The Reciprocal Influences of the Old Order Mennonite Community and Tourism in St. Jacobs, Ontario

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Graduate Program in Anthropology
A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree in Master of Arts
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THE RECIPROCAL INFLUENCES OF THE OLD ORDER MENNONITE COMMUNITY AND TOURISM IN ST. JACOBS, ONTARIO

Monograph

By

Mingyuan Zhang

Graduate Program in Anthropology

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts

The School of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
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London, Ontario, Canada

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Abstract

This research examines the reciprocal influences of the Old Order Mennonite community and tourism in St. Jacobs, Ontario. It is an ethnographic account of encounters between tourists and the Old Order Mennonite community who have both benefited from and been challenged by tourism development for four decades in the area of St. Jacobs. Cultural generalization and different ways of over-representing and misrepresenting the Old Order Mennonite identity has triggered tourists’ curiosity to seek the nostalgic past and social interactions with the Old Order Mennonite community. Even though tourism in St. Jacobs has been initiated and managed with the purpose of protecting the Old Order Mennonite community by providing a proper way of introducing the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle to outsiders, the thriving of tourism has brought an excessive amount of attention to the Old Order Mennonite community. Tourism provides more economic opportunities to the Old Order Mennonite community, while at the same time; it brings new risks. With the development of tourism, the village of St. Jacobs has been transformed from a rural farming service centre to a tourism town, and lost its main service functions to the Old Order Mennonite community. The data of this research is gathered through in-depth participant observation, formal and informal interviews by living within the Old Order Mennonite community in the area of St. Jacobs.

Keywords

Old Order Mennonites, Tourism, St. Jacobs, Ontario, Cultural generalization, Identity, Landscape change
Acknowledgments

Upon my arrival in Canada in the summer of 2012, Canada was still a very new country to me. The two years I have been here have deeply influenced my life. In the Chinese language, there is an idiom that reads as follows: “the favour of a drop of water shall be returned with a burst of spring (滴水之恩当涌泉相报, read as ‘Di Shui Zhi En Dang Yong Quan Xiang Bao’)”. Therefore, I would like to take this opportunity to express my sincere appreciation and gratitude to everyone who has supported and encouraged me during the past two years in my Master’s research and personal life.

Firstly, my thank goes to all the participants of this research. As a young graduate student who was first introduced to the discipline of Anthropology, and who conducted her first fieldwork in life, I am greatly thankful to the support and dedication of every participant for showing your enthusiasm to my research. A special thank goes to Del for making the initial contact for me and introducing me to the Old Order Mennonite community. The phone call that you made when we first met was the beginning of all my good luck in my fieldwork. I am also grateful to Mr. and Mrs. Weber for your hospitality and determined effort to find me accommodation within the Old Order Mennonite community. I am also greatly indebted to another Weber family for accepting me into their home. I understand the pressure of taking a stranger, especially a foreigner into your home, and therefore I deeply thank you for your openness and the compromise you have made to accommodate my stay. Beyond that, I would especially like to thank Mrs. Weber because you are the very most important person in my research. Only with your unreserved help and support could I be accepted by the community. Your company has diminished the awkwardness of my presence on different occasions within the Old Order Mennonite community. What I have learned from you goes beyond academic purpose, since during my stay you have also taught me an important lesson in my life that even my parents have never had the opportunity to teach me. Your encouragement and support has convinced me that no matter what country people are from, what culture they have been raised in, and what religion they have chosen to believe, the flare of humanity could be a common faith.
Then I would like to thank the professors from the Department of Anthropology at Western. I want to give my special thank to my awesome supervisor Dr. Sherrie Larkin for your consistent guidance and encouragement. You have always been greatly supportive whenever I came across difficulties in my fieldwork and during the process of writing my thesis. I would also like to thank my great advisor Dr. Kim Clark for supporting my research plan in the first place, and introducing me to St. Jacobs. In addition, I want to thank Dr. Andrew Walsh, Dr. Dan Jorgensen and Dr. Stephanie Bangarth for giving me lots of comments and feedbacks on my research. I want to thank Dr. Randa Farah, Dr. Tania Granadillo and Dr. Regna Darnell. The courses I took with you have been great experiences for me and further convinced me that Anthropology is my true passion. I want to thank Diane Belleville-Giza for her kind help to me. Thank you for driving me around during the first few days after I arrived in London only to find a place to buy a blanket. I would also like to thank the financial support from the department and the university for making the research possible and reducing the burden of my family.

I would like to express my great gratitude to my Canadian parents Lea Feldman and Alain Goldschläger. I first met Alain when I took a summer course in the University of Helsinki in Finland during the third year of my undergraduate program at Renmin University of China in Beijing. He was the one that encouraged me to apply to Canadian universities. I cannot express enough gratitude to him for his great effort of introducing me to Canada, which has later become the most important choice in my life. Studying in a university in North America is the dream of many ordinary Chinese students like me and Alain is the one who helps my dream come true and gives me confidence that I can still thrive in an English-speaking institution. The care and love that Lea and Alain have given me since I came here is immense, as if I am one of their own children. Because of you, I have never felt homesick in Canada. You picked me up at Toronto airport upon my first arrival; you celebrated my every birthday and every Chinese New Year; and you worried about my every trouble and difficulty in my life. Because my parents are all the way back in China, you have always given me the most immediate help. I know that you have always been there to support me and it is because of you two, I have never felt like a stranger in this country. Meeting you is really a blessing of my life.
I also want to thank my parents Jian Liu and Fengtian Zhang. Thank you for your selfless support to me in every way to make my study in Canada possible. As the only child in the family, I am sorry that I could not always be with you. But you two have always supported my choice and ambition. During my mother’s visit in Canada in the summer of 2013, I took her to my fieldwork. My mother spent so much time and effort making Chinese dumplings for my Old Order Mennonite host family. Thank you for everything you have did for your daughter. I am really lucky to have parents like you two.

Finally, I want to thank my great friends from different stages of my life. My first thanks goes to Haosen Sun. I deeply acknowledge that my research could not have been possible without your contribution. Thank you Jixiu Li and Ziliang Liu for helping me with the translation of the article in Japanese. Jixiu, you as well as Xiaoqi Sun, represent the cohort of my high school friends and the long-lasting friendship of us. It is always the treasure of my life. Then my thanks goes to Susa Angela MacMillan. You are the best friend and roommate I have in Canada. Thank you for your help and encouragement in both my study and life. Thank you Beheshteh Moazeni for being there for me during a period of loneliness. Thank you Rashedul Alam for your love and inspirations. I believe that you have made me a better person and your love will always be very special to me in my heart. Also, I would like to thank other friends that have made my life in Canada exciting: thank you Xizi Hu, Cliff Davidson, Maya Clarke, Zhewei Liang, Jordan Levy, Parisa Saeidi, Jana Keller, and my cohort. In the end, I want to thank two special members of my life: Halo and Frieda. The two cute kitty cats have brought me so much joy. Thank you both for your cuddling with me.
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CHAPTER ONE

Encounters: Old Order Mennonites, Tourists and Anthropologists

“I used to say to Mother that we lived on the right road because we were just like the Mennonites. The horse and buggy and we drink our milk unpasteurized but the only thing is, neither one of us can sing.” – Alice Munro “Train” 2012

Introduction

I opened my window to let the cool breeze in my car and I heard the sound of the tires running over gravel on the country road. The first time I drove to an Old Order Mennonite farm near the village of St. Jacobs, I missed the narrow lane hidden in the lush maple bush. I parked the car on one side of the road and called the Old Order Mennonite lady by my cell phone, telling her that I was lost. She laughed out loud and said that she saw my car on the road from her window and that I had already passed the lane to her farm. I got out of my car and looked around. In a scene of serene and peaceful countryside, all I could see were fields of green or yellow, pasture, crops, and sugar bush, with two towering silos at least one mile away from the gravel road.

The farm I planned to visit is home to an Old Order Mennonite family living in the rural area north of Waterloo County, Ontario near the village of St. Jacobs. It is estimated that the Old Order Mennonite community in Ontario has a total of 4,000 to 5,000 members, including both children and baptized adults (Horst 2000:30). The community mainly covers the area from Waterloo County to Mount Forest, including many important local farming service centres such as Elmira, Linwood, Listowel, Milverton and Wallenstein (Figure 1) (Horst 2000:18). In the eyes of city people, the Old Order Mennonites living in this area stand out from the rest of the society due to their horse-and-buggy transportation and traditional gendered apparel. They have successfully preserved their unique way of living by running family farms with a limited acceptance of modern technology. St. Jacobs is at the centre of one of the biggest Old Order Mennonite communities in Canada, where the majority are descendants of those who came from Pennsylvania more than a century ago (Woodsworth 1972:85).
Since the 1970s, tourism in St. Jacobs has gradually developed and it has dramatically changed this formerly tranquil village. The thriving of tourism has gained the village a reputation as “Ontario’s favourite rural destination”, according to its website. Visitors to St. Jacobs can participate in a range of tourism activities. In addition to shopping for groceries, fashion, furniture or antiques, experiencing theatres or exhibits, as well as tasting local flavours, activities that specifically feature Old Order Mennonite culture have gained great popularity among tourists. It was the dynamics of the interactions between curious tourists and the local Old Order Mennonites that have triggered my academic interests. This study is my account of the encounters between tourists and the Old Order Mennonites in Ontario.

Figure 1 Map of Old Order Mennonite Communities in Ontario (Horst 2000:18)

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1 See the website of St. Jacobs Tourism at [www.stjacobs.com](http://www.stjacobs.com).
Old Order Mennonite community in the area of St. Jacobs, Ontario who have been under the direct influence of tourism development for four decades.

**Methods**

**Research Methods**

Shortly after I came to Canada in the summer of 2012, I went on a trip that required me to transfer from one bus to another at the Toronto Greyhound bus terminal. While I was waiting for my second bus, I noticed a group of young, energetic girls wearing black sneakers, black bonnets and long dresses made from fabrics with calico prints. Due to the style of their clothing, they easily stood out in the crowd of others wearing T-shirts, shorts, jeans and skirts. My first experience of encountering Old Order Mennonite girls at the urban bus terminal triggered my curiosity and interests. After I returned from the trip, I did some initial research on Mennonites online and decided to visit the town of St. Jacobs with the hope of gaining more knowledge about the Old Order Mennonites who live in the area. As one of the thousands of tourists who visit the town every week, I realized that the development of tourism in St. Jacobs has deeply influenced the lives of the Old Order Mennonite community in this area, in both positive and negative ways. Therefore, I decided to conduct anthropological fieldwork in this area, motivated by the great enthusiasm of exploring the following guiding questions for my research: what factors have triggered the tourists’ interest in the Old Order Mennonite community in St. Jacobs; what impact does tourism development have on the Old Order Mennonite community in St. Jacobs and what is the community’s reaction towards tourism; and how do the Old Order Mennonites preserve their traditional beliefs and lifestyles in the context of intensified communication and engagement with non-community members?

With these guiding questions in my research design, I conducted a two-month period of fieldwork in the Old Order Mennonite community near the St. Jacobs area in the summer of 2013. I conducted participant observation by living with one Old Order Mennonite family on their farm and travelling with the family on their horse-and-buggy to participate in various community activities such as baptism ceremonies in Old Order Mennonite meetinghouses, community gatherings, family reunions, volunteer works with
non-governmental organizations and classes in an Old Order Mennonite parish school. During my stay with the Old Order Mennonite family, I fully immersed myself in the everyday life of the Old Order Mennonite family and spent most of my time helping the family with chores in their kitchen, garden, orchard, barn and field. As time went by, I began to develop an understanding of the Old Order Mennonite community in aspects such as religious practice, kinship relations, gender roles, economic subsistence, education system, health care issues and other aspects that play vital roles in their everyday life. I established regular contact with five Old Order Mennonite farms and I was able to conduct a series of formal and informal interviews with many Old Order Mennonites in the community. I conducted formal and informal interviews with 30 participants in total, 12 of whom are Old Order Mennonites; 12 are tourists; and 6 are modern Mennonites or local residents who work with tourism businesses. During my fieldwork, I also gathered data from the community newspapers and magazines that the family subscribe to, because I found that such detailed information could be very useful in terms of understanding the structure of the Old Order Mennonite community as well as its relationship with the rest of Canadian society.

Further, in order to collect data related to tourism development and its influence on the Old Order Mennonite community, I conducted semi-structured interviews with tourists, tourism guides, local business owners, as well as Old Order Mennonites who actively participate in tourism activities. I received permission from the business owners of the Mennonite Farm Tour to travel with different groups of tourists on the trolleys that take tourists to Old Order Mennonite farms that are open to tourists. I interacted with both local and international tourists in order to interpret their understandings about the Old Order Mennonites. I also observed and analyzed tourists’ communications with their guides and the local Old Order Mennonites. In addition to conducting scheduled interviews with local business owners, I was also invited to the St. Jacobs Mennonite church to talk about my research findings with the management board of the Visitor Centre of St. Jacobs. Therefore, during my fieldwork, I also had many opportunities to communicate with people who identify themselves as progressive or modern Mennonites but have family heritage connected to the Old Order Mennonite community in this area.
Even though the Old Order Mennonites communicate with their own community members in Pennsylvania Dutch, due to the curriculum requirement of Canadian government, participants of my research are all fluent in conversational English. Therefore, English is the language that I used in my fieldwork. Out of respect for the beliefs and traditions of the Old Order Mennonites, I did not take any photos of my Old Order Mennonite participants. Nor did I record their voice during my interviews. Instead, I took notes in point form for further reference. I used a voice recorder during interviews with other participants who were not Old Order Mennonites with their prior consent. To protect the identity of my participants, all names in this thesis are pseudonyms. As a female anthropologist working within the Old Order Mennonite community, I dressed in accordance with the Old Order Mennonite tradition, because I strongly hold the belief that mutual respect is the very first step towards establishing understanding and trust, which is key to anthropological research.

**Anthropological Authority**

I would also like to discuss my role as an anthropology student and my relationship with the participants of my research. As a Chinese student studying anthropology in Canada, I have constantly experienced what a Japanese anthropologist, Yoshinobu Ota describes as: “being a subject as well as an object of ethnographic investigation” (Ota 2002:61). Ota argues that returning to one’s “native” land might be called a tradition for many international anthropology students studying in North America and Europe in the 1970s and 1980s (2002:70). As part of this ‘tradition’, it is taken for granted, consciously or subconsciously, that as a Chinese anthropology student my research project should be something related to my “native” culture. On the one hand, my interest in the Old Order Mennonite community in Canada seems to be at odds with most of my Chinese peers who conduct fieldwork in China. On the other hand, returning to my “native” country to conduct fieldwork seems also at odds with many of my Canadian peers who depart for various parts of the world other than Canada. The tradition of trying to understand the beliefs and values of the “others” in anthropology has fascinated me: the Old Order Mennonites are the “others” to a Chinese anthropology student like me, while the Chinese are the “others” to the general Canadian society and the Old Order Mennonites that I lived with for a while. However, what I intend to pose here is a more significant
question that fundamentally matters to both anthropologists who study “other” cultures and “native” anthropologists who study their “home” culture: what guarantees the privileged position of an anthropologist? What makes the knowledge that anthropologists produce “authentic”? In other words, as Barth phrased it: do we obtain our cultural data from people who are more knowledgeable than even the best participant anthropologists about the ideas and practices of the local people (Barth 2002:29)? In my case, this issue is translated into a more contextualized question confronted by a realistic issue of research feasibility, that is, to what extent can a Chinese anthropology student have access to “authentic” Old Order Mennonite culture?

To answer this question, I want to extend my argument based on the concept of “ethnographic modernity” raised by James Clifford (1988). According to Clifford (1988), “ethnographic modernity” refers to the feeling of lost authenticity. Firstly, “ethnographic authenticity” based on “exotic” and “untouched” cultures does not exist in the interconnected world that we live in. The “exotic” is now nearby in immigrant neighbourhoods and multicultural cities. Secondly, “ethnographic modernity” refers to a pervasive phenomenon that everyone is in a state of being in culture while looking at culture. Therefore, ethnographic identity must always be mixed, relational, and inventive. As such, the interpretation of the “others” is always mediated by the anthropological “self”. The concept of “ethnographic modernity” guided my research both theoretically and methodologically. Even though the Old Order Mennonites consciously establish restrictions on modern technology and separate themselves from secular society, it is misleading to assume their identity as “souvenirs of the past”. Considering the widely accepted fact in anthropology that “ethnographic truths are inherently partial, committed and incomplete” (Clifford 1986:7), instead of seeing my own identity as a self-fashioned “cosmopolitan” anthropologist with automatic authority, I recognize my Chinese identity in my fieldwork and constantly remind myself of the influence that this anthropological subjectivity might bring to the “ethnographic truths” that I strive to record and produce. Hence, a better way to introduce my research is that this study is my account of the encounters between tourists and the Old Order Mennonite community in the area of St. Jacobs, thorough the research of a Chinese anthropology student.
In my research, anthropological “self” and “other” clash and converse in the encounters among Old Order Mennonites, tourists and me, the researcher with ambiguous boundaries of identity. In the rapport that I established with the participants of my research, the boundaries between “self” and “other” were constantly blurred. The power dynamics between anthropologists and “the objects” of anthropological study were arbitrary, sometimes reversed, as the Old Order Mennonite lady that I stayed with described in a letter she wrote to her community newspaper:

We sometimes have quite interesting 'collections' around here. Some evenings a cousin's daughter comes to ride or work with horses. My son and daughter-in-law sometimes have nieces or friends around and we have had six of the grandchildren here at times. At present we have Mingyuan Zhang here from China. She is studying at a university for two years and is studying about Mennonites also. So - as one of my daughter’s friends asked her, 'how do you like to be studied?' The truth of it is - we don't feel studied, since all we can do is just be 'us'. Sometimes we wonder, who is studying whom?

In addition to the dual role of being both the subject and the object of ethnographic investigation, my role in the field has also gone through a subtle transition from a tourist to a student “anthropologist”. According to Errington and Gewertz (1989), the most fundamental difference that distinguishes anthropologists and tourists is that anthropologists can document and explicate moments of resistance, capitulation, confusion and indifference in a socio-historical, cultural and systemic context (Errington and Gewertz 1989:46). In my understanding, tourism commodifies a certain landscape into a themed space, a certain ritual into a performance, a particular way of lifestyle into a short travel experience, and a long history of identity formation into photographic snapshots. For the Old Order Mennonites I talked with, their livelihood has been objectified as a tourism attraction. I realized that once I began to capture these critical understandings of the encounters between tourists and the local Old Order Mennonite community by participating and observing tourism for a rather longer period of time, my role switched from a tourist to an anthropologist. This is not meant to start a competition with tourists to determine who has gained the most “authentic” knowledge of the local people; however, the comparison here can lead towards a further discussion on the issue of anthropological authority.
Summary of Chapters

The goal of my research is to examine the reciprocal influences of the Old Order Mennonite community and tourism in St. Jacobs, Ontario. My main argument is that inaccurate cultural generalization about the Old Order Mennonite people triggers tourists’ curiosity, and therefore, the Old Order Mennonite community attracts tourists without actually performing, advertising or promoting themselves. Tourism in St. Jacobs serves a mediating function to introduce Old Order Mennonite lifestyle to outsiders to fulfill their curiosity, and it provides more business opportunities to the Old Order Mennonite community in this region. However, since tourism has brought too much attention to the community, Old Order Mennonite people are more willing to participate in tourism activities indirectly. While at the same time, tourism development also brings many risks to the livelihood of the Old Order Mennonite people in various aspects. I will briefly introduce the main points of each chapter in the following section.

In Chapter Two, *Understanding the Mennonites and tourism: Historical and theoretical background*, I will begin by introducing the history of the Old Order Mennonite people living in the area of St. Jacobs from the following three perspectives: 1) the migration history of the Mennonites as a group with Anabaptist Christian tradition since the Religious Reformation in Europe; 2) the history of theological contentions and church splits among groups within the Mennonites as an ethno-religious group; and 3) the history of Mennonites’ settlement in St. Jacobs and the Waterloo region. By providing a brief overview of the Mennonite history from these three perspectives, I will shed light on the historical heritage that shapes the identity of the Old Order Mennonite group who participated in my research. The historical background in Chapter Two will provide answers to the following questions: who are the Old Order Mennonites? How and why did they migrate from Europe to Canada? What are the similarities and differences between different Mennonite groups within the same Anabaptist tradition scattered around the world? What is unique about the Old Order Mennonite community in St. Jacobs? Afterwards, I will continue Chapter Two by providing a brief historical section on the development of tourism in St. Jacobs. Finally, I will include a literature review about theoretical issues on the topic of anthropology and tourism, with highlights on the
following three aspects that guide my research: 1) tourism and authenticity; 2) tourism and capitalism; and 3) tourism and power.

In Chapter Three, “We are just people!”: Towards a fluid cultural identity of the Old Order Mennonite people, I aim to challenge the essentialized identity of the Old Order Mennonite people as an ultra-conservative group that rejects all kinds of changes. I argue that cultural generalization about the Old Order Mennonite people is a powerful tool for constructing the “other” by neglecting the fluid nature of the Old Order Mennonite identity and cultural complexity. I will provide examples to support my argument from the following aspects: 1) contentions on modern technology; 2) gender relations; 3) perceptions on dating, marriage and sexuality; 4) forms of community support; and 5) challenges to the Old Order Mennonite community.

