The Changing Sociolinguistic Identities of the Beachy Amish-Mennonites

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Abstract: The study of Beachy Amish-Mennonite identities is a complex endeavor. As a loosely-organized fellowship, the Beachys have no overarching governing body that dictates symbols of their Anabaptist commitment to nonconformity. Often Beachys are described as existing on a religious continuum between the Old Order Amish and Mennonites, yet defining Beachys as what they are not does not adequately establish the religious identities that Beachys negotiate for themselves. This article addresses the negotiation of sociolinguistic identities—where language and religious identities intersect—alongside cultural change for two Beachy congregations in Central Pennsylvania. The analysis, based on a theoretical framework of the negotiation of multilingual identities, shows that the interaction of language and religion within and between congregations is varied and dynamic. The Beachys—without guidelines for how to be "Beachy"—engage in a constant negotiation of religious identity, in part informed by their multilingual past and present.

INTRODUCTION

What is the range of diversity among the Beachy Amish-Mennonites ("Beachys")? How does that diversity manifest itself not only between congregations, but also within a single congregation? Sociologist Cory Anderson (2011) admonishes that inherent in the study of the Beachys is the resulting confusion that arises from their identification: "the identity and boundaries of this movement, as even the Beachys themselves have observed, are indeed complex, not easily summarized in tidy sociological categories" (p. 362). Thus the study of Beachy identities is varied, complex, and changing. To answer the questions posed at the start of this paragraph would require thorough analyses of each Beachy congregation. Although generalizations cannot be made across all congregations, types of change related to religious ideologies may lead to a greater understanding of how the mechanics of those changes occur among congregations within the Beachy Amish-Mennonite fellowship—in fact, the ways in which the Beachys identify themselves ethnically inform

how they position themselves religiously relative to other Anabaptist groups. This paper describes one type of change in two Beachy congregations in Central Pennsylvania. Sociolinguistic identities are those aspects of identity that intersect with language—they contain the attitudes toward language and the ideologies about language as means for the negotiation of an individual's or group's identities.

The article begins with an overview of the theoretical stance applied here followed by a contextual description of the current study. The contextual description contains a sociohistorical discussion about both the location of the congregations under study and the congregations themselves. Then follows a presentation of the sociolinguistic identity data.

LANGUAGE AND IDENTITY

The underpinning of the theoretical stance adopted in this paper is that "[l]anguage is our primary semiotic tool for representing and negotiating social reality, including social identity categories" (Bailey 2007, 341). Humans use language for negotiating their social identities and sociolinguists are especially interested in learning about ways in which language itself intersects with identities and how ideologies about language factor into the process of identification. This is not to say that language is always the most important facet of one's identity.However, in the present case, language itself proves to be not only the primary medium of negotiating identity but also one of the primary markers of identity.

Identity, a nebulous concept in the social sciences, is defined broadly as "the social positioning of self and other" (Bucholtz and Hall 2010, 18). As a process, positioning invokes interaction with others and oneself as the means for negotiating and expressing one's identities. In opposition to earlier work, where identity categories were static roles assigned to individuals in social realms, social positioning means that individuals ally themselves as same or different through ongoing expression (Davies and Haaré 1990). Social positioning is both dynamic and discursive—individuals are not bestowed with identities; rather, they negotiate with identity choices. Yet this negotiation is not completely one-sided; social positioning is subject to external pressures. Further, the resulting indi-

vidual identities do not have to completely align with or completely reject a group's entire repertoire of identity characteristics for an individual to express interest in identifying with a particular group. Individuals may choose to partially adopt some aspects of given identities while rejecting others aspects or even adapt aspects to fit their own contexts. Through studying narratives in which individuals discursively negotiate their identities, researchers can understand the dynamic nature of identification through the expression of attitudes and ideologies about those aspects of identities which are differently valued. Through their narratives, multilingual individuals position themselves and create ideologies about language and culture that are not only diverse, but at times contradictory (Dailey-O'Cain and Liebscher 2011). As a result, the study of identity is indeed nebulous and requires, optimally, qualitative inquiry that is both comprehensive and longitudinal.

Important for this study is understanding that Beachy Amish-Mennonite congregations have multilingual realities. When they actively use a variety of languages in their daily lives or as part of religious ritual, they represent a heritage language community. Heritage languages are spoken at home and are a different language from the dominant societal language (Rothman 2009). Sometimes, however, groups that no longer actively use their heritage language still possess aspects of identity that are informed by their multilingual pasts—these communities, in turn, are termed "postvernacular" (Shandler 2008). For the Beachys in these congregations, using German as a hagiolect (the language for religious purposes) and Pennsylvania Dutch as the in-group linguistic marker has changed throughout their histories. The power struggle between heritage languages and the dominant mainstream language, English, resulted from greater legitimacy and overt prestige given to the mainstream language, especially in light of religious change. Since the Beachys have "opened themselves to external cultural and theological influences more fully than the Old Orders" (Anderson 2011, 364), they present unique case studies in looking at how language use can change as a group becomes more open.

