

# Growing Roots and Wings: Emergence of Mennonite Teens

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A plaque hanging in a school principal's office reads, "We give our children roots—and wings" (Bibby and Posterski, 1985:200). "In this maze of the modern world" both are needed but it is not always easy to find the right balance. We<sup>1</sup> examine first the roots, norms, and values of Mennonite teenagers, and then reflect on whether their roots prepare them adequately for life in the modern world. Growing well-grounded beliefs and values is the challenge, as the emerging generation of Mennonite teens leave their nests and fly.

## **Emerging Roots and Wings**

Bibby and Posterski (1985:3; 1992) conclude that today's teenagers place much importance on people and relationships. Since teenagers must find their own peer networks, this requires letting them go sufficiently so that they can try their wings. In their concern to instill values and roots, adults often fail to let young people grow up—they suppress emergence.

### **The Nature of Emergence**

In the rural past young people on farms learned farming, housekeeping and raising children while they grew up. Having their own farm, household and family represented a continuous transition into adulthood, ownership and parenthood which began early in life. Modernization has changed many things, including the rise of technology which requires more preparation and schooling. As the need for schooling has stretched into high school, college and further, the time between biological maturity and recognition of adult status has been lengthening. We have invented the term "adolescence," in which young people are neither children nor adults, to describe this new period of life (Bibby and Posterski, 1985:10). This creates new challenges.

The challenge for parents is that they want their children to adopt many of their values and roots, but schools have increasingly taken on the role of education which takes much natural direction out of their hands. Influence confined to off-hours at home does not leave as many natural opportunities for working and sharing together. Working parents and teens in school tend to become socialized in their respective environments, where the two often do not meet. To make up for lost time, there is pressure on parents to press their values and traditions, so they often become rule-enforcing tyrants. This does not naturally facilitate emergence. Thus, adults and their institutions can become suppressors of emergence rather than cooperate in facilitating changes.

Youth, on the other hand, sense that they are coming of age in "a period of history of unequalled scientific and technological progress, a period Orwell and Huxley envisioned would be characterized by revolutionary changes in values, relationships, and family structure" (Bibby and Posterski, 1985:175). They sense that they face times which no other generation has had to face. Bibby and Posterski (1985:176) suggest, however, that it is not a revolution, but a dramatic continuity between past and present. "Traditional values regarding friendship, love, freedom, alongside honesty, hard work, and consideration, continue to be of paramount importance in their high-tech age."

So, the problem is to what extent traditional roots are valued by Mennonite youth. What norms and values do they adhere to? At the same time, where is their sense of freedom to explore and where are their wings taking them? Like birds who have flown their nests, most learn to become adults. The question is, what does this look like today? Since social relationships are of prime importance to youth, what is the nature of these relationships? Finally, to what extent are youth prepared to fit into institutions and the workplace and become contributing members of society.

### **The Emerging Generation**

The norms of pre-war older persons born more than fifty years ago, are much stronger on ingroup identity, moral behavior, devotionalism, separation of church and state and religious beliefs than boomers and their offspring born since 1945 as seen in Table 1 (Kauffman and Driedger, 1991)<sup>2</sup> On the other

hand, boomers and “Muppies” (Mennonite Urban Professionals) score higher on social relationships related to political action and concern for racial justice. They want a more significant role for women in church leadership, and a more equal partnership in marriage. They are much more involved in memberships and use the media more. Values have changed from ingroup, normative relationships, to greater concern with social relationships including justice, politics and communication in a larger circle beyond the ingroup. Whereas, pre-boomers were concerned with staking down the flaps in their sacred canopy more tightly, boomers and their teens call for more fresh air (Berger, 1967). It is clearly a change from sectarianism to responsibility; from nonresistance to concerns for justice; from community solidarity to social networks. Note that the pendulum has already swung toward these teen values, because their parents in the 30-49 age bracket are much more like their teenagers than their grandparents over fifty years of age (Table 1).

