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Editor’s Introduction

Seventy-Five Years of Amish Studies, 1942 to 2017: A Critical Review of Scholarship Trends (with an Extensive Bibliography)

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Abstract

After 75 years, Amish studies has received no field reviews, an oversight I rectify using several citation analysis techniques. I offer criteria for defining Amish research, which results in 983 references. Amish studies has a very highly centralized core; the top one percent of cited references account for 20% of every citation in Amish studies, with Hostetler, Kraybill, Nolt, and Huntington dominating the top list. Few consolidated subareas exist, exceptions being language and health/population research. Analyzing Amish studies chronologically, the field early on accepted the definitive-sympathetic-authoritative-comprehensive-insider research approach, which legitimated “The Throne” (so-called) in Amish studies, i.e., a central scholar, a few close to him, and the irrelevant hinterlands. The seat was first occupied by Hostetler, then Kraybill. The absence of driving research questions, theory developments, and debates creates place for The Throne, whom scholars often cite to legitimize a given study emerging from an otherwise fragmented field, this field failing to provide scholars self-legitimization. Other troubles with The Throne model are also presented. My call to Amish studies is (1) to develop honed research questions that address specific sub-areas and to consider how any given reference fits into the literature, and (2) to distance our empirical work from fence-straddling popular/scholarly models, e.g. rejecting “the Amish” as a brand name, approaching the Amish as purely scholars and not partially tourists, and foregoing a protective- or reformist-mentality toward the Amish.

Keywords

Citation network analysis; Main path analysis; Reference-network graph; VOSViewer; Donald Kraybill; John Hostetler; Steven Nolt; Gertrude Enders Huntington; Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies; Walter Kollmorgen; Annotated bibliography; Bibliometric analysis

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Introduction

Reflections of the field of Amish studies—if Amish studies can even be considered a “field” of study in a proper sense—basically number zero, and this after 75 years of publications. Although many insightful contributions populate Amish studies, some incredible opportunities to answer major questions and provide insightful perspectives have been passed over. What are the goals of research in Amish studies? How do we understand knowledge in Amish studies? Where are we going with our publications? What camps of thought inhabit Amish studies? What are our paradigms, our theories, our methods, or our mother fields—or do we even have these? Are we facing lively debate or unity, stagnation or momentum? Do we aim for a progressive accumulation of findings, and if so, where are we at by now? Do subareas of study exist? What are the deep, underlying research questions that drive our inquiries? What is Amish studies really all about?

Close to a decade ago, I dove into the Amish literature at the onset of my doctoral work in rural sociology. Like so many others, I gravitated to the lime-light works and responded initially with naïve intrigue. But, in pressing on with what I hoped would be an exhaustive review, I accumulated frustrations. My impressions of Amish scholarship were this: a fist-full of rote explanations about Amish existence and persistence were repackaged across decades, with a touch of extra thoughts. Most every piece I picked up was written as if the author expected it to be the first thing read about the Amish. Theory and methods, so much a part of my rural sociology course readings at the time, were largely frail or absent, with some delightful exceptions that little to no later scholarship rarely took and ran with.

Snowball sampling every bibliography in Amish-themed works provided me with pathless-taken out of the Amish studies arcade, to the caverns and catacombs of scholarship. Were there secret caches of novel, forgotten works? Here and there, authors and publications provided a refreshing surprise—Werner Enninger’s work being among them as I will articulate in the next issue of JAPAS—but most scholarship corpses merited no resurrection. Questions flooded my mind: What research questions are Amish studies scholars asking? Why are they interested in the Amish? What about the limelight works makes them so venerated? What are they providing that I can build upon? And why are so very few publications about the Amish in major journals—for me the (rural) sociological journals, in particular?

My literature review turned into a philosophical exploration, and my first contribution to the field was not my dissertation or a monograph or even a publication in a major sociology journal, but rather anachronistically, co-establishment of the Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies with my then-advisor, Joe Donnermeyer. In our conversations, we agreed that Amish studies needed a journal article-scaled location for the production of knowledge and debate. Now in its fifth year, JAPAS has produced four volumes totaling eight issues filled with quality, peer-reviewed articles. This current volume of two issues—a reflection of the field of Amish studies—really reaches the marrow of the journal’s mission: a place for scholars across a
spectrum of disciplines, backgrounds, and viewpoints to answer questions about goals, meanings of knowledge, debates and momentum, and driving research questions.

