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## Ten Years of the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*: An Editor's Reflections on a Social Movement in Academia

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# Ten Years of the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*: An Editor's Memoir about a Social Movement in Academia

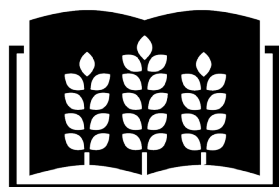
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## THIS ISSUE OF *JAPAS*: GROUND-BREAKING RESEARCH, *WISCONSIN V. YODER'S 50<sup>TH</sup>*, AND THE NEW PLAIN PEOPLE BOOK REVIEW PANEL

With this issue, *JAPAS* is now 10 years old, a full decade of providing quality scholarship and opportunities to publish Amish and plain Anabaptist studies-focused research. Fittingly, this *JAPAS* is—by word count—the largest issue yet. Given this 10-year milestone, I want to use this editorial space to recall some of *JAPAS*'s development, in memoir style, sharing some of my outlooks, opinions, and personal experiences. But first: an introduction to this issue's extremely varied contents.

As usual, we feature the interesting and cutting edge research of scholars from diverse disciplines. All articles address cultural dynamics of plain people but from different perspectives. Employing social theoretical frameworks of culture and change, Ron Jantz analyzes how and

why Holdeman Mennonites have shifted their theological thinking and religious practices over a generation. Very little has appeared about this sizeable plain Mennonite group since the 1970s. Another first, Krista Evans turns attention to the intersection of Amish culture and a salient applied issue: land use planning practice. Her interviews provide a guiding framework from which future research can continue probing this intriguing dynamic in public policy. A leading voice among activists against sexual abuse, Trudy Metzger provides another article first, as she works to identify specific latent cultural dynamics that could create increased vulnerabilities or silencing of survivors. Her article represents increasing awareness the past several years of this pressing social and moral problem. Among other things, she admirably succeeds in honing her work on specific cultural dynamics that can create problems and avoids suggesting a people's culture itself is inherently problematic (i.e., a people's existence is a problem). As such, her approach makes productive



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steps toward addressing this problem and opens the way for more research. Finally, Beth Graybill demonstrates how qualitative methodological techniques underutilized in plain Anabaptist studies—namely, reflexivity and positionality—can inform ethnographic research. She explores these techniques with gender-focused mini-studies addressing patriarchy, women’s businesses, and COVID-19.

This year also marks the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Supreme Court’s *Wisconsin v. Yoder* decision, which afforded some legitimization of Amish schools that did not go beyond eighth grade. To recognize this milestone, we invited two essays, broadly pro- and con-*Yoder*, and organized three sets of book reviews about plain Anabaptist education and schooling.

Finally, this issue represents a new development not just in *JAPAS* but, possibly, in all of journal publishing history. Because very few plain people have the formal credentials to participate in academic peer reviewed journals, I have looked for ways to include plain people in the conversation. This issue premieres the plain people’s book review panel, with more reviews in a single issue than we have ever published before. The 25-member panel is composed entirely of plain Anabaptist adherents, including Old Order and Conservative Mennonites, Beachy Amish-Mennonites and Old Order Amish, Hutterites, Apostolic Christians, and others. Their job is to identify new books by and/or about plain people (both in the academic context and their own), identify reviewers, and then see those reviews to publication. In so doing, not only can the “talked about” talk back in *JAPAS* but *JAPAS* can now highlight our own people’s growing body of quality literature, from history to current debates, from family books to community and congregation profiles, and from bibliographies to fascinating fiction by talented creative writers.

Over a decade ago, when the idea of an Amish studies journal stirred in my mind, I was thinking that a tremendous need existed for such a publication. But who was going to send research-for-peer-reviewed-publication to someone who had published one peer reviewed article about the relatively unknown group called “Beachy Amish-Mennonites” (Anderson 2011)? To this day, I believe it was those who saw knowledge needs over rapport, who had solid research findings to share on particular questions. It is this curious “lay”

spirit leading the way today. In the personal editorial that follows, I trace the history of *JAPAS* and APASA, putting together these reflections from both my own memory and personal records, including email correspondences and journal notes. As an editorial, this is an opinion essay and not intended as a peer reviewed historical study.

### BEGINNINGS OF *JAPAS*

The idea of a plain Anabaptist-focused journal came as I finished my second of five years towards a Ph.D. in rural sociology. On enrollment at Ohio State in the autumn of 2009, nearly every night for anywhere from 10 minutes to two hours, I would stay up late and read Amish studies research. (Those were the hours my dear new wife discovered what marriage to a driven doctoral student was like.) One stack of print-outs by my bedside after another were reduced to nothing as I highlighted, scribbled notes, and, the following morning, annotated what I read the night before. I stored my annotations and topically organized these publications in my new toy: desktop-based reference management software. To find new readings, I would snowball sample bibliographies. The collection of works grew one hundred by another hundred, eventually to just over 1,000 separate publications, be they books, book chapters, or journal articles. This process continued from 2009 to 2013, when the exhausting pace of Amish studies reading—saying nothing of my coursework reading—finally took its toll and I slowed down. And my wife, Jennifer, took the opportunity to make sure I never do it again.

By summer 2011, with a large stack of readings now behind me, it was clear the topography of Amish studies consisted of a couple highly cited towering peaks, several mountains at the base, and a vast lowland of everything else. Some of this work was justifiably doomed to the annals of lost and forgotten research. But a disproportionately sizeable oeuvre of impressive empirical, theoretical, and inductive works had little to no impact on the trajectory of scholarship. Above everything else, I was particularly impressed by the aggregate theorizing and methodology of Werner Enninger. I was also impressed with the scholars who presented both rich theory and were willing to debate, including Marc Olshan, Jeffrey Longhofer, and Steven Reschly. I was further impressed with the

extremely insightful conclusions drawn from the ethnographic work of Andrea Fishman, Denise Reiling, Jana Hawley, Anna Frances Wenger, and, two peers I have come to consider friends, Natalie Jolly and Caroline Brock (I could write more about others!). These were all people who spent quality time with Amish—or thick primary sources—and were committed to research rigor, whatever the epistemology. When I read all of these works, they left me with warmth and excitement. They developed my own thinking. They captured a “ground reality” that simultaneously seemed unconcerned with exhibiting Amish to popular audiences. Furthermore, they demonstrated the power of multiple epistemologies and theories to advance our understandings of a people.

Many interesting publications were scattered across semi- and completely-obscure outlets. With several important exceptions, their works were rarely cited. *If only we had a focal point where research could come together, then we could easily access each other's work and advance the conversation.*

On Monday, July 11, 2011, I met with my doctoral advisor, Joseph Donnermeyer, to discuss the idea of a first-time academic journal dedicated to Amish studies. I offered a list of six prospective articles/authors and suggested associations that held conferences we could keep an eye on for other authors.

Beyond just a journal, I had a long-term vision for a professional association that met research service needs. The Anabaptist Sociology and Anthropology Association (ASAA), chaired by James Hurd and having a committee leadership of—I want to say—around five people, had a low annual membership fee (\$10 or so?) and offered a website and occasional newsletter. Their purpose was to include “social scientists who study Anabaptist groups, and social-scientists who are Anabaptists.”<sup>1</sup> For whatever reason, several years brought little growth or activity. My guess is that no activities were associated with ASAA, and a newsletter does not offer enough value or sense of camaraderie among members and is a time-con-

suming-yet-low-value task for busy professors. For a plain people-focused association to succeed, I felt we should build backwards: start with activity and value—journal, small conference, and email network—then call it an “association” when all the parts are already in place. A journal was the greatest value we could offer. After confirming in an email with Hurd that ASAA was indeed defunct, I set to work on a journal by making additional contacts, while Donnermeyer contacted Ohio State University libraries to set up a publishing platform.

