

Through Amish Eyes: Examining the Self-Constructed Identities of Amish Women

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Abstract

As a religious subculture operating in modern times, Amish adherence to a simpler lifestyle and fervent commitment to God and family have made the Amish subjects of fictional movies, literary works, and research that often romanticize their lifestyle. This study examined the interviews of eight currently Amish and formerly Amish women. The purpose of this study was to identify how Amish women constructed their identities in an effort to contribute to the existing body of knowledge focused on Amish culture. Through identifying individual and community-influenced perspectives, this study identified emerging trends in Amish society. One interpretation of these findings suggests a subtle integration of the greater society's values into the Amish society's value system.

As a religious subculture operating in modern times, Amish adherence to a simpler lifestyle with a fervent commitment to God and family have made the Amish subjects of fictional movies, literary works, and research that often romanticize their lifestyle. Amish women appear as a topic of great discussion among these writers and researchers who either idealize them as uncomplicated and appropriately submissive women or victims of male oppression and in opposition to gender equality. These nonmember constructions of Amish women are lacking—it is time for Amish women to discuss their own constructions of reality. The self-constructed identities of Amish women are as unique as each individual, with each woman mediating her appearance to the outside world based on circumstance and personal preference. Amish women actively shape their identities and move between revelations of self. The self-constructed identities of Amish women are influenced both by their inclusion in the Amish community and their beliefs. In combination, the influences of personal and community views induce a multifaceted construction of personal identity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

An Amish Woman's Place in Her Community

An Amish woman has the distinct responsibility of caring for the household and her family. Amish women may sew, clean, tend to animals, garden, prepare meals, preserve food, and care for children. A woman's tie to her home does not mean she is confined to the home, however. Stoltzfus (1994) discussed an Amish woman, Linda, and she wrote:

[Linda] cannot own a car because the Amish have come to believe that automobiles provide too much freedom and too much opportunity to disappear from important family times together.... But Linda can have her own horse and buggy and come and go at will without answering to anyone. Or she can use public transportation (P. 61).

Although a woman's place in Amish society may be submissive, she is appreciated and revered by her family (Hostetler 1980). Amish women are rewarded for their adherence to culturally imposed limitations.

Gender

Gender consciousness can be defined as the ways and extent to which women identify with their gender in order to pursue collective action (Gurin 1985). Gurin examined trends of gender consciousness in the 1970s and 1980s. Gurin found that women do not identify with their gender as strongly as African Americans identify with their race or as older people identify with their age. One question in this study requested participants to rank phrases they most strongly identified with and to explain their reasoning. The four categories were: "servant of God," "wife," "mother," and "woman."

Women may not identify with their gender as strongly as other groups, but research showed women will defend one another (Amanatullah and Morris 2010). Amanatullah and Morris (2010) examined salary negotiations and found that women allowed fewer concessions when advocating for other women than when advocating for themselves. Findings suggested women respond to the threat of negative consequences with a lack of assertiveness in negotiations. This study did not limit itself by examining the bond women have with their gender through measurements such as collective action and negotiations. Instead, opinions of women currently residing in the Amish community

and formerly Amish women served as measurements used to examine the strength of the bond between Amish women and their gender.

Becker and Wagner (2009) found a woman's perception of appropriate actions for herself and other women were influenced by the gender role she embodied. Results showed female participants who highly identified with or felt bonded to their gender role primarily identified with a traditional gender role (Becker and Wagner 2009). Gender role preference was evaluated in this study in an effort to determine constructed identities of Amish women based on the belief that values and norms influence identity.

Religion

Miller and Stark (2002) examined why women reported higher levels of religiosity than men. They determined gender differences were more pronounced in Christian and Muslim participants than in Buddhists; gender differences were more pronounced in Orthodox Jews than other Jewish groups (Miller and Stark 2002). Christianity, Islam, and (Orthodox) Judaism have strict dogmas by which believers are expected to abide, which may account for stronger adherences to traditional gender roles. Similarly, the Amish have rules that influence everyday activities called Ordnung (Nolt and Meyers 2007). Because the Amish have a strict dogma, there may be pronounced gender role differences and a strong adherence to traditional gender roles.

Community

Mannarini and Fedi (2009) addressed the difficulty in defining the concept of community. The difficulty in defining this concept was due to the complexity and multitude of perceptions surrounding the word. As Mannarini and Fedi (2009) noted, the

definition of community is personal and intangible. The researchers determined that the community activities in which participants partook correlated with their perceptions of community (Mannarini and Fedi 2009). They found participation in aiding underprivileged members of society correlated with pragmatic definitions of community. If participants identified as members of a neighborhood, they tended to define the concept of community by its collective aspects and identity. This study asked participants to define and discuss their perceptions of community.

