

American Old Order Teachers Write Home from Mexico: Reflections on Gender, Religion and Caregiving

Rebecca Janzen, *University of South Carolina*

Introduction

In the United States, Amish and Old Order Mennonite people are often associated with romance novels, pastoral landscapes, furniture and *rumspringa*.¹ If one is inclined to associate either group of people with travel beyond their 'horse and buggies', it will likely be with couples or families travelling together as plain people on the Amtrak trains that connect Pennsylvania, Ohio and Indiana or with private buses going from these areas to Sarasota, Florida, by train, usually to Tijuana, Mexico, for medical procedures.² These notions are only partially correct: since 2000, young, unmarried women from very conservative Christian groups – the Old Order Amish, New Order Amish and Old Order Mennonites – have travelled to northern Mexico. These women serve as teachers in the schools of the Old Colony Mennonite Church in Mexico, a group that shares many values with the Amish and Old Order Mennonites in the US. These teachers are also

accompanied by other women serving as house sisters, who cook, clean and do laundry for them. Often, older couples, or house parents, accompany these women to take care of their homes as well.³

The teachers, house sisters and house parents, from the US, are part of a North American project with participation also from Canada and Mexico, that aims to reform the Old Colony Mennonites' curriculum, direct new reform-minded schools and train future teachers. This project is primarily driven by women who take ownership over their own lived experiences and live in ways atypical for their cultures.

The Amish and Mennonite women articulate their experiences in Mexico through a literary format known and loved in their communities: letters. Their letters "home" are published in a newsletter called the *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* (OCMS Newsletter).⁴ Some teachers have also contributed to a collective memoir titled *Called to Mexico: Bringing Hope and Literacy to the Old Colony Mennonites*.⁵ One of the teachers, Rachel Miller, has also published her own memoir called *Vision for the Journey: An Amish Schoolteacher's Mission Among the Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico*.⁶

This article researches a selection of these women's letters and memoirs written between 2004 and 2012, places them in their context and seeks to engage with these women's writing in a way that would make sense from their lived experiences. To do so, I survey sociological literature regarding the study of conservative expressions of several religions, and the history of Amish and Mennonites. I then turn to the three generation long US-based Amish and Old Order Mennonites relationship to Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico. With this context in mind, I examine and seek an interpretation of these women's voices. Significantly, their letters are written for a fundraising newsletter, with a particular mission focus, and so highlight the positive aspects of this project. They, thus, also align with some of the negative aspects of missionary history, reflecting a somewhat paternalistic view of the host country and culture, and the participation of missionaries in colonial projects. At the same time, these letters suggest positive change for the women writing. I argue that they illustrate continuity and change between their home communities in the US and host communities in Mexico, and that this analysis can contribute to an overall re-evaluation of the role of women in conservative religious communities.⁷

I make this case by relating the women's letters to their lives, even when they offer up very little in the way of personal

information. I argue that, according to their letters and other reflections, teaching in Mexico has given the women unexpected leadership opportunities. Moreover, I observe that Rachel Miller's memoir, and the house sisters' and teachers' letters show how the Amish and Old Order Mennonite women have expanded their understandings of their own religious traditions as they create new expressions of religious devotion in Mexico. At the same time, I note that these sources also illustrate various ways that the teachers and house sisters' significant emotional labour, in their classrooms and in their homes together in Mexico, means that they experienced continuity between their home in the United States and host communities in Mexico. This is particularly evident in the ways that they describe how they care for one another and for the children in their schools.

Engaging with Conservative Religiosity

I study these teacher's letters with reference to Bagele Chilisa's work, *Indigenous Research Methodologies*, which encourages us to use a community's own language in our research.⁸ Thus, I focus on the Amish and Mennonite women's reflections, in letters and individual and collective memoirs. I also follow anthropologist Saba Mahmood's caution against generalizations of Muslim women in Islamic revival movements. She notes that women who wear a headscarf and modest clothing may not think in the way outsiders would expect.⁹ Indeed, the Amish and Mennonite women's letters and memoir exemplify what journalists and scholars have noted, that women in more conservative religious denominations do not have inherently less power compared to women in more liberal groups.¹⁰ Victor Agadjanian and Scott T. Yabiku's sociological study, "Religious Belonging, Religious Agency and Women's Autonomy in Mozambique," examines multiple Christian-affiliated religious groups. They argue that in these situations, "women negotiate and redefine gender roles and inequalities while staying within the boundaries of the church." Outsiders may assume that these women are subordinate; yet, these scholars attest that women have found meaningful religious experiences and gained social power.¹¹

My article focuses on similar questions by analyzing the US Amish and Old Order Mennonite women's perspectives on their experiences in Mexico as shown in their letters home. As I am not a member of either religious group, I heed the wisdom of others who have researched women's roles in Amish and Mennonite

communities. Diane Zimmerman Umble's "Who Are You? The Identity of the Outsider Within," for instance, claims that scholarly representations of Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities can be rhetorically violent. Umble argues that this violence "is heightened for [portrayals of] Old Order women, who are dismissed as stereotypically oppressed victims of the patriarchy and also viewed as relics of a rural past."¹² I thus strive to analyze these women's self-portrayals fairly and "the ways [the women] exercise their influence and creativity within perceived conformity."¹³ In other words, I use the women's writing to explore the ways that they relate their new experiences in Mexico to their lives in the US. In a similar way, scholar Beth E. Graybill confronts this dilemma in her ethnographic study of women's clothing in a group of conservative Mennonite women in Pennsylvania. Graybill acknowledges her own perspective and explains that she "labored to make respect and even-handedness [her] guiding principles."¹⁴ This scholarship reminds us to place the women's writing in their own context and analyze it on their own terms to reach conclusions that would make sense to them.¹⁵

History of the Amish and the Mennonites

I assume a basic familiarity with these US-based religious groups; although the Amish and Old Order Mennonites have different histories, both send their children to religiously oriented private schools,¹⁶ and use the horse-and-buggy mode of transportation.¹⁷ Old Colony Mennonites in northern Mexico, although being car-driving people, can, as fellow-plain people, identify with groups that use the 'horse-and-buggy' form of transportation and reject electricity.¹⁸ Ironically, in some ways, the Old Colony group in Mexico is a more "modernized" group than the US group which has come to reform them, but both emphasize simplicity and communitarian cohesiveness.¹⁹