These venues provide areas in which sociolinguistic identity work is "interesting, relevant, and visible" in that identities are contested (Pavlenko and Blackledge 2004, 19). More so than the Old

Orders, the Beachys tolerate overt intergenerational differences. Within congregations, adherents to older values and language norms sit alongside those who embrace the opportunities that come with adopting the language of mainstream society. Thus, the interactions of language and culture within a single congregation provide a much more interesting look at how language is differently valued in the changing religious identities of congregants. In understanding the sociolinguistic identities being socially positioned, this analysis relies on a poststructural approach to multilingualism in which identity is dynamic, multiple, and discursive. The theoretical framework, developed by Pavlenko and Blackledge (2004) and based on earlier work on social positioning (mentioned earlier in this section), explains that identities in multilingual contexts are, first of all, differently valued. In light of the contested nature of changing identities, certain aspects of their social and cultural expression are given more weight than others. In the weighing of their options, identities are, second of all, negotiable, nonnegotiable, or not negotiated. Although individuals may be agentive in the social positioning process, there are some instances in which external pressures either from dominant society or from dominant auspices within the group do not allow aspects of the group's identity to be negotiated. Through their negotiation of multilingual identities, aspects can be, third of all, resisted or re-appropriated. Not all parts of an identity need to be adopted wholly. Multilingual identities are, last of all, contextually-based. As a result, the present and past realities of the multilingual situation factor prominently in understanding the negotiation of an individual's and group's identities. To that end, the next two sections provide background on the study, the locations of the congregations, and the congregations themselves.

CURRENT STUDY

This study is part of a larger, longitudinal project that ran from 2005 until 2011 and then was revisited from 2017 to 2019. The larger project, The Big Valley Oral History Project, was a joint venture between researchers and the Mifflin County Mennonite Heritage Society in Belleville, Pennsylvania, to collect oral histories from Anabaptist residents of the Kishacoquillas "Big" Valley, part of Pennsylvania's Appalachian range. That proj-

ect, in conjunction with research into sociohistorical and archival information, became the basis for studying Beachy Amish-Mennonite congregations in Big Valley from the middle of the nineteenth century onward (Brown 2011). The current study leans on the relevant Beachy information from Brown (2011) to revisit the language situations in Big Valley as part of a critical ethnography nearly a decade later.

Starting from the earlier collection of over 60 oral histories, this updated analysis focuses on interviews with Big Valley residents, who grew up in the Beachy church but joined more progressive groups in their early adulthood and interviews with current Beachy members. Throughout this manuscript, the participants in the oral history project are identified numerically. Since they are part of an oral history project, the typical convention of identifying them as "narrators" was followed. The numbering system continued through the second phase of the oral history project.

The current study also relies on published memoirs, historical information gleaned from unpublished church histories, and weekly church activity reports published in the Amish and Mennonite newspaper, *The Budget*. As a critical ethnography, the information in the oral history interviews and archival materials is supplemented with observations from attendance at worship services and hymn sings, visits at the homes of Beachy individuals, and interactions with Beachy individuals at additional locations in Big Valley. Personal observations were recorded in notebooks as temporally near to the events as possible; permission to record the information was always obtained.

Big Valley as an Anabaptist Continuum

Big Valley presents a unique Anabaptist microcosm. Although located in a narrow two-mile wide valley bound by mountains on each side, a surprising diversity of Anabaptists exists today. Although most Anabaptists in Big Valley come from a shared Amish heritage, there are over a dozen distinct Anabaptist affiliations. Three Old Order groups, a number of Mennonite groups, and two Beachy groups—all with congregations that range from progressive to conservative on a religious continuum—call Big Valley home.

Due to an increase in travel routes and the increasingly liberal tendency of the Amish in the

lower Pequea region of Lancaster County, more conservative Amish families moved to isolated regions in newer settlements including Big Valley in the late eighteenth century (Kauffman 1991, 58). By 1795, more than a dozen Amish families appear on historical records and later immigrants from failed Amish settlements in nearby Centre and Juniata Counties would make up the Big Valley Amish (Hostetler 1951). The growing Valley was divided into three congregations (Upper, Middle, and Lower Districts) in the mid-nineteenth century. This separation of the Amish into three congregations all the while being contained in a very narrow valley, led to several internal disputes between and within the new districts. The Great Schism, as it is known locally, was one such dispute and occurred in the 1850s as a result of debates over stream baptism (Hostetler 1948; Hostetler 1964, 286; Yoder 1991,158-59). Solomon Beiler of the Middle District wanted to perform stream baptism for his congregants, while Abraham Peachey of the Upper District preferred to keep the traditional practice of pouring water over the head of the baptismal candidate in the home. The districts split in 1863 from fellowshipping with each other and the Beiler group trimmed their hair styles, built meetinghouses for worship, and firmly rejected the practice of shunning. By the late nineteenth century, the Beiler group formally referred to themselves as Amish-Mennonite and joined some Mennonite groups toward increasing evangelism and revivalism in their churches (Yoder 1991, 260). Soon they would drop "Amish" from their church signs and continue on existence in Big Valley as Mennonites.

