

**ANABAPTIST TO ZWIEBACK: TEXTUAL ACCESS AND EXCLUSION IN  
RUSSIAN MENNONITE COMMUNITY COOKBOOKS OF SOUTH CENTRAL  
KANSAS**

**by**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Russian Mennonite immigrants who settled south central Kansas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and their descendants naturally developed a discourse community that differentiates them from the dominant culture in which they reside. Changing regional dynamics regarding diversity along with continued acculturation impacts this ethnoreligious community in a kind of dual displacement; the descendants of these Russian Mennonites not only live in the shadow of their ancestors' collected memories and traumas related to migration, but have and are currently witnessing further shifts away from the once agricultural lifestyle they previously observed. Therefore, heritage preservation is increasingly vital for stakeholders engaged with the history of Anabaptist life in Kansas. My dissertation attempts to elucidate aspects of the Russian Mennonite discourse community of south central Kansas by engaging with regional foodways as they appear in community cookbooks. I combine interview and text analysis data with John Swales' concepts of discourse communities to further define how cultural insiders worked in previous decades to create community through the production of food focused texts. By analyzing the Zwieback recipes from eight community cookbooks produced within the same cultural group, I examine which texts exclude certain audiences, and which are meant to provide an access point for cultural "outsiders." I maintain that due to acculturation and shifting population demographics in the region, long term regional and familial proximity to the Russian Mennonite community of south central Kansas determines understanding of high-context cultural practices. Establishing digital archives for Kansas Mennonite community cooking texts is also the most accessible form of preservation for all stakeholders.

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**CHAPTER I – ANABAPTISTS TO ZWIEBACK AND EVERYTHING IN  
BETWEEN: AN EXPLORATION OF DISCOURSE, COOKBOOKS, AND  
COMMUNITY IN KANSAS**

*What does it mean to be a literate reader of these recipes, one who can decipher greater meanings about the community through and understanding of the work of the sponsors of the cookbooks?...It means to read the recipes and the collections – their social, textual, geographical, and historical clues – in order to garner a greater understanding of the meaning of the texts. The greater the understanding on the part of the reader, the greater their participation in the community.*

-- Lisa Mastrangelo

*Petals of a Kansas Sunflower* is a collection of Marie Harder Epp's poetic work produced between 1929 to 1991. Much of it was never published until after her death. Harder Epp's pieces focus on what many would perceive as the mundane, but she gives voice to her community in simple, eloquent ways. "For Paul U. Claassen for the Butter Thermometer" is a singular example:

*When you make cheese and butter*

*You should not forget*

*That you need to be aware of everything*

*And with a thing like this you measure.*

*This suggestion gives a known product*

*When the process gets entailed enough*

*At the beginning it is difficult*

*But it gets easier quickly*

*Everything will then succeed*

*Invite us in sometime*

*And we will then tell you*

*That your cheese tastes wonderful.*

Harder Epp's deceptively simple construction of free verse perfectly encapsulates communal relationships. It centralizes cookbooks, community discourse, and the knowledge of domestic spaces. Although never meant for publication in a formal cookbook, "Butter Thermometer" reads like a hybrid between recipe and private conversation. Harder-Epp employs a directiveness that specifies action while inviting the reader into an established circle of knowledge. Cultural practices transmitted through written and oral language use is not unique to Mennonites or Mennonite communities. However, the way this culture manifests itself within cookbooks and discourse surrounding food does the labor of clarifying important aspects about literacies, etic and emic<sup>1</sup> relationships surrounding a culture influenced by a history of migration, and the tensions between tradition and acculturation.

A 2018 article published in *Peitho* follows the scholarship of Amy Mecklenburg-Faenger as she seeks to productively interrogate *Charleston Receipts*, "the oldest Junior League cookbook still in print." The book itself, printed in 1950, is a reproduction of the mythic image of southern culture in a bygone era that in all actuality never existed. Instead, it was an image produced by stakeholders who had a vested interest in producing impressions to outsiders which were systematically built on an inconvenient history of systemic racism and oppression. The text was produced by an elite circle of white club

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<sup>1</sup> I mobilize Conrad Kottak's definition of emic versus etic studies; "emic" is in reference to the ways in which members in one specific community see their world and culture. "Etic" refers to an approach that centers the researcher and what they prioritize during the study of a specific population. This terminology creates a basis for the relationship between insiders, outsiders, and the intended audience of cookbooks produced by the Mennonite community in south central Kansas.

members, and when analyzed rhetorically, the negative outcomes of codes within become apparent. Nevertheless, Mecklenburg-Faenger explores the renegotiation and redefining of cookbooks as compendium texts that reflect the practices and communities in which they are created. Mecklenburg-Faenger's work emphasizes the extent to which cookbooks and discourse still influence our discipline. Critically analyzing work like *Charlton Receipts* reveals how specific communities wish to portray themselves. It also conveys the community narratives that in turn create cultural rhetoric for the group entire.

This project seeks to determine what we can learn about one specific Mennonite discourse community by placing speech designated for cultural use in conversation with representative fundraising cookbooks produced by cultural insiders currently living in south central Kansas. Furthermore, I engage with what my findings reveal about the insider/outsider relationship regarding Russian Mennonites of Kansas and the larger dominant culture of contemporary America in which they exist. To be clear, the terms "insider" and "outsider" represent a dichotomy. The reality of cultural placement within this study depends much more along a spectrum, taking into account the proximity and participation exhibited by individuals existing inside and around the community. Equally important to this study is the question of how selected cookbooks and interviews expose tensions within the community surrounding contemporary cultural shifts.

Our understanding of the language and rhetorical underpinnings that culminate in the production of food texts is vital. Texts establish, articulate, and push against the normative cultural practices within communities. The term "foodway" is often used to describe the relationship between a culture and its culinary conventions; This relationship

resonates throughout Mennonite life, both in an historic and contemporary context.<sup>2</sup> Foodways are associated with fields such as folklore and sociology, but in my project, it allows me to establish the context in which discourse communities and cultural rhetorical practices are formed. Ultimately, I focus on community cookbooks compiled by a population of predominantly ethnoreligious Mennonites in two counties located in south central Kansas (see Figure 1).

In this project, I use Jennifer Sano-Franchini's definition of cultural rhetorics which "theorizes how rhetoric and culture are interconnected through a focus on the processes by which language, texts, and other discursive practices like performance, embodiments, and materiality create meaning" (52). This is an appropriate frame; cultural rhetorics as I understand them are bodies of work and practice such as cookbooks and foodways that, in essence, create communal identity. That identity is in turn validated by community members, who then generate more practices, text, performance, and materiality that embodies and represents the group entire. It is a recurrent, living cycle because culture itself is everchanging. My work is also informed by feminist rhetorics, which elevates marginalized voices; in this project, I centralize a people that have little notoriety in scholarship. Interviewees as well as cookbook contributors find representation in these pages; their voices, texts, and practices are vital to my work.

The term I've chosen to describe the people whose culture I centralize is "ethnoreligious," and it indicates that the population I attend to are direct descendants of

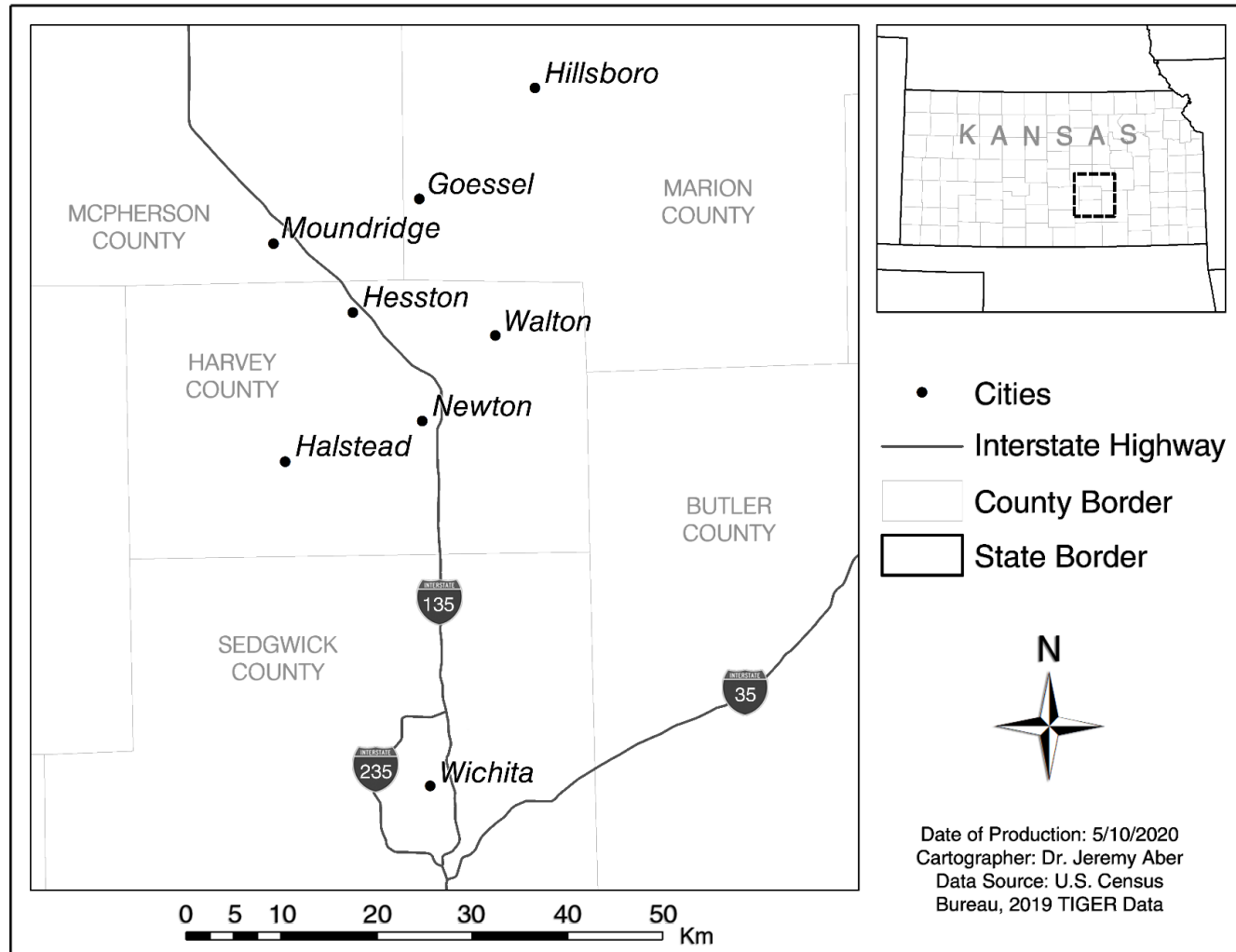
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<sup>2</sup> In this project, I mobilize C. Paige Gutierrez' definition from their text *Cajun Foodways* which states simply that scholars in the social sciences think of this terminology as encompassing "not only [...] food and cooking but to all food-related activities, concepts, and beliefs shared by a particular group of people" (xi).

German Russian Mennonites who immigrated from what is currently considered the Ukrainian Steppes near the Black Sea. My selection of cookbooks was compiled over a forty year timespan, and their exigencies are numerous. Fundraising cookbooks function as representative texts circulated in a community and can subvert or solidify specific constructs. For example, regional messages related to normative societal boundaries create a subtext in many community cookbooks; this includes assumed behavior connected with gender roles, institutions of faith, and the connection between spiritual ethics' intersection with day-to-day life.

Recipes in these texts have the power to draw people into a realm of specified knowledge, and alternatively they act as filters allowing for the transmission of selected concepts while hiding other information from general audiences. Such combinations become compelling when analyzed within the context of one distinctive group existing in a specific geographic region. My objective is to place these texts into conversation with community participants while situating them within the realm of cultural rhetorics. Food and writing are a vibrant avenue of study as is the ongoing recognition of ways in which cookbooks, recipes, and other writing born outside the academy creates spaces for underrepresented voices (see, e.g. Bower et al; Walden).

Cookbooks produced in a localized environment allow creators to make space for their experiences and perspectives. These texts also reinforce a rhetorical presence within communities. Furthermore, engagement with cookbooks produced by specific groups of people can facilitate ways to address cultural knowledge related tensions. My study presents an examination of who transmits, preserves, and shares the knowledge of foodways in one relatively small community. Furthermore, I centralize an analysis of



**Figure 1** – Map showing the region of Kansas where the study takes place and some of the communities where interviewees live.

insider information, and its positionality in the world of those outside the Mennonite community, sometimes called “English” people.<sup>3</sup> Scholarly focus regarding space, the impact of positionality on communicative potential, and genre use further inform my work. My inquiry into the creation and use of these cookbooks also explore issues of literacy, the creation of discourse communities, and extends towards methods of community cookbook preservation.

This project is a renegotiation of the cultural aspect of this community I have experienced and come to know. Hildi Froese Tiessen ‘s “Mennonite Literature and Postmodernism: Writing the ‘In-between’ Space” outlines the advantages of viewing culture from a contemporary standpoint which invites the engagement of Mennonite literature through a critical lens, and her sentiments support many of the goals I have set forth for myself in this work. She summons Linda Hutcheon’s frame of “postmodern irony” to illustrate ways in which Mennonites can question aspects of their community without being “dismissive” of traditions, history, and tenets of faith. It is my intention, with these interludes, to further interrogate my “between spaces.”

I have included short creative prose poems at the beginning of several chapters. The choice to share short creative pieces regarding the culture I present in my work is a strategy for confronting personal bias, which is unescapable for me in a project that ultimately stems from my identity. Critical scholarship combines with moments of personal nonfiction and situates itself within the critical work of writers such as Gloria Anzaldua, who uses her own voice to individuate information. She fashions stories to

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<sup>3</sup> This term is not specific to Mennonites but is known in many Anabaptist communities to describe those living outside their ethnoreligious group.

convey cultural identity. In a 2018 lecture, Becky Rickley confronts and examines obstacles of conducting “rigorous research” while being a participant in the community of focus. By grounding herself in Shawn Wilson’s *Research is Ceremony*, she comes to the conclusion that part of research involving participants with whom you have a connection means creating a safe space where both participant and researcher exchange story and knowledge; reciprocity is key. My interviewees and I produced this kind of exchange. Due to my own interpersonal connections, the exchanges I had with my interviewees benefitted from this relationship. Therefore, I also relay my own experience as an act of solidarity with those whose voices contribute significantly to my work.

### **Literature Review: Discourse, Literacies, and Place**

The framework I employ for this project is based in cultural rhetorics that supports the notion of fundraising cookbooks as texts representative of discourse communities and composition outside of the academy. The combination of sources I draw from support my assertion that cooking texts and the communities of practice that the Russian Mennonites of Kansas build produce a singular interplay between such works and language still specific to the Russian Mennonite community. James Porter (1986) defines discourse communities as a “local and temporary constraining system, defined by a body of texts [...]that are unified by a common focus” as well as “a textual system with stated and unstated conventions, a vital history, mechanisms for wielding power, institutional hierarchies, vested interests” (34-47). He also asserts discourse communities as realigning writers, texts, and audience, thus establishing discourse communities as inherently tied to both text and language (84). John Swales (1990) gives a similar definition, adding they are “groups that have goals and purposes and use communication



to achieve their goals,” attaching this concept to language-centered activities and the construction of genre, providing six guidelines for successful discourse communities.

In *Other Floors, Other Voices*, Swales later applies his ideas through the analysis of two disparate communities located in the same building on a college campus, developing a “textography.” This framing is a hybrid between ethnography and an analysis which is strictly textual; it emphasizes archival work as well as individual textual life histories (1998). As you will see in subsequent chapters, I adapt this approach. Swales revisits discourse communities more than a decade later, admitting that his guidelines were too simplistic and do not often occur naturally in the contemporary cultural landscape, stating “the concept of discourse community as originally conceived was overly static” (2016). In today’s more unsettled and uncertain world, the implications of inflexibility looms conspicuously; in particular, the concept did not firmly or directly address how people either join or leave discourse communities (4). Swales’ admitted oversight articulated another tension I found necessary to consider; what causes movement into and out of Mennonite discourse communities in south central Kansas? One possibility are transitional realities such as the shift away from small family agricultural operations that were previously central to the area and are untenable in the wake of large industrial farming. There is also the ever-growing presence of dominant secular culture aided by technology which accelerates the steady creep of acculturation. Inevitably, some individuals may move away from this community without being aware of why or how they are leaving it behind.

It would be erroneous to ignore the work of Geertz (1983) and Johns (1997), who suggest that “communities of practice” are an equally (if not more) appropriate term to

mobilize in regard to “complex collections of individuals” (Johns, 52). Johns explains that these are groups into which many are initially delivered, stating that “[p]eople are born, or taken involuntarily by their families or cultures, into some communities of practice. These first culture communities may be religious, tribal, social, economic, and they may be central to an individual’s daily life experience” (52). Although Johns focuses on academic communities of practice, she says that individuals may belong to several communities at the same time. Such mutable conditions are relevant to a study in a geographic space where individuals connected to Mennonites are both part of an ethnoreligious community while operating within the secular non-Mennonite world.

**Wider Con(texts): Many Literacies, Many Voices**

Even in a project that is primarily focused on cultural rhetorics generated by a community, literacy theory cannot help but intertwine with discourse where language in use occurs inside and outside of institutions. Ideas of discourse and literacy collide further in Shirley Brice Heath’s *Ways with Words*, which applies foundational concepts of discourse communities by analyzing the linguistic and textual practices of two disparate populations within a specific region over time. She defines a literacy event as “[a]ny occasion in which a piece of writing is integral to the nature of participants’ interactions and their interpretive process” (93). This ultimately works to shape the parameters of literacy’s social capabilities. Heath focuses on “speech events” as well as written work and the contradictions that sometimes arise between the two. Her framing informs my work and provides a model for analyzing what is written and what is spoken, thus providing useful insights into discourse communities.

Amanda J. Cobb's analysis of acquired knowledge at the Bloomfield Academy for Chickasaw Females identifies four different literacy types influenced by Brian Street's own "ideological model" (1984) wherein "literacy depends upon the social institutions in which it is embedded," literacy cannot be independent of "political and ideological context," literacy practices are contingent on "social structures and stratification" as well as "the role of educational institutions," a practitioner's understanding of literacy is contributed to by the way in which the practitioner is taught to read and write and, finally, Street's suggestion that there are several literacies instead of one singular type of literacy (8). Cobb exemplifies the critical interplay between literacy and discourse in one specific community while furthering her work by including "related skills" (Tchudi and Morris, 1996). While cookbooks themselves cannot transfer information orally, the myriad of contributors creates a chorus that conveys an academic, social, religious, and domestic standard while conveying skillsets to readers (14-15). Feminist ethnographic case studies, critical imagination, strategic contemplation, and social circulation (Kirsch & Royster, 2012) allow me to conduct research that steps beyond the confines of an academically sanctioned archival space. Adding this perspective to the aforementioned ideas combining discourse and literacy provides a way to engage productively with my chosen community.

A brief overview of the Mennonites in Kansas from Gerhard Lohrenz' essay "The Mennonites of Russia and the Great Commission" details an unmoored history of transition foregrounded by religious and political conflict which in turn interlocks with the significance of space, identity, and the generalizations leveled at Kansas Mennonite culture. Lohrenz' text extends to the initial arrival of Anabaptists in Kansas and covers

over a century of church history. Such history provides a frame in which another set of complications exist; several interview subjects maintain that there is a slow deterioration of defined cultural boundaries as Mennonites are further absorbed into American culture. Royden Loewen supports these concerns with *Diaspora in the Countryside*, simultaneously providing the story of resettlement and shifting gender roles within the Mennonite world of North America. Tracing evidence of acculturation is essential as it exacerbates evolving tensions among those of German Russian Mennonite heritage at the center of my study.

### **Problematizing Primary Materials: Aligning Research and Archival Artifacts**

Scholarship regarding community cookbooks is appropriate to this project because these texts emphasize and value a different perspective than mass-produced cookbooks for generalized audiences. Alternatively, the community cookbooks that I engage with are limited in terms of publication; they are often spiral bound. In one case, simple printed pages are stapled together, and covered by a thick yellow piece of heavy cardstock bearing a hand-drawn illustration. These texts ultimately reflect the available means of printing which are more cost-effective than cookbooks produced for larger audiences on a scale of mass production. However, even the choices that churches, committees, and organizations make about the ultimate production and aesthetic of their cookbooks convey pertinent details.

The logistics of preserving Mennonite community cookbooks synthesizes the intersection between interview data, analysis of cookbooks as representative documents, and the recipes featured in this project. The methodology within my work is best described as rooted in standpoint theory where individuals within the community serve as

sources pertaining to their own lives, positionalities, texts, and practices. This is exemplified by my interpretation of community-produced texts including recipes featuring each cookbook contributor's own language. Furthermore, the interviews I conduct were all coded according to patterns that naturally emerged from participant responses. I combined textually derived data with scholarship and interview outcomes in order to solidify my findings which indicated that physical proximity and familial connections aligned with the likelihood of cultural integration and apprenticeship.

It became necessary to approach materials from multiple perspectives. Cindy Johaneck (2000) employs a contextualist research paradigm that does not completely dismiss qualitative or quantitative research, but rather expands the boundaries of what data researchers can consider by reframing the context of materials. She allows that research materials are subject to dynamics of time, place, and ever-evolving societal issues. Researchers are allowed the freedom to produce in-depth analysis surrounding the materials they encounter. In response, Tareq Samra Graban relays her own experiences of organizing an archive in "Emergent Taxonomies: Using Tension and Forum to Organize Primary Texts." She employs Johaneck's concepts, albeit with some additional considerations of her own, suggesting that:

[t]he archival researcher can paradigmatically realize the strengths and limitations of the historical moments depicted in what he or she is sorting, instead reframing the subject in less stable social and political contexts, where context means more than just place and is, as Johaneck might say "defined by its own power and its own variability" (209).

In other words, relying on emerging patterns in a set of materials can function in a productive way for researchers and archivists alike.

Graban goes on to explicate how this methodology transformed her work, explaining that the concept assisted her approach to American suffragist Helen Gougar's career highlights, texts, and documents, while allowing her to expand the complicated context of her subject's world. My work deals with a chorus of voices across eight different cookbooks, each with multiple contributors, both dead and living, and all primarily women. I believe that Johaneck and Graban provide modified theories of context expansion while supplying guidance for organizing information and descriptions of vital primary texts. By situating these cookbook contributors within their everyday existence – women who are part of an ethnoreligious group, a discourse community focused on the particular unifying role of text creation, and as individuals whose literary practices are positioned squarely within their public and private connections – a more holistic awareness of the individuals themselves come into focus.

My primary sources were chosen due to the exigencies of each text. The term “community cookbooks” works towards the acknowledgement of contributions by cultural insiders. I view these books as products of a singular discourse community. I also use data derived from interview subjects who anonymously participated in my study. Interviewees speak to individual foodway experiences and provide necessary context that assists with microexploration of primary sources. I further define and exemplify the interplay between cookbook content and oral exchanges of information; oral information is possible through the proximity of teacher and apprentice while cookbooks provide text-based information transference. Additionally, my imperative is to measure how such

practices develop in and around my community of focus I observe the shift between cookbooks generated by churches as opposed to those texts that are produced by a heritage museum, and the local nursing home. Cultural identity, literacy sponsors, and community discourse form the nexus of concepts through which I view my data.

### **No Unsacred Places: Food and Food Texts as Home**

Geographies and sense of place are never far away from Mennonites; those who compose content for cooking texts carve identities for themselves that are socially sanctioned within physical places codified with social and traditional significance. In order to contextualize my work within a conversation about literacy and place, I turn to Nedra Reynolds' *Geographies of Writing: Inhabiting Places and Encountering Difference*. By combining writing, space, and place, Reynolds examines how we may interrogate traditional sense of place theories within writing pedagogies. Early on in her text, Reynolds highlights the slippage that can occur between writers and the places they inhabit or create:

[W]e need a sense of place – for texts and classrooms and cultures – defined by contestations and differences that extend well beyond the boundary lines. Places, whether textual, material, or imaginary, are constructed and reproduced not simply by boundaries but also by practices, structures of feeling, and sedimented features of habitus.

Theories of writing, communication, and literacy...should reflect this deeper understanding of place (2).

Reynolds invites us to question the boundaries – geographical and otherwise – that can take place within texts and those who engage with them. She stretches Homi Bhabha's

concept of “third space,” extending it towards language that communities use within spaces, thus explaining both space and discourse overlap in the definition of boundaries.

Another contemporary figure working with concepts of space, more specifically in geographical theory, is Yi-Fu Tuan. Regarded as a major foundational text in sense of place studies, Tuan’s *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* explores the link between human environment and worldview. Tuan’s critical imperative is defining the dynamic bond that links people and their corporeal surroundings. In short, the term “topophilia” unifies his study and the connections that human beings create between themselves and the places in which they live. Tuan asserts that place is a point in space that has been infused by human meaning and experiences. His definition of “topophilia” ties what is corporeal to the historically agrarian Mennonites of south central Kansas; they placed themselves in a stark, open space and planted wheat. They created fields and homesteads and orchards. Aspects of the land shape culture, which in turn shapes all other aspects of our lives. Tuan asserts:

The word 'topophilia' is a neologism, useful in that it can be defined broadly to include all of the human being's affective ties with the material environment. These differ greatly in intensity, subtlety, and mode of expression. The response to environment may be primarily aesthetic: it may vary from the fleeting pleasure one gets from a view to the equally fleeting but far more intense sense of beauty that is suddenly revealed. The response may be tactile, a delight in the feel of air, water, earth. More permanent and less easy to express are the feelings that one has toward a



place because it is home, the locus of memories, and the means of gaining a livelihood (93).

I argue that a sense of place can encompass a community-manifested text that relays localized literacy practices to the wider world. Sense of place and space can be transmitted through texts, and therefore individuals who have left their communities of origin can still achieve a connection to those communities through making and consuming the food they identify as signifiers. Alternatively, an individual's return to the locations where they first observed specific food traditions can be a powerful experience; being in a kitchen where the same cookbooks are in use (and perhaps have turned into something of a family scrapbook full of alterations and notes) is meaningful and full of its own subtext that represents traditions, stories, and patterns of a particular kinship. Eating the same food with the same people for decades is a powerful act that grounds us in community. This is an experience I have had with my own Russian Mennonite family, and to that end I decided to intersperse part of my own narrative with that of those who shared their own stories and perspectives.

At this point, I will reiterate the usage of my own creative work placed at the beginning of various chapters in order to bridge scholarship and personal perspective. The execution of this strategy employs Carolyn Ellis' short definition of autoethnography from *The Ethnographic I*, which is "research, writing, story, and method that connect to autobiographical and person to the cultural, social, and political" (xix). I continue with Tuan's assertion that if we can know our environment through the senses, and further define the places that matter to us through those senses, then it stands to reason that we can better understand the Mennonite communities of south central Kansas through the

food and food-related texts that they produce for themselves and the public. More than that is an exploration of ways in which Mennonite cooks, a group largely consisting of women, claim space for themselves through the production of cookbooks.

We may view fundraising cookbooks as products that become a body of narratives, however truncated or short. These texts, usually spiral bound and printed by smaller companies who specialize in producing fundraising or keepsake cookbooks, provide a concrete means of representation to cookbook committees and contributors alike. They also act as sociohistorical markers that assist scholars in further interrogating the differences and similarities between printed cookbooks and corresponding contemporary iterations such as blogs.

Gender roles are part of cookbook studies; engaging with fundraising texts produced by Mennonite organizations and institutions is impacted by internalized assumptions regarding gender; there is the common conception of women as keepers of the domestic sphere, maintaining hearth and home, often at the expense of their own autonomy. Nan Johnson (2002) mobilizes the term “parlor rhetoric” to describe the kind of discourse that women historically actuate while inhabiting private spaces and describes it as a kind of rhetorical training that happens outside the academy. Sarah Walden’s *Tasteful Domesticity* further develops these ideas by aligning cookbooks (which exemplify private domestic space) with tensions surrounding culturally sanctioned strategies that western women have enacted in order to shape their own lives. She states that “[w]omen’s adaptations of taste discourse and recipe function allowed them to resist externally imposed standards and definition in a culturally acceptable package. For example, many fund-raising cookbooks published near the turn of the twentieth century

included a recipe called ‘How to Cook Husbands’” (168). Indeed, a variation of this “recipe” appears in one of the eight cookbooks featured in this study (*Books for Cooks*). Although entitled “How to Preserve a Husband,” it is a variation on the piece that Walden points out in her work, suggesting this commonplace attempts to strike a balance between “romantic love and marriage” and “sexual desire that contrasts with the austere Victorian domesticity usually presented in cooking texts” (169). To further contextualize this, Theophano (2002) suggests cookbooks also give women a way to hone their literacy skills and talents while attending to their responsibilities in the domestic sphere:

Around domestic life and its responsibilities, women were able to construct a socially sanctioned world that was theirs to value, dissect, and embellish. It is not surprising, then, that culinary activities provided women with a context for reading, writing, and communicating with one another without neglecting their domestic responsibilities. From their cookery books, we learn that the kitchen was a place where mothers, servants, children, and others read and wrote.... Cookbooks and recipe collections were a “place” where they could engage in compiling, editing, categorizing, composing, and responding to written texts (156).

This is not dissimilar to the cookbooks within the Mennonite communities of south central Kansas; perhaps unsurprisingly, the concept of gendered spheres still exists. While women’s reclamation of food texts has been consistent for decades, even moving into the world of popular online food blogs, there remains a need to carve subversive spaces for women, regardless of their cultural background. This is emphasized by Anne Ruggles Gere (1994) who speaks to the value of “composition’s extracurricular.” Writing

outside the academy is significant in that it often mitigates gaps between scholarly writing that happens within institutions and that which is composed in contact zones encountered in the day-to-day lives of individuals who organically begin writing in their own local contexts.

Finally, providing nourishment for oneself or a community is an intimate act made public. The production of a physical object – a cooking text – that uses content for and by various contributors who may have no other means of public expression provides audiences with intimate knowledge passed down through several generations. In this way, recipe writers and editors can assert their existence. “We are here,” they exclaim in ways both kairotic and subversive. This powerful assertion can define historic and contemporary precepts while indicating ways that community members shape and reshape societal contexts.

### **Overview of Chapters**

The second chapter of my work begins with an attempt to relay what a Mennonite is. I relay the interplay between Russian Mennonite history and geographic space in south central Kansas. Acknowledging the relationship between both is necessary in order to trace the shifting concerns and trends that contribute to a community study.

Place becomes a component because it shaped (and continues to shape) the Mennonite families who settled in this region. Although I am obviously unable to personally interview immigrants from the 19<sup>th</sup> century that came from eastern Europe, their descendants’ cultural practices are informed by the specters and lasting memories of exodus from Russian-held territory. I provide necessary historic information so that a

holistic understanding of landscape and stakeholders is ever-present. Place is a primary element of cultural storytelling that culminates in the texts and food traditions I examine.

Chapter three attends to intersectional issues of class, labor, and gender. I begin by briefly covering the history of women and cookbooks, ruminating on what food texts written specifically for women offered their audiences. Some early examples were oversimplified manuals; however, later cookbooks included recommendations extending into domestic affairs. There is an overwhelming binary of food preparation in public and private spheres (see: Notaker's *History*; Theophano; Bower) that emphasizes the insider/outsider aspects of my project while inserting food culture and gender into a conversation. I used Sarah Walden and Doris Janzen Longacre's work to assist my own analysis of how taste and morality can combine in cooking texts and shape cultural movements. Furthermore, I connect this argument to the drastic shift for Mennonite women in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by providing a brief historic summation of Mennonite women's groups. Later groups, patterned after secular Home Demonstration Units (HDU), emphasized modern consumer culture, and changed many women's approaches to domestic life while offering yet another layer of discourse to their community.

Finally, I engage with two cookbooks that blatantly attend to gender issues through decisions relating to subtext, vocabulary, and authorship. One is a celebratory text that emphasizes woman-centered community; the other operates on a significantly more autonomous level, although the author emphasizes his connection to Mennonite family members and traditions. *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* and *Mennonite Men Can Cook, Too* were published for a wider audience independent of my chosen community; however, they reflect attitudes that touch the Russian Mennonites in south central Kansas.

The connectivity between these books and the perceptions of gender roles illustrate traditional modes of thought which influenced material within the community cookbooks I examine.

Chapter four outlines part of my methodology as it applies to Anne Bower's classification of different fundraising cookbook narratives. I use Bower's framework regarding the "plot" of various cooking texts in order to determine its exigencies. This is done through an analysis of illustration, binding details, statements of historic significance by contributors, and the number of specific recipes related to a culinary Mennonite "favorites." Furthermore, I supply readers with a series of zwieback recipes and attempt to measure which are most "user friendly" or provide an entryway for community outsiders by employing Colleen Cotter's theory of linguistic recipe components, including evaluation clauses. My findings suggest different levels of access for outsiders who cannot gain access to regional Russian Mennonite discourse without assistance, and an explanation of each cookbook's intended audience. Community cookbooks from this region facilitate productive engagement with local discourses and are useful for addressing what context is necessary for meaningful participation.

Chapter five conveys coding criteria for the cookbooks and interviews I acquired for data collection. Interviewees Mark, Anja, Ruth, Agatha, Eli, Rose, and Helen provided insights that frame specific themes correlating with tacit understanding of discourse displayed by my selection of community cookbooks. Topics such as language use, local food practices, and cultural heritage indicate that familial bonds and geographic proximity translate to a more nuanced perspective of the Russian Mennonite community of south central Kansas.

Finally, my conclusion confronts why the preservation of Mennonite community cookbooks is vital to protecting cultural heritage and giving a voice to contributors, both those living and dead. I use part of this chapter to contemplate the creation of a digital community cookbook archive that represents the Kansas Mennonite community, and who the stakeholders for such a project might be. I also emphasize the importance of opening discourse communities to achieve goals that benefit all stakeholders, both inside and outside of institutionally sanctioned spaces.

**CHAPTER II – CROSSING WATER AND CONTINENTS: THE RUSSIAN  
MENNONITES IN KANSAS**

*Memory: Ritual (8 y.o.)*

*You leave and you return.*

*Gram is there at each endpoint, both the coming and the going.*

*You go into the kitchen.*

*You sit at the table.*

*You must be certain that she knows where you will be.*

*“We are going into town,” you might say.*

*“Do you need cheese? Milk? Sausage?”*

*One afternoon*

*we go, my father and I,*

*and before our going I see there is a shoe*

*on the kitchen table.*

*At least, it might be a shoe.*

*This is an odd singular thing.*

*It is not part of my usual waking, living, dressing, or being.*

*It is from a between place.*

*I presume, as children do, that everything can be mine with the right equation of questions.*

*I ask to keep it for my treasures.*

*It can live with my seashells, old perfume bottles, great grandma Elizabeth’s hair comb  
that is*

*shaped like a butterfly.*

*But – no.*

*I can’t.*

*Gram says so.*



*I am told it belonged to (maybe) my great grandfather's father.*

*It is old,*

*came (maybe) from Russia.*

*I turn it in my hands, and it looks too small for a man's foot.*

*The surface is caked and cracked and black.*

*The sole thin, the heel counter worn.*

*There are no laces.*

*I wonder how far the shoe has gone.*

*It makes me think of how far someone can go,*

*and why a person might wear out small shoes to get there.*

#### **Dass wir ziehn nach Amerika<sup>4</sup>**

Community cookbooks produced by the German Russian Mennonites of south central Kansas can be viewed as what Norman Fairclough calls “semiotic elements of social events.” He writes that “social agents draw upon social structures (including languages) and practices (including orders of discourse) in producing texts, but actively work these ‘resources,’[creating] (potentially novel) texts out of them, rather than simply instantiating them” (475). For example, one of the most recognizable culinary symbols of Mennonite culture is zwieback, and each cookbook used in this project includes at least one recipe for this traditional yeast roll. History, peace, and conflict studies professor

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<sup>4</sup> This line comes from Immigration Song written by Jakob Stucky July 30, 1874, printed April 1875 Translation by Abe J. Unruh – “We’re moving to a foreign land.”