Farming

In identifying the strengths of farming communities, Larson and Dearmont (2002) built on the work of Waller's (2001) study that found a child's positive identification with the norms and values of a community could serve as a source of strength to that child later in life. By contrast, Stain, Kelly, Lewin, Higginbotham, Beard, and Hourihan (2008) argued a sense of community was not found to provide as much support for farm workers or residents as was expected. They hypothesized that their results may have been influenced by an intervening variable such as farm workers using supplementary sources of support (Stain et al. 2008). This study discussed affects of farming on children and asked questions concerning an Amish woman's source of emotional support.

THEORY

Symbolic interactionists study the symbolic meaning behind actions. George Herbert Mead, a founding father of symbolic interactionism, asserted that there are two social selves: the "I" and the "me." According to Mead, the "I" is the individual's

response to other's attitudes. The "me" is the group's attitudes that the individual assumes. Mead analyzed interactions between "I" and "me," which is the interaction between the individual and the individual as part of a collective group or society. Mead's theory of the "I" and "me" relates to the self-constructed identities of Amish women because these women identify as both individuals and part of a collective whole.

Mead discussed the "I" as the part of one's self that is unable to realize itself from an outsider's perspective. Conversely, the "me" is able to realize itself from an outsider's perspective—the "me" is able to assume the attitudes of others. As Mead stated, "The attitudes of others constitute the organized 'me,' and then one reacts toward that as an 'I'" (Mead [1934] 1967:175). It is only after the action occurred that the "I" is aware of his actions. Even though the self will never truly know the path of action he will take until the action is complete, there are certain past data or experiences upon which the social self may draw. Mead argued an exterior group may influence the self's response to a situation. There are two possible responses: the self adjusts itself or it fights the exterior group's attitudes. Our relationship to the others, Mead argued, helps us realize ourselves. "We cannot realize ourselves except insofar as we can recognize the other in his relationship to us. It is as he takes the attitude of the other that the individual is able to realize himself as a self" (Mead [1934] 1967:194). Self-consciousness only occurs when the self is challenged by others. The self may accept or decline the attitudes of others; at this point he becomes conscious of himself. Becoming conscious necessarily involves interactions with others, Mead argued. "To have self-consciousness one must have the

attitude of the other in one's own organism as controlling the thing that he is going to do" (Mead [1934] 1967:196).

Mead ([1934] 1967:197-198) spoke to the group attitude and the individual's reaction when he said, "But an individual is constantly reacting to such an organized community in the way of expressing himself, not necessarily asserting himself in the offensive sense but expressing himself, being himself in such a co-operative process as belongs to any community." Simply because an individual reacts to the organized community does not mean he is unoriginal. "The fact that [the organized community has] to act in a certain common fashion does not deprive them of originality" (Mead [1934] 1967:198). One must act with the "I" or "me" in different situations. The "I" needs to be expressed in order to assert one's individuality and the "me" should be expressed when it is necessary to engage in the experiences of others. Mead ([1934] 1967) contended:

Both aspects of the 'I' and 'me' are essential to the self in its full expression. One must take the attitude of the others in a group in order to belong to a community; he has to employ that outer social world taken within himself in order to carry on thought (P. 199).

While both social selves are necessary to fully express oneself, there are situations in which they may be fused. One such situation is group work. Mead ([1934] 1967:273) stated, "[Team work] is where the 'I' and the 'me' can in some sense fuse that there arises the peculiar sense of exaltation which belongs to the religious and patriotic attitudes in which the reaction which one calls out in others is the response which one is making himself." Within group work, one must be aware of one's connection to others and their relationship. "We are what we are in our relationship to other individuals through taking the attitude of the other individuals toward ourselves" (Mead [1934]

1967:279). Mead asserted that mindfulness of others has the potential to fuse the “I” and “me” (Mead [1934] 1967:280). Mead’s theory of group atmosphere acting on the “I” and “me” relate to the self-constructed identities of Amish women because these women operate within a collective group. Their lives are centered on their community; however, they must also operate as individuals within the greater society.

The “I” and the “me” are important because Amish women operate by both attitudes: that of the individual and collective group. The “I” is an Amish woman’s individual identity. An Amish woman’s “me” identifies with the Amish customs such as living her lifestyle in accordance with the Amish teachings. The way the woman reacts to Amish customs constitutes the “I.” She is unaware of how she will react to situations until after the action has occurred. The “me” may know what is considered appropriate in the society, but the “I” may act out of accordance with their lifestyle.

Because the Amish are a closed community, the influence of others in the community significantly impacts an individual’s decisions. Mead argued that it is in confronting the decision of whether to act in accordance with society’s norms that the person becomes conscious of his or her selves. Amish women’s self-realization comes about due to the conflict between the “I” and “me.”

METHODOLOGY

Participants

A total of eight women participated in this study: five Amish women, aged thirty-six to sixty-one, one Amish Mennonite (or “Beachy Amish”) woman aged fifty, and two

women who no longer reside in the Amish community, aged fifty-nine and sixty-eight. Of the eight participants, six were married. One Amish woman was never married and one formerly Amish woman was divorced. Seven out of eight participants were mothers. One participant was a daughter of an Amish bishop and another was a wife of an Amish bishop. All participants were Amish at some point—the Amish Mennonite woman converted at the age of ten and the formerly Amish participants left the community as young adults. Participants were recruited through both snowball and convenience sampling. All participants resided in the Midwest when the study occurred.