Peachey's church, although identifying with the Old Order, was still more progressive than the Valley's other Old Order churches by the end of the nineteenth century. Directly because of their sympathies with Amish churches that did not support strict social avoidance, the Peachey church counseled both congregations in Lancaster and Somerset Counties during their tensions over the issue. Soon after Bishop Zook of the Peachey church offered support to the Lancaster County congregation in 1919, his own congregants began defining their Old Order identity in a much different way than their Old Order neighbors in Big Valley—they embraced two suspenders instead of one, sweaters, zippered jackets, narrower brimmed hats, and trimmed beards (Kauffman 1991, 306).

The Zook church, as it came to be known, were less sectarian than the Old Orders in appearance, but their continuity with buggy transportation separated them from the progressive Mennonite churches mentioned above. Under the leadership of Bishop Jesse D. Spicher in the 1950s, the Zook church aligned with religious changes adopted by Bishop Beachy's Somerset County congregation, also mentioned above. They joined the Beachy Amish-Mennonites, which started out of disputes in Lancaster and Somerset Counties in the early 1900s over shunning members transferring to neighboring Conservative Amish-Mennonites Conference churches. In time, Big Valley had two Beachy districts; they later united and built a large meetinghouse to accommodate their growing numbers (Yoder 1963, 6).

With the building of their meetinghouse and a new sense of presence in the Valley, the congregation adopted innovations further disassociating themselves from the Old Orders. Religious changes such as Sunday evening meetings, English and "fast" hymn sings, growing opportunities for youth activities sponsored by the church, and increased interest in outreach and mission work characterized the congregation (Kauffman 1991, 307). The potential of more changes caused a division in the congregation in 1985—more conservative members of the congregation established the Pleasant View Amish-Mennonite church. The remaining progressive side referred to themselves as Valley View Amish-Mennonite.

Cultural Change among Big Valley's Beachy Amish-Mennonites

The Beachy Amish-Mennonites in Big Valley have roots in the Old Order in the late nineteenth century, but they have diverged considerably from the path that the rest of the Valley's Old Order have taken. This section describes some of the cultural changes that happened parallel to the linguistic changes described in the following section. The Old Order and the Beachys share "an Anabaptist commitment to the primacy of scripture as the guide to Christian life and Christian behavior" (Johnson-Weiner 2001, 232). However, the Beachys adopted Sunday school for increased interest in reading and understanding the Bible (Beachy 1955, 128). Although debated at first, Sunday school is now accepted in both Big Valley

Beachy congregations. In addition to the primacy of Scripture, the Beachys (as other Anabaptists) follow the Dordrecht Confession of Faith which mandates the importance of non-conformity to the world. Each Anabaptist group has varying interpretations on what non-conformity means, but a former bishop of both Beachy congregations relates the extent of their non-conformity to the world:

> Parents, do we appreciate our heritage enough and are we thankful enough that we have the privilege to take our children to a church that takes a stand against the evil influences of radio, TV, evil habits, disrespect, miniskirts and teaching to respect the Sabbath (no going away on Saturday nights, but getting ready for Sunday)? (Spicher 2005, 165)

In the early twentieth century, the worship service was similar to the Old Orders. It began with a hymn, followed by the *Loblied*, followed by a devotional for about 15 to 20 minutes, prayer, Scripture reading, sermon of about 30 to 40 minutes, witness from other ministers, a prayer, a final hymn, and then dismissal (Narrator 12). Today, worship begins with a 20-minute devotional, followed by Sunday school, then the main sermon. Both congregations sing in four-part harmony a cappella, i.e., without instrumental accompaniment. Further opening up their sectarian boundaries, both congregations invite outside speakers to their evening services (Narrator 3). Ministers in both congregations are chosen by lot following the tradition of the Old Order, and although sermons are based on several verses from Scripture, there is no Old Order-like *Abrot* (a ministerial meeting before worship). Pleasant View holds Wednesday prayer meetings (*The Budget*), where, contrary to Old Order style, a group convenes to discuss Scripture and collectively pray for individuals of the church and world. Neither church overtly shuns transgressions among the membership. Narrator 6 indicated that moving away from shunning was a way in which the church "progressed." Today, there is no shunning, "unless [a member] fall[s] into some kind of serious sin. Then they're expelled" (Narrator 20).

Among the Old Order, youth are valued, but as non-members of the church until their baptism in their late teens and early twenties, they possess a minimal role in the *formal* activities of the church.

