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# The Big Valley Oral History Project: Language Attitudes toward Pennsylvania German in Big Valley

## 1. Introduction

Researchers at Penn State University in collaboration with the Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society are collecting oral histories from members of the Anabaptist community in Kishacoquillas Valley, located in Mifflin County, Pennsylvania. Remote from major urban areas and less frequented by tourists than the larger and more well-known Amish settlements in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and Holmes County, Ohio, the area commonly known as Big Valley remains home to what is arguably the most diverse Anabaptist community in the world. The relative isolation, diversity, and continuity of this Anabaptist community make it an important site to study linguistic and cultural maintenance and change.

John A. Hostetler documented twelve distinct Anabaptist sects in Big Valley, ranging from two Old School Old Order Amish groups to several assimilated Mennonite churches.[1] All Anabaptist sects in the valley trace their history back to the original Amish settlement of 1791. Though all the groups adhere to the basic Anabaptist tenets of adult baptism, nonresistance, and nonconformity, they vary greatly in their interpretation of what the doctrine of nonconformity to the world entails.

Our project encompasses a full range of Anabaptist sects within their local, geographical context in Mifflin County. Our interview questions, directed at representatives of all groups, focus primarily on language use and cultural practices in an attempt to uncover attitudes about ethnic and religious identity and language. We follow other research on bicultural, bilingual societies, which stress the importance of language attitudes in the maintenance of a minority language and culture.

In this essay, we report on the language attitudes we have encountered thus far in approximately 21 oral history interviews. The essay is organized as follows. Section 2 reviews previous sociolinguistic research on Pennsylvania German-speaking communities. Section 3 provides an overview of Big Valley's Anabaptist communities. Section 4 describes the project and the use of oral histories to uncover language attitudes in a bilingual, bicultural community. Section 5 presents our findings to date. Section 6 concludes the paper.

## 2. Previous Sociolinguistic Research on Pennsylvania German

At present there are no monolingual Pennsylvania German speakers with the exception of preschool children in Old Order families. For a bilingual community to maintain a minority language like Pennsylvania German, it is necessary for the speakers

to view both languages as fulfilling complementary roles. Crystal maintains that for a bilingual community to maintain a minority language, the community must view the minority language favorably and have a desire to use the minority language as a marker of identity. On the other hand, Crystal states, "[l]anguages decline when these positive attitudes are missing."[2]

Since the pioneering work of Huffines, it has been recognized that any discussion of Pennsylvania German speakers must distinguish between the sectarian and nonsectarian communities.[3] Sectarian communities of Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites continue to actively use Pennsylvania German for in-group communications where it serves as an important marker of socio-religious identity. The Old Orders maintain parochial schools in which English is the language of instruction. Old Orders also write in English and use English for communication with others outside the community. Paradoxically, the English spoken by sectarians exhibits less phonological interference from PG than the English spoken by nonsectarian PG speakers.[4] Dress, transportation, *and* language all serve as markers of ethnicity and religious affiliation for Old Orders. Therefore, sectarians can speak English "without an accent" without compromising their ethno-religious identity.

The distinction between the sectarians (*Sektenleute*) and the nonsectarians (*Kirchenleute*) can be traced to the eighteenth century.[5] The sectarians constituted only a small fraction of German immigration to North America in the colonial period. Fogleman estimates a total German immigration of 85,000, of which 3.6 to 6.5 percent were radical pietists, a cover term he uses to include Mennonites, Moravians, Amish, Dunkers, Schwenkfelders and Waldensians.[6] The earliest Amish and Mennonite populations in the eighteenth century were concentrated in small areas of Pennsylvania where they established enclaves separate from other Pennsylvania Germans.[7] This pattern continued with subsequent Anabaptist settlements, one of which was established in 1791 in the Kishacoquillas Valley of Pennsylvania. As is the case with earlier Anabaptist settlements in Lancaster County and elsewhere, these sectarians have never had extensive contact with nonsectarian Pennsylvania German speakers. In terms of number of Pennsylvania German speakers, nonsectarians greatly outnumbered sectarians until fairly recently.

Unlike sectarian speakers of Pennsylvania German, nonsectarians are less frequently ambilingual in Pennsylvania German and English.[8] For nonsectarian speakers, the domains of usage for Pennsylvania German are quite limited. Nonsectarian speakers are more inclined to use PG for profanity, to express frustration and anger, or to joke.[9] Additionally, previous studies have found that use of Pennsylvania German is often limited to a "secret language."[10] In such cases, Pennsylvania German is therefore placed within a secret domain out of reach for a child, who is denied the opportunity to acquire fully the language. There are now few fluent nonsectarian speakers of Pennsylvania German under the age of 70.