Methodology

The research was qualitative and conducted through interviews. A copy of sample interview questions and statements of consent can be found in Appendix A.

The purpose of interviewing adult Amish women was they had completed their rumspringa or “running around” period. “During *rumspringa*, Amish youth...go on their own in the outside world” (Shachtman 2006:11). Rumspringa ends when the youth agrees to be baptized, making a lifelong commitment to the church. The conclusion of rumspringa served as a parameter of this study because its conclusion signals that Amish youth are considered adults. As adults, these women may have a more concrete understanding of how they construct their identity. Two women who formerly identified as Amish were included in the interviews in order to supplement information from currently Amish participants. This study is *not* a comparative study between currently Amish and formerly Amish women.

The researcher traveled to Indiana towns to conduct interviews and engaged in one telephone interview. Each interview lasted approximately forty-five minutes. Before conducting interviews, the researcher contacted gatekeepers for access to the communities through convenience sampling. After failing to obtain a substantial sample, more participants were recruited through snowball sampling.

Some Amish community members were wary of researchers. One Amish community felt they had been misrepresented by previous researchers and were concerned that this may happen again. Thus, many potential participants rescinded their agreements to participate. Wariness of researchers could have also influenced participant responses.

Of the interviews conducted in-person, all took place within the participants' homes. It was not possible to conduct most in-person interviews without other people in surrounding areas, such as children sitting at the table or others sitting in adjoining rooms. The influence of others may prove a weakness of this study. However, the overall atmosphere of interviews was private in spite of the physical nearness of others.

Another weakness of this study was its mixed methodology. While most interviews took place in-person, one occurred by telephone. Because this interview could not take place in-person, it was difficult to determine nonverbal cues, especially pauses. There was a great deal of static through the telephone line, which made it difficult to understand one another. Therefore, the telephone interview was different from the quiet, uninterrupted in-person interviews. This particular interview provided different challenges that may have affected results. The inclusion of an Amish Mennonite woman

may also be a weakness of this study. While there are similarities between the Amish and Amish Mennonite communities, there are significant lifestyle differences. Grouping the Amish Mennonite participant with other Amish women may have influenced the results.

One strength of the in-person interviews was they took place in the participant's home. While this was discussed as a possible weakness, it may have put the participant at ease; she may have felt more comfortable in her own home than if the interview had taken place in a public space or another home.

A great strength of the study was the in-depth knowledge these women provided. This in-depth information originated from facial expressions, the surrounding environment, and the participant's tone of voice. Nonverbal cues such as pauses or smiling provided the opportunity to probe when appropriate. Many of these women were articulate in their opinions and, therefore, the researcher did not need to probe often. Finally, developing a rapport with these women was crucial in obtaining rich information.

In order to develop a rapport, it was necessary to dress appropriately in plain pants and a long-sleeved shirt with minimal make-up, jewelry, and modest shoes.

FINDINGS

The results are organized by topic, beginning with the perception of an Amish woman's place in her community, moving through different scopes of her life, and concluding with self-constructed identity. Each topic discusses the data collected through interviews. Quotations are utilized in an effort to illustrate participant responses. Some answers contain responses from both currently Amish and formerly Amish participants,

while others only contain responses from currently Amish women. Communication problems occurred and misunderstandings arose in response to certain questions so participant pools vary based upon the question asked.

An Amish Woman's Place in Her Community

When asked what a woman's role is in the Amish community, participants provided a variety of answers. All answers mentioned an Amish woman's role within the household to some extent. In fact, only one participant of the total eight (12.5 percent) listed a paid job as an Amish woman's duty. She discussed a job as an Amish woman's duty in the context of an unmarried woman. Four participants (50.0 percent) noted housework or homemaking as an Amish woman's role in her community. Three participants (37.5 percent) noted caring for the family as a primary role of an Amish woman. It is important to note that some women mentioned more than one role; for example, a participant may have reported both homemaking and caring for children as her role.

Gender

While gender was discussed in the context of other topics, two questions were asked in an effort to truly gain insight into gender roles within the Amish community. As the Amish community has been viewed by outsiders as rigid and male-dominated, the researcher attempted to ascertain differences in gender roles through parenting of male and female children. The questions asked were, "What values do you hope to instill in your daughters?" followed by, "What values do you hope to instill in your sons?" Only responses from currently Amish women were used for this question because answers

from formerly Amish women were very different from those of the currently Amish women. This showed a difference in the values they aimed to instill in their children.

Responses to these questions varied. Of the total six Amish respondents, 16.7 percent did not differentiate between sons and daughters and 33.3 percent said they wanted their sons to embody the same values as their daughters. Thus, 50.0 percent of the Amish respondents did not differentiate between male and female children with respect to the values they reported aiming to instill in them.

