

Abstract

Title of Dissertation: **AMISH WOMEN, BUSINESS SENSE:
OLD ORDER WOMEN
ENTREPRENEURS IN THE LANCASTER
COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, TOURIST
MARKETPLACE**

Beth E. Graybill, Doctor of Philosophy, 2009

Dissertation directed by: Professor John L. Caughey
American Studies

This dissertation is an examination of Amish businesswomen and gender roles in the tourist marketplace of Lancaster County, PA. Tourism in Lancaster is a \$1.5 billion business; tourists largely come because of the Amish and values associated with them. Recently, tourism has come to provide an important source of income for many Old Order Mennonite and Amish women, whose business enterprises cater primarily to a tourist market. Among the Amish, known for their separation from wider society, tourism now puts many women on the front lines in dealing with outsiders, a monumental shift historically. Thus, this ethnography of Amish businesswomen serves as a useful lens for examining Amish women's changing gender roles in Lancaster County today. Moreover, it fills a significant gap in the literature, as virtually nothing has been written about Amish women, to date.

Mine is a micro-study that examines tourism, business, and gender through the words of Amish women themselves, and my analysis of them. Using ethnography and life

history I examine the lives of Old Order Amish and Mennonite women whose businesses range from quilt shops to greenhouses to serving meals in their homes. As I show, the ways in which these women handle their business, family, and community roles sometimes involves extensions of traditional roles and sometimes departures from them.

**AMISH WOMEN, BUSINESS SENSE:
OLD ORDER WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS IN THE
LANCASTER COUNTY, PENNSYLVANIA, TOURIST MARKETPLACE**

by

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Foreword (Epigraphs)

“It is possible, I suppose, that sometime
we will learn everything
there is to learn: what the world is, for example,
and what it means.
...What do I know?
But this: it is heaven itself to take what is given,
to see what is plain; what the sun lights up willingly;
for example ... the suitability of the field for the daisies, and the
daisies for the field.”

– Mary Oliver, “Daisies,” *Why I Wake Early*

“Despite our differences [they are Plain, I am not], we are both people of faith,
specifically of Anabaptist persuasion.”

– Pauline Stevick, *Beyond the Plain and Simple: A Patchwork of Amish Lives*

Dedication

This dissertation is dedicated to my Anabaptist women ancestors, on whose shoulders I stand and with whose voices I speak.



Figure A, above is based on an image from the title page of the 1749 American reprinting of *The Martyrs Mirror* (an important book in Anabaptist, i.e. Amish and Mennonite, history), this icon was redrawn as a woman and used as the symbol for the first ever academic conference on Anabaptist women held in June 1995, on whose planning committee I served.
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¹ See, "The Digging Woman – An Image for the "Quiet in the Land" Conference, *MCC Women's Concerns Report*, Number 124 (January-February 1996), Mennonite Central Committee, Akron, Pa., p. 3. For discussion of the original (male) image, see Julia Kasdorf, "'Work and Hope': Tradition and Translation of an Anabaptist Adam," *Mennonite Quarterly Review*, Vol. 49, No. 2, (April 1995), pp. 178-204.

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CHAPTER ONE: Introduction and Literature Review

Tourism is big business in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, situated as it is within easy driving distance from the major metro areas of New York City (163 miles), Philadelphia (65 miles), Baltimore (78 miles), and Washington, D.C. (117 miles). Although the Amish community comprises only about 5 percent of Lancaster County's population, or 27,000 children and adults (Kraybill, 2007, pp. 2-5), the Amish are a major tourist attraction. More than 8 million tourists visit Lancaster each year, according to Janet Wall, vice-president of the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau, where they spend nearly 1.5 billion, “or slightly more than the gross domestic product of Belize,” according to a local newspaper reporter (Buescher, 2008, p. B2).

Previously almost completely outside it, Amish women now actively participate in this industry. Tourism provides an important source of income for Amish women, whose businesses cater primarily to a tourist market. Among the Amish, known for their religiously-based separation from wider society, tourism puts women on the front lines in dealing with outsiders, a monumental shift historically. Methodologically, ethnography is a valuable instrument to understand Amish women from their own points of view. Thus, an ethnographic study of Amish businesswomen serves as a valuable lens for examining Amish women’s changing roles in Lancaster County today and, more broadly, for considering issues of gender, religion, and economics in the contemporary world.²

² My interest in this topic began when I worked in the Lancaster tourist industry at an Amish interpretation center one summer some years ago. Later, as a graduate student commuting from my home in Lancaster, I noticed the lack of academic research on Amish women. Now, as director of the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, I am more directly involved in tourism through my profession. This dissertation was borne of these converging interests.

Guiding Questions

To understand how and why particular women in the Amish community have become successful business entrepreneurs, we must note the significance of this change. As historically separate people, living in what was once an isolated farming community, the Amish are now surrounded by suburbanization and are at the heart of a booming, tourist industry. Ironically, their success has brought them into ever-closer contact with non-Amish neighbors and tourists today. This is especially true for the Amish women in business who form my study, and a profound change from the past, when Amish women had little to do with the outside world. Thus, mine is a case study of women's changing gender roles, an organic shift in which Amish women remain connected to community values while redefining their work and importance in the family. The shift from farmer³/producer to businesswoman/consumer among Amish women in Lancaster is monumental.

This dissertation will explore the following questions:

1. How and to what extent are Amish women involved in tourist businesses?
2. What are they doing and how do these enterprises fit within Amish society? What negotiations and changes have taken place?
3. How does this affect gender within the community? How do Amish women integrate entrepreneurship with traditional gender roles?
4. In what ways is this vocational shift for women both a continuation of and a departure from traditional women's gender roles in the Amish community?

³ Joan Jensen, 1991, recommends that we consider women on the family farm as farmers in their own right, not (solely) as farmers' wives or daughters, given women's work in dairying, with chickens/egg production, and helping with harvest. My research confirms this: as Mary, an Amish businesswoman, described her Amish neighbors, "They're farmers; they *both* farm."

Gender Analysis and Amish Women

In my study of Old Order⁴ Mennonite and Amish businesswomen, I frame my analysis with historian Joan Wallach Scott's two-part definition of gender, as follows: "gender is a constitutive element of social relationships based on perceived differences between the sexes, and gender is a primary way of signifying relationships of power" (1988, p. 42). As a socially constructed set of assumptions, meanings and ideas that are attributed to masculinity and femininity, the task of the scholar is to understand how and why gender is used. In this dissertation I explore gendered assumptions through women's stories and seek to understand their frames of reference, and I move beyond this to consider male-female gender roles within the community and consequent power differentials.

Nancy Grey Osterud writes of gender as "a relationship system. Symbolically, what is 'feminine' is defined in terms of its difference from what is 'masculine'; neither term makes sense without the other. ... Gender is always reciprocal. At the same time, it is rarely symmetrical" (1991, p. 3). Thus, in my study, change in Amish women's gender

⁴ Old Order is used to describe conservative Anabaptist groups who date their history to the Protestant Reformation in 16th –century Europe. Researchers Donald Kraybill and Carl Bowman note that Old Order people "drive horse-drawn carriages" (p. 9) and "question formal education beyond 8th grade" (p. xi). They identify the following as key markers of an Old Order identity: "the preservation of traditional ritual, the use of a special dialect for worship, plain clothing, selective use of technology, and the downplaying of individual experience and personal choice" (p.18). And they observe that Old Order lifestyles typically reflect an agrarian base, an extended kinship system, a geographical community, and ample face-to-face interaction (p. 16). See Kraybill and Bowman, 2001. In this dissertation, primarily Amish, as well as a few Old Order (horse-and-buggy) Mennonites, are being described.

roles cannot help but effect men's gender roles, as well, given the reciprocity of which Osterud speaks.⁵

In a similar vein, A. Lynn Bolles speaks of gender as a negotiation. She writes, "Negotiating gender is the manner by which terms and social relations are debated and redefined by the people themselves." Moreover, a gendered perspective is useful, continues Bolles, because it enables researchers "to analyze to the full extent any social process which produces, challenges, or confirms gender categories" (Bolles, 1987, p. 83). As we will see, there is little debate but much redefinition of women's gender roles among the Amish in Lancaster County today. Amish women in business entrepreneurship, as we explore in the following vignettes, is one such social process that both confirms and challenges women's gender roles.

Vignette: Quilt Week: For Love of Fabric

I knew driving over here that this shop would be packed. It is Quilters' Heritage week in Lancaster County, a four-day exhibition of quilts at a local hotel and conference center that draws quilt aficionados from across the United States and England each spring.

Most of the quilts on display at Quilters' Heritage are very far removed from the colors, styles and patterns favored by Lancaster County Amish quilters. Lizzie, one of

⁵ When discussing gender and Amish women, a frequently cited essay is Marc Olshan and Kimberly Schmidt's chapter, "Amish Women and the Feminist Conundrum," (1994). In it, the authors attempt to reconcile Amish patriarchy with the "quiet self-confidence, strength and clarity of purpose, and unassuming self-respect" (p. 215) of many Amish women. They argue that despite traditional gender roles, Amish women are more involved in family decision-making than their "modern counterparts," since they are valued producers in the family farming economy. Given the authors' reliance on outdated sources and the trend in Lancaster County from farming to small business enterprise, I am not convinced. I discuss this essay further in the conclusion.

the businesswomen in my study who saw the exhibit in previous years, can't get over the snake in shiny silver fabric that emblazoned one quilt. "Why ever would you quilt a snake?" She shakes her head and shivers.

However, despite the differences in quilt styles, many of the visitors in Lancaster for Quilters' Heritage will also visit Zook's Dry Goods to buy more traditional quilt fabrics. Zook's store boasts a wide selection, including 25 different varieties of black fabrics for the shop's Amish clientele, and an advertised 20,000 bolts of fabric for quilters. Started by entrepreneur Lizzie Zook, this successful shop is small, with limited space, less than 1,000 square feet. But it is nestled at the heart of the Lancaster Amish community in the pretty village of Intercourse, named after Cross Keys, a crossroads town where tourists can buy assorted lowbrow, tacky t-shirts based on the town name.

Surprisingly I find parking easily but at Zook's, the line to enter the shop is already waiting out the door, and it is only 9 am. Describing the shop as "a real money-maker," Lizzie has warned me that this will be "one hectic week." I am reminded that many quilt show visitors travel around the county via chartered bus, so the lack of car traffic is deceiving.

Once inside, I browse the fabrics as well as the clientele, who are primarily white, middle-aged women, a few with British accents. Although spirits are good, it is difficult to move about in the shop, crowded as it is with 50 customers waiting in line or admiring the fabric array.

I count 21 salesclerks, most of them Amish young women. Some are busy stacking bolts of fabric back into place or checking out customers at the cash registers. A

dozen other Amish salesclerks are in constant motion behind the wooden cutting table, measuring and cutting yards of fabric per customer specifications. (I learn later that many of the Amish clerks come in from a distance and stay in a hotel to work at the store for the week.)

A record high of 900 sales will be rung through the register today, which at an average \$20 sale equals nearly \$18,000-worth of business in a single day.

While everything is very well organized, it requires a lot of patience to move through the crowd to choose your rolls of fabric, stand in line to have your pieces measured and cut, then wait in another line to check out. For the customer, not a very productive morning, from an efficiency standpoint. I am not a quilter myself, so I wonder, what is the appeal?

It occurs to me that what these women share, Amish and English,⁶ is an appreciation for the love of fabric – its varied textures, colors, designs – and the delight of putting patterns together to create beauty. (I remember Lizzie telling me that she started the store because “I just love, love, love fabric! I just love it!”)

But beyond this and of even more importance to tourists and quilters is the appeal of Amish women and the opportunity to interact with them up close in a setting reminiscent of an old country store of bygone era. Some repeat customers are old friends of Lizzie, and upon seeing her they exchange hugs and smiles and introduce their friends. Fabric forms the common meeting ground and is what brings them together, but the story is one of nostalgia and connection.

⁶ “English” is the term used by the Amish to refer to non-Amish, whose first language is English, rather than Pennsylvania German. (It does not refer primarily to the British (though it may include them.)

Vignette: “Sell By” Discount Grocery

I can walk to this store from the retreat cottage where I am writing my dissertation and often do, for a study break. Dented cans and packaged groceries with upcoming “sell by” dates are available at half-price or less, along with a small selection of bulk-priced grains, fresh produce and milk, home-baked breads and desserts, and garden plants. Hannah⁷, a single Amish woman in her 40s who moved with her parents to the southern end of the county to escape congestion, opened “Granny’s” store to help meet expenses. Even before the economic downturn, business was booming at “Granny’s” store, whose customers include both non-Amish as well as those within the Amish community. Hannah’s thriving business is a significant means of support for her extended family. And Hannah is respected as a businesswoman in the Amish community, her advice and financial support (for a new Amish school) sought after.

Lizzie’s and Hannah’s businesses are some of a growing number of Amish women’s small business enterprises in Lancaster County today. These include quilt, craft and gift shops; stores selling fabric, sewing notions and house-wares; variety stores or discount groceries; women greenhouse growers who raise flowers for sale; roadside or market stands selling crafts and/or homemade pickles and preserves, eggs, and garden produce; bake shops, many of which also supply pies and bread en masse to Amish households hosting church services or weddings; and women who cook for groups in

⁷ Unless they preferred *not* to do so (as in the previous vignette), here and elsewhere I have used pseudonyms and changed identifying details to protect the privacy of the women in my study.

their homes. Amish women's enterprises cater primarily to tourists. Some earn small amounts of discretionary income, while others comfortably support the extended family.

Gendering Amish Studies

Amish Studies, a field of study so designated by the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies at Elizabethtown College,⁸ encompasses works primarily by sociologists, historians, health care professionals, and a few anthropologists and feminists, among whom I count myself. Through this dissertation, as well as in my earlier research projects, I have attempted to redress the absence and/or the ghettoization of gender within the larger field of Amish Studies. Gender is a topic that top researchers in the field of Amish Studies give short shrift without consequence in the academy. It is what Catherine Brekus describes as, “careless exclusion – or at best, nominal inclusion” (2007, p. 5). I am grateful to these scholars for researching the Amish and have benefited from their work, but I am disturbed by this shortcoming.

For example, when I once inquired as to whether the authors of a newly published book on the Amish included gender in their analysis, the editor asked me rhetorically, “do *any* men do gender?,” as if anatomy exempted male scholars from the expectation that they pay attention to this area of difference.

Clearly, since women scholars are expected to be familiar with and teach American history of wars and great male leaders, and persons of color are expected to be knowledgeable about and teach the classic canon in literature (works predominantly by whites), more than identity politics is at stake here. It is a dismissive attitude that

⁸ See their web site at www2.etown.edu/amishstudies.

assumes gender is tangential, marginal and unimportant in Amish Studies, relevant only to women scholars, with little impact on the field as a whole. This is akin to Rita Gross's critique of male bias in religious studies: "women have been carrying the burden of human genderedness, thus freeing men to go about business as usual, unencumbered by gender issues and gender concerns" (Gross, 2004, p. 19).

Admittedly, male scholars seeking to research Amish women will need to thoughtfully address the best means of access (for example, taking their wives with them into the field when interviewing Amish women, or meeting with Amish women in contexts where male family members are around, or partnering in collaboration with women researchers). But these barriers are not insurmountable. In some ways it is similar to the adjustments that women researchers like myself are often called on to make in patriarchal settings: for example, determining when to accept the "honorary male" phenomena that gives me access to Old Order male leaders in ways denied women of their own tradition, and when to go help out in the kitchen, literally, in order to have access to Old Order women's points of view.

John Hostetler, who pioneered the field of Amish Studies and did the bulk of his writing prior to 1990, can be forgiven for not gendering his discussion of the Amish except when talking about women's responsibilities in the home. He wrote of "Amish breadwinners" and "nonfarming Amish who work in shops and trades" without gendering those Amish as male (1993, p. 138 and 136); women, when mentioned, were the marked category. But it is surprising to find 21st century authors who also generalize about "the Amish" without attention to gender. No reputable scholar today would make the kind of

broad generalizations about “the Protestants,” or “all Catholics” that we find in much mainstream scholarship about the Amish.

A recent book entitled, *Plain Diversity: Amish Cultures and Identities*, (Nolt and Myers, 2007), does a much better job of gendering the Amish, specifying Amish men when speaking of Amish employment in Indiana trailer factories, (as well as noting that occasionally Amish young women are employed in office work in such factories), and using “the Amish” only when speaking about beliefs presumably shared by men and women in the community. But even here, the text obscures women. While they speak of having interviewed “for two years” and spoken with “dozens” of informants, one assumes that the two male researchers did not interview many women; if they had, it would have raised methodological issues that they do not address in the book. While occasionally a direct quote is attributed to a woman, the majority are not. Thus the unintended result is that women are again marginal to the main story. (This is a particularly big oversight in a book discussing Amish diversity when we consider, as I discuss in the conclusion, that women’s gender roles are a primary characteristic that distinguishes conservative groups from each other.)

Most scholarship on the Old Order Amish disregards gender almost entirely, or circumscribes rather than integrates it (*Amish Enterprise*, by Kraybill and Nolt, 2004, includes a five page section on gender), preferring instead to concentrate on limited descriptions of motherhood and domestic work. (The exception here is the recent collection of essays, *Amish and the Media*, (2008) which does a better job of including

gender.) Although Plain groups⁹ and their historians may enjoy being behind the times, this particular adherence to outmoded tradition remains both a frustration and an opportunity for scholars of women. The exclusion of women in Amish Studies today is similar to what A. Lynn Bolles has described about the absence of women in anthropology in the past:

Women were hidden from the overall social analysis, misrepresented, and positioned in arenas of action that were not necessarily accurate in terms of the culture and society under study. Sometimes, whole clans, families, groups, villages, and towns were analyzed and described without women! Furthermore, what women actually did in a social system in comparison to men was sometimes lacking in the analysis. Without an appropriate examination of the sexual division of labor the analysis resulted in absence, neglect, and misrepresentation (1997, p. 80).

Women's Absence in Religious Studies

Amish women's absence and misrepresentation in Amish Studies is a subset of the larger invisibility or marginalization of women in the academic study of religion, more generally. I owe my understanding in this regard to Catherine Brekus, in her fine overview to her book, *The Religious History of American Women: Reimagining the Past* (2007). As she writes of American religious studies, in general,

⁹ Plain, as in Plain People, is a term used to describe conservative Anabaptist groups in Lancaster County who wear a distinctive style of modest dress and limit their use of modern technology, the particulars of which vary from group to group. It includes Old Order Amish and Mennonites, but also includes plain-dressing groups who drive automobiles and use electricity. All of these groups date their history to the radical or Anabaptist wing of the Protestant Reformation. See Kraybill and Hostetter, 2001.

More than thirty years after the rise of women's history alongside the feminist movement, it is still difficult to 'find' women in many books and articles about American religious history. Although few scholars ever explain their choice to exclude women, many seem to assume that women's stories are peripheral to their research topics, whether Puritan theology or church and state. They do not seem hostile to women's history as much as they are dismissive of it, treating it as a separate topic that they can safely ignore. Since 'women's historians' are devoted to writing women's history, those who identify themselves simply as 'America religious historians' can focus on topics that seem more important to them (p. 1).

Male religious historians, Brekus argues, have prioritized citizenship and civic engagement above other human concerns. By making these questions paramount, they have overlooked how religion affected other realms of society. For many women, public and private concerns cannot be separated, thus the necessity to study more broadly how religion has shaped women's understanding of their lives. As Brekus writes, "Rather than making the sweeping claim that questions about citizenship should always be paramount, most historians argue that the most crucial, valuable questions are those that help us explain our modern situation. On that scale, questions about women's history are indeed significant – even central" for such questions illustrate "not only changes in politics, but in employment, family life, and religious activism" (2007, p. 16).

Including women's history, Brekus argues, "leads to an altered vision of America's religious past" (p. 2). For example, the intriguing theoretical work of Ann Braude (1997) has shown how foregrounding women's religious experiences invalidates the accepted framework of declension, feminization, and secularization in American religious history. As Lynn Bolles has noted, it is impossible to simply "add women and stir;" it is necessary to reformulate theories based on the study of gender (Bolles, 1997, p. 81). When women's stories are included, different questions are raised. So-called "grand narratives" that "obscure the messy reality of the past by forcing contradictory pieces of evidence into a unitary story" become impossible once greater diversity is added; "old story lines do not make sense anymore" (Brekus, p. 21-22). New categorizations are needed.

The Absence of Religion in Women's Studies

Just as many Amish scholars, in particular, and religion scholars, in general, have turned a blind eye to gender, scholars of women in religion have often faced what Ursula King calls a "double blindness:" women's studies can be blind to religion just as religious studies is blind to gender (King, 2004, p. 1-2). Many women's historians of religion feel like "missionaries to two separate disciplines," according to Brekus (2007, p. 24). In my own work I have, and have not, experienced this second trend. Reactions to my presentations at conferences have ranged from polite disinterest to mild interest, with more engagement shown to my study of Amish women than was shown to my work on conservative Mennonite women who espouse patriarchy. Brekus notes that, with the exception of historians who study African American women, (who are perhaps more

sensitive to religion because of the prominent role that black churches have played in African American culture over time), many in women's studies overlook the significance of religious belief. Catherine Brekus notes that this turn *away* from religious topics came about *after* the mid-1980s, and coincided with the rise of the Religious Right, when "feminist scholars became convinced that religious belief was closely associated with political conservatism," and thus avoided the topic altogether (p. 25). As we know, religious belief can be a powerfully motivating force for progressive, as well as conservative women. However, as I argued in my previous work with Mennonite women (Graybill, 1995), it also behooves us to understand how conservative women make sense of their lives.

In my experience, sometimes in academic settings the disdain for women on the religious right rubs off on those of us who have made them our topic of study. Faye Ginsberg, in an essay entitled, "The Case of Mistaken Identity," (1997) describes how, in talks about her work, she was sometimes stereotyped as sharing the pro-life sentiments of the women she studied. Marie Griffith aptly describes "feminist ire against conservative women [which] has ringing undertones of class and anti-religious prejudice" (1998, p. 206) that wouldn't be tolerated against other groups.

I want this ethnography to portray Amish women with the respect that they deserve, and trust that to the extent I have succeeded in this endeavor, my scholarship will also not be minimized. Hopefully works such as this dissertation can illustrate what we have to gain by understanding religious minority women like the Amish, and

illuminate the fact that the religious viewpoints of all women are worth noting for their contributions to our deeper understanding of American culture.

Adding Women to Mennonite History

It remains to be seen what adding women to the so-called “grand narratives” of Anabaptist history will mean. After the historic 1995 conference on Mennonite and Amish women, on whose planning committee I served, prominent Mennonite historian Jim Juhnke mused over what difference it might make to include Mennonite women’s history; would it mean new periodizations, new categories, new themes or subjects?

Kimberly Schmidt and Steven Reschly attempted to articulate a theoretical framework for Mennonite women’s studies in their essay, “A Women’s History for Anabaptist Traditions: A Framework of Possibilities, Possibly Changing the Framework,” (2000). They suggested that Anabaptist women’s history followed the trajectory of American women’s history as laid out by historian Gerda Lerner (reprinted 2005) moving from compensatory and contribution history that seeks to include women’s stories, often those of exceptional women, to social history that looks at organized movements and marginalized women, to engaging gender theory as a category of analysis. This essay, in my opinion, is less useful for its categorization than for the provocative questions it raises, such as, how would Mennonite history look different if rewritten from a gender perspective? What is the gendered nature of core Anabaptist beliefs such as pacifism? I address the first question below, and the second question in the conclusion.

As a beginning formulation, I have two thoughts on what it might mean to de-center maleness as the norm within Mennonite history. First, Mennonites have generally conceived of our history as that of religious exceptionalism. Yet we note provocative parallels with wider American religion when we consider women's religious experiences. Theron Schlabach (1988) has written of the 19th century "quickenings" of religious fervor among Mennonites, which led to the beginning of Mennonite mission endeavors that blossomed to full flower in the early 20th century. Scholars such as Nancy Cott (1977) and Mary Douglas have noted that women's piety was at the heart of the two "Great Awakenings" in wider American religious history. Women led male family members to church and to religious conversions. I believe that this was also true for Mennonites. I have documented the importance of women among 20th Mennonite mission endeavors in Puerto Rico (Graybill, 1999), and women's predominance in a short-term, Mennonite mission program called Voluntary Service (Graybill 1993), originally designed as alternative service for Mennonite men. Presumably women's importance in the overall Mennonite "quickenings" and in missions, more generally, can also be documented. Also, as was true in other denominations in America during the 1920s, male church leaders re-asserted control over women's missionary societies following the "muscular Christianity" and "Men Forward" movement, as Gail Bederman has documented (1989). This was also true in the Mennonite church, as male leaders brought the heretofore independent women's missionary society under their control (Klingelsmith, 1980).

To give a second, example, considering women's experiences gives special weight to the period of Mennonite "institution-building" during the early-to-mid-20th

century. During this time, American Mennonites established their own parallel, church-run institutions (mission boards, private schools, continuing care facilities, mental hospitals) apart from secular society. In an earlier paper I noted some ways in which women's gender roles changed in the 20th century (Graybill, 1994). The opening of Mennonite private elementary schools during and after World War II opened teaching vocations to women. Beginning at mid-century, the opening of Mennonite retirement homes, mental health facilities, and homes for the disabled freed Mennonite women, often oldest daughters, from continuing care of the elderly and infirm, and allowed them to marry or pursue vocations. Thus this period of institutionalization was especially transformative for Mennonite women. Through these examples we see how gendering Mennonite history allows us to reassess the importance of particular time periods for women.

What is Gained by Including Amish Women

As these brief examples show, attending to women changes how we conceptualize Mennonite history. In a similar fashion, considering women in the context of Amish Studies adds new dimensions. Brekus (2007) urges women historians of religion to answer the "so what" question: what difference does it make to write women into history? Thus I pose the question, what is gained by including women in the field of Amish Studies?

For the sake of brevity I can only suggest some points of emphasis that rise to the fore when Amish women's experiences are considered. First, understanding women's gender roles illustrates family work in the context of community. Amish women's

productive as well as reproductive labor¹⁰ is family work that benefits not only the individual household but the community. Without an appropriate examination of the sexual division of labor, Amish women's work – which includes fostering the bonds of kinship, as Michaela di Leonardo (1984) has described it, and now, increasingly, waged labor – is discounted or rendered invisible, and the community is misrepresented. A corollary to this is that understanding Amish women's gender roles foregrounds the family, including child-rearing, socialization and the familial pain of *rumspringa*.¹¹ We learn more about avenues of informal influence and personal power through studying the lives of women in communities, such as the Amish, where women have less access to formal power. Including Amish women allows us to notice when and how gender roles are changing, for both women *and* men. And finally, through Amish women's experiences in tourism, we gain a more holistic understanding of Amish culture as it interacts with and adapts to modern society.

It is my hope that through this dissertation we can discover not only what difference it makes to add the Amish to women's studies, but also demonstrate the significance of adding women to Amish studies.

Theoretical Framing: Lived Religion

Rooted firmly in American Studies, with one of its points of emphasis at the University of Maryland on the “ethnographies of everyday life” (see web site at

¹⁰ Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1992) defines reproductive labor as the care and nurture of children, the sick and elder – those tasks that reproduce the next generation (and care for the previous one).

¹¹ Literally, in Pennsylvania Dutch, the “running around” period, an Amish adolescent time of experimenting with the outside world.

www.umd.amst.edu) this dissertation draws on religious studies, anthropology, and women's studies scholarship.

Drawing from the discipline of religious studies, in this work I operate from my own relatively simple definition of religion, that is: *how people create and organize meaning in their lives through a system of religious belief and practice, in the case of the Amish, a Christian system.* Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, in his 1973 essay, "Religion as a Cultural System," articulated the concept of religion as an important interpretive framework of a cultural meaning system. Geertz defines religions as providing their members with both "models of" and "models for" reality, that is, religion both describes reality and seeks to interpret it for believers in light of a comprehensive cultural meaning system, thus helping them makes sense of their world. Moreover, Geertz argued that religion circumscribes people's actions. A significant element in understanding social life, belief systems are rooted in symbols and rituals, and help to organize human activity (Geertz, 1973/2000).¹² As Geertz notes in the article, cultural analysis is "not an experimental science in search of [natural] law but an interpretive one in search of meaning" (p. 5).

John Monaghan and Peter Just, in their chapter on, "People and their Gods," in their 2000 book, *Social & Cultural Anthropology: A Very Short Introduction*, discuss the ways in which anthropological approaches to religion, in contrast to those that focus on theology or philosophy, examine how societies construct an ethical interpretation of

¹² Geertz posits that every culture -- and every individual -- has a religion, even if no one in that group believes in a god or an afterlife or any of the more familiar trappings of organized religion. This is so, he argues, because all cultures have some overall ethical framework that we use to make sense out of life and guide behavior (Geertz, 1973).

current events and give people a framework for dealing with the problems of human life. Like Geertz, above, Monaghan & Just are concerned with religious symbols, rituals, and systems of cultural meaning.

In studying Amish women, I prefer to use a religious framework focused on practice, thus this study is informed by the concept of “lived religion.” As described by its most well-known practitioner, Robert Orsi, lived religion includes “symbols, practices, and the ability of people to actively engage the religious worlds they help to create” (Orsi, 1997, p. 5). Lived religion looks to the everyday practice of religion by ordinary people in American society, in this case, the Amish. David Hackett, in his edited reader, (2003), notes that lived religion values “cultural and ethnographic approaches to the study of American religion” and privileges the actions of the laity over religious leaders or elites (2003, p. xv). David Hall (1997) notes that lived religion was born from cultural anthropology, and specifically notes its connection to the work of both Clifford Geertz and Victor Turner. As Hall defines it, lived religion is “premised on the assumption that behavior cannot be understood apart from meaning or what sometimes is loosely designated as ‘culture’” (pp. ix-x). Thus, lived religion is an approach that lends itself particularly well to ethnographic studies such as mine. Its emphasis on behavior and practice rather than on belief systems makes it especially relevant to my topic, because for the Amish, their lives are lived as witness. While faith undergirds everything in the Amish community, including business, women entrepreneurs seldom speak of it directly. I am interested in religion as practiced by my informants, not with the formal religious structure of the Amish faith.

But religion in my study is not foreground; it is background, or more appropriately, the *backdrop* for all of the interactions I had with Amish women entrepreneurs. While verbal expressions of God-language were not common (the Amish do not believe in proselytizing), a Christian Anabaptist belief system, with a history of 16th century separation from society and martyrdom for their religious practice, underscores and is implicit in all of my conversations with Amish women.¹³ “Work and Hope,” is the epigraph of their most revered book after the bible, *The Martyrs’ Mirror*, (first published in Europe in 1660 and still in print in the U.S. today),¹⁴ meaning that the Amish focus on work on earth in following Christ and living a good (godly) life, and hope for reward in heaven. Unlike evangelical Christians, they have no assurance of ultimate salvation; the Amish leave that up to God to determine. The Amish live and practice their religion by example; they hope that their good works form a powerful witness. This lived-Christianity should be read as subtext to all my interactions with Amish women as described herein.

Review of the Literature: Amish Studies

From the 2006 Amish school shootings, to the 2004 *Amish in the City* reality TV series, to the 1998 Amish drug arrests, much has been written about the Amish, both pro and con. David Weaver-Zercher, in his survey of Amish representation in the latter half

¹³ Anabaptism denotes a religious movement begun in Zurich, Switzerland in 1525 that sought to extend church reforms begun during the Protestant Reformation. During the next 100 years, Anabaptists were persecuted for their beliefs which included adult baptism, nonparticipation in war, and separation of church and state. While the term has a specific historical context, it is also an overall term used to denote Mennonite and Amish descendants of that movement, both Plain or Old Order as well as modern descendants.

¹⁴ For more information on the history of *The Martyrs’ Mirror*, see the Global Anabaptist Mennonite Encyclopedia Online at www.gameo.org.

of the 20th century, *Amish in the American Imagination*, discusses the Amish as neither virtuous nor villains, but, in the minds of many Americans, both “saving remnant” and “fallen saints” (Weaver-Zuercher, 1995). Pauline Stevick has described this “attraction-aversion” complex that many outsiders have with the Amish (2007, p. 156).¹⁵

Within the field of Amish Studies, women are an under-studied subject. In surveying the literature that relates to my topic, I have found it useful to group the works thematically. I will first discuss key works in the literature that address the Amish but where gender is largely absent.

The preeminent work in this category is *Amish Society*, by John Hostetler, reprinted four times from 1963, its original publication date, to 1993. Hostetler, who grew up Amish in Ohio and later became Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the University of Pennsylvania, was respected both in the scholarly community and among the Amish, with whom he maintained connections as an academic. In his classic work, *Amish Society*, Hostetler argued that Amish women served valuable functions in subsistence gardening, household production, and childrearing. Historically, Amish women were essential co-workers on the family farm, engaged in valued and recognized productive labor.¹⁶ Amish women held high status despite traditional gender roles, according to Hostetler. He believed that Amish women were esteemed in the family and

¹⁵ “Even persons more intimately associated with Amish society sometimes experience this attraction-aversion syndrome, often wistfully envying the Amish their ability to operate in the world with less complexity and ambiguity, while at the same time becoming exasperated with their inconsistencies and legalism” (Stevick, p. 154).

¹⁶ Nor is this productive work insignificant. Mary Neth noted that in the early 20th century, Midwestern farm women produced between half and three-fifths of their food (1995, p. 3). Amish women preserve between 400-500 jars of food yearly (Kraybill, 2007, p. 34 and Hostetler, 1993, p. 113).

community in the face of patriarchal norms because of Amish woman's economic importance to the family.¹⁷ (I take up this topic in the conclusion.) While this may have been true in the past, Hostetler's argument is predicated on rural isolation in a society where almost all Amish farmed; neither is true today in Lancaster County, where most Amish interact on a daily basis with outsiders, and only one-third of Amish families earn their primary living from farming (Kraybill, 2007, p. 9).

By contrast with Hostetler, Donald Kraybill, in his principal book, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* (2001), admits to power dynamics at work; he argues, "Age and gender create a patriarchy that gives older men the greatest clout and younger females the least" (p. 82). While Kraybill notes that Amish women are active in church governance (they vote in church business and nominate men for leadership positions), and his book contains some surprisingly outspoken quotes attributed to Amish women, Kraybill nevertheless includes the surprisingly strong statement that, "Amish women view professional women working away from home and children as a distortion of God's created order" (p. 86). If this was the case, it is doubtful that Amish women would have granted interviews to me and to other women researchers, ourselves professional working women, a methodological point that I discuss in a later section.

¹⁷ I made a similar argument in a previous work (Graybill, 1995), that conservative Mennonite women functioned more as producers than consumers, compared to American women outside these religious traditions, since they sew most of their family's clothing and quilts, they do their own baking and home-cooking, and they grow many of their own fruits and vegetables, harvesting and preserving them for later use through canning. While to some degree this is still true, I found in my research among Amish businesswomen that more of these domestic tasks are being subcontracted out to other women. Smaller gardens supplemented by purchased produce and eating out in restaurants are all more common now among the Amish women in my study. Some clothing is bought ready-made or ordered from Amish seamstresses. Thus Amish women, I believe, are moving from producers to domestic managers (see chapter four).

In a provocative essay entitled, “Plain Folk and Folk Society” in *Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler*, Simon Bronner has written the following, which I quote at length as a useful critique of Hostetler (as well as Kraybill):

If Hostetler was trying to show that the Amish woman was empowered, many feminist scholars were not so convinced, expressing concern that the Amish system of patriarchy as described by Hostetler could appear to be an admirable model of tradition for modern society or a gloss over abuse within Amish life. In Anabaptist studies and women’s studies, there was also a concern that the main accounts of Amish society were from a male perspective and therefore showed bias in underscoring men’s leadership and activities. Margaret Reynolds, for example, complained that Hostetler as well as Kraybill and Redekop after him, were tied into the patriarchy they described, leading them to overstate the harmony of family structure in plain sects. They did not fully assess the inequality of women’s roles or appreciate women’s voices in their narratives, she argued (p. 84).

To this I would simply add that it is difficult to see outside of patriarchy when one’s sources are primarily male spokespersons, again a lack that my work corrects.

In the book, *Amish Enterprise* (1995/2004), Donald Kraybill and co-author Steve Nolt include a five-page section on gender and business that addresses women’s business enterprise largely in terms of the problems inherent in combining business and motherhood. (Where their findings identify problems, women in my study found creative opportunities, as I discuss below.) Kraybill and Nolt recognize the significance of Amish

women owning and operating small businesses, which they describe as, “one of the remarkable changes in gender relations” (p. 84). Later in the book, while discussing the statistic that 17 percent of Amish women own businesses, (and my study would suggest a higher number), Kraybill and Nolt mention that,

In a patriarchal society this [women’s business ownership] will induce some changes as women have more access to money, other resources, and the outside world. Women, in short, are gaining more power, and this will likely impact their broader influences within the community as well (p. 261).

This is the gap that my work addresses.

Richard Stevick’s book, *Growing up Amish: the Teenage Years* (2007), a comprehensive study that describes Amish practices in several settlements across the county, is little better on gender. Stevick’s interest is as a psychologist wanting to understand the Amish community high rate of retention of their youth, despite the adolescent “running round” period. It is valuable for its extended ethnographic passages about weddings and singings as well as good detail on youth gangs, baseball teams, and courting.

In a short section on gender, “Gender-Role Matters,” Stevick plows old ground by highlighting sex-role differentiation and same sex socializing among the Amish to emphasize essential difference. He admits to some crossover in work tasks, depending on need, with women harvesting and milking cows when there are few or no sons in the family, and some boys helping with household tasks, when there are few or no daughters,

but wanting “no one to see them doing these chores” (p. 51). In my experience this is overstated, especially for younger married couples. For example, when our organization hosted a meal in an Amish home at noon on a weekday, the daughters in the family were away at school so the husband took off work from his construction job to help his wife serve the meal. Mary, one of my informants, emphasized the sharing of farm tasks among her own and her mother’s generation: “They’re farmers, they *both* farm.” Historians of rural women such as Nancy Grey Osterud and Joan Jensen have noted that women have helped in the fields than men have helped with domestic chores inside the home (Jensen, 1991 and Osterud, 1991.) But in general, the situation is less monolithic for the Amish than Stevick presents.

Though about a non-Amish group, a related book with limited usefulness for my study is *Horse-and-buggy Mennonites: Hoofbeats of Humility in a Postmodern World* (2006) by sociologist Don Kraybill and anthropologist James P. Hurd. In this first-of-its-kind study of Old Order Mennonites, the book describes Wenger horse-and-buggy Mennonites, one-third of whose nationwide population lives in Lancaster County (about 16,000), three-quarters of whom still farm. Most of its references to women are related to women’s dress restrictions, childbirth and family size. To its credit, the book does name social problems effecting Wenger women such as abuse (citing a local newspaper series that highlighted sexual abuse as high among this particular group) and depression (citing a local health professional who works with Wenger women) but counters such charges with dismissive statements by individual Wenger women: “They made Plain women look

too stupid and ignorant to know how to get help” (p. 160) and “I don’t know of any unhappy, depressed Wenger women” (pp. 261-2).

This book notes the fact of women-owned businesses dismissively: “but these shops tend to follow traditional gender lines,” such as roadside stands and quilt shop (pp. 201-2), but that is hardly the point. It is the fact and function of women’s ownership [i.e., shifting gender roles and power dynamics], not the line of work, that is significant here. Moreover, by their statistics, 74 percent of women are full-time homemakers but many have “sidelines,” [i.e. business enterprises!] Finally, they note greenhouses as a common occupation, but do not mention that usually this work is gendered female and run by women (see chapter six).

Important works in the genre of Amish Studies are not limited to print media. *The Amish & Us* (1998) is an important documentary film described by its filmmaker, Dirk Eitzen, as growing out of an “ironic self-consciousness” about Amish tourism in Lancaster County (2008, p. 56). Much of the film is “deliberately tongue-in-cheek,” as it contradicts tourist expectations of what they will find in “Amish Country” (Eitzen, 2008, pp. 56). Most interesting is the ending, which shows the same series of images three times with three different narrations about: 1.) the dangers and doom of tourism on the Amish, 2.) the uncritical financial reward of tourism to the Amish, and/or, 3.) tourism’s financial benefit but its possible erosion of those very values that undergird Amish life and make it an appealing tourist draw. Thus with its decidedly post-modern ending, Eitzen leaves the viewers to make our own assessments.

In a sense, my work in this dissertation is part of the back-story that Eitzen was unable to film for his documentary; while he received permission to shoot some careful footage in one quilt shop, he was denied permission to interview on film any actual Amish involved in tourism. While he creatively relied on re-enactments, interviews with experts and/or ex-Amish, and a focus on us as tourists (hence his title, *The Amish and Us*), my work fills this missing gap.

To examine the cultural landscape of the Amish, Donald B. Kraybill and Marc A. Olshan suggest the intriguing framework of modernity in their now outdated, edited collection, *The Amish Struggle with Modernity* (1994). They argue that modernization has not by-passed Amish communities but that the Amish are engaged in a "battle with modernity" waged not against progress, per se, but against "the spirit of progress" (vii). Kraybill and Olshan's main thesis is that far from being a primitive, folk society the Amish are, in fact, modern in the sense of making informed, deliberate choices, selectively rejecting some technology and forms of social organization and accepting others. The Amish move toward business entrepreneurship, which Kraybill believes is a carefully weighed decision, could be construed as one example of such a choice toward modernity.

Kraybill's edited collection, *The Amish and the State* (2003), looks at issues such as military service, taxation, social security, insurance and health care that have brought the Amish in conflict with government. The most recent controversy, of course, was the recent passage of Amish exemption to Child Labor Laws for teenage boys in wood-working shops, which President Bush signed into law in January 2004. The best

description of the latter is to be found in the popular book *Rumspringa: to be or not to be Amish* (2006), by Tom Shachtman. Overall, *Rumspringa* is a surprisingly well-written book that covers a broader range of subject matter than adolescent Amish rebellion. The chapter entitled, “Women’s Lib Would Have a Field Day among the Amish,” actually offers little on gender roles; it intersperses conservative quotes by Amish male leaders, as in the chapter title, with individual stories of young men and women from Amish families. *Rumspringa* draws from the same well of interviews as the UPN documentary, *Devil’s Playground*, (a sensational film about wild Amish rebellion and drug use), but the book is more measured and scholarly.

Even less helpful for my purposes are two works about Amish education. Mark Dewalt’s *Amish Education in the United States and Canada* (2006) purports to survey schools in every Amish settlement nationwide in an “ethnographic description of Amish education in 21st century America” (p. vii). To its credit, the book does include detailed participant-observation passages of typical school days and the Amish curriculum of reading, writing, arithmetic and English, but no direct quotes and way too many summary statements without data to back it up.

Somewhat better supported is Karen M. Johnson-Weiner’s, *Train up a Child: Old Order Amish & Mennonite Schools* (2007). This comparative work looks at Old Order Amish and Mennonite schools in nine communities in five states: Indiana, Michigan, Ohio, New York and Pennsylvania. However, like Dewalt’s book, this is a lost opportunity to foreground gender, since most of the teachers in most of these schools are women. While noting the importance of private schooling in reinforcing religious

identity (e.g., “the private school has become an educational ‘firewall,’ a barrier limiting the influence of the world on Old Order youth,” p. 35), Johnson-Weiner notes in passing that male teachers are more sought after than women and paid more than twice as much (p. 158) but fails to highlight the significance of young women filling this important role in identity formation.

Weiner’s discussion of education in Lancaster County is limited to Old Order Mennonite, (not Amish). By contrast with Lancaster County Amish and with other Old Order schools in other parts of the U.S. described in her book, Lancaster Old Order Mennonite teachers, predominantly female, are most likely to make teaching a life-long career, since there is an emphasis on professionalism and continuing teacher education. Weiner concludes her Lancaster chapter by emphasizing that the “goal of Old Order education is to help instill Old Order religious values in children while preparing them for a changing life in which manufacture more than farming will be their lot” (p. 203), a surprising statement, since many more Old Order Mennonites (nearly three-quarters) make their living from farming as compared to only one-third of Lancaster County Amish who currently do so (Kraybill, 2007, p. 9 and Kraybill & Hurd, 2006, p. 188).¹⁸

By far the best book in recent years is, *The Amish and the Media* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008), edited by Diane Zimmerman Umble and David L. Weaver-Zercher. A collection of ten essays, including a provocative introduction and a conclusion discussing coverage of the Nickel Mines Amish School shooting events, the

¹⁸ *Horse-and-Buggy Mennonites* notes 74 percent of household heads who own farms in one Lancaster district, and goes on; “Many of those who do not own a farm work on one.” Thus the rate of Old Order Mennonite farm owners and/or laborers is twice that of Lancaster Amish (Kraybill & Hurd, 2006, p. 188).

book is groundbreaking in that it interrogates representations by and about the Amish through the news media, film, and creative writing. It is also more sensitive to gender issues than is usual in the field of Amish Studies. Steve Nolt's article about Amish newspaper scribes, who are overwhelmingly female, notes that authoring these weekly columns is "one avenue of empowerment for women in a culture in which they otherwise lack formal leadership roles" (p. 188). Diane Zimmerman Umble's essays include data from Amish women sources (by contrast, most books about the Amish rely on quotes from Amish men, usually leaders, to generalize about "the Amish").

Amish and the Media also includes one essay on tourism by Susan Biesecker. Framed by Dean MacCannell's rubric of tourism as a search for authenticity (1999), she compares two towns in Holmes County that offer up very different experiences: one, "a well-planned and beautifully executed cultural memory of an era" (p. 122), and the other a working village where Amish and tourists rub shoulders more by chance than by design. Her focus is on architecture and image. Nowhere in Biesecker's essay on Amish tourism do the Amish have a voice. Citing MacCannell's observation that authenticity is always mediated, she notes the different versions of authenticity that are presented: "In the case of Walnut Creek, tourists encounter Amish people as their predecessors from a past heritage. By contrast, in Mount Hope, tourists encounter them as their contemporaries in a present alternative" (p. 126). Her comparison of these towns suggests that tourists prefer the more obviously mediated experience. While this should not be news to anyone who researches tourism, it makes for an enjoyable read.

In another of the few articles on Amish tourism, Michael Fagance, in his chapter entitled, “Tourism as a Protective Barrier for Old Order Amish and Mennonite Communities,” in a reader on tourism, (2001), argues that non-Amish tourist sites in Lancaster County protect the actual Amish against incursion, and serve as “attention deflecting strategies” – in effect, establishing “tourism no-go areas” (p. 207-8). He bases this thesis on minimal fieldwork that is in any case dated, and overlooks the ways in which the Amish *themselves* participate in their *own* representation to tourists, which I discuss in later chapters.