In Chapter Four, “Are we zoo animals?”: The politics of tourism encounters and their influences on the Old Order Mennonite community, I argue that misunderstandings about the Old Order Mennonite people caused by cultural generalizations are the most powerful trigger of tourists’ curiosity, and that Old Order Mennonite lifestyle and culture has been over-represented or misrepresented by different forms of media. Then I will examine the role of different stakeholders in tourism in St. Jacobs by providing an account of how tourism businesses, tourists and Old Order Mennonites participate in tourism activities differently. To summarize, I argue that tourism in St. Jacobs started as a response to curious outsiders aimed at introducing Old Order Mennonite lifestyle in a non-intrusive way. Tourism businesses have been very careful in managing tourism activities in order to avoid exploiting the Old Order Mennonite identity. However, tourism has become so successful that it has brought far more attention to the Old Order Mennonite community than they appreciate. At the same time, tourism also provides new economic opportunities for the Old Order Mennonite community, which will further influence the livelihood of the Old Order Mennonite people.

In Chapter Five, “For us, the town collapsed!”: Landscape changes in St. Jacobs, I argue that St. Jacobs has been transformed from a rural farming service centre to a tourism town. I analyze the different perspectives and understandings about the landscape
changes in St. Jacobs from the standpoints of different stakeholders. For the Old Order Mennonites, the thriving of tourism cannot restore the past functions of the town as a farming service centre. Then I will continue exploring the influences of landscape changes on the livelihood of the Old Order Mennonite people from two aspects: 1) the influences of highway construction on horse-and-buggy transportation; and 2) the influences of city expansion on the Old Order Mennonite community.

In Chapter Six, “Muss Gut!”: Where do we go now?, I will briefly summarize the main points of my thesis and discuss the implications of my research to future anthropological research on tourism and to researchers who are also fascinated by the Old Order Mennonite people.
CHAPTER TWO
Understanding the Mennonites and Tourism: Historical and Theoretical Background

“You are part of history. You can relate past events in your life. The stories your parents tell go back even farther, and grandparents can give a glimpse of life long before you were born. All these happenings and stories, your own personal history, helped to make you the person you are. ‘Pleasant Places’ is the story of pioneers who carved homes from the wilderness to form the communities where we now live in unequalled freedom. The story tells of their determination to keep on even when they faced tremendous difficulties. It tells of changes over the years: the bush was cleared away, the Industrial Revolution brought machines and new way of doing things.” – An Introduction to Students, “Pleasant Places”, grade seven and eight history textbook for Waterloo-Wellington-Perth Parochial Schools, 1993

Introduction

In this chapter, I will first trace the migration history of the Mennonites in order to shed light on the position of Canadian Old Order Mennonite communities in the larger picture of the genealogy of multifarious Mennonite groups scattered in different countries in Europe, North America and South America. I will also introduce the similarities and differences of the Old Order Mennonites compared with other Christian groups that share the same Anabaptist tradition in order to understand the varieties of different Canadian Mennonite groups. By providing a brief account of the history of the Mennonites and the distinction of the Old Order Mennonite group, I aim to answer an important question that is fundamental to my research – who are the Old Order Mennonites? Then I will present a brief history of tourism development in St. Jacobs and finally I will discuss the theoretical issues that are related to tourism by reviewing the relevant anthropological work on tourism. I will highlight the relationships between tourism and the concept of authenticity, capitalism and power because they are the guiding theoretical issues of my research. By discussing the relevant literature about tourism, I intend to answer the question – why does tourism matter?
A Scattered People: Mennonite Diaspora in Contemporary World

The history of the Mennonites is one of constant resistance and migration. The Mennonites have their ideological origins in the pacifist branch of the Anabaptist movement in the Low Countries of early sixteenth century Europe (Sawatzky 1971:1). They are an ethno-religious group with distinctive religious beliefs including voluntary adult baptism, non-participation in military service, mutual aid as an expression of Christian love, and the exercise of discipline towards members within their communities as a way of maintaining a pure church (Epp 2003:317). “Mennonite” as a religious group is named after Menno Simons, a priest of the Protestant Reformation who renounced his Catholic faith and was baptized as an Anabaptist elder (Gingerich and Lightman 2006). Since the first wave of migration that took place in the mid-sixteenth century from the Netherlands to Prussia, the Mennonites have continued searching for possibilities to establish new settlements. After almost five centuries of unceasing migration, the Mennonite diaspora extends to many parts of the world, including countries such as the United States, Canada, Mexico, Paraguay, Argentina, Bolivia and Belize, which has left “a scattered people” (Sneath 2004:205).

The foremost reason for initial Mennonite migration is to escape religious persecution. The Anabaptist forefathers were mercilessly persecuted because of their beliefs in baptism upon confession of faith, complete separation of church and state, refusal to bear arms, and renunciation of participation in secular affairs (Sawatzky 1971:1). Gingerich (1972:23) argues that even after the severity of persecution had abated in the seventeenth century, they were still despised and maligned for their religious beliefs well into the eighteenth century.

The first major migration pattern of the Mennonites is from Europe through Pennsylvania to Ontario. In contemporary North America, most of the Mennonite groups that followed this migration pattern are scattered in the states of Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, in the United States, as well as the province of Ontario in Canada. Before the first decade of the eighteenth century, in pursuit of religious freedom, political stability and fertile soil, a

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2 Other Christian groups with the same Anabaptist tradition are the Amish and the Hutterites.
small group of Mennonites with Swiss tradition migrated to North America and settled in today’s Lancaster County in Pennsylvania (Draper 2010). Influenced by a Militia Act in Upper Canada which could exempt the Mennonites from military duty, some of these Pennsylvania German immigrants migrated to present day Ontario during the first decade of the nineteenth century (Draper 2010, Martin 2003). The Old Order Mennonite community around the area of St. Jacobs that I am focusing on in this research mainly originated from the Pennsylvania German immigrants. They communicate with their own community members by a regional dialect of German language called “Pennsylvania Dutch”.

The Pennsylvania German immigrants were among the first settlers in the Waterloo-Kitchener area. According to Hohol (1984), the piece of land which became St. Jacobs was part of a block of land sold by Chief Joseph Brant of the Six Nations Indians to William Wallace after the American Revolution. The Mennonites who had settled in Pennsylvania took this opportunity to migrate to the Waterloo area, since at the same period of time the British government offered preferential conditions to the Mennonites to settle in Upper Canada (Hohol 1984:47-48). In 1819, Simon Cress, a Mennonite from Pennsylvania, became the first settler in St. Jacobs. In 1850, Jacob Snider built a dam, sawmill, flourmill and a woollen mill, and therefore the hamlet was known as “Jacob’s village,” or Jakobstettel in Pennsylvania Dutch language, and later as “St. Jacobs” (Waterloo-Wellington-Perth Parochial Schools 1993:25). Different from other European immigrants to North America, the Mennonite pioneers who first settled in Upper Canada quickly became prosperous since they had a number of advantages. They loved agriculture and their ancestors had farming experiences in Europe and Pennsylvania. Also, they migrated to the Waterloo area with ready cash, good livestock, ample knowledge about building farms and mills, as well as the willingness to endure hardships (Waterloo-Wellington-Perth Parochial Schools 1993:11).

The second migration path of the Mennonites includes a first migration to Russia, and then to provinces in Western Canada such as Manitoba and Saskatchewan, followed by a further migration to Latin American countries. This group of Mennonites use the
language of Low German and are often referred as the Old Colony Mennonites³. In Europe, the Prussian rule of conscription after 1772 towards the Mennonites became the motive for their migration to the east with an offer from Russia that guaranteed religious freedom, land and exemption from taxes as well as military service (Sawatzky 1971:4; Canas Bottos 2008:218). However, state policy aimed at assimilating the Mennonites as Russian citizens in the nation-state building process motivated the Russian Mennonites to investigate new settlement possibilities in North America. In 1873, impelled by an urgent desire to populate the territories, the Canadian government offered the Mennonites privileges and invited them to settle in the prairies (Canas Bottos 2008:219). As a result, 7,000 Mennonites migrated to Manitoba and later to Saskatchewan between 1873 and 1880 (Sawatzky 1971; Canas Bottos 2008:219). During the First World War, as a German-speaking minority in Canada, the Mennonites in both Western and Eastern Canadian provinces struggled to maintain their independent education systems.

According to Fair (2006), when the British Empire declared war against Germany in the summer of 1914, it became difficult for many Canadians to see the Pennsylvania Germans in Ontario as loyalists, especially because that they refused to take up arms. The Mennonites in Manitoba and Saskatchewan were more stubborn in resisting an enforced public school system by the Canadian government aiming at making them “one hundred percent Canadians” (Epp 1982:117). As a result, despite the material prosperity in their Canadian colonies, the Mennonites believed that Mexico would be the new promised land that could provide full educational and cultural autonomy (Epp 1982). However, the unavailability of land in Mexico and the fear of the state’s military and educational demands prompted further migratory movement to other Latin American countries (Canas Bottos 2008; Sneath 2004).

The migration of the Mennonites has not ceased. According to a recent Reuters report (Graham 2012), the descendants of Russian Mennonites in Mexico have been considering return migration back to their ancestors’ land in Eastern Europe because of the unavailability of farmlands, population growth, and environmental changes in Mexico.

³ Therefore, these Mennonites is also referred as the “Low German Mennonites”. They consist of several groups: the Old Colony Mennonites, the Sommerfelder, the Bergthaler, and the Kleine Gemeinde (Sneath 2004:206).
For example, Graham (2012) mentions that the drought in 2011 exacerbated the problem of land shortage. Besides seeing Eastern Europe as the new promised land, many Mexican Mennonites have attempted to migrate to Ontario, Canada. Gingrich and Preibisch (2010) argue that hundreds of Old Colony Mennonite families from Latin America have engaged in independent return migrations to Ontario in search of better environment to sustain their traditional lifestyle based on agriculture.

Historically, the Mennonites’ reputation as “good farmers” has made them popular agents for nation-states to occupy territory and desirable citizens to make contributions to local agriculture. Due to different social and historical reasons, countries that invited the Mennonites to establish communities all attempted to incorporate them into nation-state building processes by imposing education systems and the ideology of nationalism. However, the Mennonites’ desire for separation from the secular world has marked the boundaries of their distinct identity in every host country. Common traditions of the scattered Mennonite communities have created a diasporic people worldwide. Even though there has been minimal contact between the Old Order Mennonites and the Old Colony Mennonites during the last three hundred years, there are still many similarities between the two groups due to common religious teachings and the desire to preserve traditional customs (Draper 2010).

To summarize thus far, the Old Order Mennonites living in the area of St. Jacobs, Ontario share a common Anabaptist tradition with other Mennonite groups on a wide geographic scale. Meanwhile, their identity has also been shaped by their unique migration pattern and language, which emphasizes a closer connection with Mennonite groups in the United States. The identity of Old Order Mennonites in Canada has always been under the influence of a continuous negotiation and compromise between Canadian state policies and the Old Order Mennonites’ strong desire to maintain religious integrity and separation from the secular world. In contemporary Canadian society, according to Gingrich and Lightman (2006:187), despite the Old Order Mennonites’ “steadfast resistance to change and conformity”, they were recognized as the farming pioneers of the region, and they are visible and valued contributors to the local economy.
Interpretations of Humility: Narrating the Old Order Mennonite Identity in Canada

The distinct identity of the Old Order Mennonites in St. Jacobs is not only shaped by their Anabaptist tradition, migration history and language, but it is also distinct in relation to other religious groups with the same Anabaptist roots. Because of the co-existence of multifarious Mennonite groups based on different rules that their churches have set, it is of great importance to position the Old Order Mennonite community on the “Mennonite spectrum with many shades” (Fretz 1967:11), in order to grasp a comprehensive understanding of the Old Order Mennonite identity in Canada. One question that has been puzzling “outsiders” is why there are so many varieties within the same religious group of the Mennonites. Through my fieldwork, I realized that the Old Order Mennonite identity is constantly articulated by comparisons with other parallel religious groups living in the same area, such as the Old Order Amish, the David Martin Mennonites, the Markham Mennonites as well as the “modern” Mennonites. The nuanced differences among these groups from their appearance might hardly be discernible to “outsiders”; however, in most cases, group boundaries tend to indicate significant lifestyle distinctions, which make leaving one’s original church to join another group a substantial change in the lives of those who decide to leave their own communities. Therefore, in this section, I will briefly introduce these similar religious groups and their relationships with their Old Order Mennonite neighbours.

Due to the relatively higher frequency of media coverage focused on the Old Order Amish people, a great number of “outsiders” seem to have some basic knowledge about them, but are still confused about the similarities and differences between the Old Order Amish and the Old Order Mennonites. Movies such as “Witness” and “Amish Grace”, as well as television series such as “Breaking Amish” and “Amish Mafia” have constantly put the Old Order Amish on the screen, even though many scholars criticize these depictions as unrealistic and offensive portrayals of the Amish people (Shank 2012). The Amish and the Mennonites are members of the same religious family and the Amish represent an extremely conservative wing of Swiss Mennonites who split from the main branch in 1693 (Fretz 1967:15). The Old Order Amish people also travel by horse-and-
buggy, however, they have adopted a much simpler lifestyle even compared to the Old Order Mennonites. According to Fretz (1967), Amish people worship in community members’ homes, while Old Order Mennonites use meetinghouses; Amish men wear beards after marriage, while the Old Order Mennonite men do not; and Amish women wear dresses with pastel shades only, whereas Old Order Mennonite women may wear print dresses of dark colours (Fretz 1967:15). Also, the Old Order Amish do not use power from the public electric grid. In general, the Old Order Amish are considered the most conservative on the spectrum of all the religious groups with the same Anabaptist roots.

The co-existence of different Mennonite groups in Ontario today is the result of several significant church realignments since the 1880s due to different groups’ interpretations of humility and the corresponding rules they have set to maintain such a plain lifestyle. The three sizable conservative Mennonite groups around St. Jacobs are the Old Order Mennonites, the David Martin Mennonites and the Markham Mennonites. Secular traits such as the dress code, means of transportation, home décor, acceptance of modern technologies and level of social participation are generally used to identify members from different groups. However, all the secular traits are the results of theological changes through time. The fundamental and contested issue in each church division has always centred on what kind of lifestyle can represent true simplicity and humility as “an attitude of submission both to God and to the Christian community” (Draper 2010:104).

According to Draper (2010), by the 1880s, there was serious tension in the Mennonite community in the Waterloo region between the “revivalist Mennonites”, who advocated individualism through Sunday Schools and English preaching, and the “traditionalist Mennonites” who insisted on the need for stringent church rules to deny “worldly standards”, as well as to guarantee humility, simple living and separation from the world at the community level. In 1889, the progressive group and the conservative group officially separated from each other. The conservative group and its followers continued the traditional Mennonite practices and became known as the Old Order Mennonites, while the families who chose not to affiliate with the conservative group became the predecessors of the “modern” Mennonites. Whereas the “modern” Mennonites in
contemporary Canada cannot be distinguished from the rest of society from their appearance or means of transportation, the Old Order Mennonites believe that up-to-date fashion is classified as pride that contradicts the virtues of humility. Hence, the worship and community life of the Old Order Mennonites has not changed significantly since the split (Draper 2010:103-123). The Old Order Mennonites in present time still travel by black horse-and-buggy. Old Order Mennonite women put their hair up in a bun and cover it with white coverings both in and outside their home, and wear black bonnets if they need to dress up to go into town to visit friends or to go to church. The long dresses and aprons that cover a woman’s body from clavicles to ankles are homemade from mostly dark coloured fabrics with printed flowers. Pants are forbidden for women because they are considered to symbolize masculinity and therefore are only appropriate for men. Old Order Mennonite men sometimes wear shirts and suits purchased from town, but they always wear straw hats when working in the field, and broad brimmed black hats on Sundays. Despite the fact that most of the Old Order Mennonite families have connected to the public grid and started using telephones in their daily life, they are not allowed to possess things such as jewellery, bicycles, motorcycles, automobiles, wall-to-wall carpets, ceiling fans, cabbed tractors, microwaves, dishwashers, dryers, computers, televisions and cell phones. Old Order Mennonite children go to their own parochial school for eight years where they learn English, German, mathematics, singing and painting. While the Old Order Mennonite adults pay taxes, they do not accept any social insurance or welfare offered by the Canadian government. Photos are generally forbidden and in the case of border crossings, they have travel documents issued by the government that can exempt photo identification.

The David Martin Mennonites dissociated from the Old Order Mennonites in 1917 due to divergent ideas about how strict to practise excommunication and whether or not to allow new technology (Draper 2010). Although the David Martin Mennonites send their children to public schools, their community is more isolated and exclusive than the Old Order Mennonites (Draper 2010:225). Unlike the Old Order Mennonites who can still maintain personal contact with family members who choose to leave the community, the David Martin Mennonites practise strict shunning and people who leave may experience complete social ostracism by the entire community (Draper 2010:225-226). During my
fieldwork, my Old Order Mennonite host family told me that the David Martin Mennonites drive a different style of buggy with larger windows and wheels made only from steel. They are reluctant to associate with “outsiders” and they do not even actively socialize with the Old Order Mennonites. Members of the David Martin Mennonite community are allowed to use laptops and cell phones only for business purposes, however, their homes are not connected to the public grid. They use generators to produce electricity for their home. Instead of using tractors, as the Old Order Mennonites do, the David Martin Mennonites use heavy horses for farming. Due to the ultra-conservative rules of the David Martin Mennonites, there is scarce information about their community in the Waterloo region (Draper 2010).

Compared to the David Martin Mennonites and the Old Order Mennonites, the Markham Mennonites, also known as “the black-car Mennonites”, are more moderate in church rules by allowing cars, telephones, health insurance plans and more choices in home décor. The split occurred in 1930 when Old Order Mennonite community members in the Waterloo region were concerned that the Old Order community in Markham was too lenient in church rules (Draper 2010:191). However, the cars that the Markham Mennonites can drive are only black in color, with no radio, tape decks, CD or DVD players. While members of the Markham Mennonite community have access to computers and the Internet, they are encouraged to use them only for business purposes. They have maintained congenial relationships with their Old Order Mennonite neighbours by sharing meetinghouses and parochial school facilities. Old Order Mennonites will not hesitate to request a car ride from their Markham Mennonite friends when it is necessary.

To conclude, the differences among the various Mennonite groups discussed above mainly depend on where the churches draw the line of what is acceptable as good Christians, as one tourist guide, Brendon, in St. Jacobs explains:

You might ask: do all these rules make sense? The Mennonites would say there is a difference between ‘want’ and ‘necessity’. A ‘want’ is something you are dreaming of having, and ‘necessity’ is something you need to make a living. The reason there are so many groups or orders of Mennonites is that each group or
order has a different idea of what is a ‘want’ and what is a ‘necessity’ (Interview with Brendon, 2013-09-19).

At the same time, even the most liberal Mennonites who have adopted a modern lifestyle similar to city people still recognize their Mennonite tradition based on their church affiliation and family heritage. No matter which group they belong to, liberal or conservative, they still identify themselves as Mennonites due to the following similarities explained to me by another tourist guide, Anthony, who identified himself as a “modern” Mennonite:

What all Mennonite groups have in common is that we all believe in adult baptism instead of infant baptism; we all rely on the authority of the Scriptures; we all emphasize community, a peaceful approach to life, and simplicity of worship (Interview with Anthony, 2013-09-26).

From a Farming Service Centre to a Tourism Town

Before it was a tourist town, St. Jacobs functioned as a self-sufficient farming service centre. By the 1880s, St. Jacobs had attained an impressive peak of population and economic functions and it offered to farmers a complete selection of goods and services. The town had a blacksmith shop, a harness shop, a cider mill, a flourmill, a felt factory, a tannery, a glue factory, a furniture factory, a cloth factory, a sawmill, a distillery and a woollen mill by 1857 (Hohol 1984:56). Figure 2 shows a cobbler working in St. Jacobs in 1890. Figure 3 shows the street view of St. Jacobs in 1890.
From the 1880s to the end of 1960s, population and businesses in St. Jacobs fluctuated with a steady increase after the 1940s, since St. Jacobs functioned as a major shopping
centre with goods and services for its loyal Mennonite customers (Dahms 1991:2-3). However, by the mid-1960s, St. Jacobs was beginning to decline because of the competition from other larger service centres in the surrounding area, such as the town of Elmira and the city of Kitchener-Waterloo. By the mid-1970s, St. Jacobs resembled a dying village, as the last grocery store and mill closed. In 1975, a Mennonite entrepreneur, Milo Shantz, opened a restaurant named Stone Crock that specialized in traditional family style Pennsylvania German cuisine. The Stone Crock was described by the local newspaper as “walking into the restaurant is like stepping back in time” (Hohol 1984:70). The restaurant gained great popularity in the region, and this became the turning point of the declining town of St. Jacobs by attracting new tourism-oriented businesses (Dahms 1991:4-5). From this point on, tourism enterprises gradually expanded and generated tourist traffic, which resulted in a revitalization of the village. The increase in tourists stimulated the local economy; however, it also brought the local Old Order Mennonite community more attention than they had ever expected. With four decades of steady development, St. Jacobs is now seen as a thriving and promising tourism town, which has prompted both voluntary and involuntary involvement in tourism activities of the surrounding Old Order Mennonite community.

