They failed to bring to their membership news, analysis, or guidance that was fully accurate or adequate to the circumstances. No one was more abandoned than the young men who were drafted. The analysis of the war discourse is a depressing review of a community and church that failed to meet the challenge of its time.

In terms of Samuel Wells' model of ethics, this indicates that the general response to the war by Mennonites was either to accept-it-as-given or to block it.² They either allowed North American culture to define the terms from which they drew their

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Table 2.1. Number of war reports per year by type

understanding of the war, or they refused to deal with it all. They chose what Wells argues were inappropriate Christian tactics for dealing with the experiences North American culture placed in their communities. Running against the trend were a few voices that spoke for over-accepting, and even for over-accepting in terms that could have assisted young Mennonite men to maintain a positive and pacifist Mennonite masculinity. However, these voices were never reflected in the ecclesial response.

2.1 War Reports

The most direct place from which to gain a perspective on Mennonite responses to the war were in the reports on the war itself. These were a wide range of short articles and notices, focused primarily on the events of the war and in particular on events with an impact on the Mennonite community. Such reports were found throughout *The Mennonite* during the war years and then continued after the end of the European conflict. Given the presence of large Mennonite communities and the involvement of world powers, the crisis in Russia seemed to Mennonites in North America to be in some sense an extension of the war. As Russia moved through waves of civil war and military intervention, the war coverage continued. Some congregations directly experienced war related events and their
printed reports are included in this category. Letters and articles from soldiers or others involved in the training camps or military service were also an important part of war reporting.

Each of these three types of reports showed a linkage to the American experience of the war. While reports began to appear in print with the onset of the war, they doubled and tripled their numeric presence once the United States entered the war (Table 2.1). In some respects this increase was to be expected, but as can be seen in examining each of these types of report, the coverage itself painted a picture of the war that missed significant events even within the United States.

**News Reports**

News has the appearance of reality. It is the way we explore the way things “really” are. However, the news provided is never all the news and the way it is presented shapes the reader's perceptions of what is “really” happening. News reports tell the story not of what happened, but of how the people at the time thought the world needed to be perceived. The news of World War I, as visible through the pages of *The Mennonite*, came from communities concerned by war events. But of all the events, they were especially concerned with the American and religious aspects of the conflict.

One of the major sources of news reports related to the war was the last page of the magazine, the “News of the Week” section. The bulk of the material in this section was coverage of the war taken from wire service reports. The careful reader could follow the progress of the war, including the battles, the foes, and the political manoeuvrings. Other global violence received coverage as well. The conflict in Mexico and the revolution and civil war in Russia were regular stories during this time. Articles on other major national and international events all received space. Readers of *The Mennonite* could follow stories on
strikes by railway workers, hurricanes and other disasters, and progress on American
government regulation related to such things as alcohol prohibition and women’s suffrage.
However, during the war it was the violence and struggle that covered most of the page. As
measured by column inches, in no issue was war coverage less than one third of the space
on the page and it was often ninety percent or more. Because this coverage consisted of
wire service reports and not Mennonite contributions, it will not be further analyzed with
regard to its content. However, its presence does indicate that the editors thought this
coverage was of interest to their readers.

News reports also appeared in the main body of the magazine in articles of more
direct relationship to the church. In these reports the boundary between news and
commentary could be blurry and for the purposes of this study news reports each year are
only identified as such if their concern was primarily the provision of information.

War coverage in 1914 was scant. It started, and almost ended, with an August 20,
1914, report on a European church peace conference.3 Coverage of the American Federal
Council of Churches’ involvement in global peace efforts in September was the only other
news content related to the war carried that year4. Temperance or efforts to oppose lodge
membership on the part of church members were the major news interests. In 1915 the
war coverage picked up, but primarily with a focus on the war’s impact on foreign missions
or the diminishing work toward peace of the Federal Council of Churches. The struggles
and experiences of Mennonites in Germany received occasional mention as well. In the
following year, 1916, the coverage declined a little. American war preparations were one of

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the most common features in the reporting. The ongoing battles by the American troops along the Mexican border were also covered. This latter was typically referred to as a “police action” rather than combat. Efforts to distribute Bibles to soldiers on the European front were regularly covered.

However, 1916 did bring a new level of response in terms of the way news reports took place. For the first time officials from the Mennonite church were directly involved in the stories because church institutions were becoming sensitive to the way other churches were experiencing the war. In March, 1916, H.P. Krehbiel, a prominent Kansas church minister and conference official, reported on his efforts to circulate an anti-war petition. The same issue included a reprint of an article about the efforts of the English Quakers to develop a C.O. alternative to military service ambulance unit in France. In May there was coverage of the Christian sponsored Council of Peace and Arbitration. The deportation of ten Mennonite revival workers from Canada appeared in December, and in the same month it printed an interview with a Canadian Mennonite Brethren in Christ minister regarding the active service in the British Army by members of his branch of the Mennonites.

News coverage of the war and war related events increased in frequency again in 1917 after American entry into the war. A significant portion of this increased coverage

5 Examples include Nathan C. Schaeffer, "Military Training in Schools," The Mennonite, 6 April 1916, 2.
6 The Mennonite, 16 March 1916, 1. There were clear indications of editorial approval of this military action in the reporting.
7 "Eleven Ton of Bibles," The Mennonite, 13 April 1916, 2; "World Wide Sunday School News," The Mennonite, 9 November 1916, 4-5.
10 "From the Council of Peace and Arbitration," The Mennonite, 4 May 1916, 1.
11 "In Mennonite Circles," The Mennonite, 7 December 1916, 1. The introductory note by the editor expressed horror at these actions.
was directed to the experiences of Canadian Mennonites. A second area of news focus was the international impact of the war in terms of Christian issues. One such article was Helena Jansen's report, smuggled past the English censors, on the status of peace thinking in England. A third area of focus was the war preparations in the United States. A typical example was a report on American Mennonite efforts to get modifications to the US conscription bill. Sexuality and military preparations received attention in articles such as ones on government efforts to close brothels close to training camps or the problem of unmarried mothers near military camps.

A major feature of the news coverage in 1918 was the Mennonite relationship with the American government. Complete copies of letters between J.W. Kleiwer, then President of Bethel College and member of the Mennonite Committee on Exemption, and General Crowder of the War department were printed in January. A meeting with the Secretary of War was noted in February. In one issue prominent Quaker, Rufus Jones, reported on the farm furlough program after a meeting with Dr. Kepple of the War Department and there was a report from the Mennonite Military Exemption Committee's meeting with Dr. Kepple regarding Conscientious Objector status. Other major concerns were the revisions and additions to the draft laws published during the year.

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coverage included the situation in Canada. Mennonites were also talking amongst themselves about the war and reports of these conversations were printed as well.

War aid and assistance programs were another theme of 1918. Reconstruction work in France by the Quakers was regularly covered as was Red Cross work. Mennonites in Oklahoma were building a hospital for injured soldiers. Coach Katz of Bluffton College, the Old Mennonite college in Ohio, was headed to Europe to work with the troops. (Bluffton College’s relatively pro-war stance was the source of a note in October.)

A theme that was visible in this news coverage was the need for purity and good influences in the armed forces. A note in February stressed that the YMCA does not hire women to dance with soldiers. Another article indicated that General Pershing desired “to surround [the troops] with the best influence possible.” According to yet another, President Wilson wanted Sabbath observance by soldiers. While in the United States the concern was to keep soldiers moral, elsewhere the soldiers themselves became a force for

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20 A major report early in the year was “Friends Wish Mennonites to Help them Fill a Call from France for 300 Men for Reconstruction and Relief Work,” *The Mennonite*, 28 February 1918, 1-2. Smaller articles and notes were found throughout the year. Another major report on the Quaker work was, Isaac Sharpless, "The General Condition of the Reconstruction in France," *The Mennonite*, 12 December 1918, 4. Regarding the Red Cross, “Notes and Comments,” *The Mennonite*, 28 March 1918, 1.


22 "In Mennonite Circles," *The Mennonite*, 2 May 1918, 1; Oliver Kratz, “A Letter From A Mennonite Y.M.C.A. Worker,” *The Mennonite*, 23 May 1918, 2. Kratz maintains a very positive outlook on the soldiers in his letter, an upbeat tone that carries through his additional letters over the year.

23 "In Mennonite Circles," *The Mennonite*, 3 October 1918, 1. The reference is to the stars on the service flag in the college chapel.


morality as one story suggested that in India returning soldiers would bring the caste system to an end.27

Late in the year there was some negative coverage of war effects. Two-thousand mission stations around the world had been abandoned.28 American children were working and not attending school due to the war labour shortage.29 Significantly, James Wiers’ report on gas victims, the one report on the horror of the actual war, was published after the end of the war.30

In 1919 the war was over but men were still in training camps and military detention, war reconstruction work was continuing in Europe, and revolution was underway in Russia. It was in 1919 that the problems faced by Mennonite C.O.s first began to be printed. The other side of Mennonite participation in the war also received coverage and obituaries that year included soldiers. For example, Lieutenant Earl Russell Fretz was identified as having died of injuries incurred leading his troops in battle.31 Such reports were few and war relief efforts comprised the bulk of the reporting. Quaker efforts in France and Russia received special attention, probably because Mennonites were contributors in personnel and funds. All told, the year marked a significant shift in war reporting from the year before, a decrease in quantity and a shift in direction befitting the changed world conditions.

28 “Notes and Comments,” *The Mennonite*, 24 October 1918, 1. None of these closed stations were identified as Mennonite.
**Congregational Reports**

Congregational reports were a regular feature of the magazine. A correspondent, either the minister himself or someone selected by the congregation, would write to the paper providing details on the life of the congregation. These were generally mundane reports with information on baptisms and banquets, who sang a solo, or the itinerary of the minister. At times they included information on the congregation’s experience of, or response to, the militarism of the period.

During the early years of the war there were only two congregational correspondents who mentioned anything related to the war. In 1914 a congregational correspondent expressed the worry that the war in Europe signified the coming of the “end times.” In 1915 the church correspondent from First Mennonite Church in Philadelphia reported the congregation was experiencing economic problems due to the war.

These peripheral comments gave way to more direct concerns as America entered the war as a combatant. Rev. I.A. Sommer reported in May, 1917, on the “stir and excitement among the young men” regarding the draft. The next occurrence came from Wayland, Indiana, in June when the unnamed correspondent indicated that one young man from the congregation “has joined the coast artillery.” The final reports for that year were in November and December when three churches reported that some of their young men

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32 “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 19 November 1914, 4. Speculations about the end of time and the second coming of Jesus were common in many churches during the period.

33 “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 11 March 1914, 2.

34 I.A. Sommer, “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 31 May 1917, 2.

35 “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 21 June 1917, 3.
were in training camps. These reports were descriptive and did not indicate if the congregations were either supportive of or antagonistic toward these events.

In 1918 congregations made regular reference to the effects and experiences of the war, primarily noting the loss of young men to the training camps. Gideon Lehman’s report published in the early December was unusually informative. He identified by name with details of their assignments all six of the congregation’s young men who had been drafted. Apparently none took the route of “absolute” C.O. as five of the six were in non-combatant roles, three in the hospital corps, one in the quartermaster corps, and the fifth in the radio service. The sixth was not identified as to the service. This may have meant he was in service as an active combatant. Only one of the six was identified as currently in a combat zone.

In 1919 congregational reports were a particularly rich source of war information as from January through November churches reported on their young men as they returned from the Army. A typical feature of this reporting was the notation that there had been no casualties or deaths among the draftees. For example, Katie Schmidt, reporting from Halsted, Kansas, reported that of the seventeen men away in service none had been killed. It was rare for any note to be made of the difference between those who saw active service as combatants and those who were non-combatants or absolute C.O.s. One of the few exceptions was the Wadsworth, Ohio, church report which noted, “not very many of our people have taken up weapons to shoot down another brother.” A young man who

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36 “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 29 November 1917, 2; “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 13 December 1917, 2.

37 Gideon A. Lehman, “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 5 December 1918, 3.


did take up such weapons was Wilmer Landis, about whom the Bethany Church in Quakertown, Pennsylvania, reported at length in April. About half of their report was a eulogy for him. He had been killed in action on November 10. The eulogy praised young Landis’ spirit of sacrifice but said nothing positive about the war.40

**Military Camp Reports**

In the United States all draftees were required to report to the military training camps established throughout the country. This was true even if they had Conscientious Objector status. While in the camps, draftees wrote letters, kept diaries and talked to visiting ministers about their experiences.41 Some of these letters were printed. Ministers also reported on their visits. There were no reports from the front lines, either by active duty soldiers or by non-combatant soldiers, except for the three letter excerpts from soldiers in France noted at the beginning of this chapter.

The first real information on camp life came in 1917 by way of a reprint of a letter by Jesse Brenneman of Goshen, Indiana, to Professor Huffman at Bluffton College. Brenneman reported they had received good treatment at Camp Taylor, Kentucky, and were respected for their C.O. position. He said this respect was true of both officers and recruits. He cautioned this may not be true elsewhere or later in the war.42 From the nature of his experience it also appeared to be the case that the Army had not yet begun to understand the C.O. issue—Brenneman and companions had no orders and nothing to do. Other reports later in the year continued in much the same vein. Reverend I.A. Sommer

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40 “Correspondence,” *The Mennonite*, 10 April 1919, 4.


42 Jesse L. Brenneman, “From Camp Taylor, KY,” *The Mennonite*, 11 October 1917, 3. While it is impossible to determine, he may be the same Jesse Brenneman who would in late 1918 add his signature to a letter of thanks from the Fort Leavenworth military prison. If so it indicates that things did not continue in as positive a vein as his early letter indicated. See “In Mennonite Circles,” *The Mennonite*, 9 January 1919, 1.
reported that seven men from his congregation were also in Camp Taylor where “They are grateful for the kind treatment by the government up to this time.” Editor Silas Grubb provided a detailed five-column report on life in Camp Meade, Maryland, after his visit there. He had nothing bad to say about the treatment the men received, concluding that the biggest danger to the C.O.s was “becoming lax because they are well treated and everybody is nice to them.” Grubb’s few complaints were that the government kept the C.O.s under guard and was not using them for anything useful.

It was not completely positive reporting. A somewhat more negative report came from minister H.J. Krehbiel after a visit to Camp Lewis in Washington State. In passing he noted that the C.O.s in the camp faced threats, ridicule, forced wearing of uniforms, and theft of documents. A similar story was found in a reprint of an article from the Gospel Herald, the Old Mennonite English paper. A.D. Wenger’s report of his visit to Camp Lee consisted primarily of a description of the author’s argument with the commanding officer of the camp regarding nonresistance. However, early in the report, he indicated that of the 130 C.O.s in the camp, eleven had been imprisoned at various times, and three of these were confined to bread and water diets. He also noted that some were threatened and persecuted, especially the one Quaker.

Training camp reports were a regular feature in 1918. For example, the C.O.s in Fort Taylor had developed a school. Similar news items in following months related to worship services, home visits, and numbers of non-combatants in the camps. There were a

43 I.A. Sommer, “Correspondence,” The Mennonite, 29 November 1917, 2-3.
44 “Editorial: A Visit to Camp Meade,” The Mennonite, 18 October 1918, 4-5.
45 H. J. Krehbiel, “A Report from Reedley Calif.” The Mennonite, 8 November 1917, 1. The documents are probably letters from ministers testifying to their membership in a Mennonite Church, one of the criteria for successful C.O. status applications.
47 “In Mennonite Circles,” The Mennonite, 3 January 1918, 1.
series of substantial reports coming from soldiers in the camps. In addition to the six letters excerpted in the November 7 issue and discussed at the beginning of the chapter, major reports from three Mennonites in camp were printed over the course of the year. February carried a reprint of a substantial letter from J. L. Brenneman from Camp Taylor, Kentucky, describing an active daily routine among the non-combatants which include study, worship, camp cleanup, and food preparation. Gustav Gaeddert wrote directly to The Mennonite from Camp Funston in Kansas where he indicated the C.O.s suffered from idleness. Gaeddert suggested the real solution was for Mennonites to build their own hospital serving returning soldiers where the draftees could serve their terms of service.

A completely different point of view emerged in the gushingly positive report from Private L.J. Horsch in Camp Lewis, Washington. Horsch wrote of the induction and training of the “stalwart” men who “have in this great melting pot been merged into one great unit with common aims and ideals.” Horsch stressed the positive morality of the camps, especially praising the work of the two chaplains. In language fitting a recruiter Horsch explained the problem of sexually transmitted diseases, stressing the army’s medical care. Subtly hinting at the distribution of condoms, he said, “Fathers and mothers who are apprehensive about their boys after they have been inducted into the service may rest

49 Gustav R. Gaeddert, “Correspondence,” The Mennonite, 9 May 1918, 2. Gaeddert, a Harvard graduate at the time of his draft, was to change his mind about this stance. During World War II he worked actively in the Red Cross and later said he came to realize that the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:29-37) indicated that the uniform was not relevant to the service provided. “What Service to Render: The Diary of Gustav Gaeddert.” In Melanie Springer Mock, Writing Peace, 139-176.
assured that the government is doing everything in its power to combat this awful evil.\textsuperscript{52}

With regard to the General Conference Mennonites, Horsch had only good things to say, but he indicated that other objectors were not so broadminded and had received different treatment, including punishment. Horsch made clear that he considered this punishment to be just because the orders that led to it were not directly contrary to Mennonite teachings.\textsuperscript{53}

In 1919 the reports began to mention the military detainees, Mennonites who were prisoners either in training camps or military prison. A Quaker report on Mennonite detainees in Fort Leavenworth prison noted that handcuffing to bars in solitary confinement is something no longer done.\textsuperscript{54} Six of the Fort Leavenworth detainees thanked the Kansas City mission for Christmas dinner.\textsuperscript{55} Mennonite leader J.W. Kliwer reported the good news that court-martial cases were under review.\textsuperscript{56} Rev. J.B. Boehr wrote a major article on the conditions in Fort Leavenworth based on the National Civil Liberties Bureau report on political prisoners.\textsuperscript{57} Boehr explicitly repudiated the absolutist stance of these men while at the same time calling for joint Mennonite work to obtain their release. An article by an anonymous C.O. on conditions in Fort Leavenworth indicated the detainee problem was not due to the government but to a few army officers who disobeyed orders. The author suggested that any problems experienced in Fort Leavenworth were due to the wrong behaviour of the C.O.s.\textsuperscript{58} However, not all writers shared this sanguine attitude to

\textsuperscript{52} L.J. Horsch, “More of Camps Lewis,” 3.
\textsuperscript{53} L.J. Horsch, “Camp Lewis,” 4.
\textsuperscript{54} “In Mennonite Circles,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 2 January 1919, 1.
\textsuperscript{55} “In Mennonite Circles,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 9 January 1919, 1.
\textsuperscript{56} J.W. Kliwer, “Our Brethren in Fort Leavenworth,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 9 January 1919, 4. There is no earlier coverage of the court-martials themselves.
\textsuperscript{57} J.B. Boehr, “What Are We Doing to Liberate the Conscientious Objectors?” \textit{The Mennonite}, 29 January 1919, 4-5.
\textsuperscript{58} “The C.O.s and the War Department,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 13 March 1919, 2-3.
C.O. treatment. Warren Shelly described the abuse some of the men received and concluded, “Had such methods been used in Germany, we should not have been very much surprised. But that such things could take place in Christian America is utterly unbelievable.”

**War Report Summary**

Not surprisingly, coverage of the war in *The Mennonite* focussed on issues of interest to Mennonites. However, there was a clear American bias. Reports on the Canadian Mennonite experience were few. Even more significantly, it did not reflect the American Mennonite stories of the war told to and by historians years later. The difficulties and poor treatment many draftees experienced only became significant subjects in *The Mennonite* after the war was over. As the coverage of the Fort Leavenworth detainees indicated, the spirit of these reports was one of blaming the victim. That Mennonites were explicitly targeted for abusive and violent treatment, either in their home communities or training camps, was impossible to learn through these reports though later histories show there was no absence of such targeting. Also missing was the migration of hundreds of Mennonites from the Western United States to the Canadian provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan at the end of the war. These Mennonites moved explicitly because of their experience of poor treatment and their belief that the United States was hostile to Mennonite beliefs.

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Table 2.2. Number of war related theological contributions per year by institutional relationship

### 2.2 Theological Statements

Mennonites were a Christian group with specific teachings about participation in war. These teachings should have formed part of the way the war was presented discursively in *The Mennonite*. While not as common as war reports, religious teachings regarding the war were a significant aspect of the magazine’s content. These articles included three very different types of statement, official pronouncements of the various branches of the Mennonite or other pacifist churches (dogma), the editors’ theological arguments, and the arguments of individual contributors. Each category represents a different institutional and ecclesial response, to the theological problems facing the church during the war years. Formal statements represented the full institutional process and slow deliberations of the larger Mennonite (and other) church bodies and were relatively constrained. The editors’ contributions occupied a middle ground representing both the formal church, by virtue of a paid position leading a formal church organ, and a personal point of view. Editors were subject to pressure to stay close to the formal denominational perspective. Individual contributors were free to express any position as long as it fell within the relatively permissive framework of the editors.
In looking at these articles one of the characteristics that stands out is the relative evenness of the total number of contributions each year (Table 2.2). While the quantity of news reports changed dramatically based on American participation in the war, contributions or reports in each theological category varied only a little. However, this quantitative equivalence hides a relative paucity of formal General Conference theological statements. While particular individuals were prepared to respond, especially editor Silas Grubb and prominent Nebraska Mennonite Peter Jansen, the formal bodies of the church were not reported as taking much interest in the war in terms of its relationship to Mennonite beliefs. This failure of discourse appears upon analysis to reflect a failure in action.

**Dogma**

Of all the theological reflection on the war, formal church statements were numerically the fewest. Between 1914 and 1916 there was little in the way of formal Mennonite attention to relevant church doctrine. The war appears to have been a peripheral issue at best and the peace doctrines of the Quakers received more attention in the news-magazine than did those of the Mennonites. It was not until 1916 that a regional conference of the church was reported to have issued a resolution against American war preparations. However, as a formal church statement it was weak because the resolution was based on the pragmatic reasoning that the war only has bad effects on those who wage it. This reasoning was not based on formal theological reasoning taking into account in Mennonite beliefs. Church institutions did not appear to be thinking of the war in terms of core beliefs and, for the most part, did not appear to be thinking about the war at all.

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In 1917 the General Conference Church held its triennial North American conference with delegates invited from every congregation. This was a major forum for deciding policies and forming positions to guide the church. Every conference received sustained coverage in The Mennonite, from the pre-event information through printing the results of the delegate sessions later in the year. Coverage of conferences in previous years indicated that social issues were a major concern at these gatherings and past conferences had dealt at some length with the troubling social issues of alcohol consumption and membership in secret societies. One would have expected the 1917 conference to focus heavily on the war, but that turned out not to be the case. Early in 1917 the published agenda included only two discussion papers related to the doctrine of nonresistance as it related to the war and American government policy. A background paper exploring the history of Mennonite beliefs about war was printed shortly before the conference. In September, after the conference sessions, the church leadership released a short statement reaffirming that Mennonites were creedally forbidden to participate in war and instructing young men to submit to the draft but not to perform military service. However, reports on the conference printed early in 1918 did not indicate any war related resolutions of theological significance. Thirteen of fifty-nine resolutions addressed by the conference related to the war, but all related to administrative matters regarding the selection and operation of a committee to work on war issues related to conscientious objection. Peter Jansen, a member of this new committee, tellingly wrote almost a year later that the

63 “Program for the 21st Mennonite General Conference,” The Mennonite, 22 March 1917, 6-7.
66 “Resolutions Adopted At the Twenty-First Session of General Conference of the Mennonite Church of North America,” The Mennonite, 14 November 1918, 6.
committee had not met to discuss a formal church position with regard to conscientious objection.  

The absence of a published General Conference position did not leave the pages of the paper completely empty of dogma. In August, 1917, a copy of the Hutterite position, as addressed to U.S. President Wilson, was printed in full. Later that year the magazine ran an Old Mennonite statement against the war and a copy of a 1775 Mennonite statement to the U.S. House of Assembly against participation in the Revolutionary War. However, even this minimal response was absent the following year. In 1918 the only dogma was a reprint of a Quaker statement on war from 1600 and an article by John Horsch on the history of the doctrine of nonresistance.

The slow-to-act Exemption Committee, formed by the Conference in 1917, released a document in 1919 that was printed that year in *The Mennonite*. This petition, that congregations were requested to sign and send to their congressmen, argued that the proposed military training act was politically unwise, economically wasteful, and morally wrong. The petition failed to directly reflect Mennonite doctrines.

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71 “Proposal of the Exemption Committee,” *The Mennonite*, 31 July 1919, 2. This is not the only action of the committee. It did work on the C.O. issue in 1918 and released a number of documents of limited value on that issue during the last half of that year. These documents were not carried in *The Mennonite* which suggests the committee was not concerned enough about church perceptions to send the magazine a copy.
Editorial

The most prolific and powerful anti-war voice in *The Mennonite* was Silas Grubb, first the assistant editor and then the editor as of January 1915. He contributed up to two full pages of material per issue, responsible for and often writing editorials, features, and the Christian Endeavor and Sunday School columns. Almost exactly half of all the articles or columns that responded in a theologically reflective way to the war belonged to the magazine’s editors, and almost all of those came from Grubb’s pen.

In his directness and sensitivity to the issues raised by the war, Grubb was a marked departure from his predecessor as senior editor, Carl van der Smissen. While concerned about the war, van der Smissen seemed confused about how to respond. His first editorial after the war broke out called it wasteful and destructive, but he also said it was the fulfilment of biblical prophecy. In the same editorial he called on God to stop the war and for Mennonites to work to alleviate the suffering caused by the war. Another confused editorial explained that war looses the demons of hell, but it may be fought by “pious Christian soldiers.” He concluded that particular editorial with the conjecture that God may be sending the war to punish ungodliness among Europeans. Later in the year he opined that the suffering in Europe was causing Europeans to turn to God. Most strangely of all, in a December editorial he explored at some length how contemporary armies model directly and by analogy the type of character and tactics God demands of

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72 As notes over the years indicate, the editor was assisted in the development of these last two columns by various contributors, but the columns went out anonymously and either directly or indirectly from the editor’s pen.


Christians. He never seemed to grasp either the horror of the war or how to oppose it. He failed to develop a consistent Christian critique of the war, and even implied a weak support for the war.

This was not Grubb's perspective, at least not early in the war. Grubb was alert to the problem of international violence before the war, attending carefully to the Mexico border crisis, where Mexican revolutionaries were harassing Americans in both Texas and Mexico. American troops had been deployed to the area and were carrying out active engagements against both revolutionaries and the Mexican army, leading Grubb to write regularly of the need to find alternatives to war. No doubt his presence as the Mennonite delegate to the Peace Committee of the Federal Council of Churches enhanced his attention. He was also sensitive to the way various members of the community, especially its young men, might experience the war. In April, 1914, he made manhood one of the central issues of an editorial opposed to war with Mexico. He was clear that the plea of patriotism was to a masculinity that ended in ruin while the “noblest and truest manhood” was to do right and testify for peace in the name of God. This concern for character formed his early opinions about the war in Europe as well. Only a few months after the war began he lamented that the war in Europe had already set back the quality of human character by some centuries. At the end of the year he asked how nonresistant young men might be manly in the face of the masculinity of violence. He answered his question by stating it was moral courage that defined true manliness since standing against the crowd

77 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 30 April 1914, 5.
78 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 6 October 1914, 5. While it is not clear by its location that this is a Grubb editorial, the voice is clearly that of Grubb, not the confused and nearly silent van der Smissen.
can be more difficult than going into military action. Grubb continued to pick up on the
link between manliness and violence in a May, 1915, editorial when he indicated that
religion is the difference between a man and a beast. A number of times he critiqued the
idea that there can be war heroes, and in a particularly vibrant image he said that calling a
General a hero is like a dog licking the hand of the man who kicks it. A little later he said
that the widows of soldiers were more heroic than the soldiers.

Grubb also developed a social critique of the war based on his understanding of the
nature of the American people. In the years before America entered the war he argued it
was the goodness and peaceableness of the men and women of a nation that demonstrated
its greatness and these were true American values. It was only the “Yellow Press,”
investors, industrialists, war profiteers, and some politicians who wanted war. He
appealed to the ordinary working man to take action for peace and was convinced that
should women receive the vote war would become impossible because women inherently
stand for the cause of right. As the war proceeded and America remained firmly on the
sidelines he opined that it was the American ethnic melting pot that kept the United States
at peace and if some Americans did support military action it was because they had been
deliberately misinformed by war supporters. September, 1916, brought his most
passionate and lengthy argument against the war as he filled almost two whole pages with
an editorial titled “Our Church and Preparedness.” This careful work analysed the

79 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 10 December 1914, 5-6; 17 December 1914, 4-5.
arguments in favour of U.S. war preparation and dismissed them on the grounds that they would cost money, cause degeneracy and social violence in the United States, were folly and wickedness, and would lead to war.\footnote{“Our Church and Preparedness,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 4-5.}

As for the Europeans, Grubb found them to be deeply astray from God and regularly called them all hypocrites for their professions of Christianity. In one editorial he said that it did not matter who won the war, God was not on the side of the victor.\footnote{“Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 13 August 1914, 5.} He said that the cries for “peace” coming from the Europeans were the cries of those who want the peace of the wasteland.\footnote{“Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 24 December 1914, 5.} But this critique seemed to cause Grubb problems, probably because of the implicit link between Christian faith and state action. While he charged the Christian nations of Europe with hypocrisy he typically added that the call of the church was only to redeem human hearts. When it came to war, he wanted to divorce church action from social action in order to keep the church from having any responsibility to or for the state. However, he failed to draw any such distinction on most other issues, especially temperance, where he very much saw Christian social action and state action as linked. It was as if he wanted to have the benefits of a Christian nation, but at the same time avoid taking any responsibility for the nation if it went wrong.

As the war proceeded Grubb appeared to become confused, a state he seems to have been aware of because in 1915 he opined that war makes all religions confused and inconsistent.\footnote{“Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 18 March 1914, 4.} As the United States moved closer to war Grubb moderated his anti-war position and then appeared to reverse it entirely when the country entered the conflict in 1917. At the point war was declared he called for Mennonite loyalty to the state, “as
effectual as though everyone burned with hatred.” He expected this hatred to be fulfilled through medical service.\textsuperscript{90} In June of that year he implied that everything short of actually carrying a weapon was acceptable in the face of the evil that was occurring in Europe.\textsuperscript{91} However, he backed off this aggressive stance shortly thereafter and for the rest of the war maintained a negative perspective, albeit less stridently than before American entry.

One of Grubb’s concerns throughout the war was the lack of effective Mennonite response. As we shall see in the ethics section, Grubb wanted Mennonites to do something other than simply profit from better war commodity prices. He regularly emphasised the requirement that Christians engage actively in work that heals and restores humanity, especially if it is dangerous work. In August, 1917, he criticised Mennonites for their failure to respond effectively to the war and called Mennonites to get to work on a program of war aid.\textsuperscript{92} In April, 1918, perhaps reflecting on the failure of the Mennonite church to come to a clear position on the war, he argued that the government’s provision of noncombatant military service was a problem. Mennonites, he stated, needed to suffer straightforwardly for their beliefs without such exemptions.\textsuperscript{93}

Grubb actively worked on war issues outside of his editorial position and the result was one of the most substantial written responses to the war published in 1918. He gave a speech on the war to the Eastern District Conference, an association of more liberal Mennonite churches in Pennsylvania and the surrounding states, and then printed it in the paper at the request of the conference.\textsuperscript{94} The bulk of the speech was a scathing critique of

\textsuperscript{90} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 12 April 1917, 4.
\textsuperscript{91} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 14 June 1917, 4.
\textsuperscript{93} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 11 April 1918, 4.
\textsuperscript{94} Silas M. Grubb, “What is the Message of a Mennonite Minister to his People in War Time?” \textit{The Mennonite}, 18 April 1918, 2-3, 4-5.
Mennonite inaction in the face of the war. His critical eye reviewed Mennonite actions in the United States, Germany, and Russia, though his primary focus was American Mennonites. He critiqued the absence of Mennonite participation in the Christian peace movement before the war, saying this was a tremendous missed opportunity that made war resistance later look self-serving. Even the socialists, he said, did a better job of being consistent in their pre-war position. He further criticized Mennonite negative reactions to the war after the United States entered the hostilities as futile, misguided, and unsympathetic to the genuine beliefs of most Americans. In the strongest of terms he called for an energetic Mennonite program of hospital work and war reconstruction as a sign of the integrity of Mennonite beliefs. He laid out the principle that Mennonites must go as far as their conscience permits in assisting the United States in war efforts. However, he appeared to lament what he perceived as the majority of drafted Mennonite men choosing combatant service. Finally he closed the speech with a shift of tone and content as he equivocatingly suggested Mennonite ministers should de-emphasize preaching on the second coming of Jesus Christ and Christian eschatology. While he did not say so, it would not be surprising to find that he believed this teaching permitted Mennonites to avoid responsibility for their current actions by focussing on God’s imminent future actions. Altogether it was a clear call for a different kind of Mennonite response than that which could usually be found in the pages of The Mennonite.

This is a difficult assertion since Grubb is not clear by what he means when he says, “About 800 young men who were called of the thousands of members of the non-resistant church were all who declared themselves…” (p. 4). While it could be Grubb is only referring to those men who chose the route of absolute conscientious objection, this is not consistent with his explicit positive regard for non-combatant work and rejection of absolute C.O. approaches elsewhere. On the other hand, his numbers seem to reflect figures in the rough range of those determined by Gerlof Homan as absolute C.O.s in his review of war records. Homan indicates that of 21,000 C.O.s conscripted only about 4,000 held to an absolute C.O. position and almost half of these later changed their position to that of non-combatant soldiers. Gerlof Homan, American Mennonites and the Great War, 104.
After the war was over, Grubb printed a series of critiques of the editorial position he had taken in the previous year and then responded to those critiques. Grubb was attacked for suggesting Y.M.C.A. and Red Cross service were compatible with Mennonite doctrine, for being anti-German and failing to be appropriately sceptical of American news reports, and for fostering a spirit of hate in the paper. It was a blistering set of attacks that accurately perceived the wavering middle-line Grubb walked between support for the war and support for traditional Mennonite anti-war positions. His response was significant in that he placed his critics within the American cultural milieu by explaining that their critique of him was an American way of dealing with conflict. It is not clear from his response why this was important to him, but it does make clear an inference of many of his comments regarding the war. His consistent editorial approach was to place Mennonites within the framework of patriotic though dissenting American ethno-religious experience. This placement was not easy and forced him to articulate positions well outside of established Mennonite thought, as his critics were at pains to point out.

Another post-war theme for Grubb was the future. He expected world-wide Christianity to move further in the direction of Mennonite doctrine on peace, as it had with slavery and the separation of church and state. He noted that the home and family were threatened by the post-war world. A further worry for him was the long-term American military entanglement in world affairs. Probably reflecting concerns about Russia, a last

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worry was that the world war had shifted from a war of nations to a war of classes, and this new war would bring a life and death struggle for the churches.\footnote{Editorial, \textit{The Mennonite}, 18 December 1919, 4.}

\textbf{Individual Contributions}

Silas Grubb was not the only Mennonite voice to be heard responding to the war. Peter Jansen, an extremely wealthy Nebraska Mennonite, also took an early and sustained interest in the war. He was joined by a few other voices even more concerned to articulate what they believed was the best way of thinking about the war as Mennonites.

Like Grubb, Jansen was also involved in the larger North American peace movement. His perspective on the war was also much like Grubb's, a sustained critique of the social impact of war, especially the impact on the vulnerable.\footnote{Peter Jansen, "A Bright Vision for a Dark Hour," \textit{The Mennonite}, 10 June 1915, 1. Jansen was asked by Henry Ford to join Ford's European peace tour. The December 16 "News and Notes" on page 1, indicates that Jansen refused because he thought the cause was useless.} While not as enthusiastically American as Grubb, perhaps due to his childhood in Russia, Jansen shared much of Grubb's positive sentiment about the United States. Early in the conflict he was convinced America would stay out of the war because American mothers did not want their boys learning to kill.\footnote{"Jansenisms," \textit{The Mennonite}, 13 January 1916, 1.} This gendered approach was reflected in his other writings as, like Grubb, he addressed the false valorization of soldiers' masculinity.\footnote{Peter Jansen, "No Excuse for War," \textit{The Mennonite}, 20 January 1916, 1.}

Other prominent Mennonites had more explicitly theological critiques of the war, rather than the theo-social analysis typical of Grubb and Jansen. For example, in 1915 minister H.G. Allebach prepared a defence of the traditional Mennonite doctrinal position in reaction to a pro-war argument by a non-Mennonite theologian. Allebach was quite clear that a manly man defends his family and other people to the death but he said that in doing
so “it is doubtful whether we are justified in claiming Christ’s sanction for this.”

He said that the military images in the Bible are metaphors for spiritual warfare, not reasons for taking up physical weapons.

Nineteen-seventeen was a particularly strong year for theological critiques. Prominent minister and conference official H.P. Krehbiel argued in June on the basis of Christ and the Apostles and the General Conference Mennonite constitution that “a sincere and faithful follower of Christ cannot consistently participate in war in any form.” Central to his argument was an extended analysis of the New Testament, focussing especially on the teachings of Jesus in the book of Matthew. Another contributor argued that a true patriot was prepared to die for Jesus, not for the country. Like Krehbiel, Rev. Valentine Strubhar cited the New Testament, but he focused on the strong opposition between the church and the world. Nonresistance for Strubhar included avoiding any participation in the state, such as voting, not just military service. One of the most innovative arguments was printed a few weeks later. In it lay member, John Hager, used fundamentalist dispensational thought to argue that the United States was not the good state the Apostle Paul referred to in his letter to the Church at Rome when he called Christians to obey the state, but the Satanic state of the end times referred to in the book of Revelation. Later that year church minister, John von Steen, articulately rejected the...

109 John F. Hager, “State and Church,” The Mennonite, 9 August 1917, 1-2. Dispensational fundamentalism was a world view that divided the world into a series of time periods, as few as two but usually seven or eight. In each of these time periods God functions in a different way in relation to human beings. This allows God in the Old Testament to be a god of war, while in the New Testament a god of peace. This contrasts with the liberal or modernist view that God was being progressively revealed over time and that earlier people of God misunderstood God’s true intentions.
pro-war view of Dean Gray of Moody Bible Institute, a prominent fundamentalist with strong support among Mennonites. Von Steen’s concern was to show that Old Testament support for war was not relevant to Christians of his day.\footnote{J. von Steen, “The Christian and War,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 25 October 1917, 2-3.}

One of the more substantial articles to appear during 1918 was Levi Yoder’s “Should A Christian Go To War?” Yoder argued that Christians were indeed to fight wars, but they were to be spiritual and not physical wars. Based on citations of Jesus in the Gospel of Matthew he built a sophisticated case that said Christians were only to obey their rulers, as the Apostle Paul taught, when the rulers sought to do good. While he did not criticize the American state, he implicitly argued for civil disobedience.\footnote{Levi Yoder, “Should a Christian Go To War?” \textit{The Mennonite}, 21 February 1918, 3.}

The most powerful and imaginative theological response to the war was a series of articles printed after the war, beginning in November, 1919, and running well into 1920. This series by Valdo Petter, a returned veteran and son of prominent Mennonite missionary, Rudolph Petter, vividly portrayed the hell of war. He did this by means of a discourse between the Devil and a group of dead soldiers. Petter’s Devil expounded scripture at length, explaining the clear anti-war posture of the Bible, and responding to questions and criticism from his audience with academic rigor and clarity. It was a series startling in its intensity and its twists on the religious discourse of the pro-war churches. However, in addition to criticizing the war, Petter was strongly critical of the absolutist C.O.s who he said were violating Christ’s teachings to comfort the afflicted.\footnote{Valdo Petter, “Love One Another,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 13 November 1919, 3-4, and in every issue for the next few months. Petter was probably a non-combatant member of the medical corps given his strong and well thought out anti-war position and a vivid awareness of the hell of the front lines.}

Among other striking individual perspectives was one provided in a 1918 Lenten meditation that called for God to “strike down” those who caused the war. Yet more
eloquently, in 1919 R.H. Hertzler, a doctor in the Army medical corps, spoke passionately about the destructive impact war has on soldiers. Hertzler identified how, contrary to the popular press, war destroys a soldier's Christianity and his ideals. He said the church must develop a response to the war that addresses the question of why God allows such hellish activity. In 1919 J. G. Ewert of Hillsboro, Kansas, contributed a poem on the suffering of the four Hutterite C.O.s imprisoned in Alcatraz. In it he described the terrible conditions experienced by these men, conditions that led to the deaths of two of them. Ewert placed these men directly in the martyr tradition of Christ and the Apostles.

About half the individual responses to the war were reprints from other sources, primarily Quaker and other Mennonite publications. Not surprisingly these reprints argued in much the same vein as the members of the community but sometimes they added a new perspective to the discourse. One such article identified war as being due to the work of the devil and the "wine of patriotism." According to the author, conscription was a problem because it put comrades on opposite sides, a denial of the common humanity of all soldiers. The idea of common humanity, an important part of socialist responses to the war, shows up in other non-Mennonite sources and its relative absence among Mennonite contributions may reflect the historically strong distinction between Mennonites and all other humans (the evil world).

Contrary to the general direction of the magazine, in 1918 it carried three articles by other religious leaders suggesting the straightforward anti-war ethic of Mennonites was not

the only legitimate Christian perspective. In July the magazine carried a reprint of an article by Dr. Jowett, the nineteenth-century Oxford divine, indicating that true peace was inner and spiritual. In November Dr. Gray of Moody Bible Institute stated that the end of the war would lead to a great religious revival. Finally, in early December the magazine carried an article by Capt. J.A. Mills, A.R.C. that located the Red Cross war work in the context of the Cross of Christ and valorized the military suffering in the war. Each might be interpreted in ways consistent with a Mennonite anti-war stance, but as already indicated, Dr. Gray was well known and criticized in Mennonite circles for his pro-war stance and the Red Cross was widely criticized in Mennonite circles for being an arm of the military. The publication of these three articles may represent the ambivalence about the war editor Grubb was feeling that year or it may be they were submissions from members of the church and printed at their request.