Marlene Epp demonstrated the explicit story of Mennonites and food during multiple presentations she gave at Bethel College in 2013 for the Menno Simmons Lecture Series. During one session entitled “The Semiotics of Zwieback, Sauerkraut and Spring Rolls: Mennonites and Foodways,” Epp explained that “food is endowed with complex signs and symbols. Food is itself and more than itself. It is so ubiquitous and so every day that we almost overlook its value in adding meaning.” Epp mobilizes the zwieback roll as a concrete example of the diaspora relocated Mennonites in plain states experienced. German Russian Mennonites in south central Kansas are well-acquainted with familial refugee mythos; those immigrating to the United States dried zwieback in order to keep from going hungry during long sea voyages to America. Epp argues that for Mennonites, “food holds deep religious meaning” and cannot be separated from their collective cultural cognizance.” Zwieback as a symbol of immigration, survival, and loss consistently recurs within this community. It is part of a larger story marked by struggle.

Mennonite immigrants gambled with their fortunes and future financial stability by leaving Russia in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, many purchasing land from railroad companies that needed settlers in order to ensure economic development. Kendall Bailes’ article<sup>5</sup> on the subject recounts the hard numbers of Mennonite immigration, stating that,

Of the 18,000 (Mennonites) who left Russia for North America between 1873 and 1883, 10,000 went to the United States, settling largely in Kansas, Nebraska, and the Dakota Territory; the remaining 8,000

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<sup>5</sup> *The Mennonites Come to Kansas*. American Heritage Publishing Company, 1959.

immigrated to the Canadian province of Manitoba. The largest single group who came to the United States bought railroad land in Kansas (34).

The prairies were more than capable of holding a vast influx of people; however, there was no shortage of hardship waiting for the Mennonites. Nothing new is hewn on the plains without labor or the threat of pain; the Mennonite's new lives were tumultuous. Ironically, their descendants experience current challenges equally severe. In "Rural Kansas is Dying," journalist Corie Brown connects hardships faced by this group to the current realities of the state – many of which are manifested by economic and sociopolitical realities of southcentral Kansas.

Kansas's predominately German heritage settlers survived holy hell— disease, clouds of giant grasshoppers, epic thunderstorms and blizzards, years of drought, and then the Dust Bowl. Gold diggers and gamblers moved on. Sodbusters and schoolteachers stayed to hoe their rows. Many of today's farmers are direct descendants of those original pioneers. Alone and in silence, they are bearing witness to the emptying out of their communities and the disappearance of their ancestors' legacy. But, like so much about Kansas, it doesn't have to be that way (Brown, 2018).

It may not have to be this way, but the pragmatists among us live and survive in the now of our realities. It is essential to separate the reality from what could be; this is the difference between preservation and ruin. Even now, the impression of foundations, both literal and abstract, demarcate a connectivity to times and places that continue to exist on the edge of all our waking days, all of our past tenses. Their impact shakes us where we are in our present. We have cultural aftershocks in Mennonite country. It is the evidence

of a seismic shift between people and their claimed spaces. Part of this claim, or perhaps a reclamation, depends on the tight hold Russian Mennonites have on their history; cognizance of heritage ties us to ways of being that can help us move forward in a meaningful way. Cooking texts from our community's past are integral to this process.

Until my college years, I lived in the “disappearing communities” that Brown refers to. I have witnessed firsthand the desperation people feel as hospitals close, economic opportunities disappear, and young people flee rural areas - often out of financial necessity. My own story is foregrounded by my great grandmother's mother, Sara Hiebert Schmidt, who came to Kansas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. Because of family documents and genealogy work, I know that she traveled from the small village Alexanderwohl to America on a ship in 1874. According to *Melting Pot of Mennonite Cookery*, a comprehensive guide to Mennonite history and foodways compiled by Edna Ramseyer Kaufman and the Bethel College Women's Association, the “holy hell” Brown describes in her piece regarding the immigrants of Kansas started long before my forebearers ever stood on the prairie with their winter wheat and pragmatic hopes for an oppression-free existence. The Russian Mennonites were fleeing from the shadow of stringent nationalism; I use the word “fleeing” because no one relishes the experience of traveling on a ship with 600 other families across the cold Atlantic.

I wonder if my great-great grandmother Sara and her mother Helena were two of the passengers that traveled on a train which arrived in Topeka during the 4<sup>th</sup> of July. I wonder if they were part of the group that “became dismayed” at the sound of firecrackers because “they thought they had landed in a war zone” (Kauffman 306). I can imagine Sara noticing people's stares, then turning her face with its softly cleft chin

downward into her mother's shoulder. She might've remarked on the unwanted attention in whispered Plautdietsch<sup>6</sup>. She might've even complained a little about how hot she felt in her thick ballooning petticoats and head scarf, both pieces of apparel that would appear distinctly Russian to the townspeople around her.

I am just one member of this genetic line that leads backwards, into Europe, into the tumultuous political landscape of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. As a group, most descendants of the Russian Mennonites care deeply about the perseveration of our history; we recognize the need to sustain vital information for future generations who are genetically and culturally linked to us. I should make clear; those who are not ethnic Mennos are equally welcome in our community, and the Mennonite Central Conference espouses the idea that ultimately Mennonites consider themselves a "family" of believers, however Eurocentric traditions sometimes negate attempts at inclusion. In "Forging an Intercultural Mennonite Identity: Personal Reflections on Ethnoreligion in a Global Context," Hyung Jin (Pablo) Kim Sun, a native of Paraguay, the child of Korean immigrants, and a Mennonite convert contemplates the conflicting messages often present within Mennonite communities and congregations regarding diversity and inclusion. He recounts one such set of memories, stating that,

I began to attend Mennonite regional and national gatherings...I often returned from those meetings feeling uneasy. Almost always, when I arrived...it was immediately evident that the majority of Mennonites there were white. When I began greeting people, they soon started playing 'The

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<sup>6</sup> According to the Global Anabaptist Encyclopedia Online, Plattdeutsch (Plautdietsch) is "a Low German language spoken by Mennonites who originally came largely from the Netherlands and settled in Danzig and along the Vistula River whence they spread into Russia and North and South America."

Mennonite Game,’ making family connections. Later, during our lunchtime, I got to hear about Mennonite foods. Once the events were over and as I traveled back home, I would often say to myself ‘I think I’ve made a mistake. I should have not chosen to become a Mennonite.’ Although I can reflect on these experiences today with some sense of humor, during my time of struggle, it was difficult (196).

It is vital to recognize the ongoing shift in church demographics while understanding that an emphasis on older, Eurocentric traditions can lead to alienation. The growth and preservation of the Mennonite church rests on its ability to balance the preservation of beloved traditions with the inclusion of other worldviews from individuals. This is more opportunity than challenge; the dynamics of Mennonite culture will continue to change. Nevertheless, specific recipes emblematic of the German Russian Mennonite experience appear in every community cookbook appearing in this project. Russian Mennonite food and the descendants of ethnoreligious Russian Mennonite people are at the heart of my work.

### **The Mennonite Game and Misperception**

There is an overwhelming confusion about what and who Mennonites are; people usually expect bonnets, buggies, and beards. They imagine a group of isolated individuals living in a rural, secluded location who limit their connection to technology and “worldly things.” There is the assumption that Mennonites and Amish communities are interchangeable; in very conservative groups of Mennonites this is not wrong, per se. Mennonites exist under the same umbrella of Anabaptist history that the Amish do.

However, the individuals under this “umbrella” have differentiating identities and histories.

During a late August afternoon in 2018, a retired professor of anthropology and his wife (who I’ll call Mark and Anja)<sup>7</sup> mull over the question of Mennonite “culture” and the distinctions between contemporary Mennonite groups. While going over IRB work with my interviewees, I stressed that they would remain anonymous in hopes that this would provide an additional level of comfort which would encourage candor. This seems to put the couple at ease, which is ideal as I am already seated comfortably on an old reupholstered couch in the living room of their airy, three-story farmhouse. Mark begins our interview jovially as the smell of dry heat and old wood wafts up from the floorboards.

“I’ll start by saying that I had a departmental secretary asked me, ‘Are you Mennonite? And I said, ‘Yes.’ And then she said, ‘So, do you do all those things?’ And I said ‘Yes.’ And she said ‘Wow.’ I never asked her what she meant by ‘all those things.’”

While amusing, Mark’s story perfectly encapsulates the reaction many people have to the ethnoreligious conscientious objectors who have a startlingly large international presence. However, this is a project that relies on the Mennonites of Kansas. Perhaps the best summation of Menno history that I can offer to readers came from Mark, who gave a brief overview of our historic origins:

We’re a community of faith going back to the radical wing of the reformation....[W]e believed in an adult believer's baptism and total

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<sup>7</sup> All participant’s names are fictitious monikers given the nature of my project.

separation of church and state, and we were severely persecuted for that. You were either martyred or you fled. And so we're part of that tradition and some of those...well, my father's side...they fled to northern Poland or the Vistula Delta, and then were courted by the railroads here when the draft was being imposed [in Russia].

I will admit that this interview excerpt sounds a bit like an ad for an ancestry-tracing website. What you must understand is that many people who are part of the Mennonite community in south central Kansas, as Mark is, can often recite their ancestral heritage on cue; that includes where foremothers and forefathers migrated to and from before finally landing in Kansas.

The recitation of familial history is such a wide-spread practice that it's commonly referred to as the "Mennonite Game." I myself have played on many occasions, and it became necessary for gathering the data and materials essential to this study. The game works like this; when you meet another Mennonite, you both assess (through a series of questions) whether your familial lines intersect. For this reason, knowing what Russian colonies your father's side "came from," in Marks's case, is a handy piece of information to have.

There is another reason that the Mennonite Game is so important, and it has everything to do with interpersonal connectedness as was made apparent by my conversation with "Ruth." I met with this longtime family friend at the local heritage museum in the small town of Goessel, KS. She went to school with two of my aunts, and my father still remembers how Ruth tutored many of her fellow students. She has been a recognized figure and fixture in this community for many decades. The museum is an



appropriate place to have our conversation; Ruth is one of the town residents who keeps the place running, which is advantageous for me because it's less than ten minutes from our farm. The museum is a centralizing point for cultural preservation and knowledge in our area, and it was dedicated to the public in 1974. It remains "a living tribute to the people who settled in what is now the Goessel community."<sup>8</sup>

Eight other buildings stand on the museum grounds, each one a detailed replica laid out in wood, sod, and stone; there's the Santa Fe Immigrant House that is an exact replica of the shelters that railroad companies set up for the Mennonite immigrants who settled on the Kansas plains. There is also the "Wheat Palace" that includes a threshing stone used during wheat harvests. The Mennonites brought patterns for these tools with them and replicated the stones for use in their new home. Aside from the piece at the museum, there are precious few originals left in Kansas – one of which can be located on the land my own forebears claimed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Ruth is a kind-faced woman who wears her silver hair short and straight; she speaks candidly about being part of the local Mennonite community, recalling details about traditional foods like zwieback, the continued presence of deep social connections among families living in the area, and cultural context that "English" people might not be aware of. There are intertwining connections that naturally develop within a small close-

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<sup>8</sup> The museum's threefold mission is to "preserve and share the story of Mennonites who migrated from villages in the Molotschna Colony [sic] South Russia (currently Ukraine) to this area of Kansas in 1874, to remember how Red Turkey hard red winter wheat introduced change to the agricultural development of Kansas, and to highlight the history of the Goessel community, institutions, and area businesses." Its grounds include a main building with a small store and a corresponding museum with a myriad of artifacts; there are life-sized dioramas depicting the experience of Russian Mennonites during their voyage to the United States and the hardships that followed.

knit group of ethnoreligious groups such as the Russian Mennonites, and this leads to other complications.

“You knew that everybody was related to everybody else,” she mentioned with a matter-of-fact nod, “and when I was going to high school, I had serious doubts as to whether I would find a husband that was not related to me. And, uh, I didn't find a husband who wasn't. My husband is related to me four or five different ways, fifth cousins though, you know, so it was down a ways.”

This correlates with findings in Tammy Parker's 2005 article, “Education and Ethnicity: The Relationship between Russian Mennonites and School District Formation in Buhler and Goessel, Kansas.” In her work, Parker finds it necessary to orient Russian Mennonites within history and place, and speaks to the prevalence of lineage awareness; “Older generations of Russian Mennonites are able to explain their familial relationship to almost any other member of the community (assuming they are also Russian Mennonite)” (34). With Ruth's anecdote in mind, outsiders can begin to understand why this information is a consistent necessity.

My project is a detailed exploration of various community complexities. It also extends its reach into an exploration of its discourse and foodways. We know that food and culture are inseparable, but what does that connection convey to people unfamiliar with Mennonites? In this project, Anabaptist history further centralizes a disruption of those assumptions by exploring various texts, discourse, and tensions that connect deeply to a microcosm of Mennonites in south central Kansas who immigrated from the Vistula Delta in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, the exploration of community cookbooks from those of German Russian descent exemplifies various approaches to prospective

audiences, all while establishing an identity for others to experience or, in the case of community insiders, to assist in the further definition of self and community.

Despite differentiating approaches to faith and everyday life, there are basic themes and issues that punctuate the Anabaptist path; one of these is an oft fraught relationship with technology. As part of a 2012 photo essay for *Wired Magazine* entitled “Mennonites: Connected to the Land, Not the Web,” Jordi Ruiz Cirera explains the varied approaches Mennonites have to modern conveniences such as the internet, cars, and modern photography. Cirera spent time with the Mennonites of Bolivia and encountered drastically different moral convictions among different individuals. The article states that “when it came to being photographed, Cirera says each person made their own interpretation about where photography fit into their beliefs on simplicity. Some were okay with having their portraits taken. Others said they couldn't pose but were okay with candid pictures. Others refused to have their picture taken all together.” Again, this helps to illustrate the often-wide-ranging stratification of beliefs different Mennonite communities exhibit.

Even though my work is centered in the United States, there is a similar range of religious convictions and theological adherence among the international wings of the Mennonite General Conference. During our conversation at the local grocery in Goessel, a longtime resident and small business owner named Eli spoke specifically to different ideas of “what a Mennonite is,” stating that “the most common perception of Mennonites is Amish. Like, the horse and buggy and all like that [...] There's so many flavors of Mennonites it's hard to describe. Everything from, from the Amish to conservative to

very liberal and everybody what's kind of...middle of the road. We're pretty liberal around here. So it's hard to say."

It is true that all interviewees use modern technology, and do not seem to view this as an interference with their belief system, although the exact details of their technology/spiritual boundaries are never established. My participants did not observe plain dress in a noticeable way; these individuals are not distinct from others in the outside world except for their familial background, their linguistic use of Plautdietsch and discourse circulated within the local Mennonite community, their religious practices, and an observation of conscientious objectivism. Such traits correlate with my impression that the interviewees in this project identify as being ethnically linked to German Russian Mennonites while belonging to local Mennonite congregations. Again, Parker's research supports this; although published over a decade ago, her article exemplifies that this insular communal identity persists<sup>9</sup>. Connections to church and family help to define a community that consistently attempts to culturally separate themselves through a strong sense of faith, cultural heritage, and history.

### **Wandering and Wheat: Journey of the Mennonites**

Clarifying moments arise in every single project that I have ever undertaken; you can call them portents, signs, or even universal nudges. I received one such nudge while engaging with Margaret Cook's bibliography of "charitable cookbooks" which lists 3000 titles all published before the 1920s. Regarding Cook's text, Janice Bluestein Longone

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<sup>9</sup> Well over 70 percent of the people living in Buhler or Goessel who identify themselves as Russian Mennonite still attend a Mennonite church, often the same church attended by their extended family. Those family members who leave the community for school or jobs usually keep in touch with events and people in the community, sometimes even returning to live in the area again after a few years away (35).

points out that charitable cookbooks, defined as texts produced for their explicit fundraising powers, were often “the first known cookbook[s] published within [a] state” (21). It is too perfect – too fitting – that *The Kansas Home Cookbook* was the first food text produced in Kansas by the residents of the now infamous prison town, Leavenworth. Its publication date was 1874, and this is the very year that a boatload of Russian Mennonites traveled on ships to the railways that would lead them to their claims on the dry prairies of the Midwest. The group’s evolving religious and cultural approach to nourishment provides a microcosmic example of the confluence between scholarship and practice. Two centuries and two continents serve as a backdrop for the journey this ethnoreligious group undertook. Furthermore, the Mennonites assisted in establishing a major part of Kansas’ identity as “breadbasket of the world,” although this claim may be steeped in mythos as much as fact.

The origins of Mennonite life and culture are established in the 16<sup>th</sup> century as a group of people separated themselves from the protestant church during an era known as the “radical reformation.” These individuals, called Anabaptists, believed that people could only enter Christianity as adults who had a developed sense of free will. There was no direct salvation through infant baptism or through administering sacraments in the perfect way. According to Cornilius J. Dyke, the Anabaptists believed that the work of Martin Luther was only “a halfway reformation” that still did not address the flaws present in the foundation of the church because it was still tied to state and country. Dyke states that “To [the Anabaptists], the church, according to the New Testament, should consist of believers only. These would voluntarily join the church, instead of being brought in through infant baptism, and by their free decision bind themselves to witness

and to discipline as the body of Christ” (24). Anabaptist opposition to the normative practices of Martin Luther’s brand of Protestantism in Wittenburg made them vulnerable; the acolytes of Lutheranism attacked them for being heretical in their beliefs. To escape persecution, the Mennonites fled to Germany, Switzerland, and various other parts of Europe. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Tsarina Catherine the Great offered a group of Mennonites annexed land in exchange for their participation in economic development of the region. In exchange, the Mennonites were allowed to live in their own communities, speak their own language, practice their faith, and remain exempt from military service as per the requirements of their convictions as contentious objectors. According to the historic article provided by Norman E. Saul, this was an era of growth for the Mennonites, who thrived in the lands allotted to them. He specifies that,

The two largest Mennonite colonial areas of South Russia were Khortitsa, on the Dnieper river about 175 miles northwest of the port of Berdiansk (now Osipnenko) on the Sea of Azov, and Molochna, centered around the market town of Halbstadt, about 90 miles from Berdiansk. Other settlements were scattered along the Black Sea coast, in the Crimea, in Bessarabia, and in Russian Poland. The total Mennonite Russian-German population of "New Russia" was about 40,000 by 1869, half of whom lived in the Molochna colony, while the number in all the Russian Empire was probably not over 75,000 (43).

However, the time of peaceable expansion could not last. Much altered for the Mennonites after the succession of Alexander the 1<sup>st</sup> who ended Mennonites’ exemptions from military duty and demanded that the religious group further integrate into Russian

society. An alteration in political forces caused a large swath of the Mennonite population to consider emigration. During the 1870's, the Russian empire developed a fervent nationalism and became less tolerant of groups who resisted being part of the whole. Yet again, persecution became an issue for the Mennonites.

By the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, American land developers were commissioned by railroad companies to convince large groups of Mennonites to immigrate to land in what is now considered the "heartland." Once again, a country was seeking those who might assist with economic development in yet undeveloped spaces. Travel writer Lori Erikson explains that these developers "were looking for groups of people to buy lots along the tracks being laid across the continent. They sent German-speaking representatives to Europe, where they traveled to isolated Mennonite communities to try to entice them to the U.S." The combination of worried Mennonites in colonies such as Khortitza and Molotchna on the Ukrainian Steppes and these agents promising a new life created an alloy that led to a major cultural shift in middle America. This led multiple representatives from the Russian settlement to Kansas where they assessed the possibilities for Russian Mennonite resettlement. According to Charles Hillinger's 1986 *Los Angeles Times* retrospective on the Kansas Mennonites, a familiarity regarding the landscape and climate led community leaders to believe that resettlement in the plains would be successful. Furthermore, land was cheap, and the Mennonites' agrarian skills were transferable, and likely to provide stability in their new surroundings. Hillinger states that,

In 1872 Bernhard Warkentin, a wealthy Russian Mennonite wheat grower, came to the United States looking for a new place for his people. He

discovered that the prairies of Kansas most closely represented the steppes of Russia and that land there was available for as little as \$2 and \$3 an acre. Through Warkentin's efforts 5,000 of the German-speaking Mennonite farmers from the Ukraine migrated to Kansas between 1874 and 1884. Mennonites from Poland and Germany followed suit (Hillinger).

Mennonite farmers brought the techniques that they had developed to the prairie and revolutionized wheat production; hand in hand with these advances, they traveled to Kansas with Turkey Red Wheat. The story of why and how Turkey Red was introduced in Kansas and its connection to the Mennonites has proven to be largely mythic although it also serves a semiotic purpose; Norman E. Saul corroborates this in "Myth and History: Turkey Red Wheat and the 'Kansas Miracle'" (2012). Saul eventually concedes that there is no way to be certain about the origins of this grain or the real impact of Russian Mennonites on Kansas, which was considered a corn-growing state until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. What is certain is that wheat, like zwieback, is emblematic for Mennonites in this area.

### **Listening at the Doorway: Liminality and Shift in a Post-Displacement World**

Rural life for these immigrants in Kansas remained consistent in quality until the 1900's when technological and post-war advancements led to what John L. Shover called "The Great Displacement." The decades after the Great Depression and the second World War were a time of technological and scientific revolution. Royden Loewen outlines this time of radical change in his text, *Diaspora in the Countryside: Two Mennonite Communities and Mid-Twentieth Century Rural Disjuncture*. Loewen argues that this



“displacement” led to a dualized diaspora for Mennonites in North America; the first is rooted in nostalgia for the homeland, and the second stems from disappearing rural communities that Mennonites formed in the United States during the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

By the 1980’s, the farming industries in Canada and the United States had lost millions of people. The Mennonites were some of the last people to be overcome by the cultural shift; there was ultimately no escape from changing societal realities. “[T]he Mennonites provide evidence of a unique experience in the Great Disjuncture,” Loewen suggests. “[A] people left unscathed by earlier continental changes, they finally met the forces of modernization head on” (8). Mennonites themselves are an expansive group of people who exist under a large umbrella. Currently, there are an estimated 1.3 million Mennonites living, working, and worshipping worldwide. While my focus is primarily Eurocentric, the Mennonite Central Committee’s outreach is not. According to Bethel College,

[T]here are slightly more members of Mennonite groups in Africa than in North America, with the church in Africa growing much more rapidly than that in North America. Mennonite groups can be found on every continent, in 65 different countries, speaking dozens of languages. Far more Mennonites in North America today speak Spanish than German.

Community members featured in my study are what might be referred to as “modern Mennonites.” They do not wear plain dress and although still part of a Mennonite congregation, there are more similarities than differences between Anabaptist and Protestant denominations in the area. What holds this group together is a former

observance of “separateness” that has eroded over time. One element contributing to the acculturation of the Mennonites into English society were the state schools established for children by Mennonite communities in conjunction with state governments (see: Parker).

Despite this, my great grandmother, grandmother, and a bevy of second cousins have a familial reputation of being active in the surrounding community; people know their names, their stories, and their backgrounds. This project is born from the hope of a shift in the acknowledgment of contributions and the personage of all Mennonites, although the majority of my effort deals specifically with Mennonites who by and large do not participate in plain dress or limit their usage of modern amenities. By interrogating texts compiled by a group of predominantly Mennonite women in south central Kansas (although it is important to acknowledge that a small number of men contributed to these texts as well), we can better focus our attention on their voices, proving that they are not unknowable or relegated to a domestic existence void of individuality.

This requires rigor and a determination to specify the sometimes misunderstood community in which I work; identifying the discourse and audiences of Russian Mennonites of south central Kansas represents a microcosm where findings are less likely to be extrapolated due to a limited geography and scope. The personal connection to the community my field work focuses on is advantageous; it allows me to infer nuance, and my information comes directly from the people with whom I already have a rapport. However, I also recognize that some of my insights are limited due to my part-time status as a visitor connected by blood to a family that has existed in the area since the community’s inception. All I could do was ask people for their stories. What I was really

searching for was their culture, which is exemplified in the stories that communities and individuals tell themselves and each other. I also listened to texts in this way, and tried to hear what a multitude of cookbook contributors were telling me. I listened deeply so that I could accept the information generously given. I let it sit within me.

### **CHAPTER III – WOMAN’S WORTH, WOMEN’S WORK: FOOD, COOKBOOKS, AND GENDER**

*The recovery of women’s writing, women’s history, and women’s lives involves a consideration of many alternative materials such as cookbooks, letters, diaries, and so on. Recipes convey information, but they also record the history of recipes, of food, of women cooking, and of women writing.*

--Elizabeth J. McDougall

*Women can spin very well, but they cannot write a good book of cookery.*

-- Dr. Samuel Johnson

Historically, cooking has been regarded as a skill and a practiced task; the degree to which this skill is marked as specialized and extraordinary has much to do with who is doing the cooking itself. According to a summation of *Gorgias* by Ellen Quandahl, Socrates “had charged that rhetoric was a mere knack, the antistrophe in the soul of what cooking is to the body (465e)” (129). Antistrophe implies that cooking is a repetition, a pattern that one follows again and again; this conveys a perception of cooking and food preparation as a simple and unrefined symbiotic relationship that prioritizes simple production and consumption. Contemporary issues surrounding food reflect the concerns present in *Gorgias*. The subject of food has always been surrounded by countless issues impacting those who practice and perform food preparation as entertainment, labor, or both. Issues of class, social justice, race, and gender create an intersectional maelstrom that touches the lives of everyone and anyone who eats. Carol Hanisch’s sentiments

regarding the personal as the political shows up nowhere more prominently than in issues surrounding food.

Among the Russian Mennonites in south central Kansas (and among any people with deep ancestral ties) food issues are layered between practice, time, and culture. The Mennonites in Kansas often indicate to others that the preparation of “traditional” food is an activity that acts as a reclamation of familial history. Preparing sausage bubbit or peppernuts does the job of feeding hungry people but producing dishes from their particular set of foodways is also a performative activity connecting past with present, public with private. However, traditional fare is not an everyday mainstay for most contemporary Mennonite families because of the time-intensive labor it takes to produce these dishes, not to mention modern standards of healthful eating. For example, the annual Mennonite Relief Sale in Kansas offers *verenika* to the masses, and brings in, according to a 2018 newspaper story by Beccy Tanner in the *Wichita Eagle*, “roughly 400” Mennonite volunteers to prepare the dried curd stuffed dumplings ahead of the event. One such volunteer named Joy Dalke summed up the issues surrounding traditional food like *verenika* nicely, stating “[t]hey are not easily made so they are not an everyday food. It was always very special when we did make them.”

A separation exists between the way many of the Mennonites I spoke with regard food and its place in modern western culture. To better understand these differences, it is useful to consider Doris Janzen Longacre’s *More-with-Less*, which is one of the most widely recognized Mennonite works on cooking. First printed in 1976, it provides a bridge between former precepts of eating and contemporary biblical considerations about food and consumption that remain as true in the 21<sup>st</sup> century as they were in the 1970s.

*More-with-Less* was published during a time when the Mennonite Central Committee was beginning to realize that ecological changes around the world required a redefinition of food consumption that should be adopted to alleviate hunger and need. Longacre writes that “[p]eople who live on less than 200 pounds of grain a year are deficient in both calories and protein. But much of the amount we consume above European levels must be called excess, both for health’s sake and from a caring Christian stance” (19). She also argues, as other interview subjects in my project did, that food heavy in offerings like sausage, refined sugars, and enriched flour would hinder individuals from maintaining a balanced lifestyle. The basic meat, bread, and starch diets those in 1874 consumed were for individuals charged with plowing fields and doing heavy physical labor. This is, in most cases, not consistent with the contemporary life of Russian Mennonites in south central Kansas today.

Longacre aside, this group insists that preparing food from their ethnic origins like *verenika* can be a source of physical and spiritual enjoyment. *Verenika* is Mennonite comfort food, and there has been a heavy Mennonite cultural presence in locations like Goessel, Moundridge, and Hillsboro for nearly 150 years. These are townships, church congregations, and people form what Etienne Wagner would call a “community of practice.” His model analyzes the context in which specific language is mobilized. It is also a beneficial method for identifying the discourse surrounding food traditions in Mennonite communities. There is inherent importance in studying food, literacies, and discourse communities in a small selective space partially inhabited by one ethnic group.

Establishing patterns provides helpful analysis that creates an established body of information for those who may wish to study similar subject matter in other sociocultural

settings. More than that, analyzing the cookbooks that originate in such communities gives us much to contemplate in terms of genre. It expands our perceptions of what Jennifer Sinor calls “ordinary writing.” In *Extraordinary Work of Ordinary Writing*, Sinor examines the diary of her great aunt Annie May and asks readers to reconceptualize what texts and artifacts we assign importance to, stating that,

[o]rdinary writing is everywhere, though largely unreadable and unread. Determining what qualifies, in the abstract, as ordinary writing is an exercise in the impossible. Notes, calendars, canceled checks, telephone messages, ordinary diaries, letters, grocery lists, and memos can all be ordinary writing. But they may just as easily be something else. To categorize would ignore the complexity of ordinary writing as a form of writing governed by its own rhetorics. It would equally reduce the role we have in determining the writing that matters (5).

Furthermore, Sinor suggests that what separates ordinary writing from other texts is that it “is not storied” (6) or it does not convey a narrative. Cookbooks and recipes often exist on a scale of narrative; there are cookbooks that function solely as manuals and others that convey much about the author’s life experience and culinary practices. The same can be said of recipes; in the community cookbooks I engaged with, the presence or absence of a contributor’s voice is a notable component of each recipe. It is these elements that give cooking texts a kind of liminality where narrative is concerned. Depending on the intended audience, a contributor may provide readers with varying levels of detail; alternatively, a recipe may be more list than set of instructions with no divulgements and only a scant amount of guidance.

Later in this project, I outline Coleen Cotter's concept of orientation phrases which provide story and context to recipes; community cookbooks often have little orientation that provides a narrative for readers as exemplified by the cookbooks featured by my study. However, this liminality provides an interesting space in which to question why and how cookbooks provide examples of ordinary writing. After all, when we make notes in our own cookbooks, or speak with our friends about the recipes that work best in our kitchens, it is not always with the expectation that our methods will provide us with eternal notoriety. Most people who talk about the food they make, or the recipes they want to try, are thinking of the satisfaction they can get out of doing something well and making something that's memorably delicious.

"Everybody's got to eat" is a commonplace that speaks to the universal nature of culinary studies. Food and food consumption provide two accessible topics with which everyone has some experience. It's an accessibility point that can be used to break down various boundaries. Alternatively, the necessity of nourishment has the potential to cause division in the inevitable classification of sustenance and related labor.

Henry Notaker addresses this in *History of Cookbooks* – often men as well as people of a certain class are afforded distinction for their work in the kitchen. The publication of cookbooks starting in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century also afforded a tool for women's social mobility. Men who ran the kitchens of prestigious households felt threatened by this possible affront to their authority. Robert Appelbaum further explores this controversy in his piece "Rhetoric and Epistemology in Early Printed Recipe Collections," stating that "[i]t was often feared that there was a danger involved in making the 'experiences' of cookery public. It was also often feared that publication



might upset the gender order of the household, as in the largest households male cooks were awarded prestige and privileges that were seldom allotted to women...” (12). I doubt that such concerns existed among the Mennonites, especially in prairie settlements of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Concerns of gender were often influenced by the church and were well established – even internalized – when these groups arrived in Kansas. If gender roles were ever in flux, it was likely due to the necessities of everyday life. Men generally worked in the fields and women were often in support roles. However, crossover labor division was always a possibility.

### **Five Loaves, Two Fishes: Food and Public Consumption**

In our contemporary world, daily food preparation at fast food restaurants or in cafeterias is often dismissed as squarely proletarian, if not completely menial. These opinions are tied to intersectional issues of gender and class. After all, the person standing over a fryer at the local fast food restaurant are not held to the same standards as a time-tested chef. They have much less social currency than James Beard or Cat Cora (although there is an argument to be made that both examples have vastly different types of notoriety). However, both fry cooks and chefs have a great deal of knowledge about the food they prepare for consumption. We desire delicious food; many people have used a twenty-four-hour drive thru to satisfy a craving. We even mark anniversaries and birthdays with food. However, the labor of food procurement and food preparation provides compelling examples of inequality. In some ways, the link between gender and labor defines my project in powerful ways for those invested in the discourse community of Mennonite cookbooks and food culture in south central Kansas. I predict that there will always be people who dismiss the labor and justice issues surrounding food; what’s more, food

writing is sometimes brushed aside as merely ordinary when in all actuality, it is a prominent player in public and private social concerns.

In *Tasteful Domesticity* Sarah Walden mobilizes Bourdieu to explain class related separation between the normative and the elevated. She takes on ideas of taste-making as a way that women have been able to wield societal power in the past (and present) and it is the concept of habitus that she finds the most useful when distinguishing issues of class as it applies to food. Walden defines “taste” as a means with which to establish normative boundaries in society and, ultimately, marginalize others who do not meet specific standards. She writes that “certain classes represent their taste as dominant, legitimate, and natural in order to both define themselves and distinguish themselves from another class” (22). This is significant in terms of women writing cookbooks because, as Janzen Longacre refers to in her work, food and recipes were (and are) places where it is acceptable for women to be clear influences. Part of this, one assumes, is due to the fact that recipes and food preparation may seem frivolous to people who do not consider the labor that happens in these places as “real work,” but Walden and Janzen Longacre both understand what an influential place the kitchen can be. Walden emphasizes its import as a point from which women can influence the identity and outlook of not just family units but nations and faith groups.

In *More-with-Less*, Janzen Longacre insists that food, kitchens, and family meals are a place where women can influence their families to eat healthier, live more frugally, and begin to influence a better path forward in terms of sustainability and international consciousness. There is a clear correlation between both writers’ work though one is a scholarly overview of taste-making while the second is a pragmatic guide; Walden points

out historically recognized figures, such as the “best known cooking school teachers at the turn of the twentieth century” including Sarah Tyson Rorer who was as opinionated about the moral and scientific purpose of food as she was prolific. Walden refers to Rorer as one of the “progressive reformers” who, through cookbooks and her widely circulated column in the *Ladies Home Journal*, employed her influence to sell a certain culinary perspective to the purveyors of American kitchens, more precisely, other women working within the domestic sphere. It was her belief that most of her contemporaries were trapped by their entrenched patterns of cooking “to please the palate and appetite, and the general habits of people” (4). She believed that cooking merely for pleasure was an accelerated path to health issues as well as a danger to the moral fabric of a community, aligning mindful eating with a higher class of consumption while “the palate connotes uneducated food choices based on tradition and emotion” (124) prevalent among “the immigrant working class” (23). Indeed, Rorer’s concerns were deeply rooted in class. She argued that submitting to baser instincts instead of conquering the precepts of taste by approaching food through science was a dangerous flaw, disregarding science and “good taste.”

