

From the early 1960s to the late 1980s, John A. Hostetler was the world's premier scholar of Amish life. Hailed by his peers for his illuminating and sensitive portrayals of this often misunderstood religious sect, Hostetler successfully spanned the divide between popular and academic culture, thereby shaping perceptions of the Amish throughout American society. He was also outspoken in his views of the modern world and of the Amish world—views that continue to stir debate today. Born into an Old Order Amish family in 1918, Hostetler came of age in an era when the Amish were largely dismissed as a quaint and declining culture, a curious survival with little relevance for contemporary American life. That perception changed during Hostetler's career, for not only did the Amish survive during these decades, they demonstrated a stunning degree of cultural vitality—which Hostetler observed, analyzed, and interpreted for millions of interested readers. *Writing the Amish* both recounts and assesses Hostetler's Amish-related work. The first half of the book consists of four reflective essays—by Donald Kraybill, Simon Bronner, David Weaver-Zercher, and Hostetler himself—in which Hostetler is the primary subject. The second half reprints, in chronological order, fourteen key writings by Hostetler with commentaries and annotations by Weaver-Zercher. Taken together, these writings, supplemented by a comprehensive bibliography of Hostetler's publications, provide ready access to the Hostetler corpus and the tools by which to evaluate his work, his intellectual evolution, and his legacy as a scholar of Amish and American life. Moreover, by providing a window into the varied worlds of John A. Hostetler—his Amish boyhood, his Mennonite Church milieu, his educational pursuits, his scholarly career, and his vocation as a mediator and advocate for Amish life—this volume enhances the ongoing discussion of how ethnographic representation pertains to America's most renowned folk culture, the Old Order Amish.

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