Of those participants that responded with gendered answers, all stated that they wanted their daughters to remain in the home as homemakers. Anna stated:

I know as far as girls I would very much want them to learn to sew and [preserve food] and keep house, keep things clean and not to let it get cluttered up. But I do want them to have fun, too...have our days when...we would...go on a picnic or something like that.

Sally Anne agreed, “To be homemakers and yeah, mothers, and to be...behind their husbands.” No conclusive pattern emerged from the responses pertaining to sons.

Religion

When asked to name one rule they live by, six participants (75.0 percent) explicitly or implicitly mentioned religious teachings. Of the two respondents who implicitly referred to religious teachings, one stated that her rule was to “Be faithful,” and another simply said, “Do unto others as you would have others do unto you.” Ella Renee, a formerly Amish woman stated, “Put God first. That’s the biggest thing.”

Community

The impact of community was central to this research based on Mead’s discussion of “me.” Therefore, this topic is highly focused on the participants’ definitions

of community, strength of community ties, interactions with community members, and perceptions of the community by outsiders.

In analyzing the definition of community responses, only Amish participants were included in this question because they are authentic insiders of this community. Formerly Amish participants had unpleasant experiences while exiting the community, which may have affected their responses. All six Amish respondents defined the word “community” by the people who were in the community. All participants (100.0 percent) responded with pragmatic definitions of the function community members served. Examples include working, caring, helping, and supporting. One participant, Molly, provided a vivid illustration of her definition of community when she described the following event:

My mom died [a few] years ago and she had been ill for [a while] and we had been away with her...so our [home] was...neglected. And when she died, that next day in [a short amount of time], mom and dad's house...the yard, the outside, the manure had been hauled, everything had been cleaned, the shop where the wake was supposed to be, everything was cleaned in [a short amount of time]. *That's* community.

Community support was discussed in the majority (66.7 percent) of answers with Amish respondents using a form of the verb “help” in their definition of community. When questioned about the degree of closeness participants felt to other Amish women in the community, all responded with answers between somewhat close to very close. Not a single participant insinuated that she felt disconnected from the community. Due to differences in vocabulary, it was impossible to differentiate exactly where each participant fell on the spectrum of closeness to the community.

When asked if the participants felt they held the same values as women in the Amish community, all eight participants said they held the same values as at least some

of the women in the community. This question includes both formerly Amish and currently Amish women. Five participants (62.5 percent) responded with yes or “yeah” without stipulation and the remaining 37.5 percent said they held at least some of the same values as an indefinite number of women in the community—66.7 percent of those that answered with stipulations are formerly Amish. One of the formerly Amish participants, Elizabeth, said, “Yes, [I hold the same] core values [as Amish women]. I know I’m sitting here wearing JLO [™] jeans, but core values: honesty, integrity, compassion, good will, all those things....”

When asked if participants would confide in women from the Amish community, seven participants (87.5 percent) answered affirmatively. Of those who answered affirmatively, 57.1 percent answered yes with stipulations such as, “not just anybody” or “some of them.” One formerly Amish participant answered with a firm, “No.”

All six currently Amish participants stated that they felt between moderately and strongly connected to their community. Three participants (50.0 percent) reported they felt “average” or “fairly strongly” connected. Two participants (33.3 percent) reported feeling strongly connected. One participant (16.7 percent) felt very strongly connected.

Frequency of interaction with community members was addressed when participants were asked how often they socialized with members of their community. For formerly Amish participants, the question was altered so they were asked to recall how often they socialized with other Amish community members while still part of the Amish community. Four participants (50.0 percent) suggested that they socialized two to three times per week. One currently Amish respondent (12.5 percent) stated she sees Amish

community members daily and the final currently Amish respondent reported speaking to members of her community, “Every Sunday at least.” Of the two formerly Amish participants, both (25.0 percent) estimated socializing with members of the community once per week before their withdrawal from the community.

When asked how non-Amish [or English, as participants referred to non-Amish persons] view the Amish community, four respondents (50.0 percent) cited an idyllic perception as a common misconception of the Amish community. Two of these four respondents were currently Amish and the others were formerly Amish. Ella Renee, a formerly Amish woman stated:

The majority [of the English] probably think [Amish life is] the greatest, but they don’t know everything. Maybe not the people [who live near an Amish community] but [the tourists who visit may] think [Amish life is] just fabulous and great. And it is good how they work together and do things but...I don’t feel that way.

The researcher asked participants, “Do you think English people understand Amish culture?” Six participants (75.0 percent) allowed for the possibility that some English may understand Amish culture. Two participants (25.0 percent) said they did not believe the English understood Amish culture. As an Amish woman, Sally Anne said:

[The English do not understand] the depth of it, but they see the surface, I guess....It’s hard for an English person that grew up with the English world to come into our church and be a member and think like we do. It’s just, I can’t give you an example but we’ve been taught this from all the way up and it’s just...our blood.