Review of the Literature: Anabaptist Women

In this section I discuss the growing body of literature about women among Amish and Mennonites, known historically as Anabaptists, and note significant trends. I highlight key works in particular sub-genres of contemporary Anabaptist women’s studies. At times I refer to “Plain women,” by which I mean women among the Amish and related conservative Mennonites and Brethren (sometimes referred to as Plain People), who retain distinctive clothing styles. “Plain clothing,” in the parlance of my informants, refers to a prescribed style of unornamented dress that includes an extra layer of fabric over the front, called a cape, often worn with an apron, and a head covering. It is a generic term used by Amish and other conservative Mennonite and Brethren groups in Lancaster County that varies slightly according to the particular prescribed specifications of each group. “Plain clothing” is related to but distinct from the more

inclusive "Plain style," that Katie King discusses in her writing about seventeenth century Quaker practices.¹⁹

But first a word on terminology: while most Amish, regardless of their geographic location, and the majority of Mennonites east of the Mississippi would trace their roots to Pennsylvania and to some extent identify as Pennsylvania German (or Swiss-German), most Mennonites in the Midwest and West on both sides of the US-Canada border would not, instead tracing their heritage through 19th and 20th century Dutch Russian Mennonite immigration patterns. A discussion of works by and about Anabaptist women would be incomplete without mentioning a few key works among the second heritage, knowing that it has somewhat less relevance for my own research.

I begin with the research most relevant to my own study. Ann Stoltzfus Taylor wrote a quantitative dissertation in 1995 on Amish women's entrepreneurship to fulfill requirements for her advanced degree in adult education. Taylor, who was raised Amish, thus adding a greater degree of access and accuracy to her findings, surveyed 21 married Amish businesswomen using a standard questionnaire and reported their responses via statistical tables. Designed as a survey, Taylor's study includes few direct quotations, but her wider pool of research participants allows for valuable comparative data with my

¹⁹ "Plain style," among seventeenth century Quakers, referred not only to dress but to greetings and salutations, titles and honorific pronouns, gestures and comportment, as well as speech and silence within the Quaker meeting itself. As King has written, "Sociolinguist Richard Bauman calls many of these forms 'politeness phenomena,' although today that term makes them sound rather trivial. He points out that in the seventeenth century these alterations radically challenged the very fabric of social relations and interaction and were ever present in the conduct of everyday life. Quakers understood these practices as evidence of "truthfulness in all things." From, "Demonstrations and Experiments with 'Epistemological Decorum': Seventeenth Century Quakers Practicing Writing Technologies and the Scientific Revolution." Paper written for the "Imaging Nature: Technologies of the Literal and the Scientific Revolution" Colloquium, at the Folger Shakespeare Library, discussed 27 February, 2004; available on line at: <http://www.womensstudies.umd.edu/wmstfac/kking/present/Folger04.html>

own, more in-depth findings. With the exception of a five-page section on women's business in Kraybill and Nolt's larger study on Amish enterprise, Taylor's groundbreaking dissertation is the only research that existed on Amish businesswomen prior to my own work. Her quantitative data provided excellent background, context and valuable points of comparison in relation to my own work, with my extended quotes and participant-observation vignettes. I found strong congruence and few discrepancies with my own findings despite the 13-year-lapse between our studies. My research, which has greater depth since the methodology is qualitative, built on her important foundation of broader survey data, allowing me to extend and extrapolate my own findings, and my work is stronger for it.

Two additional noteworthy books authored by Louise Stoltzfus, also raised Amish, have stood the test of time: *Amish women: lives and stories* (1994, republished in paperback by Good Books in 2002), and her less well known follow-up, *Traces of wisdom: Amish women and the pursuit of life's simple pleasures* (New York: Hyperion, 1998). Written by a (former) insider who maintained good relations with her Amish extended family members, Stoltzfus' books include accurate insights on gender, women's roles, family and community that are not available elsewhere. At times simplistic (written for a popular rather than academic audience) and always laudatory, these books nevertheless fill a void in the scholarship that my own work addresses in a more nuanced way.

The largest sub-genre of Anabaptist women's writing is the body of Christian romance fiction featuring Old Order Amish and Mennonite women protagonists but

written by popular authors with little connection to the communities they describe. From Wanda Brunstetter, who sets her stories among Amish women in Ohio, to Kim Vogel Sawyer's novels about Old Order Mennonite women in Kansas, to Cindy Woodsmall in her "Sisters of the Quilt" series, to Beverly Lewis, whose novels feature Lancaster County Amish, all of these authors write multi-volume series in the genre of Christian romance with a strong evangelical overlay (a religious sensibility that would be rare among the Amish themselves). We can view the novels of both these women writers as growing out of America's evangelical subculture. In their books, safety and security come through the solid ground of heartfelt, evangelical Christianity, with its emphasis on the centrality of conversion and personal piety. Faithfulness is defined as establishing a personal and vibrant relationship with Jesus Christ, over and against the spiritual deadness of strict Amish legalism.

Most romance readers, in general, are women. Janice Radway, in *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (1991), has shown that women read for escape, pleasure and education/ edification, i.e. learning about a different setting, time period or, in this case, a culture different than their own. Readers of Amish romance fiction may also read these books as an extension of tourism. Familiar tropes in these books include "forbidden love" with non-Amish, hard-hearted bishops, tragic buggy accidents, and wild *rumspringas*; marriage is the ultimate goal for these heroines. Were such works accurate, there would be no problem. Often storytelling invites us in to other worlds in a way less possible through nonfiction. But these works are written by

outsiders with limited understanding of or connection to actual Amish and Mennonite women. Factual errors are grating.

Of the four novelists, Beverly Lewis is the most widely read; her books routinely make the New York Times best-seller lists and five of her novels have sold 500,000 copies each. Though not particularly good fiction (action is slow and often implausible), these books are important to take note of because of their popularity. Lewis' books are the best researched (though not without inaccuracies); her latest series gives suggestions for further reading that include Donald Kraybill's books and she is relatively well-versed in many Amish customs. As I have argued elsewhere (2007), Lewis profits from "tourism of the imagination," the pleasure of reading about familiar places in Lancaster County that confirms pastoral and religious stereotypes about the Amish among would-be visitors. Lewis' books are sold widely at tourist venues in Lancaster, like souvenir mementos of a good vacation. Given its booming popularity, we can expect this genre to proliferate.

Were one looking for storytelling, I would recommend instead three works of historical fiction based on true stories of real life Amish women. The first, last fall, is *Emma: a Widow among the Amish*, by Ervin R. Stutzman (2007). Stutzman tells of his mother, widowed with six children after her husband's fatal accident following business failure. *Emma* sensitively traces his mother's efforts, aided by the wider Amish/Mennonite community in rural Kansas, to keep the family together and achieve financial independence. Carefully researched yet written as narrative, the book conveys Midwestern regional Anabaptist history amid 20th century forces of modernism.

A second successful narrative is the newly published reprint of the classic, *Rosanna of the Amish: Restored Edition* (2008). Contemporary Mennonite writer, Julia Kasdorf, edits this fourth edition (over 410,000 copies are in print) by author Joseph W. Yoder (1872-1956), a Mennonite entrepreneur raised Amish in the Big Valley area of central Pennsylvania, where the story is set. Yoder tells of his mother, an orphaned Irish baby who was raised by an Amish neighbor and who remained Amish her entire life. Reading like well-written, participant-observation field notes, this book describes 19th century rural Amish life in engaging detail.

Third, I have recently discovered the work of Amish woman, Linda Byler, through her children's books in the "Lizzie" series, described to me as the Amish version of the *Little House* books by Laura Ingalls Wilder. I prefer to think of them as the Amish answer to Beverly Lewis. Grounded in realistic detail of authentic Amish life, Byler's 7-part series (published 2003-2008) is loosely based on her childhood through marriage, following Lizzie through early child-hood escapades, school life, friendship, teen years, courtship, and early marriage. Through the course of the books, strong-willed Lizzie learns to curb her impatience and restrain her emotions, (in itself an interesting commentary on Amish women's emotional life). Byler has also written two adult fiction books set in Amish life, both realistic coming-of-age narratives (*God Sees the Forest* (2007) and *Music by the Lamplight: the Pilgrimage of Katie King* (2006)). Given that these are books written by an insider about insiders and self-published for sale primarily to insiders within the Amish community, they offer a much more accurate picture of Amish life than the Amish-themed

Christian romance fiction that purports to do so, even allowing for some degree of artistic license on Byler's part.

Unlike the Amish romance fiction written by outsiders, whose main characters' thoughts and feelings are writ large, and repetitively throughout, in both *Emma* and *Rosanna*, written by former insiders (both authors were Mennonites who had been raised Amish) these remain largely opaque, conveyed through action, if at all. One is left to wonder what these women were thinking and feeling at the time. While this reflects a more accurate representation of Old Order Pennsylvania German emotional range – as Mennonite poet Cheryl Denise has written, “*My people are quiet / and don't always say / what they want / what they need. They leave things off / for you to figure out*” (2005, p. 27) – this reticence makes for a somewhat less winsome narrative. Were it possible, I found myself wishing that the authors could have delved a little deeper into the heart and spirit of these protagonists *as women*. By comparison, although designed for a younger audience, Linda Byler's books are more emotive.

Turning from fiction to nonfiction, the landmark book in Anabaptist gender studies remains, *Strangers at home: Amish and Mennonite women in history*, edited by Kimberly Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble, and Steven Reschly, (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002).²⁰ Essays in this collection range from the 16th to the 20th centuries by scholars of note in the field of Anabaptist women's studies. Authors

²⁰ *Strangers at Home* grew out of the first academic conference on Amish and Mennonite women, held in 1995 at Millersville University in Lancaster County, on whose planning committee I served. Two subsequent conferences have been held. Essays from the 1999 conference, “Engendering the Past,” held at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba, were published in Volume 17, *Journal of Mennonite Studies* (2000); that collection includes my essay on Mennonite women missionaries to Puerto Rico. And a third conference on women's history was held just this past August in the Netherlands, “Myth and Reality of Anabaptist/Mennonite Women, 1525-1900 in Continental Europe,” with papers yet to be published.

use a variety of disciplinary approaches to explore gender and women's roles: social history, biography, personal narrative, feminist theory. None address Old Order Amish women. (Kimberly Schmidt's chapter – using oral history methodology to interview formerly Amish, now conservative Mennonite women in upstate New York – comes the closest.) Only my chapter, on Plain women's clothing and entitled, “‘To remind us of who we are:’ multiple meanings of conservative women's dress,” uses ethnography.

A book about an under-represented Anabaptist group of women is, *Plain Women: Gender and Ritual in the Old Order River Brethren*, by Margaret C. Reynolds (2001), edited and with a foreword by Simon J. Bronner, Vol. 34 in the Pennsylvania German Society's book series, an important study of women in this often-overlooked Plain group. Reynolds, an outsider who was liked by women in the community, includes good ethnographic data focusing on women's role in the bread-making ritual to create loaves for the important love-feast (communion) ritual in the denomination.

Another classic book of special merit is *Women against the good war: conscientious objection and gender on the American home front, 1941-1947*, by Rachel Waltner Goossen (1997). This landmark book makes excellent use of oral history data to chronicle the experiences of Mennonite women who served as matrons, camp followers, or employed wives of male conscientious objectors away from home during World War 2 in civilian public service camps. While it includes experiences of Pennsylvania German Amish and Mennonite women, its scope is broader in describing the inter-Mennonite connections made among women and men of conscience and the broadening of their worldview during this time period.

Good Books (of Intercourse, Pa.), was one of the first to publish a number of interesting popular works about Mennonite women through the 1990s. These titles, all of them illustrated with photographs, include Joanne Hess Siegrist's evocative pictorial history, *Mennonite women of Lancaster County: a story in photographs from 1855-1935*, (1996), now out-of-print but still available from used book sellers or at historical libraries like ours at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society; the lightweight, humorous, *Growing up plain: witty and confessional memories from the adolescence of a "plain" Mennonite girl*, (1994) by Shirley Kurtz; and *A Mennonite woman's life*, by Phyllis Pellman Good, (1993), unique for its rare and until then unpublished collection of early photographs taken by wife and mother, Ruth Hershey, of the early 20th century everyday family and farm scenes around her.

A relatively new book that I have been particularly impressed with is Pauline Stevick's *Beyond the plain and simple: a patchwork of Amish lives*, (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2006). While not focused on gender, Stevick's literary vignettes explore themes of family and community limits and values in lyrical prose that draw largely from her sensitivity to the experiences of and her conversations with Amish women. In many ways a work of qualitative ethnography, Stevick retains her ability to alternately admire and critique aspects of Amish culture. She admirably achieves her goal of enabling readers "to ponder the practice of our culture as well as Amish culture" (p. 9). In many ways Stevick's book is a more academically rigorous version of Stoltzfus' popular work.

By contrast is, *Sarah's seasons: an Amish diary & conversation* by Martha Moore Davis (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press), published in paperback in 2002. The book includes warm chapter introductions of seasonal events as told through Davis' developing friendship with Sarah Fisher, an Amish woman in Iowa. It also reproduces long sections of Fisher's brusque, 20-year old diary entries that the author unfortunately does not elucidate. Davis values the patience and other virtues she has learned from Sarah, but over-emphasizes the sense of community she feels in Sarah's world; at one point Davis speaks of feeling "at one with the women in their pastel dresses and starched white-net head coverings," (p. 176). Davis uncritically embraces Amish culture, leaving no room for objective appraisal.

Sarah's seasons lodges firmly in what I call the "**Redemptive Pilgrimage**" genre of writing about the Amish that idealizes, rather than evaluates. This genre reflects the genuine interest that draws many tourists to the Amish, some seeking to fill a spiritual void in their own lives, who sense something meaningful among the Amish.

It is reminiscent of an earlier book by Sue Bender, the New York Times bestselling author of *Plain and simple: a woman's journey to the Amish*, (originally published in 1989 with three subsequent paperback reprintings and related audio book, journal, "little book of wisdom," and a 2007 wireless electronic version) in which a modern woman gains inner peace and renewal from her stay among the Amish. Given their popularity, tremendous demand apparently exists for such "Redemptive Pilgrimages" – in which, interestingly, the seekers are always women – narratives which in my opinion do little to challenge or deepen our understanding of actual Amish

themselves, but certainly feed our assumptions about rural redemption under Amish influence.

Another book in this genre being republished by the University of Iowa Press this spring is Mary Swander's, *Out of this world: a woman's life among the Amish* (first published in 1995), a book primarily about her own health, gardening, thoughts and feelings and only peripherally about her Amish neighbors. The author, seeking relief from environmental illness, lives in rural Iowa among Amish who help her regain her strength and confidence. In the end, she finds a home, acceptance, community, and "a group of people that made me feel part of a family again" (p. 275). In all of these "Redemptive Pilgrimage" books, interactions with noble, pastoral Amish enrich the lives and deepen the values of ordinary, modern women, whose own personal growth is at the center of the narrative.

In sharp opposition to stories of "Redemptive Pilgrimage" are what I call, "*Escape Narratives*." Such stories surface from time to time, often purporting to tell the "real truth" in negative terms about the Old Orders. (The 2002 film by Lucy Walker, "Devils' Playground," from Wellspring Media, and the follow-up book, *Rumspringa: to be or not to be Amish*, by Tom Shachtman (North Point Press, 2006), which follows the same subjects, could also be seen in this category; but as gender is not foregrounded and most of the stories in both are from young men or their parents, these works are outside the scope of my dissertation.) I will give two recent examples of "Escape Narratives" from a woman's perspective. *Crossing Over: One Woman's Escape from Amish Life*, by Ruth Irene Garrett with Rick Farrant, was published in paperback by HarperCollins in

2003. It, like the more recent book, *Rolling down black stockings: a passage out of the Old Order Mennonite religion*, by Esther Ayers (Kent, Ohio: Kent State University Press, 2005), are both narratives of escape from a dysfunctional Anabaptist family and community.

Ayers' book, the more restrained of the two, documents her mother's care of her disabled father who retained tightfisted control over the family purse strings until his death, after which her mother left the Old Order Mennonites and moved the family of eight children from rural Ohio to the city of Akron, for which Ayers is ever grateful. She writes, "I realized the awesome gift Mom had given us [by leaving].... And by doing so she gave us the ability to choose our own destiny..." (p. 161). Garrett's narrative is more melodramatic. Born into a large family in a strict Amish home in Iowa, Garrett writes that her father's abusive relations with her mother soured her on marriage to an Amish man. Nonetheless, she joined the Amish church at age 16. Then at 21 she married the recently divorced (for the third time) family friend and driver of the Amish, twenty years her senior, with whom she was in love, knowing she would be shunned. (Her Lutheran church in Kentucky later held an unusual "lifting of the ban" service to bring her peace of mind.) While Garrett professes, "I cherish my family and my Amish heritage," (p. 192), she has little positive to say about it, instead criticizing the "rigid, punitive society in which the Amish dwell" (p. 173) and describing Amish life as "complying with the rules, being approved of by the people around you and blending in" (p. 181). These "Escape Narratives" are as misrepresentative of Amish/Mennonite women as are the uncritically positive "Redemptive Pilgrimages."

Biography has also had a place among Anabaptist women's writing. While I have excluded the half dozen or so early, laudatory, collections of biographical essays about Mennonite women published in the 1980s, some better than others²¹, two more recent collections (both published by Herald Press in 1999) attempt to move beyond contribution history by looking at the experiences of women *as leaders*. The book, *Quiet shouts: stories of Lancaster Mennonite women leaders*, by Louise Stoltzfus (1999) was funded by supporters in Lancaster Mennonite Conference to recover women's historical contributions. The more thoroughly researched of the two, it attempts to situate women in the larger social-cultural milieu that often overshadowed their leadership gifts. In some cases, this means redefining what leadership was during an earlier era (for example, the woman who wrote her pastor-husband's sermons, or missionary service, in which Mennonite women often had more freedom overseas than at home). The collection of autobiographical stories, *She has done a good thing: Mennonite women leaders tell their stories*, edited by Mary Swartley and Rhoda Keener (1999) and written for the popular market, is a work of oral history that would have been strengthened by greater emphasis on the broader historical context that enabled or constrained these women's individual gifts as leaders. However, to the extent that, to quote Schmidt and Reschly, cited earlier, simply "writing women back in history is a highly political act," both these collections succeed.

A more able, recent work is the story of Virginia Mennonite pastor, Ruth Brunk Stoltzfus, entitled, *A way was opened: a memoir*, by Eve MacMaster (2003). Her memoir

²¹ The best of these, in terms of locating the women described in their larger socio-cultural milieu, was written by Ruth Unrau, *Encircled: Stories of Mennonite Women*, 1986.

is of interest for the U.S. social historian as a commentary on Mennonite women's shifting roles from the mid-twentieth century into the present through the lens of one gifted woman living through a time of rapid social change for women in the Mennonite church. MacMaster sorted through some 8,000 pages of Stoltzfus' personal correspondence, journals, newsletters, sermons, denominational papers and reminiscences to write a lively, note-worthy narrative. In interesting detail, the book describes how both the wider church and Stoltzfus' own extended family, which was divided on the issue, grappled with questions of women's pastoral leadership. The memoir's emotional high point is Stoltzfus' formal ordination to ministry when she was age 74, an event which came *after* a lifetime of ministry.

In a similar vein to biography, the memoir, *Crazy Quilt: pieces of a Mennonite life* (2003), by Cynthia Yoder, is the post-modern interweaving of personal story, oral history interviews with her grandparents, and her grandmother's diary entries. Her marriage and mental health in crisis, Yoder leaves New York City and heads home to eastern Pennsylvania to collect stories from her Pennsylvania German Mennonite family. The narrative highlights Yoder's acerbic wit ("Expectations in my family were higher than the jetstream," p. 29, and, "Guilt showered me with its blessings, like acid rain," p. 39). Yet she conveys important truth in her description: "History has a way of sucking at your feet, a mud that you'd like to wash off except that something in the scent of it makes you feel proud and certain. Or proud and crazy" (p. 22). Later she extends this image as she describes steeping herself in her heritage "all the way, like a mud spa" (p. 49). The book is valuable for the way it foregrounds' women's history, and for its descriptions of

Pennsylvania German language and cultural aspects among a generation (her grandparents) that was taught to feel ashamed of that heritage.

Moving north across the border to Canada, stimulating work is being done by Mennonite women writers in both fiction and nonfiction. Too numerous to include in this essay are Canadian novelists from Mennonite background who are welcomed as important contributors to Canada's burgeoning ethnic literature. Instead, I will limit my comments to one new comprehensive history of Mennonite women, and highlight several significant historical works about Canadian Mennonite women which describe the Dutch Russian Mennonite experience.

First, just released in November, 2008, Marlene Epp has written *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History*. This far-reaching book traces Canadian Mennonite women's roles over the past two hundred years in family, church, and community. Using a lens of immigration, Marlene Epp explores the diversity of Mennonite women – from Pennsylvania German Mennonites who traveled north to Eastern Canada beginning in the early 19th century, to Mennonites arriving from Russia later that century and from the Soviet Union beginning in the 1920s, to Hmong Mennonite women in urban churches today. As Epp describes in her book, Mennonite immigrant women came here for a better life, were set apart by their religious practices and dress, and slowly acculturated to Canadian life.

Epp found contradictions between behavioral ideals and practice in some areas of Mennonite women's lives. Too often, women were identified through their marital relationships and viewed as secondary players in regional or family histories. Moreover,

Epp noted that while Mennonite nonresistance (being willing to suffer, rather than inflict suffering) has been positive in the world overall, when applied to women who historically were told to submit and to be quiet, it could become a negative, limiting factor. Mennonite ideals of Christian discipleship such as “self-abandonment,” and “the readiness to suffer for the sake of God ... become highly gendered when a model Christian-Mennonite demeanor is interpreted to be one of humility, submission, yieldedness, and readiness to suffer” (2008, pp. 12-13). For men, “discipleship allowed them to challenge the status quo of power relations in the world” (p. 13), while for Mennonite women, it reinforced their subservient role in patriarchal society. Epp’s book conveys these restraints as well as the ways in which religion fostered Mennonite women’s agency and influence. Such a masterful scope of dense writing requires time to adequately digest.

Not to be overlooked is social historian, Royden Loewen, Chair of Mennonite Studies at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba. His excellent immigration/ethnic history is always attentive to gender, like his 2002 essay in *Strangers at home*, “Household, coffee klatsch and office: the evolving worlds of mid-twentieth-century Mennonite women.” Especially interesting is his most recent work, *Diaspora in the countryside: two Mennonite communities and mid-twentieth-century rural disjuncture* (2006), comparing Mennonites on both sides of the U.S. – Canada border, which illuminates the effects of different national contexts on ethno-religious Mennonite identity. His chapter on, “The rise and fall of the cheerful homemaker,” is especially stimulating. And gender is well-integrated into all his previous work, as well.

Despite its lackluster title, Marlene Epp's invaluable study – *Women without men: Mennonite refugees of the Second World War* (2000) – relies on 34 oral history interviews at the intersection of gender, war, and immigration history to bring to light a significant period in Mennonite women's history that had been shrouded in secrecy. This compelling narrative describes the wartime experiences of Mennonite women who, having lost their husbands and fathers to Stalinist work camps, fled the Soviet Union. More than mere description, this work examines the culture of women refugees and how they remembered and reconstructed past events (including famine and wartime rape) following the war, and how they and their female-headed households were seen as both threat and promise in postwar resettlement among Mennonites in Canada and Paraguay. It is a gripping and engaging story.

Pamela Klassen, in, *Going by the moon and the stars: stories of two Russian Mennonite women* (1994), demonstrates the value of the life-history approach, as her book covers similar subject matter in more depth but on a narrower scale. Self-consciously using feminist methodology, Klassen's life histories of the war experiences of two Russian Mennonite women describes their faith and ethnic identity, forged by their arduous journey from the Soviet Union through war-torn Europe to safety as immigrants to Canada. Klassen's book makes an important contribution to Mennonite women's scholarship.

These works are in contrast to two less successful books published north of the border. *In her own voice: childbirth stories from Mennonite women* (1997), an edited collection by Katherine Martens and Heidi Harms, discusses not only childbirth but

marriage, courtship, relationship to the wider Mennonite community, ethnic identity, and ideas about God, church, and culture. It suffers for lack of a clearer focus, and fuzziness about what, if anything, makes Mennonite childbirth stories unique. However, the book *is* intriguing for the range of stories, some transcribed from German or *Plautdietsch* (a Mennonite Low German dialect distinct from but related to Pennsylvania German) and the range of age (from 20 to 80) and experience among the informants.

The study, *The work of their hands: Mennonite women's societies in Canada*, by Gloria Neufeld Redekop, (1996), relies on survey data and minutes, figures, and graphs to document the rise and decline of Mennonite women's mission societies in Canada during the early part of the 20th century. This is a significant subject of study, since women's societies were important socializing influences for immigrant Mennonite women and functioned as parallel church for women denied formal power in church structures. But the exhaustive amount of quantitative data lacking a compelling narrative makes the book tough to wade through. (On the U.S. side, Sharon Klingelsmith's fine, enduring article, "Women in the Mennonite Church, 1900-1930," (1980), tells the corresponding story of the rise and decline of American Mennonite women's mission societies, whose female leadership was supplanted when it was seen as a threat to male church administrators.)

Contemporary Mennonites have embraced our poets, many of them women, for accurate truth-telling, even when their work prods or provokes. Note the popularity among Mennonites of critically acclaimed poet, Julia Kasdorf, author of two previous poetry collections: *Sleeping Preacher* (1992) and *Eve's Striptease* (1998), both published

by University of Pittsburgh and well worth reading. In a more recent book of prose, entitled, *The body and the book: writing from a Mennonite life: essays and poems* (2001), Kasdorf discusses her creative influences, comparative poems written by other authors in response to some of hers, and the ways that growing up Mennonite and female have set “enabling constraints” on her work as a writer. Of her unofficial role as Pennsylvania German Mennonite poet laureate, Kasdorf herself has written, “Mennonites, who carry a memory of persecution and feel their identity to be always endangered, see in the voices of imaginative writers like me the promise of preservation as well as the threat of misrepresentation” (p. xii).

Alternately promise and threat, the body of work by Mennonite-related poets is too broad and diverse for this survey and includes as many Canadian as American voices. This poetry describes a modern sensibility regarding historic devotion to religious ideals. But a good place to start for an overview is the acclaimed anthology edited by Ann Hostetler, *A Cappella: Mennonite Voices in Poetry* (University of Iowa Press 2003). This bi-national book includes 24 poets, two thirds of whom are women. Hostetler notes some common themes among the variety exhibited by these Mennonite-related poets; these include the relationship of the individual to the community and the tension between communal authority and individual experience. The book’s title, *A cappella*, referencing the unaccompanied singing style traditional among many Mennonites, is taken from a particularly evocative poem of the same name by Shari Miller that describes singing as,

the entrance to a church / or a cavern / where my ancestors /
droned the poetry / that could not be uttered / in the village.

In sixteenth-century/ dungeons / they sang these hymns /
as a way to connect / flesh chained to walls / and racks. We hold
these broken ones / in our voices
like bread that could / bless us (Hostetler, 2003, p. 117).

Indeed, as in this excerpt, many of the poets in this collection hold the power of memory, of blessing, in their voices. Poems like this one juxtapose past and present Anabaptist events and images, reminders of a particular Pennsylvania German Mennonite historical standpoint that is very much a part of contemporary Amish sensibility today.

More titles of poetry by Mennonites can be found online in the DreamSeeker series of Cascadia Publishing House (www.cascadiapublishinghouse.com/dream.htm), a Mennonite press publishing new poets, including women from Pennsylvania German roots. One striking new voice is that of Debra Gingerich and her book of poems, *Where We Start* (2007). Gingerich writes out of her Pennsylvania German Mennonite heritage, sometimes with nostalgia, sometimes with angry wit. In a poem to a clueless tourist in Lancaster County who is looking for “Amish or a least Mennonites” she considers offering “a Pennsylvania Dutch obscenity / or something else of the Mennonite experience you’re not looking for – a conversation / about the Reformation, how Jacob Amman led a schism over shunning or / the impact of reading *Martyrs’ Mirror* on a child” (p. 85). Yet Gingerich’s voice overall is one of compassion, respect, and clear-sighted assessment and appreciation for her Mennonite background. Most poignant to modern Mennonites is her poem, “Diversity,” one of the strongest in her collection,

which grows out of the individual-communal dichotomy, using the image of hymn-singing, an identity marker for Mennonites.

“No one had to tell me / that God somehow can hear,
that he loves four-part harmony.

Otherwise, voices could never / fit together like that...

And we should have known / that folks who once all wore
the same cut dress, the same plain coat
couldn't also sing in unison.

Somehow it had to be told that

we are not all made alike (Gingerich, 2007, p. 25).

As in the preceding excerpt, the Mennonite and Amish women as authors and subjects named above regale us with diversity within these supposedly homogeneous religious communities, demonstrating the ways in which they are, and are not, alike in negotiating their lives and their gender roles.

CHAPTER TWO: Landscape and Methodology

Part of the tourist appeal of Lancaster County has to do with the ways in which this landscape, and the Amish who are so closely associated with it, function both literally and metaphorically in the tourist imagination.²² Indeed, as Valene Smith and Maryann Brent have noted of places like Orlando, or Vail, or Cancun, so, too, Lancaster County as a tourist destination benefits from “place marketing, where the name alone defines the destination image and the anticipated activities” (Smith & Brent, 2001, p. 10). I begin this chapter with an opening vignette from my fieldwork.

Vignette: Vegetable Shopping in the Country

When I pull in to the road-side vegetable stand, the parking lot is deserted, unusual for a sunny afternoon. Thinking perhaps they are closed for the national holiday, I’m glad to see the chain unbarred. While I need some fresh spinach for salad to take to my family gathering this Memorial Day, apparently other shoppers are at their own backyard barbeques. Or perhaps tourists are, in fact, staying home this holiday weekend, as the tourist bureau had predicted a softer market this spring, with the economic slow-down.

Twelve-year-old Sallie is minding the stand, and seems glad for a visitor. “So I guess this isn’t a holiday for you?” I inquire of her, remembering belatedly that, of course, the Amish, as pacifists, wouldn’t celebrate a national holiday devoted to commemorating war.

²² This section deals primarily with the physical Lancaster County landscape and how that is viewed imaginatively as a cultural landscape. It does not address the built environment. Although, as Mary Corbin Sies has noted, “in North America, at least, race and ethnicity are necessary considerations for understanding built environments—they, with other factors, help to constitute these cultural forms” (2005, p. 1).

“Nah, just a regular work day,” Sallie tells me.

While Amish do take off for a variety of obscure religious holidays including Ascension Day (30 days after Easter, when our Mennonite bookstore, museum and library are always busier than usual), Whitsun Monday (after Pentecost), and Second Christmas (Dec. 26), national holidays during summer and fall are often busy times for Amish who are actively engaged with garden, harvest, canning or other methods of food – or selling to tourists.

My ten-year-old son, who got out of the car with me, gives Sallie a sheepish grin and she smiles back. I can't imagine entrusting him alone with the responsibility of the family business for an entire afternoon as Sallie has been (the boredom, the potential for mischief, would it be safe?). I shake my head at this difference between Amish family expectations and my own.

As I look over the selection of locally grown spring crops (rhubarb, asparagus, spinach, beets, strawberries, cucumbers), I know that the produce is guaranteed to be fresh at stands such as these. One day when I stopped last summer and expressed disappointment that they were sold out of sweet corn, Sallie's mother, Barbara, asked me to wait a minute while she went out to the field behind the stand and picked me a dozen ears. (Since moving back to Lancaster County, I now understand why locals rhapsodize about the marvels of fresh sweet corn.)

Besides produce there are dozens of jars of home-canned pickles and pickled vegetables (five different varieties) and jellies (eight different flavors), hallmarks of women's work. Seeing them lined up on shelves in beautiful, multi-colored array

reminds me of what Mennonite Pamela Klassen (1994) has written about the aesthetic value of home-canned goods. She suggests that we should display them in our homes like we do quilts, for their artistic appeal. (And this is quite apart from the taste, health, and economics of providing for one's family year round through home-grown produce, preserved in summer and eaten in the winter, as Barbara Kingsolver has written of in her 2007 book about her family's experience of eating locally for a year.)

When I take my choices to the check out, Sallie adds up my purchases. Today she is using a battery-operated adding machine, though sometimes she calculates with pencil and paper. When I tell her that we are headed to a family gathering, she shyly asks, in good entrepreneurial spirit, if we don't need some fudge to take along. "Mam and me made it this spring," she tells me. My son's eyes light up at the thought, so we choose a container of maple fudge. Between the produce (which was all I originally intended to buy here), and the fudge and the pickles, I have spent more than I intended, but what an enjoyable interaction it has been. (Were I here on a Saturday in mid-summer, I could also buy barbequed chicken and home-baked pies.) Supermarket shopping – impersonal and standardized – is never this pleasant.

Lancaster County as Cultural Landscape

Belden Lane, in *Landscapes of the Sacred*, writes, "every human attribution of sacrality is always a social construction of reality. Places in themselves are void of any intrinsic meaning" (2002, p. 43), but many in Lancaster County would disagree. While place may be socially constructed, the attachments to it are real. Dolores Hayden (1995) has written about "the power of place" in urban working peoples' neighborhoods, the

power inherent in ordinary landscapes to nurture or alienate. “People make attachments to places that are critical to their well-being or distress” (p. 16). The fact that Lancaster county farmland still inspires writers to defend it (see following paragraph) proves its importance to a sense of well-being among many individuals who visit and/or live here. As I will argue in chapter five, part of the appeal of the Amish is not only via the cultural landscape of Lancaster County, in which they are the primary signifier, but also in the “mindsapes,” landscapes of the imagination, that surround and enfold them.

Researcher Steven Reschley has written about “alarmist literature,” written in response to perceived attacks against farmland and the Amish, of which Randy-Michael Testa’s, *After the fire: the destruction of the Lancaster County Amish* (University Press of New England, 1992) is the classic example. A more recent example in this genre is *Garden spot: Lancaster County, the old order Amish, and the selling of rural America*, by David J. Walbert (Oxford University Press, 2002), which a recent author described as a contemporary example of the pastoral genre (Crystal Downing, p. 27, in *Amish and the Media*). Reviewer Royden Loewen, commenting on *Garden spot*, has this to say: “By appropriating Amishness, the Lancaster suburbanites created an imagined rural landscape, a false rurality.... [yet] it is precisely this cultural construction that allows the Amish to flourish” (Loewen, 2007, p. 216).²³

Students of contemporary culture are increasingly coming to use the term "cultural landscape" to delimit the area of study that calls attention to the cultural meanings associated with a particular physical landscape and the people who populate it.

²³ The Pennsylvania Farm Show, held in the state capitol each January, is a celebration of rurality in which urban- and suburbanites far removed from farming can “connect with their inner farmer” (Rutter, 2009).

Geographer D.W. Meinig, summarizing the work of landscape designer J.B. Jackson, has written that every landscape is both actual and symbolic, even spiritual. According to Meinig, Jackson believed that “ultimately landscapes represent a striving to achieve a spiritual goal; they are ‘expressions of a persistent desire to make the earth over in the image of some heaven’” (p. 229). For many tourists, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is that heaven.

What is it about Lancaster County that so captures the tourist imagination? As geographer D. W. Meinig has written, “any landscape is composed not only of what lies before our eyes but what lies within our heads,” (Meinig 1979, p. 34), and, I would add, what lies within our hearts. That is, our values, preconceived notions, longings and associations with history and culture shape our experience of any landscape.²⁴

The cultural landscape that is Lancaster County represents a unique blend of geography and human community. Here, fertile limestone soil has produced a picturesque agricultural landscape. Lancaster County raises 44 percent of the state’s total chickens and 17 percent of the state’s total cows, both primarily fed on corn; feed corn occupies between 40 and 60 percent of the cultivated crops in the county (Lewis, p. 191-193). While agricultural dwellers, 2/3rds of the Lancaster County Amish no longer make their primary living from farming, according to Kraybill 2005 lecture. Those Amish who still farm tend to have multi-use farms: field crops together with dairy and/or chickens.

²⁴ Annette Kolodny (1975, 1984) has written in provocative ways about women’s relationship to the land in early America, both in gendered metaphor (land as woman, the American continent as female) and in contrasting attitudes toward the land: frontiersmen who imagined it as wilderness to be conquered vs. pioneer women who conceived of it more modestly as a garden to be cultivated. While outside the scope of this dissertation, her analysis applied to Lancaster County would make a fascinating study.

Geographer Pierce Lewis has described the Piedmont region as “Pennsylvania’s cultural hearth – where the state’s character took form and which epitomizes the state in many ways,” (p. 2). Geographically, Lancaster County sits at the heart of Pennsylvania’s fertile Piedmont region, in the southeast corner of the state, inland from Philadelphia. As Lewis writes historically, this area was,

a place that rewarded frugality and hard work, what James had called ‘the best poor man’s country’. It was rich soil for farmers’ crops, but rich soil also for the Protestant work ethic, which took root in Pennsylvania and flourished vigorously (p. 2).

The Piedmont was the core of traditional Pennsylvania.

The group most identified with tradition in this core Piedmont area is the Amish. Taken together, all the Old Order groups, Amish and Mennonite, comprise less than 10 percent of Lancaster County’s population (Kraybill, 2007), yet a Pennsylvania state publication reports that “Pennsylvania’s Amish Country” is “the most popular tourist destination in the Commonwealth.”²⁵ Thus the dynamics of Pennsylvania-German human resilience and interaction with the physical environment (described below) in Lancaster County have merged to constitute a unique cultural landscape in the tourist imagination.

Sometimes we recognize cultural landscapes only when they are no more. As David Schuyler has written of the development north of Lancaster city, “As Amish and Mennonite farm families moved away, a unique cultural landscape, a place of remarkable beauty and historical significance, was transformed into shopping center, subdivisions,

²⁵“Hello Pennsylvania: A Quick Tour of the Commonwealth,” Main Capitol Building, Harrisburg, Pa: Pennsylvania House of Representatives, 1995, p. 12.

and single-family homes that epitomized all that was wrong with suburban growth (p. 226).

In a recent book of essays by geographers, *Homelands: a geography of culture and place across America* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001), editor Richard L. Nostrand argues for the concept of a homeland constituted by “three basic elements: a people, a place, and identity with place.” The people in a given location must have lived there long enough to “have left their imprint in the form of a cultural landscape” and to have developed an identity and emotional attachment to the land (p. xvii). This is true of the Lancaster County Amish, whose ties to the land are both emotional and actual, both cultural and historic.

Physical Landscape

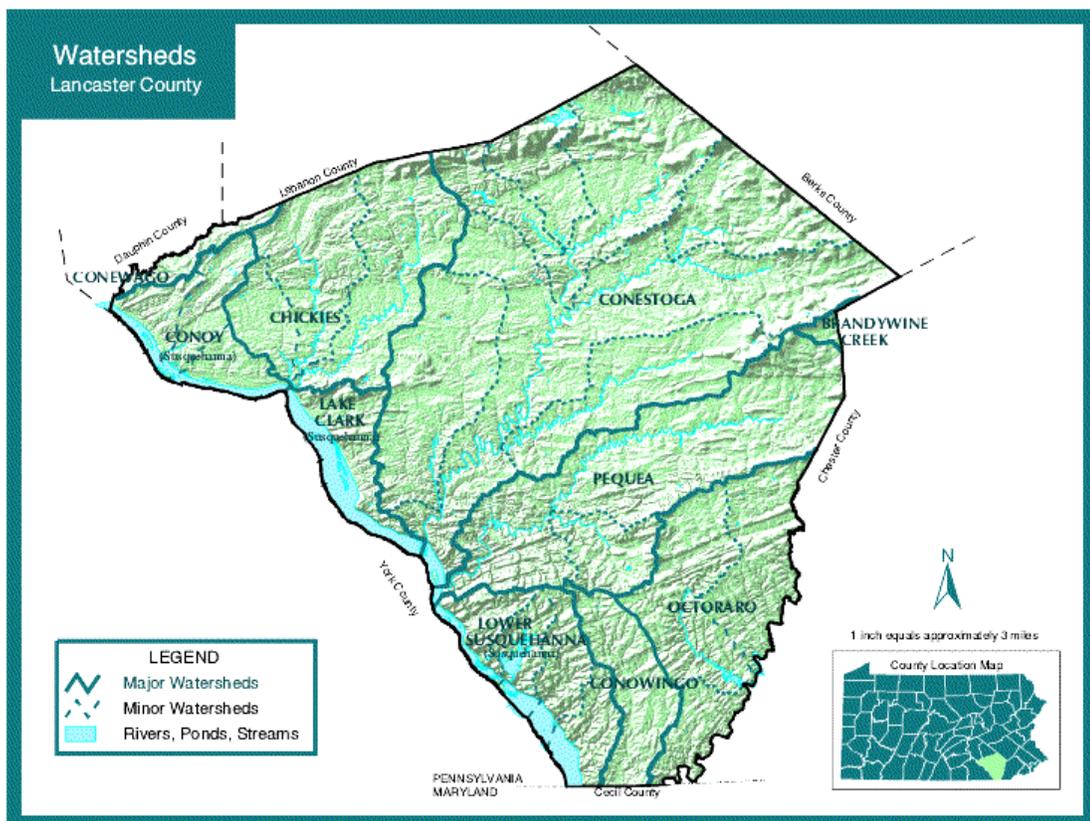
While Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, functions as a cultural landscape, features of the physical landscape are a significant component of the way in which it functions in the tourist imagination. Geographically, the borders of Lancaster County are defined by both water and hills. The mighty Susquehanna River forms the western border, connecting with the Octoraro Creek to form the southeastern border, and with the Conewago Creek²⁶ to form the northwestern corner.

Lancaster County’s northern border is formed by the wooded range of the hills of Cornwall, much of it state game hunting lands, with nearby communities of Mount Gretna, Mount Hope and Mount Airy, that run roughly parallel to the Pennsylvania

²⁶ Conewago Creek, not to be confused with the Conewingo Creek in southern Lancaster County, are Indian place names like those attached to other waterways – Conestoga, Pequea, Susquehanna. These place names document early Native American presence on the landscape.

Turnpike (east-west Route 76). With Texter Mountain and South Mountain at its northernmost peak (where Berks, Lebanon, and Lancaster counties converge), this range of elevation reaches its easternmost point near the headwaters of the Conestoga River, close to Morgantown, just outside Lancaster County's eastern border.

Geographer Pierce Lewis has written that stream patterns are the foundation of all geographical patterns which is true in this case (1995). Much of Lancaster County's fertile farmland comprises the drainage basin of the Conestoga River, which runs on a northeast diagonal through the length of the county, skirting Lancaster city, to empty into the Susquehanna River at the southwestern point (see **Figure B** below).



<http://www.co.lancaster.pa.us/planning/lib/planning/images/countywebwsheds.gif>
Used with permission of the Lancaster County Planning Commission.

Moreover, Lancaster County is watered by dozens of smaller streams and creeks, making it “the most productive un-irrigated farmland east of the Mississippi,” an oft-used quote that many locals can recite.²⁷ Many roads and township border lines follow these waterways.

While Lancaster County is blessed with some of the richest farmland in the East, it is also known for the resourcefulness of the farmers with whom it is most identified: the Old Order Lancaster Amish population, which numbers some 12,000 baptized adult members, estimated at a community size of some 27,000 including children; half are under age 18 (2008 Kraybill, p. 2).

The Amish love the land. By far the vast majority have chosen to stay in Lancaster, despite increasing land-use pressures that have two-thirds of Amish families into occupations other than farming. Many Amish can identify with Mennonite scholar Royden Loewen, who quotes his father, a master farmer, who told him, “Next to my love for the Lord and for my family, I love land the most” (Loewen, 2006, p. 254).

Geographically, the Amish are largely concentrated in this fertile area between the Conestoga River and the Pequea Creek, east of Lancaster City, and increasingly south toward Georgetown. The Amish occupy a relatively small portion of the County’s 949 square mile area. They are most concentrated in a pie-shaped wedge roughly five miles wide and 10 miles long, frequented by tourists.

²⁷ This description is found in a variety of sources, including the Lancaster-York Heritage Region web site (www.dcnr.state.pa.us/brc/heritageparks/lancasteryork.aspx) and the Pennsylvania Department of Transportation web site (www.paroute23.com/environment/farmland/farmlandHistory.htm). The original source seems to be the following, follow-up to a 1952 original study: “The rich limestone valleys of Lancaster County, which locals describe collectively as ‘the Garden Spot of the World,’ contain some of the most productive, non-irrigated farmland in the nation. Here, the Amish were able to develop a thriving community based largely on agriculture” (Luloff and Krannich, 2002, p. 147).

Tourism Historically in Lancaster County

Similar to how Wilbur Zelinsky has described the “endless busloads and carloads of tourists as integral elements” of the Washington, D.C. landscape, so the tourists frequenting Amish attractions in Lancaster County are an integral part of the physical and cultural landscape here, as well (Zelinsky, p. 321). Lancaster County is conveniently situated four hours southwest of New York City, two hours north of Baltimore and Washington DC, and 1.5 hours west of Philadelphia, making for easy access to tourists (see **Figure C** below).



<http://www.homefinders.com/lancaster/Lancaster%20Map%20Edited%206-25.gif>
Used with permission of Lynn Harley.

Tourism to Lancaster's Pennsylvania Dutch was already underway during the early twentieth century, fueled in part by the inaccurate popular novel by Helen Reimensnyder Martin, published in 1904, *Tillie the Mennonite Maid: A Story of the Pennsylvania Dutch*, which was later made into a 1922 movie (Weaver-Zuercher, 2001). But tourism got a significant boost with the 1955 Broadway musical, *Plain and Fancy*, which "put the plain Dutch [Amish, Dunkard and Mennonite] on the map, both figuratively and literally. Figuratively, with a warm story line about star-crossed Amish lovers. ... Literally, with a well-lighted backdrop that was a giant Lancaster County road map" (Stoltzfus, 2000, p. 7). The Pennsylvania turnpike, which had already opened in 1940, gave city folk easy access to Lancaster (Luthy, 1994). One of the earliest Amish attractions, the Amish Farm and House, opened in 1955 and has been continuously operating since. The local tourist bureau, now the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors' Bureau, formed in 1958 to protect the Amish and promote tourism.

Tourism continued to climb during the 1960s, and was further strengthened when in 1971 the Whitney Museum in New York City mounted a display of 61 Amish quilts from Lancaster. The 1970s and 1980s marked the height of the quilt craze in Lancaster, according to women in my study; a local reporter published "Lancaster County: Quilt Capital U.S.A." in 1987 (Klimuska, 1987), which it was seen to be.