Indeed, the Old Colony Mennonites, Old Order Mennonites and Amish, should not be solely defined by its use of technology. They also share a religious outlook. The most important aspect of each group is that they follow God as a *Gemeinde* [church community].²⁰ Indeed, as Wendy Crocker goes on to explain about Old Colony Mennonites in Ontario, "salvation was and is bestowed on the colony [or community] as a group and not to the individual. Thus, life on earth [is] tied directly to ... the body of believers."²¹ Life on earth must be lived in community in order to move on to heaven in the afterlife. The community hopes for this salvation,

which ensures passage to a more positive afterlife, but seeks to avoid being presumptuous. This outlook is similar to the Amish or Old Order Mennonite belief system and practice. To quote the Amish expression, "We ... have what we call the hope of salvation."²² This hoped-for salvation correlates with these communities' high value on humility, which we see in many of the letters from Mexico. The New Order Amish differ slightly from the Old Order Amish in the US and Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico. The New Order Amish separated from the Old Order Amish in the 1960s in order to emphasize the role of the individual in faith formation to a greater extent and to hold community members to stricter standards of behavior. The New Order Amish have Sunday Schools for children and youth and are engaged in more missionary work than the other groups because they emphasize 'assurance of salvation,' that is, certainty regarding their salvation.

The groups in the US are far from homogeneous. Most, but not all, speak Pennsylvania Dutch and send their children to parochial schools. Some are more familiar with German than others. However, most of the teachers do come from what historian Steven M. Nolt calls "more progressive Amish settlements." In his survey of these teachers he notes that places "such as Nappanee and LaGrange, Indiana; Lancaster, Pennsylvania... and segments of Holmes County, Ohio are overrepresented, while highly traditional and especially conservative Amish churches show no interest."²³ Even though former teachers offer public presentations on their experiences throughout these areas, most young women find it hard to convince their parents to let them travel to Mexico.²⁴

Schools are part of both the US and Mexican-based groups' communal venture, as they guide their children into adult participation in community life. Educational scholar Mark Dewalt notes that in the United States, Amish parochial schools, and I would argue Old Order Mennonite schools as well, provide Christian education and basic education at the same time.²⁵ Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers are primarily women, and they play a foundational role in socializing children, educating them, and bringing them into religious life, although this work is undervalued and underpaid.²⁶ Conversely, in Mexico, while the Old Colony Mennonite teachers in Mexico are mostly married men, they hold a similar view on education. Their aim within the private schools is to ensure that Old Colony Mennonite "colony thinking and traditions are carried into the future."²⁷ These schools in Mexico, however, are typically based on rote memorization of the Bible and catechism; as the US teachers put it, this system may not always have the desired end result of adults who understand their

religious commitment in the same way as someone more familiar with these texts. This is where the Amish and Old Order Mennonites begin their relationship with Old Colony Mennonites.

Contact between Amish and Mennonites in Mexico

The school teachers program was not the first interaction that US Amish had with Mexico or Old Colony Mennonites. Formal and informal connections between these conservative religious groups in the US and Mexico have occurred since 1941, the year the conscientious objectors in the United States were first enrolled in Civilian Public Service. At that point, several Old Order Mennonite and Old Order Amish families, who refused to enlist in neither the military nor register as conscientious objectors with the government, moved to northern Mexico. These families settled near the Old Colony Mennonites and for a time, sent their children to Old Colony Mennonite schools.²⁸ Other connections occurred as well. For instance, Amos B. Hoover, an Old Order Mennonite man from Pennsylvania, corresponded with an Old Colony family in Mexico as early as the 1950s, when he was a young man.²⁹ In 1984 and 2007, Amos and his wife Nora Hoover cemented the bonds of friendship with these families by travelling to Mexico.³⁰

What emerged in the 1990s and early 2000s was a very different set of interactions. Nolt explains that in 1995, the Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) led a tour of US Amish and Mennonites of Old Colony communities in northern Mexico.³¹ In this way, MCC felt that its Amish donors living in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana could learn about religious groups somewhat similar to their own.³² Each of the parties – the Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico, MCC and MCC's Amish donors from the US – expressed appreciation for this visit.³³ In particular, the Amish men spoke of similarities with Old Colony Mennonite people. However, the reports on the trip suggest that the Amish men expressed concern about Old Colony schools but were impressed by the schools and materials used by another group in the Mexico, the somewhat more progressive *Kleine Gemeinde* who had their own church-run schools.³⁴ The Amish people then felt compelled to do something for the Old Colony Mennonites. At home in the US, Old Order Mennonites agreed to join the effort, stating that: "Surely there must be a way of retaining and strengthening that which is good and try to improve..."³⁵

The Amish and Old Order initiative coincided with a reform impulse already in existence in Mexico. Mennonites in Manitoba

Colony, the oldest and largest of numerous Mennonite colonies in Mexico, and communities around the nearby city of Cuauhtémoc, had a number of committees that oversaw social service projects, and according to local understanding, these committees were instrumental in rethinking education. Part of this development was due to the collaboration of work by MCC-sponsored teachers' workshops, which brought Canadian teachers to Mexico. Another large part, I would argue, is the work of Canadian schoolteacher, George Reimer, now resident in Chihuahua, in simply promoting alternative ways of teaching that do not aim to change Old Colony understandings of the world.³⁶ In any case, by 1998, according to Gracia Schlabach, "a School Committee ... of eight visionary Old Colony men was formed" in Mexico. This informal Old Colony School Committee sought educational reform and emphasized "grade levels and used textbooks for standard school subjects but still upheld the religious training so essential to Old Colony culture."³⁷ Schlabach overlooks the ongoing developments in the Old Colony schools in Mexico, advanced by these MCC workshops as well as by Reimer.