Organized, faith-based initiatives for young people (aside from Sunday evening hymn sings) are typically discouraged. Mennonite churches in Big Valley, on the other hand, readily integrate young people into worship, encourage their participation in outreach initiatives, and sponsor faith-based endeavors such as camping weekends and socials. The Beachys are somewhere between both groups concerning the involvement of youth in church activities. Youth are encouraged to participate more in the activities of the church; in fact, they are baptized younger than the Old Orders, around age 15-16, maybe as young as 12 (Schwieder and Schwieder 1977, 48). Sunday evening hymn sings for the youth of the congregation remain an Old Order hold-over and an important venue for socializing with peers. Youth activities have increased the frequency of church-sponsored events. Pleasant View's column in *The Budget* gives examples of youth activities, including visits to ministers' homes and the preparation of a community supper for Beachy and non-Beachy residents of Big Valley.

Education of children follows the Old Order pattern of having private parochial schools staffed by their own teachers. In Big Valley, both Beachy congregations operate their own parochial school located adjacent to the meetinghouses. The Pleasant View School goes through eighth grade, while Valley View encourages continued education, often individualized through a faith-based curriculum. Both schools attract conservative Mennonite families in the Valley as well. In line with their hyphenated Amish-Mennonite religious identity, they do not send their children to the Old Order parochial schools, nor to Belleville Mennonite School. Additional outlets for education, such as Faith Builders for instruction on teaching, a deacon seminar, seminar on missions, Spanish courses for the eighth grade graduates, and a marriage enrichment seminar, are mentioned in Pleasant View's *Budget* column. Most occupations center on skilled labor such as plumbing and electrical work. There are some licensed practical nurses but no professionals at Pleasant View (Narrator 20), while Valley View has more certified nurses and teachers.

Dress remains uniform in both Beachy congregations. Men usually wear button-down shirts, trousers, and suspenders. Even plaids and prints for shirts are becoming acceptable in the more

conservative Pleasant View. All women wear head coverings, though they are smaller than the Old Order head coverings. Cloth-style veils, instead of caps, are observable at both congregations. Their dresses do not have aprons, though the top half does have a cape. The cape is typically sewn on to the top half of the dress. Some of the older women sew their dresses and capes together while retaining a few straight pins at the top of the garment to hold the front together, an Amish way of fastening clothes. Most women close their dresses with zippers and buttons rather than pins.

Technology is consistently a point of contention, both for the Old Orders and the Beachys, in maintaining separation from the world. In general, the Beachy congregations in Big Valley are conservative in the comparatively progressive Beachy affiliation, but not as conservative as factions off the Beachys, e.g., Maranatha, Ambassadors, and Berea. Even though they have had electricity in their homes since the late 1940s and computers are completely acceptable for business purposes, the Beachy members control most entertainment-based technologies. Cell phone use "causes quite a bit of concern" (Narrator 20), though its usefulness in emergencies has been mentioned in the Pleasant View column of *The Budget*. The use of the internet is increasingly common. The Beachy church in Big Valley was slower to adopt automobiles than Lancaster and Somerset Counties. They adopted tractors in 1932 and later automobiles in 1954 (Stroup 1965, 10; Yoder 1999, 101; Yoder 1963, 5). However, members in the Beachy church in Big Valley were already using cars, even before it was officially allowed (Narrator 13). In order to prevent a division in the church and the loss of more members, the ministry required black cars (Yoder 1963, 5). This move, in concord with some conservative Mennonite populations, maintains the conformity of the community, while at the same time insisting on non-conformity to the world. At present, the Valley View congregation no longer has a black car rule. Within the last decade, darker colored cars were a transitional compromise. Today, cars of all colors and makes in their parking lot are observed for Sunday worship. For Pleasant View membership, black cars—and occasionally dark, solid colors—were mandatory (Narrator 20). However within the last few years, that rule has been discontinued.

The use of the automobile and increased relations with people outside of one's usual networks resurfaces as a prominent theme in the histories of changing religious orientation. The acceptance of the automobile brought more non-Amish innovations to Beachy life in Big Valley. Cars allow faster and longer distance travel. Not only could one travel and expand one's dense social networks into open ones, but one could now travel to expand one's religious horizons. The allowance of cars eventually fed greater travel opportunities to revival meetings:

> After the Amish Church allowed cars for transportation in 1954, we could travel farther to revival meetings and have our souls fed from God's Word in a wonderful way. However, opposition to the Spirit-filled life began to grow from various churches in the valley. They tried to convince us that we were being deceived into believing in the sanctified experience. (Yoder 2000, 29)

As this sentiment intimates, one of the greatest differences between the Old Order and the Beachy is the more "explicitly evangelistic" orientation of the Beachy fellowship (Johnson-Weiner 2001, 246-47). A more outward religious orientation, including evangelism and mission work, emerges as a hallmark of their religious identity in Big Valley. Some initiatives of the Amish-Mennonites include missions abroad, prison missions domestically, and Fresh Air missions (Matthews 2001). Since 1947 there have been missions in Latin America and increasingly more in Eastern Europe (Yoder 1987). The Pleasant View congregation, for example, directly supports outreach missions in Ukraine, Kenya, and a domestic prison ministry (Narrator 20; Narrator 3; *The Budget*). Such outreach diverges from an exclusive sectarian ethnoreligious identity. Big Valley's Beachys wish to become more active in mission work and lessen the exclusive nature of their congregations.