County tourism received another boost after the making of the film, *Witness*, in 1985, and following:

Over the next ten years, enraptured audiences left movie theaters throughout the world longing to visit the Amish. They descended on [the

village of] Intercourse, many of them trekking to the booth at Zimmerman's [hardware store] to touch the phone Harrison Ford used in the movie *Witness*. The Lancaster tourism industry's long hoped-for revival had come, bringing with it lots of free-flowing cash (Stoltzfus, 2000, p. 13).

Today, according to statistics from the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors' Bureau, the Pa. Dutch Country region is Pennsylvania's leading tourist destination, and more than 8.3 million tourists visit Lancaster County each year (Faqs & Figures, PDCVB, www.padutchcountry.com/press_room/faqs_and_figures/statistics.asp). And as I have documented elsewhere, the recent growth of Amish romance fiction by such authors as Beverly Lewis, Wanda Brunstetter and others – in which the writers' own evangelical sensibilities are attributed to Amish female characters – fosters what I have coined as “tourism of the imagination” that contributes to the growth of actual Amish tourism in Lancaster County and increased sales for Amish women's business enterprises (Graybill, 2007). I discuss the vast literature of tourism in chapter five. I now turn to a discussion of my methodology.

Methodology: Ethnography

Qualitative data, as in this dissertation, offers deep immersion in another's social world. Focusing narrowly makes it possible to examine the problem in depth. Gaining the kind of insider knowledge about Amish women entrepreneurs that I sought would have been difficult with any kind of approach other than in-depth ethnography and participant observation. I have used a life history approach with a small group of

informants, actively seeking out women's voices in a patriarchal culture. Examining gender roles and expectations through a survey would have been inappropriate and impractical. Ethnographic method also provides much greater respect for and power to one's research participants, who, in some senses, become collaborators in the research.

To engage this area of study required the tools of anthropology applied to this particular, local U.S. setting, as I sought to understand Amish women's cultural meaning system through interviews, field work in their homes and shops, and transcribing and analyzing tape-recorded interviews. Qualitative research yields the benefits of deeper insights and richer analysis than quantitative data, enabling the researcher to understand cultural significance through articulating what Clifford Geertz calls "thick description" and "webs of significance" illuminating "structures of meaning" (1985).

To add a note of humility to this process, Geertz notes that while many of us present our ethnographic work as simple description of our informants' reality, in fact, our accounts as well as the self-understandings of our research participants are both interpretations of culture (hence the title of Geertz' well-known book of essays.) That is to say, both are constructions that require selecting out certain information to create a usable narrative. Quoting Geertz, these interpretations are thus "fictions in the sense that they are 'something made,' 'something fashioned' – the original meaning of *fictio* – not that they are false, unfactual, or merely 'as if' thought experiments" (1973, p. 15). This is perhaps why anthropologist Kamala Visweswaran (1994) titles her book of essays, *Fictions of Feminist Ethnography*. Hence a humbleness about the open-ended, constructed nature of my research is in order.

Through ethnography, one gains in depth and understanding what one may lack in breadth, and avoids the flaws and rigidity of survey research. Ethnographic description aims to present phenomena in new and revealing ways. Descriptive details add richness; vivid portrayals of informants are persuasive; word pictures set the scene. And, in fact, these details are ethnographic evidence, convincing us of the validity of an ethnographer's observations. Thick description requires intensity of observation, and is time consuming. But because description *is* explanation, it is largely through thick description that we as ethnographers illuminate our subjects of study for the reader to comprehend.

As qualitative researchers, ethnographers use an inductive or discovery-based approach, as compared to the deductive, hypothesis-driven method which characterizes quantitative research. I am trained to work as an anthropologist, analyzing tape-recorded interviews in some detail. One benefit of qualitative methodology is that it allows the researcher to ask in-depth questions and follow-up if she doesn't understand. Thus we identify a topic of study, and build relationships with informants, while letting the specific questions that guide our research change and develop in the field.

As ethnographers, we can argue that our accuracy is greater than that of quantitative researchers. In comparison with survey research, Martyn Hammersley has written that, for ethnographers, "As the number of cases investigated is reduced, the amount of detail that can be collected on each case is increased, and the chance of there being error in the information reduces, too" (Hammersley, 1992, p. 186). This leaves us

with smaller samples (and the concomitant danger of over-generalizing from them) but with a greater degree of accuracy in those samples.

My style of research was open-ended in that I had topics I wanted to explore with the participants in my study, but I did not approach the interviews with a pre-set list of questions. In this, my theoretical model was akin to what Mitchel Duneier writes about in his book, *Sidewalk*, a 2000 ethnography of New York City street vendors. Duneier describes his method as “diagnostic ethnography,” that is, letting the research agenda develop according to what he uncovered as he proceeded with his fieldwork. Anthropologist Renato Rosaldo refers to this as an ongoing, border-crossing process of “social analysis” (1993).

In my case I gained focus through the process of collecting and analyzing the data. As the National Science Foundation Report on Qualitative Research noted, “qualitative research is a lot like prospecting for precious stones or minerals. Where to look next often depends on what was just uncovered. The researcher-pro prospector learns the lay of the land by exploring it one site at a time” (Ragin, Nagel, and White, 2004, p. 12).

Qualitative research takes an inductive approach, discovering critical themes as they emerge from fieldwork. Moreover, qualitative methodology is uniquely suited to measure subjectivity and intention, and to understand how and why things happen. In my case, unlike with quantitative survey data, repeat visits and multiple observations over a period of time allowed me the ability to check interpretations and ask follow-up questions that extended and deepened my analysis.

Ethnography emphasizes cultural understanding, rather than taking American culture for granted. Good ethnography, as John Caughey has noted, “helps us break through the cage of our own cultural conditioning” (Caughey, 1982, p. 243). In so doing we illuminate aspects of the American cultural mosaic in ways that few other methodologies or disciplines can match for in-depth description leading to increased understanding. Michael Agar has written about the “value of ethnography in humanizing stereotypes,” and in exposing our assumptions about others as oversimplifications. Agar goes on to argue, “Ethnography, then, offers a social science metaphor within which the richness and variety of group life can be expressed as it is learned from direct involvement with the group itself” (Agar, 1996, p. 63). And this can have a profound effect on how we conceive of American cultures, which is, as I understand it, the American Studies project.

Ethnography, if done well, allows us as readers to see the world from others' points of view and makes us care about them. It has the potential to change how readers think about and relate to certain groups, because they are known, no longer seen as alien. And this has broader implications than just the particular group under study. As John Caughey has written, "It is through in-context investigations of everyday life that we can best frame an adequate understanding, not only of particular human groups, but of human thought and behavior generally" (Caughey, 1982, p. 243). At its best, ethnography helps us see universal humanity within the particular, to see the "world in a grain of sand," as the poet Blake put it.

Ethnography matters to American Studies in another way, as well. Carl Bode, one of our discipline's important founders, emphasized a populist commitment to accessible scholarship that reached beyond the borders of the academy. Ethnography, with its emphasis on narrative, does this very well. Ethnography is story-telling, and as such it is an imminently accessible medium, more so than most methodologies, which should give it a special place within American Studies, fulfilling as it does the Bode mandate.

Women's Studies & Feminist Ethnography

Ethnography's emphasis on accessibility and on story also links it to the discipline of Women's Studies. Growing out of the women's movement, with its important slogan, "the personal is the political," Women's Studies has historically placed a strong emphasis on women's stories as a basis for intellectual work and action. Thus, what ethnography has to offer Women's Studies is a rigorous method based in women's experiences. Ethnography gives Women's Studies a strong, social-science practice in which to ground its commitment to experientially based feminist knowledge.

Both ethnography and Women's Studies believe in social construction, of culture and of gender respectively. Renato Rosaldo refers to this openness at the heart of ethnography as "border crossing," and calls for more of it (Rosaldo, 1993). Deborah Gordon sees ethnography as "the process and product of cultural translation," and argues for bringing it into an "interdisciplinary feminist dialogue" (Gordon, 1993, p. 439). Thus, the theoretical commitments of ethnography and Women's Studies inform and reinforce each other.

Qualitative research is also, frankly, much more interesting to read, since it draws the reader in with narrative as story. In writing parts of this dissertation I have explicitly borrowed some storytelling techniques from fiction writing, but in all cases, the events and conversations actually did take place. Moreover, I have tried to write in a style that maximizes accessibility since some of my informants have asked to read it.

I believe this micro-study may illustrate, in a larger sense, the struggle face by women of religious faith face during periods of occupational change and gender role transition amid forces of the marketplace, modernity and change.

George Marcus has written of ethnography as a “distinctive form of knowledge production,” central to cultural anthropology, though now with increasing variety in the nature of projects and in their textual forms (1998, p. 231). While anthropology has typically assumed that fieldwork takes place in remote, international settings, the University of Maryland’s American Studies department, with which I am pleased to be affiliated, emphasizes “the cultures of everyday life,” and the value of fieldwork in U.S. settings. Research at home is the “ethnographic effort” that Caughey has described as seeking to “understand the other culture from within” (2006, p. 23).

Judith Stacey has described what she calls “feminist ethnography,” which is, at its most basic, “research on, by and especially for women” (1991, p. 111). By that standard, my work is central in this category. This, in itself, will be groundbreaking, as few scholarly articles have been written about Amish women (I have written previously about the inaccuracies of generalizing about the Amish from only male informants). Moreover, Margery Wolf writes persuasively about using one’s power and editorial

authority with a sincere desire and awareness of giving agency to one's subjects: "I may not have always gotten it right, but Taiwanese *women* were taken seriously as agents because of my research and writing" (Wolf, 1992, p. 14). I trust that this dissertation will enable us to take Amish women seriously as active agents of change.

Moreover, Stacey argues that women may bring special strengths to this method. "Like a good deal of feminism, ethnography emphasized the experiential. Its approach to knowledge was contextual and interpersonal -- therefore attentive, like most women, to the concrete realm of everyday reality and human agency" (Stacey, 1984, p. 111). Margery Wolf defines the feminist agenda in anthropology as follows: "to expose the unequal distribution of power . . . and discover ways of dismantling hierarchies of domination" (1992, p. 119). In this work I have attempted to understand the former through my interviews with Amish women, and address the latter indirectly, if at all.

As to the nature of fieldwork, Sherryl Kleinman, writing in *Feminist Fieldwork Analysis*, noted that, "to do good fieldwork, we have to know ourselves, including our expectations for and feelings about the people we're studying" (2007, p. 2). Engagement with her own politics of location led Kleinman's transition from a "qualitative researcher to a feminist fieldworker," bringing her political perspectives to bear on her work (p. 4). Or as John Caughey put it, "To know the other through oneself is an act of conceptual empathy and culturally informed imagination" (2006, p. 23).

Pat Caplan observed that women ethnographers have been the ones publishing material on the tensions inherent in fieldwork itself. Caplan saw this as a kind of disciplinary "housekeeping" in which women take up the "impurities of fieldwork" while

“men are off doing the ‘real thing’” (Caplan, 1988, p. 16). But Diane Wolf, writing in *Feminist Dilemmas in Fieldwork*, sees concerns related to ethics in fieldwork as critical for consideration, related as they are to such underlying feminist tenets as transparency, reflexivity, and reciprocity. In particular, Wolf and others have argued that disinterested detachment is neither possible nor desirable. To Caplan, objectivity is simply a form of male subjectivity. Every researcher has an agenda; some are simply more aware of it than others. In fact, as Wolf writes, “The epistemological contribution of women researchers is their ‘embodied subjectivity’ – their own knowledge and experiences are crucial for creating knowledge and for determining how fully they can understand a phenomenon” (p. 13).

I learned during this project not to weigh interview data over data gained through participant observation, but to be alert to the contradictions. This was most obvious in my interview discussion about mothers and work for pay. My informants were at pains to tell me that business should always take a back seat to mothering, yet many of their own work histories and interactions belied this. While they had various strategies for constructing their personal situations (financial need necessitated putting work first, the shop was at home so they could prioritize mothering, daughters functioned as “surrogate mothers,” not wanting other Amish women to experience their regrets, etc.) it seemed to me to be a case of do what I say, not what I did.

Renato Rosaldo suggests looking to the “mundane practices of every day life” (such as Amish women’s work?), and argues that, “Ethnographers look less for homogeneous communities than for the border zones within and between them. Such

cultural border zones are always in motion, not frozen for inspection” (1983, p. 217). In a sense the Amish women small business owners whom I studied exist in a constantly shifting border zone on several counts: as entrepreneurs, they juggle domestic and business worlds, and they are on the border between Amish-and-outsider relations, in that their clientele is tourists, or outsiders. This borderland is interesting to explore.

“Look for Someone Interesting”

In identifying participants for my study, I took to heart John Caughey’s suggestion: “don’t look for someone typical; look for someone interesting” (2006, p. 8). A range of initial contacts came from tour guides with the Mennonite Information Center in Lancaster, but I quickly found some women more engaging and interested in participating than others. While the informants in my study are to some degree representative of the range of women in business, they are all unique individuals in their own right. Listening to their perspectives illuminates some of the struggles and strengths of this field of employment for Amish women.

Initially I was concerned that my work with Amish women business entrepreneurs would not portray mainstream Amish women, because successful entrepreneurship seems to demand attributes that not all Amish women possess. But Susan Geiger has noted that “what can be usefully characterized as representative is not, in any case, the individual member of a group but rather the conditions or circumstances within which that person operates” (p. 173). Amish women entrepreneurs operate within the same milieu as do other Amish women, and thus are subject to similar pressures, though they may have adapted unique strategies for dealing with them.

However, in many ways this idiosyncratic group of informants is also representative of the Amish community, with its independent range of opinions. As researcher Pauline Stevick has written,

not only do Amish communities differ [in different states and geographic areas], but so also do Amish persons within each settlement. .. Outsiders are tempted to consider them as a monolithic entity rather than as a configuration of human beings with different ways of reacting to and living out the values of their culture (Stevick, 2007, p. 9).

As one Amish woman told researcher Diane Zimmerman Umble after an Amish man had written a long letter to the editor that was published in the local newspaper, “He doesn’t speak for me!”²⁸ It is useful to remember that the Amish themselves have no central coordinating body or designated spokespeople. This became especially clear after the Nickel Mines shooting, when organizations such as my own received requests from the media to speak to the Amish people in charge, not understanding that there is no such body. (In the days after the shooting, aided by Mennonite friends in the community, the Amish did, in fact, organize a coordinating committee to receive donations and disseminate information. This group also wrote several statements for the media, to my knowledge the first time any Amish group has tried to speak on behalf of the entire

²⁸ From Oct. 13, 2007 presentation on Nickel Mines at the American Studies Association meetings in Philadelphia, Pa., by Umble, entitled, *The Amish and the Media: Drugs and Murder in Paradise*.

community.²⁹ Thus my choice of independent-minded informants may, in fact, be more representative than not.

Methodological Issues: Positionality

“Graybill. Isn’t that a Mennonite name?” -- Informant in my study, on first acquaintance.

I followed John Caughey’s life history model, as described in his 2006 book, *Negotiating Cultures & Identities*, of “person-centered ethnography” (p. 9), conducting a cultural investigation of another person, and simultaneously, to some degree, of myself. I have also benefited from James Spradley’s nuts-and-bolts approach to the ethnographic model and participant observation. As an educated woman interviewing women with an 8th grade education, I have attempted, as A. Lynn Bolles urges, to represent the women under study “on their own terms” (Bolles, p. 82).

Many women anthropologists have written openly in their ethnographies and elsewhere about the politics of location; see, for example, the fine reflections by essayists in Behar and Gordon’s, *Women Writing Culture*. In my own case, in relating to Amish women, I had both a foot in and out of their world by virtue of my membership status. This is somewhat akin to the notion of being “a halfie” in relation to one’s informants, which was introduced by the anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1991). Born of Egyptian parents and educated in North America, she considers herself to belong to two cultures through her fieldwork with Bedouin women. There are increasing numbers of such

²⁹ Amish bishop districts of about 30 families are governed by a bishop, two ministers and two deacons (Kraybill, 2001, p. 94) and operate autonomously. The Amish National Steering Committee keeps abreast of legislation effecting the Amish, in an informational, not a public relations, capacity.

“halfies” among ethnographers; these include Dorinne Kondo (1990), an American Japanese anthropologist who did fieldwork in Japan, Barbara Myerhoff (1978), an American- Jewish anthropologist who worked in a U.S. Jewish seniors’ center, and Ruth Behar (1996), who returned to her Latina-Cuban American roots through her fieldwork in Mexico.

Likewise, I approached my research as a partial member. Mennonites and Amish share the same Swiss-German roots growing out of the Radical Reformation in 16th century Europe. Here in Lancaster County, Amish and Mennonites – from quite conservation to liberal groups – have been common neighbors for nearly 300 years. Mennonites in my progressive home congregation and the Old Order Amish share similar Christian beliefs on peace, discipleship and, at least historically, a desire to be distinct from the world. These shared beliefs can sometimes be obscured by Amish and Mennonites’ marked differences on acceptance of technology (most Mennonites accept higher education, modern dress, telephones and automobiles, whereas most Amish adhere to horse-drawn buggies and plows for farming, use of the Pennsylvania German language, “plain dress” and taboos on public electricity.)

In this research my partial membership was an asset. Being Mennonite gave me a beginning level of entry with Amish women that probably would have been harder to achieve otherwise. In Lancaster, my last name is recognizably Mennonite. Interviews often began with informants asking me questions about my father's relatives (though married, I go by my maiden name, thus my husband’s relatives came up less frequently),

designed to place me patrilineally. I came to view these opening genealogical questions as fulfilling a "gate-keeping" function which allowed conversation to flow thereafter.

Moreover, I was able to initially introduce myself as an employee of and show business cards from a known and respected Mennonite organization in the county. When I began my research I worked for the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC), an international development agency with local headquarters in Lancaster County where Amish help out with quilting, meat canning, and sorting health kits for relief. More recently I have directed the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society (LMHS), known among the Old Orders for our quarterly consignment book auctions and our annual summer Bookworm Frolic used book sale, which attract Amish buyers. In my current employment, Amish women visit our facility and attend our events, and I occasionally take groups for meals in Amish homes. Both MCC and LMHS are long-standing, reputable organizations known to Amish in the Lancaster County community. In addition, my husband teaches at a Mennonite school and my son attends one. Thus in these ways, my informants saw me as a credible researcher rooted in the local Mennonite community.

My expertise includes the fact that I have been doing research on Mennonite and Amish women in Lancaster County, where I live, for 12 years. In addition to allowing formal and informal opportunities for participation observation and data collection, this has provided ample opportunity for the research to deepen as it marinates in its own reflective juices. My research is deeper for these reasons.

However, unlike the conservative Mennonite women whom I had interviewed previously, who place a strong evangelical value on witnessing, my Mennonite identity alone did not allay the fears of the Amish participants in my study. Perhaps it was my need to tape-record interviews, and their mistrust based on fear of words being misquoted or ending up attributed to them in the newspaper, which has happened. Because of the strong Amish value on humility, drawing attention to oneself through public comment in the news can expose one to chastisement within the Amish community and is seen as a decidedly bad thing. Despite my promises of anonymity, it seemed to me that with each research participant there was a period of proving which necessitated several visits before a time could be arranged to tape-record an interview. And some would never agree to be taped. However, in my case, tape recording was indispensable. Research took place over several years given other demands on my time, so having the oral record was crucial in keeping the material fresh; memory alone would not have sufficed.

I gradually noticed in conversations with Amish women that they referred to Amish as “our people” (as in referring to store clerks, “I like to hire our people when possible,” and, in relation to the Amish address directory, “it’s just our people”), to *English* (non-Amish), and to “you people” when referring to Mennonites. For example, one businesswoman talked about hiring “Some Amish, some Mennonite. Not too much English.” That is, to them, Lancaster County Mennonites are clearly not insiders among the Amish, yet we are seen in a different category than non-Amish outsiders. This acknowledges some shared culture and history between us, even though, as in my case, we differ in our acceptance of technology and do not share “plain dress,” a recognizable

style of un-ornamented clothing with subtle variations among Lancaster County conservative Mennonites and Amish.

Early in conversation, Amish women usually asked about my husband and son; Interviewees are curious about how women researchers handle childcare during our time in the field. Speaking to a male colleague, Diane Zimmerman Umble noted of her field work, “Well, the men I’m interviewing always ask me, who’s looking after my children. Do they ask you, that?” Like Diane, I was often asked matter-of-factly who was looking after my child. Usually my son was at school or with his father or his grandparents, which seemed to be an acceptable answer. Despite our differing lifestyles, women were unfailing kind. After Mary asked about my son and I mentioned his strong-willed personality, she said sympathetically, “Well your son is an only child; he’s probably a little more used to having his own way,” behavior that is completely unacceptable in the Amish community.

In ethnography the researcher herself is the primary instrument of research. Positionality, that is to say, *who* the ethnographer is, matters. This method draws on resources of empathy and connection that I both used and benefited from in my woman-to-woman interviews with Amish informants. Karen McCartney Brown, in her classic life history of Mama Lola, describes ethnography as “a form of human relationship (p. 12). Since each ethnography is based on the quality of relationship between interviewer and informant, my research is certainly stronger for my shared connections.

Positionality had another benefit in this regard, as well. It is useful to note that women researchers to the Amish are able to interview Amish women as well as Amish

men and male leaders, but male researchers have a much harder time gaining access to Amish women, given the gendered nature of Amish society. This is the “honorary man” syndrome that other female anthropologists have written about.³⁰ In my case, it meant that I related *as a woman* to Amish women, and as a scholar/person of influence to Amish men. Amish businesswomen were interested in my family situation and to some extent, in my employment with Mennonite agencies, but had little interest in my research or life as a scholar. Old Order men that I encounter in my professional life interact with me on the basis of my academic interest in history.

Certain potential liabilities, however, may have been associated with my partial membership status. I found myself cautious, when I could have been bolder and more direct in asking questions. Knowing which were the sensitive areas (money, status), I found it difficult to ask questions or push in these areas, whereas an outsider might have been less hesitant and perhaps gotten better information. As Umble has noted in the *Amish and Media* book, Amish politeness and the desire not to offend can make it hard for the Amish to refuse to answer direct questions. I must say, however, that these were not traits that I especially noticed among the women in my study. Perhaps it takes a particular kind of Amish woman to found a business, but the women in my study were strong-minded. For example, I remember once giving a ride in my car to an Amish businesswoman in my study and being reprimanded for tail-gating, following too closely behind a horse-and-buggy.

³⁰ Nancy Scheper-Hughes, for example, discusses how doing field work in Ireland she was eventually accepted as an “honorary male” by the working class men in pubs she frequented; see her discussion of this at: <http://globetrotter.berkeley.edu/people/Scheper-Hughes/sh-con3.html>

John Caughey has written of the problems inherent in the study of American groups: that the ethnographer may overlook cultural beliefs that she shares with the group under study or believes she already understands (1982, p. 240). However, as Caughey also argues, the advantage of studying groups “at home” is that we are less likely to make gross misinterpretations. I was living in the field already, so to speak, by virtue of my current geographical residence in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, the location of my informants. This in itself made for common ground. We could discuss weather anomalies in the county, events at the Mennonite organizations where I was employed during the time of this study, gardening, community-wide events like fire-company benefit sales, or the differences between city living (my home is in the city of Lancaster) and living in the country.

Thus, as scientist and feminist theorist Donna Haraway argues in her influential article on “situated thinking,” my knowledge was located in a particular milieu. My interactions and understanding grew out of my embodied standpoint, with a unique angle of view based on my gender, religion, home setting and academic training. I sought to be even-handed and far-reaching in my treatment of the women whose stories follow. And I draw comfort from the words of Haraway, who writes that paradoxically, “The only way to find a larger vision is to be somewhere in particular . . . only partial perspective promises objective vision” (pp. 188-190). In a similar vein, Judith Stacey (1991) has written that partiality is as much an attribute of postmodernism as of feminist ethnography. Haraway (1991) argues that we move toward objectivity when we

acknowledge our particular starting place and move out from there, which I have tried to do in explicitly identifying my position in relation to the informants in my research.

Overcoming Humility

One of the barriers in interviewing was going beyond my informants' natural humility, an established virtue among the Amish. One woman apologized at first, telling me, "I'll be answering in a plain Amish way." In particular, asking directly about their influence as businesswomen got me nowhere. One woman told me, "I'm glad to be able to brag about her store, but not my own. ... Humble yourself." Another woman joked that if I wanted to know how she was thought of by Amish in the community, I could knock, on doors, take a survey and let her know. Or a quote from another, "If you want to know what people think of me, go ask my neighbors. I could tell you anything." Women in my study would clearly deny any *negative* comments directed at them for their business involvement (except historically), but were reluctant to speak well of their business to me, so I developed the technique of asking them indirectly or inviting them to speak about other women's businesses.

The following exchange with the most successful entrepreneur in my study, known for her business acumen and her generosity, illustrates some of the ways in which Amish women seemed to need to frame their accomplishments in terms of caution and humility:

I can't say [the business] is all right. You know, I had a family. I, I took care of my family. But, was it right that I was so—? To me, I can't advise anybody to act like (laughs) I did.

Well, you did it because you needed the money, right?

Yeah, that was the start of it. But it just, just grew out of proportion, I think.

I mean, you know, I knew how to make— There again, I'm bragging.

You were good at making money.

I was. I don't wanna brag, I don't wanna brag, but it just, it was good. ... I think the whole [business] thing is good if you keep it in persp—. Maybe I didn't—? I thought, you know, I am giving enough to the poor, but I, I now see what I could have given to the poor. So God blessed me, and richly. ... Abraham was rich. It don't say that you can't be rich, but keep it balanced. And I feel now maybe I kept too much for myself.

This selection illustrates her reluctance to name her business success (she knew how to make money, the business was good) and her need to downplay that success by doubting her own generosity (Maybe she didn't give enough), when, in fact, she made many sizeable loans to Amish in the community. This informant, the oldest woman in my study, also faced a good deal of criticism early in her business, which may color her responses, in addition to the Amish tenet not to show pride.

“Dutch” Language and Recording

It is also useful to remember, when reading some of the extended quotes which follow, that while fluent in English, Pennsylvania Dutch (really *Deitsch*, or German), is the first language of the Amish. Thus occasionally in the quotes, it appears that the informant is searching for a word, or using an unfamiliar idiom. What may at times seem to be inarticulateness or awkward sentence structure comes from this act of translation,

from Pennsylvania German to English. I have not corrected grammatical errors but let the language stand as spoken.

Pennsylvania German is the language that Amish use among themselves, and is used exclusively by children until first grade, when Amish children learn English at school. Were I able to speak Pennsylvania German, I might have gained additional insight into Amish ways of framing thoughts or situations.³¹ It also could have added another dimension to participant-observation settings and provided an additional source of data when women in my study were interrupted by a family member or a phone call and switched to speaking Pennsylvania German. However, it is useful to note that, with the exception of scholar John Hostetler, who was raised Amish and spoke Pennsylvania German fluently, virtually all of us researching the Amish do so in the medium of English. For Amish businesswomen who are fluent in both languages, conversing in English with me meant that taken-for-granted concepts in Pennsylvania German which might have been assumed were explained. Thus what could have been a liability was, perhaps, a strength.

The tape recorder was a living presence initially in interviews. In her first interview, clearly conscious of the recorder running, one woman chided her husband after an interruption on his part, “Harry, this is going on record. I want to be very careful what I say. I want to choose my words carefully.” Another woman, after joking about her use

³¹ Numerous writers in the past have spoofed the so-called “dutchified English” spoken by the Amish and other Plain groups in Lancaster County. (See, for example, *How to Speak Dutchified English*, by Gary Gates, published by Good Books.) With the Amish entry into business, and the everyday use of English as the language of commerce and tourism, these colloquialisms are diminishing, and more and more English words enter into the Pennsylvania German language of Amish speakers.

of a computer, told me in a sotto whisper, “I better watch what I say since you are recording this!” However after these initial references, the tape recorder wasn’t mentioned again; as time went on and in subsequent interviews it seemed to be forgotten.

Comparison with Other Ethnographies

In my research and writing I was guided by several influential ethnographies. Barbara Myerhoff’s luminous ethnography, *Number Our Days*, (1980) sets a high standard. Engagingly written with well documented insights, Myerhoff illuminates an ordinary yet unique group of elderly Jews. A minor character in her own book, Myerhoff’s references to herself serve the purpose of illuminating some aspect of her subjects (like the ways in which they made her feel guilty, but guilt being a big piece of their identity as Holocaust survivors.) Myerhoff pays attention to the affective dimensions, similar territory to that which Renato Rosaldo opens up in his essay, “Introduction: Grief and a Headhunter’s Rage” (Rosaldo, 1989, 1993) or that Ruth Behar discusses in her book, *The Vulnerable Observer: Anthropology That Breaks Your Heart* (, 1996). Picking up Myerhoff’s book recently after several years I was touched by how moving it is. And I was struck again by the power of good ethnography to touch both heart and mind.

In terms of storytelling, I admire the direct storytelling style of Carol Stack’s second book, *Call to Home* (1996) -- some of this style of writing is also evident in her first book, *All Our Kin* (1974). These are excellent ethnographies of African American experiences in modern-day South and in urban Chicago respectively. At points in this dissertation I have tried to duplicate some of the fiction-like writing devices (plot,

narrative flow, and characterization) that Stack uses so effectively in her work, and which makes it imminently readable and accessible to a broad audience.

Yet a third ethnographic comparison is Ruth Behar's much maligned, *Translated Woman* (1996). While some have found her auto-ethnographic style too centered around herself, I did not, since relationship is key to ethnographic data. Behar writes herself into the story as a character, personally interacting with her key informant, yet to my tastes it is Esperanza's story that shines through. By far the majority of her personal comments -- ways in which she is struggling for connection with Esperanza or sees some striking parallels -- are confined to the last chapter. Her story-telling techniques (dated field notes, extended observations, and long, in-depth quotes) give a sense of immediacy to the writing and served me as a useful model for narrative flow.

Ethnographies of Women and Religion

Two additional ethnographies of women and religion influenced me more in content than in methodology. While the religious framework differs between evangelical women and Amish women, nevertheless I have been helped by the following works.

Christel Manning's fine ethnography, *God Gave Us the Right: Conservative Catholic, Evangelical Protestant, and Orthodox Jewish Women Grapple with Feminism*, (1999) is valuable for its comparative data. Unlike evangelical Christians, who rely on a literal reading of specific biblical scriptures to support women's submission, Manning argues that Catholic and Orthodox Jewish teaching relies instead on church authority and tradition (for Jews, *halachic* law and practice). This, Manning argues, allows for questioning and multiple interpretations. For this reason, Catholicism and Orthodox

Judaism are more responsive and adaptable to changing cultural norms and values in relation to women's roles, than is conservative evangelism, says Manning.

In this regard, the Amish share common ground with the Roman Catholic conservative women and Orthodox Jewish women in Manning's study. In none of my interviews did Amish women justify their positions by referring to biblical texts or to the *Ordnung*, the Amish list of rules. Statements about women's roles were framed personally ("I just don't think its right, do you?") or in "We believe" language, such as: "We believe that women with young children should work at home." The latter still allows for business involvement, since many shops are located at home. Similar to Manning's findings, this would suggest that gender role change among the Amish comes not through proof-texts or edit, but through changing social mores and practice, a theme I return to in the conclusion.

Another ethnography that sheds light on issues of religion, patriarchy and gender is entitled, *God's Daughters: Evangelical Women and the Power of Submission*, (1997) by Marie Griffith. In her work with the evangelical women's prayer fellowship, Women Aglow, Griffith found that participants valued women-only prayer group settings and valorized a particular model of Christian womanhood. Evangelical women in Griffith's study "validate and prize, as a rich source of female self-esteem, conventional notions of women as more supportive, loving, and spiritual than men" (p. 200). Many Amish women would agree, I believe, with this social construction of womanhood, since beliefs about essentialist femininity also have currency in the Amish community. However, in the Amish community, both women *and men* are expected to be supportive, loving and

spiritual – in Amish terms, to practice nonresistance (nonviolence), yielded-ness (*Gelassenheit*), submission and obedience to God and the greater good of the community, a theme I return to in the conclusion.

Among the Amish, gendered notions of “women’s sphere” activities, as Griffith described, are valued. Amish women have historically spent significant amounts of time in women-only settings, be they quilting frolics or Sisters’ Days (work parties at the family homestead) or visiting in each others’ homes.

In these ways this is akin to the picture described by historian Carroll Smith-Rosenberg in her article about the nineteenth-century “female world of love and ritual” (1985). Smith-Rosenberg describes a woman-centered world bounded by home, church, and the institution of visiting. Similar to the supportive, same-sex social networks that Smith-Rosenberg and Griffith describe, Amish women also spend a lot of time in same-sex (often work-related) groupings – e.g., gathered around the quilting frame; preparing food in the kitchen for church services, weddings or funerals; canning peaches or freezing corn together in each other's homes; visiting to welcome the birth of a new baby; or socializing while shopping in Amish grocery or fabric shops.

These Amish, all-women’s worlds relate to another point in Griffith’s book. Interestingly, Griffith finds common ground between evangelicalism and [radical] feminism in the validation and celebration of all-women's spaces for sharing and support. As Griffith writes, "Both conservative evangelical women and feminists, then, want to see women's cultural and social labor revalued, celebrated, and elevated in status..." (p.

208). To the extent that women-only spaces have feminist potential, Amish women share in this reality.

So far in this chapter we have examined cultural landscape as the physical and imaginative setting within which the Amish interact (the stage setting, if you will). We have looked at methodological issues raised in doing fieldwork with the Amish. We have compared related ethnographies that bear on this work. In summary, we have examined rurality, gender and religion.

Race-ing the Amish

As I turn to a discussion of race/ethnicity in the following section, it is useful to note that areas of difference in the lives of Amish women (gender, race, religion) interlock and cannot be discretely separated. Feminist theorists such as Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) suggest the analytical tool of “intersectionality” to acknowledge the ways in which such areas of difference connect and interrelate. Intersectionality is useful for analyzing categories of difference (race/ethnicity, gender and religion, in this dissertation; one could also add class, sexuality, age, etc.), which can rarely be examined separately. In this section I look at race/ethnicity as it intersects in the lives of Amish women in a rural, religious framework.

First, Amish studies can be read as a subset of white studies. David Roediger (1991) reminds us that whiteness is a category that requires historical explanation because it has been a social construction exploited by the white working class. Omi & Winant discuss the process of “racial formation” by which individuals come to be shaped by the particular social constructions of race and ethnicity, through the “social, economic

and political forces [which] determine the content and importance of racial categories” (1994, p.61).

In work that helped define the field of “whiteness studies,” Ruth Frankenberg (1993) explored the advantages of whiteness for white women, not just the disadvantages suffered by non-white women. She found that race is a question of how power is exercised when those who have it claim ignorance of it. Peggy McIntosh has described white privilege as built-in biases and structured advantages with cash value, status, and employment opportunities that accrue to whites (1988). George Lipsitz discusses the “possessive investment in whiteness” that “produces unfair gains and unjust rewards for all whites;” he argues that the possessive investment in whiteness is “one of the key practices that make unfairness seem necessary, natural, and inevitable ... and protected from political critique” (Lipsitz, 2006, p. 106).

Certainly the Amish are raced as white, although they are also perceived as a particular kind of exotic ethnic, undeniably different. While the Amish are not a racial-ethnic minority, per se, they are an ethnic-religious minority that may be considered “marginal” in American society. Mary Corbin Sies reminds us that “marginal can be a useful term” in that it reminds us that the margins can provide some people with “an important site of differential knowledge and strength” (2005, pp. 1-2). As an ethnic-religious minority on the margins of U.S. society, Amish in business in Lancaster County are well-described by the literature on ethnic and minority business (usually taken to mean African American, Asian American and Latino) that I discuss in later chapters.

Nevertheless, the Amish are raced as white and benefit from some degree of white-skin privilege, though their status as exotic ethnics may mute these advantages. One way that white privilege manifests itself for the Amish is through easy access to credit from local banks and other lenders, since they are seen as a good risk. In addition, several recent articles in the local newspaper described the cost reductions given to Amish by doctors and hospitals because they pay promptly, in cash, and are known not to carry health insurance (Murse, 2006, p. A1 and Smart, 2008, p. A5). Thus, through the largely positive perceptions that outsiders have of them, the Amish are securely housed within the borders of unacknowledged white privilege, though they themselves would not normally recognize it as such. Their limited interactions with persons of color do little to challenge this mentality.

Whiter than White

In a recent essay, on which I expand below, Mennonite writer Julia Spicher Kasdorf speculates that the Amish may be seen to “embody the myth of white racial purity.” But on the other hand, she argues,

America is deeply invested in positioning Amish people outside the mainstream, as Other – if not racially Other, then as some kind of extra-ethnic, nonimmigrant, anachronistic ideal. In terms of the racial binary, the Amish must then be figured nonwhite or, as I temporarily claim for the sake of this essay, whiter-than-white: innocent, pure, plain – Puritans but without their unhappy edge (2008, pp. 67-69).

Thus, in the national psyche, Amish exist outside the dominant ideology of Whiteness, according to Kasdorf. She argues that by assigning the Amish a set apart, “whiter-than-white” status, Whiteness projects onto them its undesirable characteristics such as authoritarianism, dogmatism, asceticism, miserliness, childlike naiveté, etc. Comedian Weird Al Yankovic, in his Amish paradise video, plays on the stereotypes of stern authoritarianism and prudishness.³² David Weaver-Zercher has written of the infantilization in portrayals of the Amish in Lancaster’s tourist literature at mid-century, some of which continues today (2001).

The Amish’ position as whites outside the mainstream opens them to criticism as well as to adulation. Whiteness also seeks to appropriate the perceived *desirable* characteristics of the Amish (faith/spirituality, closeness to nature via the family farm, community, virtue); this analysis forms the bulk of my dissertation, which follows. The attention directed at the Amish by tourists to Lancaster County is largely positive, even idealized, as I will argue in subsequent chapters.

Discrimination against the Amish

Occasionally, however, attention to the Amish is less benign. Kasdorf notes the contradiction between the modern-day “allure of all things Amish,” (p. 68) and the Amish who were targets of racism in 1940s in the Big Valley region of Pennsylvania (near Penn State University). Kasdorf suggests, provocatively, that idealization is the other side of bullying, “because both impulses cast Amish people as Other – either threatening or exotic” (p. 68).

³² Yankovic lyrics of his “Amish Paradise” video are available at www.azlyrics.com/lyrics/weirdalyankovic/amishparadise.html; the video itself can be viewed online at www.youtube.com/.

My perspective from living here in Lancaster County suggests that discrimination against the Amish is not just a thing of the past. Almost every summer there are newspaper reports of Amish in buggies targeted for harassment, intimidation, or robbery, usually by groups of young white men. An April 29, 2008, news story in the *Lancaster New Era* reported the sentencing of a Maryland man to an 11-week to 5-year prison term for robbing occupants of two buggies, just days after, another Amish man driving a buggy was held up at gunpoint by unidentified assailants driving (Hooper, 2008). If anything, given the Amish tendency to “turn the other cheek,”³³ these accounts of harassment and theft are probably under-reported, as police are called only in major offenses.

Harassment and violence against the Amish is not limited to Amish men. The Amish school shootings in Nickel Mines, Pennsylvania, were significant in that Amish *girls* were targeted by Charles Roberts because of their sex, a fact that was little addressed in scholarly coverage of the event.³⁴ (The exception was Julia Spicher Kasdorf, who wrote, “I, too, value forgiveness and its promise of peace, but because it has been said so little, I must again call this horror a crime against girls ... [in the context of] gender-based hate crimes” (Kasdorf, 2007). Perhaps because the Amish community

³³ This is a reference to Matthew 5:39, which the Amish take seriously: “But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If someone strikes you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also” (NIV). In the news story noted above, sentencing Judge Jeffery D. Wright told the perpetrator, “You knew they wouldn't fight back. You're not just a thief, you are a cowardly thief.”

³⁴ Ironically, all three books about the Amish school shootings were authored by men and do not delve into ramifications of the event as an act of gender-specific violence. See *Forgiveness: A Legacy of the West Nickel Mines Amish School* by John Ruth (Herald Press, 2007), *The Happening: Nickel Mines School Tragedy*, by Harvey Yoder (Berlin, Ohio: TGS International and Harrisonburg, Va.: Vision Publishers, 2007) and *Amish Grace: How Forgiveness Transcended Tragedy*, by Donald B. Kraybill, Steven M. Nolt, David L. Weaver-Zercher, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2007) already in its 5th printing.

is so used to differentiating itself from outsiders based on racial-ethnic grounds, it is not surprising that so little attention was given within the community to the *gendered* nature of the crime. Nevertheless, it is disturbing that virtually all commentary from *outsiders* overlooked the implications of Nickel Mines as a hate crime based on gender (what some have called “femicide.”)

Other acts of violence against Amish women took place prior to Nickel Mines. Just recently a perpetrator was sentenced for assaulting an Amish woman in her home in 2005; the newspaper report cites police who believe that the non-Amish perpetrator “intended to rape the woman but was scared away from the home” (2008, Hambright). The most serious act of violence prior to Nickel Mines was the 1982 assault and murder of Amish woman, Rebecca Hulyard, by a deranged neighbor.³⁵ These acts against women, while infrequent, are of a much more serious degree than hold-ups directed at Amish men. This may simply illustrate that Amish women are not immune to the larger issue of violence against women in our culture. But perhaps, as Kasdorf suggests, the idealization that one senses among tourists to Amish women’s quilt and craft shops is the flip side of potential violence and harassment, both stemming, as she argues, from recognition of difference, seeing the other as diametrically opposed to ourselves.³⁶ While much of this dissertation will deal with the idealization and positive stereotypes that

³⁵ Amish woman Emma King, a niece, wrote of these events in her memoir published in 1992, *Joys, Sorrows, and Shadows: A True Story of the Heartaches Following the Murder of a Loved One*.

³⁶ A recent movie portrayal of the Amish confirms this oppositional, attraction-avoidance phenomena. In the new movie, *Sex Drive*, the Amish are portrayed as being able to strip and rebuild antique muscle cars and party hard to punk music (at least when in *rumspringa*). Also the protagonist scores an Amish girlfriend. These aspects of common ground serve as comic foils to reinforce the gulf of difference.

foster Amish tourism, the preceding examples illustrate Kasdorf's point that the Amish are racialized as Other, "not like us," in negative ways, as well as positive.

Amish Ethnicity

While both race and ethnicity are social constructions, ethnicity is seen as more tied to religious and cultural differences, thus making it more salient to understanding the Amish. For the Amish, white racial identity is largely subsumed by their ethnic-religious identification. The Amish fall into the category of "white ethnics," Anglos for whom their Pennsylvania German ethnicity and heritage, coupled with religion, are significant factors in how others perceive them and in how they perceive themselves.³⁷

Steven Nolt (1998) has written historically of the Pennsylvania German ethnic identity that developed in America, a tradition that today's Amish inherit but which historically was much broader than just the Amish. According to Nolt, Lancaster County Amish and Mennonites in the 18th and 19th century "lived and thought and acted within a broader Pennsylvania German cultural world defined by ethnic attitudes, commitments, and opinions—not to mention the practical bonds of kin ties and folkways" that also included Lutherans, Reformed, Moravians and German Baptists, all predominantly speaking the same, everyday language of the Pennsylvania German dialect through the 19th century (1998, p. 2). Kazal, the author of *Becoming Old Stock* (2004), notes that

³⁷ By comparison, social historian Royden Loewen has contrasted Mennonite ethnicity on both sides of the U.S.-Canada border. He notes the "ethnic flowering" of Mennonites in western Canada with the "ethnic decline" of Mennonites in the Midwestern United States, as Canadian Mennonites at mid-century began to see themselves less as "a peculiar, Low German-speaking religious group" and more as "an ethnic group, the descendants of migrants with a particular history" with a set of "collective memories" that could change over time (pp. 64-65). While Loewen may be correct about U.S. Mennonite ethnic decline, if anything, Amish ethnic identity is growing stronger, and tourism helps fuel this.

these 18th century German immigrants, both “church people” and the Plain People alike, deigned to identify with later German immigrants in the 19th and 20th centuries, instead retaining their sense of ethnic, Pennsylvania German distinctiveness forged on American soil. For instance, in 1891, at the founding of the Pennsylvania German Society (still active to this day), delegates voted to restrict membership to direct descendants “of early German or Swiss emigrants to Pennsylvania” (Kazal, 2004, p. 21-22). They believed that “their racial ‘stock’ was better because it was older” (p. 10). While certain Pennsylvania German linguistic traits and cultural habits linger today, only the Amish and Old Order Mennonites have retained the dominant ethnic markers (language, ethnic/religious holidays) and that once marked much of the wider population in Lancaster County.³⁸

Unlike the “symbolic ethnicity,” described by Herbert Gans as “nostalgic allegiance ... and pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior” that is practiced and enjoyed by some Mennonites and by many white Americans (Gans, 1979, p. 9), ethnicity for the Amish is central to their identity, with the Pennsylvania German language being its most salient feature and boundary-marker. Like other ethnic groups, the Amish have forged what John Higham (2004) has variously described as a “community of memory” based on common origins since their first migration to Pennsylvania in the 18th century from Bern, Switzerland, as described in the history of Lancaster County Mennonites by John Ruth (2001).

John Higham has written, “Partly real and partly imagined, memory is what binds an ethnic group together, assigning its tasks and maintaining its identity. Memory recalls

³⁸ Interestingly, many of the persons who sign up for Pennsylvania Dutch classes at the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society had grandparents who spoke the language; taking our classes is for many a return and re-engagement with these lost ethnic roots.

and fixates a particular origin, from which it projects a continuity of subsequent experience” (2004, p. 62). In fact, this also correlates with Benedict Anderson’s idea of “imagined communities” (1991). But in the case of the Amish, community is more real than imagined, as they are actually bonded together by common understandings and practices which form stronger “ethnic glue” than imagination or collective memory.

The Amish, by comparison with many progressive Mennonites for whom ethnicity has become largely symbolic (potluck dinners of ethnic foods, traditional four-part hymn-singing, extended family reunions, tracing their genealogy) have retained their actual ethnicity. Gender is a factor here, also, since women as mothers and teachers in schools fill the key role in socializing children into Amish identity. Moreover, some Amish, like the women in my study, have effectively built on their ethnic identity and marketed it through the subjectivity that attaches to their crafts, based on their ethnic identity as Amish and their gendered identity as women.