The first Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers from the United States arrived in Mexico in 2000 to build on this impulse for reform. The teachers were between 18 and 60 years old, but most were young, single women in their 20s. Before their arrival in Mexico, they would typically not have met people outside of their own religious group; that is, Amish women would not have spent as much time with Old Order Mennonite women or vice-versa, because they lived in different areas and had social lives strongly tied to their family and religious community. They usually taught in Mexico for one to five years after several years in Amish or Old Order Mennonite parochial schools in the US.³⁸ They possessed what Dewalt describes as "the general consensus of what the Amish [or Old Order Mennonite] community believes are qualifications for becoming a good ... teacher. A good teacher will be educated, modest in dress and speech, able to discipline in a fair and equitable manner, courteous to students and visitors, and Christian in word and deed."³⁹ This combination of religious character and teaching gifts allowed them to teach students in religious life and in core curriculum.

The Amish and Old Order Mennonites, even though not fluent in German, the language of instruction, or Low German, the Old Colony Mennonites' primary means of communication, overcame the linguistic barrier by being uniquely positioned to teach in Old Colony Mennonite schools.⁴⁰ Nolt summarizes the Amish perspective, stating that in an ideal scenario, a teacher "arrives in

a cooperating colony, instructs for several weeks [in limited German] with the Old Colony teacher observing, assisting, and slowly taking more responsibility until the Amish teacher turns the class entirely over to the Old Colony teacher for ten days.”⁴¹ They, thus, sought to affect reform but without changing the curriculum’s foundation: the Bible, the Old Colony hymnbook and Old Colony catechism.

At the same time, their letters and individual and collective memoirs exhibit a certain level of colonialism. According to teacher Mary Stoltzfus’s 2008 report, the US teachers aimed to “nurtur[e] the school toward orderliness and teaching of good values and study habits.”⁴² They, thus, introduced new ideas like report cards, tests and achievement charts and challenged what they understood as the Old Colony seating arrangement, where younger children and those with the most difficulties had traditionally been seated at the back of the classroom.⁴³ In her 2006 letter, teacher Esther Coblenz reflects on the teachers’ work outside of the classroom as well. She explains that they instituted organized games on the playground, and implies that she and other teachers taught the Old Colony children how to play.⁴⁴ This attitude seems to stem from their experience in the US, where Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers have been in charge of recess and must see to it that children play in specific ways; this practice is contrasted to the more unstructured and unsupervised play among Old Colony children in Mexico.

In addition to this task, Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers undertook other reforms of Old Colony practices in Mexico that surprised them. A 2010 letter from Miriam Yoder, who first went to Mexico as a prospective teacher, exemplifies these differences. She notes that she “didn’t see any big houses like we have here in the states [sic]. If we’d do with 50% less... we’d still be rich.”⁴⁵ Her letter shows that while she clearly appreciates her material possessions in the US, she encourages her home community to live more simply. Yoder may emphasize this simplicity for the purposes of her sponsoring organization or to encourage Amish people to return to their roots, which encourage humility. Rachel Miller’s 2008 memoir echoes Yoder’s remarks: “There are many ... here with a lot less than what we call a necessity... A kitchen sink is a prized possession. A white crayon is a treasure.”⁴⁶ In the US, the Amish might have had less furniture and fewer technological innovations than their neighbours, but in comparison to the average Old Colony home in Mexico, the Amish had the relative privilege and comfort.⁴⁷ Perhaps the US teachers were overstating the situation in Mexico, but my own casual

observations of Manitoba Colony suggest that there is significant wealth here and in other Mennonite colonies in Mexico, even though some colonies distribute their resources more equitably than others. Clear differences exist in roads, schools and church buildings between villages in the same colony.⁴⁸ Likely, the authors emphasized these differences for their audience.

The teachers focused on other differences between the US and Mexican Mennonite schools, and no doubt, they did so for the purposes of their fundraising publication. Rachel Anne Beiler, who taught in Mexico in 2011, observes that the quantity and quality of material goods available to everyday people differ significantly between the two countries. In a 2011 letter she states that the teachers' apartment in Mexico was not as well furnished as she might have hoped: "From the outside it doesn't look like much; just a long, low, shabby-looking building. Inside however, it's nice and very Americanized! Our pantry, however, is unique, with shelves right in the kitchen."⁴⁹ In her 2004 letter, LeAnna Miller describes another situation, where the teachers lived in the same building as the school. She explains that the "three of us teachers here each have our own bedroom on the upstairs level. In each bedroom, they put a bed and a little table. There's also a closet with an overhead shelf in each room. A large 'Spazier Stube' (visiting room) and bathroom are also upstairs. On the ground level, we have an L-shaped kitchen and a small pantry ..."⁵⁰ Beiler and Miller's letters, as well as Rachel Miller's memoir, show that the women were trying to deal with their new context through the lens of what they and their supporters would understand. Beiler also tries to make light of her situation by joking that "for lack of chairs, [fellow teacher] Martha [Ann Shirk]'s office chair is a five gallon bucket. Amazingly, it's adjustable! You can put a pillow on top to make it higher. We also took a wardrobe drawer and turned it upside down, now it's a desk. Little luxuries!"⁵¹ This sense of humor, and reference to objects such as a bucket and a pillow, that people at home would understand, suggests that Beiler and her fellow teachers and house sisters sought for ways to make their experiences understandable back home.

Unexpected Leadership in Mexico

The teachers' reflections also point to new and unexpected responsibilities for women. The experiences that they record in *Called to Mexico*, *Vision for the Journey* or in the *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* show that teaching offered them, as

unmarried women in conservative religious communities, opportunities to travel, develop school materials, and try new things. The context of this choice may be that teachers in the US are generally undervalued and, in particular in Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities which offer less remuneration than do public schools. There are also few opportunities for the women to affect change within their communities. Thus, some women travel to Mexico to seek adventure within a culturally appropriate framework. Elizabeth Gingerich's 2012 letter, for instance, explains how and why she became a teacher. In December 2011 she received a phone call from the Old Colony Mennonite Support Network board, concerned about finding teachers for the "new" schools in the spring. Gingerich explains that she accepted because she "had no paying job, so it definitely looked inviting from that aspect, plus adventuresome!"⁵² Others, like Rachel Miller, note that they were simply "called to teach in Mexico." The call from the board confirmed what this woman sensed was the divine call for her life, a calling that "has been and still is a great challenge."⁵³