Currently, tourism guidebooks such as Lonely Planet Canada introduce St. Jacobs as the following:

For some exposure to Mennonite ways, drive 6km north of Waterloo along King St. N to the historic river village of St. Jacobs – don’t be surprised if you pass a horse-and-buggy along the way. The town has become an artsy-craftsy tourist trap, selling its soul down the river, but the original stone buildings and fantastic market retain a steadfast charm (Zimmerman et al. 2011:122).

Some features of St. Jacobs are also briefly described in the introduction of the village in an online competition of “Great Places in Canada”:

Canada’s largest year round Farmers’ Market – local farmers bring their fresh fruits and vegetable, baked goods, preserves, and maple syrup. It is home for the Old Order Mennonites – they still follow traditional ways as far as their dress code goes and many of them still live on farms without electricity. Touring the countryside gives you a feeling of old western days with their horse-and-buggies.

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in full form. It is a great family place to take a break from the big city – there are horse drawn carriage rides touring the areas and a petting zoo for the kids.

St. Jacobs has been described and advertised as the idyllic countryside that is easy to access by driving from nearby cities. Despite all the recreational opportunities that St. Jacobs can provide, “home to Old Order Mennonites” has always been on its name card. People can find tourists from all over the world with a strong inquisitive desire to pick up basic knowledge about the Old Order Mennonite culture visiting here. For tourists who seek an authentic version of a “nostalgic past”, their experience in St. Jacobs, with its peaceful scenes of natural simplicity and its rural lifestyle with old-fashioned horses-and-buggies driven on the country roads, will certainly not disappoint them. However, tourists may also be amazed to discover many highly commercialized components in and around the village that seem to contradict the “nostalgic past”. Outlets malls and boutiques represent the latest fashion trends and hotels and inns provide a high level of accommodation and hospitality.

Among all the tourism attractions that focus on the Old Order Mennonite culture, a “must visit” is the Visitor Centre of St. Jacobs - the Mennonite Story. The visitor centre office introduces Mennonite history and culture with brochures, books, art and movies. It provides guided bus tours to the nearby countryside and Old Order Mennonite farms. Occasionally, it also accepts reservations from customers to organize a meal together with some Old Order Mennonite families, in order to fulfill the tourists’ cravings for “authentic Mennonite food”. The village of St. Jacobs also features shops with Mennonite quilts, souvenirs and baked goods, where the cultural identity of the Old Order Mennonites is displayed, sometimes labeled with price tags.

As the result of tourism development, many Old Order Mennonite families no longer make a living solely from agriculture. They participate directly or indirectly in the local tourism economy. The most popular attraction in St. Jacobs is the Farmers’ Market located only three kilometers outside the village (Figure 4). Tourism brochures introduce it as Canada’s largest year around farmers’ market with hundreds of food venders, including those who bring local home grown produce and preserves from their Old Order Mennonite farms nearby. It is easy for tourists to identify Old Order Mennonite venders
on the market square by their dress and the products they sell. Usually, people will find maple syrup products, summer sausage and fresh vegetables at their booths. Another activity that interests tourists is the Mennonite Farm Tour (Figure 5). The two horse-driven trolleys set off from the farmers’ market square and take tourists to one of the nearest Old Order Mennonite farms. The guides lead a tour around the farm and provide detailed elaboration on the procedures of maple syrup production, as well as the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle. The whole tour takes approximately one hour and a half.

Figure 4 St. Jacobs Farmers' Market, Local Farmer. Photo by Cliff Davidson
However, it is worth mentioning that none of these tourism activities are initiated or operated by the Old Order Mennonites. The non-Old Order Mennonite locals mediate all of these tourism activities related to Old Order Mennonite culture in St. Jacobs. Without a doubt, the reviving of St. Jacob’s economy through tourism symbolizes the success of entrepreneurial spirit and the acute business sense of the entrepreneurs. It is described as a huge economic success because of its historical heritage, amenity, entrepreneurial activity and easy accessibility (Dahms 1991). As we can see from the tourism map of St. Jacobs below (Figure 6), the village is now prosperous with attractions such as quilt shops, gift shops, antique shops, boutiques, outlets malls, restaurants and hotels.
Theorizing Tourism in Anthropology

Tourism has become one of the world’s largest industries since World War II. According to the report of the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO), international tourism receipts reached a record of US$1159 billion in 2013 (UNWTO 2014:5). Anthropologists started to conduct systematic study of tourism activities in the 1970s. Tourism is considered to be a “modern” concept that is often associated with “leisure”, “recreation” and “pleasure”. It is also a uniquely modern human activity because it evokes direct human encounters. As Chambers argues: “no other industry has anywhere near the potential to bring consumers and producers and their ‘products’ into such close contact” (2010:8). In this section, I will review theoretical issues emerging from a range of anthropological studies of tourism in the following three aspects: 1) tourism and authenticity; 2) tourism and capitalism; and 3) tourism and power.

Figure 6 Tourism Map of St Jacobs.
(http://www.stjacobs.com/sites/default/files/Village_Map_2013_0.pdf)
**Tourism and Authenticity**

“Authenticity” is the term that has dominated much critical writing about tourism (Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett 1994:449). As one of the most influential scholars in the anthropology of tourism, Dean MacCannell (1976) proposes his theory of “staged authenticity” in his book *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*. MacCannell developed this theory from Goffman’s analysis of a structural division of social establishments that he terms “front” and “back regions”, in which the “front” refers to the meeting place of hosts and guests, while the “back” means the place where people retire between performances to relax and to prepare (1976:92). MacCannell argues that touristic consciousness is primarily motivated by its desire for authentic experiences, perceptions and insights, but that in most tourist settings, instead of accessing the “back region”, tourists can only enter a social space called a “staged back region” – a touristic front region set up to resemble the “authentic back”, He argues further that tourists are reproached for being satisfied with superficial experiences of other people and other places (1976:10). According to Olsen (2002), MacCannell asserted that “authenticity” is ascribed as the essential feature of other people, times and places that are contrary to the modern Western society, and that tourism destroys “authenticity” by its presence (2002:161).

Critiques of MacCannell mainly focus on the two sets of dichotomies that he created between the tourist role and the experience of authenticity, as well as between the “genuine” and the “spurious”. The concept of “authenticity” is problematic because “it is associated with the past, the ‘primitive’ other, and in opposition to modernity” (Cole 2008:24). Cohen (1988) argues that “authenticity” is an eminently modern value because it is widely believed that modern society is inauthentic. Cohen (1988:374) asks an important question in his study of authenticity, that is, to whom does the concept of “authenticity” belong, or in other words, do the local people observed by the tourist even possess such a concept? What does authenticity mean to the local people? Cohen argues that the idea of authenticity is a socially constructed concept that is not given but negotiated. Olsen also argues that it is a feature attributed to objects by actors in social processes who possess authority and power (2002:163). As such, I argue that the
dichotomy between the “authentic” and the “inauthentic” within the identity of local societies sought by tourists is problematically understood as “pre-modern” and “static”.

Due to the prevailing existence of such dichotomous points of view, many tourist destinations are built on a set of binaries. It seems that the more the touristic space contradicts modernity, the more fascinating it is to tourists. One example is the Mayers Ranch in Kenya that provides an opportunity for tourists to experience Maasai culture. According to Bruner and Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1994), tourism brochures emphasize the Maasai people as tenaciously clinging to their traditional way of life and as very reluctant to adapt to modern ways. The Maasai people are constantly referred to as “unchanged” “museum pieces” “obstinately conservative” and “anachronistic in modern society” (1994:454). Similar attributes can be found in the literature and tourism advertisements about the Old Order Mennonite people. They are characterized as “souvenirs of the past” “identity in paradox against modernity”, and travelling in an Old Order Mennonite town is depicted as being “caught in a time warp”. Based on my findings from my fieldwork, I suggest that tourists in St. Jacobs imagine the Old Order Mennonites as the nostalgic others, and tend to easily ignore the changes that occur within the Old Order Mennonite community.

Tourism and Capitalism

Many scholars also explore the relationship between tourism and capitalism in their work. Tourism is considered to be a “modern” concept primarily because the development and success of the tourism industry fulfilled the dictates of the long-established capitalist system. According to Max Weber (1958), “the spirit of capitalism” is composed of traditional avarice and profit-making activities; however, it only becomes modern when the “rational” utilization of capital and the organization of labor become dominant forces in the determination of economic activity.

The phenomenon of tourism has also been adapted by architects of economic development. Due to tourism’s huge market potential, it is seen as the passport to economic development by creating job opportunities and stimulating relevant services such as transportation, accommodation, shopping, advertisement, and insurance. Further,
the emerging of tourism in history was closely associated with the invention of leisure
time. Industry, technology and the division of labour have created more leisure time for
people; however, as Goldman and Wilson (1977) argue, leisure as “the gift of industry”,
presented itself as a social problem to industrialists, and therefore leisure time was
regulated in the interests of higher productivity and moral uplift (1977:160). The conflict
between the desire for leisure and the requirements of industry symbolize another feature
of the capitalist system. For “Westerners who value individualism, self-reliance and the
work ethic” (Graburn 1977:23), tourism is practised with the purpose of individual
fulfilment and embellishment. It is a time for self-fulfillment and regeneration. Tourists
are engaged in such “human exploratory behaviour” (Graburn 1977:24) as a “modern
secular ritual”, which is seen as equivalent to a rite of passage (Errington and Gewertz
1989:38) since tourism can be a meaningful developmental phase in the lives of many
tourists (Noy and Cohen 2005:5).

Operating within the framework of the modern capitalism system, the tourism industry
determines the value of a certain place according to how well it can cater to tourists’
quests and how much profit it can generate. As James Scott (1995) writes: “the term
‘nature’ is replaced by the term ‘natural resources’ in which the focus is on those aspects
of nature that can be appropriate for human use” (1995:192); places that used to be
relatively unknown to tourists are now becoming “tourism resources”. For example,
according to James Ferguson (2006), the tourism development approach in Africa was
based on community participation in the hope that the local communities would be able
to benefit from the existence of preserved “resources”. However, it failed to change the
situation of coercive partitioning of space because of the desire to secure selected rural
areas as “resources” for internationally valued eco-tourism (2006:43). Similar examples
can be found in Barbara Bender’s argument about tourism in Stonehenge. She believes
that tourism development in the name of preservation caused great controversy and
involved an increase in disputes over land use at Stonehenge (Bender 1998:117). Also,
Chambers (2010) argues that the Amish in Pennsylvania’s Lancaster County successfully
resisted the alienation of their farmlands and erosion of their distinct social conventions,
precisely because they were so valuable to the region’s tourism economy. Consequently,
they became worth more as Amish tourist attractions than their lands might be worth if
put to other uses (2010:105). These examples show that places which attract tourists can be evaluated on the tourism market and commercialized to generate economic income.

In tourism, “nature,” “culture,” “ethnicity,” “arts and performance,” as well as “space and places” are all packaged together and commercialized as products to sell to tourists. One aspect in the tourism economy that has aroused the interests of many scholars is the material culture of tourism and its relationship with the commercialization of cultural identity. Crafts and souvenirs produced for the tourist trade are modified to symbolize ethnic identity (Cole 2008:25). For tourists, the supply of local souvenirs is central to their shopping satisfaction (Cave et al., 2013:6) because “souvenirs are material proof of a tourist’s intimate contact with the ‘other’” (Cole 2008:25). Chambers suggests that tourism can alter the cultural functions of a material object, and that tourist interest in purchasing such objects might shift the local value from its domestic context to a market context (2010:112). The most popular souvenirs that function as “identity markers” of the Old Order Mennonites in St. Jacobs are quilts, furniture and farm-produced food such as maple syrup, jam and summer sausage. Besides those Old Order Mennonites who directly participate in tourism activities, local businesses mediating the production and sales of such souvenirs connect Old Order Mennonite families indirectly with the tourism economy in St. Jacobs and thus tourism further influences their livelihood and the division of labor along gender lines.

**Tourism and Power**

Scholars have also directed their focus on the comprehensive impacts that tourism engenders in local communities. Important questions that need to be asked about the overall effects of tourism include: “what are the social and cultural influences of tourism on the local people?” and “how is power distributed within the system of tourism among different stakeholders including tourists, local people, guides, business owners, media representations, government authorities?”

Nash (1977) recognizes the power imbalance in tourism systems. He argues that tourism is a form of imperialism and that local people in the touristic areas are usually less productive and powerful (Nash 1977:42). He suggests that investigations of the
consequences of tourism in tourist areas ought to begin with an analysis of the individual and collective adaptations made by a host people in order to provide service for tourists’ leisure needs (Nash 1977:43). In other words, the adaptive changes of a host community are subject to the needs of the more powerful tourist groups. For example, the indigenous people of Embera in Panama earn a living from tourism and they are learning very fast how to satisfy the demand of tourists. Canoes that were originally used for transporting plants and food are now used to transport loads of tourists to the indigenous community (Theodossopoulos 2010:123). Similarly, Reiter (1977) acknowledges the “politics of tourism” by saying that populations living in the areas of tourist development usually stand in an asymmetrical relation to the outside forces that are responsible for such development, and that the imbalance of power often influences the reallocation of local resources (Reiter 1977:139). For instance, Strang (2010) points out that in Australia, tourists as recreational water users express and affirm their identity and status through their ability to make luxurious, non-commercial use of the environment, which has caused tensions between tourists and local farmers who have a clear vision of resource ownership and control. Strang argues that the recreational use of the water resources continues to gain ascendance, and that rural agricultural communities and recreational water users will find their opposing aims increasingly difficult to reconcile (2010:43).

While admitting the existence of power imbalances, some scholars discovered that tourism development offers an opportunity for empowerment to host communities because it helps them to maintain their own cultural autonomy. For example, Cole’s research conducted in tourist areas in Indonesia leads to the following conclusion: “tourism has become a vehicle through which localness is asserted, traditions are attested and communities are affirmed” (Cole 2008:23). This conclusion also applies to my own research with the Old Order Mennonite community, since tourism in St. Jacobs has played a significant role in protecting Old Order Mennonite tradition and lifestyle. On the one hand, the Old Order Mennonites in St. Jacobs are recognized as great contributors to the local economy. On the other, tourism in St. Jacobs was initiated as a means of introducing Old Order Mennonite lifestyle to curious outsiders with a purpose of protecting the Old Order Mennonite community.
Another aspect reflecting the issue of power imbalance is the politics of representations of the touristic area. Tourism by no means only represents the binary relationship between the “host” as the “self” and the “guest” as the “other”. The mediating agencies in between may include photography, media, advertisements, guide books, all of which contribute to the establishment of power relations between the “self” and the “other”. The over-representation or misrepresentation of the host community of a touristic area may create falsified images in tourists’ expectations. For example, Stasch (2011) asserts that tree house dwellings in Papua New Guinea have been over-represented by photography in global visual culture. He discovered that photographers were more willing to take snapshots of those dwellings high up in the trees, while far more local dwellings were built on the ground level and were seldom caught in people’s cameras. He argues that people’s imaging of these tall tree houses is “out of proportion with their actual presence on the landscape” (Stasch 2011:84), and that with the photos circulating by global media, an entire fictional culture living in the trees has been created. In my research, I discovered that the Old Order Mennonite community has been constantly represented by mediating agencies as a people who are frozen in the past and reluctant to accept any changes. I argue that it is an inaccurate representation of the Old Order Mennonite people.

The third aspect of power imbalance I would like to address here is the politics of space-making processes, or “landscapes of power”. Tourism landscapes become separated from their places and transformed into spaces that serve market-driven purposes, which decontextualize the future or the past (Chambers 2010:116). People’s engagement with landscape is “historically particular, imbricated in social relations and deeply political” (Bender 2002:104). The experience of the land for local people is based on their “everyday attentiveness to the tasks in hand, the routines, their relations to each other, to their animals and crops, and to the world around them, which is also shaped by the particularity of the historical moment” (Bender 1998:98). Due to different ways of experiencing the landscape, in the context of tourism the embodiment of landscape might be contested among different subjectivities. In my research, I found that the way local Old Order Mennonite people experience landscape changes over time and contrasts with sightseeing tourists. What is more, landscape related activities change the relationship between people and the material world, and further signify a change of identity.
Participating in both the construction and deconstruction of tourism landscape could reveal people’s attitudes and reactions towards tourism.
CHAPTER THREE

“We Are Just People!”: Towards a Fluid Cultural Identity of the Old Order Mennonite People

“Warm greetings of love are sent your way this peaceful Sunday afternoon. We had communion today so we didn’t expect a lot of company, unless we invite some friends – from Kitchener or wherever. So we have a quiet time at home, which is also special. We hope this finds you back in a new routine that is working well for you. I am sure you miss your mother and home folks, but you can call and Skype, so that helps. Thank you for all you taught us, Mingyuan. China is closer than it used to be. I am hoping you can come some Tuesday or Wednesday and go with me to the school when we have music and a short lesson in Mandarin Chinese!” – Letter from my Old Order Mennonite host family.

Introduction

Having read the excerpt from a letter sent to me by my Old Order Mennonite host family after I came back home from fieldwork, you might be surprised by how informed the Old Order Mennonites are about technology and how open their community could be. Yet the Old Order Mennonites are constantly referred as “a separate people” (Horst 2000) or a reclusive community. If you have the opportunity to travel with tourists to Old Order Mennonite farms, tourist guides will probably introduce the Old Order Mennonite community like this: “as a Mennonite community, we do not have our own religion, but we are part of the Evangelical Christian community. But you could say that we are a ‘culture’, and the main reason that Mennonites are seen as a different group is because of the lifestyle that some of the more conservative groups have chosen to live”. In most of the tourism narratives about the Old Order Mennonite identity, the concept of “culture” is used as the essential boundary marker of distinction. Lila Abu-Lughod (1991) argues that the concept of culture is important to anthropology because the anthropological distinction between “self” and “other” rests on it, and that it is the essential tool for making other. She recognizes that the notion of culture cannot guarantee an escape from the tendency towards essentialism, yet it tends to perpetuate differences by contributing to generalizations. She notes the problem of cultural generalization as follows:

The…problem with generalization derives not from its participation in the authoritative discourses of professionalism but from the effects of homogeneity, coherence, and timelessness it tends to produce. When one generalizes from experiences and conversations with a number of specific people in a community,
one tends to flatten out differences among them and to homogenize them. The appearance of an absence of internal differentiation makes it easier to conceive of a group of people as a discrete, bounded entity who do this or that and believe such-and-such. The effort to produce general ethnographic descriptions of people’s beliefs or actions tends to smooth over contradictions, conflicts of interest, and doubts and arguments, not to mention changing motivations and circumstances. The erasure of time and conflict make what is inside the boundary set up by homogenization something essential and fixed (Abu-Lughod 1991:152-153).

The traditional and somewhat discreditable binary in anthropological discourses perpetuates boundaries between “self” and “others” by generalizing people from different cultures into two categories: the “modern Westerners” and “the primitive natives”. As part of the European settlers to North America, the Old Order Mennonites have never been categorized as “the primitive others”; however, in contemporary society, they do not precisely fall into the bracket of “modern Westerners” either. Still, the identity of the Old Order Mennonites has usually been essentialized by an ideology of cultural difference based on a simple fact of whether or not they use modern technology. Drawing upon Abu-Lughod’s argument in this chapter, I will use the data that I collected from my fieldwork to argue that the generalizations about the cultural characteristics of the Old Order Mennonite people tend to homogenize them solely as representations of the nostalgic past and ignore the ubiquitous differences, conflicts and contradictions emerging from within the Old Order Mennonite community. The concept of culture has been used as a rigid identity marker of the Old Order Mennonites, which portrays them as “unchanged” and conceals the fluid nature of their identity and culture. I argue that while recognizing some distinctive cultural characteristics of the Old Order Mennonites as a group, people should avoid essentializing their identity or neglecting the complexity of the cultural reality fabricated by each particular individualized case. I will discuss cultural aspects that are typically associated with Old Order Mennonite identity such as the limited acceptance of modern technology, gender relations, dating and marriage practices, household relations and community support, as well as the challenges that the community is facing, in order to shed light on how the Old Order Mennonites themselves situate and negotiate their own cultural identity in the continuously changing and interrelating cultural, social and historical contexts in the area of St. Jacobs, Ontario.
Contentions on Modern Technology

When I asked various people about their impressions of the Old Order Mennonite people, the most common response was: “they are really old-fashioned and do not use technology”. Yet such generalization is not accurate. According to what other scholars have observed in similar conservative Mennonite communities in the United States: “they do not categorically dismiss technology or consider it inherently immoral; however, they view it as a neutral force that can, depending on its use, impair their community or strengthen it” (Kraybill and Hurd 2006:209). The underlying reason for the constant debate within the Old Order Mennonite community about which technology is acceptable and which is not is that people are concerned about whether a certain technology will threaten the plain lifestyle that makes them good Christians. It is worth mentioning that during my stay with the Old Order Mennonite family, they were aware that I had brought my laptop and cellphone with me. I kept and used them only in my room and the family did not interpret me using them in their house as offensive or evil. The Old Order Mennonites are by no means a static or fossilized community; on the contrary, they recognize and respond to changes. The lady in my host family, Judith, explained the issue about technology in the following way:

Many people think that we are living as [people who lived] fifty years ago, but changes happen to us too. For us, nowadays it is difficult to live as our ancestors did. There is no such thing as a list of what things they can possess or not. We are raised in that way so we all know what is allowed and what is not. My mother used to say that if more than half of the families in the community have it, then it is not considered something new, so we can have it too. But the church will have council meetings to decide what is allowed and what is not (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

The most contentious issues or “grey areas” related to modern technology that have raised controversies in the Old Order Mennonite community include the use of electricity, telephones, and photography. It is easy to make generalizations about the Old Order Mennonites without considering the various choices that each particular family is facing. Most Old Order Mennonite families now have electricity in their homes, while some conservative families or people from older generations may still refuse to connect to a public grid because they suspect such activity is too “worldly”. The following narratives will demonstrate how different generations from the same family perceive and cope with
technological change and how different perspectives on the application of technology influences individual life experiences. Further, the narratives will show that the way to make decisions about issues within the “grey areas” may totally depend on the choice of the individual family.