Ethnicity is based on cultural differences, either real or constructed, attributed from the outside or claimed from the inside. Michaela di Leonardo defines ethnicity as “the labeling from within or without of particular populations as somehow different from the majority” (1984, p. 18). Amish ethnic identity – constructed both from inside the Amish community by genuine religious values as well as from outside by tourists hungry to believe in a purer, simpler way of life – has been marketed in Lancaster County as a valuable tourist commodity. Similar to what Michaela di Leonardo described in her study of northern California Italian-American families, “Ethnicity is a commodity, a kind of local color or atmosphere, like cable cars or fog, to be consumed by tourists” (1984,

pp. 22-25). While ethnicity and race can have both positive and negative markers attached to it, the Amish have benefited from largely affirmative cultural perceptions that valorize their virtue, success, and the romantic lure of the past that they seem to epitomize.

Amish Ideas about Race

While the Amish themselves are “raced,” they also hold racial attitudes about others, and their ideas about race are complicated. Nancy Foner notes that ethno-racial groups are abstractions; groups do not interact, but people who are seen to “belong” to these groups do, and they have a variety of identities and allegiances that come in to play in social relations and interactions (2004, p. 9). While Amish women entrepreneurs have more social interaction with people of color through their non-white tourists than do others in the Amish community, the reality is that relatively few tourists are persons of color. According to 2004 statistics from the Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau (the only information available), 93 percent of adult travelers and 83 percent of family travelers are white (Wall, 2008).³⁹

Even before their interactions with non-white tourists, however, members of the Amish community have hosted children of color in their homes for short periods of time each summer through the Fresh Air Fund program, based in New York City (see www.freshair.org). One of the great untold stories yet to be written is that of the long association between Amish families in Lancaster County and the predominantly African

³⁹ Statistics are from a June 2004 report prepared by C. Frederic John & Associates in cooperation with Quantum Insights, based on a telephone survey of 445 households, according to an email communication from Janet Wall, vice-president of the Pa. Dutch Convention and Visitors’ Bureau.

American and Latino school-age children from New York City who live with them for two-week stays each summer. From the 1980s through early 2000, the *New York Times* ran periodic stories on these Fresh Air program visits with Amish families (see, for example, the June 30, 2002 article, “*The Fresh Air Fund: Visiting the Barnyard Creatures Can Outshine TV,*” or the August 18, 1991 article, “*Young Visitor From Queens Meets Amish,*” or the August 27, 1989 article, “*An Amish Vacation for New York City Children.*”)⁴⁰ As New York Times reporter, Sarah Jay, wrote in this 1995 article,

Before last summer, she had never traveled far from her housing project in the Bronx. In fact, she had never spent a night away from her mother. But when 8-year-old Alanah Wade returned from two weeks in Pennsylvania's Amish country with a Fresh Air family, she was bubbling with smiles and stories: She had had corn on the cob and ice cream sundaes, picnics by day and fresh berries at night, Sunday rides in a horse-drawn buggy. ... This year Alanah can hardly wait to return (Jay, 1995, p. 41)

Last year, Lancaster County celebrated 100 years of hosting children through the Fresh Air Fund program, and through the years, Amish have been active hosts, according to Annette Schopf, Lancaster County coordinator of the Fresh Air program. In 2006, some 215 Lancaster county families hosted some 250 children from the Fresh Air Fund, and in 2007, more than 320 children spent some part of the summer with host families in

⁴⁰ More recently the Lancaster newspapers have adopted a policy of not identifying families as Amish unless it is relevant to the story, so one needs to read articles about Fresh Air exchanges closely for Amish names. For example: a July 3, 2007 article in Lancaster's *Intelligencer Journal* noted the large family of the Kings of Honey Brook who has been hosting children since 2000, almost certainly Amish by their surname, place of residence, and family size.

Lancaster.⁴¹ Some of these relationships are long-standing. A 1995 New York Times article noted Lancaster families that had been “welcoming summertime guests for four generations” (Muenster, 1995). The Fresh Air fund web site notes three Lancaster County families that have hosted children for more than 20 consecutive years (Fetrow, 2007). A recent article in the local Lancaster newspaper noted Brooklyn native, Genevieve Wimer, a Fresh Air child hosted by Amish for ten consecutive summers 50 years ago, who is writing a book about her good experiences (Spinelle, 2007). According to Schopf, local coordinator for the Fresh Air program in Lancaster, half of the current host families are Amish.⁴²

Urban children in the Fresh Air program have been beneficiaries of Amish hospitality and generosity and the Amish have benefited by getting to know children quite different from themselves in race and class. In some cases these connections forged lasting friendships, with former Fresh Air children, now adults, staying in touch with their Amish host families and welcomed back for periodic visits. Many adults who were Fresh Air children remember their Amish home-stays with fondness, including rapper Shawn “Diddy Combs (Freydkin, 2003).

On the other hand, apart from individuals friendships formed with children through the Fresh Air program, most Amish have few venues for interacting with people of color. Almost no Amish adopt children, in general, and none adopt children of color, believing in certain immutable, race-based differences that would create problems later as

⁴¹ Data from phone call conversation, August 2008.

⁴² When I asked one informant if her family participated, she told me, “We were always too busy. But many [Amish] did.”

adults. To the extent that the Amish think about race at all, they may perceive Black or Hispanic tourists or the Fresh Air children they interact with as having different behavior (louder, more colorful) than their own. However, unlike white women in Ruth Frankenberg's "color-evasion" category (1993), there is often ignorance on both sides.⁴³

Although Lancaster County Amish do rely on the services of professionals such as doctors, dentists, optometrists, accountants, lawyers, and bankers, by and large in Lancaster County these persons tend to be white. Thus, the "social geography" (to use Ruth Frankenberg's term) of most Amish on a day-to-day basis is largely white and racially stratified. Since Amish generally lack primary relationships with people of color, racial stereotypes remain unchallenged.

Amish unease about racial minorities is manifested by their view of Lancaster city, where most people of color are concentrated. Lancaster city has a sizable population of color, largely working-class Puerto Ricans and African Americans, but most Amish have few reasons to venture into the city and seldom visit, save for uncommon hospital stays or visits. In fact, Amish hold some of the same stereotypes about the city's dangerous racial composition as do non-Amish white suburban dwellers. While census statistics for Lancaster County show it to be 3.5 percent Black, 1.7 percent Asian, and 6.7 percent Hispanic (with roughly 2.6 percent born in Puerto Rico), the vast majority of

⁴³One of my most interesting personal anecdotes in this regard was when Annie Stoltzfoos, an Amish woman who cleaned for us for about a year after our son was born, was sweeping our front sidewalk. She was frankly suspicious of some of our Puerto Rican neighbors across the street, who were sitting outside, listening to music while she worked. To her it suggested laziness and, possibly, threat; she didn't know that city row houses are very hot during summer afternoons, and outside in the shade is the coolest place to sit, nor that many of our neighbors worked the less desirable evening or night shift. Then later, after Annie left, our Puerto Rican neighbors asked us curious questions about *her*, surprised by the fact that the Amish did any other work than farming.

people of color live in the city, where 45 percent of the population is non-white (U.S. Census, 2006).⁴⁴ . Like many of the rural-dwelling, Old Orders in Lancaster County, Amish view Lancaster city with unease, partly based on racial grounds.

Race is a salient issue in examining my dissertation topic, though it rarely came up directly. The most overt reference was a story about shoplifting, told me in a later chapter, when the Amish businesswoman assumed that her thefts were by people of color but found it to be from a woman within the Plain community, thus completely confounding her stereotypes.

In her 2007 ASA presidential address, Vicki Ruiz cited the work of Hazel Rose Markus and Paula M. L. Moya, who call for a paradigm shift, from “thinking about race and ethnicity as something we *have*, to understanding them as something we do” (Markus and Moya, 2007). Amish women in tourist businesses are *doing* race, enacting it daily in particular ways through their interactions with customers, some non-white, which builds on their previous interactions with and attitudes about people of color.

Against Exceptionalism

While a colorful American subculture with much to emulate, the Amish are not exceptional, in that their society, like ours, has its own shortcomings, as any Amish person would admit. Media attention has been given to such social problems as drug abuse among Amish-raised youth (see Umble, 2008), sexual abuse among Mennonite and Amish populations in Lancaster (through a July 12-15, 2004, four-part newspaper series in the Lancaster newspapers entitled, “Silenced by Shame;” see Espenshade and

⁴⁴ Lancaster County Quick Facts and 2006 American Community Survey from the U.S. Census Bureau at <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/42/42071.html> and “Lancaster Economy Report” by Antonio Callari of Franklin and Marshall College, May 2008.

Alexander), and most recently, in the statewide debate against so-called “puppy mills,” many run by Old Order families (see Worden, 2009, who refers to “breeders - most of them Amish and Mennonite farmers,” p. A1). Yet despite these social problems, many tourists are drawn to the Amish.

Having located the Amish within their religious and ethnic tradition as well as their cultural landscape, I now turn to my own ethnographic findings related to Amish women entrepreneurs in Lancaster.

CHAPTER THREE: The Performance of Amish Tourism

I begin this chapter with an opening vignette at a quilt shop, followed by a comparison with a traditional Amish women's gender roles, and discussion of the role of quilts and quilt-making in the Lancaster tourist marketplace.

Vignette: Performing Quilt Sales

I am driving through verdant Lancaster County farmland in early fall. Parking my car in the small gravel parking lot at Mim's quilt shop, I walk next door to her house and rap lightly on the screen door. "Just a minute," she calls, and soon appears, an attractive, middle-aged Amish woman in blue dress, with white apron, head covering a bit askew, carrying a basket of lima beans to hull. As we sit companionably on the porch swing, we chat about her business, the rain, and the late spate of warm weather (who ever heard of sweet corn still being available alongside fall squash and pumpkins?). I occasionally jot some notes in my notebook. Her experienced fingers slide beans out of their hulls in half the time it takes me, at home, using a metal hulling instrument, on the rare occasions that I shell lima beans for my family.

As Mim talks and hulls, she occasionally glances at her watch. An experienced mother, home-maker, gardener, and quilt shop owner for the last 20 years, the habit of multi-tasking is second nature for her. I remember calling Mim on the phone last week: her breathless daughter answered the phone on the eighth ring, and called her mother who answered after several minutes. I had apologized for running her to phone, and asked, "Did I catch you in the middle of something?" She had replied, "It's fine you called," and laughed, "but I'm *always* in the middle of doing *something!*" While leisure is rare

among the Amish, in general, it is in especially short supply for businesswomen like Mim.

At a few minutes before 10 am, Mim glances at her watch. “Time for me to get started,” she says, as we move next door to her store, located just across the driveway. Mim sits down at the quarter-size quilting frame, roughly an arm-span across, on which is stretched a manufactured, Amish-printed scene, and takes a few stitches. Mim is quilting the outlines of a preprinted buggy and barn, to give it the texture of “hand-mades,” as she calls her stock of quilted pillows, bedspreads, aprons, and smaller gift items in the store. Though she rarely finds time to do much quilting herself these days, “tourists like to find me at it,” and this piece is clearly for show.

Soon the tour bus arrives, right on schedule, and the group of senior citizens streams in to the shop. “Good morning,” Mim calls out, as customers wander over to watch her quilt, just as she expects them to do. Mim engages them in conversation, and when she finds out that some of them are from the Gulf States she expresses sympathy for those who were effected by Hurricane Katrina.

Abruptly Mim jumps up and says, “It’s too dark in here,” as she stands on a stool to light the kerosene lanterns hanging from hooks overhead. She’s right; on this overcast day, the natural light from windows and skylight is insufficient to illuminate her goods, but as the kerosene flames brighten away the shadows in her shop, it feels a bit like turning on the stage lights so the real show can begin. When the group of 50 has assembled, Mim moves over to the display bed in her shop, on which are piled multiple quilts, one on top of another. With the help of a customer, she begins to fold back the

quilts, one at a time, so we can appreciate the brilliant colors and intricate designs of each one individually.

In the middle of Mim's quilt commentary, one of the customers receives a cell phone call, and begins talking loudly into the phone, "Hello, Sharon. I'm here in Lancaster County, where are you?" Mim rolls her eyes, increases her volume, and continues talking, as the tourist on the phone eventually moves out of earshot. (Later Mim will tell me that customers who answer their cell phones right in the middle of her presentation are one of her pet peeves. "Why bring it along at all?" she rants to me later. "Why can't they just let it ring? Or at least go outside to talk and not interrupt me!")

As each new quilt is displayed, the group gathered around the bed oohs and aahs, as Mim comments: "This is a particularly nice Log Cabin quilt, over 600 pieces," or "Note the beautiful appliqué work in this Country Garden quilt – approximately 8 stitches per inch." Our audience responses – mine included, since some of her quilts are indeed breathtaking, and an exclamation of appreciation seems the only response – have the quality of reacting to a performance, which in many ways it is.

Leah Dilworth has written that, "Touring is a performance of 'life,' inscribed within consumer capitalism," (2003, p. 109) an especially apt description for this vignette. In fact, tourism has much in common with performance. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett (1998) first extended the notion of tourism as embodying elements of performance, noting that "live-ness" is at the heart of both, with emphasis on the behavior being enacted. Performance is not just something that occurs on stage, but something

that occurs in everyday life in both secular and sacred rituals. Performances are actions, full of meaning, operating in many different settings and on many levels.

As in any live performance, repetitive questions can become tiresome. Thus Mim's repertory includes standard replies to frequent questions, the most common being, "How many hours does it take to make a quilt?" Her stock response of, "Many hours!" is a prelude to a more complex answer describing how quilting is one task among many done by women in a given day, worked on in snatches as time permits, with the quilters paid on a piecework basis – all of which makes it almost impossible to count the hours precisely.

Staged Authenticity

Tourism as performance is a live encounter deemed to be authentic. As Dean MacCannell (1976/1999) has written, tourists are in search of the authentic, the real; what tourism offers, for the most part, is "staged authenticity." However, MacCannell notes that the staged product is acceptable if it bears some resemblance to the real thing; most tourists do not discriminate between front and back stage.

In Mim's case, her presentation is an authentic description of the current quilts in her shop and their value. And Mim genuinely enjoys interacting with tourists, especially those who know and love quilts. But it is staged in that it is a repeating kind of performance which consists of certain repertory actions. In this case, Mim is the central performer; her repertory includes functions of "getting started" (sitting down at the quilting frame), "setting the stage" (including lighting), and a central performance (browsing through quilts with commentary) that it annoys her to have interrupted.

Through repetition she has developed a script, of sorts, which makes it easier for her to communicate the authentic value of the product she sells. “Admission” to this “performance” is free but the hope and goal is that it will result in enough sales to justify the actor’s exertion, and enough pleasure on the part of the audience that they will remember their visit fondly, hopefully with a memento to remind them of the experience, and return again to buy more.

Mim’s tourist performance is simply one expression of lived religion in her life. Mim performs her faith in the public eye through her plain appearance and a narrative that emphasizes good value, handmade craftsmanship, and by implication, support for a way of life generally recognized to be religious. And her “performance” is to some degree colored by the expectations brought to it by her “audience.” As Jane Desmond has written, in her book, *Staging Tourism*, “performers become signs of what the tourist audience believes them to be” (1999, p. xx).

Performance is an analogy that allows us to notice the interaction with those in the audience, evoking certain reactions and meanings. As already noted, a primary tourist reaction to her performance, Mim hopes, is to increase the desirability of owning a quilt, or at least a quilted pillow or smaller item. And, in fact, Mim sells at least one \$600 quilt to each group with whom I observe her. If we view tourism as a search for authentic experience, as we will discuss in more detail later, we may view craft souvenirs, such as quilted items, as “traces of authentic experience,” to quote Susan Stewart (1993, p. 135). In this setting, objects can serve as powerful reminders or evidence of authentic experiences, which most tourists believe their encounters with Amish to be. Tourists are

often eager for an intangible stamp of authenticity. Upon purchase of a quilt, one tourist asks, “Can you tell me a story about it?” Others want to know the meaning behind the quilt pattern they have purchased, (although few patterns are specifically Amish). Leah Dilworth argues that handcrafted objects by Southwestern Indians are “subjectified, animated by the culture they supposedly ‘embody’” (2003, p. 107). The same can be said of Amish quilts: they are subjectified, seen as deeply connected to Amish culture. Apart from the beauty of the craft, its meaning comes from its ability to invoke an Amish lifestyle, with such positively associated values of hard work, simplicity, thrift, and religiosity. This is akin to the way in which Shaker goods acquired Shaker values of quality, good taste, simplicity, and hand-craftsmanship; “Shakers were simple, spiritual people; therefore Shaker chairs were simple, spiritual objects” (Bixby, 2007, p. 105).

Lucy Lippard has written, only half in jest, of tourism’s “social mandate: everyone must go somewhere else and spend money in someone else’s home, so that every one living *there* will be able to go to someone else’s home and spend money, and so on” (1999, p. x). In the case of Lancaster County, this is a double irony, since most of its tourists come from the nearby major metro areas of New York City, Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C., themselves tourist attractions. And shopping itself is a major tourist activity.⁴⁵

But tourists, of course, are not a passive audience. They bring their own interruptions (the cell phone), and their own transgressions. One group I observed was led by Amos, a freelance guide from another, more liberal Old Order religious group.

⁴⁵ As Valene Smith has written, “consumerism has become a major personal identifier in the West. ... shopping ranks high if not number one as a travel activity” (2001, p. 23).

While Amos does not object if the tourists take *his* photograph, he always duly instructs the tourists on his bus not to photograph the Amish, as it goes against Amish beliefs about making images of themselves. However, the urge for souvenir mementos of Mim, herself, is strong. I notice several tourists posing Amos for a picture alongside a quilt in the foreground, when the real focus of their photograph is Mim ringing out customers at the cash register in the background of the photograph they are shooting.

As the tour bus pulls away and I prepare to leave, Mim turns out the kerosene lamps. Though it is the standard lighting for all Amish homes and businesses, Mim says she hates to leave the lamps burning when she's not in the shop but next door in her house. So she dims the lights on the quilts until the next performance, when another tour bus pulls up the lane and the show goes on again.

Performing Amish Tourism, Living Amish Life

When Mim leaves her shop, she shifts from performing a staged version of Amish life for tourists into performing her version of the traditional role of Amish wife, mother, and middle-aged woman within the wider Amish community. To use MacCannell's terminology, she moves from the "staged authenticity" of the "front stage" region, where the performance takes place, to the "back stage" of her own home.

Mim's house is a typical Old Order Amish dwelling with an open floor plan that flows from kitchen to dining room to living room, in order to facilitate the accommodation of up to 150 people when it is her turn to host Sunday services for her

church district⁴⁶ (which happens about once a year). The house has no electricity and no television, computer or phone, although Mim has an intercom system that lets her know when the shop phone is ringing, though she must run next door to answer it. (The few incoming phone calls when I am there turn into long conversations in Pennsylvania Dutch, suggesting that the phone gets used for personal as much as business calls.) While Mim admires quilts, the ones that she uses on her own beds are more functional or connected to family memories. Some she received as wedding presents, others were made by a favorite aunt or grandmother.

Mim's house is comfortable but plain in the Amish style: window blinds or shades instead of curtains at most windows, and flooring of tile, linoleum or wood (not carpet), upholstered sofa and recliner, and cane-back chairs around the polished wooden table. Her bathroom has modern plumbing. Her appliances (stove, fridge, washer) are also modern, though powered by compressed air or gas. Normally wash is hung out to dry on the clothesline, but Mim admits to occasionally stopping over to use the electric clothes dryer at their rental apartment behind the house on rainy days. Mim's cellar contains shelves with the several hundred quart jars of food that she has preserved via home canning; since without electricity, freezers are seldom used.

Out back is a small barn/carriage shed, with horses' stalls (she has told me that her husband "always has a few more horses than we need, but plenty of horsepower that way,") and place for the buggy to be stored when not in use. Owning a car is forbidden

⁴⁶ The Lancaster Amish settlement is organized into some 160 church districts (similar to congregations, though the Amish meet in homes or barns, not church buildings). Kraybill (2008, p. 3) estimates 20-40 family units totaling on average 165 adults and children in each Lancaster church district.

by the rules of the church (called the *Ordnung*⁴⁷), and while Mim, like other Amish women, sometimes hires non-Amish to drive her on an extended shopping errand, visiting, or to a chiropractor appointment, she ordinarily drives the buggy on errands herself while her husband is at work. (He is employed at an Amish furniture store.) Once when I stopped by to visit, Mim had just returned in a rental buggy, after dropping off their family carriage for repairs.

Traditionally Amish mothers are responsible for caring for the children, the sick, and the elderly. Mim has four children (three daughters and one son), slightly less than the average family size of five to seven; all of her children helped in the shop when they were younger. Mim is grandmother of three (so far two of her daughters have married).

Amish women were and to a significant degree still are expected to take care of all the cooking, cleaning, and laundry, to maintain a large vegetable garden, to can and preserve food, and to take care of the lawn. As we shall see, women's entrepreneurship has shifted some of these patterns. Mim, for example, has a somewhat smaller garden than the traditional version and she uses her income to buy foods traditionally grown or prepared at home (such as applesauce and pies for church). Mim grew up on a dairy farm in a neighboring church district and learned these women's work skills from her own mother.

Like all Amish children, Mim's first language was Pennsylvania German, which she spoke until she learned English when she attended a one-room, private Amish

⁴⁷ Nolt and Myers have defined *Ordnung* as "the accumulated traditional wisdom about the proper ordering of life," and include both "general principles, such as assuming a humble demeanor, as well as specific directives, such as the dimensions of a woman's bonnet" (2007, p. 8).

school through 8th grade. She finished school at age 13 and worked at home and at a few odd jobs. After a short period of “running around” when she attended teenaged Amish singings and few parties, Mim chose to join the Amish church. Like other Anabaptists, joining church is conceptualized as a free, adult decision. By most estimates, 90 percent of young people from Amish families will eventually join the church, although slightly more men than women leave (see Meyers, 1994). Those who leave before joining church are not shunned, though family relations may be strained; many join a less conservative branch of Anabaptists in Lancaster. By joining the church, Mim vowed to uphold the rules of Amish life, including separate gender roles, and also the practice of shunning of wayward members who have strayed from the *Ordnung*; while rarely practiced in the Lancaster settlement, shunning does occur.

Like most Amish girls, Mim married soon after joining the church. Mim married Ben, an Amish man in the district where she now resides. She and her husband started out farming his parents’ farm, but went into debt, and found they were better suited to waged labor jobs instead; first they rented out the farming operations to an Amish neighbor; then turned the farm over to her oldest daughter and son-in-law.

For Mim, a typical week includes washing on Monday, cooking daily family meals (with help from her grown daughters), and household cleaning, a little bit every day. Evenings often find her sewing an item of clothing for a family member on her foot-powered, treadle sewing machine. During summer she is out in the garden every day. On Sundays she and her family will use their horse and buggy to attend church at the home of a nearby Amish family in her church district. The women will sit on one side,

the men on the other, as male ministers delivers two long sermons often focusing on basic Amish values like *Galessenheit* (submission) and separation from the world. She and her community members will sing slow hymns in unison without accompaniment. After services and a noon meal, typically women visit together in the parlor while men talk in the tobacco barn or carriage shed. On alternate Sundays, when church does not meet, her family may visit extended family members in their own or in neighboring church districts.

Caring for her family is an important activity for Mim. Mim enjoys looking after her grandchildren during the off-season at her quilt shop (winter and spring). Despite her busy schedule, she makes time to be available to her husband and grown children during the week, taking an active role in helping to schedule wholesome youth gang activities for her daughters and their cohort. Being a mother, for Mim, involves teaching her children practical living skills as well as helping to instill Amish values. Like most Amish women, Mim hopes and expects her own children to join the Amish church as teenagers. Already two of her daughters have chosen to do so, and she is content. In these ways, she “performs” her gender roles as wife and mother. To this important vocation, Mim has added business entrepreneurship via her quilt shop.

I now turn to a discussion of the role of quilts and quilt-making in the Lancaster tourist marketplace.

History of Amish Quilts

Quilts rose to prominence in the public eye with a landmark art exhibition at the Whitney museum in New York City in 1971, entitled, “Abstract Design in American

Quilts,” which included a few Amish quilts. The exhibit was mounted by Jonathan Holstein and Gail van der Hoof, and demonstrated the aesthetic resemblance of pieced quilts to modern abstract art, illustrating how, as Holstein wrote in the original exhibition catalog, “Quilt makers did in effect paint with fabrics (1991, p. 214). The Whitney exhibit was followed by subsequent traveling exhibitions of quilts from Holstein’s and van der Hoof’s collections across the U.S., in Europe, and in Japan (which led to a “new-found Japanese passion for quilt-making,” (Holstein, 1991, p. 121). The exhibition, and the ensuing publicity, “created a worldwide awareness of American quilts as designed objects” (Holstein, 1991, p. 221), especially Amish quilts. By 1976, Holstein writes that, “Amish quilts were assuming the status of cult objects” (1991, p. 107).

In addition to the show at the Whitney, Janneken Smucker (2006) credits other influences, as well, for the swift ascendancy of Amish quilts. These included the interest in women’s handicrafts growing out of the women’s movement, the back-to-the-land movement’s appreciation for things rural and handmade, and the American bicentennial in 1976, in whose wake, quilts, especially Amish ones, were perceived as patriotic, home-grown American art (pp. 189-190).⁴⁸

Through the 1980s, Lancaster became widely known as “quilt capital USA,” to quote a series in the local newspapers (Klimuska, 1987). Another boost to the local quilt industry came with publication in the June/July 1983 issue of *Bride’s* magazine an appliquéd quilt entitled, “Country Bride,” a newly designed quilt pattern of lovebirds,

⁴⁸ As Jonathan Holstein (1991) reflected, on the 20-year anniversary of the Whitney exhibit, “The publicity continued, encouraged by the exhibitions, nostalgia, and approaching Bicentennial celebration, and a quilt-making revival,” p. 85.

hearts and tulips (Parrish, 2006). Tourists flocked to Lancaster for quilts, seeking “to capture Amish rural simplicity for their own world” (Smucker, p. 202). In 1987, a Lancaster newspaper quoted one quilt collector, “They don’t make the pilgrimages there for nothing. If you know about quilts, you know about Lancaster County” (Klimuska, 1987).

Through the 1990s, quilt aficionados sought to connect Amish quilts with a “romanticized rural past,” which sometimes included inaccurately praising Amish quilts for such things as home-grown wool and natural dyes, when in reality, neither were used in Amish quilts (Smucker, 2006, pp. 202-203). Ironically, during this time, rural Lancaster County was fast modernizing and facing development pressures at home, becoming less the actual, idyllic Garden Spot than it was in the minds of quilt lovers (Walbert, 2002). Nevertheless, tourism continued to rise.

One blow to the quilt industry, according to reporter Kathleen Parrish (2006), came in the late 1990s when the Smithsonian museum released quilt patterns that were mass-produced and machine-stitched in China, driving down prices in the U.S., in general, and in Lancaster County, in particular. Amish women in my study attribute their loss of sales to increased competition, including from overseas. Quilt sales for individual shop owners began to decline after the millennium; the market was simply saturated.

Home-workers doing Piecework

While tourists may sentimentalize Amish quilts as being made in communal, quilting-bee settings, in reality, work is done at home and women are paid by the job, or

the piece (i.e. “piecework”).⁴⁹ The process of quilting involves several steps. Fabric in matching or contrasting colors must be bought, cut it into patchwork pieces, arranged into a pattern, and the individual pieces sewn into quilt blocks that are sewn together into a finished quilt pattern (called “piecing” a quilt). In some quilts, appliquéd designs are sewn on top of the fabric. Then the quilt is marked for the hand-stitching that will give the quilt its texture. This hand-stitched quilting, besides being decorative, holds the top layer of the quilt together with the inner stuffing and the bottom layer. Finally, quilts require a binding, or border along the outside edges. Most often, different women do different steps on a quilt.

Quilting is usually interspersed with other domestic chores. As Sadie told me, in relation to orders for customized quilts:

A custom order is approximately four to six months. If I have a lady that would work at it constantly, it might not take that long but everything is done in your spare time. Like we call pick-up work. Like whenever you have spare minutes of the day, you might sit down and quilt some piece or whatever. It’s not like it is coming out of the factory and you are working at it constantly.

Each woman who works for Sadie specializes in one aspect of quilt-making: sewing the piecing the fabric together into designs, appliquéing, marking the pattern for

⁴⁹ This is called “home-work,” in the literature, and it is predominantly done by women. See *Home-working Women*, by Annie Phizacklea and Carol Wolkowitz (1995), for the range of such employment in the U.S. and Britain, from white-collar contractual work like accounting, to poorly-paid piecework, often some aspect of sewing, that is done at home, sometime in hot, crowded, squalid conditions. Much of this work is unregulated, since it takes place in the informal job sector.

hand-stitching, quilting, or sewing on the binding. Sadie told me that she had over 100 women working for her, “including some Mennonite ladies,” of whom about 50 are quilters who are paid per yard of thread. Piece-workers, women who sew the pieces of fabric together into designs, are paid according to the intricacy of the pattern.

Having told me that “people will only pay so much for a quilt,” Sadie went on to describe the women who quilt for her:

Really, they don’t get paid that much. The amount of thread—, this one lady—, well, one of my very good friends, she is a cousin of mine, and her daughters help her quilt sometimes in the evening, after they come home from their jobs. They will sit down, like a mother-daughter thing, and quilt. They really enjoy quilting. She says, “You know, my daughters figure they do about \$2 an hour at quilting.”⁵⁰ But it is so relaxing to just be able to sit down and quilt like that in the evening or whenever. You just get to doing so much, even if it doesn’t really pay that well. But you are looking at hundreds of hours of work.

When I asked Mary how she accounted for inflation in paying her piece-workers, she responded with the realities of the marketplace:

I just can’t put the price of my quilts up. \$400 to 800, that’s about as high as I go. Well, you can’t keep going up and up [in price] if the demand’s not going up. I think it’s sorta stabilized now. But I don’t feel that—, I can’t put the price up. People just aren’t paying—, not buying them like

⁵⁰ As contractual workers, home-workers, like women who quilt, are exempt from the Fair Labor Standards Act. For more information, see web site of the organization, Interfaith Worker Justice, www.iwj.org

they used to.

Mary has also moved away from paying her sub-contractors on a piecework basis. “Too hard to keep track of?” I ask her. “No,” she says, “I had it all in my book.” [An uncomfortable pause.] “It’s just easier this way, fewer people to deal with.” Mary now selects completed quilts for her shop that she sells on consignment, which presumably adds another layer of middle[wo]men, since quilters continue to specialize, but removes her from the uncomfortable realities of what women are paid for piecework.⁵¹

The Appropriation of Amish Quilts

Janneken Smucker has asserted, “Few cultural objects have become more closely associated with a geographic place than Amish quilts with Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, during the late twentieth century” (2006, p. 185). According to Smucker, Amish quilts function as “fine art, souvenir, commodity and symbol” (p. 185). Addressing the later, the quilt as a cultural symbol is everywhere in Lancaster County. In addition to being widely used iconographically to designate tourists sites associated with the Amish (The Mennonite Information Center, The Old Country Store in Intercourse, the Lancaster Quilt and Textile Museum), logos of quilts are used by key, County-wide organizations. The Lancaster County Reservation Center (hosted by the Lancaster County tourist bureau), uses a pieced-quilt logo. The Lancaster County Community Foundation uses a quilt as its logo. The Cultural Heritage Program of the

⁵¹ In this study I have focused on Amish businesswomen, that is, women who have started and own Amish businesses enterprises, not their sub-contractors. With the distinction between business owners and employees, Don Kraybill has acknowledged the realities of class within the formerly class-less Amish community (private conversation, summer 2007). In the case of women, the distinction is between better paid, owner-contractors and less well paid pieceworkers. In a future study, I hope to explore this dynamic by interviewing quilt pieceworkers.

Lancaster County Planning Commission uses a quilt motif as its program symbol, and organizations who join the Cultural Heritage Program and become certified as authentic cultural heritage sites each receive a quilt sticker to be posted on their property, identifying them as an authentic site to tourists (LCPC, 2008). Even the new (opening in spring, 2009) Lancaster County Convention Center in downtown Lancaster city is using a Pennsylvania German tulip logo, patterned on a common quilt appliqué motif. In these ways, the quilt now visually symbolizes authentic Lancaster County. While quilt-making is not solely the province of the Amish (lots of women, of any or no religious affiliation, make them), quilts are most associated with the Amish in Lancaster County.⁵² County organizations using this symbol have thus, in a sense, appropriated Amish women's quilts as iconographic for the wider Lancaster community.

⁵² Daniel Born, in "From Cross to Cross-Stitch: The Ascendancy of the Quilt," argues that the quilt occupies iconic status in the Mennonite imagination. He identifies two poles of the Mennonite imagination: *Martyrs Mirror*, the 16th century book of Anabaptist martyr stories, symbolizing the cross, and the quilt (cross-stitch), symbolizing "creaturely comforts, and the familiarity of the ethnic" (2005, pp. 179 and 181). While Mennonites prize quilts, and some Mennonite women still quilt, quilts are more associated with the Amish, a connection that Born fails to acknowledge.

CHAPTER FOUR: Kitchen Table Entrepreneurs⁵³

Feminist anthropologist, A. Lynn Bolles, has written, “Work – no matter how dead-end – has meaning and value for women. It not only meets their family responsibilities but also plays an important role in the development of women’s self image and the conception of ‘independent’ womanhood” (2003, p. 257). As we will see in this chapter, meanings of work for Amish women include income, family responsibility, self-esteem, and particular understandings of womanhood as related to autonomy as well as domesticity.

In order to locate Amish women’s businesses within a broader cultural milieu, it is useful to begin with data about women’s business ownership more generally in American society, for comparative purposes. I turn to that discussion now.

Women’s Business Trends in U.S. Society

Women entrepreneurs are the fastest growing group of business owners in the United States today. The 2000 census documented that women’s business grew 20 percent in the previous five years, twice the national average for small business growth in general (U.S. Census, 2000). In 2002, women owned 28.2 percent of U.S. firms, and that number continues to climb (SBA, 2006, p. 3). From 1997 to 2002, the number of women-owned businesses in Pennsylvania increased 12 percent, with Lancaster County’s percentage of women-owned firms – at 27.4 percent, which included Amish women’s businesses – exceeding the percentage of women-owned firms in the state of

⁵³ This term was originally coined by the Ms. Foundation for women’s economic empowerment, as used in the book by Martha Shirk entitled, *Kitchen Table Entrepreneurs: How Eleven Women Escaped Poverty and Became Their Own Bosses* (Westview Press, 2002). However, it is also a fitting nomenclature for Amish women’s entrepreneurship, as I explain below.

Pennsylvania generally, at 26 percent (U.S. Census, 2002). Amish women's small business ownership is thus part of a national and statewide trend toward greater women's entrepreneurship.⁵⁴

Among women's businesses, in general, minority women's businesses grew even faster. (While not a racial minority, the Amish function as a distinct ethnic-religious minority, thus I believe these comparison statistics are relevant.) In a study released Oct. 10, 2008, the Minority Business Development Agency, a branch of the U.S. Commerce Department, released findings which show that minority women-owned businesses grew twice as fast as the number of business created by male minority entrepreneurs or by non-minority men and women (see "Press Release," MBDA, 2008).

Sole proprietorships (small businesses with no employees) are also more common for women than for men: 72 percent of all U.S. businesses but 86 percent of women-owned U.S. businesses, according to statistics compiled by the Small Business Administration (SBA, 2003, p. 8). A 2005 study for the SBA on sole proprietorships noted that between 1985 and 2000, female-owned sole proprietorships grew much faster than their male-owned counterparts in terms of the number of businesses, gross receipts, and net income (Lowery, 2005). Women-owned firms which had paid employees accounted for just 14 percent of the total number of women-owned firms (Census, 2002).⁵⁵ In similar fashion, Taylor noted in her study of married Amish women that the

54 Of all women business owners, 8.33 percent claimed Hispanic heritage, 85.95 were White, 8.43 percent African American, 1.23 percent American Indian and Alaska Native, 5.25 percent Asian, and 0.18 percent Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander (SBA, 2006, p. 3).

55 Of the women sole proprietorships, single women comprised 23 percent, female heads of household comprised 11 percent, and married sole proprietors comprised 66 percent (SBA, 2003, p. 8).

majority had no full-time employees; excluding two large shops, the Amish women's businesses in her study averaged only one part-time employee (1998, p. 72).

The fields of women's business have been traditional. According to Angel Kwolek-Folland, "The growth in women's small-business ownership between 1977 and 1987 came largely in traditionally female-dominated fields: service (38.2 percent); finance, insurance, and real estate (35.6 percent); and wholesale and retail trade (32.9 percent)" (Kwolek-Folland, 1998, p. 177). Service (health care, social assistance, personal services, and repair and maintenance) accounted for 32 percent of women-owned business revenue, whereas wholesale and retail trade accounted for 38 percent of women-owned business revenue (Census, 2002). According to recent Census data on women's sole proprietorships, the majority (61 percent) were in services, but more than one-fifth (22.6) were in wholesale and retail trade (2003, p. 15). As my study indicates, Amish women's tourist businesses are in sales, which also mirrors larger societal trends.

Examples of Amish Women's Business

I have borrowed the term, "kitchen table entrepreneurs" as a fitting description for Amish women in business. This term was coined by the Ms. Foundation for women's economic empowerment to describe business enterprises that started small and grew incrementally (Shirk, 2002). These small-scale business enterprises typically start at home, often with women doing finances at the kitchen table after supper. Such businesses tend to employ only the entrepreneur or herself and one or two employees, often family members, who may or may not be paid. Kitchen table entrepreneurs grow

the business slowly as funds accumulate (Shirk, 2002). This trajectory is common for Amish women.

I continue with three brief snapshots to illustrate some of the variety of Amish women's businesses in Lancaster County.

Vignette: The "Amish Wal-Mart"

This rural, variety store is set mid back roads southeast of Leola in a picturesque valley surrounded by farmland. While their signs state, "No [tour] buses please," customers inside include a mix of Amish and English. Wide aisles lit by sky-lights are well-stocked with toys, gifts, baby products, linens, ready-made clothing, kitchen items, and sewing notions (buttons and safety pins are sold individually). According to a Mennonite friend, when Emma married the owner of this store in middle age, she became co-proprietor, and her status in the Amish community went way up. I ask her about the store's nickname, the Amish Wal-Mart. "Well," Emma says, "Your people call it that more than we do. Many of us [Amish] also shop at Wal-Mart. So we just call it by its name, "Country Treasures."

Vignette: Maiden Baking

When I push open the screen door, the aroma of fresh-baked bread makes my mouth water. It is Wednesday, bread-baking day at this small, Amish-run bake shop in eastern Lancaster County. Beautifully crimped pies in six or more flavors adorn the counter, alongside still-warm loaves of bread, cookies, and "whoopie pies," cake-like chocolate cookies with a thick layer of home-made filling in the middle. "We each have our own specialty," Barbara, one of the Amish sisters tells me.

For 35 years, their bake shop has been the livelihood for these three unmarried Amish women in their sixties. They live behind the shop in rooms at the back. (When I entered, a buzzer sounded in the kitchen to let them know a customer had entered the bake shop.) They sell to tourists staying at the nearby campground, to passer-bys and locals, and at a farmers' market in Wilmington, Delaware, where a neighbor takes some of their baked goods for sale. While the bake shop is open year round, the bulk of their business is seasonal: summers, Thanksgiving and Christmas.

Barbara, a "maiden woman," as the Amish community refers to older single women, tells me, "It's not the Lord's will to stay single if you can get married," even though her sister has recently rebuffed a suitor, a middle-aged widower. These sisters have been good company for each other, and the business has supplied their needs.

Vignette: Quilts on the Farm

Although her business cards necessitate a map on the back side in order to locate her shop, the scenic countryside is certainly some of the attraction for customers to Sadie's quilt shop. Sadie has been in this basement addition to her home for 20 of her 25 years in business, space which includes the quilt shop, sewing room, office, storage and restrooms.

Her business is on the 38-acre-farm where her family raises sweet corn in the summer, for sale to tourists and to the local produce auction, and manages 11,000 chickens: ("My husband likes to say, 'I have 11,000 ladies working for me. They're laying eggs. I have to feed them, talk to them and take care of them.'") While Sadie and I are talking, favorite customers of hers, a retired couple from Staten Island, stop in to

visit bringing six dozen empty egg cartons and Sadie steps out to refill their egg supply. The woman tells me that they travel down to Lancaster every few months for an overnight stay when their eggs are running low, “And the drive is so beautiful,” but it sounds to me more like pilgrimage to familiar sacred sites, with the overlay of longing and devotion that I hear in her voice. Later they leave having placed a custom order for a quilt (which takes about four to six months); Sadie tells me that they “musta bought a dozen quilts from me over the years. ... She has brought a carload of her friends down to buy quilts, and now a baby quilt for her new grand-daughter.”

Overview of Amish Women’s Enterprises

As the preceding vignettes illustrate, Amish women’s business enterprises vary by size, type, and location. Amish women's enterprises occupy what Andrea Kwolek-Folland (1998) has called “feminized niches” of retail sales, marketing such things as fabric, baked goods, quilts, flowers, housewares, and jams, jellies & pickles. Quilt shops remain the most visible Amish women’s business, and Amish women who serve meals to tourists in their homes, the least (not advertising and requesting a “suggested donation” rather than a set fee are means that enable them to bypass state health department regulations for restaurant food service).

Some forms of Amish women's business enterprise are not new; selling produce and home-canned goods at roadside stands has existed since non-Amish stopped growing and canning produce themselves, well before the advent of the tourist industry in Lancaster County at mid-century. Other enterprises are much more recent. The oldest woman in my study, who began in business some 40 years ago, remembers being one of

the first three Amish women to open a store. Another woman in my study, who has been in business for some 20 years, recalled when her quilt sales were booming in the 1980s because there were only a handful of shops.

Significantly, Amish women's enterprises cater primarily to tourists or, in the case of stores that sell house-wares and fabric, to both Amish and *English* (the term used by research participants in my study for all non-Amish, tourists and locals alike, whose first language is English, unlike the Amish whose first language is Pennsylvania German). Through their interaction with bus-loads of tourist who visit their shops, Amish businesswomen primarily represent the public face of their community to outsiders.

Some businesses provide small amounts of discretionary money for Amish women. One woman's flower gardening income was used to finance trips to visit family members who live in Ohio and Indiana, and several businesswomen in my study mentioned now being able to afford winter vacations to Pinecraft, an Amish vacation community in Sarasota, Florida. Other women's businesses are more lucrative. One entrepreneur near Intercourse is referred to among the Amish as a millionaire for her success in business; she has been able to financially support not only her children but members of her extended family, also. While overall smaller than some Amish men's businesses, this is nevertheless significant.⁵⁶

56 To put this in perspective, some businesses run by Amish men and located in the Orlean industrial park in New Holland, Pa., are multi-million dollar a year operations, according to Kraybill, who cites Amish businesses that gross \$8-12 million in sales per year (2001, p. 256). By comparison to national trends, data from the Small Business Administration documents that men operate larger businesses than women, averaging gross receipts in 1997 of \$58,000 vs. \$31,000 for women (SBA, 2003). However, in data that I believe is applicable to Amish businesswomen (see p. 89), the Minority Business Development Agency, a branch of the U.S. Commerce Department, released a study 10-14-08 which shows a higher rate of growth for minority female-owned firms than that of minority male-owned firms (57 percent compared to 31 percent between 1997 and 2002), and much higher than the rate of growth for white-owned businesses of

Nor is the reach of some of these businesses limited to Lancaster County: the Amish proprietress of a stand at downtown Lancaster city's Central Market has a business selling Amish dolls, quilted hot-pads and cookbooks that ships orders across the entire United States. And some women-owned businesses create significant employment for other women: an Amish woman entrepreneur who runs a local quilt shop told me that she pays a hundred Amish and Mennonite women to quilt for her on a piecework basis.

Most of these Amish women's businesses are located in the countryside, although the family may no longer farm, renting their land out to non-Amish tractor farmers (Kraybill, 2008, p.47). This rural setting adds to their appeal. According to one businesswoman in my study, tour buses bypass her quilt shop because tourists prefer visiting a shop on "a farm, a real Amish farm!"

(Under) Counting Women's Business

Sociologist Donald Kraybill and historian Steven Nolt, who researched the trend to business enterprise from "plows to profits," estimated in their 2nd edition of *Amish Enterprise* (2004) that Amish businesses in Lancaster number "at least 1,600" (p. 60), of which "one-fifth are women's" (p. 62). By their figures that puts the number at 320. Other than this rough estimate, no hard figures exist as to the prevalence of Amish women entrepreneurs.⁵⁷

either sex (press release, MBDA, 2008). So women's firms are smaller but growing more rapidly in number.

57 The relatively recent shift (taking place over the last 20 years, according to Kraybill and Nolt, 2003) among Lancaster County Amish from farming to business entrepreneurship is monumental. In a recent public lecture (May 2008), Donald Kraybill described this movement as a "negotiated cultural compromise" driven by lack of available farmland for an ever-growing Amish population, coupled with the preference of most Amish to remain in Lancaster County, in spite of increased tourism (or, for those women in businesses catering to tourists, perhaps *because* of this ready market for their goods).

Family business has overtaken farming as the primary vocation for Lancaster County Amish. Kraybill now estimates that only “about 30 percent of Lancaster’s Amish families still earn their living by tilling the soil” (Kraybill, 2008, p. 47). Milk had been the primary income for those still farming, but this is declining. One informant in my study said that she could count 8 of 30 families in her district who had “put away their cows” in the last few years in favor of business enterprises.

My research suggests that the number of women’s businesses may be even higher than Kraybill and Nolt’s findings for two reasons: first, many married women are ostensibly in business with their husbands. Sometimes Amish women’s businesses are in the name of the woman who runs it, whether she is single or married (e.g. Hannah’s Quilts, Marian’s Quilt Shop), but more often the business carries the family’s last name (e.g. Riehl’s Quilts and Crafts, Witmer Quilt Shop), or bears the names of both husband and wife (e.g. Chris and Katie Stoltzfus, Country Lane Quilts), even when the wife is clearly in charge of the work.⁵⁸ As Sadie explains,

It’s my business but I still have my husband’s name on it. I always put it on because he’s my husband. He doesn’t really do anything down in my shop unless I go away. Once in a great big while he will wait on customers. If the girls are away he will occasionally wait on customers. He does take an interest in my business. He likes to know what I sell, what I’m doing. ... I always say he hardly does anything in my quilt

58 In general, Angel Kwolek-Folland (1998) argues that family businesses often obscure the reality of how much women are central to those enterprises.

shop, but he likes to make sure that I keep busy and I keep at it. He doesn't want me to stop.

In such cases the business cards include both husband and wife's names, even when she runs the business, thus making it easy to undercount women's enterprises. According to Kraybill and Nolt, this is done to "maintain the propriety of patriarchy. Nevertheless, within the community everyone knows" whose business it is (2004, p. 209).