Longacre makes an argument for a cautious approach to food that correlates to Rorer’s moral approach; she too is invested in the health of her readers but approaches the subject with ideas of sustainability in mind. It is ultimately a reversal; Longacre’s sense of “taste” guides the critical imperative of *More-with-Less*. good taste, she believes, considers health and wellbeing from an international standpoint while attempting to incorporate tradition into the personal eating habits of those in developed nations with strong infrastructures where food insecurity is (in theory) a nonissue. Longacre attempts

to address class issues related to wealth by asking those who have an abundance of sustenance to be mindful of those who don't.

Both women emphasize that consumption with the express purpose of satisfying one's palate is, if not immoral, not wholly aligned with an enlightened perspective. However, Rorer and Longacre approach this stance from different perspectives; one is more spiritually minded while the other is more utilitarian in nature. This difference creates complexity regarding our own "taste" – do we still see traditional favorites as resting between the liminal space of right or wrong, and where do these assertions leave the Russian Mennonites of Kansas?

Fortunately, there are ways to observe food traditions without making and consuming daily helpings of verenika. Cookbooks preserve foodways while giving readers the ability to adapt their own eating habits to modern sensibilities. Perhaps this need for traditional preservation is partially responsible for a food writing renaissance which often takes the shape of online cooking blogs. Alternatively, the demand for cooking texts is far from dead. Popular culture and current digital platforms offer an environment where, whether consciously or unconsciously, people are emphasizing the language of "ordinary" labor as important to the greater society for both the archive and individual's kitchen. Ultimately, writers producing content for these blogs and books are not unlike the tastemakers in Walden's text. The importance of cooking texts and domestic knowledge never changed; it's only evolved.

The entertainment industry also benefits now more than ever from an ongoing interest in food making and food consumption. A vast expanse of baking and cooking competitions saturate the landscape of television broadcasting and online streaming.

These shows serve as simple evidence of public demand. For example, *The Great British Baking Show* enjoys a voracious following of fans who want nothing more than to watch Mary Berry or Paul Hollywood poke at some poor contestant's pitiful attempt at a Stroopwafel. We all gasp at the misadventures of novice bakers who do their best (and usually fail) to recreate edible masterpieces adorned with mirror glaze and buttercream on the Netflix series *Nailed It*, and we cringe whenever we hear Gordon Ramsey shouting at an emotionally fragile line cook about an underdone risotto in the gritty televised confines of *Hell's Kitchen*.

To belabor the point, the study of food is often shaped by desire, necessity, and popular opinion. Barring some miraculous medical advancement, such truisms are not likely to change. Humans understand the requirement of nutrition and sustenance as an unquestionable part of survival. Therein lies the irony of our relationship with food; we cannot live without it, but like Socrates, we sometimes deride and dismiss those who prepare food as part of their livelihood. Again, I am alluding to the differentiating and often intersecting spheres that are at odds with affluent groups who seek to raise food above mere necessity and into the echelons of privilege.

### **Communities, Cooks, and Bakers: The History of Food and Women's Work**

Our language posits kitchens as places where women are in charge, or places in which women should be. "Get back into the kitchen," and "in the kitchen barefoot and pregnant" are insults that have a long, misogynistic history; these representative examples of often violent gendered attitudes are sadly pervasive. And yet there is cognitive dissonance in the positive connotations of a "home cooked meal" which readily exist with an equal amount of familiarity.

It is this duplicity which Notaker references repeatedly in his fascinating *History of Cookbooks*. The perception of what women's roles should and could possibly be regarding kitchens has been prone to fluctuation and often discriminatory, given the zeitgeists of particular places and times. The kitchen has historically been a realm that has the potential to confine women. Alternatively, it can also be a space where women find recognition, both private and professional. History notes that no matter the society, public opinion surrounding women in kitchens has been fraught. Notaker writes about this at length, explicating how notable chefs were intolerant of women who sought to sharpen their own culinary skills. He states that,

Historically, men have often referred to female cooks with little respect.

When the successful 18<sup>th</sup> century French cookbook writer Menon, after publishing a series of great works for the professional chefs of the aristocracy, was persuaded to write a book for female cooks in bourgeois households...he demonstrated a rather patronizing attitude by giving easy recipes for simple dishes. The German gourmet writer Karl von Rumohr was full of contempt in his 1822 description of female cooks, who, in his opinion, lacked the necessary thoughtfulness for the trade, had a penchant for fashion and decoration, and demonstrated unyielding resistance to his many good suggestions for improvement (19).

I ultimately wonder what "many good suggestions" Rumohr was giving these women, or how often he was insulting their intelligence. And why not apply decorative flair to the culinary arts, even in a "bourgeoisie" setting?

People who opine the nature of food preparation as art also perceive the cookbook as much more than a rote set of linear steps readers should follow. Furthermore, cookbooks as we know them have evolved over time; according to Notaker, they began as, “medieval recipe collections” then progressed steadily towards a recognizable cooking text. The oldest examples of recipe collections we have were often gathered in a book format, but Notaker says that they “are all compilations copied from earlier texts or recorded from oral communications by cooks” (50). These manuscripts often provided directions for “confections and medical remedies, instructions for the service at table, suggestions for menus, and practical hints for householder and chief stewards on big estates and in princely courts” (51). These texts were also subject to change as manuscript owners made additions and various notations over time. However, it is important to note that the manuscript cookbooks are still very much alive.

Women in all time periods seem to recognize that “manuscript cookbooks” (a term connected to sisters and food influencers Marilyn and Shelia Brass) act as literal journals that contain information beyond simple direction; in a 2017 article for online publication *Taste* entitled *Pleasure, Pain, and Hot Fudge Stains*, writer Beshia Rodell describes her mother’s handwritten cookbook which became a text through which Rodell could literally trace the different seasons of her mother’s life. She describes how language, measurements, and recipe notation shifted, creating a piece of work that was wholly of her mother’s creation. Perhaps most relevant to my work is Rodell’s admission that her mother’s “manuscript” provided the language through which she began to build her own understanding of food preparation, explaining that she “scoured the pages of

[Mom's] book in order to learn the language of cooking, told here in a dialect much more familiar and intimate than the contents of any printed cookbook.”

Janet Theophano identifies this learning process referred to by Rodell as the underlying importance of cookbooks within communities – and more specifically, within communities of women. She points out that traditional recipes that have a history become variations on a theme that are continually altered but retain “rituals” that “continue to shape a group’s current image of itself” (51). The concept of group perception of self is integral because it emphasizes the importance of engaging with a particular ethnic and religious group of women, such as the Russian Mennonites of Kansas. Theophano points out that while modification of recipes within traditions may happen, those recipes and that “culinary knowledge” is still “collectively generated” (51). This links directly to the discourse surrounding “traditional” Mennonite food featured in this project. Furthermore, Cornelia Gerhardt tells us that “recipes are not simple, straight-forward...instructions that can be successfully used by any novice[;] they represent a register containing presuppositions on many levels, necessary incompleteness in the steps of preparations or sets of instructions, [and] assumptions about cultural knowledge, practical skills, and technical equipment evoking a complex set of practices. (43). Discourse communities rely on community insiders’ ability to develop terminology and shorthand; likewise, communal practices related to specific discourse use by a specific set of individuals contribute to Theophano and Gerhardt’s summation of recipe building within a small, intimately acquainted populace.



### **Honoring Tradition, and the Trials of Trailblazing**

The tensions of insider and outsider status emerge repeatedly in my work and are no doubt exacerbated in some part by the historic positionality of Mennonite women. In *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*, Kimberly Schmidt, Steven Reschly, and Diane Umble focus on the conflicting relationship these women have with their denominations, explaining that,

[w]omen are situated differently from men in Anabaptist communities: they are simultaneously insiders and outsiders. Even though women may have a family history that reaches back generations in their community, as members of patriarchal religious groups their voices are limited. Their community practices, participation, and influence are often exercised through their husbands' place in the community or through female-centered activities such as the breadmaking ritual and kinship networks (26).

I wish to complicate the idea that such behavior is replicated identically in all Anabaptist communities. The reality is far more nuanced, and prevailing attitudes about gender vary greatly. For example, the Russian Mennonites I focus on in my own work are less traditional in terms of blatant gender role enforcement. However, there is always some level of internalized sexism present that I would argue is prevalent in almost every ethnoreligious community of western origin.

The very precepts of Anabaptist life prioritize a kind of group unity; the theological tribulation of their ancestors bind Mennonites together and this naturally extends to the women's organizations therein. Anita Hooley Yoder's *Circles of*

*Sisterhood* provides invaluable assistance towards this truism. *Sisterhood* explicates the inception of Mennonite women's organizations and uses the information gleaned from archival research as well as written accounts to show the impact of gender expectations on early women's groups who prioritized service and simultaneously created communities which allowed for empowerment and support. Within the pages of Hooley Yoder's book lies a subtext of continual debates on gender and the placement of women's roles in the church. An honest analysis of these "circles" provides a deeper understanding of the tensions that shape the contemporary Mennonite community. My aim in bringing this information into conversation with my work is that it will provide further insight into the texts produced by Mennonites of south central Kansas.

Early women's groups that formed in North America "engaged in work that significantly supported the mission of their congregations and denominations and connected them to each other in new and deeper ways" (13). Their activities usually centered around sewing and fundraising. By the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century these sewing circles were becoming increasingly organized, growing into formally recognized groups connected to various congregations.

However, male church leaders whose congregants participated in early women's groups had many doubts about the true nature of these organizations. They often begrudgingly accepted the women's mission work provided that the members of these organizations were able to connect their aims to the furtherance of the church's mission. Hooley Yoder writes that "[w]omen leaders sometimes had to defend themselves against involvement in 'worldly' causes; in a 1918 letter to Daniel Kauffman (a prominent Mennonite Conference leader), Clara Eby Steiner assured the church leader that the

women she was organizing were ‘not suffragettes’” (21). The work of Mennonite women reflected the societal and economic concerns of the early to mid-1900s; these groups of faithful wives, mothers, sisters, and friends eventually began to produce their own periodicals and worked tirelessly to establish institutions of higher education (16). In turn, they began to create roles for themselves adjacent to the wider Mennonite church. This was not done without strife as many members of the Mennonite Conference (MC) considered the women who served as leaders and members of these organizations as liberal radicals. After all, this religious community still stood on the principals of women as the inferior and subordinate sex (23).

Eventually, there were “takeovers” of women’s organizations by male leaders on the denominational mission boards of the Mennonite Conference. One stunning statement featured in Yoder’s book was featured in the June 1929 *Gospel Herald* and states that “[t]he church has not looked with favor on such a movement, not that it wasn’t interested in women’s work but because it was feared that the organization of such a society would have a divisive influence. We can see a reason why there should be a women’s sewing organization, for this is distinctly women’s work. With a separate mission society, this is different (25). It is this idea of “women’s work” that underscores much of my analysis regarding gender roles in community cookbooks.

For the most part, the General Conference Mennonite Church remained content to let women’s organizations proceed and continue working independently with few caveats. Eventual shifts in perspective regarding women’s autonomy among North American Mennonites align historically with changes in economic and technological realities. Schmidt, Reschly, and Umble explain that such advancements rendered a

women's labor on her husband's farm less necessary than it had previously been (267). In turn, new choices were suddenly available to Mennonite women.

*Strangers* further details the growing evolution of women's groups into the mid-to-late twentieth century, indicating that as certain churches became increasingly evangelical, each church member regardless of gender was perceived as equally important in order to successfully "compete for souls" (271). The emphasis on gender lessened and, in some cases, women avoided marriage and childbirth in favor of mission work. The shifting concept of womanhood was also exemplified by the influence of secular House Demonstration Units. Mennonite women adapted the concept of HDUs and integrated them into their own communities rather than join chapters unaffiliated with churches. Nevertheless, these groups included "The language (...) of a new middle-class, consumer-oriented, and domestic femininity (269) which led to the development of new discourse identities within Mennonite circles. The socioeconomic life of Mennonites changed so significantly that women were reevaluating their place in these ethnoreligious communities. An increasing confidence and support from women's organizations may have provided encouragement for participants to look outside the church for further opportunities. Schmidt, Reschly, and Umble state that among some Mennonites,

[d]uring the 1950s (...) women also began translating their public identity as nurturers into off-farm professions. As the number of women farm producers waned, the number of female students in secondary and postsecondary education waxed. Women who had pursued professional degrees in the 1930s and 1940s recall having to resist older agrarian notions of women's work and marriage (271).

These sewing circles and other church affiliated groups establish a portrait of how women have formed communities within the Mennonite denomination, and it parallels evolving perceptions of gender in secular society. It is also necessary to exemplify the vibrant history of such groups to illustrate the myriad of intersectional issues informing my work; feminist rhetoric, the discourse communities developed by Mennonite women's groups, and the knowledge generated by collaborative texts such as community cookbooks.

### **Identity Recognition and Cookbook Collaborations**

Cookbooks and recipes can be, and often are, seminal texts of a community; they invite outsiders to engage with practices that contribute to an ongoing debate about genre and audience. Carrie Helms Tippen emphasizes that “food is especially important to the discussion of identity because of its position as a ‘privileged site’ for examining the tensions and conflicts surrounding changes in dominant ideology” (567). von Rumohr’s resistance to female cooks is interesting in light of Royster and Kirsch’s concept of social circulation, which includes a “disruption of dichotomies associated with rhetoric being defined within what has been considered historically to be the public domains of men” (98) and aside from politics, religion, and the like, Notaker indicates that this attitude extends to kitchens.

Therefore, I find it necessary to widen the scope of my study to gender inclusiveness; although food studies and scholars studying cookbooks work to elevate these texts as worthy of study, it is not completely woman-exclusive, even within the Mennonite community. By widening definitions of labor division, and continuing to

dispel gendered stereotypes, we can begin to see how cookbooks align and deviate from mere hegemonic construction.

What's more, we can accomplish this while simultaneously attending to the import of women's writing and written work. While examining the application of gender to cookbooks in *Authenticity: How Cookbook Writers Redefine Southern Identity*, Tippen reveals that in the "introductions to scholarly works of food studies, it is conventional to note that the late arrival of food studies to academic standing is attributed to a devaluing of women and their labor." However, the focus of her book does not limit itself in terms of one gender's perspectives. She states that, included in her work are "[m]any texts authored by men because gender does not only mean women [...] the expectations of a sex-gender system based on binary constructions affect how the gendered speaker appeals to a gendered audience (6)." My project deals specifically with texts and interviews produced by those who identify as cisgendered men and women. No alternative gender identity was disclosed to me during our time together.

### **Presence (and the Absence) of Men in Mennonite Community Cookbooks**

1964's *Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread* compiled in Halstead, KS by the local Mennonite Church includes a forward by pastor A.E. Funk. This is a logical opening to a church-affiliated cookbook. However, I wonder why the cookbook did not have a collectively composed introduction from the text's recipe contributors. On a related note, *Daily Bread*'s contributors are primarily women, and yet the majority of these individuals are listed by the honorific "Mrs." in front of their husband's names. I realize that this was (and in some circles, remains) a regularly accepted marker of a married woman's status. However, it rankled me despite my acknowledgement that I view this practice from the

perspective of my own era and political viewpoint. I do recognize that it's a tradition nonspecific to Kansas Mennonites. Ultimately, it's simply impossible to remove gendered power differentials from the interviews and texts I cite in my work.

Complications surrounding gender, the concept of discourse, and participation in community-oriented food labor extends far beyond the pages of *Daily Bread*. For example, two men manage a local restaurant that serves “traditional” Mennonite fare in Newton KS along with their wives. Another male business owner caters most of the funerals, weddings, and major church meetings that occur within the Goessel and Moundridge area. Other participants spoke about the men in their families who still make “traditional” food, and fondly recalled hog butchering and sausage-making along with other forms of culinary preparation viewed as family events requiring communal participation. It is clear to me that the extrapolation of assumptions related to gender within Russian Mennonite food tradition must be avoided, although some persistent trends cannot be ignored. Ultimately, these cookbooks consist primarily of women writers, editors, and contributors. I do not disavow that men are occasionally present within these texts, but the reality is that women dominate the pages.

In connection with *Daily Bread*, I wish to diversify my analysis and engage with two cookbooks published on a large scale for audiences both Mennonite and mainstream. These texts provide a contemporary example of wider complications regarding gender and food traditions within the Mennonite community. Herald Press' 2011 book featuring Lovella Schellenerg, Annelise Friesen, Judy Wiebe, Betty Reimer, Bev Klassen, Charlotte Penner, Ellen Bayles, Julie Klassen, Kathy McLellan, and Marg Bartel is a textual extension of the popular online blog *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*. Since 2007, the

site has been not only a place to find time-tested recipes for food such as Bubbat and Platz but has also featured insights from Mennonite women regarding heritage, traditions, and faith. The resulting book provides readers with the same material. In her forward to *Mennonite Girls*, Schellenberg describes how the women in her real-life and virtual community combined their efforts for the project, stating that,

Someone once commented, ‘You Mennonite girls sure can cook,’ and though I smiled at her generalization of our cooking abilities and heritage, the name stuck. . . .we created a blog called *Mennonite Girls Can Cook*. We opened our overstuffed recipe boxes and carefully documented the traditional recipes that our Mennonite grandmothers had memorized or sometimes just quickly jotted down without accurate measurements or detailed methods. . . .We added memories and recipes as we published them to the blog (12).

This recollection undoubtedly shares similarities with locally circulated cookbooks connected to the Mennonites of south central Kansas; there is an undeniable participatory element that surrounds Shellenberg et al’s blog and book.

Good Books Publishing also released Willard Roth’s *Mennonite Men Can Cook, Too*. There is no forward like the one appearing in Shellenberg’s book, but a small synopsis of the text’s book jacket reads, “In this book are recipes inspired by the food made by [Roth’s] Mennonite mother and grandmothers. Other recipes are inspired by the monasteries he’s visited in Ireland and England. There are recipes of the food he’s eaten in Ghana, Jamaica, Cyprus, the Netherlands, India, and Nepal.” Roth’s book makes a point of combining a wide selection of recipes with interspersed moments of food-based



memoir entitled “Practicing Hospitality with a Glad and Generous Heart.” In one of these moments, Roth recounts how the men in his family and community participate in food preparation and traditions, recalling his Uncle Vernon, who “supplemented his farming occupation with restaurant cooking and baking” and his father who assisted Roth’s mother during canning season.

There are other moments in *Mennonite Men* that further relay males as active participants in culinary Mennonite life; however, there are no recipes that can be identified as pointedly connected to heritage. In a chapter entitled “Recipes from Friends,” Roth provides a space for other contributors to his book. They include recipes from chefs, retired businessmen, heritage center directors, and emeritus professors. It is curious that these professions are tied so securely to the contributors in Roth’s book. This is a departure from *Mennonite Girls*, where identity centralizes interpersonal relationships within family and faith-based communities, harkening back to Theophano’s observations about the “collective” nature of food knowledge. Such details seem to reveal a distinct differentiation between each text’s priorities; there is the professional identity of the public world, and there is the community tied to domestic realms. The content in *Mennonite Girls* seems inextricably linked to the identity of these women; for Roth, the recipes in his book are a wide array of favorites from various foodways gathered over a lifetime. The women who compiled *Mennonite Girls* link their dishes with the personal worthwhile preservation of heritage.

The final pages are additions from “nephews,” and the description at the top is curious: “As word spread that Uncle Willard was working on a cross-generational cookbook with a masculine twist, several nephews (with a bit of prodding) sent along

their stories and favorite recipes” (301). My observations of these two texts are not meant to provide blanket statements of sweeping intent; only that one seems to inform the other, and that gender undeniably plays a role in both. I would suggest that in this case, Roth does not diminish those who participate in food labor, although it is evident with each recipe that a myriad of women contribute to the content of *Mennonite Men*. Several recipes are described as belonging to women in Roth’s family and so the presence of women in kitchens is never demeaned or refuted. Rather, Roth teases at societal tensions, as does his text. Note the “bit of prodding” moment from the Nephews section of *Mennonite Men*. This book is proud of those who labor to feed the flock, but it cannot shake the pervasive nature of internalized gender expectations. This is, as I have shown, not an issue that only impacts Mennonites, but appears whenever scholarship attends to cooking texts.

***Interlude: Buak Fru***

*Let me be clear.*

*I do not remember much about my great grandmother.*

*I remember the cinnamon rolls we had at her funeral. I remember my Aunt Irene knelt next to me by Elizabeth’s casket. She told me that great grandma was now in heaven where she could watch and protect all the little children. It struck me as frightening – that a woman who had passed might still watch me during my waking days.*

*Before Elizabeth’s death, Gram and I went to the rest home where she lived every evening to put Great Gram to bed.*

*I remember, especially, her hair. In the evenings, we’d release it from its pins and combs.*

*We brushed it out into what looked to me like rivers of iron spilling silver, white, and grey over our hands. Iron, unbending, elemental. Not unlike the trains that brought her people to the prairies.*

*Elizabeth was made from that which forms the stars.*

*Her daughter is fire.*

*Gram is the keeper of the best zwieback recipe.*

*She knows that potato water will keep your bread together. You can hear her in the kitchen before Christmas dinner or Easter Faspa telling everyone that the salads, the beans and tomatoes, everything needs more salt. I wonder if her insides look like veins of hardened crystals formed by sodium chloride running through a mass of curious earth.*

*The food in my heart comes from her kitchen.*

*Her pie safe, a library.*

*Her cookbooks, sacred texts.*

*In the kitchens of women,*

*Bibles.*

*The difference is*

*between what the Father has writ, and the women who are writing.*

*My aunties, cousins, Gram - anyone who alters recipes, writes margin notes in graphite or ink,*

*underlines for emphasis,*

*scratches parts of untrue things completely away –*

*they are not unlike prophets.*

*These are Biblical scrolls,*

*translated, retold, transmitted -*

*women in kitchens change verses.*

## **CHAPTER IV – CLAIMING A PIECE OF TRADITION: COMMUNITY DISCOURSE IN RUSSIAN MENNONITE COMMUNITY COOKBOOKS AND RECIPES**

### **Nourishing Traditions: Food Index for Faspas**

Going forward, it is important that those engaging with my project have knowledge about traditional dishes referenced in my study. What follows are descriptions and background information for each food item that I tabulated in each of the cooking texts my project includes. Understanding the sociocultural significance placed on each food is another strategy for understanding the contents of the cookbooks in my work; the inclusion or exclusion of specific recipes by contributors and editors convey decisions and attitudes related to audience. For example, a cookbook that includes dishes from this list represented by several recipe variants may wish to introduce community outsiders to Mennonite food heritage. Alternatively, if many “old” recipes are present in a cookbook, but there is little explanation surrounding them, it is not unreasonable to suggest that a cookbook has been written exclusively for an insular group (e.g. see, Porter, 1986; Swales, 1990 and 2014).

These dishes have been selected because of interviews conducted with community insiders in the summer of 2018. I produced a corpus of these conversations and elected to concentrate on traditional menu items that were most frequently mentioned by participants. I tabulated the number of times interviewees brought these food items to the forefront of our interaction, and this informed what recipes I traced throughout the

community cooking texts I analyzed in this chapter. Each chart includes the primary dishes participants spoke about most often during our conversations.

### **Zwieback**

Earlier in this project, I explain what this roll represents. In the most basic sense, zwieback is a yeast roll that rises twice and is often served during Faspa. The roll and the meal are interconnected in the Russian Mennonite communities of Kansas; you cannot have one without remembering the other. From *Pluma Moos to Pie* provides a brief explanation of this meal, explaining that “Faspa is one of those Low German words for which there is no direct English translation. Faspa meant a light lunch about 4 p.m. on workdays. Faspa also meant the gathering of family and friends, usually at 4 p.m. Sunday, for a light meal and fellowship, with an emphasis on fellowship. The meal always included zwieback and coffee and might also include cheese, cold cuts, and jelly” (3). Further evidence of the Faspa/zwieback connection occurs in Norma Jost Voth’s *Mennonite Foods & Folkways*, which digs deeper into the origins of each. Voth writes that “it is a Russian Mennonite tradition, adopted in farming communities for very practical reasons. Interrupting busy farm operations in the late afternoon to eat a large meal was considered poor use of time” (71). Zwieback is a staple of the Faspa table because of its various uses; it’s as good with jam and butter as it is with cheese and sausage, perhaps more so because of its shape. The way that zwieback is served and treated at each table varies from region to region; some bakers believe that so much butter goes into the dough that there need be nothing placed onto the bread at all. The roll itself is a figure eight made three dimensional. A small circle is placed on top of a larger circle and the two are conjoined before baking. This zwieback is not to be confused with

the small toasts sold in German grocery stores. Instead, it is a dough filled with copious amounts of fat (usually lard, butter, or shortening), salt, and is less firm than a typical bread dough.

Several sources, including *Pluma Moos*, state that these rolls were crushed, toasted, and then packed into trunks so that the Russian Mennonites would have a viable source of food during their voyages from Europe to America. If toasted correctly, no molding or rot would touch the hard, crusted bread. In this form, these rolls became toasted bread or “reeschkje tweeback.” It is not uncommon for several variant recipes of this yeast roll to appear in cookbooks specifically connected to Mennonite churches and organizations in the area; what’s more, this is a trend that carries over into other cookbooks of similar connection published for public audiences.

### **Borscht**

Unlike the version of this dish that so many are used to, Russian Mennonite borscht often uses cabbage. This dish is Ukrainian in origin but was adopted for use by the Mennonites living in Russia because it made use of the root vegetables that were laid up for storage during the winter months. Most recipes call for a protein base, such as soup bones, then root vegetables like carrots, cabbage, onions, potatoes, and parsnips. Dill is also considered essential to the make-up of Mennonite borscht. As one cook in Jost Voth’s work said, “When you have spices and no dill, you don’t have borscht, you have beef soup” (179). Similarities between Ukrainian beet borscht and the Mennonite borscht (the word is capitalized, given a “t”, and made into a Low German noun) are numerous; the only difference seems to be the lack of beets in Mennonite borscht. Many variations

of this soup exist, including kroot borscht or “green soup.” A major component of this dish is “edible or wild greens.”

### **Peppernuts (Pfefernuesse)**

This small, hard cookie filled with nuts, dried fruit, and spices is of such importance to the Russian Mennonites that it is difficult to estimate the number of versions and variations that exist in south central Kansas, let alone the rest of the Mennonite world. In *Peppernuts Plain and Fancy: A Christmas Tradition from Grandmother’s Oven*, Norma Jost Voth traces the origins of this holiday treat from Holland to Denmark to Latvia and Germany, finally concluding that “Original peppernut recipes probably were copied from the Germans, Dutch and West Prussians when Mennonite families moved about Europe in search of religious freedom” (6). The process of making peppernuts is long and labor intensive. A cookie dough is prepared (although there are versions that call for a yeast dough that rises). Whatever spices, fruit, or nuts the maker wishes to add is then folded into the dough. In the next step, the dough is separated into equal parts, and rolled (usually between the palms – of clean hands!) until they resemble long ropes. After the “ropes” of dough are formed, they are laid onto a cutting board vertically, then the baker will cut through the long, separated dough stripes horizontally until dozens of tiny doughy pebbles cover the cutting board.

Nostalgia and the connection to this specific cultural landscape best summarize the importance of peppernuts to the Mennonites of south central Kansas. The memories and emphasis placed on peppernuts becomes evident in the sheer volume of writing that has been dedicated to this tiny Christmas cookie. Nearly fifty different recipes for peppernuts exist within the eight community cookbooks included in this study alone. One



entire chapter of *Pluma Moos to Pie* is dedicated to variant recipes and their origins. This is all separate from Jost Voth's *Peppernuts Plain and Fancy*, not to mention the myriad of other variants included in more widely published Mennonite cookbooks that are not directly affiliated with the geographic landscape of my project.

### **Fruit Moos**

According to Jost Voth's research, moos (which rhymes with "dose) is a holdover from the Ukrainian influence in Russian Mennonite cooking. Like so many of the "traditional" foods associated with Mennonites in Kansas, moos is another appropriation or variation of a preexisting dish. Whatever the case may be, there is much division surrounding this staple of Mennonite mealtime. Moos are, in short, another kind of soup and a dessert; they usually contain dried fruit. The fruit is often boiled with sugar and spices, then a thickening agent of flour joins the mix. Finally, after allowing the mixture to cool, cream is blended in before serving. The most renowned version is called pluma moos, and in her humorous memoir *Mennonite In A Little Black Dress*, Rhoda Janzen captures one prevalent and wide-spread opinion pertaining to traditional Moos in her list of things that "Mennonites happily endorse" (240). Below items like "Mind over matter when it comes to dental hygiene," and "Sweater vests buttoned right up to the top," Janzen includes "Pluma Moos, a hot fruit soup starring our friend the prune. Can I just say here that Pluma Moos also contains raisins" (240)?

To clarify, the different types of moos are enough to make the mind reel; this soup can contain anything from cherries to apricots to apples – there's even a moos that calls for Concord grapes. It can be served hot or cold, and to be fair, some people in south

central Kansas still enjoy a good moos. *Pluma Moos to Pie* provides an overview of the soup's place in a cultural context:

Moos was traditionally served for dinner on Christmas Day and on other holidays like Easter and Pentecost. Often it was cooked on Saturday and then served for Sunday dinner along with cold meat and zwieback. Moos was served from a large bowl in the center of the table and eaten from individual bowls with a soup or dessert spoon. Moos was eaten as part of the main meal (35).

### **Verenika (Verinike)**

People often wonder what the difference between verenika and perogies are; they're both eastern European in origin, and they're both stuffed dumplings. However, verenika in contemporary south central Kansas is stuffed with a dry curd cottage cheese. The contents are sealed into a dumpling dough, boiled, and then pan fried. A ham gravy is usually ladled over the top before serving, although Ruth mentioned that her family liked topping their verenika with syrup. The annual Mennonite Central Committee relief sale sells thousands of verenika, both frozen and ready to eat. The verenika seem most recognizable to visitors from eastern Europe who immediately connect recipes the Mennonites in south central Kansas still make with the typical food they prepare back home.

### **Communities, Clauses, and Recipes**

Patterns relating to traditional dishes and discourse surrounding food further ground my work. Because of several critical pieces on recipe construction, I engage with the content of primary community cooking texts, and its messages regarding readership

and audience. Other aspects of the cookbooks themselves allow me to correlate their content and discourse use with interviews in chapter five based on patterns that emerged from conversations with my participants who spoke frequently about cultural identity, acculturation, shifting attitudes towards “traditional” food, and the transfer of foodways knowledge.

I establish stipulations regarding conversational frequency with dishes like zwieback and verenika to connect with my interviews; this entails tabulating the moments in which they organically emerge within conversations between myself and project participants. An example of this occurred during my interactions with interviewee Agatha who, at one point, threw her hands into the air and exclaimed, “Oh, we have got to talk about peppernuts!”

From this juncture, I completed a series of charts indicating how many times frequently mentioned recipes appeared in each cookbook. I determined that the inclusion or exclusion of these dishes might indicate decisions pertaining to audience and cultural identity. Finally, I examined zwieback recipes in each cookbook to further determine the specialized discourse recurring within each text; in other words, where is implicit knowledge assumed? What is the contributor’s purpose regarding the recipe, and does it invite outsiders in, or disallow them entry into foodways knowledge specific to the Mennonites of south central Kansas?

### **Recipe Content and Evaluation Clauses**

The accessibility of a recipe relies on several elements that reach far beyond a cursory glance. In *History of Cookbooks*, Notaker provides readers with his thoughts on the syntax, grammar, and purpose of recipes (143-47). My examination led me to define

what contextual details a recipe should have, and I discovered that these elements must be included for an individual to reproduce a recipe. Due to Notaker's information, I have identified five basic components. First, a recipe should share an estimated yield with readers. A recipe must also describe a list of required ingredients. Along with this, an explanation with more details might be provided if the ingredients are likely to be unfamiliar to a general audience.

Directions pertaining to the preparation of the dish should also be included. Ideally, this is done in chronological order in order to avoid confusion. When a set of directions is listed in paragraph form, cooks must be sure to read and follow these directions carefully. Necessary equipment should also be listed so that readers can take the appropriate steps to prepare pans, containers, etc. Finally, a recipe must give some indication of how long a dish will take to prepare, and how it should be cooked. This can be accomplished blatantly with numbers listed for time and temperature. A recipe writer might also choose to create directions such as, "heat liquid till boiling," or other less-precise descriptions. This produces a possible remove for readers and potential cooks as some prior knowledge may be required if the instructions are not elaborated on; for example, "boiling" is commonly understood. However, "until the milk is scalded" might cause confusion among amateur cooks unless they understand what scalding milk entails - what it looks like, and when one can tell that the appropriate amount of "scalding" has occurred.

In "Claiming a Piece of the Pie: How the language of Recipes Defines Community," Colleen Cotter describes these moments in recipes as "evaluation clauses," which "sets similar recipes apart from each other" and "requires a prior knowledge of the

genre if these evaluation clauses are to be understood properly” (57). In truth, evaluation clauses are important when studying cookbooks produced within specific communities of discourse. They reveal what community insiders know by utilizing specific units of discourse in context.

Instead of the necessarily subjective nature of evaluation clauses causing confusion, Cotter chooses to embrace this quality because of what these clauses reveal about a recipe’s “social and historic context, especially when we compare the same dish from different sources” (63). The analysis of this structural component does much to reveal more than what is written on the page, Cotter notes, stating,

[e]valuation clauses, in tandem with the list items and instructional actions, combine to offer a subjectivity and objectivity of experience that goes with the transmission of any subtextual messages inherent in the recipe. Because of the subjective nature of evaluation clause, the reader’s own background knowledge or shared or divergent assumptions potentially mingle with the narrative evaluation, allowing unconscious judgments to be formed – about herself, her community, and her place in the world (63).

The evaluation clause is ideal in terms of identifying what will resonate with insiders and outsiders regarding recipe content. Readers may immediately identify what is strange or unfamiliar.

In my analysis of zwieback recipes, I attempt to identify culturally specific evaluation clauses that fail to transfer a complete body of information from contributor to reader. These clauses assume knowledge, primarily knowledge predicated on information connected with the discourse communities these cookbooks were compiled in and for.

This is one small exercise in separating what is specific to the insider discourse identified in “traditional” Mennonite food, and that which is commonly understood as shared context between experienced cooks.