Only a few studies on language attitudes and Pennsylvania German exist.[11] These studies focus on nonsectarians and draw data from language attitude questionnaires, but one relied on matched-guise tests.[12] Several of the negative attitudes toward Pennsylvania German are addressed here. The general findings are that Pennsylvania German is considered to be an inferior language (and arguably by some not a "real" language at all) that is not appropriate for "public and professional spheres."[13] However, the notion of the inferiority of Pennsylvania German to English and the concept of

the "dumb Dutchman" are prevalent only among the generation of speakers who did not pass the language on to their children. In fact matched-guise tests found that the monolingual descendants of Pennsylvania German speakers rated speakers with a marked "Pennsylvania German English" to have a higher status because they are presumed to be bilingual.[14] These positive attitudes towards Pennsylvania German from the younger generation are probably inspired by the current language death situation and a desire to speak with older persons at a more intimate level. Such feelings of nostalgia are quite common once a language is moribund. Younger generations of formerly bilingual communities often regret the demise of the heritage language.[15]

There is strong evidence that the negative attitudes toward Pennsylvania German just discussed have been present in the nonsectarian community since the nineteenth century. Louden documents that Pennsylvania German was considered to be a "dialect" rather than a "language" and that the sterotype of the "dumb Dutchman" is an old one. Pennsylvania German suffered as well in the schools and in the press in the nineteenth century since it was not considered to be worthy of instruction or serious journalism. The language was maintained in the nonsectarian community from the nineteenth century onward only by those speakers who remained in rural isolation with limited social mobility. As soon as speakers moved to a more urban area, pursued an education or married a nonspeaker, they quickly abandoned Pennsylvania German and did not pass the language on to their offspring. Therefore the nonsectarian community was susceptible to language shift when demographic and economic changes led to industrialization, increased access to education, migration from the country to cities and school consolidation in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Louden uses the term "maintenance by inertia" to describe the long-term maintenance of Pennsylvania German nonsectarians despite pervasive negative attitudes toward the language both within and without the Pennsylvania German community.[16]

Studies of language attitudes among Anabaptist subgroups that are not Old Order are largely missing from the research literature.[17] In the following section, we describe the diverse Anabaptist community of Big Valley before reporting on the language attitudes we have encountered among transitional and assimilated Anabaptists. In section four, we discuss the use of oral histories to explore language attitudes in the context of language shift and maintenance in a bilingual community.

### 3. The Anabaptist Communities of Big Valley

The first Amish settlers arrived in Big Valley in 1791, following westward expansion from earlier settlements in eastern Pennsylvania. Since that time, a strong Anabaptist presence has defined the character of the community commonly called Big Valley, nestled in the Ridge and Valley region of the Appalachian Mountains in Central Pennsylvania. From this original settlement descended a spectrum of Anabaptist groups ranging from assimilated Mennonites to three Old Order Amish sects.

The groups vary greatly in their interpretation of what the doctrine of nonconformity to the world entails. For the most conservative groups, nonconformity requires plain dress, limited education, the selective use of technology reflected in horse-and-buggy transportation and traditional farming techniques (hay stacks rather than bales, husking corn by hand, non-refrigeration of milk, etc.) and the use of Pennsylvania German in the home and with fellow congregational members. For members of the

most progressive Mennonite church, these outward manifestations of nonconformity are considered unnecessary. Between these two poles, the standards of nonconformity vary. On the basis of his ethnographic work in Big Valley, Hostetler terms this range of practice "the Anabaptist continuum."[18] The following thumbnail sketches are based on the 1993 edition of his work and are listed from most traditional to most progressive as judged by Hostetler.

Old School Amish: This group is commonly referred to as the Nebraska Amish, and is one of three Old Order Amish sects in the Valley. According to Hostetler, the Nebraska Amish are the most traditional Amish sect in North America. The name "Nebraska Amish" derives from their history. In the nineteenth century, a few families left Mifflin County for an Amish settlement in Nebraska and later returned to Big Valley. The dress of the men and women is plainer than that of other Amish sects in the valley. Men wear white shirts, wide-brimmed hats, and no suspenders or belts. Women wear a distinctive flat, straw hat similar to that worn by their Alsatian and Swiss ancestors two centuries ago. The Nebraska Amish use no modern farm equipment. Their houses and barns are unpainted. Window screens, curtains, and carpets are not allowed. They drive white-top buggies.

Byler Amish: Like the Old School Amish, this is an Old Order Amish sect that rejects the ownership and operation of motor vehicles. The Byler Amish are readily identifiable through their use of yellow-top buggies. The men's shirts may be a color other than white. Their pants have one suspender. Women wear brown bonnets. The Byler Amish may use tractors in the barnyard but not in the fields. Their buildings are generally painted. Half-length curtains and window blinds are permitted. Carpets are not used.

Renno Amish: The Renno Amish is the third Old Order Amish sect in the Valley. The Renno Amish have a close relationship with the Byler Amish, with whom they exchange ministers. Their buggies have black tops. Men wear a single suspender. Women wear black bonnets. Houses are typically painted white, and barns are red. Carpets, window blinds, and half-length curtains are all used. Like the other two Old Order Amish sects in the Valley, the Renno Amish do not use meeting houses for worship, but meet at the home of a church member and practice shunning.