Second, Amish women's businesses may be undercounted because many do not advertise and thus are easy to overlook. Some family businesses that were described to me (e.g. sewing custom Amish coats or dresses) are done at home by special order for community insiders. Amish women who cook meals in their homes for tourists are known primarily by word of mouth. Some women greenhouse growers sell their wares wholesale, rather than retail, making these businesses harder to track. In addition, the study on which Kraybill and Nolt's book is based excluded roadside produce stands, and in at least one case related to me, half of the Amish family's annual cash income came from their roadside stand.

One indication of the growth of business opportunities for women is the finding by Kraybill and Nolt that Amish schools boards are having a harder time finding single Amish women to teach school, a valued occupation open to women, since now, single women prefer to be involved in small business enterprises, which pay better (2004, p. 216). In my study, one shop owner's daughter was employed as a teacher in Lititz, 17 miles from her family home; she and two friends from her district who taught at Amish schools near her school hired a driver to transport them back and forth each day. This

unusual distance away and commuting arrangement indicates a lack of willing Amish women available to teach in Amish church districts closer to Lititz. Other daughters of the women in my study who had finished school and were living at home with their parents were employed as salesclerks, market help, or “mother’s helpers” (live-in, short term assistance to Amish families with new babies), not teachers.

Type and Frequency of Women’s Entrepreneurship

It is clear from my research that women’s business enterprises, in general, are increasing in number and in importance. Amish women’s business enterprises take many forms. Small piecework occupations (like quilting) done at home are common for mothers of younger children. While the examples at the beginning of the chapter illustrate women who have formal shops, many more women are employed doing piecework in some stage of quilt production or in other home-based enterprise. In fact, in the heart of the Amish settlement, women who are *not* involved in some form of business endeavor may be the exception. One businesswoman told me succinctly, “Most every woman is doing *something* on the side. ... It is *expected* of you.” One business owner in Ann Stoltzfus Taylor’s survey put it even more strongly: “You’re just not with it unless you have something else [i.e. a business] to do” (Taylor, 1995, p. 41).

In one Amish church district in the heart of the Amish settlement, I studied the occupations of adult women. One quarter of these women were described to me as farmers: “they *both* farm.” Another 25 percent were married with young children whose husbands work as day laborers and “don’t hold an outside job so far as I know.” About women in both the previous two categories I was told, “Of course, most of them do some

quilting for pay.” The other 50 percent of the women were involved in a variety of business enterprises. Occupations that were cited to me include sewing Amish coats or pants, selling “primitives” (folk art), making picture frames⁵⁹, cleaning houses, baking bread from home-ground wheat for a local health foods store, growing organic produce, working in the local Amish book store, running a pie-baking business, doing “bookwork” for a husband’s gazebo or woodworking business, working at farmer’s markets in New Jersey and Lancaster, and clerking in a local shop.

Staying Small, “The Personal Touch”

In general, within the Amish community, smaller businesses are valued; they avoid pride and offer greater flexibility. As Kraybill observes, Amish businesses are conducted in particularly Amish ways. As he states,

These new industries bear the imprint of Amish culture in several ways. They are, first of all, small. Church leaders fear that businesses with dozens of employees will bring pride, worldliness, excessive power, and publicity... A smaller scale offers flexible work schedules to accommodate community activities... Small-scale operations harbor the dignity of work and pride in craftsmanship. Without professional training, the Amish nevertheless act as professionals because they control the terms and conditions of their work (2008, p. 50).

⁵⁹ When I remarked on the incongruity of one Amish family business that make picture frames, given the Amish distrust of art and their prohibition against photography (which could lead to pride), Mary reminded me that frames are also for jigsaw puzzles, *fraktur* genealogies, and marriage certificates, but then admitted that “many do” take family photos, though they would more likely be kept in a drawer than displayed at home.

These values of smallness of scale, flexible schedules, and controlling the terms of their employment (Mim spoke of not letting her customers run her life) are definitely true of women's businesses, also, which tend to be smaller than their male counterparts, anyway. Rebecca, the most successful entrepreneur in my study, mused about whether others felt her business was “too big for Amish.” For her, gender was a factor, as well: “Is it a woman’s job to be so big? I sometimes question it.” Not only is small better, by implication, too much money is bad. As Mary said of a family in her church district, in which the husband runs a successful business and the wife is at home: “She does not need to work. They do not need *any more money* coming in.”

Most Amish women’s businesses are staffed by the businesswoman and her family members, usually daughters, and occasionally one or two “hired girls.” Often this small size is by choice. Sadie told me she values the “special time” with her customers:

I want to stay small so I can have the, what do you call it, I like to have the tou— the personal touch. If I’m away, customers ask, “Where’s your mom?” they want to see me. Just like that customer that was in here, she wanted to talk with me. ... If my shop was so big that I’d have to have a bunch of [sales] ladies, that would take away from the special time with my customers.”

Ann Stoltzfus Taylor cited the following strategies used by women in her study to limit growth and keep the business of manageable size: discontinuing advertising, taking down the business signs, discontinuing inventory items, or subdividing the business when it got too big for the entrepreneur to comfortably manage alone (1995, p. 54). These

deliberate strategies kept the business small enough for married women to manage alongside other domestic responsibilities.

Good Business, Good Sense

Dependent as they are on the movement of tourists, good business sense requires that entrepreneurs be aware of holidays and school schedules. When I commented on her shop getting a surprising amount of business in February, Sadie told me, “Oh, I always get families coming in to my shop over the week of Presidents’ Day.” On another occasion I was gathering information in early June at a different shop, and Mary told me, “Business is still slow because the New York City schools haven’t let out yet.”

The quilt shop owners in my study, however, disagreed as to whether demand for quilts was going up or down. Said Mim,

Some people say that business is not as good as it used to be but I don’t see a difference. I have so many repeat customers, I can’t honestly say that. I have my buses, up to what I want, what I can do. Bird-in-Hand [Family Inn and Restaurant] busses come on a daily basis. ... People like to get out on the farm.

Mary, who feels that her business may suffer since it is *not* located on a scenic farm, noted that her business was better in the 1990s.

Not now, sales don’t keep going up, not for me. ... Well, the market’s flooded, what with consignment sales, fire company sales. ...

The ‘90s were the better years. But there’s been more quilt shops, there’s

been, quite a few more quilt shops [since the 90s], and I don't think the demand is bigger.

Quilt shop owners agreed, however, that no new quilt shops have been opening recently and some old ones have closed as long-time shop owners retired, perhaps an indication that the market for quilts is saturated.

Motivations for Business

Women's motivations for going into business varied. Amish businesswomen in my study started by opportunity, out of financial need, and by example, for something to do. Sadie had a quilt drying on a clothesline when a tourist stopped and asked to buy it. That inspired her to find a market for her quilts, as a little extra income. Mary, knowing the demand for quilts, put a sign at the end of her lane, "Quilts for Sale." That led to sales from her home, and eventually a shop of her own. Rebecca needed a source of income by necessity, and chose fabric because that was what she loved and knew best. Mim got started from the example of her aunt.

My grandmother sorta inspired me, and my aunt. They were both quilters and piecers. ... My aunt had her own dry goods shop along Route 340. A maiden lady. In her 40s, 50s, 60s, and 70s, she ran it. I watched it. I always had an eye out for quilts. ... It was not a new—, not anything new for me. It came natural to me.

The quilting or the sales?

Well, I dunno, I guess both. (Laughs) Well, the quilting. The sales came later. The quilting came natural. Sales came later.

Interestingly, the perception, if not the reality, of financial need was the driving force behind the tacit approval for Amish women in business, especially among married women with children, which was formerly taboo according to Hostetler (1993). After all, the reasoning goes, people have to make a living. Moreover, women in business do not seem to affect major visible Amish identity markers such as the horse-and-buggy and dress. Kraybill has also written of the role of economic productivity in encouraging change or modernization: "Changes that produce economic benefits are more acceptable than those that do not. 'Making a living' takes priority over pleasure, convenience, or leisure" (Kraybill, 2001, p. 203).

Financial need was more of a factor for some women than others. As Linda, an Amish woman who went to work writing books after her husband's significant business failures put them deeply in debt, put it: "I'm an overweight, middle-aged woman. What was I going to do, clean houses for the rest of my life? You can't make that kind of money cleaning houses." Since for years she had been a scribe for one of the Amish newspapers, Linda decided to capitalize on that skill. In her case, financial necessity forced her into a unique occupation, but the rewards of the business have kept her doing it. Ruth, an experienced Amish woman greenhouse grower, told me, "Farming just doesn't reach these days. You need another source of income."

By contrast, Mary's motivations were somewhat different. She started her business:

For something to do, and also for some income. I thought of my growing family. And to teach my children how to make money and how to

handle money. And it still is part of the reason to be in business. I'm certainly not expecting to *give* everything away. ...

I liked the idea of being independent. And putting something aside for retirement. ... I mean, I don't know if I thought about saving for retirement when I started, but I think about it now, that we should put some aside. See, that's our—, how do I want to say it? What do they call it? A, a nest? (Pause)

Nest egg?

Yes. [The business is] our nest egg. ...

If you had to, could you live just on your husband's income?

I think, I think the young people are doing it. Let's say, a mother with young children. But maybe they sew at home, maybe there's more sewing than I know. ... I'm sure there would be ways we could live without the business. But I think it taught us a lot.

Women that I spoke with downplayed their business's contribution to the family income, instead highlighting other factors (i.e., good modeling of value for children: "It taught us a lot.") While financial need may have been a contributing factor for many women, it is also the most acceptable means of justification.

Mompreneurs and WAHM's (Work-at-home moms)

The stated preference of Amish women is to have the business at home, at least when children are young. Anne Stoltzfus Taylor's 1995 study of 26 married Amish women entrepreneurs found that 69 percent had their business at home, either operating

out of a room in their house or with shop directly adjacent to it, with a buzzer or bell that sounded in their private quarters when customers entered their shop; the remainder had their shop in another location (p. 73). The fact of this home-based business mirrors a larger phenomenon in wider U.S. society that has been increasingly referred to as “mompreneurs” or WAHMs, work-at-home moms. I was first introduced to these terms through bi-weekly emailings from NAWBO, the National Association for Women Business Owners, which surveys the week’s newspapers for links relevant to women in business.⁶⁰ Patricia Cobe and Ellen Parlapiano, co-authors of *Mompreneurs: A Mother's Practical Step by Step Guide to Work at Home Success* (Perigee Trade, 2002), claim to have coined and trademarked the word in the 1990s to describe entrepreneurial moms. (See their web site at www.mompreneuronline.com/) These terms are applicable to Amish women, as well, in that married Amish businesswomen claim a primary identity as mothers and home-makers.

Women in my study emphasized the advantages of having a home-based business with young children. As Sadie put it,

Quilts was what there was demand for. This was something I could do at home, while I was home with the children. ... It’s a neat way to make work for your family. Be at home to quilt, wait on customers, have them help with gardening, cleaning, baking. They get the opportunity to meet a lot of people and just help with the business.

⁶⁰ See, for example, the following: Pondel, Evan. (Aug. 20, 2005). “Home is where mom’s heart and business are: Mompreneurs find they can make money while keeping family top priority.” *Los Angeles Daily News*, on-line edition. And also: Armour, Stephanie. (July 20, 2005). “Job opening? Work-at-home moms fill bill. *USA Today*, B3.

After a discussion of my own son's asthma, and my comment that I had never heard of that in the Amish community, Mary replied, "We have sicknesses just like you. And that's another reason where, where we would feel that we couldn't work outside the home. ... Who's gonna care for the children, who's gonna be here for them when they come home?" With her shop right next door, and older siblings around to look after the younger ones, Mary didn't need to worry about sick children. "I'd be at home, I guess mine just were never that deathly sick that I couldn't leave them for a few minutes. And most of our sicknesses were in the winter," when business is slow.

Challenges

But having a home-based business also brings special challenges. The daughter of one shop owner, who had grown up helping in the business, wanted no part of it as an adult. When I asked her why not, she replied, "It's a pain!," voicing her resentment about the interruptions. Rebecca remembers that family mealtimes were especially difficult:

I always had [the business] at home and I always tried to be real—you know, to this day I love to cook and I always—I can't remember that I cheated them out of food and stuff like that, I always seen to them. ... I cooked for them. ... But evenings were a little different. It was a little hard. ...

It's this way: customers come any old time of the day. We never had off for dinner. Now wait, it's not nice to say this, but we had to send the children over to wait on the customers while I eat, you know? They didn't have a home life. It was business, just businesses. Now who gets

served first? I mean, who gets attention? The dinner's ready but the customers are still coming. And who gets attention? You know? Well, of course, when you have customers you gotta wait on them. ...

It's true, you are kinda saying, "Well, I'm sorry, girls, but I can't deal with that now." Someone has to go over ... So who is first at a time like that? Your children, your babies? Or the customers? Who comes first – your children or your customers? Well, of course the customers come first, but they shouldn't, or should they? When a woman has her children waiting on her, she's torn between the two.

Another challenge to home-based businesses is the need to have somebody home during business hours to wait on customers. Various women in my study spoke about feeling tied down at home. Said Sadie, "It's fine if my daughter can be here, but we want to do things together sometimes, too." Rachel noted, "It's hard to get away as a family. We were in Florida for a week last year [on vacation], but not this year." Mary has recently begun to consider closing her business because,

I want to slow down. I don't want to be in retail business all the time.

Either I'll go into wholesale or do sewing on the side. ... I need some peace and quiet in my life. ... So I can run my own life, so to speak, so I can live my life, instead of having *the people* [customers] run it for me.

Women small business owners, many of whom are sole proprietors, juggle the demands of customers that tie them to expected shop hours and limit their time away.

One potential problem that businesswomen of home-based shops did *not* mention is children's behavior in front of tourists. This is likely a function of their age in starting businesses at mid-life, when children were older and/or there were older children to care for younger ones (see below). The only example of misbehavior cited to me was from Mary, who spoke in mock disapproval of her little 4-year-old granddaughter who, when Mary is ready to fold back quilts on the bed for display to a group, will sometimes "sit on the bed and just grin at me. And I'm like—, all right. She's not supposed to, but she'll just do it." Smiling and shaking her head as she said this, Mary almost seemed to admire her endearing granddaughter's spunk.

Having your own help

An important dynamic that I became aware of relatively late in my field work was the importance of other family members, particularly daughters, to the feasibility of running a business. Aaron said of his wife, Rachel, who is just building her business of serving meals to tourists in her home, that while she wanted to start doing this when the girls were young, he encouraged her to wait until they were old enough (11- and 12-years old) to help more with the cooking, baking and clean up. A mother's business involvement is often made possible by the presence of young, unmarried daughters who can either help wait on customers in the shop, or prepare meals and provide childcare for younger siblings at home. As Sadie, a mother of nine, told me,

I waited to start my business until I had my own help. I didn't have any little ones, because I wouldn't have started if I had. 'Course I did have two babies since I started my business. ... I did not start having

my own shop without my own help. See, my oldest daughter was already out of school when I started. Because I didn't want to take away from my family. ...

I wouldn't want any of my daughters to take over my business without their own to help. It would be taking away from their own children. I can say they wouldn't want it without having their own help. You just can't take care of your own children and run a business. I would not want to be put in that position, that I'm not enjoying my own family. ... I've heard of young mothers that started their own business, Amish people that run their own business as a mother. They say it's hard to be a real family, be a real mom.

Sadie, whose last child was born since she had her quilt shop, is freed from many daily domestic responsibilities for entrepreneurship because she "has her own help" in the form of older daughters. Mary and Rebecca both noted the importance of the business in instilling a work ethic in their children. Said Mary, "I think it taught us a lot. I handled the business part, the money. My second son was in the business; he helped me, 'course he was 9 years old!. I taught him how to run the register." In these ways, Amish women's business enterprises are built on a family business model in which all family members have an investment of time and emotional energy in the business.

Literature by Ivan Light on ethnic business (which these Amish businesses also are) notes the reliance on family and kin "for the cheap, loyal labor essential for their survival and success" (2000, p. 141). Family labor, Light notes, is largely unpaid;

relatives are willing to work long hours to help the business succeed. Thus, Light concludes, “if a strong family structure represents a resource of a group, individual entrepreneurs from that group will exploit their family structure in business” (Light, 2000, p. 133). Given the demands of the family business model, it is perhaps not surprising that entrepreneurs’ children do not want to follow in their mother’s businesses.

Mother Managers

Reproductive or caring labor (care of children, the sick and the elderly) and productive labor (cooking, gardening) are as important, though less tangible, than work that results in cash income. Feminist researchers have used the term "social reproduction" to refer to that constellation of at-home, unpaid labor that includes caring for children, the elderly and the sick; purchasing household goods; preparing and serving food; maintaining furnishings; laundering and mending clothing; socializing children; and maintaining community ties (Laslett and Brenner, 1989). More often performed by women, this "reproductive" work is absolutely necessary and invaluable. As Evelyn Nakano Glenn (1992) and others have written, however, because such labor is unpaid it has historically been undervalued in capitalist society in comparison to productive or income-generating labor.

To return for a moment to “kitchen table entrepreneurs,” this designation is apropos in another way, as well, since typically, Amish women in business retain responsibility for managing “the kitchen,” that is, domestic duties. Of her time and household responsibilities, Mary had this to say, “If I wasn’t busy in my shop I was busy with my family. ... I do canning, the yard, and the garden, now I do have help with the

garden.” Sadie noted during our interview that while she was downstairs in her shop talking with me, her daughter was upstairs babysitting three grandchildren.

In the case of businesswomen who still shoulder expectations of managing the domestic workload, this can also create work for other women. Many quilt entrepreneurs do less of their own baking and sewing of clothes. These Amish businesswomen become “domestic- or mother-managers,” hiring out work that they no longer do themselves. This is contributing to the limited growth of secondary industries. As Mary said,

When church is at my house and I need 30 pies, I buy them from Bluegate [bake stand]. There is no shame in not doing your own baking. Maybe 20 years ago, but not today. It might have been unheard of in the past.

Twenty years ago, very few people bought their desserts.

According to my study, cooking, gardening, and to a lesser extent, canning, are still done primarily by women entrepreneurs and their daughters, with a few exceptions; one woman in Taylor’s study noted that she didn’t make applesauce this year because it didn’t pay to close the shop to do so; she could make more money keeping the shop open and buying her applesauce from another Amish woman in the community (1995, p. 52).

Cleaning, however, is more typically delegated to others, though there is some precedent for this. The Amish have typically hired young Amish women to live in as “mother’s helpers” to help clean and cook after the birth of a new baby. An Amish woman notes, “I always had a hired girl when the children were little” (Stoltzfus, 2003, p. 185). In Anne Stoltzfus Taylor’s study of 26 married Amish women entrepreneurs, one quarter hired help to clean their house and half relied on older children or husbands to do

so (1995, pp. 51-2). As Stoltzfus Taylor noted, outsourcing unpleasant household duties to hired help is available to affluent Amish entrepreneurs (p. 94). Now as Barbara Ehrenreich has noted in a provocative article in *Harper's* subtitled, "Other women's work," hiring other women to do one's less desirable household chores is a function of privilege that reinforces class distinctions (Ehrenreich, 2000). This may be the downside of being a mother-manager.

Entrepreneurial Preparedness

As I have reflected on Amish businesswomen in Lancaster County, PA, I have considered the characteristics that contribute to their success. Certainly community bonds and the support of other women entrepreneurs are positive factors, which I examine in my discussion of "social capital" in chapter six. Beyond that is a constellation of individual characteristics that women in my study have in common. Hackler, Harpel, and Mayer (2008) have discussed the importance of what they call "entrepreneurial preparedness" in relation to women's small business ownership. They write:

Entrepreneurial preparedness refers to the personal skills, attitudes and resources gained outside of formal education and work experience.

Financial capital, in the form of earning power and as an indirect measure of resources and success, is one component of entrepreneurial preparedness. Life experience, as measured by age, comprises another general component of entrepreneurial preparedness. More specifically

notions of entrepreneurial preparedness might come from the cultural and family background of the entrepreneur.

Apart from experience or education, (Amish businesswomen, like all Amish, have an 8th-grade education), the women in my study benefit from cultural Amish values of thrift, hard work, a strong work ethic (14-hour days are not uncommon) and a mentality toward saving, not spending. Hackler, Harpel, and Mayer define “financial capital” (an element of human capital) as “personal earning power and the ability to accumulate capital for investment in a business” (p. 10). The women in my study self-financed their shops from savings and profits accumulated slowly over time from products initially sold out of their homes.

Lastly, life experience is another attribute that these authors identify. Hackler, Harpel, and Mayer note that “self-employed women are more likely to be older than their non-self-employed cohort” (p. 20). They cite Rae’s theorization about life stage events and entrepreneurship in the United Kingdom (2005), which identifies “mid-career entrepreneurs” (MCEs) from a broad range of social and demographic backgrounds who start their own businesses between the ages of 35 and 55. “MCEs have gained considerable life experience and may well be at the peak of their potential and capability, yet a number of studies have shown the dissatisfaction and need for change experienced by people in this age group” (p. ?). Almost all the Amish women entrepreneurs I have met fit this age range; a few are older (though they started their businesses at mid-life); I have not met any younger.⁶¹ Part of the reason for this among married Amish women

61 Gertrude Enders Huntington has written of the burden faced by young Amish mothers, in part because of the simple lack of children to assist with time-consuming domestic chores (Huntington, 1994). As Mary

may well be the need to “have your own help,” discussed earlier. But it may also relate to mid-life factors identified above such as peak capability and the need for change.

Finally, the women in my study demonstrate certain personal attributes that contribute to their entrepreneurial preparedness and may play a significant factor in their business success. Susan Jensen, associated with the Nebraska Business Development Center, wrote provocatively of this as “psychological capital,” that is, certain beliefs, perceptions, attitudes, and personal qualities which can positively affect business success. Character traits such as optimism, resiliency, responsibility, and well-being often translate into business success. Jensen has studied this phenomenon among ethnic immigrant entrepreneurs, particularly Asian Americans running family business. Many of the same characteristics that Jensen identified apply to Amish women in business. In addition to more practical, common-sense considerations such as sound business judgment and knowing how to manage money, psychological capital can include such things as an openness to business growth and development (which we might call ambition), enthusiasm and optimism, as well as drive/determination, which Amish women demonstrate in abundance. Anna told me she was determined to have her own greenhouse even before she got married: “I always knew I wanted to do it,” or as Mary, a quilt shop owner, put it, “I had it in my blood [to do retail]. ... If you have a little extra ambition, it works.” Regarding the need to remain upbeat, Rebecca told me, “You can’t have a long face – not that I don’t have a long face sometimes – but you cannot do it in

Neth (1995) has written of Midwestern farm women in the early 20th century, “A study of the labor and leisure time of farm women and men concluded that women’s work loads were affected most by the age of the children ... In the early stages of a family’s life, women were especially burdened by the shortage of family labor (p. 24).

public, you just can't." And Sadie noted her enthusiasm for her quilt shop business: "I do love, just love, my work." Finally, women in my study universally spoke of the need to "be a people person." Mary told me, "It is very interesting to deal with the public. I get to meet some people from all over the world." Said Rebecca, now retired, "I just love my people. When I quit stopping in there, I miss them so much. I got a lot of hugs. I miss -em, I really miss -em, when I stopped coming in."

What I cannot know for certain without a larger comparative study of Amish women who are, and are not, in business, is whether entrepreneurs started their businesses because they had these characteristics of entrepreneurial readiness/psychological capital to begin with, which enabled them to be successful, or whether they developed them through their business. Did entrepreneurship strengthen their self-confidence and self-esteem, or did already possessing these traits lead to their business success? Amish women to whom I put the question seemed to agree that while any Amish woman *could* run a business, not every Amish woman would *want* to; some would have more shyness to overcome. Which is not really an answer. Here is an exchange with Sadie:

Q: what makes a good businesswoman in the Amish community?

[Long pause] I don't know, what do you think?

[Silence on my part]

Probably mostly personality. Be friendly with people. ... I do enjoy meeting people, that's probably why I went into this type of business.

Customer Service

Like any successful salesperson, Amish businesswomen know what their customers want and aim to satisfy them, male or female. Sadie told me this about selling quilts in her shop:

I like the men shoppers just before Christmas. They come in and they don't take long. They always wait and shop at the last minute, and they are always in a hurry, and they want to get something very special for their wife for Christmas. If they claim to know the color of their carpet, and know what kind of curtains their wife has, and they might know the wall paper, they say, "Oh, my wife likes dark green and burgundy," and I'll just have a ball finding them a quilt for that man. That is a lot of fun.

... You'll get into quilts like some of the Log Cabins or the plaids—the men will go crazy for those. Or even for a Log Cabin house, for, maybe, their son's bedroom, or maybe something more masculine looking. I find out that men tend to go for darker colors. They will go for the dark navies, dark blues, dark greens. Where women might go for some of the more lighter colors. I find that is very, very true. ...

But then sometimes you have men coming in, and hey, their wife wants to buy something, and the men will say, but really, that is almost too feminine looking for me. ... Sometimes the men will say, "Buy whatever you like. I don't care. I sleep under it." And sometimes they will say,

“Don’t buy anything with pink.” You get all kinds of people. So we try to do all kinds of quilts. Hopefully we do a quilt for everybody.

Beyond Sadie’s expert sales(wo)manship, I am struck by the authority in her voice as she tells me this. The thought of an assertive Amish businesswoman guiding a male customer in his quilt selection is transgressive in many ways. An Amish woman taking charge and exercising authority over a man, let alone a non-Amish one, would have been rare even ten years ago.

(Not) Passing on the Business

When I ask Mary about the future of her business, she muses about “retiring, not selling.” She continues,

I don’t always want to be in the retail business. Either I’ll go into whole-sale, or do sewing on the side. I wouldn’t sell the business unless one of my daughters would want it.

Presumably you would have liked it if your daughters had gone into the business?

Well, it’s their choice, but yes, if they woulda wanted it, I would have helped them. But I’m not gonna say, you do it, you have to do it. It’s their choice. And I guess many times that’s the way it works [that the second generation doesn’t want it.]. ... I guess I don’t really consider this a business that has to go on, for the family. If it dwindles down, it’s OK, it’s not forever.

Several things are striking to me about this quote. First, the business is not essential to the family or to her daughters. Mary goes on to tell me about her one daughter who is busy with young children and her husband on the farm, an unmarried daughter who prefers teaching school, and the third who would rather be “working out” at a job away from home. Her daughters’ freedom to choose their preferred occupation is more important than the business continuing as a family legacy. This seems to support the notion, advanced earlier, that while financial necessity is a convenient justification for being in business, and probably the most easily understood rationale within the Amish community, it is not the only motivation. In this case, personal preference is also a factor. And Mary is philosophical about the future of her business: it doesn’t have to go on, it’s OK that it’s not forever.

This scenario is not limited to Mary. One of Rebecca’s daughters opened her own fabric shop in a new location, rather than taking over Rebecca’s. Nor do Sadie’s daughters want her business. She shrugs and remarks that, after all, they grew up with it, so they’ve had the experience; perhaps they’ll start their own business later doing something else, and besides, she wouldn’t want them to try it until their children are old enough to help. In fact, in my research in the Lancaster Amish community, second-generation shops are the exception. While this might reflect the fact that Amish women in businesses is a relatively new phenomena, thus their enterprises are younger, it is opposite findings from a study by the Center for Women’s Business Research, which found that, in a national study, on the whole, women business owners are nearly twice as

likely as men business owners to intend to pass the business on to a daughter or daughters (37 percent vs. 19 percent; www.womensbusinessresearch.org/).

Ann Stoltzfus Taylor, who has researched this topic and was herself raised Amish, believes that within the Amish community there is a healthy emphasis on choosing what you want to do, and support for starting up your own project, however unique – not a point of emphasis that we would necessarily expect from a community-oriented group like the Amish, but one that may influence decisions about business futures.⁶²

Quilting and Men’s Gender Roles

As entrepreneurs and as home-makers, gender roles for Amish women in business are clearly defined. Likewise Amish men’s gender roles are clear as family breadwinners whether they farm, work in construction or in shops. But while gender roles are defined, they are not rigid, and allow for some change over the life cycle. Women on family farms will often help in the fields during harvest time. Conversely, while quilting is considered women’s work, other aspects of the quilt-making process are sometimes done by men.

An interchange between Sadie, and a group of students that I brought to her quilt shop, illustrates ideas about retirement as well as male gender roles in the Amish community:

Are there any men who quilt?

I don’t think there are as many men that quilt as piece. Some of the elderly men, like ya say, after they have retired from farming, have started

⁶² Private conversation with Ann Stoltzfus Taylor, spring 2006.

to help their wives piecing and even doing the marking – the marking is stenciling the design for the quilter – or cutting patches. Some of the men as they get older and they are not capable of doing as much hard work, and they still don't want to sit back and retire, they find things to do like cutting patches for the women to sew. Or doing lots of things like that.

But as far as quilting, I don't know of any men that actually do quilting. I think the men tend to have too big hands or their fingers aren't as nimble as doing the tiny stitches as the women. When I look at my husband's hands – I know I don't have very nice, delicate looking hands, but my husband's look big and strong. How in the world would he be able to take a needle and do tiny stitches? I can't picture him doing that. But a lot of them do sew [pieces together using a non-electric, foot-powered sewing machine]

And the men who do that, that is not considered feminine for a man to sew or quilt?

No, because they normally won't do that as long as they are capable of going outside and getting a good job, or they are still in the age where they are a good farmer, or a good cabinetmaker, or whatever. He is not going to do quilts. Say he may have a heart problem or may have a problem where he cannot do some of the harder work, and it gives them something to do.

After men have been working so hard for all those years, you will not find an Amish man just sit back, and retire, and do nothing. I don't

think you will around your people either. I think they will find something to do. Whereas a man, if he is not going to be able to do anything else, he is going to cut patches or sew 'em, instead of doing nothing. He is not going to sit in his rocking chair and get old. What would you find your men would do at the old age, in your type of people?

[Pause; uncomfortable laughter among the students in my group] Hobbies, ... maybe, ... play golf.

Well, that is something, right? They are not going to just sit there and get weak. That is a good one, probably play golf. Well, you see, our older men don't play golf, so I guess they sew quilt patches.⁶³

Working on quilts (though not quilting) is considered acceptable for Amish men after they have retired, or if they aren't capable of another job for health reasons. Thus, while quilt-making is gendered female, some aspects may be done by older or infirm men, giving them value instead of "doing nothing."

Interestingly, the advent of business enterprise in the Amish community has changed the whole concept of retirement. Until recently, the concept itself was relatively unknown. When farming, parents would typically turn over the farm in their mid-50s, continuing to help out as needed, but slowing down and moving into a "*daudy haus*" (a

⁶³ Retirement, per se, is virtually unknown among Amish women, as well as men. As Butch Reigart, language teacher of the Pennsylvania Dutch dialect for the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society has told me, there is no word for retirement in the dialect, so the English word is used. While those Amish of means who are able to may vacation as "snowbirds" in Pinecrest, an Amish neighborhood in Sarasota, Florida, for a few months each year, it is more appropriate to speak of doing different kinds of work in retirement, rather than not working. Private conversation with Reigart, fall 2008.

small attached apartment to a larger farmhouse) after their last child was grown and gone and the next generation had moved into the farmhouse.

But when parents are in business, the timing of this transition to retirement is unclear. As Rebecca said, comparing the previous generation on the farm to her peers,

Grandmother and grandfather did not have a business; they helped their sons and daughters, maybe just by sitting on the rocking chair, do some mending, mind the [grand]children. Now they don't even do that for their children. ... They themselves are much more in business. ... Or they go to market. Lots and lots of them.

Another woman in my study was matter-of-fact when talking about the shift for Amish women from farming to entrepreneurship. Mary sought to normalize this significant cultural change by drawing parallels between her life as a businesswoman and her mother's life, and that of other women of her mother's generation, as farmers.

They were living on a farm where they were—, they helped their husband, so they were actually helping in the business, they just weren't getting paid for it. If they wouldn't have been there, the husband or the farmer woulda had to hire help. So in a way she worked just as hard, or harder, than a career woman. On duty 24 hours a day, my mother had seven children; it certainly was a busy life.

By implication, Mary is positioning herself as a “career woman” in relation to her mother, in this quote. Mary sees her work running a quilt shop, based on her home

property, as a continuation of her mother's home-based work on the farm, not a departure.

As I wrote in my previous study of conservative Mennonite woman's transition from producers to consumers,⁶⁴ necessary domestic tasks such as running errands and doing the household shopping are often undervalued and do not contribute to the productive family economy in the same way as sewing clothes at home and preserving bountiful garden produce. Thus women's perceived importance to the family economy is lessened. Anne Stoltzfus Taylor cites a woman in her study who believes that housewives are not respected in Amish society, and another who told her that she "'moved up a step' when she went from housewife to shopkeeper" (Taylor, 1995, p. 97 and p. 41). Writing about Amish families in northern Indiana, Meyers documents that, in comparison to farm wives, women married to men who work away from home in factory jobs suffer a change in status: "they are becoming housewives rather than partners in the production of the family livelihood" (1991, p. 178). As more Amish women in Lancaster County are no longer part of farm families, the tendency is toward a consumer lifestyle where more goods and services are purchased rather than produced. Amish women's involvement in business, earning cash income, offsets the drop in status that might otherwise accompany this transition from a farming economy to a capitalist economy.

Gender, Business and Status

During my field work I tried to assess women's status as business owners in the community. Among the Amish, it seems to me, *businessmen* clearly carry leadership

64 See, "'To Remind Us of Who We Are': An Ethnographic Exploration of Women's Dress and Gender Roles in a Conservative Mennonite Community," by Beth E. Graybill, Master of Arts Thesis, 1995.

within the community. Their opinions carry weight in church life, and theirs are the publicized contact names for community events; for example, the names of prominent Amish businessmen were given as contacts and chartered buses left from their business locations for a recent protest at the Pennsylvania state capitol in support of an unlicensed midwife.⁶⁵ Moreover, since the relatively recent rise of Amish business enterprise during the last 20 years, researcher Donald Kraybill has noted the development of a three-tiered Amish class system of business owners, farmers, and business employees, with owners carrying the most clout.⁶⁶ I believe some of this greater status carries over for women business owners, as well. Certainly there is no negative stigma attached to it, like Rebecca experienced in her early years (see chapter seven), as the following quote from Mary illustrates:

How are women shop owners seen? (Long silence.) Do people look up to you or look down on you?

It's just sorta part of your life, whatever you want to do. I don't know. If you want to do it, go ahead, if you don't—. Especially now. Maybe 20 years ago. But even 20 years ago there were some [women] that did [have shops]. ... If I wouldn't have felt good about it, I wouldn't have done it. I know a lot of people had asked, "Do you have something to sell?" It's more the norm, now. ... I was never out looking to discuss

⁶⁵ Undated flyer in author's possession, "Rally to Support Midwife Diane Goslin," picked up at the Amish-run Millers' Natural Food Store on April 1, 2008; newspaper article on the rally noted that hundreds of Amish attended in six chartered buses; see "Amish protest state crackdown on midwife," by David Wenner, Harrisburg (Pa.) Patriot-News, Wednesday April 09, 2008.

⁶⁶ Public lecture by Donald Kraybill, Stumptown Mennonite Church, May 1998.

my business or promote it. I always felt that if God didn't want me to do it, He'd show me a way to not do it, if I shouldn't be doing it.

Note that Mary sees this as a decision that she was free to make, between herself and her God, not bound by community stigma, as might have been true 20 years ago.

The strongest support for increased status accompanying Amish businesswomen comes from a conversation with Rebecca on lending money. Known to be the owner of several successful businesses, other Amish would come to her with requests for loans of significant amounts of money.

Was I stingy? I don't know. But you just can't help everybody, [not] even all the Amish that come to you... People would come to me for loans. That was a headache! I had to have a book-keeper just to keep after all the loans. ... I finally realized that I don't have to give to them every time they ask. ... You can't help everyone. If they don't know how to manage money, you're just helping them into a hole; you give them money for a hog barn, and then they lose the hogs, risk losing the whole farm, so you have to help them out again. Well, you put them in; how are you going to get them out? ... I don't like to waste what God has given to me.

In Rebecca's case, with wealth and status came increased responsibility to care for others in her community.

CHAPTER FIVE: Crafts, Commodification & Cultural Brokers

Vignette: Eating at Home

I am arranging a meal in an Amish home with Lydia for group of 30 University of Maryland students. For \$17.50 per person we are entitled to a menu of homemade rolls, salad, applesauce, pickled vegetables, beets, relish, two entrees (we choose baked chicken and meat-loaf), real mashed potatoes, homemade noodles, a fresh vegetable, two desserts (we choose shoofly pie and chocolate cake), and coffee. This is my third phone call, after an initial visit to set up the arrangements. I have been told to let it ring a while, as the phone is located at an outdoor shed, and on the ninth ring a breathless Lydia answers. Apologetically I tell her that in order for my group to pre-pay by check the university is now requesting a receipt in advance. (Lydia is set up to handle cash or checks, but not credit cards.) She asks if the receipt can be handwritten; it can. Then she says, "Can I fax it you?" I later learn that an accommodating non-Amish business in the town of Intercourse lets her use their fax machine when the need arises. Later, when I phone back yet again to tell her that our numbers have dropped, she says that's fine, since she is cooking for another group of 45 tourists at noon that same day. She reminds me to have our group there by 5 pm sharp, as she is leaving for a women's gathering at 7 pm that Saturday evening.

When our group arrives, it is Lydia's husband, Dan, that welcomes our group and ushers us into the converted garage arranged with round tables. As their children and grandchildren serve the meal, Dan circulates to make sure we are getting enough to eat; Lydia supervises from the doorway into their kitchen, which adjoins the garage/dining

room. I barely see Lydia until the end of the meal, when I am in pursuit of my toddler who has darted into her kitchen through the open doorway. There I see her spooning leftover chicken into a Tupperware container, and loading dishes into a gas-powered dishwasher. After dessert, Lydia brings us a rebate check, signed with her signature. And promptly at 7 pm, while our group is lingering over dessert at tables, she hitches up the horse and buggy and drives down the lane.

Food Tourism

Among Amish women serving meals at home for tourists, Lydia's business is unique in that she deferred to her husband in meeting and hosting us. In each of the other four Amish homes where I have brought guests to eat, the Amish woman cook/hostess, welcomed us, served us (aided by daughters or in the case of one widow, a paid assistant), engaged us in conversation, and in one case, even sat down to eat with along with us.

Meals for tourist in Amish homes can be considered an example of what Brenda Gayle Plummer has called "food tourism" (2008, p. 24) or what Lucy Long calls "culinary tourism" (2003). Food, in general, is an interesting vehicle for tourism. In the introduction to their edited reader, *Food and Culture*, Counihan and Esterik discussed food's ability to convey cultural meanings (1997/2007). Long (2003) has described "culinary tourism" as not only eating but procurement (which could include buying at Amish roadside stands), preparation (the act of cooking or baking itself, which perhaps explains the popularity of Amish cookbooks and box mixes for shoofly pie and homemade pretzels that are commonly available in Lancaster tourist venues.) Even

thumbing a cookbook, contends Long, is part of food tourism. Interestingly, some of the Amish in homes where I take groups to eat have begun selling home-printed cookbooks of family recipes to tourists who eat there. These serve as both remembrance and reenactment of the event – a culinary souvenir, if you will.

Brenda Gayle Plummer locates food tourism at the nexus of consumerism, popular culture, and relations among peoples, noting that it “relies substantially on the novel and the exotic – otherwise why not eat at home?” (2008, p. 24). Or in this case, why not eat in a restaurant instead of in an Amish woman’s home? Though the food is not exotic, the setting is. Vicki Ruiz has said that food constitutes an “ethnic borderland,” (2008, p. 5). Thus food may become a cultural meeting ground between cook and consumer. This is certainly true for groups who eat a meal in an Amish home, although in my experience, the food is less the vehicle for this than is the setting, and the ability to ask questions of an Amish woman herself, that provides outsiders a border-crossing setting.

Such meals are hard to learn of, since these women do not advertise (one way in which they bypass Pennsylvania State Department of Health regulations for restaurants), which adds to their novelty. Amish women serving home-cooked meals for tourists were the fastest growing sector of Amish women's entrepreneurial activities prior to a 2002 food poisoning scare.⁶⁷ (Meals in Amish homes still take place today, but are harder to

⁶⁷ In March, 2002, people on a group tour to Lancaster County became ill after they had visited a petting zoo and eaten in an Amish home. See Smart, 2002. There was considerable debate as to which had made them sick: the petting zoo or the Amish meal. Amish with whom I have discussed this believe that hygiene in Amish homes hosting tourists is actually higher than in many restaurants and in non-Amish homes, since no one wants to lose a profitable source of income for the rest of the Amish community; also, tourists themselves bear responsibility for hand-washing. Since then, however, organizations like the Mennonite Information Center no longer refer groups to Amish homes, fearing liability if another tour group gets sick.

arrange, since they are only available via word-of-mouth and thus receive fewer referrals.)

These meals are prized by tourists since food is presumed to convey ethnic meanings. For example, Hasia Diner has written how foodways shifted during the process of Americanization for immigrant groups; “becoming America” often meant altering diet and/or food practices. (Diner, 2001). In *We Are What We Eat: Ethnic Food and the Making of Americans* (1998), Donna Gabaccia argued that as ethnic foods became Americanized they often lost their original meaning as markers of ethnicity, while foods that retained their ethnic roots, continued as salient markers of ethnic identity. Writing from the Russian Mennonite tradition, Pamela Klaassen, has compared cooking to ethnic glue: “Cooking *varenike* and *borscht* – keeping alive the ethnic customs and the church – has been an important element in the invisible glue holding together Mennonite families and communities” (Klaassen, 1994, p. 242). Thus ethnic food can serve to reinforce ethnic identity.

But food can also become an element of ethnic tourism. As Barbara Shortridge put it, in her essay about two Midwestern towns’ ethnic food festivals, “Tasting another culture is part of the expected experience for those who want to be Swiss or Swedish for a day” (2003, p. 268). Tourists to Lancaster County may likewise seek some of this same ethnic identification through food: e.g., be Amish for a day; eat Amish cuisine. But there

The Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitors Bureau (PDCVB), Lancaster County’s coordinating body for tourist services, also advises their members *against* referring guests to Amish homes for meals, even though most tourists want this, on the grounds of a potential lawsuit should there be food poisoning. Some wonder if the PDCVB’s position on this issue is influenced by their members who run family-style/smorgasbord restaurants, who view meals in Amish homes as taking away business from their establishments. Other members argue that visitors who eat a meal in an Amish home also want to eat at a family-style/ smorgasbord restaurant during their visit, and will extend their stay to do so.

is less mystique about so-called Amish *food*, per se; it is simply old-fashioned, home cooking (at least if one's home was mainstream white middle-America divorced from particular ethnic roots). Exoticism comes not through the food; its appeal is in the *setting*. When eaten in an Amish woman's home, the food becomes de-familiarized, or as Long puts it, "the familiar can be exotic" (p. 2).

Edible Histories

In fact, it is hard to define what exactly *Amish food is*, with the possible exception of shoofly pie, the single food most associated with Amish cooking, often inaccurately, as it turns out. Reviewing the menu with Amish cooks before I bring groups, they always ask if we want shoofly pie, knowing that many tourists expect it. Although advertised as unique, Pennsylvania Dutch cuisine, in reality, Amish food is closer to what Daniel Sacks has called "white-bread Protestant" home-cooking (Sacks, 2000).⁶⁸

In general, Amish food itself has been largely separated from any particular German ethnic roots.⁶⁹ As cookbook author Phyllis Pellman Good has written of the Amish from the mid-1850s on, their "food tradition evolved that included an amalgam of dishes from a variety of sources: they brought their own cultural taste preferences from Switzerland and Germany; that affected what they copied and adapted from the diets of their English and Native American neighbors; the geography and climate in the area of the New World where they made their homes also shaped their eating. In those ways,

⁶⁸ One newspaper writer describes Amish food as "plain, simple and functional... Much of it is pure all-American and all of it is bland" (M. Parrish, 2000, p. 1N).

⁶⁹ Historically, the first Swiss-German Mennonite immigrants to Pennsylvania ate a lot of pork (even those less desirable parts of the animal, as used in scrapple), apple products, and pickled vegetables, especially sauerkraut. See Weaver, 1993. Shoofly pie, a molasses-based crumb pie, associated with the Amish, has no ethnic basis, but is perhaps the single most highly marketed food item supposedly related to Amish ethnicity.

however, they were little different from the other German folk who settled in William Penn's colony" (Good, 2001, p. 9). Any distinguishing characteristics of Amish food, according to Phyllis Pellman Good, grow out of "their productive relationship with their gardens and fields" preserved through home-canned fruit and produce, including "massive pickling operations," and by the frequency of desserts, which are eaten daily in most Amish homes" (pp. 9-10).

Perhaps the most distinguishing characteristic of Pennsylvania Dutch cooking today is *quantity*, as proved by the popularity of family-style and smorgasbord, all-you-can-eat restaurants in Lancaster County. The Pennsylvania Dutch Convention and Visitor's Bureau capitalized on this with their 2006 advertising campaign to attract tourists, "Eat yourself silly."

Pennsylvania Dutch home cooking is marketed with characteristics that imbue it with memory and family ties. Marketing slogans related to food – some used by the Amish themselves – tout the virtues of traditional, old-fashioned, good home-cooking from bygone days. Writers of the cookbook, *From Amish and Mennonite Kitchens*, praise it as food cooked "from scratch" that "belongs to some of the warmest human experiences – family reunions, going to Grandma's," (Good and Pellman, 1984, p. 7). While "not a part of the[ir] religion" (p. 8), Amish food is described as a means of showing love and affection, of extravagant celebration, in short, home-cooking that "feeds the body as well as the soul" (Good and Pellman, 1984, p. 11). Thus Amish food is marketed as being imbued with wholesome, desirable traits intended to heighten its appeal.

Amish women serving meals to tourists at home is a natural choice since food preparation is gendered female, as it is in many cultures. Psyche Williams-Forsen (2006) noted how African American women used cooking to create economic and cultural spaces. Pamela Klaassen (1994) argued that cooking was one of the few avenues of creativity and calling open to Mennonite women during an earlier era. While there is satisfaction on the part of Amish women in their ability to serve a hearty meal to a roomful of English guests, which serves to affirm their gender identity, in my conversations with them, food is as much a component of cultural affirmation as a common-sense vehicle for generating income.