One empirical base from which to engage in field reflexivity is quantitative analysis of citations. A citation network analysis documents who is citing whom and whose voices are heard. It provides assistance mapping the topography of a field so that we can identify clusters of paradigms, topics, debates, research questions, and so on. In this article, I provide an extensive citation network analysis to access a good empirical footing from which to critically evaluate the state of the field. The field is characterized as having a narrow center that I refer to as The Throne model. After critically analyzing The Throne model’s impact, I offer proposals for strengthening our research. The appendix includes a thorough list of peer reviewed research in Amish studies, permitting readers the opportunity to broaden their repertoire of references and find sources of inspiration for future work.

Defining the Bounds of Amish Studies Research

The first concern in constructing an Amish Studies citation network is what work constitutes Amish studies scholarship. While a few precedents exist in several extensive Amish studies bibliographies, their usefulness is limited with their weak or non-existent inclusion criteria—what is in, what is out. Take, for example, John Hostetler’s (1951) loose-ended inclusion criteria in his career-inaugurating annotated bibliography:

All materials pertaining to the Old Order Amish Mennonites and also to all Amish groups descending directly from them are included. Any published material arising out of controversy, differences, or the birth of a new group is listed, but material of a derivative nature and slightly removed from the Old Order Amish is not […] An effort was made to list every book, pamphlet, or article […] whether historical, sociological, religious, or genealogical in nature and regardless of the quality. (v)

His ambitious effort—even for 1951—evidently reached a limit to all: “It was impossible […] to list every scrap and fragment of information pertaining to the Amish in local newspapers” (xvii). Yet his volume includes no shortage of “scraps” and ultimately is a cluttered conglomerate of tourist pamphlets, Amish writings in German, newspaper and newspaper clippings, magazine articles, Amish-composed letters, genealogies, unpublished papers by undergraduates, and, yes, some peer-reviewed journal articles and scholarly books. “Howard,” the name inscribed inside of my used copy, found it needful to go through item-by-item and mark the actual scholarship, and he marked what I would have. Hostetler followed a similar pattern for his 1984 (non-annotated) bibliography (Hostetler and Gaines 1984), so I did as Howard across pages of many unhelpful references. Had Hostetler separated out the scholarly material, his two bibliographies would have been much more useful, offering a precedent-setting schematic for sifting literature. He does attempt categorical organization, but his categories are “somewhat arbitrary” (xviii) in both the annotated bibliography (1951) and in the reinvented categories of his second bibliography (1984). Though published due to “demand for authentic information about them […] from high school students to scholars seeking to discover the secret of their way of life” (Hostetler 1951, v),
neither bibliography isolates the *scholarly* material. Similarly, *The Amish* (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner and Nolt 2013) provides pages of references, but the references mingle scholarly, unscholarly, and primary sources.

Two other sources do focus exclusively on scholarly materials, although have topical constraints. In his two volumes of sociological studies about Mennonites, Hutterites, and Amish in Canada, Donovan Smucker (Smucker 1976; Smucker 1991) organizes material by format (e.g. book or journal article), although Smucker’s “Canada” topical constraint is awkward for a largely American-based religion. He includes many studies not exclusively or even at all about Canadian Amish, yet leaves out many, many other studies. His opening essay notes briefly a “paucity of work on the Amish with the plausible explanation of smallness of numbers [in Canada] […] Moreover, this is an area of research dominated by one man, John Hostetler…” (Smucker 1976, xvi). Werner Enninger’s (2002) impressive annotated bibliography of Amish and Mennonite language use is empirically-focused although confined to language studies.

The absence of a systematic protocol for defining scholarly material in Amish studies suggests at least one reason why field analyses are absent. Consequently, I here offer a protocol for inclusion and exclusion.

