

Editors' Introduction

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As readers of this journal know, research on Plain Anabaptist communities is an interdisciplinary enterprise, attracting scholars from a variety of fields who employ diverse methodologies, investigate different types of sources, and use various theoretical frameworks. This issue of the journal includes articles, conference presentations, and reviews that illustrate that variety. Sociologist Joseph Donnermeyer offers a comprehensive demographic profile of the Greater Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, Amish settlement based on a random sample of the household entries in that settlement's 2015 directory. Comparing his findings with those of Elmer Lewis Smith (1920–1981), whose 1960 work with Lancaster Amish demographics included data that went back to the early twentieth century, the demographic data reveal striking continuity as well as social change across more than a century. Anthropologist Karen Johnson-Weiner reflects on the scholarly use of a different kind of data source, namely personal correspondence. She discusses the value of letter writing in her research and the way letters give voice to Plain women whose perspectives do not always surface in print. Another methodology comes into play in the work of Tony Walsh, Jeff Bach, and Sam Funkhouser, whose exploration of the Old German Baptist Brethren employs participant observation. In their article, which is the first of two parts (part 2 will appear in the next issue of *JPAC*), they interpret their findings within a postpositivist framework that makes use of narrative inquiry and autoethnography.

This issue of *JPAC* also includes edited transcripts of three plenary presentations from the conference “The Amish and Their Neighbors: A Multidisciplinary Conference” that was held June 2–4, 2022, at Elizabethtown College. All three presenters offer what were somewhat preliminary findings from research then underway, and that also reflect diverse sources and disciplinary dispositions. Sociologist Carl Desportes Bowman analyzes national survey data to examine the American cultural context of the early twenty-first century in which Plain groups find themselves



and to ask how that national context might situate our understanding of Plain communities. Rachel Stein, also working as a sociologist, uses a variety of sources, including archival print sources, to look at Amish responses to epidemics and pandemics since the 1940s and what such responses tell us about beliefs, behaviors, and community. And political scientist Kyle Kopko shares some findings from an ongoing study of Amish voter behavior across several states and settlements.

A research note by Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh, archivist at the Earl H. and Anita F. Hess Archives and Special Collections at Elizabethtown College, reports the results of a survey of scholars who study Plain groups. The findings demonstrate the rich diversity of scholar backgrounds, data sources, and research methodologies that can be found in this and every issue of *JPAC*.

Finally, we offer reviews of works that, in their own ways, illustrate a variety of disciplines and perspectives. Three reviewers, one from the field of communications, one from business, and one a thoughtful Amish church member, respond to *Virtually Amish: Preserving Community at the Internet's Margins* by communication theorist Lindsay Ems. Rounding out this issue, English professor Susan Trollinger reviews the work of media studies scholar Dirk Eitzen in his book *Fooling with the Amish: "Amish Mafia," Entertaining Fakery, and the Evolution of Reality TV*.

We anticipate an equally rich range of topics and disciplines in the next issue of the journal, which is already in process. Until then, enjoy the variety here.

JPAC is dedicated to publishing both empirical and theoretical work related to Plain Anabaptist communities, including, among others, the Amish, conservative Mennonites, Amish-Mennonites, Apostolic Christians, Brethren, Bruderhof, and Hutterites. *JPAC* articles may include emerging issues associated with Plain Anabaptist communities, diverse theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches to the study of Plain Anabaptist groups, and significant research findings about Plain Anabaptist populations.

The *Journal of Plain Anabaptist Communities* is a jointly sponsored journal of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania, the Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center in Berlin, Ohio, and The Ohio State University Libraries.

JPAC's predecessor at OSU was the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies (JAPAS)*. Articles from volumes 1–6 of *JAPAS* can still be accessed, free of charge, in the Knowledge Bank of the OSU Libraries: <https://kb.osu.edu/handle/1811/54888>.

If you would like to discuss ideas for manuscripts for possible publication in the journal, please contact Joe Donnermeyer (donnermeyer.1@gmail.com) or Steve Nolt (nolts@etown.edu). Visit <https://plainanabaptistjournal.org/about> to access additional detail about *JPAC*, including author guidelines. As these guidelines state: "Submissions should be in Microsoft Word, double-spaced, with 1-inch margins, left justification only, and no headers or footers." We allow prospective authors to select from one of two styles for citations: the American Psychological Association (APA) style (7th edition) and the Chicago Manual of Style (17th edition). In this manner, we recognize the diversity of backgrounds of prospective authors, especially because standard publication formats vary among academic disciplines.