Judith was born and grew up on a farm that was connected to the public grid. But her husband Matthew’s parents were very conservative and resistant to do the same. After Judith and Matthew married, Judith moved to live with Matthew’s family, with Matthew’s parents living in the “dawdy house”. She had to learn to get adapt to a life without electricity. For her, living without an iron or a freezer was immensely inconvenient because it meant that they needed to go to a storage place in town to store food. She said: “at that time when we were still not connected to public electricity, every time we went to the town, we needed to think of what food we had in the storage” (Interview 2013-08-08). Three years after Matthew and Judith married, Matthew decided to connect electricity to their farm since they started their own milking business and the generator for the barn did not work well in winter. But Matthew’s parents did not support this decision and always warned their son and daughter-in-law not to “travel too worldly”. Even after electricity was available on their farm, the “dawdy house” where Matthew’s parents lived was still not connected.

The issue of telephones on the farm has also invoked great controversies in the Old Order Mennonite community, for installing a telephone provides easier access to the outside world and increases dependence on the larger society (Kraybill and Hurd 2006:211). According to Draper (2010), through much of the twentieth century Old Order Mennonites who did have telephones kept them in shops or barns and the usage of telephones was restricted to business purposes. But with more and more farmers developing family businesses on their farms, telephones gradually became a necessity and therefore the church finally approved them (Draper 2010:208). One interesting scene happened one morning during my stay: right after the breakfast, the phone rang and

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5 Old Order Mennonite people follow the “patrilocal” residence pattern, which means after marriage, the married couple live with or near the husband’s parents. So most families will build an extra living space attached to the original main house for the husband’s parents to move in. This part of the house where the parents and grandparents live is called the “dawdy house”.

Judith answered it. The woman on the phone requested permission to do a survey about a radio program. Judith laughed and said to the girl: “sorry, we don’t have a single radio in here!” and hung up the phone. This example shows that the presence of telephones in the homes of Old Order Mennonites do cause interruptions in the lives of families and can certainly increase the connections and influences from the outside world. However, telephones have been playing a significant role in Old Order Mennonites’ everyday life for some time in aspects such as doing business and maintaining connections with friends and relatives. Matthew might talk for a long time on the phone to make arrangements about the farming and milking issues with his sons and local businessmen; Judith might call her relatives and non-Mennonite friends living in the city; and their younger daughter Hannah who taught at one Mennonite parochial school might communicate with her friends to discuss classes or to plan trips. Nevertheless, there are more specific rules about what kind of telephone they can use. Judith said:

   It is okay now if you have a telephone, but the phone must be a simple dial phone with no fancy gadgets. The issue is not as simple as whether or not you have a phone. It relates to lots of details, such as whether you have calling numbers, answering machines and many other additional functions. We try to keep it simple and basic. You see, sometimes the more things you have, the more rules you need (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

The younger generation has started to see electricity and telephones as indispensable components in their everyday life. Judith’s daughter Hannah told me in one casual interview:

   It is so good for us to have electricity. I can’t imagine a life without electricity now. But I guess if you were raised without electricity, you would still get used to that. The phone was also a recent thing. Our church did not allow phones in the past. It was probably in the 1990s that they started to allow phones because before, you could order things by mail. But after a while they did not take mail orders anymore, so we have to get a phone (Interview with Hannah, 2013-07-23).

In addition to electricity and telephones, Judith described the issue of photography as another “grey area”. According to Horst (2000), it is not the pictures and photos themselves that the Old Order Mennonites object to, rather, it is the way in which the photos are treated and displayed because showing photos to friends or displaying them in prominent places is a demonstration of pride (2000:187). In fact, many families may have
photos of themselves and pictures of scenery that they took on a trip. But they will keep
the photos to themselves only as a memento. I attended Judith’s family gathering during
my fieldwork and one of her modern Mennonite relatives asked permission to take a
photo of Judith and me together. Judith did not reject the idea of being included in the
photo but she had no intention of keeping that photo. One modern Mennonite man,
Anthony, who is involved in tourist businesses told me during an interview that recently
the bishop had asked for all the photos to be handed in because he thought there were too
many photos around in the community (Interview with Anthony 2013-09-26). According
to Judith, it is always the parents’ responsibility to teach and discipline younger
generations about what is allowed and what is not by setting good examples. However,
individual families still have the agency to control how strictly the rules should be
applied because it is not the parents’ wishes to push the rules too hard and make the
youngsters rebel as a result. Judith went on to explain:

We believe people should not show or impress other people by how they look on
the ‘outside’. It is the ‘inside’ that matters. All these rules are not the most
important things. If you don’t love Jesus from the heart, even though you follow
all the rules, it still doesn’t work (Interview with Judith, 2013-08-16).

Another eminent “cultural icon” of the Old Order Mennonite people is the horse-and-
buggy they use for transportation. Draper (2010) argues that the tenacious rejection of
owning a car is due to the emphasis on simplicity over convenience, and that there is a
fear that cars provide easy ways to get away from one’s humble home. But the Old Order
Mennonites are also willing to hire a driver or take a car ride if they need to visit places
that are too far away for a buggy ride. Even though there might be lots of situations when
they need a driver, they still refuse to own a car because after all, “having a car to drive
everywhere is a totally different lifestyle” (Interview with Judith 2013-08-16). The
following quote exemplifies the perspectives about cars from an Old Order Mennonite
man, Richard, who sells farm produce at St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market. It demonstrates
how he sees driving a car as unnecessary if living in the Old Order Mennonite
community where face-to-face interpersonal relationships are highly valued:

Another interesting story I want to tell you is that once there was one guy asking
me how long it takes for me to get here [to St. Jacobs Farmers’ Market]. I said
one hour with the horse. Then that guy said: ‘that is too long for a horse-and-
buggy drive. I think I need a car for that’. Then I asked him how long it takes him to get to Waterloo. He said one hour and a half by car and he works here! I think this is so interesting because he thinks I need a car, but it takes him more time than me to get to work! (Interview with Richard 2013-09-19).

To conclude, the Old Order Mennonites do not reject all technological change. For example, a new trend of change is that even though most of the families still only use tractors without ceilings and windows, there are some families starting to accept cabbed tractors. Old Order Mennonites do not perceive new technologies as inherently evil or immoral, but they may see some technologies as having the potential to compromise their plain lifestyle. The rules about what is acceptable and what is not are all intended to maintain humility. I would like to quote part of my interview with Judith as the concluding remark of my discussion about technology in an Old Order Mennonite community:

*Mingyuan:* Do you think maybe someday the church will allow television?

*Judith:* I doubt it. Television is too connected. You don’t have control over television programs. Maybe after they have better programs (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

**Gender Relations in the Old Order Mennonite Community**

The longstanding assumption about gender roles in the Old Order Mennonite culture generalizes them as: women are subordinated under male domination. Doubtlessly, Old Order Mennonite women are educated to be “submissive” to their husbands who are considered to be the “head” of the home; women are supposed to wear only homemade dresses that do not expose their bodies, and they are expected to wear bonnets to show their “submission”. Further, the everyday activities of Old Order Mennonite families are clearly divided along the gender line. Women undertake chores such as preparing food and cleaning, while men are responsible for most of the work in the field. The gender relations within the Old Order Mennonite community seem to match the criteria of a typical patriarchal society where family and social relations are predominately controlled by men; however, such generalizations about the gender roles may severely underestimate the agency that Old Order Mennonite women can have within the community. This stereotype contains the assumption that Old Order Mennonite men do
not show the same courtesy to women that mainstream Canadian etiquette dictates and therefore they are the ones who would abuse their wives (Horst 2000:114). Horst (2000) argues that such assumptions are great misunderstandings of the Old Order Mennonite women who are loved and respected by their husbands. In this section, I will explore a deeper understanding of the gender relations of Old Order Mennonite people by contextualizing the roles that women play in the social relations of the local community.

For outsiders, the women’s dress code is regarded as one of the most distinguishable visual displays of the Old Order Mennonite identity. Women’s dresses and bonnets are used to signal gender identity in Old Order Mennonite communities. Dresses are considered socially appropriate for women, while wearing pants is greatly discouraged. Dresses are all homemade from cloth with printed flowers (Figure 7). They need to be long enough to reach the mid-calf (Draper 2010:201) and the collar should be high enough to cover the clavicles. Both long and short sleeves are acceptable, but shoulders should not be revealed. When women work at home, they usually wear a dress as the first layer of clothes, with an apron as the second layer. Dresses and head coverings are important cultural components that symbolize a modest lifestyle and women’s submission to their husbands. Similar to many other cultures in which there are specific requirements about what women should wear and what part of their body they can expose, Old Order Mennonite beliefs about women’s dress code are also associated with the issue of gender equality, as elaborated in the questions that Lila Abu-Lughod raised in her study of Muslim women’s clothing: “can dress symbolize freedom or constraint? How can we distinguish dress that is freely chosen from that which is worn out of habit, social pressure of fashion” (Abu-Lughod 2013:18). Judith explains this issue the following way:

We wear coverings because we learn to be submissive to our husbands. But being submissive does not mean that men are controlling women because men have all the power. It only means that men are leading the family. In our families, men usually make decisions after discussing the issues with their wives. We always made decisions together. The man is the head of the home, while the woman is the heart. Men need to be respected and women need to be loved. We always say that a backseat driver is just as bad as a cook at the dining table (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-23).
People coming from outside the Old Order Mennonite community often question the way women dress, as one lady, Roselee, who works for a local business told me:

Many people who come here ask me about my dresses: ‘don’t you get hot in the summer; don’t you get cold in winter?’ Actually the dresses are just fine in the summer, and in the winter we dress to keep warm. We can wear leggings and thick coats (Interview with Roselee, 2013-09-19).

![Dresses for Old Order Mennonite Women. Photo by Mingyuan Zhang](image)

What is worth mentioning is that Old Order Mennonite ladies wear the appropriate form of clothes to follow community standards. Similar to Abu-Lughod’s observations about the dressing code of Muslim women, these forms and requirements on women’s dress style might have become so conventional that most women gave little thought to their meaning (Abu-Lughod 2013:36). My experience of living within the community began with negotiation with my host family about proper dressing. Before I moved my belongings into their home, Matthew and Judith informed me that I must wear dresses
instead of pants or shorts during my stay. Even though I tried to find dresses with the most modest style, the dresses I bought from city shopping malls still revealed too much of my body. One day before I went to Elmira with Judith, she suggested that I wear her daughter Hannah’s dress to go to town and she said to me:

I hope you don’t mind me commenting about your dresses. I just want you to leave a good impression if you go to town with us and meet our friends there. I would rather say this to you before we go. We really appreciate that you can wear dresses as we asked you before you came here. But you need to know that if you want to gain more respect in our community, especially if you want to gain respect from men, you need to dress modestly, not so revealing. You should not let men feel sinful. And think about it this way: which man wants his wife to wear clothes that are so revealing to other people? A lot of Canadian women don’t have dresses, except for balls or parties. All they have are jeans and pants. One of my city friends always tells me ‘oh Judith, if I dress like you in the city, I will never attract men! Women have to dress pretty to attract men!’ I don’t agree with her because it should be the inner beauty that matters the most. Even for wedding dresses, someone in the church used to say: ‘all materials are going down!’ We don’t understand why a design like that is considered beautiful (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

It seems ironic that having more choices in what to wear symbolizes the liberation of women from constraints, since the woman from the city that Judith talked about claims that the purpose of dressing up is to “attract men”. As such, it does not seem very convincing that she lives in a utopian world where women’s rights are totally free from male domination. The previous discussion shows how women’s clothes can be constantly interpreted as an important demonstration of gender relations within the Old Order Mennonite community, especially from the perspectives of outsiders; it also shows how Old Order Mennonite women themselves attribute meanings to their style of dressing.

Another aspect that marks gender differences is the division of labour along gender lines. The following field notes based on my participant observation describe an ordinary summer day on the Old Order Mennonite farm and illustrate how men and women are responsible for different types of work at home:

A busy summer day on the Old Order Mennonite farm started around 5:30 in the morning. I could hear Matthew and Judith getting up downstairs from my attic room. Even though the farm had already been equipped with modern milking
appliances, Matthew, Judith, their son and daughter-in-law all need to work for almost two hours in the barn milking cows in the morning. Around 7:00, women go back home to do laundry and prepare breakfast. Breakfast is served when the men come back from the barn after a silent grace led by the men. Even though the dawdy house is usually attached to the main building, the son and daughter-in-law usually do not have meals together with Matthew, Judith and Hannah. Everybody around the dining table is quiet during the approximate one-minute silent grace until the man decides to finish it by the sound of stretching his legs or rubbing the floor with his shoes. Then the man starts to take food on his plate and pass every dish around. After breakfast, the woman usually reads a short story from books and hands out songbooks to lead everyone in singing chorus. Shortly after the singing, the men go out again to work in the field or in the barn doing chores such as cutting grass, reaping wheat, spreading liquid manure, maintaining machines, blowing animal feed into the silo and so on, while girls and women start washing dishes, hanging laundry on the clothes line, cleaning the house, canning fruits or vegetables, maintaining the gardens and orchards, baking and preparing dishes for lunch and supper. Usually the men lead the silent grace before every meal, but there is no singing after lunch or supper. Maple syrup, ketchup, butter, cheese, yogurt, table cream, canned fruits, bread and juice are usually homemade by females who work at home. Every meal is guaranteed to have main courses and desserts. When asked what they think about their wives’ cooking, men are always satisfied. Another Old Order Mennonite friend, Robert, often joked about himself having zero knowledge of how to cook. He always laughed and said: “well, I don’t know how to do that stuff, my wife knows! I guess she learns it from her mom, and her mom learns it from her mom’s mom!” An interesting Old Order Mennonite tradition about table manners is that they do not change plates between the main dish and desert, rather, they clean the plates using a piece of bread after finishing the main courses. Women are also responsible for doing the dishes and cleaning up after meals. Similar work for males and females continues after lunch and everyone on the farm goes to the barn to milk the cows again. Around 8:00 in the evening
after all the chores in the barn and in the house are finished, people could enjoy their free time by chatting on the phone, keeping diaries, writing letters, singing, reading newspapers, playing table games for an hour and a half before they go to bed around 9:30. Judith always says: if you live on a farm, there are no holidays. You have to milk the cows twice a day even on Christmas and New Year’s Eve!

The narratives above can exemplify the respective responsibilities Old Order Mennonite men and women have in family life. Most women’s work is related to food, for instance preparing meals every day and storing food for the winter to make sure that the farm is self-efficient and guarantee a balanced diet (Figure 8). The kitchen is the place where Old Order Mennonite women spend most of their time working at home. It is also the kitchen that functions as the living room where guests enter first when invited to an Old Order Mennonite home. Women are hardworking housekeepers who arrange and cultivate the gardens, feed everyone in the family with healthy food, and keep the home clean and tidy. They are caregivers to both the young and the elderly. They are homeschooling teachers who pass on all their living skills such as cooking, baking, canning, quilting, and sewing to their children, especially to their daughters. At the same time, they are also active contributors to family businesses and tourism related activities. As a result, Old Order Mennonite women communicate more frequently than men with outsiders, according to my observations in my fieldwork.
However, compared to most of the Old Order Mennonite men who are busily occupied with farming work in the field and barn, women seem to have more free time to become involved in activities that are not so much related to domestic chores. Even though being a mother is always the priority of Old Order Mennonite women after they have children, they still enjoy a high level of mobility within the community. For example, most of the teachers working at Mennonite parochial schools are unmarried young women. Since working as a school instructor is a full-time paid job, successful candidates are required to devote a lot of time and energy to their teaching duties. Women are also actively engaged in community volunteer work with local non-governmental organizations. As we can see from Figure 9, most of the volunteers are Old Order Mennonite women. They offer voluntary help to prepare food that will be converted into dry soup and delivered to some developing countries for humanitarian relief. Furthermore, women play influential roles in maintaining friendship, community ties and kinship relations. They are more inclined to become involved in activities such as organizing community and family gatherings, writing circular letters, or paying visits to their friends and relatives.
Perceptions on Dating, Marriage and Sexuality

Based on the accounts of my Old Order Mennonite friends who participated in this research, their beliefs and values about dating, marriage and sexuality are another aspect that sets their cultural tradition apart from mainstream Canadian society. Regarding the current high divorce rate in Canada, the Old Order Mennonites have always been proud of keeping their tradition of “zero divorce” in the community. It is hard to generalize whether or not all Old Order Mennonite people enjoy “happy marriages” according to secular criteria, since according to Horst (2000), the reason for “zero divorce” is because there is no escape route of divorce as an alternative, and that as good Christians, the couple will have time to learn how compatible they are by nature (Horst 2000:104). Since divorce is considered sinful, it has never become an acceptable solution for solving marriage problems. Old Order Mennonites are certainly not claiming that their marriages are all perfect and spotless; instead, they firmly hold the belief that instead of seeking divorce, the couple should both make adjustments for each other and work marriage problems out together. Due to the seriousness in people’s attitudes towards marriage, Old
Order Mennonite people would rather date for a long time before they make the decision to get married, in order to give themselves enough time to consider whether the dating partner is a good match for going into marriage. Judith and Hannah described their dating experiences as the following:

*Judith:* I dated Matthew for two years before we got married. Matthew started the relationship by writing me letters. Young people get to know each other at Sunday night singing, or from travelling together. The boys usually write letters to the girls first to express feelings. Sometimes they also phone each other, but letters work better because you can somehow hide behind them. Normally you are not too surprised when you get a letter from someone. Quite a few times I doubted whether Matthew and I should continue [dating]. Then I asked God to show me the way and to guide me. I remember I asked several times: ‘Oh God! Please show me!’ Because we [as Old Order Mennonites] don’t divorce, so we need to consider marriage carefully. It is fifty years of commitment, not just five years. It is always better to be single wanting to get married than to be married but wishing to be single (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-23).

*Hannah:* It is a very serious thing when we date. If we do date, we may date for a long time, but we work towards marriage. Normally boys send out letters showing their intention to date. If you and your family agree, you can date him. I dated a guy when I was nineteen for one year and a half. But we did not get married because we don’t divorce. I want to have a happy life after marriage. He was a really good guy and he could be a good husband with someone else, but just not for me. I expect a man to be more decisive. I wish it weren’t me that leads the home. It is natural that a man should be the one who leads the home. They are born to do that. Women are becoming more and more independent now and they always talk about equal rights. But for me, the Mennonite men and women have equal rights, as long as the man is fair. If the man isn’t fair, then it is not good for the woman (Interview with Hannah, 2013-07-23).