Progress was slow and intermittent: I was preparing for comprehensive exams and putting together an application for the highly competitive university-wide Presidential Fellowship application for the 2012-13 year. By December 2011, Donnermeyer and I were discussing journal names. I started by proposing pieces of names common to journals, and then we honed in on *The Review of Amish and Old Order Anabaptist Studies*, then, in further discussion, *The Review of Amish and Conservative Anabaptist Studies* or *The Review of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*. We would ultimately go with the latter, swapping out “Journal” for “Review.” As I reasoned, this title “(1) makes the journal more searchable (“Amish”), (2) emphasizes Amish as the main group of study, but not to the exclusion of others, and (3) gives you an idea of what these other groups are, those related to Amish within the Anabaptist field.”<sup>2</sup> “Plain” encompassed both “Old Order” and “Conservative” traditions within Anabaptism. In terms of frequency, we knew quarterly was too much work. Donnermeyer wanted one issue a year, whereas I thought we could sustain two, and two would keep publication regular enough to remain on people's radar. Ultimately, we did two.

We were simultaneously making contacts with scholars who would eventually publish in one of the early issues of *JAPAS*. Through 2011 and into 2012, I initiated contacts with Christopher Petrovich (Vol. 1, Issue 1), Sunny Jeong (1-1), Sigrid Cordell (1-2), Gracia Schlabach (1-2), Caroline Brock (1-2), William Smith (1-2), and Steven Reschly (2-1), while Donnermeyer initiated contacts with OSU colleagues Elizabeth Cooksey (1-1), Richard Moore (2-2), and Dee Jepsen (3-2). We also talked about introductory articles that

<sup>1</sup> Ryan Schellenberg, Anabaptist-Mennonite Scholars Network newsletter, spring 2010. The AMSN continues today and probably had more conceptual overlap with ASAA than what is today our Amish & Plain Anabaptist Studies Association.

<sup>2</sup> Email, from Anderson to Donnermeyer, 12-13-2011.

would define the scope of the journal, the eventual need for at least three associate editors, and our desire to hold off advertising the journal until the author list was much further along.

From our first meeting about *JAPAS*, my desire was to see plain people involved. Because *JAPAS* was going to be open access but just online—following the OSU Library’s platform—I proposed we find a printer who would make issues available to plain people who were off-line and others who preferred print copies. Ridgeway Publishing, the operation of New Order Amishman Norman Miller of Lyndonville, NY.<sup>3</sup> The deal was that he could sell them and keep all of the income; we only wanted to ensure their availability. He printed, my memory says, 500 copies of issue 1 and ended up with an overstock. While future runs were smaller, our audience among plain people was niche and hard copies got into interested people’s hands.

In addition to making *JAPAS* available in print, in the summer of 2012, I posed the idea that we extend special consideration to plain people whose quality research may “not measure up to a journal writing standard, not because [they are] not intelligent [but because they] lack that thing we call PhD training, or MA, or BA, or GED, a special section titled ‘The Researched’s Research’ perhaps.” This section would align with a recent “emphasis in qualitative circles on breaking down the superiority-of-researcher / researcher as detached from subject paradigm”<sup>4</sup> which I felt was one of the most glaring problems in Amish research. When an ethnic or religious studies field lacks members from the very people studied, misinterpretation, appropriation, othering, and hyper-etic perspectives can easily dominate.

The closest journal to *JAPAS* was *Mennonite Quarterly Review*. The Mennonite Historical Society (which sponsors *MQR*) invited Donnermeyer—having just published in *MQR* (Donnermeyer and Cooksey 2010)—to Goshen College for a presentation about the Amish population. Donnermeyer invited me to include the

Amish-Mennonites in the presentation. We had both finished population tallies for the 2010 U.S. Religion Census. On this trip, Donnermeyer prepared a hand-out about *JAPAS*—the first time we really announced it. He also wanted to talk to John Roth, *MQR* editor, about *JAPAS*. I remember the four of us, which included Jennifer, sat at a table in the hall of an academic building, and Roth offered encouragement on our new endeavor.

I had asked Donnermeyer about whether we should also meet with Steven Nolt, a historian who published about the Amish, often with sociologists Donald Kraybill or Thomas Meyers. Ultimately, only Jennifer and I met with Nolt. We had a warm conversation. I remember he had a wall of books and, as we talked, he occasionally glanced at, and eventually flipped through, the proof manuscript of *The Amish* sitting on his desk: “it’s pretty good” he said. I wrote about this meeting to Donnermeyer after the trip: “he seemed to like the idea of [*JAPAS*], and had much of the same questions as John Roth, though fewer [...] *JAPAS* was only about 20% of our conversation time. All in all, the conversation was a good time of connecting and networking.”<sup>5</sup> I enjoyed the Goshen College visit and learning more about John Roth and Steven Nolt, who were just names and email addresses to me prior.

By October 2012, Donnermeyer suggested we have the first issue published “a month or two before the Kraybill conference in June [...] Advertising before and at the conference is an opportunity not to be missed.”<sup>6</sup> All-in-all, only two works ever came from the 2013 Amish-themed conference hosted by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietistic Studies (YCAPS)—the last one I ever attended. I felt uncomfortable trawling YCAPS’s networks for manuscripts, given my commitment to a vision of *JAPAS* as a lay movement in the lowlands. By YCAPS’s 2016 conference, frustrations with planning decisions prompted me to withdraw my presence.<sup>7</sup> That only two manuscripts came in

<sup>5</sup> Email from Anderson to Donnermeyer, 3-20-2012.

<sup>6</sup> Email from Donnermeyer to Anderson, 10-15-2012.

<sup>7</sup> I was asked to be on two panels and as second author to Donnermeyer’s paper. My key submissions were (1) as lead author with Jennifer on a paper focusing on our recent international Amish research, sponsored by the Mennonite Historical Society and Society for the Scientific Study of Religion, and as a supporting co-author on a paper by Jennifer about women’s head coverings. The committee rejected

<sup>3</sup> Ridgeway ultimately printed all issues through Volume 6 Issue 1, when his business had grown to the point that he wanted to invest in higher selling items. I coordinated printing and shipping from then on, keeping several hundred dollars in profits each year as a token for my editorial work, eventually formally approved by the APASA board.

<sup>4</sup> Email from Anderson to Donnermeyer, 6-21-2012.



from the 2013 conference was certainly evidence to me that people's connections to *JAPAS* were independent of YCAPS *because* the journal offered something unique and valuable in its own right. If they participated in either (or neither), it was for independent reasons.

Work on the journal slowed for me autumn 2012, as I began the first of what would be many years of time-consuming job applications. After launching at least 17 custom-written applications destined for the silence of black holes, I spent part of winter break 2012-13 writing the piece "Who Are the Plain Anabaptists? What Are the Plain Anabaptists?" (Anderson 2013) to define the scope of the plain people and to identify and define (nearly) all of the plain Anabaptist denominations. I would only have several to add thereafter to this list, suggesting that, by this time, I had acquired a mental map of most corners of Anabaptism. Donnermeyer and I were originally going to do a Who, What, Where article, but my solo-authored Who and What got so big, I suggested we separate the Where. Donnermeyer contributed a map of and write-up about the Amish based on his U.S. Census research and I contributed all other maps, then lead-authored the article while Donnermeyer edited. We made "Where" before "Who and What" because "Where" was co-authored by the co-editors (Anderson and Donnermeyer 2013). Donnermeyer primarily focused his energies on the Amish population article (Donnermeyer, Anderson and Cooksey 2013)<sup>8</sup> and the Iowa article (Cooksey and Donnermeyer 2013) for the first issue. *JAPAS* was released May 2013 with six articles: three introductory by Donnermeyer and/or me and three examples of the kind of research we invited (e.g. geographic/demographic, sociological, and historical).