Valley View Amish Mennonite Church: This sect grew from a group that formed in 1911 as a progressive offshoot of the Renno Amish. Its members along with members of Pleasant View Amish Mennonite Church are often referred to as Beachy Amish. They do not use shunning to enforce church discipline. In 1948, this group adopted the use of electricity. The ownership of automobiles was permitted in 1954. Prior to adoption of the automobile, tractors were used for plowing. Pennsylvania German is still spoken by older members, but its use appears to be waning. The Valley View meeting house was built in 1962.

Pleasant View Amish Mennonite Church: This congregation's history is closely tied to the Valley View Amish Mennonite Church. The Pleasant View meeting house was built by the Valley View Amish Mennonites in 1985. Both meeting houses exchange ministers with other "Beachy" Amish churches in the United States.

Beth-El Mennonite Church: This church was organized in 1973 by several families who withdrew from the Allensville Mennonite congregation. They objected to progressive changes in the Allensville church. This sect emphasizes the wearing of plain clothing. Women wear black stockings and cape dresses, men wear collarless coats and no neckties.

Holdeman Church: The congregation formed in 1958, but the denomination, Church of God in Christ Mennonite, dates back to the nineteenth century. According to the official church history, it emphasizes "repentance, forgiveness, the new birth, self-denial, nonconformity, nonresistance, excommunication of transgressors, and the shunning of apostates." Many members were expelled from Old Order Amish sects and appear to be attracted by the born-again theology. Members may use automobiles and modern farm equipment.

Allensville Mennonite Church: This church originated in 1861 when Solomon Byler organized an Amish group that later built a meeting house in 1869. Only a few women continue to wear plain Mennonite bonnets and white prayer coverings. The congregation is affiliated with the Allegheny Conference of the Mennonite Church, the largest body of Mennonites in North America.

Locust Grove Mennonite Church: This church was organized in 1898 by members of the Allensville and Maple Grove Mennonite churches who felt that the community was changing too rapidly. The congregation is affiliated with the Conservative Mennonite Conference, but no longer maintains the traditional clothing that once distinguished its members from Mennonites belonging to the Allensville and Maple Grove churches.

Brethren in Christ Church: Similar to the Holdeman group, this church stresses repentance, conversion, and conducts revival meetings. It built a meeting house in Belleville in 1959 and drew members from the Beachy Amish. It does not require distinctive dress or shun apostate members.

Maple Grove Mennonite Church: The Maple Grove Church was organized in 1868 by meeting-house Amish and is now affiliated with the Allegheny Conference of the Mennonite Church. The church is regarded as the most progressive in Big Valley. It was the first to permit its members to attend college, to conduct choral programs, and to allow members to join civic and community organizations. According to Hostetler, other Protestant churches in the area are still considered to be more "worldly" than Maple Grove Mennonite.

Raith breaks the Anabaptist continuum down into three groups: conservative sectarians, transitional sectarians, and assimilated Mennonites.[19] Figure 1 provides an overview of the three groups and their verbal behavior.

**Fig. 1. Groups within the Anabaptist Continuum**[20]

**Conservative sectarians** (Old Order Amish)
- Stable bilingualism and diglossia
- Plain dress, horse & buggy transportation
- German in worship services

**Transitional sectarians** (Beachy Amish)
- Nonstable bilingualism, remnants of diglossia
- Plain dress, automobile transportation
- English in worship services

**Assimilated Mennonites** (Maple Grove Mennonite Church)
- Bilingualism only among older members, no diglossia
- nonplain dress, automobile transportation, English in worship

It should also be noted that Big Valley is also home to many monolingual English speakers who are not of Pennsylvania German descent. In our interviews of residents who attended one-room schools prior to school consolidation in the 1940s, all report having monolingual English classmates who were not Anabaptist. The Pennsylvania German population of Big Valley has always been primarily Anabaptist and has had little if any contact with nonsectarian Pennsylvania Germans.

## 4. The Goals of the Big Valley Oral History Project

Our project has three broad goals: 1) preserve the memories and perspectives of Anabaptists in Big Valley at a time of great change in an archive that will be locally accessible to members of the Anabaptist community, 2) provide a resource for scholars that will complement existing archives at Penn State University, and 3) explore language attitudes in a diverse Anabaptist community exhibiting a wide-range of cultural and linguistic practices.

Duane Kaufmann has documented the history of the Anabaptist groups in Mifflin County, but since Hostetler's pioneering research in Big Valley during the 1950s and 1960s, no systematic ethnographic work has been done in this area.[21] In recent years economic and social changes and demographic shifts have affected Big Valley in unprecedented ways. Among the Old Order Amish, economic necessity has forced some to rely on non-farming occupations, such as Amish-owned pallet factories that employ Amish labor. Improved highway access to Big Valley enables others to sell organic produce to restaurants in Washington, D.C., and many residents, both Amish and non-Amish, now work outside the valley in nearby Lewistown or State College. A greater emphasis on evangelism has had an apparent impact on language use in the so-called transitional groups such as the Beachy Amish. In these congregations, only the

older generations are still fully fluent in Pennsylvania German as the heritage language is being supplanted by English, the language of evangelism, in all linguistic domains. Locust Grove Mennonite Church has been influenced by the evangelical movement in worship style and emphasis on outreach, whereas Allensville Mennonite Church has embraced some doctrines of a more mainstream Christian fundamentalism. Most Mennonites now have radios and televisions in their homes.