Theology Summary

The handful of Mennonite responses to the war in the midst of thousands of articles indicated the fundamental discursive inaction of the Mennonite church in response to the crisis. With the exception of a few voices such as that of Peter Jansen and editor Silas Grubb, rare were the voices that spoke passionately for Mennonite peace perspectives. None were systematic and none reflective of a significant institutional response.

Examining the theological articles thematically, the majority argued against war participation pragmatically on the basis of a theo-social analysis. The minority were more formally theological, using traditional Mennonite doctrines or the Bible, or even some new

118 "I Am The Red Cross," *The Mennonite*, 5 December 1918, 4.
theological perspective. Very few reflected traditional Mennonite understandings by quoting teachings of Jesus.

The theologically most creative contributors were those who developed dispensational arguments.\textsuperscript{119} Fundamentalist dispensational thought, with its rationalist yet highly imaginative imagery, was popular in conservative American Christian circles at the time. One of its major sources, the Scofield Reference Bible, was often advertised in \textit{The Mennonite}. Moody Bible Institute in Chicago and the Bible Institute at Los Angeles (BIOLA) were both popular with Mennonites and centers of fundamentalist dispensational teaching, so it is not surprising this type of thinking had come into Mennonite circles. However, both Moody and BIOLA embraced the American war effort enthusiastically. Despite that, perhaps somewhat ironically, some Mennonites used dispensational thought to oppose the war. The rare usage suggests this was not a popular approach, possibly because this point of view posited an extreme opposition between the government and Christians, an opposition most General Conference Mennonites seemed loathe to make.

One voice that stood out in the discourse was that of Silas Grubb. As editor and peace activist, his voice was heard regularly from the pages. Sometimes strident, sometimes confused, even sometimes contradictory, Grubb's voice proclaimed a Mennonite perspective that was anti-war and deeply reflective of the situation American Mennonites faced. Of all the contributors, Grubb also seemed to be the most aware of the challenge to masculinity the war placed in front of young Mennonite men. From the very beginning he warned of the false valour of military action and the need for an alternative masculinity.

\textsuperscript{119} See n. 109 above.
However, Grubb stepped somewhat outside traditional Mennonite thought by articulating a pro-American Mennonite response to the issues of violence and war. At every point Grubb was concerned to connect Mennonite nonresistance/pacifism with patriotism and support for the American state. This led to a confused and contradictory response to the American declaration of war on Germany. It may also explain why his critique of war never seriously explored the actual damage Americans were wreaking on other Americans in the name of patriotism. More typical of his awkward position was a set of editorials in September, 1918, when he argued that the American government’s approach to the draft would turn Americans against the war. With that background he said that Mennonites should avoid talking about their peace position in public so as not to antagonize the government and ministers should stick to themes of repentance and salvation. 120 His agony over the difficulty of being both American and Mennonite was clearly visible.

It would not be surprising to find that Grubb’s ambivalence about the war was shared by many other Mennonites. Few seemed prepared to speak out in print, and those who did rarely addressed the violence of the American state. Instead it was as if the whole constituency sought to find an accommodation, one that was achieved by denying the suffering American Mennonites were experiencing. Certainly Grubb’s predecessor as editor, Carl van der Smissen, agonized over the war even before the American entry. The call to speak on behalf of a peace church to address violence was clearly one he shied away from, and instead he wrote only a few conflicted and confused commentaries. The straightforward and forthright opposition to the war of a Peter Jansen seems to have been the extreme exception. Jansen was born in Prussia and spent his childhood in Russia before

becoming an extremely wealthy agribusinessman in Nebraska. This intelligent and articulate world traveller, known to the likes of Henry Ford, might not have seen the same need to integrate Mennonites into the American experience.

The dominant opposition to the war was the discourse of pragmatism: The war was extremely destructive, more so than the alternatives. It destroyed the character it was supposed to build. It harmed the innocent, especially women and children. It led to a type of society opposed to the American virtues of individual freedom and independence of thought. Especially, the war interfered with the global Christian missionary enterprise, though this was not a theme reflected by the reports of Mennonite missionaries writing home from overseas. Those reports hardly changed during the war years. Rather than being something Mennonites experienced, the concern for Christian missions appears to have arisen from the logic of a failed Christendom, of “Christian” nations at war and therefore contradicting the gospel.

Finally, the voices against the war did not speak of a sustained formal or institutional opposition to the war. The voices in the magazine were individual. No one claimed to speak on behalf of the church at large and the church at large—through its formal structures—did not present a position. Individuals haphazardly turned their attention to what concerned them, but even then, these individuals failed to address major war issues that faced Mennonites in North America. The issue of war bond purchases, a very controversial item in the United States and Canada, was almost completely ignored until after the war.

Jansen was the subject of two major autobiographical series of articles in The Mennonite in 1914 and 1915.


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<td>39</td>
</tr>
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Table 2.3. Number of ethical instructions per year by target

2.3 Ethics

Ethical instructions are the guidelines for community and personal action developed by individuals and institutions within the Mennonite world. Ethics can be highly philosophical or “common sense,” be suggestions or commands, and range from principles of behaviour to specific practical instructions. From time to time there were formal and informal ethical instructions carried in the pages of The Mennonite regarding how Mennonites and Christians should live during the war period. These included instructions to the young men facing registration and draft, to the Mennonite community, and to the broader world of Christians and Americans (Table 2.3). Over the years these instruction varied in number, from a low of 11 in 1916 to a high of 57 in 1917 with half of all the instruction focused on the Mennonite community. The bulk of the rest, and the majority in the years before American entry into the war, were focused on Christians at large. Eight percent were directed at the young men who were required to serve. The difference between these last two suggests there was something wrong in the Mennonite community. If it was ten times as important to say something about American life as it was to guide

122 While not all Americans were Christians, it appears to have been a widely shared assumption that the United States was a Christian nation.
young men making the toughest decisions of their lives, then what truly concerned this people?

**Instructions to Young Men**

The registration and drafting of young Mennonite men was one of the most critical events of the war years. All Mennonite men of the appropriate age were required by the registration laws of both United States and Canada to register with the national government. *The Mennonite* paid relatively little attention to the Canadian process, reflecting its primarily American orientation. However, even before the war the behaviour of young men was an issue. In early 1914, concerned about the growing violence on the Mexican border, Silas Grubb wrote an editorial directing young men not to get caught up in the pro-war enthusiasm and enlist. 123 He picked up the same theme later in the year after the war in Europe began. If young men felt they must do something he commended to them the Quaker C.O. ambulance corps then being formed as an expression of Quaker resistance to the war. 124

Grubb continued to be a major source of ethical instruction for young men, though his next comments did not come until just before the United States entered the war. At that point he told young men that if drafted they should go to prison rather than to war. 125 After entry an editorial gave instructions on how to register for the draft including how to answer questions and what documentation to have. 126 In January, 1918, when hope for alternative civilian service still existed, he wrote, “in the face of the wave of hate and passion... we still have confidence in the rank and file of our youth to believe that in this

war weary age they will be prepared to vindicate the peace sentiment of their fathers by holding close to the teachings of Jesus.”127 Later in the year he provided a set of principles when in a speech to the Eastern Conference of the General Conference he emphasized that the young men should do what the government required, as far as conscience allowed.128 This ended his instructions until after the war when he opined that the church should not change for veterans, instead he believed veterans would want to return to the old ways after the horrors they had experienced.129

In addition to Grubb, church authorities were a major source of ethics for young men, though this was almost completely restricted to 1917. In June of that year the paper carried the Eastern District Conference instructions telling their young men to register.130 The September 13 issue included three statements from Mennonite groups providing instruction to draftees. The most important was the General Conference statement which represented the official position of the magazine’s constituency. This statement provided a three-point directive to young men telling them to obey all orders except where they conflicted with the Word of God or Mennonite creed or principles, to accept non-military service or other work that aided human life, and not to do any work which did violence to others.131 Four weeks later the General Conference produced a statement requesting draftees live out their confession as a holy conviction.132 This rhetoric was not accompanied by suggestions regarding what this might look like. At the end of November

128 S.M. Grubb, “What is the Message of a Mennonite Minister to His People in War Time?” The Mennonite, 18 April 1918, 2-3, 4-5.
130 “In Mennonite Circles,” The Mennonite, 7 June 1917, 1.
131 “General Conference,” The Mennonite, 13 September 1917, 1. At this point Mennonites still hoped the government would provide an avenue for alternative service outside of direct military control.
the young men were supplied with answers to the draft registration questionnaires. A meeting of the General Conference Committee on Exemption at the end of the year led to a more extensive and detailed position for General Conference draftees. This seven-point statement provided little substantive content other than outlining a process for appealing treatment the draftees considered outside legitimate government action. As part of the appeals process it recommended writing letters to the Committee on Exemption, despite earlier in the statement indicating the committee was unable to do anything to assist the draftees directly. Significantly, there was a direct appeal to the masculinity of the draftees, telling them to appeal in a “dignified, gentlemanly and courteous way.”

In 1918 the draft expanded and in March of that year the U.S. government brought in its regulations requiring non-combatant military service from conscientious objectors. This (and the delay in implementing the Farm Furlough Act) led to the dilemma for many Mennonite men regarding where they drew the line around nonresistance. Did they agree to non-combatant military service or did they continue to resist and wait for an increasingly unlikely alternative service or furlough arrangement? At the direction of Secretary Baker of the War Department, military pressures to accept conventional military service increased and would lead to court-martials for the some of the Mennonite C.O.s. However, faced with this increasingly difficult situation, practical advice to these men was no longer printed. What may have contributed to this silence was the American Espionage and Sedition Act which was interpreted in such a way that instructing C.O.s in any specific action might result in charges of sedition. As Gerlof Homan points out, this was the fate of


some of the Mennonite ministers who met with men in the camps. However, it seems more likely, as we have seen in the theological responses, that the broader Mennonite church had no idea what to say.

If the approach of the General Conference to their young men appears negligent, they were not markedly different from the positions taken by other Mennonite groups. The Old Mennonites, in a statement adopted August 29, 1918, and printed a few weeks later in *The Mennonite*, recommended young men meekly comply with instructions, not desert or commit treason, accept neither combatant nor non-combatant work, submit to penalties, and trust God. Later the Old Mennonites would expand this set to include, do not wear a uniform or carry a gun, do not take military training, beware of temptation, do not swear oaths (a long time Mennonite doctrinal concern), and obey all commands your conscience permits. The more conservative Old Mennonite Franconia Conference adopted its own set of instructions in September: suffer persecution, be pleasant and kind, accept scorn and name calling, avoid temptation, and do not play cards. The last was part of a general concern of the period about young people falling into the trap of “amusements.” By comparison with these other denominational instructions, the General Conference position seems somewhat scant on guidance but hardly less realistic.

Individual contributors rarely addressed the behaviour of the young men. In August, 1917, the magazine reprinted an article suggesting the only possible legitimate non-combatant service for Mennonite draftees was the medical corps. The contributor noted


137 *The Mennonite*, 4 October 1917, 1.

that it was better for these young men to die than to disobey the teachings of Jesus Christ.\textsuperscript{139} After the war the magazine reprinted a brief quote by G.P. Lapp of Goshen College, Indiana, saying Mennonite men needed to "prove real bravery by entering some form of self-sacrificing service which will enable them to give their lives for the good of humanity."\textsuperscript{140} In another post-war article, Quaker Wilbur Thomas called Mennonite young men and women to commit "one or two years of their lives to service for others" at church expense.\textsuperscript{141}

\textbf{Instructions to Mennonites at Home}

As with ethical directions to the young men, Silas Grubb was the first to consider the need for changes in behaviour by Mennonites at home, and again it was the conflict with Mexico that triggered his reflections. In March, 1914, he expressed the need for Mennonites to produce a prophet of peace.\textsuperscript{142} It is not clear whether this prophet was to speak to Mennonites or the broader world, but Grubb's role in interdenominational peace movements and later editorials recommending more peace preaching in Christian churches in general suggests the latter might have been the direction of his thinking.\textsuperscript{143}

Silas Grubb continued through the war to provide a stream of sometimes inconsistent advice on how Mennonites should behave during the war including the already noted direction to burn with hatred. His 1915 call for Mennonite ministers to start preaching peace was withdrawn in 1918 after the United States entered the conflict.\textsuperscript{144} In

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{139} J.A. Huffman, "A Call to Prayer," \textit{The Mennonite}, 16 August 1917, 4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{140} "In Mennonite Circles," \textit{The Mennonite}, 27 March 1919, 1.
\item \textsuperscript{141} "In Mennonite Circles," \textit{The Mennonite}, 10 April 1919, 1. Mennonite Central Committee would adopt this strategy almost thirty years later in the aftermath of World War II.
\item \textsuperscript{142} "Editorial," \textit{The Mennonite}, 12 March 1914, 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{143} "Editorial," \textit{The Mennonite}, 14 May 1914, 5-6.
\item \textsuperscript{144} "Editorial," \textit{The Mennonite}, 10 June 1915, 4; "Editorial," \textit{The Mennonite}, 26 September 1918, 4.
\end{footnotes}
October, 1918, Grubb called for the purchase of war bonds. He argued it was simply a case of rendering unto Caesar that which is Caesar's, a reference to a famous direction of Jesus when asked the question about paying taxes.\textsuperscript{145} In the same editorial he argued that farming and munitions production equally supported the war. His point appeared to be that Mennonites were already supporting violence and therefore war bond purchases were only the appropriate next step.

Grubb was also a strong supporter of reconstruction work, a theme he returned to many times during the war years and especially after the conflict was over. Lest the ongoing relief efforts with Mennonites in Europe become too parochial, in June, 1919, he called Mennonites to extend their generosity to the whole world and commended those who worked with the Red Cross, YMCA or other humanitarian groups during the war.\textsuperscript{146} A later editorial stressed that reconstruction and other acts of service must be a whole hearted endeavour by the church if it intended to keep the loyalty of the “young people who have had to bear the brunt of the trials.”\textsuperscript{147} Toward the end of the year he suggested God spared American Mennonites during the war just so they could help European Mennonites, a perspective that later became strident.\textsuperscript{148}

The General Conference was formally active through its Emergency Relief Commission, a long standing committee which had in the years before the war raised funds for relief work in India and elsewhere. With the outbreak of hostilities in Europe in 1914,

\textsuperscript{146} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 26 June 1919, 4.
\textsuperscript{147} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 24 July 1919, 4. The gender language Grubb uses was not out of keeping with what seems to have been an ongoing desire of his to identify both young men and women as sufferers as a result of the war policies. A number of times he referred to the trials of both young men and young women, though he failed to specify what trials the young women might have experienced.
committee member John Lichti wrote requesting donations for help with war damages.\textsuperscript{149} The targets of their relief work at that time were the German Red Cross and the widows and orphans of German soldiers.\textsuperscript{150} (Silas Grubb appeared to be unaware of this work because later in that year he called on Mennonites to start planning how they could help war sufferers.\textsuperscript{151}) Later the Commission changed its focus to devastated Mennonite communities in France and Russia. Throughout the church there were those who saw in this emergency relief work the seeds of a more extensive program of action. In early September, 1917, a paper presented to the Middle District Conference by C.O. Lehman suggested churches should become active in war reconstruction work right away for fear that delaying a response would demonstrate the irrelevance of the church.\textsuperscript{152} In the same month Peter Janzen suggested that the church needed to build hospitals (as well as demonstrate loyalty to the country and clarify non-combatant status).\textsuperscript{153}

There were other voices with words of advice. In 1915 C. Henry Smith, the Mennonite historian, made an appeal to the churches to start teaching peace to young Mennonites, advice repeated by an anonymous contributor the following year.\textsuperscript{154} Others recommended Mennonites give to the Red Cross.\textsuperscript{155} A reprint from the Old Mennonite paper, the \textit{Gospel Herald}, recommended Mennonites profiting from the war demonstrate

\textsuperscript{149} John Lichti, “Call for Help,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 24 September 1914, 2.
\textsuperscript{150} “Contributions,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 20 October 1914, 3.
\textsuperscript{151} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 12 November 1914, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{155} “Notes and Comments,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 22 March 1917, 1. This was more controversial than it seems since for many Mennonites the Red Cross was seen as working too closely with the combatants in the war.
frugality in order to prove they were truly people of conscience. Minister R.F. Landis called on the churches to pray for the President, support the government, and farm. An anonymous article suggested the appropriate war strategy for ordinary folks was to work well in their existing jobs.

The end of the war brought a particular intensity to the Mennonite sense that they needed to be doing something. The need to support relief work in Europe was very much on the forefront of Mennonite consciousness, though by March, 1919, this focus was beginning to shift from Western Europe to Russia. N.C. Neufeld gave a sense of the breadth of the need when he suggested housewives go through their goods for things they could send to the Mennonites in Russia. Closer to home, early in the year Rev. J. B. Boehr called for assistance on the part of the Mennonite church to liberate the imprisoned American C.O.s. Boehr called the imprisonment a violation of the C.O.s’ constitutional rights and declared the church had a requirement to confront unjust laws. In addition Boehr, like many others, called for reconstruction work in Europe. President J.W. Kliwer, of Bethel College in Kansas, cast his eyes on the international stage and told Mennonites to pray for peace and the success of the League of Nations, love their enemies, and work to Christianize the world order. He also called on the churches to love their returning soldiers, at least those who experienced a conversion in the trenches. Lina Schwartzendune,

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156 “Keep Your Head,” The Mennonite, 13 September 1917, 3.
160 J.B. Boehr, “What Are We Doing to Liberate the Conscientious Objectors,” The Mennonite, 30 January 1919, 4-5; 6 February 1919, 4-5.
in a rare contribution by a woman, worried about the diminishment of commitment by women to sewing societies now that the war was over.\textsuperscript{162}

One contributor called for the church to undertake a rethinking of Mennonite understandings of their position and practices. Abram Burkhart said conscience was not the right way to present Mennonite perspectives. It was this approach that led to the suffering of the men in the camps. Instead Mennonites needed to proclaim they were creedally and absolutely committed to following Jesus and could not participate in war in any way, including as non-combatant soldiers. He went on to challenge the comparison of going to war to stopping a home invader. He also addressed the war bond issue with the direct statement that since all money belonged to the government they have the right to ask for it any time they wish and in any way they wish. It was a complex set of positions that in one way or another put Burkhart at odds with nearly every Mennonite who took a public position during the war.\textsuperscript{163}

\textit{Instructions to Christians}

The ethical world of \textit{The Mennonite} extended past Mennonites to take in Christians in general and Americans at large. Often these last two were understood as synonymous since many of the contributors were convinced, at least before the United States entered the war, that it was perhaps the only truly Christian nation. In examining this material it needs to be noted that this discourse was directed at the Mennonite community, not at the world at large since the audience of the paper was Mennonite and Mennonites had little impact on the world outside their communities. In this light it is significant that almost one

\textsuperscript{162} Lina E. Schwartzendune, “Our Woman’s Work,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 29 May 1919, 4. During the war congregational sewing societies had raised funds for relief and sewn and knit for the Red Cross.

third of all the ethically directed articles were directed to this larger world. The Mennonite world needed to tell itself something about the rest of the world.

Not surprisingly one of the voices speaking about this larger world was editor Silas Grubb. He saw the war as many things to Americans, first and often as a call to unity. A December, 1914, editorial warned against the American willingness to sell materials to the warring nations, a theme he returned to a number of times. A highly prescient editorial in 1918 reflected on the post-war nature of family and home life and, contra popular media, called for an awareness that change was coming. Grubb was convinced that in the post-war world women would expect to be treated differently—having been major contributors to the war effort through their employment they would no longer be satisfied with old patterns of domesticity. He also noted that male war experiences would change the men, though he explicitly refused to speculate on the direction of those changes. He called for men and women to behave sanely and construct gender roles of greatest good to God and humanity in the aftermath of the war.

Another unsurprising contributor was Peter Jansen. He addressed the United States, but only once and then to argue that true patriots pursued peace. But while Jansen was an often heard voice on many topics, most of the articles printed regarding the ethics of Americans came from a wide range of mostly new voices. Already in 1917, E.Y. Fretz wrote of the need for Christians to start planning for the world after the war. He wondered how the world might learn to live in peace. In the following year H.J. Kliewer reflected

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164 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 27 August 1914, 6; The Mennonite, 3 June 1915, 4.
165 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 26 November 1914, 4-5.
166 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 4 April 1918, 4.
168 E.Y. Fretz, “War-Time Christmas,” The Mennonite, 6 December 1917, 4-5.
on Cheyenne Indian questions regarding the legitimacy of a government that took their
land by force and subsequently asked for their help to keep that land. In a different vein,
P.R. Aeschliman argued that Christians as a whole need to practice self-condemnation in
order to bring peace to the world. This Mennonite virtue would, he suggested, bring an end
to self-righteousness and lead to more love between Christians.

Many of the voices speaking through the pages regarding the ethics of Americans
came from non-Mennonite sources. In the years before American entry to the war Quaker
Isaac Sharpless said the United States needed to take the position of global mediator based
the belligerents. Benjamin Glassberg wanted peace teaching included in the public school
curriculum. Rev. MacFarland called the United States to begin a program of European
war relief for the destitute and suffering. Throughout the war years the magazine
regularly printed calls by American Christians, especially the Federal Council of Churches,
to pray for peace. The problems caused by the war came in for commentary and there were
calls to Americans to attend to problems such as soldiers in training camps becoming
sexually involved with local women, and child labour due to war labour shortages.

Femininity was an aspect of these American ethics. An odd series of three articles
by Mrs. Max West, starting in the April 25, 1918, issue, indicated it was the patriotic duty of

Mennonite, 13 May 1915, 4-5.
175 Ada Wallace Unruh, “A New War Problem,” The Mennonite, 2 August 1917, 3; “Emergency Child Labor
During the War,” The Mennonite, 2 August 1917, 3.
mothers to raise healthy children. She was quite explicit that this treatment was to ensure America would have soldiers for the future. While in pre-war years articles on baby and child care occasionally found their place in the pages of the magazine, in no other article was the creation of either good citizens or good soldiers endorsed. Adding to this pro-war femininity was an article in May, 1918, calling readers to celebrate all mothers whose sons were “fighting for freedom and the sanctity of the home.” Another article sought to recruit women for the Red Cross. The effect of these articles was to encourage women to think positively about how they could contribute to the American war effort.

**Ethics Summary**

The ethical concerns expressed in the magazine ranged widely over the war years. One of the few points of consistency was their commitment to obedience to the laws of the United States. While many Mennonites were deeply worried or displeased by the actions of the American government leading up to and after entering the war, no voices of actual opposition let alone arguments for civil disobedience made it into print. This concern for obedience especially shaped the directions given to the young men. Looking at these expressions of ethics most broadly, the general direction was for Mennonites to frame their ethics in terms acceptable to the ethos of the United States.

In general, the most explicit and useless ethical instructions were those given to the young men who faced the most difficult ethical crisis in responding to the war. These young men faced the direct ethical problems of registering for the draft, responding to draft notices and, once in camp, deciding where to draw the line around conscientious

176 25 April 1918, 5; 16 May 1918, 4; and 30 May 1918, 5.
177 “A Call to Prayer for Mother's Day,” The Mennonite, 2 May 1918, 3.
178 “The Red Cross Membership Roll-Call,” The Mennonite, 31 October 1918, 2.
objection. However, they obtained little assistance except for the direction to do what they were told as far as their conscience permitted. Church leaders seemed more concerned that they behave like nice Mennonite farm boys than to provide careful guidelines that might help a young man decide where he should draw the line: Carry a gun but refuse to fire? Join the non-combatant corps? If so, which ones? Refuse to join the corps, but help out in the camps? Refuse to join and refuse to help out in the camps? Nor was any rationale given for the instructions. What made registration and reporting once drafted appropriate activities? Was it simply a question of doing what you were told up to the point where you could not take it any longer? One could perhaps blame this absence of effective instruction on fear of the sedition laws and their broad interpretation, but this absence of instruction matched the lack of clarity of all those involved at every level of the church. Revealing significant insensitivity to their plight, Silas Grubb’s declared that after the war the men would need to return to the church and their old ways. New experiences and exposure to new ideas and people would have to be put aside. In this light it is easy to see why James Juhnke calls these young men a lost generation to the church. Poorly guided on the one hand and neither understood nor accepted on the other, it was no wonder they left the church and engaged in other hostile behaviours of the type the life course reconstructions show.

More positively, a major concern of these ethical statements was the need to do something that reflected the Mennonite understanding of God’s command to aid fellow humans. For General Conference Mennonites this had been the Emergency Relief Committee, an agency that early in the war assisted German families. But as the war progressed the focus became more global, and then in response to Mennonite communal

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devastation in many parts of the world, it focused on aid to suffering Mennonites. What these calls neglected to mention was the difficulty Mennonites had in responding to these calls. The Emergency Relief Commission had no staff. The lack of unity between Mennonite groups seriously hampered the good intentions being expressed. Many Mennonites finally donated to Quaker agencies due to the lack of effective Mennonite vehicles for aid. It was not until after the war when the crisis of Mennonites in Southern Russia forced a unified response that Mennonites actually began to work together. It is worth noting that in making the calls for acts of service many of the contributors also stated Mennonites were not cowards. This indicates that for some Mennonites, the desire to get involved in acts of service was a direct response to the sense that they were perceived by others as less brave than the American norm.

There was the odd feature of specifically female ethics, especially the pro-war direction of those ethics. It seems to have been acceptable for women to support the cause of the war through service and child rearing. Did this reflect an actual tendency of Mennonite women to support war service, unlike their men? Was it a way for the men to show that Mennonites were truly patriotic, as shown by their women, and therefore the men were patriotic too, just misunderstood? The latter would certainly reflect the biases of the editor, but there were signs visible in some of the other material, as the next chapter will show, that the former might have been the case as well.

Then there was the strange case of the ethics of American life. There were other Christians besides Mennonites prepared to address the war with calls for peace, calls for peace that sounded very much like those of the Mennonite community. That Mennonites needed to hear they were not alone was almost certainly what was driving this material’s inclusion. But other printed statements that called for more integration into the American
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Table 2.4. Number of military metaphors and illustrations per year

cultural milieu might have reflected the pain of the ostracism that was then current at the interface between many Mennonite communities and the surrounding American culture.

What all these ethical instructions indicate was how much the war caught Mennonites unprepared for what they would experience. Mennonites had lived before the war in prosperous rural ghettos, for the most part cut off from mainstream American life. Those Mennonites who were more actively engaged with the nation were generally supportive of the American cultural milieu. They had not determined how to both appropriate and distance themselves from this larger world. This led to ethics that were weak and poorly thought out. They lacked clarity or persuasiveness and failed to be effective guides to what good Mennonites did in those difficult times. In the end individual Mennonites, whether young or old, male or female, were forced to make their own decisions regarding how to respond to the war. The church press was not much help.

2.4 Military Metaphors and Illustrations

Military metaphors and illustrations were the images of militarism used by various contributors to explain points or add detail to their articles. These secondary types of usage reveal the way military ideas were present in the overall framework of discourse within the
Mennonite cultural world. The total number of such usages varied widely from year to year in no necessary relationship to the progress of the war (Table 2.4).

There is a Christian tradition of military metaphors going back to the New Testament itself. It is not surprising then to find such metaphors in a Christian publication, though it may be surprising how much they were embraced by a pacifist tradition. Many times the virtues of the soldier were used as the basis for explaining the virtues of the Christian life. The most blatant use of the war itself as a metaphor for Christian life came from a 1914 editorial by Carl van der Smissen. He used details of the military preparations and actions of the European combatants to illustrate virtues of the Christian life. Such images as hand-to-hand combat, mass warfare, well-armed and supported armies, and general national preparedness were, for him, analogies to good Christian behaviour. 180 No less disconcertingly, a eulogy for three deceased conference leaders in 1917 called these leaders Christian Soldiers. 181 It could be argued these uses attempted to subvert the metaphor by recontextualizing it. Indeed some of the contributors who used such metaphors were clear they were referring to spiritual warfare rather than physical warfare. 182 However, such metaphors inherently valorized the soldier. His imagined characteristics were made into good characteristics, not challenged as destructive to the good Christian life. This was explicit in a reprinted article from famous Congregationalist minister N.D. Hillis who explained that among the things the Bible fosters are “Patriots, fighting for liberty; heroes, struggling against oppression.” 183 The life lived in pursuit of destruction had

become the model for those who formally sought the peace of the world and the well-being of the enemy.

There were other uses of military metaphors. Masculinity seemed at times to attract them. "Militant masculine Christianity" was demonstrated in one news report in reference to a march of 7,000 men.\(^\text{184}\) A reprint titled "Men's Missionary Song," consisted of little more than military metaphors strung together.\(^\text{185}\) Admittedly such uses were very rare. Another not quite so rare use of the war as metaphor was to talk of the "real war." The "real war" was not the war in Europe but the war against the family or against heathenism.\(^\text{186}\)

Military images also served as backdrop, context or illustration in other stories. This too is not surprising given that the world was at war and the impact of such a war is felt everywhere. What is surprising was how neutral these uses were. As already examined, those who focused on war as a subject saw it as inherently negative, but as a contextual or background image, war was treated as something that was simply a fact of human life, something against which other things could be assessed and measured. In this sense, according to one contributor, war was among the things that cannot damage the Bible and an editorial on social justice used the war as an example of how Christians are blamed due to their inaction.\(^\text{187}\) A column on the importance of reading the Bible used the war as an illustration of what happens when people do not read their Bibles.\(^\text{188}\) The oddest use of the war as an illustration occurred in a major article on the importance of effective public

\(^{188}\) "The C.E. Topic," \textit{The Mennonite}, 10 February 1916, 4-5.
speaking where teacher B.D. Smucker set up an opposition between the effects of poor public speaking and the "thrilling battle scenes now taking place in Europe."\textsuperscript{189} Jacob Fretz indicated that problems in the military are typical of the problems caused by alcohol.\textsuperscript{190} A.M. Fretz, in a series of articles on the inspiration of the Bible saw the butchery of the war as a reason for not taking the Bible too literally.\textsuperscript{191} A Christian Endeavor column on the subject of Christian childhood announced cavalierly that, "The boy of today will be the man in the ranks fighting his country's battles in a few years."\textsuperscript{192} A more typical military illustration was in the Christmas letter of P.A. and Martha Penner from the mission field in India. They contrasted President Wilson's ease of getting millions of people for the army to their difficulty in finding a few to work in India.\textsuperscript{193} Chicago mission worker, W.W. Miller, used the war differently when he quoted a General to the effect that the best thing to do for a nation at war is to make it spiritual and later he used the armistice as a contrast with God's true peace.\textsuperscript{194} An article on parenting called on parents to sacrifice for the well-being of their children the way they do for the war.\textsuperscript{195} Women's column editor, Anna G. Stauffer, made the telling comparison between women's competence in responding to war needs and the potential competence of women for church mission service.\textsuperscript{196}

In summary, contributors and editors of the magazine seem to have had little difficulty using military metaphors in their thinking. Most commonly, the virtues of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{189} B.D. Smucker, "A Plea for Oratorical Culture," \textit{The Mennonite}, 18 May 1916, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{190} Jacob R. Fretz, "Temperance Progress or The Advance of the Prohibition Tidal Wave," \textit{The Mennonite}, 14 June 1917, 3.
\item \textsuperscript{191} A.M. Fretz, "The Inspiration of the Bible," \textit{The Mennonite}, 6 December 1917, 3,5.
\item \textsuperscript{192} "The C.E. Topic," \textit{The Mennonite}, 3 January 1918, 6.
\item \textsuperscript{193} P.A. and Martha Penner, "Christmas in Champa," \textit{The Mennonite}, 30 May 1918, 2.
\item \textsuperscript{195} Blanche Myers, "Christian Duty and privilege," \textit{The Mennonite}, 30 May 1918, 4-5.
\item \textsuperscript{196} Anna G. Stauffer, "Our Woman's Work," \textit{The Mennonite}, 28 November 1918, 4-5.
\end{itemize}
military were used to illustrate Christian virtues and the idea there might be a distinct
difference between these sets of virtues was never considered. Examining the wide range
of uses of images from the war suggests how powerfully the war formed the backdrop of
human experience during the era. The general neutrality of such use is surprising.
Altogether these uses indicate a relatively naïve understanding of metaphors and images
and a refusal or inability to undertake a thorough critique of militarism. For these people
the war was reflected on as an event, but ignored as a state of being.

2.5 Sub-themes

This examination of the war discourse of The Mennonite has opened a window into
the way one of the largest North American groups of Mennonites dealt with the crisis of
World War I. They were beginning to move toward assimilation into the American
mainstream, but were doing so without the benefit of a mature intellectual, institutional or
organizational infrastructure. Therefore, when the war caused the American mainstream to
shift in a direction profoundly hostile to the core values of Mennonites, it is not surprising
that Mennonite discourse was confused and scattered. Mennonites wanted in, and now
they did not know what to say. Reviewing the discourse we can see the many forces
pushing Mennonites as they assimilated, and then how that created the conditions for their
failure to address the crisis of masculinity faced by the young men in their midst. In that
review two major sub-themes emerge, the Americanization of the discourse and the lack of
a good answer to the question, what would you do if some brute attacked your loved ones?

Americanization

Under examination, the war discourse was an Americanized phenomena.
Substantial Mennonite communities existed in 1914 in the Netherlands, France, Germany,
Switzerland, and Russia, as well as in Canada and the United States. Yet the perspective of the discourse was American. While there were occasional voices of resistance to this perspective, the vast majority of contributors and the editors themselves spoke out of and for an American perspective. For these people the world of Mennonite existence was confined by the borders of the United States. International family ties and the ongoing movement of Mennonites to or from the United States did not have a discernable impact on the discursively expressed identity. This indicates that a significant assimilation of identity had already taken place. They were first Americans and only secondarily part of an international religious movement.

What makes this perspective more disturbing is the formally international constituency of *The Mennonite*. The General Conference Mennonite Church, of which *The Mennonite* was the English news-magazine, was a bi-national church with approximately 2,000 members in Canada at the time. Canadian correspondents wrote in from time to time and a few events in Canada did get attention. Despite this, the war story told was an American story.

The result is that while Mennonites experienced the war globally, and Mennonite theology and ideology placed a sharp divide between church and state, the Mennonites of the General Conference and *The Mennonite* assumed the primacy and legitimacy of American national boundaries. These boundaries, not Mennonite boundaries, formed the framework from which they thought and spoke. They were Americanized Mennonites. 197

This Americanized identity meant that as Mennonites tried to deal with the war they were first forced to struggle to place their response within the framework of American

197 This nationalism is not surprising. Stanley Hauerwas comments that in liberal democracies an idolatry of the nation-state is the most common and powerful error Christians make. Stanley Hauerwas, *A Community of Character* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1981), 110.
democratic and individualist ideology. This was relatively easy in the early stages of the war when the United States maintained a neutral approach to the belligerents. At that point it was easy to find in the United States the kind of national Christianity Mennonites could support or even applaud. The majority of Christian churches spoke for peace. Significant figures such as President Woodrow Wilson and Secretary of State Williams Jennings Bryan spoke strongly for a peaceful United States. The ongoing violence with Mexico did cause some problems, but there was no disagreement with Silas Grubb’s declaration that this as a police action rather than an invasion, suggesting his perspective was one Mennonites were comfortable accepting.

As the United States moved towards war with Germany this easy Americanization began to clash with the Mennonite history and ideology of nonresistance. At first contributors imagined that American support for militarization belonged to a small minority, but as popular support increased this point of view became impossible to sustain. With American entry into the war Mennonites began to reflect with intensity on it, and perspectives within the denomination diverged as nonresistance and tradition clashed with this militaristic American identity. While a significant number of the voices returned to the ancient themes of Mennonite nonresistance rooted in Jesus Christ, their Prince of Peace, other voices sought new perspectives from fundamentalist dispensationalism or American civil religion. However, most calls for opposition to the war sidestepped Mennonite nonresistance and were based on pragmatic reasoning, such as that the war could have been handled differently or war was wasteful of humans and other resources. Pragmatism is itself the quintessentially American form of reasoning.

Despite this side-stepping, nonresistance still powerfully shaped the Mennonite response to the draft of their young men. For these men nonresistance was identified as a
passive martyr tradition, not a tradition of active peacemaking or active peaceful resistance to evil. They were told nonresistant Christians freely gave up their lives knowing their God achieves victory despite or through their deaths. The contributors, often institutionally located, were forced to identify the draft as an evil but responded to their assimilation by uniting ideological passivity with a desire to avoid confrontation. There should have been greater clarity regarding the separation of church and state and a concomitant clarity of where true martyrdom lay. However, in the early stages of the draft, Mennonites in the United States lived in the hope of an exemption process much like the one being offered in Canada. Based on this hope, guided by their martyr tradition, and conflicted by their assimilation, they sent their draftees off to camp with minimal support or guidance. By the time it was clear their hopes would not be realized it was too late to develop a strategy of more aggressive opposition, but there is no sign even then that the community even thought to do so. At that point the discourse in The Mennonite must be identified as the discourse of cover-up and denial. Training camp and war were portrayed as a summer camp, not the hell into which so many innocent Mennonite men had been sent. The violence of American popular opposition to Mennonites was also covered up. The discourse of The Mennonite was of people who wanted to be patriotic Americans, and, as the United States became something other than the positively Christian state of their allegiance, they were unable to formulate a response. All they could do was pray for a quick end to the war and then celebrate that so few died. As for those who did die, if they died patriotically they could be identified in passing, but the deaths of those in the training camps or military prison could not be addressed until after the war was over, and even then only two Hutterites, cousins to Mennonites, were identified as having died. The result was a martyr tradition that was afraid to proclaim its martyrs.
In the context of this clash between Mennonite ideology and American militarism, the implicit valorization of soldiers in the metaphors used demonstrated the way the desire to be patriotic leaked into the discourse. That these metaphors had a long biblical tradition perhaps makes them acceptable, but there are many metaphors in the Bible and not all were used. Instead of images of peace, with which the Bible is also filled, soldiers were regularly used as symbols of honour, valour, courage, and Christian integrity. It was as if they wished some underlying alignment with the violence of the American state, despite their tradition's refusal to tolerate such a condition.

This valorization of the soldier was significant in that it introduced a clashing yet overlapping masculinity for Mennonites to confront. Nonresistant masculinity was the masculinity of humility, cooperation, and communal direction. Good Mennonite men were part of the community, followed the instructions put in front of them, and got along well with others, in the process exemplifying the life of Jesus, the god who died rather than resist his persecutors. The good soldier shared many of these characteristics. The good soldier was part of a community, followed instructions, and got along well with his compatriots. But the virtues of the soldier had the goal of providing the state with a weapon of destruction. To valorize the soldier, as the United States did in the context of the war, was to establish an ideal that was difficult for Mennonites to oppose because the difference between these masculinities was only in the objective. Other war resistors, such as the socialists, could call upon alternate heroic masculinities of revolution and resistance. However, Mennonites were trapped by so many similarities between the masculinity they fostered and the masculinity valorized by the state that opposition was difficult. While there was opposition, and sometimes quite strenuous opposition, simply stating Mennonite males were to pursue peace rather than violence was not effective.
It is at this point that American existence clashed with Mennonite masculinity in such a way as to be fundamentally destructive for Mennonite men. The goal of Mennonite masculinity was a martyr male, but as quiet, prosperous, American farmers there were no vehicles for expressing such a masculinity, even in symbolic form. Thus when the American state proclaimed a militant masculinity of martyrdom in the interest of the state it picked up on exactly what was lacking in Mennonite masculinity, an avenue for male self-sacrifice. Even more effectively, the claim of the state that those who failed to be drafted were cowards, i.e. less than manly, rang true for Mennonites. They had no opportunity to be actually masculine in their own traditional terms. The one hope for an alternative was a masculinity that proclaimed the heroic martyr in a battle against the state. However, this masculinity was one Americanized Mennonites could not proclaim because it ran against both the humility strain of Mennonite belief and the American ideals they had adopted.

If Silas Grubb’s editorial comments after the war reflected Mennonite community existence, this inability to fabricate an effective masculine response to the war was compounded by the refusal of the communities to accept the war experience of these men as legitimate male experience. They came back from the horror of the training camp and the war, horrors which the communal discourse had denied, and then were told they were not to introduce new ideas or thoughts into the communities to which they were returning. Not only had the community failed to provide them with a masculinity resistant to the American military identity, it refused to accommodate the masculinity they had developed. That they became a lost generation to the community’s leadership becomes entirely comprehensible. That they were angered and twisted by the combination of their experience and communal response would make perfect sense.
This problematic union of gender and militarism is reinforced by one troubling story. Buried in the lead to an article on post-war assimilation, there was an editorial comment on the arson of a Mennonite church during the war. Editor Silas Grubb expressed the loyalty of the Mennonites to the United States by telling of “the women of the congregation with difficulty rescuing their service flag which they then hung up over smoking ruins.” The service flag identified those young men who had been drafted and were serving in the armed forces. That it was in the church at all is surprising since it represented the state’s entry into the life of a people who among their most powerfully held tenets was the separation of church and state. But this went unremarked by Grubb. Instead it was the women’s rehanging of the flag that drew his attention. Clearly, the women understood the nature of American patriotic heroism and were intent on demonstrating it. Grubb’s report combined gender and militarism and made the point that at least Mennonite women were truly American (and pro-war?). Other articles did combine female existence with full patriotic militarism. It is as if women’s behaviour could demonstrate a patriotic femininity which could stand in for, or imply, a corresponding masculinity that was not permitted formal expression.