Moreover, not all Amish women are good cooks. Linda Byler, in her book of collected writings taken from her weekly column in an Amish newspaper, routinely disparages her own cooking (Byler, 2008). Or as Mary told me, “You can’t do it all [if you’re running a business]. Usually women concentrate on cooking or sewing, one or the other, not both.” Cooking among the Amish is gendered female, but, as in Linda’s case, a job that may be delegated to one’s daughters. Eating out and buying processed foods are also becoming more common.

In an excerpt that illustrates the novelty of Amish men cooking, Sadie told me about her son who was in Florida (near Pinecraft, the Amish winter-resort neighborhood in Sarasota, a city along Florida’s Gulf Coast) and had taken a restaurant job as a cook:

He said, ‘but I’m a cook.’ I said, ‘oh, my goodness!’ He is a cook in some big Dutch restaurant down there. ... ‘Oh,’ I said, ‘you are going to come home, and you are going to cook everything up for me, right?’ (laughs).

I'm going to cook. He always did like to cook but he never did cook much because he worked and he came home at night and was hungry.

Sadie tempers her surprise at her son's employment with the statement that he always liked to cook, though circumstances prohibited it. When I asked her about this she remarked that there are some boys who like to help out in the kitchen and he was one.

Serving meals to tourists in their homes is a source of revenue that an Amish woman's family values enough for other adult family members to assist. When I brought a group of 25 to Sarah's house for a meal at noon on a weekday, instead of her four daughters, ages 5-15, who usually help her but were in school that day, Sarah was assisted by her mother-in-law and her husband, who had stayed home from his construction job to help his wife serve us the meal.

Nationally, the most well-known Amish cook is Elizabeth Coblenz, an Old Order Amish woman in Indiana, who writes a syndicated column carried in 200 newspapers across the country. Entitled, "The Amish Cook," the column includes a weekly recipe and associated story or reflections from Coblenz that Kevin Williams, the newspaper reporter who discovered her, claims he receives handwritten from her each week and dutifully types in and tests before publication (Coblenz & Williams, 2002).

Food tourism is a subset of Tourism Studies, more broadly. I now turn to that subject.

Tourism Studies

I have found tourism studies a useful framework on which to build my argument about the significance of Amish women's business enterprises, since by and large their

quilt stores, bake shops, and greenhouse businesses cater to tourists. Valene Smith has written extensively on the subject of tourism; two editions of her cross-cultural, edited collection, *Hosts and Guests: The Anthropology of Tourism*, which was recently co-edited with Maryann Brent and re-released as *Hosts and Guests Revisited: Tourism Issues of the 21st Century* (2001), is a landmark work. Building on Smith's definition of a tourist as "a temporarily leisured person who voluntarily visits a place away from home for the purpose of experiencing a change" (Smith, 1977 and 1989, p. 1), Smith and Brent define tourism as "leisure time + discretionary income + positive social sanctions" (p. 17). Thus tourism connotes intention, diversion, and the approval of one's reference group.⁷⁰

Nelson Graburn analyzes an additional motivation for travel. Tourists, he argues, "chose to visit a particular place because they believe that they will experience something positive there that they cannot easily experience at home;" they are looking for what he calls "rituals of reversal" – a liminal, sacred experience amid the mundane of normal life (2001, pp. 42-43). As we will see, many tourists seek this in Lancaster County's "Amish Country."

Smith and Brent note that tourism gets little respect, despite its influence.⁷¹ In fact, tourism is big business today, as the opening sentence states in *The Business of Tourism* (2007). According to Smith and Brent, "In 2000, tourism receipts were 10.8%

⁷⁰ Smith also speaks of the four H's of tourism: Habitat (physical landscape and tourist attractions), History (prior contact with outsiders), Heritage (museums and ethnic centers), Handicrafts (heritage crafts and artisans); assessing these allows an evaluation of tourism assets and liabilities (2001, p. 112).

⁷¹ As Valene Smith and Maryann Brent argue, "Because tourism is recreation and fun, the travel industry has not received the serious attention or support that it deserves" (Smith & Brent, 2001, p. 9).

of the world's Gross Domestic Product," they write, which makes tourism the largest global industry. It is also the world's largest employer, generating 1 in 11.2 jobs worldwide (p. 8, 9). In the U.S., tourism in 2008 generated 8.6 million jobs (U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis, 2008). In Pennsylvania, the fifth's most visited state in America, tourism ranks as the state's second biggest industry (agriculture is first); in 2000, tourism generated 563,440 jobs ("Pennsylvania Tourism at a Glance," 2000). And in Lancaster County, tourism accounted for \$1.5 billion in revenue (Faqs & Figures, PDCVB, www.padutchcountry.com/press_room/faqs_and_figures/statistics.asp).

Dean MacCannell, a forerunner in the field of tourism, published, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class* in 1976, re-issued in 1999. Much of his work is about tourist attraction and a desire to experience "otherness." Pointing in his book to what today we would call the social construction of tourism, MacCannell notes that "anything is potentially an attraction" (p. 192) depending on such criteria as representation and perceived authenticity. He writes, "It is important to recall that most things that are now attractions did not start out that way... It is the 'you have got to see this,' or 'taste this' or 'feel this' that is the originary moment in the touristic relation" (p. 203). For MacCannell, tourists actively construct their own experiences and, in doing so, expect authenticity and exercise agency.

By contrast, John Urry has written of the "tourist gaze," implying tourist passivity and presupposing a hegemony which I doubt exists; (tourists' gazes would be more accurate, since different tourists perceive things in different ways.)

Religious Tourism

A more focused lens for viewing Amish touristic experiences, however, is that of religious tourism, related to pilgrimage. Erik Cohen writes of religious tourism as an educational experience in which the traveler expects to be transformed in a particular way (2006, p. 79). Boris Vukonic, in *Tourism and Religion*, defines religious tourism as “a physical journey in search of truth, in search of what is sacred or holy” (1996, p. 80). Dallen and Olsen define a pilgrim as a tourist “who is motivated by spiritual or religious factors” (2006, p. 7). In fact, the lines between tourism and pilgrimage have often blurred; as Victor and Edith Turner wrote in a now-classic quote, “A tourist is half a pilgrim, if a pilgrim is half a tourist” (1978, p. 20). From my research and experience, I would argue that many tourists to Lancaster County come seeking or are drawn by some religious impulse, however ill-defined or unacknowledged. One indication of this among the Amish is repeat customers. All of the quilt owners I have talked to mentioned repeat business from regular customers (e.g. the retired couple from Staten Island, stopping in for eggs and a quilt, in the vignette at the start of chapter four). As Rebecca said, “I’ve met a lot of nice people and they do keep coming back.”

More and more Americans continue to identify as spiritual not religious (Clark, 1999), thus, “[m]odern society has expanded what it defines as sacred, bringing about the creation of new sites of sacrality, with travel to these sites being termed pilgrimage in its own right” (Morinis, 1992, p. 5). Because their activities and travel patterns differ little, Valene Smith (1992) argues in an article provocatively titled, “The quest in guest,” that

pilgrims and tourists should be seen on a continuum with a variety of sacred-secular combinations in between.

Pilgrimage involves both outer and inner journeys. Justine Digance speaks of the actual, outward journey and the inward quest for spiritual meaning: “Although the physical journey reminds pilgrims that they are engaging on a quest with the sacred, an essential element of any pilgrimage is also the inner journey that the pilgrim undergoes, namely the quest and search for meaning” (2006, p. 39). Religious quest can take many forms. On the several occasions when I have taken groups for meals in Amish homes, there is what I can only describe as a kind of reverential hush that seems to descend on folks seated around a dining table in an Amish home. There is often elbow prompting to each other: look at the genealogy hanging on the wall, isn’t that little boy in overalls precious? At least at first, eyes are wide, conversation is hushed. It has the feel of a religious experience.

A. Morinis, in his edited collection, *Sacred Journeys: The Anthropology of Pilgrimage*, describes pilgrimage as a sacred journey “undertaken by a person in quest of a place or a state that he or she believes to embody a valued ideal” (1992, p. 4). Michael Hall notes that pilgrimage is a “spiritual interior quest within the heart of those who feel something lacking in their lives – a sense of mystery and wonder, power, health, meaning and connection with others” (2006, p. 74). While a full survey of tourists to “Amish Country” is needed to assess what ideals they seek or voids to be filled, after working in the Lancaster County tourist milieu for twelve years in several different settings, I am struck by those tourists, many on return trips, with a sense of wistful longing that I can

only describe as spiritual. As I discussed in chapter one, the number of books in the “redemptive pilgrimage” genre about the Amish would seem to indicate support for this position. Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere (Graybill, 2007), the hugely popular bulk of Christian romance fiction about the Amish – by such writers as Beverley Lewis and Wanda Brunstetter – is also an indication of what I have termed religious “tourism of the imagination.” Lewis’ works routinely make the New York Times bestseller lists and Brunstetter’s books have topped the Christian Booksellers of America list, their popularity indicating the genre’s appeal to (would-be) religious tourists of the imagination.

Heritage Tourism and Timelessness

In addition to religious quest, Amish in Lancaster County also benefit from what has been termed, “heritage tourism,” which Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett calls a “value added industry” (1998, p. 151). Kirschenblatt-Gimblett argues that “[h]eritage produces something new in the present that has recourse to the past (p. 149). As Valene Smith describes it, “Heritage is not history. History records facts ... but heritage augments this information. Heritage makes history come alive,” (2001, p. 197). Amish cultural heritage grows out of a specific religious history and is grounded in genuine religious values such as community care, hard work, and Christian faith. For example, as Dottie, an Old Order woman, remembers:

For instance, like when my father died -- he died very suddenly of a heart attack -- and gee, you know, half an hour elapsed, and one [Old Order] neighbor was there with folding chairs, bringing chairs and setting 'em up

because they knew that persons would be coming very shortly and we probably wouldn't have enough of chairs for everybody that would be showing up. And people were there with food, and persons came and cooked the—, cooked a meal, and prepared a meal for the day of the funeral, and ah, just, you know, that kind of thing. It was there automatically.

As the preceding illustrates, a genuine cultural heritage encompasses Amish tourism, adding value. Indeed, as Fagence has written of Amish tourism in Lancaster County, “The tradition of independence, self-sufficiency, attention to quality, and integrity tends to increase the admiration of the tourists for the output of these communities and leads to heightened degrees of inquisitiveness” (2003, p. 68).

Heritage tourism, however, is composed not only of actual cultural values but also of constructed ones. As Myra Shackley writes, “Myths and legends are often used as the basis for a heritage tourism product and create powerful and romantic subliminal images. When reinforced by heritage themes, these are widely used to create images in advertising and may be combined into powerful marketing devices for tourism” (2001, p. 318). As Erik Cohen has noted, tourists are positioned between “a romanticized past and idealized future” (2006, p. 79) in the marketing of heritage tourism. For example, writing about tourism in Nottingham, England, related to the legend of Robin Hood, Shackley continues,

The visitor may be aware that an attraction is not real but be able to achieve a high quality of experience by compliance with the fantasy....

What matters to Nottinghamshire visitors is not whether Robin Hood was a real character but whether they can have a good time trying to find out.

And they can” (2001, p. 322).

Tourists to the Amish can likewise have a good time even when preconceived notions don't necessarily match reality.

A primary aspect of heritage tourism related to the Amish is timelessness, their association with an earlier, rural, pioneer period in American history. As Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has noted, heritage tourism “creates value through the notion of time travel;” that is, the notion of traveling back in time is an effective marketing strategy (1998, p. 151). In the case of the Amish, when I have shared the vignette at academic conferences of Lydia's cooking business, audiences always chuckle at the mention of the fax machine. I think this is because it contradicts our stereotypes about the Amish as timeless, partaking in a sense of cultural authenticity that precludes the use of anything modern, a widespread but false assumption. Probably the stereotype I find myself most often correcting is the idea that the Amish lack modern plumbing. While Beverly Lewis books have perpetuated this inaccurate stereotype, and the infrequent phone shanties near some Amish homes can sometimes look like out-houses,⁷² I have wondered if the frequency of this myth has something to do with the perception of old-fashioned timelessness that clings to the Amish. An imagined past of romanticized rurality can obscure what was in actuality a hardship, but is not current reality.

⁷² A few older Amish one-room schools in the county have retained outhouses, but not homes. Phone shanties are communal phone “booths” housed near Amish farms, usually with a phone answering machine. Incoming messages are passed along by Amish making outgoing calls. For more information on telephones among Old Orders, see Umble, 1996.

This perception of timelessness about the Amish is widespread. In his introduction to *The Amish Cook*, Kevin Williams describes the Amish as a “touchstone to a lost era” and “a living link between a simple time and today’s more chaotic world” (Coblentz, 2002, p. 2). He goes on to describe the “cluttered but comfortable kitchen” in the “land of the Amish, where little changes—ever. Creaking barns tucked into the folds of rolling wheat fields lend a timelessness to this land” (pp. 2-3). Examples of A recent Nexus-Lexis search turned up numerous additional examples; here is the opening paragraph from an article published in the Los Angeles Times:

Put down your cell phone, click off your Palm Pilot, and get out of the fast lane for a minute. It’s hard to imagine, but there are some people who day after day, year after year, choose a way of life so tranquil and simple that it’s 180 degrees away from the style most of us have become accustomed to. Take a look at the Amish.

While parts of this perception of timelessness may be valid – for example, life may go at a slower pace when horse-and-buggy is the primary, though not the only, means of transportation used – the myth is largely constructed. Amish businesswomen are not backward; they are up-to-date on the news through the local newspaper, they have modern kitchen appliances (powered by gas, compressed air or battery sources) and telephones in their shops (that are also used for personal calls; one interview with Mary

was interrupted twice by extended phone calls in Pennsylvania Dutch).⁷³ Evidence suggests that they also vote.⁷⁴

Moreover, Amish women are hard-working and perceive themselves as busy. At one home where our group ate in November, the husband and wife, together with several other “middle-age couples” (ages 40-50 with teenage children) had spent the morning preparing 30 chickens for a wedding meal the next day before we arrived for a meal at noon. When asked, Rachel, the cook, told us that she routinely gets up at 4:30 am and works until 9:30 or 10 pm at night in order “to get everything done.” Or consider Mary, who said, comparing herself to her husband (“He’s 56 *years* old, or will be, and—, they [men] just need more time to rest!”) that she is “always busy” in her shop or home or garden. Arlie Russell Hochschild discusses “speed-up, (2003, p. 198), or the accelerating pace of adult work time, from which Lancaster County Amish are not immune, despite tourist perceptions otherwise.

Nor are Lancaster County Amish removed from contemporary social issues, which we might expect of a culture perceived as timeless and traditional. During the last eight years the Amish community has dealt with drug use (Umble, 2008), sexual abuse (Espenshade, 2004), U.S. government labor laws (Shachtman, 2006), and murder at the

⁷³ As Don Kraybill is fond of saying, “The Amish are not Luddites.” I have heard Don say this in several contexts, most recently at a May 2008 talk to those of us involved in the Amish tourist industry at the Mennonite Information Center, Lancaster, Pa.

⁷⁴ Don Kraybill wrote about Amish voting patterns in the 2004 presidential election (Kraybill, 2007). A Republican Party organizer with Mennonite roots registered Amish voters and secured about 2,000 Amish votes for Bush in the 2004 election. Significantly, the Amish districts with the lowest percentage of farmers (or conversely, the highest number of business entrepreneurs) also had the highest rate of voter registration. In those districts, one-third of the voters were Amish women. These figures suggest to me that Amish businesswomen vote in significant numbers, and indicates their engagement with the modern world.

Nickel Mines school (Kraybill, Nolt, Zuercher, 2007). Still the perception of timeless simplicity persists.⁷⁵

In fact, amid an economic downturn, this perception of timelessness and simplicity associated with the Amish can become a marketing asset. As Chris Barrett, CEO of the local, Pennsylvania Dutch tourist bureau, put it, “People tend to go back to basics and have a yearning for the ‘simpler life’ in an economic downturn. We [Lancaster County] are a tailor-made destination for that sentiment” (2008, email communiqué). As I argue at other points in this study, Amish businesswomen benefit from the mystique of timelessness, a consumer cache that attaches to their quilts and other crafts (and here I am including food as a consumable craft).

The Perception of Authenticity

In addition to timelessness, another value sought by tourists to the Amish is authenticity. In her book, *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity*, Marilyn Halter notes that, “Whether as tourists or as long-term excavators of their [own] ethnic roots, people are pursuing experiences that ring true, feel untainted, and taste authentic”(2000, p.18). One aspect of authenticity that Lancaster “Amish Country” represents to outsiders is a site of family-friendly vacations. Family-friendly forms of authentic entertainment or “agri-tainment”⁷⁶ in Lancaster County, (many of which are

⁷⁵ A recent advertisement for Amish romance fiction books in a local tourist publication carried the banner headline, “Slow Down this Christmas, and Experience the Simplicity of the Amish” (Advertisement, *Amish Country News*, p. 19).

⁷⁶ An article in last year’s *Lancaster Farming* magazine (at www.lancasterfarming.com/node/884) noted, “October is also a big month for a small but growing segment of the farming community — farms that offer what is sometimes referred to as “agritainment.” It has become quite the cash cow. Whether it’s through the thrills and chills of a haunted barn, or the more family friendly corn maze or hayride, these attractions are growing at a brisk pace. It has given farmers a new way of making money and a reason to keep the

associated with the Amish but not run by them), include such things as buggy rides, petting zoos, pick-your-own fruit or vegetable harvests, and corn mazes (in which visitors pay to wander around in a maze cut out of a cornfield), as well as wholesome, home-cooked meals in local, Pennsylvania-Dutch-themed restaurants, many served “family style.” The local tourist bureau recently published statistics from visitors to its web site in summer 2008 which show that for the 25-44 age group, “Family Fun” is the top pick in what they are seeking from a visit to Lancaster; for visitors in all other age groups, from 18 to 65+, “Amish” was their top pick (“Travel Planning Survey,” PDCVB, 9-19-08). Tourists, including many repeat visitors, are seeking an authentic, family friendly experience related to the Amish.

Within the tourist community itself, authenticity is a point of discussion. Organizations desiring the “authentic” designation through the Cultural Heritage program of the Lancaster County Planning Commission must file paperwork about their educational component and accurate representation (of arts, history, or the Amish) to legitimize their inclusion in the program (LCPC, 2008). Thus, as Halter has written, “Not surprisingly, when market forces are at play, authenticity itself becomes a hot commodity” (p. 18), as it is in this case.

According to Lucy Long, authenticity is an important attribute sought in culinary tourism, as well. She writes, “[W]e tend to speak not only of the authenticity of a dish or a restaurant, but also of an authentic experience” (Long, 2003, p. xii). Meals in Amish

family farm. ... What was once a handful of small, cheap attractions has turned into a multi-million dollar business, challenged with liability issues, stress, and some people asking the question — are these really farms?” (Torres, 2007). See also Yoder, 2008, re: new liability protection being put forward in the PA Senate by Mike Brubaker, whose district includes parts of Lancaster County.

homes meet both criteria, though the experience can sometimes challenge notions of what is authentic. During a recent dinner in an Amish home, one of our group asked the cook, Rachel, what ingredients were in her shoofly pie. “Well, I don’t rightly know,” she said. “Molasses, sugar ... I don’t know what all else. My mother always makes my shoofly pies.” And she proceeded to pull out and show us her mother’s handwritten recipe card for shoofly pie, telling us that her family doesn’t eat it much. Afterwards the people in our group were astounded – an Amish woman who didn’t know how to make shoofly pie – probably the single fact that made the biggest impression on them during our entire afternoon spent learning about the Amish in Lancaster County, because it challenged their stereotypes about authentic Amish food.

Authenticity is also an important element of ethnographic display in tourism. Dean MacCannell wrote in his definitive work nearly 30 years ago that tourists are in search of the authentic, the real. This may be “staged authenticity;” (i.e. constructed), taking place in defined places, what MacCannell calls front-stage regions, though tourists really like to see the backstage areas, as well (1976/1999). Given that most Amish women’s business enterprises are located on the family homestead,⁷⁷ some entrepreneurs mentioned the difficulty in maintaining these public-private boundaries. Leah voiced her irritation at tourists who don’t respect her signs which state, “No Sunday sales.” In fact, as producer/director Dirk Eitzen noted in his film, “The Amish and Us,” what tourists really want to see when they visit Amish women’s shops or eat meals at their home is the inside of an Amish house – the kerosene lamp lighting, the bathroom, the wall hanging

⁷⁷ Ann Stoltzfus Taylor’s larger study of married Amish businesswomen supports this finding. According to her research 69 percent have their businesses at home (1995).

of scripture verses in needlepoint. A tourist in one group was pleased that in his transgressive stroll by the open barn door he'd been able to peek inside the "plush" [upholstered] seats inside the family's buggy. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett has described the desire for "access to the back region of other people's lives, the life world of others as our playground" (1998, p. 62), an important element of ethnographic display in tourism. So far, at least, despite ways in which Amish homes become exoticized as part of the product they are selling, this tourist desire for access is a price Amish proprietresses have been willing to pay. That is, most have not yet chosen to move their shops to locations away from their homes, and those who host groups have been doing so for a while and presumably know what to expect from tourists wanting to explore.

Authenticity is an important element in crafts as well as food. In general, Amish-made connotes authenticity. In a recent survey of visitors to the Amish community in northern Indiana, sociologist Tom Meyers found that tourists are in search of authentic artifacts. When asked whether the label, made by the Amish, was important to them, 65 percent of those surveyed said yes, and 59 percent were willing to pay more for Amish-made products (Myers, 2003, p. 112). In a similar vein, Karen Johnson Weiner has characterized a socially constructed attitude which she calls "Amishness." In this social construction, the Amish are presumed to be in contact with a primitive reality that supercedes the ephemeral, impersonal, and highly individualistic culture of mainstream North America. Weiner argues that the construction of Amishness provides modern Americans with a means of coping with uncertainty at a time of rapid social change by comparison with a particular people tied to the historic past and its norms (1992).

Amishness represents a means by which customers can appropriate a piece of idealized culture through purchasing Amish crafts. As reporter Kathleen Parrish wrote, following up on her article about the Amish quilt industry, “There is no doubt the Amish mystique adds to the allure of the Lancaster quilt” (www.mcall.com/news/specials/all-quilt-mcall-chat-042706,0,1495993.graffitiboard). Part of the attraction of Amish goods – apart from the reality that they are, in fact, mostly well-made and reasonably priced – is the *perception* of them as being so, and the appeal of buying something made by the hands of a hard-working people living a pure and simple lifestyle. After a summer working in an Amish information center, I was struck by how often tourists, after exposure to the Amish way of life, would comment with a kind of wistfulness, “How do they do it? I could never live like that” (meaning, most notably, without electricity.) This longing on the part of sophisticated moderns for an idealized, unattainable culture where peace and simplicity are seen to reign rubs off on Amish merchandise, giving it an appeal above and beyond the item itself. Thus, the signification is that you buy a little bit of Amish values when you buy an Amish craft. The crafts’ association with Amishness certifies their authenticity in tourists’ imaginations.

Product choices are tied to identity. Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears argue that the modern consumer is engaged in a cultural project of self-creation through product choices (1983, p. vii). In her book, *Shopping for Identity: The Marketing of Ethnicity*, Marilyn Halter cautions that “determinations of authenticity are extremely arbitrary, and which items are and are not considered genuine expressions of ethnic identity is based on highly subjective criteria” (p. 19). Thus, as Halter writes,

authenticity itself is constructed. Clearly Amish women's crafts from homemade meals to quilts are perceived as authentic, whose antithesis would seem to be commercialism.

Product Design

Such subjective criteria in determining what is authentic is seen in the area of product design. Increasingly, Amish women are producing new quilted products, from placemats to appliance covers to beach bags to vests, none of which are traditional among the Amish. In addition, Amish quilted crafts such as these are commonly pieced but not quilted (quilting is the tiny stitches that give the object texture though stitched designs). Thus, although the workmanship is done by hand, neither the design nor the function are traditional. Even quilts themselves are not authentic in the sense that new quilt patterns and new color combinations are constantly being invented and used. These crafts are bought as authentic expressions of Amish culture yet they are neither traditional, nor timeless, nor authentic in the sense of a genuine article coming from the community.

Among Amish women in my study, good business sense requires new product design and knowing your market. Some Amish businesswomen visit craft and fabric trade shows at New York City's Javits' Convention Center to get ideas. Greenhouse growers (see chapter six) know which flower colors are "in" this year. And Amish quilt shop owners are always on the lookout for new designs. As Sadie told me, using the example of a towel sewn into a quilted beach bag, "When quilters come up with something new, they know we're going to fall for it."

Material culture scholar Henry Glassie (1999) differentiates between "authentic crafts" which are untainted by demands of the marketplace, versus "degraded crafts"

which have been adopted for wider sale in a tourist market. Interestingly, Amish crafts are usually seen as authentic even when they break with tradition. While on a bus tour with university students, we visited a craft shop and were shown a quilted pillow that could unfold into a comforter; we were told it was “perfect to wrap up in at night in your dorm room.” While not a craft traditionally used by Amish in the past, this pillow/comforter nevertheless draws on traditional skills and is an interesting example of adapting to the market place, or an example of Glassie’s “degraded” commercialism, if you will.

Even further afield are the Amish-themed ornaments, computer mouse pads, painted spoons, dolls, and other small souvenirs sold in Amish quit and craft shops, including pre-printed, hand-colored Christmas cards and a Christmas star made out of the plastic strips used to hold together a six-pack of soda. Myra Shackley (2006) has written about the mass-produced, kitsch goods for sale at shrines and other sacred sites. She disputes the view of critics who have argued that authenticity precludes commercialization and commodification. If we accept that a visit to Amish County can be viewed as a kind of pilgrimage, and the quilted and other items for sale in Amish gift shops are produced in bulk, like commodities, Shackley’s observation which follows is apt. She writes,

It is a fashionable intellectual pose to disapprove of commoditization at sacred sites, but such disapproval is usually articulated by people who are unaware of the emotions stirred up in the pilgrim by the act of visiting such a site. ... Taste, after all, is in the eye of the purchaser not the

beholder ... [Moreover, there is] considerable disagreement within groups of pilgrims over the value of souvenirs. Some ignore and ridicule them, while others purchase a wide range of goods that for them have sacred associations because of the purchase location. What counts as authentic depends on the cultural lens of the seeker (2006, pp. 99-100).

Any Amish purchase, however *kitsch*, can serve as a reminder of spiritual association because it comes from an Amish store.⁷⁸

Danger of Difference

Finally, beyond the spiritual association of Amish crafts, the perception of authenticity adds value based on our assumptions about Amish craftswomen as different from us. Jane Desmond has noted that tourism relies on difference, but it “is double-edged. The simultaneous emphasis on and experience of difference ... help the tourist define him-or herself as part of a different collectivity from that on display” (1999, p. 265). Thus, difference creates the appeal of tourism while it emphasizes the gulf between cultures.

This very attraction on the part of tourists can lead to a kind of commodification of Amish women and their handiwork that threatens to reduce them to a caricature which undermines, rather than elicits, real cultural understanding. In fact, Michaela di Leonardo warns against Americans who seek “refuge in the timeless ... exotics at home or attempt to buy our salvation through consuming the primitive” (di Leonardo, 1999, p.2 and 33-34). It is a short step from the constructed view of “Amishness” to exemplifying di

⁷⁸ Colleen McDannell defines kitsch as “religious objects and devotional arts, with or without the derogatory sense” which, although mass produced and often sentimental are nevertheless worthy of study. (McDannell, 1995).

Leonardo's warning against seeing these Others as "primitive, traditional, folk, natural, and underdeveloped – those who will save us from modernity, whose primitiveness proves our worth and justifies our domination" (p. 82).

Di Leonardo warns especially of the trope of the "primitive woman" who, in the Western mind, represents "the selves we have lost, for good or ill, on the road to civilization" (p. 147). Part of the attraction of Amish women and the goods they market, then, according to di Leonardo, is the appeal of buying something handmade by a so-called primitive woman whose presence affirms our own cultural superiority. Thus the danger in difference is that we, as outsiders, may see in Amish values of simplicity and religiosity a foil for our own cultural conflicts about modernity, and project onto them a wider gulf than exists.

Towards the end of her book, Micaela di Leonardo argues for doing the "historically informed, politically engaged" intellectual work of cross-cultural understanding. Why? She answers, "Because we are heirs to a long, distinctively but not uniquely Western tradition of stigmatizing Others that need to be unraveled if we are to know ourselves properly" (p. 346). It is incumbent on us to do the work of cultural unraveling, as a means of understanding our own culture as well as that of the Amish.

Tourism is Good for Business

Di Leonardo's warning against commodification of "exotics at home" (which the Amish are) has relevance for the relations between Amish women and the tourists who patronize their shops. Amish women are on the border between Amish-and-outsider relations, since most of their clientele is tourists, a unique and inherently powerful role of

representation played by Amish women, as opposed to Amish men, whose businesses cater within the community or have more limited contact with outsiders (generally busloads do not visit their places of employment).

Indeed, as Fagence has written in an outdated and poorly written article⁷⁹ about Amish tourism in Lancaster County, “Scientific evidence of the impact of host-guest interactions is scarce. Most of what exists is largely anecdotal, and refers to general circumstances rather than directly to the impact of tourism” (2003, p. 69). In fact, Kraybill cites as evidence the fact that, by and large, Amish are not yet moving out of Lancaster County in significant numbers, which tourism (as well as lack of farmland) could drive them to do (Kraybill, 2004).

Unlike Hall Rothman, who argues that tourism is “a devil’s bargain” in which communities “welcome tourism as an economic boon, only to find that it irrevocably changes them in unanticipated and uncontrollable ways” (1998, p. 10), in my research, I have found that the women in my study are unequivocally glad for tourism. After all, it is their livelihood. Without exception, the Amish businesswomen described themselves to me as people-oriented, who valued their interactions with tourists.⁸⁰ For example, Mary said, “It’s interesting to deal with the public. I get to meet some people from all over the world.” And Sadie told me, “I love the tourists who come to visit. ... They are interested in quilts and I love talking about it with them.”

⁷⁹ Two of his points are simply factual errors, either based on inaccurate or outdated fieldwork: that if credit cards are used, the business is not Amish, and that if Amish symbolism is used, they’re not Amish (p. 74). Both are untrue today in the many Amish shops that I have visited.

⁸⁰ Quotes from my pool of informants included the following: “You have to be a people person or you couldn’t make it.” “I love people.” “I’m a people person.” “You have to enjoy people to do this.”

However, in the quote that follows, Sadie admitted that, among the Amish, “some may and some may not” welcome tourism. A student in a college group visiting her shop noted that “there are all these tourists here!” and wondered if the Amish community felt bombarded by them. The student asked Sadie, “You seem to really enjoy the public coming to see you; do you think that is typical of the Amish?” Sadie’s answer follows:

That’s a good question, but you know, some may and some may not. Just for example, I have a very good friend of mine who also has a quilt shop along Rt. 340, and for the first six or seven years, when they were married, her dad built them a new house right along Rt. 340, between Intercourse and Bird-in-Hand. And they lived along Rt. 340 for all those years, and she said, “Oh, Rt. 340 was always so crowded of people, and all these tourists, why don’t they go home, you know, leave me have privacy here in my little place.”

And then in the meantime, they built another house on Irishtown Road, which was more in the country instead of along the main highway, and she started her own quilt shop along Rt. 340, close to where they lived in the first few years they were married. “Now,” she said, “I have this business, and just the more tourists that come into my shop the happier I am.”

So I think if you have a business, and if you were having a business that is depended upon *tourists*, you don’t mind it. But I think if you don’t have anything to do with the tourists, and you live along these

busy roads, some of those people tend to feel, you know, why don't we move out? It is just a little bit too busy around here. ... not just with tourists, but it's like, the farmland and buildings going up, and even the big factories buying farmland, being developed, etc. that, you know, the land here in Lancaster County is just outrageously high. So some of these [Amish] people that might get tired, of course, might move out, because they know they could sell their home for, like, a half million [probably closer to a million]. So that is just like it is living in Lancaster County, right?!

Sadie's answer, as a quilt shop owner who makes a significant living from tourism herself, is instructive; she seems more comfortable putting her own feelings into the mouth of an anonymous good friend, ("The more tourists that come into my shop, the happier I am"), while acknowledging that not all Amish feel the same way, if tourism is not their livelihood.⁸¹

Commodification and Those Commodified

Consumption is a key element of tourism, that important livelihood. Writing about U.S. consumer culture, Richard Wightman Fox and T.J. Jackson Lears have argued that Americans "have been invited to seek commodities as keys to personal welfare, and even to conceive of their own selves as commodities" (1983, p. vii). As discussed earlier, commodities associated with the Amish signify the social construction of Amishness, and

⁸¹ In a much-earlier Amish research project some years ago, an older Amish woman who lived along a heavily-trafficked, tourist road, told me, "Some of those tourists make you feel like an animal in a zoo." However, none of the businesswomen in my current study voiced negative sentiments about tourism.

there is a danger in commodifying Amish women who make and sell those crafts as alien, primitive, “exotics at home,” to quote di Leonardo.

Richard Kurin, who directed the Smithsonian’s Center for Folklife, discusses in his book, *Reflections of a Culture Broker*, the dimensions of cultural representation. He writes, “Culture is increasingly commodified, packaged, and marketed for use in a rapidly expanding culture industry. ... At issue is who does the representing to whom, who makes money from it, and at what cost.” And he adds a caveat: “despite what scholars, as purists, might like, local folks need money” (1997, pp. 272, 274).

Recognizing the need for tourist dollars, Kurin’s concern is that locals have as much control and ownership as possible over the representation of their culture. Thus, the small shops and produce stands run by Amish women are preferable to the many non-Amish tourist enterprises capitalizing on the mystique of Amishness by selling Amish-made products from hex signs (none of which the Amish use) to key-chains, with Amish figures dangling on them, made in China. Amish entrepreneurs are running the businesses in which they have a big degree of control over the image that they market to tourists. The Amish women entrepreneurs I interviewed are less concerned with commodification and more concerned with down-to-earth values such as financial gain. They will not sacrifice their integrity in the largely positive stereotypes that they benefit from, but they may exploit them.

But what of the ways in which the Amish women in my study may themselves commodify others?

One of the more interesting debates in a discussion of Amish commodification is a series of four articles (later condensed into one article for the Lancaster newspaper) that ran in the Allentown *Morning Call* newspaper, 68 miles north of Lancaster, in April 2006. In it, the authors documented Southeast Asian women involved in Amish quilt-making in Lancaster County and in Thailand.⁸² The article confirmed that Hmong women based in Lancaster are doing appliqué on Amish quilts: “While the Hmong sew most of the appliqué that grace quilts, few acknowledge it. Sellers advertise quilts as Amish made no matter how many Asian hands have taken part in their crafting” (Parrish, 2006). The article cited Lamao Moua, a Hmong quilter: “Ninety-nine percent of the appliqué is done by Hmong” (Parrish, 2006).

The Hmong community in Lancaster County now numbers some 450 people, former refugee families sponsored by Mennonite churches during the 1970s and their descendants.⁸³ The Hmong were in Lancaster and known to Amish and Mennonites when the demand grew for appliqué, as opposed to patchwork, quilts in the early 1980s. Amish enlisted the Hmong to appliqué because they were skilled at this technique from their traditional reverse-appliqué style of needlework (Gibson, 2004).

Quoting Peter Seibert, president of the Heritage Centre of Lancaster County, a landmark local Pennsylvania German museum, reporter Kathleen Parrish wrote: “The Amish and Mennonites are as guilty as the Hmong, Seibert contends. For years, shop

⁸² The newspaper reporters also visited communities in Thailand where Thai families were quilting Amish-style quilts for sale in the United States. They were unable to trace the specific connection.

⁸³ Data provided by Don Sensenig, former staff person with Mennonite Central Committee’s Southeast Asian refugee resettlement program, who worked with Hmong and Vietnamese families in Lancaster in the 1970s and today provides translation services for them, as needed. Sensenig also confirms the fact that some Hmong women work on Amish quilts. Private conversations with Sensenig, p. 2008.

owners have hidden the participation of their Hmong piece workers, allowing tourists to believe the quilts offered for sale in the shops are made exclusively by Pennsylvania German hands” (Parrish, 2006).

This topic also raises fascinating questions about what is and is not authentic. Responding to a question posted online in the aftermath of the furor over the articles, “From an authenticity standpoint, what would the value be of an American-made quilt versus a Hmong or non-American quilt,” quilt expert Peter Holstein had this to say:

I can't really answer that since it involves new quilts and an existing marketplace. My guess is that "authenticity" is in the mind of the beholder. Are quilts made by the Hmong in the U.S. not American quilts? I think the value is in the eye of the beholder, and the workmanship, at least for me (www.mcall.com/news/specials/all-holstein-chat-transcript,0,5821792.story?page=2).

Siebert, quoted in the article as referring to hidden Hmong work on Amish quilts as “fraud,” was quoted in a later interview: “The County of Lancaster has been attempting to create standards for recognizing authentic products. The issue bogs down on what is authentic. Even quilting is not a traditional Pa. German craft but rather was learned from the English. ... I would buy a Hmong quilt as a beautiful quilt but not as one that is being sold as made by ‘Lizzie Lapp’” (www.mcall.com/news/specials/all-quilt-seibert-transcript,0,4764037.story).

Since the newspaper publicity, the matter of Hmong labor on quilts has been a terribly sensitive subject to research. When I began to broach the subject with one Amish

shop owner, inquiring whether she sold appliqué as well as patchwork quilts, and asking her, “Who makes...? a look of annoyance crossed her face, she immediately excused herself and went back to her office, only emerging later to ring out the last customers in our group. Another shop owner would only tell me, “They’re made by local women. Some Mennonite, some Amish, but all local.” Which could include Hmong.

Mary, the quilt shop owner I know best, admitted, “You know we don’t like to talk about it.” “Why?” I asked her. “Because it makes us loo—, it makes us *feel* bad. ... And really, we don’t know anymore.” Because of the volume of quilts she receives, Mary and many other quilt shop owners buy finished quilts on consignment, thus they truly may not know who the subcontractors were that worked on other stages of the quilt, such as appliqué.

Being a Cultural Broker

Commodification is partly determined by tourist expectation, partly by the Amish being visited (and the Hmong who may quilt for them)—who may (or may not) have some control over their own representation—and partly by tour guides, or what Kurin calls “cultural brokers.” Others have also written of this phenomenon. Smith discusses culture brokers as cross-cultural intermediaries or “go-betweens” who negotiate between host supply and guest demand (2002, p. 276).⁸⁴ In the case of the Amish, Fagance discusses outsiders who want to preserve the Amish and serve as a tourism buffer (2001, p. 276); elsewhere he speaks of such people as “hosts and custodians of tourism resources” (Fagance, 2003, p. 74). Kidder, in *The Amish and the State*, describes a

⁸⁴ Such persons may also control access: “The culture brokers are primary decision-makers, selectively identifying segments of the culture content to be shared with outsiders, and may also serve as guides” (Smith, p. 277).

cushion of “sympathetic outsiders” designed to safeguard the Amish from threats in the outside world (2003). Kraybill and Niemeyer (1993) refer to such people as “social gatekeepers” who restrict or facilitate entrée to the Amish community. As Dean MacCannell has written, reflecting on his definitive early work, “The central organizing metaphor of the book, ‘we are all tourists,’ still stands. But it is also true that, on occasion ... we are [all] tour guides” (MacCannell, 1989, p. 191). Different framings, these authors are all reflecting on the issue of outsiders’ representation of insiders’ culture.

My own brush with being a cultural broker came just hours after the first sirens went past the site of my own organization, the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society, en route to the Amish schoolhouse shootings in Nickel Mines, in October of 2006. Even before we had accurate information about what had actually occurred, my organization began receiving calls from news media as far away as Japan and Australia.

According to David Weaver Zuercher, Mennonites have often been cast in, or put themselves in, the role of endeavoring to provide the public with what they considered more accurate pictures of Amish life (Zuercher, 2000, p. 88). That was true in this case. As a Mennonite historical society, part of our job is public education. As I saw it, our role was to contextualize these horrific events in Anabaptist history and provide general information about the Amish that it stirred up. What the news media wanted from us, however, was access to the Amish, most of who were refusing public comment. I and my staff found ourselves in the unenviable position of *denying* access as our way of best respecting the wishes of the Amish for privacy.

We did respond to general requests for information about Amish schools, of which there were many, and explained to people the connection between a 17th century book of martyr stories widely read by the Amish, *The Martyrs' Mirror*, and the Amish understanding of these current events as contemporary martyrdom, about which there were relatively few requests for information. We passed on word about where to send donations and condolences, as it became available. Perhaps the biggest service we provided was to disseminate information from the Nickel Mines Accountability Committee, composed of Amish and English who had agreed to serve as spokesmen, once statements from them became available.

My organization and members of my staff were so concerned that we not be seen as capitalizing on tragedy that we probably refused requests to speak with the media when we could have contributed to the conversation in useful ways. Now, years after the events, I find myself wondering if we should have done more.

A month after the shootings, we wrote an article in our newsletter compiling entries from Amish letter-writers, as published in Amish newspapers, about the events, in their own words. In December we held an educational meeting about Amish funeral practices by the undertaker who had handled arrangements for the Nickel Mines shooter. The following spring we held a public lecture on Amish forgiveness. That summer we hosted book signings by Mennonite authors of books reflecting on the tragedy. We sponsored another public lecture in the fall about lessons learned from the tragedy by Mennonites with ties to the events. And on the one-year anniversary we held a memorial

concert, not for the Amish but for the local community, recognizing that an event like this touched all of us.

As a scholar, the events affected my research peripherally. One businesswoman in my study still owned property near the scene of the events; she found it jarring to see the photographs of the Amish funeral procession with her store in the background. Rachel, whom I had interviewed briefly, was an aunt of one of the martyred girls; I spoke with her again several months after the tragedy, and her statement about her sister-in-law's grief and the Amish community's forgiveness was telling: "I'm not sure you ever completely get over a thing like that, but it helps to know we made a difference."

In an odd way, being close to the community and knowing the Amish wish to be left alone in the best of times, let alone in their grief, coupled with not wanting to be identified with the many information-hungry tourists drawn to the scene in the months following, made me reluctant to try to establish contacts with families directly effected by the tragedy. Perhaps this was an area where being a partial member held me back. In a recent book, *Amish and the Media*, the authors write that "scholars are mediators, too...we need to make decisions about how to gather information and what to do with the information we have. We need to decide which stories to tell and how to tell them" (Umble and Weaver-Zercher, 2008, pp. 246-7). And perhaps also, which stories not to tell.

In an essay from some years ago, Robert Kidder described "The Role of Outsiders" in relation to the Amish. He argued that the Amish maintain "an intricate web of relationships" with neighbors, Mennonites, ex-members, state officials, and

members of the tourism industry, among others, that serves as a “protective buffer” (Kidder, 1985, pp. 214). That was certainly true around the Nickel Mines events, as educational organizations like ours saw ourselves as protectors of Amish privacy. (In addition to the outsiders mentioned above in Kidder’s article, in the case of the Nickel Mines shootings, strong bonds were formed between first-responders – police, emergency medical personnel, and members of the local fire company – that continue to this day.)

Perhaps the most influential example of being a cultural broker and public mediator in Amish history was that of John Hostetler. Raised in an Old Order Amish home, Hostetler spoke fluent Pennsylvania German. After his family left the Amish, he sought higher education, eventually receiving his PhD in the academy. Hostetler had a respected career as professor of sociology and anthropology at Temple University, yet retained ties to the Amish community. Hostetler is described variously in the book *Writing the Amish: The Worlds of John A. Hostetler* (edited by David Weaver-Zercher, Penn State Press, 2005) as “a cultural outsider [to the academy] in spirit and temperament” (p. 37), a “gatekeeper” granting or restricting Amish access with respect to the public and to fellow scholars (p. 126), “an Amish-modern”(p. 132), the “leading public advocate” of the Amish (p. 133), and “a thoroughly modern man. Yet in his mind he was still Amish (p. 115).

Hostetler sought to represent Amish interests. He testified on the nature of Amish life before the Supreme Court in the *Wisconsin v. Yoder* case in 1972; his testimony, among others, won the right for Amish parents to send their children to private, Amish-run schools through grade eight only, a case that continues to serve as a benchmark for

religious liberty involving ethno-religious minorities.⁸⁵ Hostetler's campaign *against* the making of the movie, *Witness*, which he believed would exploit the Amish, received a fair bit of counter-criticism, and challenged the notion that he alone best represented Amish interests (Weaver-Zercher, 2005).

Hostetler was committed to taking his subjects seriously and telling the truth about the Amish, although in a positive light:

From the beginning of his ethnographic work among the Amish, Hostetler knew what all ethnographers know: offending his hosts would spell the end of his work. He continued to work hard to foster and maintain good relations with Amish people, even those he didn't know personally. ...

Hostetler's ethnographic work nurtured in him a respect for Amish life that reverberated through his writings. As a result, many Amish persons came to see him as a friend of the Amish people, one who knew their foibles but opted to accentuate the positive (Weaver-Zercher, 2005, p. 124).

The one lingering question I am left with is whether his ties to the Amish kept him from naming negative aspects. Cultural brokers are usually sympathetic to the community they are seeking to represent, but at what point does that interfere with fairly representing the community, faults and all? In writing this dissertation I have struggled to render an honest representation alongside a desire that my readers admire the group under study. I have noticed my tendency to want to mute negative elements (the patriarchal language; the fact that many Amish still grow

⁸⁵ For more details and discussion of this court case, see *The Amish and the State*, 2nd ed., 2003.

tobacco, freely use Styrofoam cups, and eat processed highly foods; the terminology of children as “hired help.”) To the extent that I am aware of this tendency, I have tried, in fairness, to include those less admirable elements. I trust I have succeeded.

CHAPTER SIX: Growing Plants with Dollars and Sense

Claire Moses and Heidi Hartmann have written that gender is one of the central dimensions along which power is structured (Moses and Hartmann, 1995). Changes in gender roles, as we see in Amish women running their own businesses, are significant to examine for the shifts in influence that these changes entail. The following vignette is taken from my fieldwork with Old Order Amish and Mennonite women who own and run greenhouses.

Vignette: Greenhouse Growers

When we pull up in the car at a quarter to nine for the meeting of greenhouse growers in rural Lancaster County, PA⁸⁶, the farmyard is already full of horse-and-buggies and black bicycles, ridden by Old Order Mennonites for short distances. A group of about 30 Amish and Mennonite men and women stand outside, chatting in same-sex groups. Styrofoam coffee cups in hand, their somber-colored clothing whips in the breeze, since it is chilly on this brisk morning in early March. Some have no doubt been up for hours, working hard in their greenhouses or doing farm chores before they came to this gathering.