Focusing specifically on teenagers in Table 1, we see in the topset of “Older Person’s values,” that except for moral behavior where one third scored high, only one in five or less scored high on the dozen scales listed. Ethnic identity (language use, endogamy, ingroup friends, use of Mennonite schools, organizations) and moral attitudes and behavior scales (drinking, smoking, dancing, use of drugs) measure traditional normative values where about half the older adults scored high. On the other hand, at the bottom of the table we see that under younger persons’ values, almost half of Mennonite teenagers score high on political action (congregational discussion of issues, supporting candidates from the pulpit, encouraging action) and two to four out of ten score high on use of mass media, favor greater opportunities for women in leadership, are more open to other races, and non-Mennonite memberships. More adults over fifty score high on normative values, while those under fifty score high on values which measure more openness.

Not many studies have dealt with students in Mennonite high schools, but there are a few (Hess, 1977; Kraybill, 1977a,b; Kraybill, 1978; Schludermann and Schludermann, 1990). Shirin and Eduard Schludermann (1994) did a study of Mennonite high school students (Westgate and Mennonite Brethren Collegiate in Winnipeg) to compare values with Bibby and Posterski’s (1985) Canadian national research.

### **Roots and Values**

If the values of Muppie youth have changed significantly, can we identify these and get some sense of where they are headed?

#### *Biblical and Moral Roots*

Using a sample of 3,795 churched youth aged 13-16, drawn from thirteen evangelical denominations (including General Conference and Mennonite

**Table 1.**  
**Faith and Life Variables, Ranked by Correlation with Age, 1989.<sup>A</sup>**

Variables/Scales	Age of the respondents				Pearson's	
	13-19	20-29	30-49	50-69	70+	r
	(Percent scoring "high")					
<b>Older persons' values</b>						
In-group identity	16	11	16	33	43	.31
Moral behavior	35	15	17	41	53	.31
Church participation	11	22	36	29	17	.31
Devotionalism	7	12	16	27	31	.29
Moral attitudes	20	17	21	38	54	.28
Evangelism	8	9	16	24	27	.26
Separation of church & state	17	19	21	32	51	.23
Serving others	6	19	29	37	37	.22
Stewardship	14	38	38	29	20	.18
Communalism	17	15	18	27	32	.16
Anabaptism	16	19	20	28	28	.16
Fundamentalism	11	16	20	30	36	.12
<b>Common values</b>						
General orthodoxy	57	72	71	80	82	.09
Separatism	11	16	17	18	18	.07
MCC support	13	19	22	19	25	.06
Bible knowledge	17	32	38	41	32	.03
Secularism	38	22	15	18	31	.03
Individualism	28	17	15	14	25	.02
Political participation	4	24	27	21	13	.01
Peacemaking	16	24	20	19	14	.01
Materialism	36	22	14	15	24	.01
Welfare attitudes	24	21	18	17	14	-.03
Ecumenism	29	31	26	28	29	-.04
<b>Younger persons' values</b>						
Greater roles for women	26	33	36	29	17	-.08
Political action	48	48	46	33	31	-.18
Use of mass media	22	14	19	9	2	-.18
Memberships	23	16	22	12	8	-.19
Women in leadership	34	44	42	29	11	-.23
Race relations	42	47	37	20	19	-.36
<b>TOTALS</b>						
	Number	140	403	1195	947	328
	Percent	5	13	40	31	11

<sup>A</sup>J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic*, Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991, p.268.

**Table 2.**  
**Norms and Values of Teens, 1994<sup>A</sup>**

Teen Norms and Values	Total		
	Sample N= 3795	GC N= 307	MC N= 326
	<i>Percentages</i>		
<b>Biblical and Moral Norms</b>			
It is wrong to break the law when it hurts someone	80	78	83
Only the Bible provides a clear description of moral truth	72	58	73
The Bible is relevant for today's problems	68	68	73
The Bible provides practical standards for living	67	64	71
Moral standards today are not as high as they used to be	59	66	69
God sets limits; conflict with his laws has negative consequences	57	53	59
<b>Freedom and Relativism</b>			
Every religion offers a different explanation of the meaning of life	59	61	59
Freedom means doing anything you want as long as it is legal	54	48	40
Truth means different things to different people; can't be sure	48	57	51
Nothing can be certain except experience in life	39	35	34
Lying is sometimes necessary	38	40	37
Intelligent way is to make the best choice based on feelings at the time	33	27	25
There is no "absolute truth"; truth can be contradictory	29	35	27
Everything in life is negotiable	23	25	20
Whatever feels right is ok if it harms no one	22	24	17
Something is morally or ethnically right if it works	16	14	11

<sup>A</sup> Churched Youth Survey by John McDowell Ministry directed by Barna Research Group, Glendale, CA, 1993.