For many works, their identification as scholarly research is clearly in the center; yet, many other pieces occupy a fuzzy periphery needing clarification. Thus, I begin with the base assumption that an Amish-specific citation network exists and that reference inclusion largely takes care of itself by what authors cite. Not a total scheme, it is nonetheless a self-evident beginning upon which to build additional parameters. A further clarification is that the term “Amish” is inclusive of the total Amish tradition, including horse-and-buggy groups as well as (1) plain Amish-Mennonites (A-Ms) today, namely, the Tampico A-Ms, Beachy A-Ms, and subgroups from the Beachy A-Ms, and (2) A-Ms of yesteryear prior to losing plainness, namely, the late 1800s regional conferences and the early Conservative A-M Conference. Including the whole plain Amish tradition is justified because it avoids haphazard, often era-specific inclusion criteria of who are *really* Amish (e.g. prohibition on driving automobiles). A group need only be within the Amish tradition and plain, as defined by this journal’s scope.

As peer review is a canon of the formal research process, and Amish studies is defined apart from other Amish-themed literature as a science and humanity, peer-reviewed publication media is the primary inclusion requisite. Four media are included: (1) articles in peer-reviewed journals, (2) articles in loosely peer-reviewed yet scholarly periodicals, (3) university press and academic publisher books, and (4) book chapters or handbook sections of the same publishers, treated as stand-alone entities.

Notably, three peer-reviewed formats are omitted from my citation analysis protocol: theses / dissertations, conference proceedings, and encyclopedia entries. Theses are omitted because they are neither widely read nor cited, their numbers are prolific, and many are difficult
to obtain for analysis. Conference proceedings are omitted for two reasons, that they are also prolific and difficult to obtain, and that many conference papers are the backbone of eventual peer-reviewed publications. Encyclopedia entries are neither systematic reviews nor contributions of new knowledge, and the authors have often borrowed their thoughts from previously published work. Finally, all three of these formats are rarely cited, making their exclusion furthermore justified.

Yet other non-scholarly formats are omitted, worth noting given that many are the formats with which Hostetler littered his bibliographies. These include: the scads of tourist booklets, cookbooks, and other popular materials, as with Aurand’s pamphlets; genealogies and Amish directories; fictional or biographical / narrative accounts, notably *Rosanna of the Amish* and recent ex-Amish memoirs; articles in Amish periodicals; academic works that make reference to the Amish as an example or in passing but provide no new information or do not deal with the Amish substantively, as in textbooks; exclusively popular books written by scholars that otherwise echo their scholarly works, notably Hostetler’s *Amish Life* and Kraybill’s *Puzzles of Amish Life*; and academic works that have peripheral treatment of the Amish in a larger narrative about Mennonites, especially with historical works. The following categories were also omitted: works prior to 1942, which are small, somewhat anecdotal, and basically confined to *Mennonite Quarterly Review*; works written in a language other than English (notably German, French, and Japanese); works that are translations, transcripts / reprints, or catalogs of primary materials, of which the *Mennonite Quarterly Review* has many in earlier years; stand-alone or lightly introduced non-annotated bibliographies and recommended reading lists; and websites. Exceptions are necessary and must be managed in order to provide a meaningful dataset. The main systematic exceptions to excluding works are for university / academic press books targeting a popular, non-academic audience, especially given that they are rarely cited in the broader literature, e.g. Linda Egenes’ *Visits with the Amish* from the University of Iowa Press and Randall James’s *Why Cows Learn Dutch* from Kent State University Press.

Exceptions for inclusion were largely driven by citation demands. They are case-by-case and discretionary, typically considered due to unique scholarly contributions. Some include the scholarship of plain people, including five of Stephen Scott’s books about the Amish, David Luthy’s scholarship including *Amish Settlements that Failed* and *Amish Settlements across America* (Luthy also has many short-but-strong history articles populating the pages of *Family Life* not included here), Sara Fisher’s and Rachel Stahl’s *The Amish School*, and Leroy Beachy’s *Unser Leit*. Gertrude Enders Huntington’s dissertation *Dove at the Window* is included due to citation recognition, and a few reports are also included, as with Lawrence Greksa and Jill Korbin’s “Mental Health Service/System Planning for Amish Communities in Four Northeastern Ohio Counties.” Several conference papers that fill notable gaps in scholarly output are included, as with Joseph Donnermeyer and Elizabeth Cooksey’s 2004 conference paper about Amish fertility. One time-frame specific exception was made due to its subtopical importance, John Umble’s 1939 Amish music study.
The area with the most difficult decisions of inclusion and exclusion concerned five topics: genetics / medical research, language research, history, legal work, and folk art. These literatures are vast and potentially meaningless to the immediate Amish studies analysis.