Both those teachers who dreamed about being in Mexico, and teachers who arrived by chance, describe their difficulties and the ways that they tried to adapt to Old Colony culture with a certain bravado. For example, they speak about the challenge of developing a new curriculum. This scenario follows what historian Marlene Epp observes about Canadian female Mennonite missionaries in foreign countries, places in which women often had more opportunities than they did at home.⁵⁴ Epp explains that women were leaders in their mission work long before they could be in official leadership at home, and that there were more opportunities in church work than in their insular communities. These new roles were downplayed on trips home where women missionaries could only report on their work, while male missionaries could preach sermons based on their foreign experiences.⁵⁵ Anthropologist Doreen Helen Klassen's descriptions of single women in Mexico who worked in Manitoba Colony's *Altenheim*, an interdenominational senior's home, reflect a similar experience. These women gained significant independence through their work: it afforded them opportunities for further education and training as well as homeownership even though they were living in ways atypical for their culture.⁵⁶

In her 2010 letter, LeAnna Miller, who was a teacher and then a school principal at various points between 2002 and 2011, reflects on her work in reforming Old Colony Mennonite curriculum and workbooks. She mentions the dearth of materials available in

Mexico and states that there is much work to be done. “Our goal is to someday have the Old Colony Mennonites being able to teach alone. In order to reach that goal, we have been working on helping make some extra curriculum items. A number of these items will include detailed teacher instructions.” As she sees it, her role in informal teacher training in Mexico could well leave a legacy for future teachers. Her letter reviews various projects and notes that “It has meant extra hours at times for the teachers who work on this along with a busy schedule otherwise. But visions of the future fruits give the needed inspiration to continue.”⁵⁷ It is clear that LeAnna Miller was committed to the project’s goal of helping children learn to read rather to memorize. This commitment in Mexico had given her a greater role than she might have had as a teacher in Amish parochial schools in the US; in Mexico, she was farther away from religious leaders of her own community, allowing her the freedom to try new things.

This sense of purpose and responsibility was important because sometimes new teachers were thrust into situations where they were suddenly in charge. Ella Nolt, an Old Order Mennonite woman, went to Mexico as a teacher in the fall of 2008 and throughout that school term worked closely with two other teachers from the US. Then, in the spring, she was the only US teacher. A 2009 letter to the OCMS newsletter relates her anxieties: “suddenly I was in charge. It was rather scary – suppose I make the wrong decisions because I don’t know enough about the Old Colony customs and they will be offended? On the other hand maybe I am too scared to do anything and I’ll be of no use at all?” Nolt uses a humble rhetoric to appeal to her supporters’ values and explain the unusual circumstance in which she, as a woman, took leadership to advance a school reform project. Evidently the project’s success depended on good relationships, meaning that she could not go against social norms in Mexico. She concludes her letter by thanking her house sisters for their support and people at home for their prayers.⁵⁸ These reflections illustrate women who surpassed some stereotypes. The teachers’ letters, which were written to the home communities in a fundraising medium, were constructed within existing paradigms to seek the emotional, as well as financial, support of their home communities as they embarked on these new ventures.

Renewed Religious Devotion

Reflections on teaching in Mexico also show that the women experienced new forms of religious devotion. They had the opportunity to reflect on the positive aspects of their own culture, articulate new developments in their understanding of their faith in God and use this reflection and articulation to transform the schools in which they taught. Mary Stoltzfus, who taught in Mexico for multiple periods between 2005 and 2011, lauds Amish culture, which, we assume, would be helpful in the fundraising aspect of the newsletter. One of her letters from 2009 asks those who support Old Colony Mennonite school reform to “give thanks for the privileges we as Amish have – an established school system, for bishops who care about and enforce church standards, for the positive changes our youth make, for a sound family structure, and many more things we take too much for granted.”⁵⁹ This letter implies that teaching in another context has helped Stoltzfus gain a new appreciation for her own culture. She also implies that in Mexico, Old Colony Mennonites do not have bishops who consistently enforce standards outlined in their catechism, and that Old Colony families often struggle. Rachel Miller gives as an example a family in which the father was a “drunkard and his wife and children ... are said to have nothing to eat except what others share with them.”⁶⁰ Erma Miller offers her highly optimistic solution to these issues in a letter from 2004. She writes that once Old Colony Mennonites are able to better read and understand their German Bibles, they will solve these problems. In her view, “If they do not understand the Scriptures, what do they reach for when they need help? (Such as when they are into drugs, alcohol or are battling suicidal thoughts?) We need to help open the door to the real life – life in Christ. This brings a whole new world to them.”⁶¹ Clearly, she believes that she has this type of life, allowing her to deal with problems as they arise so that she can extend this life to others. Her letter suggests that Old Colony people cannot read their Bibles, and that if they can, they are not interpreting them correctly. It also implies that she believes that the Amish do, and that as a result, their communities do not have these problems.⁶² Similarly, Mary Zook concludes that she is in the right place to serve others. In her view, “One of our greatest missions here is to dilute the misery of the world,” in other words, to confront the difficult economic circumstances of others.⁶³ She encounters this reality in the school reform project and is eager to communicate it to supporters who may wish to join this project.

The Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers' letters and reflections also articulate an increased reliance on prayer and on specific passages from the Bible. This development follows sociologist Cory Anderson's argument that in Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities women are offered specific markers of devotion, even when they are not granted formal leadership opportunities.⁶⁴ Rachel Miller concludes her memoir by thanking "God for his sufficient grace and for providing a clear vision for the journey."⁶⁵ Almost every letter in the OCSN newsletters echoes this rhetoric of humility: this language includes prayers, meaningful Bible verses or expressions of a new reliance on God. Elsie Yoder, who taught in Mexico from 2005 to 2010, writes the following to supporters in 2006: "God is my refuge and strength, and ever present help in trouble. Psalms 46:1. These words often come to mind when at times we struggle with whatever it might be ... Loving children who at times need help and guidance, wishing to be with family, but yet we're so far away."⁶⁶ Evidently, reading the Bible and remembering verses she learned as a child was comforting. She uses a common sign-off in Amish publications, "Only me," seemingly demonstrating a belief that God was working through her and that she had gained new faith as a result. Many sections of *Called to Mexico* echo these remarks. Mary Zook explains that teaching in Mexico was difficult for her. At certain times, she "need[ed] an extra dose of prayer support and total reliance on a strength not my own. Fear of the unknown threatens to override." She experienced a perplexing new reality in Mexico and was helped by her faith and the Bible verses she had committed to memory buoyed her spirits. She reminds herself and her supporters that "'God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind' (II Timothy 1:7)" This extra dose of encouragement allowed her to reflect that "The presence of God was felt, and the prayer support of the faithful. Praise His name!"⁶⁷ These expressions of personal difficulty echo what Epp observes about female missionaries' narratives, that they were allowed to be exhausted by their work through the paradigm of self-denying service.⁶⁸ The way Rachel Miller, Erma Miller, Elsie Yoder and Mary Zook narrate their experiences shows that it also led them to new ways to express their religious devotion.