Language and the Big Valley Beachy Amish-Mennonites

Alongside these numerous cultural changes have been changes to the verbal repertoire of the Valley's Beachys. At first, they maintained the Old Order pattern of language behavior. An archaic form of standard German was the language of

written liturgy. It connected both the Beachys and the Old Orders to their roots in the Radical Reformation and, through their hymns, reminded them of the sacrifices of the early martyrs. Within their in-group, they maintained Pennsylvania Dutch—a covert prestige vernacular, which further separated them from "English" outsiders. However, as their cultural (and religious) changes continue to integrate them into a less sectarian worldview, it becomes less necessary for the Beachys to maintain these traditional linguistic boundaries of their identity. Big Valley's Beachy congregations are still considerably more conservative than many Beachys in other areas, and their late acceptance of English in worship is an example of their conservatism. For Big Valley's Beachys, German declined in emphasis in the 1950s, particularly for funerals and young people's singings (Beachy 1955, 139). By 1985, Valley View switched nearly completely to English in worship services. By no longer using German and Pennsylvania Dutch, their identities fall more in line with their neighboring mainstream Mennonites. All of these elements—cultural and linguistic—contribute to their ongoing negotiation of their religious identities.

A former Beachy man recounted the bond between German and religion in his memoir:

> Sunday was the Lord's Day; no more work was done than necessary. It was a day to learn the German language; we attended church every two weeks, and services were always held in German (Yoder 2000, 15)

For his childhood in the first half of the twentieth century, religion and language were inseparable—to be Beachy in Big Valley meant to use German in the worship service. The role of German in Big Valley's Beachy worship services would eventually change in the mid-twentieth century. The Old Orders incorporate German instruction in their parochial schools and while an archaic form of standard German is the language of their written liturgy, the spoken elements of worship are in Pennsylvania Dutch (Louden 2016). As a result, the Old Orders are equipped to handle German as a hagiolect. With the creation of their own parochial schools, the Valley's Beachys relied heavily on a local German School on Saturday mornings in the neighboring village of Whitehall (Kanagy 2006, 24; Kauffman 1991, 222; Yoder 1999, 48; Yoder 1963, 37). Since Beachy children (and

adults) attended German School, German as a hagiolect was more feasible. When the German School ceased operation—coinciding with an increased availability of Sunday school curriculum in English—German declined as the language of religion for the Valley's Beachy. It was not necessarily the existence of German that made them uneasy. For Big Valley's Beachys, they did not care to perpetuate the poor knowledge of German in a similar vein to Samuel D. Guengerich's admonishments at the beginning of the twentieth century (Louden 2016, 309).

Similarly, the building of their meetinghouse as a visible manifestation of their religious "home," further contributed to the decline of German as a language in worship. By not worshipping in homes, outsiders would feel more comfortable to join the congregation for worship than if the service is held in a private home. As English increased its role in the religious sphere in the mid-twentieth century, it further contributed to the split between the conservative and progressive congregations in the 1980s. Valley View chose to fully incorporate English in their worship services, while Pleasant View held on to German as a hagiolect for a longer period of time. The congregation's bishop left for a German-using Beachy church in Selinsgrove, Pennsylvania, when Sunday school switched to English and the congregational trend was toward greater English use (Kauffman 1991, 307; Yoder 1987, 350).

Linguistic changes in the churches were gradual. Congregants negotiated the delicate balance between tradition and progression. In the transition period from bilingualism to monolingualism, it began with the hymn singing, when one of the songs was in English and another in German (Narrator 3). The import of songs in English became an important venue for English language growth (Yoder 1987), affecting not only the allegiance to German in worship, but also the language of these casual hymn sings for young people. Previously, they used the *Christian Hymnary*, which included a minority of selections representing their multilingual past, e.g. the *Loblied* in both German and English, English translations of hymns of the martyrs from the Old Order's *Ausbund* hymnal, and some from Menno Simons (including the original language, whether German or Holland Dutch). The hymnal functioned as an amalgamation of their Old Order roots and their increasing open-

ness to a variety of Anabaptist musical traditions. *Zion's Praises*, a supplementary hymnal for worship that has since been discontinued, includes hymns on nonresistance, feet washing, mission, evangelism, and salvation; it does not include any German. Today, Pleasant View uses the *Christian Hymnal*, an evangelistic Holdeman Mennonite compilation exclusively in English. The lasting remnants of the German hagiolect exist as a thirty minute hymn sing alongside a longer English hymn sing on the last Sunday of every month at Pleasant View.