Three participants noted that English people were more likely to understand Amish culture if they regularly interacted with the Amish.

Farming

Historically, farming was an influential part of the lives of many Amish. However, participant responses reflected a shift from farming to other forms of work. Anna stated, “There are not a lot of people that do their own farming.” A portion of the interview consisted of farming-specific questions, but it would be inaccurate to report these answers since a substantial number of participants no longer reside on a farm.

One question answered was the influence of farming on children. Since these women are from semi-rural towns, the question concerning the influence of farming on children was still relevant. Five currently Amish women (83.3 percent) explicitly used a form of the verb “teach” in answers concerning the influence of farming on children.

Self-Constructing Identity

One question asked six participants to rank four descriptive phrases by the degree to which they identify with these words, with one being the phrase they most identify with and four being the phrase they least identify with. One currently Amish and one formerly Amish participant are excluded from these results because they were unmarried. The phrases were: “servant of God,” “wife,” “mother,” and “woman.” Five participants (83.3 percent) ranked “servant of God” as number one, “wife” as number two, “mother” as number three, and “woman” as number four . This information is shown in Table 1 in Appendix B.

When asked how she selected her rankings, an Amish woman, Molly, who ranked “woman” as fourth said, “I want to put myself last. I want to keep my life not about me, but about what I am put here on earth for. And I think if anybody is familiar with the

Bible, that's not a hard question to answer." Marlene, an Amish woman, marked

"woman" as number one. When asked why she chose "woman" as number one, she said:

I like that part of me....I guess [women] just have more freedom. I know that some women feel they don't have as much freedom but I feel I have more freedom because I don't have to make sure my family is financially secure and I don't have the hard physical labor that a man has.

When asked why she ranked "wife" before "mother" Sally, an Amish woman, responded,

"I like to be submissive to [my husband].... [M]y husband comes before my children."

Since two participants were unmarried and one was unable to articulate her answer, only five participant responses were included in the question of how participants believed their husband viewed them. Four participants (80.0 percent) responded that their husbands viewed them positively. Only one of the five participants (20.0 percent) responded that her husband viewed her, "just as his wife."

In the question concerning how people in the Amish community view the Amish participant as an individual, only the six currently Amish participants were asked to answer this question because formerly Amish participants are no longer part of the community. Two participants (33.3 percent) connected themselves with their work outside the home. The remaining 66.7 percent either identified themselves by their special talents such as being a grandmother or proficient baker or by their character traits.

When asked how God views them, 87.5 percent of all participants hesitated using variations of the phrases, "I guess," "I think," or "I hope." Only one formerly Amish participant (12.5 percent) said firmly, "[God] loves me. I know he loves me."

The question of, "If there were one thing that you could change about yourself, what would it be?" elicited many different answers from currently Amish women. Two of

the six currently Amish participants (33.3 percent) who shared a commonality in their responses stated that they would prefer to “not be as fast to talk” Another participant wished she were “able to know what to talk about with [English] ladies.”

DISCUSSION

While there was no explicit mention of adapting to the English world, one interpretation of the research suggests a subtle move toward more modern lifestyles. An Amish woman’s place in her community was discussed as being in the home. However, in four of the six interviews of currently Amish women, participants discussed their paid jobs—writer, artist, waitress, and culinary professional. Furthermore, farming did not prove to be highly influential in the lives of these participants. The decrease in farming could be a reflection of the overall decrease in family-owned farms in the United States. Finally, a large percentage of Amish participants (50 percent) did not differentiate between the values they hoped to instill in their male and female children. This finding suggests a movement toward equal treatment of males and females in the Amish community; this contradicts an outsider stereotype of rigid and male-dominated gender roles in the Amish community. These three results may reflect a subtle, almost undetectable incorporation of the English values into Amish culture. As a subculture immersed in greater American society, the transmission of the dominant culture’s values may be faintly visible in this subculture despite their efforts to remain a separate entity.

A second interpretation of the results may acknowledge the influence of participant’s personal attitudes on the findings. These women may be more progressive

than others in their community based upon their willingness to be interviewed. As mentioned, many Amish women refused to be interviewed with some citing a distrust of English researchers. In addition, most of the findings are consistent with what the researcher expected. Based upon the strict dogma of the Amish religion, it was not surprising that six out of eight respondents implicitly or explicitly mentioned religious teachings or God as the primary rule that guides their lives. As expected, currently Amish women felt connected to their community. Community proved to be a prominent feature in the lives of many of these women. Providing monetary, physical, and emotional support proved influential in connectedness. Their closeness was exhibited by frequent socialization with members in their community as well as a willingness to confide in one another.