“What would you do?”

In this light it is important to examine the way the community directly addressed the challenge of militant masculinity. Over the course of the war a number of contributors directly addressed the question of masculinity in its rawest form, the form recruiters or officers typically put it before their Mennonite conscripts. That question was, what would you do if some brute attacked your female loved ones? The published responses indicate

198 “Justice to our People of Foreign Speech,” The Mennonite, 20 February 1919, 4.
that while they were sensitive to some of the issues in this question, they had not thought through the impact of the heroic, martyr masculinity being promulgated by the American state.

As John Howard Yoder points out, this question is not a simple one.\textsuperscript{199} It presupposes that the person interrogated can control the situation, the attacker is unreasoning, and this applies to nations as well as individuals. It fails to leave open the possibilities of limited human control, that the victims might have a stake in other outcomes besides being protected, or in the face of a reasoned non-violent defence the attacker might decide to go elsewhere or reform. Nor is it necessary to reason from individual confrontation to mass warfare by nations. Responses to the question can go in many directions if these underlying assumptions are challenged. However, the powerful red herring that makes it hard to perceive these assumptions is the issue of masculinity. Real men, this question assumes, thoughtlessly charge into situations of threat to protect the weak and vulnerable, especially the women and children. This misdirection can make it difficult to perceive the underlying assumptions and challenge them. The danger is that if this red herring is not challenged then masculinity is inherently defined in terms supportive of mass warfare. This is so because as long as real men know they are to charge recklessly into a fight to protect the weak, the critique of the other assumptions looks like a coward’s defence. Especially for young men, who are in general more open to risk taking and male display, good answers are needed if they are to avoid the trap of the military recruiter. If Mennonites were going to address the challenge to masculinity posed by the World War I,

this question needed good answers. Within the pages of *The Mennonite* seven answers were given.

Early in the war in a front page feature, H.G. Allebach, minister and regular contributor, argued that real, red-blooded men defended their families and even their broader community in case of attack. Not only did he not challenge the underlying assumptions of the question, he acquiesced to their full range, coming just short of making explicit what is assumed by the question, defence of the nation by its citizens is a good thing for men to do. Against this he said, this is contrary to the command of Jesus. According to Allebach there was a conflict between true masculinity and true Christian existence. A true Christian, he implied, follows Jesus to the death even though the desire of the heart is to do something completely different. 200

At one level Allebach’s perspective was a clever case of what Wells calls over-acceptance, the redefining of the world’s ideas within a conceptual framework taken from the church. Of course, he implied, real men wanted to charge into battle just the way the recruiters said, but since Jesus said it was wrong, you were not to do it. The problem was that this answer, despite its clever retelling of the recruiter’s story, offered little to the younger man still making up his mind whether to join the church, particularly if the young man was of Swiss Mennonite background. Part of that tradition was the acceptance of young people “sowing their wild oats” before settling into the faith as adults. 201 While by the war this idea had been rejected by the church due to pietistic influences, and was never a part of the Russian Mennonite tradition, its memory still led to a difficult transition from pre-baptized youth to baptized fully responsible adult church members. For an unbaptized

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young male, Allebach’s argument legitimated any desire he may have had to head off to war.

Another minister, Clarence Gottschalk, accepted the bulk of Allebach’s position, but refused to extend it to the current war. He said that while it was “honourable to protect your country, home and family,” it was not Christ-like to do so in the terms of mass war. His problem was that soldiers leave many more victims including those they killed, the loved ones of those they killed, and their own loved ones in case of their own death. Recognizing the very real danger in the economic climate of the day, he posited it was wrong to risk the starvation of those you are trying to protect, and the loved ones of the man on the other side of the battle.202

For Gottschalk, as for Allebach, masculinity stood in contrast to Christianity at the level of defence of the weak, but while Allebach posited this as a general condition, Gottschalk made it specific to mass war. While he raised the question of the values of other stakeholders on the decisions of the potential soldier, he still missed the thrust of the underlying assumptions related to the question and to its implied masculinity. Men were still those who charged into a fight in order to protect the vulnerable.

English Pentecostal S.H. Booth-Clibborn’s argument against Christian participation in war took a very different approach. The first half of his article used a dispensational argument to show that war belonged to a previous divine dispensation, not the rule of Christ. In the second half he directly addressed the question, “suppose a brute in human form attacked your wife and children.” He made five points in response. First, in a mixed metaphor he said war is most aptly thought of as a cock-fight at the direction of bystanders

with the soldiers herded like cattle. Second, God protects his own from violence; human protection is not needed. Third, God requires obedience even if there is an attack and obedience to God means loving and forgiving enemies. Fourth, suffering is a natural thing for the church and one of the heroic marks of church existence. Finally, even suffering comes to an end in God’s own time.203

While Booth-Clibborn had still not addressed all the underlying assumptions, he moved well beyond the previous authors in his approach. Though not formally addressing the issue of masculinity, he made clear that from a Christian point of view the question was fundamentally faulty. The Christian need not take it seriously because suffering is the way of the church and attacking the enemy violates the basic commands of God. His disparaging images for soldiers, using the images of blood-crazed chickens and docile cattle, implied that this was not a manly activity. He also implied that the war itself was a blood sport fought for the benefit of war profiteers, not to defend anyone against anything. While it was a telling critique, in the face of accusations of German brutality to women and children, it lost much of its emotional power. Nor were young men seeking guidance likely to find in his critique a “manly” way to respond to the draft.

In the midst of a torturous and confused argument on the nature of Christian conscience, contributor Abram Burkhart addressed the question as well. He responded that defending your home and family against an invader was reasonable, though it did not mean killing the invader. But, he said, there is no comparison between the defence of home and war because war is not about defence but about the invasion of the enemy. In any case, and this was his main point, Christians were not to use their consciences. Instead they were to

203 S.H. Booth-Clibborn, “The Christian and War,” The Mennonite, 26 April 1917, 2. According to John Howard Yoder this is reprinted from Weekly Evangel of 28 April 1917, 5, and is also found in What Would You Do?, 50-54.
follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. According to him, conscience leads people in many
directions but the Holy Spirit leads Christians in the paths of Jesus.\footnote{204}

Burkhart accurately picked out some of the assumptions hidden in the question,
but he failed to address all the assumptions or the challenge to masculinity. Instead he
implicitly acquiesced to the challenge by legitimating defence of the vulnerable. Nor was
his recommendation to follow the Holy Spirit of great help. He gave no indication what
this looked like, perhaps assuming this was what drove the traditional position of the
church. His argument was further weakened by noting that in fact an invasion did take
place and defence against a brutal invader was something people were calling for.

Returned soldier Valdo Petter, in his post-war reflection, placed the question in the
mouth of a fictional dead soldier defending his actions before Satan. This soldier had to
avenge the cruelty of the enemy to innocent women and children or lose all self-respect.
Petter's answer was to examine the reality of war. While he accepted that atrocities took
place, he said there was no connection between the actions of a given soldier and the
atrocities. Instead he said the desire to avenge was a working out of personal wrath, an
usurping of the role of God, and, in any case, a meaningless act in terms of its
consequences. He added that soldiers have a choice between being a hero in God’s eyes or
in human eyes.\footnote{205}

For Petter the question moved past the theoretical to the real. German atrocities
were part of his experience. The question was how to respond in terms of the bigger drama
of God’s redemption and judgement of human beings. Following a perspective of what
Wells calls over-acceptance, according to Petter, soldiers needed to focus on the heroic that

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comes from obedience to God. However, while rooting his response in a perceived reality, and accurately assessing some of the assumptions related to the relationship between individual perspective and mass responses, Petter’s call to a higher heroism lacked depth. Pure avoidance of the war by following God does not appear heroic when it is a decision made by a young man far from the scene of battle. Staying home on the farm, doing what you have always done, hardly appears to be the kind of heroic manliness Petter argued that it was. Even if it had been an effective guide for the young Mennonite men struggling to make their decisions regarding the draft, his point of view did not get to them until well after the war was over.

Editor Silas Grubb loosely responded to the question a number of times, most directly in 1917 when he made it a question of nations and mass war. He asked, can a Christian fight to defend the weak in his own country? Unfortunately his answer sidestepped the question by suggesting that mounting a defence would cause the enemy to attack, but not defending would leave the country in peace. If the question were posed simply as an American national question about the invasion of the United States, there might have been some legitimacy to his response, but since the question was posed in abstract with Germany already widely perceived as an attacking bully, he missed the point. Would a defence after attack make things worse? The implication of Grubb’s argument was that it would, but he did not spell this out. Instead he ruled an attack out as unlikely.206

By ruling out the basis of the question Grubb was attacking one of the underlying assumptions. Unfortunately critiquing that one assumption was no defence, especially when the popular evidence appeared to refute it. He left his audience with no way of

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206 “Attitude of the Christian Toward the War,” The Mennonite, 13 September 1917, 4-5. In making this defence Grubb has used the situation of the United States as his ethical base, a distinct Americanization of his ethical perspective.
formulating a response to the question as it was traditionally posed. Only if the questioner specified an attack on America was there any legitimacy in Grubb's approach and since this was not the way it was posed, his response was useless.

Grubb's response was also disappointing because he was one of the most sensitive observers of the issues facing young men. It was he who as early as 1914 suggested young men were taken by the possibility of the heroic in war. Against the heroism of war he posited things like the courage of maintaining convictions in the face of opposition and participation in programs like the Quaker ambulance corps. However, he did not link this approach to masculinity in terms that related to the way recruiters discursively located the war.

None of these authors succeeded in effectively responding to the issues of masculinity raised by the question, what would you do? Most failed in terms of both theology and masculinity. They generally accepted the underlying premises and only offered weak responses. None were prepared to accept that victims desired anything other than protection. None were prepared to posit that masculinity could do anything other than protect. None showed how to be practically and heroically nonresistant in the context of the war. It was not that such answers could not exist but it was certainly the case that they were not well developed within the Mennonite community, and if Booth-Clibborn is a good example, they were also not well developed within the broader pacifist religious community.

There was one more way of opposing this question and that was to sidestep it through the development of a discursive masculinity that was not vulnerable to it. A
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Table 2.5. Number of articles with discursive responses to war by type

number of authors articulated a pacifist heroic masculinity, most clearly Jesse Holmes.\(^{207}\)

He said that virtue and virility came not through war but through trust, cooperation and mutual dependence. Violence, he said, was dishonouring. It was an emotional argument, not a reasoned one. While it would have been appealing to those raised in nonresistant traditions, it would not withstand the challenge raised by the question of an attack on loved ones. While trust, cooperation and mutual dependence may indeed be powerful virtues, it is hard to see how their embrace gave any guidance regarding how to respond to the recruiters’ questions.

These contributors demonstrated that there was a failure to work through the questions raised by the war, and more deeply, a failure to understand the nature of men faced with the question of war. These Mennonites were not capable of putting before their young men a masculinity that would allow them to avoid the trap of male defence of the vulnerable, nor did they effectively deconstruct the discourse so that such a masculinity was not needed.

Before putting the question of Mennonite responses to war aside, there was a trend that indicates much of the problem. Examining the numeric occurrence of types of

Figure 2.1. Number of articles with attention to the ethics and theology of war

materials indicates that both the onset of the war and the American entry to the war served as significant points for contributors in their willingness to draft responses (Table 2.5). Especially the combination of theology and ethics indicates how seriously the community took the events (Figure 2.1). In examining the table and graph what is especially significant is the decline in 1918 over 1917 in theological and ethical commentary. While total responses increased, this was due to a substantial increase of metaphorical and background uses of military imagery. The total increase is not surprising given the substantially increased impact of the war on human consciousness in 1918. But that very increase draws attention to the dropping off of theological and ethical responses. As the community moved into the war years, and conversations took place among members of the community, more responses should have been generated and more alternatives developed to the challenges the community was facing. Instead the community spoke less to itself in its news-magazine, and, as a review of the content has indicated, what it did say avoided the seriousness of the impact. Here too the movement of the community into discursive failure can be observed.
2.6 Conclusion

It takes time for a community to respond effectively to a crisis, particularly a crisis of the magnitude of the conscription crisis of 1917. That *The Mennonite* revealed a community that lost its ability to speak effectively as the crisis matured indicates just how powerfully the community experienced the crisis. As it continued the community was forced toward silence, a silence that was targeted especially at those who experienced the brunt of the crisis, those who suffered persecution, in particular the young men being drafted. Mennonites were a people adrift. Their discourse increasingly avoided or denied the suffering of Mennonites within the United States, failed to join Mennonites to their brothers and sisters around the world, and failed to develop an updated form of Mennonite nonresistance. Mennonites had moved from isolated rural enclaves into an encounter with the American state and they were not able to respond effectively to that encounter when it ran contrary to their beliefs.

As a crisis of masculinity the discourse of the community failed to understand or respond effectively. No voice spoke to the dilemma faced by the young men. No voice articulated the issues or formulated a response that would take Mennonite martyr masculinity and reframe it with the tools to withstand the hegemonic masculinity promulgated by the American state, a particularly dangerous failure since that masculinity overlapped powerfully with traditional Mennonite masculinity. Within the framework of Mennonite submissiveness and the Americanization of Mennonite identity, young Mennonite men were left without effective images for surviving the challenge the masculinity of the American war effort posed for them.

*The Mennonite*, as a source of discourse of the community in relation to World War I, presents the picture of a community in transition from one form of Mennonite identity.
to another and unable in that transition to cope with a serious challenge from the American state. In shock at what it was experiencing, without many voices to interpret that experience, the American Mennonite communities set themselves up for a future crisis of identity, a crisis most powerfully experienced by their young men. It was the discourse of a minority community unable to deal with its experience and therefore of discourse unable to take it into the future.

In the terms Samuel Wells suggests are useful for ethical analysis, World War I brought into the Mennonite encounter with America a set of experiences they tried to block, or accept-as-given. They did not give expression to their experiences as a persecuted religious minority. Such discourse was blocked. Instead the war was taken-as-given. It was accepted in terms defined by the American state as an example of self-sacrificing patriotism in action. That led to a conflict between Mennonite beliefs and experiences, a conflict exacerbated by the lack of institutions which would have enabled an effective response had they desired one. However, there were voices attempting to over-accept the experience and redefine it in terms of the larger historic Mennonite story. That one of those voices was editor Silas Grubb, who also exemplified both blocking and accepting-as-given, only shows how hard it was for this voice to find a sustained or careful hearing. As a discursive ethical encounter between Mennonites and their North American home, the war was a place of ethical failure.
3. A GENDERED TEXT

Between 1910 and 1925, *The Mennonite* printed 73 feature articles on war, militarism, and peace by members of the General Conference Mennonite constituency. Of these 73, all but one were written by men. That one, in a pattern consistent with other changes in the magazine, was the only one predating 1914. With the onset of the war the gender of the subject area became male. This was only one of the many changes caused by the war. As a gendered text, the magazine showed clear signs that over time and due to the war both men and women were, as measured by feature articles, changing their relationships to the church and to each other. For men the world was opening up while women redirected their view toward home and church life.

*The Mennonite* was a gendered text. Identifiable males and identifiable females wrote specific articles and reports, contributed to columns, and had their poetry printed. Their names were found in obituaries, lists of financial contributions, and conference reports. These representations gendered the text as they demonstrated men and women as having had specific interests, styles and locations in the communal discourse.

When war, militarism, and peace became subjects only men addressed they became a male-gendered aspect of community life. As such they indicated it was men, not women, who took a deep enough interest in this area to put pen to paper and send it to the publication. The long-term impact of this authorial uniformity would be for the readership...
to have consciously or unconsciously identified these areas as male—during or after the war an article by a woman on this subject area would have stood out by virtue of her sex.1

Examining all 1,010 feature articles published between 1910 and 1925 reveals that no subject area addressed by women was not addressed at least as often by men. While women might have had their interests in specific areas, there was no general topic that could be identified as female. However, outside of feature articles, there were areas of completely female reporting, such as “women’s work” in the church related to sewing circles and women’s mission support groups. No male reported on these topics before, during, or after the war. They were gendered female. Due to contributor gender differentials, in some respects every part of the paper was gendered and these genderings spoke of the way the community understood and discursively portrayed gender to itself.

As already noted in chapter one, traditionally war has been a highly male activity, but one with distinct female components related to home, victimization, and the production of sons for battle. As the gendering of war met the gendering of the magazine, the war’s impact on the portrayal of gender in the constituency of The Mennonite became visible. That men wrote about war, rather than women, showed one aspect of that gendering. Women, clearly, did not feel it was appropriate to put their feelings and understandings down on paper for publication once the war began. Even more significant than the male authorship was the overall shift of feature articles’ authorship regardless of the topic. Before the war an average of 77% of the feature articles each year were written by men. During the war this rose to 89%. After the war it dropped to 76%. As a whole the magazine became significantly more male during the war than it was before or after.

1 Before the war it stood out by virtue of the subject. Few contributors addressed any topics outside of the church life.
Among these Mennonites, not only was discourse about the war masculine, discourse itself became more masculine during the war.

Partially confounding this transformation were changes in gendering due to shifting editorial policy. Silas Grubb, full editor from 1915 to 1925, took an explicit position of welcoming women into the formal leadership of the church, and, in keeping with his understanding of women’s leadership, developed a column in the paper edited by women for the portrayal of their issues. At the same time he removed from the paper the bulk of the poetry, one of the major sources of female gendering under earlier editors. The net effect was to make women a more discursively serious part of the newsmagazine as it was transformed into a generally more serious publication.

This chapter proceeds to explore this textual gendering in two ways. First it explores the way the text was gendered as a whole. This exploration attends to questions of types of material and the general ratios of male authored content to female authored content. Especially it focuses on the feature articles, those that most fully represented the specific concerns of community members. It also attends to the way gender was portrayed in the background indicators of church life. The second section of this chapter explores the influence of the war on these genderings. By comparing pre-war, war, and post-war gendering the effect of the war can be seen. Given the smaller sample sizes this second section is less sensitive to discursive nuances than is the larger picture, but does show distinct changes in some of the indicators. The cumulative effect is to demonstrate that The Mennonite was primarily a male document, and became even more so during the war, but

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2 "Editorial," The Mennonite, 1919, 5-6. Grubb’s father had carried out the ordination of Ann Allebach in 1911. Allebach was the first woman ordained to preaching ministry in the General Conference Mennonite Church. She was identified as Reverend in church papers. The tone of the younger Grubb’s contributions to the magazine shifted markedly toward the inclusion of women after that event.
women also had interests of which they were increasingly assertive over time. However, as the interests of men and women shifted, men were more attentive to the external forces that would shape the future of the Mennonite church in North America.

The gendering of the text is also an ethical issue. Even when the changes in the way each sex contributed to the text of the magazine were not part of a conscious pattern of decision making, they still indicated the implicit ethics of gender. In terms that Samuel Wells supplies, both explicit and implicit tactics of textual gendering can take the shape of over-accepting, accepting-as-given, or blocking. The difficulty is in determining what the observed changes were responding to in their original cultural environment in order to determine which tactic was being applied. The patterns may be clear, but when, as in the case of most of the textual gendering, they reflect and contribute to deep patterns of perception within the broader magazine constituency, the cause and effect may be quite distant from each other. In this case, since the source of any effect is the war and it had a major impact on the community, any patterns should be relatively easy to determine and then to understand in terms of ethical tactics. What is evident is that women and men used very different tactics, with women blocking the war while men either accepted-as-given or over-accepted the war.

Before attending to the way the materials of the text were gendered, the question of gender in language must be answered. While less gendered than many languages, English still has a gendered way of describing the world. The male nouns and pronouns—man, manhood, and he—had two distinct uses for most of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. One use was for humanity in general and the other use was in reference to male

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human beings. This way of using masculine nouns and pronouns carries an implicit set of relationships between men and women. When male nouns and pronouns can stand in for all humanity they indicate a blindness to the experience of women and a normalization of maleness as relatively co-equal with humanity itself. However, men can be discursively located as partners with women in human activity by clarifying in their use whether the nouns and pronouns that could stand for both men and women actually stand for male persons only. The same effect can be had by using them in conjunction with the corresponding female terms. When a contributor makes the actual sex of the subject clear it demonstrates a sensitivity to the roles of men and women, particularly of the need to respect them as relational partners in the life of the community.

Recognizing this problem of male gendering of the English language, it is significant that most contributors to The Mennonite were clear when they referred to men or women or both in their choice of nouns and pronouns. While some writers ambiguously used “man” to identify men and women collectively, most preferred to use “men and women”. When directly addressing topics that might be understood as gendered, it was almost universal for writers to use “manhood and womanhood” or similar nomenclature if they meant to include both. There were a few situations where the writer used male pronouns and it is not clear if the writer was referring to male persons alone or male and female persons together, but it is almost always clear from the context what the writer intended. As reflected in the language, there appears to have been an understanding of men and women as separate and partnered entities. This was true of materials submitted by the members of the constituency and materials reprinted from other sources.

This language sensitivity suggests that while the text was gendered in terms of subject and reporting, writers tried not to implicitly gender their writing. Instead writers
seem to have worked to be clear that they included men and women as active members of the community. As the next chapter on subject matter will demonstrate, this led to some confusion such as when an article on “men and women” identified behaviours only a man could undertake because of the cultural constraints placed upon women. However, this was rare and the rule appeared to be that both men and women were discursively recognized as significant actors in the life of the General Conference Mennonite Church, though this recognition was limited by gender specific expectations.

3.1 Gendered Interests

Gendered interests, such as those found in *The Mennonite*, have many dimensions. For texts the two primary dimensions of gendered interest are rhetorical types and subject matter. The rhetorical dimension looks at the different genres of material such as feature article, poetry, or column and identifies the sex of the author. Typically men and women use different genres of material to express their discourse. Which genres they choose and in which they are published partially indicates how they understand their existence as men and women and partially reveals the institutional bias toward those understandings. The second dimension, the topical, looks at the variety of subject matters, and again asks which sex wrote on what topics. In the case of *The Mennonite* there was a third gendered dimension found in the community indicators, the obituaries, contributor lists, and conference speaker lists which were regularly printed. This dimension spoke of the lived reality of men and women, as well as that reality’s discursive portrayal to the community. Together these three dimensions demonstrate the way *The Mennonite* was gendered. These dimensions reveal how thoroughly the discourse was gendered as male, but how women were significant voices at specific locations within that discourse.
Within *The Mennonite* writers were male, female, unidentifiable as to sex, or unidentified. These writers and what they wrote about identify both what members in the community were interested in as reflective of their sex and how the community existed as a gendered enterprise. What we find is that men and women wrote in different ways about different subjects. To analyze how men and women wrote, all the sex-identifiable contributions in the magazine over the period of 1910 to 1925 were examined for rhetorical type and sex of contributor. A large number had no discernable sex attached to them. They were either unidentified as to the author, or identified by initials in such a way that the writer could not be identified at this time. Many had multiple authors, sometimes of mixed sex, more often of only one sex. Every time a writer was identifiable, they were listed for this study according to their sex and the genre of material they were contributing. Often the same person appeared in many issues and sometimes a number of times in one issue. Each time they appeared they were counted. This produced a total of 5,620 discreet writer identifications over the period 1910 to 1925 inclusive. The contributions were broken into five genres: 1) reports, 2) features, 3) reprints/releases, 4) columns, and 5) letters. These were then analyzed in terms of the total contributions per sex and the ratios between sexes (Table 3.1).

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1. It is possible the contributors identified by initials were well known throughout the General Conference Mennonite Church. However, this seems unlikely given the rural isolation and limited travel at the time.

2. There were rhetorical conventions regarding sex identification. Males were identified by the formula of "first initial" + "last name", by "Brother ________", or by "masculine first name." Females were identified by, "Mrs. __", "feminine first name", "Miss ________", "Sister ________", or in a few cases by "first initial" + "last name" where the context and previous usage made clear the writer was female. In a few cases the sex was ambiguous and these cases were not counted. This format may have led to the under-identification of female writers and over-identification of male authors. However, given the large number of times most contributors appeared this would not be a common occurrence. For example, Bertha Kinsinger wrote regularly from the Montana mission centre under her own name, and then after she married fellow missionary Rudolph Petter, as Bertha Kinsinger Petter. Therefore if a report from the Montana mission appeared under the name of B.K. Petter, it could be identified with certainty as a female-authored report.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genre</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Ratio M:F</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>2253</td>
<td>674</td>
<td>3.3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>855</td>
<td>210</td>
<td>4.1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprint/Release</td>
<td>905</td>
<td>220</td>
<td>4.1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>350</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>3.1:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8.8:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>4398</td>
<td>1222</td>
<td>3.6:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.1. Numbers and sexes of contributors 1910-1925 by genre

This approach does not tell us anything about the sex of the writers of the material that appeared anonymously. If the author's sex was known, it might shift the ratio closer to equality since women may have been less comfortable letting their names be publicized. The general conventions of the church and culture were that women did not take public roles to the degree men did. It is conceivable, though less likely, that the editors stripped off the identification or rendered females as males. It is also possible that women disguised their contributions as male by conforming to the publishing conventions of *The Mennonite* and submitted their contributions with their initials and last name. In the context of Mennonite humility teachings many writers may have preferred not to be identified and it is possible these anonymous sources were more often women than men. Regardless, these possibilities do not change the way the magazine was gendered. It was the appearance that counted.

Overall the ratio of identifiable male writers to female writers was 3.6:1. Of the five genres there was no genre where both sexes were not found as contributors and none where men were not the dominant contributors. Men were by far the most common

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66 The one exception to this unlikely situation was 1914. See the section below regarding this year. In these rare cases the writer was identified as female since the ease with which they are identified as such suggests they were not disguised by the use of their initials.
contributors of letters, but somewhat less likely than typical to be identifiable contributors of material to specific columns. The other categories hovered close to the overall average level of male contribution. This indicates that men and women, with the exception of letters where the small number makes their contributor ratio inconclusive, turned their attentions and pens to The Mennonite at approximately the same ratio (three to four males per one female) regardless of the genre of contribution.

This constancy of contributor sex is particularly significant with regard to the rhetorical categories of Reprint/Release and Columns. Reprint/Releases were those materials written for publications other than The Mennonite or for distribution to a number of publications, and usually from sources outside the Mennonite world. These materials were added as space permitted and in some issues were the dominant material in the magazine, presumably if constituency submissions had been few. As such they were selected by the editor, though often at the recommendation of a member of the constituency. That these items reflected the same general sex identification breakdown as the other materials suggests that either these materials were chosen to reflect the perceived gender concerns of the constituency or they reflected the general American gendering of writings of interest to the editors and constituency. It may also have been a statistical coincidence since it varied dramatically over time with female attributions plunging once poetry was removed from the paper.

7 Major columns over the years included “Our Woman’s Work,” “The C.E.Topic,” “Notes on the S.S. Lesson,” and “Editorial” (when writer identified). Shorter term columns included a young people’s column, a home life column and “The Christian Exponent Chat”.

8 The overall framework of the magazine and the occasional editorial response suggests that, with the exception of letters, the editors included for publication all original materials submitted by members of the constituency, with the proviso that articles well outside Mennonite beliefs would not be printed. In general there does not appear to have been enough original material submitted to keep the magazine full, nor do the editors appear to have held to a narrow definition of Mennonite belief.
The columns were regular features, usually weekly, and carried topically related material. With regard to gendering, columns are difficult to interpret. The columns were often gender specific, such as the long-running “Our Woman’s Work,” which provided coverage of women’s sewing societies and had its own editor. Sewing societies were congregationally-based groups of women who raised funds for mission work. This was a column added during the war years, about half-way through the study period. The only columns to run consistently throughout the study period were “The Christian Endeavor Topic,” and “Notes on the Sunday School Lesson.” The first provided sometimes systematic topical material for study by congregationally-based youth groups. The second provided systematic Bible study materials for church Sunday study groups. These two columns were generally run anonymously, though assembled under the direction of the editor. Occasionally they were not anonymous and when authorship was attached it was invariably male. For the purposes of this study these columns were only identified as male when a male name was attached. Since they were a regular feature, editorials were also counted as columns. During the first half of the study they were usually identified as to authorship through the editor’s initials. After Grubb became the sole editor they were anonymous. When identified with initials they were listed as “male” and otherwise not counted as part of the sex identified material. Because the gendering of columns was so dependent upon editorial practice it varied wildly in its impact on the gendering of the magazine. Thus while the column contributor sex ratio did reflect the overall gendering of the magazine over time, its instability as an indicator made it less reflective of the

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9 This treatment of the columns and editorials suggests that if anything, the gendering of the magazine was yet more male than the numbers suggest. Attentive readers would have assumed these were male.
constituency than some of the other indicators. It is unlikely the pool of potential contributors varied the way the attributions did.

The genre most strongly represented in the magazine was reports. This category consisted of reports from congregations, conferences, or church institutions regarding their activities or events of significance with which they were involved. The general ratio of male to female contributor identifications was 3.3:1. Within the reports there was a perceptible difference in content related to the sex of writers. Social service reports from hospitals and orphanages, while uncommon, were probably close to equal in sex of authorship. Conference reports from area and national church institutions were overwhelmingly male. Mission field and congregational reports, the most common kinds of reports, were in the rough order of 2:1 male to female in source. Collectively, this suggests a form of gendered parallel institutional life where men dominated the formal church structures, but where women were generally active and even highly active in the new social service institutions the church was developing.

The overwhelming masculinity of letter writers is also hard to interpret. It is evident that few letters were published so the actual number of letter writers and their sex is unknown. In a number of cases the publication of letters was clearly due to the prominence of the writer within the institutional life of the church. Since these institutions were overwhelmingly male, this may have skewed the publication results significantly. Therefore it would not be surprising to find that actual letter writers were significantly more often female than the attribution suggests.

The most significant articles in the publication were the features. These were generally longer contributions running thirty to forty column inches (reports generally ran less than twelve column inches) and sometimes serialized over a number of issues. The
longest articles ran over 20,000 words and were typically on some aspect of church history. In every case where it was possible to determine the source, only articles contributed by the constituency solely for publication in *The Mennonite* were used for this study. A total of 1,010 articles were identified as features. Serialized articles were counted every time their writer was identified, generally in each issue in which they appeared, unless, as was sometimes the case, the writer was only identified in the concluding section in which case he or she was only counted once.

The topics of feature articles ranged widely from issues of Mennonite theology to travelogues. Not surprisingly, during the period under study the war and alcohol prohibition were major topics. However, the most common topics related to church life and operation (175), church mission and evangelism (166), and Christian life and character (164). In declining order, other major topic groups were doctrine/belief (99), church history (76), war/militarism/peace (73), social analysis (including temperance)(54), parenting (43), travel (42), and education (35). While not common, two other topics received enough coverage to merit attention. These were relief work (19) and pastoral ministry (12). A grab bag of other topics made up the final fifty-four feature articles including at least a half-dozen biographies or eulogies. Together these subjects illustrate the range of topics members of the constituency were prepared to take the time to write and the editors to publish.

The ratio of male-authored to female-authored features was 4.2:1. This was a slightly higher ratio than for all contributions to the magazine. However, there was a clear difference in the sex ratio depending on the topic (Table 3.2). Some topics were highly male. One was closer to 1:1 in authorship ratio. Using the 4.2:1 ratio as a baseline they can
be divided into four categories, exclusively male topics, disproportionately male topics, proportionate topics, and disproportionately female topics.

Three topics can be considered exclusively male, relief work, pastoral ministry, and war/militarism/peace. Relief work and pastoral ministry focused on the institutional work of the church. As actual practices both of them were carried out almost exclusively by men. However, the recipients and financial supporters of relief work and pastoral ministry were whole congregations consisting of men and women so there was no inherent reason these subjects should be solely the focus of male authorial concern. That they were suggests that for women these were background topics and not necessarily relevant to their existence as persons. On the other hand, men were concerned about these almost exclusively male activities and saw the need to respond to them in written form, telling the stories, encouraging participation, and outlining their correct implementation.

While the topic group of war, militarism and peace was not exclusively male, it was so for all intents and purposes. The one female contribution took place in 1911 and was
the only contribution on the subject before the beginning of the war. The other seventy-
two responses were male and were printed after January 1, 1914. That women were absent
during the time of greatest community concern indicates this was a male-gendered concern.
Women did not seem prepared to address issues of militarism, though the stories told
indicate that women had a stake in the war and did act independently of men. However,
only men saw it as appropriate to put pen to paper to address the war and did so almost
universally with condemnation and on behalf of peace. Why this should be so is a
significant mystery, but it fits a general pattern of women withdrawing from topics related
to the public world in their writing, even if they did not so withdraw in their actions. It is as
if specific public events triggered women’s response, but that when women focused their
imaginations and prepared to write they had more interest in, or felt safer dealing with,
topics closer to home.

Four other topic areas were disproportionately male in authorship. These four were
church history, travel, social analysis, and doctrine. While there were significant female
contributions on these subjects, the ratio of male writers to female writers was in each case
well over the ratio for all features.

Church history consisted of articles on congregational origins, histories of the
denomination, or histories of specific individuals significant in the larger historical picture,
especially Menno Simons. Women’s writings on church history were few and confined to
congregational histories. Church historian C. Henry Smith and Bethel College Dean Jacob
Langenwalter were major contributors, as were the wealthy agribusinessman Peter Jansen,

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10 One of the more powerful stories of congregational life during the war was after the Michigan church
arson when the women rescued the service flag from the ashes. This story was told by a man, the editor,
and former Kansas land agent C.B. Schmidt. Men appeared to be drawn to the big picture of Mennonite life.

Travelogues appeared a number of times over the years. These were in almost every case travels related to mission work, typically travel to or from remote destinations around the world. The vast majority of these travelogues came from the pen of John W. Kliwer, President of the General Conference Mennonite Church Board of Mission, and President of Bethel College, Kansas. As president of the mission board Kliwer made two major tours, the first in 1918 around the United States. On this trip he travelled to Mennonite home mission locations and his travel writings described his sights and experiences along the way. The second tour, in 1920 and 1921, was to Mennonite mission locations (and other stops of personal and religious interest) around the globe. If Kliwer’s writings are disregarded, travelogues were relatively equally divided between male and female authors. Both sexes felt free to write for the home audience regarding what they saw and heard as they traveled to and from foreign missions. In this case the male dominance of the genre seems due to the unique circumstances of an exceptionally articulate man privileged to travel widely on behalf of the church. While it is not clear, the tone of his writings suggest they were a way of returning value to the constituency for the privilege of church-funded travel. This may also have been a motivation for some of the other writers.

Social analysis includes a variety of articles whose most common target was alcohol consumption, but also included analyses of urban life, suffrage, foreign countries and

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11 While Schmidt was not a Mennonite, he often wrote specifically for The Mennonite at the request of the editors. As a young man and land agent Schmidt had been instrumental in the settling of the Russian Mennonites in Kansas and developed both a sensitivity to and fondness for this people. During the war years he was also a public advocate for the patriotism of Mennonites despite their refusal to fight.
religions, and human psychology and sociology. There was no particular gender focus except no women wrote on the subject of women’s suffrage. This one topic appeared to be a subject of more formal interest to men than to women. In every case the male writer advocated women’s suffrage within American national political life. However, no writer directly advocated women’s suffrage in the church, though it was obviously a subject of some discussion and women missionaries were granted the vote in church institutional life in 1917.\textsuperscript{12}

Church doctrine was the last disproportionately male category of contribution. Church doctrine is a broad term used to describe any article dealing with the nature of Mennonite belief, from proper interpretation of the Bible to exposition on existing formal church statements. This was a major area of interest, something not surprising in a church publication. If articles related to church doctrine on war and peace were added it would be substantially larger (and shift to a more disproportionately male ratio). What is surprising here was the strong presence of female authorship (83 male to 16 female). Doctrine, like pastoral ministry, was a core function of the institutional church and therefore one that fell into the realm of male privilege. That on this subject women desired to contribute and subsequently were published is therefore surprising. One woman, Emma Burkett, wrote about doctrine with acuity and relative frequency. This was a break from Mennonite church history and its tradition of male theological work. This suggests that within the church some of the traditional boundaries between men and women were breaking down and women saw the need for changes in the belief structure of the denomination.

\textsuperscript{12} “In Mennonite Circles,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 7 April 1921, 1, indicates women’s voting was a preliminary conference agenda item at one of the regional conferences. The series, “In The Interests of the General Conference,” a pre-triennial conference history series in 1929, notes female missionaries were granted the vote at the 1917 session. \textit{The Mennonite}, 20 June 1929, 4.
In this gendering, *The Mennonite* showed a different pattern from that found in the Old Mennonite publications. According to Sharon Klingelsmith, Mennonite women’s names were not found attached to doctrinal articles in Old Mennonite publications during the period of this study. This suggests that church doctrine for Old Mennonites was an entirely masculine realm. The difference is in some respects not surprising since the General Conference did gender differently than did the Old Mennonites at the time. Unlike the Old Mennonites they refused to specify what women should wear or how they should cover their heads, practices that were increasingly important among Old Mennonites early in the century. In keeping with this difference in practice, General Conference Mennonites also appeared to allow women to speak on topics Old Mennonites understood to be exclusively male concerns.

Church life, broadly speaking, and education were two topic areas that reflect the general ratio of male to female contributions of feature articles. Church life includes such topics as how to run a Sunday School or a Christian Endeavor society (subjects relatively equally addressed by men and women), church attendance patterns, rural church life, urban church life, inter-denominational work, and church social service agencies. Education primarily concerned post-secondary education, but also included public school participation. Effective classroom techniques, the importance of education, and proper parent or student attitude were typical topics. Both church life and education were areas where women were deeply involved in day to day institutional operation, often providing leadership. However, men were dominant in the institutions and dominant in the materials

written, though at a ratio very typical of the relative rhetorical participation of men to women overall.

Three topics were disproportionately likely to have female authors, and for one the ratio was close to 1:1. These were Christian life, church mission, and parenting. Christian life is a very broad category of all things related to Christian ethics, character, virtues, and psychology. It includes prayer life and personal relationship to God. While male writers outnumbered female by almost two to one, this was still a marked shift from the overall balance in the magazine. Clearly this was an area where women were very involved in responding to the issues and took a deep personal interest in how the church at large understood them. No particular pattern of authorship showed up in this topic area and men and women seemed equally likely to address any particular aspect of the topic.

Church mission was primarily an institutional arm of the church. While as defined here it includes personal evangelism, the bulk of all the articles concerned the action of the church in support of, or in response to, the institutional mission work of the denomination. Many women wrote regularly on the subject, especially women in mission work overseas. Women also wrote regularly on their work in congregations to support foreign missions, a subject where their contributions substantially outnumbered those of men. The articles by men were more likely to relate to the rationale for missions, though women did address this subject as well. Both the male dominance and strong female participation in this part of church life were visible in the way these subjects were addressed. Judging from their writing, many of the women missionaries were strong individuals, in some cases obviously stronger than their male counterparts. Women writing from church foreign missions were also more likely than others to comment negatively on the treatment of women in the United States, though admittedly these comments were
extremely rare. One of the common comments on the treatment of women, made by men and women alike, was how much better women were treated in the United States and other western countries than in the rest of the world. A number of men, drawing up lists of the reasons why foreign missions were important, stressed the liberation of women under Christian influence. What this topic area demonstrates was the importance of foreign missions to men and women in defining the roles of women in the church and western society. Not only were mission workers participants in a highly privileged aspect of church life, and one of the few areas in the Mennonite church where women could exercise complete independence and initiative in their actions, paradoxically they helped all those involved better see how western women were well treated within the existing male-dominated western system.

The topic area of parenting, including family life, mothering, fathering, and childhood, was the one subject area where men and women were nearly balanced as contributors. However, if a 1924 special series where male ministers were asked to write about family life is excluded, the ratio shifts in favour of female authors. Both men and women were concerned with the behaviour of men and women in families, and especially the general characteristics of family life. These writings were often highly stereotyped with women in the role of child-rearers and men as spiritual heads of households. Despite this, articles were most often parent-focussed and even-handed in gender role attributions, and this was the case whether the contributor was male or female. No writer called for the reapportioning of household work away from a traditional male-breadwinner female-housekeeper division, but a number did call for more male involvement with childcare. Some called for wider recognition of women's roles in society at large. It is not surprising that women should have found gender roles and family life of concern since the cultural
values of the period were strongly focused on women as housekeepers and providers of childcare. If women were going to contribute to the magazine, this would be expected. More unexpected was the even-handedness of most of the writing, including the writing by men, addressing the nature of parenthood. Men who addressed this topic did not seem intent on enforcing traditional roles, but were likely to express the need for mutuality in family life.

What these topics and rhetorical types indicate was that the magazine was highly gendered in its approach to its materials. Men were the dominant voice, and in many parts of church life the exclusive voice. Women had voices, sometimes significant and surprising voices, but generally in areas connected with women's traditional roles. In this it is significant that the overall pattern was not one of rigid separation, but of differing proportions in attention. Rhetorically, women did write in all of the genres open to men, and on almost all topics as well. What they did not do was address women's involvement in the public sphere, even when the stories indicated they were active there. Men may have written approvingly of women's public actions and potential, but women paid more attention to issues of home and church.¹⁵

**Background Indicators**

Before proceeding to the changes in gendering over time and due to the impact of the war, there was one other aspect of the newsmagazine that also portrayed gender. While it is not the intent of this dissertation to probe the background world of the General Conference Mennonites, within the pages of the magazine there were indicators that

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¹⁵ It is not my intention to adopt a private-public dualism, and certainly not to put the church on the private side of that distinction. From a Mennonite point of view their must be a wide range of categories of existence, including family, village, church, and public/English world.
Table 3.3. Background indicators, ratios M:F of names

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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Obituaries</th>
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</thead>
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<td>0.9:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1913</td>
<td>2.3:1</td>
<td>1.7:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1914</td>
<td>3.3:1</td>
<td>2.6:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1915</td>
<td>4.6:1</td>
<td>0.9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1916</td>
<td>3.2:1</td>
<td>0.9:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1917</td>
<td>6.1:1</td>
<td>1.6:1</td>
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<tr>
<td>1918</td>
<td>4.4:1</td>
<td>1.4:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1919</td>
<td>3.6:1</td>
<td>1.2:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1929</td>
<td>1.9:1</td>
<td>1.3:1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

provide insights into the ongoing structure of masculinity in the communities and congregations that made up the church. To a degree, these indicators also contributed to the gendering of the text. Four of these indicators are financial contributors, obituaries, conference speakers, and public notices. Each of these has a gendered component that reveals something of the discursive nature of masculinity.