Admittedly, family plays a strong and influential role in young people’s decisions about dating and marriage. Approval from parents is always needed before young people start to date. Sex before marriage is completely forbidden. After marriage, Old Order Mennonite couples do not use birth control. Therefore, it is very common for a family to have more than four children. Since Old Order Mennonite women must move to live with their husband’s family, married women are faced with difficulties in marriage that are centred around two pairs of relationships: first, the relationship with the husband; and second, the relationship with the mother-in-law. The following interviews shed light on of Judith’s beliefs about how to keep a man’s fidelity in marriage, as well as her understandings about awkward moments with the mother-in-law:
If men get everything they need at home, why will they go to other women? People in the city always say that all men need pornography. I don’t understand that. Why do all men need pornography? If they get the sex they need at home, why would they still need pornography? My mother used to say that her mother’s mother told her that when you and your husband get married, you please each other. One of our city friends went through divorce a couple of years ago and at that time we tried and tried to advise them to think twice. We used to invite them here a lot. But Matthew said it is wrong to divorce, so her husband is not welcome here anymore. After so many years of marriage and the children they had together, they still didn’t work things out. They have been paying a lot for marriage counselling, but they are still not happy together. They each want to change the other one, but neither of them wants to be the one to change first. You asked about my mother-in-law, Matthew’s mother - she was very blunt, meaning that she didn’t always say things very gently. I sometimes felt it was hard to get along with her. But at that time I always thought: ‘oh, I also have Matthew!’ He always told me to do things my way. Even when we were living under the same roof [with Matthew’s parents], we still had separate space. If you see more good from others, you won’t be disappointed; if you see more evil from others, then you won’t be disappointed either! So now, after our youngest son married Kate, and we moved to the dawdy house, I always tell myself that I am not in the master position of this house anymore, Kate is. So I don’t want to interfere with her. I want her to do things in her way (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

As we can infer from Judith’s experiences above, the circumstance that women are facing within the household can be more complicated in societies where extended family structure is prevalent. Since the grandparent’s generation has a stronger influence within the household in extended family structure, the experience of Judith is similar to the situation that many married women are facing in China. I discuss such an interesting parallel phenomenon in both Chinese society and Old Order Mennonite community based on my own experiences and observations in both societies. Therefore, it is critical to recognize that the inconveniences in Old Order Mennonite women’s family life are not essentially caused by a homogenized and bounded “Old Order Mennonite culture”. Instead, the vulnerability of women’s position might be the outcome of many other social factors. Therefore, I use this example to argue that instead of arbitrarily attributing the problems that Old Order Mennonite women are facing to certain characteristics of the so-called “Old Order Mennonite culture”, it is crucial for people to de-essentialize the Old Order Mennonite identity, in order to gain a more informed understanding of the Old Order Mennonite community.
Community Support

In Chapter Two, I quoted the words from a local tourist guide, Anthony, to summarize the common characteristics of a collective Mennonite identity. Anthony noted that all Mennonite groups believe in the simplicity of life and worship and a peaceful approach to life and all have a strong sense of community (Interview with Anthony, 2013-09-26, see page 20). The previous discussions in this chapter about the Old Order Mennonites’ perceptions of technology and dress styles echo their belief in simplicity. In this section, I will continue my discussion about Old Order Mennonite identity concentrating on these two interrelating aspects: a peaceful approach to life and a strong emphasis on community.

According to Gingrich and Lightman (2006), the Old Order Mennonite communities have remained in a gemeinschaft-like system of mutuality since their first migration to North America. The community is a comprehensive system of social, emotional, and material mutual aid, embedded in a well-defined social structure, accomplishing essential autonomy and self-sufficiency, which creates a distinct group identity that resists the strong forces of individualism in the secular society around them (Gingrich and Lightman 2006:175). The motivation behind maintaining such a separate, autonomous and self-efficient community is that the Old Order Mennonite people try to detach themselves from the secular world and issues of the government. They wilfully withdraw their participation in government affairs and give up some citizen rights such as voting or holding government positions. They also refuse to accept social or health insurance, such as the OHIP (Ontario Health Insurance) program. The motivation behind such tradition is that the Old Order Mennonites try to remain as independent of government as possible so that they will not be required to serve military duty in case of war. The two segments below from my fieldwork interviews with Robert and Maggie, will demonstrate how Old Order Mennonite people see their relationship with the government:

*Robert:* The biggest government support for our family business is allowing it. We do not take government grants. Other people might, but we don't. We also do not have any pensions or insurance. We support each other (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).
Maggie: We don’t want to depend on the government because we won’t go to war. We won’t fight for the government. It is not that we don’t want to be good citizens. We still pay taxes. But we won’t depend on the government for anything. We just want to keep low-key for everything (Interview with Maggie, 2013-07-30).

As shown in the narratives above, Old Order Mennonites will not seek help from public health insurance or pensions provided by the government; however, to maintain an autonomous community, the church will provide financial support to community members in need. According to Judith’s explanation, in case of medical treatment the individual family will be responsible for 30% of the cost, and the church will provide financial support by covering the remaining 70%. In the case of education, community members also support each other’s children to finish eight years of school. Even though there are some Old Order Mennonite children who attend public school, the vast majority of them attend the Mennonite parochial schools (Figure 10) for eight years since they believe that the curriculum of their own parochial schools is more suitable for the Mennonite community, as Hannah further explains:

Canada requires us to be bilingual. So we have to learn English and something. We are not supposed to use our Pennsylvania Dutch at school. In public schools they make people learn French, but for us it makes no sense. We don't use French. So we learn German in our own schools. We learn High German in our schools. I think we learn more here in Mennonite schools than in public schools. In public schools they just teach the kids how to use computers. There are eight grades in our school and I teach all the subjects such as grammar, English reading and writing, vocabulary, mathematics, history, geography and a bit of science. The science part depends on who is teaching though. I will have 18 students in the coming September, in three different grades. There are both Old Order Mennonite children and Markham Mennonite children in my class. The children’s parents have to pay fees to support the school, but the school is also a church thing. The church supports the school a lot. Sometimes even when there are no students coming, some older parents still pay for the school because some younger parents cannot bear the fees. In this way they keep the school continuing (Interview with Hannah, 2013-07-23).
This support from within the Old Order Mennonite community strengthens the ties among different households and keeps the community harmonious. For example, in the summer of 2013, one family lost a child in a barn fire accident. Many families who heard about this tragic news from community newspapers delivered emotional support to that family. At the same time, many men quickly gathered together to build a new barn for that family too. However, such supportive mechanisms within the Old Order Mennonite community do not imply that Old Order Mennonite people never seek help from outside the community. As Gingrich and Lightman (2006) noted in their research, Old Order Mennonite people occasionally seek help from “outsiders” such as public health nurses, bankers, chartered accountants, and lawyers (2006:183). There are certain restrictions, however, such as community members are not allowed to join any kind of secular organizations or groups. As Robert’s wife Diana explains, even though the community tries to remain autonomous and self-sufficient, it is not secluded from the Canadian society:
We do grocery shopping; we sometimes eat in restaurants; we also need to make a living; we go to see doctors when we are sick. We are just normal people living normal lives! We are just people! Keep in mind! (Interview with Diana, 2013-07-04).

Challenges to the Old Order Mennonite Community

In the previous sections of this chapter, the discussion focused on several significant cultural characteristics that are constantly associated with the identity of the Old Order Mennonite people. By offering a perspective from the standpoint of Old Order Mennonite people and presenting the internal differentiations within the Old Order Mennonite community, I intended to challenge the fossilized idea that many “outsiders” hold about the Old Order Mennonite identity and culture, and present an insider’s view based on what I learned from Old Order Mennonites such as Judith:

We should let others know that the Old Order Mennonites are just ordinary people. Sometimes we have given other people the wrong impression that we are only a closed group. We do want to keep ourselves small and a bit separate, but we are just people who need to make a living too. So we need to find a middle place in between (Interview with Judith 2013-08-16).

However, a local resident from the town of St. Jacobs once asked me: “since you have such an insider experience, do you think the Old Order Mennonite people are depressed?” A general question such as this is difficult to answer with a definite “Yes” or “No” because there are various challenges that the Old Order Mennonite community is facing. Old Order Mennonite participants in my research all seem very satisfied with their lives despite all the difficulties. At the same time, they never try to disguise their worries about the challenges and uncertainties that they are currently facing. Unlike Old Order Mennonite people’s struggles in the past, religious persecution and obligatory military service are no longer the outstanding challenges they are facing in contemporary Canadian society. Other concerns have taken their place.

Firstly, the pressure of making a living is becoming more intense, since the price of farming land is getting higher and higher around the area of St. Jacobs. According to Old Order Mennonite tradition, the youngest son in a family usually inherits the family farm from his father, while older sons need to buy a new farm after marriage with financial assistance from parents. In order to meet such a demanding amount of family expenses,
many Old Order Mennonite families need to seek additional sources of income. As a consequence, along with the primary income from farming, many families have started to sell their extra farm produce to people from nearby towns or cities, some families have set up workshops on their farms to engage in contracted small-scale industrial production, and some other families have chosen to directly or indirectly participate in tourism related activities in St. Jacobs, a topic I will discuss in greater detail in Chapter Four. When necessary, unmarried young women may find teaching jobs in Mennonite schools or provide domestic service for families outside the Old Order Mennonite community, while men are more involved with construction jobs such as carpentry or handyman work within the community or in nearby towns. Many Old Order Mennonite people express deep gratitude towards God for giving them such an affluent life. However, it also requires an acute business sense to properly manage the income of a farm. Matthew is the one who is always shrewd about farm business and he explained the family financial situation as the following:

The milk cheque we get from our milking business is about 20,000-30,000 dollars a month. This is basically what keeps us going. But we are not making big money at all. There are a lot of expenses on the farm, especially the payments that go to the vet. Animals are extremely expensive. The cheapest cow now is about 3,000 dollars, and the expansive ones can be way more than that! There used to be a cow worth one million dollars years ago! Besides milking, we also sell our summer sausage, maple syrup, and sometimes vegetables to people coming to our farm. But that is just side income (Interview with Matthew, 2013-07-29).

Robert introduced his family business to me as the following:

We started the workshop on our farm seven or eight years ago. The main reason to start the business is to make more money in addition to farming. Farming alone doesn’t provide enough monopoly to pay for the price to maintain the farm. We sometimes sell vegetables from our garden. The customers will come to our farm and buy them. [There are] many foreign customers, most of them Romanians, but [there are] also people from many other countries. Some of those people farm in their home countries too. They just believe these vegetables from our garden are fresh (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).

Another challenge for the Old Order Mennonite community is how to keep the young people involved with the Old Order Mennonite church. The population of the Old Order Mennonite community is still steadily growing since only a very small percentage of
young people have chosen to leave the church. However, parents still have many concerns about the choices of their children, especially those who are experiencing the rebellious adolescence. Three of my Old Order Mennonite friends, Robert, Richard and Anna, all admitted that there were many concerns about the influences from “the outside world” on the younger generation. However, they emphasized that such challenges to their children are less about the fascinating nature of technologies, but more about the rebellious nature of adolescence, as they further elaborated to me during the interviews:

Robert: The most influential factors for the younger generations are technology, festive moods and the influences from other young people. But it is more a problem of puberty. After the children pass the age of fourteen or fifteen, they will finally realize what is more important. It is a matter of obedience or disobedience (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).

Richard: For younger generations, it is mostly a puberty problem. When they are at that young age, it is the time they always say they want to do this, want to do that. But it happens to all families in the world, not only in our Old Order Mennonite community. Children all over the world go through a period when they don’t obey their parents. Children don’t do what their parents want them to do. It is not just us Mennonites. But we are grateful that our children have all grown up and they still raise their kids the same way we raised them. All of them stayed with our church (Interview with Richard, 2013-09-19).

Anna: We do have concerns about raising our kids in an environment where there are so many outside influences. But we still believe that if we have raised our children in the right way since they were very young, there shouldn’t be too many problems (Interview with Anna, 2013-08-13).

The spread of technology and media has undoubtedly posed challenges to the Old Order Mennonite community. Maggie mentioned that there was an Old Order Mennonite boy who always tried to go to the public library in town to watch pornography videos online. Such cases are rare in the Old Order Mennonite community; however, this example demonstrates that easily accessible technologies do potentially bring worldly influences to the community. Another important reason that has motivated young people to leave the community is the desire to drive cars. When a child leaves the community, he or she may also leave the church and parents will surely be very disappointed. Judith has some family members who chose to leave the church. In fact, her grandfather was the only one in her family who stayed with the Old Order Mennonite church in his generation. One of
Judith’s brothers also left the church after having three children with his wife. The reason he left was that he had always wanted to drive a car, as Maggie explained to me:

One community leader’s son chose to leave the church several years ago because the son wanted to drive cars, but his father was too conservative. Of course his father was very disappointed. Just imagine what people will think if the leader’s son can’t stay with the church! But at least he still believes in Jesus. We can’t do anything about it (Interview with Maggie, 2013-07-30).

According to Maggie, most of the people who leave the Old Order Mennonite community do not detach themselves completely from the Mennonite church; instead, they join a more liberal Mennonite church, such as the Markham Mennonite church that allows its members to own a vehicle. There are more boys leaving the Old Order Mennonite community than girls in general, which has caused an imbalanced gender ratio within the Old Order Mennonite community where single girls outnumber single boys.

**Conclusion**

To conclude, I argue that generalization about Old Order Mennonite culture tends to create a fossilized identity. In this chapter, I discussed several aspects of the Old Order Mennonite culture that play a crucial role in shaping outsiders’ understandings and impressions of the Old Order Mennonite people, including the attitudes towards modern technology, gender roles, beliefs about dating, marriage and sexuality, forms of community support, as well as the challenges that the community is facing. Based on how the Old Order Mennonite people themselves understand and narrate their own cultural traditions, I contend that generalizations about Old Order Mennonite culture ignore the fluid nature of their identity and conceal the ubiquitous differences, contentions and controversies within the Old Order Mennonite community. These generalizations have also created inaccurate, sometimes biased impressions among outsiders, even though as stated in one newspaper headline: “there is much more to Mennonites than wearing black and driving buggies” (Fretz 1989:306). In the next chapter, I will continue my discussion and argue that it is exactly these misunderstandings caused by cultural generalizations that have become the biggest motivation for tourists to visit St. Jacobs in order to understand the Old Order Mennonites’ way of living.
CHAPTER FOUR

“Are We Zoo Animals?”: The Politics of Tourism Encounters and their Influences on the Old Order Mennonite Community

Introduction

In the previous chapter, by providing insights from the Old Order Mennonite people’s own perspectives and standpoints, I highlighted the complexity of Old Order Mennonite cultural identity that is often omitted in the generalizations of outsiders. For tourists, such generalizations lack an understanding of the cultural complexity within the Old Order Mennonite community and have become the motivations for many to visit St. Jacobs, just to “see the Mennonites” (Fretz 1989:306). This chapter will examine the impacts of tourism development in St. Jacobs on the emotional attitudes, and subsistence patterns of the Old Order Mennonite community. In the context of intensified encounters between tourists and the Old Order Mennonites, the data I collected from my fieldwork will illuminate the controversial role of tourism in St. Jacobs. My research findings show that tourism development has become a double-edged sword to the Old Order Mennonite community. On the one hand, tourism has provided new economic opportunities for the Old Order Mennonite people and served as a means of recognition, protection and reinforcement of the Old Order Mennonite identity; however, on the other hand, the huge amount of attention that tourism has brought to the local community has caused awkward experiences and unpleasant sentiments among the Old Order Mennonite people.

The Politics of Tourist Curiosity

I will start this section by providing some questions that tourists frequently asked during their tour in St. Jacobs. Tourists ask these questions related to the Old Order Mennonites out of personal curiosity. However, such questions can disclose the underlying assumptions or stereotypes that people hold towards the Old Order Mennonite people. Some typical questions from tourists are as follows:

What is the difference between the Amish, the Mennonites and the Hutterites?
Is the population of the Old Order Mennonite community still growing?
Are the Old Order Mennonites living in one village all together?
How can the Old Order Mennonites live without technology?
Are the Old Order Mennonites depressed?
If Old Order Mennonite people decide to leave the church, will they be shunned?
When do the Old Order Mennonites come out?

As noted in Chapter Three, such stereotypes are produced by cultural generalizations, which are further reinforced by different representations of the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle. Modern tourism is by no means limited to a binary relationship between the “host” and the “guest”; instead, the factors mediating the two such as media, guidebooks and ways of social interaction reveal power relations between the “host” and the “guest”.

In a similar fashion, Urry (1990) considers the tourist curiosity as directed to features of a touristic destination that are out of the ordinary and separate from everyday experiences, and he suggests that people who are the objects of such curiosity could be visually objectified or captured through different ways of representations such as photography, literature or magazines (Urry 1990:3). According to Carrier (2010), tourism is often associated with images and meanings that spring from social, political and economic relations and shape how people see the world and each other. Such images and meanings can further affect social, political and economic interests (Carrier 2010:113). Likewise, different ways of representing Old Order Mennonites allow the images and meanings of their culture and lifestyle to be “endlessly reproduced and recaptured” (Urry 1990:3) in the tourists’ quest for new experiences. The following vignette is an example of how the Old Order Mennonite culture has been misrepresented and how their “old-school” lifestyle has been exaggerated.

One Old Order Mennonite family in the community agreed to host a magazine journalist and invited her to live on the farm with the family for a few weeks. They also agreed to allow the journalist to take photos of their everyday life of cooking, eating, quilting and travelling with horse and buggies. Photo snapshots with people’s body figures and faces were captured by the journalist, but not in a way of posing the Old Order Mennonite people specifically for the camera. After staying with the family, the journalist published a brief introductory article with photos about her experience of living with the Old Order Mennonite family. The title of her article “The Canadian Christians Who Live the Lives
of the Middle Ages: The Pacifists Who Are Loyal to the Holy Bible” is very telling and
the following is an English translation:

Unlike America where vulgarization is taking over, these people keep protecting
the tradition. To this day they reject the scientific achievements of cars and
televisions. The photos are real portraits of the Mennonites taken by a Japanese
artist who lived with them. In Canada, Kitchener near Toronto, there is a
community called the Mennonites. Their ancestors moved to North America
when the Reformation happened in Europe in the 16th Century. They are the
sect of Protestants called the Mennonite. Their basic principle is: we shall go
back to the early Christian-like, simple life of worship that is loyal to the Holy
Book.

Many Mennonites retain the original way of living today, and reject
"technologies" such as cars and televisions. Also, they are fundamental pacifists,
and do not respond to any drafting or military duty. They are "conscious deniers
of military deeds". Mennonites have churches in more than 40 countries around
the world. Excluding the children, there are about 600,000 people. More than
half live in North America. According to the Mennonite world handbook
published in 1978, about 2000 of them are Japanese. They are a bit of anti-
socialists, and rarely have contacts with the outside world. In addition, because
they are against false idol worship, photographs and videos are strictly forbidden,
therefore their existence is largely unknown to the public. Through the movie
character of John Book in “Witness”, which was shot in the village of Amish (a
sect of the Mennonite), the group became widely published for the first time.
The photographer found a family who consented to have her live with them
"with conditions" in Canada, where the belief was even more traditional than in
the States, and then took these pictures.

At their house, which is called the Old Order, they maintained the most
traditional type of life. They do not have televisions, radios, or cars. The
husband and the wife are in their early thirties and they have four kids. While all
of them were born in Canada, because they all speak ancient German in the
community, their English is very rusty. They assigned the photographers many
conditions such as “you cannot let the others know that you are taking a picture”
“you cannot use flash” “when others visit the house, you have to hide your
camera”. They say if the others and the church find about the journalist’s
purpose of staying, the journalist will be expelled. The journalist also stops
wearing cosmetics and accessories which are banned, and wears long skirt and
clothes that hide all the skin. Only one time, because all of the journalist’s skirts
were being washed, did she wear a pair of jeans. The lady, who was always
smiling, turned away her face in anger and said: “how can I stand looking at a
woman in trousers?” Originally, buttons were considered a luxury and were
banned, but these days more than half of the people wear clothes with buttons.

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* The original journal article is written in Japanese. Please be noted that I do not have access to the original magazine that published this article. See Appendix for the photocopy of this article.
They did not play any instruments for the same reason: they are too luxurious. In their music classes at school, there is no organ, nor flutes. They only teach student singing.

Everything was self-sufficient here. Every family has farmland. The husband has to work in the field during the day too. They raise fruits such as strawberries and blueberries, and other crops. They make maple syrup, and raise chicken, pigs, and cows. Bread and butter are all self-made. They eat things like vegetable stew and pork stew, mostly German style. Alcohol is only used during religious rituals. They burn wood for cooking. Electricity and gas are basically forbidden and they live a life of waking up together with the sunrise and going to sleep when the sun sets. However, more recently their lifestyle has started to change. There have emerged families who started using electricity, and also some families who started using tractors for farming. Among the most progressive are the Mennonites in the village of the Amish in the state of Penn in the United, who were the earliest Mennonite settlers in the North America. I have heard that they welcome visitors, and even have restaurants and gift shops for tourists. How are the Canadian Mennonites feeling about the introduction of modern technology? “I know they exist, but I do not think they are necessary for our lives.” With a reserved tone, they just reply in this way, indeed like a pacifist.

As we can see above, this magazine article was written in order to introduce its Japanese readers to some basic and reliable knowledge about the Old Order Mennonite people. It emphasizes the authenticity and the reliability of the content by highlighting the journalist’s experience of living with the Old Order Mennonite family. However, in addition to the obvious mistake of confusing the Old Order Mennonite and the Amish people, there are some other aspects of over-representing and misrepresenting the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle. When the members of the family who hosted the journalist read the transcription of this article, they were very surprised to find out what the journalist wrote about them. They found the content both annoying and amusing at the same time since they believe that many descriptions of their lifestyle are distortions of their lived experience. Here is the response from one member of the journalist’s host family:

*Host Family Member:* The title says we are living in the Middle Ages! That is before the fourteenth or fifteenth century! Ah! We are not even in the eighteenth century! When she wrote that we burn wood to cook, she really should have

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7 Translated by Ziliang Liu, content includes minor changes by Mingyuan Zhang in order to maintain anonymity
mentioned that we also used electricity for cooking when she lived with us. At that time, we definitely had electricity already. And even my grandparents had already started to use tractors to farm! Some of the words she used there are so strange. We think our English is just fine, and also, we would really have appreciated if she would have worn clothes that met our dress codes when she lived with us, but it was not possible for me to say something like ‘how can I stand looking at a woman in trousers’ to her! When she wrote that if the church found out her purpose for staying here she would be expelled, that does not sound true either.