1. Most genetic and technical medical studies use the Amish as a dataset to answer broader questions about human health and biology and are not concerned with the Amish as a social entity. Yet, some genetic and medical studies are, and these have been included, e.g. delivering culturally competent healthcare. My criteria for exclusion is “overly technical and jargon-laden, and lacking a social component.”

2. Language research is oftentimes concerned with the social dimension of Amishness, but many other studies are but technical linguistic analyses of Pennsylvania Dutch that use Amish-derived data but are otherwise uninterested in Amish as a people; these are omitted.

3. History research, on the other hand, is very concerned with the Amish as a people, and is thus germane to Amish studies, and yet a plethora of small, narrowly-focused accounts of Amish history abound in periodicals such as *Mennonite Family History*, *Mennonite Historical Bulletin*, *Mennonite Quarterly Review* (in earlier volumes), and many state- or region-specific bulletins. Many are included, but some are so short, narrow, and/or genealogically-focused that they were omitted. Others may well have been missed due to obscurity.

4. Legal scholars have written about school conflicts, especially the 1972 *Yoder v. Wisconsin* case. Many address the Amish and the law; many others merely discuss legal implications or technicalities, often in the larger context of church and state. The latter are omitted.

5. Finally, publications about Amish folk-arts are well researched and yet deal more with the art itself or are a popular treatment. These are plentiful yet usually omit social elements of the Amish, and thus are mostly excluded except core works. Ervin Beck (2004; 2005) has consolidated Amish and Mennonite folk research elsewhere.

Finally, I have two citation handling clarifications. Compiled books are treated in two ways; first, citations to specific chapters are granted to those chapters and not the book as a whole, whereas citations to the book as a whole are granted to the book. Books with a second (or more) revised edition are not treated separately but as one, and citations to any editions are consolidated into the first edition. The bibliographies of multiple editions are consolidated.

**Analyzing Social Network Data**

The above protocol was used to identify all references in Amish studies. Each reference’s bibliography was manually reviewed and Amish studies citations were identified. These two tasks alone demanded several hundred hours of work and an extremely patient interlibrary loan staff. A short-hand system for references helped organize the process. Each reference was coded in the following format: the first three letters of the first author’s last name, the 4-digit year of publication, and the first three letters of the title (excluding prepositions and articles), so, for example, Kollmorgen’s *Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community* is coded as *kol1942cul*. 
Thus, unique codes serve as a shorthand reference for items locatable in the bibliography appendix, which is sorted by author, year, and title, respectively.

Reference codes were cataloged in an asymmetrical adjacency matrix. Rows contain the bibliographies of references; a given column, then, allows us to see what works are citing a given reference. While the works are listed chronologically, within a given year they are listed alphabetically by author’s last name, then title. The matrix data were imported into UCINet (Borgatti, Everett and Freeman 2002) and Pajek for network calculations; VOSviewer and yEd Graph Editor were used to visualize network maps. VOSviewer—“Visualization Of Similarities”—uses a bibliometric-focused algorithm based both on being cited and a reference’s citations where proximity represents similarities and scale represents centrality (van Eck and Waltman 2009); it is at its best visualizing large networks, such as the total reference list. yEd Graph Editor contains a vast catalog of visualization algorithms and is at its best with smaller networks.

To analyze influence among Amish studies references, several measures were calculated, including degree centrality. In-degree and out-degree centrality tallies how frequently a reference is cited and how many times a reference cites others, respectively. A second, citation analysis-specific duo of measures—authorities and hubs—acknowledges interdependencies among items. Authorities are those who are named by many high-ranking hubs, and hubs are those naming high-ranking authorities. For example, an article can become a hub if it cites all high-ranking authorities, even if the hub itself is never cited, whereas an authority need not cite anyone else to score highly if it is named by the right hubs (Kleinberg 1999).