One of the features of the magazine was the regular listing of financial contributors with the amounts given and the objective of the gift. While not in every issue, these lists were in more than every second issue, and ranged in length from a couple of column-inches to more than a page. The bulk of these contributions were identified by the name of the congregation. However, the names of individuals were common in these lists. These individuals may have been the donor or they may have been the person responsible for the collection of the congregational amount. Unfortunately who was which was not always clear, nor were the forms of reporting entirely consistent from year to year. Sometimes the amount was listed and sometimes not.

Significantly many of the names in the donor lists were female. It was rare to find a listing that was only male names, and not impossible to find a listing that included only
female names. The ratio of male contributors to female contributors ranged in any year from 1.3:1 to 6.1:1 (Table 3.3). These ratios indicate that while economic contributions to the church were primarily gendered as male, financial decisions were not confined to men. It appears that within families and communities women had significant control of financial resources. This may have been because in traditional rural families there were independent gendered sources of income: male income from field crops and cattle; female income from chickens, vegetables, and dairy.  

However, given the male gendering of much of the public life of the church and male control over the power structures, it is conceivable that the public appearance understates women’s control of financial resources. It is possible that women were donating money in the name of their husbands, just as many of them took their husbands’ names (both first and last) as their own in public.

Even more significantly, donations of money are typically indicative of power within the community. While there is no certainty regarding this, that women were prominent among donors is suggestive that women had roles of significance in terms of community decision making, even though they were excluded from formal voting.

Certainly women were very important in terms of the mission efforts of the church and their contributions could make or break a particular mission enterprise.

It is also worth noting that between 1910 and 1925 the total number of donors increased from a few hundred to a few thousand. This major increase is suggestive of

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16 One writer suggests that women could be the primary financial contributors to church life if they would only contribute all their egg money from eggs laid on Sundays. “In What Ways Could the Women’s Societies be Helped,” The Mennonite, 14 October 1920, 5.

17 This would be in keeping with the understanding of the impact of Mennonite inheritance patterns developed by Royden Loewen. Royden Loewen, Hidden Worlds: Resisting Mennonite Migrants of the 1870’s (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2001), 33-50.

substantially growing prosperity, no doubt in part caused by the war. Significantly, even with this change, the ratio of male to female donors remained relatively constant. This constancy suggests that within families there was no change over this period in how active women were within family finances. It also suggests the church was no less likely to accept the legitimacy of women’s donations over that time.

Throughout the study period obituaries were a common feature of the last pages of the magazine. The ratio of males to females in obituaries was relatively consistent at around 1.3:1, a little higher in some years and lower in others. The obituary notice could be as little as three lines or as long as a column or more. Both men and women could receive long notices. When there were reports on their life activities typically men were noted for their work or church related achievements, as well as listing their family. Women were more commonly noted for their family accomplishments and sometimes for their relationship to their husbands. This gender divide may have been indicative of where these individuals spent most of their time because eulogies for women who never married also stressed their occupation and church work. Ministers sometimes received prominent notice, though this was also true of women in ministry or mission. The person who received the most attention over the years was Annie Funk, a missionary in India who died in the sinking of the Titanic, April, 1912. She was single, and from the descriptions, obviously headstrong (she went to the mission field on her own against the recommendation of the mission board), but was otherwise not particularly noteworthy. It was probably her attachment to the historic event of the Titanic that led to more than a full year of references to her death.19

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19 Much of this continuing discussion concerned whether to build a monument for her, and, if so, what type would be most appropriate. In the end there was a small monument built in Philadelphia. The 25 April 1912 issue carried the first notice of her death, and 15 May 1913 issue carried the monument unveiling notice. To gain a sense of her character, the eulogy by A.S. Shelley published in 2 May 1912 noted she was only partly worthy of emulation.
It was a regular feature of the magazine to print agendas for various conferences and major meetings. These conferences ranged from the major Triennial conference of the General Conference to a young people's convention of a group of local churches. Overwhelmingly, the speakers listed for these conferences were men. Whether the topic was running a Sunday School class or how to understand a major doctrinal issue, men spoke to gatherings of men and/or women. Few women spoke and the subjects they addressed were limited to children's issues, mission work, youth work, Sunday Schools, and temperance. There was a clear gendering that demonstrated a male competence on all topics while women's competence was limited to traditional women's concerns. In addition, unless the group was a women's mission group, the elected officers were either all men, or men in the roles of president and treasurer, with a woman as the secretary.

While the format changed regularly, a common feature of the magazine was the inclusion of a section of public notices and fragments of materials that were generally news oriented. It was common for these materials to include information on the activities of individual members of the General Conference. In almost every case these were people active in the formal institutional life of the church. Given the changing format it is hard to draw any strong conclusions, but in general these reports had a ratio of about seven reports that were entirely concerned with the activities of individual men for every one similarly concerned with women. This was a higher ratio of men to women than in any other aspect of the paper, but may represent the ratio of men to women in the formal structures of the church. This supposition is further supported by noting that the women identified came almost exclusively from two contexts, foreign and home missions and the deaconess hospitals, while the men came from all parts of institutional church life.
In keeping with the overall ratio of gendering in the magazine content, these background indicators, except for obituaries, suggest a similar ratio of gendered activity in the public life of the church. If this was the case it was a community dominated by men but within which women played significant roles, roles framed by the men. The relative equivalency of the obituaries suggest that these gendered roles did not indicate a lack of respect for women since their life accomplishments, typically constrained by the limits of home, were recognized at relatively similar rates. The one caution is that the high level of female identification in donor lists suggests a deep and partially hidden current of women’s power. If this was the case then the discourse of the community covers a reality that was quite different, a reality where women were not only significant but powerful.

3.2 Impact of the war

The concern of this study is with the effects of the war on gender discourse. Since war is a discourse of masculinity, the gendered world of The Mennonite could have changed to match it. This was what happened. As the war proceeded both men and women changed their roles in the church discourse quite significantly, altering both their level of participation and types of topics addressed. Once the war ended some of these effects ended but other changes, such as the topics addressed, were maintained.

While for Mennonites the crisis of the war began in 1917 and was mostly over by the end of 1918, the range of the war’s impact on textual gendering is hard to determine at the outset. For the purposes of this study the war era is defined as 1915 through 1919. These cut-off dates are based on the assumption that it takes time for the war to infiltrate communal consciousness, make it through the writing process, and be published in the paper. Therefore the war’s beginning in mid-1914 should have shown up in the way articles were printed some time in 1915. At the other end, coming as the war end did late in 1918,
it would not be until some time in 1919 that gendering would be expected to move into its post war form. This would be especially true since full demobilization and the return of incarcerated men did not occur until well into 1919. In addition, the post-1918 crises in Russia and the respective British, French and American invasions of that country would have appeared to some to be a continuation of the war. Based on this reasoning, for this study the pre-war period is set at the years 1910 through 1914, and the post-war as 1920 through 1925.

In examining these three periods there were distinct changes over time (Table 3.4).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>1910-1914</th>
<th>1915-1919</th>
<th>1920-1925</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Report</td>
<td>4.5:1</td>
<td>3.1:1</td>
<td>2.9:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feature</td>
<td>3.5:1</td>
<td>8.2:1</td>
<td>3.0:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reprint/Release</td>
<td>2.2:1</td>
<td>10.4:1</td>
<td>6.0:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Column</td>
<td>223:0</td>
<td>1:1:1</td>
<td>1.3:1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Letter</td>
<td>4.7:1</td>
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<td><strong>4.0:1</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.7:1</strong></td>
<td><strong>2.8:1</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4. Sex ratio M:F of contributors by genre, changes over time

The pre-war period showed an overall ratio of male to female writers of 4.0:1, very close to the average for the study as a whole. However, the war period showed for all contributions a slight shift to a more male-gendered magazine (4.7:1). This was reversed in the post-war period with the ratio dropping to 2.8:1. Within specific genres of material there were distinct changes as well, changes that did not necessarily match those of the magazine as a whole. These three eras were also marked by changes in the overall number of sex identified articles. The war era saw a drop in sex identified articles by almost 25% (1,388 compared to 1,938 pre-war and 1,925 post-war). The number of anonymous articles increased correspondingly.
Unlike the case for all contributions, reports from congregations and conferences showed a steady decline in the ratio of male writers to female writers over the sixteen years covered by the three periods of analysis (4.5:1, 3.0:1, 2.9:1). Each period showed an increase in the absolute number of female-authored reports (164, 169, 287). Male-authored reports declined substantially for the war years, but their climb after the war was more than compensated for by an increase in the number of female reports (730, 532, 843). Since there had been no substantial change in the institutional life of the conference this suggests women were taking a stronger role in organizational life, either at the direction of the men (for example as recording secretaries) or on their own initiative. Certainly their voice was increasingly significant in the day to day life of the denomination, and correspondingly, men were a decreasingly significant, though still dominant, voice.

Feature articles showed a very different pattern. During the war years the total number of female-authored features plunged while the total number of male authored features increased (222M/64F, 287M/35F, 304M/102F). The post-war period marked a massive jump in female-authored features, dropping the sex ratio of contributors below its pre-war ratio even though the absolute number of male-authored feature articles increased as well. This suggests that the war years had a distinct impact on female authorship of feature articles while men experienced no impact in their desire to write major features. It is not clear why women would withdraw from feature article writing during the war period, or return later. As already noted, the editor for this period, Silas Grubb, was explicitly in favour of more roles for women in the church and introduced a column for women. On this basis it seems likely women found their energies either reduced or drawn in other

20 This column had no observable relationship with the change in total female authored articles. The columns did not share authorship or subject matter with feature contributions written by women.
directions during the war period. This appears counter-intuitive since there were risks for
males who spoke publicly during the war but no comparable risks for women. Men could
be and were publicly pilloried for their verbal or printed positions with regard to the war.\textsuperscript{21}

This also appears inconsistent with the increased participation of women in report writing.
It may have been a case of self-censorship where women perceived their areas of interest
during the war as either less interesting to the broader Mennonite world or unprintable by
virtue of a perspective that was thought to be outside that which was acceptable.
Regardless, after the war the women were once again writing significantly.

The sex ratio of reprints and releases shifted sharply between 1914 and 1915.
Overall there was a decline in the number of male-authored reprints and releases across the
three eras, with an especially sharp decline in the post-war period (358, 344, 161).
However, this decline was more than compensated for by the near elimination of female-
authored reprints and releases in 1915. An examination of the reprints shows that under
Grubb’s new editorship, poetry, a primarily female-authored source of reprints, was almost
completely eliminated from the magazine. Grubb also eliminated the female-writer
dominated, family-oriented, “Home Circle” section of reprints with its sentimental stories
about children and home life.

Columns showed a different trend under Grubb’s editorship because he established
women’s columns as a new feature of the magazine. While these columns were heavily
focussed on segregated women’s work in support of mission enterprises, and represented a
stereotyped set of gender practices, they did give women the opportunity to express their
identity as a significant part of church life. It was a breakthrough in gender, with a woman

\textsuperscript{21} Gerlof D. Homan, \textit{American Mennonites and the Great War: 1914-1918} (Scottdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1994), 57-
formally appointed to collect and edit the material. At the same time male identified columns dropped to almost zero in the war era. This reflected the changing editorial practice where a number of columns previously filed by men were moved to the direct hand of the editor and all names dropped from the submissions. The columns remained but their male authorship was no longer identified.

The small number of letters makes it hard to determine what trends were involved, if any, in their regard. The general direction of editorial policy under Grubb and his predecessors was to minimize all letter publication except under special circumstances and so it is not possible to gain any clear sense of what either men or women wrote to the magazine or how that might have changed over time.

Excursus: The strange case of 1914

In 1914 there was an unusual set of circumstances related to the authorship of reports and features. For this one year seven women writers were identified only by their first initial and last name, the most common form of male sex attribution of contributions. In one case it was a reprint of a popular female writer who often went by her initials. In the other six cases they were women who were identified by first name in previous and succeeding years. Five of these cases were missionaries. In each of these cases the woman was ordained to missionary work. The sixth case was that of Emma Burkett. Burkett was an occasional contributor of reports and features to the magazine. She was one of the few women who contributed articles on church doctrine and in 1914 she was the only such woman.

The number of cases and their timeframe suggest there was something significant going on at this time with regard to gender and these changed forms of identification were not just a coincidence (there were perhaps a half dozen other such occurrences over the
fifteen years of this study). In these six cases the women were working on the fringes of the male-gendered institutional and discursive framework within which *The Mennonite* functioned. Missionary work and doctrine were activities normally or formally within the realm of male control. By writing in these subject areas these women were giving a female voice to some aspects of a male world. In that light this use of initials, the typical male form of address, might have been a way of shifting these women more fully into the male discursive world. There are two possibilities in doing so. The first was an editorial intention to make these women appear to be men, not women. The second was to supply these women with the respect implied by the male form of address.

If the naming was a case of women being made to appear as men, it suggests the editor or important voices in the constituency were uncomfortable with women speaking within the male realm. If this was how they felt then the rationale behind hiding their sex would be that these women should not have spoken about their experiences in the mission field nor reported on mission activities because this was something men should have been doing. In the case of Emma Burkett, she should not have addressed issues of doctrine since only men were permitted to address such subjects. Thus women who did so were upsetting the gender order and needed to be hidden. Given that this runs opposite to the identified biases of one of the editors, this does not seem a likely hypothesis. It would have been easier to hide these women by refusing to publish their work. It seems more likely this was a case of women being supplied with a form of more respectful address. This suggests that female gendering was not perceived as being respectful enough of their contributions in terms of their roles or topics and therefore that the constituency (or the editors) were not comfortable with such serious topics being potentially trivialized by the female gendering. Since this pattern did not continue into 1915 it appears this reframing of
the voices of some women was not a satisfactory solution to the underlying issue, whichever it may have been.

Just as the authorship changed between the pre-war, war, and post-war periods, the subjects addressed by the writers showed changes as well. These changes were due to changing cultural factors and showed significant shifts in the sex ratios of the contributors (Table 3.4). Somewhat surprisingly, given the prevalence of military issues in the years before the war,22 war, militarism, and peace did not show up as significant topics until the war in Europe broke out. Unsurprisingly they declined substantially in the post-war period. Relief work, while it took place before and during the war, only emerged as a significant topic once Mennonites started working together to rebuild Europe and rescue the Russian Mennonites. Pastoral ministry was a male concern primarily in the pre-war period with the bulk of the relevant features published before the war. It is not clear why this might have

<table>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Ratio M:F</td>
<td>Total</td>
</tr>
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<td>Church History</td>
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<td>3:1</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
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<td>8</td>
<td>1:7:1</td>
<td>14</td>
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<td>3:0:1</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3.4. Feature article topics by number and contributor sex ratio

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22 The American public was concerned with both the on-going unrest on the border with Mexico, the regular wars in the Balkan states and the arms race that pre-occupied Europe in the years before the war.
been the case unless it was because men in leadership were less concerned with the operation of churches and more concerned with the war and post-war reconstruction.

The other topics showed shifts as well, sometimes very significant shifts in sex attribution. However the small number of contributions on some of the topics means that when broken down by the period of publication the meaning of the changes is sometimes hard to determine.

Church history was a concern of the new editor Silas Grubb and his concern was visible in the shift in the number of feature articles on church history in the pages subsequent to his appointment in 1915. Grubb authored some of the features, but he also drew upon the work of significant male figures in the conference to make this a substantial topic area in the magazine. The contributions of women remained at the same low level after the war as before the war and therefore the ratio of their participation dropped substantially. The masculinity at work may have been that of the editor rather than that of the community at large.

The ratio of men’s to women’s travel features dropped in a similar manner to that of the church history features. Since the bulk of all the travel writing had one source and related to two major trips on behalf of the conference it is hard to know how significant the drop in female travel writing was. It was not high to begin with and the lack of any female contributions after the war may simply have reflected that no women who enjoyed writing were traveling on behalf of the church at that time.

Social analysis contributions were erratic in sex ratio over the three periods. Due to the small number of features published, small changes in contribution caused major changes in ratio. It is hard to see any significant change in women’s or men’s attention to this subject area despite the shifts.
The subject of church doctrine showed a significant shift over time toward a stronger male presence (2.9:1, 5.8:1, 9.3:1). The number of female contributions on doctrine dropped by half between the pre and post-war periods (from 8 to 4) while the number of male contributions climbed substantially (from 23 to 37). Men were taking a stronger interest in issues of doctrine and almost as dramatically, women were demonstrating a lesser interest in doctrine. Given the importance of doctrine in the transitions the Mennonite church was going through in the period, especially with the rise of fundamentalism, this was significant. Fundamentalism, far more so than the opposite theological movement of modernism, saw women as confined to narrow roles within the church and community life. Mennonites were more sympathetic to fundamentalism than modernism, and despite the fundamentalist embrace of the war, would continue to move in that direction after the war. While it is hard to assess the meaning of the shift, it is clear there was a shift: men were becoming more vocal and women were becoming less vocal about church beliefs.

Church life issues were the single most common feature topic and they showed a shift as distinct as that of doctrine, but in the opposite direction. In the pre-war period men strongly dominated the writing on church life (62:12). During the war years interest in the topic waned among both men and women, but more so among men than among women (29:6). After the war interest rose, but more strongly among women than among men, so while men still dominated this topic, it was at a much lower ratio than in the pre-war period (42:12). The relative shift was to a stronger female presence with every change of era.

This shift in the contributor sex ratio for church life articles suggests there was a conflict among men and women over the gendering of church life. The strength of the topic indicated its importance to men and women, but the increase in the ratio of women
writers demonstrated rising female concern about how church life functioned and along what avenues it functioned. This period also saw the development of lay men's groups within urban Mennonite churches. These were explicitly male groups focussed on the development of stronger congregational ministries through male participation in and financial support for congregational life. In Mennonite churches the male minister typically reported to a male board, but worked with numerous female committees. Sometimes these committees were the real power in the church, a power the male board often responded to quite directly.\textsuperscript{23} If indeed there was a conflict, then women were moving toward winning the struggle for the gendering of congregational life.

The topic of education rose in importance over time, from being a minor topic before the war to a significant topic after the war (respectively 3, 6, and 26 articles). Its rise in importance among men was greater than that among women leading to a sharp shift in ratio toward greater male domination (from 2.0:1 to 5.5:1). This male domination of the discourse was not reflected in the content which consistently spoke of the need for both men and women to achieve a post-secondary education (the primary sub-topic).

The topic of Christian life showed a pattern identical to that of church life. Both men and women were interested in the topic before the war, then during the war interest declined, though this drop in the number of contributions was larger for men than for women (from 54:10 to 29:6). After the war interest in the topic rose dramatically, more

\textsuperscript{23} As a student intern in a large conservative rural Mennonite church in the late 1980's I observed two parallel political structures divided by sex. The male political structure held the formal power, but the female informal committees made the decisions. The male committees then ratified them and carried them out. For example, the male trustees committee was in charge of the maintenance of the building. However, the female "decorating committee" made all the decisions about what would be maintained and when, from the type of appliances to the colour of the paint. Once the decorating committee had made the decisions the trustees would hire the people to do the work. The men were incapable of deciding where to locate a bulletin board without the decorating committee's prior approval. Shortly after I left this structure started to break down as women moved increasingly from the female committees to the formerly male committees.
strongly among women than among men (41:24). The result was that over time this topic area showed a distinct shift from being strongly dominated to being more weakly dominated by male voices.

Christian proselytising was central to the ideology of Mennonite church life during the period and the high number of articles reflected that importance. After church life it was the most common topic. However, the writing on this subject showed a unique gender pattern. Before the war it was a topic weakly dominated by men (28:16). During the war women’s voices diminished dramatically and it became disproportionately male (29:5). After the war both men and women showed a sharp rise in interest in the topic, but the most dramatic increase was in women’s writing which in the post-war period approached closer to parity with men’s (49:37). Numerically, as reports from the various home and foreign missions demonstrated, women did outnumber men in the actual work. The gendering in print was moving in the direction of the gendering of the actual work.

Like education, interest in the topic area of parenting and family life also rose dramatically in importance after the war as measured by the number of feature articles on the subject (4, 9, 30). However, unlike education, this topic was increasingly a female enterprise (from 3:0:1 to 1.0:1). While male interest in the subject appeared to rise dramatically, female interest climbed faster, leaving this as the one feature topic where women were equally represented with men in the post-war period. However, if a special series of male church leader responses to questions of family life, written at the request of the editor, is taken out of the calculations, then women overwhelmingly dominated this subject area in the post-war period. It is conceivable that it was this female dominance that led to the commissioning of the male series on this topic.
These changing sex ratios among the contributors of feature articles showed a complex pattern of gender change. Throughout the study period the magazine was dominated by male voices, but to a lesser degree after than before the war. Over time women contributed more feature articles to the pages of *The Mennonite* particularly in relation to the areas of family life, church mission, church life, and Christian life. These topics which were so important to the general Mennonite discourse of the period were increasingly represented by female voices. This numeric presence seemed to occur due to women abandoning their discursive interest in other aspects of Mennonite life. For their part, men were taking a stronger interest in doctrine, relief work, and war/peace. These subject areas were all driven by events external to the Mennonite church. This did not come at the expense of male interest in other topics. In no case were men reducing their interest in other topics; male contributions on other topics were either static or increasing over the period of the study. The change in feature article contributor sex ratios revealed that over time women attended increasingly to the internal and established vehicles of church life with greater energy while men increased their attention to the external forces shaping church life.

In marking this shift in interest it is significant that the redirection of male interest foreshadowed the long term future of the Mennonite Church. This was particularly true of the topics of relief work and doctrine. As an actual practice, relief work drew together issues of war and peace and eventually produced the powerful institution of Mennonite Central Committee. This inter-Mennonite agency mobilized globally to deal with the collapse of the Mennonite communities in Russia and later developed innovative programs of response to the Second World War and arguably became the central institution in terms of Mennonite identity in the last half of the twentieth-century. When Mennonite men
turned their discursive attention to relief work they may not have known it, but they were
gendering as male the most powerful Mennonite innovation of the century. In a similar
way, male discursive attention to doctrine placed men on one of the crucial frontiers of
twentieth-century church life. The fundamentalist-modernist doctrinal conflict would tear
North American Christianity and the Mennonite church apart over the coming thirty years.
As it did so, Mennonite men would be the ones identified with its language and issues.

It is important to note here that these male voices were not creating the conditions
of the future, they were responding to the external forces that would create the future.
These were the forces shaping Mennonites globally, regardless of how Mennonites desired
to function within the confines of American or Canadian experience. But only men seemed
to sense the need to respond to these external forces. Even more so, women seemed to
lose interest in these areas after the war. The topics and concerns of the future were
emerging as male gendered areas of contribution.

An additional gender complexity of the feature articles was the drop in the
proportion of female writing during the war years. In every category where women’s
contributions were significant before the war they dropped to about half those levels
during the war years. This can be seen with particular clarity in the statistics related to
feature articles. Before the war men wrote 77% of all feature articles. During the war they
wrote 89% of the feature articles. After the war men’s contributions dropped to 76% of
the feature articles. Even more significantly, the ratio of male features to female features
increased every year during the war with a peak in 1919 when men wrote 96% of the
feature articles. While men changed their focus to the war, women seemed to have
generally lost their voice. While it is speculation, it may be that the war, as a powerful and
masculine event, left women speechless regarding what to say about anything. If this was the
case then the war discursively recast all of life as male. Or women may have found their interests turning to the war and away from other subjects, but lacked a perspective from which to speak. Of these two possibilities, the former was more likely than the latter, and if it was the case, it indicates how powerfully the war was a masculine event that reshaped all of North American life as an arena of masculine action/discourse.

Overall, the period 1910 to 1925 marked a series of distinct shifts in the way the pages of The Mennonite were gendered. The voice with which the magazine spoke to its readers was a male voice, though one increasingly tempered by a female tone as time passed. Not surprisingly, that female voice was heard more strongly in some areas than in others. When it came to parenting, the female voice approached parity with the male voice. However, core parts of church existence, from pastoral ministry to responses to the war, were spoken solely with a male voice. It was not a question of institutions vs. non-institutions, since the important institutions and ideology of mission and evangelism had one of the strongest sets of female voices. But it was a question of response to the outside world. The male voice was outward looking and explored the future in a way that the female voice did not. This was not because female voices could not look outward. From time to time they did, but they did so within the traditional categories of mission and church life. Male voices addressed the new forces of war and relief work and males were increasingly dominant as the voices of doctrine in a world where doctrine was gaining new, powerful, and divisive meaning.

It might be possible to argue that there was a tentativeness to the female voice that was lacking in the male. In the face of the crisis of the war the contributions of both men and women diminished on many subjects, and only men were prepared to respond to the war. Clearly this was not a quick or decisive response. Only Silas Grubb and Peter Jansen
appeared to be thinking clearly about the impact of the war and addressing the constituency on this topic in the early years of the war. But as time passed the chorus of voices that followed them were without exception male. Men were prepared to risk the new topics of conversation and address the new issues facing the church, but women were not. These new male voices were conflicted and sometimes contradictory, but they were male voices. As such, they gendered as male the challenge of the war.

3.3 Conclusion

The masculinity of *The Mennonite* between 1919 and 1925 was distinct, as was the masculinity of the church behind the paper. They both represented male-dominated worlds where men were the voices of the major institutions, carried the weight of the major issues, and faced the external world. Male editors controlled a discourse where male writers told the community what happened and what to think about what happened. However, it was not a universal discourse of masculine domination. It was instead a world with a strong and respected female presence. Women’s voices were heard in ways that signified their right to be heard as women on issues that concerned the community as a whole.

The differences between men and women in the discourse portrayed a world of interests both overlapping and separate, and where those interests diverged over time. That divergence was highly significant. As a whole men were interested in all subjects of concern to the church, and in the era before the war those interests were primarily internal to the life of the denomination. The gendering of the text portrayed women in the pre-war era as secondary but respected partners with men in the life of the denomination. In the post-war period the interests of men had become broader and included significant features of the external world. This shift of interest either made room for women to take a greater interest in the internal life of the denomination or women were struggling for a stronger voice in
the internal matters. In doing so women’s voices lost some of their range. The war itself seemed to cause the expansion of the male range and the diminishment of the female range.

That the war should have this effect on men is not hard to understand. Men were faced with the disturbing reality that the external world was forcing its way into the Mennonite communities. They were registering and being drafted. They were being harassed to buy war bonds. They were the ones speaking to the authorities. They could not help but become increasingly aware of and need to respond to the issues the world created for them.

That the war had the inverse effect on women is much harder to understand. It does not appear to be that the male voice pushed aside the female voice, since the war diminished the male voice as well, but of the female voice quieting itself. Possibly, as already noted, it was the maleness of the war that had this effect. In this case we face the following dynamic: While women were portrayed as secondary within the Mennonite community, they were discursively respected as persons. However, the overwhelming maleness of the war may have led women to shrink back from the external world just as the men were forced to face it. The in-breaking force of the war was therefore an external male attack on both the men and the women in the Mennonite community, and one which challenged men but threatened women through its strangeness to their experience. It stripped women of their power in the face of the world, and therefore led to silence and a retreat to the inner world of Mennonite life and institutions. Men, on the other hand, were
forced out into the world to face and subsequently explore Mennonite interaction with that world.\textsuperscript{24}

If this conjecture is accurate it suggests that the Mennonite future would be one of increasing male control if Mennonite men were able to master the forces facing them in the external world. Conversely, if Mennonite men were not able to master those forces they would be pushed back into the internal world of the Mennonite communities in fear or anxiety only to find that women had taken a stronger hold on the discourse of that internal world. In either case the stage was being set for a reduced partnership between men and women, and in the latter case, for the possibility of struggle and even violence.

If the possibility existed that there would be increasing conflict between men and women then it shows there was an ethical irony in the gendering of the discourse. Editor Grubb took deliberate steps to include women in the public discourse in ways his predecessors had not. As an editor he was more sympathetic to women and liberal in his conception of women's roles and his work to establish regular women's input demonstrated the desire to ensure women were integrated as respected members of the constituency. However, the channels he used to give women a stronger voice reinforced traditional gender divisions within the Mennonite culture by focusing on traditional women's work. As inadvertent as it may have been, he aided men and women to perceive women in more traditional terms, not in terms that would genuinely mark their engagement with the changes affecting Mennonite life. He was trying to embrace women's

\textsuperscript{24} It is impossible to know whether this discourse was part of the Mennonite communities, but Frances Early identifies a powerful female anti-war voice that specifically rejects the images of women necessary to support the military masculinity. Not only did Mennonite women not articulate such a femininity, they were exposed to images that supported the militarily focused, vulnerable, soldier-mothering gendering of American society. Frances Early, \textit{A World Without War} (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1997), 192.
participation, but by doing so in terms that accepted women’s roles as traditionally defined, he did not help broaden their range of participation.

The more important ethical question was that of the impact of the war. Given the power of the war to reshape the gendering of the Mennonite discourse, it indicates that men and women were adopting differing ethical tactics to the war. In terms of Wells’ model of Christian ethics, women were blocking the war and men were accepting the war as given and/or over-accepting the war. Women were not addressing the new issues, but giving increased attention to the old issues. Men, on the other hand, were looking at the world outside the Mennonite villages and trying to understand it. Looking in particular at the discourse of relief work, the male gender of this discourse indicates that these contributors were over-accepting the war, not only taking it as a new reality, but trying to retell the world’s story of suffering in terms of a Mennonite ethic of service.

If this was what they were doing, then they were in fact innovating in a powerful way that changed the essence of the Mennonite story. By retelling the story of the world’s suffering as a story of Mennonite service, they were also retelling the story of Mennonite existence in terms defined by the world. The ethical over-acceptance ran two ways. The result was a new version of the Mennonite story where they were servants of the world, as well as a new way of telling the story of the world as a place that needed Mennonite service. The old Mennonite story of isolation and retreat was significantly altered, at least for this branch of the Mennonites.

Lastly, that men and women chose different ethical paths in response to the war, speaks of Mennonite disunity at a core level, that of marriage itself. In as much as men and women chose different tactics based on gender, they were pointing themselves in different ethical directions and setting in motion a conflict between men and women that probably
was not there before. It was not that they chose to look in different directions, but that having chosen different tactics they were choosing radically different ways of living out the Mennonite story. To block the world and withdraw from it has been a powerful strand of Mennonite history. Mennonites have survived historically by fleeing to the countryside. The women reflected this traditional tactic by fleeing to a gendered isolation. But this was not a feasible tactic for the Mennonite community as a whole since the world had permanently pushed in on Mennonite communities. Men were learning new ethics, ethics that put them at odds with the tradition and therefore that put them at odds with the women in the communities. At the same time these were the ethics that would push the community into a positive engagement with North American culture. The gendered discourse reveals a deeply divided set of ethical tactics. Men and women were on radically different courses.
4. MASCULINITY DEPICTED

In 1911 Ann J. Allebach was the first woman ordained to the preaching ministry in the General Conference Mennonite Church, encroaching on what had been until then an exclusively male preserve. It was an act that would touch off a controversy in the church, and though it would never result in an official church statement that ordaining women was wrong and she was never stripped of her credentials, it was an act that would not be repeated for many years. But it did provide a sharp image of the new possibilities for Mennonite womanhood in the twentieth century. The meaning and imagination of Mennonite femininity had changed.1

There was no corresponding event related to Mennonite masculinity in the first thirty years of the twentieth century. While urbanization was slowly moving Mennonite men from the country to the city, the few who made the move adapted without any public fanfare to the new urban conventions of the male breadwinner. There were no controversies over their behaviour or characteristics in the pages of The Mennonite. Even with the war and its challenge to masculinity, no voices were raised to articulate or complain about the new forms of masculinity.

1 “Ordination of Annie J. Allebach,” The Mennonite, 19 January 1911, 5-6. There was additional coverage in the subsequent month. The controversy over her ordination never made the pages of The Mennonite, which maintained a positive approach to Allebach throughout her life and printed her name with the prefix Rev. on those occasions when she contributed an article or was mentioned in relation to church events. An account of Allebach’s life can be found in Mary Lou Cummings, “Ordained into Ministry: Ann J. Allebach,” Full Circle: Stories of Mennonite Women, ed. Mary Lou Cummings (Newton, Ks: Faith and Life Press, 1978), 2-11. See also James Juhnke, Vision, Doctrine, War (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1989), 285-287. While other ordinations did not take place in the next fifty years, other women would go on to preach and provide formal leadership in General Conference Mennonite churches in the 1920’s and later. One was Vinora Weaver Salzman who was an itinerant preacher in Illinois in the late 1920’s and later regularly preached in her husband’s church when he was out of town. S.F. Pannebecker, “His Plan: Vinora Weaver Salzman,” Full Circle, 184-190.
That no one complained about changing masculinity is surprising on two counts. First, due to the war Mennonite men were forced to explore the meaning of their masculinity in terms drawn from the military recruiters and government propaganda. The war was a time when North American culture was particularly and strongly focused on one image of manliness. As Michael Kimmel says, “All wars... are meditations on masculinity,” and in World War I, the good man was many things: he cared for a vulnerable and dependent family, was physically healthy and active, took his Christianity seriously, and heroically laid down his life for his country. These were not just images in popular culture. As Gerald Shenk demonstrates, this masculinity was reflected in the terms used in the very discourse of the military and government. But this hegemonic, militant masculinity was not reflected in the Mennonite writings of the war period. There was nothing in either the images of men or the ethics directed toward men to indicate Mennonite men experienced any discomfort with the masculinity they were projecting. This led to a surprising continuity to the images of masculinity found on the pages of The Mennonite in the pre-war, war, and post-war periods.

Second, if, as Kimmel and others have suggested, in general masculinity at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth century was in crisis, then General Conference Mennonite men were in deep denial. The thesis of these scholars is that urbanizing and industrializing North America was struggling with the emasculation of the

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traditional yeoman of the soil. Regimented de-skilled industrial processes and relatively
gentle office life eliminated the experience of male, productive prowess. At the same time
intense competition for work created a high level of anxiety about life itself. Fitting the
crisis thesis was an anxiety about masculinity that showed up among Old Mennonite
leadership and suffused their writings. But throughout the thirty-year period of The
Mennonite examined for this study, no male anxiety was displayed. Instead men were
repeatedly portrayed relatively placidly in terms consistent with the image of the male
breadwinner popularized in the nineteenth century. Moreover this was a male breadwinner
with a broad range of characteristics, some of which overlapped with traditional feminine
characteristics. There was nothing that showed a Mennonite masculinity worried about
becoming feminized due to industrialization.

Instead what was found in the pages of The Mennonite was a masculinity composed
from many sources. The new masculinities of urban breadwinner and patriarchal/spiritual
head of the home were two. But these two were combined with traditional Mennonite
humility teachings. Traditionally the men (and women) of the General Conference
Mennonite discursive world were told to conform to community standards and put the
needs of others before themselves, whether in the home or in the outside world. From
1900 to 1930, it was a relatively unchanging perspective. It was as if there was no desire to
probe this changing realm of human experience, and especially no desire to question the
conventions of masculinity long established in Mennonite life. If masculinity was in crisis,

5 Kimmel, Manhood in America; Bristow, Making Men Moral.
6 Brenda Martin Hurst, “The Articulation of Mennonite Beliefs About Sexuality, 1890-1930” (Ph.D. Thesis,
   Union Theological Seminary, 2003).
7 This might be consistent with the position taken by Michael Messner that there was no generalized crisis in
   masculinity during the period. Michael A. Messner, Politics of Masculinities (Thousand Oaks, Ca.: Sage,
   1997). It may also be due to the very low level of urbanization among Mennonites.
and there were signs inside and outside the Mennonite world that it was, then the response of the General Conference Mennonite Church and its English news-magazine was, in Samuel Wells’ terms, blocking.\(^8\) These Mennonites would not, in their printed examinations and images of masculinity, permit the possibility that a challenge to their masculinity existed. In the pages of *The Mennonite* there was a masculinity that reflected a more open response to femininity than would typically be expected from a conservative rural people or the period in general. While this study does not directly examine femininity, as a proportion of gender images and ethics, there was during this period more content regarding femininity than masculinity and the editors were open to publishing relatively far-reaching and liberal examinations of the roles of women. “Feminine” characteristics were also applied to men in a positive way. While this study cannot answer the question of whether pacifists have a special open relationship between the sexes, the material that depicts gender leaves that open as a possibility. Certainly during this period there were no signs that openness to women, their experience, and characteristics, related negatively to a fully male existence. It seems as if the authors and editors of *The Mennonite* were prepared to be relatively unmanly in terms of the North American dominant masculinity, and instead reflect the world of their own more flexible traditions.

This chapter proceeds by exploring the images and ethics of masculinity in *The Mennonite* between 1900 and 1929. It examines the way men were described, the types of activities they were reported doing, and the types of attributions they were given. A longer time line was chosen for this part of the study than for the previous components. In

\(^8\) Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004).
general portrayals of masculinity change as cultures respond to long term social and economic changes. Mennonites were moving in a small, steady stream from rural to urban environments. Farming practices were slowly mechanizing. The industrial life of America was moving steadily outward and into many of their communities. But these were changes measured in decades with concomitantly slow changes in the images of masculinity they fostered.

Over 740 articles were reviewed for their discourse on masculinity and femininity. While not exhaustive for this period as a whole, they are such for nine years (1900, 1910, 1914-1919, 1929) and there was careful attention to any articles of significant gender content for the other years. This provides the full framework of gender discourse during the period. From these articles all the images and ethics of masculinity were taken and broken down by general classification related to the aspects of human life primarily present in the article. Thus discourse on fatherhood or the ethics of temperance respectively would be grouped together and analyzed. From these groupings particular aspects of masculinity were identified and conclusions drawn regarding the construals of masculinity over the period.

In examining these images and ethics, the corresponding discourse of femininity is addressed as appropriate. In many of the cases the images and ethics of the feminine are necessary in order to understand the masculine image that were developed. In other cases the masculinity is relatively self-evident or there was no feminine against which to locate it.

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9 This was not true of all Mennonites. However, it was true for the General Conference Mennonites, the Mennonite Brethren, and some of the other groups. Many Mennonites were proud of their quick adoption of technological changes. Old Order Mennonites and the Amish were resistant to these changes and other Mennonites existed on a continuum between these two poles. See James Juhnke, *Vision, Doctrine, War*, 189-207; and Frank Epp, *Mennonites in Canada, 1786-1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 283-302.
In other cases the appropriate contrast was between masculinities. In these cases the varieties of masculinities being rendered are examined with attention to the interplay between them, especially to their place as hegemonic or resistant masculinities. Cumulatively they demonstrate a picture of a masculinity in very slow transition, where women were moving into the male realm, and where men had a wide range of alternatives in front of them to guide their character, despite a limited range of work options.

Two studies are especially useful in undertaking the examination of these images and ethics. Brenda Martin Hurst has examined the changing Old Mennonite teachings about human sexuality in this period. She identifies key leaders as explicitly taking Mennonite thinking into a new conceptual world of a hierarchical masculinity of strength where men were identified as the masters of women and themselves. According to Hurst they opposed a traditional more egalitarian Mennonite sexuality of "sowing your wild oats" that encouraged both men and women to explore their desires before settling down to church membership, marriage, and established existence. Instead they sought to reorder the Mennonite church into one where men were clearly in control of the community, and especially in control of the women. To do so they enforced new standards of male and female dress, especially the female bonnet or head-covering which all post-pubescent women were to wear as a sign of their purity and the authority of men. According to Hurst it was a time of major transformation in the life of the Old Mennonite communities, especially with regard to gender.10

An additional helpful study is that of Gerald Shenk. He examines the way a variety of American World War I draft boards approached the draft, paying special attention to

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10 Hurst, "Articulation." The "sowing your wild oats" pattern of young male and female sexuality is still maintained by the Amish.
their discourse of masculinity. As part of his analysis he developed paired sets of terms for masculinity taken from American government correspondence. Draft boards were responsible for ensuring manly men were drafted and for encouraging manliness among draftees. Evaluating the draft board reports and correspondence between individuals and departments he produced the following table of paired, opposing terms for masculinity:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Manly:</th>
<th>Unmanly:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agency</td>
<td>Latency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Powerful</td>
<td>Powerless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volition</td>
<td>Instinct, impulse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure</td>
<td>Chaos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Disorganization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-discipline/control</td>
<td>Controlled by others</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical perfection</td>
<td>Illness, crippled</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance/Symmetry</td>
<td>Distortion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fairness</td>
<td>Inequity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The terms on the left are those used by the draft boards to describe the ideal type of man, the type of man the military sought to develop and put forward to the nation as the ideal soldier. This was the model to which other men were to conform, and if necessary be taught to conform. The terms on the right reflected the types of masculinity rejected by the military.

These two studies give us analytic tools with which to assess how General Conference Mennonites responded to masculinity both in relation to their Old Mennonite kin and in relation to the U.S. Government. Against the Old Mennonites it quickly becomes obvious General Conference Mennonites did not see the need to develop a hierarchical masculinity of control. Against the American Government it is obvious General Conference Mennonites did not limit masculinity in the same terms.

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11 Shenk, “Work or Fight,” 27.
Before examining the 740 articles of The Mennonite in detail it must first be recognized that the primary mode of anthropological imagination or ethical reflection in the magazine was either not gender specific or was formally inclusive of men and women in positions of ethical equality. This reflected a church which understood the divine call to rest on all members of the church regardless of sex. Every baptized adult member of the community was expected to live a life of holy service to God. This was one of the oldest of the teachings of the church, from Michael Sattler and Menno Simons in the 1500s through to the contemporary Mennonite church. While neither the founders nor any of their descendents taught the behavioural equality of men and women in the day to day life of the family or church, it did mean women were included in the commands of the church regarding obedience. Therefore teachings were typically directed at men and women together.