Continuity between the US and Mexico

The letters and reflections also highlight that the women did more than transform the Old Colony Mennonite schools. They also

maintained continuity between their home and host communities by performing valued caretaking work or affective and emotional labour. According to feminist scholar Johanna Oksala, the labour of human contact and interaction is most often produced by women.⁶⁹ Suzannah Weiss adds that women are particularly adept in “the exertion of energy for the purpose of addressing people’s feelings, making people comfortable, or living up to social expectations.”⁷⁰ For the Old Order Mennonite and Amish women this included several of the tasks Weiss outlines, such as keeping a living space neat, providing guests with food, and keeping the peace with cohabitants.⁷¹

In fact, some of the Amish and Old Order women participated in the school reform project exclusively in this caretaking capacity by dedicating themselves exclusively to homemaking in a role called “house sisters.” Their performance of such a role may also have appealed to supporters who were used to women performing domestic and emotional labour in their communities. A letter by Ruby Zehr, a house sister in 2009 and 2010, shows the importance of this caretaking role. She encourages “anyone to step forward and take the challenge to be ... house keepers [sisters]. It encourages the teachers to have someone to just listen to their frustrations and concerns.”⁷² The house sisters’ reports also acknowledge that this was a difficult task. In a 2009 letter Marie Kauffman almost denies her own hard work as she states: “There are some challenges for the *Haus Schwester* [house sister] too. But of course not like having the heavy load that the teachers carry.”⁷³ Lydia Bontrager echoes Kauffman’s self-effacement, saying that she only came to Mexico as a house sister and that she “helped out here and there.”⁷⁴ At the same time, as longtime teacher Elsie Martin (2009-present) explains in a 2010 submission, she and her fellow teachers, Mary Stoltzfus, Gracia Schlabach and Nora Troyer, felt “pampered” by house sisters Martha Shirk and Arlene Zimmerman.⁷⁵ This emotional work was important to these women and, clearly, both the teachers and US-based supporters understood its value.

Teachers also frame their own work as caretaking. This follows what Dewalt claims about most Amish teachers in the US, that they take their responsibility of education seriously. Indeed, when “asked what they like best about teaching, teachers usually indicate the positive interactions and associations that they build with the scholars [students],” and many state that the children are their “greatest joy.”⁷⁶ The same is true of many Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers in Mexico. Rachel Miller reflects on a single day where she “taught math and reading, helped Alwin

Friesen and Corny Wiebe, settled fights.” After school was over, she visited with her neighbours and met her students’ parents.⁷⁷ Just one day seemed taxing on many levels, like teaching anywhere. Mary Zook’s 2004 letter describes the students’ trajectory in school in the Las Bombas Colony: “First it was fascinating to just page through and look at the pictures, but some have now discovered the pleasure of reading. To us, that is truly a reward!”⁷⁸ She seems to appeal to her supporters at home who shared her satisfaction of teaching children to read. LeAnna Miller’s letter from the same year would agree with Zook. She writes that, “Seeing the joy they have in learning makes many of our hurdles dwindle in size.” The same letter gives examples of this joy, including of one boy telling his mother he was excited about next day’s spelling test!⁷⁹ In a note two years later, Esther Coblenz, expresses appreciation for her students’ enthusiasm: “Something they often say is ‘Ich liebe die Schule.’ (I love school).” This love went both ways as Coblenz’s letter adds that: “It is a pleasure to teach children who appreciate school and are excited about learning.”⁸⁰ There seems to be a combination of love for children and a love for learning for many of the teachers. As Mary Stoltzfus states, “Our desire is to love these children unconditionally and respect the [Old Colony Mennonite] teachers.”⁸¹ This emphasis on love and pleasure, even when it came from a somewhat paternalistic standpoint, maintained continuity between the teachers’ home communities in the US and their experience in Mexico.

The teachers’ sense of caretaking is particularly evident in the ways they describe teaching children with learning disabilities. In one colony, Nueva Holanda, they began a special education classroom, in line with the development of special education classrooms in Amish schools in the US.⁸² Lizzie Hershberger, who served as a teacher from 2009 to 2011, states that “At first we thought, with some help, the slow learners would be in the regular classroom again, but we soon discovered most times it doesn’t work that way.” She adds that the school, like the Amish schools in the US, includes children with disabilities in activities with other children whenever possible, such as catechism, devotions and recess.⁸³ This means that “They feel more like a part of the big group.” Clearly, the teachers were concerned for the wellbeing of the group, as well as for particular students. Hershberger also elaborates on the time spent with one particular student who found reading especially challenging; as she did not think that the student would be in school for very long, she felt it was “important to teach him as much about the Bible as possible.”⁸⁴ These letters

support the idea that teachers were involved in important emotional labour or caretaking work in the special needs classroom and with other students. This approach to teaching, along with the willingness with which some women performed hard work as house sisters, speaks to the importance of emotional labour in their communities. In spite of taking on new responsibilities and expressing personal devotion in different ways, the women maintained a sense of continuity between their homes in the US and their experience teaching in Mexico.

