

DISCOVERING VOICES AMONG PECULIAR QUIETNESS: AN ANALYSIS OF
U.S. MENNONITE WOMEN'S RHETORIC IN THE CHURCH PRESS 1963-1977

A Thesis by

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I have examined the final copy of this Thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the degree of Master of Arts with a major in Communication.

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ABSTRACT

This research is a quantitative content analysis and qualitative rhetorical analysis of U.S. Mennonite women's rhetoric in two prominent Mennonite publications, *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite*, between 1963 and 1977. During this time period 150,000 Mennonites considered themselves members of the church. The context of each paper was identified through content analysis. Women who chose to submit articles to the church press faced enormous obstacles when promoting gender equality. Gender equality was a direct challenge to Mennonite's traditional view of "divine order," which is a hierarchy of God, man, then woman. Due to these obstacles Mennonite female authors who were supportive of gender equality took on a facilitating tone and a double identity persona comprised of both Mennonite and feminist. Mennonite women who supported a more traditional view of gender roles had an instructional tone and a "self-hate" persona. Invitational rhetorical theory helps to explain the rhetorical choices made by female rhetors during this time period.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The question is often asked, "What does woman want, more than she enjoys? What is she seeking to obtain? Of what rights is she deprived? What privileges are withheld from her? I answer, she asks nothing as a favor, but as a right, she wants to be acknowledged a moral, responsible being. She is seeking not to be governed by laws, in the making of which she has no voice. She is deprived of almost every right in civil society...In religious society her disabilities, as already pointed out, have greatly retarded her progress. Her exclusion from the pulpit or ministry – her duties marked out for her by her equal brother, man, subject to creeds, rules, and disciplines made for her by him – this is unworthy of her true dignity. –Lucretia Mott, 1849 (Skinner, 79:1996)

Many of us have heard stories of the revolutionary women of yesterday. Through these stories of the past, we are taught who confronted barriers, protested discrimination, articulated demands for equal rights, and broke through the glass ceilings. We remember names such as Angelina and Sarah Grimke, Harriet Tubman, Mother Jones, Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Lucricia Mott, and others who were our feminist foremothers.

Unfortunately, I am one of the unlucky ones. I never learned about women's suffrage in high school. I thought women who kept their maiden name were "ridiculous." My conservative views made it difficult to engage members of the pro-choice camp in dialogue of any sort. During my junior year of college, the views I held throughout my upbringing began to transform. I began to transform. In order to fill an elective requirement, I enrolled in a class titled, "Women's Concerns." After learning about the struggles my sex had faced in the past my curiosity was piqued. How did my high school history class in the late 1990's not include discussions about women's history? More

importantly, how did women like Elizabeth Cady Stanton, and Lucricia Mott go unmentioned? I felt deprived.

After gaining more insight into women's history it became important to me to explore the details. I wanted to get beyond the popular stories of the women's movement and learn about the stories that did not make it onto the pages of textbooks.

I come from the Mennonite heritage, born and raised in a small Mennonite community in southeast Iowa. Since the completion of my "Women's Concerns" class in 2001, I have often wondered what exactly is the history of Mennonite women? How did they gain their voice? How did women in my denomination discuss women's suffrage, the vote, women in the workplace, or Roe vs. Wade?

Mennonite women faced many changes during the second wave of the feminist movement in the 1960's and 70's. Between the years 1963-1977, Mennonite women went from being silent observers in the church to leaders. They began to find themselves in roles such as deacon or elder. Two Mennonite women during this time period even made it to the ranks of an ordained minister/pastor. Mennonite women greatly increased their numbers at Mennonite seminaries. Adult Sunday school classes moved from segregated male and female classes to a more integrated design. Out of the changes that occurred for Mennonite women during this time comes my research question: *How did Mennonite women [re]construct their identity during the second wave feminist movement of the 1960's and 70's in the church press?* Specifically my critical probes include: 1) In what ways were Mennonite publications open to discussing women's changing role during the second wave? 2) How did the rhetoric of Mennonite women as expressed in church newspapers reflect events happening in the greater women's movement?

Through content and rhetorical analysis of two major Mennonite publications and by applying identity formation theories I plan to uncover details regarding the rhetorical history of Mennonite women. I want to hear their experiences - the struggles faced by mothers, wives, and singles, leaders and mission workers. I desire to follow their journey, whether it includes determination, affirmation, rejection or confusion. I also plan to test feminist theories, such as invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1995) and double-identity discourse (Foss, 1992; Huxman, 1997) to see if Mennonite women used these theories to call for equality within Mennonite culture and church leadership. Out of my research I hope to have a greater understanding and appreciation for my voice by rediscovering theirs.

HISTORY

Who are the Mennonites?

For the Anabaptists, the church was neither an institution (Catholicism), nor the instrument of God for the proclamation of the divine Word (Lutheranism), not a resource group for individual piety (Pietism). It was a brotherhood of love in which the fullness of the Christian life ideal is to be expressed. –Harold S. Bender, 1944

The Amish and Mennonites of North America trace their beginnings back to the preaching and writing of early Anabaptist radicals of the sixteenth century, who originated through a movement of resistance against the church-state synthesis in Europe. (Reschly, 1994). The term Anabaptist, from a Latin translation, means, “to baptize again” (Redekop, 3:1989). These radicals, namely Conrad Grebel, Felix Manz, Wilhelm Reublin, and Simon Stumpf, originated their movement in Zurich, Switzerland and were calling for a new community of believers (Smith, 1981; Redekop, 1989). “What they

asked for now was a 'pure' church, a church composed of men and women who were not necessarily sinless, but rather sin-conscious...who of their own volition had formed themselves into a voluntary band of worshipers after the example of apostolic times" (Smith, 5:1981). This expectation of a voluntary commitment by those wanting to become members of the "pure" church made infant baptism a meaningless practice.

The two core values of Anabaptists, the practicing of adult baptism (their name sake), as well as pacifism (the renouncing of warfare and violence), brought them into continual conflict with early European government, resulting in years of persecution (Blosser, 2003). It has been reported that nearly 5,000 men and women paid the ultimate price for their faith during the early years of the Anabaptist movement (Huxman, 1987). Harold S. Bender (1944), a prominent Mennonite historian, stated, "Anabaptists feared neither torture nor death, and gladly sealed their faith with their blood" (p. 6). Bender goes on to explain that the reason for Mennonite's lack of fearing the end was because of their "vision." Bender summarizes this vision by saying, "The Anabaptist vision included three major points of emphasis; first, a new conception of the essence of Christianity as discipleship, second, a new conception of the church as a brotherhood; and third, a new ethic of love and nonresistance" (p. 14). Menno Simons, an influential leader from Holland, described the third principal listed in Bender's "Anabaptist Vision" almost four centuries earlier in 1550. According to *The complete works of Menno Simons* (1871) Simons said:

The regenerated do not go to war, nor engage in strife . . . They are the children of peace who have beaten their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks, and know of no war . . . Spears and swords of iron we leave to those who, alas, consider human blood and swine's blood of well-nigh equal value.

Named after Menno Simmons, one group of Anabaptists began identifying themselves as “Anabaptist Mennonites.” Their core values, like the original Anabaptists, included the three values described earlier by Bender (1944). Even though pacifism was and continues to be one of the core values of Mennonites, denominational conflicts line their history. This is largely due to another defining quality, that of nonconformity to the larger society.

Nonconformity, for Mennonites, “to be in the world, but not of it,” has always been an ideal for those within the denomination. “One of the reasons that Mennonites began immigrating to America [in the 1700’s] was the hope that they could maintain cultural autonomy” (Huxman, 98:1987). For Mennonites, this meant to live *in* a secular world, while living *for* a sacred one (Huxman, 1987). This ideal naturally causes tension because of the variety of ways one can interpret what conformity or being “worldly” includes. Traditionally nonconformity among Mennonites has been represented through an outward display of plainer dress.

Those outside the faith find it hard to understand how Mennonites can struggle with interpretation when the majority of other denominations rely on a bishop, archbishop or “head” of the larger church for interpretation accuracy. For the Mennonite church this “head” does not exist, being a congregational church. Even though the Mennonite faith has organized conferences, these conferences only serve a consultative role. “[C]onferences have been functional instead of being ecclesiologically hierarchical and authoritative” (Redekop, p.67:1989). Congregations chose their own leadership, reserve the right to accept new members on their own discretion, and selected

their own educational programs. In short, individual congregations were ultimately their own authoritative social organization (Redekop, 1989).

The first major schism among Mennonites occurred in 1693. A division occurred within the Swiss-origin Anabaptist-Mennonites. This division arose through concerns of a Mennonite minister named Jacob Ammann. He feared that the people of his faith would eventually begin blending in with the greater society and compromise their costly Anabaptist heritage. He prompted a clearer separation from the popular culture. Those who followed his teachings came to be known as the “Amish Mennonites” while another group, “Old-Mennonites,” remained unaffected by the Amish reforms. (Blosser, 2003)

Immigration of Amish Mennonites and Old-Mennonites to the U.S. had come into full swing by the 1800’s. Mennonite settlements were established in Pennsylvania and slowly spread to the Midwest, including states such as Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Iowa, Nebraska, and Kansas (Dyck, 1993). Upon arrival both groups, immigrating from Europe and Russia, immediately desired to organize churches, as well as schools, and eventually in the late 1800’s institutions of higher learning.

For Mennonites in North America a second schism occurred in the 1880’s. Churches struggled through what seemed to be a consensus breakdown. The root could be tied to interpretation differences of what it meant to practice nonconformity. Leaders tried sorting out their differences, but efforts failed. (Reschly, 1994) The issues included disagreements over: patterned plates, home décor, dress, and telephones. Differences among the Amish Mennonites eventually caused a complete break between the Mennonite and the Amish Church. Mennonites decided to drop the Amish name all together, also departing from the traditional aspects of the Amish faith (Blosser, 2003).

This group of Mennonites, more commonly referred to during the majority of the twentieth century as “Mennonite Conference Mennonites” (MC’s), as well as the Old-Mennonites, or “General Conference Mennonites” (GC’s), continued to face denominational conflicts as they became more acculturated to larger society. Mennonites were still trying to live as nonconformists. Even through World War I, Mennonites were described as having “isolated communities” (Huxman, 97:1987). But this did not mean that all members could resist temptations. During the war “Mennonite leaders braced themselves for watching fellow members leave the flock in the face of extreme pressures from outside” (Huxman, 251:1987). These pressures included joining the military, mixing with denominations with less strict policies on dress and behavior, alternative career goals, or simply a loss of faith.

During the Civil Rights movement of the 1960’s and 70’s, the Mennonites endured a whole new set of “pressures from the outside.” During this time period military resistance, due to the Vietnam War, equal rights and feminist issues including equal opportunity, abortion and equal wages, were all issues Mennonites were destined to have to face. Despite their desire for nonconformity and a distancing from worldly concerns, Mennonites were too integrated into American society to ignore the shifts happening in larger society.

The MC Mennonites and the GC Mennonites, between the years of 1963 and 1978, will be the focus of my research. In 1963 The MC conference consisted of 84,830 members, growing to 106,961 by 1978 (Zook, 1964; Horsch, 1979). The GC conference consisted of 53,542 members in 1963, growing only slightly to 60,397 members by 1978 (Zook, 1964; Horsch, 1979). More recently in 1997, a vote of both the MC and GC

conferences joined the two groups to make up the largest group of Mennonites in North America, “Mennonite Church USA,” or MCUSA. Today both conferences are collectively called “Mennonites” and are made up of 1.2 million members worldwide, 25 percent living in the United States (Roth, 2005).

Mennonite Women

In order to fully understand the Mennonite woman, we must again revisit the Anabaptist movement of sixteenth century Europe. Contrary to many assumptions, women were extremely visible among these early radicals. “*The Martyrs Mirror*,” a compilation of stories from 930 Anabaptist martyrs, list 1/3 of the stories as being about women martyrs (Funk, 1975). Besides martyrdom, these women were active participants in the movement by openly and intentionally spreading their faith, spending time in prison for refusing to denounce Anabaptist teachings, and by becoming more knowledgeable about the scriptures than many priests (Rich, 1983).

Early Anabaptists stood for religious and social radicalism, but did little to change the patriarchal set up of family. After direct persecution had subsided in Europe, many Anabaptists reverted back to the typical patriarchal model of European society and culture (Rich, p. 25:1983). The idea of male headship accompanied Mennonites to North America. “Mennonites have been a quiet people and the women among them have been an even quieter group. Traditionally, women were wives and mothers and silent partners in the church” (Klingelsmith, 163:1980). Women were known to spend most of their time in child rearing and in providing clothing and food for the family. Their many duties

included gardening, preserving or canning fresh fruits and vegetables, weaving, knitting, and sewing.

As German and other European Mennonites became more acculturated to North American culture in the late 1800's, women began to slowly lose status. An example of this can be found through the translating of German to English. The word *Gemeinschaft* means "the Christian community" in German. However, when translated to English it means "brotherhood" (Rich, 1983). Therefore, Mennonite women began to be linguistically omitted.

Within the Mennonite church the idea of women as church leaders was unmentionable until the second half of the twentieth century. Mennonite women were taught to be submissive, seen and not heard, and to never usurp authority over a man. These teachings were an attempt at following the teachings of Paul found in 1st Corinthians and 1st Timothy. First Timothy 2:11-15 states:

A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent. For Adam was formed first, then Eve. And Adam was not the one deceived; it was the woman who was deceived and became a sinner. But women will be saved through childbearing-if they continue in faith and love and holiness with propriety (NIV, 1984).

Because of these teachings the Mennonite denomination was able to openly call for women's submission. The denomination's scriptural interpretation and the lack of an authoritative head made it difficult for Mennonite women to even imagine trudging a path towards equality without being labeled a sinner or "worldly" by their congregation. Therefore, the patriarchal society found in the Mennonite faith was able to sustain their traditional male/female roles and an all male leadership among church congregations until the second half of the 1900's.

The first opportunity for women to take part in supporting and contributing to the greater work of the church was in the sewing circles of their local congregations, which grew to become the “Women’s Missionary and Service Commission” or WMSC. Women trying to start a sewing circle struggled with opposition from church members who objected to the idea of women leading and managing an organization of their own. The combination of determined women and a sympathetic bishop was usually the only way a circle could begin. (Blosser, 2003)

Even though the church press brought much instruction to Mennonite women, it also brought the opportunity for women to have a public voice during the late 1800’s and early 1900’s. Many women of the denomination submitted editorials to *The Gospel Herald*, the main Mennonite publication of its time starting in 1908, and *The Mennonite*, which started in 1885. These church papers became a place for women to share thoughts, address concerns of the church, express joys and discuss the women’s missionary movement of the 1900’s happening domestically and overseas. According to Rich (1983) “A meaningful medium binding scattered Mennonites together has been the printed page” (p. 226).

In the 1960’s and 70’s these publications became a platform for women to discuss their changing role. In an article published in *The Gospel Herald* in 1970, the author states in her opening line: “Something new has dawned on the horizon of church thought: the realization that women do not have equal standing with men in the work of the kingdom” (Swartzentruber, p. 615). She later states: “Many Mennonite women have become professional people. The church is the loser if it does not capitalize on the contributions such women can make to its total program” (p. 615). Mennonite women

with differing opinions also shared their thoughts. Another article that ran in *The Gospel Herald* in 1974 was titled, “Not Liberated and I Love It” (p 80). With women having full freedom to share their ideas *The Gospel Herald* quickly became a vehicle for the MC Mennonites, male and female, to take part in the conversation concerning women’s role and women in church leadership. Similar conversations were taking place among GC Mennonites in their publication, *The Mennonite*.