Examples of this unity of male and female in the character of the Christian life abounded in the pages of The Mennonite. Good Christians could be described as having both traditionally masculine or feminine characteristics. A column from 1914 exhorted both men and women to courage and another in 1915 called men and women to be leaders and used a military analogy for this leadership. One of the traditionally “feminine” characteristics Christians were called to emulate was purity as when a column in 1914 told all Christians to foster the flower of purity, and another in 1916 said, “Modesty and purity

12 Robert Friedmann, The Theology of Anabaptism (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1973), 115-119. Among contemporary Mennonites this is commonly called the doctrine of the “Priesthood of all Believers.” However this nomenclature confuses early Reformation Lutheran concepts of the church with the early Anabaptist and Mennonite perspectives. Anabaptist views are more accurately called the “Discipleship of all Believers.” With only rare exceptions none of the church founders used the Lutheran term. Marlin E. Miller, “Priesthood of All Believers,” Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online (Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online, 1989).

are the pearl of Christian manhood and womanhood.”14 More mundane aspects of the Christian life received the same treatment such as when a 1918 column indicated reading books led to better men and women.15 Repeatedly, men and women were held to the same behavioural characteristics.

The cumulative impact of such images is such that it would appear that early twentieth-century Mennonite men and women stood conceptually equal before God and possessing an androgynous set of characteristics. However, while this might have been theoretically true, it did not carry over into how church life was practiced. Women could not vote in church life nor would it have been acceptable for a man to stay home and care for the children unless he was disabled. James Urry notes that a traditional Mennonite man would not milk a cow nor a cook a meal, even if his wife was sick.16 The performance of Mennonite life was much more gender differentiated and this was reflected in much of the material as well. While the language of co-gendered ethics dominated the magazine, it masked a very different world of life experience, a different world partially visible by attending to the minority of the ethics articulated.

To explore this world of gendered discourse, this chapter will proceed in three sections. The first section will explore the impact of the war on images of masculinity. The second will look at the range of images of masculinity, exploring the imagination of male roles and issues, paying careful attention to them in the framework of both American national imagery and the Mennonite religious imagination. The last section will look at the

broader issue of the relationship between images of men and images of women. There are aspects of gendering that only become visible as the two genders are contrasted.

4.1 Images & Ethics of Masculinity during the War

Contrary to what would be expected of a culture openly engaging the world surrounding it, as General Conference Mennonites seemed to be doing in other respects, the war itself did not have any major impact on the way they depicted masculinity in their English news-magazine. From 1910 to 1929 there was little change in the way masculinity was depicted or the way the ethics of masculinity were exhorted. The images and ethics were relatively consistent in the character, breadth and flexibility of masculinity, with no change during the war years. The hegemonic military masculinity being promulgated by the dominant society was being blocked. 17

The one change that did take place during the war was the sharp drop in sentimental images of masculinity (and femininity) around 1914. While the basic conceptual framework remained the same, the stories of wise mothers and generous men diminished almost to nothing. Given that there was no change in the actual role attributions or the nature of the gender ethics extolled, this was probably due to changing policy under the new editor, Silas Grubb. While Grubb made no declaration of such an intent, there was a distinct change in emphasis throughout the magazine under his editorship. As already

17 This raises concerns about the impact of hegemonic masculinities on the discursive masculinity of subcultures. R.W. Connell, who developed the concept initially, appears to have similar questions about its legitimacy and he strongly alters its use in recent work. See R. W. Connell and James W. Messerschmidt. “Hegemonic Masculinity: Rethinking the Concept,” Gender and Society 19 (2005): 829-859, though Connell and Messerschmidt still see the concept as a powerful tool. John Tosh also calls for a more flexible and subtle use of the term in “Hegemonic Masculinity and the History of Gender.” In Masculinities in Politics and War: Gendering Modern History, edited by Stefan Dudink, Karen Hagemann and John Tosh (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2004), 41-58. However, the ethical model developed by Samuel Wells in Improvisation, is suggestive of just such a response. Wells model implies a level of discursive power within sub-communities that Connell and others seem hesitant to embrace.
noted, the number of serious contributions and historical articles climbed substantially. The sentimental material may have been the area he cut in order to make room for the new material.

This absence of a distinguishable effect in gender depictions due to the war is difficult to understand. As noted in chapter two, in the evaluation of the question of response to a brute attack on vulnerable women, questions of masculinity were swirling in the background of Mennonite responses to the war. The integration of breadwinner images into the discourse of masculinity shows that the community was looking for new images that would better assist the community in enacting its masculinity. Yet there were no other signs that the community took seriously the masculinity being articulated by the surrounding culture during the war.

As a people with a long martyr tradition, in response to the war with its many images of death, one might expect these men to have reached into their history of martyrdom for useful images and ideas, but this did not happen. There was no positive recollection of the tradition of the martyrs, though there was some musing in this direction from editor Grubb. This was also the era of Billy Sunday and “muscular Christianity.”18 Jesus was, according to Sunday and his ilk, a tough guy prepared to lead revolutions and die in the process. It would have been easy to combine this tradition and set of images into images of virile Mennonite men facing death like Jesus on behalf of God, just like their great-great-grandparents. But this did not happen. It would also have been possible to call for a withdrawal from the world and a return to rural isolation. This was certainly the

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discussion among Canadian Mennonites. But no such discussion emerged in the pages of *The Mennonite*, not even as hundreds of Mennonites in the United States began a trek north to the perceived sanctuary of Canada and thousands of Canadian Mennonites started looking to the far south.

In the face of what actual men experienced, Wells’ concept of blocking seems to be the only reasonable evaluation of this lack of response. Men were harassed on the streets, accused of cowardice and other unmanliness. Young men were asked difficult questions and, if drafted, placed in highly anxious and often deeply painful positions trying to justify their existence as men to a system which saw their responses as womanly. That no one ventured to put such experiences or responses to such experiences into print, let alone was prepared to open the question of Mennonite masculine identity or future, speaks of shock and a deep fear. This is apiece with the refusal to acknowledge the suffering of the young men in the military training camps or the armed forces. In both cases Mennonite men were left without resources to face a world suddenly become hostile. As noted in chapter two, it appears to be the case of a community moving into a new world, seeking integration and approval, and unable to deal with the painful reality it experienced.

### 4.2 Discursive Masculinity 1900-1929

In light of this denial it becomes important to examine exactly what images and ethics of masculinity were put forward over the larger period. The pages were rife with imagined masculinities and, even if they showed no direct response to the war, they do indicate something about how men (and women) understood the place of men in Mennonite life. To explore these images and ethics the articles have been broken up under

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six headings, manliness, unmanliness, marriage and fatherhood, violence, and God and church. The hegemonic masculinity of the war specifically construed each of these categories in a way that made military service essential to masculinity. Military masculinity was about being a “real” man, not being a slacker, protecting women and children, undertaking protective violence at the direction of the state, and obedience to God. As Mennonite masculinities are explored through these categories, the way they were construed shows how different Mennonite masculinity was from that of the dominant masculinity of the surrounding culture. It represented a more egalitarian ideal, with a broader range of behaviours, than that articulated in the surrounding culture before, during, or after the war. Given the scope of the social transition then in progress this was a situation of on-going blocking, a refusal to bring into the community a discourse of social change, of denying the changes being experienced by Mennonite men, and of denying the difficulties experienced by the men making their way through the transition and in encounter with the broader North American English society.

**Manliness**

Manliness as a specific character trait was an area of concern throughout the study period, forming the largest single grouping of articles over the full thirty-year period studied. It was depicted in story and addressed in ethics. There were many suggestions of a traditional, rural-Mennonite masculinity of humility. There were also masculinities taken from popular culture and even masculinities compatible with the military masculinity of the war period. However, the overall picture was of a traditional Mennonite humility masculinity being recast in terms more suitable to an urban world. Significantly, this was

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not a separate-spheres masculinity, though it did share many traits with that popular ideology. The manly Mennonite male was not set off over against women but carried many characteristics shared with women, even as he carried out his responsibilities in the world and in the home. The inconsistencies and range of characteristics show this was no combat arena where discursive masculinities were pitted against each other. Manliness was more chaotically depicted, a jumble of implicitly competing masculinities where writers made vast assumptions without critique. That this was an area of painful transition was not evident.

Men start off as boys and one area where the discourse of manliness did conform to popular stereotypes of masculinity was in the portrayal of boyhood. In *The Mennonite* boyhood was displayed primarily through stories of boys and not ethical instruction aimed at boys. These stories were typically found in fiction published in the pre-war period. In these stories the virtues of courage, self-control, generosity, physical well-being, care for mother, and the avoidance of alcohol and tobacco were played out. Conversely the vices were deceptiveness, disobedience to mother, or smoking and drinking. One nuance was that while physical well-being was part of the discourse, participation in sports was not consistently recognized as a good thing, even though this was very much part of the way masculinity was being remade in popular culture. One article in 1910 even went so far as identify sports participation as a sign of a boy going wrong.²¹ This fit Mennonite humility teachings which deemphasized competition.²² One important characteristic of the depiction of boys in *The Mennonite* was the strong place of mothers in their lives. Mothers were to be

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¹ Newton Gottshall, “The Young Man in the Sunday School and Church,” *The Mennonite*, 10 November 1910, 5. This was a marked contrast to the way sports were emerging as one of the important symbolic ways in which urban males proved their manhood. Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 117-125.

² Royden Loewen notes sports participation was a significant marker of urbanization for Mennonite masculinities after World War II in Southern Manitoba and not one easily accommodated within traditional Mennonite communities. Royden Loewen, *Diaspora in the Countryside* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 145-168.
treated respectfully and attentively, and every proper boyhood was guided by the teaching of a mother, teaching that would guide him long into adult life.

Exploring motherhood and its relationship to boyhood more generally reveals additional aspects of the nature of boyhood that include more than just the pre-war period. One of the concerns found in *The Mennonite* throughout the period 1900 to 1929 was the relationship between mothers and children, both boys and girls. As the pre-war stories of boys indicated, mothers were essential to the well-being of children. These mothers needed to properly understand and care for their children, including understanding and dealing appropriately with the sex related differences of their children. Most of the concern regarding mothers involved their care for children as a whole, regardless of sex distinctions. However, there was a little sex distinctive concern. For boys the biggest worry was that mothers would not let them run free enough or engage in rough and tumble play. One article went so far as to suggest over-protective mothers led their sons to homosexuality.23 For their part it was vital for boys to respect their mothers, care for them, and protect them. Boys were also instructed to be obedient to their mothers, especially in avoiding the wrong moral influences. The conclusion these stories drove home was that mothers were central to the development of good men. Looking at stories of male adulthood only reinforced this relationship. These stories also showed that men who went wrong typically did so because they had forgotten or neglected their mother's teachings. Clearly a proper Mennonite man had a good relationship with his mother, a relationship rooted in moral guidance on one side and protection on the other, and one that began in boyhood.

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23 Everett Tomlinson, “The Boy and His Companions,” *The Mennonite*, 17 February 1916, 3. While homosexuality was not named as such, overprotected boys were in danger of developing “queer affections.”

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The importance of a boy (and a man's) relationship with his mother takes on special significance when it is contrasted with the imagined relationship of fathers to their families. Men were generally depicted as distant from their children, instructionally absent from the family home, and even irrelevant to the moral well-being of children, as one 1929 column indicated. Outside of his spiritual role as head of the family, a role stressed by a number of writers, a father at best stood as a distant image for his sons to emulate. No story or ethical exhortation depicted or suggested Mennonite men should foster a close relationship with their sons. While no doubt many Mennonite men grew up with close relationships to their fathers, such relationships were simply outside the view of the contributors to The Mennonite.

This prominence of the depictions of the relationships between mothers and sons indicates that the discursive relationship between boys and mothers was important and problematic. While the text indicates that good mothering led to good men and good men took care of their mothers, this very discourse suggests the community was at some level worried about what mothers were to do, how good men were produced in the emerging industrial world, and what good men looked like. That this discourse was present throughout the study period suggests this was a long-term issue in the General Conference Mennonite world. The relationship of mothers with sons was one of long-term moral ambiguity calling for a repeated (and futile?) sentimentalization of the relationship in terms of a reciprocity of moral guidance and physical protection.

24 "The S.S. Lesson," The Mennonite, 11 April 1929, 6. The author notes in passing that a good father makes no difference in the production of a good son, while stressing that a good mother improves the likelihood of a good outcome. There are only four articles that deal primarily with the relationship of fathers and sons compared to the 19 that explore the relationship between mothers and sons, and mothers get eight times as much attention as do fathers.
If we invert this depiction we may have something closer to the experienced or feared reality. Women may have been disconnected from their sons, unable or unwilling to provide the moral teaching boys needed. Boys may well have been growing up into men who departed the family home without looking back, off to make their way in the outside capitalist world. Such experiences or fears would not be surprising in a traditional rural people making the transition to an urban industrial world. In the traditional moral world of Mennonites, children were raised in the context of gendered responsibilities and transitions, kin networks, and strong church institutions. Urbanization weakened these traditional linkages and called for a new way of guiding young people, especially for guiding boys who in the urban world experienced their fathers as absent figures, not the powerful trainers and mentors of the rural environment. So mothers were called upon to take up the space left vacant by the weakened and absent fathers, churches, and kin. 25

This sentimentalized hope for mothers and sons becomes more significant in terms of another discursive absence noted in chapter three. There we found that women did not speak to militarism and war. Especially noteworthy in light of this sentimentalization, women did not address the registration, enlistment, or drafting of their sons. Women did not address the situation in the camps or the moral dilemmas of the young men trying to decide between resistance, C.O. service, and full combat participation. At this critical juncture only the (weak) voices of men and church institutions were heard. No doubt

25 The relationship between language and what it portrays is complex. As Barry Brummett indicates, “texts wield rhetorical influence because of the meanings that they support. In other words, people make texts so as to influence others. Second…texts can mean different things, they are often sites of struggle over meaning (and thus, over how and what or whom they will influence). Creation of a texts may be the point of rhetorical struggle…. The paradox is that a text is both a means to and an outcome of, rhetorical struggle.” Barry Brummett, *Rhetoric in Popular Culture* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martins, 1994), 68-69. Given the on-going nature of the discourse it appears to be the case of a continuing rhetorical struggle rooted in a community in transition where something other than the text’s recommendation was what was being experienced or feared would be the future experience.
women had positions, at the very least as mothers worried for the well being of their sons. But despite the willingness of women to address many issues of church life, on this one they remained silent. Nor did the men seem to think this absence was worth noting. The morality of war was a male gendered ethical arena, despite the interests women might have had in the outcome and the sentimentalized discourse suggesting women were responsible for their sons’ morality.26

The issue of a gap between the discourse and experienced reality around mothers and sons brings into visibility one aspect of the question, what would you do if a brute attacked your mother? This question was not taken as a critique of masculinity as seriously as it should have been. That sons needed to protect mothers was not only part of the sentimental discourse of The Mennonite, it was also part of war propaganda. Had protecting mothers been part of serious ethical reflection, Mennonites would have needed to be clear how the protection of mothers did not include going to war. The lack of such an argument contributes to the conclusion that in discourse on the relations of mothers and sons Mennonites were struggling with a perceived problem, not articulating a necessary relationship.

However, this gap between discourse and experience also contributes to the conclusion that there was blocking regarding military masculinity in the Mennonite community. These articulations of sons protecting mothers were an opportunity for Mennonites to directly respond to the challenge military masculinity posed to Mennonites

26 This absence is significant at another level. According to Suzanne Evans the discourse of motherly martyrdom was very much a part of the war discourse both as a recruiting tool for young men and as a motivation for mothers to voluntarily send their sons to die. While her emphasis is on British and Canadian discourse she indicates that this was also part of the American discourse. The absence of a response to this perspective in The Mennonite suggests it was either not a significant part of the American discourse or it was ethically blocked. Suzanne Evans, Mother of Heroes Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queens University Press, 2007).
who refused to protect their mothers in ways the state demanded. It is not hard to imagine a Mennonite minister sitting at his desk and writing an article that depicted true support for motherhood in self-sacrificing honour of God's teachings. How much more manly it would be, such a minister might argue, to fully honour a loving God by refusing to take up weapons to kill the sons of another mother who depended on that son. The irony was that the opposite position is what was actually printed in a May, 1918, Mother's day article. In it God, mother and home were merged as the rationale for the war.27 Genuine worry about mothers and sons from the viewpoint of Mennonite theology and ethics would have led to the opposite position.

Once boys became men, the images and ethics of manliness were more ambiguous. While boyhood was a relatively simple construct, manliness was not. Men lived in a complex and demanding world where a wide range of responses were called for, some of which were at variance with others. The discourse of The Mennonite reflected this ambiguity and variance. It also demonstrated a profound sense of the religious nature of Mennonite manliness. When they saw the need, Mennonites were both capable and willing to write thoughtfully about how manliness and religion interacted.

The most straightforward writing on Mennonite manliness was found in a set of instructions to young men on the meaning of Christian manliness in 1915. This was one of a paired set of columns on Christian manliness and womanliness. The column began with the example of Jesus who the author described as the most manly of men and whose manliness was rooted in his humility. The author went on to tell young men that manliness was found in sober, thoughtful and long term work. The author also identified religion as

essential to male life, contrary to accusations that Christianity was womanly, and asserted that men were a vital part of the church through the many men's organizations. The highest calling for a man was to be found in the life of a foreign missionary.\textsuperscript{28} This article worked carefully from a specific Christian imagination (Jesus) through key aspects of traditional Mennonite masculinity (humility and sober work), to an affirmation of church life. It was highly unusual in the care with which it was constructed and the partial traditionalism of its teaching. It failed to be fully traditionally in that it failed to encourage the traditional Mennonite understanding of conformity or "yieldedness" to the teachings of the church.\textsuperscript{29} It also stood in marked contrast to the teachings of male control rather than humility Hurst found in her review of Old Mennonite teachings during the same period.\textsuperscript{30} Lastly it stood in contrast to the heroic imagination that was one of the basic sources of military recruiting propaganda.

Coming as it did during the war, this careful articulation of a Mennonite masculinity brings to attention the work of Gerald Shenk identified earlier. None of Shenk's World War I military terms for manliness were found in this text. But neither did it espouse the characteristics of unmanliness found on the other half of his list. Instead the article set a completely different line, suggesting that when Mennonites thought carefully about manliness they thought first of their own traditions and only secondarily drew upon the surrounding popular culture or contemporary events. This was a strategy followed in greater or lesser degree by many of the other authors who addressed the subject.

\textsuperscript{28} "The C.E. Topic," \textit{The Mennonite}, 3 June 1915, 5-6.
\textsuperscript{30} Hurst, "Articulation."
Even when Shenk's terms for military manliness did appear in the discourse, they were often placed in contexts that would probably have distressed Shenk's military and government authors. While male self-control was a very common image, assertion, or assumption of many articles, it was rarely left on its own. It was usually placed in the context of other characteristics, especially self-sacrifice or even humility. This combination was no more profound than in an article on self-control that concluded, "True meekness is the climax of manliness."31 Similarly, authors often asserted that bravery and courage were characteristics of the true man, but the courage they identified was more often moral courage than physical courage, and during the war years it was especially emphasized as moral courage in standing up for right beliefs and conscientious objection. Self-sacrifice was also regularly coupled with these virtues, such as in a June, 1916, article that indicated real men were men of power, had courage and vision, and lived through self-sacrifice. However, this article picked up on the ambiguity of these as representations of manliness in Mennonite circles by stressing they were found most fully in mothers!32

Other topics demonstrated this interweaving of Mennonite tradition and contemporary masculine language in their construction of the ideal man. One of these was work, one of the more important stages for the display of manliness. The type of occupation was rarely stressed with the exception of an emphasis on church related work. Men were continually encouraged to seek vocations in the church, primarily as church ministers or missionaries. But men were found across the occupational spectrum as businessmen, machinists, farmers, nurses, teachers, and doctors and were identified as such generally without special mention regarding the nature of the occupation. In general it was

31 "Self-Control," The Mennonite, 5 June 1913, 2.
32 "Such An One As Paul," The Mennonite, 8 June 1916, 3, 5.
not the type of work but the manner of work that was important. Men were to show
initiative, work hard, be honest in their dealings, and have integrity. Some types of work
did get special mention. Besides the call for men to take up church-related work,
businessmen were cautioned to be honest in their business dealings and teachers received
special approval for their contributions.33 Illustrating how fully the occupations themselves
were not relevant within the discourse of The Mennonite, none of these occupations were
solely male. References were also made to businesswomen, female teachers, female mission
workers, female industrial workers, female nurses, and female church ministers, even if in
some cases they were non-Mennonite. These women were always depicted positively thus
reinforcing the assumption that manliness was found in the attitude to work and not the
form of work.

Examining the topic of work also brings out the lack of any firm separate spheres
ideology. While men may have found their life’s meaning outside the home, women were
found both inside and outside the home. It was the obvious assumption by many authors
that the best place for women was in the home, yet they were not prepared to complain
about women who did not accept that role. This may have reflected a demographic reality
where women outnumbered men, at least in western Mennonite communities,34 leading to
the necessity that women would find occupations outside the home as urbanization took
place. Mennonites even developed a religious order for celibate women, an order which
received much prominence in the pages of The Mennonite. Regardless, these Mennonites

33 “Notes on the C.E. Topic,” The Mennonite, 12 February 1914, 6; “They All Do It,” The Mennonite, 3 May
1917, 5.
34 Joan Stevenson, Phillip Everson, and Laurine Rogers, “Changes in Fertility Relative to Starting, Stopping,
Male | Female
--- | ---
true citizens | queens of the home
unemployed | deserted
character | purity
need to be better Christians | need to foster their sanctity
honest | virtuous
honest | pure
honourable | virtuous
save souls | help the needy
aspire | love
risks life or property | risks virtue or safety

Table 4.1. Paired Gender Characteristics

discursively depicted women working outside the home as a routine matter, not one upon which comment was required.  

While dominant, this relatively ungendered world was not universal. A number of contributors did carefully set off masculine characteristics from the feminine and some developed paired lists of differing characteristics (Table 4.1). These paired characteristics showed signs of traditional separate spheres gendering where men focused on honesty and activity in the world while women focused on personal purity and generosity. However, it

35 Between 1915 and 1921 there were repeated requests on the front page for Mennonite women to consider the Deaconess order. Reports on their activities were a regular feature. This order began among General Conference Mennonites in the early part of the twentieth-century, continuing a practice with origins in Russia. Lena Smith, “Deaconess,” Mennonite Encyclopedia, Volume II (Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1956), 22-25. The impetus for this order may have been a birth sex ratio of less than 100 males per 100 females which would result in up to 5% of women not being able to find a marriage partner when in their twenties. Such a ratio would be consistent with the demographic information used as the basis of chapter five. Joan Stevenson, Phillip Everson and Laurine Rogers found a 6% excess of women in Kansas church records between 1875 and 1924. Joan Stevenson, Phillip Everson and Laurine Rogers, “Changes in Fertility Relative to Starting, Stopping, and Spacing Behaviors in a Migrating Mennonite Community, 1775-1889,” Social Biology 41 (1994): 84. As Mennonites urbanized, these women would need to find their own way in the world.

was possible to find other articles that reversed the gendering of these terms, even if never in this precise way. Therefore, while it is possible to see in some articles a masculinity constructed as distinct from femininity, it would be an overstatement to describe one set of terms in the table as masculine and the other set as feminine for the discourse as a whole. The alternate uses were too common.

Exploring the images and ethics of manliness still further, there were other gentler characteristics. In an article in 1924 true men pursued peace. In December of 1918 a Sunday School lesson found that manly men were men of mercy, not justice. It also noted that weeping is a noble, manly activity if the man weeping is a brave man, but otherwise it is a cowardly activity.

The cumulative effect of this collection of images and ethics of masculinity is confusing. The men of *The Mennonite* in some respects fit the descriptors used by Shenk’s military and government men, especially as boys. However, the discourse transcended these terms and they expanded the positive definition of manliness to include characteristics in keeping with traditional Mennonite teachings of humility and general images of femininity. These inclusions took place in the name of a Christian vision, one that identified Jesus as the core of true masculinity. Unlike the Jesus found on some recruiting posters raising a sword, this was a Jesus meek and humble. The result was that the Mennonite man in his manliness was discursively portrayed as having many characteristics shared with Mennonite women.

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This humble masculinity made the General Conference Mennonite man significantly different from Hurst’s Old Mennonite man who was pushed by his church leadership to adopt a stance of firm control over women and advised to cease being humble. At no time was a General Conference man to find manliness in control over women and he was specifically charged with remaining humble. It was an inclusive vision for men based in both a theology and a tradition of a partnership of men and women engaged in lives of service before God. The lack of debate around this gendering suggests this was a vision shared broadly by the community. However, insofar as discourse emerges out of the need to explain difference, these depictions suggest the General Conference Mennonite community felt a discord between the manliness it advocated and the manliness being advocated by the surrounding culture. When things are assumed as natural and of common agreement they do not emerge into consciousness and from there into discourse. Somewhere there was a dissonance that led this discourse into being and the most likely location of that dissonance was between Mennonites and the North American culture they were beginning to enter.

_unmanliness_

If a manly Mennonite male can have feminine characteristics, then what is an unmanly man? Shenk’s military and government authors had a list of characteristics used to describe unmanly men, including chaos, powerlessness, and disorganization. In _The Mennonite_ there were very few images of men with such characteristics and minimal use of such terms. Of the few examples found in the magazine, most were related to the effects of alcohol consumption.

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40 Hurst, “Articulation,” 130.
From the depictions of the effects of alcohol consumption, alcoholism was a
gendered problem. Alcohol’s direct victims were almost always male and those who
suffered at the hands of the alcoholic were women, children, employers, the United States
Army, the country, and God. Alcohol consumption led to drunkenness, and drunkenness
led men to violence against women and reduced efficiency in their work. As little as one
glass of alcohol could cause a man to lose self-control permanently. Alcohol had this effect
on women as well, and in consequence they risked their virtue and their productivity, but
women’s drinking was not a major concern. 41

Among the other things that caused a man to slide into unmanliness were tobacco,
scepticism, lodge membership (such as joining the Masonic order), or forgetting the
 teachings of mother. 42 Anger could lead a man into doing wrong and even excessive
optimism could have that effect. 43 The worst outcome of these journeys into unmanliness
was the abandonment of wife and children.

All unmanliness came from loss of control. These were stories of men who were
embedded in chaos and became powerless and disorganized, terms fitting Shenk’s military
 correspondents’ views of unmanliness. But these stories were rare cautionary tales, not
reflections of the actual experiences of Mennonite men. Unmanliness was a background
issue, not a major concern.

41 These images and ethics were confined to the period before prohibition in 1920. Robert Roth, The
Mennonite, 7 November 1912, 5-6; Katie Reusser, “How Does Temperance Help One in Travelling,” The
Mennonite, 26 October 1916, 4.

42 A.M. Shaw, “Three Scenes in a Blighted Life,” The Mennonite, 4 May 1916, 3; “Infidelity in One Family,” The
Mennonite, 30 January 1913, 2; “Ministerial Conference,” The Mennonite, 21 April 1921, 1; “The Runaway’s
Return,” The Mennonite, 18 December 1919, 4-5.

43 Howard Yoder, “Anget,” The Mennonite, 5 May 1910, 2; “Somewhere in Manhattan,” The Mennonite, 12
October 1916, 3, 5.
Marriage & Fatherhood

The most common images and ethics of masculinity were found in relation to the concepts of marriage and fatherhood. Primarily these were images of fathers: fathers with children, fathers with mothers, and men in families. A good man was married, sensitive to his spouse, a breadwinner, and a spiritually strong father.

A good man was first of all a heterosexually married man. Single men were quite literally boys. There were almost no images of single adult men. The few stories of single adult males include a news report of a miner who dived off a ship to rescue a young woman and lost his riches overboard, a story of an old man in poor health who needed rescuing by a girl, and another story of a curmudgeonly old man who needed assistance. Only the miner could be called a positive, unmarried, adult male image. There was even one article, possibly an editorial, that spoke strongly against men who did not marry. According to the contributor, these men were driven to crime by their singleness, while married men, by the nature of their married state, were virtuous.

There was very little information on how a man ceased being a boy and became a man. That they should grow up and get married was assumed by all contributors. As they did so, they should respect the purity of women and select future wives from the ranks of same denomination Christians. The latter was the case because a man typically converted to his wife’s denomination.


45 The Mennonite, 10 July 1913, 5-6. From its lack of a title and location in the text next to a Grubb editorial it is possible the author was assistant editor Silas Grubb.

Once married, men were sensitive to their wives. They emphasized mutuality in the family, changed their minds according to their wives persuasion, and were respectful toward and cared for their wives. A bad man blamed his wife for problems that were his responsibility. However, this sensitivity existed within a framework of role differentiation. Men were the ones who drove the cars while their wives cooked the meals.

The most common material about men was in relation to their families. As fathers men were the spiritual heads of the household. While mothers were primarily responsible for moulding the characters of the children, fathers were required to spend time in the home leading it spiritually through Bible reading and prayer. A 1921 editorial went so far as to call the father the necessary high priest of the family. Men were also breadwinners, but in doing so they might become too focussed on their work outside the family. Contributors were clear, men were not to attend to work at the expense of family. Men were also protectors of women and children and attentive to the sanctity of motherhood. A minor theme was the need for boys to have the training and attention only a father could give.

However, there was another vision of fatherly masculinity, a vision of men in relationships of mutuality and service with women and children. At the most extreme a 1921 column indicated that all members of a family were equally children before God and a

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50 “Editorial,” The Mennonite, 18 August 1921, 4-5. There were many depictions of this behaviour, both as image and as ethical exhortation.


52 “Only One Mother,” The Mennonite, 28 July 1910, 3.

1924 feature indicated that men and women in a family were to be as wives to each other, bound by mutual service.54

Collectively, these images of fathers spoke of male agency, structure, organization and control. Male power was also assumed, and even called upon in terms of images of men protecting women and children. On the other side, the single men were generally powerless, disorganized, ill, and controlled by others. On these two counts, the images of Mennonite masculinity were in keeping with an authoritarian separate spheres understanding.55 However, the depictions of male relationships with their wives suggest there was a broader understanding of masculinity. In relation to their wives men had volition and in some respects agency, but at the same time they functioned in terms of sensitivity, mutuality, and commitment. When it came to religious participation, they were significantly influenced by their wives. As with other aspects of male identity that have emerged to this point, the complete depiction of men with their families was complex and broad, incorporating both traditional masculine images typical of popular culture and military masculinity, and images that suggested a more feminine, humble, and service oriented masculinity.

Violence

Central to this dissertation is the examination of the Mennonite response to a masculinity of violence. In Chapter two, the only conclusion that could be drawn was that Mennonites avoided addressing masculine violence. But violence goes far beyond war and

54 "The C.E. Topic," The Mennonite, 27 January 1921, 6; J.H. Langenwalter, "The Christian Home," The Mennonite, 2 October 1924, 5-6. The full quote is, "The meaning of the word 'wife' originally was 'one who answered'. The Christian church has kept that idea without confining it to the wife. Members of a Christian home are essentially complements of each other." (6) Langenwalter was a respected male Mennonite academic and at the time of this article, President of Bethel College, Kansas.
55 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 157-165.
includes crime and aggression of many types including some sports. It is possible to address masculine violence even while avoiding the subject of war. However, that was not what was visible on the pages of *The Mennonite*. Beyond the slight attention identified already in the chapter on war, there was very little in the way of either images or ethics on masculine violence.

The one significant concern about male violence was that the image of hero not be applied to the soldier. As a number of contributors identified, the title of hero belonged to those who stood firm for their convictions even when they ran counter to the prevailing social currents.\(^56\) The true hero was variously described as Jesus, those who modeled their lives on Jesus, the war widow, those who worked for temperance, the ambulance corps member, the minesweeper, medical orderlies, or those who worked at war reconstruction.\(^57\) In these descriptions and exhortations key terms from Shenk’s list of military masculinity such as self-control, volition, courage, organization, and agency were located in opposition to military masculinity. From the point of view of the writers and editors of *The Mennonite*, the military man was implicitly, and occasionally explicitly, not a masculine hero.

While the soldier might not be a masculine hero, he was depicted as sexually appealing. Apparently uniformed young men caused young women to lose all sense of discretion and modesty. This led to warnings to mothers to ensure their daughters were aware of this danger.\(^58\) Within the framework of Mennonite experience these depictions

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were probably meant to portray soldiers in a poor light, not act as actual warnings to Mennonite women.

Nineteen-twenty brought a curious pairing of understandings of the war and masculinity. In August of that year the magazine reprinted an article that saw in the new, red-blooded, sacrificial, militarized manhood of the United States the great hope for Christian America.\textsuperscript{59} But a late September issue included an editorial identifying the war as highly destructive of men, making them selfish and hard-hearted.\textsuperscript{60} This contradiction suggests the editor had a relatively liberal policy of including diverse points of view. It also suggests there was confusion about the impact of the war on masculinity. On the one hand it could create good Christians and on the other hand it destroyed men morally.

There was only one other significant additional set of comments about militarized masculinity during the period studied, and this by way of femininity. In 1929 there was the unusual circumstance of the U.S. government refusing citizenship to two women, a Quaker and a Mennonite, on the grounds that they refused to commit themselves to serving in the armed forces if called to do so by the state. This led to sarcastic references about the unmanliness of the state in calling upon women to take up the defence of the nation.\textsuperscript{61} Obviously the understanding shared by the editor and contributors to \textit{The Mennonite} at the time was that violent national defence was a masculine activity.

The conclusion must be that while there was some awareness of the relationship between masculinity and violence there was no desire to explore it. Certainly there was no thorough or detailed evaluation of the relationship between the two concepts. The closest

\begin{footnotes}
\textsuperscript{60} “Editorial,” \textit{The Mennonite}, 30 September 1920, 4.
\end{footnotes}
the contributors came was their deconstruction of the idea of the military hero. However, despite the strong language with regard to the non-heroic nature of the soldier, there was no carry-through into a critique of the masculinization of violence in the war, and no desire to examine male violence in any other way. At one level the refusal to explore male violence is surprising, especially given the suffering experienced by so many during and because of the war. But it is consistent with the concept of moral blocking in Well’s model. Mennonites did not want to think about violence, not state violence and not masculine violence.

**God and Church**

The last category of gender portrayal in *The Mennonite* explores gender in relation to theology and church life. As a conservative religious community, images and understandings of God, religious perspectives on gender, interpretations of the Bible, and teachings about church life could be expected to have a significant part in determining community norms on a day to day basis. However, the relationships between religious belief, discursive portrayal and actual behaviour is complex. Theological and church discourses of masculinity can emerge from a religious world view or reflect practices of masculinity that contradict formal beliefs. In the discourse examined here, discourse that took place over thirty years in a denominational magazine and reflected a wide range of writers and a number of editors, the religious perspectives on masculinity were complex. In the context of the depictions and ethics of masculinity examined to this point it is not

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62 Traditionally ethics have been a major formal concern of Christian thinkers, from the Apostle Paul to most recently James McClendon, Jr., the Baptist theologian whose major work of systematic theology begins with the volume, *Ethics* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1986). One of the most publicized Christian theologians working today is an ethicist, Stanley Hauerwas, of Duke University.
surprising to find that there was a range of masculinities and a blocking of a social challenge to Mennonite masculinity.

As a Christian religious community, images and understandings of God could be expected to have a significant part in the discourse. Therefore it is perhaps surprising to find that in the period between 1900 and 1929 there was almost no “god-talk” in The Mennonite. General Conference Mennonites did not contribute much on God or use God as a direct source of their ethics. Their mode of Christian reasoning appears to have been biblicism, the use of the Bible as an authoritative text for daily life, rather than more theoretical and formally theological explorations.

Despite the biblicism, there were a handful of images of God found in the text and they deserve close attention. The assumption of current scholarship is that gendered images of God reflect the gendered state of the community and go on to shape the relationships of men and women. With regard to Mennonite images of God, the sociologist Leo Driedger has found in his examination of late twentieth-century Mennonites that images of a harsh or judging God were typical of a conservative approach to personal morality and restrictive roles for men and women, and images of a warm or loving God were typical of a more flexible approach to personal morality and the

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63 That the divine reflects the human and sanctifies the nature of human relationships and existence has been argued since the publication in 1841 of Ludwig Feuerbach’s *The Essence of Christianity* (E.T. New York: Harper and Row, 1957). This way of conceiving of the relationship between theology and ethics received powerful sociological support with the publication of Peter Berger’s *The Sacred Canopy* (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1969). The two classic examinations of this thesis in terms of gender, in both cases from feminist perspectives, are Mary Daly, *Beyond God The Father* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1973) and Rosemary Radford Ruether, *Sexism and God-Talk* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1983). It remains an active part of current cultural and discursive analysis of religious beliefs. See Robert Wuthnow, *Rediscovering the Sacred* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1992) for a more recent development of this perspective. A current examination of masculinity within this general framework is W. Bradford Wilcox, *Soft Patriarchs, New Men* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004).
behaviour of men and women. With this theoretical background, examining the few images of God in *The Mennonite* during the first part of the twentieth-century is highly revealing of gender discourse and dynamics though not with the clarity that might be desired.

Of the nine images of God found in *The Mennonite* between 1900 and 1929, five of them imagined God as a father. In two cases this father image was a warm one, a father who comforts and to whom His children cling in need. Two of the others portrayed a slightly tougher divine father who desires repentance and obedience. The fifth simply indicated that God relates to human beings much like a human father to his children. The remaining four images were very different and found in three articles. Two articles late in the study period written by women suggested that God can be imagined effectively as a mother, one as direct analogy and the other by portraying humans as children weeping for their absent mother. A 1910 article compared God successively to a comrade with whom humans share their playground marbles and a young man in love. It was an eclectic array of images and spoke of no clear gendering of the divine or human realms.

Evaluating these images of God as a whole, they appear closer to Driedger’s images of a warm and loving God, especially with the inclusion of the feminine images, suggesting the magazine at that time sat on the more ethically flexible end of the Mennonite theological spectrum. But the more judgmental images indicate that more conservative

positions were present as well. The inclusion of female images may also speak of a significant female participation within the General Conference Mennonite world. While Hurst's Old Mennonite leaders were articulating a patriarchal hierarchy from God through men to women, and enforcing a program of female subordination, it is difficult to conceive of the dominance of a patriarchal hierarchy in a community where God could be imagined as female. At the very least, if such a hierarchy existed among General Conference Mennonites these images of the divine feminine spoke of a resistance that women were prepared to articulate and found support in the editor of the magazine. On the basis of the gendering of God, this was not a world of uncontested male domination.

The small number of articles on God were greater than the number of articles that explored the relationship of Christianity to gender more directly. Beginning in 1916 and through to 1921 there were five such articles. Without exception these five articles identified the improvement of the condition of women as one of the central functions of Christianity. For three of them, this was the main point. Two others included men as beneficiaries, one in a way distinct from that of women. According to the contributors, the gospel meant for men as for women, honour, purity, and the brotherhood of men, or for men alone, an end to brutishness.

It is hard to draw conclusions from such a small set of articles, but by making the improvement of women's conditions something the Christian message revealed, it suggests a discomfort with the social conditions of women, a discomfort not felt with regard to the social conditions of men. That the one unique effect of the gospel on males is that they become less brutish raises the question: brutish toward what or whom? If the object of

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72 This perspective is reinforced if we pay attention to the many articles exploring the poor state of women in foreign countries (see below).
brutishness was women, a reasonable surmise, then the proper condition of women was achieved through the behaviour of Christian men. This was not quite a heroic depiction of Christian men, but does indicate that Christian masculinity was assumed to be a significant and positive experience as well as an active part of the social environment.

More central to Mennonite understandings of the Christian faith and numerically more common were gender images and teachings taken directly from the Bible. Consistently in the long running “The Sunday School Lesson” column, and often in other articles, readers of The Mennonite were treated to many of the Bible’s stories with directions on how to interpret them. Central to “The Sunday School Lesson” column were stories of biblical men and women with comments of approval or disapproval of their various ways of functioning. Given the overwhelming predominance of masculine images in the Bible it is not surprising that the vast majority of these stories were male. Contributors would sometimes address the manliness or womanliness of the characters or use them as examples for current Christian behaviour. There were multiple masculinities being read into and out of these characters.

The most prominent masculine model found in The Mennonite during the period was the Apostle Paul. Since he is a major character in the New Testament of the Christian Bible and was a contributor to it, this is not surprising. Contributors found that the Apostle Paul possessed a, “magnetic personality… magnificent stamina, virility, and moral rigor,” or his manliness was found in the way he found something worthwhile in everyone, or it existed because he was controlled and courteous, or it was found in his sincerity, honesty, and courtesy.73 An extended article in 1916 found it was the Apostle Paul’s vision, moral

courage, self-sacrifice, and message that made him a “real man.” He appealed to them as a positive vision of Christian manliness.

However, when the Apostle Paul’s own writings in the Bible are examined for a comparison with these depictions of him, he does not appear to be such a manly man. From his own letters written to the first Christian churches in the Ancient Roman Empire, his stamina is evident, and sincerity and honesty seem to be hallmarks of his approach to people and issues. Visionary and courageous would also seem to apply. However, most of the other characteristics attributed to him seem foreign to his nature or significantly overstate his character. He was capable of suggesting his critics castrate themselves, worked hard to demonstrate the sinfulness to the point of depravity of all those he addressed, and agreed with his critics that he himself was unmanly. Against these autobiographical characteristics we can see that the other characteristics attributed to him such as virility, rigor, control, and courtesy, and his ability to find something good in everyone were then the characteristics of manliness the authors wished to perceive in their biblical hero. We can reasonably conclude these were characteristics they believed were displayed by good men in their current time.