On Sundays in the 1930s and 1940s, the Beachys would gather in plain garb, sing the hymns of the martyrs, and envelop themselves in their traditional language. Through these social actions, they negotiated their ethnoreligious identities. However, the importance of German does not guarantee its stability when participants choose to project a different religious orientation. Lacking the rigorous instruction in the language of earlier generations at the German School, they found the language to be a barrier to religious understanding. One Beachy man wrote in his memoir:

> It reminds me of the portion of a beautiful German song that still rings in my mind and goes like this—'Als ich auf jordons ufer shtand und shuete seelinch hin, zu Canan's shone und lieblich land vo meini schetzi'. (Peachey, n.d., 52)

His writing does not convey knowledge of German grammar or spelling and elements of his Pennsylvania Dutch shine through. Drawn from his sentiments, German has become nostalgic for the Beachys in Big Valley. It links them with their past and once strengthened their commitment to an exclusive sectarian lifestyle. The language of worship had to change to assure the religious viability of the group as its religious orientation changed. In fact, this same author later concedes in his memoir:

> We were singing those precious old German hymns but with our minds and understanding far from the depth and meaning of the words we were uttering (Peachey, n.d., 11)

Although he calls them "precious" and "old," adding to the nostalgic connotation, at least this writer felt less proficient in having German as a

hagiolect. He reveals in this instance not only his changing personal identity—one that seeks to understand written liturgy—but also his changing sociolinguistic identity—one that seeks to sever the ties between language and religion, so that his religious life turns to English hymns, translations of the martyrs' hymns, and an English Sunday school curriculum.

Although all of the Beachy narrators for this study speak Pennsylvania Dutch, only one couple speaks the language on a regular basis to each other. The rest of the narrators speak English most of the time with their spouses and housemates, even though 20 years ago, they would have spoken Pennsylvania Dutch exclusively. On the whole, the Pennsylvania Dutch abilities of the older Beachys in Big Valley are attriting, while the younger Beachys have either limited or no abilities in the language. Narrator 13 stated, for example, that the youth of the Beachy congregations in Big Valley no longer speak Pennsylvania Dutch because of the lack of transmission between younger parents (in their 20s) and their children.

As both Beachy congregations grew, their affinity toward education and increased economic opportunity also grew. The role of English continues to be important in the lives of the Beachys after leaving primary school, in secondary/ post-secondary school and in future careers. A couple who enthusiastically shared that their children spoke Pennsylvania Dutch in childhood, also resigned that Pennsylvania Dutch alone was not useful for their changing lives:

> Narrator 21: It was nice that they could speak English.
>
> Narrator 20: Yeah it was. They could too.

Although it was good at the start for the children not to speak English—so these parents could use it as a secret language, the increasing possibilities with English were advantageous. This pattern is very much unlike the Old Orders, who discourage overuse of English at home (Johnson-Weiner 1992).

English is winning out as a monolingual variety, rather than bilingual maintenance of English and German, in religious spheres. Pleasant View uses the conservative Mennonite Christian Light Publishing materials for Sunday school. Although

the curriculum is in English, the older generation occasionally discusses the content in Pennsylvania Dutch. The younger generation relies exclusively on English for discussion (Narrator 20). In Valley View, Sunday school classes are multigenerational.

English, the language of education, is now the native language for most younger Beachys in Big Valley. Along with the role of English in education arose greater prestige for the language. Although the Old Orders speak Pennsylvania Dutch directly because of its covert prestige (humility) value, "covert prestige" for the Beachys became undesirable. Narrator 43 commented that Pennsylvania Dutch is "too common" for the members of her congregation at Pleasant View today:

> Narrator 43: But a lot of the Amish of our church they don't speak Dutch. They could if they wanted to, but they all speak English.

> Interviewer: Why's that?

> Narrator 43: Well, I don't know. I guess it's too common for them.

Although the Old Orders value the "commonness" of Pennsylvania Dutch, a shift in cultural identification with the language surfaced among the Beachys. By not speaking Pennsylvania Dutch, the Beachys are allying their religious identities more with mainstream Mennonitism and less with conservative Old Orders. As such, they negotiate their identities with language choice. Although Narrator 43 does not agree with this choice, she nonetheless recognizes it as a growing trend and an aspect of the religious lives of co-congregants that is negotiable. The loss of Pennsylvania Dutch within generations of a loss of German in worship is a typical pattern (Louden 2016, 331).