Church) in North America, we see in Table 2 that churched youth do have standards.<sup>3</sup> Eight out of ten respect the law, and two thirds or more see the Bible as relevant and practical for daily guidance. The differences between MC and GC youth are minimal. Nor do Mennonite youth vary significantly from other Assemblies, Church of God, Nazarene, Foursquare, Free Methodist, Friends, Pentecostal, Salvation Army, Southern Baptist and Wesleyan youth.

The general moral standards of these youth are, however, shared by fewer respondents. More than half, but less than two thirds, agree that moral standards are not as high as they used to be and that God sets limits. While biblical standards are important to them, and moral standards in the perception of youth are in decline, how do they see freedom and relative forms of action? This is where it is difficult to get a majority to agree. Over half agree that different religions offer a variety of explanations for life, and that freedom is more than what is legal. A minority admit that on occasion lying may be necessary, that truth is often contradictory, and that negotiations in life are necessary depending on circumstances.

**Table 3.**  
**Values of North American Teens Aged 13-18, 1994.**

	Total Sample N=	GC N=	MC N=
How Desirable is (A Lot)	3795	307	326
<b>Primary Relationships</b>			
	<i>Percentages</i>		
Having one marriage partner for life	85	86	89
Having close personal relationships	81	89	82
Having a close relationship with God	77	75	79
Having a spouse and children	73	73	70
High personal integrity	69	68	67
Having a fulfilled sex life within marriage	61	61	63
<b>Lifestyle Issues</b>			
Good physical health	83	85	88
Having a clear purpose for life	81	81	84
Having a comfortable lifestyle	70	71	68
Living close to family	48	41	42
Achieving fame or public recognition	25	17	18
<b>Secondary Relationships</b>			
Influencing other people's lives	64	54	62
Being active in church	64	49	55
To make a difference in the world	62	55	53
Having a high-paying job	55	45	48

### *Ranking of Social Values*

More adults scored high on normative biblical and moral values (Table 1) while church youth laid more emphasis on social relationships, so let us examine these more closely. Here we find that primary social relations seem to rank higher than most secondary relationships.

In Table 3, we see that primary social relationships are important to a large majority of teens. Having one marriage partner is at the top of the list and close personal relationships follow. A close relationship with God seems to be part of this desirable package as well. Certainly adults would have no problem with these high desires which also includes having a family, personal integrity, and a fulfilled sex life in marriage.

Primary relations were more important than secondary relations. Two out of three wanted to influence other people's lives, be active in the church and make a difference in the world. Mennonite teenagers tend to follow others, except that they are less interested in being active in the church, making a difference in the world, having a high-paying job, and achieving fame.

### *Available Mentors and Brokers*

Since youth seem to place less value on normative living and value human relationships more, a key question is, what is the potential for offering values in the form of mentors and friendship models? We see in Table 4 that three out of four teens know adults who are valued as mentors. Mennonite youth are even more fortunate.

**Table 4.**  
**Perspectives on Life, 1994**

	Total		
	Sample N=	GC N=	MC N=
	3795	307	26
	<i>Percentages</i>		
Know adults who really have it together	75	80	82
Disagree what I think doesn't matter	68	69	73
Disagree one person cannot really make a difference	66	74	72
I do have somebody who is a hero and model in my life	65	65	65
Everyone needs a hero in their life	62	51	60
Disagree the main purpose in life is enjoyment and fulfillment	55	53	61
I do not wonder whether life is worth living	53	51	57
Life is too complex these days	49	52	44
I do not feel alone in times of trouble or crises	47	46	46
The future will be better than today	34	30	32

Two out of three have a sufficiently high enough concept of themselves that they believe their contribution matters. They also think one person can make a difference, which suggests they have seen such mentors, and that their own

worth has been sufficiently reinforced through social relationships. Indeed, they have such heroes and do model their lives after such persons. These experiences have been significantly rewarding so that they agree everyone needs such a hero. Models are an important ingredient for social relationships which teens value highly.

While over half think there is more to life than enjoyment, and that life is worth living, they admit that life is complex. Only one in three can agree that the future will be better than today. Youth in the nineties are more sober about their options. They are realistic in a limited environment.