74 “Such An One As Paul,” The Mennonite, 8 June 1916, 3, 5.

75 This is especially true if the writings are limited to the academically uncontested letters of Romans, I and II Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, I Thessalonians, and Philemon. The book of Acts portrays the Apostle as an Ancient Near Eastern miracle worker, somewhat more in keeping with the way the early twentieth-century writers portrayed him. However, the advocates of a masculine Apostle Paul failed to portray him as a miracle worker, neglected the autobiographical portions of the letters, and still overstated the characteristics they were looking for.

76 On castration see Galatians 5:12. On depravity see Romans 1. Some member of the Corinthian church accused the Apostle Paul of being unmanly. He agreed and went to some length to ensure he was not perceived heroically by recounting stories that would show his weakness and humanity. See II Corinthians, chapters 10 through 12. The Apostle Paul’s point was that “super” Christians are not the real thing; it is instead the weak and suffering who carry the truth. See Victor Paul Furnish, II Corinthians (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 454-483. Similarly, when confronting the Galatian church Paul stressed his own weakness and illness. Galatians 4:12-14.
Jesus was not as prominent a subject for writers who were imagining masculinity.77 When he was described his manliness was typically in the form of dogma rather than characterization.78 For these contributors, Jesus was manly because he was divine, not because of his character or actions in life. As already examined, the one major article that did take Jesus as the characterization of actual manliness did so in the name of traditional Mennonite humility teachings. However, this dogmatically or humbly masculine Jesus stood in marked contrast to the early twentieth-century teachings of “muscular Christianity” or the Jesus of military recruiting posters.79 Mennonites seem to have deliberately side-stepped the challenge of this kind of Jesus. Once again they appear to be blocking a significant cultural image of masculinity.

There were other characterizations of biblical manliness found in The Mennonite. One such was the Old Testament character, Daniel, a politically powerful Jewish captive in Babylon c. 400 B.C.E. who, according to one contributor, lived a Christly life in spite of oppression.80 Another Old Testament character was Joshua, commander of the invasion of Palestine by the Hebrews fleeing Egypt, who had, “a real man’s job.”81 In both cases these were powerful men, even as they served God.

According to the contributors to The Mennonite, the Bible also produced images of unmanly men. These included Peter, the cowardly Apostle, Elijah, the cowardly prophet,

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77 This is surprising given the prominence of Jesus in the writings of the Social Gospel theologians such as Shailer Mathews and Walter Rauschenbusch. These theologians used a physically robust, assertive and vigorous Jesus to champion their renewed liberal Christianity. This was in marked contrast to Mennonite writers who never suggested such a Jesus. Susan Curtis, “The Son of Man and God the Father: The Social Gospel and Victorian Masculinity.” In Meanings for Manhood, 67-78.
78 “The C.E. Topic,” The Mennonite, 3 June 1915, 5-6; 8 March 1917, 6; 20 May 1920, 5-6.
79 Kimmel, Manhood in America, 175-182; Frantzen, Bloody Good.
Eli, the effeminate priest, and King David, the terrible sinner. The last story is particularly interesting because it tried to shift the blame for King David's sin onto Bathsheba, the woman whose husband he had murdered so he could marry her. Blaming Bathsheba was in keeping with the approach to women being developed by Hurst's Old Mennonite leaders. However among the General Conference Mennonites the story stands out because it was almost the only time women were blamed for any ill befalling a male. The High Priest Eli's effeminacy is also interesting because it was read backwards into his story: his sons were failures, therefore their father must not have been masculine enough. This suggests one of the early twentieth-century ways of evaluating whether a man was a "true man" was the way his sons behaved in public.

Since part of the way masculinity is perceived is by contrast with femininity, a significant question is, how were women portrayed? The Bible has many images of femininity and some of them were found in The Mennonite. These images need consideration if we are to fully understand the theologically shaped gender imagination found among the magazine's contributors. While they were not "manly," a number of biblical women were used as examples to be emulated by Christians, both male and female. The positive characteristics of these women were their faithfulness, bravery, generosity, repentance, leadership, and constructiveness. The positive range of character these

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83 King David spotted Bathsheba bathing, decided to abduct her for sex, made her pregnant, and then when her husband refused to be tricked into accepting the child as his own, had the man murdered. The anonymous author of this biblical text places the volition within King David. II Samuel 11-12.

84 Two articles blame women's immodest dress for respectively social decay and male damnation. "Indecent Dress and Lust," The Mennonite, 22 December 1921, 3; T. DeWitt, The Mennonite, 25 April 1929, 7.

women displayed was considerably greater than that of the male Bible characters. They were also clearly marked as models for all Christians, not for women specifically. Men were to look not just to biblical men but also to biblical women for their ethical imagination. If these depictions reflected the gender world of the Mennonites contributing to The Mennonite then it suggests their world was one where women demonstrated a significant and broad moral character. Women were important to the lives of Mennonites, and in a way that demonstrated characteristics morally important for both men and women.

In sum, the biblical images presented to the readers of The Mennonite were complex and with attributes both read into and read out of the texts. These images portrayed masculinity generally in terms reflecting ideals current to the writer's era, sometimes at the cost of considerably distorting the biblical text. They were also quite willing to use women as images of the Christian life to be emulated by both men and women. Biblically portrayed by the magazine's contributors, the most important aspect of the Christian life was to be a faithful human, rather than a particularly masculine man or feminine woman. However, as noted with regard to Jesus, this was not a neutral depiction. It stood in marked contrast to the discourse of a more violent Christian masculinity promulgated by popular evangelists and military propagandists alike.

Exploring religion and masculinity further, since participation in church life was central to Mennonite existence, gendered images and ethics of church life were important in determining the religious discourse of masculinity. In general women received the bulk of the discursive attention with regard to church participation and writers used a very limited range of male images and ethics. These few images and exhortations were based around careers in churches, participation in men's groups, and, as explored below, the conviction that church was important for men. 86

86 Between 1910 and 1929 there were six calls for young men to enter the ministry. Reports on male gatherings in congregations or between congregations were a commonplace. They were a typical part of congregational reporting. Sometimes they received more prominent recognition in independent reports.
Church life itself was portrayed as strongly segregated by sex, with sex designated activities at all stages of the life cycle. Men had men’s groups and women had sewing circles. Study groups were often segregated by sex as well as age with boys’ classes, girls’ classes, women’s classes, and men’s classes. Men ran the formal structures of the church and women managed the support structures. As any number of the congregational histories printed in the pages of The Mennonite demonstrated, men physically constructed the buildings while the women cooked food or supplied other support services. Men voted on decisions regarding congregational life, and while this was in the process of change during the study period, almost all women did not. The church was a world of men and women operating in separate realms, joining together only for worship and participation in the formal rites.

Within that segregated system one of the most significant worries was the attachment of men to the church. From the number of times it was addressed it is clear that some contributors feared church participation was perceived as womanly rather than manly. The call was for men to take church participation more seriously and for the church to take men more seriously. Stories were told to demonstrate the manly challenge of lay church work. Articles addressed the obstacles the church placed in the way of male attendance and participation. The pull leading men away from the church appeared to

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87 Sex and gender are not discreet entities, sex is a sub-set of gender based on perceived physiology. See Anne Fausto-Sterling, Sexing the body: gender politics and the construction of sexuality (New York, NY: Basic Books, 2000).

88 In some branches of the Mennonite church men and women sat in age and sex-segregated groupings until late in the 19th Century.


92 “Some Reasons Why Some Men Do Not Go To Church,” The Mennonite, 2 May 1918, 5. The article identifies nine reasons men do not attend church including women’s hats, automobiles, and natural male depravity.

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have been their work, especially for businessmen. This perspective on masculine needs vis-à-vis the church was significantly different from that taken with regard to women’s participation. While the absence of men was feared, women were congratulated for their high levels of service.

A significant question regarding this particular discourse of male attachment to the church is whether it reflected an actual decline in male participation. There was nothing in the contributions to suggest an actual drop in male attendance nor any article on the subject of why men were not in church. Nor does any of the secondary material suggest or deal with a decline in actual male participation. If there was no such decline then it suggests that contributors to *The Mennonite* were very sensitive to the discursive portrayal of churchly masculinity in the surrounding culture. For early twentieth-century Christianity the discourse of male church participation was important and reflected fears that in a world of separate spheres of male and female conduct, the church belonged in the female realm.93 Such a sensitivity on the part of contributors once again suggests a blocking of other aspects of early twentieth-century masculinity.

The overall picture these materials on the men in the organized church produced was of a church in transition where the masculine half of the membership was feared to be slipping away. Significantly, none of the writers inquired whether there were social changes that might be responsible for the perceived change in male behaviour. That factory and business work ran on schedules less sympathetic to church attendance that that of farming was never considered. At the same time, women were depicted as moving into stronger roles within the church and slowly taking positions and roles held only by men a few

93 Such fears were common. Clyde Griffen, “Reconstructing Masculinity,” and Susan Curtis, “The Son of Man.”
decades earlier. It is possible the sense of attack on manliness was a response to a felt but unarticulated slow breakdown of the sex segregation within the Mennonite church. While there was no denial that the relationship between men and the church was changing, there was a clear lack of sensitivity to the social and economic dynamics that may have been driving it.

From images of the divine through practices of church participation, what stands out is the ambiguity of the images and ethics. While the church was segregated by sex, the theology, images and ethics of the church were not. This was a church whose discourse embraced both men and women, though within that mutuality, did so with specific concerns related to masculinity and femininity. Examined in terms of Hurst’s Old Mennonite issues or Shenk’s military masculinity, the General Conference discourse in The Mennonite stood out by its mutuality and breadth of human gender. While both Hurst’s Mennonites and Shenk’s military men were endeavouring to create a strengthened and sharper masculinity, General Conference Mennonites appeared happy to muddle along with significantly blurred distinctions between men and women. These Mennonites did not perceive the need to prop up threatened men with a more muscular Christian masculinity, nor did they respond to those who did.

Examined as a whole, these six categories of manliness, unmanliness, marriage and fatherhood, violence, and God and church show a Mennonite masculinity that was comfortable in an overlapping relationship with a Mennonite femininity. It is no wonder Ann Allebach found Mennonite men willing to ordain her and welcome her into the ranks of the until then male ministry. Women were intrinsic to the way these men understood their lives as Christian men, from companions to models of faithfulness. Adding her to the
ranks of Mennonite ministers only expressed what was already implicit in their discourse on the gendering of church life. While there were many indications that the masculinities of their non-Mennonite contemporaries were influencing this perspective, they were not doing so in such a way as to cause significant discomfort or bring out a conscious reply. General Conference Mennonite masculinity existed in a mutual relationship with femininity, and did so in such a way that while each had their sex related distinctives there was no fundamental understanding of men dominating or aggressively pursuing a male authority over women. A cooperative gendering of life appeared to be fundamental to their discourse.

This appearance of cooperative gendered existence may not have reflected the reality. The social background of the war and the corresponding masculinity being articulated by the state, and the masculinity being developed among Old Mennonites suggests this relatively placid transition was a cover for something else. That General Conference Mennonites remained aloof from these alternative masculinities is implausible, especially given the powerful impact of the war on Mennonite existence. The war challenged Mennonite existence at many levels and in the long term shocked all North American Mennonites into completely new understandings of Mennonite theology and relationships with the state. The difficulty is in determining what was actually going on. If no contributors wished to express their struggles with the projected masculinity and/or no editors were prepared to publish such material, then it is difficult to know what they thought, let alone what they experienced. They may well have been blocking a response to the world around them, but blocking, refusing to articulate a response, must be read by implication. Certainly that seems to be the most reasonable reading of an otherwise unreasonable absence.
4.3 A Complex Background

It is possible to expand the nuances of this discourse of masculinity and determine more accurately what was being experienced by looking at the larger background of gender imagery and discourse in *The Mennonite*. As has already been identified, the bulk of the gender discourse included men and women as equal companions in life, even if their behaviour was often sex segregated. It also carried gender-differentiated material, the material on masculinity already examined, but even more which we have not looked at related to femininity. To this point femininity has only been introduced when relevant to understanding specific aspects of masculinity. What a more integrated perspective that looks at both masculinity and femininity demonstrates is also a community in transition, but this time one that was picking up much from the culture around it. Comparing the depictions of masculinity and femininity reveals that men, in direct contrast to women, were more internally driven, at risk of drug abuse, but otherwise relatively safe within the framework of North American culture as long as they converted to Christianity. However, it is not necessary to compare the images and ethics of femininity in detail to determine what was happening. There are quantitative tools that allow a more direct and simple exploration of the differences between the depictions of men and women. Quantitatively examined, the discourse about men and women showed that the genders existed in substantially different worlds.

One way to take this broader look is to compare the relative weighting of the total number of articles about issues of masculinity to those of femininity. There was a range of topical concern as expressed by the number of articles on any given subject and where there was a substantially larger ratios of male to female or female to male articles, this indicates an area where men were understood to be different from women. In a number of
areas the observed ratio between them was close to or more than two to one and this large
difference suggests that for these topics the interest was a gendered interest. Ratios of
images of white men and women, images of foreign men and women, images of religious
conversion, ethics of work, ethics of church ministry, and ethics of character were thus
skewed. In addition, while men and women were about equally likely to be targeted for
ethical prohibitions, the type of prohibition was very different with men the target of
prohibitions on alcohol consumption and women the target of prohibitions on styles of
dress.

Looking at these highly divergent areas is revealing. The images of white men and
women were almost exactly one to two, suggesting the contributors (or at least the editors)
were more concerned with the image and roles of women than those of men. Within that
ratio an even more powerful discrepancy existed. There were more than seventy images of
women as mothers and only fourteen of men as fathers. While images of both men and
women going ethically wrong were found, there were ten such images of men and only
four such of women. The bulk of the male images were of men being positive and helpful.
The bulk of the female images were of mothers caring for children. The skewed ratios of
images of masculinity in relation to images of femininity suggests a discursive set of
concerns where men were active outside the family and at risk of going wrong, and women
were active inside the family with childcare.

Images of foreign men and women are also highly revealing. Almost every foreign
woman depicted was a victim of her culture. Child marriage, footbinding, abuse, slavery,

94 Articles about white men to white women, 68:123; foreign men to foreign women, 6:34; male to female
images of conversion 13:5; male to female ethics of work 7:21; male to female ethics of church ministry
13:41; and male to female ethics of character 43:19.

95 Ratios of men to women as the targets of articles on behaviours identified as problems: clothing (2:12),
dancing (1:4), sex and prostitution (3:8), cinema (9:2), gossip (0:2), tobacco (3:1), and alcohol (14:4).
lack of education, female infanticide, and prostitution were all common images. In a number of these contributions there was a deliberate contrast between the bad conditions of these women and the good conditions of western women. In every image of a foreign man, the man was a grateful and/or courageous recipient of the Christian gospel. The articulation was of foreign women in need of rescue as women, unlike western women, while foreign men became Christians. Or to put it slightly differently, the world was a dangerous place for women, but for men it was a place of religious opportunity.

Given the ratios of the male and female images above, not surprisingly images of religious conversion, of people going from spiritually wrong to spiritually right, were primarily of men. Images of women converting to Christianity were less than half those of men. This suggests that in general men were understood as needing to become right with God and church in a way that women did not. This was not out of keeping with Progressive Era images of the natural moral purity of women and the religious needs of men.96

Counter-intuitively, the ethics of employment and church ministry were heavily skewed to the activities of women. This is an important difference since both were traditional areas of male responsibility. Within the articles on employment there was a slight emphasis toward women moving into careers in nursing or teaching, though positive images were present of women in almost every other conceivable area of work. The ethics of church ministry were strongly focused on calling women into the General Conference celibate women's diaconal order that ran hospitals and did social service work. However, in

96 The moral purity of women was very much a part of Mennonite discourse and particularly obvious in the discussion of Suffrage. Women, writers said, should vote because they would bring a higher level of morality to the political process because women naturally stand for right, purity, love, justice, honour, and virtue. “The C.E. Topic,” The Mennonite, 4 April 1912, 4-5; 22 June 1916, 6; 30 September 1920, 6.
relation to church work for women there were a range of other options explored including women in pastoral ministry. The relationship between motherhood and employment was weak with few laments for women who chose employment over child care. Instead, most of the relevant laments were for men who chose employment in town rather than continue farming. Otherwise the major concern regarding males was to have enough young men choose the church’s pastoral ministry. The contrast was between women who moved positively into the opportunities in the new urban world while men left the respected rural world. It is as if, in those few times writers turned their attention to the changing rural world, it was the men, not the women, who were placing the old world at risk by their departure from the traditions.

When it came to individual character, manliness was more of a concern than womanliness. Character issues between men and women were also different. As we have seen, men needed to be honest, hard working, peaceful, and controlled. For the few texts on womanliness, the character depicted consisted of being gentle, generous, and, above all, good mothers and housekeepers. The inner state of men was the area of masculine concern, as if men needed to find new internal bearings that would guide them in the new urban industrial world. Women were still more strongly defined by their roles. The differences were also typical of a separate spheres frame of reference. Men and women were to have different characters based on their sex alone.

Collectively these skewed areas of interest suggest that the General Conference Mennonite constituency as a whole was concerned with male character and female roles (jobs, motherhood), and of the two, women’s roles were the bigger concern. On both sides the exhortations and images were positive. Men could go wrong and women could face tragedy, but negative stories and discourse were a small portion of the whole. The direction
of the whole was more one of positively framing certain aspects of male character and female roles in the home or workplace. The discourse embraced change rather than tradition, pointing the way through the on-going social transition to new ways of being masculine or feminine rather than fearfully critiquing society and particular male or female characteristics and roles.

From this quantitative examination of the larger gender perspective part of what might have led to the absence of a more developed critique of masculinity becomes visible. The gender focus was more extensively on women, the group where change from past ways was perceived to be more extreme. Men were not the subject of as much concern, and therefore were not explored with the same depth.

Significantly, the comparison of proportional gender representation reveals that the contributors were adopting some of the attitudes of the surrounding culture. More of the separate spheres gender ideology was being absorbed than would appear to be the case when looking only at masculinity. However, this must be recognized as a very "soft" adoption since there was a relative ease with women's roles expanding well beyond their traditional Mennonite framework. While they framed much of their observations of men and women from an adopted understanding of the greater moral purity of women and their necessary maternal natures, contributors were comfortable with women exploring a wide range of occupations without this being seen as violating their maternal natures. There was no perspective that traditional Mennonite roles should bind women's actions in the new world. Overall, they reflected a community that was modifying its discursive masculinity and femininity, and doing so with confidence that the changes were good for the community and with a particular interest in the changes women were experiencing.
4.4 Conclusion

What the images of masculinity in *The Mennonite* over the first thirty years of the twentieth-century revealed was a gentle degendering. Women were dramatically expanding their range of occupational options as both men and women moved into the urban industrial environment. While there were moments of resistance, such as P.W. Kliwer to the ordination of Ann Allebach, it was the ordination that indicated the direction of the discursive world. Women could take on roles that were once sacrosanctly male with only moderate concern that they were getting things wrong. All they needed to do was remember their femininity and embrace marriage and child rearing, unless they chose a celibate women’s ministry in which case they did not need to remember their femininity.

For men, the transition to the urban world was a relatively happy one. Men were concerned with the inner state of their character as they moved into new occupational roles. They were concerned to remain honourable men and priestly figures in their family, even as their work roles took them out of their families in ways that made them effectively irrelevant to them.

Strangely, the war had no significant impact on this progression. While military heroism was not true heroism, and the military man was discursively portrayed for the most part as less manly than his Mennonite, nonresistant counterpart, this was a minor set of images and almost peripheral to the magazine. Nor was there any appraisal of or resistance to the hegemonic masculinity projected by the state. From the analysis of the magazine as a gendered text in chapter three, it is evident that the war had a significant impact on the way men and women responded to issues. The question is why did this impact not appear in the imagination and ethics of the community regarding masculinity?

There seemed to be such little regard for the questions raised by the war or other
significant masculinities of the period that either there was no impact from them or there was a deep desire to ignore such an impact.

This runs counter to everything this dissertation has uncovered to this point and raises significant issues regarding the nature of gender both theoretically and practically. One of the possibilities raised a number of times in this chapter, and evident elsewhere, is that there was an unconscious blocking by the constituency regarding the impact of external events related to the war. The gender discourse did not admit to impacts visible in other ways. Was it the case that the discourse did not reveal what was actually going on? Might it even have been the case that actual gendering was going in a completely different direction than that suggested by the discourse? Theoretically there can be a significant divergence between the discourse articulated and lives lived. How far the lived experience can diverge from expectations before the divergence must be recognized in the discourse is unknown. Certainly there is evidence here of some level of divergence since the known experiences were so effectively blocked. The question is only how far such a divergence might have gone.

If such a divergence between discourse and experience was the case, the disjunction would be particularly strongly felt by those young men who faced the draft. These men would be the ones at the intersection of the discursive, gentle, de-gendering masculinity of the Mennonite community and the harshly gendered world of military masculinity. It is possible these young men were being pushed in a direction quite different from their elders who were contributing to the pages of The Mennonite. If so it would not be the first time a generational divide occurred in a community.

If there was a generational divide, then the crisis caused by the war would only show up in print years later. The discourse of these younger males would not be likely to
enter the public arena until closer to the end of the study period and become dominant in the 1930s and 1940s. Their discourse of masculinity will occur later, once they have become mature enough and institutionally connected enough to begin to shape the Mennonite world.

The conclusion that can be drawn from the absence of response to the challenge of the war is that gender as discourse was less sensitive to historical events than was gender as enacted experience. The thirty years of this study demonstrated minimal change in the direct imagination of gender despite significant events with great gender impact. When discursive change occurred for these communities, it would happen as a younger age cohort moved into its prime discursive years and outside the framework of this study.

During the first part of the century Mennonites were moving from a highly and inherently gendered agrarian world to one where gender was constructed more deliberately by institutions, such as church schools and leadership gatherings. Separate spheres understandings of gender common to Progressive era thought were only a peripheral part of the discourse. Their religious belief system, based as we have seen on a flexible and minimally gendered reading of the Bible, did not have the distinctions to make such constructions easy. God was not so male nor the ethics so gendered, despite the sexual divisions within the church structure, that women could not change their roles as the culture changed. A belief system and culture that emphasised the co-obedience of men and women did not struggle when men’s and especially women’s roles changed under new economic systems.

It is no wonder Ann Allebach found men who would ordain her. The leadership of the church was attentive to the changing situation faced by women and open to new roles and possibilities. However, they and the other contributors to The Mennonite were not so
sensitive to the situation faced by young men as they encountered the frightening and powerful language of the war, an insensitivity that, like their responses to other aspects of the war, looks in retrospect like blocking. That lack of sensitivity created a gap in the discourse that would come, as can be seen in chapter five, to haunt the men and women of a younger generation. The next generation would not find it so easy to be male after living through the hegemonic masculinity of the war. Instead, in some cases they would react against themselves and the women around them. There were dark clouds on the horizon, dark clouds whose origin may lie at least partially in the refusal of an earlier generation to seriously explore the changing world of Mennonite masculinity.
5. DEMOGRAPHIC MASCULINITY

To this point this dissertation has argued that there was a crisis of masculinity among Mennonites due to the military conscription of World War I. What has been demonstrated is a failure of a leading Mennonite voice to effectively address the issue of pacifist masculinity in a time of war. Conceivably this failure might indicate that there was no crisis, only a lack of response by *The Mennonite* because there was no serious impact on Mennonite masculinity. Despite the militaristic rhetoric of the time and the terrible experiences of some North American Mennonites, it is possible that the silence regarding the impact of the war on young men is an indication that they did not experience a crisis at this time. To determine the extent and severity of a crisis requires an inquiry into the lives of the men within the Mennonite communities. Did they feel threatened as men? If so, how did they respond? Could those responses be considered as indicators of a crisis? Once those questions are answered we can evaluate the broader relevance of what this dissertation has uncovered to this point.

What this chapter will demonstrate is that among at least one group of Mennonites the war had long term and deleterious effects. Western American Mennonite men who were between 16 and 25 in 1918 lived lives that were significantly different from those of counterparts who preceded or succeeded them in age. Historical demographic analysis reveals that these differences were negative and indicative of problems consistent with threatened gender identities: shorter lives, marriages more likely to terminate due to the death of their spouse, more marriages to outsiders, and a shift in child sex ratios indicative of a strong boy preference. Not all the men in this age group demonstrated these
behaviours, but when examined collectively, enough of them did so to make them stand out as group. The most logical explanation is that they were threatened as men by the events of the war and reacted in ways that created a masculinity that was self-destructive and destructive of the women and children in their lives.¹ They were damaged as men and responded in damaging ways. There was a crisis.

What this chapter also demonstrates is that this was a hidden crisis. It was not one that took place in ways that would make these men stand out in their communities. Instead they seemed to be intent on maintaining the patterns of their older and younger contemporaries. None of the demographic indicators that exhibited change, with the exception of exogamy, were of a type that demonstrated a visible break with traditional patterns of Mennonite existence. Given that the underlying crisis was one that challenged their existence as men, this was all the more surprising.

While this dissertation cannot demonstrate a causal link between the discourse of the General Conference and the later behaviour of these young men, what ties them together is that many of these men were General Conference Mennonites at the time of the war and it was discourse that drove their long term behaviour. They needed a theological and psychological framework for their masculinity that would have assisted them in resisting without damage the hegemonic war masculinity of the American state, exactly the type of discourse that was missing. This does not mean that had such discourse been present they would have behaved differently. It is also not possible to determine if the type of church membership affected their behaviour because it is not possible to determine

¹ As Nate Yoder, Eastern Mennonite University faculty and grandson of a World War I Conscientious Objector, has pointed out to me, the sons of these men also suffered due to the difficulties within these homes. However, this suffering would not become visible until much later in life as they expressed their own negative behaviours. Nate Yoder in personal conversation, 12 October 2007.
from the sources if the sample examined was only General Conference Mennonites or if it included substantial representation from the Mennonite Brethren, Kleine Gemeinde, or other small Mennonites groups who were also part of the source communities. Regardless, there was a discursive failure by the General Conference and a crisis in family relations among the young men. Possibly the one did not cause the other, but it is hard not to draw the conclusion that had the General Conference constructed an effective pacifist masculinity the damage to these young men would have been mitigated and their subsequent behaviour would have been less destructive.

As with the ethical concerns of previous chapters, this one will examine the behaviour of these men as examples of ethical actions. Unfortunately it is not possible to use Samuel Wells’ model of narrative ethics to assess the observed changes in behaviour and determine what type of ethical response they represented.² The connection between historical events and any individual’s demographically visible characteristics is speculative. More access to the discursive framework of the individuals in relation to the observed characteristics is needed in order to draw firmer conclusions. A researcher would need survey results related to the intellectual and discursive worlds of the subject men in order to make such linkages. Regardless, it is clear that there was an ethical failure, a failure by these men to maintain the pre-existing pattern of relations between men and women with the result that there was suffering and shortened lives for the men and for those closest to them.

5.1 Theoretical Background

In seeking to explore the question of the impact of the war and the discourse of the General Conference Mennonite Church on the behaviour of the men, this dissertation poses one of the most important problems in religious ethics, the relationship between discourse and behaviour. Whether it be for individuals or communities, discourse is the ground for meaning and meaning shapes action. But the relationship is not linear. Authoritative ethical teaching, even explicit behavioural instruction, does not necessarily lead to the directed behaviour. When the teaching is implicit, such as the Mennonite discourse on masculinity already examined, the relationship between discourse and behaviour can be quite obscure. Looking for the consequences of ethical teaching needs to be done with methods that are quantitative, broad and sensitive.

One powerful tool for exploring the impacts of historical events is demographic analysis. Historical demography provides tools of social analysis that are broad and

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3 There is a long history of scholarship working to tie religious beliefs to the practices of populations in a causal fashion. One of the more significant recent studies of religion and family life is W. Bradford Wilcox, Soft Patriarchs, New Men: How Christianity Shapes Fathers and Husbands (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004). In the field of historical demography, Kevin McQuillan, Culture, Religion and Demographic Behaviour: Catholics and Lutherans in Alsace, 1750-1870 (Montreal, Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1999) is one of the best relatively recent examples. With regard to Mennonites and demographic behaviours the number of studies is more limited. Joan Stevenson and her colleagues have put together a series of studies on Mennonite patterns of fertility. See most recently J.C. Stevenson and P.M. Everson, “Historical demography of Mennonite populations.” In Different Seasons: Biological Aging among the Mennonites of Midwestern United States, editor Michael Crawford, 19-30 (Lawrence, KS: University of Kansas, 2000). Calvin Redekop and colleagues have undertaken occasional studies of Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico. See most recently Judy C. Felt, Jeanne C. Ridley, Gordon Allen, and Calvin Redekop, “High fertility of Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico,” Human Biology 62 (1990): 689-700. In every case the connection between specific religious beliefs and specific behaviours is complex and often covariate. For example, reviewing the theories and studies on the relationship between religion and fertility practices William Mosher and colleagues find it difficult to determine that there is any consistent relationship. See William D. Mosher, Linda B. Williams, and David P. Johnson, “Religion and fertility in the United States: new patterns,” Demography 29 (1992): 199-214.

4 As Sociologist and Historian Rodney Stark points out, and this dissertation supports, key indicators historians should attend to are best examined through quantitative measures. He notes that many historians have a disdain for quantitative analysis, but that without such analysis it is impossible to evaluate the proportionality of any historic characteristic. It would not be possible to make definitive statements of the type developed here without quantitative tools. Rodney Stark, Cities of God: The Real Story of How Christianity Became an Urban Movement and Conquered Rome (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 209-214.
remarkably sensitive. The raw information provided by birth dates, death dates, and sex are capable of providing insights into a wide range of cultural practices related to the history, economy, ecology, and biology of any human group. They are especially sensitive to issues of gender. Sex differentiated ages of death, birth ratios and other demographic indicators indicate how a specific cultural group understands manliness and womanliness in terms of their cultural value and how they were historically experienced.

Demographic tools have been used to explore a wide range of historical events and experiences and there is currently a wide range of literature available. One of the more recent demographic studies on religion is that of Kevin McQuillan on Catholics and Protestants in the Alsace region of France. Using demographic material taken from parish records he found that over a 130 year period religious beliefs did have a differential effect on the behaviours of communities when controlled for economic conditions.

Demographers have also done significant historical work in partnership with other disciplines. Kansas Mennonites were the subject of a major study on aging that included significant insights from historical demography.

There have been challenges to the work of historical demographers. Demographer Thomas Burch has pointedly expressed his frustration with the lack of theoretical sophistication of demographers in general and historical demographers in particular. He argues that demographers need to do more development of theory before undertaking

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5 McQuillan, Culture, Religion and Demographic Behaviour.
6 In Different Seasons nineteen scholars from a wide range of disciplines, including historical demography, applied themselves to understanding aging among the Alexanderwohl Mennonites of Kansas and Nebraska. Demographic reconstructions by Stevenson and Everson taken from church records allowed patterns of behaviour to be traced back over three centuries.
7 Thomas Burch, “Longitudinal Research in Social Science: Some Theoretical Challenges,” Canadian Studies in Population 28 (2001): 263-283. As Burch notes, demographers, and historical demographers in particular, continue to publish mountains of information without a major advance in human knowledge. While this dissertation does not meet Burch’s criteria for a middle theory based approach to demographic analysis, it does fit his request for a more question focused strategy. As such it fits the direction being developed by current historical demographic researchers such as Tommy Bengtsson et. al., Life Under Pressure: Mortality and Living Standards in Europe and Asia, 1700-1900 (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004).
demographic studies so that their material is more focused and their results are more useful. Anthropologists have sometimes challenged the legitimacy of demographic generalizations, though others from that discipline have used demographic tools to augment the results of field studies. These critiques have done nothing to stop the continuing use of demographic tools in historical research. The availability of relatively simple computer tools and modeling has made them appealing as increasing amounts of demographic data have become available to researchers.

For historical purposes one of the most effective tools of demographic analysis is cohort comparisons. A cohort is a group of people who experience the same event. As has long been recognized, each human being in a community experiences a historical event differently and will demonstrate that experience through different subsequent behaviours. An event such as a war or famine may leave one person changed for life while another person has no long term effect and a third might be killed and eliminated from the community. However, major events typically leave similar results among a number of people, especially if they experience those events at a similar point in their life cycle. A famine is more likely to damage the health of children while a war is generally devastating among specific civilian or military populations. These are cohort experiences. If enough people are examined with the right tools the results of these experiences can be determined for whole populations through observations taken from their demographic records. How

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many people are examined and over what time span varies with the event and the tools applied. In general the larger the sample size and the longer the time-span examined the easier it is to see the consequences of any specific historical event. With a large enough sample the impact of a historic event on a group of people can be determined with both clarity and depth.9

The best cohort comparisons come from birth-cohort life-course reconstructions. By linking together information such as a date of marriage, the birth dates of children, or the date of death, demographic life courses for specific individuals are constructed. Once a satisfactory number of individuals have had their life courses reconstructed, they can be examined in birth-cohort groupings for the impact of historical events. Because these events typically have differential impacts on each age group of an affected population, birth cohorts (those born in any specific period) generally share similar responses to common life events. Often historical events will lead to long term changes in behaviour by a specific birth cohort. For example, a war typically leads to deaths of marriageable age males and therefore it can lead to contests for spouses by the surviving women and potentially long term changes in their mating behaviour. Their life courses (whether they marry or who they marry) will be different from older and younger women of the same ethno-cultural group.

If the life courses of specific individuals can be determined, and then those individuals aggregated, reliable pictures can be produced of how specific cohorts moved through their lives and, therefore, how historical experiences changed their lives.

The major limitation on life course reconstructions for cohort analysis is the availability of good data sources. Finding sources for specific populations that will provide adequate information can be difficult or even impossible. Most human beings outside of large, bureaucratically organized states go through life with only sporadic connection to information collectors. The mobility of individuals reduces the ability of most sources to provide information on complete life-courses. Of all the sources, parish registers and family genealogies are among the best, though both have significant limitations. Problems can include birth records that neglect infant deaths, absence of subsequent information for individuals who move from the parish or abandon their families, or, in the case of genealogies, spotty records due to poor family record keeping. Finding and then compiling these records into large enough pools for reliable statistical analysis can take years of painstaking research. With these theoretical and practical weaknesses, the precise impact of a specific historical event may end up as little more than conjecture. However, when the data sources are good, reasonable sample sizes and careful analysis produce extremely reliable results and, as a consequence, they have been the source of most academic research in historical demography. With good sources and sophisticated computer modelling and evaluation, extremely complex questions about the nature of multiple aspects of historical events can be answered. Correlations between grain prices and male and female mortality, for example, can reveal subtle characteristics of otherwise apparently rigidly patriarchal cultures as male mortality climbs and female mortality remains stable while prices climb. Under such conditions it is a reasonable surmise that males are experiencing the negative

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effects of higher food prices differentially.\textsuperscript{11} Good sources mean reasonable answers can be
developed to difficult questions of historical effect.

\section*{5.2 Method}

It is relatively easy to reconstruct life courses in the cases of some of the
Mennonite men with whom this study is concerned. Many family genealogies have been
compiled by Mennonites. A number of volumes of church records are also available,
sometimes in electronically readable form. The California Mennonite Historical Society has
combined these with its own additional documentary research into census data, passenger
lists, and materials found in archives in Canada, the United States, Poland, and Russia to
create the GRANDMA genealogical data-base.\textsuperscript{12} Currently well over 700,000 Mennonites
with origins in nineteenth-century Poland and Russia, as well as those they have married or
have adopted into their families, have been organized into one data-base that is easily read
with standard genealogical software. Records have been entered, compared, and corrected
or amended to produce a list of relatively high accuracy.\textsuperscript{13} Whenever possible, individuals
are tracked from birth to death, and all major life-course events marked out between those
two points. The GRANDMA 4.1 edition includes 713,132 persons of Prussian and Russian
Mennonite descent, and, in some cases, of their ancestors in Holland, France and Austria.
The oldest persons in the collection were born in the 1500s and the most recent in the
early twenty-first century. It is currently being expanded through the addition of

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{11} George Alter et. al., “Gender Differences in Mortality.” In \textit{Life Under Pressure}, 331.
\item \textsuperscript{12} GRANDMA 4.1 [electronic data-base] (Fresno, CA: California Mennonite Historical Society, 2003).
\item \textsuperscript{13} Tested according to the criteria developed by J. Dennis Willigan and Katherine A. Lynch, \textit{Sources and
Methods of Historical Demography} (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 113-115, the data-base is more than
98\% accurate where it can be tested against external sources and is more accurate than other published
sources. By the standards of genealogical records for historical purposes this makes the GRANDMA data-
base extremely accurate.
\end{itemize}
genealogical and church records, and improved through archival research on two continents. Records are compared and modified in order to produce a listing that is as accurate as possible. Hundreds of volunteers contribute many hours of labour to the project annually, with the project coordinated by the California Mennonite Historical Society. A new project associated with the genealogical data-base is the development of a DNA data-base to enable genetic tracking to go along with the life-course information. This is part of a widespread Mennonite interest in maintaining accurate long-term records as a way of ensuring community identity and longevity.14

The primary limitation of this data-base is its bias to the western parts of Canada and the United States, the final destination for many of the Mennonite families with roots in Poland and Russia. A secondary limitation is the skewing of the birth data in the direction of an excess of boys due to the under-reporting of births. Traditionally Mennonites had no reason to ensure the births of all individuals were recorded and the result is that in many cases the still births and infancy deaths (typically before the age of one) were not recorded.15 Despite these limitations, the data-base remains a treasure trove of demographic data which can be usefully analysed. It is possible to pull out records that fit specific geographic or time criteria and then to use them to construct life courses that can be aggregated and examined to produce reliable results. The large size of the data-base also allows the development of a relatively refined grid around the core concern of this study, the conscription crisis of World War I.

15 The records are based primarily on family recollection and annually collected church records in the period before routine hospital births and government record keeping. A still-born child or early infancy death could be forgotten in either case, and as the records demonstrate, often were. This skews family size and sex ratio indicators, but does so in ways that can become part of the statistical analysis.
Given the great scope of the GRANDMA data-base, it is necessary to select records and therefore to develop selection criteria. Prime draft age males, those aged 21 to 25, would be the specific targets of military masculinity and therefore would be most likely to be highly affected by the war. These were the men who were most likely to face direct pressure to enlist or refuse conscientious objector status if drafted. These were the men who most needed to find a masculinity that would enable them to maintain good feelings about themselves while resisting pressure to violate their Mennonite beliefs. Older and younger men might feel some effects as well, but they were not the men on the “front-lines” of the draft. However, to develop a cohort evaluation it is necessary to explore the characteristics of other cohorts besides those who are most likely to feel the effects. In order to develop these cohorts the men born ten years before and ten years after are included as part of the study. By comparing the characteristics of these older and younger men, changes in behaviour related to the conscription experience will be revealed.

Five sets of birth cohorts were constructed composed of men born between 1883 and 1907. The first is composed of those who made their major life decisions before the draft and who were not likely to be drafted (cohort I, born 1883-1887). The second consists of those who had already made their life major life decisions but were draftable (cohort II, born 1888-1892). The third is made up of those who were most draft eligible and in the process of making their major life decisions (cohort III, born 1893-1897). The fourth comprises those who were adolescents at the time and aware of the draft though unlikely to be required to face the draft (cohort IV, born 1898-1902). The fifth and final cohort was made up of those who were children at the time of the draft (cohort V, born
1903-1907). Since they were of a different age and life situation during the war, each cohort could be expected to have reacted differently. Including two outlier cohorts (I and V) creates a set of controls, those theoretically too old or too young to be significantly affected by their experience. Through their differences these two outlier cohorts also help in the identification of the long-term trends regardless of the war's impact.

Comparing these cohorts to determine the effects of the war, there were three general sets of possibilities: no visible effect (no changes between cohorts), a short term effect (cohort III primarily, with smaller effects in cohort’s II and IV), or a long-term effect (cohort III and a similar or increasing behaviour in cohorts IV and V). In any specific community it is possible the effects of historic change will not be strong enough to permanently alter the behaviour of those affected but it is also possible for a change to be so significant that subsequent cohorts pick up the behaviour and make it a permanent part of the life of the communities. It is not hard to imagine that the effects on masculinity due to the war experience might become permanent. The war marked such a powerful encounter between two masculinities that, in as much as Mennonite masculinity might have been found to be inadequate or in need of modification in order to respond effectively to North American culture, the changes made by those at the crux of the encounter could become permanent in subsequent cohorts. This would be the case if the challenge was extreme enough to question fundamental tenets of Mennonite existence that, once challenged, were found to be too weak to maintain. Having been exposed to the larger North American world, through exposure to the draft process and the general war events,

16 Initially the draft age in the United States was set at twenty-one. In the Summer of 1918 this was lowered to eighteen, but no eighteen year olds were drafted and it is not clear how many registered. This study uses age twenty-one in 1919 as the marker point for Cohort III, with the other cohorts determined by working backwards and forwards from this age.
the sense of masculine inadequacy (or supremacy) might have lasted for quite some time as
the community reshaped its overall existence leading to a new construal of masculinity. In
this case the draft crisis would be the trigger to long-term changes. A theoretical example
of such effects might be that of age of marriage. If the age of marriage dropped due to the
crisis, we might see the new age maintained in the long-term as successive cohorts grew up
with the experience of older siblings marrying at the new age and found that the earlier age
of marriage helped them cope more effectively with North American culture.

The possible demographic characteristics which might have changed in response to
the war was large because the challenge to masculinity faced by the men may have been
expressed in many ways. Of the extensive possibilities for changes in behaviour, males
feeling threatened with regard to their masculinity could have undertaken the following:

• Earlier age of marriage (to demonstrate male sexual prowess in a highly married
culture),

• Larger family size (again demonstrating male sexual prowess),

• Lower rates of baptism (to demonstrate male independence), or

• Higher rates of baptism (to demonstrate male responsibility and power in the
  community).