Conclusion

The project to reform Old Colony Mennonite schools, then, has been the outgrowth of three quarters of a century of contact between conservative religious groups in the US and in Mexico. In the past two decades, the Amish and Old Order Mennonite teachers and house sisters have written letters to their supporters, penned a memoir, and contributed to a collective memoir, *Called to Mexico*. They had little experience outside of their home communities prior to traveling to Mexico, and their writing exhibits some paternalistic attitudes towards Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico. It also emphasizes the differences between the US Old Orders and the Mexican Old Colonists, no doubt, to garner financial support and prayers from their home communities. At the same time, spending time in Mexico influenced the women's religious lives. Their letters also show that they linked their challenges to experiences at home by continuing to value caretaking. As the house sisters and teachers leave their homes for opportunities in Mexico, some aspects of their lives may change, but the women remain grounded in their own rich traditions.

Notes

- ¹ These associations were some of the first hits in a google search on April 4, 2017. Those who travel to Mexico for medical procedures come from a range of affiliations and have done so for many years. They usually travel to Tijuana because of the lower cost of treatment and wider availability of some procedures and pharmaceuticals in Mexico. For more information on the US obsession with Amish romance novels and Amish culture, see Valerie Weaver-Zercher's *The Thrill of the Chaste: The Allure of Amish Romance Novels* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2013).

- ² I would like to thank the Kreider Fellowship at Elizabethtown College for the time and space to write this article, and Jeff Bach, the director of the Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, as well as the rest of the Young Center. I would also like to thank Amos Hoover at the Muddy Creek Farm Archive, Donald R. Kraybill for introducing me to this archive, and Rachel Grove Rohrbaugh, the archivist at Elizabethtown College.
- ³ This is an important difference in education among Old Colony Mennonites – where most of the teachers are men – and Old Order Mennonites and Amish, where most of the teachers are women. As far as I am aware, only two single men, Aaron Hershberger and Delbert Yoder, have taught in Mexico through the Old Colony Mennonite Support (OCMS) network. Men in several couples, Andrew and Kathy Miller, Alva and Elnora Hochstetler, Ben and Esther Troyer, Merle and Rachel Troyer, and Marlin and Savannah Troyer, have also taught through OCMS. To the best of my knowledge, they have not written letters in the newsletters or reflections in *Called to Mexico*. For more information about teachers', house parents' or house teachers' dates of service in Mexico see *Called to Mexico: Bringing Hope and Literacy to the Old Colony Mennonites* (Walnut Creek, OH: Carlisle Printing and Old Colony Mennonite Support, 2011), 396-401.
- ⁴ Letters are a significant component of Amish life; see for example the weekly Amish newspaper, *Die Botschaft* [*The News* or *The Message*]. The newsletter was initially called the *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter*.
- ⁵ The book is, as Steven M. Nolt explains, "a compilation of many short essays, some anonymously authored and others with attributed writers, some original pieces, and others reprinted from newsletters," "Amish Stories," 13-14n29. I provide authors or section titles whenever they were available.
- ⁶ Another important example of a female teacher's agency, creative curriculum ideas and communication with supporters in the US is Ella Nolt's *Zug nach Mexiko: Die Geschichte von Judith Bergen/Train to Mexico: The Story of Judith Bergen* (Sugar Creek, OH: Carlisle Printing, 2014).
- ⁷ See for example Elizabeth E. Brusco's *The Reformation of Machismo: Evangelical Conversion and Gender in Colombia* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1993), which discusses the role of women in Protestant churches in Colombia. Jennifer E. Heath's *The Veil: Women Writers on its History, Lore, and Politics* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), discusses women and head coverings in a range of religious traditions.
- ⁸ Bagele Chilisa, *Indigenous Research Methodologies* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2012), 15-20.
- ⁹ Saba Mahmood, *Politics of Piety: Islamic Revival and the Feminist Subject* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005, rev. 2012), 153-155.
- ¹⁰ Rosemary Radford Ruether, "The Feminist Critique in Religious Studies," *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 100:2 (2017): 89-103; Tamara Van Dyken, "Retrospective on Rosemary Radford Ruether's 'The Feminist Critique in Religious Studies,'" *Soundings: An Interdisciplinary Journal* 100:2 (2017): 104-111.
- ¹¹ Victor Agdajanian and Scott T. Yabiku. "Religious Belonging, Religious Agency, and Women's Autonomy in Mozambique." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 54:3 (2015): 461-475.
- ¹² Diane Zimmerman Umble, "Who Are You? The Identity of the Outsider Within," in *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*, ed.

- Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble and Steven D. Reschly (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 48.
- ¹³ Umble, "Who are You," 49.
- ¹⁴ Beth E. Graybill, "'To Remind Us of Who We Are': Multiple Meanings of Conservative Women's Dress," in *Strangers at Home: Amish and Mennonite Women in History*, ed. Kimberly D. Schmidt, Diane Zimmerman Umble and Steven D. Reschly (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 57.
- ¹⁵ I had the opportunity to meet with a former teacher. My observations have been shaped by her contributions.
- ¹⁶ For more information about the conflict around education see Robyn Sneath's "Whose children are they? A Transnational Minority Religious Sect and Schools as Sites of Conflict in Canada, 1890-1922," *Paedagogica Historica* 53:1-2 (2017): 93-106.
- ¹⁷ For more information about these religious groups see Donald B. Kraybill's *Concise Encyclopedia of Amish, Brethren, Hutterites and Mennonites* (Baltimore The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2010).
- ¹⁸ There is a small community of horse-and-buggy driving Old Colony Mennonites in Chihuahua in the Sabinal colony and much larger horse-and-buggy communities in the Mexican state of Campeche. The teachers from the US are not involved with them.
- ¹⁹ For more information about the Old Colony Mennonite migration history see Harry Leonard Sawatzky, *They Sought a Country: Mennonite Colonization in Mexico* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971); Calvin Wall Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites: Dilemmas of Ethnic Minority Life* (Baltimore, MD: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1969) or Royden Loewen, *Village among Nations: "Canadian" Mennonites in a Transnational World, 1916-2006* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013).
- ²⁰ Redekop, *The Old Colony Mennonites*, 31.
- ²¹ Wendy A. Crocker, "More than A, B, C: Old Colony Mennonites and the Challenges of Ontario Public Education Policy," *Transnational Social Review* 3:2 (2013): 195.
- ²² Louise Stoltzfus, *Traces of Wisdom: Amish Women and the Pursuit of Life's Simple Pleasures* (New York: Hyperion, 1998), 131.
- ²³ Steven M. Nolt, "Amish Stories, Images, and Identities: Two Windows and a Mirror on Contemporary Culture," *The Conrad Grebel Review* 33:1 (2015)," 16.
- ²⁴ For more information, see for example Steven M. Nolt and Thomas J. Meyers' *Plain Diversity: Amish Cultures and Identities* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007).
- ²⁵ Mark Dewalt, *Amish Education in the United States and Canada* (Toronto: Rowman and Littlefield, 2006), 26. For more information about Amish education see for example Karen Johnson-Weiner, *Train Up a Child: Old Order Amish and Mennonite Schools* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2007) and Sara E. Fisher and Rachel K. Stahl, *The Amish School*, rev. ed. (Intercourse, PA: Good Books, 1997). John A. Hostetler and Gertrude Enders Huntington, *Amish Children: Education in the Family, School, and Community*, 2nd ed. (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), is one of the earliest resources on this topic.
- ²⁶ For more information on teacher salaries see Dewalt, *Amish Education*, 125; for information about salaries in the state of Ohio, for example, see "K-12