There are some stipulations in place which account for modern information access i.e. smartphones and search engines. I am operating within the bounds of that which is made apparent by a recipe and a cookbook alone; not a recipe, a cookbook, and what information Google can provide (and given that Google is simply an aggregator of information, it may not differentiate between multiple varieties of dishes unfamiliar to larger cultural groups). In other words, my work assumes a kind of *Great British Baking Show* technical challenge scenario. Would contestants (who in this situation are assumed to be community outsiders) be able to reproduce a zwieback recipe given only the information they receive on the page, or is there essential information that’s been excluded, thus rendering the recipe ineffective?

Tim Wharton addresses the subtext of recipes in his own analysis of recipe structure. Wharton is a scholar of pragmatics which is, according to his own summary, “the study of what the speakers (or writers) of...sentences mean over and above the meaning of the words themselves” (67), and in “Recipes: Beyond the Words” he explicates necessary elements of recipe analysis, claiming that various parts of speech, recipe composition, mood, syntax, and content indicate several messages to an audience. For example, Wharton interprets the use of imperative language in recipes differently than Notaker, asserting that in English, the imperative loses its linguistic chutzpah:

In some other languages (Hungarian, for example) recipes are traditionally written in the first-person plural...Many chefs adopt this approach when

broadcasting on television or on the Internet, as the English imperative is also commonly used to communicate requests or even orders. Presumably, the chef believes that the first-person form will make viewers feel more included or involved and less as if they are being ordered to do something. However, in the context of a recipe the imperative loses its directive force. The sentence in (4: ‘Now wash the cucumber.’) is not an order, request, or entreaty of any kind. It is simply one stage in a series of steps the reader can choose to follow or not (68).

This elucidates one of the many shifts that can occur within a recipe depending on what form an author chooses to enact. It also illustrates how a recipe might alter over time if specific processes are changed, omitted, or simplified for general use among audiences familiar with group-specific conventions. As you will see in chapter five, interview participants Rose, Helen, and Ruth all speak about how recipes can be altered over the years due to the steps that individual cooks chose to alter. What’s more, such linguistic moves help us to “see beyond the words,” as Wharton suggests. Imperative and infinitive forms alone can indicate tonal issues that impact the reader in various ways, often subtly. The shifting of form occurs throughout the texts chosen for this study.

Most community cookbooks rely on the contributions of many people who add their voices to create a final product. Anne Bower calls them “communal partial autobiographies” (30), and unless an editor has sanitized each recipe in the cookbook, there is usually an indication of several personal approaches to the audience. This element is perhaps even more important than form and pronoun use because it connects directly to a recipe’s rhetorical composition. Wharton notes that “the readership, after all,

dictates the kind of recipe, the style of presentation as a whole, the technical or nontechnical nature of the vocabulary, and the number of stages into which the procedure is broken down” (68). Recipes are sets of directions that ultimately promise a specific outcome, but the recipe writer tells us much about their intended audience by how they address readers. This is the case with *Pluma Moos to Pie*, which was written for the Goessel Mennonite Heritage Museum and is currently sold in the museum’s gift shop. *Pluma Moos*’ first editor indicates to readers that due to the age of each recipe and the evolution of modern culinary practices, some recipes are vague. The writer states that,

[w]e appreciate the guidance from some of the older women in the community who helped us categorize recipes and provide information for those recipes which were not previously in written form but were passed down through the generations from mother to daughter. Consequently, some traditional recipes may list ingredients only and not compete instructions. Seasonings were usually left up to the individual – according to personal taste and preference (1).

Furthermore, this text contains information from community insiders who provide insights for *Pluma Moos*’ audience; the cookbook is interspersed with information that acts as partial invitations to learn more about regional Mennonite communities. Various members of the community were interviewed to describe previous experiences with their own public and private food practices. Some of these entries include “Memories of Weddings, Funerals, and Zwieback,” “Feeding the Threshing Crew,” and “Butchering Time.”



Cotter takes these narrative expansions in cookbooks further, insisting that “beyond its distinctive linguistic features, a recipe is also a narrative, a story that can be shared and has been constructed by members of a community” (58). She argues that cookbooks and recipes have specific audiences in mind, and that this is reflected in recipes themselves, and then draws from William Labov (58-59) to explicate different facets of recipes which correlate to specific narratives for specific audiences. Cotter then states that,

[t]he title [of a recipe] (akin to Labov’s ‘abstract’) gives key information; the list items relate to procedural order; the orientation components reflect the effort on the author’s part to facilitate understanding of the procedure; the actions, in spite of any brevity, are related temporally and sequentially; the evaluative components describe features of the recipe event that relate to identity or action; and the coda provides closure and describes projected outcome (59).

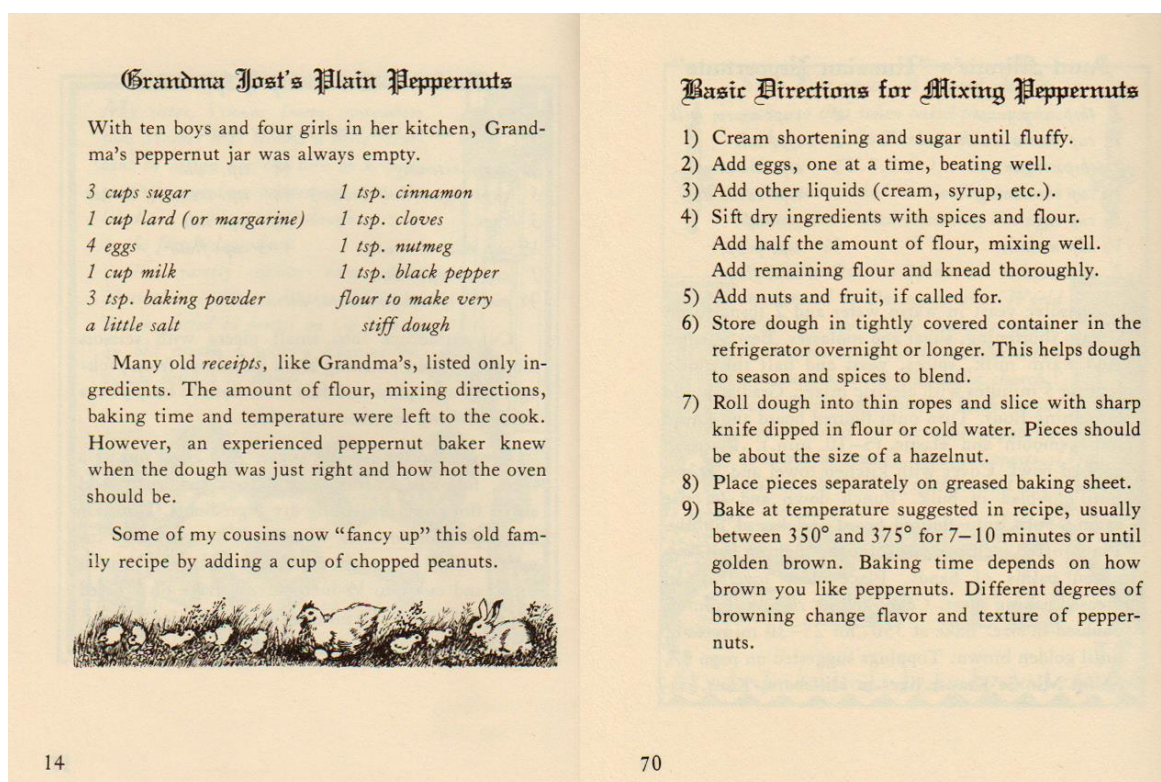
In many ways, this is not dissimilar to what occurs in online recipe forums and food blogs, which are the digital expansion of such practices. Information conjoined with narrative can be a window into community cultures, connecting with Wharton’s conviction that the most important ingredient in recipe construction is the shared understanding of context and prior discourse.

Of course, this connectivity and sense of understanding aligns with Swales’ definition of discourse community, as well. Ultimately, they work towards specified, collective goals that allow writers and readers to combine efforts and produce specific dishes i.e. food outcomes. Without this shared knowledge, an audience will not be able to

use the directions of a recipe successfully; the text cannot be used effectively and may be abandoned for something more accessible.

Many of the recipes in Norma Jost Voth's *Peppernuts Plain and Fancy: A Christmas Tradition From [sic] Grandmother's Oven* display the intersecting uses of Cotter, Wharton, Gee, and Swales' ideas regarding discourse and narrative in a recipe. In its final pages, this slim 72-page volume includes "Basic Directions for Mixing Peppernuts" which appears in Figure 2 along with "Grandma Jost's Plain Peppernuts" recipe. Readers can apply these explanatory, detailed directions as needed. In some cases, a recipe from *Plain and Fancy* will baldly reference the "directions on page 70," and this allows for variety without additional confusion or ungainly repetition. It demystifies the process of preparation for recipes like the recipe which is formatted like "many old receipts" which "listed only ingredients" (14).

Jost Voth chooses the commentary beneath this "receipt" to acknowledge the insider/outsider binary, stating that all elements aside from the ingredients and their allotted amount were "left to the cook." She states that "an experienced peppernut baker knew when the dough was just right and how hot the oven should be" (14). Even with the decoding of discourse, tensions between those in the know and foodway "tourists" still exist.



**Figure 2 – Directions for Mixing Peppernuts and Jost's Plain Peppernut Recipe illustrate the collective goals and shared discourse between cookbook authors and audience.**

### **Cookbook Analysis: Construction, Content, and Contributors**

The analysis of physical traits for each text that I engage with provides windows through which to analyze the community cookbooks from the geographic area in which I situate this project. In total, I have selected eight cookbooks all produced in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. *Reminisce Cookbook*, produced by Bethesda Nursing Home in 2009 is the most recent publication in my small collection; this is ironic considering that contributors of *Reminisce* are in the same age category as my 92-year-old interviewee Agatha.

Although the timeframe of cookbook selection is limited, it provides a microcosm representing forty years of data. Four decades can showcase the developments and

changes that the cookbooks represent while also prioritizing what is consistent within their pages. Tensions between what changes and what remains the same is important when placed in conversation with the interviews from my participants; after all, I did include a question that focused on observable shifts in foodways. Ultimately, I have composed a study about the shifting parameters of culture and how various concerns based on geography, population, and economics can impact the landscape of Russian Mennonites in Kansas. Cookbooks are not a perfect distillation of perceptions, habits, and folkways of the entire cultural community. However, several texts in this study do have the explicit intention of providing a limited entryway to readers.

For example, *Pluma Moos to Pie* includes historic interludes that appear as “short articles on the way things were done a long time ago” (2). Two of the cooking texts in my collection were produced specifically as souvenirs, and even with this intention in mind, they contain insider information that creates confusion for those who have no experience with Mennonite food. Such oversights are probably not intentional; the books give disclaimers such as the one in *Pluma Moos* warning readers about the imprecise nature of given instructions. I argue that a liberal approach to recipe reconstruction eventually causes seminal changes to traditional dishes in Kansas Mennonite country. This is a natural occurrence given the nature of recipes and recipe revision over time. In *A Companion to the History of the Book*, Simon Eliot and Jonathan Rose theorize that through the act of writing down (and in this case, publishing) recipes, these recipes “[become] fixed, unlike most oral performances. [A recipe] can also be copied, though copying opens up the possibility of variations, intended or accidental” (3). Each of the cookbooks listed below represents (or indicates) different levels of access and assumed

insider status. However, the treatment of readership helps us better define the terminology and assumptions situated within this discourse community.

I attempt to determine the objective of individual group-produced cookbooks, and what Anne Bower would call the “narrative” of each; Bower approaches community cookbooks as texts produced by “active creators” who use the medium to tell their stories, thus summoning the concept of “‘verbal’ artifact”(30) familiar to those who situate themselves within feminist scholarship. Ultimately, we can view cookbooks as testaments to self-expression while paying attention to several distinct qualities that help to identify the ultimate goals that Bower outlines; these include familiar concepts like setting and narrators that allow us to develop further analysis regarding a cookbook’s aims.

From that point, Bower begins to break down the different kinds of narratives a cookbook can have, such as the “female plot of ambition” (37) and the “historical plot” (44) which Bower observes “is strictly a twentieth-century plot form for community cookbooks” (44). This is a familiar trope – Bower’s assertion that this particular narrative “construct[s] plots from collected facts, plots which end with the demise or victory of a cause or group” is already familiar; this narrative appears in several of the cookbooks included in my project.

Bower’s narrative outlines do not fit each text perfectly, nor do they adhere to only one categorical description. I postulate that there are often several “plots” going on in community cookbooks. However, I am satisfied with the examination of what representation each cookbook attempts to construct for itself and its readers. For example, what audience does a cookbook like *Pluma Moos to Pie* wish to communicate with, and

to what end? Furthermore, we may connect community cookbooks that are primarily authored by women to Walden's concept of taste making; each text attempts to create space for ideals that may steer the intended audience.

In this segment of my project, I wish to identify recipe variants, content, and physical attributes of each food text. Each book is listed in chronological order, although some publishing information may be incomplete given the limited scope of printed copies and scale of production. I connect the changes in purpose, intended audience, and content with the overarching patterns which I coded for in my interviews. Of course, I also apply knowledge from Janice Bluestein Longone, Bower, and Cotter regarding the history of community cookbooks, the various "plots" they may exhibit, and the subtext of specific language use in recipes.

Bower argues that while looking for directions in a cookbook, "a reader seldom thinks of plot" because "[t]he only sequence of events such a reader desires is the liner process of the recipe[...]but for *more* than a recipe, reading the full cookbook as a text, can yield inklings of different beginnings-middles-ends and a new sense of plot" (37). Bower's approach aligns with my goals regarding the categorization of insider/outsider knowledge present in these books that ultimately indicate who the cookbook's primary audience is, as well as the text's exigence and function.

Bower's list begins with the "integration plot," which involves "a communal autobiography of social acceptance and achievement" (38). This plot indicates the ways in which the authors have succeeded in becoming accepted members in society. The second category is the "differentiation plot," which prioritizes the unique facets the authors possess, thus separating themselves from the general public. The third category is

what Bower calls “the plot of moral or religious triumph” (43) and centralizes women as the moral center of a household. These plots may also instruct readers on how to create religious instruction using domestic food-centered practices. Bower mentions that this plot is especially prevalent in community cookbooks. Mennonite cookbooks, with their attention to ethnic culture and ancestry, often include elements of the moral or religious triumph plot, even if it is not the primary narrative. Finally, there is the historical plot where the authors collect information and produce texts that prioritize facts and the construction of cultural events “but always with the victorious ending” (44). These plots, though not strict categories demanding adherence, do provide a format in which women can shape their message in community cookbooks through themes indicated by Bower’s categories that, in the writer’s words, “indicate why plot matters” (47).

In this section, I speak to what possible “plot” each text is taking on, and what subtexts of narrative might be revealed by applying Bower’s definitions to this material. Truthfully, there is no distinct categorization but a combination of various plots that may indicate several goals. Therefore, I will mention secondary “plots” when appropriate.

***Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread (1964)***

Recipes contributed by women of the Halstead Mennonite Church, drawings by Lena Waltner (including cover). Spiral-bound, 69 pages.

**Table 1 – *Daily Bread* Recipe Inclusion and Variants**

<b>Dishes:</b>	<b>Recipe Variants:</b>
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	2
Moos (various fruit)	4
Peppernuts	7
Verenika	0
Zwieback	2

The first page of this book reveals that the recipes inside were “submitted by the women of the Halstead Mennonite Church” and that the book itself “includes recipes featured at the annual Smorgasbord, along with other old favorites” (2). The term “Smorgasbord” is Swedish in origin and seems at odds with a project that is concentrating on the traditions of Russian Mennonites in Kansas. However, an explanation for this is included within a brief note explaining background pertaining to the church. The writer explains that,

[h]aving come from South and North Germany, Switzerland, Austria, France, Poland [sic] and South Russia with varying habits, customs [sic] and dialects [sic] the first Mennonite Church of Halstead became indeed a miniature ‘melting pot’ in the area of religion, culture, and industry. Yet we their grand- or great-grandchildren still retain some of the customs our forebearers had. This booklet is evidence of that fact. We have found the recipes that our mothers used, and gladly share them with you (2).

This “sharing” is a greeting to readers and extends a sense of connection to church outsiders. It has been produced with a historic sense of separateness in mind; the subtext of unique lineage and diaspora is also present. The introduction leaves no doubt that contributors want to preserve parts of their heritage, linking them to another land and time; it is obvious that there is a clearly communicated separateness.

Below the missive on church history is a more detailed rumination on “History of the Smorgasbord” which reveals that the church’s own Mary-Martha Mission Circle began the practice of holding a Smorgasbord for the public in 1957 “during the pastorate of Rev. and Mrs. Roland R. Goering.” The event itself served as a reminder of a



combined cultural representation of the Mary-Marthas; the writer draws attention to the fact that the event “created interest among its members since the group was made up of women descended from three different backgrounds – the Bavarian German, the Swiss, and the Low German” (2). This information readily ties *Daily Bread* to Bower’s assertion that, while community cookbooks are often used as a way to raise money, they also “provide a space in which women assert their values” (47) and we see this happening in a dual sense regarding the Mary-Marthas; organizing the Smorgasbord event and compiling a cookbook after the fact requires complex writing abilities as well as editing skills, an understanding of advertising and community outreach, the mitigation of strenuous tasks, and anticipating needs of a large crowd. *Our Daily Bread* provides the story of professional expertise wielded by a group of women whose combined capability and intelligence creates positive outcomes for their beloved spiritual community.

The rest of the introduction tells a story of how the event was attended by over 500 people even though the church had only expected to host approximately 350. Such attention was likely procured by all the “free advertising” afforded the church through “TV appearances and radio announcements” as well as donated posters and newspaper articles that alerted its readership to the event. The Smorgasbord meals gained further recognition, and in 1961, the church was “honored to have Clementine Paddleford, food editor of *This Week* magazine” present at the annual event. However, this led to some difficulties; because of the articles Paddleford published, “hordes of people came the following year” (3). In the end, many Smorgasbord seekers had to be turned away, and the Mary-Marthas determined that “the largest group for which our group can prepare efficiently is rated about one thousand.” It was the continued popularity of the event that

eventually prompted First Mennonite of Halstead to publish *Daily Bread*. This sequence of events suggests that, at least in some small part, the resulting cookbook was produced with cultural outsiders in mind. After all, it is illogical to assume that all 500 to 1000 Smorgasbord attendees were Mennonites themselves.

The cookbook is split into nine separate sections, indicated by tabs, in the following order: Breads, Butchering, Meats, Soups, Vegetables and Salads, Pastries and Desserts, Cookies, Christmas, Soap Making, and the ever compelling “Miscellaneous” category. There is a black-and-white illustrative sketch on each individual tab that precedes each section, and their depictions range from pictures of fruit and pies to symbolic pictures such as a Christmas tree and candle. The cover (fig. 3) also bears one such illustration – under the title, rendered in simple calligraphy, is a still life of a hurricane lamp, loaf of bread partially covered with a single shaft of wheat (in reference, one assumes, to the Turkey Red Wheat that Mennonites planted upon their arrival in Kansas) and a book with the words “Die Bibel” scrawled across the front. The use of Plautdietsch (Low German) indicates to a privileged audience from the area that this cookbook is Mennonite. Such linguistic details are consistent throughout the cookbook, creating a separation between the readers who are cultural insiders and those who are not. Several phrases and rhymes in this Low German dialect are present throughout the pages, but no accompanying translation is provided for readers.

As a reader of *Daily Bread*, I admit that there seems to be an inconsistency in respect to the writers’ perceptions of audience; I believe that this is an example of Bower’s “differentiation plot.” The Mary-Martha Mission Circle grants a certain level of historic and factual knowledge to readers. Their church affiliation is implicitly engaged in

outreach, although in most cases this might be for religious concerns rather than cultural ones. However, providing the public with a popular fundraising event that capitalizes on a unique combination of cultural and ethnic difference is at once a way to separate oneself from a society of non-Mennonites while explicating how the Smorgasbord creates a conduit by which the church congregation can share their unique traditions with outsiders, thus remaining a cherished part of the secular community. The variants of recipes in *Daily Bread* (table 1.) is bereft of verenika; this is an important detail in that verenika is one of the best-known Russian Mennonite dishes served to the public in contemporary Kansas.

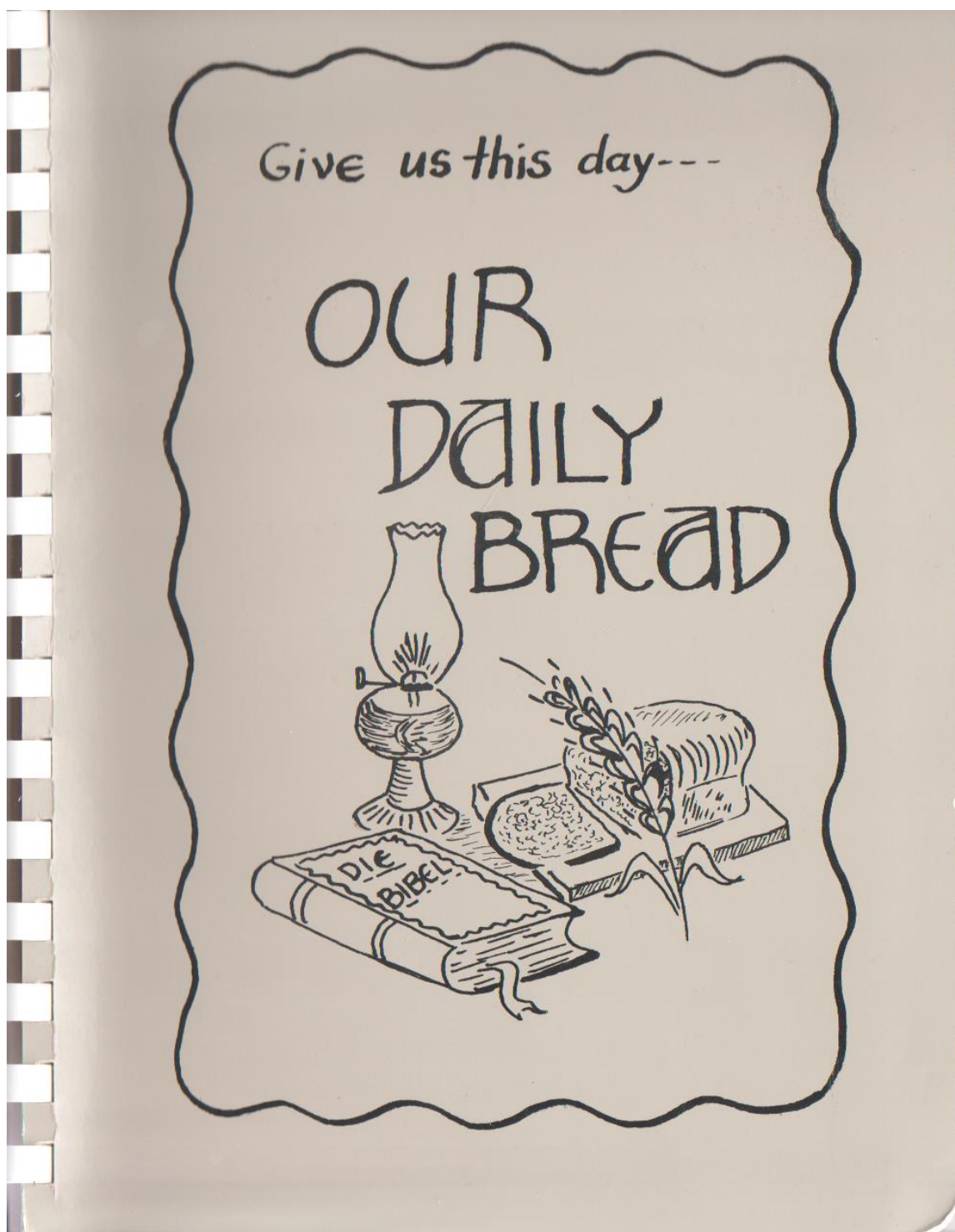


Figure 3 – Cover of *Daily Bread* (1964)

*Goessel Centennial Cook Book [sic]: Including Traditional Low German Recipes Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Coming of Mennonites 1874-1974*  
Compiled by the Goessel Centennial Souvenir Committee, 47 pages.

**Table 2** – *Centennial* Recipe Inclusion and Variants

Dishes	Recipe Variants
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	2
Moos (various fruits)	1
Peppernuts	10
Verenika	1
Zwieback	2

Here another example of the differentiation plot due to the subtext of the event for which this text was produced; the “coming of the Mennonites” refers to a specific group of people who share a history that is unique to them. *Centennial* is far less detailed than *Daily Bread*. In fact, it is more ephemera than cookbook; there is no actual binding. Instead, *Centennial* is stapled together. Thick white bond paper is sealed between one yellow sheet of paper with the approximate thickness of an index card. The front cover of the cookbook (fig. 4) bears a simple black and white outline sketch portraying a shaft of wheat and the notable threshing stone,<sup>10</sup> symbolic of agricultural Mennonite history. The “title page” also includes a short note stating that the book includes “Traditional Low German Recipes Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Coming of the Mennonites” and provides the corresponding dates “1874-1974.” Another statement

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<sup>10</sup> From the Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum site, “Since ancient times flails had been used to knock the wheat kernels out of the stocks, so during the mid-1870s, the threshing stone was considered *state-of-the-art farm equipment* in Russia. The immigrants brought with them Turkey Red (a variety of hard red winter wheat) to plant as their main cash crop. In order to have the stones made here, they brought along a pattern from Russia. Within only a very few years, the stones had become obsolete as more progressive threshing methods were adopted” (<https://www.goesselmuseum.com/what-is-that-thing>).

indicates that the book has been compiled by “the Goessel Centennial Souvenir Committee.”

The index page provides readers with the nine sections separating recipes; these include main dishes, breads, cookies, pies, desserts, cakes, soups, salads, and beverages. The book’s impermanent qualities extend to the copy itself; the text looks as if it’s been produced on a manual typewriter. Less variance of “traditional” recipes occurs in *Centennial*; the book is short so while some traditional favorites are still present, fewer recipes are included overall. In short, decisions were made that upheld specific priorities related to cultural representation. The number of recipe variations is curious; for example, only two zwieback recipes exist as opposed to nine different variants on peppernuts (see table 2.); the listed contributors of each recipe (82 in all) included in *Centennial* are women.

There is a clear alignment with history, but a clear focus on differentiation applies to this text, though there are precious few narrative contributions. Again, this is due to the length and the impermanent nature of *Centennial*; as far as souvenirs go, a stapled set of papers is harder to preserve than a spiral bound book. However, the simple goal of *Centennial* is the commemoration of an ethnic group, bound together with religious conviction, and made transitory by the extenuating political circumstances that lead to their departure from Europe. Unlike *Daily Bread*, there are no prayers or maxims relayed in Plautdietsch that cultural outsiders might puzzle at; this indicates a seeming willingness of the souvenir committee to create a document that serves as a concrete educational document for people unfamiliar with the Mennonites in south central Kansas. I believe that there is a significant shift between *Daily Bread’s* sometimes inaccessible

material compared with *Centennial's* simplified outward-reaching content; this was, after all, the same decade that Janzen Longacre's *More-with-Less* was published. *More-with-Less* is considered to be an inclusive text that has an international perspective; stories of mission work and recipes from various cultures fill its pages. The 1970's are also remembered for events like the Vietnam War, and an increased awareness of environmental issues. After all, the first Earth Day happened in 1970. This indicates a zeitgeist that likely influenced the MCC; because of Mennonite institution Bethel College's presence in the community, these events and attitudes may have been heightened among the people of Goessel. A renewed dedication to outreach is result, as this small accessible souvenir likely reflects.

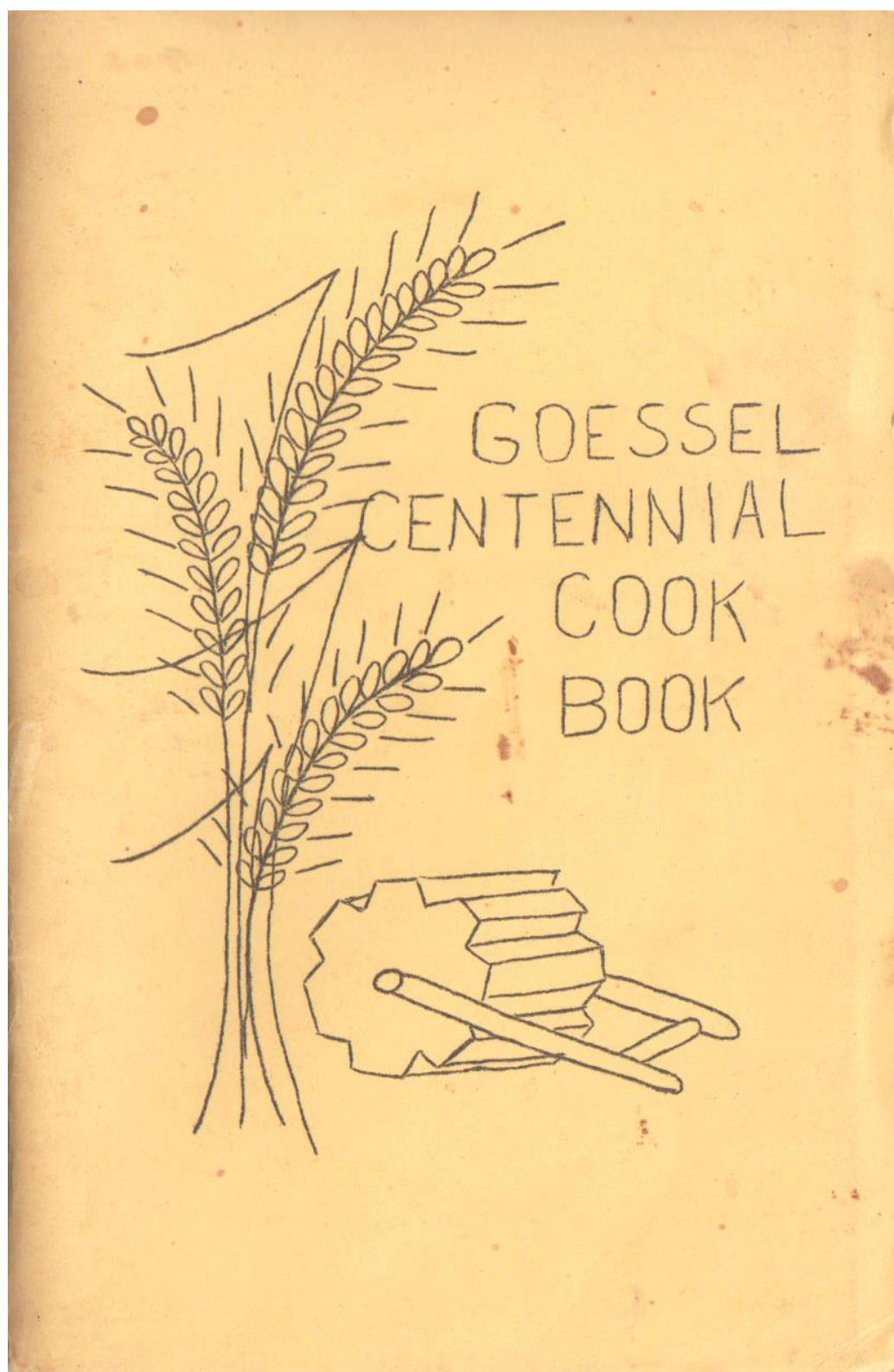


Figure 4 – Cover of *Centennial Cook Book* [sic] (1974)



***Kitchen Medley: A Collection of Recipes from the Congregation (1981)***

Compiled by West Zion Mennonite Church in Moundridge KS, 200 pages.

The content for this text was collected, organized and edited by the Christian Homemaker's Women's Group which consists of cookbook committee members Maxine Fast, Marilyn Galle, Sheri Miller, cover & layout design by Paul Unrau, illustrations by Kurt Becker, Bob Loganbill, as well as "boys and girls in Sunday School classes (Grades 3-8) who furnished other artwork. The cover (fig. 5) is laminated with hand lettering and an orange cover; the text is spiral bound.

**Table 3 – *Kitchen Medley* Recipe Inclusion and Variants**

Dishes	Recipe Variants
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	0
Moos (various fruit)	4
Peppernuts	2
Verenika	0
Zwieback	1

*Kitchen Medley* is a deviation from fundraising cookbooks; to outsiders, it attends most closely to the plot of integration although there is Mennonite subtext that would likely be understood only by other cultural insiders. I make this argument because of what the cookbook does not have in the way of culturally specific examples of maxims or pictures that are coded specifically as "Mennonite." Unlike *Daily Bread* or *Centennial*, *Medley* has no illustrations of threshing stones or Plautdietsch phrases. Aside from recipes for zwieback, moos, and peppernuts, there is little difference between the content of this cookbooks and other similar community texts of its kind. *Medley* represents a congregation invested in a shared goal; this was the effort of a unified people. However, there is a significant detail that English audiences might miss that people in the

congregation and in other Mennonite churches would recognize almost immediately. The whimsical play on musical vernacular and references used as unifying theme in *Medley* is significant in terms of music's placement in the Mennonite church. It's fair to say that music is central to many sects, but Mennonites are especially invested in singing, thus the notoriety of hymn number 606 which, according to folklorist Ervin Beck's *MennoFolk*, is "the Mennonite ethnic anthem" (191). Beck adds that the "hymn became a favorite, especially for large Mennonite assemblies, and has continued to be called, affectionately, '606,'...many Mennonites sing this difficult hymn from memory" (222). One could even say that "606" is a Discourse-related litmus test that would-be community members must have knowledge of in order to be considered "initiated."

All copy in the cookbook is hand-written by contributors or typed out manually. Illustrations appearing in the bulk of *Kitchen Medley* are rendered by the 22 children who attend the congregation's Sunday school classes. This text shares much more with manuscript cookbooks than with normative examples of other fundraising cookbooks; the representation is situated in the larger Mennonite community of south central Kansas. However, the content of *Kitchen Medley* seems far more intimate given the physical acts represented by both word and image in the pages. Hand-written recipes contribute to a feeling of one-on-one knowledge being passed between community members. Likewise, children's artwork is usually associated with refrigerator doors, elementary classrooms, and other spaces that represent domestic realms where women's labor practices are prominent, thus positioning *Kitchen Medley* as a text that places women at the moral center of a household, much in the way Bower describes.

*Kitchen Medley* elevates the voices of women and children whose presence and participation are showcased prominently. There are men who aided in the process of producing this text, although their contributions are not food centered. Indeed, there is even a recipe for “Triticale Bread” contributed by a former United Methodist Church pastor, Reverend Laura E. Bradbury of Newton, KS. In many ways, this is not a cookbook of erasure or the text of a community that has been closed off to outside influences. However, insider knowledge enriches the text and a privileged audience would understand how music is being employed to frame the text.