As the baptism example points out, depending on the way masculinity was construed,
indicators could go in opposite directions. The questions are, what pattern of changes is
visible in the statistical analysis, and, subsequently, what type of masculinity does the
change suggest?17

17 The author is not aware of any studies that explore the demographic characteristics of masculinity in
relation to either pacifism or militarism. Thus there is no research that suggests which of these directions,
if any, might be expected in this study.
To develop the life course reconstructions 1,764 men were identified within the 
GRANDMA 4.1 data-base that fit the following criteria:

• Born in the United States.
• Not identified as dying before the age of 18.
• Mennonite parents and three out of four grandparents as identified through 
community of origin or church records.

These men were identified through random sampling of the 33,522 men in the data-base 
who have birth dates 1883 to 1907 inclusive.\(^{18}\) Approximately 30% of the men born in each 
year were selected to produce 25 birth cohorts of one year each which were then 
amalgamated into five cohorts of five years each. The sample size for each year was 73 
men, plus or minus four. The total was approximately 350 men in each cohort group.\(^{19}\)

\(^{18}\) Randomization was developed through the use of a random number table applied to the genealogical 
record number. Records where reasonable surmises could be made that the person fit the required criteria 
were also included. If the death information was missing the record was included even though in some 
cases this almost certainly meant the inclusion in the study of some who died before the age of 18. 
However, these probable early deaths do not alter the results obtained. Information taken from the 
records included genealogical record number, full name, birth date and location, birth order and family 
size, baptismal date and location, death date and location, marriage date and location, name and birth date 
of spouse, an evaluation of the spouse’s status as a Mennonite, type of marriage termination (death, 
divorce, widowerhood), second and subsequent marriage dates, and birth dates and sexes of children. 
From these life-course reconstructions demographic information was gathered using statistical tools in a 
Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. The relatively consistent level of information suggests the information was 
collected relatively equivalently for each record and over the period of the study.

\(^{19}\) The sample size was chosen to produce results of extremely high reliability without the need for complex 
probability analysis. The births of children in particular are subject to sex ratio changes depending on the 
sample size due to the natural variability in human birth sexes. A family can naturally have ten children of 
only one sex and this will have an effect on the sample pool’s child sex ratio. In developing the data pools 
it was observed that the general direction of the sex ratio was clear by the time 100 men had been 
analysed. Once the sample under analysis reached 200 the variation was minimal. After 250 the variation 
was less than 0.1/100. In order to make certain chance variation did not have an effect and to allow more 
detailed breakdown related to birth order a sample size of 350 was chosen.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cohort Characteristic</th>
<th>1883-1887 I</th>
<th>1888-1892 II</th>
<th>1893-1897 III</th>
<th>1898-1902 IV</th>
<th>1903-1907 V</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Baptism</td>
<td>31.9%</td>
<td>26.8%</td>
<td>24.2%</td>
<td>22.6%</td>
<td>21.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage</td>
<td>83.6%</td>
<td>80.6%</td>
<td>82.2%</td>
<td>82.0%</td>
<td>81.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>69.5%</td>
<td>72.4%</td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>70.9%</td>
<td>72.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death</td>
<td>76.3%</td>
<td>71.8%</td>
<td>73.8%</td>
<td>70.3%</td>
<td>59.1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.1. Rates of information in individual life course records, GRANDMA males

For each of these males the genealogical records were used to develop life-course records. The subsequent cohort pools of these life-course reconstructions were then statistically evaluated for a wide range of demographic indicators and the results across the cohorts were examined. The generally equivalent amount of information in each cohort regarding characteristics such as marriage information and the births of children shows that there was no major change in the way information was gathered between cohorts and thus that the differences discovered represent changes in behaviour rather than changes in the way information was collected (Table 5.1). The drop in death information for cohort V indicates this is a truncated sample due to the number of men still alive at the time the data-base was compiled.

### 5.3 Observations

This evaluation demonstrated that American Mennonite males in the GRANDMA genealogical data-base were relatively similar throughout the study period (Table 5.2). A wide range of demographic statistics were calculated for each cohort and then compared. A number of trends across all five cohorts were visible including a declining age at baptism, a rising rate of marrying non-Mennonites, increasing life expectancy, and a declining number of children, a decline managed through a reduction in the age at which the last child was born.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>Cohort 1883-1888</th>
<th>Cohort 1888-1892</th>
<th>Cohort 1893-1898</th>
<th>Cohort 1898-1903</th>
<th>Cohort 1903-1907</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Size of family of birth (mean)</td>
<td>9.9</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>9.7</td>
<td>9.2</td>
<td>8.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Expectancy (mean years)</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>71.7</td>
<td>71.5</td>
<td>73.6</td>
<td>75.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age of Marriage (mean)</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.5</td>
<td>25.7</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exogamy (first marriages)</td>
<td>17.3%</td>
<td>15.6%</td>
<td>29.2%</td>
<td>28.1%</td>
<td>41.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Years older than spouse (mean)</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage end by death of male</td>
<td>64.7%</td>
<td>57.6%</td>
<td>55.1%</td>
<td>53.5%</td>
<td>53.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baptismal Age (mean)</td>
<td>21.6</td>
<td>20.8</td>
<td>20.4</td>
<td>19.6</td>
<td>19.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child sex ratio (M per 100F)</td>
<td>99.5</td>
<td>98.0</td>
<td>109.5</td>
<td>111.3</td>
<td>106.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children (mean)</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>3.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age at last child (mean)</td>
<td>38.2</td>
<td>37.6</td>
<td>37.5</td>
<td>36.5</td>
<td>35.5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 5.2. General characteristics of GRANDMA males

Surprisingly, the changes that were centered on cohort III, and therefore deemed to be due to the war, were confined to only a few of the measurable characteristics. On the basis of the statistical analysis used in this study, changes for cohort III were clearly visible in only four demographic indicators: mortality, form of marriage termination, exogamy, and child sex ratios. While these are not minor indicators, what is especially pertinent for this study is these changes did not take place in two highly visible and socially sensitive indicators, family size and religious participation rates. Both family size and religious participation had long-term trends across the cohorts to lower levels as measured by completed family size and rates of baptism. Larger or smaller family sizes are easy to accomplish once family size is being regulated, as it was at this time, and are an easy way to demonstrate dissatisfaction with community norms. So too with rates of baptism. Dismay with significant aspects of Mennonite life should show up in a marked drop in rates of baptism. But neither family size nor baptismal rates showed any visible shift for cohort III.

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20 This study uses simple direct examination of the changes in means as its primary tool. More sophisticated methods such as regression and multivariate analysis might discover additional and more subtle patterns.
relative to the trend lines. The stable trends in these two variables, with no variation from the trend line for the prime war cohort, indicates that there was a significant conformity to the overall changing life patterns of Mennonites in the United States in characteristics where the war experiences might have been expected to produce changes.

The four indicators where there were significant changes form a consistent pattern of destructive behaviour that, while somewhat self-directed, was primarily directed against women. One indicator, child sex ratios, marked a long-term change in behaviour that was picked up by cohort IV and possibly also cohort V. This suggests either that the trauma at the time of the war was experienced by the young male children as well as their older draft age brothers, or that older brothers set up and then reinforced a pattern their younger siblings emulated once they had grown up.

Overall life expectancy for all the men examined showed a general upward trend from cohort to cohort (Figure 5.1). This suggests that with one exception these
Mennonites lived in a world of generally improving social and health conditions. Each cohort benefited more than the previous one from the improved conditions. Conditions especially improved for cohort V because the mean life expectancy of 75.1 years is based on a truncated sample. For this cohort only 59.1% of the records included a date of death, well below the average of 73.0% for the other cohorts. The oldest members of the cohort were still alive after the last information was collected for the data-base. The mean age of death for this cohort would be considerably higher if all the death information were available.

In the midst of this rising life expectancy, cohort III was remarkable as a reversal of this trend. It marked a slight decline from cohort II (from 71.7 to 71.5 years), and is well below cohort IV (71.5 years to 73.6 years). A conservative trend line between cohort II and cohort IV suggests the appropriate life expectancy for cohort III should have been 72.3 years, a full ten months higher than it was for this cohort. This problematic mortality was demonstrated most clearly by the age-specific mortality rates (Figure 5.2). Here it can be
seen that the reduced life expectancy for cohort III was found in higher mortality rates between 36 and 65 years of age (22.0% versus 17.1% and 18.1% for men of the same age in cohorts II and IV respectively). The trend across the cohorts was for a reduction in mortality within this age category, a pattern in keeping with improving life expectancy overall. For this cohort prime-of-life mortality was higher than it should have been.

Why there was elevated prime-of-life mortality for cohort III is not clear, but this pattern is consistent with the thesis that the masculinity of this cohort of men was challenged and that they subsequently responded by engaging in slightly more self-destructive behaviours. These behaviours may have been as simple as taking less care with their health or working harder than their comrades in other cohorts, thus demonstrating they were truly “tough” men. It could also indicate slightly higher rates of depression and suicide because they did not feel “truly” manly and therefore felt badly about themselves. Regardless, life expectancy indicated that these men were at higher risk of prime-of-life fatalities than their siblings in the older and younger cohorts.
Observing this elevated set of prime-of-life mortality rates draws attention to another demographic indicator, the type of marriage termination. In general, marriages ended due to the death of the husband (Figure 5.3). However, there was a trend line of marriages becoming increasingly likely to end by the death of the wife. This may have reflected the greater improvements in life conditions for males than for females, perhaps due to the low but slowly rising level of urbanization. This trend line rises relatively sharply to cohort III and then levels off, suggesting women's lives were improving at about the same rate as men's for cohorts IV and V. However, hidden in this situation is a negative indicator. Since prime-of-life mortality rose and life expectancy dropped for cohort III males, there should not have been any rise in the number of marriages ended by the death of the wife for this cohort. Based on male life expectancy for cohort III, the likelihood of the marriage ending by male death should have been about 66%, not the 55% actually measured. That it was not the latter ratio means that prime-of-life female life mortality for the spouses of cohort III climbed even more than that of their husbands. While the source of this rise in spousal mortality is conjecture, it is at least suggestive of more difficult marriages, marriages characterized by conditions of significantly greater difficulty for women. If the expression of masculinity of this cohort was more antagonistic to women than that of preceding or succeeding cohorts, then this would suggest that hostility to women was one aspect of this male response to the experience of conscription. However, women might also have experienced elevated rates of depression, poorer conditions in childbirth, or riskier working conditions, all due to some unknown factor in their life courses of the spouses of these men and therefore no information is available regarding the specific changes in life expectancy.

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21 This study did not examine the life courses of the spouses of these men and therefore no information is available regarding the specific changes in life expectancy.
relationship with their husbands that was unique to this cohort and thus had their lives shortened for some other reason.

First marriage exogamy rates for cohort III also stood out (Figure 5.4). Many Mennonite men from cohorts I through V married outside the Mennonite community as determined by examining the last names and genealogies of their first spouses. Over the course of the five cohorts the rate increased from 17% to 42% of records where a marriage was recorded (Table 5.2). These measured rates of exogamy were probably lower than the reality since individuals disappeared from the records if they lost contact with their families and churches, a loss of contact that could have been due to marrying outside the community or due to leaving the community permanently and thus losing access to future information related to any marriage. The stable rate of marriage information across the

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22 Second marriages were not common (11% of all marriages) and may have been subject to very different life pressures and therefore were not evaluated.
cohorts indicates that these unknown exogamous marriages were probably relatively consistent and low in number throughout the study period.

There was a sharp rise in exogamy for cohort III, and a subsequent significant but lesser rise in exogamy for cohort V. The first of these rises indicates that the cohort of men who were most likely to be conscripted were twice as likely to choose a marriage partner from outside the Mennonite community as were their older brothers. Their experience of the war could have had this effect for any number of reasons including exposure to the outside world, feelings of alienation from the community, losing their attractiveness to Mennonite women, or the desire for outsider “trophy” wives. It might also have been due to a coincidental change in their conditions, such as urbanization, that led to fewer opportunities to marry Mennonite women. That conditions were changing is indicated by the second upward jump for cohort V. These latter marriages would have almost all taken place during the Great Depression of the 1930s, an event with significant economic impact on American life as a whole and therefore one that could have had an impact on exogamy rates. Minimally, the pattern of exogamy suggests there was turmoil of some kind in the Mennonite community that was experienced by cohorts III to V, turmoil experienced in a way not experienced by cohorts I and II and which led to fewer marriages between Mennonite men and women for the later cohorts.

The strongest indicator of changes in masculinity was found in the child sex ratio indicators (Figure 5.5). Child sex ratios are the birth sex ratios of male children to female children born to the wives of the men in this study. Throughout the world, child sex ratios

23 However, according to Stevenson and Everson, Mennonite men in the U.S. Great Plains region were increasingly likely to be farmers or agricultural workers with every cohort in this study. This trend would not change until the cohort born between 1920 and 1929. Joan Stevenson and Phillip Everson, “The Cultural Context of Fertility Transition in Immigrant Mennonites,” in Fertility and Resources, eds. J. Landers and V. Reynolds (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 57.
Figure 5.5. Child birth sex ratios, GRANDMA males

are used as a measure of preference for males and misogyny in human cultures. This is because birth sex ratios are relatively fixed biologically and reported changes in these ratios away from the biological norms is understood to show the gendered treatment of children by their parents and communities well before the children are old enough to engage in significant activities of their own. Among the men in the GRANDMA sample, analysis of the child sex ratios showed there was a change in boy preference practices centered on cohort III, but continuing in large measure in cohort IV and possibly to a lesser degree in cohort V.

In general there are 104.5 male children born for every 100 female children born. There are more male foetuses than female foetuses conceived, leading to more males being born than females. This natural birth ratio varies from 103:100 to 106:100, a variation

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24 Siu Fai Leung, “On Tests for Sex Preferences,” *Population Economics* 1 (1988): 91-114. While an established benchmark for historical demography, the value of this indicator is contested by some anthropologists. W.H. James, “The Validity of Inferences.” One of the key differences between anthropologists and demographers is the sample size. Natural human birth ratios vary widely between families and only stabilize over larger sample sizes than those generally used by most anthropologists.
understood as primarily due to pre-natal maternal health. This narrow range of variation is due to the greater vulnerability of male foetuses to poor maternal nutrition leading to elevated rates of miscarriage and still birth for males under adverse economic conditions.\textsuperscript{25} Therefore, under poor economic conditions the birth sex ratio can be expected to drop to closer to 103:100 and under good economic conditions to climb toward 106:100. This observed range of variation is true not only of contemporary but also of historical populations where the sample sizes are large and statistics were accurately kept. However, there are significant variations on this range of birth sex ratios under a number of circumstances. Reported birth sex ratios can vary from well above to well below the natural range. In contemporary cultures where sex selective abortion can be practiced the actual birth sex ratios may also be significantly different from the norm.

The major historical reason reported ratios may differ from the natural range is the death of the newborn or infant. Many cultures have not recorded the births of children who died either at birth or shortly thereafter. Mennonites are an example of such a culture. The genealogical records in the GRANDMA data-base may identify only five children of a couple by name, but indicate in the comments field that there were seven births, sometimes with the notation “died young.”\textsuperscript{26} When not all births are recorded, the birth sex ratio observed by researchers typically, but not always, shifts down toward a ratio of 100 males:100 females or lower. Newborn males are weaker and more vulnerable than newborn females to health and nutrition problems. This leads to a greater likelihood of male infant death in the first year of birth and therefore to the lesser likelihood of the birth of a boy


\textsuperscript{26} Such births are included for the calculation of total and completed fertility.
being reported. However, nutrition and health care can be given in a discriminatory manner. The most common discriminatory patterns of care globally are for resources to be withheld from baby girls or lavished on baby boys, and this can shift the ratios significantly in the other direction as the children who are discriminated against suffer elevated mortality. A slight majority of human cultures apparently practice some deliberate infanticide at or shortly after birth, and where gender is part of that parental calculation, it is more commonly female infanticide than male infanticide, and this skews the records of birth dramatically if accurate records are not kept since the births of eliminated children are less likely to be reported. In current research the generally accepted range of birth male to female ratios for cultures with anti-female practices short of female infanticide is between 106:100 and 110:100, and female infanticide or sex selected abortions are understood as responsible for ratios higher than 110:100. There are no generally accepted markers for girl preference behaviours. Note that in all cases uncounted births leading to measured birth sex ratios higher than 106:100 are due to gendered patterns of discrimination. This is because 106:100 is understood as the highest “natural” ratio and even if no babies are dying due to sex discriminatory patterns of behaviour, the reports themselves indicate

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28 The classic study of global infanticide is Leigh Minturn and Jerry Stashak, “Infanticide as a Terminal Abortion Procedure,” *Cross-Cultural Research* 17 (1982): 70-90. Using a conservative definition of infanticide that does not include abortion they found that 53% of all cultures globally practice infanticide. They determined that most infanticide takes place for economic reasons and sex selection is a minor reason.


which is the desired sex. One of the questions researchers ask is how much the differential indicates actual discriminatory behaviour and how much it represents a gendered prejudice against the reporting of childbirths. Currently the Chinese ratios are taken to indicate a combination of both failure to report healthy baby girls plus actual practices that discriminate against the survival of baby girls.31

As noted, genealogical records can fail to identify all births, and the same can be true of church records, the two primary sources of the GRANDMA data-base. For Manitoba Mennonites who came to Canada at roughly the same time as the GRANDMA sample came to the United States, the practice was for the church to request an annual list of births from members, generally around the New Year.32 If this was the strategy used by all Mennonites then there was no way of ensuring all child births were reported and therefore that current genealogical records are accurate. Some families may have seen no need to report still-born infants or infants who died in the first few months of life, behaviours that would be in keeping with some of the family notations in the GRANDMA data-base. The net result of such strategies would be an underreporting of births, and since the most vulnerable children are male, an underreporting of male births. A final caution is that individual family birth-sex ratios can vary widely due to chance. Small samples are very sensitive to such effects and therefore can look skewed due to discriminatory effects when no such effect is being practiced. Birth sex ratios must be treated carefully. However, used appropriately, they can be highly revealing, especially because not all births are recorded. This is because, as already noted, the difference between the reported rate and the expected rate, and the changes in those differences over time, say much about gender preferences

31 Coale and Banister, “Five Decades.”
among those doing the recording. Those gender preferences are linked to underlying patterns of masculinity and femininity in the culture.

In general the GRANDMA 4.1 sex ratios indicate there was a marked shift in birth sex ratios due to the war experience. From a low male to female ratio in cohorts I and II (99.5M:100F and 98.0M:100F, respectively), they jumped to a high ratio in cohorts III to IV (109.5M:100F and 111.3M:100F) and dropped to just above normal for cohort V (106.5M:100F). The first two cohorts had male to female birth sex ratios indicative of a high infant mortality environment where early infancy deaths are not reported. Infant boys are more susceptible to diseases than are infant girls and, while it is conjecture, these low birth ratios of boys to girls suggest that the infants of these cohorts were exposed to less than ideal conditions resulting in increased deaths of new born and infant boys. However, the birth sex ratio changed sharply for the last three cohorts where they jumped into a distinct boy preference range for cohorts III and IV. Because not all births were being recorded across all cohorts, and because a failure to record boy births changed so that girl births were not being recorded, a sexual preference in recording behaviour is a warranted conclusion. Changes in recording behaviour without a corresponding change in actual survival of children is out of keeping with the way church and genealogical records are made. Therefore it is a reasonable surmise that for cohorts III through V, more infant boys were surviving than had been the case earlier, or more infant girls were dying than had been the case, or both. In the case of cohort IV, active hostility to infant girls would be the

33 To achieve a birth sex ratio of 98:100, the infant mortality rate must be at least 45%. Such a rate would be extremely high but not unknown. Johansson and Nygren, "The Missing Girls of China," 48; Waldron, "Factors Determining the Sex Ratio." It is more reasonable to suspect a lower infant mortality rate and sex selective practices. See below.

34 Church and genealogical records are less effective at their purposes of maintaining religious, cultural and family identity if surviving children are not recorded and there is no gender discriminatory logic inherent in these recording types.
most likely explanation of how such a high male to female birth sex ratio was achieved.35
Either the fathers or the mothers or both were deeply concerned about the well-being of
their infant sons for two of the last three cohorts and acted to improve the survival of
infant boys relative to infant girls. Given the decline in the birth sex ratio of males to
females for cohort V, it may be this was a temporary phenomenon and the long term trend
was a return to older patterns. This pattern across the cohorts suggests that the war
experiences of cohort III men led them to prefer baby boys, a pattern subsequently
followed by the next cohort.

The overall shift of birth sex ratios could conceivably be due to biological or
cultural influences other than sex preference behaviour on the part of the parents. As well,
gross birth sex ratios can hide more subtle sex preferential behaviours. By evaluating sex
ratios related to the birth order both of these possibilities can be examined.36 For cultures
that cease reproduction through some form of birth control practices (such as cessation of
sex, sterilization, or abortion), the final birth can indicate sex preference.37 Traditional rural
cultures are often boy preference cultures out of necessity, and with every step upward in
birth order, the baby is more likely to get preferential treatment if a boy. Other cultures

35 Such ratios in historical populations are typically understood as involving some kind of active female
infanticide. That infanticide, and female infanticide in particular, may be part of Mennonite culture may be
surprising, but it is far more prevalent in Western cultures than is typically assumed. Sharp shifts in birth
sex ratios for temporary cultural reasons have been found elsewhere. James Z. Lee, Cameron Campbell,
and Wang Feng. “Society and Mortality,” in Life Under Pressure: Mortality and Living Standards in Europe and
Asia, 1700-1900, edited by Tommy Bengtsson, Cameron Campbell, James Z. Lee, et. al. (Cambridge, MA: MIT
Korea During the Year of the Horse,” Demography 43 (2006): 269-292; The alternative, that these children
were given up for adoption, seems less likely. No corresponding rise in the presence of female children is
found in other families, nor is there a rise in notations of adoption. That the children might be sent out to
non-Mennonite families seems no more likely than that they were murdered since in a tightly bound
religious community such as the Mennonites such an action would be tantamount to condemning them to
hell, a fate worse than death. There would also be no reason to fail to report the births of these children if
they were sent out. See below.

36 Coale and Banister, “Five Decades.”
37 This is true whether the birth is the first, second, fifth, or eighth and therefore it is included as a separate
category.
emphasize boys earlier in the birth order, especially if family limitations are being practiced. These cultural patterns lead to parity (birth order) sex ratio effects. If no such birth order sex ratio effects are found then it suggests there might be other factors that are less directly cultural that are influencing the altered sex ratios. Biological conditions might have changed, or there may be state intervention that leads to discriminatory health care and infant survival rates. By examining parity sex ratios in the GRANDMA sample more insight can be gained into the exact nature of the boy preference pattern.

In examining the parity pattern there is a statistical issue related to sample size. While the sample sizes are large in aggregate, they are considerably smaller when analyzed in terms of parity. This is because each cohort's children are now divided into five groups, substantially reducing the sample size for the parity positions of three or higher (born third

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38 Coale and Banister, "Five Decades."
or higher in birth order) due to the smaller number of families that had more than two children. Smaller sample sizes are more easily affected by chance occurrences (though such effects will leave parities one and two relatively unaffected because of the large number of families in each cohort with at least two children). By amalgamating the cohorts into two groups, cohorts I and II, and cohorts III and IV, larger sample sizes are obtained and these lead to high reliability for the resulting statistics at each parity position.39

These amalgamated cohorts demonstrate two very different patterns of parity sex ratios (Figure 5.6). The different patterns are not even across the parity positions. The likelihood of a child being a boy or a girl changes with the birth order. While there can be biological changes leading to a changed probability of the birth of a boy or a girl, these biological changes are fixed across the birth order. Therefore the observed changes in this study rule out biological or generalized birth selection effects. Only culturally selective patterns vary by birth order. This also rules out the possibility of only discursive bias and indicates that child nurturing practices changed. A discursive bias will almost certainly be against reporting the births of either boys or girls in general, not a complex pattern that not only changes sex preference but does so on the basis of birth order. Even if such an unusual discursive bias were to take place, the likelihood of that pattern reversing itself in subsequent cohorts seems farfetched. Regardless, to accomplish the patterns revealed in this study without an underlying change in child nurturing behaviour, hundreds of families would have needed to fake their birth records in identical and changing patterns and maintain those faked records for decades. The most reasonable hypothesis is that the changes in records indicates actual changes in family practices.

39 Cohort V is eliminated from this amalgamation because its parity sex ratio pattern indicates a return to the earlier cohort I and II rising pattern of parity specific behaviour, though at elevated male birth sex rates at each parity.
Examining these two summary patterns in detail, pattern one, from cohorts I and II, indicates what can only have been a strong preference for a first-born girl. Assuming good maternal and child health, this shifted to a somewhat lesser girl preferential pattern for parity two, no preference for parity three, and finally to a boy preference for parities four and following. Reproduction tended to cease after the birth of a boy indicating a general boy preference. This parity structure suggests a culture of early strong girl preference, followed by a boy preference in the upper parity positions. This pattern may be unique among human cultures since it is not indicated in any of the literature reviewed. The strong first-born female preference (83:0M:100:0F) is particularly interesting because it was such a strong ratio as to suggest first-born male infanticide. This may indicate that these Mennonites found an eldest daughter to be an extremely important part of their cultural practices, perhaps due to their value in assisting in raising the subsequent children.  

Pattern two, from cohorts III and IV, indicates a consistent, strong boy-preference culture. The ratios are very high for the first born (125.3M:100F) indicating an intensely boy favouring culture, and remain high throughout the birth order, approaching normal ratios (assuming high infant mortality) only at parity two and parities five or higher. The very high ratio of first-born males is indicative of female infanticide, a possibility which may also occur at parity three or four. These Mennonites wanted boys and were not prepared to have large families in order to obtain those boys. Girls were particularly unwanted at the first-born position, a complete reversal of the pattern of the earlier cohorts. This pattern speaks of an immediate and intense need for boys that was not

40 Williamson suggests such a rationale for girl preference in, Nancy Williamson, Sons or Daughters: A Cross-Cultural Survey of Parental Preferences (Beverly Hills, CA: Sage, 1976), 23.
experienced by previous cohorts, a need that once supplied led to no sex preference for the upper parity positions. However, there was still the sense that the family was completed by the birth of a boy, as indicated by the last born birth sex ratio.

This sharp shift in parity sex ratios between the two sets of cohorts is astonishing in its size and strength. It suggests a significant reorientation of cultural patterns. It also suggests a profound reinterpretation of the meaning of masculinity, possibly a shift from a masculinity anchored in farm life and agrarian production to one found in the production of baby boys. The shift meant that as Mennonites lived through the 1920s, 1930s and 1940s the men who had faced the draft, and their young brothers, saw their identity in terms of their male children. The conscription cohort changed its behaviour and the following cohort maintained this change.

That this consistent boy-preference pattern replaced what appears to have been a partial girl-preference pattern suggests there was a profound conflict between the men of cohorts III and IV and their wives. The conflict would have occurred as women’s poorer treatment, and perhaps infanticide, of first-born baby boys was replaced by their husbands’ demands for sons and the subsequent poorer treatment and perhaps infanticide of baby girls. How many women, strongly committed to a first-born daughter to assist them in managing the family, were going to be happy with that daughter’s replacement by a boy?

The strange aspect of this shift is that both sexes of the later cohorts could have come close to achieving their desired number and type of children if they had chosen to have a larger family. If men needed three boys and women needed a first-born girl, this could have been achieved in general by maintaining the first-born girl preference and having six children instead of the approximately four they did have. Such family sizes were not difficult to achieve and most of these men came from families of more than six
children. However, mean family size dropped by almost one-half a child for each five year cohort, from almost five (cohort I) to just over three (cohort V). The decline seems to have been a rigid trend, and can be seen as early as the 1880s if the sizes of the families of origin of the men in the study is examined. Family size and its decline appeared to have been determined by some other cultural dynamic, one that did not permit change even in the face of the male need for sons and the female need for daughters.

It is worth enquiring if there might have been some other event that might have caused the shift to early boy preference. The declining family size indicates there were other forces at work. Decline in family size is a much studied phenomenon and the research does not indicate any simple and consistent pattern between family size and other social or economic indicators. However, the research does suggest that strong changes, such as those indicated by the changing birth-sex ratios, are not in keeping with the types of motivations that lead to the slow changes evinced by the changing family size. Certainly rural families generally want a son, and the pattern of cohorts I and II indicates such a desire among these Mennonites. The decline in family size by approximately one-half a child between each of cohorts I and II, II and III, III and IV, and IV and V would logically push this desire up the parity order toward the first born. However, the sharp and substantial shift between cohort II and III in sex ratio, and the fact that cohort V appears

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41 Family of origin birth order and size were collected for the men in this study whenever possible. Reviewing that information reveals that each cohort was born into a family whose completed size was smaller than that of previous cohorts. Completed family size dropped from 9.9 children (cohort I) to 8.7 children (cohort V).


43 This is indicated by the rising ratio of male to female children as the birth order rises.
to be moving back to the parity sex ratio pattern of cohorts I and II, is at variance with such long term and slow changes in family size (Figure 5.5).

5.4 Contextual and Background Issues

Collectively these four characteristics, mortality, marriage termination, exogamy, and birth sex ratios, form a coherent whole that suggests there was a profound change in the nature of masculinity due to the war experience. This was a change focused on the presence of baby boys, but it included other indicators of male difficulty and antagonism toward women. Certainly the mortality figures for cohort III are suggestive of men who were struggling and unhappy and who were seeking alternative ways of expressing themselves in the wake of their experience during the war. They found such an alternative in a need to have baby boys, a powerful drive that overrode a tradition of first-born girl preference. However, this was a drive almost certainly resisted by Mennonite women, and if so a resistance that may help to explain the elevated wife mortality and even the higher rates of exogamy. It is not hard to see how these men, with their drive for baby boys, might have been less attractive to baby girl oriented Mennonite women and thus driven to seek more conducive women outside the Mennonite community.

Whether these four sets of changes were due to the experience of World War I draft registration, conscription and military service for some Mennonite men and the related social pressures on others is impossible to say for certain. It takes a significant shock to rearrange this kind of sex preference pattern and the only historical event that seems likely to be substantial enough and specific enough is the conscription crisis. Urbanization might achieve a similar effect, but Mennonites did not urbanize significantly until after World War II, long after the patterns uncovered here were underway. If, as the discourse analysis suggests, women took a different and more positive approach to the war
than men, then perhaps the war was already a point of male-female conflict, and one heightened by the return of young men who were in some cases traumatized. That these men turned against women on the one hand and needed to find a way to strongly identify themselves as "real men" on the other seems a logical outcome. Certainly there was no cooperation between male baby-boy preference and female baby-girl preference through the production of larger families. It seems to be the case that for one cohort the pattern ran one way and for the next it ran the other. It was a transition from a system that worked for both genders to one that worked for the men at the expense of women's traditional patterns. For the American Mennonite males of the GRANDMA data-base, conscription appears to have marked a decisive change in masculinity, from one that existed in agrarian productivity where both sons and daughters were desired to one that knew a "real man" by the number of his sons.

In exploring this emergent pattern of masculinity, there are three additional considerations which will be explored below. First, child gender selection requires further examination as a phenomenon. While it seems extreme to hypothesize infanticide, by comparison with other cultures globally and historically, it would not have been an unusual response. However, before drawing that conclusion there are other considerations that need to be assessed. Second, what these changes indicate is the power of discourse to affect behaviour. There are clear indications that what happened was due to the words and imaginations of those involved rather than to actual experience. Third, there are dozens of demographic indicators that could represent a shift in masculinity. The four that demonstrate the shift are even more remarkable when examined in light of the many that did not, especially the trends in baptism.
Source of child sex ratio shift

What was the source, the impetus for the shift in Mennonite child sex ratios? Was it due at least partially due to infanticide? Current research into global sex ratios supports such a conclusion. However, to date there has been no research that suggests Mennonites have traditionally undertaken infanticide. While skewed sex ratios among Mennonites have been noted, no researcher appears to have asked why those sex ratios existed.\(^4^4\) That no researcher appears to have inquired about infanticide suggests none have had it brought to their attention. Regardless, the lack of research does not mean that no infanticide took place. As noted earlier, infanticide is a feature of the majority of human cultures, including some historic European cultures. It appears to generally have an economic basis but sex-selective infanticide is well known. Within the framework of an intensely religious community such as the Mennonites infanticide seems counter intuitive, but intense religious experience has also been a source of infanticide.\(^4^5\) That infanticide should not be ruled out becomes more clear once the characteristics of infanticide are understood.

However, infanticide should not be assumed to be the sole cause of the skewed birth sex ratios because there is a possible contributing factor rooted in culturally determined practices of mothering.

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\(^4^4\) Joan Stevenson has a birth ratio of 90M:100F for the period 1875-1899 in her study of Kansas and Nebraska Mennonites. This is a distinct shift from earlier periods in the history of these Mennonites (1725-1874), but she makes no mention of this except that it is the topic for a further paper. Stevenson, “Changes in Fertility.”

\(^4^5\) Suzanne Evans explores the history of martyrdom and the murder of children including infants and finds that religious sacrifices of children date back to human prehistory and are a constant of human culture. She argues that this religious understanding was part of the justification for the sacrifice of sons in World War I. Suzanne Evans, Mothers of Heroes: Mothers of Martyrs: World War I and the Politics of Grief (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2007), 14-42. For a review of ancient religious practices of child sacrifice, including its effects on Christian origins, see Jon D. Levenson, The Death and Resurrection of the Beloved Son: The Transformation of Child Sacrifice in Judaism and Christianity (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1993), 3-31. René Girard argues that sacrificial violence and murder are inherent in the development of religious experience. René Girard, Violence and the Sacred (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1977).
Infanticide among human beings has been studied from a number of perspectives. Its prevalence has led anthropologist Sarah Hrdy to argue that infanticide in general, and sex selective infanticide in particular, are natural evolutionary outcomes of human consciousness. Comparing human infanticide to that of other species she indicates that, Where environmental conditions, marriage and residence patterns, or laws can change on short notice, the better part of evolutionary valor is to postpone irrevocable decisions till the last feasible moment. Conscious strategists constantly update information about local prospects for sons versus daughters. Chronic tensions between maternal and patrilineal interests are resolved quite differently as new subsistence opportunities open up while others close, as daughters once of no use suddenly become net assets, and so on.46

Her conclusion is that infanticide, while often heartbreaking to the parents who undertake it, makes economic and evolutionary sense for species that can consciously project the results of current conditions into the future. Those parents who can assess the economic value of specific children and act to eliminate those who are too costly will be more likely to have surviving offspring when conditions are marginal. Over thousands of years that reproductive success will lead to a common human trait of willingness to commit infanticide when necessary. What Hrdy does not discuss is whether cultural values as well as economic values can lead to infanticidal behaviour.

An important study that explores the economic rationale for infanticide is that of Brigitte Bechtold on nineteenth-century France.47 She finds that both infanticide and sex-selective infanticide were relatively common. She also reports that industrialization correlates with generalized infanticide and sex-selective infanticide in highly complex

relationships. The prevalence of textile industries appears to have been a particularly significant factor in a decline in sex-selective infanticide, possibly due to the economic value of young girls in the textile mills.\(^\text{48}\) While she does not explore the implications, the logical conclusion to her study is that in a European country parents were making economic evaluations of the relative value of their children, both in number and sex, and were eliminating some children on that basis.

Perhaps a study more relevant to the concerns of this dissertation is that of Jungmin Lee and Myungho Paik on symbol-sourced patterns of infanticide including sex-selective infanticide in Korea.\(^\text{49}\) According to superstitious folklore recently imported from Japan, the Year of the Horse is an inauspicious time for births, especially the births of girls. Between 1970 and 2003 the Year of the Horse consistently correlated with a decline in general fertility and a decline in female births (independent of the overall decline). In the most recent period of their study these effects are understood as due to contraception and abortion, but similar effects were noted before these practices were common. What is significant for this dissertation is that in the case of Korea it was a recently imported superstition that had the ability to affect the birth rate and the gendered pattern of births across a whole nation in spite of rising education, income, and industrialization. It is clear from their study that parents will change their child gender preferences based on recent cultural trends despite other powerful social and cultural effects including law (infanticide and sex-selected abortions are illegal in Korea). Discourse, in its broadest sense, will produce infanticide regardless of economic effect.


\(^{49}\) Lee and Paik, “Sex Preferences and Fertility.”
These theoretical and historical observations do not make the prospect of Mennonite infanticide more attractive as a rationale for explaining the observations in this study. That it may be a relatively common human undertaking with economic or evolutionary rationale does not explain why some North American Mennonites should undertake this practice, let alone why they might change their practices as a reflection of masculinity. What these studies do indicate is that sex-selective infanticide is common practice that can emerge due to cultural as well as economic forces. However, just as these studies do not explain why some Mennonites might behave this way, they do indicate that even in the face of strong opposing forces something as trivial as a recent superstition can lead to such behaviours. There is nothing to suggest Mennonites were immune to these kinds of forces. If boys were seen as a sign of masculinity by the surrounding American culture, such a new idea might well have been imported into the Mennonite communities in such a way as to lead to infanticide. But, the understanding that presence of boys indicate the masculinity of their father may also have been a part of the traditional Mennonite way of life, even if not one acted upon with the strength of the men of cohorts III and IV. That men would enact such a belief, whether imported or traditional, due to the psychological and social pressures of the war seems extreme but would hardly make Mennonites stand out from other cultures including other cultures of European background.

These very European cultures suggest, however, that there might be another explanation for a component of the shifts in child sex ratio. The history of European child mortality is complex and there have been notable shifts over time in the kinds of parenting a child could expect and consequently a changing likelihood of surviving to adulthood. When the mortality of children changes so does the sex ratio of the surviving children. Under difficult conditions, as noted earlier, baby girls are more likely to survive than baby
boys. Edward Shorter argues that there was a radical change in mothering practices over the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. This change led to a sharp drop in infant mortality as mothers took more interest in children, breastfed more consistently, and kept their children cleaner. It was the time when wet-nursing went from a relatively common and often deadly practice to one that was confined to a minority of upper-class women. By the twentieth century a culture of maternal care was the norm for western Europe. These changes in mothering would lead to cultures where boys were more likely to survive than had been the case with earlier forms of mothering and therefore a shift to a sex ratio with more boys. Running against this trend were the cultures of Germany and Eastern Europe, both of which had rising infant mortality rates at the same time that they were dropping in the west and south of Europe. The Mennonites who moved to the Western United States and formed the basis of the GRANDMA sample came from areas of Europe where infant mortality was rising and therefore where sex ratios would shift to a stronger girl presence.

European cultures continued to have different patterns of child nurture once in North America. George Alter’s review of the literature on infant and child mortality in the United States and Canada found that ethnicity was the most powerful predictor of infant mortality in North America from the eighteenth through the middle of the twentieth century. If Mennonites maintained a high infant mortality pattern of parenting in Russia and Prussia, it seems likely that they continued to raise their children in similar ways once in North America. If so, birth sex ratios skewed in the direction of girls would have been

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normal for them in the late nineteenth and perhaps early twentieth centuries. With exposure to the different mothering practices of their Western European and non-Germanic neighbours it is conceivable that the changing sex ratios observed with more males to females were at least partially due to changing Mennonite practices of mothering as they adopted the practices of the surrounding American culture.

In theory this possibility could account for the full measure of variation in the observed sex ratios. However, this is not a strong possibility because it depends on both a very high underlying level of infant mortality and a set of practices that were highly sex-discriminatory with regard to mothering and healthcare. To account for the full range of sex ratio variation the underlying infant mortality rate would need to be at least 35%. Such a base infant mortality rate would be among the highest for any group in North America at the time. According to George Alter, by the early twentieth century infant mortality in North America ranged from five to twenty percent in urban settings among a number of ethnic groups. Rural conditions were generally supportive of slightly lower infant mortality rates. A mortality rate of 35% is almost double what would be reasonably expected given the patterns of infant care then present in North America and seven times as high as the best patterns of child care. This seems unreasonably high.

To achieve the observed effects it would also be necessary for Mennonites to apply effective mothering and health care based on sex and birth order. This is not an unreasonable possibility and in the case of very high underlying levels of infant mortality would very easily lead to the preferred child’s survival without any deliberate withholding

52 Based on calculating infant male to female mortality as 1.3:1 and then assuming that at each parity all of the desired children were given the necessary health care while unwanted children were not provided health care.

53 Alter, “Infant and Child Mortality.”
of care or otherwise undertaking specific acts of infanticide. The change in birth sex ratios
would then be due only to a change in the way health care resources were being provided,
in this case one that was sex and birth order specific.

An additional support for the possibility of applied health-care leading to the
observed ratios is found by examining the sources of infant mortality. In the United States
in the first third of the twentieth century the leading cause of early childhood mortality was
respiratory infections, predominantly influenza and pneumonia. Gastroenteritis was the
second leading cause. These are illnesses that are highly variable in frequency and severity
depending on the level of child care. Better care would lead to a marked decrease in the
death rates, and better care selectively applied by gender would fit the child sex ratios
observed.

However, as noted, this possibility is premised on an extremely high underlying
level of preventable infant mortality. Such a rate seems unreasonable if prevention was
practiced in some cases. A more reasonable prospect would be a base infant mortality rate
of 15%. Such an underlying rate would not be exceptionally high and then differential
mothering and health care could account for the full range of sex ratio changes in parities
two or higher. One would still need an explanation for the extremes found in parity one
and some infanticide would be necessary to accomplish both the lowest sex ratios of
cohort II (79M:100F) and the highest of cohort IV (134M:100F).