English, not only the language of education and overt prestige, is now associated with the Beachys as the language of outreach. In line with the assertions of anthropologist Karen Johnson-Weiner (1992, 34), it is the willingness of the group and their changing worldview that brings them closer to English use. Big Valley's Beachys needed a language for Biblical literacy and one that would open up their congregations to mission works. In time, Pennsylvania Dutch and German were differently valued than English in light of their nego-

tiations with changing religious opportunities. Although linguist Joachim Raith (2003, 63) asserted that it was the loss of German in worship that caused the loss of Pennsylvania Dutch, this cannot be the sole cause. A disruption in the social reality (Berger, Berger, and Kellner 1974)—the structure and consciousness—of a group is a major impetus for change. Beachys survive because of an "interpretive process" (Schwieder and Schwieder 1977, 50), which allows them to place boundaries around acceptable and deviant social behavior. For the analysis here, this "interpretive process" is part of their negotiation of identities. As such, Big Valley's Beachys are engaged in constant questioning, e.g.: "Is there now enough about him, maybe two-toned car, white sidewalls, etc. extra to show that he believes in nonconformity" (Spicher 2005, 156). For the Beachys, the negotiation of identities involves a sharp distinction between the Old Orders and themselves, even if that requires severing the strong ties to traditional language use. Their reasons for language shift were due to their reevaluation of self (Buchheit 1982, 112, Johnson-Weiner 1992, 27). Changes in their religious orientation—becoming more outward and opening up ethnoreligious boundaries—necessitated an increase of English for both mission work and Biblical literacy. In turn, the increased use of English in all domains is an indication of "the rejection of the Old Order identity" (Johnson-Weiner 1998, 384). A minister of the Pleasant View church stated that his church "progressed":

> Narrator 3: Well, in a sense we always belonged to that church, we never changed church. We were known as an Amish church but then later on as the church progressed, I'll say progressed—I suppose would be the right word.

Narrator 20 also hedges on a response regarding the naming of his own Pleasant View congregation:

> Interviewer: Are there other changes would you say, and what changes are taking place in the Amish church these days?

> Narrator 20: I don't know much about the Amish church, but –

> Interviewer: Oh I mean Pleasant View is also Amish?

Narrator 20: Well…

Interviewer: Isn't it Amish?

Narrator 20: Yes, it's Amish-Mennonite.

For this narrator, he not only distances himself and his familiarity with the Amish (here the Old Orders), but aligns his own church with its hyphenated identity: Amish-Mennonite. Their plain dress and restrictions on transportation, occupations, and other aspects maintain their separation from the world, which their new sectarian identity requires. This increasing gap between the Old Orders and the Beachys in Big Valley was a consistent theme in the interviews. Narrator 26, who left before the Beachys adopted cars, viewed their buggy-rule as culturally stagnant:

> Narrator 26: I said I don't go to the church where I talk Dutch. And, well, why did you ever leave the Amish church? I said I wasn't going to drive in the back of a stinkin' horse. I wanted a car... And I said that's what I got. Oh he says, well you can talk Dutch. It's a shame that you ever left the Amish church. Oh no I said, not for me it isn't. Might be for you, but not for me.

For him, language loyalty was less important than the car and the other opportunities that the car brought with it, including outreach and mission work. He does not regret his decision, even though he still is able to speak Pennsylvania Dutch. He does not see the connection between Pennsylvania Dutch and his changing religious identity as strong as it once was. His attitude toward the symbolism of Old Order identity (buggy transportation) and the language bound to that symbolism is evident. In this excerpt, the narrator negotiates his identity with a third party and shares his attitude of Old Order cultural norms. For him, language was not an important deciding factor in his religious choices.

For many, though, it was no small matter to bring English into a traditional language domain. The senior-most minister at Pleasant View reflected on the effects of bringing English into worship services:

> Interviewer: As you look back, was that the right decision, or was that yielding to the ways of the world too much, to bring English into the worship services completely?

Narrator 3: Well, that's a little difficult. In one sense, it brought other things along.

Interviewer: Good or bad?

Narrator 3: Well, perhaps, I'd say good. But on the other hand, sometimes it made a difference in our approach to some things. Life goes on, you know. But basically I'd say it was the thing to do.

For him, although he dressed plainly, was a minister of the congregation in elderly age, and regularly spoke Pennsylvania Dutch with his wife at home, his views on language and religion changed. His hedging is evident in the beginning of his response, yet his reluctance gives way to concession by the end. Perhaps it is even resignation on his part, that the changing world is simply a matter of fact. The attitude that change is imminent remains foremost in the minds of these narrators. For them, their whole lives have been about negotiating their sectarian identities. For them, worship in homes, buggy transportation, and language were parts of their past that became relics of their changing religious identity. With their changing religious orientation, German failed to fulfill the growing needs for Biblical literacy and outreach among the Valley's Beachys. In short, the prospects of carrying a Luther Bible on missions to Latin America and Eastern Europe are not practical.