Its contents are split into ten different sections divided by thick yellow cardstock, bearing the section’s title on one side and the chapter’s contents on the other. These lists are, again, typed. Hand-drawn illustrations are included at the bottom of several page, and each section’s name relates to musical theme set by the cookbook’s title (*Medley*). The titles of each sections are as follows: Breads – Dough, Re, Mi; Cakes – Fantasia; Cookies – Scrumptious Suite; Desserts – Grand Finale; Dips & Snacks – Preludes & Postludes; Main Dishes – Themes & Variations; Pies – Oven Operas; Salads – Symphony of Salads; Vegetables – Garden March; and Miscellaneous – Potpourri. The book is punctuated throughout with maxims and poems all seemingly collected by contributors Barbara Fast, Gladys Krehbiel, and Brandie Galle. None appear in Plautdietsch; no translations are necessary in order to engage with this text. Again, *Kitchen Medley* has far fewer recipes attributed to “traditional” ethnic Menno food (see table 3.) than either *Daily Bread*, or *Centennial*. However, due to the nod towards the historic relationship between Mennonites and the placement of music in their culture, I believe that this text is a subtle example of a differentiation plot masquerading as a cookbook of integration.

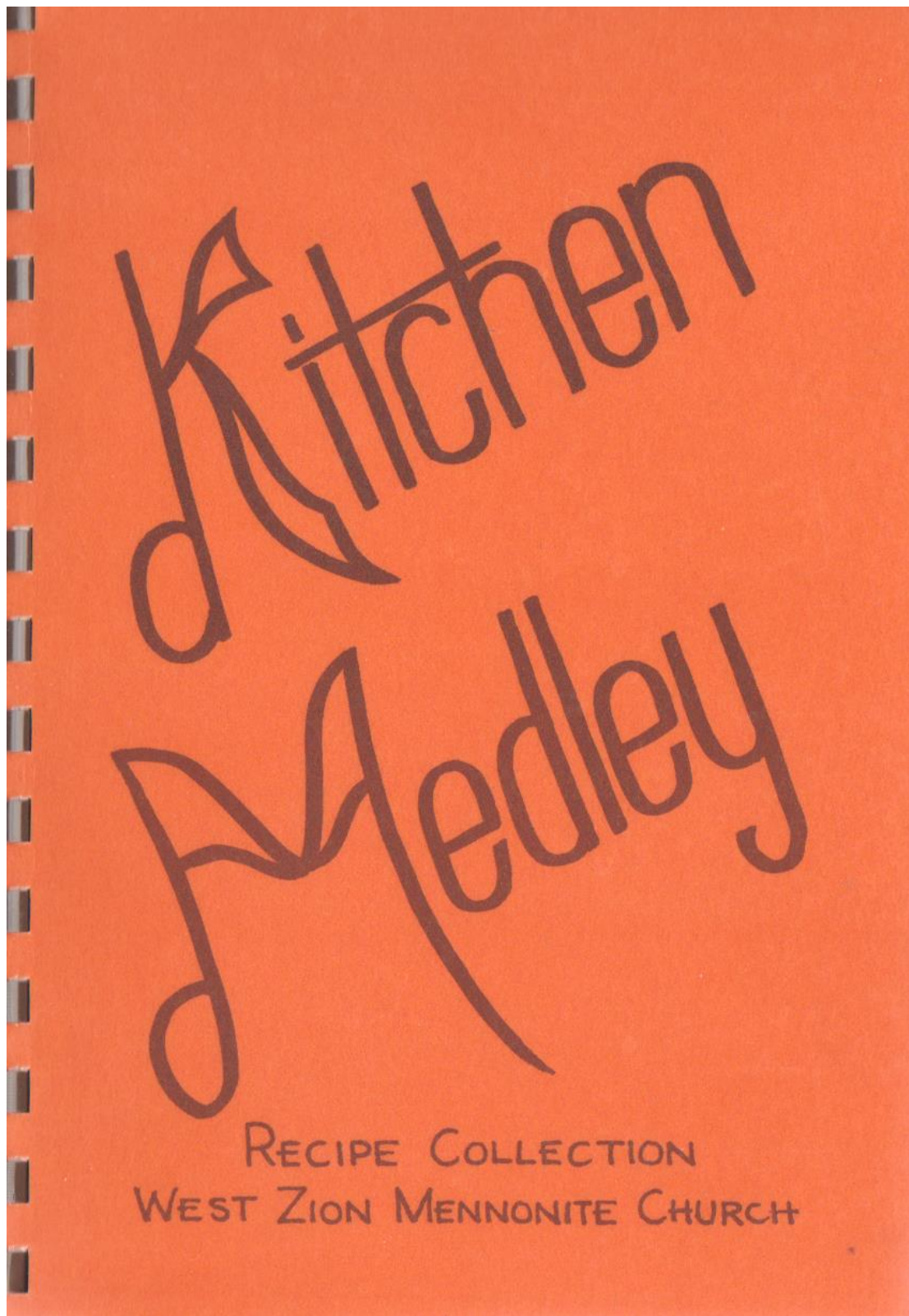


Figure 5 – Cover of *Kitchen Medley* (1981)

***Book for Cooks: Favorite Recipes From [sic] Ladies Attending Koerner Heights Church of the Mennonite Brethren (1982)***

Text compiled in Newton KS, 198 pages.

**Table 4 – *Book for Cooks* Recipe Inclusion and Variants**

<b>Dishes</b>	<b>Recipe Variants</b>
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	1
Moos (various fruit)	0
Peppernuts	1
Verenika	2
Zwieback	1

This cookbook indicates to readers that it is an “in-house” and “hands-on” congregational project; it is spiral bound with a laminated cover (fig. 6) much like the one from West Zion Mennonite Church. However, this text has no recipes appearing in a contributor’s writing, although the illustrations are hand drawn. Every recipe is typed out neatly. Three pages that follow the table of contents seem to be printed excerpts provided by another text or perhaps the publisher; this addition is a simple reference to kitchen weights and measurements, metric to imperial system conversions, and finally a list of “Approximate 100 Calorie Portions” for 89 different foods. Finally, another list tabulates a handy guide for the volume of specific dishes needed to feed approximately fifty people, indicating occurrences of community functions or church potlucks.

The illustrations in *Book for Cooks* appear on thin yellow typing paper that functions as a divider between sections. The sections themselves are conventional in terms of the cookbook genre – recipes towards the beginning deal with “Party Foods” and “Breads” while the middle section features heavier fare. However, in the back of *Book for Cooks* is a chapter called “This & That,” which includes a subsection labeled “Ethnic.” This is where readers find recipes for Moos, two variations on Peppernuts, and other

“traditional” favorites (see table 4). Again, we find a smattering of what one might expect in a cookbook distributed by a Mennonite church.

Contributors and editorial staff might have been aware this book would extend to secular community. However, there is a curious addition to this cookbook – a recipe for Sopapillas. I believe this indicates a shift in consideration of what constitutes “ethnic” cuisine, and one wonders what caused such a shift. This dish is a popular dessert in Latinx culture, begging the question, how and why did this recipe appear in *Book for Cooks*? One possibility is the MCC’s devotion to service work around the world. However, I believe that the appearance of this recipe has much to do with the shifting demographics of Kansas communities in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. In a 2007 article for the *Kansas Policy Review* entitled “Baby Boomers and Immigrants on the Range: Population Trends in Kansas,” László J. Kulcsár gives readers a brief glimpse of a population in flux:

Kansas, like many rural Midwest regions, has been ethnically homogeneous and predominantly white for most of the 20th century. Until the 1960s, more than 95% of the state’s population was white. However, this proportion declined to 86% by 2000, mostly taking place in the 1990s. Similarly, the foreign born population of Kansas also increased, from 1% in 1970 to 5% in 2000 (4).

Increasing numbers of immigrants certainly change the makeup of congregations, and Mennonite churches have been navigating the challenges of creating environments of welcome and access to all those who wish to join the Mennonite church. Hooley Yoder covers this point in *Circles*, using a 2006 Mennonite Church USA study by Conrad

Kanagy that reveals the advantages of this shift. Not only do contemporary immigrants reflect the journeys that the ancestors of Mennonites in North America took, but they may be the key to the long-term survival of the church. Kanagy concludes that overall, the denominations of most Mennonite churches were aging and dying out, “but ‘racial/ethnic’ members were younger and increasing in numbers. Hooley Yoder insists that “[a]s the denomination and the country in general become more diverse, the Mennonite Women USA’s sentiment that all women in Mennonite churches are Mennonite Women will need to include an increasingly diverse constituency” (240). The ability of congregations to provide a welcoming space for diverse communities continues to be an issue. In 2008, Canadian Mennonite historian Royden Lowen published an article entitled “The Poetics of Peoplehood” where he outlines six predominate attitudes regarding ethnicity and faith in Canadian Mennonite congregations. This seems unrelated to my study, but large numbers of Russian Mennonites migrated to Canada as well as Kansas, so I would argue that there is an interconnectivity applying to churches in this area. What Lowen found was a sliding scale of emphasis placed on either denominational faith or the ethnic traditions shared by many congregants. The present-day struggle of the MCC is to find a balance which does not alienate non-Eurocentric Mennonites while still honoring the past (if historic preservation is a priority of some congregations at all). In some sense, *Book for Cooks* might be a portrait of an increasingly diverse congregation, and the ways in which this diversity manifested in 1988.

Bower might classify this as a plot of integration due to the lack of overt religious content within the pages. The scant number of verses which are included exist without the biblical chapter and verse reference. “A merry heart doeth good like medicine” is

advice that readers can find on page 78, but not every reader will know that these words come from the book of Proverbs. What is immediately apparent is the inclusion of various maxims typed out just below recipes on many of *Books*' pages. One example, under "Chicken Special" tells readers that "[d]oing a woman's work is like walking down a railroad track; the end seems in sight, but never is" (65). Thankfully, the structuring around progressive participle "doing" does not convey that "women's work" is always done by a woman. However, one wonders what qualifies as this specific kind of "work." More unsettling, however, is the maxim under "Frozen Strawberry Salad" that reads, "There's nothing like a living doll to bring out the Santa Clause – in men" (98). The differentiating messages act as a potpourri of commonplaces, and mixed messages abound within. *Book for Cooks* is also the only cookbook in my project that includes a variation of the "How to Preserve a Husband" poem (see: pg. 19). These asides are not particularly religious, although some might call them "moral" in character. I argue that this step away from purely religious content towards a more secular sensibility is further proof of Bower's integration plot as a key element of this text.



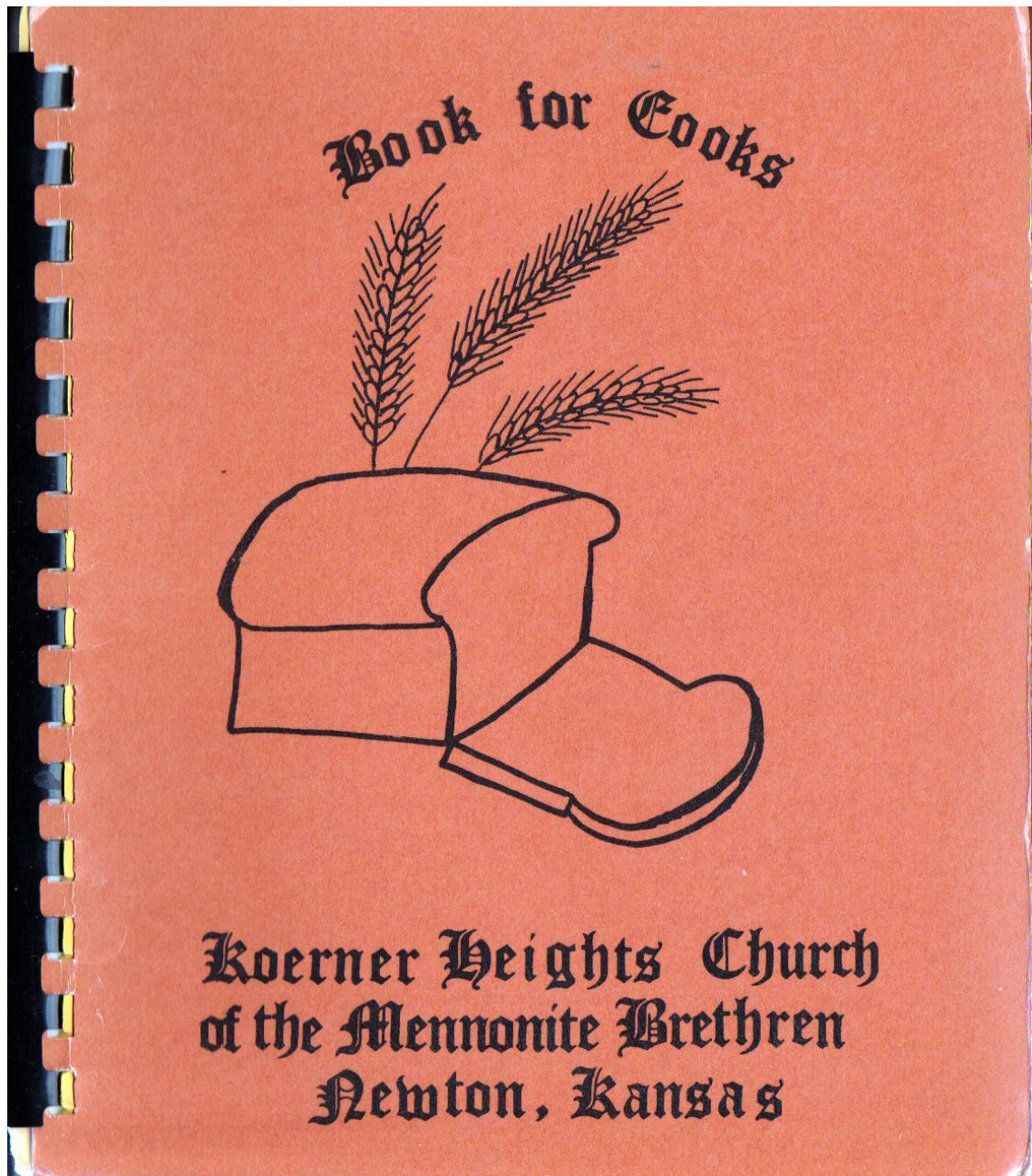


Figure 6 – Cover of *Book for Cooks* (1982)

***T.G.Y.F. Cookbook: Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread (1982)***

Compiled by the Tabor-Goessel Youth Group of Goessel, Kansas. Cookbook funded youth group's trip to the general conference in PA during 1983.

**Table 5** – *T.G.Y.F* Recipe Inclusion and Variants

<b>Dishes</b>	<b>Recipe Variants</b>
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	0
Moos (various fruit)	2
Peppernuts	0
Verenika	0
Zwieback	1

The exigence of *T.G.Y.F. Cookbook* is made clear by the “Expression of Appreciation” on the first page. The youth group thanks “all the cooks who submitted their favorite recipes,” and tell readers that “[p]roceeds from the sale of this cookbook will help to finance a trip to Pennsylvania in August 1983 for the members to attend the General Conference.”

*T.G.Y.F* conveys a more polished aesthetic than other cookbooks in my project; printed by Cookbook Publishers Inc., it has a full-color cover along with colored photos attached to the divider tabs between each section. Behind each tab, readers can locate helpful general information for cooks at every level, such as “A Handy Spice Guide To [sic] Make You Become A Seasoned Seasoner” and a meat roasting guide.

There are few recipes in this cooking text that an outside reader acquainted with this community might expect to see; the lack of a peppernuts recipe is incredible, given that it is such a popular cultural touchstone in south central Kansas. *T.G.Y.F* is the only community cookbook in this project that does not have at least one recipe for peppernuts. There are two recipes for moos, which is something of a surprise; this dish is less well-known in contemporary “English” or non-Mennonite circles. However, in 1982, the

people in this area might have been partial to this dessert. Predictably, there is a zwieback recipe, which indicates connectivity to the church and heritage. This cookbook is straightforward in its intentions, an impression that consists throughout; there are no maxims or hand-drawn illustrations, prayers, or poems. All text is in English. This might further fall into Bower's integration narrative, even though the youth group is upfront about their plans to attend the faith-specific conference. There may be more restraint on the part of this youth group due to various kinds of oversight necessary to obtain the permission to produce and sell this cookbook; it is possible that the church would have wanted members to represent the congregation in a particular way. Therefore, there was a premeditated knowledge that *T.G.Y.F* would be purchased by outsiders and circulated beyond the walls of Tabor Church.

Aside from zwieback, there are recipes such as Schnetcke and the ever-popular New Year's Cookies that do point to Mennonite culture and customs. A variety of instructions for canning pickles and watermelon rinds point towards basic elements of the Mennonite diet. However, there is yet again the inclusion of foods like "Company Enchiladas," "Gringo Tacos," and the dubious "American Chop Suey." A pattern towards integration and diversity rather than a representation of difference begins to emerge. What is excluded in *T.G.Y.F* is equally important as the dishes that are included, and as Jennifer Signor reminds us, it is sometimes what is discarded that gives us the best picture of a text's exigence. For example, no peppernut recipe appears in this text – a surprising omission because peppernuts in south central Kansas are all but trademarked by the Russian Mennonites. To me, this indicates the youth group's step away from expectations of a "Mennonite" cookbook.

In the case of Tabor's youth group, this book creates a cache of funds necessary for future plans. Bower argues that the integration plot shows the willingness of one culture to become part of a larger culture. However, this assumes that groups such as the Mennonites of south central Kansas are inclusive and can contribute to the English world of outsiders. Such an exchange seems in the spirit of outreach. However, as we will see in chapter five, some community insiders believe that changes can lead to acculturation, a sizable source of tension within the community.

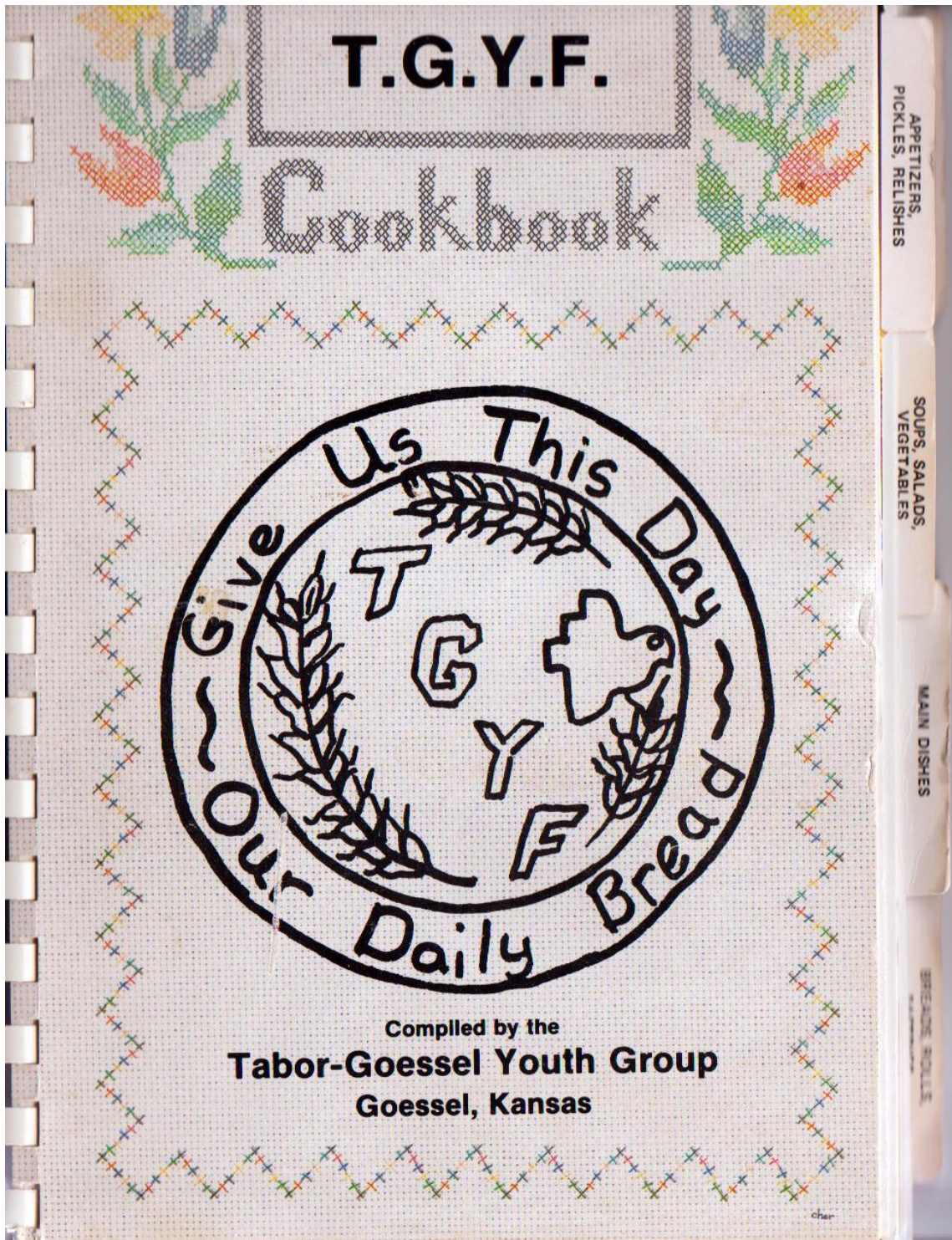


Figure 7 – Cover of *T.G.Y.F* (1982)

***Sharing Together: Hesston Mennonite Church Cookbook (1984)***

Compiled in conjunction with the 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration (October 3, 1984); art by Joanna Friesen, 218 pages.

**Table 6** – *Sharing* Recipe Inclusion and Variants

<b>Dishes</b>	<b>Recipe Variants</b>
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	0
Moos (various fruit)	1
Peppernuts	2
Verenika	0
Zwieback	2

The physicality of *Sharing Together* is not dissimilar to others included in my study; it has a laminated manila-colored cover decorated with a simple black and white hand-drawn illustration by Friesen paired with the title. The title script shares similarities to the Fraktur typeface of German origin (see fig. 8 and fig. 6). It is spiral bound, and there are illustrated dividers between the content's chapters. However, what is singular about *Sharing Together* lies on the last page of the text, opposite the space reserved for hand-written notes. Two paragraphs surrounded by a black-and-white ivy motif reveals that this cookbook has a distinct publishing history:

...[P]rinted by GENERAL PUBLISHING AND BINDING of Iowa Falls, Iowa, which is a company that was founded by two women who dedicated their time to printing [c]ookbooks for [c]hurches and other organizations at the cost they can afford to pay. Our aim is to help others with money making projects by printing your favorite recipes in book form (219).

Readers are now aware that *Sharing* was, first and foremost, a community endeavor sponsored by the church for fundraising purposes. It was entrusted to a woman-owned

company for binding and publishing. The text itself becomes its own narrative of entrepreneurship largely engineered by women. In truth, there are six possible male contributors in *Sharing*, and half of those contributors have submitted along with their spouses. In one case, a recipe for “Nigerian Groundnut Stew” is attributed to the Clifford Amstutz Family (96) which may or may not include a male figure. The inclusion of men is noteworthy, but it does not detract from the likelihood that this cookbook is largely the result of women-led efforts.

Again, a curious trend regarding *verenika* appears in table 6; there is no recipe for the cheese-filled dumpling, and this is odd given its consistent appearance at restaurants, local festivals, and public events that occur annually in south central Kansas. In fact, I wonder what decisions lead this (admittedly laborious) recipe to be excluded when it is usually so popular with Mennonites and non-Mennonites alike.

The integration plot here echoes a deep concern with inclusion that is evident in other community cookbooks from this particular place and time – the trend of non-traditional Mennonite recipes persists, and some featured dishes may represent a commitment to international service work by members in the congregation. This is, as affirmed by the backmatter included by General Publishing in Iowa Falls, a fundraising cookbook. However, the particulars of where the funds went is never revealed. Nevertheless, the women of Hesston’s Mennonite Church use their perceptions of taste to create additional resources for their community.

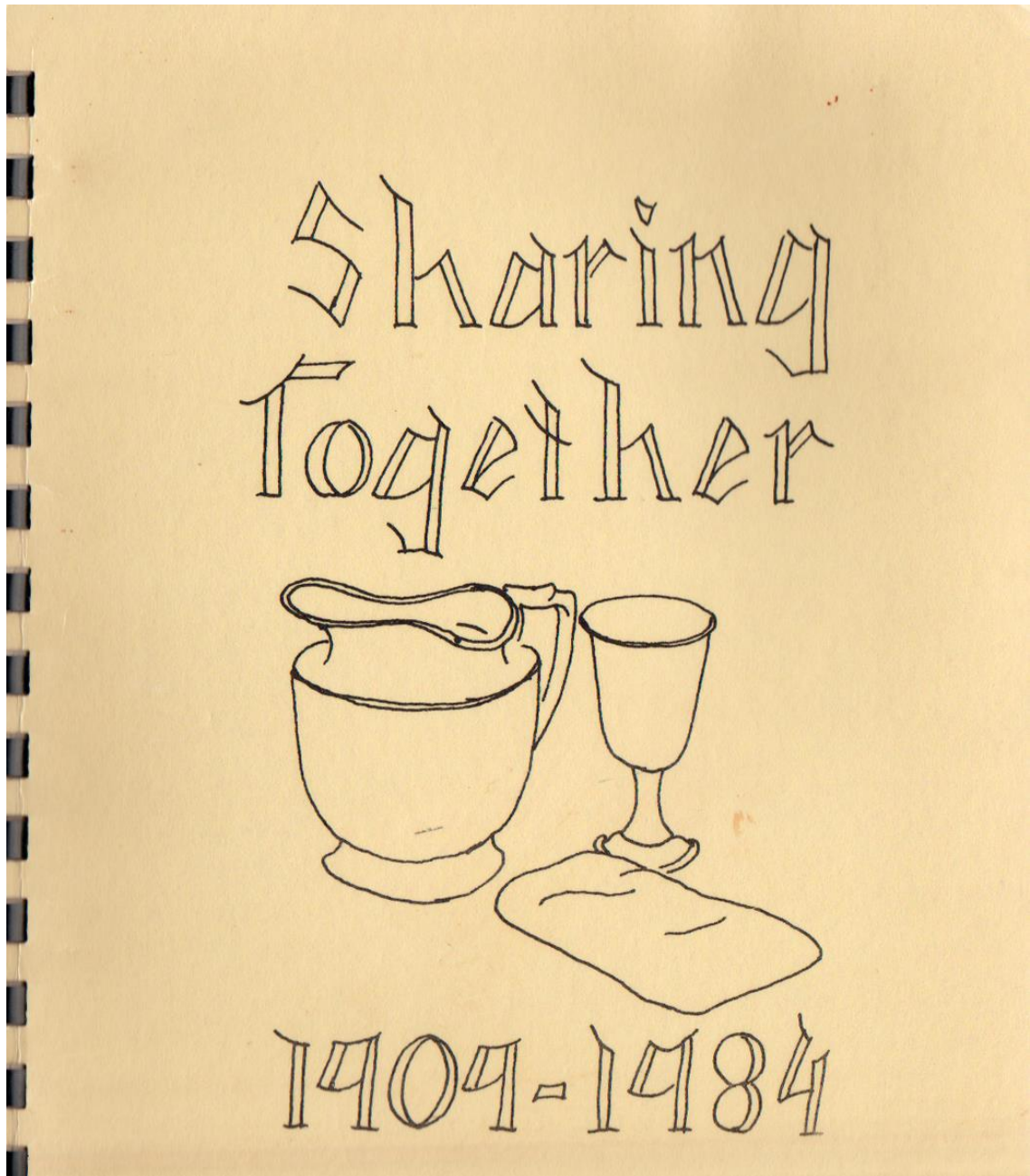


Figure 8 – Cover of Sharing Together (1984)



***From Pluma Moos to Pie, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. (2007)***

Compiled by Ruth Unruh & Jan Schmidt. Illustrations by Emmalyn Hiebert. Translations by Velda Duerksen, 151 pages.

**Table 7 – *Pluma Moos* Recipe Inclusion and Variants**

<b>Dishes</b>	<b>Recipe Variants</b>
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	5
Moos (various fruit)	6
Peppernuts	22
Verenika	1
Zwieback	6

The exigence of this cookbook is immediately clear, even if the overall plot is complex; the first edition, published in 1981 was conceived of by former director Jan Schmidt for the benefit of the Mennonite Heritage Museum in Goessel, KS. As I have already covered the mission of the Heritage Center, I will move forward with an analysis of the text. The cover (fig. 9) is thick cardstock, and *Pluma Moos* is bound with a plastic spiral. However, this book has a combined plot that rests between an historic celebration and a differentiation of the Mennonites, separating them from their English counterparts. This is perhaps more on-brand than other texts in this study, as it seems to follow the Anabaptist principal of nonconformity to the world, supported by Corinthians 6:17 and Romans 12:2. It is also important to note that *Pluma Moos* is in its second edition (2007) after the initial production in 1981, and a revised edition finished in 1991. The 1991 *Pluma Moos* includes “a new design and several short articles on the way things were done a long time ago” (1). Alterations to the spelling of various dishes were also made to align with Herman Rempel’s *Mennonite Low German Dictionary*.<sup>11</sup> Again, the alterations

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<sup>11</sup> “Kjenn Jie Noch Plautdietsch? A Mennonite Low German Dictionary,” by Herman Rempel <http://www.mennolink.org/doc/lg/index.html>

made between the first and second editions of *Pluma Moos* seem to be geared towards demystifying Mennonite culture for audience. This denotes a desire for further accessibility, and once more I am reminded of Loewen's assertions regarding attitudes of ethnicity of faith, and how a balance must be achieved in order for the Mennonite church to grow and flourish. The short articles referred to in the introduction may also indicate another attempt at further preserving cultural knowledge for future generations.

Aside from illustrations, there is a more adept look at traditional life straddling the line between historic fact and nostalgia. The material in *Pluma Moos* is a still life that depicts the past; it is a document that preserves several touchstones of Mennonite life. For example, "recipes and old sayings and proverbs were solicited from friends of the museum organization and descendants of the 1874 Russian immigrants to the Goessel area" (2). In this sense, there is also the preservation of the Plautdietsch language, which is a major part of the Mennonite's ethnic identity. Where *Daily Bread* gives no translations for the Plautdietsch proverbs interspersed throughout its text, *Pluma Moos* provides an English translation for the various poems, songs, and prayers that are featured, such as "Wea daut niche em Kop hat, Hat daut enna baen" which, in English means "If you don't use your head, you'll use your legs" (37). There are maxims that appear in English only, but even they have a less secular bent such as the poem "I am my neighbor's Bible" (22). This is a text that accomplishes more than one narrative; what it does not attempt is an integration into secular community cookbook conventions by attempting to emulate the favorite material found in other contemporary food texts.

Likewise, it connects to what the Heritage Museum attempts to achieve. This cookbook preserves the account of daily life from longtime residents of the area. For

example, Bertha (Mrs. Herb) Schroeder provides a section on “Feeding the Threshing Crew,” which begins much like the first few lines of a favorite relative’s story might. It’s not hard to imagine sitting around a table with a cup of coffee as Schroeder tells you that “[i]n describing the threshing days of my youth – I’m now 79 – perhaps I should begin with the harvesting of the wheat” (55). What follows is a primer on one woman’s lived experience. It is storytelling, and the explication of cultural practice. She relays to her audience when a Mennonite family could tell it was time to cut the wheat (“when it was ripe, but not ‘dead-ripe’”), the typical machinery used in the fields, and the roles each family member played. Other historic sections on the “long time ago” aspects of Mennonite life in south central Kansas include “Butchering Time,” “Mennonites and Watermelon,” “Memories of Weddings, Funerals and Zwieback,” and “Peppernuts.” *Pluma Moos to Pie* is arguably the most comprehensive food text among the small group of cookbooks that I have selected for this project. It attempts to extend a metaphoric hand to outsiders, and there is some sense that if the public responds – if they reach back – the preservation of Mennonite history is likely. Voices that are silenced and disenfranchised by the quick pace of contemporary life are meaningfully present within this text. However, they do not have to remain muted if stakeholders outside the community are cultivated and understand the nature of *Pluma Moos*’ exigency.

*Pluma Moos* provides the most variants of any of the other community cookbook in this study for peppernuts, zwieback, borscht, and moos (see table 7). Again, the text is a celebration of difference while attempting to share information with outsiders who bring their curiosity with them – first to the Heritage Museum, and then to the kitchen.

From  
Pluma Moos  
to  
Pie



Mennonite Heritage Museum  
Goessel, Kansas

**Figure 9 – Cover of Pluma Moos (2007)**

***Reminisce Cookbook: 110 Recipes Celebrating 110 Years. (2008)***

Compiled by Bethesda Home in Goessel KS, 115 pages.

**Table 8** – *Reminisce* Recipe Inclusion and Variants

Dishes	Recipe Variants
Borscht (spring, summer, cabbage, etc.)	0
Moos (various fruit)	0
Peppernuts	2
Verenika	1
Zwieback	1

*Reminisce* is an outlier among other cookbooks; it is the most current text within this study, and its purpose is purely nostalgia based. This text was compiled by residents and caretakers in Goessel’s Bethesda nursing home, and it most closely follows a differentiation plot – although the application of this concept is not based on woman-only content. Many of the recipes are attributed to the “Bethesda Home Kitchen” which cannot be contributed to a specified gender even though the setting is domestic. Furthermore, there is one male contributor whose recipes are also included. Most of the recipes are provided by women, but the additional input from this outlier cannot be completely discounted as trivial. Rather, the ratio speaks volumes in that “one of these things is not like the others.” The book itself is held together with loose metal binder clasps and printed on plain white rectangular cardstock laid out in a horizontal position. All illustrations are black and white; the few interspersed within the text are clip art or derived from the internet and then placed into position. The single exception to this is *Reminisce Cookbook’s* cover (fig. 10) which displays a highly detailed hand-drawn picture of the nursing home’s exterior<sup>12</sup>. It is evident that computers were used to produce

<sup>12</sup> No artist is credited for the illustration on *Reminisce’s* cover.

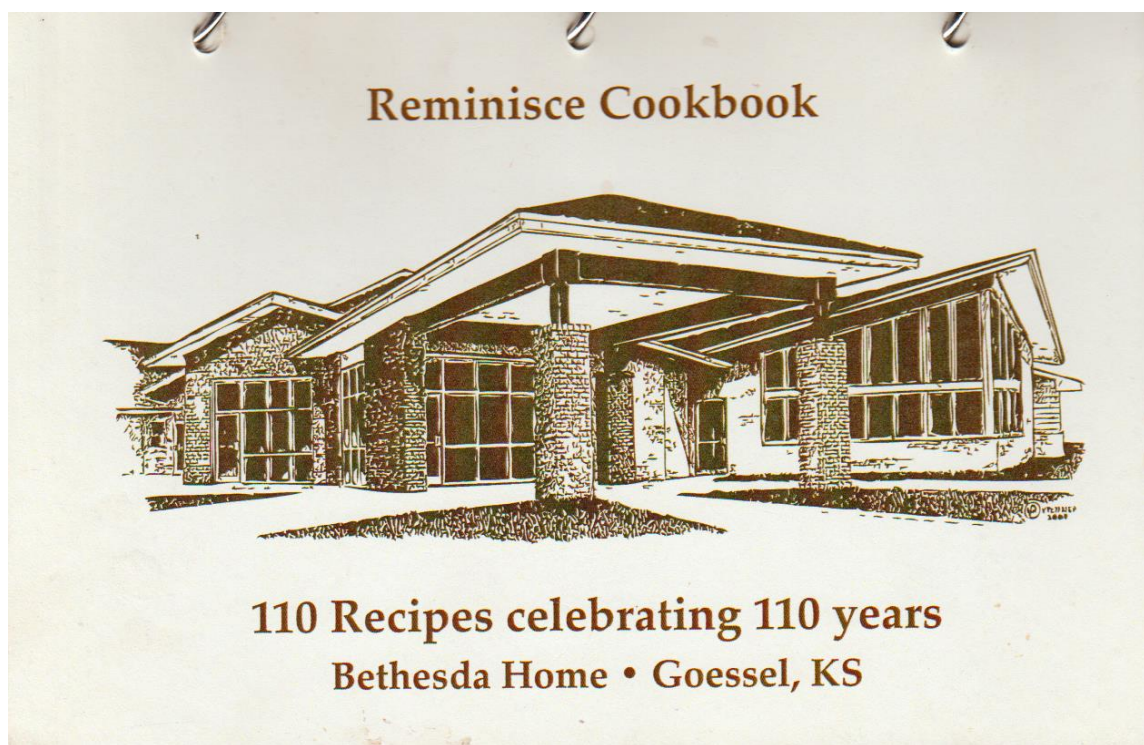
this “in-house” project compiled by staff and residents; there are no names of professional binding or publishing companies printed on the front or back of this text. Again, this may speak to the issue of available means.