As the conversation grew more intense, changes began to appear in Mennonite policy. In 1963, no females were listed under the heading of “pastor” in the General or Mennonite Conferences’ annual reports (Zook, 1964; General, 1963). However, by 1978 some individual congregations had started to allow the ordination of women. A very small scattering of female names appear on the “pastor” list printed in the annual MC and GC conference reports in 1978. Some of the names include: Linda Gunden, Emma Richards, Marilyn Miller and Regina Bartel (Horsch, 1979; Graber, 1978).

Because the Mennonite Church is governed congregationally instead of hierarchically, policy regarding women’s ordination has been largely dealt with on a regional level. Between the years of 1963 and 1978 both the MC and the GC conferences were made up of regional conferences. The GC conference, was made up of six regional conferences, one of which being Canada, while the MC conference had twenty-one regional conferences. After congregations within the regional conferences began ordaining women, some regional conferences not only began recognizing these ordinations, but also officially allowing them.

Despite the policy changes of the 60’s and 70’s, women continued to be viewed as less than their male counterparts. In 1985, the MC conference began printing a “Brief

Statement of Mennonite Doctrine,” made up of twenty numbered sentences, on the inside cover of their annual reports. Number fourteen read, “We believe that God has established unique roles for man and woman, symbolized by man’s bared head in praying and prophesying, and by womans’ veiled head” (Horsch, 1985).

Today, Mennonite women’s leadership is still a point of contention, especially in the more conservative congregations of the denomination. Some congregations have gladly welcomed the decision to ordain women made by their regional conference. However, other congregations have chosen to hold on to the tradition of a more patriarchal leadership. This difference of acceptance is discussed in an article published in the *Mennonite Weekly Review* in 2004:

Acceptance of women in pastoral ministry varies in MC USA’s 21 area conferences. Western District has the highest percentage, 27 percent; followed by Central District, 24 percent; and Eastern District, 24 percent. At the other end of the scale are Franklin and North Central conferences with no women in pastoral ministry. Lancaster, MC USA’s largest area conference with 17,500 members, does not ordain women. (Schrag, p.15)

In summary, Mennonites have been a separate people. However, through slow acculturation to American culture they have had to address issues arising out of greater society, such as women’s leadership and gender equality. Mennonite women’s rhetoric is just one of the indicators available for measuring Mennonite’s responses to issues dealing with gender. The church publications was one of the only ways for Mennonite women to have a public voice, making *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* rich rhetorical artifacts.

Mennonite Publications

Mennonites are a relatively small denomination, yet they span across the entire nation. For this reason their denominational publications have been of great importance in terms of keeping the members of the church connected. John F. Funk started the *Herald of Truth* in 1864, which later changed to *The Gospel Herald* in 1908. This Pennsylvania based weekly publication had the largest circulation of all of the Mennonite publications and has been referred to as “the official paper of the Mennonite church” (Rich, p. 226). It was the most popular Mennonite media until 1997 when the MC and GC conferences merged to create MCUSA, which also called for the merger of *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite*. Between 1963 and 1977, *The Gospel Herald* was edited by John M. Drescher between 1963 and 1973 and Daniel Hertzler from 1973 through the end of my research period (1977). According to circulation numbers reported for 1973, the paper had 75,000 readers, which was well over half of the MC conference during that time.

The Mennonite, beginning in 1885, was also a weekly magazine, but aimed at serving the GC Mennonite Conference. Based out of Newton, Kansas the paper was edited by Maynard Shelly from 1963 to 1971, Larry Kehler from 1971 to 1976 and Bernie Wiebe from 1976 through the end of my research. This paper’s circulation, while not as high in number as *The Gospel Herald*, still had over fifty percent of the GC Mennonite population as their readership. Even though Mennonites face stereotypes of being an extremely conservative group, readers of *The Mennonite* rated the publication as being “moderate” to “liberal” in a survey conducted in 1971 by the publication (Shelly, 1971:18).

Articles written by women that address women's roles found in both *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* will be analyzed in the next chapter. The layouts and indexing of each paper vary. Therefore, what qualifies an article for analysis will be clearly defined within the next section.

Preview of Chapters

Now that the foundation of my research has been explained analysis can begin. Chapter two will begin with specific reasons for and benefits of this research topic and later move into a specific review of scholarly literature regarding women's leadership in a religious sphere, gender and identity formation. Chapter three will identify the context of each publication through quantitative content analysis of the lead editorials published in each weekly issue of both *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* between 1963 and 1977. This chapter will also include an examination of the articles submitted by Mennonite women during this time period through qualitative rhetorical criticism in order to have a greater understanding of Mennonite women's identity formation and [re]construction efforts. Chapter four will address how well the findings support or refute feminist rhetorical theories, such as invitational rhetoric and double-identity discourse. Also, the question will be raised whether identity formation theories assisted in explaining the rhetorical choices made by Mennonite women during the second wave.

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF SCHOLARLY LITURATURE

With each research project comes a healthy skepticism about why a given topic deserves inspection or analysis. The research of Mennonite women's rhetoric during the second wave is warranted for several reasons:

First, Mennonite feminists have been engaged in a complex and delicate "juggling act" since the beginning of the second wave feminist movement, some by choice and others involuntarily. Forced to address the stereotypes that accompany being a part of a small and "peculiar" denomination, obstacles for Mennonite feminists were magnified when denominational stereotypes were juxtaposed with the stereotypes of feminism. Generally, the label of "Mennonite feminist" has been an oxymoron. Yet I am able to call myself one today thanks to Mennonite women pioneers who wore that label long before it became favorable. This research may help to identify how inventive women became in identifying one's self as a feminist, within the confines of the Mennonite denomination. This thesis will serve as an excavation of stories in the church press that trace this progression.

One such story includes a woman by the name of Mary Lehman Yoder. In the early 70's Mary had a desire to attend Mennonite Seminary. However, because she was married she assumed her desire would automatically be trumped by her husband's career. The Mennonite church at that time instructed women to be submissive to their husbands in nearly every context such as family decision-making, financial endeavors and church involvement. "I thought that his medical education would naturally take priority in our

decision-making. I thought that when it comes to the church, the woman must give in,” Mary stated in a 1979 interview with *The Gospel Herald*.

Mary and her husband Mike later chose to relocate because of Mary’s desires to attend seminary at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary (AMBS) in Elkhart, Indiana. “All this blew apart my theory that ‘the woman submits,’” she said. In 1979, Mary was just one of nearly 70 women who were attending AMBS. Mary’s story is one of many who took part in this early reconstructing identity - of having a call to church leadership, while trying to remain in line with traditional Mennonite values. Even though Mary may not have considered herself a Mennonite feminist, her story is one that has opened the door for other’s to wear that. Mary was able to break down her own stereotypes and follow her desire to gain church leadership training (Nelson, p. 396-398). *The Gospel Herald* was the source through which Mary Lehman Yoder chose to express her story.

This highlights the second justification for this study. Church papers, such as the two being analyzed in this research, are under represented as rhetorical artifacts. They are more than records that allow for the collecting of historical data; they are vibrant rhetorical sources that allow for analysis of religious culture. The pages of *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* can not only identify if something happened or not, but also *why* and *how* it happened for the Mennonite Church.

An example of explaining the *why* and *how* is found within the reporting of Mennonite women’s organizational meetings. Organizations such as WMSC and some congregational sewing circles of the early 1900’s published their meeting minutes in *The Gospel Herald*. By examining these minutes, via the church press, Sharon Klingelsmith (1980) in her study of Mennonite women between 1900-1930 discovered not only *what*

women's organizations historically did, but also *why* and *how* they did it within the context of traditional Mennonite culture. She found that even though Mennonite women were organizing themselves, men still restricted women's operations and leadership of their sewing circles. "As late as 1930 the reports of meetings list men for chorister, devotional leader, moderator and speakers. A woman gave the statistical report for the work of the cutting room, but that was all" (Klingelsmith, p. 191).

A final justification is the unique intersection of qualitative and quantitative methodological approaches included in my research. In order to produce numerical data that can identify each paper's context in relation to how open each paper was to discussing women's roles, I will be conducting quantitative content analysis. In order to analyze the rhetorical choices made and to identify if Mennonite women discussed events in the larger women's movement during the second wave, I will be conducting qualitative rhetorical criticism.

By combining qualitative and quantitative methods to form a triangulated methodology, qualitative studies gain confidence and precision when discussing results, while quantitative studies gain richness. According to Babbie (2004):

Because each research method has particular strengths and weaknesses, there is always a danger that research findings will reflect, at least in part, the method of inquiry. In the best of all worlds, your own research design should bring more than one research method to bear on the topic (p. 113).

Most importantly, triangulation can assist in constructing a more holistic perspective that offers an in-depth way of analyzing specific populations of people, documents, or data. By applying both qualitative and quantitative methods, my work is answering the call from quantitative researchers to increase the generalizability and

reliability within qualitative findings, without abandoning the in depth probing of the *how* and *why* questions, made possible by qualitative research.

History of Women In Church Leadership

I find the Lord Jesus defining the duties of his followers in his sermon on the Mount, laying down great principals by which they should be governed, without any preference to sect or condition: - 'Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick, and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.' I follow him through all his precepts, and find him giving the same directions to women as to men, never even referring to the distinction now so strenuously insisted upon between masculine and feminine virtues: this is one of the anti-Christian 'traditions of men' which are taught instead of the 'commandments of God.' Men and women were CREATED EQUAL; they are both moral and accountable beings, and whatever is right for man to do, is right for woman to do." –Sarah Grimke, 1837 (Skinner, 60:1996)

The history of women seeking equality began much earlier in the greater Christian Church than in the Mennonite Church. According to K. Maddux (2004), the issue of women in church leadership has a rich and controversial history in the United States, beginning in 1853 with the ordination of Antoinette Brown to the present.

For example, in the Episcopal Church, the American branch of the Anglican Church, the decision to ordain women drew large amounts of public controversy. In part this was because of the denomination's close ties to the Catholic faith. After many years of debating if women should be allowed to hold positions of leadership in the church or if women should be ordained, the controversy finally came to a head. Three retired Episcopal bishops ordained 11 women to the ranks of elder in 1974. This event was followed by a 1976 vote to allow the ordination of women, which took place at the denomination's General Convention. (Maddux, 2004) The denomination ordained their

first female bishop in 1989 and made women's ordination mandatory in 1997 (Duin, 2001).

Currently the Southern Baptist Convention, the Lutheran Church (Missouri Synod) and the Roman Catholic Church all refuse to ordain women (Maddux, 2004). However, many denominations have openly affirmed women's leadership and ordination. The greater Lutheran Church opened the pulpit to women with its first ordination in 1970. According to Duin (2001), the Methodist Church has ordained 5,202 women. Methodists have the largest number of ordained women among the main-line denominations. Another example would be The United Church of Christ. This group has been ordaining women since the 1960's. In *Christianity Today*, Laird (2000) listed the Church of the Nazarene, the Church of God, Evangelical Friends, Free Methodists, and the Wesleyan Church, all as having a long standing practice of affirming and conducting ordinations of women.

Even though many Christian denominations in the U. S. are advocates of women in church leadership, women still face an uphill climb. According to David Van Biema (2004) regarding women in protestant denominations:

The percentage of female seminary students has exploded in the past 35 years, from 4.7% in 1972 to 31% (or roughly 10,470 women) in 2003, and it continues to accelerate 1 to 2 percentage points a year. Yet women make up only about 11% of the nation's clergy. This is not totally unexpected, since more conservative denominations do not ordain women and are exempt on First Amendment grounds from equal-opportunity laws. (p. 58)

Van Biema (2004) also found in a 1998 study of fifteen Protestant denominations that most ordained women found it extremely difficult to surpass the associate pastor position. If women did not hold an associate pastor position they were usually delegated into more specialized ministries. For example, many were ministers of music, youth

pastors, or involved in leading Bible studies. Women who operated as lead pastors usually worked in smaller or financially challenged congregations. From an economic standpoint women were also making on average nine percent less than men, men who were trained equally and in the same positions.

One might ask, “Why does sexism in our nation’s churches continue to be justified, when our work places, our school systems, our military, and our athletic programs all call for equal opportunity?” The obvious answer is the United States separation of church and state. The separation of church and state was written into the Constitution in 1787, which eases the extent to which religious institutions must comply with the Civil Rights Act of 1964.

Prior Scholarship Concerning Mennonite Women

Even though Mennonites, as a religious sect, have been well researched in academia, scholarship recognizing Mennonite women is a relatively new concept that emerged in the late 1970’s. Much of the early work focused on proving the theory that devotion and faithfulness to God empowered women (Schmidt, Umble, & Reschly, 2002). For example, the first conference on women’s history among Anabaptist denominations took place June 8-11, 1995. The conference was titled, “The Quiet in the Land,” reflecting the Mennonite value of quiet separateness. From the ideas and articles shared at the conference three conference planners, Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble and Steven D. Reschly, compiled some of the articles presented and published a book titled *Strangers at home: Amish and Mennonite women in history*. The

authors identify four common threads as reasons why research of Mennonite women would benefit not only those inside the denomination but also those in larger society.

First, the experience of Anabaptist women illuminates the relationship of individuals to the community and to broader society...Second, Anabaptist women's history advances religion and ethnicity as topics within women's history...Third, Anabaptist women's history raises critical questions about the assumptions implicit in mainstream scholarship...Fourth, Anabaptist women's history raises once again the issue of diversity in the historiography of women (Schmidt, Umble & Reschly, 4-5:2002).

Among current Mennonite women's literature the majority includes memoirs of influential women of the faith, stories from their role in the missionary movement and historical recounts of the development of women's organizations, such as WMSC.

According to John A. Lapp (1972), of the 102 missionaries who served in India during the peak years of missionary activity (1897-1962) eighteen of the 102 were single women, while the rest were made up of married couples. No single men took part in the mission work of India during the 63 years of his research. Elaine Sommers Rich (1983) discussed the remarkable efforts put forth by Mennonite women involved in mission work during this time period as well. Influential women, such as Alice Yoder, Rose Lambert, Lena Zook Ressler, Phoebe Yoder, Clara Eby Steiner and many others, are included in the countless stories discussed by Rich. These women served all over the world, in countries such as India, China, Turkey as well as on Indian reservations and with inner city mission activities happening in Chicago. (Rich, 1983). Mennonite women involved in the missionary movement of the late 1800's and first half of the 1900's had no choice but to step outside of the prescribed social expectations of a Mennonite "woman's role." According to Rich (1983), "These women taught, they supervised their

own households - sometimes under great difficulty – they provided health care, and they set up an effective women’s organization” (p.127).

Beyond the literature regarding Mennonite women involved in the missionary movement, there is a small population of scholarly work that addresses Mennonite women’s roles. Linda A. Huebert Hecht (2002) challenged earlier research that suggested Anabaptist women were either “emancipated” or “oppressed.” By researching 268 Anabaptist women from Tirol, Austria between 1527-1529, she developed the argument that women from this area, while contributing to the Anabaptist movement, still operated within the confines of the expected family and social roles appropriate for women at that time. Hecht gives many examples of how women were treated as mere followers, rather than active participants in the Anabaptist movement.