⁸⁶ Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, has a population of 498,465, of whom 54,672, or 9 percent, live in Lancaster City, according to recent Census statistics (US Bureau of the Census, 2007). The population for which Lancaster County is best known, the Amish, are concentrated in rural areas east and north of the city, where they live alongside non-Amish farmers and rural dwellers. Like Carol Coburn's German Lutheran community in the Midwest, the Amish are a community that defines itself less by geographic boundaries and more by ethnic and religious identity (Coburn, 1992). Today only 30 percent of the Amish earn their living from farming (Kraybill, 2008, p. 47), thus we do well to remember that, in the words of Anne B.W. Effland, rural does not always equal agriculture (Effland, 2000).

Seeing the arrival of my friend, Jean⁸⁷, a group of Old Order women cluster around her, some with potted plants in hand. Known as “the bug lady” for her expertise on greenhouse pests and how to treat them, Jean, an agricultural extension worker, closely examines a drooping shamrock plant that a woman has brought, trying to diagnose the problem with her *un*-lucky four-leaf clover in time to salvage the woman’s crop of clovers for upcoming St. Patrick’s Day sales.

“I have something for you,” says another Plain woman to Jean with a smile, holding out a zip-locked, plastic bag with tiny white bugs clinging to some brown, diseased-looking leaves. Half a dozen Old Order women examine the infestation of thrips (a common pest) on these leaves, their black-bonneted heads inclined around the baggie, while Jean knowledgably offers advice.

Specializing in flowering plants, these greenhouse growers are primarily female, though many have come with their husbands, thus maintaining the appearance of patriarchy. While many of the greenhouses are registered in the name of both wife and husband, some do carry only the woman’s name (e.g. Barbara Stoltzfoos, Katie Beiler). In either case, based on my fieldwork, it is women who are in charge. Face-to-face meetings like the one I am attending are important among these women, since Old Order culture is primarily an oral culture. (This point is driven home by the fact that Pennsylvania Dutch, their mother tongue and the one in which they converse with each

⁸⁷ In this chapter I have used pseudonyms to protect the privacy of the modern participants in my study, as well as those who are Old Order.

other, is *solely* an oral language among the Old Order Amish and Mennonite groups; written communication is in English.)⁸⁸

Soon we gather on folding chairs inside a barely heated, clean-swept barn, while Jean and her colleagues from the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture present tips on greenhouse growing and on pest prevention, including through natural methods, such as Integrated Pest Management (in which good bugs are introduced to eat bad bugs, which works if you catch the problem before your greenhouse is infested), although chemical pesticides are more commonly used by these growers.

In the meeting, Alex, one of the state agricultural agents, encourages the group to consider raising their prices to cover increased costs of shipping and fuel, which are 10% higher this year. “Your retail customers can understand price increases because they’re feeling them in other areas,” he advises. Much of the discussion is nuts-and-bolts advice on customer sales and marketing, supply and demand. How can they provide the flowers that their buyers want? As Alex tells the group, “Over the last ten to twelve years you folks are getting really good at growing plants. Now it comes down to finances: how do you survive and keep your children in it? Can you change your practices to ensure that?” He encourages them to know their customers’ tastes and preferred colors in flowering plants (which this season, we learn, are hot pink and orange earth tones).

Social Capital

What Jean seems to understand, though Alex may not, is that in some cases, Old Order growers are operating by different business principles than solely profit. For

⁸⁸ I owe my understanding of the cultural practice and significance of the Pennsylvania Dutch language to K. Varden Leasa and Keith “Butch” Reigart, trained linguists and past or present teachers for the Lancaster Mennonite Historical Society of classes in Pa. Dutch (really *Deutsch* or German, a low-German dialect).

example, one retail grower bought flats of seedlings wholesale from another grower the second year in a row, even though the plants were of inferior quality the year before, because “I knew the family needed the work.” This spirit of mutual aid is a prevailing Old Order characteristic.

Likewise, a spirit of mentoring and cooperation exists among women greenhouse owners. One Amish woman tells me, “Whenever I have a question, I just go ask Sarah,” a more experienced grower who lives up the road. When her greenhouse doesn’t have what a customer wants, another woman sends them to a nearby grower, her competitor. Additionally, greenhouse growers frequently buy stock from each other to round out their selection.

These traits of mutual sharing and assistance that benefit Old Order Mennonite and Amish women growers can be viewed as examples of “social capital,” a term popularized by Robert Putnam in his widely read book, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (2000), and further refined in his co-authored book, *Better Together: Restoring the American Community* (Putnam & Feldstein, 2003). Social capital refers to connections among individuals – “social networks, norms of reciprocity, mutual assistance and trustworthiness” – in short, “a powerful tool” (Putnam and Feldstein, 2003, p. 2). In the case of Old Order growers, strong social networks can help an individual advance her business through personal connections and emotional support, as well as through business advice and mentoring. Putnam and Feldstein discuss two kinds of social capital. *Bonding* social capital links homogenous, like-minded folk, functioning as a “sociological Super Glue” (p. 2). In the case of women growers, it

bonds them to each other and offers them woman-to-woman sources of encouragement and advice. *Bridging* social capital, according to Putnam and Feldstein, links different kinds of people, functioning as a “sociological WD-40” (p. 2) that smoothes relations, for example, connecting Amish growers and the tourist customers who buy their plants and flowers.

In a provocative work seeking to extend this analysis, Amy Caiazza and Robert Putnam (2005) set out to address the question, how might *gender* matter to social capital? In practical ways, Caiazza and Putnam found that women are more likely to know their neighbors, be active members of churches, and be skilled at making connections and building relationships. These are gendered aspects of social capital that aid Old Order women’s success in business. In many ways Caiazza and Putnam’s most significant finding is the strong relationship they found between high levels of social capital and women’s economic status and well being. According to their analysis of data from the Institute for Women’s Policy Research “Status of Women in the States” indexes, “Social capital is the most important variable significantly related to women’s health and well being. ... In a consistent way, higher levels of social capital are associated with women’s better status” (p. 80).⁸⁹ Old Order women experience success in business, in part, because of social capital networks based on kinship, friendship and church ties. Caiazza

⁸⁹ Caiazza and Putnam are primarily concerned from a policy perspective. According to their research, women “are more sympathetic to policies that benefit disadvantaged populations, *including themselves*” (p. 71, emphasis added). Moreover, they note: “Women’s values may shape women’s proclivity to build relationships with others, determine who those ‘others’ might be, and influence their motivations for becoming involved” (p. 72).

and Putnam's research suggests that, by extension, women like these greenhouse growers may also experience higher levels of status and well-being.

Anthropologist Carol Stack, writing in the book, *All Our Kin*, showed how exchange transactions (gift-giving, shared childcare, doing favors for one another) among low-income, urban Black women developed recognized kinship networks, that is, those "people who are socially recognized as having reciprocal responsibilities" to assist you, like family (p. 55). In her second book, *Call to Home*, Stack demonstrated how educated Black women returned to their home communities and put to use their experience with structures and strategies learned up North that enabled them to create networks and coalitions for organizing in the South (p. 155). In these ways Stack describes social capital as the networks and resources among one's kin or community upon which one can rely for camaraderie, assistance, mentoring and support.

In a similar way, Old Order greenhouse growers and the other Amish business-women in this study benefit from networks of mutual assistance and support. For example, quilting parties, as well as "sisters' days" or work frolics, when Amish women gather to share large cooking, cleaning, or canning chores, (the female equivalent to Amish barn raisings), illustrate community resources of mutual assistance and norms of trust and cooperation that carry over into women's business ventures. Strong social ties help an individual advance her business through personal connections and emotional support, as well as through business advice and mentoring. Even more tangible benefits of social capital may include start-up seed money from family, business loans from within the Amish community, and more experienced entrepreneurs with whom to consult

on business matters from inventory to marketing. Amish enculturation – including such community values as hard work, financial responsibility, and thriftiness – is also a beneficial element of social capital on which Old Order businesswomen draw.

Examples of business cooperation rather than competition abound in my larger study. When organizing a group meal in an Amish home, one Old Order woman, who couldn't schedule our group on our preferred date, referred me to another woman in her church district who had a competing business. Another cook, who could only accommodate a group of 25 for a meal, wanted us to consider splitting up our busload with half at her farm and half a mile up the road at her sister-in-law's farm, who was "just getting started but she does a real good job." Cooperation may also extend to subcontracting business to other women who need it, an example which motivated Sadie to accept a quilt with a flaw which she would later donate to a local auction. Competition is accepted philosophically. Mentioning the many more Amish quilt shops now than 20 years ago, when she opened her shop, which have resulted in declining sales for her, Mary noted matter-of-factly that "Everyone needs to make a living," and mused that if she wanted more business she could advertise. This acceptance, even encouragement, of sharing the work around, may illustrate the desire to keep a business of manageable size, a value that Ann Stoltzfus Taylor noted in her 1995 study of 26 married Amish women entrepreneurs,⁹⁰ but also illustrates the priority of relationships over competitive sales within the Old Order community, a tangible aspect of social capital.

⁹⁰ Ann Stoltzfus Taylor cited the following strategies used by women in her study to limit growth and keep the business of manageable size: discontinuing advertising, taking down business signs, discontinuing inventory items, or subdividing the business when it got too big for the entrepreneur to comfortably manage

“It’s mostly the women in charge.”

Returning to my meeting of Old Order women growers, I am struck by their common sense attitude toward plants. In the question-and-answer session that follows the state agricultural workers’ presentation, I find the women growers well-informed. “That’s also a fungicide, isn’t it?” clarifies an Old Order woman, at one point. When Alex shows a damaged plant that a grower has brought and asks for the diagnoses, a woman responds, “A nutritional problem?” and Alex confirms that the plant is probably lacking calcium.

Jean and her colleagues also show photos from the state agricultural research farm and demonstration garden in western Lancaster County, including some from last summer’s open house and field day. “I’m in that photo,” says one Amish woman excitedly. “That’s my back in the picture.”⁹¹

While many of these women are here with their husbands, I’m told by George, another of the agricultural extension workers, that when he visits the greenhouses, “it’s mostly the women in charge.” As Jean summarizes, “Women are the greenhouse people.” Among younger couples, in some cases the husband has joined his wife in the business. One Amish man laughs when I ask him who oversees the greenhouse, points at his wife, and tells me: “She’s the boss; I work for her.”

alone (p. 54). Taylor noted that these deliberate strategies kept the business small enough for a married woman to manage alongside her other domestic responsibilities. See Taylor, 1995.

⁹¹ While Amish opposition to photographs is a well-known truism, in my experience the issue is not to be seen as posing for photographs. As one Amish woman told me, “Most Lancaster Amish have some family photos tucked away in a drawer.”

After the presentation, our group walks through an adjacent greenhouse, large enough to accommodate our entire group of 30. Jean, always on the lookout, finds microscopic spider mites on some ornamental sweet potato vines. I murmur sympathetically to the woman in charge, “I guess with greenhouses, there’s always something.”

“Well,” says the Amish woman philosophically, “Greenhouses are easier than my vegetable garden. In here the plants are protected; wind or hail can’t hurt them and you can water or spray when you need to.”

In the afternoon, I accompany Jean to a similar meeting in a greenhouse near the town of New Holland, ten miles east of Lancaster. I compliment Anna, the Amish women hosting us, on her greenhouse, which is absolutely spotless, not something you’d expect when working with dirt. “Well, you have to keep it clean of weeds, even under the bedding platforms, or the weeds can spread disease,” she tells me, exactly the point that the agricultural extension agent had made that morning to a different group of growers. “But,” she smiles, “I did clean up a little extra when I knew the group was coming.” She has also provided homemade cookies for refreshments, something George, who organizes these meetings, always tells the hostess is not necessary, but the Old Order women routinely provide.

Ruth, one of the more experienced Amish women growers, who has been doing greenhouse wholesale for 20 years, tells me, “Nearly everyone around here has a greenhouse.” (Here, in this case, means the Amish settlement between New Holland and Leola.) Later she jokes with George, “Hey, you should renovate the water tower in New

Holland [the tallest point in town], so you can watch the greenhouses springing up below!”

This humor reveals a sensitive issue, Jean explains later. Everyone selling plants is supposed to be registered with the state and pay a pay \$40 annual fee. When new greenhouses are spotted, they are required to register. Part of Jean’s job is to visit greenhouse growers, convince them that they need to comply, and to inspect their stock annually. Registration with the state allows greenhouses to be inspected periodically to ensure proper greenhouse protocol and safe use of pesticides.⁹² In return, growers are provided free advice and invited to informational sessions like today. Jean has been successful at relationship-building with greenhouse growers because usually she is dealing woman to woman. As a female agricultural agent, she is less threatening in getting them to register, although when she mentions the \$40 state registration fee, she is often told, “Let me call my husband.” (In this instance, patriarchy, or the appearance of patriarchy, is maintained.) I wonder if today’s good turnout is part of a desire to “get their money’s worth,” a Pennsylvania German truism for thriftiness, although it also surely reflects the fact that Jean is on genuinely good terms with her clients.

⁹² Jean encourages growers to know which pesticide to use when, and not to spray as prevention but only when there is a problem. She tries to educate growers about safe pesticide use, and help them understand why it’s important. “Chemicals from the field should not be used in the green house. That would be illegal but not unusual,” she says. If growers want to buy restricted-use pesticides for use in their greenhouse they need a “Pesticide License” and must keep up-to-date by going to periodic meetings about safe use of chemicals. Understanding pesticide labeling can be part of the problem, Jean acknowledges. Pesticides come with rigorous pages of information about proper usage and liability, but these instructions are often several pages long and filled with scientific terms. Says Jean, “This is complicated jargon to understand with an 8th grade education. It’s especially difficult for people who haven’t studied science in school. Bacterial disease, fungus, or virus can seem the same to them, but each requires a different treatment to manage.”

Greenhouses are important sources of income for Old Order families. Over the last decade, there has been a growing trend among the Old Order Mennonites and Amish away from tobacco farming to greenhouses, with new ones starting up each year. This is less an aversion to supporting tobacco and more a consequence of economic factors, since the price of tobacco has been dropping in recent years, making it less profitable for family agriculture (Kraybill, 2001, p. 362). Of the some 365 certified nurseries in Lancaster County today, about half are run by Old Order Amish and Mennonites⁹³, selling to a mix of wholesale and retail customers. And by and large, it is Old Order *women* who manage these greenhouses.

The work history of Anna, who operates the Chestnut Ridge greenhouse where we are meeting, is typical. Anna, an Amish woman, worked at a greenhouse for several years before she married, and always wanted to open a greenhouse when her children were older. She has now been in business for six years. She manages the greenhouse with help from her two oldest daughters, aged 16 and 20. Her husband runs the family's hog farming operation. She tells me that she sells retail or at the local produce auction, depending on which is bringing better prices.

Noticing bugs on an ornamental plant in the greenhouse, Anna brings over the bottle of pesticide that she has been using to show Jean. Jean recommends switching products, since some pests are becoming resistant to this one, reminding Anna to be out for 12 hours after spraying, for her own protection. "Yes," Anna tells her, "I usually spray in the evening and don't come in again until the next morning."

⁹³ Statistics compiled from "List of Certified Nurseries and Nursery Dealers," Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture, 2007.

Greenhouse work, even pesticide spraying, is done primarily by women. As John Hostetler noted in his classic work, *Amish Society*, in an assessment equally applicable to Old Order Mennonites, women traditionally have been in charge of flowerbeds, lawns, and the family garden,. Hostetler writes that gardening “is the sole responsibility of the wife,” who often “grows as many as 20 kinds of vegetables” (Hostetler, 1993, p. 153.) Greenhouses are seen as an extension of this female area of responsibility, albeit one that moves them from production (producing food for their family’s table) to sales in the marketplace, a significant shift in the transition to capitalism and consumer consumption.⁹⁴ Thus greenhouse work is gendered female. An Amish dairy farmer at the meeting, whose wife is a greenhouse grower, tells me that his teenage sons don’t help in the greenhouse because, “They don’t like all that repotting of tiny seedlings; they’d rather be doing more active things.” In general, women, assisted by children, especially their daughters, plant, propagate, repot, water, weed, spray, prune, and take plants to market.

From my research in the Old Order community, men’s involvement in greenhouses is limited to building and maintaining the greenhouse structure and fixing equipment; sometimes they also help with pesticide spraying. Several husbands in the afternoon meeting deferred to their wives on everything related to the greenhouse *except* in a discussion of building structure.⁹⁵

⁹⁴ For more on this, see Nancy Grey Osterud, “Gender and the Transition to Capitalism in Rural America,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 67, No. 2, (Spring, 1993), pp. 14-29. See also David Blanke, “Consumer Choice, Agency, and New Directions in Rural History,” *Agricultural History*, Vol. 81, No. 2, (Spring 2007), pp. 182-203.

⁹⁵ Re: building structure, Amish greenhouses lack the electricity available to Old Order Mennonites so must capitalize on basic technology. Without electric lights and fans to warm and circulate air, Amish greenhouses rely on the use of warm water-heated pipes under stands of flowerbeds and plastic side-wall tarps, which can be rolled up or down, to control air flow, temperature, and humidity. (The latter is

The gendering of greenhouse work also extends to the customers who buy the flowering plants for their lawns and homes in suburbia. According to the agricultural extension agents, these customers are 80 percent female. A good business enterprise for the Old Orders, state agricultural workers believe that the market for flowering/bedding plants is nowhere near saturated, given the growth of suburbia and homeowners wanting more landscaping, in and around Lancaster County, situated as it is, within easy driving distance of Philadelphia, Baltimore, and Washington, DC.

A good framework for understanding the popularity of these greenhouses (as well as other rural, Amish-based business) is that of agri-tourism. As described by the Virginia agricultural extension service, which recommends it for family farms seeking to diversify, agri-tourism is “the practice of attracting travelers or visitors to an area used primarily for agricultural purposes” (www.ext.vt.edu/pubs/agritour/312-003/310-003.html#L2). While narrowly defined as farm or ranch stays, a broader definition of agri-tourism includes such things as harvest festivals, farmers’ markets, pick your own fruits/vegetables, state or county fairs, petting zoos, camping, and recreational activities such as biking, corn mazes, horseback riding and hot air balloon rides, all of which are popular in Lancaster County. I argue that Old Order women’s greenhouses are part of, and benefit from, larger agri-tourism to Lancaster County. Tourists seek out and enjoy patronizing such greenhouses out of the same interest in other farm fresh/homegrown products and activities that focus on Lancaster County’s bountiful natural environment.

important, since higher humidity breeds more pests.) Amish growers conserve energy by insulating the North wall (which gets least light/warmth), and putting plants onto raised pallets, getting them off the colder ground. They also consider prevailing winds and often vent those sides to help air circulation.

Family Business Model

Old Order Mennonite and Amish greenhouses are run as women-headed family businesses. This is a continuation of the family-farming business model.⁹⁶ While many greenhouses are important supplemental sources of income, others are primary income. Most greenhouses are located in rural areas, on the family farm, which the Old Orders themselves may no longer be farming; many Amish in business rent the land to non-Amish tractor farmers (Kraybill, 2008, p. 47). By and large, greenhouses are run by married women.⁹⁷ Costs are kept low because of unpaid family labor. As I was told, Amish children work in greenhouses rather than play at sports or computer games. Their labor is understood as part of duty and responsibility within the family unit. With free family labor, few employees need to be hired, which keeps business overhead low, resulting in lower prices.

The family business model is more common among ethnic and immigrant groups in America, just as it is among these ethno-religious Amish and Mennonite growers. Ivan Light (2000), the foremost scholar on ethnic enterprise and small business ownership, notes that entrepreneurs succeed based on “self-exploitation” (p. 26), that is, long hours

⁹⁶ As Joan Jensen has written, “Farms were family businesses using family labor and the labor of kin and neighbor. . . . These businesses often used, in Grey Osterud’s words, ‘strategies of mutuality.’ Families and communities organized their labor, with the work of each member fitting into a complicated mosaic created to provide for survival through economic and cultural development” (Jensen, p. 222).

⁹⁷ Counter-intuitively for a patriarchal culture, marriage does not constrain but, in fact, seems to encourage Amish women in business, based on my research. This is similar to research by Ivan Light in his overview of ethnic entrepreneurship, which found that for every ethnic group except African Americans, marriage *increases* women’s self-employment rates *more* than men’s” (Light 2004, p. 11). In the case of rural Amish women, I found that especially once a woman’s oldest daughters reach the age of responsibility to substitute for her domestic duties, including childcare, married women are freed for other involvements, including greenhouse or other farm-based business.

and low overhead, as well as by reliance on “family, kin, and coethnics for the cheap, loyal labor essential for their survival and success” (p. 141). Relatives and coethnics are prepared to work longer hours and at times that most outsiders would find unacceptable; notes Light: “During seasonal high-demand periods, families may work late every night, seven days a week” (p. 142). This is true in the case of greenhouse growers, whose season for flowering plants runs from March through July, and is based on high production demands for spring holidays such as Easter and Mother’s Day. While Old Order greenhouses engage few employees outside of the family, a characteristic that is also true for the other Amish women’s businesses in this study, as well as in Taylor’s research with Amish women,⁹⁸ those that do, employ other Old Order folk, and manage those employees based on “personal loyalties and ethnic allegiance,” as Light describes of ethnic businesses, in general (p. 38). Thus, “ethnicity provides a common ground on which the rules of the workplace are negotiated” (p. 133), and in which ethnic identity is reaffirmed, representing “a source of ethnic pride as well as of jobs” (Light 2000, p. 79).⁹⁹

These greenhouse businesses function in what is essentially an “ethnic enclave” (Gallardo, 2000). While generally used to describe business entrepreneurship within homogenous racial/ethnic city neighborhoods, the term also accurately describes the

⁹⁸ In Taylor’s 1995 study of 26 married Amish women entrepreneurs, she found that 15 out of 26 had no paid employees (p. 72). Excepting the two largest businesses that employed 10-15, women in her study averaged one part-time employee.

⁹⁹ Ivan Light notes that cultural pre-dispositions in an ethnic community may also include “relative work satisfactions arising from *non*-acculturation to prevailing labor standards” and “access to a pool of under-employed coethnic labor” (p. 132), both of which may be said to apply to Amish women’s businesses. Moreover, as Light notes, “Once in place, an ethnic business niche may give rise to, or strengthen, group consciousness” (p. 34).

concentration of Old Order enterprise in the rural, Amish tourist area east and north of Lancaster City. Gallardo (2000) describes an ethnic enclave as including spatial concentration, sectoral specialization (women's greenhouses to the north and quilt shops to the east), and co-ethnicity of owners and employees, as described above. Tourist-customers are attracted to the ethnic enclave for the ethnic goods and services available there.

The family business model is also relevant in another way, as well. Customer attitudes towards such businesses, often positive, may afford a competitive advantage. As Gabriel Gallardo has written, "Customers and clients play a central role in owners' strategies, as building a loyal following is a way of offsetting the high level of uncertainty facing ethnic small businesses" (Gallardo, 2000, p. 47). Some empirical evidence suggests that customers are more likely to favor family businesses, in general, over non-family business (Ashley-Cotleur, King, Brazeal, 2000). These authors suggest that family businesses are *perceived* to care more because their names and reputations, not to mention the family's income, are on the line. In addition, Brokaw cites the customer perception that family businesses are likely to be more stable and enduring (Brokaw, 1992). Thus, according to the literature, customers attribute high levels of integrity and commitment to family businesses, which may result in greater trust in the enterprise, and increased sales¹⁰⁰ (Ashley-Cotleur, et al, 2000). While my study lacks the quantitative

¹⁰⁰ Business consultants recommend that family businesses promote themselves as such, a trend that has been taken to heart in Lancaster County, where family-owned business abound, and are marketed by name *as* family businesses. While Amish businesses are typically smaller and less well known, many local multi-million dollar national businesses have Mennonite or Pennsylvania German roots: for example Herr's (snack) Foods, High Companies (construction), Kunzler and Co. (meats), as well as the more regional Lapp's Electric, Brubaker's Plumbing, etc. Recognizing this trend, Elizabethtown College, in Lancaster County, has since 1995 operated a research center now known as the S. Dale High Center for Family

scope to fully test these assumptions, anecdotally, Old Order greenhouses are thriving, known not only as family businesses but benefiting from the largely positive stereotypes of the Amish as ethno-religious, rural people. And this admiration of the Amish often spills over into admiration for the work of their hands. In Tom Myers' research in Shipshewana, an Amish tourist center in northern Indiana, people were willing to pay more for Amish-made crafts (Myers, 2002). In Lancaster County, colloquially known as "the Garden Spot of America" for its fertile farmland and agricultural bounty, the Amish and Mennonites are seen as being at the heart of horticulture.¹⁰¹ Thus Old Order greenhouses benefit from positive Amish associations as well as those related to family business.

The family business model, as applied to Old Order greenhouse growers, includes child labor. Given the participation of minors in the family business, Jean is uneasy regarding child safety around toxic pesticides in greenhouses. Her concern for child protection is not dissimilar from federal legislation passed in 2004 to protect Amish youths working in sawmills, but children are not deemed to be facing immediate harm from pesticides in greenhouses as they could be if near the operation of saw-blades.¹⁰² In

Business; its web page notes that "In Pennsylvania, family businesses form the backbone of the most local economies" and "Family firms typically outperform non-family firms." See www.centerforfamilybusiness.org/facts.asp

¹⁰¹ David Walbert's book, *Garden spot: Lancaster County, the old order Amish, and the selling of rural America*, explores this further. See Walbert, 2002.

¹⁰² Greenhouses are understood as an extension of the family farm, which is exempt from child labor laws, unlike the sawmill controversy, which required a special exemption. See pp. 200-205 in Shachtman, 2006, for a cogent summary of the sawmill controversy. Legislation to amend the Fair Labor Standards Act to permit Amish youth, ages 14 to 18, to work in sawmills under adult supervision, passed the House (in 1999, 2000, and 2003) and Senate in 2003 and was signed into law by President Bush in January, 2004. Proceedings of the special hearing before a Senate subcommittee, May 3, 2001, are also enlightening. See: "Employment Needs of Amish Youth."

conversation with growers, Jean stresses that children should wear shoes in the greenhouse, wash hands after working with plants, and be nowhere near the spraying of pesticides, all precautions that most growers seem to understand. But there are grey areas. Not long ago, Jean visited growers whose newborn baby, appropriately secured in a safety seat, was in the greenhouse where they spray plants. “They don’t treat the plants when the baby is in there, but still, there are residues! Nothing on the label says you can’t do that. They keep a clean greenhouse, overall, and the baby is not in any immediate danger. But such young life in there!”

Helping out

As we prepare to leave, I ask Anna I if they make their living from hogs. “Well,” she tells me, “hogs are up and down.”

“So it’s important to have the greenhouse as a steadier source of income?”

“Yeeees, well, the greenhouse is up and down, too. That’s just the way of farming.”

Ruth, the experienced Amish woman greenhouse grower, who attended the meetings independent of her spouse, chimes in, “Farming just doesn’t reach these days. You need another source of income. And this is something that we can do to *help out*.” Anna vigorously nods her head.

Several Amish quilt owners also spoke of their business as “helping out” the family, as in the grower’s quote above. In a conversation with Mary, a quilt shop owner, about parents selling the farm below market value to family members in order to keep it in the family, she remarked, “A woman’s income could never buy a farm. [Pause.] But it

helps.” Since buying a farm in Lancaster typically costs a million dollars or more,¹⁰³ in this case, *helping* could be significant.

This dialogue of “helping out” is provocative. Kimberly Schmidt, in her dissertation research with Mennonite farm women in central Kansas during the 1980s farm crises, documented how Mennonite women worked out in a variety of waged labor, off-farm jobs including teaching and nursing (Schmidt, 1995). Described by the women and their husbands as “helping,” their income, in fact, provided primary living expenses for the better part of a decade. In many cases, these women’s income was what enabled families to hang on their farms in years when the farm was barely breaking even or, in fact, was losing money. (And, then as now, off-farm work was often in addition to farm chores.)¹⁰⁴

Deborah Fink (1986) makes a similar point about the diminishment of women’s work in the family economy. In her research with Iowa farm women, Fink wrote about women’s work “helping” both on the farm and also when doing off-farm, waged labor, as follows:

Even though many women worked outside the home or worked from their homes for money, they tended to denigrate the importance of what they did. One woman after another spoke of having a little job that brought in a little extra money, but they did not consider themselves *working*

¹⁰³ The cost of farmland in Lancaster now averages \$15,000 an acre (Kraybill, 2008, p. 47), and the typical Amish farm has less than 50 acres (Kraybill, 2001, p. 72), but advertised real estate prices of farms for sale in Lancaster are usually higher, more than a million.

¹⁰⁴ Data about women in seven states reveal that women who are not employed off-farm spend an average of 21.8 hours per week on agricultural tasks and those who work off-farm spend 14.1 hours (Goodwin et al., 1991).

women. ... Like the farm women who *helped* rather than *worked* on the farm, these women denied the significance of what they did (p. 195).

In like manner, Nancy Grey Osterud (1991) discussed the production of 19th farm women in New York State. Their butter, cheese-making, chicken and egg sales were referred to colloquially by men as “sidelines,” and regarded as “a source of petty cash or credit rather than as a substantial contribution to the farm income,” which they often were (p. 282). Women’s productive labor was at times the major source of cash income for these farm families (p. 224, p. 3). Thus, for rural women historically, as for Old Order Amish women in my study, the terminology of “helping” seems to reflect status within a patriarchal society more than the reality of these businesses’ net worth.¹⁰⁵

In fact, I believe that the helping rhetoric obscures the reality of the financial significance of some Amish women’s businesses. Mary told me that she hires an accountant to prepare her taxes, she maintains her business assets in a separate bank account, she has invested her business profits into mutual funds, she owns credit cards in her name, and that when her children were growing up, they came to her, not her husband, when they wanted cash to spend. This does not suggest to me the secondary income of a helper.

Given that men and women have clearly defined roles in Old Order society – and male headship, at least in theory if not in practice, is the norm – women’s work may be

¹⁰⁵ An April 2001 national phone survey of 2,661 farm women conducted by Penn State University sought to counter this perception. It found that half of all farm women disagreed with the perception of themselves as “helping out” on the farm. According to the Penn State data, 9.6 percent viewed themselves as the principal farm operator, 30 percent viewed themselves as a “full agricultural partner,” 7.2 percent as the business manager, only 33 percent as “agricultural helper,” and 19.4 percent claimed no involvement in the farm (Findeis, 2002, Table 2).

considered supplemental simply because of the fact that it is done by women. This is not unlike what Susan Carol Rodgers has described as the “myth of male dominance,” in which women’s subordination is acknowledged, while in reality, a balance is maintained between men’s overt power and women’s informal power (Rodgers, 1975). As Mary, the Amish quilt shop owner quoted above, told me in one of our later interviews:

I set a good example, I hope. ‘Course that’s not the topic at the supper table, that’s not— [laughter] how much money did you make today, or how are we going to pay our bills. No, they just sort of see how—, how it can be worked out. [Pause] They just—, mom always had money, there’s always cash around to spend. [Pause] You know, but— I’m sure they’ll remember that as they grow up, if they’re ever in a pinch, or their husband’s business is ever slow, I hope they can remember, yeah, the woman can help out, the woman can help surpla—, can supplement the husband’s income.

Mulling over what may either be a revealing slip of the tongue (“the woman can *surplant* the husband’s income?”) or an indication that English, as opposed to Pennsylvania Dutch, is not Mary’s first language, I note that Mary kept her own finances and her family understood that she did (her children came to mom, not dad, for spending money), yet her business profits were inconsequential, not something to bother discussing at family mealtimes. Her language of helping the family (financially) seems to belie another value having to do with her own satisfaction in modeling this financial in/inter-dependence for her daughters.

Agrarian Feminism & Analyzing Contradictions

In Monda Halpern's book, *And on That Farm He Had a Wife: Ontario Farm Women and Feminism, 1900-1970*, (2001), she discusses the concept of "agrarian feminism," which arises from the intertwined social and economic relations on the family farm that define rural women's work and family lives. Agrarian feminism is organized around the betterment of women's personal lives within the primacy of the family, male-dominated though that may be. Of course, Amish women would never use a feminist framework to define their lives, mistrusting the word and the concept, which to them smacks of selfishness.¹⁰⁶ In fact, if gauged by their rhetoric, Amish women have been self-consciously *opposed* to putting themselves first, i.e. feminism. And yet, Moses and Hartmann (1995) remind us that not all women's struggles historically have been self-consciously feminist.

While elements of "agrarian feminism" would seem to apply, Sherry Ortner reminds us that perhaps this is missing the point. In a fascinating essay, Ortner advances her central argument: that no society or culture is consistent regarding gender, and analyzing these contradictions is the scholar's task:

Every society/culture has some axes of male prestige and some of female, some of gender equality, and some (sometimes many) axes of prestige that have nothing to do with gender at all. The problem in the past has been that all of us engaged in this debate were trying to pigeonhole each case (is it

¹⁰⁶ In discussion with potential Amish women informants, I understood that the word, feminism, was off-putting. Thus I tended to describe my project in terms of gender and fairness, i.e. wanting to include Amish women's business in discussion of Amish enterprise, in order to have a balanced and accurate picture. This language was understood.

male dominant or not?) either through data purification (explaining away the inconvenient bits of information) or through trying to add up the bits and arrive at a score (add a point for balanced division of labor, subtract a point for prevalent wife beating, etc.). ... [But] the most interesting thing about any given case is precisely the *multiplicity of logics operating*, of discourses being spoken, of practices of prestige and power in play. Some of these are dominant – ‘hegemonic.’ Some are explicitly counter-hegemonic – subversive, challenging. Others are simply “there,” “other,” “different,” present because they are products of imagination that did not seem to threaten any particular set of arrangements. *The analytic question will be precisely that of the relationship between the elements*, both at a given moment and – ideally—across time (Ortner, 1996, p. 146, emphasis added).

Some Old Order women have constructed business opportunities that offer them independence, creativity, and valuable income. This is true whether or not they recognize or admit it as such. This chapter has looked primarily at greenhouses, but other forms of Amish women’s business could also be discussed: quilt shops, produce stands, fabric or and variety stores, bake shops and pretzel stands, etc. The transition to capitalism, as women move from productive labor to waged labor, a phenomena which Osterud (1993) has described for farm women in wider U.S. society, is quite significant. In the case of Old Order women business owners, apart from personal satisfactions, their perceived status and importance within the family has gone up, since their contribution now can be measured in cash income. Yet despite the deep-seated changes inherent in these business

ventures, in my fieldwork, women were at pains to present their businesses to me matter-of-factly, either as a natural development or “just something I wanted to do,” and nothing out of the ordinary.

But perhaps this inconsistency, this “multiplicity of logics,” to quote Ortner, is precisely the point, as businesswomen’s changing gender roles also shift power differentials within the Old Order community, subtly, without directly calling attention to it.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Fabric Notions, a Life Story

Vignette: Looking for Lizzie

I am driving home over back country roads from Shady Maple Smorgasbord in eastern Lancaster County, where I have just enjoyed a free birthday meal and made use of a 25 percent birthday discount coupon at Good's Variety Store, run by conservative Mennonites. I am content but anxious; I need to connect with the most successful Amish businesswoman in the county and my university timeline for interviews is running out.

I turn off Hollander Road in the heart of the Lancaster Amish community and head toward the town of Intercourse. As I make the turn, I see a motorized scooter on the road with a tall orange safety flag, chugging along ahead of me. The figure in black who is driving can only be one person – business entrepreneur Lizzie Zook¹⁰⁷, in her 70s and disabled but still energetic after a stroke (which she described succinctly as “a big hole”), just the person I am looking for!

Not wanting to stop her in the middle of the road, I pass carefully and pull ahead into the parking lot of Zook's Dry Goods, where I am sure she is headed, to wait for her. Though it still bears her name, Lizzie no longer owns this business, but she is always welcome in the store, and stops in frequently.

After waiting for five minutes, and no motorized scooter arrives, I realize that somehow I have missed her. I check inside the store: no Lizzie. I walk out to the road: no Lizzie. Where in this quarter mile stretch of road could she be? I get back in my car

¹⁰⁷ By her choice, and because her identity would be difficult to disguise, I have used Lizzie's actual name in this vignette.

and drive slowly back and forth, checking the parking lots and driveways of each business and home en route.

Finally, I give up and turn in at the Amish-owned Lunch Basket restaurant (it has since closed) for a cup of coffee before I continue home. And what do I see parked on the sidewalk outside the front door but a motorized scooter with its tall orange safety flag flapping in the breeze.

Inside I spot Lizzie at a table eating lunch and chatting with a middle-aged Amish woman. Later I will learn that this is the businesswoman who took over another of the shops that Lizzie founded, Nancy's Notions. When she says goodbye to Lizzie, an English (non-Amish) man in coveralls, who Lizzie will later describe as "one of my rentals," comes over and pulls a chair up to Lizzie's table.

He talks for a few minutes, and when he gets up to leave, two 50-ish Amish men who were finishing their meal stroll by Lizzie's table. "Hey," one of them teases good-naturedly, "You could be arrested! Don't you know it's illegal to block traffic by the front door like that?"

"Psh, not on the sidewalk," retorts Lizzie. "Besides, didn't you see my orange flag?"

As they move on I hurry over to Lizzie's table and introduce myself before someone else can intervene. Lizzie tells me later that she "most always finds a good many people to talk to" when she goes out to eat. Clearly, it seems to me, she is a likeable person of influence in the Amish community.

“Well sit down, sit down,” beams Lizzie, ever cheerful, her black bonnet bobbing as she talks. I cautiously explain my research project to her. “Well, what d ‘ya want to know?”, she says, ready to begin the interview here and now. I stammer that I don’t have my tape recorder with me, and we arrange for me to visit her at home tomorrow.

When I arrive at her house with my list of questions about her entrepreneurial success, this is not what Lizzie wants to talk about. Not the five businesses that she has founded in three different areas of the county, nor her significant property holdings, nor the fact that she was one of the first Amish women to start a business, nor her buying trips to New York City, nor the assistance that she was able to provide to those in need in the Amish community. What Lizzie wants me to know, first and foremost, is that God, not she, deserves the credit.

While the clock chimes in the background and her husband Henry, also retired, sorts and counts buttons at the kitchen table, we talk about her life and business over the course of several interviews, beginning and ending with variations on this quote:

Give God the glory, as far as my business goes. I used to say a lot, a lot when someone wants to pat myself on the back and say “Well, Lizzie, you’re doing a good business,” now, come on now, give God the glory. I want it to honor him. It’s not what I did but it’s through the Lord. He gave me a good mind, he gave me a healthy body, he gave me a work ethic, and, you know, he gave me the power to do it, the strength. Then who’s supposed to get the honor? It’s not me! I give him all the glory. ... Opportunities came up for

me that I wouldn't ever have dreamed of. But I thank God, I say, God, you've blessed me because I was one of your good stewards.

Fore-runners

Lizzie, like Rebecca, whose story follows, was a fore-runner to what is now commonplace among Amish women: running a business. Rebecca's story is particularly interesting in that her business was one of the first in the Amish community. At the time, most Amish families were farming. While a few Amish women were running quilt shops, she was the first to begin to sell fabric. *"Somebody had to be the start. Can't all do one thing. Now there's so many stores out there... I knew Mary Lapp [who ran one of the first quilt shops]. If wasn't wrong for her, why should it be wrong for me?"*

Rebecca began in business after several of her children were born with physical disabilities, requiring multiple hospital stays. To pay off huge medical bills (the Amish do not carry health insurance)¹⁰⁸ required an additional source of income than her husband's jobs as a day laborer. An Amish woman growing up on a nearby farm remembers, in glowing terms:

In the 1960s when our neighbor opened a small fabric shop in the front room of her home, none of us imagined her on the leading edge of a growing phenomenon – Amish women running their own businesses. My parents

¹⁰⁸ The Amish oppose health insurance because they believe members are to care for each other so as not to be unequally yoked with nonbelievers (see Hostetler, 1993). As Gertrude Enders Huntington has written, "In health care matters, the Amish believe they must accept responsibility for their own actions and not depend on services supplied by the state" (2003, p. 163). As the Amish are fond of saying, their health insurance is the community. Joseph Donnermeyer believes that the prohibitive cost of health care may also be a factor in not carrying health insurance (see Donnermeyer and Lora F. Friedrich, 2002). Today many Lancaster County Amish pay into a mutual assistance fund called "Amish Aid" which serves as a safety net in case of catastrophic medical bills. Amish are often able to negotiate reduced medical bills with local hospitals since they pay promptly, in cash (Smart, A5, 2008).

described her situation with simple straightforwardness, “She needs to make a living,” and we frequented her store. Most of the dresses my sisters and I wore through the years came from fabric purchased in her store. We understood. It was about survival. Without her courage, her family would have faced an ongoing struggle with poverty. Because of her flair for business and finance, she became the family breadwinner, lifting a great burden from her husband’s shoulders. Hers is a quintessential story of breaking rules to make a partnership work (Stoltzfus, 1998, p. 180).

While Rebecca’s shop was indeed outside the norm for Amish women of her day, and people bought from her knowing her financial need, she was also providing a service to the local Amish community by filling a niche in the marketplace, a point that Rebecca recognized when she told me, *“They’d rather go to Amish stores. We tried to get what the Amish want, because they’re our customers. We also tried to satisfy the English, but English is a wide frame. Don’t know what all they need. ... But after a while, you learn a little what they want, too.”*

Before Rebecca had her shop at home, Amish women rode the bus or the trolley into Lancaster City to buy their fabric at the Hagers or Watt & Shand department stores. Some also bought fabric from traveling salesmen. As Rebecca told me: *“Two or three of them came around; Isaac Hersch or Horsch was one ... The Jews came around in cars and peddled their wares to the Amish from New York City.”*

Buying Trips to NYC

After Rebecca's business outgrew her house, she moved the shop out to her barn and renovated it into a three-room store. Soon Rebecca began making buying trips to New York City herself to buy bolts of cloth from fabric wholesalers, most of them Orthodox Jews, thus bypassing the peddlers. *"Amish, you know, started to help themselves and kind of ruined it for the middle-men."* I picture Rebecca in her black Amish dress and bonnet negotiating for fair prices from black-garbed Jewish men in New York City. She bought close-outs or remaindered lots: *"Fabrics after fabric, roll after roll. I could get oodles of bargains. Where are they now? Overseas. You can't get the bargains anymore like I did."*

Rebecca's buying trips were strenuous. As she reflected:

It was a pain in the neck. I had to oftentimes start at 3 and 4 o'clock in the morning. I did. Early in the morning I'd go out. I'd take a van. And we filled that van up. That was a hard day's work. And we had to unload when I came home. Therefore I worked while I was asleep! ... Sometimes I used a 24-footer, sometimes an [Amish] taxi ... like, a driver and a van. Sometimes the van was too full and then I had to ship it home. I brought an awful lot out of New York. ...

You have to have the know-how to know where to get good quality and good material. And time, time of being in business told you, you learned, you taught yourself. ... I even went alone sometimes, on train. Whew, was I lost in that big train station! [NYC's Penn Station] See there again, I did things

that not any woman would do. It's not nice to say. But I just had such a big determination; I was just determined to make a go of it.

Growth and Expansion

Rebecca's determination to succeed bore fruit. After six years she bought her first shop in Intercourse and the family moved nearby. She grew her business slowly, waiting until she had accumulated enough capital to expand the building and purchase several other businesses: "*I didn't go way ahead of myself.*" As she describes her growth:

I just dreamed and dreamed and dreamed about that [building.] ... We put my second shop in there and didn't even build a basement. It grew and grew and finally we got bull-dozer in there and dug it out and put a big basement on. Now that was a job! Well, we still weren't satisfied. So we built on out back to where the pole shed had been on the property. ... And then we had to stop [because] there wasn't any more room [to expand]!

Q: Did you have to get a bank loan for that building project?

I don't think by then. See, there again, I was always careful to not overdo it. You know, I crawled up the ladder. I went step by step. ... I was taught to save. You don't spend as fast as you get. I always had enough co— what'd the banks call it? Collateral. I could advance myself by collateral. That's the way I did it. I could do an addition to the store because I had collateral, you didn't have to have a cent. That's the way it works. I could go ahead with nothing!

After she had been successful for ten years in business in Intercourse, Rebecca heard about a property for sale in the southern part of the county, ten miles away, at a major crossroads. *“I saw that [busy] crossroad and how much traffic went through there, both Amish and cars, and I just thought to myself, ‘There has got to be a store there.’ And I watched that property for years.”* She believed it would make a good location for a store, but the seller was asking more than she felt she could afford. It was a crisis of faith for her.

*God was just saying I can't have it. ... But I thought I **need** to have it. ... I couldn't afford it that good; I still had [my other store] tied up. ... So I said, OK, let it set, but I wanted it. ... It was awful hard on me. I waited three years and she [the seller] came after me because she knew I was interested. ... Then I thought it might be from the Lord. ... I was in better [financial] shape by then. ... That property came down \$30,000 in three years! ... That's why you should listen sometimes what, the Lord says. You cannot, you cannot see ahead.*

This business decision involved a major change for the family. Her husband quit his job as a butcher to clerk in the new store. Her youngest child was six and her oldest daughter was 14.

She and a couple of the other [children] went down with the pony cart, over all the hills, and all. And we moved down there, the children had to change schools, it was kind of a big deal. But we bought it, now you have to roll up your sleeves, yeah, you gotta work for this. And there was determination in

there. I was, I knew I— well, you can't do that without any, any butterflies, you know? I wanted it, now you have to do something about it. And ah, I talked it over with my husband. And he said he thought it was kind foolish to do it, you know, after all, can you do it? ... I just wanted it so bad, more than him. ... I was nutty enough to do it.

The family stayed there twelve years as Rebecca built the variety store into another successful business, a property which she still owns, but no longer manages. “*That place is just a gorgeous spot [for a store.] I often wonder, if I hadn't stuck my neck out, who would have? I wonder who would have it.*”

Theft (“What makes me different?”)

While generally on very good terms with her customers, Rebecca was not immune to challenges. When asked, she brought up an encounter with a shoplifter:

Q: Were there hard things about running the business?

Like what'd ya mean?

Q: Oh, problems with stealing, with bad checks?

Why wouldn't I have just as well as any other store? I mean, what makes me different? Nothing! I'm prone for theft just as well as anybody else. ... We found empty bolts, missing bolts [of fabric], we knew there was a problem, but we didn't know who, we thought maybe the Haitians.¹⁰⁹ It was going on for 2-3 years. ...