Identifying the audience for such a text is not straightforward in that several could exist; it’s true that there is very little to engage a general audience of readers. However, the first page of *Reminisce* suggests that the book was not meant to be a profit-making venture, or perhaps shared with community outsiders at all. Instead, this sparse introduction reveals that the cookbook represents the work of residents who formed the “Writing and Reminisce” group that met weekly “on Thursday afternoons” (1). The introduction goes on to say that “the purpose [of the group] was to recall and write about our lives; record the events and experiences that make us who we are. It seemed that as time went on, we did more reminiscing and less writing, and very often our conversations revolved around food and cooking.” Truthfully, audience may not matter in the case of *Reminisce Cookbook*. I postulate that it is intended to be a keepsake for contributors, and perhaps for their families as well. This is a prime example of cultural rhetoric where the remembrance of food practices produces a text that leads to the extension of those practices into the immediate community and out into the secular world. It is culture redefining itself in a feedback loop between the memories of community participants and the texts that they produce.

The cookbook, was printed in 2009 and has the added significance in the number of recipes included, which “correspond[s] with the years that Bethesda has been in existence.” The end of this introductory note does address readers – “[w]e hope you

enjoy the recipes...” - but this does not indicate the number of cookbooks printed or how they were circulated.

The different sections of *Reminisce* are not out of the ordinary, except for the penultimate section entitled “Ethnic Foods.” Ten recipes, excluding borscht and moos (table 8) accompany three short nonfiction depictions of the writer’s past; Geneva Bartel takes readers through her recollections of making molasses and provides a curious piece entitled “Weather Wise” that reads like an excerpt from *The Farmer’s Almanac*. In a final aside, Frieda Flaming provides her thoughts on the recipes she submitted for *Reminisce*. Flaming tells readers that she procured a zwieback recipe with a smaller yield from a young woman named Pat Voth: “[Pat] wrote that she introduced the Washburn Volleyball team to Mennonites with these zwiebacks. This caught my fancy, and I’m still using her recipe. Bless her!” (98). This cookbook may not have been widely circulated, but within its pages, readers are given an example of how culinary traditions of the Mennonites spread to curious (and hungry) outsiders.



**Figure 10 – Cover of *Reminisce* (2008)**

### **Recipe Engagement**

Flaming perfectly illustrates how valued zwieback is in south central Kansas' Russian Mennonite community. The sharing of a single recipe is regarded as generous, and in this case, is reciprocated with gracious thanks. I have established the importance of zwieback as a potent symbol of Russian Mennonite culture. As an image, it communicates survival, nourishment, ingenuity, and the fortitude of our legacy. Marlene Epp's scholarship reinforces this, as does the work of Royden Loewen who situates zwieback as a figure representing dual diaspora in its ability to evoke the memory of forebearers who came from the Ukrainian steppes to Kansas as well as the ever-fading lifestyle of rural Mennonite.



Because of its significance, I have chosen to focus the bulk of my analysis regarding community discourse in Mennonite cookbooks produced in south central Kansas on various examples of zwieback recipes; this mirrors the methodological approach Cotter selected to analyze recipe discourse and narrative components in “Claiming a Piece of the Pie.” This section displays charts detailing each zwieback recipe present in the eight cookbooks that I provided textual commentary for in the preceding segment. My purpose is to further define what layout, orientation components, and evaluation phrases indicate about the people who produced each cooking text. Terminology in each cookbook may be familiar, but the product readers are able to recreate with the information provided by contributors varies from recipe to recipe.

The recipes featured in this section do not showcase language that is necessarily uncommon; many cookbooks rely upon evaluation clauses that are sometimes unsatisfactory in terms of description, and the cookbooks that I have selected for this project share this quality. Rather, I attempt to examine what language use in each recipe creates a link between inherent knowledge available to community members (for whom zwieback is part of a primary discourse). Furthermore, this helps to identify what aspects of such discourse must be clarified for community outsiders. I employ Swales’ belief that “language use in a group is a form of social behavior, that discourse is a means of maintaining and extending the group’s knowledge and of initiating new members into the group, and that discourse is epistemic or constitutive of the group’s knowledge” (468). My primary concern focuses on how these recipes initiate or further obfuscate for outsiders the knowledge shared in each recipe variant. This is primarily indicated by the explanation of zwieback construction which, again, is a double-decker yeast roll with a

large bottom and small, round top. I emphasize and showcase evaluation clauses related to zwieback construction only; this singular knowledge is familiar to my interview participants and many Russian Mennonites in south central Kansas.

I have decided to use Cotter's language-based assessment of recipe narratives for this project, and that is reflective in the content of each cell. The top row deals exclusively with each cookbook's title, and the variant zwieback recipes included in each, complete with the name of each contributor. In Cotter's essay, even the title can provide vital information for the analysis of a recipe. The remaining categories in each chart reflect other information that Cotter identifies. They include, "the list items related to procedural order; the orientation components," which work to "reflect the effort on the author's part to facilitate understanding of the procedure." The other categories include "the actions" which are simply verbs related to preparing each recipe. They are also important because, as Cotter states, "in spite of brevity, [they] are related temporally and sequentially." Each chart also contains a row where the appropriate evaluation components are listed. These "describe features of the recipe event that relate to the identity or action." Again, I have elected to concentrate specifically on the instructions for shaping zwieback in each recipe; this is an indication as to whether a recipe is useful to outsiders or requires insider knowledge and a familiarity with community discourse in order to produce zwieback , especially in terms of aesthetics. Finally, the "coda" category "provides closure and describes the predicted outcome" (59).

### Narrative Structures of Zwieback Recipes:

**Table 9** – *Daily Bread* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 2</b>
<i>Give Us This Day Our Daily Bread</i> (1964)	“Zwieback” cont. Mrs. Edward Geist	“Zwieback” cont. Mrs. Roy Aurenheimer, Mrs. Otto Quiring, Mrs. Harlan Friesen
List	Milk, butter, shortening, salt, sugar, yeast, flour	Milk, lard, salt, sugar, yeast, flour
Orientation Components	N/A	Part of title: “Two Story Buns”
Actions	Scald, add, dissolve, mix, stir, knead, cover, let, pinch, place, put, press, bake	Scald, cool, melt, dissolve, make, beat, let, add, form, knead, pinch, place, squeeze, press, keep
Evaluations	pinch off small balls of dough the size of a small egg similar ball on top of bottom ball	a piece of dough the size of a grapefruit forming a small ball of dough slightly larger than the other smaller ball of dough firmly
Coda	Yields about 4 dozen	This makes about 24 medium sized zwieback

### Observation:

The two variants in *Daily Bread* adhere to basic contemporary recipe formats described by Cotter and Notaker. Neither recipe provides obvious orientation phrases that readers can point to as contextual. Perhaps the description of Aurenheimer et al's zwieback as "Two-Story" buns gives a fuller description of appearance, and in doing so may give readers a baseline of understanding regarding the recipe's outcome.

The evaluation phrases are more explicit, and they work with the Aurenheimer recipe's title to assist readers with correct zwieback construction. In this case, it is likely that community outsiders would be able to recreate the zwieback roll. The action verbs are typical of what a seasoned baker might find in other cookbooks typical of the genre, and this familiarity may set readers at ease.

Both recipes (fig. 11) walk the reader through creating the necessary dough consistency, and the use of language here becomes more overtly descriptive – even poetic; “[p]inch off small balls of dough the size of a small egg,” (Geist) and “[p]inch off a piece of dough the size of a grapefruit. Place it in your hand and squeeze between the first finger and thumb, thus forming a small ball of dough. Form two of these, one slightly larger than the other,” (Aurenheimer, Quiring, Friesen). These directions are still subjective – after all, one reader's grapefruit may not resemble another's. However, it leaves less to the imagination than Rupp's "form into Zwiebach." Two realizations become evident to me when I read these recipes; first, there is still an assumed level of knowledge that each contributor has about the audience for this cookbook even though it is more accessible. Secondly, it's clear that making these rolls can be a simple task if you have an "expert" baker to show you how everything should look, feel, smell, and taste.

Bower herself points out that “Differentiation Plots” are not always about separation, and almost always relay how a community integrates itself into society while honoring its uniqueness. In this way, the women who collectively speak in *Daily Bread* through these recipes are doing important work in terms of outreach as well as preservation as it ties back to their own cultural connections. These directions are clear and concise, even to the point of a numerically exact coda, which many of the other recipes do not provide. Such directive elements indicate at least two things; a willingness to lessen the gap between insider/outsider positionality, and perhaps to preserve these food practices for future generations who may not have the advantage of guidance by experienced elders.

### ZWIEBACK

2 cups milk  
 1 cup butter and other shortening (half and half)  
 1 T. salt  
 2 T. sugar  
 1 cake yeast  
 8½-9 cups flour, sifted

Scald milk, add butter, shortening, salt and sugar. Dissolve yeast in 1 cup lukewarm water. Add yeast mixture to lukewarm milk mixture. Mix well and stir in flour gradually. Knead dough until very soft and smooth. Cover and let rise in warm place until double in bulk. Pinch off small balls of dough the size of a small egg. Place these 1 inch apart on greased pan. Put a similar ball on top of bottom ball. Press down with thumb. Let rise until double in bulk (about 1 hour). Bake at 400°-450° F for 15-20 minutes. Yields about 4 dozen.

*Mrs. Edward Geist*

### ZWIEBACK (TWO-STORY BUNS)

2 cups milk, scalded and cooled to lukewarm  
 ¾ cups lard (part butter may be used) melted and cooled to lukewarm  
 2 tsp. salt  
 2 tsp. sugar  
 1 cake yeast or 1 package dry yeast  
 About 6 cups flour

Dissolve yeast and sugar in ¼ cup water. Make a starter with the milk, yeast and salt and enough flour to make a thin batter. Beat and let rest for about 15 minutes until some bubbles form. Then add the lard and more flour to form a dough which isn't quite as stiff as bread dough. Knead, let rise until double in size. Pinch off a piece of dough the size of a grapefruit. Place it in your hand and squeeze between the first finger and thumb, thus forming a small ball of dough. Form two of these, one slightly larger than the other. Place one on a greased cookie sheet. Press smaller ball of dough firmly onto bottom half of zwieback. Allow to rise on pan, keeping them covered. When double in size and very light bake in hot oven, 400°, 20 to 25 minutes or until light brown. This makes about 24 medium sized zwieback.

*Mrs. Roy Aurenheimer  
 Mrs. Otto Quiring  
 Mrs. Harlan Friesen*

### VASPA (LUNCH)

"Vaspa is a lunch served in the afternoon around 3:30 or 4 o'clock, and sometimes even a little later. "Vaspa" is almost a must on Sunday afternoons. It is taken for granted that when you go visiting on Sunday afternoon, invited or not, that you will be served "Vaspa" by your hostess. Almost everyone is prepared to serve a lunch, too. The main item on the menu, of course, is zwieback, though at times bread or coffee-cakes, cinnamon rolls can be substituted. Jelly, coffee, cheese, lumps of sugar, cake, cookies or other sweets complete the meal.

*Mrs. Harlan Friesen*

Figure 11 – Zwieback recipes from *Daily Bread*, including contributor attributions.

**Table 10** – *Goessel Centennial Cookbook* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 2</b>
<i>Goessel Centennial Cookbook</i> (1974)	“Zwieback” cont. Mrs. Henry Goossen	“Kleine Zwieback” cont. Mrs. Anton Klassen
List	Milk, salt, sugar, margarine (cool)	Water, yeast, milk, lard, salt, sugar, flour
Orientation Components	N/A	Part of title: “Little Double Rolls”
Actions	Combine, let rise, work, make, bake	Dissolve, scald, add, beat, let rise, put, have, knead, roll, cut, place, break, toast
Evaluations	N/A	Make into zwieback (large ball on bottom topped with smaller ball)
Coda	N/A	N/A

**Observation:**

Given the length and purpose of this short souvenir cooking text it’s not surprising that these two recipes are succinct, lacking the descriptive elements which provide outsider guidance. The souvenir’s intended audience was probably assumed to have a familiarity with zwieback rolls. This small, short text is almost certainly for experienced cooks who do not require elaborate handholding.

The Goossen recipe is more explicit in its instructions; she indicates timeframe and provides exact oven temperatures and baking requirements in a way that Klassen’s recipe does not. It is no surprise then that the phrase “make into zwieback ” which lacks any elaboration finds its way into the Klassen recipe, although she does tell readers how to shape their zwieback rolls; this contributor seems to believe that their simple

instructions are sufficient. There's no need to elaborate. In this, Klassen does not anticipate non-experienced bakers to use her recipe.

Goossen's contribution is more explicit; these directions indicate that one piece of dough is stacked onto another. However, there is no clear statement regarding what shape the stacked objects takes, or what the correct appearance of a final product is. In truth, this recipe calls for the finished bun to be toasted at three-hundred degrees for twenty minutes after they're done with a first initial baking. This recipe seems to be more toast than roll. Both contributors may believe that those who celebrate "the Coming of the Mennonites" will have previously encountered the "double-bun" – if not in their own homes, then with their Mennonite neighbors and friends.

**Table 11** – Kitchen Medley Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>
<i>Kitchen Medley</i> (1981)	"Connie's Zwiebach" cont. Pat Rupp
List	Wesson oil, milk salt, sugar, water, yeast, sugar, arcadia powder
Orientation Components	A 25-word statement which describes these zwiebacks are "softer than most," and tells readers that the recipe comes from Pat's "sister's husband's family."
Actions	Scald, add, cool, soak, let, shape, bake
Evaluations	<i>shape into zwiebach</i>
Coda	Makes between 40-60 zwiebach, depending on how large you make them.

**Observation:**

The zwieback (spelled 'zwiebach' in this instance) recipe from *Medley* lacks technical orientation phrases; however, I would argue that there is a kind of personal touch to the recipes within *Medley* because of the hand-written, hand-drawn content



present in the book. There are similarities between notecards passed down to Congard-Black written by her grandmother, and “Connie’s Zwiebach.” Even though the book itself is a bound and printed text – even though this specific page and recipe may never have been touched by contributor Pat Rupp, there is still someone’s handwriting which can now be archived (fig. 12). It is unalterable fact that, whether Rupp has passed on or is still alive, some aspect of her existence has been preserved.

In community cookbooks, there are often moments of individual preservation, such as evidenced in *Medley* which moves beyond the printed page, becoming a compilation over time – notes from owners past and present scribbled in margins create a kind of conversation within the pages. These are voices that speak back and forth to one another, making changes and alterations to recipes for as long as the text exists. Cotter touches on this in “Pie,” stating simply that “orientation function is also fulfilled by many cooks’ handwritten notes next to a particular recipe in their cookbook, for instance, ‘Bill made this for my birthday,’ or ‘tasted better with honey,’ or ‘yum!’ in effect personalizing the recipe and making it part of the cook’s personal story” (61). There is a link here between ordinary writing, and the preservation of individuals’ interactions with texts that are underestimated or ignored completely.

Moving back to the recipe, there is an assumption by the author that someone interacting with the recipe is part of her community and already understands what significance the zwieback recipe holds. There is some sense of orientation at the bottom of the page which indicates to readers that Rupp “find[s] this recipe softer than most Zwiebach [sic] recipes,” and that the recipe “is from [their] sister’s husband’s family” (13). The most problematic phrase is, as with *Centennial Cookbook*, “shape into Zwiebach” which

assumes reader knowledge regarding the zwieback roll's appearance. However, unlike Friessen and Goossen's recipes, no real details regarding roll construction is given to readers. This is problematic because although contemporary readers can search "Zwiebach" on a smart phone, they'll come up with two resulting definitions and images via Google; the first is for the traditional teething toasts from Germany, and the second is for the "yeast rolls" that Rupp is discussing here. Readers are likely to discern which result is the correct one. However, in 1981 a successful reproduction of this recipe would be predicated on cultural insider knowledge.

### Connie's Zwiebach

3 c. milk	1/2 c. water
1 c. Wesson oil	5 tsp. yeast
2 Tbsp. salt	1 tsp. sugar
6 Tbsp. sugar	1 tsp. arcadia powder (optional)

Scald milk. Add oil, salt and sugar to milk. Cool. In 1/2 c. water with 1 tsp. sugar and 1 tsp. arcadia powder added, soak 5 tsp. yeast. After milk mixture is cooled, add yeast mixture and enough flour to make a stiff dough. Let rise 1 hr. Knead. Let rise another hr. Shape into zwiebach. Let rise 1 hr. in pan. Bake at 350° for approximately 15 minutes.

Makes between 40-60 zwiebach, depending how large you make them. This is a simple yeast dough recipe and I find this recipe softer than most zwiebach recipes. This recipe is from my sister's husband's family.  
Pat Rupp

Figure 12 – Handwritten zwiebach recipes from *Kitchen Medley*, including contributor attributions.

**Table 12** – *Book for Cooks* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>
<i>Book for Cooks</i> (1982)	“Zwieback” cont. Esther Harms
List	*no list set apart from recipe directions* Ex. “Dissolve 1 cake yeast in 1/3 cup warm water...” east, water, sugar, milk, butter, oleo, salt, flour
Orientation Components	N/A
Actions	Dissolve, warm, add, let, punch, knead, form, set, cool, cover, keep touch as in “will not” is also included as action
Evaluations	punch down thoroughly form into single zwieback place one on top of the other
Coda	N/A

**Observations:**

Book for Cooks contains a unique zwieback recipe; appearing in two short paragraphs, there is no typical “list” or ingredients that precede the actions or evaluation phrases. Contributor Esther Harms has deviated from what Notaker and other cookbook scholars identify as typified genre characteristics, but her recipe has descriptions that would translate roughly to an outside audience as to what zwieback is in terms of appearance. Readers know, for example, that they are to form risen dough “into a single zwieback” and that “the lower half” is “larger than the upper half” (29). Although the vague nature of language that may keep community outsiders from perfectly reproducing this recipe (i.e. what does a “single zwieback ” look like?) there are descriptive hints that may help readers reach the intended outcome: for example, “keep in plastic bag,” etc.

**Table 13** – *T.G.Y.F.* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>
<i>T.G.Y.F. Cookbook</i> (1982)	“Zwieback” cont. Alice Funk
List	yeast, water, (scalded) milk, sugar, salt, lard, margarine, flour
Orientation Components	N/A
Actions	Scalding occurs with milk in ingredient list. Dissolve, beat, add, punch, shape, pinch, place, let
Evaluations	Shape by pinching off dough to make 1 ½ balls. Pinch off another ball a little smaller and place on top of first one.
Coda	Makes 6 dozen

**Observation:**

Alice Funk’s zwieback recipe is explicit; the contributor does not give any orientation phrases to her readers, but immediately gets down to business. Funk tells her audience exactly what a roll should look like, and how one is constructed. I wonder if such a detailed process is outlined in this particular text because it is a cookbook that has been produced for the express purpose of fundraising. It is reasonable to assume that members of the Tabor-Goessel Youth Group would want their cookbook to appeal to as many people in the community as possible. This would include both community insiders and outsiders living near and within the Mennonite community. It is not inaccurate to suggest that most people in the surrounding community would have a passing familiarity with zwieback.

**Table 14** – *Sharing Together* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

Analysis Components	Recipe Variant 1	Recipe Variant 2
<i>Sharing Together</i> (1974)	“Zwieback” cont. Agnetha Duerksen	“No-Fail Zwieback” cont. Twila Penner
List	Milk, butter (or part butter, or part butter and substitutes), salt, sugar, dry yeast, water, flour	Margarine, milk, water, dry yeast, sugar, salt, flour (appx.)
Orientation Components	A 26-word aside - “Zwieback are usually baked on Saturday to be served for Faspa or Sunday lunch.” They are “usually serve[sic] with cheese, lump sugar, and coffee” (13).	“These freeze well.”
Actions	Scalding and cooling occurs with milk in ingredient list. dissolve, melt, add, stir, knead, cover, handle, pinch, place, bake	Melting occurs with margarine and warming occurs with milk in ingredient list. Combine, add, stir, knead, let, form, place, bake
Evaluations	small ball smaller one to place on top	form into walnut-size balls
Coda	N/A	N/A

**Observation:**

Duerksen’s recipe gives us orientation components that literally convey a place and time to readers. She contextualizes this food, mentioning simply “Russia,” and then telling us about Faspa and what part zwieback plays in this traditional light afternoon meal. It is not as descriptive as the introduction materials in *Our Daily Bread*, but this brief aside does indicate that Duerksen was thinking, at least partially, of community outsiders when she penned this recipe. However, the purpose of this informational detail is a move toward cultural preservation. I doubt Duerksen considered this when she laid out the orientation components in her recipe, but it does important work, enriching the

text for anyone who engages *Sharing Together*. Finally, this is also an example of zwieback recipes that can be reproduced by community outsiders with directions explicit enough to guide bakers through the process.

Directions for Twila Penner's "No-Fail Zwieback" is pared down considerably, but also manages to give readers a formative concept of zwieback's appearance. Penner, like Duerksen, details construction, although her observation that the dough "balls" that need to be placed one on top of the other should be "walnut-sized" is subjective, as with the directions in *Daily Bread*.

**Table 15** – *Pluma Moos* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 2</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 3</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 4</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 5</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 6</b>
<i>Pluma Moos to Pie</i> 2 <sup>nd</sup> ed. 2 <sup>nd</sup> printing (2007)	“Zwieback” cont. Alice Duerksen	“Zwieback” cont. Theresa Schmidt	“Zwieback” cont. Dora Reimer	“Zwieback” cont. Marie Banman	“Sourdough Zwieback” cont. Sophia Unruh	“Zwieback” cont. Agatha Duerksen
List	dry milk, water, shortening (or 1 cup margarine and ½ cup Crisco), sugar, salt, dry yeast, flour	yeast, water, sugar, shortening, milk, salt, sugar, flour	milk, margarine, shortening, sugar, salt, caked or dry yeast, flour	canned milk, water, dry yeast, salt, sugar, vegetable oil, flour	sourdough sponge, yeast cakes, milk, shortening, flour	milk, margarine, salt, eggs, water, sugar, yeast, flour
Orientation Components	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	Sourdough (assumes preparedness)	N/A
Actions	dissolving occurs with dry milk and warm water in ingredient list. mix, add, let, add, knead, form, shape, bake	soaking occurs with yeast and water, and scalding occurs with milk in ingredient list. knead	punch make	heating occurs with water in ingredient list. mix, knead	make, knead, put, let, bake	scald, let, cool, dissolve, add, mix, knead, pinch, place, bake
Evaluations	shape into zwieback	N/A	N/A	N/A	put one small roll on top of another	pinch off small pieces of dough
Coda	N/A	N/A	Makes about 60 zwieback	N/A	N/A	N/A



**Observation:**

*Pluma Moos to Pie* has a very distinct purpose and intended audience; it's a text that prioritizes history and preservation while teaching community outsiders about Mennonite heritage and culture. As I have mentioned, this text is sold in the giftshop at the Goessel Mennonite Heritage Museum, often to visitors who are passing through on highway K-15; it's also a book that was commonly referenced time and time again by my interviewees.

All six recipe variants in *Pluma Moos* are compelling due to the dual nature of writer's goal versus reader's reality. In the analysis of these zwieback recipes, there's only one explicit description of how to construct the roll. This seems to be something of an oversight; however, the closest thing *Pluma Moos* has to offer in terms of a visual guide for the zwieback-baking novice is in Sophia Unruh's description. She tells readers to "put one small roll on top of another" (109). The other recipes simply tell readers to shape the dough into zwieback.

*Pluma Moos to Pie's* orientations partially compensate for its lack of explicit evaluative phrases. The book situates itself within sense of place and history. Many recipes in the third edition of *Pluma Moos* are paired with asides that provide additional context for readers, inviting a sensation of push-and-pull between outsiders and privileged readers who have knowledge of Mennonite culture and heritage in south central Kansas.

Accompanying information pertaining to zwieback is present in *Pluma Moos*, although the entry is quite short. Despite its brevity it manages to convey a simple explanation regarding import (as if the six variant recipes don't already emphasize and

indicate significance). Under the heading “Toasted zwieback,” the text tells readers, “[l]eftover zwieback may be broken apart and toasted in a slow oven. May be eaten plain or dunked in coffee. Our ancestors took baskets of toasted zwieback with them for their trip to America” (108). Again, this address seems to thwart the insider/outsider dichotomy; *Pluma Moos* is not a cookbook that specifies one community but speaks to several in drastically different ways. Shaping zwieback is treated as common knowledge by way of simple directive omission. However, there is a single instance of instruction which renders the recipes useful to outsiders, and perhaps this should not be a surprise. The beginning of *Moos* warns its audience that recipes are stripped-down variants open to malleable interpretation by readers. History lessons, sometimes bridging between orientation and memoir, link outsiders and discourse community members with information that works on differentiating levels for each intended audience. It’s a complex task that requires the ability to think about the varying perspectives of different readers

**Table 16** – *Reminisce* Recipe Variants and Content Analysis

<b>Analysis Components</b>	<b>Recipe Variant 1</b>
<i>Reminisce Cookbook</i> (2008)	“Zwieback” cont. Frieda Flaming
List	Shortening (or margarine & butter), sugar, yeast, salt, milk, flour
Orientation Components	On next page – memoir
Actions	Place, scald, pour, stir, cool, let, knead, pinch, cover, bake, remove, cover
Evaluations	N/A
Coda	N/A

**Observation:**

The recipe for zwieback in *Reminisce* contains some of the difficulties and issues with evaluation clauses that other recipes in this project have displayed. However, the orientation components are arguably rich; the shape of the cookbook itself presents an issue for those who have compiled the materials from contributors. It is a text with large print, perhaps a necessary design choice given that the cookbook was compiled by the residents of Bethesda Home. Details regarding specific dishes are relegated to separate spaces on the back of each page, as is the case with Frieda Flaming's recipe. Orientation components in her work don't appear in the body of the recipe itself; there's no introductory paragraph that provides contextual information for readers. However, on the page immediately following the recipe is a small moment of "reminiscing" from Flaming who writes about the contents she's submitted for the text, one of which is her zwieback recipe.

The four recipes I'm submitting for the Bethesda Home Cook Book are my old time favorites; except for one major difference...It's my [Z]wieback recipe. When I still had a family around me, and a deep freeze to keep full [sic]; this was a five cups liquids recipe. Now in retrospect, I've realized that the [g]olden years have brought on needful changes. I did find a smaller recipe done by a young lady, Pat Voth. She wrote that she introduced the Washburn Volleyball team to Mennonites with these [z]wieback. This caught my fancy, and I'm still using her recipe. Bless her (98)!

The orientation denotes transference of food and linguistic practice; whether Flaming realizes it or not, she provides readers with a perfect illustration of foodway distribution between discourse communities. By relaying the story of Pat Voth, she illuminates ways in which outsiders can and have attained access to certain cultural touchstones of Russian Mennonite food practices. However, this “transference” is sometimes complicated by a lack of cultivated understanding that is arguably exclusive to Mennonite kitchens; people can and do recreate zwieback on their own, but their attempts might be made more successful with additional guidance from a community insider.

### **Implications of Recipe Analysis**

In *Feminist Rhetorical Practices*, Royster and Kirsch ask writers and researchers to do the labor of considering what has not historically been centralized in scholarship. In a rumination on situating genre within their “re-visioning” of the discipline, they suggest that we consider how other feminist rhetoricians have “pushed the boundaries of rhetorical studies” regarding the writing of everyday life. The questions they pose regarding texts and materials produced by women are as follows; “What is worthy of inclusion? What is left at the margins? How do we read texts when they don’t meet our expectations? How do we step back and examine our readerly habits and expectations? How do we read material artifacts as rhetorical activities, even if the writing was done by needle, not pen” (63)? They ask scholars to peer into “the shadow of literate lives, to notice viewpoints that might be easily dismissed, discarded, tossed” (63).

In reviewing my data, I often looked to Kirsch and Royster’s list so that I could reframe my thoughts about the primary sources I’d collected for the purpose of

deciphering the discourse of a group where I identify as a marginal member, inhabiting a liminal space difficult to define.

At the beginning of my project, I wondered why so many recipes I encountered in these books were alarmingly sparse compared to the lives of these women. I am still fascinated by what each contributor decides to give readers. Are we allowed a glimpse, or do they believe their contractual obligation is to provide us with a simple checklist of ingredients and directions (Notaker), some which are vague? How do the writing practices of women who contribute to these cookbooks intermingle with their own understanding of the community they live within? What I know is this; the production of food ties directly to the identity of these contributors and is always rhetorical.

I remember being young and unaware that the food traditions my family practiced were different than that of any other family in America. I only knew that being on the farm and eating at Gram's was far better than eating almost anywhere else. I thought that she and my aunts were so proficient in the kitchen that they simply produced good food. I never realized that there was a differentiation between the culinary experience of Menno food and that of the outside world; I just knew that I preferred the cooking my father's family did. When I became older, I began to make the distinction. As soon as I had some idea of what made our family unique – what made us Mennonites – I began my own journey to learn more about my familial and spiritual history. Much of that education was facilitated by cookbooks.

I have, in some sense, come full circle in considering the many entanglements of this work. Although these are a limited set of recipes from a small selection of community cookbooks, they encapsulate specific implications regarding the contributors

and their perspective of intended audience. I also attempted to think about who this removed audience is in an objective way, but I keep running into my own shadow again and again; did the people contributing to these cookbooks anticipate readers like me?

On some level, zwieback recipes from texts like *Kitchen Medley*, *Sharing Together*, and others indicate who contributors considered a likely audience for their work. Subjective evaluation phrases make some directions unclear, although I would argue that the bulk of these are not specific to Mennonite community cookbooks from the area. Many recipes and cookbooks seem to assume a certain kitchen proficiency which a reader may not possess. This is, as I've said, less of an issue in the age of Google and smart phones. Demystifying simple directions like "combine to form a stiff dough" or "scald milk" is not a difficult task; however, the basic components of zwieback structure and the mastery of technique required to produce the intended outcome of a recipe can be vital in determining specific aspects of this discourse community; each recipe exposes the insider/outsider binary, and evaluation clauses indicate reader positionality. The simple fact is that reproducing zwieback successfully may require proximity of an experienced individual from the community.

As for myself, I can tell you that the only reason I understand the process by which to produce zwieback is due to watching my grandmother and aunts make it many times over. Even then, recreating the recipe in my own home has varying results depending on how out of practice I am. I cannot imagine what trying to recreate zwieback would be like for a person who had never even seen one, much less watched as someone baked them.

This is how we may separate the recipes in terms of effectiveness; which sets of directions consider a more holistic approach to the techniques and practices being openly conveyed to readers regardless of community status and background? Only one cookbook out of the eight featured in this study contains an entry that omits all necessary details to structure zwieback; Pat Rupp's recipe in *Kitchen Medley* cannot be followed to fruition without insider knowledge. Prospective bakers engaging with Rupp's contribution would need to understand the aesthetics of zwieback. Several other cookbooks contain sparse recipes which rely on surrounding, more complete entries. *Pluma Moos to Pie* is a prime example of where this occurs.

All but one of these cookbooks meet the expectations that readers would have for recipes within their pages; that is, *Kitchen Medley* is the only one text that defies the promise that we are used to cookbooks making to their readers. The expectation is that a reader will be able to follow a logical set of steps in order to arrive at an expected endpoint. However, Rupp's entry falls short of this contract. *Medley* is also the most unique cookbook in my collection in that it includes the personal handwriting and drawings of women and children, merging the private and public. Even though it exhibits features of Bower's plot of integration, it still resists complete assimilation through this one small feature.

Understanding cultural foodways is more complex than having a simple cursory knowledge of one group's culinary repertoire, and this is no different than the unique, regionally specific data set that I've developed for my study. During my interviews, several individuals told me that they did not make zwieback for various reasons, and I was left wondering if the zwieback roll's status in the Russian Mennonite community has

altered over the years. Perhaps this food item has become most important as a potent symbol that resonates with the area's residents instead of the common food staple that it used to be.



**CHAPTER V – THE MORE (WITH LESS) THINGS CHANGE: ALTERATIONS,  
ENCULTURATION, AND PRESERVATION OF RUSSIAN MENNONITE FOOD  
TRADITIONS IN KANSAS**

*Strategic contemplation further suggests that we pay attention to how lived experiences shape our perspectives as researchers and those of our research subjects. We call for greater attention to lived, embodied experience because we consider it to be a powerful yet often-neglected source of insight, inspiration, and passion.*

-- Jaqueline Jones Royster and Gesa E. Kirsch

**Mindfulness and Mennonites: Conducting Research and Applying an Ethics of Care**

In chapter three, I spoke to food writing and culture's shaping of Mennonite approaches to culinary tradition. More than that, I connect issues of gender with the production of food writing in the Mennonite community at large. In this section, I extend my study towards community discourse surrounding food.

First, I wish to provide yet another account of my methods for gathering and interpreting data. At the beginning of this project, I came to understand the necessity of being specific in my aims and outreach; I remain cognizant of my status as partial outsider in this community despite the fact that many of my family members are insiders who have lived and worked in the area for decades. My own familial origins can be traced to the migration of Mennonites from Prussia and Russia to Kansas in 1874. However, I was not born into this community. My father was. My grandmother and great grandmother, too - all born in Goessel's Bethesda Hospital. However, I encountered the

Mennonite community long after my birth; I met my grandmother when I was three after my family had moved back to Kansas after a brief stint in the Pacific Northwest.

The family farm – located in the heart of Kansas Mennonite country – is a place I returned to again and again as a child; however, I was not a constant resident. Although the people and places in the area are familiar to me, I am an acquaintance to the surrounding community. I'm Lila's granddaughter and not an intimate friend or neighbor.