Nearly twenty years ago, a felt sense of cultural change and loss led some representatives of the Mennonite and Amish-Mennonite churches in the valley to establish the Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society to collect, preserve, and research artifacts and stories relevant to the Anabaptist communities. Members of this group have helped to plan the project, identify individuals from each of the various Anabaptist groups to participate, and its members have joined our researchers in interviews.[22]

In cooperation with the Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society and Penn State University Libraries, a minimum of 50 interviews are planned from members of twelve Anabaptist congregations across the Anabaptist continuum. The questions focus on everyday life, verbal behavior, worship, and observed changes in the valley. From the summer of 2005 to the present, 21 interviews have been conducted. The narrators interviewed to date all belong to assimilated or transitional congregations.[23] Sixteen of the twenty-one narrators are native speakers of Pennsylvania German. Church affiliation and dates of birth for narrators interviewed thus far appear in the appendix. The interviews are digitally video- and audio-recorded. Transcripts and digital recordings of the interviews will be housed at the Mennonite Heritage Center in Belleville and at the main library on Penn State's University Park campus. The collection will be available to scholars and the general public. Together with the Hostetler collection, which contains John A. Hostetler's field notes from the 1950s and 1960s, Penn State's library will provide extensive research materials on the Anabaptists in Big Valley.

The oral history interviews are structured chronologically so that participants can recall and describe cultural changes and language use from their childhood to the present.[24] Topics covered include church affiliation, reading and writing practices, worship and music, dress, education, occupation, domains of language use, and initial exposure to English. The interviews therefore focus first on the narrators' childhood, then on their adulthood, and finally on their own children, as appropriate. The interviewer asks follow-up questions as the interview unfolds.

Oral histories supply anecdotal and rich, particular evidence to elucidate language maintenance and shift, phenomena previously described largely in demographic and sociological terms. Our interview questions, directed at representatives of all groups, primarily focus on language use, education, dress and worship practices in an attempt to uncover attitudes about ethnic and religious identity and language. Of course, demographic and sociological studies are highly valuable in understanding language maintenance and shift. The perceptions, memories and life experiences of individual community members also play a vital role in shaping language use and language domains. For this reason, we concentrate primarily on two particular oral histories in the following section as case studies and supplement them with material from other interviews. In the words of Fasold, "the choices made by the members of a particularly

speech community, reflecting their cultural values, add up to [language] shift or maintenance in that community.[25]

Our project regards the Anabaptists within their local, geographical context in Mifflin County, where there has been a sizable Anabaptist settlement since 1791. It provides particular insight into language attitudes toward Pennsylvania German among different Anabaptist groups in the valley in an era when many, but not all, are shifting to monolingual use of English. We follow other research on language maintenance and

**Fig. 2. Profiles of narrators in the Oral Histories of Anabaptist Communities of Mifflin County Project (as of January 2007).**

| | Birth year | First church affiliation | Current church affiliation | L1 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1 | 1914 | Locust Grove Mennonite | Barrville Mennonite | PG |
| 2 | 1915 | Renno Amish / Valley View | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 3 | 1914 | Renno Amish / Valley View | Valley View Amish-Mennonite | PG |
| 4 | 1919 | Allensville Mennonite | Beth-El Mennonite | English |
| 5 | 1920 | Renno Amish / Valley View | Maple Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 6 | 1924 | Locust Grove Mennonite | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 7 | 1925 | Renno Amish | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 8 | 1930 | Allensville Mennonite | Barrville Mennonite | PG |
| 9 | 1913 | Locust Grove Mennonite | Allensville Mennonite | PG |
| 10 | 1920 | Locust Grove Mennonite | Maple Grove Mennonite | English |
| 11 | 1921 | Maple Grove Mennonite | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 12 | 1915 | Renno Amish / Valley View | Brethren in Christ | PG |
| 13 | 1945 | Renno Amish | Beachy Amish (in Missouri) | PG |
| 14 | 1919 | Renno Amish / Valley View | Barrville Mennonite | PG |
| 15 | 1915 | Stahl Mennonite (Johnstown) | Barrville Mennonite | PG |
| 16 | 1919 | Lutheran | Brethren in Christ | English |
| 17 | 1919 | Locust Grove Mennonite | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 18 | 1928 | Allensville Mennonite | Maple Grove Mennonite | English |
| 19 | 1923 | Renno Amish / Valley View | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 20 | 1923 | Locust Grove Mennonite | Locust Grove Mennonite | PG |
| 21 | 1925 | Renno Amish | Locust Grove Mennonite | English |

language shift that stresses the importance of attitude in the maintenance of a minority language, for example the work of Joshua Fishman on minority languages including the continuity of Yiddish in urban Jewish communities.[26] The Anabaptist communities in Big Valley provide a unique advantage because of their long shared history and their great diversity within the Anabaptist tradition. The boundary between the Old Orders, Mennonites, and the outside world can blur in communities with a rich Anabaptist legacy. Intergroup and interpersonal relationships play a crucial role in the formation of language attitudes. Cargile et al. urge "scholars to examine the motivational and

affective constituents of the language attitude process and place these in the context of the relevant interpersonal and intergroup histories."[27] Oral histories are an excellent way to elicit attitudes toward language and culture. These attitudes emerge as narrators tell their story and recount interaction within their particular community as well as with other Anabaptist groups in the valley over the decades. The oral histories document changes in language use and culture from the perspective of the participants.