**Table 5.**  
**Assessment of Individual Strengths**  
**and Weaknesses, by Teens, 1994**

Total  
Sample GC MC  
N=3795 N=307 N=326

<b>Which Phrases Accurately Describe You</b>	<i>Percentages</i>		
<b>Positive</b>			
Have high hopes	87	85	89
Reliable	86	89	90
Respected by others	86	90	91
An achiever	80	81	79
Religious	78	79	75
Seeking answers	74	80	77
Encouraged	74	69	80
Upbeat	63	61	66
Physically attractive	61	58	68
High integrity	60	66	67
Content	59	65	69
<b>Negative</b>			
Confused	55	58	51
Too busy	54	55	51
Stressed out	50	51	45
Always tired	46	45	41
Lazy	41	38	39
Lonely	36	39	31
Disappointed	35	36	31
Skeptical	33	34	32
Mistrust people	32	30	29
Angry with life	26	23	20
Resentful	25	23	17
Unmotivated	20	18	22
Lacking purpose	20	22	20



### *Self-Concept and Personal Identity*

Strongly held values and supportive social relationships should lead to a positive self-concept and a positive identity. In Table 5 we ranked teen self-assessment of their strengths and weaknesses, and found the first dozen were positive and the last dozen negative. Most ranked high hopes, reliability, respect from others and being an achiever among the top four strengths which teens aspired to. This did not vary by religious group. Almost as many thought of themselves as being religious, which put their spiritual commitments in the top five.

The bottom dozen included mostly negative features which they agreed applied to them. Half thought they were too busy, stressed out and always tired. Four in ten admitted to being lazy. A third were lonely, disappointed, skeptical and mistrusted people. And one in five reported that they were angry with life, resentful, unmotivated and lacked purpose.

### **The Wings of Social Relationships**

In the first part of this paper we learned that while adults favor normative behavior more than youth, youth value social relationships more than adults. In part two we explored the extent and types of normative values youth do adhere to. We found that churched youth do have biblical and moral standards, they do in fact highly value primary relationships, they admire and follow adult mentors, and they have many positive strengths which suggest self-esteem and personal identity. This web of normative emphasis does suggest that today's youth have values which guide them. In part three, let us explore more fully the quality of the social relationships that youth emphasize and value more highly than adults.

### *Family Relationships*

The family always has been the cradle of human development, but sexual experimentation, divorce and family abuse have put the family under great stress. Do modern youth want to raise their own families, do they value family support and relationships?

It is clear that most youth today think that God intended marriage to last a lifetime, and they do not expect their marriages to end in divorce (Table 6). Despite the sexual promiscuity in our society, three out of four want to be virgin, and those who aren't would like to be. As many feel that overall their family experience has been positive. About half want a marriage like their parents. They are not unaware of family problems and almost half seem to want to work with difficulties which may arise. These data suggest that today's youth are not yet willing to give up on the family, and are planning on families of their own.

### *Trying Parent-Youth Wings*

Roughly two thirds of evangelical churched youth in Table 7 report that their

**Table 6.**  
**Attitudes Towards a**  
**Strong Stable Marriage and Family, 1994**

	Total		
	Sample N= 3795	GC N= 307	MC N= 326
	<i>Percentages</i>		
God intended for marriage to last a lifetime	90	89	93
Disagree we should expect that marriage will end in divorce	86	89	91
If I wasn't a virgin and could change the past I'd wait to have sex until after marriage	76	72	83
I would like to be a virgin at marriage	73	74	82
Overall I feel my family experience has been positive	72	81	84
I want a marriage like my parents	48	58	61
If the traditional family falls apart, society will collapse	47	39	49
Disagree parents out of love who have children shouldn't divorce	46	47	36
Disagree it is very hard to have a successful marriage today	44	50	49
Marriage problems have been exaggerated; most are healthy marriages	34	31	29

**Table 7.**  
**Relations Between Teens and Their Parents, 1994**

	Total		
	Sample N= 3795	GC N= 307	MC N= 326
	<i>Percentages</i>		
<b>My Parents...</b>			
Seldom/never fight with each other	71	70	73
My home is a place where I feel secure and loved	62	68	62
Usually trust me	62	65	68
Frequently show that they really love each other	56	61	60
Seldom/never are too strict	56	57	53
Frequently set good examples for me	54	56	58
Usually do not expect more of me than is fair	53	58	57
Are really interested in me	50	53	51
Usually allow me to do things I want to do	49	49	50
Seldom/never yell at me	48	59	51
Frequently spend time with me	46	41	44
Frequently admit when they are wrong or mistaken	27	26	23

parents seldom or never fight. Youth feel secure and loved, and say their parents usually trust them. This is also true for Mennonite teenagers.