Wolfgang [Wynnter] was a tailor from a village near Vienna, and it was in that city that he heard the preaching of Hans Hut, [an Anabaptist leader] from Augsburg and was baptized by him. Following Wolfgang’s brief testimony is a single sentence that reads: “Martha, Wolfgang’s housewife, states the same” (Hecht, p. 243).

Jane Marie Pederson (2002), found that women’s subordination is one of the only anti-modern attitudes that remain in today’s modern and postmodern societies. She goes on to explain that for Mennonites the attitude that women’s subordination is acceptable stems from the anti-modern value system adopted early by leaders of the faith.

The Feminist “Waves”

Among feminist scholars the women’s movement can be unpacked by addressing three distinct “waves” in history. Each wave has its own unique characteristics, participants and list of accomplishments. First wave feminists, who were active in the late

1800's through 1910, focused on the woman's suffrage movement (Reger, 2005). Their struggles included education for women, the vote, and breaking down gender stereotypes. Gender was a concept that ran deep in American society during this time. Even the Supreme Court was tied to traditional gender roles. For example, during the ruling of *Bradwell v. Illinois* in 1869 the court stated that women were unsuited to practice law, due to their reproductive responsibilities and "feminine nature" (Skinner, 104:1996). Women such as Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, and Mother Jones are just some of the names that mark this era (Skinner, 1996; Nies, 2002).

The second wave feminist movement is often marked by the publication of Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. "The book generated a huge response from all sides, triggering the second wave and revitalizing feminism" (Eng, 2006). Freidan's groundbreaking book addressed "the problem that has no name." Women were earning college degrees at an unprecedented rate, yet fulfilling "empty" domestic lives. Women were feeling a lack of meaning and purpose -- being tied to a full-time domestic role was no longer meeting the needs of these newly educated women. *The Feminine Mystique's* popularity made it one of the most influential pieces of feminist literature to date.

The second wave spans from 1960 through the early 1980's (Redger, 2005). This movement dealt predominantly with equal rights for women. The major events of the second wave include the Equal Pay Act of 1963, the Civil Rights Act of 1964, the assembly of the National Organization for Women (NOW) in 1966, the legalization of abortion with *Roe v. Wade* in 1973 and The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, including many others (Skinner, 1996; Rowland, 2004). As noted earlier Betty Freidan

along with Gloria Steinem, and many others, are noted as the influential women of the time.

Critics of the second wave have identified one major downfall of the movement. Theories and stories from this time period only applied to secular, white, upper-middle class women. According to Reger (2005), at this time, many women of color were excluded from the feminist movement and feminist organizations by white women who claimed the term “woman” was universal and joined all women together equally.

One may ask, “Does this critique of the second wave have implications for this study?” The major implication would be that, as women’s history has been accused of disregarding the history of women of color, Mennonite women’s history could also face similar accusations. Mennonites, because of their Russian and European heritage, lacked minority populations prior to the 1950’s. Today there are large populations of Hispanic and African Mennonites, who may feel that Mennonite women’s history disregards the stories. Unfortunately, no authors in this study are women of color, nor do any articles reference the specific struggles of Mennonite women of color.

The third wave feminist movement immediately followed the second wave and has continued to the present. Some describe the third wave through a mother daughter analogy, describing those who call themselves third wave feminists as the daughters of those who participated in the second wave (Naples, 2005). While others describe those involved in the movement as critiques of the second wave’s lack of diversity (Naples, 2005).

The third wave addresses issues with fundamentalist Christian backlash, categorizing of postmodernism and gender identity, as well as international problems that

negatively effect women across the globe (Mack-Canty, 2005). This wave is thought to be highly inclusive of different races and backgrounds. This inclusivity is a deliberate aim of the movement in response to criticism experienced by the second wave feminists who were thought to focus on the issues of the rich or middle-class, white woman. Influential women of this movement include: Rebecca Walker, Cherrie Moraga, Gloria Anzaldua and Barbara Smith.

Gender & Leadership

Before I embark on a discussion about the scholarly research available regarding gender, let me first define the term “gender” and make the distinction between sex and gender. According to Julia T. Wood (2003), “There is nothing a person does to acquire her or his sex. It is a classification based on genetic and physical factors and one that is enduring. Gender, however, is neither innate nor necessarily stable. It is acquired through interaction in a social world, and it changes over time” (p. 21).

Even though some Mennonite women recognized a need for more gender equality within the faith during the 1960’s and 70’s, specifically in church leadership, they also recognized the enormous obstacles in their way. One of these obstacles was male leadership. This type of leadership was considered biblical, while the equaling of gender roles was still viewed as “worldly.” Rhetorical obstacles that include gender constraints and attempt at creating social change are complex. Campbell (1973) discusses this complexity by saying, “No values . . . are more deeply engrained than those defining ‘masculinity’ and ‘femininity’” (p. 77). According to Pearson, Turner & Todd-Mancillas (1991), the development of “appropriate” gender roles for males and females are one of

the first clear senses self acquired by children, usually happening by age three. Therefore, women who tend to argue confrontationally attack “the entire psychosocial reality” (p. 75).

Even though the “appropriate” gender roles for males and females have become increasingly blended within larger society, during the dates of my research (1963-1977) rigid descriptions of gender roles existed. Societal shifts, occurring since the second wave feminist movement have brought about a more fluid definition of gender. These shifts have come slower to those within the Mennonite faith, which has intensified the gender obstacles Mennonite women seeking equality have had to face.

“Tradition” and “gender” are not fixed or static entities...Despite this fluid and flexible reality, Anabaptist groups often treat shifting traditions as timeless rather than changeable. In fact the fiction of changeless tradition often proves a convenient way to maintain patriarchal cultural structures in changing social and political situations. Anabaptist groups are consciously unselfconscious about shifting gender systems. (Schmidt, Umble & Reschly, 10:2002)

Because of this Schmidt, Umble & Reschly (2002), explain how traditional gender constraints, even though Mennonite women were considered “insiders” of this highly separate religious group, dealt with having the identity of “outsiders,” due to Mennonite’s male headship culture. This dual Mennonite/female identity, defined by traditional gender roles, creates a difficult position for Mennonite women. They want to remain true to their faith community, yet desire equality.

[W]omen in traditionally conservative groups...may not experience gendered limitations in the same way as women in theologically conservative groups such as American fundamentalists and evangelicals. Furthermore, women in traditional groups, on the path to assimilation but not there yet may face the harshest forms of patriarchy as these groups desperately seek ways to maintain social stability (p. 5).

Identity Formation: Foundational Theories

On February 18, 1911 an article appeared in *The Gospel Herald* titled, “An Ideal Young Woman.” The article, running half a page in length, was filled with phrases such as, “She is cheerful, but not foolish and giddy” and “She seeks not for the outward adorning which is forbidden in God’s Word, but for inward adorning...spoken about in I Peter 3:4.” (Selzer, 738:1911). Articles such as this were often found in the pages of Mennonite church papers in the early 1900’s. In a prior study of *The Gospel Herald* all articles dealing with women’s roles between the paper’s beginnings in 1908 through 1930, only three were not instructional to women out of a total of 70 (Swartzendruber, 2004). Instructions to women ranged from how to be a better mother, to how to be a better Christian. Why all the instruction? One could speculate Mennonites, who had recently gained a nationwide voice through their publications, were trying to construct their collective identity.

Social construction of reality theory, articulated by Berger and Luckman (1966), as well as other theories give some insight on how Mennonite women’s identities may have been constructed or [re]constructed during the “reality” created by the second wave feminist movement. They explain that only through social interaction is human knowledge constructed. The interactions taking place within Mennonite publications, such as *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite*, are examples of the “social interaction” discussed by Berger and Luckman. Littlejohn and Foss (2005) summarize Berger and Luckman by stating:

The identity of a thing results from how we talk about that object, the language used to capture our concepts, and the way in which social groups orient to their common experience. The nature of the world, then, is less important than the language used to name, discuss, and approach the world (p. 46).

This idea that the language used is more important than the acts being described is echoed by Griffin (2003): “The socio-cultural tradition is based on the premise that as people talk, they produce and reproduce culture...Our view of reality is strongly shaped by the language we’ve used since we were infants” (p.28). As we “produce” and “reproduce” culture in turn we are producing and reproducing our reality.

In 1963, the Mennonite reality was as follows: policy prohibited the ordination of women to pastoral roles, no females were on major Mennonite governing boards, women were unlikely candidates for congregational leadership roles such as elder or deacon, and the integration of men and women in Sunday school classes was still a new trend. By 1977, this reality had drastically shifted for Mennonites. Emma Richards of the MC conference and Marilyn Miller of the GC conference had both been ordained to a pastoral role. Women’s numbers at Mennonite seminaries had greatly increased. Although most served in a secretarial role, women began occupying positions on some denominational governing boards. Though still a minority, it no longer was completely taboo for females to fill roles such as elder or deacon (or deaconess) in Mennonite congregations. Also, the majority of churches had fully integrated their Sunday morning Sunday school to include men and women. A lot had changed for Mennonite women over this 14-year period.

The Mennonite church was not an anomaly. Greater society had experienced a wide range of shifts as well. The civil rights movement had called for equal rights for all people, including women, with the civil rights act of 1964. Women who had bought into the feminist movement were demanding equal pay, liberating their appearances and no longer apologizing for being right.

By 1977, the reality was that women's roles had changed, inside and outside of the Mennonite church. Therefore, I contend that Mennonite women had no choice but to reconstruct their identity, which according to identity formation theorists would also call for the "reproduction" of Mennonite church culture in regard to women.

Identity formation theory is found within the realm of developmental psychology and started with scholars such as Erving Goffman (1959) and his research on the management of personal identity in everyday interactions. Griffin (2003) summarizes Goffman's theory by saying, "Goffman claims that we are all involved in a constant negotiation with others to publicly define our identity and the nature of the situation" (p.62). G. H. Mead (1934) and his work with the construction of self also contributed to identity formation theory. Mead explains that only through the acquiring of roles within one's community can individuals construct a "me." He claims we are not born with a "me," but construct it "as the organized community within the individual" (Griffin, 2003:62). Charles Horton Cooley (1902) and his development of the "looking glass self" helped pave the way for Goffman's identity formation theory. This theory highlights the benefits that can come out of self-inspection. In short, individuals imagine how others see them within the context of their socially constructed reality.

The Mennonite faith community has traditionally had a patriarchal hierarchy. Burkean theory indicates that identity formation especially the [re]formation of identity within a hierarchy happens through rhetoric. According to Foss and Griffin (1992), Burke sees rhetoric as a tool that allows individuals to create a new identity for themselves in three stages: guilt, purification and redemption. "This rhetoric of rebirth involves movement through three stages of pollution, an initial state of guilt or tension;

purification, cleansing or catharsis; and redemption, a state of cleanliness in which a new identity – physical, spiritual, or psychological – is achieved” (p. 341).

Hierarchy implies a set of rules established by those in power, the failure to follow every rule all of the time becomes inevitable for humans. Through the breaking of rules the first stage of identity rebirth is established, the consequence of guilt. This stage can lead people to take on self-hating roles. According to Foss and Griffin (1992), there are five self-hater roles, which include: the conqueror, the orderer, the master of servants, the censor, and the judge. “Each form of self-hate involves an obsession with particular issues and a particular view of the self and the world” (p. 336). Foss and Griffin (1992) describes each self-hater view of self and world by stating:

The Conqueror treats the self and others as enemies to be feared...The Orderer imposes rigid control on the self and the environment and promises that value will be gained if enough control is exerted. The Master of Servants is a caretaking role...one in which rhetors are dependent on being needed for their sense of value or are dependent on others to meet their needs. The Censor role is one of silence and isolation...[they] do not speak their truths because of their desire to win the approval of others. In the role of the Judge, rhetors judge others and themselves, ascribing or withholding value according to how they measure up to particular standards – standards that perpetuate the positions of superiority and inferiority (p. 336).

The second stage of identity rebirth, within a hierarchical context, is the purification stage, or the cleansing of guilt. According to Burke (1966; 1970), there are two ways of gaining purification. The first is by transferring the guilt of the rhetor to something or someone else. The second is through mortification, or self inflicted punishment that aims to eliminate certain aspects or characteristics of the rhetor.

The third and final stage of identity rebirth is redemption. According to Burke (1970), redemption occurs when a feeling of cleanliness is felt long enough for the new identity to begin. However, if a self-hater role was maintained out of the first stage of

identity rebirth a system of domination and patriarchy still reside, making transformation of the patriarchal system and the production of redemption impossible (Foss and Griffin, 1992). The ideal situation is for a person to discover their “immanent value” by sloughing off the guilt of failure. If people truly gain redemption than their rhetoric’s identity is also reborn to promote the immanent value of all humans. “In a rhetoric of inherent value, to be incomplete or inadequate is impossible” (p. 340).

Identity formation involves many factors. Some of these include sex, race, education, or socio-economic status. Another factor in the formation of identity is the social roles people choose to enact. Many of the roles people choose to take on are due to societal and cultural pressures. For example, many married women choose to have children because that is the societal norm. However, McCall and Simmons (1978) discuss how despite culturally shared meanings, current societal definitions of “right” and “wrong,” along with constraining social influences, a person’s self is never fully determined. Therefore, reconstruction of identities and roles is possible at any point.

Even though the many factors involved in identity formation like gender and sex have been intensely discussed, researchers still continue to leave others severely under-represented, such as religious beliefs.

Many studies of rural and urban communities have overlooked religion as a factor shaping identity and community history, but the impact of religion in Amish and Mennonite communities cannot be ignored. Religious beliefs and ethnic folkways inform Amish and Mennonite women’s decisions in the most mundane matters – from what they eat and wear to career and family related choices (Schmidt, Umble & Reschly, 5:2002).

The work of Schmidt, Umble and Reschly has expanded the understanding of Mennonite women’s identity formation. Researchers who choose to not include religion as a possible means for creating identity are missing a possible key component. Since the

rise of second wave feminist thought in the early 60's, Mennonite women have been in a state of cultural disorganization. Mennonite culture since that time has not been able to clearly define what women's roles should be. Some Mennonite women started working outside the home, pursuing church leadership roles or gaining more education, while others remained content in filling the traditional expectations of the church. Their role began to appear conflicted. Societal and financial expectations were pulling them one way while their religious commitments were pulling them another.

This cultural disorganization, despite the obvious hardships, may have provided these women with a strength that would assist them up through present day. People who experience what Cote & Levine (2002) call "role strain" (role ambiguity, role conflict, or role overload) seem to have gained a contemporary personality strength by dealing with "role strain" through compartmentalizing their role. Cote and Levine (2002) state: "Such people therefore can be seen to be enduring a certain level of emotional impoverishment and marinating a false consciousness as a sort of 'defense mechanism'" (p. 115). In short, Mennonite women may be able to endure a higher level of role strain than Mennonite men because of the amount of cultural disorganization they have experienced in regard to their role.

Feminist Rhetorical Theory & Identity Formation

A large majority of feminist rhetorical literature does not attempt to identify a certain rhetorical style, but simply suggests that it is difficult for women to use rhetoric in its traditional sense. In her ground breaking essay titled "The Rhetoric of Women's Liberation: An Oxymoron," Campbell (1973) suggested that, "[I]nsofar as the role of

rhetor entails qualities of self-reliance, self-confidence, and independence, its very assumption is a violation of the female role [according to patriarchal standards]" (p.75). In other words, claiming there to be a women's rhetoric is oxymoronic in that all social expectations for women are violated if a female attempts to persuade through a traditional rhetorical genre. Thus, Cambell calls on scholars of rhetoric to expand the definition of the term, or discover new feminine genres.