For reasons related to my liminal status, I made the choice to triangulate data between interview participants, the scholarship presented in chapter one's literature review, and community cooking texts. This solidifies the lens through which my data is seen and interpreted as objective with the full knowledge that some level of personal bias will no doubt be present. I produce generative conclusions that form organically while allowing my subjects and primary texts to articulate patterns, experiences, and tensions within my community of focus.

I run the risk of extrapolating data because of the roots I share with people in this region; bias born of familiarity and the threat of providing readers with an unbalanced viewpoint is counterproductive to my ultimate intent. I want to avoid what Patricia A. Sullivan speaks to in her piece "Ethnography and the Problem of the Other" when she warns writers that interpreting a study focused on other individuals' lives from one's own vantage point can be paramount to a "room of mirrors" (103). Sullivan conveys various approaches that ethnographers and researchers have used to write about the subjects of their work in the past, navigating the complexities of each tactic. How can researcher and subject gain a "power-sharing discourse" (108) in a project such as this? Sullivan turns, at one point, to R.S. Khare who suggests "to view the 'other' under love rather than under a

will to secure self-privilege and textual power” (15) and ultimately she suggests that best praxis for ethnographic writing is “motivated less by the will to knowledge than by an ethic of care” (111). I believe that it is appropriate for scholarship involving anabaptist doctrine and the Mennonites who are ultimately members of an international peace church to be situated within the “ethics of care” Sullivan seems to prescribe. This, for me, does not mean ignoring the performative and, at worst, artificial nature of interactions between researcher and respondent. These are not roles that can be wholly transcended. Rather, I have taken into consideration the positionality of my subjects; I attempt in this work to remain mindful of their perspectives and ideals while also attempting to trace what is unspoken and unobserved.

It would have been possible for me to approach the Mennonites and their foodways from the removed positionality of a researcher, unfamiliar with the places and people in my study. However, this tactic might have proved detrimental to my work. With Royster and Kirsch’s concept of critical imagination in mind, I determined that I should take the dual outside and inward journeys that work in tandem to create a holistic portrait of materials and subjects. I wanted to “go to archives and historical sites, the city or country where a historical subject worked or lived...carefully collecting details, information, experiences” (85) so that I could take the elements of the Russian Mennonite story that I already have, and widen its scope. Inwardly, I found myself processing my interviewees’ stories and eventually the cookbooks themselves as intellectual companions with whom I became intimately acquainted. If I had made the decision to ignore materials and subjects readily available to me, I

would've created a dearth of resources essential to providing a multidimensional portrayal of the population and practices present in the location selected for my project.

Community connections, both archival and interpersonal, are essential to engaging with emic normality and distinction in this geographic, culturally significant space. For example, I spent hours perusing cookbooks in the Bethel College Mennonite Archives. I wandered secondhand bookstores in Newton, hoping to find Mennonite community cookbooks produced by congregations and organizations in the area. I sought out directors and volunteers at the Heritage Museum. They, in turn, pointed me towards other individuals whose input was simultaneously beneficial and insightful.

Several interviewees featured in this chapter are familial connections who expressed an interest in assisting me with my project. Each participant lives and works in the Mennonite communities of south central Kansas. Five out of the seven participants I interviewed have resided in the Goessel/Newton area for most of their lives. All participants brought their own questions and concerns about the scope of my research to me; this provided a compass and a wealth of important observations I was able to glean from our interactions that were not directly related to the guiding questions I had composed for my interviews. Additional information that might reveal blatant personal identifiers from these interviews are not disclosed in my project for reasons relating to confidentiality. However, pertinent and assistive individuated input absolutely contributes to my project; I have done my best to keep my interviewees anonymous but allowing these individuals to speak for themselves means that there are some identifiers that cannot be omitted. This works towards giving my project depth and candor that I could not otherwise provide.

Many participants provided me with observations and concerns connected to changes and perceptions surrounding Mennonite communities – not just for those living in south central Kansas, but in a larger, globalized sense. Issues ranging from the diversification of community inhabitants (primarily through the influx of immigrants from other countries) to acculturation of Mennonite traditions were a through-line. The acknowledgement of sociological shifts among my interviewees was corroborated by Parker who studied the ways in which the local school systems eventually led to the dissolution of boundaries between the once isolated Mennonite communities in Kansas and secular local groups. In the last thirty to forty years, globalization and technology have played a part in boundary erasure; many Mennonites in south central Kansas would consider mission work and world outreach one of MCC's major priorities. As you can imagine, this is a major shift away from attitudes held among their ancestors.

When the Mennonites first came to Kansas in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, they attempted to re-form the structure of Russian villages which they had previously lived in. However, their priorities also included providing education for their children. These schools remained primarily separate from the secular schools of English peoples until the turn of the century when cars and buses could ensure better mobility. It was this change that truly began shifting the schools themselves, which led to yet more influence from the outside world. Parker states that,

[a]t any point in this process, a few friendships with people outside the ethnic group alone would not have indicated acculturation; however, such friendships would have increased familiarity with the dominant culture. If the new friends of elementary school students did not speak Low German,

for example, it may have encouraged children to speak English more and thus accelerate linguistic acculturation. If their new friends did not value pacifism, students might have been encouraged to question and possibly reject this traditional belief of the Mennonites, which over the long term could even lead to leaving the church (43).

As one can imagine, the heterogeneous nature of students and teachers in the formerly Mennonite school districts of south central Kansas has only increased in the last century.

An unexpected acceptance of change and innovation within the local food culture became another emergent theme; one interview highlights the Janzen Longacre *More-with-Less* cookbook; the interviewee emphasized that need for mindfulness, health, and social justice issues to shape local food culture. Other interviewees mentioned how dietary restrictions shift local food practices. Patterns of further note include what characterizes someone as a community insider/outsider. I also wondered who in the community gets to decide what is and is not “authentic” to Mennonite heritage, or whether those decisions vary individually.

Employing interview analysis allowed me to create meaning out of the viewpoints and attitudes I encountered during my interviews. I chose this engagement with my interviews as a method of discovery because concrete observations were made more accessible through coding for patterns that naturally emerged. In this way, I was able to better determine the specific markers of discourse and cultural concerns while allowing all subjects to “speak” in significant ways, therefore guiding my research.

The discursive practices of this community are complex and often inaccessible to outsiders; by having some integral knowledge by way of my familial background, I attempt to interpret meaningful and specific subtleties.

### **The Interviews**

From August of 2018 to October of 2019, seven individuals underwent semi-structured one-on-one interviews of open-ended questions. I composed my questions<sup>13</sup> such that they created malleable parameters for our interaction while providing necessary flexibility for my participants. I told my interviewees that the study's focus was on the food-related experiences of those who consider themselves part of the Russian Mennonite communities in south central Kansas and that the overall purpose of the study was to measure how the perceptions and use of "traditional" food has changed over time. I relayed to all participants that there was no expectation or requirement of any knowledge but their own memories, opinions, and thoughts.

They were also informed that I was searching for patterns in their responses, and that I believed speaking with several individuals would help me gain a better understanding of how cultural participants think about foodways. My questions did not require straightforward responses from interview subjects, but rather provided a starting point for conversation. Verbal exchanges often moved beyond the parameters of original subject matter, but initially began with a specific focus on areas of content directly connected to local Mennonites and their food traditions. For example, I asked participants

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<sup>13</sup> IRB work and question set located in the appendix.

to describe their cultural, social, or familial relationship to Mennonites in the area; I also asked them to characterize “traditional Mennonite food.”

My inquiries often led to a digressive mode of conversation where the participants could use several different access points to compose a response. I want to stress that in this case, “digressive” does not hold a negative connotation. Open-ended inquiries resulted in a rich dialogue that revealed more than I felt a stringent set of questions on a questionnaire would have provided. I contextualized questions regarding discursive practices within the realm of an interviewee’s experiences by asking them what connections they have to Russian Mennonite culture, their experiences with the cookbooks they commonly used, any alterations to food traditions that they have encountered whether inside or outside the community, and examples of the vernacular (both Plautdietsch or English) used in private homes and within larger community groups to describe food.

These conversations often left me wondering how the insider/outsider binary influenced my time with those I interacted with. I must acknowledge that this impacts my study because, not unlike the featured cookbooks, interviews are tailored to and for a specific audience. No interview is without bias because of perceptions between interviewer and participant. As my field work continued, I wondered how interviewees perceived me and how they might want to be perceived in turn. My role as interviewer undoubtedly shapes a participant’s responses; that cannot be denied. For example, in at least one case I observed that a sizable detail that was public knowledge within the community was withheld by a participant during our time together. I have no way of knowing if it was an intentional rhetorical move on their part or a simple oversight. I did



not force the interviewee to address this; the danger of compromising my data set was, to my mind, a greater threat to this project. Despite this, each interview went amicably enough. The youngest interviewee is in their early fifties and the oldest is ninety-three years of age. Although there are no young adults included in these interviews, I believe that there are some advantages to interviewing those who have observed the cultural landscape of Mennonite communities change over time. Many participants used memory to connect with more recent changes of note.

Overall, I interviewed five women and two men; one of my interviews includes dual voices from a married couple who are actively involved in the preservation of Mennonite culture. Six of the seven participants were born in the communities in which I am focusing my work. One was born in West Germany. Four out of seven participants had lived elsewhere intermittently. One of these participants, Agatha, who left the community and eventually returned to the area was a military wife who chose to resettle in her place of origin. Eli lived in the pacific northwest for a short time, and the married couple are academics who split their time between travel and their home in south central Kansas. Another interviewee moved away for a short time to attend college, but eventually returned to the area right before marrying her husband. All participants live within a forty-mile radius of each other (See Figure 1).

### **Interpretation and Data Use**

Once transcriptions were available for coding, I proceeded to identify several points of interest important to interpreting the data. I coded for parallel themes that interviewees had spoken about during our interaction, the most important being food and domestic knowledge. However, other themes that emerged were as follows:

- 1.) Cultural identity
- 2.) Perceptions of acculturation by interviewees
- 3.) Adaptations of foodways that mirror current needs of changing culinary landscape
- 4.) Specific discourse use surrounding foodways in the community
- 5.) Transfer of foodways knowledge in the community

I concluded that the responses to my questions formed a narrative that reveals a cultural group still in flux; the technological and economic development that took place after the second world war (see: Lowden; Schmidt, Reschly, and Umble) was not the only impetus that moved Russian Mennonites of south central Kansas to further integrated into contemporary American culture. These changes impacted ideas regarding domestic roles and gender expectations.

For example, most of the women I spoke with had been or were career-oriented individuals who hold college degrees. The labor these women still participate in regarding foodways has more to do with observing tradition, as we saw with verenika preparation for the annual MCC sale; in the fast-paced culture of twenty-first century America, considerations regarding health and convenience influenced the day-to-day diets of the community members I interviewed. However, habitual labor regarding food that might be identified as specifically “Mennonite” shifted along economic lines; my interviews highlight at least two instances where outsiders from the community handle food preparation and alter the outcomes in a way my interviewees disparaged. It is impossible to know the gender of the outsiders my interviewees refer to in their assessment of the unacceptable “Menno” food sold to public. However, I believe that the

conventional knowledge regarding the gender of most low-wage workers (such as nursing home and restaurant employees) can be applied here. In other words, women are still laboring to make Mennonite food. What has changed is the background of the workers, and the monetization of their work.

One complication in my findings came from a blatant example of labor as food preparation for capital exchange. This harkens back to the double standard I present in chapter three where men involved in culinary occupations (i.e. “chefs”) were historically given a higher status than women who cooked for themselves, their families, and their employers. Again, in chapter three I also point out that Willard Roth’s *Mennonite Men Can Cook, Too* aligns cookbook contributors with their occupations; although this move may have been made to bolster the ethos of the book itself, it is curious in regards to this seeming need for the continued (and oft gendered) legitimization of culinary labor. My interviewee is a male business owner who is also part of the area’s Russian Mennonite community, and provides catering for many of the weddings, funerals, and family events that take place in the Newton and Goessel area. He has participated in this work for decades, and his status as a community insider may be directly responsible for his success; he understands his customers and their expectations. Indeed, this serves to emphasize the varying opinions that interviewees had regarding the production of their foodways for public consumption and the insider versus outsider binaries that persist.

### **Making Life Livable: Food Traditions as Cultural Byproduct**

Question about cultural identity developed organically during these interviews. Speaking with individuals about their ancestral origins naturally led to ruminations on how they identify the evidence of heritage in their own day-to-day lives. Ruth described

her close ties with others in the surrounding area as being key to her own understanding of the local Russian Mennonite community. This was a consistent theme, as were the basic tenets of Mennonite and Anabaptist theological parameters which shape the lives of other community participants. Ruth described the most notable elements of growing up Russian Mennonite in a summary reflective of her own childhood, stating that,

You grow up knowing your relatives...all your relatives grew up right in the same spot as you did. You know your cousins. I lived on the same farm with my grandparents, so I knew them extremely well. It wasn't like they were half a state away. You know your history of where you came from and how your ancestors struggled to raise wheat in a prairie where there was nothing. They had to start over all the time. Even in Russia they had to start over with nothing.

Belief and shared history came to the forefront in my conversation with Agatha. Born in the 1920s and a survivor of the Kansas Dust Bowl, she told me that she had never consciously acknowledged specific communal precepts or interactions as being terribly significant.

You know, there's not anything here that...well, it's just Mennonite. What would the alternative be, right? There was no other religion, and all white, and all farmers. The main thing to me that keeps them [the Mennonites] together is the non-resistance thing. And the wheat thing, you know, they brought the [Red Turkey] wheat over here, and I think that's the two biggies. They were just all comfortable with each other. The pastors all

preached the same way, and it was just a very united bunch of people.

They all kind of came from the same place in Europe. I'm just Russian.

Agatha's perspective is decidedly from an older generation, but Rose (Agatha's niece) describes her own past interaction with cultural identity, and its impact on her outlook, stating that, "when I was growing up, this was what I would consider a very closed community. And so the kind of mores and the food and the traditions that were part of this community is what I very much associate with being Mennonite."

Inevitably, cultural identity dovetailed into discussions of food, although as Mark stated during our conversation, "I think food is significant in the cultural Mennonite tradition, but I don't think that it is necessarily front and center as the faith issues, but it's there, and it's sort of another layer of significance that makes life livable." This sentiment was corroborated by Helen, who spoke about the changes she's seen regarding the culture and its foodways, stating, "I think there was a time when Mennonite foods [ . . . ] were much more important than what we have now. I mean, I think we're still cooking them, but I think because of our diversity in our ability to get out and do things, we're not just focused in on, 'Oh, these are the foods we eat.'"

Agatha noted that people have moved further away from some of the foods that she ate as a child. There are those that have stayed popular within the community, sometimes as a symbolic example of Mennonite food, although this sentiment seems prone to extrapolation.

"Verenika is something that happens now that didn't happen [as often] when you were growing up. Or the pluma moos...I think that'll disappear. Yeah, I don't think

they'll make that much anymore...I think eventually they'll get away from a lot of the old recipes.”

This remark leads me to wonder at Agatha's hypothesis regarding the disappearance of pluma moos. Why would it cycle out of favor as opposed to a dish like verenika? The creation of moos might have been due to using available means with which to create a dessert. Dried fruit, thickening agents such as flour, and milk may have been convenient fare for rural people existing first on the Ukrainian Steppes and, later, on the Kansas prairie. I postulate that since verenika is produced and sold during a statewide relief sale and in area restaurants, it has more staying power than moos. Verenika provides a small access point by which members of those in the secularized, non-Mennonite world may access the culinary traditions of Russian Mennonites (no matter how in/authentic). Community outsiders would have little exposure to moos. Furthermore, verenika shares similarities with the pierogi. This adjacent familiarity might encourage the popularity of one dish over the other.

I cannot state conclusively why some dishes might become more obscure over time. My educated opinion is that invasive elements of acculturation and the homogenization of American cuisine plays a part in establishing current tastes. That being said, my family has made cherry (kirschen) moos part of our holiday meals on several occasions. However, I never encounter kirschen moos in other culinary scenarios. I have never seen moos sold to the public. In my own experience, seeing recipes or references to moos in Mennonite community cookbook and literature is a more common occurrence. It may indicate a deep desire to preserve the moos tradition even though its

preparation by individuals in the regional community may become less frequent over time.<sup>14</sup>

Two contemporary cookbooks of local origin were mentioned by several interview participants. Rose, Ruth, and Agatha all pointed me towards *Pluma Moos to Pie* and *Five Mennonites and a Greek* as references to area foodways. These texts, like my subjects, seemed to be interested in preserving aspects of Russian Mennonite culture in Kansas while presenting a specific narrative to outsiders. Descriptors that define an ethnoreligious perspective convey what and how the public may define Mennonites and Mennonite history.

Aside from interviewees who mentioned *Pluma Moos* and *Five Mennonites* repeatedly, it was Mark's comment about the influence of faith on Mennonite traditions that caused me to consider precepts of faith and spirituality's continuous cultural impact on the Russian Mennonites of Kansas. After all, theological beliefs bound this group together and provided the catalyst for their shared history. There is a sense among those I spoke with that conscientious objection and prioritizing a simple lifestyle fosters a strong work ethic. Many interviewees took pride in the reputation that they perceived as being directly linked to their faith-based convictions.

For example, Helen explained how she perceives Mennonite ethics from a personal standpoint, stating, "I think about Mennonites and the values that the Mennonites have that I grew up with and I think about some of the values...well, a

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<sup>14</sup> Walden applies the term "constitutive rhetoric" (87) to describe how taste and identity work together and cause the public to create a distinct discourse for themselves, in this case, through cooking texts. It is possible that this is the reason that Moos appears in many Mennonite cookbooks and is preserved for a public of those who claim Mennonite ancestry, but is not often produced for outsiders unfamiliar with Mennonite foodways.

family that seems like that's a really high value of Mennonites is that the family support. I would also say thrifty, non-confrontational. Um, you know, the whole aspect of 'you want to be more peace than not.'"

My interviewee Eli had his own story about the public's perception of Mennonites. After temporarily relocating to Washington state for a short time, he became employed as a delivery driver due in part, he believes, to his ethnocultural identity.

"My uncle had an egg farm at the time, and I applied for a job with one of his friends out there. He got me in on this, and I got hired – my boss hired me because the reputation of Mennonites being trustworthy, honest people."

The perception of a strong set of ethical adherences is not irregular among specific faith and culture groups. However, many of my participants did identify it as a defining characteristic. Of course, there was the inevitable connectivity between food and cultural identity. This is not surprising because, as Anja aptly pointed out, "food is important in that it is meant to foster community. That is central, and I don't think that is specifically Mennonite. That is true for any kind of cultural cohesion, or friendship, or reaching out to people."

Ruth gave voice to this right away in our conversation, stating that there were some foods that she associates with her community.

"You grow up with zwieback. You grow up with ham. There are just some things you know about zwieback because you've eaten them all your life and you know about pluma moos."<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>15</sup> Ruth seems to imply that knowledge about Pluma Moos is part of a specialized discourse in the Russian Mennonite community of south-central Kansas.



Connections between foodways, cultural identity, and community are all enhanced for the public during the annual Mennonite Relief Sale held at the Kansas State Fair Grounds in Hutchinson, KS. As expressed in previous chapters, these relief sales are often massive, and the one in Kansas is no different; it's held in seven separate buildings and participants can enjoy a number of activities. The Mennonite Central Committee operates primarily as a relief organization, and according to Melvin Gingerich in *Service for Peace, A History of Mennonite Civilian Public Service*, the organization was founded in 1920 in order to aide Mennonites starving in the Ukraine (16). Ruth asked me if I'd ever been to one of the sales, and I sheepishly told her I hadn't been able to attend.

"You should go," she says, flashing me a grin. "The MCC sale is a cultural melting pot, actually, of Swiss and Russian Mennonites and Amish and all the...well, it's kind of like a big family reunion."

Cultural identifiers in this community are numerous, and it is unsurprising that a myriad of different answers came forth from interview participants. However, the common threads that emerged all centered around a shared expression of societal convictions as well as a surprising acknowledgement of a community "separateness."

This "separateness" is set up by design in the Mennonite culture; breaking away from the world for spiritual enrichment is one of the basic tenets of Anabaptist practice. But the rural landscape of south central Kansas placed Mennonite communities outside larger cities that experienced more growth and "progress" due to the outside world. This is largely no longer the case; immigration and globalization have led to an acknowledgment of diversity and connectedness with the world. However, unifying spaces such as the MCC sale keep reifying cultural markers to participants. Nevertheless,

there was a sense among all interviewees that inevitable change had been reshaping Mennonite life in Kansas for decades.

### **Diversity, Acculturation, and Change**

Anja was a singular subject in my project as she is not originally from Kansas; for much of her youth, she lived in Europe and her familial faith origins are Lutheran, although she did eventually become a member of the Mennonite church. Like so many others, Anja can recount her family's faith journey as well as their tale of geographic displacement, largely due to war and unrest. In fact, her early experiences with the MCC aligned with the organization's history of international aide and outreach. "I didn't grow up in [the Mennonite religion] at all. My family joined a Russian and West Prussian refugee community in West Germany. There had been no Mennonites where I grew up."

Her father, attracted to the Anabaptist Mennonite tenets of faith, converted but eventually found out that he had Mennonite roots; his father's grandfather had been excommunicated from the church because he'd married a Lutheran woman. The Mennonites became a source of vital assistance for Anja and her family.

She told me that "[t]he MCC for us – in 1946, 47, 48 after the war – my mother said was a lifesaver. The Mennonites who sent food packages from Canada and the MCC Christmas fundraisers. Just the whole aide through the Mennonite Central Committee. That was absolutely critical for our family."

Anja and Mark are now retired and have settled on their land which is located twenty minutes outside Walton, KS. However, she still contributes regularly to the German Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online. What is notable about my

time with Anja were her perceptions regarding the current state of Mennonite life and its vulnerability to cultural dilution.

“Unfortunately, in a lot of Mennonite communities, there is not necessarily a real awareness about Mennonite history,” she told me. “That is when the power of acculturation sets in.”

Acculturation can be best understood as one culture assimilating into the prevailing culture of a place. It is a double-edged form of adaptation that can assist with survival while slowly eroding cultural practices that a group of people hold dear. This subject is one consideration in Cobb’s *Listening to our Grandmother’s Stories*; the students of Bloomfield Academy exist in an environment where the Chickasaw still have some sway over the curriculum. However, it is no secret that many indigenous North Americans were not so lucky in the face of 1887’s Dawes Act, which encouraged “assimilation” of individuals into colonizer culture. The United States government, trying to solve the “Indian problem,” created an educational system that was meant as a “preparation for American citizenship” where the Chickasaw and other tribes would be “absorbed into the national life, not as Indians, but as Americans” (72). It is stunning to consider that Mennonites, who were courted by railroads and encouraged to settle in Kansas, escaped assimilation born out of a nationalist trend in 19<sup>th</sup> century Russia while the indigenous people of the plains experienced major cultural disruption, genocide, and forced acculturation.

The migratory lifestyle necessitated by religious persecution caused Mennonites to glean bits and pieces from each place and peoples that they encountered. However, becoming long-term residents of the United States presented a new kind of cultural shift

that currently resonates, becoming more noticeable over time. The basic truism remains that it was not an explicitly forced shift, though likely vital to community establishment and survival. Erosion of cultural facets, both subtle and pronounced, can be somewhat tragic and doubly so as they seem a natural consequence of citizenship.

However, several interviewees pointed out that change is not exclusively negative. Part of the shift in the Mennonite community of south central Kansas is due in part to the growing diversity of the area. Helen, who works in education, commented on the dualized affect that an influx of people from various places has on the small school she works in and was positive about the opportunities this could provide her students. She took a moment to contrast this element of change to her own experience as a student in the same district many years ago.

“We’re a small school, and of course over the years the diversity has grown tremendously, which I say is good. We need that because when I was in school the Mennonite names were so traditional. And you know, now diversity has just come in and changed that, which is great. And so the kids are exposed to a lot more than what I ever was when I was in school.”

This diversity that Helen spoke about is aligned with the outlook that the MCC cherishes; service and outreach has – at least in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century – been an international endeavor, as Anja alluded to. Doris Janzen Longacre’s popular *More-with-Less* may be the best example of how a global viewpoint can influence individuals in this microcosm of cultural space, as Anja, who actually spent time with Janzen Longacre during the 1970’s, attests. “I can assure you,” Anja told me, “that in our ‘food and thought’ group at church we have the most delicious potlucks where we then discuss

big ideas afterwards and it's international food. When you're familiar with Doris' book, emphasis is on food from everywhere. What we do is emphasize food that is made from scratch and seasonal. We emphasize seasonal food when the gardens start kicking in."

*More-with-Less* came to the forefront of several interviews, including Rose's. She confided to me that she preferred using Longacre's text because of its many diverse dishes. Again, this mirrors the MCC's treasured tradition of international service. "That's one [cookbook] I continue to use, and it does have many ethnicities represented there. And a lot of the little stories to go with them." The increased awareness of a world beyond the small Mennonite communities in south central Kansas ushers in dynamism, as does the creep of modern life.

Technology, mass-produced food, and other contemporary elements of life have extended their somewhat unwelcome tendrils around what community residents such as Anja hold most dear.

"Doris pointed out to me, she said, 'In those magazines they push these [food] products and that doesn't mean they're any good. I had never put two and two together! I just thought it was convenience, right? It's terrible! I mean, I gave my kids Tang to drink. I bought convenient food like fish sticks. So Doris talked about this, and then her cookbook came out, and it was my new bible. I liked the philosophy.'"

This echoes the idea of women's cookbooks and taste in terms of identity; I perceived Anja's apparent guilt as being integral to how she felt she'd blindly led her family astray regarding their health and nutrition. She seems to believe that *More-with-Less* guided her back towards a beneficial relationship with sustenance.

Contemporary food practices disturb Anja, who told me that fast food in her family is a definite “no no” and was horrified to find, during a trip to an Amish church, that the after-service meal consisted of white bread and bologna. “You can have the same thing with any group,” she insisted, scandalized by the memory. “They buy into mass culture. Just like people put plastic flowers on cemetery plots. It’s Wal-Mart culture.”

Individuals like Mark and Anja have a deep sense of history that leads to their understanding of traditions among the Russian Mennonites of south central Kansas, and how those societal norms have changed over the years. However, Anja’s comments also exemplify an ideological reprioritization congruent with the shift from rural homemaking to a globally-minded redirection made possible by the displacement that Loewen speaks to as well as the middleclass “refocusing” that Schmidt, Reschly, and Umble outline in their text. Anja’s spiritual efforts to restructure the concept of food consumption in her own home as well as the need for awareness regarding nutrition in contemporary society is more possible because of taste-making efforts by Doris Janzen Longacre.

In some sense, Longacre’s efforts to advocate for simple, healthy food is possible because of secular society’s technological and economic developments which have, in some cases, led to a life of greater ease for the Mennonites who can now devote time towards addressing specific global trends and issues such as world hunger. Furthermore, these developments allowed Anja and her contemporaries the time and energy to safeguard specific practices while leaving others behind.

### **PVC Pipe and Culinary Peculiarities**

Change isn't something that bothers Ruth all that much as long as primary elements of Russian Mennonite culture are preserved.

"I'm sure that our 17<sup>th</sup> century ancestors would be like, what...how are you eating that? Don't you know that's ridiculous? So everything will change. I don't feel grumpy about it or anything."

This is underscored by the individuation of recipes altered according to each cook's tastes and preferences and correlates seamlessly with the forwarding message in *Pluma Moos to Pie*; the editor expresses hope in the possibility that readers will play with and recreate the recipes they encounter until they are satisfied with the final outcome. Rose emphasized this by speaking to how her own culinary methods were shaped, and the adaptations her own relatives made to various recipes. As we sat drinking coffee at her kitchen table, she used her hands to describe how her grandmother would roll peppernut dough in equal parts flour and sugar instead of a simple dusting around the long, doughy ropes to avoid sticking.

"You know," she told me with a slight smile, "I think it's more that all of the years of observing grandma and my mother who...I always thought they were not only exceptional cooks, but they were some people in our community who were willing to experiment a little more than just the meat and potatoes and green beans kind of thing. There's a little more exploratory cooking. So when I read some of these recipes that have Mennonite roots, well I think about, you know, how they cooked."

Rose went on to describe her own food preparation methods:

“I always say I'm a little recipe challenged because I rarely can just follow a recipe and that's how my grandma and my mom cooked. They kind of intuitively knew about sort of what things went together well.”

Alterations of food, even traditional recipes, seems natural. This extends not only to ingredients, but to mechanisms designed to assist in the specific preparation of Russian Mennonite favorites. During her interview, Ruth told me about a contraption that her friend had procured for making peppernuts (see: Food Index in Chapter IV). “My friend brought in a speedy method of making the little dough snakes you have to cut apart and,” she places her index and thumb into the air in front of her, as if estimating the size of the object.

“Well, it's not quite a caulking gun, but it pushes out the dough and then you snip the pieces off with a piece of PVC pipe. It speeds up the process a lot more.”

Ruth also spoke at length about culinary changes that she's watched impact local culture and emphasized that some Mennonite food available to the public is not a reliable reproduction of what she considers authentic in taste or texture. One such place is the Breadbasket located in Newton, KS. This small restaurant, situated on a main thoroughfare, opens its doors at 6:30 a.m. for breakfast. By seven in the morning, you can find a faithful flock of locals drinking coffee; they discuss anything from grain prices to the national news until they saunter off, one by one, to go about their respective lives.<sup>16</sup> This is seemingly not enough, however, for a successful cultural transfer of Mennonite

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<sup>16</sup> The Breadbasket is a town mainstay; in a place the size of Newton, such hubs have their own cultural positionality and importance. At the time this study was conducted (2018), the United States Census Bureau reported that Newton had a population of 18,746. See: <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/newtoncitykansas/POP010210>



food knowledge according to Ruth. Over time, the Breadbasket's quality seems to have shifted as cultural outsiders step into the role of food preparation.

“I'm sorry to say this, but you can tell from Breadbasket who, I mean there's a little—how do I say? Non...non-traditional people working there that don't know what they should do, what stuff should taste like. And so...for Threshing Days<sup>17</sup> we used to get our verenika from there and I'm like, oh boy, this is not going in a good direction. Too pasty! And so we buy them at the MCC sale and freeze them and then we get them out and make and prepare them here so they have more quality control. Yeah, when there are other people that have never had the experience of eating real ones, I'm like, ‘Ooh, this is not right. This is not quite that the direction that I enjoy.’”

This kind of “quality control” provides outsiders with what Ruth and others may feel is a more accurate conveyance of food traditions. She asserts that she doesn't “feel grumpy” about small alterations related to inevitable culinary change, but there is an inherent contradiction in her words; when food is made for the public and meant to be representative of the community entire, the mishandling of culinary standards is problematic. It also points to a major source of tension that I witnessed during my conversations with interview participants; there are unspoken tests that outsiders who interact with the Russian Mennonites of south central Kansas are subjected to. Even if such tests are as subjective as the texture of verenika, there are ideals that initiated

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<sup>17</sup> “The Wheat Heritage Engine and Threshing Company's major event is the annual old-fashioned country threshing demonstration and show in Goessel, KS. More than 100 exhibitors from a 7-state area display and demonstrate antique equipment related to farming during the past century. Additional demonstrations and ethnic Mennonite food are provided in conjunction with the Mennonite Heritage and Agricultural Museum.”

Wheat Heritage Engine and Threshing Company Inc. “Country Threshing Days, August 2 – 4, 2019, Goessel, KS Featuring John Deere,” Web. 20 March 2020.

community insiders feel they have the authority to judge. Without being apprenticed to someone like Ruth, it is unlikely the outsiders preparing traditional meals at Breadbasket will ever get the verenika just right. And so these tests are not all related to speech; many of them are also intrinsic to ways of being and doing.

Variance of recipes in the cookbooks I have featured – even among directions for zwieback making – exemplify how personal taste and biases can alter access to food cultural for outsiders. It echoes Wharton’s assertion (68) regarding the necessity of shared understanding in terms of recipe construction; following a set of directions is not nearly enough. Ruth as well as others seem to believe that there must be a core element of “sameness” although different insiders will have different opinions about what that “sameness” entails.

Helen’s take on outsider experience of Mennonite food resonated in light of Ruth’s observations, and she surmised that perhaps large quantities of “Mennonite” food prepared for the public might give people an approximation of what verenika or the regional country sausage might taste like, but ultimately fall short. She also expressed an incredulity towards food and other products that exploit the reputation of Mennonites without a means of quality control or authenticity.

“I think for years,” she mused, “anytime you could attach a Mennonite to something, people would look at that and say ‘Oh yeah, we want to try that’...I mean, whether its food or you know, whatever it is, if the word ‘Mennonite’ is in it, it seems like instantly there’s a lot of people interested in it. But just because of that doesn’t mean it was actually made like Mennonites used to make it...but because of that word, it’s a seller.”

This irritates Helen, who places emphasis on what she considers doing things the right way in order to represent the cultural standards that she grew up with. “If somebody that’s non-Mennonite goes and has a Mennonite buffet, [people] are going to say, ‘Oh, that’s great. You know, this is something similar to what it’s supposed to be like.’” Nevertheless, traditional foodways continue providing comfort to community insiders; this seems to be especially true for older life-long inhabitants.

At one point in time, Ruth worked at Goessel’s Bethesda Nursing Home where she experienced a minor conflict of outsider unawareness regarding the food Mennonite residents of the home were used to: “When I worked there, they would steam the country sausage and I’m like, steaming takes out all the grease and the flavor out, the good stuff,” she laments. “So I told the cooks, I said, ‘Why don’t you just bake them in a convection oven?’ They did that sometimes and I’m like, oh, this is much better. I don’t know what they do now, but there were people in charge that were not, did not know how country sausage should be prepared.” The eventual acculturation of Mennonites in Kansas, then, is not only about the inner community becoming more entrenched within the prevailing “English” culture, but the outsiders’ imposing their own practices (intentional or not) on Mennonite life. Again, I would maintain that Loewen and Kim both speak to this issue in their work, pointing to necessary changes that Mennonites must consciously make regarding diversity. This may mean learning to de-emphasize the importance of an ethnocentric heritage while still respecting traditions of the past. Kim suggests an intercultural model to achieve meaningful change in Mennonite churches, stating that it would seek “to promote active engagement among different cultural and ethnic groups in settings where each group is present in their full identity and dignity...[this] approach

envision a context where all cultures are equally ready to learn from each other and shape each other, even as they maintain their own identity” (200). In many ways, Mennonite culture has been working towards an intracultural model since the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, I suspect that a tendency towards tribalism will always be present among this group.

### **The Nourishment of Our Bodies: Altering the Menu**

Modern sedentary lifestyles and differentiating diet preferences have changed the ways five of my interviewees think about traditional food and its place in their day-to-day lives. Two out of the seven participants had spouses whose health led to a significant shift in their own personal foodways.

“I used to do a lot of the things like the sour cream gravy and fried potatoes and some of those kinds of things that I grew up with,” Rose said. “And we both liked those kinds of things. After [her husband’s] heart attack, I stopped cooking quite as much of that and reverted to more...I don’t know, a lot of sautéing and olive oil and things that weren’t necessarily lard based.”