The ordering of phrases the women most highly identified with supports the second interpretation of findings because the women listed “servant of God” as the phrase by which they most highly identified. It is interesting that most of these women listed “wife” as second and “mother” as third. While some English women might choose “mother” as a more important phrase, these women selected “wife.” This result may reflect Amish women’s collective belief in the sanctity of marriage. Another notable finding is most women listed “woman” as the phrase by which they least identified. The results of these rankings further Gurin’s (1985) study by suggesting that Amish women are not highly gender conscious. Based on Becker and Wagner’s (2009) research, it is unlikely that Amish women would engage in collective political action in an effort to bring about social change for women. However, based on Amanatullah and Morris’s

(2010) work, Amish women would likely advocate and negotiate in the best interest of their husbands and children before negotiating for themselves.

One unanticipated finding which relates the influence of the Amish community to a woman's identity construction is all participants reported holding some similar values as [other] members of the Amish community. Because both formerly Amish participants regularly discussed negative attributes of the Amish community in their interviews, this finding was unexpected. Despite leaving the community, the Amish seem to have left an indelible impression on the lives of women who have chosen to break from the community. This finding demonstrates the strength of a community's influence on a woman's identity construction consistent with Mead's (1934) theory.

Mead (1934) contended that a person will select the self he will exhibit in a given situation based upon a variety of environmental and personal factors. In addition, these selves may fuse to create an intricate and complicated self-construction of one's identity. Mead's (1934) theory is consistent with this research because Amish women constantly mediate their identities in response to ever-changing environmental and personal influences. These women choose the self they will reveal in a given situation based on social appropriateness and personal opinion. The inherent connectedness of social self and individual self prove a complicated web of self-constructing identities by Amish women.

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Appendix A. Sample Interview Questions & Statement of Consent

Sample Informed Consent Form for Currently Amish Participants

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Department of Sociology
Saint Mary's College

You are invited to participate in a study designed to provide insights concerning the self-constructed identities of Amish women. Self-constructed identity means how you, as an Amish woman, define your life: your opinions, your hopes, and memories. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you are an adult Amish woman. The purpose of this study is to identify how Amish women construct their identities. Your participation may lead to insights into the ways Amish women view themselves from an individual and community standpoint.

You will be asked to engage in an interview with Ashley Feely, Sociology major from Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. During the interview, Ashley will ask questions concerning your hopes for future generations, how you believe your community perceives you, and how you perceive yourself. I ask you to answer the questions honestly as I am very interested in your opinions. The risks associated with this study are minimal, although the questions may be of a personal nature.

These conversations will be tape recorded in an effort to clearly and concisely convey your opinions in Ashley's findings. You have the option to ask Ashley to turn off the tape recorder at any point during the interview. After the interview, your comments will be transcribed and included in a report. After the interview has been transcribed, the tape recordings will be destroyed. In addition, your name will not be included in the report unless you have given verbal consent to include it, as to maintain confidentiality. You have the option to give a pseudonym in order to protect your privacy. If you choose to assume a pseudonym, only Ashley Feely will know your true identity. A report of the findings will be given in academic settings and your comments will remain anonymous if you choose a pseudonym. Only the advisor, Dr. Carrie Erlin, and Ashley Feely will have access to the interview records.

If at any point following the interview you would like Ashley to include or exclude any information concerning yourself, you may contact Ashley. **You are free to discontinue your participation in the research at any time.**

This interview will last approximately one hour. If you have any questions about the interview, this form, or the overall research, please contact me (Ashley Feely) and I will be happy to answer your questions. You may contact me at (708) 214-5969. You may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Carrie Erlin, at any time. You may contact Dr. Erlin at (574) 284-4887. If you would like a copy my findings, please feel free to contact me.

Your signature below signals your agreement to participate in the interview. Your signature indicates you have read this information and have chosen to participate in the study. You may withdraw from this study at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, your comments will not be included. **Refusal to participate will involve no penalty.** A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

I hereby give my consent to participate in this study as a volunteer. I have been informed of the general nature and purpose of the study and I am aware of the expected duration of my participation in this study. Possible benefits of this study have been explained to me. I have been informed of the extent to which confidentiality of the records identifying me will be maintained and I have been instructed to whom to contact for answers to my questions concerning this exercise. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I may discontinue my participation at any time, and that discontinuing participation will involve no penalty.

Signature of Participant: _____
Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Sample Interview Questions for Currently Amish Participants

Participant Name:

Pseudonym (Yes or No):

Age:

Marital Status:

Number of Year Married:

Children (Yes or No):

Number of Children:

1. Will you tell me a little bit about your family? Were you raised in the Amish community?
2. How old were you when you had your first child? Where did you have your child?
3. How would you describe your duty as a mother?
 - A. How would you describe a mother's duty?
4. How would you define the word "community?"
5. What is a woman's role in your community?
6. What values do you hope to instill in your daughter(s)?
 - A. What values do you hope to instill in your son(s)?
 - B. What values are important to instill in the next generation of Amish?
7. Will you tell me a little bit about your mother?
 - A. What is your most salient memory of your mother?
8. Do you do anything differently than your mother in terms of raising children?
9. Will you lead me through your average day?
10. What do you enjoy most during your day?
 - A. What is your least favorite part of your day?
11. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be?
 - A. Why did you choose those three words?
12. Please rank by importance the words that you most strongly identify with (1 being most highly identifying with and 4 being least highly identifying with):

Servant of God	
Mother	
Wife	
Woman	

- A. Why did you rank them in this order?
13. How do you think your husband views you?
14. Do you think this is similar to how other men view their wives in your community?
15. Which bond do you think is stronger: with your husband or with your female friends/family?
16. Who do you turn to for emotional support?
 - A. Do you turn to your extended family or your community? Why?
17. How close do you feel you are to non-Amish women?
18. How close do you feel you are with other women in your community?