Thus the many religious changes that have occurred in Big Valley among its Beachy congregations have brought different ways of negotiating the role of language as part of their religious identities. In light of the theoretical framework, language and religion—once intimately linked in their Old Order past—are now differently valued. The opportunities that an "open" religion brings them outweighs the loyalty that they held to German as a hagiolect and Pennsylvania Dutch as an in-group identity marker. While older members of the congregations hold on to speaking Pennsylvania Dutch and a German hymn sing remains once a month, they realize that language is a negotiable aspect of their Beachy identities. In giving up their traditional languages, they are able to incorporate youth in formal church activities and engage fully in outreach and mission work far beyond the boundaries of their narrow valley.

I am hesitant to say, though, that it is all about language loss in Big Valley as the Beachys negotiate the role of language in their religious identities. The Beachys rely just as much on language maintenance as they negotiate their religious identities. Big Valley's Beachys require the maintenance of German and Pennsylvania Dutch among their Old Order neighbors, because of their shared heritage. To signify themselves as different, the Beachys require the Old Orders to maintain their traditional languages and to maintain the role that language has for their religious identities. In so doing, the Valley's Beachys maintain distance from the Old Orders—they become those who engage in international outreach, while weaving into their narratives a recent past where language figured prominently as a marker of their religion.

CONCLUSION

I return to the complex questions posed at the start of this article—namely, how do the Beachy Amish-Mennonites identify themselves? While the Beachys are often described as what they are not (Anderson 2011, 364), I have attempted here to show that although language loss has meant religious change, language maintenance is needed as the Beachys negotiate their place in such an extreme example of a geographically isolated Anabaptist continuum. Certainly, Beachys in other areas do not rely on the language maintenance of the Old Orders to define themselves, yet language continues to be an integral part of their shared multilingual past. As a result, it is difficult to define Beachys without invoking how much or how little traditional language use remains. In short, the negotiations of how language factors into Beachy religious identities is varied and dynamic.

I fully agree with Louden's (2016, 331) assertions that the bilingualism (Pennsylvania Dutch and English) among groups related to the Old Orders is transitional after the switch from English/German to English monolingualism in worship. In this regard, the findings from this study are generalizable not only to other Beachy groups but to other North American Anabaptist groups including many Mennonite and Mennonite Brethren churches. Strong parallels between North American Anabaptist groups, including the Beachys as this study shows, and language shift can be drawn. Harold S. Bender (1957), the prominent Menno-

nite theologian, in his article "Language Problem" referred to the maintenance of German and English to be a "language breach," effectively preventing outreach opportunities. For contemporary Mennonite groups, Louden (2016, 312) notes that "[they] have tended to see Pennsylvania Dutch as a handicap to intellectual and spiritual development." The parallels between Beachy negotiations with language are similar to those of the earlier Mennonites.

Additionally, the shifting role of Pennsylvania Dutch and German in one Old Order Mennonite group has most recently been well-documented. Amos Hoover's (2018) excellent volume on language change within the Weaverland Conference has shown that the inclusion of English monolingualism has brought mainstream Protestant theology into the group. Many offer the following excuse for shifting to English monolingualism: "Well, I'm so busy learning English, I will not bother with Dutch" (Hoover 2018, 28). Again, parallels between the negotiations of language as it figures into their changing identities can be drawn with the Beachys. I assert, however, that Beachys are not simply following the trend of progressive Mennonites and Weaverland Mennonites. The roles of language in their religious lives for each group are varied and, while the resulting language shift is the same, the meaning of language in their current worldviews is different.

This study has shown that the bilingualism of the Beachys in Big Valley continues to be transitional in light of the relatively recent switch to English in worship. Importantly, I only view their bilingualism as transitional. Although in the history of Big Valley, as well as in other areas (see Beachy 1955, 135 and Fuller 2005), some Amish-Mennonites have shifted to Mennonitism, judging their religion as transitional would fail to acknowledge the ongoing negotiations of religious identities within the congregations. Such a top-down distinction given to a group is contrived—indicating where the Beachys are headed without fully acknowledging where they are. Although some of the narrators in this study referred to their religious identities as being between Amish and Mennonite, none called themselves transitional, or saw themselves on the path toward full Mennonitism:

> Interviewer: So that is a kind of outreach? That is not a traditional Amish...

Narrator 3: Not the Old Order, no. I was just thinking here a little bit ago, in our group of churches, which is getting larger and larger, we sort of find ourselves halfway between the Mennonite church and the Old Order Amish church.

Language functions as an important marker of ethnoreligious identity for the Beachy in Kishacoquillas "Big" Valley, Pennsylvania. For them, their definition of religious identity has always included language, yet the role of language has changed with the changing nature of their religious orientation. For Big Valley's Beachys, and for many other North American Anabaptists, I argue, shifting away from Pennsylvania Dutch and German means opening up to the world and pursuing a less exclusive religious endeavor.

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