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the international paper outright and only permitted our head covering paper if my name was not on it. They suggested that Jennifer "can do the parts that she does feel comfortable to do [and you] could attend the session and then make comments about the theoretical aspects from the audience if you wish, when the time comes for question and answer." When Jennifer and I decided to withdraw from the conference, Donnermeyer took over my panel positions.

<sup>8</sup> Donnermeyer kindly invited me to be co-author on it even though it was really the work of him and Elizabeth Cooksey. In hindsight, I should have politely declined but I deferred to his invitation.

Though I had published very little peer reviewed content when *JAPAS* was published, I had sponged up opinions about so many Amish studies research articles that I had a strong sense of what was well executed and what was not, as well as a strong sense of current networks and research projects. I also had a fountain of research ideas flowing that would be published in highly ranked journals in coming years, including *The Sociological Quarterly* (Anderson 2016b), *Review of Religious Research* (Anderson 2016a), and *Rural Sociology* (Anderson and Kenda 2015). So with a command of the literature, competency for editorial work in plain Anabaptist studies, and a personal drive and vision for this work, I was uniquely and unusually poised and ready to be a functional and capable editor of *JAPAS*.

Looking back, I confidently believe that no other Amish or plain Anabaptist journal would exist today were it not for my labor to understand the full history and topography Amish studies research and vision to make many scholarly and plain voices heard. Donnermeyer was continually supportive of *JAPAS* but letting me lead the way by making most contacts, fielding peer reviews, and seeing issues to completion. We were listed as co-editors for the first five issues. When in conversation with David Luthy, Amish historian, on a visit to his Heritage Historical Library in Aylmer, ON, Donnermeyer concluded from their conversation that I was putting in most of the work. He generously acknowledged this by allowing me to be listed as lead editor, beginning with Vol. 3 Issue 2, and suggested that, someday, *JAPAS* could find a new home at whatever institution I end up at. From 3(2) on, I directly solicited and/or took lead in editing and organizing all content. It had been and continued to be a heavy load I was not anticipating.

### REORIENTING AMISH STUDIES: *JAPAS* REPRESENTS A NEW PARADIGM IN KNOWLEDGE-PRODUCTION

*JAPAS* responsibilities are intriguing but not a token upon which to get hired as an assistant professor. Indeed, much of my time went into advancing other people's research through editorial work, as I believed that only through many voices will we better understand plain Anabaptist peoplehood. It has been a rewarding experience I would

never trade. It has come with opportunity costs but I am very satisfied in *JAPAS*'s role in facilitating research.

Knowledge creation—whatever the epistemology—is inherently intertwined with power configurations, and following this logic, all science is hypothetically non-neutral. After several interesting issues with content from many junior and senior scholars of different plain Anabaptist groups, *JAPAS* launched a two-part, Amish studies-focused Volume 5 in 2017, celebrating 75 years after the first two major works in Amish studies were published (Bachman 1942; Kollmorgen 1942). In that issue, I demonstrated in a quantitative citation network analysis that the works of John Hostetler and Donald Kraybill—both YCAPS scholars—were disproportionately influential in Amish studies (Anderson 2017). It was natural, then, that authors writing for field-themed volume honed in on Hostetler and Kraybill. I also provided my personal bibliography of 1,000+ Amish studies references, attempting to make available a word-searchable document for scholars seeking relevant sources (Anderson 2017).

Identifying both the terrain of scholarship and some problems with prevailing theories, *JAPAS* 5(1) led to conversations with Donnermeyer, senior colleague Jeffrey Longhofer, editorial board member Steven Reschly,<sup>9</sup> and several others about theory problems in Amish studies. The culmination of these conversations was a 2019 publication in the high ranking religion journal, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* (Anderson et al. 2019). After a successful R&R in which the editor and three peer reviewers provided strong encouragement with helpful suggestions,<sup>10</sup> the ar-

<sup>9</sup> Both Longhofer and Reschly have offered largely bypassed but profound theoretical critiques stemming back to nearly three decades (e.g. Floersch, Longhofer and Latta 1997; Kusnetzky et al. 1995; Reschly 1993; Reschly 2000), and their impressive work has inspired my own. Their co-authored contributions were valuable.

<sup>10</sup> Reviewer 1: “I suppose I am one of the many who, according to the authors, have accepted ‘the dominant perspective’ in Amish research for the past three decades [...] I found this paper to be well-written and argued [...] thorough, developed, systematic, and logical [...] I believe their contribution will advance the development of Amish studies.” Reviewer 2: “the case that they build [is] so well-demonstrated [...] the widespread reliance on Kraybill’s scholarship has served to hamstring the field of Amish studies [and his] usefulness to the field has largely expired. Many in this field, myself in-

cluded, would relish this critique.” Reviewer 3: “This is really important work and an impressive piece of scholarship. I am glad that the authors are bringing this matter to the attention of a broader social scientific audience. For too long, there has been a singular approach to research on the Amish that has not been guided by theory. As a result, the arena of ‘Amish studies’ has been strictly separated from mainstream social scientific studies of religion. I applaud the authors.”

ticle was published online May 2019 and in print that autumn. It focused on fleshing out the “negotiating with modernity” paradigm championed by Kraybill and critiquing both its theoretical insinuations and epistemology. Kraybill did reply in *JSSR*, and he ceded no ground. Notwithstanding, I was energized that one of the most potent theoretical debates in Amish studies in existence had arrived and was published. However, I was unprepared for how it awoke the sleepy fault lines of Amish studies power configurations, which I will return to shortly.

Beyond *JAPAS* Volume 5, the journal represented more than theoretical debates but also championed coverage of a wide gamut of plain Anabaptist groups and topics, with many engaged voices contributing to this knowledge creation. In issue 6(1), three papers, in essence, debuted the Apostolic Christian/Nazarene (Samuel Froehlich-inspired) Anabaptist religious tradition to researchers, which heretofore had garnered the attention of almost no researchers. Both Joseph Pfeiffer’s history of the, approximately, first century of the movement and my own detailing of recent history and religious-cultural themes (Anderson 2018; Pfeiffer 2018) are two of the most accessed, read, and passed-around articles *JAPAS* has published. Volume 7 was devoted to Amish movements coming off the “mainline” Old Order Amish in the early to mid-1900s. In 7(1), the entire issue was devoted to the Beachy Amish-Mennonites, who went in a more progressive direction, while in 7(2), the issue was devoted to groups that went in a more conservative direction, including the Andy Weaver, Stutzman-Troyer, and Swartzentruber Amish churches. Peter Hoover’s painstaking delineation of the many small “pure church” movements in the 20<sup>th</sup> century filled a huge research gap (Hoover 2018).