**5. Language Attitudes in Big Valley**

From the initial interviews, the researchers have found varied language attitudes toward Pennsylvania German from Anabaptists in Big Valley. Our focus is on language attitudes among assimilated Mennonites since they constitute the great majority of the narrators interviewed thus far. We concentrate on the language attitudes of two representative narrators which are supplemented by statements from other narrators. Narrator 1 was born in 1914 and attended Locust Grove Mennonite Church as a child.[28] His parents were both Pennsylvania German speakers from Big Valley and Pennsylvania German was also the language of his childhood (although he is a severely attrited speaker). He learned standard German only in Sunday School. He began attending Maple Grove in the late 1930s, when he was married. He attended school until eighth grade, but completed the GED test at age 50. He has three living children, none live in the Valley and all attended college (two have degrees). Two of his children remained Mennonite. He currently attends a small congregation that was started as a "mission Sunday School" by Maple Grove Mennonite Church. Narrator 5 was born in 1920 into the Zook Church (Beachy Amish), but began attending Allensville Mennonite at age 21 and later joined Maple Grove with his wife in the 1940s. He is a native speaker of Pennsylvania German and attended school until eighth grade. He has four children; three live in Big Valley.

The language attitudes of assimilated Mennonites interviewed thus far toward Pennsylvania German are almost all overwhelmingly negative. In most of the interviews, the narrators mentioned that one of the biggest problems with Pennsylvania German came when they first encountered English at school.[29] The negative experience of first learning Pennsylvania German at home and then being put into an English school definitely affected their willingness to allow a similar fate for their children. The conflict between language and education was especially acute when teachers could not speak Pennsylvania German. Narrator 1 tells of years of watching children who entered school after him, who were unable to speak English and the frustrations involved:

> Narrator 1 [Barrville Mennonite, assimilated Mennonite]: There were some, I had heard through the years, who couldn't speak any English and the teacher had a real problem with them because she'd try to communicate and they could understand her, but she couldn't understand them for a while.[30]

The sentiments of such a narrator who could not speak English on the first day of school validates Narrator 1's anecdote:

> Narrator 6 [Locust Grove Mennonite]: I couldn't talk English going to school

. . . I was so anxious to go to school; I had my things lying on my dresser upstairs, ready to go the first day. The next day, I didn't want to go at all.

Narrator 6's enthusiasm for school was short-lived due to his inability to meet the linguistic demands of the educational setting. The desire to facilitate their children's education led several of the parents interviewed to use English at home. For example, narrator 6 first spoke Pennsylvania German to his children, but the pressure of education led to English monolingualism:

Narrator 6: The same thing with our own children—we talked Dutch to them first, too, but it seems when they started school, it fell through.

For generations, Pennsylvania German served the Anabaptist community as a marker of ethnic identity. At an earlier time, all Big Valley residents of Anabaptist heritage spoke Pennsylvania German. In the middle of the twentieth century, the more assimilated subgroups began to take a negative view of the use of Pennsylvania German. Narrator 1 was eager to avoid Pennsylvania German in his youth and his negative attitude toward language is not only because of its connotations. He saw a Pennsylvania Dutch[31] identity as something to avoid:

Narrator 1 [Barrville Mennonite]: My wife and I were so glad to get away from it [Pennsylvania German].
Interviewer: Why were you glad to get away from it?
Narrator 1: Well, I don't know, not a stigma exactly, I just didn't want to be associated with Pennsylvania Dutch. That was Dutch, I didn't want to be Dutch.

Pennsylvania German no longer serves to separate assimilated Mennonites from other mainstream Protestants. Speaking Pennsylvania German in Big Valley is now strongly associated with the Old Orders. Big Valley's assimilated Mennonites no longer view being Dutch (and speaking Pennsylvania German) as part of being Mennonite. This dissolution of ethno-religious identity is a relatively recent development:

Interviewer: But you didn't associate Dutch with being Mennonite at all, those were two different things?
Narrator 1: Well, years ago, I guess somewhat, but then not later.

Importantly, this change has not come at the cost of a distinct religious identity. The religious identity of Narrator 1 has remained very Mennonite without Pennsylvania German. He is a Mennonite minister, and in the 1950s he founded an all Mennonite men's chorus in Big Valley: "one of Mifflin County's last traditional singing schools."[32] Moreover, facing loss of local control over schools during school consolidation, assimilated Mennonites founded Belleville Mennonite School in 1945, before the establishment of parochial schools by Old Order in the valley during the 1950s.[33] At the very time that intergenerational transmission of Pennsylvania German ceased among assimilated Mennonites, church members started new Mennonite institutions. In other

words, a new Mennonite identity was emerging for assimilated Mennonites, one that was no longer bound to ethnicity.