Scholars who answered this call include Foss and Griffin (1992, 1995). They contend that the traditional definition of rhetoric is made up of masculine characteristics. According to Foss and Griffin (1995), "[R]hetoric, in summary, is characterized by efforts to change others and thus to gain control over them... This is a rhetoric of patriarchy, reflecting its values of change, competition, and domination (p. 4)." Their introduction of an invitational rhetoric attempted to divide rhetorical strategies into "patriarchal" and "feminist" categories. In doing this they aimed at creating a space for women to persuade in a way that allowed them to remain "feminine," instead of adhering to the traditional "patriarchal" way of arguing. Foss and Griffin (1995) define invitational rhetoric by saying:

Invitational rhetoric is an invitation to understanding as a means to create relationship rooted in equality, emanate value, and self-determination. Invitational rhetoric constitutes an invitation to the audience to enter the rhetor's world and to see it as the rhetor does... Ideally, audience members accept this invitation offered by the rhetor by listening to and trying to understand the rhetor's perspective and then presenting their own. (p. 5).

Some scholars highly refute invitational rhetoric as perpetuating stereotypes or not being deserving of the term *rhetoric*. Lane Bruner (1996) suggests that while Campbell is simply stating that the current definition of rhetoric is not conducive to societal expectation for women, Foss and Griffin are perpetuating a stereotype by

allowing scholars to gender rhetorical styles. Bruner (1996) states, “[M]y argument is that these studies indicate a trend in feminist argumentation theory within rhetorical studies that tends to essentialize and reify gender stereotypes rather than problematize them, and more importantly perhaps, the dichotomization of “patriarchal” and “feminist” argument strategies tends to forcibly separate the constraining and enabling dimensions of all language systems” (p. 187). This idea is also echoed by Barbra Biesecker (1992) as she points out, “[T]he inability of feminist critics to mediate with sufficient self-consciousness on their own methodological assumptions is partially responsible for the still widely held view that women’s speech is secondary to the real concerns of the discipline” (pp. 87-88).

Another scholarly approach to analyzing the history of women’s rhetoric is through the theory of feminist consciousness-raising within a small group context. Kathie Sarachild’s (1970) original conception of this theory “entitled women who met in small groups to share their experiences through personal testimony in order to relate to one another and generalize experiences” (Sowards & Renegar, 535:2004). Campbell (1989) contends, “Because oppressed groups tend to develop passive personality traits, consciousness-raising is an attractive communication style to people working for social change (p. 13).” Sowards & Renegar (2004) go on to explain that consciousness-raising helped to “unite women so that they could understand that their individual experiences were not isolated events and to eliminate self-blame . . . Consciousness-raising for women was rooted in recognizing personal oppression” (pp. 535-536).

Mennonite Rhetorical Themes & “Double Identity” Challenges

In a rhetorical analysis of Mennonite rhetoric during World War I, Huxman (1987) argues that Mennonites were forced to be “rhetorically inventive,” by creating their own form of deliberative rhetoric and by assuming roles of political experts and moral authorities. She goes on to explain that in order to achieve and justify a pacifistic, non-combatant stance, it became crucial for Mennonites to reaffirm the “righteousness of Mennonitism” in order to maintain the church’s integrity.

During times of war Americans are typically not supportive of nonconformity or nonresistance, two defining characteristics of the Mennonite faith. American citizens unite when threatened by a common enemy through patriotism and assisting with war efforts. Because nonconformity and nonresistance are seen as negatives during war times, Mennonites are regularly revisited by the task of justifying their stance through their rhetoric. Burke (1966) discusses how defending negatives is a difficult task rhetorically. He explains that negatives are not images or things, they are ideas and principles. It is hard to make them enticing. Huxman & Mast (2004), explain how Mennonites have attempted to combat this difficulty explained by Burke. “Mennonites today have sought to translate their negative-sounding faith principals by developing a ‘positive theology of civil institutions’” (p. 543). In short, Mennonites, while continuing to demonstrate opposition to war, have remained active and “patriotic” citizens. They take part in conflict transformation efforts on a national and international level, disperse Christian peace maker teams to the Middle East, supply volunteers to assist in rehabilitation efforts happening within the criminal justice program and aid in natural disaster relief.

Mennonites' ability to be rhetorically inventive is further explained by Huxman and Mast (2004) in their argument that Mennonites are often forced to take on a "double-identity" role when faced with issues brought on by the larger society like that of war.

Arguments of separatism and assimilation are blended in Mennonite discourse with corresponding narratives that affirm the faith's complex corporate identity as a sect (not of the world and seeking the perfection of Christ) and a civic church (in the world and seeking the providence of God by obeying civil authority) (p. 544).

This "double-identity" role has also been apparent among the denomination throughout the conversations regarding the changing role of women. Their separatist identity has called them to continue to follow their traditional interpretation of Paul's teachings, while their assimilated civic identity has called them to stand up for gender equality within the ranks of church leadership and in the home.

Karen A. Foss (1992) describes this pull in opposite directions as a paradox for women. Bringing the terms Mennonite and feminist together had not been done before the second wave feminist movement. Therefore, according to Foss (1992), Mennonite women who were encouraging the progression of women's roles were embarking on an "emergent role passage." Besides facing the challenge that there are not clear models for how to conduct shifts in one's role, Foss (1992) identifies three additional constraints/challenges people going through these types of passages must face. She states:

First, the role shift represents a major shift in identity that involves virtually every facet of an individual's life. The shifts are of a magnitude that those around the individual cannot avoid dealing with the transition; thus there are multiple audiences to be addressed at the time of the role passage...Second, in each case, the individual is moving from a socially sanctioned moral state to one considered immoral or at least suspect...Finally, the passages are abrupt and irrevocable. While considerable time and thought may have gone into the decision to make the role shift, the transformation is sudden and complete (p. 126-127).

Foss (1992) contends that the maintaining of paradox (true, yet contradictory strategies) could be an “organizing principal” of discourse produced by those going through dramatic role shifts. Keeping the paradox present in the discourse allows for ambiguity for those going through role shifts. A static role does not allow for transformation. However, ambiguity does. Ambiguity, through the support of two competing stances, also disarms the audience. “Unable to select a single perspective from which to view the [role shifter], their audience may have been forced into a passive stance that minimizes the harshness and intensity of the judgments made about them” (p. 137).

This ambiguity discussed by Foss is present in evangelical women’s rhetoric of the 1970’s. According to Jennifer Heller (2003), between 1972 and 1979 the majority of evangelical author’s “express their profound ambivalence about the activities of their feminist counterparts” (p. 19) She goes on to explain, “On one hand, many applaud the strides towards ‘equal pay for equal work’ or the attention given to issues like rape, domestic abuse, and sexual harassment; on the other hand, evangelical authors have strong reservations about what they see as feminists’ degradation of ‘women’s work’” (p. 19-20). Ambiguity toward the women’s movement was more than a note worthy trend in Heller’s research of evangelical women’s rhetoric, it surfaced in “almost every text in [the] study” (p.24).

METHODOLOGY

The subject matter of my research requires two separate but companion methodologies. These include qualitative rhetorical analysis and quantitative content

analysis. This two-tiered method allows for conclusions to be drawn through a more complete analysis of Mennonite women's discourse, generating both observable and numerical findings. Social construction of reality theory and identity formation theory will provide a foundation for the conclusions that will be drawn. Feminist theories, specifically invitational rhetoric and double –identity theories, will be tested.

Rhetorical Analysis

There are two main benefits in doing rhetorical criticism. First, rhetorical criticism allows for personal growth. According to Roderick Hart (1997), rhetorical criticism has distinct purposes: 1) has the ability to explain the progression of social trends and movements, 2) generates a general understanding or interpretation of an event or act, and 3) invites interaction between groups or those one sees as their “others” (p. 24-28).

I openly and proudly call myself a feminist. By doing this, it is quite possible that I have neglected to step out of my own frame of reference, which has called me to be an advocate for women in leadership, and sincerely attempt to understand the views of women who see patriarchal leadership as a divine call. For me, the traditional female role as defined in this paper is my “other.” Engaging the opportunity to gain sensitivity toward “the other” and opening the door to true dialogue may be made possible through rhetorical criticism.

The second reason why I chose rhetorical criticism is articulated best by Campbell and Huxman (2003) when they state, “Critical analysis examines rhetorical acts in order to describe processes of influence and explain how they occur” (p. 13). By examining

articles written by Mennonite women during the 1960's and 70's, via rhetorical criticism, illumination of otherwise hidden structures and trends in speech is made possible - how Mennonite women developed their interpretations of the second wave feminist movement. The rhetorical acts I plan to study in order to identify these interpretations are the articles written by Mennonite women with topics generally dealing with women's role in the church, home, or society. A rhetorical act, according to Campbell and Huxman (2003), "is an intentional, created, polished attempt to overcome the obstacles in a given situation with a specific audience on a given issue to achieve a particular end" (p.7). Even though Mennonite women were not encouraged to state their opinions in church until the latter decades of the twentieth century, they were encouraged to discuss their opinions through writing and submitting editorials and articles to the denominations publications, namely *The Gospel Herald* (the MC paper) and *The Mennonite* (the GC paper).

Content Analysis

Quantitative content analysis has been included in my methodology for three distinct reasons: 1) it brings precision, objectivity and scope to qualitative research, 2) it allows for the comparing of messages produced by mass-media over time, and 3) it makes generalizations about a certain population possible.

According to Babbie (2004), "Content analysis is the study of recorded human communications" (p. 314). He goes on to explain that content analysis is an unobtrusive way of answering research questions. In a Mennonite context, this method can help to identify what obstacles existed for Mennonite women during this time period. Berger (1998) explains how, although not always producing a perfect reflection, this method also

sheds light on the message sender. Berger states, “Content analysts assume that behavioral patterns, values, and attitudes found in this material reflect and affect the behaviors, attitudes, and values of the people who create the material” (p. 23). Since content analysis calls for the quantification of findings, combining this method with rhetorical analysis will add reliability, along with factual numerical data representing a historical time period.

Operationalization

My overall research question (*How did Mennonite women [re]construct their identity during the second wave feminist movement of the 1960’s and 70’s in the church press?*) calls for rhetorical analysis of all articles in *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* written by Mennonite women that deal with women’s roles between the years of 1963-1977. This time period was identified by the start of the second wave, which is marked by the publishing of *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963. The end of my research is 1977, which was marked by being the first year both conferences had ordained women included in the ranks of pastor. The MC conference had ordained their first woman to the pulpit in 1972 and the GC conference ordained their first woman to the pulpit in 1976, making 1977 the first year both had ordained women pastors. These years capture the majority of the second wave feminist movement, increasing my research time period’s significance.

Unfortunately indexing topics related to women’s roles was not a priority for Mennonite publications during this time period. Therefore, in order to collect the appropriate articles that apply to my research I will first examine all articles written by

women in each weekly issue. Articles that deal with women's roles or women's place in the home, church or society will be collected from the whole of female authored "lead articles." These articles comprise the population of articles in the publications for the 14-year time period.

The Gospel Herald is divided into five sections including: 1) lead articles, 2) feature articles, 3) poems, 4) editorials, and 5) items and comments (the editor's page).

The Mennonite is divided into seven sections including: 1) lead articles, 2) news, 3) record, 4) congregational profile, 5) editorials, 6) meditation, and 7) a closing letter (the editor's page). Only lead articles will be examined in each paper in order to discover the most prominent and repetitive Mennonite women's voices.

My first critical probe aims at discovering the context in which these women were communicating: 1) *In what ways were Mennonite publications open to discussing women's changing role during the second wave?* In order to discover the context each paper offered to its female correspondents, quantitative content analysis will be used to measure if either Mennonite paper encouraged the discussion of women's roles.

Answering this question will call for the collection of each issue's lead editorial to see if the changing role of women is part of the topic or question posed to readers. The editorials will be coded as "women's roles discussed" or "women's roles not discussed." Also, the sex of the authors of the editor's page lead editorial will be coded to see how often, if ever, women were asked to write guest editorials on the highly coveted editor's page. More extensive coding, such as "women's roles discussed positively" or "women's roles discussed negatively" is not necessary as rhetorical analysis will capture this quality. After each paper has been coded for the entire 14-year period "women's roles

discussed” and “women’s roles not discussed” will be calculated to see what percentage of lead editorials posed questions about women’s roles, or at least discussed them. This will allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding the context of each paper.

In order to identify efforts to [re]construct the identity of Mennonite women, which relates to my overall research question, their responses to the second wave will be categorized based upon their rhetorical purposes. Anticipated purposes will range from the extreme of legitimating the women’s movement for those in the Mennonite faith, to the other extreme of promoting women’s submission to men (traditionally viewed among Mennonites as requirement for following “God’s divine order,” spoken about in 1st Corinthians). Other rhetorical elements examined, referred to as “elements of descriptive analysis” (Campbell & Huxman, 2003), such as tone, persona, evidence, structure and strategies, will test if invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1992; 1995) and double-identity discourse (Foss, 1992; Huxman, 1987; 1997) were ways Mennonite women writers attempted to present/justify their identities.

By using rhetorical and content analysis to answer my overall research question and critical probes I will discover if Mennonite women were rhetorically inventive in their responses to second wave feminists and in their management of paradoxical roles.

During the 1960’s and 70’s, the United States government increasingly called for social change in the area of women’s rights. Those who were not endorsing the changes came into question by feminist activists. While the messages from greater society were gaining momentum, Mennonite women were simultaneously inundated with the expectations of their traditional patriarchal faith. Complicating Mennonite women’s position further, a small number of women from the denomination during this time were

hearing a call to ministry from within, or as some believed “from God.” These competing demands on Mennonite women created a paradox for those seeking church leadership.

CHAPTER 3

RESULTS

Perhaps woman is a natural-born house(wife) mother and anything else is abnormal or deviate. If so, why does woman need bombarding from birth to death with instruction, admonition, reassurance, threats, and sermons from pulpit and press, business world and home society as to the honest-to-goodness, cross-my-heart-and-hope-to-die, natural-born peculiarity of woman as house(wife) mother? Is society trying to convince us, or convince itself? –Lois Eckman (p. 722:1971).

This is just one of many sentiments eloquently expressed in the letters to the editors of *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* written by Mennonite women between 1963 and 1977. Women's names were regularly seen on the "Letters" page of *The Mennonite* and the "People Say" page of *The Gospel Herald*. Women's letters to the editor, while still outnumbered by men's and roughly accounting for only twenty-five percent of total submissions, were an important outlet for Mennonite women. This chapter will highlight how Mennonite women used their voice through the pages of the church press. This chapter explores specifically the results of quantitative content analysis of the editor's pages of both publications and findings from rhetorical analysis of articles submitted by Mennonite women about women's roles and the women's movement.

The Church Press During the Second Wave

According to Foss and Griffin (1992), a structure of hierarchy "reinforces the idea that some people are inherently more worthy than others" (p. 336). The Mennonite church has traditionally been a system of "divine" hierarchy, starting with God, man, then

woman then child. My first critical probe: *In what ways were Mennonite publications open to discussing women's changing role during the second wave*, examines if each church paper perpetuated patriarchal hierarchy or if they were open to discussing a new structure that would see the sexes in a more equal light.