- Salary,” *The Buckeye Institute*, 2018, https://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/data/teacher_salary.
- ²⁷ Crocker, “More than A, B, C,” 199.
- ²⁸ They eventually established a small settlement of their own but abandoned it and returned to the US in 1946. For more information see Lester K. Burkholder, *Pennsylvania Mennonites in Mexico: A History of Four Lancaster County Mennonite Families’ Pilgrimage to Mexico During World War II, 1942-1946* (Morgantown, PA: Masthof Press, 1998).
- ²⁹ Amos B. Hoover, in discussion with the author, 1 March 2017, Muddy Creek Farm Library, Ephrata PA. Evidence of this correspondence is also available in the Isaac Dyck Collection of the Muddy Creek Farm Library, Ephrata, PA. It is worth noting that Hoover is not a horse-and-buggy driving Mennonite even though he identifies as Old Order. He belongs to the car-driving Old Order Weaverland Mennonite Conference, akin to the Markham Mennonites in Canada.
- ³⁰ Amos B. Hoover, “Are Old Order Mennonites and Old Colony Mennonites Related?” 1984. Old Colony Mennonite files, Donald B. Kraybill collection, Hess Archives, Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown, PA.
- ³¹ For more information on MCC see *A Table of Sharing: Mennonite Central Committee and the Expanding Networks of Mennonite Identity*, ed. Alain Epp Weaver (Telford, PA: Cascadia Publishing, 2011).
- ³² Nolt, “Amish Stories,” 13.
- ³³ MCC News Service, “Amish Find Similarities, Differences with Old Colony Mennonites on Mexico Trip.” *Mennonite Weekly Review* March 2, 1995, n. p. Clipping in Isaac Dyck Collection, Muddy Creek Farm Library, Ephrata, PA. German language sources include Rosabel Fast, “Amische besuchen Mennoniten in Mexiko” [“Amish visit Mennonites in Mexico”], *Deutsch-Mexikanische Rundschau [German-Mexican Magazine]*, 2 February 1995, 3. “Amische Sitzung nach Besuch in Mexiko” [“Amish Meeting after Visiting Mexico”], *Die Mennonitische Post [The Mennonite Post]* 7 Aug 1998: 16.
- ³⁴ The *Kleine Gemeinde* are a religious group with greater interaction with technology and a more evangelical focus than the Old Colony church. They dress distinctively, although some of the dress markers will be less noticeable than Old Colony head coverings or dresses. For more information see Crocker, “Schooling across Contexts,” 170. For a detailed description of the church group see Royden Loewen, *Diaspora in the Countryside: Two Mennonite Communities and Mid-Twentieth-Century Rural Disjuncture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2006), 10-11.
- ³⁵ CF, “Old Colony Mennonites (In Mexico),” *The Church Correspondent* March 1997: 3. Isaac Dyck Collection, Muddy Creek Farm Library, Ephrata, PA. This is an overstatement; multiple groups associated with the Mennonite Central Committee, the D.F. Plett Historical Research Foundation and the Conferencia Evangélica Menonita (related to the Canadian Evangelical Mennonite Conference and Evangelical Mennonite Missions Conference) have worked with Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico. Some of them have a strong desire to change the Old Colony worldview, but that is not the overall tone of the majority of these relationships.
- ³⁶ This is not well-documented. These conclusions are drawn from discussions with George Reimer in Cuauhtémoc, Mexico, in 2015 and 2016. Correspondence with Robyn Sneath (Facebook messenger, February 16, 2017) and discussions with William Janzen corroborate these remarks. I

- also believe that these claims are overstatements based on the memories of Old Colony teachers about MCC programs (such as a teacher I met in Blumenheim, Capulín Colony, Chihuahua, Mexico, in June 2016) and informal conversations with Canadian teachers who travelled to Mexico through church or MCC exchanges.
- ³⁷ Gracia Schlabach, "Research Note: Mapping Positive Change in Manitoba Colony, Chihuahua, Mexico," *Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies* 4 no. 2 (2016): 184. At certain points, Schlabach's article and other English-language writing from the Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities shows a strong influence of Pennsylvania Dutch, in word selection and sentence structure. I have preserved the original and noted [sic] in cases of obvious typos or faulty translations.
- ³⁸ Dewalt, *Amish Education*, 117. In recent years, Dewalt adds that some single men have become teachers.
- ³⁹ Dewalt, *Amish Education*, 116.
- ⁴⁰ For more information about Low German see Christopher Cox, Jacob M. Driedger and Benjamin V. Tucker's "Mennonite Plautdietsch (Canadian Old Colony)," *Journal of the International Phonetic Association* 43 no. 2 (2013): 221-229.
- ⁴¹ Nolt, "Amish Stories," 16.
- ⁴² Mary Stoltzfus, "Mexico Reflections," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 9 no. 1 (Spring 2008), 4.
- ⁴³ Aaron Hershberger, *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 7:1 (Jan 2006): 1. Hershberger also claims that Christmas programs are a new idea – this is not true. Typically, Old Colony children will memorize special verses and share them with important family members, such as their grandparents. His view of Old Colony seating arrangements challenges my own observations of children in traditional village schools.
- ⁴⁴ Esther Coblentz, "Camello Mexico," *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 7 2 (April 2006): 3.
- ⁴⁵ Miriam Yoder, *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 11:1 (Spring 2010): 3.
- ⁴⁶ Rachel Miller, *A Vision for the Journey: An Amish Schoolteacher's Mission Among the Old Colony Mennonites in Mexico* (Sugar creek, OH: Carlisle Printing, 2008), 13.
- ⁴⁷ This realization is similar to that expressed in the short-lived Old Order Amish settlement in Honduras (1967-1977). For more information see Joseph Stoll's *Sunshine and Shadow: Our Seven Years in Honduras* (Aylmer, ON: Pathway Publishers, 1996), 17-18.
- ⁴⁸ It is difficult to assess wealth and poverty in Mexico because of a general lack of transparency around money, land and taxation in the country, and the Mennonite colonies' unique position there. As a visitor to the Mennonite colonies in Chihuahua, Durango and Zacatecas in 2015 and 2016, I observed that the colony with the sharpest difference between rich and poor in Mexico was the La Honda colony in Zacatecas. Some may perceive that the Manitoba colony in Chihuahua is wealthier than others; villages more removed from the commercial highway likely experience lower levels of extreme wealth than those closer to the highway.
- ⁴⁹ Rachel Anne Beiler, "A Glimpse into Mexico," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 12 1 (Spring 2011): 3.
- ⁵⁰ LeAnna Miller, *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 5:3 (December 2004): 3.