- A. Do you think you hold the same values as these women?
- B. Would you confide in them?
- 19. How strongly connected do you feel to your community?
 - A. What are some activities that you partake in with members of your community?
 - B. How often do you visit with members of your community (family or non-family)?
 - C. What matters do you discuss most often when you visit with members of your community?
- 20. If you could describe the farming lifestyle in one word, what would it be?
- 21. Will you describe how influential farming is in your life?
- 22. How does a farming lifestyle influence children in your community?
- 23. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a farming lifestyle?
- 24. What are the benefits and drawbacks of living in a farming community?
- 25. What is one rule you consider to be the most influential in your life?
 - A. Why do you consider this so important?
- 26. Will you describe your favorite memory? This can be from any day in your entire life.
 - A. Why is this your favorite memory?
- 27. How do you think people in your community view you?
 - A. Do you think they view you accurately?
- 28. How do you think non-Amish people view you?
- 29. How do you think non-Amish people view your culture?
 - A. Do you think you are accurately portrayed?
 - B. Do you think non-Amish people understand your culture?
 - C. If you could change one perception of your culture what would it be? Why?
- 30. How do you think your children and family view you?
 - A. Do you think this is accurate?
 - B. How is this accurate or inaccurate?
- 31. How do you think God views you?
 - A. Do you feel you live up to the ways God wants you to live?
- 32. What is your place within your religious community?
- 33. What is a woman's place within your religious community?
- 34. Do you feel that men are more, less, or equally involved in your religious community as women?
- 35. Is there anything that you do in an effort to serve the religious community?
- 36. Did you participate in rumspringa?
 - A. If so, what made you decide to commit your life to the religion?
- 37. If you could change one quality about yourself, what would it be? Why?
- 38. Is there any one activity you would like to do before you die?
- 39. Overall, how do you feel about yourself?
 - A. What are your strengths?
 - B. What are your weaknesses?
- 40. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Sample Informed Consent Form for Formerly Amish Participants

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Department of Sociology
Saint Mary's College

You are invited to participate in a study designed to provide insights concerning the self-constructed identities of Amish women. Self-constructed identity means how you define your life: your opinions, your hopes, and memories. You have been chosen to participate in this study because you were once part of the Amish community. The purpose of this study is to identify how Amish women construct their identities. Your participation may lead to insights into the ways Amish women view themselves from an individual and community standpoint.

You will be asked to engage in an interview with Ashley Feely, Sociology major from Saint Mary's College in Notre Dame, Indiana. During the interview, Ashley will ask questions concerning your hopes for future generations, how you believe the Amish community perceives women, and how you believe Amish women view themselves. I ask you to answer the questions honestly as I am very interested in your opinions. The risks associated with this study are minimal, although the questions may be of a personal nature.

These conversations will be tape recorded in an effort to clearly and concisely convey your opinions in Ashley's findings. You have the option to ask Ashley to turn off the tape recorder at any point during the interview. After the interview, your comments will be transcribed and included in a report. After the interview has been transcribed, the tape recordings will be destroyed. In addition, your name will not be included in the report unless you have given verbal consent to include it, as to maintain confidentiality. You have the option to give a pseudonym in order to protect your privacy. If you choose to assume a pseudonym, only Ashley Feely will know your true identity. A report of the findings will be given in academic settings and your comments will remain anonymous if you choose a pseudonym. Only the advisor, Dr. Carrie Erlin, and Ashley Feely will have access to the interview records.

If at any point following the interview you would like Ashley to include or exclude any information concerning yourself, you may contact Ashley. **You are free to discontinue your participation in the research at any time.**

This interview will last approximately one hour. If you have any questions about the interview, this form, or the overall research, please contact me (Ashley Feely) and I will be happy to answer your questions. You may contact me at (708) 214-5969. You may contact my faculty supervisor, Dr. Carrie Erlin, at any time. You may contact Dr. Erlin at (574) 284-4887. If you would like a copy my findings, please feel free to contact me.

Your signature below signals your agreement to participate in the interview. Your signature indicates you have read this information and have chosen to participate in the study. You may withdraw from this study at any time. Should you choose to withdraw from the study, your comments will not be included. **Refusal to participate will involve no penalty.** A copy of this form will be given to you to keep.