I also envisioned *JAPAS* as a place guest editors could step in and advance their subareas of interest. Accordingly, *JAPAS* spotlighted three thematic areas, including a special section de-

cluded, would relish this critique.” Reviewer 3: “This is really important work and an impressive piece of scholarship. I am glad that the authors are bringing this matter to the attention of a broader social scientific audience. For too long, there has been a singular approach to research on the Amish that has not been guided by theory. As a result, the arena of ‘Amish studies’ has been strictly separated from mainstream social scientific studies of religion. I applaud the authors.”

voted to health in 6(1),<sup>11</sup> gender in 8(2), and agriculture in 9(2), with guest editors for the gender (Katherine Jellison and Natalie Jolly) and agriculture (Caroline Brock) issues. Thematic issues are intended to both advance our thinking in potentially stagnant areas and to spark new conversations leading to fresh research. Because these issues are specially organized, anyone has a chance to join the conversation, even if with different opinions or research findings. Special issues are dynamic forums.

Finally, for nearly every issue the past decade, I have offered extra time to make at least one, sometimes two, articles a reality. These articles have interesting findings but may have been rejected or never submitted without additional work. It has been rewarding to see such excellent research published and helps fulfill a key vision for *JAPAS*.

#### **JOURNAL + LISTSERV + CONFERENCE = NEW ASSOCIATION**

Stepping back to around the time of volume 4 (2016), I was working on other components of what would become a professional organization. Donnermeyer and I first discussed converting our *JAPAS* announcement list into a full-fledged email listserv. Donnermeyer expressed some interest in an open-ended, un-moderated list, where anyone could post. I felt it should be one-way, an informative list. I was concerned a free-for-all list would not be productive—both because anyone could say anything to everyone, and I doubted people would use the platform for conversations. Ultimately, we proceeded with a one-way listserv. Beginning with a public announcement June 21, 2016, I began posting a regular stream of new publications, events, and other alerts. The listserv created a steady stream of content and required no additional commentary. It fulfilled the function of a newsletter without all of the aggregate work leading up to a newsletter release that readers may only spend several minutes with (if that). The list was based on a *JAPAS* announcement email list I had built up to around 50 people. Donnermeyer added around 30 more names in 2016 before we

launched the new list. In 12-months' time, I made 63 posts with various informative items. I continued looking up emails of authors from all of the Amish studies publications I had been reading, and added interested people, including personal friends, via other channels. By March 2018, largely through researching the names of scholars in Anabaptist studies and adding emails, I had helped grow the list to 140, and, by May 2019, to 207. As of writing, many times this number of people—including service providers, plain people, scholars, and friends—receive APASA-related emails.

A “mini-conference” was the next step toward an association. In 2017, we worked with the Rural Sociological Society (RSS) to facilitate a one-day conference with non-concurrent sessions as part of their summer meeting in Columbus, OH. I also organized a one-day field trip to Holmes County, OH, for both RSS members and our attendees.<sup>12</sup> The bus was nearly full. The trip started in the northern end of the settlement and included stops at the Kidron livestock auction (cut short by late arrival), Wayne Wengerd's Pioneer Equipment, lunch at an Amish home near Wilmot, David Kline's farm, and the Behalt cyclorama. We then wended our way from Berlin down to New Bedford and to Coshocton (southern side of settlement) before returning to Columbus. Many rural scholars outside Amish studies attended; one reflected that there “was much enthusiasm for learning more about the Amish.”<sup>13</sup>

December 8, 2017, I posted an announcement on our listserv inaugurating APASA and announcing APASA's new website ([amishstudies.org](http://amishstudies.org)). The announcement named myself, Donnermeyer, and Caroline Brock as co-organizers. The APASA website had been designed autumn 2017 semester by Allison Grey, an undergraduate computer science major at Truman State University.<sup>14</sup> APASA membership was \$20 and included the following offerings: “Reduced rate hardcopy subscription to the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*; Invitation to participate and present at the annual APASA mini-conference; Access to

<sup>11</sup> This issue was to be guest edited but, in consultation with the guest editors, we decided to reduce it to a smaller section in the issue without guest editor responsibilities.

<sup>12</sup> RSS sponsors included the following Research Interest Groups (RIGs): Rural Policy; Population; Rural Studies; and Racial & Ethnic Minorities.

<sup>13</sup> Personal correspondence.

<sup>14</sup> Where I was a non-tenure track assistant professor at the time.



the annual membership list;<sup>15</sup> Subscription to the APASA email announcements listserv; Ability to contribute content to the *Journal* including submissions and book reviews.”<sup>16</sup> There it all was! The results of several years’ work constructing the association piece-by-piece. Our first “APASA” conference—second in the series—was held June 1, 2018 at the Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center in Berlin, Holmes County, OH. As with the prior year, around 20 plain Anabaptist scholars attended, and non-concurrent sessions focused on health, population, and social topics such as history, prejudice, agriculture, education, and business. Caroline Brock, one of our early *JAPAS* contributors, agreed to work as treasurer.<sup>17</sup>

Though APASA existed, official leadership beyond my ad hoc efforts and Brock’s treasurer work did not. On October 19, 2018, then again December 12, Brock and I, with Donnermeyer, invited the *JAPAS* board—down from five to four by then—and several others we had correspondences with—nine of us in all—to an organizational meeting. The three of us met in Ohio State meeting rooms and the rest joined via Zoom. All attended the first meeting but only two others at the second. I developed the agendas and Brock did minutes. We discussed incorporating APASA as a non-profit; putting together publications (eventually “scholarship”), communications, and conference planning committees; possibly expanding the *JAPAS* editorial board to 10-15 people; developing both *JAPAS* and APASA further; and ways we could better serve researchers with the organization. Lots of productive discussion and action items, but the only tangible steps for the organization was for Donnermeyer to draft APASA by-laws based on his new rural criminology society’s by-laws. Donnermeyer soon noted he would need to step back from responsibilities for the time, given concurrent work organizing the new criminology society.<sup>18</sup> This was soon after Brock had requested to step back from heavier treasurer responsibili-

ties, given personal/career considerations. Like me, she too had yet to find secure tenure track employment.<sup>19</sup> We did not schedule a future meeting but expected to get in touch with non-attendees to work out a convenient time. I began thinking of others who could lend a hand, especially with a 2019 conference only a half-year ahead.

### CONFERENCE DEVELOPMENTS: MEETINGS THAT STIMULATE CONVERSATIONS AND DEBATE

While not combining conference efforts, I had been coordinating with the leader of an Ohio-based health organization to offer back-to-back conferences across two days for our organizations that summer, sharing the theme “Theory and Practice in Amish Research.” Sadly, by April 2019—around three months before the conference—we were separating our planning efforts due to communication difficulties. Thereafter, I identified two adjacent venues in Millersburg, Holmes County, for the APASA meeting: Hotel Millersburg meeting rooms and the Millersburg campus (office suite) of the University of Akron, Wayne College, where I was then working as a senior lecturer. The meeting rooms were very nice but space constraints existed due to fire codes. We had to limit registration to 50 people; several late registrants had to be turned down. It was a *full* day on August 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2019,<sup>20</sup> with six concurrent sessions (12 separate organized events of five paper sessions, six panels, and one round table) and two plenary talks covering the work of Luann Good Gingrich and me. Session topics focused on tourism, agriculture, tax advocacy, and others.

In 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions nixed APASA’s conference—and many others in academia—but we returned July 2021 and July 2022 at Hotel Millersburg.<sup>21</sup> These two most recent meetings represented extremely encouraging de-

<sup>15</sup> No one ever asked for it and we found no good way to make it public, so this benefit was removed.