In spite of the negative attitudes expressed toward Pennsylvania German, several positive attitudes did surface during the oral history interviews. For some speakers, feelings of nostalgia later in life have led to a reassessment of Pennsylvania German. Narrator 1 harbored definite negative attitudes toward Pennsylvania German in his youth:

> Narrator 1: And I suppose I wanted to talk English, so I would talk English to my mother. Pop and I talked Dutch until I was in my mid-teens, I suppose. But when we'd be away somewhere, my father and I, around town somewhere, and he'd talk Dutch to me, I didn't like that . . . I didn't want people to know that he was talking Dutch to me.

Not only are his earlier attitudes toward Pennsylvania German obvious in this passage, but also apparent is the erosion of language domains for the use of Pennsylvania German. For the narrator, Pennsylvania German was considered unsuitable in a public space although Pennsylvania German was commonly spoken throughout the valley, including Belleville, and continues to used regularly by the Old Order population. The language of the home changed from only Pennsylvania German to a mixture of Pennsylvania German and English. Two languages occupied a single domain making the functional boundaries of each unclear and eventually English won out. His initial attitudes toward Pennsylvania German were strong enough that he did not forget them and their impact on his adult life. Although Narrator 1 felt "ashamed" of Pennsylvania German in his youth, his attitude has changed:

> Narrator 1: I guess I was sort of ashamed of it [speaking Pennsylvania German], I don't know. I wouldn't be now, but I was then.

As shown above, the use of Pennsylvania German in a functional domain during one's childhood does not prevent the development of negative attitudes. However, the lack of a functional domain for a language can also contribute to negative attitudes. Two narrators (4 and 10) were not native speakers of Pennsylvania German and their view on the use of Pennsylvania German in their childhood home was the same:

> Narrator 4: They just talked Dutch if they didn't want us to understand it.
> Interviewer: So it's sort of their secret language in a way?
> Narrator 4: Yeah.

> Narrator 10: The only time [they spoke Pennsylvania German] was when they didn't want us to know what they were saying probably.

The limited function of Pennsylvania German as an excluding language contributes to its negative value in the broader English-dominant context.

Although Narrator 1 did not recall any instances in his life where knowledge of

Pennsylvania German was advantageous, two narrators, both nurses, mentioned the advantage of speaking Pennsylvania German in their professions:

> Interviewer: Do you think people sought you out, because they knew that you talked Dutch and they were comfortable for that reason?
> Narrator 2: I think they felt more comfortable, but I think it was really more a matter of need on their part.

> Narrator 11: It was really handy while I was a nurse working in pediatrics. When we got children who couldn't speak English; we'd get White-Topper [Amish] children in.

They saw Pennsylvania German as a particularly useful tool in a specific situation related to their occupation. Interestingly, both narrators made reference to the benefits of Pennsylvania German in dealing with Old Order Amish. It is both surprising and significant that other informants did not recall any occasions where knowledge of Pennsylvania German was an advantage. For native speakers, this may be due to Pennsylvania German's status in their childhood as an "everyday" language used primarily in the home, and its use was therefore not perceived by the narrators as advantageous.

Big Valley does not exist as a monolithic society and as such the sentiments of contrarians do appear during the oral history interviews. Unlike Narrator 1, Narrator 5 definitely sees a direct correlation between the linguistic and cultural history of the valley. He is of the opinion that those of Pennsylvania German descent should speak Pennsylvania German. For him, the two should not grow apart:

> Narrator 5 [Maple Grove Mennonite]: It's a pity here in the Valley. They don't talk Dutch a lot of them. They should, I think it's bad—maybe I shouldn't feel that way, but I feel bad that they don't, because they come from Dutch background.

Narrator 5 insists on the maintenance of traditional Mennonite tenets. His thoughts on proper dress are evidence:

> Narrator 5: But not one woman that didn't have her hair covered . . . We'd look at them now [with no head coverings], it looks like Hollywood Church.
> Interviewer: So that's been a real change you've noticed then?
> Narrator 5: Terrible change, yes a terrible change.

> Narrator 5: I don't call Maple Grove Amish-Mennonite. I don't call it Mennonite either, I just call it the Maple Grove Church. They're not Mennonite, not to my knowledge. I mean, not to my way of thinking. They're not Mennonite.

This narrator's "way of thinking" most definitely includes several of the outward signs of nonconformity which Maple Grove considers unnecessary (head coverings, plainness in dress, and linguistic isolation). For Narrator 5 both the outward non-linguistic and

linguistic (i.e., speaking Pennsylvania German) markers of ethnicity are necessary for maintenance of Mennonite identity.