Rose also told me that she still makes bierocks<sup>18</sup> with some regularity because it’s “kind of a nice healthy sandwich,” but she’s given up a lot of the foods she used to make for her family. She’s also shifted to preparing only vegetarian meals at least twice a week, and she told me about another family member’s more healthful adaptation of the traditional zwieback recipe. “I think of my sister-in-law who’s wonderfully health conscious and she puts mashed sweet potatoes in her zwieback and in her bread buns, and

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<sup>18</sup> In Kansas, bierocks are round yeast bread dough pockets filled with ground beef, sauerkraut or cabbage, onions, and other seasonings. In other regions of the United States such as Nebraska, they are shaped like squares and called “runzas.”

they're fabulous, you know. And so she adds some of the moisture and makes them a little healthier and they're really, really good."

Helen's husband also had a heart attack, and her food practices realigned accordingly. "We have become more health-conscious," she told me. "The way our ancestors would've cooked or even my parents...I mean, there was no thought about what you were cooking or how it would affect your health. My husband had a heart attack at 48, and very unexpectedly, so we kind of started changing our habits."

It became impossible for me to see shifting foodways as separate from the many other changes that have occurred over the decades in this community. This is in part because I was often stunned by ways in which gender, labor, and labor division among Russian Mennonite descendants have altered and grown over the years. One particular interview led me to interrogate certain presuppositions I'd developed early in the scaffolding of this project. My assumptions were based on the nearly total absence of men in the cookbooks I engaged with. However, Eli became a conundrum for me. On the day I spoke with him, he was in a pair of denim overalls. On the outer wall of the front bib's pocket sat a proud multi-colored line of pen clips ready for use. He was – and always is – efficient. Paired with his easy, practiced conviviality, Eli conveys a sense of steadiness and charm.

His is an occupational perspective regarding changes in food practices currently impacting the area. Eli and his employees cater events for people, and they have noticed an uptick in ingredient awareness and certain food preferences. "We're getting more vegetarians and vegans," he told me. "When I cater, they always have so many vegetarians and a couple of vegans. Yeah, you have to adjust for that. Sometimes they

just have to pick out what they can and can't eat. When you're feeding two to three hundred people, you can't add the individual divisions."

Eli has adjusted his catering menu and offerings over the years so as to mirror cultural shifts regarding consumer trends which continue to infiltrate the community he serves. His adherence to new food practices is a sensible addition to an already successful business platform with an established customer base.

"We try to do something for [vegans and vegetarians]. We try to make gluten free. And gluten free, they're a big deal now, but we all grew up without issues, and now all of a sudden gluten is a big issue. That's something I've noticed recently. But we do a lot more salads." Diet realignment is a move that may have more to do with an adherence to modern health guidelines than adherence to a prevailing culture, but it was a theme that struck me as significant. Not all interviewees emphasized health concerns, but the majority (specifically Mark and Anja with their commitment to the ideals in *More-with-Less*) did.

### **Discourse and the Remains of a Mother Tongue**

Language and Discourse (as seeing, doing, and believing combinations) within the south central Kansas Russian Mennonite community perpetually shifts; this extends to its foodways and cookbooks. Linguistic affiliation and discourse identities for individual community members multiplied as the area became more diverse; the descendants of Russian Mennonite settlers found adaptation to American culture a matter of necessity, and as such, acculturation has become an issue for those who wish to preserve and authenticate specific Mennonite traditions, foods, and customs. Nevertheless, I found that there were specific terms often utilized within local vernacular

that most interviewees implicitly understood. Each person spoke about their relationship with Low German or Plautdietsch, and how it continues to inform their own understanding of cultural heritage. Furthermore, two participants spoke about discourse that had developed over time in their own communities, both familial and public.

Language provides levels of context for any cultural group, and so it was no surprise that the use of Low German or Plautdietsch played an integral role in these interviews as a differentiating feature of insider/outsider dynamics. While all interviewees showed some passing verbal knowledge of Plautdietsch, two out of the seven admitted to having lost their linguistic proficiency over time. Agatha conveyed this loss while speaking about the cookbooks that her own mother left behind, although her remarks indicate a possible prioritization on speaking Low German in her home rather than honing the ability to read and write the language for public usage.

“The recipes,” she said, with a dismissive wave of her hand, “were all in German, and so, you know, they didn’t mean a thing to me.”

Hearing Agatha say this caused my stomach to sink as I realized that an ongoing loss of cultural knowledge has steadily eaten away at the Russian Mennonites of south central Kansas for decades. It had occurred to me long before our conversation, but this was the moment that the consequences of language loss crystalized for me. We cannot know the last time Agatha’s mother used one of the cookbooks that she kept in her kitchen. We also cannot know whether Agatha has thrown away those cookbooks due in part to the fact that she could not understand the language in which it was written. At the time, I did not think to ask whether Agatha had thrown out her mother’s cookbooks. Knowing her as I do, the likely answer is “no.” But how many cookbooks rendered

unreadable due to linguistic issues have been thrown out? How much knowledge has been lost to time and change?

Eli's thoughts on the role linguistics played in his own home correlated with Agatha's in that there was oral usage by older relatives. "My folks spoke German, but not to us, so we understood it, but we never talked it." In essence, the use of Plautdietsch was not a mandatory element of domestic life.

Rose spoke at some length about words used by community insiders versus language used with outsiders, recalling how she'd prepared a snack of zwieback for her knitter's group, simultaneously providing them with a presentation on Russian Mennonite food. Rose also reflected on how other terminology for the dishes she'd grown up with would probably baffle other acquaintances. "The difference is always the Low German language. So, if I'm talking to my sister or somebody in the family, I'd talk about verinika...to my English speaking friends, I'd explain that it's a dough that has cottage cheese in it that you deep fat fried. I'd probably explain it more than just kind of know how that they knew what I was talking about."

Helen was quick to point out that family members marrying into the community were also unfamiliar with and being inducted linguistically into the familial community of those who still speak Plautdietsch, often out of curiosity more than necessity.

"Our son-in-law," she reflects, "did not grow up in a low German environment. And so he will often times hear me use words that are very much like Low German words that we would have used for something. And he's very interested. He's you know, like 'What does that mean? Why are you using that? What does that mean food-wise?' I



think there are things like that I say. They're just a throwback to what the name of a food was in Low German."

Linguistically, family and community vernacular hybridize over time and create distinguishing elements that are unique unto themselves. Agatha exemplified this occurrence when speaking about the word that her family applied to zwieback that had been toasted in the oven; the term her family has always used for twice baked zwieback is "knostache."

"To me, that was the sound they always make when you eat them. Yeah, only our family called them that," she said.

For every example of evolving discourse, there is another story about aspects of Low German that have worn away over the years, and this harkens back to issues of acculturation so many of my study participants mentioned. My observation of community discourse in this region stems from the cultural basis of Low German terminologies and foodways cultivated by individuals in the area.

Public vernacular has impacted Eli's business-specific discourse community; catering various functions for Russian Mennonite congregations and families often requires providing a spread that includes sandwich basics such as cheese. "We cover an older community. Older people – they've lived here, and they die. Anyway, everyone will go to a funeral and we'll have cheese. I mean, there will be a hundred things, but there's always cheese, and people say, 'Where's that good cheese from?'" At this point in his explanation, Eli smiles to himself and I know what's coming. My own grandmother orders this cheese from Eli's store all the time, after all.

"Cheese is good at room temperature," he continues.

“At a funeral, we’ll pull it out of the refrigerator, and it stays on the table till it warms up and that gives it flavor. So that’s why people remember it. People from around here come in, and say, ‘I need the funeral cheese,’ and actually, our meat and cheese scale label now says, ‘funeral cheese.’ They come in and ask for it by name, so we just named it ‘funeral cheese’ and package it that way.”

When I moved away from south central Kansas, I was mystified as to why I could never find funeral cheese in stores. In truth, the mysterious “funeral cheese” is simply Longhorn Colby Jack, which you can find anywhere. While not grounded in Low German, a term like “funeral cheese” is connected to regional Russian Mennonite food. Its shorthand for an adopted staple, and in some ways, it has become every bit as symbolic to this ethnoreligious group as zwieback or verenika. In this place, it is a representation of food that accompanies significant events.

Eli has created a benevolent monopoly through his stalwart reputation, grocery store, and catering business; it is still assumed that if you are a Mennonite in the area and you are getting married or you’re dying, Eli will be the person who provides the food for your wedding or funeral. The fare served at the funerals usually consist of cold cuts with bread buns and all the accompanying condiments. There will be iced tea in the summer, but hot coffee is served year-round. Sometimes there are cinnamon rolls if someone is being buried in late fall or winter; standing graveside in the cold is alleviated by the comfort of a warm, frosting-soaked pastry. However, variations to these spreads are made seasonally.

The one constant is always funeral cheese.

In some ways, it represents the steadiness of life cycles in Kansas Mennonite country; as Eli said, many residents have lived, wed, and died in the area although that number is decreasing as decades of bad financial reform and cuts to state funding force younger residents to seek viable employment in other parts of the country. According to the *Wichita Business Journal*, the outbound percentage of moves involving Kansas residents in 2018 was 58.7%. 63.8% of those moves were from south central Kansas.

Nevertheless, the funeral cheese along with other food stuffs in this area act as a constant; even when the world is upended – even when mourning a loss or in my case, trying to stave off homesickness. Eli’s funeral cheese itself is emblematic of a specific people and place. No one anywhere else calls it anything but Colby Jack. We apply meaning where others see none. Cultural touchstones are what anchor people in this community to each other and this place. Likewise, foodways are preserved by public events, historic sites such as the Heritage Museum, and local businesses within the region that cater to the community like Eli’s grocery store. Specific public spaces, some which prioritize historic preservation, create touchstones where individuals can reengage with their community. Additionally, both museum and store strive towards perpetuating certain ideals and cultural precepts (such as the mythos and awe surrounding zwieback’s role in the emigration from Russia) while developing new vernacular born of the community that becomes part of community discourse.

**CHAPTER VI – MIX UNTIL JUST COMBINED...DO NOT OVER STIR:  
PRESERVATION IN THE FACE OF ACCULTURATION**

*Each institutionalized discourse privileges some people and not others by generating uneven and unequal subject positions as various as stereotypes and agents. Hence, it is at least plausible to expect most, though not all, of those individuals whose subjectivity is the most positively produced by a discourse to defend its discursive practices against change.*

-- Linda Brodkey

*Many people would see this acculturation as dying as a culture, not as surviving. But what were their choices? To change and continue on, or to resist and dissolve? Cultures are dynamic, active, and ever changing. A static culture is not a living one.*

-- Amanda J. Cobb

***Ornithology Exam: The Christmas Goose***

*I am in Gram's kitchen shaping zwieback with two of my cousins.*

*Libby and I are close even though I'm ten years older; we grew up together – talked and danced and ate and ran and read books and climbed trees on the same farm.*

*If we're birds, we're migratory.*

*We're Snow Geese visiting for the holiday.*

*Long ago, we grew early wings.*

*Libby's little sister is Mary –  
 and she is young  
 and she spends her days among our parents,  
 our aunties, our uncles,  
 our greats and our great greats.  
 She is enviously near Gram almost every day.*

*Libby and I stand on the old wooden floor, sweating beside the hot oven in our seasonal  
 sweaters. We desperately try to shape our zwieback rolls as we've been taught, but when  
 we're finished, our misshapen dough mounds are a far cry from Mary's perfect, smooth  
 rolls  
 round like figure eights,  
 like rubber ducks,  
 like the heads and bodies of robust wooden Matryoshka dolls.*

*Gram sees our pans – mine and Libby's - and something in her catches.  
 Her eyes are puzzled, and we giggle because we're puzzled, too.  
 A little ashamed, we laugh, but then I know -  
 We can fly home, but our fingers have forgotten what to do there.*

Questions of cultural authority will never disappear for the ethnoreligious Russian Mennonites of Kansas. Diversity has become an asset. However, shifting dimensions of

the larger mainstream society Mennonites currently inhabit has caused complexities and tensions. This is not unlike all cultures existing alongside the great homogenizing forces of America. Amanda Cobb's quote reminds us that in order to survive, a culture must accept change, even as some of their members resist it. In her study of Arabic literature entitled "Baklava as Home," (2017) Arlene Voski Avakian speaks to emic and etic debate present within the Arab world, affirming that within ethnological parameters the question of "[w]ho is in and who is out" (134) never dissipates. However, foodways can be a bridge of belonging. Avakian asserts this by telling us that "who we are both as individuals and socially is linked, then, to our psychic/bodily experiences of and discourses about food. Food memories can evoke both powerful emotions and a sense of a whole – reconstructed – cultural context" (136). So, the question for the descendants of south central Kansas' Russian Mennonite immigrants remains. It emerged several times in my interviews as well as in community cookbook analysis – who truly is "in" and how do we distinguish insiders versus outsiders who may cause further acculturation? Do the Mennonites of south central Kansas have, either consciously or unconsciously, litmus tests for people who claim to be one of their own?

Being born into a family of Russian Mennonite descendants seems the most obvious way to distinguish those who are part of the community from those who do not "belong." This harkens back to Ruth's interview where she spoke of the close familial ties present in the Newton and Goessel area (see: 146). Three out of my seven interview participants lived far from south central Kansas for a time but eventually returned home. The others have resided in Marion or Harvey county their entire lives. Ultimately, I would argue that it is the physical proximity of an individual which impacts

insider/outsider status throughout life among the descendants of Russian Mennonite immigrants. Technology and modern economic realities exacerbate this by creating a scenario where young people grow up among their Russian Mennonite relatives, become part of a discourse community while learning a set of traditions, then leave their areas of origin for employment and educational opportunities that rural south central Kansas cannot offer. Proximity plays an important role in community membership because those who seek to gain (or regain) access must be apprenticed into a community by other accepted members. In that sense, it is not unlike learning how to bake; reading a well-written recipe is one thing, but having an experienced baker show you what ingredients form a good dough, how zwieback rolls are shaped, and what a finished batch smells and tastes like is an embodied experience that many cookbooks (due to the subjectivity of phrases and language) cannot replicate.

### **Methodological Drawbacks and Future Amendments**

In chapters four and five, I provided interviews, examples of cookbook narratives, and recipe analysis to demarcate the cultural literacy and community discourse exemplified by Russian Mennonites in south central Kansas. Through conversations and engagement with community-generated texts, my conclusions regarding these boundaries now contain more depth and understanding, but there is no definitive answer that can encompass the entire group. However, it is evident that there is an (often unspoken) tension in the Kansas Russian Mennonite community wherein the boundaries of one discourse identity clash with others. This is especially evident where the remnants of Plautdietsch make their appearance in conventional speech of the home or workplace; for example, Helen revealed how she often had to explain certain words and phrases in Low

German to her son-in-law. Many interviewees also spoke about how a more diverse populace filled with yet other immigrants (primarily from Mexico and South America) moving into the area during the 21<sup>st</sup> century have impacted the cultural community. Alternatively, standard Americanized English used in 19<sup>th</sup> century Kansas crept deftly into the Russian Mennonites' lives due to natural acculturation that occurred as they adapted to their new geography; learning how to read and speak English was necessary for survival.

It's not realistic to expect that a discourse identical to that of the Mennonite immigrants could survive in contemporary Kansas. The culture has shifted just as the social practices of any people will; it has been fractured and rebuilt over the decades. Where once Plaudietsch rested inside the dominant culture like a set of nesting dolls, a smattering of words and phrases now act as a peppering of individualistic vernacular over commonly used speech acts. The question becomes how to preserve aspects of an older discourse while allowing for the natural progression of time and life, and Ruth may have summarized it best when she pointed out that change "doesn't make her feel grumpy." Documents like community cookbooks and places like the Heritage Museum ensure a working maintenance of older "oral modes" (Gee, 1986) formerly used in the closed Russian Mennonite community, while allowing the discourse of a more diverse contemporary Mennonite population to develop.

Finally, I maintain that descendants of Russian Mennonites now residing in south central Kansas rely on literal geographic proximity and familial connection. This assists in maintaining the community and culture they have shaped and have been, in turn, shaped by over the centuries. Such findings are situated within the acknowledgement that



acculturation continues to erode the boundaries of cultural practices that are understood as specifically Russian Mennonite. One cause of this erosion is due to natives born and raised in south central Kansas leaving the area for economic opportunities. Another (and more positive) reason may be the influx of diversity where multiple cultural groups begin to integrate into what was once primarily a white European Anabaptist populace. Furthermore, Mennonite food practices are, at least in south central Kansas, part of the area's commerce. This leads to questions regarding authenticity and hospitality that might be further explored in another project. What remains are ways in which cultural rhetorics of cultivated foodway practices feed the Russian Mennonite community figuratively and literally.

I acknowledge that in future iterations of this project, several steps towards a more rigorous set of methodological practices should be observed; for example, interviewees did not have the opportunity to read the transcripts generated by our conversations. That must change if I use this information for future endeavors. I hope that through honoring my interviewees' authentic voices, they would be satisfied with how I have employed their words and ideas. Upon completion, I will be providing each participant with a copy of my finalized project. What's more, analyzing cooking texts and recipes produced by one specific church or organization over a period of several decades might create a more controlled demonstration of shifting attitudes and discourse.

Despite my study's limits regarding only eight community cookbooks published over a forty year span, and my interviewees' inclusion from older generations, the cognitive dissonance and steady creep of dominant culture into Mennonite life is an emergent pattern within the data I gathered. There is a desire to create accessibility for

outsiders who want to learn about Mennonites (for both historic and religious purposes). At the same time, there is also an ongoing effort to preserve historic traditions that attend to people who still keenly feel a dualized sense diaspora because of ancestral narratives and the changing socioeconomic landscape of Kansas itself. There are individuals such as Anja who view acculturation as a threat to preservation, while other community members such as Ruth observe these shifts and feel no frustration about the assimilating factors that lead to shifting combinations of cultural practices. *Daily Bread* and *Pluma Moos* define and separate the Mennonites culturally while also trying to preserve history steeped in memories and nostalgia; this is useful but ultimately provides readers with only a carefully constructed impression of the Russian Mennonites. This is well within each organization's rights, but the issue of "authenticity" should still be noted. The Tabor-Goessel Youth Group's cookbook is the most blatant example of a community fundraising cookbook, and the choices its editorial staff made regarding dishes to include aligns with a goal of public outreach, although several traditional favorites remain. All eight cookbooks convey differentiating attitudes towards their intended audience, and while similarities occur, the texts create their own conversation about discourse among the Mennonites.

Aside from cultural preservation, the fact remains that community cookbooks from this area remain a vital example of women's writing, the historic exemplification of one unique discourse community, and a valuable contribution to community goals in terms of conserving foodway traditions. Who is "in" and who is "out" now relies a great deal on what is protected and what is lost to time. The question for future writers who compile Mennonite cookbooks, whether printed texts or in the guise of cooking blogs and

websites, will likely centralize how best to represent the customs and voices that have come before. There is value in letting the past speak while making space for fresh perspectives.

### **The Erasure of a Voiceless Death**

In the summer of 2017, I made my way up old stone steps located on the eastern side of the Bethel College library which holds the Mennonite Library Archives (MLA). There is a second set of steps once you're through the set of creaky double doors out front, and you must walk up yet another floor to the archives proper. That's not the first thing you'll think about while you're standing at the bottom of the staircase, though. What would strike you – what struck me – were the large murals depicting scenes from Thielemann J. van Braght's 1660 publication, *The Martyr's Mirror* or *The Bloody Theater*. These murals, first etched in copper by Jan Luyken, stand roughly four by six feet and vertically line the walls preceding the archive doors. The confrontation between myself and these images (in light of expectations involving the peaceful perusal of yellowing documents and aging books) was deeply powerful, if not more than a little unsettling. Individuals being burned, drowned, and tortured was not what I'd signed up for, but it was what I got. There are no trigger warnings posted out front, after all.

The most recognizable visual is that of Dirk Willems, whose image graces the cover of many modern editions of *Martyr's Mirror*. The story goes like this: Willems was arrested and imprisoned in his home of Asperen located in the Netherlands. He knew that he would be executed unless he escaped, and so he tied cloth together and slid out of a window in his cell. A guard gave chase, and to get away, Willems ran over a frozen lake. As you can imagine, the prison inmates weren't well-fed; he'd lost a great deal of weight

and therefore was light enough to cross the ice while the man pursuing him was decidedly not. The guard fell through the ice, but instead of letting the man perish, Willems ran back and pulled the man from an untimely, frosty end. Willems was recaptured and executed, and while the etching by Luyken shows the memorable rescue, his death was a miserable one – he was burned at the stake. Believe it or not, the illustration of Willems is one of the cheeriest among the murals at the MLA.

This aesthetic choice indicates that the Mennonites of south central Kansas are still cognizant of the traditions and strife their history encapsulates, and my project emphasizes this truism. Therefore, I am led to believe that a natural extension of my work is yet another act of preservation that, in this case, might require assistance from archive stakeholders and community insiders. Just as *Martyr's Mirror* depicts important moments in Mennonite history, so too can community cookbooks.

In *Glimpses of Mennonite History*, John C. Wenger claims that when martyrs like Willems were executed, the governing bodies of state who attended were fearful of their victims' propensity to give testimonies of faith to the public during their executions; put simply, they did not want dying Anabaptists to create converts with their final words. Wegner writes, "Finally, the executions were carried on in many places at night [...] the executions were done in secret, and at night, so that not many people would see, hear, or know of them (61). This is further corroborated by Paul Showalter's entry in the *Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia* which states that "[E]xecutions took place publicly; but in the course of time there were a large number of secret executions, because the crowds gathered around the execution places often showed sympathy with the victims and not seldom revolted against the executioner, the officers, and the Catholic priests,



**Figure 13** – Dirk Willems saving a guard from icy waters, etching by Jan Luyken

who were always present” (521). Using Braght’s text to illustrate this point, W. Benjamin Myers recounts authorities’ endeavors to thwart accused Anabaptist’s attempts to subvert the performance of execution, pointing out that,

[p]erhaps the best indication that many of these martyrs were effective in claiming this space as a stage is in the authorities’ response to them. In 1553 Tijs (a crippled man) was sentenced to being drowned privately. He was distressed and requested a public execution so “the people present might hear and see for what cause [he] died” (540).

This request was soundly refused. The sentence was carried out at midnight so no one could see. He was gagged and put in a bag that was tied to a boat. The authorities released the bag into the water, and he was drowned. In 1551, a Mennonite prisoner was singing hymns from her jail cell and attracted a crowd that upset her jailors. She was scheduled for execution and many Anabaptists planned to attend to offer support, “but the crafty murderers had anticipated [them]...for they perpetrated their murderous work between three and four o’clock [in the morning]...so that but few witnessed it (522). Reactions to the vocal Mennonite prisoners is telling; even in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, allowing marginalized peoples a voice meant the possible upending of systemic oppression.

Willems himself was able to speak and gathered a large crowd for his own execution; however, it was still an execution, and ultimately ended in making certain that Willems could never verbally assert his convictions of faith again. The image of execution as testament is a powerful one. Death is ultimately the last physical act of silencing; it is a drastic removal of agency and representation, especially when politically

motivated. Without the efforts of van Braght and Luyken, the dead remain dead and the silenced silent.

It is dramatic to align death by execution with the neglect of cookbooks crafted by people – primarily women – whose agency and voice may be underrepresented by society at large. However, I maintain the corollary between silence and a state of being dead. Representation and recognition signal activity and impact on the living world. Just as the martyrs spoke their truth to potential converts, so too might recipes and specific discourse use in the Mennonite community alter perspectives and historic regard. It is possible that the reclamation of texts like these cookbooks, long relegated to dusty shelves and attics, can provide a connection between forgotten aspects of heritage and the younger members of this ethnoreligious group in south central Kansas. However, the cookbooks do more than convey an uncomplicated impression of women in Mennonite communities. These texts are poignant examples of the often-conflicting nature of domestic and public participation by women in a culture rife with conflicting messages surrounding societal expectations. Cookbooks do more than provide recipes, and they must be available to all scholars who engage with feminist and cultural rhetorics; they are examples of a unique genre that feature technical writing, ethnography, and history, all shaped by women's words. It is imperative that *Sharing Together* and *Our Daily Bread*, along with other community cookbooks (Mennonite and otherwise), also be available to community outsiders.

### **Preservation of the Past through Means of the Present**

At the beginning of this project, I selected examples of cooking texts that I believed best display a variety of community representation. However, were I to include

all the cooking texts available to me, my data would have been unmanageable. Working with larger data sets might be possible in the future and the preservation of older print texts like the ones I have analyzed can bridge the gap between digital and physical work. I believe that a logical step towards creating a symbiotic relationship between digital cookbooks and their printed counterparts might be achieved by establishing an open source online archive of community cookbooks from the south central Kansas area. What I am proposing is that Mennonite community cookbooks should be available online so that they are not lost to the deteriorating impact of time.

There are extensive complications that would accompany such an undertaking, but I believe that this might preserve and proliferate the number of etic and emic communities who are aware of Mennonite foodways. Given the popularity of the *Mennonite Girls Can Cook* website and companion text, there is an indication that such a partnership could be a successful one.

Furthermore, in an age of ubiquitous computation, the ability to digitally access community cookbooks that are now often relegated to the kitchen shelves of older family members and used bookstores would increase the longevity of these works. I am convinced that if these texts are not preserved digitally, many may be lost forever. Janine Solberg's concept of visual proximity applies here, and heightened access has several advantages. For example, the act of intentional feminist recovery through the digitization of books like *Daily Bread* would not simply provide recipes for people searching out ethnic Mennonite food. It also preserves the story recounted in chapter five regarding the annual smorgasbord gathering that Halstead Mennonite Church was known for in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century. It recounts the history of Mennonite migration, and the supplemental



proverbs in Low German included in *Daily Bread* are likewise preserved for future generations. Such material will be beneficial to historians, linguists, and community insiders.

A careful approach should be utilized, and certain ethical standards and practices must be negotiated before such an archive (and before any archive grounded in feminist rhetoric and historiography) could come to fruition. In “Meaningful Engagements: Feminist Historiography and the Digital Humanities,” Jessica Enoch and Jean Bessette explore the sometimes inconsonant aims of feminist historical work and digital archivists, attempting in their own words, to “explore how feminist rhetorical historiographers might enact meaningful engagements with the digital humanities [...] meaningful engagement denotes that we consider not only how digital innovations may correspond with or enhance feminist historiographic priorities, but also how they might detract from or run counter to our goals and investment” (636). Proceeding with this level of care is especially vital when constructing archives for an ethnoreligious community who, as I’ve stated in chapter two, have a shifting and varied relationship with technology. Alternatively, the ability to ensure the digital survival of Mennonite cooking texts allows for tech-literate individuals to access these documents long after they can no longer be explored physically by community insiders (or outsiders).

Enoch and Bessette situate queries about how to practice Royster and Kirsch’s concept of social circulation when engaging with digital archives. Their work indicates to me that an online archive methodically cataloguing and displaying digitized scans of community cookbooks might allow general observers to contemplate the discourse of women contributors to these cookbooks at a volume and pace that would be impossible

without technology. The question of how the act of strategic contemplation shifts in such an archive remains, though. It is possible that different approaches would reveal different perspectives while simultaneously dismantling the physical aspects that cookbooks may contain – I would not, for example, have discovered many of the handwritten notes, nor had the first-hand experience of finding abandoned ephemera tucked behind covers and into the bent corners of frayed pages in a digital setting. However, visually aligning zwieback recipes on one screen would have been a useful tool during the initial stages of comparing the construction of recipes at a basic sentence level.

Ethical concerns, preservation of original intent, and organizing materials pose a stiff set of challenges to anyone organizing an archive; when envisioning a hypothetical archive of Mennonite community cookbooks, it is essential to keep in mind variables such as the work that has already been done by historians and researchers in the area. Some Mennonites of south central Kansas are increasingly desperate to document history and culture. This documentation includes the intimate use of community discourse and language among the Russian Mennonites. In order to stave off an acculturating power's homogenizing impact, the documentation of essential traits of a group forced to disperse due to sociopolitical and economic circumstances would be of great benefit.

How could this archive of Mennonite community cookbooks be established, produced, and maintained? First and foremost, the geographic boundaries of inclusion would have to solidify in a concrete way so that the parameters could be understood by any individual who wishes to contribute to the archive or volunteer their assistance. My project centralizes the microcosm of food texts produced by the ethnoreligious group of Mennonites who originated in Germany and settled in Russia before making their way to

Kansas. However, there are a myriad of Mennonite communities whose lives and bloodlines are rooted in south central Kansas. *Daily Bread* is evidence of that. Perhaps the concept of “Smorgasbord” put forth by Halstead’s Mennonite Church might apply to all salvageable Mennonite community cookbooks in the area. Preserving such work could be of astonishing import.

A Kansas Mennonite Community Cookbook archive would make for an arduous process full of potential ethical and fiduciary restraints. Questions pertaining to which individuals possess the expertise to sit at the helm of such a project also has the potential to cause controversy. I believe that even if the culmination of a digital archive such as the one I have described could not be accomplished in the short-term, its inception should be suggested to the appropriate stakeholders. Such online spaces have the potential to provide valuable materials to various stakeholders such as the general public, scholars, and the Mennonite people.

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## APPENDIX – IRB DOCUMENTATION

### Interview Questions for IRB Approval

Note: These are open-ended questions that are meant to guide the interviewer and interviewee through their interaction. Because these questions are a starting point for a conversation, the interview may stray beyond these topics, but I intend to focus on these specific areas of content.

- 1.) Describe your relationship to what you consider to be the Mennonite culture here in southcentral Kansas.
- 2.) What do you consider traditional Mennonite food?
- 3.) What cookbook(s) do you use the most often?
  - a.) Are there physical texts/digital texts that you use regularly as references? What are they?
- 4.) Do you use cookbooks or digital texts that are specifically Mennonite or Anabaptist – such as such as Janzen and Longacre’s *More-with-Less*?
- 5.) Do you have experience with cookbooks compiled by Mennonite organizations such as churches or heritage centers?
  - a.) In what context?
  - b.) Is there anything besides the recipes that you would describe as connected to Mennonite culture? For example, is there any use of Plautdietsch in the text?
- 6.) Are there words and phrases specific to your friends and family when discussing how to make food?
  - a.) Do you remember when this vernacular became a normal part of food-related activities within your home?

- 7.) Do you prepare food that you consider traditionally Mennonite in origin?
- 8.) Can you make this cuisine/food, and can you do it from memory, or do you require reference texts that assist you in recreating this dish?
  - a.) If so, what reference texts do you use?
- 9.) Have you taught anyone else to cook?
  - a.) How did you accomplish this task?
- 10.) Are you finding that Mennonite food traditions have altered over time?
  - a.) How is this occurring, and what do you think the alterations happen?
- 11.) What “Mennonite” food do you most often see being served at public events?
  - a.) Describe the events where this occurs.
  - b.) Is this food prepared differently than you would prepare it in your own home? For example – bierocks, verenika, bohne beroge, etc.



## IRB Expedited Protocol Approval Notice

**IRB**  
**INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD**  
 Office of Research Compliance,  
 010A Sam Ingram Building,  
 2269 Middle Tennessee Blvd  
 Murfreesboro, TN 37129



### IRBN001 - EXPEDITED PROTOCOL APPROVAL NOTICE

Friday, October 05, 2018

Principal Investigator **Amy Harris Aber** (Student)  
 Faculty Advisor Julie Myatt  
 Co-Investigators NONE  
 Investigator Email(s) *amy.harris-aber@mtsu.edu; julie.myatt@mtsu.edu*  
 Department English

Protocol Title ***Mennonite fundraising cookbooks as heteroglossic texts: An examination of discourse communities in South Central Kansas 19-2007***

Protocol ID **19-2007**

Dear Investigator(s),

The above identified research proposal has been reviewed by the MTSU Institutional Review Board (IRB) through the **EXPEDITED** mechanism under 45 CFR 46.110 and 21 CFR 56.110 within the category (7) *Research on individual or group characteristics or behavior*. A summary of the IRB action and other particulars in regard to this protocol application is tabulated below:

IRB Action	<b>APPROVED for ONE YEAR</b>		
Date of Expiration	<b>10/31/2019</b>	Date of Approval	10/5/18
Sample Size	20 (TWENTY)		
Participant Pool	Primary Classification: <b>Healthy Adults (18 or older)</b> Specific Classification: <b>Self reported as a member of the mennonite community (familial relations or church affiliation)</b>		
Exceptions	1. Contact information for research planning and coordination. 2. Voice recording is permitted.		
Restrictions	1. <b>Mandatory active informed consent; the participants must have access to an official copy of the informed consent document signed by the PI.</b> 2. <b>Identifiable personal information must not be retained beyond the data processing stage.</b> 3. <b>Inclusion/exclusion criteria must be followed as proposed.</b> 4. <b>Video/audio data must be destroyed after data processing.</b>		
Comments	NONE		

This protocol can be continued for up to THREE years (**10/31/2021**) by obtaining a continuation approval prior to **10/31/2019**. Refer to the following schedule to plan your annual project reports and be aware that you may not receive a separate reminder to complete your continuing reviews.

Failure in obtaining an approval for continuation will automatically result in cancellation of this protocol. Moreover, the completion of this study MUST be notified to the Office of Compliance by filing a final report in order to close-out the protocol.

#### Post-approval Actions

The investigator(s) indicated in this notification should read and abide by all of the post-approval conditions imposed with this approval. [Refer to the post-approval guidelines posted in the MTSU IRB's website.](#) Any unanticipated harms to participants or adverse events must be reported to the Office of Compliance at (615) 494-8918 within 48 hours of the incident. Amendments to this protocol must be approved by the IRB. Inclusion of new researchers must also be approved by the Office of Compliance before they begin to work on the project.

#### Continuing Review (Follow the Schedule Below:)

Submit an annual report to request continuing review by the deadline indicated below and please be aware that **REMINDERS WILL NOT BE SENT.**

Reporting Period	Requisition Deadline	IRB Comments
First year report	9/30/2019	NOT COMPLETED
Second year report	9/30/2020	NOT COMPLETED
Final report	9/30/2021	NOT COMPLETED

#### Post-approval Protocol Amendments:

**Only two procedural amendment requests will be entertained per year.** In addition, the researchers can request amendments during continuing review. This amendment restriction does not apply to minor changes such as language usage and addition/removal of research personnel. .

Date	Amendment(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

#### Other Post-approval Actions:

Date	IRB Action(s)	IRB Comments
NONE	NONE.	NONE

**Mandatory Data Storage Requirement:** All of the research-related records, which include signed consent forms, investigator information and other documents related to the study, must be retained by the PI or the faculty advisor (if the PI is a student) at the secure location mentioned in the protocol application. The data storage must be maintained for at least three (3) years after study has been closed. Subsequent to closing the protocol, the researcher may destroy the data in a manner that maintains confidentiality and anonymity.

IRB reserves the right to modify, change or cancel the terms of this letter without prior notice. Be advised that IRB also reserves the right to inspect or audit your records if needed.

Sincerely,

Institutional Review Board  
Middle Tennessee State University

#### Quick Links:

[Click here](#) for a detailed list of the post-approval responsibilities.  
More information on expedited procedures can be found [here](#).