<sup>16</sup> APASA listserv email, December 8, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> Brock was and still is a non-tenure track teaching professor at the University of Missouri, though around this time, she worked as a research associate at Ohio State’s agriculture campus in Wooster.

<sup>18</sup> Personal communication.

<sup>19</sup> Donnermeyer did pick up the treasurer role temporarily.

<sup>20</sup> The conference we originally partnered with to have back-to-back offerings nearby was still held August 1<sup>st</sup>, as originally planned, just up the road. Some people attended both and some only one or the other.

<sup>21</sup> The Wayne College branch in Millersburg—which was a second floor office suite with three classrooms—closed in spring 2020 at the onset of COVID-19 and as one of many nationally discussed University of Akron budget cuts.

velopments in the history of APASA conferences. Three improvements made these two conferences so strong. First, instead of one full-day, as we had done prior, we started at 1pm and went to 5pm the next day, allowing people to stay overnight one day rather than two, so people would not cut out the morning or evening conference portions to eliminate a night's stay. Second, we eliminated concurrents and kept participants in the same room. Participants had a greater sense of togetherness. Conversations stagnated between sessions the first three years, but the last two years, we could hardly bring people back to their seats due to lively conversations. Third, rather than stocking the conference tank with particular research sessions, we focused on compiling extremely interesting, discussion-oriented panels. These panels triggered engaging conversations during and surrounding each session. Panels included many plain people, with 13 of the 19 panelists in 2022 consisting of plain people (some of whom doubled as service providers). Recent conference attendance landed between the lows of 2017-18 and high of 2019. The recent size has felt ideal for a conversationally toned meeting. In 2021, approximately 30 registered; in 2022, 35. Both years included an additional 10-20 panelists and local plain people drop-ins who were present for their own session and sometimes additional sessions. In review, one participant shared with me what I think captures the feeling of many attendees: "The discussions were unbelievably important. I love the way it was, so different than the boring academic conferences where you can just read the content from home. I already want to register for the next year." The recent conference planning committee has consisted of Jennifer Anderson (my wife), Katherine Jellison (Ohio University), Kristin Park (Westminster College, PA), Fred Witzig (Apostolic Christian Church of America, IL), and me.

### CREATIVE ORGANIZATIONAL MOMENTUM

The greatest thrust forward for APASA and *JAPAS* was, as is often the case in organizational history, forged during trying times. As I ponder this next section, I can honestly say that I am not proud of everything I have said or done, and yet, given the vast power differentials that overhung the dif-

icult decisions I was making, I still feel confident that *JAPAS* and APASA are now at a better place and remain resilient. Nothing testifies to this better than the wide range of people identifying *JAPAS* and APASA as "ours," as a quality outlet for new research and knowledge.

### Paradigm Debates

The only organization actively self-identifying as engaged in full-time Amish research was YCAPS at Elizabethtown College (senior scholars John Hostetler, Donald Kraybill, and then Steven Nolt). I, and some other scholars, have felt that the prevailing paradigms and epistemological nebulousness of YCAPS research has been problematic. In my early years as a doctoral student, while reading many Amish studies articles, I did not understand what exactly I was grappling with, why I was so dissatisfied with much of the well-cited literature. I was increasingly restless with a field that seemed oriented toward exhibition-/popular-style research but failed to meaningfully integrate serious scholarship into knowledge advancements. It was as if everything has been said. Further, I was living the life of a plain person, and though what I read could be placed on the plain people, the models really did not fit. Yet, some journal reviewers were quick to note that I rarely employed Kraybill's work, but their reviews were unclear as to why I should, other than my work being about the plain people.<sup>22</sup> This suggested that

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<sup>22</sup> For example, from one reviewer, who listed what I should cite—as if self-evident—and degraded whom I had chosen to cite. "The review of Anabaptist literature that might have a bearing upon your work is thin. The most glaring omissions are recent scholarly books and articles by Steven Nolt, David Weaver Zercher, and most importantly, Donald Kraybill. It would seem that [...] Kraybill's *The Riddle of Amish Culture*, and Kraybill and Bowman's *On the Backroad to Heaven*, in particular, would be foundational for such an analysis of Anabaptist groups. Your Anabaptist citations generally seem to rely unduly upon lighter, descriptive presentations (such as Stephen Scott's), rather than University Press monographs (i.e. more sweeping and analytic treatments.)" Of note in this quote, Stephen Scott was a personal friend and role model for me—as a scholar-convert to the plain people—who passed on suddenly in 2011. He had authored six fascinating books before accepting employment at YCAPS, where he never published books again, though in the prime of his knowledge. Just prior to his death, he had confided in me that he felt his written work—for a book he had not yet been able to publish—had been lifted for a Kray-

Kraybill's work served a gate-keeping function that justified a published challenge, achieved in the abovementioned *JSSR* article. In May 2019, with the *JSSR* article just published online, I invited Donnermeyer to send it out to our lists. I shared the latest copy of the broadcast email list I had largely compiled.

About one month before, Donnermeyer wrote me that "at least five people have called me or pulled me aside with concerns about how quick you are to criticize Kraybill in a manner they think is very strident (my word — strident)."<sup>23</sup> Indeed, I agree; I have been quick to criticize Kraybill—specifically, his theory and the structure of knowledge production. I was publishing critiques that represented much academic labor and a desire to move the field to a "post-NWM."<sup>24</sup> While I expected debates, I did not correctly predict the political and emotional response from YCAPS and admirers. Signs existed, such as the fact that YCAPS email announcements were no longer arriving in my inbox after *JAPAS* Volume 5 (about the field of Amish studies). Additionally, we felt like the shared conference theme "health" we were discussing with the Ohio health organization—all the way back in 2017—was poached, as it was announced as the same theme by YCAPS far in advance—18 months before their event.<sup>25</sup> (We changed our theme.)

### From Paradigm Debates to the New Face of *JAPAS* Administration

Through 2018 and into 2019, during the exciting developments of APASA's founding, I was burdened with the heavy workload of publishing *JAPAS* as a volunteer and without compensation while struggling financially due to the persistence

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bill publication without proper credit. In a role play illustration, he caricatured his relationship with Kraybill as that of slave and master. Such words from someone I strongly admired—a very humble man—was the first time I remember being wary of YCAPS modes of knowledge production. Scott did not have a college degree, even as his knowledge about the intricacies of plain Anabaptists were unrivaled.

<sup>23</sup> Email from Donnermeyer to Anderson, 4-25-2019.

<sup>24</sup> As stated in the final paragraphs of our 2019 *JSSR* article.

<sup>25</sup> Donnermeyer, I, and another planner emailed Steven Nolt, the new senior scholar at YCAPS, asking to talk it over. His reply indicated everything was already set and did not indicate receptivity to discussing it

of poor job market success. I floated ideas occasionally of ways to use *JAPAS* to bring in some financial support for me as editor, but I recall Donnermeyer always objected. The *JAPAS* board was small. Donnermeyer was assistant editor and helped with editing as articles and issues were close to publication. I made some contact with Steven Reschly; rarely solicited assistance from Denise Reiling, Mark Loudon, and Elizabeth Cooksey<sup>26</sup>; and cannot recall ever contacting John Roth, due by-and-large to my own hesitancy to impose myself on him given his workload with *MQR*. All of these would have been glad to help, but I really needed to tap into diverse expertise with (1) a larger board, (2) energetic junior scholars, and (3) plain people.