It is important not to overlook the attitudes of the speakers towards the entire language situation in their speech community. Their intuitive knowledge of the situation in which they live can shed light on implicit attitudes toward Pennsylvania German. Rather than just focusing on the language itself, the speakers can voice their opinions of the shift. Narrator 5 offered his opinion on the change and obviously does not approve of it:

> Narrator 5: No, they can't [speak Pennsylvania German], it's a shame, when I think.
> Interviewer: At Valley View?
> Narrator 5: Yeah, they can't talk Dutch, because they talk English at home. Well, my wife doesn't talk Dutch either, but I taught all my children to talk Dutch.

Valley View is a Beachy Amish congregation and is classified as transitional sectarian by Raith.[34] Its members dress plainly and have been permitted to own and operate automobiles since 1954. This account of the linguistic situation at Valley View is corroborated by Narrator 8, a former minister at Valley View. He reports that the use of German and Pennsylvania German is no longer part of worship. According to Narrator 8, his Beachy Amish congregation switched to having all services in English in 1985 after a long period of using English as well as German and Pennsylvania German during services. Narrator 8 began preaching in English in 1961 or 1962 at the time that a meeting house was erected for the congregation. The Beachy Amish, who retain some Old Order worship practices such as not using musical instruments, have followed assimilated Mennonites in switching to exclusive use of English in worship. Moreover, the Beachy Amish no longer sing the *Loblied*, which according to several narrators continued to be sung in German at Locust Grove in the 1930s when the rest of the service was in English. Narrator 5 appears to be quite correct in his assessment that the Beachy Amish are well on their way to shifting to English monolingualism.[35]

## 6. Conclusion

In many ways, the attitudes that have accompanied the shift to English monolingualism in transitional and assimilated Anabaptist groups seem very familiar. The heritage language was viewed as a barrier to education and of little utility or value. Upon abandoning the use of German for worship, these groups moved or are moving quickly to English monolingualism. This same pattern can be found for many other bilingual speakers in the United States, including German immigrants in the nineteenth century.[36]

An important difference in Big Valley, however, is the presence of a number of Anabaptist subgroups with a shared history yet distinct identities. It is significant that the Old Orders, who maintain Pennsylvania German, and more assimilated Anabaptists are neighbors and interact with one another regularly. Members of the different Anabaptist groups are well aware of their shared history and often have friends and relatives who belong to different congregations. For example, Narrator 5 grew up Beachy Amish,

now belongs to an assimilated Mennonite congregation, and regularly provides Old Order Amish with transportation for pay. Interaction between members of different subgroups and changing church affiliation to a different Anabaptist congregation, often upon marriage, is not at all unusual. Pennsylvania German is still alive and well in the valley and is perceived as such. However, the language is no longer considered to be a shared trait of Anabaptist identity. Instead, Anabaptist residents of Big Valley now associate use of Pennsylvania German with the Old Order Amish and thereby mark an important boundary in the Anabaptist continuum.

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## Notes

[1] J. A. Hostetler, *Amish Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993), 253.

[2] See D. Crystal, *Language Death* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 81.

[3] M. L. Huffines, "Pennsylvania German: Maintenance and Shift" *International Journal of the Sociology of Language* 25 (1980):85-94.

[4] J. Raith, "Phonologische Interferenzen im amerikanischen Englisch der anabaptistischen Gruppen deutscher Herkunft in Lancaster County (Pennsylvania)," *Zeitschrift für Dialektologie und Linguistik* 23 (1981):77–105.

[5] For an excellent discussion of the eighteenth century sectarians from German-speaking lands in Pennsylvania and other colonies, see A. S. Fogleman, *Hopeful Journeys: German Immigration, Settlement, and Political Culture in Colonial America, 1717-1775* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 100–26.

[6] A. S. Fogleman "Hopeful Journeys", 103. Marianne Wokeck estimates 100,000 German immigrants came through the Rhineland to the colonies, primarily through Philadelphia, between 1683 and 1776 "German Immigration to Colonial America: Prototype of a Transatlantic Mass Migration," in *America and the Germans: An Assessment of a Three-Hundred History*, vol. 1, ed. by F. Trommler and J. McVeigh (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), 3–13. See also M. Wokeck, "The Flow and Composition of German Immigration to Philadelphia, 1727–1775," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 105 (1981):249–78.

[7] A.S. Fogleman "Hopeful Journeys," 107.

[8] M. L. Louden, "Bilingualism and Syntactic Change" (PhD dissertation, Cornell University, 1988), 105.

[9] R. C. Williamson, "The Survival of Pennsylvania German: A Survey of Berks and Lehigh Counties," *Pennsylvania Folklife* 32 (1982):67.

[10] See for example: M. L. Huffines "Pennsylvania German Maintenance and Shift," 49, 51; Williamson "The Survival of Pennsylvania German," 67 and R. C. Williamson, *Minority Languages and Bilingualism: Case Studies in Maintenance and Shift* (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1991), 67.

