

Editors' Introduction

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This issue of the *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* includes a range of work by scholars in the fields of sociology, geography, demography, public health, and media studies. We open the issue with an examination of Amish and Old Order Mennonite views on vaccine risks and benefits. In recent years, as rates of vaccination have declined across the United States in many populations, health researchers have investigated public perceptions of immunization and factors shaping those perceptions. In their article “Vaccination Risk Through the Lens of Faith, Family, and Community,” professors Rachel Stein, Katie Corcoran, and Corey Colyer of West Virginia University find that, although Plain community members discuss vaccine hesitancy, refusal, and acceptance in ways that reflect the views of the larger society, they also discuss the subject through the distinctive lenses of faith, family, and community.

The themes of faith, family, and community also animate the patterns of migration examined by John Cross, a professor emeritus at University of Wisconsin–Oshkosh. Using information on migration from the most recent Wisconsin Amish directory, Cross produces an illuminating picture of that state’s diverse Amish settlements and their patterns of formation. Some settlements attract newcomers from a variety of places while others pull migrants from a limited number of places. The ties of affiliation are a key determinant influencing the choice of Amish migrants, as Cross shows by comparing the spatial patterns of migration in pairs of settlements.

Two demographic studies add to our understanding of Old Order Amish population growth and longevity. The so-called Swiss Amish, an ethno-historical subgroup within the Amish population, are the focus of Joseph Donnermeyer’s investigation of fertility and interbirth intervals. Based on data from the four largest Swiss Amish communities, in Adams and Allen Counties, Indiana; Seymour, Missouri; and California Corners, Michigan, Donnermeyer, a professor emeritus at the Ohio State University, documents relatively high fertility and low



interbirth periods among the Swiss Amish, although the Allen County community diverges somewhat from the other three. Donnermeyer concludes with suggestions for future research.

Henry Troyer, a retired professor of anatomy and physiology who was raised in an Amish family in eastern Ohio, examines longevity among Holmes County, Ohio, Amish men. He demonstrates that Amish men live an average of five years longer than other men in Ohio, and that within the Amish community, farmers outlive nonfarmers. Considered in light of published research on Amish work habits, Troyer concludes that Amish longevity might be attributed to their exceptional level of physical activity.

The topic of longevity is connected to the work of Claire Marie Mensack, an assistant professor of public health at Lander University. Mensack offers observations from her fieldwork on aging in Amish society by examining life in the *Dawdyhaus*, a separate or sometimes attached dwelling for older family members alongside their children and grandchildren. Mensack focuses on two couples, one in Delaware and the other in Pennsylvania, who have yielded many responsibilities to their adult children and moved into a new life stage. Her essay also reflects on the meaning of aging in a collectivist culture.

Revisiting the fieldwork that underpinned her 2012 book *Selling the Amish: The Tourism of Nostalgia*, University of Dayton professor Susan Trollinger identifies a startling new retail landscape in Amish-themed tourist destinations in Holmes County, Ohio, one that emphasizes patriotic and militaristic merchandise. Her observations prompt reconsideration of the evolving meaning of nostalgia and a call for more research.

Our series featuring research centers with holdings related to Plain groups continues with a profile of Mennonite Life in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. And our issue includes two book reviews, the first an effort to expand and adapt the concept of negotiation as a metaphor for social change in Amish society, and the other a set of essays on Hutterite history that were first delivered under the auspices of the Maendel Lectures, which are sponsored by the Hutterian Brethren Book Centre in MacGregor, Manitoba.

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To discuss ideas for manuscripts for possible publication in the journal, contact Joe Donnermeyer (donnermeyer.1@gmail.com) or Steve Nolt (nolts@etown.edu). For details about *JPAC*, including author guidelines, visit <https://plainanabaptistjournal.org/index.php/JPAC/about>.