On April 26, I proposed to Donnermeyer that the final APASA board would include Brock, Kristin Park, Steven Reschly, him, and me, who all accepted. Simultaneously, I shared with him a list of 18 editorial board members, with me as editor, he as assistant editor, and Rosanna Hess as copy editor. Donnermeyer vetoed one (discussed below), and I sent invitations to most of the rest. From those invites, Hess accepted, eight others accepted, two more new invites accepted in the next two months, then three more by the time we released the spring 2019 issue (late release in autumn due to the publishing platform transition described below).

By the end of May 2019, while I was confirming the first round of *JAPAS* editorial board acceptances with Donnermeyer, he made a suggestion: invite Steven Nolt of the YCAPS to the *JAPAS* editorial board: "The function of it is simple: *co-optation* (*i.e.*, *Machiavellian*). Also, he is well known to Anabaptist/plain scholars, which is what you want for the editorial board, not *marginal, unproductive folks who no one else knows*... He can only say no, but if he agrees he may receive some negative reaction from Kraybill, which is an advantage" [emphasis added]. This would include "a bit of invading the Young Center turf"<sup>27</sup> by soliciting presenters at the YCAPS's early June conference. I had already stated I was not attending, even against Donnermeyer's objection that I should go because it would "greatly unnerve them to have

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<sup>26</sup> Cooksey was no longer on the board by then due to Donnermeyer's wish she be removed due to a fallout.

<sup>27</sup> Email from Donnermeyer to Anderson, 6-1-2019.



[me] walking around there.”<sup>28</sup> I was increasingly feeling uneasy about this combative style and also apparent brushoff of a board he would rarely access anyway.

His proposal to include Nolt was just *one week* after he broadcasted our *JSSR* article. Simultaneously, Donnermeyer was also proposing to guest edit a special issue of *JAPAS*—about health, the YCAPS conference theme. Part of me was delighted that, after years of limited involvement in content generation, he offered to take on a bigger role—even if just for one issue. However, I saw little honor in piggy-backing YCAPS events while developing an organization that claims to stand on its own. While at YCAPS’s early June conference, Donnermeyer reported he was invited to a “small reception for international guests on the evening before the first day” and that the “*JSSR* article came up briefly” (June 9)” with Kraybill and Nolt, but he provided little else of significance about the conversation. On June 20, Donnermeyer sent me a list of prospects for the special issue he wanted to edit and popped an executive decision on me:

Special issue editors: Joe Donnermeyer and Steve Nolt. You may view this in two ways, and both are right. One is to co-op the Young Center Conference, and the other is to invade the Young Center itself, with both based on the strength of *JAPAS* in a post-Kraybill era. Sorry to use a military term (invade) on the latter but it is the only word that seems to fit. Any other view of this is wrong [...] By co-opting the Young Center conference on health and well-being, I advance both *JAPAS* and *APASA*. (June 21)<sup>29</sup>

<sup>28</sup> Journal notes. This motivation certainly did not make me feel good, even though it seemed clear YCAPS was monitoring us. For example, at this time (May 2019), in less than one month, the *APASA* website logged 60-some separate visits (with multiple page loads) from a single Elizabethtown College computer—mostly to our conference page—in addition to multiple visits from several other computers. I started watching more closely: by the year’s end, several hundred separate visits from Elizabethtown College computers had been logged. I do not know who these were, but so many visits are inordinate for anyone.

<sup>29</sup> After our fallout, he would tell others that his action was “meant by me to bring the Young Center network toward *JAPAS* and hence benefit Cory” and that I should have left *JAPAS* to start my own journal “rather than try to dictate to me as a co-founder of *JAPAS*.” (Message shared with me, autumn 2019.)

These comments distressed me because I did not believe he was fully forthcoming. I wondered if I—and *JAPAS*—were being co-opted for his personal goals, that is, it was exciting to critique YCAPS theories until pressure came *with* potential rewards for being more closely aligned with YCAPS. I can only surmise that, for Donnermeyer, putting YCAPS leadership into *JAPAS* (i.e., the journal of the editor who instigated the new *JSSR* article) was important to ease pressure and receive social rewards. Though surmising, for me, it was a feasible possibility because I had repeatedly been affected by Donnermeyer’s personal feelings about others in academia. Just three examples follow. First, across 2016-17, I felt pressured to stop working with a colleague of his that he had a personal quarrel with. Finally, I set the option before him that we could “just move on without [him/her].” He replied: “When I express negatives about [...], I feel like I have put you in a difficult situation. Nonetheless, I am happy with your message. Let’s move forward.”<sup>30</sup> Second, in 2019, when I proposed editorial board members just two months prior, he vetoed one who I thought was a sharp scholar. That person, Donnermeyer said, will “grouse about everything, interjecting [him/herself] unnecessarily into the office politics of [his/her] department” and “is engaged in a series of derogatory statements about [topic], which I take personally.”<sup>31</sup> Finally, and concurrent with the unfolding events, he, again, degraded a proposed *APASA/JAPAS* staff member, whom he had several years ago rejected entirely as a prospect: “I am able to cite [him/her] and indicate that [the] article was very, very good. Personally, I think [s/he] is an arrogant ass.”<sup>32</sup>

Given that the *JSSR* article was only a little over one month old, I replied that “I am not ready to have Young Center personnel take leadership in *APASA* even if you are. I immediately added that “I have no opposition to them publishing in *JAPAS*” if the research passed peer review. I confided that I was suspicious of “dirty politics.” Vehement about the whole untrustworthiness of the arrangement, I concluded: “As editor, I will remain firm on this decision: [no] one at the Young Center will be involved in any editorial role [...]”

<sup>30</sup> Emails between Donnermeyer and Anderson, 4-18-2017.

<sup>31</sup> Emails from Donnermeyer to Anderson, 4-27, 5-26-2019.

<sup>32</sup> Email from Donnermeyer to Anderson, 6-21-2019.



and as *JAPAS* editor, manuscripts will continue to “be personally reviewed by me” (June 21). I made this decision unilaterally, from editor to assistant editor. Donnermeyer’s reply took a week:

I want you to keep in mind that I am the only OSU link to JAPAS at this point in time.<sup>33</sup> As that sole link, I worry about how JAPAS is perceived by [...] Amish scholars because it reflects on Ohio State [...] If [this arrangement] is what you strongly prefer, you will have to start your own journal outside of OSU and the Knowledge bank [...] Also, to deny membership on the editorial board or in relation to any kind of editorial role (such as me inviting Steve Nolt to be co-editor for a special issue [...]) based on your perceptions of being victimized or poorly treated by them is not possible. Once you go public with these kinds of statements [...], you are acting in my opinion in a manner contrary to the editor’s role of a journal associated with The Ohio State University’s Knowledge Bank and the philosophy of the Creative Commons. Hence, so long as Steve Nolt wants to co-edit a special issue with me [...] then the issue will proceed as I have it planned. Once we reach the final stage, we will share the manuscripts with you, asking for your opinion, but final decisions are to be made by the co-editors of the special issue. [emphasis added] (June 28)

This left me with a heightened sense of, as Donnermeyer had earlier said, “Machiavellian co-optation,” a threat of takeover insinuated through his invocation of being the “sole link” to the publishing platform and suggestion I leave *JAPAS* to start another journal. I also felt that his invocations of how Amish studies scholars perceive Ohio State poorly *because of me* was an exaggeration; his own past rejections of *JAPAS* board members due to feeling mistreated also came to mind. And ultimately, I suspected that he was withholding information about his activities and intentions given the obliqueness of this most recent email.