Roughly half of today's youth report that their parents are seldom too strict, frequently set good examples for them, and usually do not expect more of them than is fair. This suggests that for over half, standards and expectations of both parents and youth have been internalized and agreed upon. The source of these agreements seem to be love, because half the youth feel their parents are really interested in them, and also trust them, because they allow their teenagers to do the things they want to do. The desires and values of both seem to mesh, driven by love and trust.

Almost half also agree that their parents seldom yell at them, and frequently spend time with them. One in four parents admit that they are frequently wrong or mistaken, which adds to a give-and-take atmosphere of communication. Alas, the other half of the parents and youth are not doing as well. This again suggests that while many relationships are positive, many are not.

### *Demonstrations of Affection*

We assume that love and affection begin in the family between parents and their children. As shown in Table 7 we expect that this begins with fairness, respect and interest in each other which has already been demonstrated. Let us look deeper to see whether such positive relations also translate into love and affection for each other, and how much this is demonstrated? Does this vary by type of parent, mother or father?

Three out of four are close to their father as shown in Table 8. The perception is higher for feeling of closeness to mother. Over half never wonder about whether they are loved, and feel proud of their parents. About half say their father shows his love, while two out of three say mother does so. Half also claim they show their love for their mother and spend at least a special half hour or more with her each week, which is much lower with father.

We see that closeness, being loved, pride, showing love, spending time, seeking advice, acting and talking together are always higher between mother and teenager, than father and youth. The expectation that mother has closer relations with her children than father, is clearly borne out in the total sample. Only doing something special together with mother, drops down to thirty percent or less.

Reports by Mennonite teenagers diverge more widely with teen-parent affection than any other issue discussed so far. Mennonite youth do not show love for both mother and father as much as other non-Mennonite youth. Fewer Mennonite teenagers also feel proud of their mothers, and do not seek her advice as much, nor do they do something special with her as much as other youth. This clearly shows that Mennonite teenagers do not give their mothers the same status as their fathers, which is not the case for other youth. Two out of three MC teenagers never doubt the love of both parents, which is significantly higher than GCs and others. These Mennonite data are distinctly different.

**Table 8.**  
**Teen-Parent Demonstrations**  
**of Love and Affection, 1994.**

	<i>My Father</i>			<i>My Mother</i>		
	Total N=	GC N=	MC N=	Total N=	GC N=	MC N=
	3795	307	326	3795	307	326
	<i>Percentages</i>					
<b>Frequently</b>						
We are very/fairly close	74	79	79	88	86	91
Never wonder whether loves me	57	57	57	59	60	67
Feel proud of him/her	56	57	53	58	44	48
Shows his/her love for me	51	50	53	68	62	66
Show my love for him/her	41	31	32	52	37	36
Spends 30 plus minutes with me						
weekly on things that matter	34	36	37	53	52	51
Seek advice from him/her	26	20	26	40	30	29
Do something special together	19	13	16	30	22	17
Talk about personal concerns	12	10	9	39	31	33

*Gender and Sex Relations*

We are a much more open permissive society than in the past, revolutionized by the media and the car. The electronic revolution offers ideas, tunes, images and communication via computer, Fax, E-mail and internet which create unimagined networks of potential relations. The car has revolutionized physical mobility, which also opens up spatial potential for multi-variate relationships.

This is especially evident in the sexual revolution. Three out of four youth (Table 6) want to be virgin before marriage, but the open society now provides opportunities for the opposite sex to be alone together which is hard to deal with. How do their morals and actions match? Most youth find holding hands acceptable, and two out of three approve of kissing and embracing when in love. Their actions match their ideals fairly closely.