You know, it is true that we do not have musical instruments like the piano or violin in our homes and we do not use them in our meetinghouse, but we do use simple musical instruments to teach singing in school sometimes. Oh, I thought she have lived here long enough to understand us! This is very interesting. Maybe we should go to bed now because we get up with the sun rise and go to bed with the sunset. [Laugh] Well, we don’t care anymore; we have a sentence like this: ‘create in me a clear heart, O God, and review a right spirit within me’. You know, to have a clear heart, we must forgive everyone, even though for those who made mistakes, or who say something not quite true about us. Anyway, we still enjoyed her stay here. Probably somebody else wanted her to write that way (Interview with members from the host family of the journalist, 2013-07-25).

The response from the host family shows that the journal article misrepresents and exaggerates the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle in many aspects. Outsiders often tend to focus on the most “out of the ordinary” aspects of people with different beliefs and cultural practices, and hence, their exaggerated representations of such differences may contribute to the reinforcement of a fossilized identity. In the case of the Old Order Mennonites, misrepresentations such as those above have created the image of an entire culture living timelessly in the nostalgic past, which has become the strongest motivation that drives tourists’ curiosity and draws them to the town of St. Jacobs to “see the Mennonites”. However, if we recognize that Old Order Mennonites do not see themselves as “out of the ordinary”, it is not hard to understand the confusions and the sentiments that the Old Order Mennonite people have about the tourists’ interpretations. Many of the participants of this research talked about the uneasiness and the uncomfortableness they felt under the scrutiny of outsiders.

_Diana_: I remember that when we were still at school, all the students went to the Toronto zoo together. But other people there looked at us the same way they looked at the animals in the zoo. But we were there to see the animals, so we just…saw animals (Interview with Diana, 2013-07-11).
Maggie: Sometimes people just come here and take a photo of the buggy. It is ok with me. But I just don’t like being looked at as the zoo animals. There certainly are some misrepresentations of our life in media. Well, I guess we can live with that (Interview with Maggie, 2013-07-30).

Robert: Once I saw a horse-and-buggy surrounded by people who want to take photos of the guy with his buggy. I felt that we were being treated as animals, not as normal people. I was feeling insulted when people emphasized our Old Order Mennonite identity too much. For example, in the news, you can always see ‘an Old Order Mennonite boy blah blah blah’. But why don’t people say ‘an Anglican boy’ or ‘a Catholic boy’? Another example is what they call the ‘Old Order Mennonite furniture’. They advertise it as better and people think it is better. But it is just furniture made from solid wood. We don’t fancy it. And we have received way more attention than we think we should. Old Order Mennonite is simply an identification. We get more attention than we appreciate. I think people need to listen to our voices for mainly two reasons. The first is that they need to respect us. The second is that if some of them do not respect us, people will not respect them anymore (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).

Judith: I don’t understand why just the fact that we don’t use those high-tech things has made us so different from others. In fact, we are not that different. On some occasions we go to restaurants to have a meal. Once we found four girls around a table and they kept texting. I thought they were coming out for a good time, but they just could not stop texting. The high technology certainly is good to some extent, but people also need to communicate more and help each other, instead of keeping things to themselves. It is easy for city people to believe that we don’t know anything, but it is not true (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

Matthew: People always ask questions like ‘when do the Old Order Mennonites come out’. [Laugh] Can you tell me when the groundhogs come out? (Interview with Matthew, 2013-07-29).

These responses illustrate how Old Order Mennonite people feel uncomfortable or even insulted by the intensified curiosity of outsiders or tourists. Many of them described the feelings of being stared at as “zoo animals” or questioned as “strange” or “abnormal” people. At the same time, many explained to me that they understand why tourists are curious about them and that they are getting used to be seen as “different” from the rest of the society, as Roselee told me:

Whether you feel comfortable or not with the tourists, it really depends on how sensitive you are. They are curious about us, and often ask us different kinds of questions. But we get used to that and we can live with it (Interview with Roselee, 2013-09-19).
Another prominent theme that many people mentioned to me is the issue of photography. In the same way that other media representations often misrepresent Old Order Mennonite communities, photography can also lead to the fossilization of the Old Order Mennonite identity. According to Cohen (1992), tourists’ limited acquaintance with the environment and their consequent inability to grasp anything but the most obvious and easily recognizable features of it, necessarily induce them to produce stereotypes (1992:217). Following these behavioural patterns, tourists to St. Jacobs always bring cameras with them in order to eternalize what they consider to be the most impressive scene and moment for themselves. In the Old Order Mennonite community, things such as the women’s traditional dress, the horse-and-buggy, maple syrup production equipment and farming landscapes are often the objects of tourists’ photographic snapshots. By producing and reproducing the repetitive images that are considered to be symbols of the Old Order Mennonite cultural identity, tourists, who also play the role of photographers, contribute to the process of objectifying the subjectivity of the other by seeking to capture a certain characteristic or typical facial expressions or body posture of the Old Order Mennonite people (Cohen 1992:215). Most of the time, tourists seek such typical scenes and human figures only to follow what is already given by the pattern from various kinds of mediating agencies. As such, the transient memory that tourists’ photography records about a touristic destination cannot truthfully represent the changing reality of the local people and landscape in the long term. On the contrary, the photographic images contribute more to the objectifying of a certain lifestyle, as one guide working in the tourism business told me:

*Jack:* They [the Old Order Mennonites] have a lot of fun living on the farm. Sometimes when tourists take a photo of them passing by on horse-and-buggies, they kind of show a stoic look on their face, but I always assure tourists that they do have a great sense of humour (Interview with Jack, 2013-09-19).

**Tourism Businesses: Mediating Tourism Encounters with Discretion**

Encounters between outsiders and the Old Order Mennonites as described in the previous section have indeed aroused sentiments within the local community, which has become one of the main reasons to introduce tourism into the community. Instead of seeking to completely cut off connections with outsiders, tourist businesses have been developed as
a solution to ease and mitigate unpleasant encounters. When tourism in St. Jacobs initially started to develop, it was designed with the purpose of protecting the Old Order Mennonite community. Hence, many people who work in tourism businesses still avoid advertising and commercializing the Old Order Mennonite identity. According to Fretz (1989), one of the major tourist attractions in the Waterloo area is the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle and the progressive Mennonites took steps to prevent the exploitation of their Old Order co-religionists by setting up what they thought were appropriate ways of meeting tourist interests. The idea of establishing new businesses in St. Jacobs is the result of a vision motivated by altruism and a desire to serve tourists without exploiting them or the local community, and discouraging others from coming into the community and doing so (1989:222-223). Similar goals followed by some tourist businesses in the town of St. Jacobs were conveyed to me during my fieldwork interviews. The followings are some descriptions about how and why tourism in St. Jacobs was initially organized:

**Anthony:** It started in 1979 and it goes back to an interesting story, well it is interesting to me at least. By that time St. Jacobs was pretty much a ghost town. People were leaving and there wasn’t much business. A man called Milo Shantz, who was a modern Mennonite and also an entrepreneur, opened the Stone Crock Restaurant in the year of 1975. He wanted it to be a place where people could eat, but also a place to learn about the Mennonites. The Old Order Mennonite community had come to him and asked him to help them because people were lining up outside their churches on Sunday morning and taking pictures of them. The Old Order Mennonites thought that Mr. Shantz could introduce something that would help other people learn about the Mennonites without being intrusive. So he started the restaurant and he hoped to tell people about the Mennonites at the restaurant. But it became so successful that it did not have time for that. So he and a group of modern Mennonite ministers got together and helped to start the Visitor Centre in St. Jacobs called the Mennonite Story. So it started in 1979 and really in many ways at the request of the Old Order Mennonite people (Interview with Anthony, 2013-09-26).

**Nicholas:** The visitor centre of St. Jacobs is actually the response of a few Old Order Mennonite leaders. Several of them approached some modern Mennonites and asked them to find a way to let other people understand more about the Old Order lifestyle (Interview with Nicholas, 2013-09-27).

Such narratives shed light on issues about how encounters between outsiders and the Old Order Mennonites can be intrusive or rude. At the same time, they show that people working in tourist businesses are trying to use tourism as a tool to introduce Old Order
Mennonite lifestyle to outsiders. As the group mediating encounters between Old Order Mennonite people and curious outsiders, they navigate tourism activities carefully in order to meet the needs of both parties. Robert gave me another example of how tourism has helped outsiders to learn more about the Old Order Mennonites:

At our Sunday church service, there used to be many ‘social cars’ lined up there just to see our horses and buggies (Figure 11). The traffic police had to come, or else there would be traffic jams. Now tourists still come to see our church services, but most of them come in tourism buses. The buses park outside our church. But they [the tourist guides] won’t let people out of the bus. Tourists just watch us or take photos from inside the bus. For us, there is nothing new seeing tourists taking pictures of us. We have already learned to live with that. We will not stop tourists or make them delete the photos. There is really nothing we can do (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).

Figure 11 The “Parking lot” of an Old Order Mennonite Meetinghouse on a Sunday morning. Photo by Mingyuan Zhang

Most of the people engaging in tourist businesses identify themselves as modern Mennonites and many of them have family members or ancestors who are Old Order Mennonites. Therefore, they navigate tourism businesses and mediate tourism activities with discretion out of respect for Old Order Mennonite lifestyle. As Fretz (1989)
acknowledged in his book, the Chambers of Commerce and other promoters of tourism have been discreet in their promotional literature in order to protect and respect the privacy of the conservative Mennonites who are the objects of tourist curiosity (Fretz 1989:223). Without doubt, people who work in tourist businesses in St. Jacobs play an important role in mediating tourism activities. Even though it is obvious that the goal of all tourist businesses in St. Jacobs is to gain economic profit, most of them are well aware of their responsibility to protect the Old Order Mennonites from being overly commercialized. The following narratives will further illustrate the role of the people who work in tourist businesses.

**Jack and Brendon – “You are not going to use this for advertising, are you?”:**

I met Jack and Brendon at one tourist business they own. They both identify themselves as modern Mennonites. After I explained my intention of interviewing them about their business for my research, they asked me: “you are not going to use this for advertising, are you?” They explained that they are willing to participate in the interviews for this research, but do not wish anyone to use such information for advertising purpose since the Old Order Mennonite do not want to be advertised as tourism attractions.

**Suzanne – “I encourage them to do business with the Old Order Mennonites”:**

Suzanne works at one local tourism office. In our brief conversation, she told me that she believes tourism is a good way for tourists to learn more about the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle. If managed properly, it will benefit both the local Old Order Mennonite community and tourists in the long run. She sees her role as a mediator who is responsible for introducing and teaching tourists to be aware of and respectful toward Old Order Mennonite traditions. She said: “if tourists ask me questions such as ‘where can we find Old Order Mennonites?’ my colleague and I will always encourage them to buy things from the Old Order Mennonites, to do business with them. And that is how people will see the Mennonites” (Interview with Suzanne, 2013-09-26).
Anthony – “I am a screener”:

Anthony is a tourism guide and he identifies himself as belonging to the most modern group of the Mennonites, by which he means that members of his group are pretty much as everybody else in aspects of technology, level of education and ways of employment. He further clarifies that members of his group are not like the conservative Mennonites who mainly work in agriculture, family workshops or small-scale businesses, but they are in professional careers: they pursue university education; and in terms of technology, there aren’t any restrictions. His parents used to belong to the Old Order Mennonite group, but they moved by the time he was born into a more modern Mennonite community called the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. He explains the reasons for his parents leaving as the following: “back in the 1930s there were large numbers of people leaving the Old Order churches. One of the issues that people who left were concerned about was the idea of having a car. Also, instead of German language in their church services, they wanted it in English. A further reason is that they wanted something for their children, so they wanted to go to Sunday school, something that the Old Order Mennonites did not do. So those were some of the factors that led them to a more modern group.” Now he can still speak a little Pennsylvania Dutch, but not much. He has been working as a tourist guide for many years and he is usually responsible for operating the tourism business that introduces Mennonite history, culture and lifestyle using multi-media tools. He is also responsible for organizing bus tours to the countryside near St. Jacobs. He provides a step-by-step guide on the bus. The bus tour takes two hours and it includes not only “seeing the Mennonites”, but also sightseeing at some historical sites such as the “kissing bridge”. Occasionally, depending on certain circumstances, he also brings tourists to join a family meal with the Old Order Mennonite people. In such cases, tourists will have a chance to have a conversation with an Old Order Mennonite family and learn about the community. But neither he nor his business associates advertise such activities. He said: “sometimes I feel good about people and if they request a chance to go for a meal, I may make arrangements for them. But we don’t
advertise that and we won’t include such things into our regular business activities.” When asked about the Old Order Mennonites’ concerns about such tourism activities, as the people in between tourists and the Old Order Mennonite community, Anthony shares his experiences of being a guide: “there are not many of them [Old Order Mennonites] who are willing to do that. And for personal reasons, or maybe they have a big family, they don’t have time. They might feel a little uncomfortable with people who have a different background, or who are just not good conversationalists. So there are not a lot of people who will do that. Some of them wouldn’t want the neighbours to see a big bus coming in and all that. They don’t want to bring so much attention to themselves; they don’t want to become attractions. On the other hand, people who are willing to interact with tourists have very meaningful conversations and they have a way of not making themselves an attraction. One thing for sure is that cameras just wouldn’t work. When people ask whether they may take pictures, I say you just have to do it with discretion. But if someone wants to go into a farmhouse with a camera or something, they wouldn’t be allowed. I always explain to people that you can take pictures of things like quilts, but the Old Order Mennonites don’t want themselves to be part of the picture. When I talk to people who are interested, I get a feel for them. Sometimes I think to myself: I am not sure I want to take these people there because I just think their motivation is wrong. I am sort of a screener. Sometimes if I feel good about people, I may give them the phone numbers of my Old Order Mennonite friends to let them call each other directly (Interview with Anthony, 2013-09-26).

**Barbara – “Most of the times, they will ask me first”:**

Barbara is the owner of one tourism business in St. Jacobs. She identifies herself as a modern Mennonite affiliated with the Mennonite Conference of Eastern Canada. Her parent’s generation is not part of the Old Order Mennonite group; they belong to the Markham Mennonites, who allow members to drive black cars. Her parents are still with the Markham Mennonite group. She is the only one who decided to leave the church because she thought it was not necessary to live so conservatively. She operated her business for almost 20 years. She told
me: “in most of the cases tourists are friendly and respectful but they still ask a lot of questions. A lot of them think that there is a Mennonite village, but there isn’t. Mennonites just live amongst everybody else. There are quite a few Mennonites who sell their produce at the market. They are ok with tourists because it is an income for them. But they don’t like having their pictures taken, which still happens all the time. They usually turn their heads so tourists don’t see them on the camera. Most of the time, they will ask me first what is appropriate and what is not before doing anything” (Interview with Barbara, 2013-09-20).

**Ben – “St. Jacobs tourism is a fine line between people being interested and those being intrusive”:**

Ben works in the tourism business in St. Jacobs and he also identifies himself as a modern Mennonite. He told me that he wishes that tourism in St. Jacobs did not go in the direction of commodifying Old Order Mennonite identity because the main purpose of tourism is to let tourists understand how to act properly with Old Order Mennonite people. Then he said: “I think we are very judicious about advertising. It is not the main thing for the Mennonites. I think it is also important to show that we respect them. We always make a point of saying that we respect the Mennonites. But then, of course, you get a variety of opinions. Especially, if you have a lot of people at Sunday church service taking pictures and all that, it makes them a little uncomfortable. But after all I think St. Jacobs tourism is a fine line between people being interested and those being intrusive” (Interview with Ben, 2013-09-20).

**Tourists Seeking Authenticity and Social Interaction**

In the last section, I demonstrated that tourism in St. Jacobs has assumed a positive role in guiding tourists and regulating their behaviour. It is important to recognize that even though they are geared towards economic profit, most local tourist businesses still avoid excessively promoting, advertising and commercializing Mennonite identity in publicity. However, these attempts to remain low-keyed have not prevented local and international tourists from coming to St. Jacobs. Many of them wish to gain knowledge about the Mennonites through tourism, and many of them are also eager to establish social
interactions with the locals. I was permitted to travel with different groups of tourists to an Old Order Mennonite farm with a local guide. The tourists I met were of different ages, genders, nationalities and had different cultural backgrounds. However, regardless of their differences, what all tourists have in common is that they are all considered “outsiders” to the Old Order Mennonite community. Another commonality is the questions many of them have about the Old Order Mennonites in their minds and they choose to tour St. Jacobs to find answers to their questions. Through my research, I found that because of the reinforced idea that Old Order Mennonites live the “old-school” lifestyle and reject modern technology, even the details of the most ordinary everyday practice of the Old Order Mennonite people could potentially trigger tourists’ inquiry. Such questions posed by tourists include: “how do the Old Order Mennonites cook”, “how do they do their laundry,” “how do they communicate with the outside world,” “how do they live their lives without technology,” “where do the Old Order Mennonite women work” and so on.

A tour to the Old Order Mennonite farm takes approximately one hour and a half. Normally, the tourist guide will provide a brief introduction of the lifestyle, beliefs, traditions and history of the Old Order Mennonites on the way to the farm. Upon reaching the farm, the guide will introduce the basic information about that particular farm such as the acreage and the crops. Then visitors will tour the maple bush and see the equipment used to produce maple syrup. After introducing the procedure of maple syrup production, as well as how to distinguish different kinds of maple syrup, the guide will take the group to the sheds where the owners of the farm parked their buggies, often referred to as the “garage”. There the guide illustrates the use of different kinds of buggies and answers questions from the tourists. Finally, the group will be led to the shop at one side of the house where many kinds of maple syrup produce are displayed for sale. If interested, tourists can buy whatever they want from the shop to have a taste or purchase as a souvenir. The whole tour is both relaxing and informative for tourists. They can enjoy the beautiful country scenery and at the same time learn about the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle (Figure 12).
Figure 12 Tourists Enjoy the Scenery of St. Jacobs. Photo by Mingyuan Zhang

Many tourists express their excitement and satisfaction of experiencing the authentic lifestyle of the Old Order Mennonites by actually paying a visit to the farm to see where and how they live. The McKinley couple from a nearby town in Southwest Ontario told me that they used to come to the St. Jacobs area very often ten years ago because their friend was a farmer and he always bought farming equipment from here. In the area where the couple live, there are also many Mennonites, but the McKinleys do not communicate with their Mennonite neighbours very often. They participate in tourism activities in St. Jacobs because they want to learn more about the Old Order Mennonites and experience authentic Mennonite culture. And they believe that touring the farm will be a good way to experience the real life of the Old Order Mennonite people. Another couple from Norway told me that they are very surprised to see that in such a globalized and modernized world, there are still people who insist on maintaining such a plain lifestyle. They see the experience of touring an Old Order Mennonite farm as very interesting and educational for their children because during the tour they can not only see life on the farm but they can also participate in it. They also believe that it is important for their children to learn about different ways of life. Another family from Vancouver bought some maple candies from the farm shop and told me that they thought it was very meaningful to buy those candies from this farm because the candies are
souvenirs that would always remind them of the vivid experience of touring the Old Order Mennonite farm. They said that they learned so much about the Mennonites through this tour. A group of Chinese students who participated in the farm tour expressed their surprise at seeing such a slow-pace lifestyle. They were very happy to have an opportunity to tour the farm and they believed that they had some really authentic experience of the Old Order Mennonite way of living.

As we can see from tourists’ testimonies, many of them used the concept of authenticity to describe their tourist experiences. As I argued in Chapter Two, the concept of authenticity is often associated with the past, the primitive other, and in opposition to modernity. Consistently, the Old Order Mennonites lifestyle is often generalized as contrary to modernity, and as representations of the nostalgic past. The Old Order Mennonite people do not need to dress up in costumes to attract tourists; however, the simple fact of their presence near the city and their horses-and-buggies that share the roads with automobiles create a scene that is fascinating to tourists. Many tourists come to St. Jacobs with a desire to seek authentic Old Order Mennonite culture that is opposite to “the modern society.” In that sense, the experience of touring the Old Order Mennonite farm certainly will not disappoint them because it is so easy to capture the image of Old Order Mennonite women dressed in traditional long dresses and coverings passing by in a horse-and-buggy, or Old Order Mennonite men in their hats working in the fields. Many tourists express their feelings about touring the farm afterwards with a more reinforced idea that the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle symbolizes a reclusive sanctuary away from modernity. They view life in a so-called modern society and the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle as a binary in which the two ends contradict each other. And without doubt, most tourists still prefer a “modern” way of life. For example, a lady from India told me: “I had such a good experience! But it made me wonder that it seems that they only work to meet basic needs. The life on the farm seems boring and less sophisticated, or less advanced and I would never want to live there!” A couple from Barrie, Ontario joked around after the tour: “Now, do you still want to be a farmer?” “Nope!” A couple from Newfoundland discussed their touring experience in the following way: “I cannot imagine living a life like this! But I guess they are happy with it! Isn’t that enough?” A lady from Kitchener said: “Oh God, I will never become an Old Order Mennonite! I love
my cellphone, my laptop, my iPod and music, and TV!” As we can see from the fieldwork observations above, the tourist experience is more about how much tourists learn about themselves, rather than about what they learn to understand and appreciate about the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle.