First, quantitative content analysis was used to measure if the editor was open to discussing women's roles in the paper and how often each editor did so within the contents on their individual editor's page (or lead editorial). Every issue's lead editorial was collected and recorded as "women's roles discussed" or "women's roles not discussed." If a lead editorial was coded as "women's roles discussed" this meant that the editor, or person asked to write the lead editorial for that issue, discussed women's role in relationships, the home, the church or in greater society. If a lead editorial was coded as "women's roles not discussed" this meant that, while individual women may have been mentioned, their roles or assumed duties were not. In order to give additional insight into the context of the paper the sex of the lead editorial authors was also coded.

An example of a lead editorial that was coded as "women's roles discussed" was written by Daniel Hertzler, the editor of *The Gospel Herald* during the last four years of the research sample, published on September 17, 1974. The topic dealt with gendered language, challenging readers and writers to try being more inclusive of both genders. An example from *The Mennonite* is a lead editorial that was published on February 9, 1971. The editor at the time, Maynard Shelly, discussed the lack of gender diversity on church boards. He called the greater church to begin considering women when filling positions in church leadership. Mothers, divorce, women's dress, and appropriate hair length were all sub-topics coded as "women's roles discussed." Examples of lead editorials coded as

“women’s roles not discussed” made up the majority of editor’s pages between 1963 and 1977. Topics such as the military, evangelism, Christmas, communism, and the food shortage were just some of the topics that lacked discussion of women and their evolving roles.

Between the years of 1963 and 1977 there were 755 lead editorials published in *The Gospel Herald*, all but 154 written by the editor. Of the 755 only eight were coded as “women’s roles discussed.” Usually articles discussed topics such as the Mennonite value of non-conformity, pacifism, serving those less affluent, discipleship or Mennonite organizations. Among the eight articles coded as “women’s roles discussed,” all were written by men. This comes as no surprise seeing that a lead editorial was authored by a woman only once during the fourteen-year period, which was Janet Kreider in the October 26, 1965 issue. According to Foss and Griffin (1992), this lack of women’s representation on the editor’s page may have sent the message that Mennonite men were considered more valuable than women.

The Mennonite published 697 lead editorials between 1963 and 1977, less than *The Gospel Herald* due to their bi-weekly schedule during summer months. Of the 697 lead editorials, 356 were written by persons other than the editor, 73 being women, beginning with Elaine Sommers Rich, a Mennonite missionary, who discussed the Easter season and Christ’s resurrection in the April 9, 1963 issue. Out of the total number of lead editorials sixteen were coded as “women’s roles discussed.” These sixteen were scattered throughout the 14-year time period.

The difference in the number of lead editorials written by women in *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* demonstrate the long held generalization that the MC

Mennonites, represented by *The Gospel Herald*, identify with a more traditional set of values than the GC Mennonite conference, represented by *The Mennonite*. The GC Mennonites have long been described as liberal or progressive, while the MC Mennonites have often been labeled as more conservative or traditional. This difference can be traced all the way back to differences in each group's ethnic backgrounds. The GC Mennonites traditionally come from Russian and German backgrounds, while MC Mennonites come from German and Swiss origins.

With these results, one can conclude that Mennonite women were subjecting themselves to a less than hospitable environment for expressing their views of women's roles if they submitted letters to the church press, especially *The Gospel Herald*, which served the majority of North American Mennonites. Female readers of *The Mennonite*, which served a drastically smaller portion of the denomination, were at least seeing prominent female names such as Elaine Sommers Rich, Katie Funk Wiebe and Mary Lou Cummings occasionally listed as author on the coveted editor's page (found on the back cover of both *The Mennonite* and *The Gospel Herald*). They also were able to see that their publication was open to women writers and topics about women's roles, though not in abundance. Some of the specific topics discussed in the sixteen lead editorials included women and the draft, women in church leadership, working mothers and the life of a housewife.

The Feminist Movement

My second critical probe aimed at identifying if Mennonite women referenced the second wave feminist movement within their rhetoric. I ask: *How did the rhetoric of*

Mennonite women as expressed in church newspapers reflect events happening in the greater women's movement? Answering this question helps to identify if Mennonite women, who valued separateness from society, viewed the greater women's movement as a source of information or an example of how to redefine their identities. If so, one could assume secular feminist rhetoric in some way resonated with Mennonite women, despite their attempt at societal separation.

A total of forty-nine articles were collected from the two Mennonite papers that were written by women and also dealt with women's roles. *The Gospel Herald* had twenty-six articles that discussed women's roles, seventeen of which referenced the greater women's movement. *The Mennonite* had twenty-three articles that discussed women's roles, nine of which referenced the movement. (See appendix A)

The discussion of the second wave women's movement increased during the span of the study. Prior to 1971, only twenty-five percent of the articles discussed the women's movement. After 1971, this number more than doubled, indicating that 75 percent of the articles published in both papers discussed the movement.

The publishing of articles that referenced the movement especially increased in *The Gospel Herald*. During the first three years of the research dates (1963-1965) no articles were found that referenced the women's movement in either paper. However, between 1966 and 1972 an average of two articles a year referenced the movement. From 1974 to 1977 this number increased again to an average of three articles each year. (See appendix B)

Second, this study conducted rhetorical analysis in order to examine just how events happening in the larger women's movement during the fourteen-year time period

were identified in the church press. The discussion of the second wave feminist movement ranged from vague references, to direct quotes from well-known feminist leaders. More importantly Mennonite women appeared conflicted on how to respond to the women's movement. Some feared it, others embraced it. In the May 3, 1966 issue of *The Gospel Herald* an article titled, "*Motherhood – Its Meaning*" states, "The world's way to fulfillment is freedom, emancipation, self-development, equal rights for women. God's way is so completely different that it seems foolish" (Lehman, p. 382). This was the first sighting of the feminist movement within Mennonite women's rhetoric of the 60's. Two years later in an article titled "*What's a mother for?*" the author references Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique*. Author Blaise Levai writes, "Still [women] feel trapped because the talents they have are not being used creatively. Betty Friedan...stressed this problem of conflicting ambitions" (p. 323).

The first article that made a blatant plea for Mennonites to consider ideas coming out of the feminist movement came in a 1970 article by Katie Funk Wiebe titled, "*Liberation – For Men and Women.*" Even though Wiebe did not directly endorse the movement, at times even criticized it, she highlighted how important equality is for both men and women within a Christian context. She states, "Men cannot run the church alone, neither can women. They need each other's support, but not at the expense of one another" (p. 1011).

As stated earlier, in 1971 references to the women's movement increased considerably. Titles such as: "*Who Defines Liberation,*" "*The New Feminism: Another Perspective,*" "*How My Family Liberates Me,*" "*Not Liberated and I Love It,*" and "*Equal Opportunity to Serve,*" began to appear. As one can see from these titles, not all

of the articles collected were in support of the second wave feminist movement or the progression of women's roles in general.

Out of my sample, twenty-five of the forty-nine articles discussed the progression of women's roles positively, nineteen indicated a preference to the traditional definition of women's roles, while five articles did not indicate a clear leaning. One of the major indicators of the author's leanings was the overall tone of each article. On many occasions this rhetorical element alone was able to indicate if an author was in support or against the [re]construction of women's roles.

Among the articles that called for a recommitment to traditional roles for women and a denouncing of the current societal trends in regard to gender [re]construction tone was in most cases instructional, giving lists of steps to follow or ideas to adopt. One of the best examples of this instructional tone is found in an article from *The Mennonite*. The article defined the appropriate role of a pastor's wife. The list of instructions included: "The pastor's wife must maintain personal private devotions...have a genuine concern for people...help her children love church...[a]t no time should [she] speak evil of the church or its leaders...be willing and able to participate in every phase of church life" (Bartel, 19:1963). A later article in *The Gospel Herald* describes the role of a wife by saying, "Her joy, her contribution to the world is through being the expression of her husband's majesty! Through her honor to him, her identification with him in his leadership in the church and community, her husband becomes the majestic being God intended him to be" (Lehman, 382:1966).

On the contrary, authors who were more open in supporting the progression of women's roles had a facilitating tone. These women provided evidence, quoted scripture,

gave personal examples and usually challenged readers to consider a particular question they had posed. These women rarely gave instructions and at times did not even fully disclose their opinion of the second wave. The best example of this is found within an article by Katie Funk Wiebe titled, "*Women alone in a couple's world.*" Wiebe poses the following questions: "Can a single person accept her singleness as an alternative and whole way of life, or must she always feel like the child whose nose is pressed to the window of a candy store, knowing the goodies displayed there are never for her? Does singleness mean sitting and waiting" (p. 729).

As years passed this facilitating tone remained evident. In an article by Beulah Kauffman in 1974 titled, "*The Role of Women: Time for a Fresh Look,*" Kauffman states: "We need to ask some hard and searching questions: Is it really true that men have to be superior and women inferior? Is that the way Christian women and men want relationships to be? Can we allow women to be persons in their own right, to possess strengths as well as weaknesses?" (p. 28). The instructional verses facilitating tone attached to the anti and pro women's roles respectfully deserve to be placed in the larger theoretical context of what constitutes persuasion in feminine discourse.

Application of Theoretical Lenses

Foss and Griffin's (1992) article, which critiques Burkean theory, gave the greatest assistance in explaining the tone of "traditional" female, Mennonite author's opinions regarding their "appropriate" role of women in society and the church. Women in a patriarchal society, under Burkean theory, are forced to communicate within the confines of a rhetoric built around their domination. As discussed in my literature review,

Foss and Griffin (1992) explain how five “self-hating” personas may offer women within a hierarchy ways of finding self-value in a system that fails to grant them imminent value.

These self-hater roles were seen extensively between the years of 1963 to 1967. Of the fifteen articles published during these years, nine were identified as having a rhetor who had assumed one of the five self-hating personae. Examples of all but one of the self-hater roles were found within the nine articles. “The conqueror” role was the only self-hater role not identified, which is understandable since its description does not easily align with the Mennonites commitment to nonresistance and pacifism. “The conqueror” can best be described as someone who sees themselves as well as others as an enemy that should be destroyed or demonized.

The “censor” role, which is one of silence and isolation in order to win approval, can be seen in an article, titled “*God Made Me a Woman,*” published in 1967. The author states:

American women are fighting against their natures. They are discarding their innate feminine qualities and trying to create in themselves the qualities of manhood...Deep within me is the cozy consciousness that God made women with natural desires to be homemakers, not career women, helpers, not leaders; submitters, not revolters...She is commanded to accept a position of quietness and submission. She ought to enjoy it! (Weber, p. 360).

In an article that was published one month later “the master servant” self-hating role was identified, which is a caretaking role that allows rhetors to find their own value in other’s need for them. In the article, “*I Am Happy to Be A Minister’s Wife,*” the author states, “When several people come to me simultaneously, the weight of the combined sorrows becomes so heavy I almost feel the life draining from me, but I know that by my sharing a part of their grief they are comforted and their load is lightened” (Walker, 552:1966). She goes on to say, “Trying to be all things to all the members of the

congregation causes pressures that are sometimes hard for me to handle...When I get to the point where I feel I have nothing else to give anyone, I must turn to my storehouse and dig out love” (p. 552). However, even though the role of a pastor’s wife seems to fall close in line with that of Superwoman, the author finds no hesitation in accepting the workload. Why wouldn’t she? It is what gives her value in a male’s world. She states, “It doesn’t take me long to be replenished for what I give to others in their grief” (p. 522).

Some authors did not assume self-hater roles themselves, but assigned them to groups of women. In 1963, Elaine Sommers Rich wrote an article titled “*Mrs. At-Home Talks About Mrs. Jobholder,*” discussing how stay at home mothers are too quick to judge working mothers. She assumes that the majority of stay at home mothers deal with feelings of jealousy, envy, bitterness and resentment and take on the self-hater role of “the judge.” “[Mrs. At-Home] should recognize that jealousy, envy, bitterness and resentment are sins. She should confess her sins to God and accept His forgiveness” (p. 6). The self-hating role of the judge judges others on how they “measure up” to community’s standards. Her article states: “Mrs. At-home should not generalize about Mrs. Jobholder. She should remind herself of the many working mothers who pull more than their share of the church and community work” (p. 6).

The self-hater role of “the orderer” was also identified in my analysis. This role is fulfilled when a women assumes that by enforcing rigid control on herself, and on the context she is communicating within, she will gain value when enough control is maintained. The best example of this was found in an article that was published in *The Mennonite* in 1964. Helen C. Schellenberg wrote an article titled, “*The Day I Became a Mother-in-Law.*” Schellenberg creates a list of seven do’s and don’ts for any new mother-

in-law. According to Foss and Griffin (1992), this may have been an effort to enforce rigid control in hopes of regaining power found in following the rules. Schellenberg states, “Try to be a friend...Don’t give advice unless it is asked for...Don’t try to compete for your daughter’s (or your son’s) affection...Never take sides...Make your visits short...Be fair and generous...[S]tep back into the shadows” (p. 471:1964).

Foss and Griffin’s descriptions of the self-hater roles helps to identify why many of the authors adopted the role or persona they did. The woman who took on the “censor” self-hating role had to define herself in relation to her husband, due to the censors need to find her value through the approval of others and through silent submission to hierarchy. “A women has the power to enrich a man’s life. Her gentle and dependent spirit makes a man rise to the weight of his masculinity...The abilities and education she has are geared toward making her a better helper to man” (Weber, 360:1967). Women are portrayed as having no worth of their own. The article even identifies that the reason for women’s creation could only be thought of in relation to improving men’s lives. “God created woman for man, not man for woman. She is commanded to accept a position of quietness and submission” (p. 360). This author indicated no hesitation with accepting the theology that the value of a women’s life could only be found in relation to a man. Webber not only displayed a censor self-hating role, but “enjoyed it.” She was happy to take on her “God-given nature” of a helper and a helper only.

Because she had no option of official leadership or pursuing her own career, the minister’s wife of 1966 found her value through the needs of others. She assumed “the master of servants” role by “trying to be all things to all the members of the congregation.” Because people needed her for grief counseling, Sunday school teaching

and playing hostess to visiting speakers/preachers she concluded, “I have a respect and place all my own beside my husband. I complete him in his work and in his life as God intended me to do when he made the first woman” (p.522).

Mrs. At-Home is assumed to be a “judge” in order to assign value or worth to her and others, through identifying who is doing a better job of meeting societal standards. She may not be able to measure up in the working world, but she finds her value through providing the *most* food for church functions, *always* volunteering to teach Bible school, and even having other’s children tell her, “I wish you were my mommy” (Rich, 6:1963).

“The Orderer” orders her life around rules and control in order to find value in following the rules. If she does everything she is “supposed to” she will not be subjected to the possibilities of failure or meaninglessness in a world where she lacks the inherent value accorded to her male counterpart.

Obstacles faced by the Rhetors

Another way to probe why many authors adopted the persona or tone they did is to understand their rhetorical choices in light of the rhetorical obstacles they faced. Campbell & Huxman (2003) identify three types of possible obstacles that can be faced by any given rhetor. The first category is audience-related obstacles. Examples include: 1) inattention caused by audience members being insulated from exposure to the subject, 2) misperception caused by stereotypes held by the audience or audience members distorting the subject, 3) lack of motivation caused by audience members struggling to find the subject relevant to their lives, and 4) inertia caused by audience members feeling powerless or having a strong resistance to change.