Heavy “French” kissing is where a discrepancy between ideals and actions begin to show (Table 9). One third do not approve of such behavior when in love, while half have done so. Only one in ten approve of fondling of breasts, but a third have done so. One fourth of evangelical church youth have engaged in fondling of genitals, while few approve even when in love. Almost no teenagers approve of sexual intercourse when in love. Half as many Mennonite as non-Mennonite youth have engaged in intercourse. These data clearly show that while pre-marital sex is still largely taboo, non-Mennonite youth are finding it much more difficult to abide by these ideals.

*Institutions Connecting Roots and Wings*

In the sixties there was a general resurgence of individualism and a wholesale rejection by many of social institutions which have since been greatly

**Table 9.**  
**Attitudes and Behavior of Teenagers With the Opposite Sex, 1994.**

Which of the following are acceptable or have you done with the opposite sex?	Always					
	Applicable if in Love			Have Done		
	Total			Total		
	Sample	GC	MC	Sample	GC	MC
	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=	N=
	3795	307	326	3795	307	326
	<i>Percentages</i>					
Held hands	85	90	88	89	82	89
Embrace and some kissing	68	73	69	73	64	67
Heavy "French" kissing	33	36	31	53	42	45
Fondling of breasts	10	10	9	34	31	31
Fondling of genitals	9	9	8	26	23	21
Sexual intercourse	7	6	5	16	8	8

modified. Teachers in schools had to revamp their methods of teaching; with the young Kennedys in power the media began to put image-making front-stage in politics. The fifties surge in church memberships began to decline. Since then, we have begun to question more our religious, political, economic and educational institutions.

### *Church Institutions*

If relationships are most important to youth today, can they find social opportunities in the churches today? Almost all youth made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ, which is still important to them; they believe God the creator is still in control (Table 10). Eight or nine out of ten attend their youth group in the church. They also attend church services, as well as Sunday school, weekly. The church is holding these teenagers in the networks of weekly activity, supported by their church-going parents.

The salience of their beliefs is somewhat less, which suggests that some of their weekly activity is family routine into which they are locked. Three fourths believe they will go to heaven because they accepted Christ. Two thirds claim their faith is important for daily life, and as many pray to God daily. Less than half read their Bible and attend a Bible study group every week. Seventeen percent lead a small group—half as many Mennonites do. Generally, Mennonite youth follow the larger evangelical pattern, except that somewhat fewer consider their faith important, more attend Sunday school, and fewer attend Bible study and lead groups.

### *The Political Arena*

In the strident sixties we were riding the demographic baby boom bulge when there were always more mouths to feed, more students to teach, where jobs were crying for workers who would fill the escalating economic spiral. How

**Table 10.**  
**Religious Beliefs and Activity of Teens, 1994**

	Total		
	Sample N=	GC N=	MC N=
	3795	307	326
	<i>Percentages</i>		
<b>Religious Beliefs and Behavior</b>			
Made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ still important	86	78	82
God is the all-powerful, all-knowing creator who rules world today	85	84	85
Attend a church youth group weekly	84	83	82
Attend church services every week	82	78	86
Attend a Sunday school class weekly	78	83	87
I will go to heaven because I have accepted Christ as Savior	75	74	80
Pray to God daily	65	67	67
My Christian faith is very important in my life today	64	53	56
Read the Bible every week or more	48	45	55
Attend a Bible study group weekly	43	37	37
Lead a small group	17	8	8

much things have changed! The economy has been in recession for years, birth rates and population are in decline, businesses, schools and professions are facing cutbacks, and jobs are hard to find. In the interim, youth people have become compliant and conservative compared to the sixties. Youth are sober and not too sure of their chances to compete in our ever-changing world.

These conservative attitudes are also apparent in the political arena. We usually think of youth as being more liberal while adults become more conservative. Not in the nineties! Our 1989 North American data in Table 11 show that three out of four adult Mennonites voted for conservative Republicans in the United States, and over half of the teenagers who could vote did so as well (Kauffman and Driedger).<sup>4</sup> True, twice as many in the teens voted for liberal Republicans and Democrats, which does follow expectations, but the numbers are surprisingly small—one or two in ten. What’s noteworthy is that teens do not differ significantly from their parents in this area.

Twice as many in the seventies voted for the most conservative Social Credit Party in Canada, but more youth than the elderly voted Progressive Conservative. The one third in the seventies who voted Liberal is related to past immigration history, which we cannot discuss here. Twice as many (one fourth) in the teens voted for the New Democrat Party which is the most socialist, left of center. Youth did vote more for liberal parties in both countries, but well over half to three fourths voted conservatively. This seems to correlate with an image of today’s youth concentrating more on egalitarian gender and racial personal relations with others.