Since all the tourists have been told beforehand that they are not supposed to take photos of Old Order Mennonite people, most tourists will just take photos of the rural farming landscape, the horses-and-buggies and the maple syrup bush. They might also take a quick snapshot of the buggies passing by without anybody noticing. However, it seems to me that the restriction on using cameras increases the desire of tourists to establish more social interactions with the Old Order Mennonite people. Many of them try to start a conversation with the Mennonites when they buy their products from the shop. However, most of the conversations finish before they even start since tourists are not given a lot of time to interact with the Old Order Mennonites. Another reason is that both the tourism business and the host Old Order Mennonite farm owners arrange the tour in a way to minimize human interactions to avoid overly commercializing the Old Order Mennonite identity. The farm that agreed to take tourists in for a tour several times in a day is also the home of the host Old Order Mennonite people. Hence, they designed the tour route with a clear distinction between private and public space. The maple sugar bush, the field, the yard and the shop are public spaces, while the rest are private. As a result, many tourists are left with more questions than answers after the tour finishes. An hour and a half is not enough time for the guides to answer all the tourists’ questions and many tourists told me that they wished they could have more time and interactions with the Old Order Mennonite people. However, as I discussed in the first section of this chapter, many Old Order Mennonite people have expressed their uneasiness and discomfort when subjected to the curiosity of outsiders. Therefore, the tour plays out a basic difference in the expectations of the guests and the hosts: the tourists are more interested in interacting with the local people; while the Old Order Mennonites are more interested in selling their products to tourists in order to make a living.

What is also worth mentioning is that the tourism experience does not finish after the farm tour is over. Tourists often revisit the memory of their tourism experiences
afterwards by looking at the photos they take or posting and sharing their travel strategy on social media, which makes tourists not only learners but also knowledge disseminators. Since tourists as learners gain new knowledge during their travel and bring the knowledge back home, tourism should be seen as one major avenue to generating information and knowledge. For people who have never been to St. Jacobs, the narratives of tourists who have actually been there have become the most authentic account. Therefore, the representations of tourists in many ways shape other people’s understandings of a certain tourism destination. During my fieldwork, I found that many tourists become even more confused about the Old Order Mennonites after the tour, since it is impossible to introduce all relevant information of the Old Order Mennonite people within a short period of time. Furthermore, since tourists seldom have the opportunity to interact with Old Order Mennonite people themselves, they are left with a strong impression that the Old Order Mennonite people are “reserved” “shy” or even “mysterious”. Therefore, many descriptions relayed by tourists might not be a trustworthy account of Old Order Mennonite day-to-day lives. For example, one Chinese tourist wrote the following about his tourism experiences: “I went to St. Jacobs near Waterloo last weekend. St. Jacobs is a small town where there has zero divorce rate, since the Old Order Mennonite people live there.” Another tourist wrote in her blog: “The Old Order Mennonites in St. Jacobs are very conservative and most of them live in remote rural areas. They do not have any appliance requiring electricity. Most of them are showing a serious face, revealing the indifference of separation from the world.” Tourists’ narratives such as these can disseminate inaccurate knowledge about the Old Order Mennonite people and reinforce stereotypes.

Old Order Mennonites’ Participation in Tourism: Risk and Opportunity

As I have noted in Chapter Two, none of the tourism events are initiated by Old Order Mennonites themselves because the Old Order Mennonites have no intention of advertising and promoting their own culture as an attraction. Instead, all the tourism activities are mediated and organized by local business owners, many of whom are modern Mennonites, with direct or indirect Old Order Mennonite participation. In this section, I will discuss the Old Order Mennonites’ role in tourism activities, as well as the risk and opportunity that tourism has brought to the Old Order Mennonite community.
Without doubt, tourism activities, and especially those related to the Old Order Mennonites inevitably emphasize the Old Order Mennonite identity, which has created some unpleasant encounters between the tourists and the local community. However, the thriving business of tourism also creates more economic opportunity for the Old Order Mennonite people. Many of them see tourism as a way to generate side incomes for the family.

A small proportion of Old Order Mennonite families participate in tourism activities directly by hosting farm tours and catering food with the assistance of tourism businesses. Since I elaborated on encounters between tourists and Old Order Mennonites during farm tours in the previous section, I will focus on the second type of direct participation in tourism activities – catering – in this section. Catering mainly serves tourists who are interested in having a taste of Mennonite homemade dishes. However, it is not advertised in any tourist promotional products. Instead, it is only mediated by local modern Mennonites who have connections with Old Order Mennonite families who are willing to earn extra income by providing homemade food and inviting tourists to their homes. Groups of tourists will go to the kitchen and the Old Order Mennonite family will put out a big dining table. The price for each tourist ranges from fifteen to twenty dollars. Different from the farm tour experiences, catering activities can provide tourists with more chances to establish social interactions with the Old Order Mennonite people. Tourists will have a real opportunity to sit down with the Old Order Mennonite family and have a conversation with them, as well as to learn about the community. Anthony is one of the guides who is able to make such arrangements. He told me that there used to be three families he knew that were willing to provide catering service, but currently there are only two. It began with his personal connections with those families but then he received more requests from tourists to have a meal with the Old Order Mennonites. However, great hospitality comes hand in hand with risk. Anthony told me several incidents that he came across with tourists:

Once, we went over the covered bridge on the way to a farm, and there was a buggy there. And I cautioned the tourists to approach it ‘with discretion’, but the group just run up to the buggy. Woo…most of the tourists have a view of religion that is different from the Old Order Mennonites. So sometimes the tourists will press the Old Order Mennonites about ideas, like saying ‘don’t you
think you should do this and that’. That is why not everyone is engaged in a pleasant conversation. We hope they can share each other’s experiences and ideas, instead of pressing on ideas. There was a lady in another group. She asked me if she could take pictures and I said I am sure it would be okay, as long as she avoided taking photos of the Old Order Mennonite people. But after we were in the kitchen and finished the meal, she went to take pictures of every room in their house. Once a principal of a Mennonite school came to me and said: ‘could you tell people not to take pictures of the children and let them know that the schools are not open to tours?’ (Interview with Anthony, 2013-09-26).

Other Old Order Mennonite families who directly participate in tourism activities also expressed to me their concerns about the potential risk and opportunity of engaging with an increasing number of tourists. Anna lives on a farm that regularly receives tourists. She has been living there for more than ten years since she got married. She told me that the tourists have been there longer than the time she had lived there. In fact, tourists have been coming for more than twenty years. It was not her decision to agree to accept tourists. Her husband’s family have been working together with a local tourism business for quite a long time. She told me that the main reason for allowing tourists to their farm is to sell their products from the farm directly. They decided to let tourists in also because they wanted more people to know about Jesus. The income from tourism is absolutely a side income for them. She confirmed that the tourism business is totally separated from her farm, and they only made money from the things that tourists buy from their shop on the farm. As a mother, she confided that she had concerns about the worldly influences that tourists bring. However, she is also confident that as a qualified parent, she can raise her children properly by following the Old Order Mennonite tradition. When asked about general attitudes towards tourists, Anna said:

Most people are polite and they do respect us a lot. Some people want to take photos with us and I would just say ‘no, thank you’. Most of the time it is a quite enjoyable experience with tourists coming from all over the world. But we do have negative experiences, I would rather not say because I don’t want to complain. There will be at least five groups of tourists come each day when our farm is open to them. They don’t really interrupt our chores too much. I think if tourists are willing to pay money to the guides to come to our farm, they must be interested enough to learn about us. We are too close to the city, so I guess that is one of the reasons why we attract lots of tourists here (Interview with Anna, 2013-8-13).
Robert and Richard told me the following about their experiences and attitudes toward St. Jacob’s tourism in our interviews:

**Robert**: Once we had an unexpected German visitor, probably a tourist, to our Sunday church service. We were all surprised to see him there because we had no idea how and why he found out where our church is. He tried to speak to us in German and he was very loud. We considered his behaviour very rude. We don’t really participate in tourism at St. Jacobs. Although we occasionally sell things in the market. This is what other people do. The Amish people take part in tourism more in some states in America, like Pennsylvania and Ohio. We just live our own lives. As long as we respect each other, I am ok with it. We cannot change other people and we do not advertise (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-04).

**Richard**: Many of them want a photo with me. But I would say we are really not here for that. We are here just to sell our products and make a living. Nothing has really made me uncomfortable because we are Christians. But there was one guy saying to me ‘God is not trustworthy’, and he wanted to talk us out of believing in God. He thinks God is useless and asked me if he could be a Mennonite without believing in God. I think it is such a stupid question (Interview with Richard, 2013-09-19).

Besides direct ways of participation in tourism activities, many Old Order Mennonite families participate in the tourism economy indirectly. From this perspective, the thriving of tourism has created extra business opportunities for the Old Order Mennonite people. Many of the participants of my research told me that their vegetables and flowers are very popular among nearby city residents or small-scale food businesses. Another prominent example of Old Order Mennonites’ indirect participation in tourism is the sale of Mennonite quilts as tourism souvenir. Since quilting is considered to be a Mennonite tradition, many souvenir stores at St. Jacobs sell quilts that are handmade by Mennonite ladies. The price for one quilt ranges from 500 dollars to almost 2000 dollars, which can be a major extra income for Old Order Mennonite families, as one business owner told me:

Many businesses just call Mennonite women to see if somebody is interested in quilting for the business. And if they do a good job, we will start from there. Right now we have probably between six and ten ladies who do the work. They do their work at home, mostly in winters when they are less busy with the garden and that type of thing, then we pick everything up. My partner and I do the color coordinating, we choose fabrics and patterns and we take it to the ladies. We never keep track of their work, but from start to finish, from choosing
your fabric to everything, we say about 1000 hours or a couple of months. Most of the ladies are married. We have one mother and daughter team. The daughter is not married and she lives at home with her mom. When there is shortage in stock, we sell one and we make one. The ladies generally have no problem with participating in this business since they always do their other things first. Their families will always take priority (Interview with Barbara, 2013-09-20).

As we can see from the business owner’s narrative, many Old Order Mennonite women choose to participate in tourism activities in such indirect ways. Since quilts are very popular in the market, many Mennonite ladies keep track of the market price of different patterns and fabrics of quilts each year. Figure 13 shows a quilt auction in the Waterloo area. Many Old Order Mennonite women attended the auction with their family members, not to buy any quilts, but to make note of the final selling price of every quilt. By doing so, they show a strong business sense because they can obtain information about which patterns and colors of the quilts are in trend on the market each year. In conclusion, thriving tourism industries can create new business opportunities such as quilting for many Old Order Mennonite families. Such means of indirect participation in tourism generates less concern about “worldly influences” brought by the intensified engagement with tourists.
Conclusion

In this section, I discussed the roles that tourism business owners, tourists and Old Order Mennonites play in the St. Jacobs tourism industry. I argue that tourism business owners play an important role in mediating and regulating tourists’ behaviour and activities. While tourists who are curious about the Old Order Mennonites are mostly respectful, their intensified curiosity sometimes inevitably puts the Old Order Mennonite people in an uncomfortable spot. Tourists seek authentic Old Order Mennonite cultural experiences and social interactions with the local people. However, their behaviour can be intrusive and rude to the Old Order Mennonite people. Finally, I argue that tourism in St. Jacobs is a double-edged sword that brings risk and opportunities at the same time to the Old Order Mennonite community. In the next chapter, I will explore the impacts of tourism on the Old Order Mennonite community in St. Jacobs from the aspect of the changes in and around the village over time.
CHAPTER FIVE

“For Us, the Town Collapsed!”: Landscape Changes in St. Jacobs

Introduction

On September 2, 2013, after a devastating fire accident burned down one main building at St. Jacobs farmers’ market, journalists reported the accident as follows:

*The Globe and Mail*: “An overnight fire has destroyed the beloved St. Jacobs farmers’ market building. The town of approximately 2000 people in the heart of Ontario’s Mennonite country, is a popular tourist attraction with thousands coming to visit every week. The destruction of the St. Jacobs farmers’ market is a terrible loss to the Waterloo region. St. Jacobs played such an important role within the community and contributed greatly to the local economy. It is something that is iconic, and there will be a loss in business and revenue tourism.” (Kauri and Bradshaw 2013)

*The London Free Press*: “Canada’s largest year-round farmers’ market was gutted by a spectacular early morning fire that caused as much as $2 million damage. It is a devastating loss for St. Jacobs, the Township of Woolwich, the region and the agricultural community. The St. Jacobs Market is an iconic site in the Township and is an established, well-known destination for tourism across the province.” (QMI Agency 2013)

As we can see above, media coverage of the market fire accident describes St. Jacobs farmers’ market as an “icon” that is focal to the economy of the local community because of the huge profit it generates. St. Jacobs farmers’ market as the major tourism attraction, together with other tourism businesses in St. Jacobs, are believed to have revived the small town successfully. As Fred Dahms (1991) argues, St. Jacobs has evolved from a traditional rural service centre into a thriving and successful tourist destination, which has rejuvenated the otherwise declining village. Along with this process, the landscape of St. Jacobs has been dramatically changed. As I discussed in the last section of the previous chapter, even though tourism has exposed the Old Order Mennonite community to intensified attention from tourists, tourism development indeed has brought more economic opportunities for both business owners and the Old Order Mennonite community. However, landscape changes in St. Jacobs have altered the function of the town, which has further influenced people’s perception and understanding of the local
landscape. For people who gain profits from tourism businesses, the thriving of St. Jacobs as a tourist destination suggests positive change; while for local residents or Old Order Mennonites who do not participate in tourism activities as much, their understanding of the tourism landscape in St. Jacobs may turn out to be the opposite. As Bender (2002) argues, the engagement with landscape is historically particular, imbricated in social relations and deeply political (2002:104). In St. Jacobs and its nearby area, the Old Order Mennonite people’s engagement with the tourism landscape is both shaped by social relations and also represents and influences social relations. In this chapter, I intend to explore the local community’s attitude, perception and embodiment of the town of St. Jacobs in historical and contemporary contexts. I argue that the town of St. Jacobs has been transformed from a traditional rural service centre to a tourism town, which has further influenced the everyday experience of the landscape for tourists and the Old Order Mennonite community.

**Perceptions on Tourism Landscape**

In the narratives of Robert, tourism developed very fast in St. Jacobs:

I was born in 1951 on this farm. My family has been on this farm since 1900, at least the past three generations, and our children and grandchildren all live on this farm. We are really close to St. Jacobs. Tourism in St. Jacobs was developed by the guy named Milo Shantz. It was mainly the work of one or two people. Milo Shantz is a modern Mennonite and he owns the Mercedes Corp. After he established the Stone Crock Restaurant, everything just started to develop very fast. He also has money in some other things such as the St. Jacobs Outlets, Antique shops and the Holiday Inn. Before that, there were many stores in the town of St. Jacobs such as a drug store, a dairy, a blacksmiths shop, but many of them were closed. Milo advertised the whole tourism thing. In the daytime, we can hear trains coming. That must be the tourist train. Milo is really a rich guy and more of a businessman. He got this idea from the Amish in Ohio, in the United States. There, the Amish open restaurants and they just attract people by being there and cooking. There are many opponents of it, but tourism just grew and developed. Another big thing is the Home Hardware. It was not started by the Mennonites. But it simply mushroomed and took land from several farms close to the village (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).

For people who are in favour of tourism development in St. Jacobs, the town was given a new life of prosperity. However, for the Old Order Mennonite community who are receiving an unprecedented amount of attention, their understandings of the tourism
landscape of St. Jacobs show an opposite perspective. Richard has been selling his product at the St. Jacobs farmers’ market for eight years after he retired from farming. He has five sons and four daughters and all of them stayed with the Old Order Mennonite church. His ancestors came from Lancaster in Pennsylvania. He is the youngest son of his generation. His father and his grandfather all lived on the farm where he lives right now. When I asked Richard about the influences of tourism in St. Jacobs, he told me in the interview:

_Mingyuan:_ Do you observe any changes to St. Jacobs after tourism developed?

_Richard:_ Too many people, St. Jacobs is blooming. But for me, it collapsed. Big changes happened here after tourism. It used to have a cream shop, a machine shop, a grocery store, feed mill and a blacksmith to shoe the horses. It used to be a farming town. But after tourism took over, we don’t use the town that much anymore. We go to Elmira or other nearby towns (Interview with Richard, 2013-09-19).

Richard stated that St. Jacobs has lost its function as a service centre for Old Order Mennonite farmers like him. In his point of view, the success of tourism did not revive the town. Instead, the town collapsed after it lost most of its old functions. In other words, to businesses and tourists in St. Jacobs, tourism may have rejuvenated the town; however, to Old Order Mennonite farmers, it has not saved the town from declining. In my interview with Diana, she revealed similar understandings about tourism in St. Jacobs:

_After they built the express highway (referred to as Highway No. 85 that connects Elmira, St. Jacobs, Highway No.7 and No.8, and finally to Highway 401), tourism has been developing. St. Jacobs used to be a town that was so nice, quiet and peaceful. But now I think it is terrible there. They are just ripp ing off the tourists. Things are too expansive there. When we need anything, like groceries, we go to Elmira. We don’t go to St. Jacobs. There is nothing there that interests us. We don’t want to be there and be seen as tourism attractions (Interview with Diana, 2013-07-11)."

However, when I talked with a few local residents in town I heard different opinions. They disagree with my Old Order Mennonite participants’ argument that “the town has collapsed” because they believe that the town had been withered for a long time before tourism began to develop. They argue that it is not tourism that has broken the town, but the recession before the mid-1970s and that the Old Order Mennonites in this region had stopped using the town of St. Jacobs before tourism developed. However, regardless of
which side of the story is more credible, my argument is that for Old Order Mennonite people in this region, tourism cannot revive the town of St. Jacobs since it cannot restore its bygone function as a farming service centre. Additionally, the negative consequences that tourism has fostered, such as excessive attention and intrusive curiosity, may have further distanced Old Order Mennonite people from the town. Gary is a middle-aged Old Order Mennonite farmer with five children who owns a family farm close to St. Jacobs. His experience of living close to the town supports my argument:

Some people still use the bank and the hardware store in St. Jacobs, but nothing else. Before tourism, people went there for groceries, doctors, and so on. They also went to the mill and the school there. But now most of the time, people just drive through it. We always do our grocery shopping in Elmira now, or when necessary, we may take a bus to Waterloo (Interview with Gary, 2013-08-15).

To conclude, the experience of tourism development in St. Jacobs varies according to people with different standpoints. According to Anthony, who has been working in the tourism business for almost twenty years, the positive influence of tourism is the thriving of businesses. But the increase in tourism also pressures the Old Order Mennonite people by putting them under the spotlight. Some of them still actively contribute to the ongoing construction of the tourism landscape, while others choose not to participate any more. Anthony told me:

What happens to St. Jacobs is that businesses open. If they are successful, this is the spot for business. If they close down, there will be new businesses coming in. There are some businesses that have been here for quite a long time, but there are some changes. There is a new place down the street that makes its own beer. They opened, and then they had to close for four weeks because they ran out of stock! [Laugh] But some people come and say, well, they miss certain things. We used to have a blacksmith across the street. He passed away so that is something different. Some people are losing the feeling that was here at one time because they think it is becoming too commercialized. It is, but it still attracts a lot of people because it is so nicely located in between Toronto, London and Waterloo. Internationally, people also hear about St. Jacobs. There used to be a mill here that the Old Order Mennonites used. But of course, some of the Old Orders have left the market and started to sell things from their homes now. That is why you see a lot of signs at the end of their farm lanes advertising summer sausage, vegetables, flowers and so on. They do that instead of being at the market. The market used to be just on the right side, where the antique market is right now. At that point, the Mennonites used to come a little bit more. Then the market grew bigger and bigger. So there are still some Old Orders at the market there, but not the percentage that there used to be. They do not want to come to
the market. I guess it is because they think they are becoming an attraction as opposed to providing services. People indiscriminately taking pictures, and maybe intruding on them and asking them questions and so on, makes them uncomfortable. That is my guess though. But I think many of them are still quite successful at their businesses (Interview with Anthony, 2013-09-26).