¹⁰⁹ Having never heard of the presence of Haitians in Lancaster County, I was surprised by her reference. I discovered that, according to the 2000 census, 0.3 % of the population of Lancaster city, or about 170 people, are Haitian (www.citytowninfo.com/places/pennsylvania/lancaster), many of whom are members of the Haitian Maranatha Bible Church, founded in 1995. The neighboring town of New Holland recorded

The reason that she got away with it so good was that she had a covering on [i.e. she was a conservative Mennonite woman]. ... I was in the other room and looked through the spokes... I could hardly believe my eyes. ... Out comes a big packet bag and she sticks those bolts in, and I almost fainted. ... I just felt so bad that she would actually do that, and she's a Plain person. ... I couldn't believe she would do something this cruel. She said, "I'll pay you back, I'll pay you back. I'll pay you back. Is a thousand enough?" What are you talking about? She must have been doing this longer—! I thought she'd said 25 dollars or 50 dollars. She just wants us to hush, hush, hush. So we don't get the police up. So she paid a thousand dollars. ... She had to make restitution. I certainly wouldn't want to see her put behind bars. But she shouldn't get away scot free. Because you had to figure she was doing it for years. ... If she don't get punished it'll come among her children and grandchildren... Anyways that's how I handled that.

Retirement

As she grew older, Rebecca thought about retirement. She had sold several of her businesses and was looking to put her dry goods store into good hands. She contacted Harry, her fabric wholesaler and friend, and offered him the opportunity to learn her retail fabric business and eventually buy the store. He trained with Rebecca for several years

a population of 0.6 % or 30 Haitians (www.citytowninfo.com/places/pennsylvania/new-holland) during the same census. My informant may have been more aware of the Haitian presence in Lancaster County than I was due to the annual Pennsylvania Haiti benefit auction, held each July to raise money for relief in Haiti, which is widely attended by the Old Orders and some local Haitians.

before taking over. Rebecca describes the importance of that training period in learning the tastes and desires of her Amish clientele

*Harry, if he did it all alone he'd buy **cotton!** [Amish prefer practical polyester fabrics.] He has no taste for what they wear, but he found it out, working for me. ... See, someone comes in and asks for jacket-back lining. Well you don't know what that is, but an Amish person does. ... The back of it is real shiny, the front it is not. They don't want the stiff, they want the clear. ... And there's a black that the stiffening is just right to make capes, to line them up and make them stand right. He'd buy a few bolts and be out of it and be out of it. And I said, "You buy **a lot!**" ... Harry found out by four years working for me.*

Overcoming Disapproval

Over the course of her 45-year business career in the Amish community, Rebecca has seen attitudes change with time, as the following interchange illustrates:

Q: When you had your businesses, were people supportive in the early years?

No, they frowned on it.

Q: Would they say things to you or talk about you?

I, I had a big store and they would say, "Does this all belong to one person?" You know, something like that.

Q: They thought it was just too big?

I don't know whether they thought, how in the world does she manage it? Or is it too big for Amish.¹¹⁰ I don't really know what they meant by it. Not too often. My brothers and sisters were more so than the rest of them. But now, by now, 40 some years later, they practically all have some family business: quilts, or one has even a grocery store. ... [My sister] has my Georgetown store for 15 years now. ... They don't get near that big [like mine], but they have it. Same as me.

So it's a little bit of a different lifestyle now. Lot of [Amish] people don't farm, they're putting their cows away. They don't sell their farms, but oh, other things, they can make more on business than what they can do on farming, a lot of them. ...

Other people—, I remember so good. My sister-in-law thought I'll never make it. I'm stupid that I want a store. Time proved that I, I meant what I said. I don't like to say I'm fruitful, I don't like to say it. But time proved that she was wrong.

Q: When you were in business, was it hard to take off for weddings and funerals? Did you close your shop?

Oh, it was awful hard to leave, yeah. Ohhh. As a rule, you should go to a wedding. People frown on it if you are invited and don't go, because you're too busy, it's not right. ... You're supposed to go, it's not good.

¹¹⁰ Donald Kraybill notes that small size is a landmark of Amish “social architecture.” Large enterprises may be associated with pride, which is to be avoided. “*Gelassenheit* [submission, self-surrender] prefers small-scale things. ... Small farms are preferable to large ones. ... We're not supposed to engage in large businesses” (Kraybill, 2001, p. 106). As Mary said disapprovingly about another Amish family with a large business: “They do not need any more money coming in.”

Q: So what did you do?

I'm allowed to go to the wedding in the forenoon but I'm allowed to go home then in the afternoon. But that wedding lasts until midnight. They eat, and eat, and eat. Well, I pretty much used to—I always got to the majority of it. But now ah, people just go half-days, if they feel like it. It's a change. ... Nowadays nobody expects a business-woman to give up a whole day. ...

Her use of the terminology, “allowed” is significant. As one of the first in the community to face these kinds of conflicts between the demands of church and business, Rebecca’s actions were a point of discussion among church leadership. The compromise reached (she may leave at noon) reflects the contrasting values of community and the marketplace, with the knowledge that closing her shop for a day or even half a day, would mean a significant loss of income. As Don Kraybill has written, “Changes that produce economic benefits are more acceptable than those that do not. ‘Making a living’ takes priority over pleasure, convenience, or leisure” (Kraybill, 2001, p. 203).

Family Matters

Rebecca regrets being busy and the customers that disrupted family meal-times.

Q: When you had your businesses, that was a big help to your family budget, right?

Yeah, sure, that's why I did it, but that's not what they say. Mom was too busy, Mom was away. My youngest would say that. Mom was just too busy.

But overall she feels that she took good care of her children's needs. Her daughters and a son all clerked for her in her shops, and one daughter now owns a store of her own. Moreover, Rebecca draws satisfaction from having taught her daughters to sew and cook for themselves, and having instilled in her children a strong work ethic.

I was with a lady [in business], and she said, "When I come home it would be so nice if the children could at least have supper ready for me." And they have 16 and 17 year olds. I mean to say, they don't cook? "Well, if I tell 'em to do it." I'm not trying to brag on myself, but if they are raised young and taught, they will cook. ... I can't understand it that they would not... We were so much together. ... It's their own fault if they don't teach their children. Helping is being part of the family. ... If everything gets handed to children, they'll never know how to—, if they earn it themselves, they know how it feels if it disappears. It means more. But if they don't earn it, they don't know how hard it was to earn that dollar.

Rebecca's relationship with her husband is more complicated. She is grateful for his support around the house today, and compliments him:

Now, not all husbands do that much for their women as he does for me. He did really help me a lot. I trained him how to hang up wash the way women hang it up. Other men, they don't want to be bothered with it, they come home and they're tired.

Rebecca is grateful to her husband for his out-of-the ordinary assistance with household tasks. (During a discussion with the two of them about household help,

Rebecca's husband remarked, "A boy can clean house." Rebecca replied tartly, "If I teach him!") But Rebecca also notes the following:

[My husband] was never a businessman, or I would have pushed it on him.

But I don't advise—, if the man isn't a businessman, really, I pity that woman 'cause she just got the urge for it, she just got to get it out of her system. But to me it's not working together if the man—I think the woman's allowed to do lot of stuff if the man can be her leader, but he was not the leader and it made me feel bad. You know, it always made me guilty. And it still do.

Maybe it was alright. Some people'd say it'd be all right. But the things I had to suffer I didn't suffer in business. Other things, like sick children. I had six sick children. And I don't know, people can do as they want to in that part, but if someone were to come and ask me, what would you do, should I go do [a business] if my husband don't want to, I think I must say no.

Q: Because you know how hard it was to do it yourself without your husband's support?

Yes, I just had to hack my way through it, and I don't think that's right.

Really I don't think that is right. You know, you're just young, and maybe you don't see it that way. Are you married? ... Well then you don't have a big family, but if someone wants to do something with 5-6 kids, it's hard.

What advice would Rebecca give to future businesswomen?

They have to have patience. And they have to have a working ethic. They gotta have, they gotta have a goal. Believe, I am gonna make it. But without

a goal, you can't do it, without knowing what you're heading for. You have to make a mark to know what you're doing. Aim for something.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Conclusion

In this dissertation I have used the microcosm of a small sample of Amish business women in Lancaster County to offer an in-depth exploration of the ways in which gender and entrepreneurship work together within the contemporary Amish community located in the heart of Lancaster's Amish tourist area. How do Amish women negotiate gender roles as members of a strict religious community amid a booming tourist industry? This dissertation has illustrated how women make use of social, cultural and psychological capital, how they depend on "having their own help" and function as "mother-managers" to oversee the domestic work of others while in business. My research has illuminated those aspects of consumer culture and tourism that effect the success of Amish women's businesses.

Rhetoric of patriarchy, practice of autonomy

Within the Amish community, I have shown how advertising a business in their husband's name and describing their sometimes significant earnings as "helping out" serve to mute criticism and maintain the patriarchal order that functions in formal leadership and in theory, though not always in daily practice. In fact, it could be said that Amish women use the rhetoric of patriarchy and the practice of autonomy in their business enterprises.

As we have seen, the language of patriarchy often does not reflect the actual realities of women's work. Amish businesswomen and their families or church district may downplay their employment as secondary, even when their business income is a

substantial portion of the family budget. Thus the language of “helping” obscures the reality of how significant these businesses are to the family economy.

In many ways, the current transformation of Amish women’s work is a continuation and extension of traditional women’s gender roles within the community. Women’s greenhouse businesses are akin to women’s management of large family gardens, for which they have traditionally been responsible. Women’s business enterprises – from established shops to meals in homes to roadside stands – are in areas of responsibility that have always been gendered female: quilts, fabric, housewares, food. Even those women who are in business still retain oversight, though often not day-to-day responsibility, of domestic responsibilities, either by hiring out some of those jobs or by delegating them to responsible children.

Yet the very fact of women being in charge of these enterprises is a significant change. Kraybill, a renowned expert on the Amish, sees the move from farming to business as the “biggest social change” the Amish have ever had to face.¹¹¹ This is also true for women in the Amish community. Historically, in wider U.S. society and on the farm, women's status declined with industrialization and the devaluation of non-wage, domestic labor, which shifted the home from the center of production to the center of consumption (see Osterud, 2003 on farm women’s transition to capitalism). This was accompanied by the perception of domestic work as routine and repetitive with a subsequent drop in women's status (see Susan Strasser’s *Never Done: A History of*

¹¹¹ Public lecture by Donald B. Kraybill at Stumptown Mennonite Church, Lancaster, PA, Dec. 7, 1998.

American Housework, 1982/2000).¹¹² Conversely, women earning cash income for the household has resulted in increased status at home.¹¹³ I believe that this is true for Amish women, as well. While there have always been some Amish women, usually unmarried, who worked for wages, often in local restaurants or cleaning homes for non-Amish families or as Amish school-teachers, what is new and significant is the move toward owning and running a business among married as well as single women, and making the decisions related to start-up funding, financial management, marketing and customer relations, inventory and product line, and future growth that this entails. These business responsibilities impact women's gender roles within the Amish community.

Kraybill, himself, recognizes the significance of Amish women owning and operating small businesses, which he describes as, "one of the remarkable changes in gender relations" (p. 84). Later in the book, while discussing the statistic that 17 percent of Amish women own businesses, (and my study would suggest a higher number), Kraybill notes,

In a patriarchal society this [women's business ownership] will induce some changes as women have more access to money, other resources, and the outside world. Women, in short, are gaining more power, and this will

¹¹² And in my study of conservative Mennonite women – who have largely moved away from the family farm economy to male breadwinner, away-from-home employment – women's roles are geared toward consumption and do appear more subject to patriarchy; in this instance, as women function more as consumers, their perceived importance to the family economy is lessened, and their status declines. See Graybill, 1995.

¹¹³ Alice Kessler-Harris describes this process in the 20th century following industrialization. For example, she writes that during the 1920s, married women were accepted as working to achieve "an 'American' standard of living." Their "contributory" wages appeared to pay for, not luxuries, but a higher quality of life to "enhance the family standard." This enabled them to "maintain status and self-esteem" in the family, despite pay inequality with men (1990, p. 31).

likely impact their broader influence within the community as well (p. 261).

Another way to look at the growth in Amish women-owned small businesses is as a means of preserving the rough gender parity of the family farm: that is, women once again position themselves as producers of essential *income-producing* goods and/or services, with the corresponding rise in status. As one informant told Taylor, she “‘moved up a step’ when she went from housewife to shopkeeper” (Taylor, 1995, p. 41). So the strategy of Amish women owning and managing small businesses and cottage industries offers a way to preserve the value of their labor during a period of Amish transition to non-farm occupations.

With the exception of the term “agrarian feminism,” which I suggested in chapter six may be an appropriate framework, because of its focus on women working to improve their lives within the context of the family, I have deliberately avoided using the language of feminism to describe these women’s choices, since it is not a term they would use themselves.

Instead, I prefer to write and think about Amish women entrepreneurs according to degrees of being either self-directed or other-directed.¹¹⁴ In my dealings with them, I have found Amish business women to be self-directed – i.e., highly motivated, making autonomous business decisions, seeming to be little concerned with others’ opinions of them – to a greater degree than I had expected. This is in contrast to the conservative

¹¹⁴ Peter Wink writes about self-directed vs. other-directed women as a function of age. See Wink, 1996.

women in my previous study, who, by comparison, I would describe as highly other-directed, i.e. responsive to the needs of spouse, children and church, sometimes to the exclusion of themselves and their own needs. (I noted a number of informants in my previous study who suffered from depression. As one conservative Mennonite woman in that study described her mother, “When my mom is most depressed, she is most like women in my church are expected to be. . . . She's quiet, and submissive.”) By contrast, Amish businesswomen in my current study were outgoing, assertive, and self-directed.

Moreover, it is useful to remember that Amish women’s business enterprise was not a foregone conclusion. We forget the different ways that this could have gone. Amish women could have remained full-time homemakers, as most conservative Mennonite women have done, while their husbands transitioned to wage labor. Amish women could have continued to do piecework on quilts and crafts – as in fact some still do – and let other non-Amish handle their marketing. Amish women could have taken up low-paid, menial-labor jobs, those gendered as “female” that women are presumed inherently able to do, such as housekeeping or laundry, that are currently filled by Puerto Rican women whom I see streaming out of hotels on the bus route I occasionally take. The taken-for-granted attitude about Amish women during the transition away from farming – “Well, *of course* they would go into business like Amish men” – belies the significant departure inherent in this choice toward business.

The Public Face of the Amish to Tourists

One unanswered question that bears further exploration is what it means for Amish society now that women, not men, have more contact with outsiders, the reverse

of what was true for Lancaster Amish historically and what is true for more isolated Amish in other settlements today. As I have studied Amish women's businesses, I have been struck by the ways in which these women represent the entire Amish community to outsiders. Bus-loads who visit quilt shops, tourists who patronize Old Order green-houses, the steady stream of families who stop at roadside stands selling produce or baked goods, tour groups who eat a meal in an Amish home, the thousands who flock to Amish fabric stores, especially during quilter's heritage week – all experience their most direct, and many times, their only, real contact with actual Amish persons through their interactions with Amish women in business.

Amish women's tourist enterprises are not separate from the world¹¹⁵ (a formerly important church teaching), but right in the middle of it. This is in contrast to many Amish men's businesses, which either cater to the Amish community (e.g. harness shops, buggy repair) or have more limited contact with tourists, since they are wholesale suppliers (woodworking shops, e.g. making gazebos for sale at Wal-Mart), and do not interact with the public in any sustained way. I have contemplated what it means that Amish women in business are thus the public face of the Amish to tourists. It strikes me that this is both burden and opportunity, bane and blessing – that many outsiders will form their opinion of the Amish based in large part on their interactions with these Amish women. While this is not normally high in the consciousness of Amish businesswomen – their everyday, practical concerns are focused on the business side of their enterprises – it strikes me as worth noting. Such businesses have a value to the Amish community as a

¹¹⁵ This is taken from the bible verse, "Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is." Romans 12:2.

whole, above and beyond their financial value to the individual families involved, and should be esteemed for that as well.

Unmarried and “Women-identified” Women

While this study has primarily looked at married women in business, who form the majority of Amish women business owners, a word about single women is also in order. Since more men than women leave the Amish faith (Myers, 1994), there have always been single women in the community (though rarely single men). Some older single women are in business: running a bake shop, a discount variety store, a quilt shop, a greenhouse. I was told about one of the first women to open a quilt shop, now in her 70s, that two factors worked in her favor: she was single, and she was the Bishop’s daughter (since he supported it, others were unlikely to oppose it). During my research I also learned of several single women engaged in non-traditional, health-related occupations. Once when I asked to interview a Plain Mennonite woman employed as midwife, she politely declined my request and told me frankly, “I brought this vocation with me [to this particular conservative Mennonite church] and I don’t want to call attention to it.” Two unmarried Old Order women who sought nurse’s training (which required education and training beyond the normal limit of 8th grade) were described to me as having “gone ahead and done it and the Bishops declined to speak against it.” Many single women live alone or with other women; others have separate living quarters on the family farm. In many ways their lives are “women-identified,” lived primarily in the company of other women, where their strongest bonds lie, (though they do interact with men infrequently at church and with male relatives in family settings). In a panel on

rural women at last year's Agricultural History Society meetings, we as presenters were invited to look for those stories of "women-identified women," particularly in rural and religious settings where sexuality is unquestioned. Even in these locations, it was argued, there have always been women-identified women who challenged "compulsory heterosexuality," and may or may not have been straight.¹¹⁶ As noted earlier, much of the socializing among Amish women, single or married, takes place in same-sex work or social gatherings. Nevertheless, singlehood would seem to offer particular opportunities for Amish women to live a women-identified life.

For single as well as married women entrepreneurs, however, more relevant to my own research is the process by which spaces open up for women's roles to shift. How and why do gender roles, and subsequent power differentials, change through practice?

Gender and Amish Women

In order to understand this question, it is useful to take a step back and look at gender roles within the Amish community more generally. To do so, I would like to return for a moment to Olshan and Schmidt's essay, "Amish Women and the Feminist Conundrum" (1994). The authors make two points; the second is more valid. First, the authors attempt to reconcile Amish patriarchy with the "quiet self-confidence, strength and clarity of purpose, and unassuming self-respect" (p. 215) of many Amish women,

¹¹⁶ See Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory heterosexuality and lesbian experience," 1986. Rich writes, "Woman identification is a source of energy, a potential springhead of female power, curtailed and contained under the institution of heterosexuality," p. 63. This comment was made at a session entitled, "Agricultural Women and the Interpretation of Rural Experience, annual meeting of the Agricultural History Society, Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa, on June 23, 2007. What are to make of the fact that, as Lousie Stoltzfus noted in an unpublished paper, two early 20th century Mennonite women in urban missions shared not only a bedroom but a bed for thirty years? See, "Lucky in Love," undated, unpublished paper in author's collection.

arguing that Amish farm women are more involved in family decision-making than “their modern counterparts,” whoever they may be (other non-Amish moderns? Other farm families? Other conservative Anabaptists?) Comparative data is needed to support such a claim.

Karen Johnson-Weiner (2001) provides some comparison with other Anabaptist groups. Her thoughtful article contrasts women in three conservative traditions that she has studied: Old Order Amish (though not limited to Lancaster County), Beachy Amish and Fellowship (conservative Mennonite) Churches. (Unlike the Amish, the latter two groups accept telephones, cars, and electricity, though not television and computers.) While I agree with her conclusions, I disagree with her reasoning. Johnson-Weiner, like others before her, valorizes the family farm with its supposed separation from wider society as the most egalitarian model. She writes,

Research suggests that the more the Old Order community engages with the surrounding society and is dependent upon it economically and spiritually, the less likely women in the community are to share in community decision making. In short, as long as the barriers between the church and world remain intact, with men and women interacting daily on the farm, the male and female domains are complementary and interconnected, and men and women remain partners. As church–communities redefine the separation of the church from the world to permit members to engage in wage labor outside the church-community, the relationship

between men and women in daily life changes, for men and women are generally given unequal access to such work (p. 156).

I think that Johnson-Weiner is right to detect differences in women's roles from the conservative Mennonites to the Old Order Amish (a less restrictive patriarchy, if you will, which I discuss below), but I believe she is wrong, at least so far as my own studies go, to attribute those differences to the interdependence of farming or cultural separation. For one thing, often the family farm has not been the egalitarian model it is purported to be. As Deborah Fink has noted, "Agrarian ideology – the celebration of farming and farmers ... meshed poorly with the lives of many rural women" (Fink, 1992, p. xv). She notes that while agrarian ideology "proclaimed that women were liberated rather than limited," in reality, it subordinated women, who not infrequently suffered from violence and abuse. She continues, "Although modern agrarians tend to dismiss incidents of breakdown and violence in rural homes as recent urban intrusions, I believe that rural women's difficulties have had a more fundamental basis in the structure of farming and rural communities" (p. 3). So it is doubtful that farm life, per se, explains women's higher status among Amish communities. In fact, the reality for Amish women in the heart of the Amish tourist settlement that forms my study is that, while most live in rural areas, few of them are farming (only about 20 percent, according to my informants). In addition, there is much less separation from the world than Johnson-Weiner posits. Amish women have relationships with non-Amish drivers, customers, neighbors, friends, and co-workers. They interact with outsiders at farmers' markets, in retail shops, at restaurants and in homes. Thus the wider world is not the contagion that Johnson-Weiner

believes. While Amish women to some degree continue to be producers through large gardens and home canning, not all do so, and other work is shifting to consumption rather than production; for example, as we have seen, sewing of clothing and home-baking are often performed by others for pay.¹¹⁷

However, in my research, whatever loss of status may accompany the shift from producer to consumer is offset by the financial reward of cash income, a concrete family benefit. According to my research, almost every Amish woman in the heart of the Amish tourist settlement does some work for pay, whether she runs a business or does piecework at home. This is in contrast to conservative Mennonite women, who, with the exception of greenhouse growers, are much less likely to be bringing in cash income, according to my research.

Like Johnson-Weiner and Olshan & Schmidt, I have found the small pool of Amish businesswomen in my study to be more confident and outspoken than the small pool of conservative Mennonite women in my previous study,¹¹⁸ although more research is needed to validate this comparison, and I question whether the entrepreneurs in my study are typical of Lancaster County Amish women, in general. Business entrepreneurship may call forth certain traits of confidence or outgoingness, or it may attract Amish women who possess those characteristics, and this may be different from the norm. (In addition, there are differences among Amish in different parts of Lancaster County, with

¹¹⁷ Kraybill quotes an unidentified Amish woman who estimates that “only half of all Amish families bake their own bread” (2008, p. 34).

¹¹⁸ See “‘To Remind Us of Who We Are’: An Ethnographic Exploration of Women's Dress and Gender Roles in a Conservative Mennonite Community,” by Beth E. Graybill, Thesis submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of The University of Maryland in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, 1995.

Amish women in the heart of the tourist district, where my study is centered, viewing Amish in the southern part of the county as less progressive and unsophisticated (see Yost et al, 2004).

Also it is useful to remember Mary's quote in chapter four: "If I wouldn't have felt good about it [being in business], I wouldn't have done it. ... I always felt that if God didn't want me to do it, He'd show me a way to not do it, if I shouldn't be doing it." Mary felt free to make this decision between herself and her God, not bound by community stigma or disapproval. Thus business entrepreneurship affords a higher level of acceptance than that of the women who sought advanced training to be nurses. This speaks to Amish businesswomen's confidence in stepping out of traditional gender role activities, not only reflected in the fact that the bishops don't speak out against it, but that they are buttressed by their sense that God would indicate to them if what they were doing was religiously wrong.

Schmidt and Olshan's second point of note is that Amish religion mitigates patriarchal authority, a provocative thought which bears further reflection. It is true that in church matters, Amish women attend church members meetings and can vote, including to nominate male leaders. This is in contrast to my previous study with conservative Mennonite women, who were excluded from "heads-of-household" meetings, and thus lacked a formal decision-making role in the denomination. Conservative women could influence church decisions informally through their husbands

or brothers, which also occurs in the Amish community: as Lois, a formerly Amish woman, reflecting on her Amish extended family members, told me:

A lot of church business gets decided around the quilting bee. Then the women go home and talk to their husbands. ... So you get to say what you want to say because you can sort of say it through this man. [laughs]
Which in a way is terrible. In another way it really works for people. It works for them.

While Amish women have access to this informal means of decision-making within the church community, they are not *limited* to this avenue of influence; they also have a “voice and a vote in church business meetings,” giving them access to formal channels of power (Kraybill, 2008, p. 9).

Seeking to understand the claim that Amish religion may mitigate patriarchy, I turn to the work of Ann Braude, a scholar of religion who is attentive to gender. Braude describes the periods of the spiritual “Great Awakenings” in America as times of “relative spiritual equality” among men and women as “both partook of [religious] qualities considered feminine” (1997, p. 98). While church structures remained male-dominant, women were active and respected laity, seen as equal in the faith, with access to power and activism within their church communities.¹¹⁹ Likewise, in a similar manner, I believe that contemporary Amish men and women are equal heirs to a spiritual

¹¹⁹ “For many white women in early America, religion not only meant an ideal of spiritual equality but also access to power and activism within their godly communities. ...In a spiritual sense, white women were able to forge a self-identity, which they used to construct an active religious life based on prayer, worship conversation, and community; for white women of middling or higher status, this translated into a life and religion of their own” (Lindman, 2007, p. 143).

tradition that emphasizes common, so-called feminine religious values of nonresistance and love of enemy (from the verses, “resist not evil,” Matthew 5:29a, and “overcome evil with good,” Romans 12:21b), including non-participation in war or violence.¹²⁰ The Amish act of forgiveness around the Nickel Mines shootings was completely consistent in this regard. In addition, Amish society is built on values of sacrifice and *Gelassenheit* (yielded-ness) that both men and women are expected to uphold. These values are normative for Amish and Mennonite women but counter-cultural for Amish and Mennonite men, who have sometimes been deemed feminine by comparison with male ideals in modern society.¹²¹

In wider society, even churchgoing itself is often feminized, since women far outnumber men in the pew, a strikingly obvious but overlooked and under theorized fact, as noted by Braude, which has been true since the colonial period in America. As she writes,

Women constitute the majority of participants in religion in the United States, and have wherever Christianity has become the dominant faith in North America. Indeed, the numerical dominance of women in all but a few religious groups [excepting Hasidic Jews and Nation of Islam]

¹²⁰ Kraybill and Bowman define nonresistance as “verbal assault without retort, bodily injury without retaliation, property damage without revenge, and financial exploitation without litigation. In the final analysis, nonresistance is defenselessness – a willingness to absorb malice and leave vengeance up to God,” (2001, p. 183). Some Mennonite feminists, such as myself, have sought to reinterpret such teachings to include nonviolent resistance and personal self-defense. See Graybill, “Pacifism and Women’s Self-Defense,” 2000.

¹²¹ Braude describes the following as normative for American men in religion historically: “For men, ideals of masculinity often conflicted with Christian virtues rather than reinforcing them. ... Whether exemplifying manhood by competing in the marketplace, the battlefield, or the paying field, the goal for men was to win, not to offer examples of self-sacrificial love” (Braude, 1997, p. 104).

constitutes one of the most consistent features of American religion, and one of the least explained” (p. 88).¹²²

However, here again, the Amish are an exception. While they attend in numbers not absolutely equal (since more men leave the Amish than do women, although 90 percent remain, see Myers, 1995), churchgoing is expected and participated in by all members of the family.

In a tradition in which religious practices, such as church-going, are valued by both sexes, and in which *both* men and women are expected to submit to a greater good (God and the community), does gender matter more or less? Is patriarchy weaker or stronger, to compensate for the de-masculization in wider society of Amish and other men who profess peace?¹²³ Support for the latter position comes from Jane Pederson, who claims, “Although in Anabaptist men’s relationship to the state, pacifism is frequently a key principle, nonviolence in family and social relationships is not” (2000, p. 356). Her supporting evidence for this claim is the existence of abuse among Mennonites. While I know from my years of advocacy, 1999-2004, addressing issues of Mennonite family violence at the Women’s Desk of Mennonite Central Committee, that abuse occurs at no *lower* rates within the Mennonite community than in wider society,

¹²² As Braude summarizes even more succinctly, “Where women are present, religion flourishes, where they are absent, it does not” (p. 92).

¹²³ Rachel Waltner Goosen has written about the conscientious-objector men from Anabaptist traditions who served in government-sanctioned alternative service during World War II yet were subject to taunts and threats against their manhood for their refusal to fight as soldiers. The film, *Conchies: An American Story of Commitment and Courage* (Sisters & Brothers, c1993) also describes this abuse. Lacking a present-day draft, the conscientious-objector issue has less relevance, though one Amish hardware store experienced loss of sales in Fall 2001, for their refusal to sell American flags after 9-11. And a judge sentencing a thief in several cases of buggy holdups, reprimanded him for taking advantage of the Amish “who you knew wouldn’t fight back” (Hooper, 2008).

this is hardly conclusive evidence to apply to the *Amish*. In fact, in an article recapping the four-part series on sexual abuse in Anabaptist homes that ran in the local newspapers in summer 2004, one of the journalists wrote, “The Amish seemed to be the most receptive of the conservative churches” in dealing with the issue of abuse (Alexander, 2004).

To complete my contrast with Johnson-Weiner’s work, I found in my previous research among conservative Mennonite women that women’s distinctive clothing and men’s headship over them served as the primary marks of cultural separation, with male-female roles quite stratified in the tradition. Because they accept most modern technology (cars, phones, electricity, even computer but no Internet), female dress and male headship have been made to carry almost the entire burden of cultural separation in such groups. The subordination of women as expressed through their dress functions to maintain order within the conservative Mennonite group and draw boundaries around it. Given that men’s blue-collar work clothing in such communities is undistinguishable from men’s attire outside the denomination, women’s dress and gender roles, with their visible distinctiveness, are paramount to maintaining the denomination's identity, I concluded, as their most visible mark of separation. Thus, at least in theory, this would seem to expose women in the denomination to harsher forms of patriarchy than Amish women. Thus I concur with Johnson-Weiner’s findings (that conservative Mennonite women are more affected by patriarchy than are Amish women) but not with how she arrived at them.

Do we then conclude, as do Schmidt and Olshan, that patriarchy among the Amish is more benign, since both men and women's religious beliefs are "feminized" to some degree, vis-à-vis the larger culture? Anecdotally, while I see some evidence of this in my impressions of strong-minded Amish businesswomen, I prefer to believe that Amish society simply attaches *different* gendered meanings. To give an example, both Amish men *and* women partake of particular qualities that in my white, middle-class Protestant setting would be more typically *masculine* – for instance, a certain forthright bluntness in manner of speaking and respect for hard physical labor, whether gardening (which is Amish women's work) or haying, which Amish women occasionally help with. (Lawn care is also Amish *women's* responsibility, while in most white, middle-class settings, yard work is typically gendered male; see Jenkins, 1994). On the other hand, Amish men and women hold fairly traditional beliefs about separate gendered spheres of influence with women responsible for the domestic sphere, despite some variation in actual practice.

In discussing gender roles at home, Cristal Manning, who has compared conservative Catholic, Jewish, and Evangelical women, makes a useful distinction between what she calls *family headship*, i.e., who has authority at home, and *home care*, i.e., who is responsible for housework and childcare (p. 125). All three groups in Manning's study maintained at least a semblance of male headship, although in each case, home care was shared, to some degree. Likewise, Amish women in my study all professed a language of patriarchy. Yet as Louise Stoltzfus, who was raised Amish, has written, "While [Amish women] give careful lip service to patriarchy, they experience, in

actual practice, something much closer to mutuality” (1998, p. 150). Lois, an informant who is no longer conservative, believes that the quality of a woman's relationship with her husband is the single most important factor influencing conservative Amish or Mennonite women's lives for good or ill. As farmwomen’s historian Mary Neth has written,

[T]he status of women and children within the farm family economy often rested on the quality of their relationship with the men who controlled farm resources. Promoting mutuality was a strategy that encouraged farm survival and improved the status of dependents within farm families. By emphasizing work flexibility, shared responsibilities, and mutual interests, farm people limited the conflicts created by the patriarchal structure of the family and agriculture and created strategies for the survival of family farms (1995, p. 33).

Likewise, while the majority of Lancaster Amish no longer farm, they are still rural people. Promoting mutuality in the family and community offsets some of the understanding about family headship, leading, in effect, to a more benign patriarchy.

Finally, both Manning and Marie Griffith have provocative sections discussing how self-professed conservative women can behave in what appear to be feminist ways. Manning's greatest contribution is her chapter entitled, "Understanding Inconsistency," in which she discusses the fact that so many of her informants seemed to hold seemingly contradictory tensions in tandem. How did they handle this inconsistency around what they said they believed about gender roles (sex-role essentialism and male headship) and

how they lived their lives (by more egalitarian values)? Manning argued that “many people are quite willing to live with some degree of inconsistency so long as their beliefs and practices provide them with a meaning system that is coherent, especially at an emotional level” (1999, pp. 151-152). Griffith's book was helpful for its reminder that, rather than oversimplifying the rude dichotomy of male-patriarchy and female-oppression, “the realities are far more muddled ... women have always carved out spaces for themselves within the social, historical, cultural, and religious structures that constrain them, and have resisted those structures in subtle and unexpected ways”(1997, p. 14). I found this quote to be a helpful reminder of those muddled realities of constraint and resistance that complicate the lives of the women in my study, as well as my own life. Griffith's corrective in this regard served as a useful lens through which to examine the realities and contradictions in the lives of Amish women.

Cultural Drift, Cultural Change

Having examined gender among the Amish more generally, and having noted previously that Amish women's occupational change toward business consequently shifts power dynamics toward somewhat greater responsibility and status, we are ready to look at why such changes are taking place. What factors are at play? The shift away from farming among Lancaster Amish, as men took up other occupations (work in shops or mobile construction crews), did not necessarily dictate that women would do likewise. What led to these changes for women? One theme to explore is the anthropological concept of cultural drift. Anthropologists Koerper and Stickel write that cultural drift can be “conceptualized as a process of culture change” (1980, p. 464) which is analogous to

the process of “genetic drift” in biology (p. 468). In a study of the recurring frequency of baby name distributions in the U.S., Hahn and Bentley (2003) used drift to explain a simple process by which individuals unsystemically copied names from each other.

While drift implies randomness, the process is often less arbitrary. Cultural drift is a means by which small, day-to-day innovations results in long-range directional changes, allowing cultures to change from within. But rather than random drift, I believe what we are seeing with Amish women’s business is more like a persistent cultural current, whose progressive accumulation works toward greater respect and status for women entrepreneurs.

Living Their Way into New Ways of Thinking

I prefer to draw a parallel between the mini-industrial revolution that the Amish are undergoing today with what many Lancaster County Mennonites experienced post-World War II. In that era, Lancaster Mennonites were modernizing (through rural electrification), were beginning the move off the farm, and were encountering the wider world through the media and via postwar relief efforts in Europe. Also at that time, Mennonite women’s roles also widened by virtue of them training for professions outside the home such as teachers, nurses, church and mission workers, both in the U.S. and abroad (see Graybill, 1994). As I have argued in that previous paper, women’s gender roles changed not because of any particular church teachings but in spite of patriarchal church structures. That is, new social practices led to new ways of thinking, not the reverse. Mennonites lived their way into new ways of thinking about women’s roles. Respected historian, former teacher, and elder spokeswoman, A. Grace Wenger, has

described the subtle process of changing roles for women that she noticed in the Mennonite church:

In Lancaster Mennonite Conference, change has come about because people do things and if they aren't stopped they keep on doing them. ...Women would try something, if it wasn't stopped, then it became accepted. At least that's how it was in the past. ... I don't think there was any philosophy of change for the roles of women. It's just that women were doing more and more things and were more and more accepted.

In like manner, I believe that attitudes about appropriate Amish women's roles are changing as women move into and model those new roles. Behavior thus changes belief. Women began businesses at first because of genuine financial need (see the life history in chapter six). As other women modeled their cottage businesses after these fore-runners, such vocations became commonplace. Remember the quote about the two single Old Order women who sought nurses' training: they took the initiative to test the limits of church rules, and their leaders "declined to speak against it." Water-color painter, artist Susie Riehl, whose vocation is unusual among the Amish, is quoted as saying, "They [the Bishops] have not yet said that I can't do this."¹²⁴

In a similar vein, Mennonite historian, Marlene Epp, has argued that what led to the demise of plain dress for Canadian Mennonite women was not any active change in church policy but rather the actual steps that women took in replacing their bonnets with

¹²⁴ Interview with author during Amish women entrepreneurs pre-conference tour, as part of the Conference, "The Quiet in the Land? Women of Anabaptist Traditions in Historical Perspective," held at Millersville University, Millersville, PA.; June 14, 1995.

hats and discarding their head coverings (Epp, 1990, p. 11). Emphasizing the collective power of groups, Catherine Brekus has written, “social historians claim that when large numbers of people make similar decisions about their lives, they set events in motion that have far-reaching consequences – sometimes unwittingly”(2007, p. 18). As women took action and when they were not stopped, their actions became accepted; they created a new social norm.¹²⁵

For Future Research

Through this, and in the preceding bulk of my dissertation, my contribution to the field of Amish Studies should be clear: another step toward gendering a field that has, by and large, not seen the need nor had the will to consider gender as an important axis of analysis. Much more remains to be done. Many elements of a gendered analysis focused on women remain unexplored: concerns related to marriage and the family have been under-researched. Child-rearing and socialization processes, including the crucial but over-looked role played by young women who form the bulk of the teaching staff in private Amish schools, has not been adequately addressed.

One related field suggested by my study would be to investigate the element of class in Amish business entrepreneurship. While fewer Amish women in business supervise employees, many of the larger male enterprises do, thus creating a two-tiered system between owner-managers, and hourly employees. When one considers those Amish still on the farm, who are often rich in land but cash-poor, the element of class has

¹²⁵ This is not unlike how Kraybill describes how change happens within the Amish community more generally: “Because changing the *Ordnung* (set of rule) is difficult, the Amish are slow to outlaw things at first sight. If seen as harmless, a new practice – for example, the use of barbecue grills or trampolines – will drift into use with little ruckus. ... If a member conforms to the symbolic markers of the *Ordnung*, there is considerable ‘breathing space’ in which to maneuver and still appear Amish” (2001, p. 114).

introduced into what was once a class-less Amish society. Thus, the topic of class is also ripe for further study.

My hope is that my present work, which has sought to highlight women and gender, might pique scholarly interest and encourage future scholars of the Amish to pay attention to gender an important and under-theorized angle of research within Amish Studies.

EPILOGUE: Buying a Quilt

It is 6:30 am and I am walking up to the Gordonville fire hall, site of their annual “mud sale,” one in a series of sales to benefit local volunteer fire departments that take place in the early spring, mud season in Lancaster County. While outsiders are welcome, this particular fire hall and its annual sale, located in the heart of the Amish community, is almost entirely organized, staffed, and largely patronized by Amish.

The signboard that I pass on my way in is advertising, “sale day, kitchen help needed, 3 am to 8 am.” While daybreak seems early enough for me – particularly on this grey overcast morning with rain forecasted off and on all day long – I realize that Amish women have been here preparing food for hours.

I ask the 20-something Amish woman who serves me coffee and donuts if she has been here since 3 am. “No,” she laughs, “I only got here at 6.” Some of the seven middle-aged women behind her in the food trailer, who are cooking eggs and ham, were here that early, to ready the pots of homemade chicken corn soup, now simmering on the stove, for later in the day. “Come back around 10 am when the soup’s ready,” my server encourages me.

Inside the fire hall kitchen, which opens at 8 am for hot sandwiches and baked goods, some two dozen Amish women are hard at work. They will rotate in shifts throughout the day, cooking and serving, until food sales close around 4:30 pm. Fifty pie slices of at least a dozen different varieties are displayed for sale, and hundreds more pies wait to be sold – all women’s handiwork.

I head over to the quilt auction, product of thousands more hours of Amish women's work. I wait outside with a few dozen Amish and English women for doors to open as chairs are being set up inside the fire hall. "Are you here to buy a quilt?" I ask the matronly Amish woman next to me.

"No," she says, "but I like to see what's here. Ya know, I made baby quilts for all my 28 grandchildren," she tells me. "The oldest is 15, but the youngest is just four weeks old. I usually live in for the first week or two, to help hold the baby."

The doors open soon after 7 am for browsing the some 600 quilts, hung on racks for viewing, that will be sold throughout the day, beginning at 8 am. "What makes a good quilt?" I ask a nearby Amish woman,

"Tight, small stitching," she answers immediately, "not like this," pointing out a poor example, with wide-spaced stitches that are not completely even. I know how difficult it is to quilt even that, at least without considerable practice, having once tried to quilt a baby comforter with my Mennonite friends that left us with cramped necks, pinpricked fingers, and quilting that wasn't even as good as the bad example she has just shown me.

By contrast, I remember a quilt shop owner who told me that she allowed her girls as toddlers to join Amish quilting bees but with an empty needle, just for practice. Later, her seven-year-old was actually helping to quilt, but pulled out the stitches herself because they didn't measure up.

"What do you look for in a quilt?" I ask an Amish woman who is browsing a rack of quilts with appliquéd patterns sewn on.

“Well, I like these applicated [appliquéd] ones,” she says. “But see, I was looking for the peacock; often those colors take it a different direction.” Clearly, this woman knows quilts, for she can recognize a quilt pattern based on the 1/8 size section of folded quilt that is visible on the rack. Sure enough, this whole row of appliqués has peacocks in the pattern, and some of them introduce another color to the color scheme.

Time passes. I leave for work and when I return later in the day, the mud and puddles are deeper from the steady drizzle. Knots of young Amish girls and boys stand outside in same-sex groups watching the horse auction down the hill where Amish men are crowded.

(When I am passing by I hear the auctioneer describe “an excellent carriage horse, so what if it takes two people to hitch her up,” then lament good-naturedly to the low-bidding crowd, “this bidding could break my heart!” Later, my son tells me excitedly that he could have bought a pony for \$13.)

Back inside the fire hall, the quilt auction is crowded with Amish and English, partly because here are seats out of the rain.

Chatting with a neighbor about quilts, she tells me that quilt prices here are one-third to one-half as expensive as those at the Mennonite Relief Sale in April, another benefit sale. These quilts are certainly cheaper than what is sold in quilt shops, although, of course, shops have overhead to pay.

I remember that a quilt shop owner once told me to beware of quilts bought at mud sale auctions, since that is where they donate their “problem quilts.” As she put it, “I shouldn't be telling you my secrets, but that is sometimes how we get rid of our

“mistakes.” In fact, some of the quilts are marked in the sale booklet as stained or damaged, so there is truth in advertising.

At this sale, all the quilts are donated, most locally made, though some are sent in for sale from out-of-state. And every quilted item sells; the lowest price I see is an unattractive, polyester¹²⁶ pieced runner that sells for \$4. Given that even this piece required many hours of hand labor, I hoped its maker wasn't in the audience to see this low bid.

As a Mennonite on a limited income, I appreciate a good bargain, so I head over to register for a number to bid. The room is crowded with bidders paying for their purchases; Amish and English wait to be served by a dozen calm but tired-looking Amish young men and women at calculators. Out-of-state checks are not accepted, but they are set up to accept credit card transactions for an additional 2 percent fee.

When I return to the quilt auction, a light blue fan-patterned quilt comes up for sale but I am slow to get out my bid number and the gavel hits down. “Sold,” says the auctioneer, and I have lost my chance on this quilt.

“Good you didn't bid on that one,” says the Plain woman sitting next to me, who noticed my attempt.

“Why not?” I ask.

“Machine-stitched,” she informs me.

“How can you tell?”

“The curly-q stitches, you could never do that with hand-stitching.”

¹²⁶ My aversion to polyester is not shared by most Amish, who value its easy care and durability.

“Well, you *could*,” counters the Amish woman sitting next to her, “but you just never would.”

“Why not? I ask.

“Too fancy,” says the Plain woman.

“Too much trouble!” says the Amish woman.

Quilts are unfolded and displayed through a pulley system that hoists each individual quilt, clipped widthwise to a pole, almost like hanging on a clothesline. Three young Amish women on each side alternate clipping, hoisting, releasing and then refolding, bagging and running the quilts to the claim room. They all look a little giddy after some eight hours of quilt selling. When one quilt is clipped lopsided and doesn't unfold properly, and another quilt falls off the clips midway up, they double over with gales of laughter.

For a novice bidder like me, the language of auctioneering is almost incomprehensible (“fifty, seventy-five, fifty, seventy-five, seventy-five, five, five, who'll give seventy-five, now two, two, two, who'll give two [hundred]”), especially when spoken rapid-fire, in a Pennsylvania Dutch accent, with two auctioneer assistants on either side calling “hup” whenever they spot a bid among the 300 people in the audience..

I have deliberately waited until the end of the day, partly to get up my nerve for the daunting process of bidding, and partly so none of the quilt shop owners in my study, had they been present earlier, will still be here to see me buying a quilt instead of from their shops. (One of the participants in my study, bemoaning competition from benefit

auctions like this one, admits that quilts can be \$200 cheaper “if you’re willing to settle for something not quite right; you can’t get exactly what you want.”)

Bidding for my quilt is nerve-wracking. At one point I can’t tell who has the high bid. “What’s it at?” I ask the Amish auctioneer’s assistant. He smiles, snaps his suspenders, and mouths the figure to me. He’s enjoying this, I think to myself, and realize how entertaining an auction can be if you’re not worried about how much you spend. Perhaps this enjoyment value and the bargains to be had, plus the good cause being benefited are why the Amish community owns this sale.¹²⁷

I end up with the last quilt of the day, #629, a traditional Amish pattern of interspersed light and dark fabrics called Sunshine and Shadow. It has been a tough year for me personally, and I love the symbolism.¹²⁸

Having paid for and claimed my quilt, I head outside (the rain has finally stopped) to start the long walk down the country road to where my car is parked, and see a group of Amish women looking east. “Look,” someone points.

I turn to see the most remarkable full-orbed rainbow cutting across the sky – a gift from the sunshine after today’s rain and shadow – and I am content.

¹²⁷ Amish participate in and are helped by volunteer fire companies, as was demonstrated at Nickel Mines, when the first-responders to the scene were Amish and English fireman from the local volunteer firehouse.

¹²⁸ Sunshine & Shadow is a traditional pattern associated with the Amish. As one of my informants told me, “The dark part is the shadow going into your lighter colors that is your sunshine. . . . you can see the light going into dark, dark into light.” According to Sallie, Amish like it for another reason as well. “It’s just a very old traditional pattern and at the same time you could use up lots of little pieces of fabrics. And I remember very well as a young girl when my mother was making new dresses for us or whatever, every little piece of fabric that she would have leftover that was big enough for a quilt patch, she would stick into her scrap box. And in the winter time when she wanted to make a new quilt, she would get out all these pieces and they were always your Amish colors because they were leftover fabrics we wore. She would shade them getting the blues and the navy together, the lights and the darks. It’s a very popular Amish design.”

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