[11] See i.a. A. Kopp, "The Matched-guise Technique in Practice: Measuring Language Attitudes within the Pennsylvania German Speech Community," in *The German Language in America, 1683-1991*, ed. J. C. Salmons, (Madison, WI: Max Kade Institute for German-American Studies, 1993), 264-83; A. Kopp, *The Phonology of Pennsylvania German English as Evidence of Language Maintenance and Shift* (Selinsgrove, PA: Susquehanna University Press, 1999); A. Kopp, "Language Attitudes across Society and Generations in a Pennsylvania German Speech Island," in W. Keel & K. Mattheier *German Language Varieties Worldwide*, 87 – 115; R. C. Williamson "The Survival of Pennsyvania German"; and R. C. Williamson, *Minority Languages and Bilingualism*. Huffines ("Language Maintenance Efforts," 244) mentions the common sentiment that "Pennsylvania German is not only useless but inferior," i.e., moving from a null social value to a negative social value ("Pennsylvania German Maintenance and Shift," 55). Williamson ("The Survival of Pennsylvania German," 68) notes that compared to European minority language speakers, Pennsylvania German speakers are more embarrassed linguistically. Moreover, Pennsylvania German speakers with the so-called "Dutch accent" were traditionally viewed as "handicapped" (M. L. Louden, "Minority-language 'Maintenance by Inertia': Pennsylvania German Among Nonsectarian Speakers" in *Standardfragen: Festschrift für Klaus J. Mattheier zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. J. Androutsopoulos and E. Ziegler (Frankfurt: Peter Lang, 2003), 5).

[12] A. Kopp "The Matched-guise Technique." The matched-guise test gauges a listener's attitudes toward spoken varieties of language. As guises, Kopp used the speech of three native speakers of Pennsylvania German speaking Pennsylvania German and Pennsylvania German English plus the speech of a native PG speaker speaking PG, PGE and regional Standard English. Subjects listened to recordings and were asked to evaluate the speech for different characteristics such as friendliness and intelligence.

[13] A. Kopp "Language Attitudes," 106.

[14] A. Kopp "The Matched-guise Technique," 277.

[15] D. Crystal, *Language Death*, 106.

[16] M. L. Louden, "Minority-Language 'Maintenance by Inertia,'" 137.

[17] An exception is J. Raith, "The Speech Island 'Big Valley' as a Speech Community," in *German Language Varieties Worldwide: Internal and External Perspectives*, edited by W. D. Keel & K. J. Mattheier. (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2003).

[18] Hostetler, *Amish Society*, 253.

[19] J. Raith, "The Speech Island 'Big Valley' as a Speech Community," 64-65.

[20] Figure 1 is based on Raith "The Speech Island 'Big Valley,'" 64-65.

[21] For a comprehensive history of Kischacoquillas Valley, see S. D. Kauffmann, *Mifflin County Amish and Mennonite Story, 1791-1991* (Belleville, PA: Mifflin County Historical Society, 1991).

[22] Special mention is due to Betty Hartzler of the Mifflin County Mennonite Heritage Center in Belleville, PA.

[23] We adhere to the standards of oral history interviews by referring to the interviewees as "narrators."

[24] In conducting the interviews, we follow guidelines developed by the Oral History Association. The interviewers are Julia Kasdorf, Willard Martin and Richard Page, all of whom are faculty members at Penn State. Dr. Kasdorf is a native of the valley, and Dr. Martin is a native speaker of Pennsylvania German. The interviewer informs the interviewee that the purpose of the interviews is to create a local history of the Anabaptist communities in Big Valley. Prior to the interview, interviewees sign an Oral History Interview Agreement and Oral History Release Form in order to give their consent. Penn State's Office of Research Protections approved the oral history project and the associated agreement and release forms.

[25] R. Fasold, *The Sociolinguistics of Society* (New York: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 214.

[26] See for example: J. A. Fishman, *Language and Ethnicity in Minority Sociolinguistic Perspective* (Philadelphia: Multilingual Matters, 1989).

[27] A. C. Cargile, H. Giles, E. B. Ryan, and J. J. Bradac, "Language Attitudes as a Social Process: A Conceptual Model and New Directions" *Language & Communication* 14, no. 3 (1994): 227.

[28] Narrators were each assigned a number; these numbers identify each narrator in this study.

[29] This is consistent with A. Kopp "Language Attitudes," 107.

[30] To aid the reader, we have included the name of the church, which the narrator currently attends.

[31] Dutch or Pennsylvania Dutch is commonly used in Big Valley and elsewhere in Pennsylvania to describe the language, the culture, and the ethnic group. We follow local usage in using "Pennsylvania Dutch" to describe the culture and ethnicity.

[32] S. D. Kauffman. *Mifflin County Amish and Mennonite Story: 1791 – 1991* (Belleville, PA: Mifflin County Mennonite Historical Society, 1991), 255.

[33] S. D. Kauffman, *Mifflin County Amish and Mennonite Story*, 223-24, 227-29.

[34] J. Raith, "The Speech Island 'Big Valley' as a Speech Community," 64-65.

[35] J. Raith, "The Speech Island 'Big Valley' as a Speech Community," 64-65, comes to the same conclusion.

[36] H. Kloss, "German-American language maintenance efforts" in *Language Loyalty in the United States: The Maintenance and Perpetuation of non-English Mother Tongues by American Ethnic and Religious Groups*, ed. J. Fishman (The Hague: Mouton, 1966), 223-26.