I hereby give my consent to participate in this study as a volunteer. I have been informed of the general nature and purpose of the study and I am aware of the expected duration of my participation in this study. Possible benefits of this study have been explained to me. I have been informed of the extent to which confidentiality of the records identifying me will be maintained and I have been instructed to whom to contact for answers to my questions concerning this exercise. I understand that my participation is voluntary, that I may discontinue my participation at any time, and that discontinuing participation will involve no penalty.

Signature of Participant: _____
Investigator: _____

Date: _____

Sample Interview Questions for Formerly Amish Participants

Participant Name:
Pseudonym (Yes or No):
Age:

Marital Status:
Number of Year Married:
Children (Yes or No):
Number of Children:

1. Will you tell me a little bit about your family? Were you raised in the Amish community?
2. Will you tell me a little bit about your break with the Amish community? What were the reasons for or situation surrounding your break with the community?
3. Do you have children?
 - A. How old were you when you had your first child?
 - B. Where did you have your first child?
4. How would you describe an Amish woman's duty as a mother?
 - A. What do you believe a non-Amish mother's responsibility is to her children?
5. How would you define the phrase "Amish community?"
6. From your experience, what is a woman's role in the Amish community?
7. (If applicable) What values do you hope to instill in your daughter(s)/son(s)?
8. Based on your experience, what values do you believe Amish women hope to instill in their children?
9. Will you tell me about your mother?
 - A. What is your most salient memory of your mother?
10. Do you (or would you) do anything differently than your mother in terms of raising children?
11. Will you lead me through your average day?
 - A. How is this different from your life when you were in the Amish community? B. What activities are parts of the typical day of an Amish woman?
12. What did you enjoy most during your day when you were part of the Amish community?
 - A. What was your least favorite part of the day?
13. If you could describe an Amish woman in three words what would they be?
 - A. If you could describe yourself in three words, what would they be?
 - B. Why did you choose those three words?
14. Please rank by importance the words that you most strongly identify with (with 1 being most highly identifying with and 4 being least highly identifying with):

Servant of God	
Mother	
Wife	
Woman	

- A. Why did you rank them in this order?
15. How do you think an Amish husband views his wife?
16. Which bond do you think is stronger: between an Amish woman and her husband or between an Amish woman and her female friends/family?
17. Who do you Amish women turn to for emotional support?
 - A. Do they turn to extended family or their community? Why?
 - B. Who do you turn to for emotional support?

18. How close do you feel you are to Amish women (example Amish friends and family)?
 - A. Do you think you hold the same values as these women?
 - B. Do you confide in them?
19. When you part of the Amish community, how strongly connected were you to your religious community?
 - A. Do you think this is representative of how strongly connected most Amish women feel?
 - B. What are some common activities you participated in with members of the community?
 - C. How often did you visit with members of your community (family or non-family)?
 - D. What matters did you discuss most often when you visited with others in the Amish community?
20. If you could describe the farming lifestyle in one word, what would it be?
21. Will you describe how influential farming was in your life while you were in the Amish community?
22. How does a farming lifestyle influence children in the Amish community?
23. What are the benefits and drawbacks of a farming lifestyle?
24. What are the benefits and drawbacks of living in a farming community?
25. What is one rule you consider to be most influential in your life?
 - A. Why is this so important to you?
26. Will you describe your favorite memory while in the Amish community?
 - A. Why is this your favorite memory?
 - B. What is your least favorite memory of the Amish community?
27. How do you think non-Amish people view the Amish culture?
 - A. Do you think they are accurately portrayed?
 - B. Do you think non-Amish people understand Amish culture?
 - C. What is the biggest misconception of Amish culture?
28. How do you think an Amish woman's children and family view her?
29. How do you think God viewed you when you were in the Amish community?
 - A. Do you think God's opinion has changed?
30. What is an Amish woman's place within her religious community?
31. Do you feel that men are more, less, or equally involved in the Amish religious community as women?
32. What activities do Amish women do to serve the religious community?
33. Did you participate in rumspringa?
 - A. If so, did you commit yourself to the religion?
 - B. What made you decide to commit/not commit your life to the religion?
34. What aspects of the Amish lifestyle do you most object to?
35. Were there any accomplishments that you were unable to achieve because you were an Amish woman that you are now/were able to achieve after leaving the community?
36. Overall, are you satisfied with your decision to leave the community?
37. Is there anything else you would like to add?

Appendix B. Table of Interview Question concerning Rankings

Table 1: Rankings of Four Characteristics by Percentage

Response	Percentage Ranked as Number 1	Percentage Ranked as Number 2	Percentage Ranked as Number 3	Percentage Ranked as Number 4
Servant of God	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)
Wife	0 (0.0%)	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)
Mother	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (62.5%)	1 (12.5%)
Woman	1 (12.5%)	0 (0.0%)	0 (0.0%)	5 (62.5%)
Missing	2 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)	2 (25.0%)
Total N=8	8 (100.0%)	8 (100.0%)	8 (100.0%)	8 (100.0%)