One move was clear: I needed to decide whether now was the time to protect *JAPAS* from the prospect of a coercive takeover. First, I accessed the APASA email list that I had almost entirely compiled and removed it from the shared OSU platform. Though Donnermeyer would still

have the master list because I shared it with him to promote the *JSSR* article, my use of the OSU platform was over. Second, and more critically, with the three-year publishing contract with Ohio State Libraries expiring September 14, on July 1, I asked the new board members if they would be willing to come out from OSU. I described pros and cons. In the midst of much angst and with board members so new, my acknowledgement of the circumstances in the longer email was truncated: “we do concede more control over the journal than I feel comfortable with at this point by having it hosted at an institution we have almost no active representation at. [...] in 2013, 3 of the 7 people involved in the journal were from Ohio State. At present, we only have 1 of 16.” Eight approved, one was neutral, none were opposed; I shared all discussion points and questions and provided replies. Around a month later, I was working to have *JAPAS* hosted on the University of Akron’s journal publishing platform.<sup>34</sup> My greatest regret in this process was sending the votes to the new board members and not the old ones, whose relationship to the revamped editorial board and in the midst of this unfolding conflict had yet to be clarified and seemed difficult to clarify so quickly now. In any case, if the editorial pool was considered as inclusive as possible—including Donnermeyer, whom I did not notify given the threats—majority approval was obtained. I did later affirm an invitation for them to continue; John Roth and Denise Reiling would opt out, Steven Reschly accepted an invitation to become assistant editor (replacing Donnermeyer once he confirmed resignation), Elizabeth Cooksey would (re)join *JAPAS*, and Mark Loudon joined Donnermeyer.<sup>35</sup>

In August, Donnermeyer used what was likely the email list I compiled to promote Kraybill’s reply (Kraybill 2019) to our co-authored *JSSR* article: “an excellent, point-by-point rejoinder to a recently published critique of his work.”<sup>36</sup> Then in October, he similarly promoted a spin-off

<sup>34</sup> I was adjuncting three courses a semester at Akron’s branch campus, Wayne College, at the time.

<sup>35</sup> In one correspondence to another party, he stated: “As a Jesus-follower in the Anabaptist tradition like yourself, I am committed to promoting shalom and am excited about the big-tent spirit of [Donnermeyer’s journal]. My move is not based on anti-JAPAS concerns.”

<sup>36</sup> Email broadcast from Donnermeyer, 4-16-2019.

<sup>33</sup> This was because, as mentioned before, he had pressured me to remove Cooksey from the *JAPAS* board.

journal<sup>37</sup> with an editorial board including Joseph Donnermeyer, Donald Kraybill, Steven Nolt, Mark Loudon, and Marcus Yoder.<sup>38</sup> In this announcement, which also inaugurated a new corresponding email listserv, Donnermeyer implemented the “open posting” mechanism he advocated for several years ago. Numerous people replied “thanks,” “got it,” or eventually, as the unsolicited “reply all” posts poured into people’s inboxes, some variant of “unsubscribe.” (Enabling this spew of unsolicited emails felt like an abuse of the list I had shared with him.) Someone asked Donnermeyer for clarification about *JAPAS* versus Donnermeyer’s new program, which Donnermeyer said “does not require a subscription. Neither did *JAPAS* require you to pay anything, so long as it was part of the OSU system. This is one reason why I started over, with broad support for a new journal dedicated to the promotion of scholarship, not to fund anything or anyone.” Petrovich, a *JAPAS* author and new editorial board member, provided clarification: “*JAPAS* was recently moved out of the Ohio State University system with the agreement of the editorial board and is now overseen by APASA. Perhaps I am mistaken but Joe Donnermeyer’s uninformed or duplicitous claim about paid subscription for post-OSU *JAPAS* appears to be an act of sabotage as he tries to start his own spin-off journal [...]. Joe’s closing attack (“...not to fund anything or anyone”) on Cory Anderson and the APASA is particularly concerning.” Soon after, Petrovich received an unexpected, automated unsubscribe notice from the listserv.

From my vantage point, it seems as if *JAPAS*/APASA no longer exists for Donnermeyer, yet, simultaneously, it remains his best source for ideas. For example: his spin-off journal’s name was similar to *JAPAS*<sup>39</sup>; the scope text mimicked *JAPAS*’s<sup>40</sup>; he claimed it was “the DIRECT suc-

cessor of the now de-activated OSU-version of the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*<sup>41</sup>; published it twice a year (my original idea for *JAPAS*); added a cover photo to the front of his journal when we started adding one to ours; ran a three-person symposium of Johnson-Weiner’s *Lives of Amish Women* after we did one<sup>42</sup>; contacted a news reporter after I was interviewed in an article about Amish and COVID-19 and had his name with full title and affiliation inserted next to my name as a co-founder of *JAPAS*<sup>43</sup>; started organizing an Amish agricultural extension conference shortly after invited guest editor Caroline Brock announced a call for papers for *JAPAS* on that very theme;<sup>44</sup> and other examples too numerous to list but that I have kept notes of. For three years, he has sent unsolicited emails to people

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sian Mennonite, Swiss Mennonite, and related movements.” Donnermeyer’s frontmatter: “dedicated to publishing both empirical and theoretical work related to plain Anabaptist communities, including the Amish, conservative Mennonites, Amish-Mennonites, Apostolic Christians, Brethren, Bruderhof, and Hutterites” [emphasis added]. Evidence of copying includes: the decision to include Apostolic Christian as a separate tradition and specifically named “Apostolic Christian” (a tradition I remember Donnermeyer expressing no awareness of when I proposed the 6(1) issue about the group), the decision to refer to “Brethren” as such rather than “German Baptist” or some variation, and the uncommon choice to hyphenate “Amish-Mennonite” per my own preference in both my dissertation title and in *JAPAS* editing.

<sup>41</sup> Undated announcement, mass emailed October 2019.

<sup>42</sup> Particularly in-group indulgent, given that the journal’s co-editor Nolt was also editor of this book and could have solicited such reviews before the book’s publication. The symposium idea itself was my inspiration from years of reading symposiums in *Contemporary Sociology*.

<sup>43</sup> Only the online revised version contains his information; the underlined portion is the revised text the reporter included after his contact: “Anderson is a member of the Amish-Mennonite community living in Holmes County and a co-founder of the Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies, which he started with Professor Emeritus Joseph Donnermeyer of the Ohio State University OSU Emeritus AcademySchool [sic.] of Environment and Natural Resources.” Goshay, Charita. “The Amish and COVID-19: It’s complicated,” *The Canton Repository*. January 11, 2021. (<https://www.cantonrep.com/story/news/2021/01/10/why-dont-amish-want-wear-masks/6406390002/>)

<sup>44</sup> She was not contacted with an invitation to attend, and when she finally inquired, was not even invited to speak, despite her extensive expertise and own vision of eventually organizing a conference like this, an idea she had shared with others.

<sup>37</sup> As evidence, a family member and friends otherwise uninvolved in plain Anabaptist research received his emails.

<sup>38</sup> Yoder is director of the Holmes County Amish & Mennonite Heritage Center, where Donnermeyer does some settlement research.

<sup>39</sup> So similar that an article intended for Donnermeyer’s journal that he was listed as a co-author on was mistakenly submitted to the *JAPAS* system!