In Anthony’s narratives, some families have decided to retreat from the St. Jacobs farmers’ market. Their refusal to continue participating in the construction of tourism in St. Jacobs demonstrates that some Old Order Mennonite families might have negative experiences with it. However, the example below will show that participation in tourism may actually change the lifestyle of the Old Order Mennonites. Roselee is an Old Order Mennonite young lady who has been working for a business in the St. Jacobs farmers’ market for almost eight years. She helps a vendor who sells farm produce and this is only one of her part-time jobs. Her other job is cleaning people’s houses. She told me that the owners of the business that she is working for used to be with the Old Order Mennonite church. They joined the Markham Mennonite church after the business grew because of the inconvenience of using the horse-and-buggy; the Markham Mennonite church allows its members to drive black cars. She told me:

This is not my own business. I only work for them. It takes me 10-15 minutes to get here, with a car. Most of the time, I can get a ride here. I come with a friend who has a car. If I come by horse-and-buggy, it will take one hour. The owners of the business have their own recipe for the products they sell here. When they started this business in the farmers’ market, they were Old Order Mennonites. Now they have joined other groups of Mennonites and my guess would be it’s because they need to drive in order to bring so many things for their business. It is inconvenient with the horse and buggy. It becomes very very busy in the market, especially from May to October when lots of tourists come to St. Jacobs. There are a lot of changes happening here. It becomes a lot busier. More people come here. For families who have a business, it is a good thing I guess. But for the locals it is not a good place. There are no grocery stores here anymore. There are only tourist shops (Interview with Roselee, 2013-09-19).

Sharing the Road with Cars

It was a sunny day with a cool breeze. When I woke up in the afternoon after a nap, everyone was working outside. The wind chimes outside the window of my attic room were ringing. In the forenoon, Judith and I got fresh vegetables and flowers from the garden, and made ten cans of applesauce. After Judith mowed the lawn of the orchard,
she came back in the house and asked me: “Mingyuan, do you want to walk with me to the mailbox to get the mail?” The mailbox is at the end of the gravel lane near the road. Newspapers are usually dropped on the ground in a plastic wrap, and mail is put into the mailbox. While Judith and I were walking towards the mailbox, she said:

The road in front of our farm was newly paved within the last five years. Before that, every time I walked to the mailbox at the end of our lane, there was no traffic. But now, after they paved the road, there is way more traffic and many big trucks use this road too. When I walk to the end of the lane now, I hardly have a chance of seeing no traffic passing by during my walk (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-25).

With more and more traffic, driving a horse-and-buggy on the road can be dangerous for the Old Order Mennonite people since automobiles and buggies share the same road. Even though most of the roads in this region have a separate gravel lane for the horse-and-buggy, as well as road signs reminding drivers of slow moving vehicles, driving a horse-and-buggy can still be dangerous, especially at night. A horse-and-buggy ride feels more bumpy, dusty and noisy than it looks. In the open buggy that most young people drive, it can be cold and windy even in the summer. The construction of highways and the increasing amount of traffic in the region of St. Jacobs can potentially cause changes in the Old Order Mennonite community. One example is that the Old Order Mennonite community stopped using one of their meetinghouses near the city of Waterloo, and one of the reasons was the construction of Highway No. 85. According to Horst (2000), the church is the first of the Old Order Mennonite meetinghouses in this area. The Old Order Mennonite people decided to stop using the meetinghouse because it is too close to the city with increased traffic, which was not compatible with horse-and-buggy travel (2000:25-26). Robert confirmed this story in our interviews:

There were horse-and-buggies hit by cars on the highways. They built the highway approximately 37 years ago. We don’t use that church anymore, partly because the transportation is too dangerous for us. The highways were built for speed. I have to admit that this area has accommodated us a lot, in terms of transportation, but it is still dangerous. To drive a horse-and-buggy with heavy traffic, you need some really faithful horses. For horses, if they know the community and area you are living in, they can find their way back home without too much effort (Interview with Robert, 2013-07-11).
The example above shows that landscape changes in the area of St. Jacobs have influenced the Old Order Mennonite community. These changes have become one important reason for the Old Order Mennonite people to stop using their old meetinghouse. Even though highway construction is not the direct consequence of tourism development, it has potentially facilitated the increase of tourism in St. Jacobs. Tourism brochures that advertise St. Jacobs highlight its convenient location among major Canadian and American cities by listing the estimated average driving time from those cities as the following: Buffalo – 2 hours; London – 1 hour; Niagara – 1.75 hours; Ottawa – 6 hours; Rochester – 4 hours; Stratford – 45 minutes; Toronto – 1.5 hours. With more traffic coming to St. Jacobs for tourism, drivers of horse-and-buggies need to learn to deal with more complicated traffic conditions on the roads. Matthew told me that many people who drive cars or trucks do not understand how horses work, and thus, their driving behaviour can be dangerous to horse-and-buggies and their passengers:

> Many people just think horses can stop right away after people give them instructions. But horses are not machines that you can make them stop anytime. They need time to respond and react, and to process your instructions. We can drive buggies on the road here. But we have to understand the traffic and get used to it, because after all we are the minorities and we are the weird ones (Interview with Matthew, 2013-07-25).

As a matter of fact, traffic accidents with horse-and-buggies can be lethal. Judith’s brother was killed in a traffic accident. According to Judith, her brother was driving his horse-and-buggy at night when he was hit by a drunk driver. The driver saw a reflection of light on the buggy and followed the light. But the car was too fast and hit the buggy. When Judith recollected her memory about this tragic accident, her eyes were filled with tears. With the development of tourism in St. Jacobs, different kinds of automobile vehicles for business cargo, tourists or residents from surrounding cities gather at St. Jacobs, especially during the days when the farmers’ market is open. It is not hard to imagine that driving a horse-and-buggy in the region has become more risky than before. As we can see from above, changes brought by highway construction and tourism in the region of St. Jacobs can further influence the Old Order Mennonite people’s everyday experiences of engaging with the local landscape.
At the Forefront of City Expansion

Raymond Williams (1973) acknowledges that “country” and “city” are very powerful words. He argues that “city”, as a great human achievement, represents a distinctive form of civilization of learning, communication, light, noise, worldliness and ambition, while “country” symbolizes a natural way of life of peace, innocence, simple virtue, backwardness, ignorance and limitation (Williams 1973:1). St. Jacobs is publicized as the most popular rural destination in Ontario since the small town is surrounded by the gorgeous scenery of a farming landscape (See Figure 14). Without a doubt, people who visit St. Jacobs for its peaceful countryside atmosphere automatically associate meanings of the “country” as Raymond Williams describes them to the rural landscape of this small town. However, St. Jacobs’s location is at the forefront of Waterloo and Kitchener’s city expansion. Being close to the city provides convenient conditions for tourism development of St. Jacobs. For the Old Order Mennonite families, it brings more customers from nearby cities to buy their farm produce; while at the same time, it might also bring unexpected visitors to their farm.
For Old Order Mennonites, a consequence of being too close to the city and the tourism town is that on some occasions, they get unexpected curious visitors on their farm. When asked about the reasons why some Old Order Mennonite farms are willing to open their farms to tourists, a tourism guide told me that those that are open to tourists are mostly because they are so close to the city that many unexpected visitors would show up on their farm and there was nothing they could do. But now if people are interested in learning more about the lifestyle of the Old Order Mennonite people, they can come with groups of tourists. There are certainly boundaries to how much one can see and do on their farms as a tourist.

Many Old Order Mennonite farms near St. Jacobs posted signs at the end of their laneways indicating the produce they sell directly from the farm. I spent four hours in the afternoon on an Old Order Mennonite farm near St. Jacobs on a regular working day and

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**Figure 14 Rural Landscapes Near St. Jacobs. Photo by Mingyuan Zhang**
witnessed around fifteen customers driving to the farm to buy produce such as fruits, vegetables, flowers, eggs, meat, summer sausage and so on. All of them lived in nearby towns or cities and paid special visits to the farm for farm produce. Lynn, the lady at the farm, told me that people from the city always come to her farm, then they introduce their friends to come to the farm too. They like the fresh fruits and vegetables from her garden because they think they are somehow better. She continued talking about customers from the city:

Most of the customers are polite, friendly and respectful. The worst thing that ever happened before was that one day when the whole family went to a harvest meeting, someone came to our house and stole six hundred dollars in cash. So after that, we would take money to the bank sooner. This was the worst consequence that had ever happened to us with possible outsiders (Interview with Lynn, 2013-08-16).

Further, being at the forefront of city expansion, there is not enough farming land for the Old Order Mennonite community in St. Jacobs. In Old Order Mennonite tradition, the youngest son of a family will get the family farm from his parents; while an older son will need to buy his own farm with financial assistance from his parents. As the population of the Old Order Mennonite community continues to grow, there is not enough farming land in this area. And the price of the remaining available farming land has been surging. Judith told me:

For us, agriculture is most important and that is what keeps us attached to the land. It is hard to maintain Old Order Mennonites if you don’t live and work in agriculture, because your lifestyle will change. You will need to have a car to go around, but we want to be closer to the land. Now it is harder to find farms to buy for the next generations in this region. Many of us moved to a newly established community in the North called Mount Forest. There are some families moving to Mexico, but not many. Some have started to move to Manitoulin Island, and there used to be no one farming there. Most of the people living there, I think, are the First Nations. And now, they are also building a new community way up north in Ontario. There are less than ten families there and they are still building everything from nothing. They are building their houses and barns, and planning to build a school and a meetinghouse too. There is a shuttle van that comes once a week to take people and the things they need back and forth (Interview with Judith, 2013-07-24).

From Judith’s narratives, it seems that the reason Mennonite people moved in the past still persists. As their ancestors did centuries ago, the Old Order Mennonite people are
still in search of sufficient farming land to maintain their way of living. In my fieldwork, I found that many young people from the Old Order Mennonite community worry about losing farmlands. Many of them explained to me that the expansion of nearby cities and towns has taken the land away from some family farms. To sum up, being close to the city has influenced the Old Order Mennonite people’s experience with the rural farming landscape in two outstanding ways. Firstly, the rural farming landscape is always associated with meanings that are opposite to the spirit of the city, which further stimulates the development of tourism and related businesses. Tourism in turn makes use of such sentiments that people attach to the rural landscape to attract more tourists. Secondly, the expansion of cities and towns inevitably encroach on the limited amount of arable farmland, which may cause great financial burdens to the Old Order Mennonite families who make their living through agriculture. Such financial pressures may push Old Order Mennonite families to seek new ways of earning money, such as participating in tourism activities, which will keep influencing the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle in its nuanced ways.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, I argued that the function of St. Jacobs has been transformed from a rural farming service centre to a tourism town. I discussed the Old Order Mennonite people’s understandings and experiences of the town’s change of function. And I argue that for people who are engaged in tourism businesses in St. Jacobs, tourism may have revived the town; however, for the local Old Order Mennonite community, especially those who do not actively participate in tourism businesses, the development of tourism cannot restore the old functions of St. Jacobs. Therefore, the town still loses its use for many Old Order Mennonites. Then I focused my discussion of landscape changes on the construction of highways and the increasing amount of traffic in this region. I argue that the increasing traffic from tourism in this region might potentially bring more risks to horse-and-buggy drivers. Such changes in landscape require local Old Order Mennonite people to be more careful with horse-and-buggy rides. In the last section, I discussed the influences of nearby cities to the rural landscape of St. Jacobs. I also highlighted the challenges of city expansion to the Old Order Mennonite community near St. Jacobs.
CHAPTER SIX

“Muss Gut!”: Where Do We Go Now?

“What sunshine is to flowers, smiles are to humanity. These are but trifles to be sure; but scattered along life’s pathway, the good they do is inconceivable.” – A quote from Judith’s notebook

When I said goodbye to my host family, I used the German words “Muss Gut” for farewell. The shape of the barn and silo of the Old Order Mennonite farm where I stayed in the summer for almost two months blurred in the mirror of the car. Even now, I can hear the sound of the wind chime and the melody of their hymns. In this last chapter, I will briefly summarize my main argument. Then, I will discuss the implications of my research for the anthropology of tourism.

“What do you think people will see how the Mennonites really live from tourism?”

At Judith’s family gathering, a Markham Mennonite lady asked me this question: “do you think people will see how the Mennonites really live from tourism?” I responded to her with a negative answer. Then she nodded. As I reach the end of my thesis, I wish that my research could answer the following two questions: what do tourists really learn from tourism in St. Jacobs about the Old Order Mennonites; and what do the Old Order Mennonite people really think about tourism.

I began this thesis by introducing the historical background of the Old Order Mennonite group who participated in my research, as well as the theoretical background on the anthropology of tourism that guided my research. Then I went on to argue that tourists are drawn to the Old Order Mennonites lifestyle because of the inaccurate generalizations and representations of Mennonite culture. In Chapters Three and Four, I challenged such inaccurate cultural generalizations and representations about the Old Order Mennonite identity from several aspects based on my experience and observation during my fieldwork. Then I continued my discussion about how tourism businesses in St. Jacobs managed and mediated tourism activities, how Old Order Mennonite people participate in tourism activities, as well as how tourists behave in tourism activities, in order to shed
light on what tourism means to different stakeholders who are involved. In Chapters Four and Five, I argued that for both local business owners and Old Order Mennonites, tourism development brings more economic opportunities; however, for the Old Order Mennonite people living near the area of St. Jacobs, who either directly participate in tourism or are indirectly involved in the tourism economy, tourism may potentially bring challenges to their traditional lifestyle and livelihood. Even though many Old Order Mennonite people hold no thoughts against tourism by saying “strangers are just friends we haven’t met” or enjoy meeting and communicating with new people from different parts of the world, most of them told me that they have experienced the feeling of powerless in their encounters with tourists. In Chapter Five, I also discussed how tourism has influenced and changed the landscape of the Old Order community near St. Jacobs.

Tourists come to St. Jacobs in search of an “authentic” Old Order Mennonite lifestyle, but the tourists are influenced by the stereotypical impressions they have in their minds before they even arrive. They seek authenticity by touring the Old Order Mennonite farm, tasting the Old Order Mennonite foods, buying products or souvenirs that they think are made by the Old Order Mennonites, or trying to establish social interactions or initiate conversations with the Old Order Mennonite people they meet. However, due to the limits on tourism, most of the knowledge tourists have gained is superficial.

I would conclude that tourists do not see how the Mennonites really live by touring St. Jacobs due to the following reasons. First of all, tourists lack the understanding that the Old Order Mennonites in St. Jacobs are only participating in tourism related activities to supplement their farming livelihood, and that the Old Order Mennonites have no intention of participating in promoting, advertising and commercializing their own culture and identity. Secondly, tourists lack the understanding that the town of St. Jacobs as a regional centre is not used by the Old Order Mennonite people as it used to be because it no longer provides farming services to the nearby Old Order Mennonite community. Thirdly, Old Order Mennonite families who directly participate in tourism activities have various concerns about intensified encounters with outsiders and they create a clear line between the private and the public to minimize the negative influences. Therefore, what tourists learn from a short period of tourism activities hardly covers the
whole picture of the life of the Old Order Mennonite people. Finally, it is also difficult for many tourists to realize the feeling of powerlessness that the Old Order Mennonite people constantly experience from living in a region of great tourism popularity. Tourists do not realize that their mindless behaviours such as aiming their cameras at the Old Order Mennonites, or challenging Mennonite religious beliefs based on secular standards can be intrusive. As a result, many Old Order Mennonite people have chosen to step away from direct tourism encounters. Tourists fail to understand that Old Order Mennonites are just normal people who make their living by farming and add a bit of extra income by providing products and services to tourists. This also explains why many tourists who want to experience authentic Old Order Mennonite culture in St. Jacobs feel that the town is too commercialized to maintain its authenticity.

This leads me to expand on the question that the Markham Mennonite lady asked me: Are the Old Order Mennonites “authentic”? Do tourists gain an “authentic” view of the Old Order Mennonites during the farm tours, or do they only see what MacCannell (1976) calls the “front” and even when tourists are allowed to dine in an Old Order Mennonite home are they only experiencing a “staged back region”? However, in Chapter Two, I asked: what does authenticity mean to local people? Do the local people understand authenticity in the same way as the tourists? According to Chambers, authenticity means that local people they have power to control their own affairs:

My sense of the authentic is that it occurs under conditions in which people have significant control over their affairs, to the extent that they are able to play an active role in determining how changes occur in their social settings. In this view, all cultures are dynamic by their very nature. Resistance to change is as much an act of deliberateness as is the will to adapt to new customs and practices. Authentic cultures might not be able to predict their futures or to act in a wholly independent manner but they have the wherewithal to play a significant role in participating in those processes that will shape their lives (2010:101).

While Nash (1977) argues that tourism is a “power imbalance” and a form of “imperialism” in which the local people are less productive and powerful, can we really describe the Old Order Community as either less productive or less powerful than others in the surrounding communities or tourists? As a matter of fact, the Old Order Mennonite community has been able to retain their lifestyle within an environment in which
everyone around them has different beliefs and values. They have continued their livelihood of farming when thousands of family farms in Ontario have disappeared. For example, when the Canadian economy is weak and the regular income they earn through farming is not enough, they have been able to use the tourist market to supplement their regular income. In doing so, they have increased the attraction they hold for tourists. In other words, Old Order Mennonites have been able to contribute to tourism and gain some of the benefits. On the other hand, life for Old Order Mennonites in the area of St. Jacobs is not perfect and some features of outside “progress” such as road construction, do have a negative impact. But this does not mean that the Old Order Mennonites are powerless or that they do not have any control over their own lives and lifestyles. They have been able to withstand the negative effects of tourism and gain some of the benefits at the same time. Therefore, if we go by Chambers’ definition of authenticity, I argue that the Old Order Mennonite people are authentic, and that the meaning of authenticity to the Old Order Mennonites is different from tourists’ understandings of authenticity.

Towards a Richer Understanding of Tourism and the Old Order Mennonite People

This thesis adds to the existing literature on tourism in anthropology by looking at what happens when a community that tries to live by its own religious standards finds itself the object of tourist curiosity. What is special about the relationship between tourism in St. Jacobs and the Old Order Mennonite community is that the Old Order Mennonite people living in the area do not need to conduct any performances to attract tourists. Unlike many other tourism sites that attract people due to their distinct cultures and traditions, the Old Order Mennonite people do not need to dress up in traditional costumes to attract tourists’ interests. They simply continue to wear their everyday clothes. Further, Old Order Mennonite people actually play a constructive and contributing role in tourism without advertising or promoting their culture. They have both directly and indirectly participated in and influenced tourism activities by continuing the way of life that motivated them to migrate to Ontario in the first place and by allowing tourists to catch a glimpse of that life. They take part in the capitalist system by selling the products they grow on their farms to people in the surrounding communities as well as to tourists at the market, by selling their quilts and other crafts in specialty shops and by selling their
processed foods on their farms. This means that St. Jacobs, tourism and the Old Order Mennonite community influence each other in complicated and dynamic ways. The implication of my research is that there is much more to tourism than seeing the host community and the tourists as a simple binary relationship of opposition. That is to say, it is important to attempt to grasp the mediating powers in between the opposing factors in order to reach a deeper understanding of the reciprocal influences on each side in the anthropology of tourism. In other words, even though we can recognize that some stakeholders hold more power in tourism encounters, we still should not assume that the local people are powerless. They are stakeholders too and their way of participating in tourism may influence the tourists as much as the more powerful stakeholders.

For scholars who are also interested in Old Order Mennonite people, I suggest that it is important to avoid understanding the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle as opposed to progress. Compared to urban lifestyles in Canada, the Old Order Mennonite way of living may seem very old-fashioned. However, from the perspective of a Chinese anthropology student who has been exposed to less-developed circumstances in the biggest developing country in the world, the Old Order Mennonite lifestyle is quite advanced in many aspects. Unlike tourists, it is important that anthropologists start their research without any preconceived judgement about where the group fits in the trajectory of progress and development. And this is also a solution to avoid fossilizing the identity of the researched group that is caused by binary thinking. Also, it is vital for future anthropological research, to try to understand the Old Order Mennonite people’s perspective from their own standpoint. When I approached one Old Order Mennonite lady in my fieldwork, she asked me: “why you want to do research with us? Because we are different?” As we can infer, the Old Order Mennonite people may perceive outsiders as people who only have ignorant curiosity without the motivation to gain a deeper understanding of their lifestyle. Even if as anthropologists, we can never entirely see the world through other people’s worldview, efforts should still be made to begin with their standpoint and perspective to gain a richer understanding of the people we research.
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MacCannell, Dean
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Appendices

Appendix A: Photocopy of the original magazine article in Japanese
Appendix B: Ethics Approval

Principal Investigator: Dr. Sherrie Larkin
File Number: 103850
Review Level: Full Board
Approved Local Adult Participants: 35
Approved Local Minor Participants: 0
Protocol Title: The Impact of Modern Tourism on Old Order Mennonite Communities in Rural Ontario
Department & Institution: Social Science/Anthropology, Western University
Sponsor:
Ethics Approval Date: May 24, 2013 Expiry Date: September 30, 2013

Documents Reviewed & Approved & Documents Received for Information:

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This is to notify you that The University of Western Ontario Research Ethics Board for Non-Medical Research Involving Human Subjects (NMREB) which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario has granted approval to the above named research study on the approval date noted above.

This approval shall remain valid until the expiry date noted above assuming timely and acceptable responses to the NMREB’s periodic requests for surveillance and monitoring information.

Members of the NMREB who are named as investigators in research studies, or declare a conflict of interest, do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on, such studies when they are presented to the NMREB.

The Chair of the NMREB is Dr. Riley Hinson. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00003094.

Signature

[Signatures]

Ethics Officer to Contact for Further Information

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