Mennonite women promoting redefinition of their role faced all four of the audience obstacles. However, the most prevalent obstacle was misperception. The majority of Mennonites during this time period had reservations and stereotypes about the second wave. “Feminist,” according to Wiebe, was considered a dirty word (1976). Wiebe stated in her first article that dealt with the Women’s Liberation movement, “Women’s Lib is here, but we don’t like it” (p. 1011:1970). The Mennonite church tried to stay away from hot topics of the day. The subject of Women’s progressing roles was doubled in difficulty because not only was it an issue coming out of popular culture, but it also was in violation of the traditional Mennonite value of male hierarchy.

The second category of obstacles according to Campbell & Huxman (2003) is subject-related obstacles. These include: 1) a sense of complexity caused by a lack of firsthand experience with the subject by the audience or by a subject being too difficult to understand, 2) cultural history that has created taboos on subjects or a sense of overkill of a given topic, 3) the assumption that there is a high cost of time, money or effort involved in addressing the subject, and 4) a lack of control, due to a lack of enforcement in regard to the subject.

The most apparent subject related obstacles involved in this research were the obstacles of complexity and cultural history. Because of Mennonites’ separateness they lacked a full understanding of the women’s movement. This lack of understanding led to misperceptions by the audience in regard to the Women’s Liberation movement, as discussed earlier, which led to taboos on the subject. Taboos on the subject were also present because of the expectation that women were to be silent and submissive. If they diverted from this expectation they were in violation of God’s “divine order.” This

violation constituted sin in the minds of some Mennonites. Mennonite women were not only going against expectations of the times, but also expectations of “the word of God.”

The last category of obstacles a rhetor can face is rhetor-related obstacles.

According to Campbell & Huxman (2003), there are two rhetor-related obstacles. The first is obstacles arising from prior ethos of the rhetor. Prior ethos is established by the rhetor’s reputation, their appearance, how they are introduced to the audience and what occasion they are communicating in. The second obstacle is the rhetor’s ethos that is established by way of the rhetorical act itself. This type of ethos comes about through how dynamic and trustworthy the rhetor is perceived to be by the audience. The ability of the rhetor to communicate their expertise on a subject and their ability to get the audience to identify with their individual perspective affects the ethos from the rhetorical act as well.

The Mennonite women who chose to submit articles promoting women’s progress faced major obstacles resulting from prior ethos. Their major obstacle was that they were women. Because of their gender it could be assumed that they had no official authority on church theology. These female rhetors had to find a way to establish themselves as credible and trustworthy. They had to discover a style of persuasion that would enable male leaders in opposition to see from a different perspective, a woman’s perspective.

Mennonite Women and the Challenges of “double identity” formation

Mennonite women writers attempted to present/justify their identities to their suspicious, undecided Mennonite readership, within a pro-liberation societal context in complex ways that can best be examined through the lenses of invitational rhetoric (Foss

& Griffin, 1992; 1995), double-identity discourse (Foss, 1992; Huxman 1997; Huxman & Mast 2004), “role strain” (Cote & Levine, 2002) as well as Erving Goffman’s (1959) theory regarding the management of personal identity in everyday interactions.

Invitational rhetoric (Foss & Griffin, 1992; 1995), was most obviously seen through the articles that had the rhetorical purpose of creating virtual experience. These articles used a narrative structure, inviting the reader to understand another woman’s experiences. An effort to actively persuade in the traditional sense of manipulation was not taken. The best example of this can be found in an article published in *The Mennonite* in 1969 titled “*A Place at Home.*” The entire article was a story about a woman who had recently decided to go back to work after having children. The story told of the mother’s struggle to create order out of her daily chaos. Even though the article was in support of women staying in the home, the author never called for the readers to agree with her. She simply shared one perspective, inviting readers to hopefully gain a better understanding of the benefits of staying at home. A total of five articles between 1968 and 1977 were identified as using invitational rhetorical strategies to communicate the purpose, three of which also had a narrative structure.

In other cases invitational rhetoric may not have been blatantly carried out throughout the article, but the given author maintained an invitational tone or established an invitational mood within the article. For example, Katie Funk Wiebe wrote a total of seven articles all touching on women’s liberation between 1963 and 1977. She wrote more articles than any other author within the research sample. The vast majority of her articles had an invitational tone or mood. This can be seen in an article written in 1971 when Wiebe poses the question, “How does one cope with a society that believes that to

marry and have children is the normal way of life, and to be single is a deviation?” She later discusses singles as “people on the fringes” and invites readers to see life on the fringes through her eyes. “People who live on the fringes of society because they think they are not wanted in the middle need more opportunity to share their problems and their joys...I watch these people because I am one of them. I see how they cling to one another, waiting for the opening to a fuller life” (p. 729). Wiebe invites understanding through the sharing of her perspective. She does not fill her article with pro-single propaganda or a list of instructions on how to befriend a single. She simply offers her perspective in hopes that people may gain something from it.

Another good example of Wiebe’s invitational tone can be seen in an article published in *The Gospel Herald* in 1976 titled, *Another Kind of Feminism*. In this article Wiebe discusses the Evangelical Women’s Caucus she attended in Washington D.C. a few months earlier. She attempted to breakdown stereotypes of feminists through the reporting of her experience at the Caucus. She states, “I know that for some individuals ‘feminist’ is a dirty word. Attaching ‘evangelical’ or ‘biblical’ doesn’t make it easier to accept. The stereotype of a feminist is a raging, hostile, aggressive, anti-male female with lesbian pro-abortion attitudes.” She goes on to say, “What a relief to find the stereotype did not hold true at the Evangelical Women’s Caucus...I found only a group of very calm, level-headed women – and a sprinkling of men” (p. 44). Whether Wiebe herself had feminist leanings was not the focus of the article. She was not trying to persuade her audience to all rise up and become whatever her definition of an acceptable feminist might have been. She was offering an eye-opening experience to her audience that she had the opportunity to have in person. She was sharing what she learned, observed, and

found beneficial. She was inviting her readers to simply reexamine their own definitions of what being a “feminist” meant.

During the 1970’s the articles from both publications, especially *The Gospel Herald*, began to have a more defensive tone. Women began to recognize they were being asked to play a “double identity” role. “Double identity” discourse (Foss, 1992; Huxman 1997; Huxman & Mast 2004) identifies the major “role strain” (Cote & Levine’s, 2002) being experience by these female authors. As the number of Mennonite women working outside of the home increased, so did their attempts at adopting some of the ideas coming out of the second wave feminist movement. They began to start redefining who a Mennonite woman was or could be.

Katie Funk Wiebe, one of the more feminist writers of the time, stated in a December 1970 article, “I do not favor feminist movements, yet I see in the protest a desperate plea that the church, as well as society, examine the basic attitudes which exist between men and women” (p. 1011). In order to continue being a credible Mennonite writer, Wiebe could not openly endorse the women’s movement happening in secular society. Mennonites were to be a separate people, not conforming to the trends of the day. However, she also had the purpose of generating conversation about the movement in hopes that the church could gain strides toward male and female equality. Because her desire to initiate action among Mennonites to rethink their definitions of women’s roles had to become coupled with her desire to respect Mennonite values, she was forced to assume some aspects of a double identity.

In an article by Dorothy Swartzendruber, also published in 1970, she too displays a double identity of Mennonite and an advocate for women’s progress. Early in her

article, titled "*Women, Equality, and the Church*," Swartzentruber states, "By continuing to tolerate the segregation of the work of the church by sexes, the two-church myth is perpetuated... The church is the loser if it does not capitalize on the contributions such women can make to its total program" (p. 615). Two paragraphs after her harsh demand on the church she abruptly changes her tone, instructing women to proceed cautiously and politely. "[W]omen who serve on committees and boards should be sensitive to attitudes which cannot be changed overnight. Aggressive women or those with personal aspirations are not appealing" (p. 615). Swartzentruber made a clear call for equality in an "aggressive" tone, then tagged her demands with instructions on the benefits of showing sensitivity and other "feminine" characteristics when assuming more leadership in the male dominated hierarchy. Twelve of the twenty-seven articles published after 1970 gave indications that the author employed "double identity" strategies attempting to join feminist and Mennonite ideals.

On a larger level, Mennonite rhetoric on women's roles needs to be examined from a systems perspective. Goffman's management of personal identity theory helps illuminate the "back and forth" statements from each "camp" that began to emerge on women's roles. Each "camp" would produce a well-researched article only to be met with a passive-aggressive rebuttal that called for negotiation or a challenge to women in an opposite direction. Griffin (2003) summarizes Goffman's theory by saying, "Goffman claims that we are all involved in a constant negotiation with others to publicly define our identity and the nature of the situation" (p.62). This was apparent in the articles after 1970 when Mennonite women started to engage in a back and forth statement of beliefs.

Mennonite women who supported women's progression were trying to negotiate and construct an expectable definition of a "Mennonite feminist."

The most apparent rhetorical purposes were to "initiate action" by those in support of women's progression and to "maintain action" by those encouraging the denomination to remain content in their traditional views of women's roles. This was made evident through the types of evidence used by the two groups. Both used the Bible, at times even the same passages of Scripture. However, the interpretation attached to the scriptures by a rhetor in favor of women's progress failed to echo that of a rhetor who remained opposed.

For example, in an article by Lareta Halteman Finger that was published in *The Gospel Herald* in 1975 she references the creation story of Adam and Eve as evidence for why men and women should have different roles. She states, "Men and women must have different roles for an efficient division of labor. It has been so ever since Adam and Eve were cast out of the Garden of Eden" (p. 461). In an article by Dorothy Yoder Nyce published in *The Gospel Herald* in 1973 she discusses the creation story quite differently, giving Adam and Eve the same responsibilities. She states, "They are created to live in dependence on each other and God with the same assignment; being God's representatives in ruling over the rest of creation" (p. 606). Nyce continues to explain how "equal male/female responsibility" is the "image of God."

This example demonstrates what little evidence was available to Mennonite women for promoting their rhetorical purposes. Many used personal experience, well known Christian theologians, and conclusions drawn from the larger women's movement. Strangely, women from either side rarely capitalized on using their

Mennonite/Anabaptist heritage to advance their identity. The majority of the evidence used came out of Christian/Biblical context.

This back and forth call to action began with Swartzentruber's article in 1970. After she demanded for the church to stop tolerating "the segregation of the work of the church by sexes," and defined the proper action as fully utilizing the "resource of Mennonite women," (p.615) she faced strong opposition one year later when Ruth S. Burkholder and Anna M. Frey both responded with articles criticizing the second wave. Burkholder states, "Women's Liberation, this past year, has given birth to some extremely interesting articles. They seem to be advocating subtly or outrightly that if we women are to find ourselves as whole, free, and liberated people we are going to have to fight our men to attain this freedom" (p. 873:1971). According to Burkholder women's liberation was responsible for women's confusion and has stripped men of their "strength, their aggression, and their leadership; particularly in the home" (p.872). She summarized her identity at the end of her article by saying, "This woman is a woman at peace with herself and a person capable of giving from her own inner wholeness" (p. 872). Her article tries to initiate the action of others to find their inner wholeness while remaining in the confines of male dominated hierarchy.

In 1973, Dorothy Yoder Nyce authored a three part series in *The Gospel Herald* that called readers to reexamine the role Christ intended for Christian women. In the first article of the series Nyce concluded, "As we continue to overemphasize misinterpretations and intentionally ignore or minimize equal male/female responsibility for being the image of God, we deprive all of mankind from becoming the whole people God intended us to be" (p.606). This call for Christians to find wholeness in Christ is the

same call Nyce's opposition, Ruth S. Burkholder, challenged her readers to do two years earlier. As stated earlier, Goffman's theory indicates that "we are all involved in a constant negotiation with others to publicly define our identity and the nature of the situation." The nature of the situation for both camps was defined as trying to get readers to find wholeness in Christ. However, the definition of how to do that demanded continual negotiation.

This negotiation continued beyond 1973. In 1974 four articles were published in *The Gospel Herald* regarding women's roles, a peak for either publication. One article, by Elsie H. Brunk, gives a mixed review of the women's movement, but continues the call for wholeness or liberation through Christ instead of wholeness through societies definition of "liberation." She closes her article by saying, "A woman who has come to know her true self-worth in Christ is first of all content to be and then as God leads, to do... She knows who she is in the eyes of God and it doesn't matter who (or what) people think she is. She is truly liberated" (p. 221). In 1975 an article by Lareta Halteman Finger calls her readers to a similar challenge. She states, "Do not let society dictate what roles you should play, but let God help you choose your own special role. Jesus calls us neither to follow traditional patterns unthinkingly, nor to embrace new anti-traditional patterns unthinkingly" (p. 463).

Defining "proper action" as wholeness in Christ or following God's or scripture's leading was present in articles that both supported and rejected the women's movement. Emerging in 1970, this desire expressed by authors was negotiating and was something that united both camps, giving them an element of mutual identity, negotiated through interaction. Both "camps" of women identified themselves as wanting to defer the issue

to ultimate authority, God. Each concluded that their ultimate purpose was to remain a committed follower of Christ, whether that called for progression or a recommitment to tradition.

Between 1963 and 1977 topics addressed by Mennonite women in the church press shifted as did the tactics women used to justify and explain their stance. During the first six years of my study nine of the nineteen articles were about mothers. Of the remaining ten, six were about marriage or being a wife. Between 1969 and 1975, “women’s liberation” was the popular topic, totaling thirteen of the twenty-four articles. After 1975, the topics discussed in each publication stopped mirroring the other. As *The Gospel Herald* continued to discuss feminism and Christ’s intended role for women, *The Mennonite* became more focused on women’s ordination, which began to be seen in 1972 with an article titled “*Women, the Ministry, and Mennonites.*” In 1972 the MC conference ordained their first woman, Emma Richards, but there was no mention of it in *The Gospel Herald*. However, when the GC conference ordained their first woman to the pulpit, Marilyn Miller in 1976, *The Mennonite* had two articles about women’s ordination. One of the two specifically celebrated the first female ordination, which ran on the front cover.

Reasons behind this difference in popular topics between the publications will be further addressed in the final chapter of this thesis. Explanations for why some theories were supported, such as “double identity” and “invitational rhetoric,” will also be discussed. Lastly, I will pose remaining questions for future research, declaring, “where do we go from here.”

CHAPTER 4

DISCUSSION

We tend to forget that sometimes what we consider to be the absolute truth of the Word of God is but a thin slice of our particular culture thickly frosted by a few scripture verses. Instead of letting the Word speak to us, we read our prejudices into it and then promote that as God's truth...Every once in a while we need someone with courage to take a hard look at what is happening and then to say to the rest of us, "You are promoting western life-styles, not God's truth." –Katie Funk Wiebe (p. 38:1977).

These are the words of someone who knew how to broach the topic of the women's liberation movement with Mennonites all over this country. Liberal and conservative, young and old, Katie Funk Wiebe got Mennonites to at least consider their options regarding the topic. As stated before, Wiebe wrote seven articles dealing with women's roles between the years of 1963-1977, more than any other female author during this time period. Wiebe was able to overcome many rhetorical obstacles in her way, allowing for true dialogue on the topic. Not all of the female authors submitting articles to *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* were as lucky. This begs the following questions: Why did Mennonite women communicate in the way that they did? Why did some rhetorical styles work well for those attempting to further women's roles in the church while others did not? How were rhetorical tools used within a given style in order to overcome the many audience, subject and rhetor related obstacles? These questions, as well as what the overall findings can tell us about how persuasion works within the confines of a small religious group, will be the focus of this chapter.