**Table 11. Mennonite Political Orientation by Age and Nationality, 1989.<sup>A</sup>**

Political Orientation	Age of Respondent					Total	
	13-19	20-29	30-49	50-69	70+		
<i>U.S.</i>	<i>Percentages</i>						
Conservative Republicans	56	61	56	69	76	63	
Conservative Democrats	15	12	16	12	11	14	
Liberal Republicans	18	13	12	9	7	11	
Liberal Democrats	11	15	16	10	5	13	
<i>Canadian</i>							
Social Credit	-	5	5	10	9	7	
Progressive Conservatives	57	57	57	54	45	55	
Liberal Party	19	21	19	27	34	23	
New Democratic Party	24	17	18	9	11	15	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>Number</b>	140	403	1195	947	328	3013
	<b>Percent</b>	5	13	40	31	11	100

<sup>A</sup>J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic*, Scottdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991, pp.137-145.

### *Peace and the Military*

Perhaps the most distinctive feature of Mennonite beliefs for almost 500 years, has been nonviolence and peace. To what extent have distinctive Mennonite beliefs been passed on, and how does this vary by age? Driedger and Kraybill (1994) found that a major shift has occurred from nonresistance to active peacemaking over the last fifty years since World War II. Before the war nine out of ten Mennonites were on the farm, but since then half live in cities, are more educated and more mobile, all indicators of increased modernization. Have these modern forces eroded the distinctive search for peace?

In Table 12 we see that the traditional alternative service position to war is still the first choice of two thirds of those over thirty, but less than half of the teenagers would choose that alternative. Less than ten percent would choose a more radical refusal to register or to be inducted. Uncertainties are up, however, with one fourth of teenagers not sure what their choice might be, and almost ten percent choosing military service. Almost half of Mennonite teenagers would choose some form of military alternative, or are not sure of their position.

### **Summary**

In their studies of Mennonites, Kauffman, Harder and Driedger found Mennonites have become more educated, professional and well-to-do economi-

**Table 12. Mennonite Draft Choices by Age, 1989.<sup>A</sup>**

Which position would you take if faced with a military draft?	Age of Respondent					
	13-19	20-29	30-49	50-69	70-94	
<i>Percentages</i>						
Refuse registration and/ induction	7	11	7	5	7	
Alternative service	46	49	63	67	61	
Uncertain	23	19	11	10	14	
Noncombatant military service	17	14	12	12	16	
Military service	8	7	7	6	3	
TOTAL	Number	140	403	1195	947	328
	Percent	5	13	40	31	11

<sup>A</sup>J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic*. Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press, 1991, pp.172-178.

cally. Many fear that as Mennonites increasingly urbanize, they will no longer hold to the traditional religious and cultural norms and values for which many died in the past. Comparing Mennonite adults and youth, we found that while older Mennonites scored higher than youth on doctrinal and moral norms, youth valued political involvement, communication and social relations more. They wanted more openness and communication.

We suggested that today’s youth need to strengthen both their roots and their wings. In the rural past traditional emphasis was on roots, but often the wings seemed undeveloped. In the mobile changing modern world wings are of great importance because youth must change with the times, which requires strong wings to negotiate new challenges. We found that older adults had developed their roots (norms, standards) well, while youth were clearly more concerned with social relationships (race, women, memberships, media).

Youth who are connected to the church are by no means without roots. Almost all have made religious commitments and attend activities regularly. Many also foster a meaningful devotional life. They clearly have biblical and moral values, meaningful social relationships, including adult mentors, and have developed positive self-concepts and identities.

Family life continues to provide a sense of rootedness for youth as well. A majority feel secure and loved at home where their parents trust them. Many



want marriages like their parents. While they aspire to having families of their own and want these relationships to succeed, they are realistic about some of the difficulties that lie ahead.

How well have the roots of biblical norms and family values prepared youth for life in the modern world? Their ideals remain high. They desire a clear purpose for life, want to make a difference in the world, expect to have a traditional family, hope for a comfortable lifestyle. Achieving fame, having a high-paying job and being active in the church are significantly less important. In their relationships with the opposite sex their standards are high even though their behavior does not always match their ideals.