<sup>40</sup> *JAPAS* frontmatter: “The *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* welcomes manuscripts, both theoretical and empirical, about plain Anabaptist groups, including Amish, Apostolic Christian, Brethren, Bruderhof, Hutterite, Rus-

whose names appear as authors in *JAPAS* or on APASA conference programs, often timed with APASA/*JAPAS* activity. Even three years later (June 2022), one day after the APASA conference committee posted the program, he emailed most authors listed and invited them to participate in a YCAPS research effort, submit to his journal, and expressed hopes to “chat with each of you over the next several years, but especially at the next Young Center Conference in 2025”—three years away! His behavior is consistent with how he once spoke about YCAPS: “invade territory” and “Machiavellian co-optation.”

APASA leadership addressed lingering issues as they came up. In April 2020, the APASA board refunded YCAPS scholars’ APASA membership; we invited a conversation,<sup>45</sup> but we never received a reply. In June 2021, the APASA board posed the following to Donnermeyer, Nolt, and their staff, asking them to stop referring to their journal as the successor of *JAPAS*.<sup>46</sup> Again, no reply; within the week, Donnermeyer had sent more unsolicited emails to people named with *JAPAS* and APASA, in time even to the very board member who had written and sent the letter. The next issue’s front-matter was tweaked to read that its “predecessor at OSU was the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies (JAPAS)*” [emphasis added] which we still read as misleading, if not also on legally thorny ground. Finally, we provided APASA/*JAPAS* staff a memo describing what was going on, disclosure of at least three attempts to

invite third-party mediation that he had rejected, and the action steps we were taking to protect the organization. In closing, we highlighted the organization’s growth and strengths, emphasizing that “APASA and *JAPAS* represent broad networks and are not “about” this conflict.”<sup>47</sup>

As a colleague acquainted with him wrote of these events: “He so dearly wanted to be a part of the Elizabethtown group and I think this is why he did it, but it seems like such a mean and underhanded thing to do.”<sup>48</sup> I will never know. Donnermeyer’s name is still listed on the *JSSR* article. To whatever extent he once, or even now, embraced the theoretical arguments or an Amish studies scholarship forum not dependent on YCAPS seems immaterial given the developments described in this section. While this closes a chapter in *JAPAS*, this chapter did not close *JAPAS*. Better things were ahead.

### LEAPING FORWARD WITH AN INDOMITABLE VISION

What, then, is the great leap forward in times of trial? The free market argument that competition improves products holds true here. As we faced the pressures of an effort that was positioned to replace us, *JAPAS* has focused on making some overdue advances. Issues are larger than ever, layout is clean and attractive, more research databases are picking up *JAPAS*, and the editorial board includes 18 rotating members who are helping with the load corresponding with their expertise. What cannot be copycatted about *JAPAS* and APASA is the particular vision from the beginning over a decade ago: advancing knowledge and appreciating good work from scholars no matter the name or institution. Additionally, several offerings will always be unique to *JAPAS*, including the sheer respect for the involvement of plain people and their voices and our interest in promoting good research developed by diverse scholars. I am happy to be part of a collegial network where each contributes his or her best, eye-to-eye with one another. In sociological terms, APASA represents a social movement: it arose due to unmet needs, worked outside of established institutions to address those needs, and confronted former paradigms

<sup>45</sup> After an opening, the letter stated: “Anyone who supports APASA’s mission statement is welcome to join. In this regards, we have reservations about accepting Young Center staff for 2020. In 2019, staff from your organization were involved in activities we construe as attempts to undermine the operation of APASA and *JAPAS*. We believe the timing suggests retaliation for the *JSSR* article. We welcome professional debate but not organizational attacks.”

<sup>46</sup> As composed by the board and sent by secretary Kristin Park: “We write to you as members of the Executive Board of the Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies Association (APASA). In these capacities we ask that you cease referring to [your journal] as the ‘direct successor at The Ohio State University of the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies (JAPAS)*’ (as appearing in the “Front Matter: Focus and Scope” section of each [...] issue). We believe that this wording is both misleading and academically improper given the ongoing publication of the *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies*. Indeed, APASA owns the International Standard Serial Number of the *JAPAS* periodical.”

<sup>47</sup> Memo from the APASA board to *JAPAS*/APASA staff.

<sup>48</sup> Email to Cory Anderson, 2022.



of thought. It is inevitable that social movements will encounter trials along the way when creating change and promoting new ideas.

### APASA ORGANIZATIONAL EXPANSION

APASA board members Kristin Park and Steven Reschly, as well as my wife Jennifer, met via Zoom on October 29, 2020, for a formal meeting, even as we had been corresponding via email through the past year. Our three APASA committees—conference, communications, and scholarship—were being organized. The communications committee first met January 20, 2021 and started meeting most months, with four members. Major projects have included continuation of a service providers' conference call that had met twice during 2020, development of a newsletter,<sup>49</sup> expansion of our email list especially for conference promotion (a great success), the APASA adoption of the listserv Plain-People-in-the-News which keeps plain people informed about secular news written about them, other translational work linking plain people to research findings, and an overhauled APASA website, to be released summer 2022.

The scholarship committee, which included four members, met for the first time January 18, 2021, with the overarching goal of promoting good research, especially good research that appeared in *JAPAS*. The committee has met once a month most months since. The committee has worked to promote *JAPAS* content through public promotion, content categorization, and an annual *JAPAS* paper award. Likely the most exciting effort has been APASA Café, a monthly speaker series meeting at noon (Eastern Time) on the last Friday of most months. The series represents a forum for researchers to present work and for conversations to circulate around research to stimulate thinking. The Café series has been going for a year and is a fantastic success. Topics have included the economic calculus of household wealth and retention of offspring (Choy 2020), adoption (Harder), uneven religious-cultural standards for Amish dairy farmers (Welk-Joerger 2021), public media framing of Amish measles outbreaks

(Fullenkamp 2021), an overview of Case Western Reserve's Collaborative Amish Aging & Memory Project (Haines) which received press coverage, recent advances in Hutterite history (Kleinsasser 2019), Low German Mennonite colonization of undeveloped land in Latin America (le Polain de Waroux et al. 2021), and panels about each new issue of *JAPAS*.

### REFLECTIONS ON TEN YEARS AS EDITOR

Even though recent years are disproportionately on mind, going back through my files, journalings, and emails for this editorial revealed some regrets I have and areas in which I hope I can improve. On the whole, though, this effort has been extremely rewarding and I am happy to see people taking interest in this work and witnessing success in their own work. I have met not just many new colleagues but feel like this organization has solidified many friendships. The challenging times have taught me much about bonds of collegiality and the importance of respectful interactions. I have been fortunate to make acquaintance with several new professional mentors who are invested in good scholarship and have helped direct me toward those interested in hard scholarship. Meanwhile, numerous contacts, friendships, and problem-solving conversations have persisted in *JAPAS* space since the early days of the journal, as many of the same authors, editors, and readers remain with the project.

I was surprised to learn in John Roth's recent *Mennonite Quarterly Review* editorial (July 2022) that there has been, in effect, three editors across almost 100 years of *MQR* history. It is not my intention to force *JAPAS* to continue beyond its usefulness, but it is plausible—and daunting—that, given my age, I could imagine seeing *JAPAS* Volume 40 or even 50 as editor. My long range vision is to see capable new staff take over soon than that, a young generation bringing new insights and shattering the knowledge limitations my generation has encountered.

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<sup>49</sup> Three bi-monthly issues were released in pdf format and posted on the website. While well-liked as a source of information, the effort that went into it for the impact it made appeared negligible. It was discontinued without fanfare.



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