- ⁵¹ Beiler, "A Glimpse into Mexico," 3.
- ⁵² Elizabeth Gingerich, "Nueva Holanda Report," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 13:1 (Spring 2012): 4.
- ⁵³ Rachel Miller, *A Vision for the Journey*, vii.
- ⁵⁴ Marlene Epp, *Mennonite Women in Canada: A History* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2008), 145.
- ⁵⁵ Epp, *Mennonite Women*, 144-147.
- ⁵⁶ Doreen Helen Klassen, "'I wanted a life of my own': Creating a Singlewoman Mennonite Identity in Mexico," *Journal of Mennonite Studies* 26 (2008): 49-67.
- ⁵⁷ LeAnna Miller, "Improved Curriculum and Teaching Tools," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 11:2 (Summer 2010): 5.
- ⁵⁸ Ella Nolt, "Manitoba Colony School Reports," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 10:1 (Spring 2009): 2.
- ⁵⁹ Mary Stoltzfus, "Camello School Report," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 10:3 (Fall 2009): 3.
- ⁶⁰ Rachel Miller, *Vision for the Journey*, 76.
- ⁶¹ Erma Miller, *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 5:3 (December 2004): 1.
- ⁶² For more information about alcoholism see, for example, James A. Cates and Chris Weber "A Substance Use Survey with Old Order Amish Early Adolescents: Perception of Peer Alcohol and Drug Use," *Journal of Child and Adolescent Substance Abuse*, 21:3 (2012): 193-203. See also Chris Weber, James A. Cates and Shirley Carey, "A Drug and Alcohol Intervention with Old Order Amish Youth: Dancing on the Devil's Playground," *Journal of Groups in Addiction and Recovery*, 5:2 (2010): 97-112. For information about sexual abuse see, for example, Malcolm Gay's article "A Crisis in Amish Country," *New York Times* Sept. 2, 2010, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/03/us/03amish.html>>. See also Saloma Miller Furlong's commentary on this article, "Sexual Abuse among the Amish," Sept. 8, 2010, <http://salomafurlong.com/aboutamish/2010/09/sexual-abuse-among-amish_08/>.
- ⁶³ Zook, *Called to Mexico*, 119.
- ⁶⁴ Cory Anderson, "Religious Seekers' Attraction to the Plain Mennonites and Amish," *Review of Religious Research* 58 no. 1 (2016): 140-141.
- ⁶⁵ Miller, *Vision for the Journey*, 203.
- ⁶⁶ Elsie Yoder, *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 7:2 (April 2006): 3.
- ⁶⁷ Zook, *Called to Mexico*, 113.
- ⁶⁸ Epp, *Mennonite Women*, 150.
- ⁶⁹ Johanna Oksala, "Affective Labor and Feminist Politics," *Signs* 41:2 (2016): 284.
- ⁷⁰ Suzannah Weiss, "50 Ways People Expect Constant Emotional Labor from Women and Femmes," *Everyday Feminism*, August 15, 2016, <<http://everydayfeminism.com/2016/08/women-femmes-emotional-labor/>>.
- ⁷¹ Weiss, "50 Ways."
- ⁷² Ruby Zehr, "House Parent's and House Sister's Report," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 10: 1 (Spring 2009): 5. For her dates of service see *Called to Mexico* 401.
- ⁷³ Marie Kauffman, "House Sister Report." *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 10: 4 (Winter 2009-2010): 5.
- ⁷⁴ Lydia Bontrager, "El Camello School Update," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 9: 2 (Fall 2008): 5.

- ⁷⁵ Elsie Martin, "Mexico Bound," *Old Colony Mennonite Support Newsletter* 11 no. 3 (Fall 2010): 3.
- ⁷⁶ Dewalt, *Amish Education*, 126.
- ⁷⁷ Rachel Miller, *Vision for the Journey*, 146-147.
- ⁷⁸ Mary Zook, *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 5: 3 (December 2004): 2.
- ⁷⁹ LeAnna Miller, *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 5:3 (December 2004): 3.
- ⁸⁰ Esther Coblenz, "Camello Mexico," *Old Colony Mennonites Newsletter* 7:1 (January 2006): 3.
- ⁸¹ Mary Stoltzfus, "Mexico Reflections," 4.
- ⁸² For more information see for example Johnson-Weiner, *Train Up a Child*, pp. 110-111 or Christian G. Esh, comp., *History of Special Schools and Clinics, with Speech Minutes of Annual Meetings, 2000-2016* (Gordonville, PA: The Author, 2017). He explains that the first special education classrooms began to be developed in the 1970s (Esh 184).
- ⁸³ Johnson-Weiner, *Train Up a Child*, 110.
- ⁸⁴ Lizzie Hershberger, "Nueva Holanda Special Needs School," 133-34.