A goodly number are quite realistic about the future and admit they are often too confused, too busy, stressed out and tired. About half disagree that the main purpose in life is enjoyment and fulfillment, wonder whether life is worth living, feel life is too complex, and feel alone in times of trouble or crises. Only a third feel the future will be better than the present. They have a sense that life will not be easy.

Our research has isolated a number of issues which clearly require discussion and research:

1. Biblical and devotional norms are in decline among youth. In what ways can that decline be reversed?
2. While adults stress norms more, youth focus more on relationships. How can the relational roots of youth be strengthened?
3. Family relationships are robust, but family structures are changing. How can the sense of being loved and feeling secure within a family setting be increased?
4. Mennonite youth seem to have more difficulty relating deeply to their parents than others. Why do Mennonite youth show less affection?
5. The biological and social pressures of the sex drive will become increasingly difficult to manage. What can be done to help youth live up to their ideals in this area?
6. Youth seem to be well locked into the church and its activities. How can that level of interest and involvement be maintained or increased for those who are unconnected?
7. Youth are increasingly ambivalent about peace and the Anabaptist beliefs. How can this theology be more effectively communicated so it can be seen more as an integral part of the gospel?
8. Why are youth so conservative politically, when in the sixties they were so radical and wanted change everywhere? Should this be a concern?

## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Leo Driedger is Professor of Sociology at the University of Manitoba in Winnipeg, and Abe Bergen is Secretary of Youth Education, General Conference Mennonite Church and Assistant Professor of Practical Theology at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg. Paper presented to the "In the Maze of the Modern World" youth ministry conference held at Canadian Mennonite Bible College in Winnipeg, November 4-6, 1994.

<sup>2</sup>A sample was taken in 1989 of five Mennonite denominations (Mennonite Church, General Conference Mennonite, Mennonite Brethren, Brethren in Christ and Evangelical Mennonite) which represented about 75 percent of the Mennonites in the United States and Canada. A detailed discussion on methods can be found in J. Howard Kauffman and Leo Driedger, *The Mennonite Mosaic* (Scottsdale, PA: Herald Press), 1991, pp. 273-277. The sample was selected in two phases: 1) selection sample of congregation, and 2) selection members within each sample congregation. One hundred fifty-three congregations participated with 3,083 useable returns, representing about 70 percent of the eligible members. Respondents were asked over 300 questions related to the indicators mentioned here. Each of these scales in Table 1 is made up of 4-6 questions or indicators which were combined to form a scale ranging from low to high. For example, ingroup identity, the first scale in Table 1 is comprised of six indicators of ingroup identity. We asked respondents whether they supported Mennonite schools, newspapers, ethnic language, endogamy, having a majority of ingroup friends, and participated in Mennonite organizations. Those who supported five or six of these means of identity, scored high on ingroup identity, those who agreed to three or four scored medium, and those who agreed to none or only one or two, were rated low on the scale. The percentages given in Table 1 show the proportion who scored high on each of the 22 scales.

<sup>3</sup>The 1994 Churched Youth Survey was completed by the cooperation of the Josh McDowell Ministry, thirteen denomination leaders, and the Barna Research Group, Ltd. The eight page survey questionnaire was drafted by the Josh McDowell Ministry Research Center with input from the participating denominational leaders. The questionnaire was pretested, and was completed anonymously by 3,795 churched youth in late 1993 and early 1994. Each denomination was given the goal of surveying 500 youth from their total church list using a "multistage stratified random sample probability sample." Surveys were distributed and completed during a regular youth group meeting with no prior notice. The 13 denominations included Assemblies of God, Church of God-Cleveland, Church of God- General Conference, Church of the Nazarene, Foursquare Gospel Church, Free Methodist Church, The Friends Church, International Pentecostal Holiness Church, The Salvation Army, Southern Baptist Convention, The Wesleyan Church, and two Mennonite denominations, The Mennonite Church, and the General Conference Mennonite Church. This survey of churched youth is more positive than the findings of general Mennonite youth by Kauffman and Driedger (1991), because they are churched youth who are members and attending church.

<sup>4</sup>Here we are again using the Kauffman and Driedger (1991) data of North American Mennonites, described and used in Table 1, and described in footnote 2.

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