Foss (1992) and Huxman & Mast (2004) both create a theoretical position that is reaffirmed through this research. Their findings suggest that persons in small groups that

face a tension of values produced by group ties and civic mindedness struggle with “double-identity.” These findings are reaffirmed by this study. Mennonite women of the 1960’s and 70’s who began to identify with feminist ideas and theories struggled combining their deep commitment to Mennonite values with their civic desires of granting equality to all persons, including women. This tension created the need for Mennonite women to adopt a “double-identity.” According to Huxman and Mast (2004), situations, such as the one faced by Mennonite women during the second wave, “is an opportunity to forge a ‘double-identity’ and allow members of the faith to vacillate between otherness and belongingness; between dissimulation and assimilation” (p. 544). Mennonite women wanted to remain a faithful Mennonite, while attempting to also become an advocate for equal opportunity. Huxman & Mast (2004) describe the rhetoric produced by this tension or paradox. The authors state, “Arguments of separatism and assimilation are blended in Mennonite discourse” (p. 544). This combination of arguments created a “third way” for Mennonite women. One option of achieving this “third way” was through an invitational rhetoric approach, which was done by Katie Funk Wiebe.

Katie Funk Wiebe knew how to broach the topic of the Women’s Liberation movement with Mennonites. Her writings largely fell into the category of invitational rhetoric. She was one of the most well received female Mennonite writer’s of her time. She framed much of her work as a discussion of the available information regarding the women’s movement and women’s changing roles in the church. In her first article about women’s liberation she references outside, non-religious sources four times. Outside referencing was something that was seldom done by other female writers. She references

the work of Fredrick Douglass and the American slave emancipation, *Life Magazine*, feminist conferences, Mennonite conferences regarding women's roles, personal experience and also the Bible. Instead of pushing an agenda she posed questions such as, "What should the Christian woman think about Women's Liberation?" (p. 1011:1970). She offered different perspectives and invited her readers to investigate the issues for themselves. She was slow to clearly reveal her own stance or opinions on the issue of women's progression, something other writers did freely, especially if they were in opposition.

Wiebe was never turned down publication in either Mennonite paper. In a personal interview in March of 2006, Wiebe discussed this by explaining that other women complained about not always getting published in the church press, or were hurt by not being asked to submit after negative responses were received for a prior article. She said that even though she had strong feelings in support of women's progression, referring to herself as a feminist was not an option at the time. According to Wiebe, "The Women's Liberation movement was so hot that to be identified with that would have ruined any kind of writing ministry I wanted to have" (Wiebe, 2006). She tried to have her articles remain expectable, yet challenging, to individuals on either side of the issue. "You had to frame it in a way that people wouldn't shut [you] off," Wiebe said (2006).

This invitational approach helped to combat the audience obstacle of misperception. Through the offering of perspectives and personal experience Wiebe gave Mennonites a realistic window into the Women's liberation movement. This is most evident in a 1976 article titled, "*Another Kind of Feminism*" that was published in *The Gospel Herald*. She states:

I know that for some individuals ‘feminist’ is a dirty word...The stereotype of a feminist is a raging, hostile, aggressive, anti-male female with lesbian, pro-abortion attitudes. What a relief to find the stereotype did not hold true at the Evangelical Women’s Caucus at Washington D.C.! I found only a group of very calm, levelheaded women – and a sprinkling of men (p. 44).

Wiebe’s invitational style also was able to combat several subject obstacles, such as subject complexity and taboos on the subject based on cultural history, she and other writers who tackled the issue were facing. The topic of Women’s Liberation was a highly taboo subject within the Mennonite Church. Time after time women writer’s tried to justify their stance by way of Biblical evidence, before ever opening the door for discussion as Wiebe did. Wiebe set the stage for questioning, searching, and free investigation. She usually started her articles off with a question or statement she had been pondering, or with a personal experience she recently had gone through. She would open the door to the topic, start questioning and invite others to do the same. She took on the persona as a discussion facilitator. By creating the feeling that she was searching for answers herself, instead of claiming to have them, she was able to guide her readers through an examination of a topic, despite the fact that it was laden with cultural taboos. By using personal experience and rhetorical questions she was also able to breakdown the complexity of the subject for her readers. She left room for people of different stances to identify with her articles.

Other authors, such as Dorothy Yoder Nyce who was second behind Wiebe in the number of articles published within the time period, with a total of four, began each article with pieces of Biblical and theological evidence that men and women were to be viewed as equal. In the first article of a three part series published in *The Gospel Herald* she draws conclusions about one of two creation stories in the book of Genesis within the

second paragraph. Nyce states, “[T]his version gives no reason to think that women participate in the image of God in any way different from men or that male/female exercise of dominion is other than corporate” (p. 606:1973). In her second article, which ran three pages in length, she concludes within the first section that instead of keeping the traditional thought that Eve was responsible for the sin in the Garden of Eden, both man and woman were responsible for the broken relationship or fall from God (p. 621-623:1973). In her last article in the series she draws final conclusions that do not create a safe place for those with opposing viewpoints from hers. She states:

Jesus did freely talk to and publicly teach women. Women freely traveled with and ministered to Him. We should approach Paul’s writings within a similar context. Instead of distorting him as one in opposition to women’s equal rights and duties, we should be secure/mature enough to see that numerous times he called for mutual, reciprocal male/female relationships. We must identify him as one who highly respected and gratefully recognized the competent women working with him” (p. 636:1973).

Nyce leaves little room for a reader to confidently keep a traditional view of women, leaving readers feeling coerced or pushed in a certain direction. According to this article, anyone who interprets the books in the Bible written by apostle Paul as articulating the importance and demand for the divine order, which supports male hierarchy, is “distorting” what Paul is saying. Readers are pre-labeled insecure and immature for not being able to change their views. If readers are left with the option to conform or else, they will likely choose the first. Nyce, while filled with good intentions, seemed to increase the taboo on the subject, by creating a “right” and “wrong” way of thinking about men’s and women’s status in a religious context. According to Wiebe (2006), Nyce was very hurt by the responses she received for her articles. “She suffered,” Wiebe stated.

In a March 2006 interview with Wiebe she discussed why this subject was so difficult to address. “Changing theology is one of the most difficult tasks,” she said. “It often takes crisis to bring about confusion, to say ‘welcome confusion.’” Wiebe came to the conclusion that in order for Mennonites to address and welcome discussion on the subject of women’s changing roles and the Women’s Liberation, Mennonite theology had to be rewritten. She said that Mennonite women had been conditioned to be silent and submissive. “Speaking out meant going against that.” Everything preached in Mennonite churches prior to the second wave supported this silent submission of women. In order for Mennonite women to gain equality and opportunity they had to create a safe space to reexamine the Scripture. Wiebe saw this as a feasible task because of her view that “theology is a human invention.” She viewed her task as getting Mennonites to look at the Bible not as a “proof text” to justify their stances with, but as a place to simply look and see what is there.

Wiebe was an ideal person to create this safe space for reexamination of the Bible. In 1962, while she was a stay at home wife and mother with four children, her husband passed away. After this event she had no choice but to move into the working world. People praised her for this choice, while chastising other females that had made the same decision. Because Wiebe was a single woman by chance instead of choice she was able to tend to her desire to begin writing. She said that she had to start finding things out for herself and asking questions for herself because there was no one else to do it for her. “My source of information was shut off because I got it through [my husband].” Wiebe, because of her situation, faced little to no rhetor related obstacles. Even in her own words, “I didn’t have a husband that my words would reflect on” (2006).

She was able to do, say, and suggest more than any of the other female writer's could have at that time on that subject. If a woman had a husband she was to find information and question information via his role in the church. Wiebe said that according to church standards prior to the second wave, "Women weren't meant to be thinkers."

Wiebe's writings quickly became known in the Mennonite church. She had articles published in Canadian Mennonite papers, *The Gospel Herald*, *The Mennonite*, *Christian Living*, papers from the Mennonite Brethren church (which she identified herself with) and had a column for 30 years in *The Christian Leader*. Book reviews and other more technical pieces demanded research. After conducting a book review for a Canadian Mennonite newspaper of Betty Freidan's *The Feminine Mystic*, Wiebe's feminist leanings began to appear more frequently in her writings. According to Wiebe, "This book identified the ambiguous feelings I had about women's roles."

In stark contrast to the writings of "Mennonite feminists," such as Wiebe and Nyce, many other female writers of the time held fast to the traditional instructions or expectations for women. Many of these writers adopted self-hater personae.

Foss and Griffin's (1992) discussion of how women take on a self-hater personae in order to communicate within a male dominated hierarchy help to understand why women who were in support of the traditional role of women reacted the way they did the second wave and those promoting. Depending on which self-hater role was adopted determined the tone of the article. Self-hater personae were most often seen in articles that were in support of the traditional definition of women's roles. Foss and Griffin (1992) state, "[I]n a hierarchical structure, guilt is a consequence; so too, is self-hate" (p. 341). Women who accepted their "divine" role in Mennonite hierarchy had to establish

their value on their own, seeing that hierarchy is not a structure that gives each person inherent value. Women in the traditional Mennonite hierarchy rank lower than men, therefore they had to take on self-hater roles in order to establish and communicate their value to others.

For example, the role of a pastor's wife during the 60's and 70's was one that demanded near super human characteristics. Church congregations held their expectations high for the pastor's wife. One article went as far as saying the church sets a standard of "perfection" for the wife of a pastor. The author explained, "It expects her to be spiritual, friendly, economical, neat, conservative, and much more. Such a standard is not held even for the pastor himself. A safe rule to follow is to let the conscience of the congregation be her guide in what she does or wears" (Bartel, 20:1963). Mothers also encountered high standards and long lists of expectations set for them by the male dominated hierarchy. An article published in *The Gospel Herald* in 1967 states:

A mother's job first of all is her duty to be a loving wife and a homemaker in general. This includes being a dietitian or cook and seeing to three meals a day plus snacks and drinks. Being a dishwasher...the family nurse and doctor...a general housekeeper and scrubwoman. She's a teacher; runs a laundry and a bakery. She's a gardener...a canner...a seamstress...an inspector, a watchman on call 24 hours of the day. She's a peacemaker and a go-between (Beiler, p. 383).

In order to find personal value in roles that are extremely controlled and "severely criticized," one feasible option is through taking on the self-hater role of an "orderer." This persona was probably an attractive option for Mennonite women. The orderer allowed them to do some things better than others; they can follow the rules, stay within the guidelines and are not tempted to rebel. As long as enough control was exerted onto a given situation, the orderer gained value.

Mennonite women have always existed in a highly controlled environment. In the 60's and 70's their leadership opportunities were restricted. However, long before this time period they were restricted to extremely conservative dress and from speaking in church. According to Pamela Klassen, "The Swiss [Mennonites] took the most steps in regulating women's bodies in the 'creation order' by requiring women to wear devotional coverings as symbols of their constant openness to God and their divinely-ordained submission to men" (p. 237:1994). She goes on to explain how the church expected their female members to be "pure." This purity was demonstrated through the conservative dress. "Covered heads at church, closed-toed shoes, and not a spot of lipstick were expected among both Russian and Swiss Mennonites" (p. 237). Taking on self-hater roles like that of the orderer fall right in line with traditional Mennonite theology in regard to women. They are used to following a long list of guidelines.

Another way Mennonite women writers attempted to gain value was through adopting the self-hater role of the "censor." Adopting this persona was also not far from what the Mennonite church expected of its women. As stated in chapter two, the censor role can be defined as, "one of silence and isolation; rhetors whose self-hate assumes this form do not speak their truths because of their desire to win the approval of others" (Foss & Griffin, 336:1992). Mennonite women fell naturally into this self-hater role because disregarding their needs, wants, or ideas came naturally. The widely held Mennonite value of separateness from the world conditioned the denomination's women to see depriving themselves of their wants as natural or "right." According to Klassen (1994), "[S]eperation from the world has often meant separation from ourselves" (p. 238). Mennonite women with families did not consider speaking out about their possible

fatigue, when facing another day of endless tasks with little to no help from their husbands. Women who were single Mennonite missionaries, upon their return, did not rise up and demand the same leadership opportunities they were granted overseas. When pastor's wives were asked to play the part of Superwoman with little to no official recognition, quitting was not an option. Mennonite women have long been playing a part of "silence and isolation." Their desire to win approval is prioritized over speaking their own "truths." The censor self-hating role is one that the Mennonite woman knows intimately.

Traditionally Mennonite communities have operated through means of strict regulations. Traces of this can still be seen today through the Amish tradition of "shunning" members who have committed blatant, public sins or who have chosen to leave the faith tradition. Because Mennonites come from a culture steeped in rigid control through regulations judging comes naturally. Mennonite women who chose to support their traditional roles often took on the self-hater role of the "judge" in order to find self-value by judging how well one "measures up to a particular standard" (Foss & Griffin, p. 336:1992). When speaking about how others view a pastor's wife, Bartel (1963) writes, "When she is seen with her husband, people will say nothing about his conservative suit and necktie, but her choice of dress and her hat, her care of the children, her abilities and behavior are frequently discussed. Most women are extremely interested in these things and often terribly critical" (p. 20). Judgment was almost expected among Mennonites. A woman who assumes a judge self-hater role might think to herself, "If I am needed to hold others accountable that gives me an important, valued role to play."

The last self-hater role seen within the research sample is the “master of servants.” The presence of this role can be explained by the role options given to women prior to the 1960’s and 70’s. Mennonite women were often thought of as either mothers or wives. Singles, widowers, and divorces, according to Katie Funk Wiebe (1971), were “people on the fringes” of the Mennonite church. Those not married or without children were not the norm. Mennonite women before the women’s liberation movement had to define themselves in relation to a man, or at least to someone with more inherent value than themselves. Many struggled to see themselves as an independent unit. Alone in the hierarchy they had no value or power. However, through fulfilling the needs of others they found value and power. According to Weber (1967) in *The Gospel Herald* men need a “helper.” According to Levai (1968) in *The Mennonite* children need a mother who “cooks, shops, folds clothes, mends, chaufers...[and] feeds the pets” (p. 324). Women who took on the role of the master of servants were content because fulfilling a role based out of other’s needs was all they had previously known. As stated in chapter two, before the 1970’s, almost all of the articles published about women in either Mennonite publication defined them within the roles of either wife or mother, making it hard to think of women independently.

Despite the self-hating role adopted by Mennonite women, one thing is certain, those who supported the traditional roles of women, like that of a submissive wife and mother, were much more likely to take on self-hater personae. These women were exempt from the audience and subject obstacles dealt with by those in support of women’s progression. They could speak their mind bluntly, use aggressive language, and give ultimatums because their purposes fell in line with the traditional Mennonite view of

appropriate women's roles. They were allowed to argue "like men" as long as they towed the men's agenda.

Women who were in support of the ideas and the expanded female identities coming out of the second wave were much more likely to find their value in ways that began to challenge the traditional hierarchy. If a Mennonite woman began to question "the way things had been done" she no longer used self-hater roles to seek value or power. She started seeking her value through practicing her newfound ability to question the status quo, or by at least posing alternatives to the traditional female identity. Women, such as Nyce, who attempted to use this same model while towing the other line faced ridicule for her position. Wiebe, however, was one of the most successful rhetors of the time because she adopted an invitational tone, which assisted her in overcoming the many barriers she faced.