Whether the skewed birth sex ratios were due to infanticide, preferential care or
some combination of the two, the central issue is that the patterns across the birth order
and cohorts are due to the results of gender favouring behaviour. Regardless of origin, they

54 Sam Shapiro, Edward Schlesinger, and Robert Nesbitt, Jr., Infanf, Perinatal, Maternal, and Childhood Mortality in
represent patterns of changing masculinity on the part of the fathers, changing patterns
that had a substantial impact on the sex selected survival of their children. Families were
actively choosing which children would survive to be counted, and the sex and birth order
of the child were important factors in determining that survival.

The impact of discourse

One of the important conclusions has been that discourse drives the behaviour
observed in the statistics. This becomes even more evident in the examination of the
relationship between cohort III and cohort IV. This is a relationship rooted in discourse
and demonstrates the power of discourse, in the absence of direct experience, to change
specific characteristics of masculinity. While there are differences between cohorts III and
IV, in the case of child sex ratios there is a clear pattern by the younger cohort of copying
the behaviour of the older cohort. This is also the sharpest indicator of war affected
masculinity for cohort III. These two aspects of the relationship between cohort III and
cohort IV show that it was discourse that drove the behaviour of both cohorts.

That cohort IV copied the behaviour of cohort III at any point is an extremely
important observation. During the war the younger cohort may well have been subject to
the stress of harassment in the towns, but it was not directly under the threat of the draft
and did not experience any brutality in the training camps nor any exposure to violence due
to military service. Its experience of the war was primarily as observers, those responsible
for interpreting for themselves what happened to some of their elder brothers and then
extrapolating the appropriate responses in terms of their own masculinity. That they then
copied the behaviour of their elders shows that it was a pattern of discourse, of
symbolically transmitted understandings, that led to the new behaviour. They needed to
have determined, as individuals, that the reports they were hearing required that they live
their lives in a new fashion that stressed the presence of male children. This becomes even more poignant when it is observed that these younger men modelled what was almost certainly a hidden set of practices (sex selected survival of their children). Powerful symbolic systems had been actuated that had a cultural logic leading to the behaviours they undertook. Discourse led to a significant behavioural effect. This supports the thesis that General Conference Mennonite Church discourse was a significant factor in the nature of the crisis. It was discourse that triggered these younger male responses, and therefore the possibility existed that other discourse would have had a counter-effect.

**Indicators that did not shift**

Four demographic indicators showed easily visible shifts around cohort III. As already noted, the other possible indicators did not. This is significant and says something about the nature of those that did shift. While many of the demographic indicators that might be examined would not be expected to show a shift caused by changing experiences of masculinity, there are a number that might have been expected to shift, but did not. These indicators include number of children, age at first marriage, rate of marriage, spacing from marriage to first birth, rate of second marriage, age at baptism and rate of baptism (Table 5.2, above). The number of children has been evaluated above, but the others require exploration.55

In examining these other characteristics one of the confounding effects is the behaviour of cohort II. While cohort III may have a distinctive pattern of response to some of these indicators, cohort II certainly does and their behaviour makes it extremely

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55 These are made even more significant in light of the fact that these are the same four indicators to shift among Sommerfelder Mennonites in Canada of the same ages. In forthcoming research, Sommerfelder Mennonite Church records from Manitoba show that of all the possible demographic characteristics that could change in response to the war, these are the same ones to shift.
Table 5.3. Baptismal behaviour, GRANDMA males

difficult to see any patterns for cohort III. Cohort II is more likely than any other cohort to experience an early or out-of-wedlock birth on the part of their spouse. In keeping with this, their median age of first marriage is slightly lower than that of other cohorts. Cohort II is also less likely to remarry than any other cohort after their marriage ends. These are significant indicators and suggest that cohort II may have experienced the effects of a major historical event such as a spike in agricultural product prices that took place before the war (since the marriages and early births took place in the five years before the United States entered war). With regard to the other characteristics, there is no noticeable cohort effect. Men of cohort III may have been slightly more likely than the other cohorts to marry, but if there was any effect it was very slight.

The most confusing set of characteristics with regard to this dissertation is with regard to baptism (Table 5.3). There were trends across the cohorts to fewer baptisms but at an earlier age. Baptism has both immediate and long-term discursive components. It can signify a wide range of personal decisions from the desire to gain access to the marriage market to a sense of personal renewal. It would also seem to be a low risk yet important indicator that was likely to change if the discourse of the community proved less than fully satisfactory. Men who were unsatisfied with their church’s discourse on the war might have been expected to get baptized later and with less frequency. However, this is not what is
revealed. Cohort III does not show changes that would indicate a response due to the war. To explain this absence it is possible that the long-term cultural value of baptism outweighed its value as a place to demonstrate disagreement over the meaning of masculinity. One might also conceive that there were some men getting baptised later but the statistical effect of such behaviour was exactly cancelled by another group of men who were baptized earlier in order to establish better credentials as C.O.s. However, the low standard deviation for cohort III (2.5 years) reveals that the men were more likely to cluster around the median age of baptism than were other cohorts. This clustering indicates greater unanimity of behaviour than was the case for cohorts I, II and V. This unanimity may have been a war effect since these baptisms cluster in the years just after the beginning of World War I, though the behaviour was already underway before the United States entered the war.

Based on the baptism case one might speculate that the reason fewer changes in demographically measurable characteristics took place is because they were readily visible to their own communities. The members of their families and the local congregations might see these behaviours and respond negatively, perhaps cutting these men off from needed personal and social support. They might also be symbolically important due to a discourse which is not available to researchers at this time. However, the case of exogamy, where there is a significant shift, suggests that these men were prepared to break with their families and churches at significant points.

One other possibility is that the markers that did shift were due to a highly personal narrative being constructed by each individual man. It may be the case that these men were responding to deep and painful inner feelings that they could not share and where they did not want others to know what they were feeling. However, since decisions about marriage
can draw upon the most powerful of inner forces, at this one point they may have felt that they must depart from cultural convention. Their exogamy may support the contention that they were less desirable to Mennonite women. In this case they wanted to marry Mennonite women, but were unable to do so because Mennonite women were marrying elsewhere. Or it might have been the case that the demonstration of their masculinity through American “trophy” wives was itself a powerful reward for this visible behaviour.\textsuperscript{56} Regardless, except for this one indicator they followed lives that looked on the surface much like their older and younger brothers. The shorter life expectancy, marriages more likely to end by the death of their wife, and skewed child sex ratios could all remain hidden. Their struggles with their masculinity would be left for the invisible intimacy of self-expression directed toward themselves, their wives, and their children. Their agony was one no one was to know.\textsuperscript{57}

5.5 Conclusion

Drawing causal links between historic events and long-term demographic change is difficult because it depends on conjecture regarding the changing psychodynamics of those affected. While it is impossible to say for certain that the changes detected among men in the later parts of their lives were due to their experiences when they were young, it is hard to explain what other links there might be to such profound shifts in behaviour.\textsuperscript{58}

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I am indebted to Janice Matsumura for this insight.
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In this case the irony of their circumstances was that so many of them experienced these feelings that the characteristics of this cohort as a whole were changed.
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Victor Seidler indicates that academic analysis tends to ignore such causal links. He says, “Often we do not know how men have come to feel and think about themselves in these ways. The neglect, abuse, and violence they might have suffered as children and the powerlessness they have experienced tend to be rendered invisible if masculinities are identified as relationships of power. We tend to think of every young men (sic) in terms of power, and we find ourselves unable to think about the powerlessness of men in specific situations.” Victor J. Seidler, Transforming Masculinities: Men, cultures, bodies, power, sex and love (London: Routledge, 2006), 13. The connection suggested here also fits R.W. Connell’s contention that masculine violence is the result of violence as much as the cause. See R.W. Connell, The Men and the Boys. (Cambridge: Polity, 2000), 224.
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Mennonites did face a collective crisis in World War I, a crisis experienced by individuals and by the communities as a whole. There is no doubt that during the war Mennonites were badly mistreated in some locations in the United States. One direct demographic indicator, though one not examined here, clearly did shift as a result of the war—some American Mennonites moved to Canada. The other kinds of events that could have caused changes of this magnitude, such as urbanization, were not taking place at a significant or rapid enough rate to produce these indicators or this pattern of indicators. While urbanization was underway, it was a minor part of Mennonite life, a situation that would only change much later in the 1940s and 1950s. The Mennonites examined did not suffer any major economic shock or physical dislocation at the critical times. The only reasonable surmise is that it was the conscription crisis that led to the observed changes in behaviour. Importantly, it was a set of changes that was hidden at the time and represented a masculinity under pressure.

As an inductive study of historical demography, the materials gathered call out for a more deductive set of subsequent studies. The poignant picture of social change sketched here suggests that social-psychological theories of social change could contribute to understanding the dynamics within which these men found themselves. Theories of personal and moral development may also be useful. Such studies can follow up the significant points made in this study and provide clarification of the many questions it raises. There is a risk that these theories will not be nuanced enough to effectively work with such a complex set of historically determined conditions.

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As a case study in ethics, the new masculinity promulgated by cohorts III and IV does not speak well of a Mennonite nonresistant masculinity in confrontation with a militant masculinity. Shortened lives, shorter lives of spouses and a dramatic shift to boy-preference behaviours are negative indicators of the long-term results of being a pacifist male under some circumstances. That these were in at least one case also cohort IV behaviours, the behaviours of men who did not directly experience the possibility of draft, says that what drove these negative outcomes was not the experience itself but the way it was perceived. Inherent in this realization is the concomitant realization that the discourse of the men and their communities was the ground for this perception. This supports the conclusion that Mennonite ethical discourse and Mennonite behaviour were connected. The ethics of the community failed the young men at this critical juncture and led them to their own later failure in relation to themselves and those most intimate with them.
6. CONCLUSION

This dissertation explores a traumatic period in North American Mennonite history, the conscription crisis of World War I. What it reveals is that gender, in this case masculinity, is an important vehicle for understanding what happened to Mennonites in that crisis. Daniel Teuscher's shame and the Old Colony Mennonite emigration were expressions not just of ethno-religious communities experiencing the war but of masculinity being tested.

The masculinity that General Conference Mennonite discourse conveyed in the pre-war period had much to commend it as a broad and flexible masculinity. As North American Mennonites began a period of major economic and social transitions in the first years of the century this masculinity showed few signs of strain, and gender discourse as a whole was primarily focused on finding room for women to embrace the opportunities the new world was offering. Unfortunately that discourse did not have the breadth or sophistication to respond effectively to the challenge placed before it by the war in general and conscription in particular. The hegemonic military masculinity promulgated by the American state, through its institutions and propaganda, had both short and long term negative impacts. As the chapters of this dissertation have demonstrated, specific strains and weaknesses were evident at a number of points. Most notably, the young men most vulnerable to these strains and weaknesses suffered a long term shift in their behaviour, a long term shift with terrible consequences for the men and their families.

This dissertation also set out to find the answer to the question of the relationship between one ethno-religious community’s beliefs and its practices. This is a question of
historical theological ethics. The introduction develops Samuel Wells’ view of individual and collective ethical practice based on the metaphor of dramatic improvisation. How well that metaphor works as a tool to open up this Mennonite experience of masculinity will now be addressed. Finally, William Schweiker writes that the task of religious ethics as an academic discipline is to respond to the ethics of a community in order to humanize it. To that task this chapter will briefly turn in its closing section.

6.1 Summary of Findings

In three chapters this dissertation explores a Mennonite discourse of masculinity as found in the General Conference Mennonite Church news-magazine, *The Mennonite*, in a period centered on the First World War. In a fourth chapter it examines the long-term experience of one group of Mennonite men who lived in the tension between that discourse and the hegemonic military masculinity of the United States. Collectively, these chapters reveal a complex set of responses to the war that fits no tidy pattern, nor are they fully consistent with Wells’ model of ethical response.

Chapter two’s analysis of Mennonite discourse on the war demonstrates a failure to engage the war fully in terms of Mennonite beliefs and practices. An implicit Americanization of the discourse had taken place. Despite the international nature of the readership of the magazine, Mennonite history, and the war crisis, the focus of *The Mennonite’s* contributors was almost completely American. The topic range was also more limited than would be expected of a pacifist religious periodical. There was minimal identification or theological exploration of the crisis experienced by Mennonites due to the

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1 Samuel Wells, *Improvisation: The Drama of Christian Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos, 2004).
war. Painful experiences did not make it into print, whether those painful experiences were those of the congregations at home or the men in the camps, prison, or Army. Masculinity itself was rarely recognized as a factor in the experience of the community and when it was there was no unified or even fully coherent perspective.

In the terms Wells identifies, the war was generally ethically accepted-as-given by the editors and constituency of *The Mennonite*. The American government defined the terms of the war and the Mennonite church repeated them, not without protest, but with no significant challenge to the states' patriotic construal of the war. But accepting-as-given was not the only ethical stance taken, and with regard to the ethics of masculinity the ethical crisis was blocked. While there were some significant exceptions to this blocking, such as the over-acceptance of a few pre-conscription editorials by Silas Grubb and the occasional contributions from other writers, these stand out because they were the rare exceptions. As a collective perspective, the militant masculinity projected by the American state was ignored. It was a non-subject.

Chapter three's review of the pages of *The Mennonite* as a gendered text demonstrates that the war had a profound impact on the way gender was carried out within the General Conference Mennonite Church. Once the war began, and long before conscription, women partially withdrew from contributing to the magazine and narrowed what they did contribute to issues internal to Mennonite communities. As they regained their pre-war level of contribution in the post-war period, this internal focus remained. For men the war's impact was quite different. While men did reduce their overall level of contributions and refocus their subject matter during the war, the new focus was on the issues of the larger world. The men began responding to the external forces that would be shaping their religious world in the future, issues of theology, militarism, and social service,
and these subjects became major concerns after the war as the number of male contributions came back up to its pre-war level.

These differences in the types of topics and numbers of contributions reflected a growing gender separation within the Mennonite community. In Wells' terms, women blocked the war. They did not face it as an issue to be retold as a woman's story or attempt to accept it as a given by lamenting the loss of their men. Instead they ignored it. They turned their eyes and their voices to issues of home, church, and family. Men, on the other hand, ethically embraced the world either as given or in over-acceptance through the new language of service and aid. As Mennonite men began to act and write about their efforts as North American Mennonites to reach out in material aid to the war-devastated regions of the world, they found a way to tell a new story that embraced parts of their past and the world around them. This new story provided the basis for new avenues of communal expression. With regard to Mennonite theological concerns, while the female discursive range became narrower and more focused on home, the male discursive range became broader and more focused on the world. The actions of God were seen in different ways depending on the sex of the contributor.

Standing in contrast to this shifting of gender found in *The Mennonite* as a gendered text was chapter four's examination of the way gender was depicted in it. Images and ethics of gender, especially male roles and images, did not change significantly over the course of the war. Instead, chapter four finds that the images of men and women over the first thirty years of the twentieth-century went through a gentle degendering as men, and especially women, were welcomed into new social and economic roles. Mennonite gender portrayals had been, and continued to be even after the war, ones that portrayed men and women in a relatively equal partnership of worth before God, a partnership that allowed men a wide
range of discursive options. Men were portrayed freely as gentle, humble, and compassionate, as well as assertive, spiritual, and active. Men could even be told to look to mothers as the best examples of true masculinity. Contradicting the standard notions that American masculinity was in crisis during the first part of the century, there was no substantive concern demonstrated for what was happening to men or their roles in family, church, or society. The expressions of concern were related to femininity, and there they explored how women might best be fully welcomed into the public world.

Given all that this dissertation uncovers, this failure of the contributors to The Mennonite to explore a changing masculinity is hard to understand. Placed in the context of the language of militant, masculine Christianity common in most Protestant denominations, and the separate spheres gender discourse of society as a whole, this gentle degendering would best be described by Wells' metaphor of blocking. No sign of a discourse of a militantly masculine Christianity slipped across into Mennonite portrayals. One would not know from reading The Mennonite that in the world outside the General Conference Mennonite communities there was any struggle to define gender in restrictive ways. Since other Mennonites did take that struggle seriously, this absence can only be

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5 According to Curtis, “The Son of Man,” Charles Stetze was one of the key promoters of this Christianity. Stetze was regularly printed in The Mennonite but never a contribution from him that reflected this masculine Christianity.
construed as a refusal to consider those other concepts of masculinity and femininity, and thus as a blocking of the larger social discourse on gender.

While the discourse on masculinity in *The Mennonite* seems to suggest that Mennonite masculinity was relatively unaffected by the war, chapter five reveals that this was not the case for those men most affected by the war. In the western United States those men who were young and had not made their life decisions at the time of the draft showed indications of a new and destructive masculinity. Their lives were shorter and marked by difficulties with their wives and daughters, those women who were closest to them. Most profoundly, they shifted to a child sex ratio that indicated a strong boy preference. For their first born this shift was at a level suggestive of female infanticide. They faced the trials of the war and responded years later by wanting baby boys so strongly that in the context of shrinking family sizes they appeared not to allow some baby girls to live. This latter behaviour was picked up by their younger brothers, those who were in their late adolescence at the time of the war, who did not need to register, and who were at no risk of the draft. That this younger cohort modeled some of the older cohort’s behaviours indicates that it was the discursive encounter with the war that caused this change, not the direct experience of it. These younger men were changed on the basis of the stories they heard and the world they imagined.

### 6.2 Failed masculinities

A crisis emerged in the North American Mennonite masculine experience due to World War I. This crisis arose due to the collision of Mennonite nonresistant beliefs with the hegemonic, militant, masculine discourse of North American society. Mennonite men were forbidden by their beliefs from taking part in the war, but North American society defined a manly man as one who took up arms at the direction of the country. The General
Conference Mennonites responded by writing of an obedient, American, patriotic Christianity that did not go to war, but they did not specifically address the question of masculinity. Nor did they honestly respond to the difficulties faced by their men, and in particular of the unique difficulties faced by their young men. No discourse was promulgated that gave ethical guidance for the creation of a pacifist masculinity, a lack experienced in particular by the young men struggling to define their masculinity during the time of crisis.

This crisis has demonstrated that at the time of World War I Mennonites did not have a pacifist masculinity. Ted Koontz, Kimberly Schmidt, Steven Reschly, and Ivan Kaufman each suggest there is a Mennonite masculinity distinct from that of other Christian traditions, a distinct masculinity rooted in Mennonite nonresistance. To the extent that was true at the time of World War I, it was a masculinity of humility, not of pacifism. As General Conference Mennonites approached issues of militant masculinity during World War I there were only a few voices that suggested Mennonite men might experience war differently from other men. By expressing the problem of mass warfare in terms of more general Mennonite beliefs, as most contributors to The Mennonite did, they demonstrated that they did not perceive a clash between the masculinity of the state and Mennonite masculinity. According to most of the discourse, Mennonite men were men like other men, except they were not allowed to take part in the war.

This lack of a Mennonite pacifist masculinity may have had serious negative consequences. While most Mennonite men appeared to live through the war without

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feeling badly about themselves, men between the ages of 16 and 25 were not so fortunate. Men in this age group experienced the masculinity of the war as one that challenged the meaning of their existence and led some of them to act destructively toward themselves and those closest to them later in life, especially their wives and daughters. That they could behave so destructively indicates just how profoundly Mennonites had not articulated a masculinity that addressed pacifist male existence as different from that experienced by other men. It is difficult to imagine such destructive consequences if their communities had had any perception of the unique difficulties of being a pacifist male.

Instead of constructing a discourse of pacifist masculinity, Mennonite discourse repeatedly turned to traditional humility teachings as men were given guidance regarding the problems placed before them by their culture. There were strengths to this discourse. It articulated a masculinity capable of embracing feminine characteristics and welcoming women into public roles, useful characteristics for both men and women in the increasingly urban world Mennonites were experiencing. However, in part, these teachings of humility contributed to the problems younger Mennonite men faced. By taking humility as the guiding ethical concept, Mennonite men were directed toward passivity in the face of suffering, a stance that left them open to further criticism as unmanly from the other North Americans they encountered. What they needed was a way to interpret their experience as manly, active, and oriented to peace. Humility was not by itself an effective source of masculinity under those circumstances.

Ted Koontz suspects that nonresistant masculinity inherently leads to violence against others and especially women. Based on anecdotal evidence he posits a mechanism

7 Koontz, “Grace to You.”
of displacement where the elimination of formal channels for expressing violent behaviour leads to its hidden use. There is nothing in this dissertation to suggest that Koontz is correct under most circumstances. However, it is possible Koontz is accurately capturing what happens to some Mennonite men under highly stressful circumstances. It certainly is similar to the profile of the younger draft age men in this study. While there is no way of knowing if they were especially strong in their verbal proclamation of nonresistance, as in Koontz's anecdotal cases, for the men in this study there was a rise in destructive behaviour among those who were forced to explore for themselves and affirm the meaning of nonresistance. On that basis it may be that the theology of nonresistance contains conceptual components that are easily turned to destructive ends.

Carol Penner's penetrating analysis of Mennonite theology raises questions of whether violence against women is implicitly supported by Mennonite peace teachings. This dissertation suggests that such violence is not implicit in Mennonite theology, since a wide range of relationships between men and women seem to be both feasible and supported, but that violence toward women is a very real consequence of the failure of that theology when the subjects of that failure are men. The demographic characteristics of the young men of this study seem to indicate many of the characteristics of the abused women Penner identifies. On that basis it might be more accurate to suggest that the gendered nature of Mennonite theology leads to violence against both men and women.

The results of this dissertation also indicate that there was no one Mennonite masculinity. Instead it is more accurate to talk about the existence of trajectories of

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Mennonite masculinity. There were a number of possibilities for masculinity in the discourse, even if one was dominant. Some contributors to The Mennonite did attempt to articulate a pacifist masculinity and by doing so indicated that for these few contributors it was a real possibility. Almost certainly some Mennonite men attempted to live such a masculinity, even if there are no records of such. The topics explored by the contributors demonstrated that while the dominant discourse did not provide a pacifist masculinity, it did reveal a masculinity itself in transition due to the war. The transition was from a church and agriculture focussed masculinity to one that was increasingly concerned with the issues of doctrine and service and the impact of world events. Shortly after the war Mennonite men would begin to act in ways quite foreign to their ancestors as they entered the world as agents of compassion in far flung corners of the globe. The demographic records also reveal a multiplicity of masculinities. Some American Mennonite men who were young at the time of the war, would later on develop a masculinity that needed the presence of baby boys, while others maintained more traditional Mennonite patterns of masculinity.

It is open to speculation whether there would have been so many trajectories of Mennonite masculinity had there been a formally developed pacifist masculinity. The war was the point of divergence for some of these trajectories, and given that some of them were significantly destructive, it seems likely that a peace-oriented masculinity would have shaped all the young men in less violent directions. Divergence is logical when a communal

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9 This fits the thesis of Stephan Valocchi that masculinity as an imagination is not only multiple, but that every male is in a different location on a personal trajectory of masculinity. Stephan Valocchi, “Not Yet Queer Enough: The Lessons of Queer Theory for the Sociology of Gender and Sexuality,” Gender and Society 19 (2005): 750-770.

10 Yet another masculinity was the one being promulgated by the Old Mennonites studied by Brenda Martin Hurst. Brenda Martin Hurst, “The Articulation of Mennonite Beliefs About Sexuality, 1890-1930” (Ph.D. Thesis, Union Theological Seminary, 2003).
characteristic is under attack and the community has no discourse that responds effectively to that attack.

Regardless, it is clear that the lack of an effective discourse contributed to the problems facing Mennonite men at the time of the war. As the cohort IV men demonstrated, being too young to be directly affected was also no barrier to long-term change. What changed these men's lives was the way they thought about the war, thinking that was directly due to the way their worlds talked about the war. Different words would have led to different thoughts, and different thoughts would have led to different consequences.

Finally, this project has demonstrated that specific historical events can reshape powerful discursive practices such as masculinity. In this case the dramatic, short-term encounter between the hegemonic military masculinity of World War I and the nonresistant masculinity of the Mennonites, transformed some aspects of the Mennonite masculinity in both the short and long term. This was in some respects an absolute shift since, in the long term, Mennonite men broadened their perspectives and developed new institutions such as the Mennonite Central Committee. Mennonite men would not be taken by surprise by mass war again.

Those Mennonite men who were younger at the time of the war would change the way they lived the rest of their lives as the psychological shifts caused by the war led them to change their personal expression of Mennonite masculinity. These changes were confined to specific birth cohorts, but were permanent for these men. The demographic

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11 It remains a question for further research whether the response to World War II was more effective at fostering a pacifist masculinity. That it may not have done so is at least suggested by Marlene Epp's research. Marlene Epp, "Heroes or Yellow Bellies? Masculinity and the Conscientious Objector," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 17 (1999): 107-116.
record they left behind was significantly different from those older and younger than themselves at the time of the war.

However, that the changes experienced by these men of cohorts III and IV (born between 1893-1897 and 1898-1902, respectively) did not seem to carry on to the next generation indicates the surprising power of minority group masculinities. The failure of the hegemonic military masculinity to lead to major permanent demographic change in this group of Mennonites suggests that minority masculinities may be quite powerful in their ability to inculcate key aspects of their masculinity in following generations, even when this is directly and sometimes fiercely opposed by the surrounding culture and hindered by an intervening cultural crisis.

In the end, in significant respects, the discourse of Mennonite masculinity turned out to be a failure in its response to World War I. While it successfully resisted the demands of the state, the discourse of the church was not adequate to protect the young men most vulnerable to the state. It was not responsive to the needs of the young men who had to go out each day into a world where they might at any time be required to justify their manliness in the face of everything from taunting to battering rifle butts. These young men paid for that lack of responsiveness in ways that led to shortened lives and, in some cases, shortened lives for their wives and female children.

Finally, this dissertation reveals that the study of historic trajectories of Mennonite masculinity is important. Historical events can have important long-term effects on masculinity in ways that are quite hidden from the participants both at the time and much later. At the time of the war Mennonite discourse did not reveal that members of the

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churches knew a serious challenge to masculinity was taking place. That some men changed their perspective on Mennonite life and identity and began to develop a new masculinity of service was not seen at the time to be a consequence of the war. That other men were destructively changed by the same challenge, due to their life situation at the time, also went unnoticed. Masculinity was a powerful dimension of the struggle between Mennonites and the state, but a hidden dimension, and one whose examination reveals new sides to Mennonite history and identity.

This suggests that masculinity needs more careful attention as a category of analysis everywhere. If these powerful transformations went hidden, then what other transformations in masculinity are currently underway in other cultures that are also hidden? Do those transformations lead to a type of society where relationships between men and women are healthy for both? How many baby girls are currently dying under a regime of foetal ultrasound and abortion simply because they are the unwanted fruit of a destructive masculinity? The more attention that is brought to the interaction of historical events and masculinity the more sensitivity will be generated to points of suffering within other groups and therefore to the potential to change cultural practices to reduce or end the suffering.

6.3 Ethics and History

This dissertation has also been an exploration of Samuel Wells’ version of Stanley Hauerwas’ virtue ethics. According to Wells there are three primary modes of ethical response that describe the Christian community in its response to historical events. Based on the metaphor of dramatic improvisation, these modes are blocking (refusing to engage), accepting-as-given (taking an experience or event in terms defined by some other), and over-accepting (retelling the experience or event in terms defined by the ethically engaged
community). All three of these modes have been visible in the material revealed by *The Mennonite*. Wells’ approach has been a useful tool for revealing the way in which the various contributors pushed the discourse forward. His three modes have also constructively outlined the various tactics used in response to the crisis caused by the war. Wells’ model has insightfully framed Mennonite discourse between 1900 and 1929.

However, Wells’ model is not sufficiently complex to assist in understanding the ethical nature of the crisis as a whole. His model presupposes an ethical community able to speak or put into print the crisis it is facing. In this case, masculinity, one of the key arenas of ethical action, was for the most part hidden from the community at that time. While in retrospect it is obvious that there were significant transformations of masculinity being triggered by the war, at the time the communities were aware of neither the challenge the war presented nor the resulting changes in masculinity and therefore they were unable to effectively respond. This was as true for the formal institutions of the church as it was for the local congregations and individual contributors. Provision for such a failure of awareness is difficult to locate within Wells’ framework.

The one explanation Wells provides for explaining this absence of discourse is the concept of blocking. According to his model, any community has the option of discursively refusing to respond to an event or experience offered to it by the outside world. If this was the case in World War I, then the reason the Mennonite discourse did not explore masculinity with greater depth, insight, or wisdom, was because Mennonites refused to do so. However, this seems excessively simple. It implies that the possibility of greater awareness of this specific ethical issue was there at the time and then not acted upon. While there were voices that offered insight into a more effective response to the challenge of militant masculinity, the discourse presented what seems more likely to have been a
tactical error rather than actual blocking. The formal institutions, and Mennonites in
general, tried to over-accept the war (tell the story of the war on their own terms) through
the concept of humility, one of the traditional understandings of what nonresistance meant
in practice. They constructed an ethical narrative that said that Mennonites would suffer
through the war as quiet, patient, patriotic citizens. This discourse allowed them to tell the
war story in their own terms, terms that embraced their existence as Americans and as
nonresistant Christians. In retrospect, humility was the wrong concept with which to frame
the war experience. But having chosen it, they were only able to work with what the
concept could reveal and unable to see what it did not reveal. That it made possible a
discourse of patriotic and nonresistant American Mennonite existence was a very positive
result. That it disabled the possibility of an active and engaged pacifist masculinity was the
invisible negative consequence. It is difficult to see how this negative consequence was a
form of blocking. The problem was the choice of ethical concept through which to tell the
story, and the choice of the wrong concept led Mennonites to a response to the war that
had destructive consequences that were not conceivable at the time.

That the General Conference Mennonites erred is not a minor matter. Mark C.
Taylor has pointed out that erring is intrinsic to Christian existence and an important
concept in theology. Existence is too large and ambiguous for human beings to have any
certainty of anything other than error. By erring these Mennonites demonstrated the truth
that existence is always about error. It is about good intentions gone wrong, clear thinking
missing the point, and anguished decisions where the wrong option was selected. By failing

13 All language conceals even as it reveals. Martin Heidegger, “Letter on Humanism” in Basic Writings: From
Being in Time to the Task of Thinking, edited by David Krell (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1993),
213-239.
to conceptualize the crisis of the war as a crisis of masculinity they demonstrated that they could not understand their existence and, like all humans under such circumstances, were therefore without the power to direct their motion in the correct direction. In consequence, at a vital point Wells’ model is not applicable in its framing of Mennonite behaviour. The model assumes a level of agency, a level of control, that the intrinsic reality of erring does not permit.

The behaviour of the men of cohorts III and IV also raises questions about the intrinsic adequacy of Wells’ ethical model. While their collective behaviour can easily be construed as the result of an ethical failure by the broader world of Mennonite community and church, under a more individually oriented examination this is not so clear. Unfortunately the materials will not allow an examination of specific individual rationales, but inferences can be drawn from the demographic results to the motives of specific underlying behaviour. To achieve the statistical results found here, individual men were required to make individual decisions, and the rationale for those decisions is open to speculative analysis. Such an analysis, as developed above, suggests very complex, unconscious, ethical responses of a wide variety of types, many of them hidden from others. That range of responses raises questions about the adequacy of Wells’ underlying assumption that communities of ethical practice can exist. If the ethical practices that need review cannot be identified with clarity by the participants then the possibility of making choices as a collectivity is eliminated.

Another challenge to the possibility of a community of practices comes from the range and complexity of the demographic indicators between cohorts. The differences indicate that each cohort was making its decisions based on its unique psychological and social location at the time of the war and age was the primary contributor to that location.
The problem for an ethic based on the concept of community is that if age cuts decisively through the practices of a community creating hidden sub-groups of radically differing practices, then the very concept of communities of ethical practice becomes difficult to defend. The differences are profound and permanent as well as hidden. To call it a community of practice is to cast a blanket of fiction over the chasms. This becomes even more obvious when it is taken into account that these divisions in Mennonite practice existed within relatively tightly regulated and strongly bounded ethno-religious enclaves. They indicate that even the appearance of a relatively homogeneous community can be a screen for very different communities of practice. It is also hard to imagine how these deep divisions might be overcome when they exist along unconscious and hidden fractures. Groups can only ethically engage the world as communities when they have some claim to speak for those who are implied as belonging to the group. When those who are assumed to belong are experiencing or enacting a world radically outside of the discourse, such a claim is questionable.

As well, since not all the men in each cohort took part in the behaviours that produced the statistical indicators, their collective failure conceals that individual men made their own decisions to block, accept-as-given, or over-accept their experiences. We do not have access to their individual discursive worlds. There almost certainly were men who did not engage in destructive behaviours despite their war experiences. No doubt there were others who took the general anguish of the war as an excuse to behave destructively despite not being members of the most affected cohorts. Their behaviours are also part of the ethical response of the community, a response that is neglected when we assume there is a community of ethical action.
Well's model also fails to tell us how to respond to failures of ethical tactics. In the worst case, the American Mennonite birth sex ratio pattern of cohorts III and IV may represent a program of over-acceptance (correct ethics) of the crisis of masculinity by some men. Since partial boy preference was part of their upbringing, using that part of the community tradition to reframe the claim that they were unmanly may have been an example of retelling the outsider's story in terms of their existing story. Some Mennonite men had always emphasized the presence of baby boys. These younger men would make that tradition the key to being "real men" in terms that were undeniable to all who encountered them. Those men who made this personal ethical decision took existing mild boy preference and used it to tell a story of manliness in Mennonite terms (having lots of boys), not American terms (military service). In as much as such was the case, they were choosing the correct ethical approach but using the wrong concepts from the community's existing story to fill that approach.

When examined broadly, these weaknesses in Wells' approach to ethics raise significant questions about the nature of virtue ethics. Having experienced years of inner city Christian ministry, Wells is a most sophisticated practitioner of these ethics. It is on the basis of that experience that he has endeavoured to develop a model that makes the practice of virtue ethics easier to implement in real communities. That against the backdrop of a real historical case his model is inadequate, pushes the questions of adequacy further back into the framework of contemporary virtue ethics itself. Central to virtue ethics, as practiced by Wells and Stanley Hauerwas, is the concept of the narrative. Ethical communities live out of a narrative that they use to frame their experiences and guide their actions. However, if a group is unable to identify with accuracy the nature of its own experience, or is unable to see the impact of outside forces, or cannot discern the
important practices of its own assumed members, then how can it claim to have a narrative? Under these conditions any narrative used to ethically define the community is one creatively constructed after the action in order to assist the survivors in determining what is the community, not a way of guiding the community forward authoritatively. The Bible, the main source of narrative for Hauerwas’ Christian communities, cannot be authoritative under conditions where the experience is unknown to the participants. It is at the best of times simply a classic locus of interest from which the discursive community mines what it needs to engage its contemporary existence. How can it be useful when that against which it would be mined is unknown? Such Christian narrative construction of the type recommended by Hauerwas can only take place long after the events are past, not in the lead up to them. This also suggests that the virtuous community is one constructed after the fact, not in the process of the ethical experience. Key points in the contemporary virtue ethics framework seem too weak to maintain the structure built upon them.

This observation becomes a plea for further work at the juncture of history and ethics. Ethicists have been focused on the principles of decision making and minimally focused on the nuances of historical decisions in part because the kinds of tools for this type of historical analysis have been lacking. As this dissertation has demonstrated, there are now tools that enable such analysis. Discourse analysis of popular media can reveal obscure nuances of thought. Historical demography, through cohort analysis, has proven to be a sensitive indicator of responses to historical events, especially when explored in terms of gender. Not all ethical questions will find equally useful historical tools, but the

15 This agrees with Gordon Kaufman who argues that all theological work is first of all a creative activity. Gordon Kaufman, An Essay on Theological Method (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995).
methods of historical analysis are continually broadening as more sources are found and more social scientific methods are developed. Gender itself is an extremely significant category, engaging as it does some of the most central and powerful of human behaviours. Even if similar sensitivity is not developed in other areas of historical ethical concern, this one may prove to be highly useful.

6.4 Masculinity, Mennonites, and the Future

William Schweiker argues that religious ethics must assist religious communities to humanize their ethics.\footnote{Schweiker, “On the Future.”} By this he means that academic analysis must assist communities to achieve their highest human ideals. Leaving aside his contentious use of terms like communities and highest human ideals, it is worthwhile to inquire what this project might suggest that is helpful to those who currently call themselves Mennonite. A preliminary exploration suggests at least four points can be drawn from this research that might be useful for Mennonite ethical reflection.

The first point this dissertation suggests is that masculinity is an important category of ethical analysis for Mennonites. In societies of mass war the burden of Mennonite beliefs rests disproportionately on men, and especially, during times of conflict, on draft-age men. These young men are at a stage in their life course where their experiences can reshape what happens to them long into their future. They need emotional support and resources that will enable them to work through their experiences and find them later in life still confidently male and part of the Mennonite community. In addition, since women were the primary victims of masculine failure in the past, Mennonites need to pay careful attention to the way their discourse locates men and women in relation to each other.
Attention to gender issues must be part of Mennonite efforts to develop peaceable communities.

The second point this dissertation suggests is that the Mennonite doctrine of nonresistance risks turning not only women, as Penner suggests, but also men into passive victims of aggression. Carrying through Jesus' command to "not resist the evil one" might well be the appropriate response when the threat is immediate, personal, and overwhelming. But in situations that are ethically complex, where both short-term and long-term responses are available to those faced with the decisions, nonresistance is too passive. This is true for women in abusive intimate relationships and for men dealing with the aggression of the state. Nonresistance needs to be reframed as one end of a continuum of peacemaking. Mennonites need to develop a range of peace perspectives that allow more nuanced responses to the conditions they experience so they are not forced to choose between either nonresistance to evil or participation in it. There needs to be a range of possible ethical tactical moves in response to the experiences Mennonites face in North American culture. Most of the Mennonites explored here failed to see a range of responses in their own tradition and they failed to develop effective responses to the challenge posed by the state as it related to the registration and draft of young men. In both cases they failed to develop responses that would lead to a community that more strongly represented the best of Mennonite beliefs and practices. Their situation required a more creative set of responses, ideally responses that engaged their young men positively in a moral struggle against violence. What should have been visible in the demographic records was a shift toward more egalitarian gender relations, not the opposite.

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18 Penner, "Mennonite Silences."
19 Matthew 5:39.
The third point this dissertation suggests is that Mennonite ethics need to be thought through more clearly in terms of their long-term implications and possible hidden results. Masculinity as a discursive category was a hidden part of Mennonite existence, but not one that was completely invisible. There were those who were perceptive regarding the implications the militant masculinity promulgated by the state held for young men but their voices were lost in the general discussion. No one paid more than fleeting attention to them. It is almost certain that similarly perceptive, minority voices are there when any group looks at the decisions it is making. More attention to the perceptive voices at the time of World War I might have set in motion responses that would have mitigated or eliminated the hidden long-term consequences. Sensitivity to the prospect that such minority voices are always present should drive current Mennonites to think more carefully about how collective strategies are developed. The possibility of subtle (or gross) unintended consequences arising from specific decisions cannot be eliminated, but more attention to the possibility that they exist, and more sensitivity to alternative and minority voices, is the only way to potentially mitigate them.

Finally, this dissertation raises the issue of Mennonite models of power. While there was an ethical failure regarding World War I, in the longer term this failure prepared the ground for a more successful response to World War II. In addition, most Mennonites were not affected negatively by the First World War, despite their failure to understand or deal with the crisis effectively. They picked up and went back to their traditional way of life and then modified their institutions to make that way of life sustainable in the face of future similar events. That even in the face of failure at the time of the war, and in the face of deep hostility from the surrounding culture, Mennonite communities were able to maintain their existence as relatively intact units suggests there is more strength (power) in
Mennonite responses than might be thought present in a minority community. Mennonites were more than merely resistant to the surrounding culture, they changed tactics so that in the future the American and Canadian states would be more aware of and sensitive to Mennonite perspectives. So rather than being destroyed by a specific hegemonic masculinity promulgated by the state in a time of crisis, Mennonites changed the way the state would understand and react to future such events. Scattered and divided as they were, they demonstrated immense social power. Despite being the “quiet in the land” they made the land itself change in response to their needs. This suggests that even small minority groups can wield significant power in the broader social context, a concept Mennonites have not been quick to embrace. This reluctance to explore the social impact of minority ethics should come to an end.

6.5 Final Thoughts

This dissertation has covered a large scope, exploring history, gender, and ethics, using two modes of analysis and two types of sources. It has demonstrated that masculinity is an important category of analysis for pacifist peoples and that the consequences of beliefs can be far-reaching and invisible to those who undertake to provide the ethical guidance of the community. It has tested the basic theory of virtue ethics of community and found it inadequate in terms of real world complexity. Specifically, it has tested Samuel Wells’ model of ethics through improvisation and found it helpful but inadequate to reveal the nuances of ethics in an actual historical community. It has suggested ways Mennonites

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20 This is in keeping with the thesis developed by James Urry in his most recent work. He demonstrates that Mennonites have had sophisticated political responses to the states within which they have lived, responses that have often been highly effective in reaching Mennonite goals. James Urry, Mennonites, Politics, and Peoplehood: Europe–Russia–Canada 1525 to 1980 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2006).
might move forward based on the results of this study. It has even suggested the
development of a new field of academic work, theological ethical historical analysis.
Daniel Teuscher suffered and died carrying the burden of Mennonite masculinity. Other
Mennonites responded to the crisis of World War I in other ways, from maintaining
traditional mores, to the hidden deaths of female infants, to the mass migration of whole
communities, to the development of new ways of being peaceful Mennonites. Throughout,
men and women acted out of their understanding of what it meant to be male and female.
In doing so they portrayed the range of responses to this foundational aspect of human
life. That they did so opens up new hope that Mennonites in particular, and human beings
in general, can find a better range of responses to the crises they face now and in the
future. Daniel died almost forgotten. The lives of hundreds of baby girls have been
forgotten, only visible by inference. However, Mennonites also developed the Mennonite
Central Committee and became peaceful servants to the world. The history is mixed, good
and bad tangled together. What it does teach us is that there are other ways to define the
present than those we see now, and ways yet unimagined to create a better future.
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