Barriers, such the cultural taboo of the subject, subject complexity, audience misperception, and the mere fact that rhetors were "thinking women," made the task of writing for *The Gospel Herald* and *The Mennonite* a difficult one. As made evident by the many different numbers of female writers appearing on the editors pages of the two publications (*The Gospel Herald* with one female writer in fourteen years and *The Mennonite* with seventy-three female writers in fourteen years) there were more barriers depending on which paper the women chose to submit their articles to. *The Gospel Herald*, which is owned and operated by the MC Mennonites, suggested through it's gendered language and lack of female representation on the editor's page that the MC conference was more traditional in regard to women's roles than the GC Mennonites who owned and operated *The Mennonite*. Another piece of evidence supporting this

conclusion is the referencing of women's ordination to the pulpit within the papers. In 1972, the first woman was ordained to the pulpit in the Mennonite Conference, but there was no mention of it in the conference's paper. In 1976, the first woman was ordained to the pulpit in the General Conference. This event brought about a full issue dedicated to the theme of women's ordination. The front cover displayed pictures of Ann Jemima Allebach who was the first woman to be ordained to the pulpit in any Christian denomination, happening in 1911, and of Marilyn Miller who was the first woman to be ordained in the GC Mennonite Church, happening in 1976.

Women's ordination began to be discussed in *The Mennonite* as early as 1970. *The Gospel Herald* had little mention of the topic throughout the entire research time period. When trying to analyze why this trend of discussing women's ordination did not take hold in *The Gospel Herald*, one must wonder if editors tried to ignore the upcoming issue. If the papers did not talk about it, perhaps the ordination of Emma Richards in 1972 would never become big news.

According to social construction of reality theory topics have to be discussed and negotiated in order to have meaning. If women's ordination could be kept out of the minds of MC Mennonites perhaps this discussion and negotiation would not take place. If this is the case those in charge of *The Gospel Herald* were sorely mistaken.

Drawing conclusions regarding the overall question within this research is not an easy task. It needs to account for editors, readers who are either in support or opposed to redefining women's roles, writers with feminist leanings, writers with traditional leanings, and writers that keep their stance hidden and ambiguous. Another factor that also must be mentioned is the role of the Vietnam War. War for Mennonites is never a

comfortable situation. Their core belief of pacifism put them in automatic opposition with any war effort. When Mennonite's pacifistic value is challenged, few things take precedent over their response. Through coding the topics of the editor's page, Vietnam/peace efforts were indicated as being the most prevalent topic between 1963 to 1977. The Vietnam discussion focused on loss of innocent lives, food shortages/starvation among the Vietnamese people and the issues arising for conscientious objectors within the Mennonite faith. Promoting equality for women was not the priority for the entire faith community. The topic may have been received better and had more representation if such a major war was not being fought simultaneously. Compared to the major issues of the war, providing women's leadership opportunities in the church could have been interpreted as a trivial issue, leaving some women hesitant to submit articles on the topic.

Overall, Mennonite women during the second wave were divided on how they wanted to be defined. As stated in my second chapter not all the articles within my sample spoke positively of the Women's Movement; In fact, the number was nearly split. The women who supported the more traditional definition of a woman's role took on one of the self-hater personas and had an instructional tone. The author's who were in support of women's progression created a double-identity and had a facilitating/invitational tone. These same rhetorical elements indicate division in evangelical women's rhetoric from this time period. Heller (2003) indicated that women rhetors who were not in support of any type of violation of "God's design" or divine order had an instructional tone with their feminist counterparts as well. The more "traditional" author's promoted the "appropriate" masculine and feminine roles for men and women by means of long lists or

comparison charts. Mennonite women were not totally alone in how they dealt with gender inequality.

Despite this split Mennonite women did agree on one thing, that both men and women should be “liberated” through Christ. They should find personal value, personal worth, and self-fulfillment in what they do. The women who were in support of traditional women’s roles were not in support of making life miserable for all women, they were in support of helping women find worth in their “divine” role. They did not want women to resent the church, but they also did not want women to reject traditional Mennonite theology. Women writers in opposition to the second wave tried to frame the traditional life of a Mennonite woman as something to be desired. In their eyes this was the only way of remaining valued themselves. If women began working outside the home, gaining more education and filling more roles in the church, women would begin to find themselves being judged not only against other women but also against other men. Not preaching because of your gender was easier to accept for some than not being asked to preach because one was not as preferred as another preacher, male or female. Women would find themselves filling jobs in the workplace that had been previously held by men. A natural fear would be, “What if I can’t do the job as well as he did and they blame it on my gender?” Women may have been holding so tight to their traditional roles in order to save themselves from more judgment than what they had previously had to endure.

However, there are also those writers who were willing to forge ahead no matter the cost. As Katie Funk Wiebe and I sat in her Wichita apartment eating girl scout cookies and pepper nuts (a Mennonite delicacy), sipping our individual cups of lemon

zinger tea that had been made by the same tea bag, supporting the Mennonite's "more with less" value, I asked her why she risked her reputation to defend such a "hot topic." She responded, "You come to the place where you believe in something." Wiebe, like other Mennonite women who lived through this time period, found herself with no option but to speak out. She was not born with a desire to be a spokesperson for Mennonite women's equality, but she acquired it through experiences. "I evolved over the years in regard to this issue" she said. She went on to explain how not only her experience shaped her, but also hearing the stories of others. "It made me see how important it is to articulate for other people what they want to say," she said, "to be the voice for other people." The role that Wiebe played during the years of the second wave is immeasurable. She was the bridge between the clear supporters of the women's movement, such as Nyce and the many wives and mothers who wanted to remain in the expected Mennonite status quo. She opened the door to dialogue and let others see from a new perspective.

Even though a definition for invitational rhetoric did not exist in 1963 or 1977, Katie Funk Wiebe's understanding of persuasion was ahead of its time. She knew that only through understanding another's perspective could people begin questioning, reexamining and, as Funk states, begin saying, "welcome confusion." She knew this because a change in her perspective is what gave birth to her feminist views.

Today Katie Funk Wiebe openly calls herself a "Mennonite feminist." When I walked into the door of her apartment, passing by her afghans, teacups and pictures of grandchildren I sat down at her kitchen table only to be greeted with a picture. "This is a picture of five die hard Mennonite Feminists" she said pointing at the picture. She later

pointed out herself in the picture and told me the names of the other white haired women. Wiebe did not get comfortable in her feminist skin overnight. As stated earlier, she “evolved.”

The evolution of Wiebe’s views, as well as other Mennonite women’s views, was evident through content and rhetorical analysis of the forty-nine articles. A personal interview with Wiebe. As stated in chapter one, by combining qualitative and quantitative methods, findings can be tested for their consistency, in turn increasing their reliability and validity.

Rhetorical analysis has the strengths of being able to interpret covert meanings, which helps to address how and why people use symbols to create meaning. Inspection of rhetorical artifacts gives insight on how rhetors use meaning to attempt persuasion. This study allowed “double-identity” discourse and invitational rhetoric to be reaffirmed as rhetorical options for minority or “out groups.” Rhetorical criticism also serves a social betterment function, which held true in this study. Mennonite women can now gain insight for how they may possibly create their own emancipating rhetoric in regard to increasing church leadership opportunities for women. However, one weakness of rhetorical criticism is its low reliability due to the subjectivity of the researcher.

For this reason content analysis was also a method within this research. Content analysis brings precision, objectivity, generalizability and replicability to research studies. For example, in my research content analysis was able to produce clear numerical data that can be replicated by other researchers. Out of my sample a different researcher with a different background would find the same number of articles referencing the women’s liberation movement because the method is objective.

Therefore, the numbers produced could be replicated. Through these numbers I was able to draw generalizable conclusions about the larger Mennonite population. However, according to Berger (1998) numbers are just part of the story. “[O]nce you have data,” Berger states, “you have the problem of interpreting them” (p. 27). This reinforces my reasons for combining content analysis with rhetorical analysis. I was interested in telling the whole story.

With these two methods combined there was still a missing link. My research findings needed explanation. For example, I had numerical totals of how many articles discussed women’s roles in the 1960’s and 70’s, I identified how Mennonite women used rhetorical strategies to combat their many obstacles, but I was unable to answer questions such as, “Why did Mennonite women become motivated to embark on a road to equality when they knew it may cost them their reputation within the church sphere?” Or, “Did every article submitted that dealt with women’s roles get published?” In order to answer these remaining lingering questions I incorporated qualitative personal interview into my research method scheme.

Personal interviews are a strong method to use because of the opportunity given to researchers to ask “follow-up questions.” Researchers can probe the topic of interest for a considerable amount of time. When I was meeting with Katie Funk Wiebe I not only was able to ask the two questions I posed in the preceding paragraph, but I was able to respond to Wiebe’s answers by attempting to break down her answers by way of unscripted, additional questions. Personal interviews, according to Berger (1998) also allow for “unexpected findings” (p. 57). Berger argues that people may produce additional information through slips of the tongue or by getting carried away with the

information they are disclosing. As Berger says, “The more people talk, the more they reveal (give away) about themselves” (p. 57).

The main disadvantage of personal interviews is that the interview itself generates a large amount of information. When I interviewed Wiebe I found it hard to write everything she said down. Therefore, I am sure I may have missed a statement or a non-verbal indication of a deeper meaning, but in an interview it is impossible to record every element of the situation. At times another disadvantage of personal interviews is interviewing someone who lacks in producing in depth answers. This was not the case with Wiebe. She spoke like she wrote. Her statements sounded as if they were extracted from a book of famous quotes. She was clear, yet concise, as we made the most of our hour together. Wiebe was selected for the interview because of her significant contribution to Mennonite women’s rhetoric as it appears in the church press.

Justifications Revisited

As stated in chapter one, I have three justifications for how my research contributes to the larger conversations taking place regarding women’s roles. First, I indicated that my research would serve as an excavation of stories about Mennonite women who forged a trail for those who would later call themselves “Mennonite feminists.” The successes of Katie Funk Wiebe or the hurt experienced by Dorothy Yoder Nyce are two stories capable of demonstrating to younger generations how arguments can be presented. The story of Marilyn Miller’s ordination in 1976, which was published in *The Mennonite* in 1977 allows those who read it to witness one of the major turning points for the GC Mennonites. These stories are the foundation of the rise of feminism in the

Mennonite church. Therefore, these stories deserve more representation in current Mennonite society.

My second justification dealt with the importance of church papers as vibrant rhetorical artifacts. Every issue of a church paper is a time capsule of a religious groups values, priorities, concerns and societal events. Church papers are able to indicate occurrences that are still preserved in the religious culture. Researchers have a difficult time separating the two, which makes results richer in nature. For example, in my research the topics that appeared on the editor's pages indicated what the denomination was concerned with at that time. As stated in chapter two, Vietnam and peace concerns were of large concern for Mennonites. Another example is the sharp increase seen in the early 70's of articles that discussed the women's liberation movement. This indicates that women's liberation was of little concern before this time period. Church papers represent a specific group of people, therefore could assist in identifying cultural factors surrounding a topic.

The final justification for my research is my unique triangulation of methods. This is a unique practice that needs to be increased in academic researcher. I argue that a combination of methods should be incorporated into all studies that hope to truly discover the deeper meanings and persuasive strategies hidden in rhetorical acts. My research produced three sets of results, each supporting the results produced by the other methods. With the results staying consistent, I am confident that accurate and dependable conclusions are being drawn.

Future Research

This leaves me to pose a few questions for further research. First, are the younger generations of Mennonite feminists, including my own generation, comfortable in their feminist skin? Does a division on the progression of women's roles in the church remain today? Did invitational rhetoric continue to be influential in the church press after 1977 in regard to progressing women's roles? Where are Mennonite women getting their information on what a Mennonite women's identity should consist of, seeing that the church press is no longer read by the majority of denominational members? What has replaced the church press as the medium of expression? Finally, do Mennonite women who were readers of the church press during the 1960's and 70's reference Wiebe as the trusted or preferred voice on the topic?

The final question I asked Katie Funk Wiebe was what, besides the death of her husband, put her on the track of promoting women's equality. She said, "Its lots of the little things, where you're rejected because you're not the right gender." She was told as a seventeen-year-old youth that the church did not feel she should fill the role of youth group president, despite being elected for the position by her peers. She was told as a young adult, "Women don't teach Sunday school." Wiebe faced rejection as many Mennonite women do. I myself became interested in this topic because of the "little things" I was rejected from. In small subgroups of people we must remember that there is a "right" and a "wrong" way of doing things conditioned into the minds of those included in the subgroup. This makes invitational rhetoric a key tool for embarking on the exploration of any issue or value by the group.

Some glass ceilings have been broken, while others still remain. We can fight them, support them, crack them or simply stare through them like a kid outside a candy store window. However, if we want to discover what is on the other side we must create a safe place to discuss our perspectives, offer them, and accept an invitation to consider someone else's. Only then may we truly find what is in store for us.

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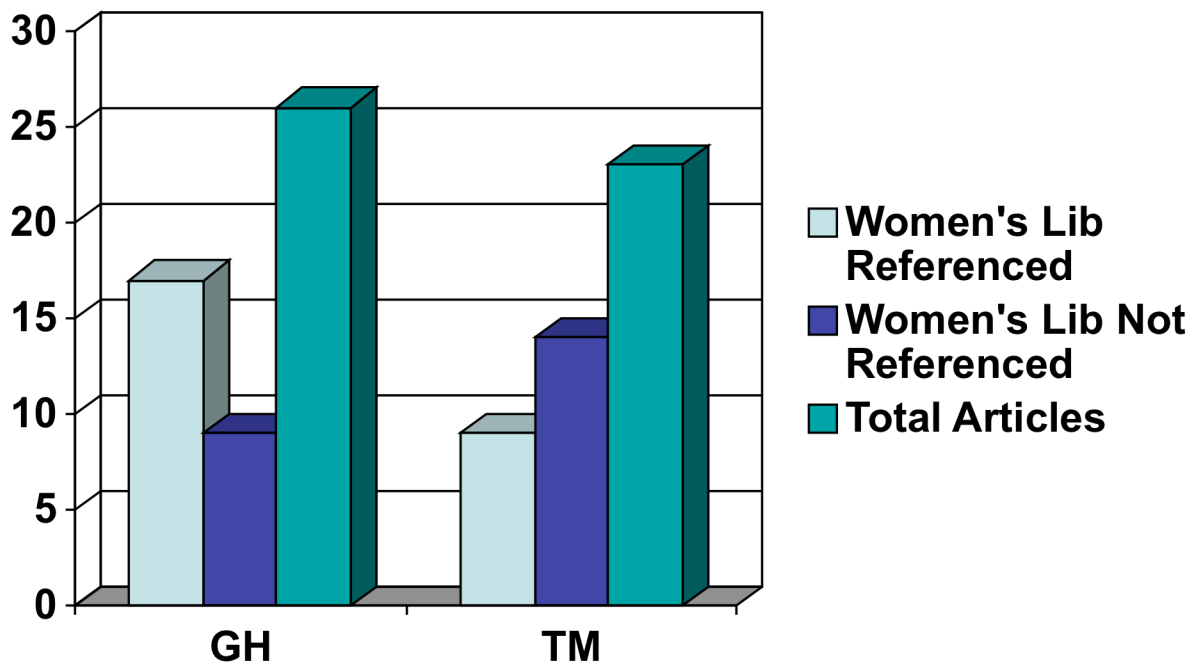
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APENDIX

Appendix A

Amount of articles that referenced Women's Liberation



Appendix B

Articles Discussing Women's Liberation Over Time