Influence is also an artifact of relative inequality. To measure citation inequality within Amish studies, the in-degree sums were used to calculate a Gini coefficient. A Gini coefficient, often used in measuring wealth distributions in a country, calculates the extent to which a good—in this case, a citation to a work—deviates from a perfect distribution. In this case, a Gini coefficient of zero suggests all works are cited equally (perfect equality), while a coefficient of one suggests only one work is ever cited (perfect inequality).

To analyze the time-passage of central scholarship, a main path analysis was conducted in Pajek and visualized in yEd using the hierarchical layout algorithm. Main path analysis identifies and traces the path of the most influential references over time by weighing connectivity. Connectivity is quantified with traversal weights, that is, the frequency with which a given link is used on all possible paths between source references (with no citations to others) and sink references (having not been cited). The output treats connections among articles as a flow of knowledge, the backbone of a field (Calero-Medina and Noyons 2008; de Nooy, Mrvar and Batagelj 2005; Hummon and Doreian 1989). For main path analysis to work, the citation network must be acyclical, meaning that all references to future works—including those cited in a later edition chronologically beyond the first edition—needed to be eliminated. Of the three main path analysis algorithms available, Search Path Count—the most commonly used in
citation network analysis—was employed for this study as well. Main Path Analysis typically produces a single path, but paths can be a web of parallel and intersecting paths. To broaden the scope of the main path, I permitted all links with traversal weights of 0.045 and greater, which was the approximate minimal link weight along the main path.

Main path analysis reduces the network to a few references. By also visualizing citation patterns of all references chronologically, the duration of citing patterns, researchers’ sensitivity to the present-day applicability of past findings, and epochs of research become visible. I present the chronological adjacency matrix as a reference-network graph (Hargens 2000). The right-triangle shape lists citations chronologically along the x and y axis. A diagonal line follows where the same reference meets in the row and column, representing what is contemporary at any point. Blocks beyond the diagonal line represent either (a) reference to same-year or “in press” publications, as references are listed alphabetically within years, or (b) references in the bibliography of a final edition, which are consolidated into a the reference’s first edition.

After exploring multiple techniques for identifying subareas, the heat map display of VOSViewer was used. The heat map visualizes the intensity of interrelationships, which helps identify subareas beyond the center. Because of what was discovered to be much fragmentation among potential subareas, a key player analysis was also employed. It identifies which nodes, if removed, would significantly fragment the network, that is, what references are commonly recognized by unconnected others or what references cite generally unconnected, yet related, references (Borgatti 2003).

Descriptive Stastistics

The bibliography from 1942 to 2017 includes 983 references, which cite 7,151 other works. The mean number of Amish studies citations per reference is 7.3. Of the 7,151 citations, at least 795 (11.1%) are self-citations, which is probably undercounted, given that self-citations had to be manually observed and some were undoubtedly missed. Some citation networks have multiple components, that is, two or more citation networks that do not interlink. This study had only one main component and 32 isolates, i.e., 32 references that neither cited nor were cited by others. Isolates were eliminated for network calculations. The results will be further divided into three themes: the reference core, citation subgroups, and the historical ebbs and flows of the field, which will lead into a critical analysis of Amish studies publication trends.

The Core of Amish Studies

Amish studies has a highly cited, narrowly populated core of references and authors. Table 1 lists the 10 most cited references, the “one per cent” of Amish studies. This one per cent claims nearly 20% of all citations. Put another way, one out of every five citations to anything in Amish studies is to one of these top ten works. The second 1% of references (not shown) claim 6% of all citations, the third 1% claim 5.4%. While these are still large proportions, the
difference between the top 1% and the second is sizeable. Of note, The Amish (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner and Nolt 2013), while published too recently to make the top 10 list, may be there shortly, with 36.19% of all references since 2013 (38 total) citing it. That would place it third if ranked by citation rate.

The influence of Amish Society and Riddle of Amish Culture cannot go unnoticed. Over half of all studies published since 1963 cite Hostetler (“hos1963ami”) and close to half since 1989 cite Kraybill (“kra1989rid”). The sheer enormity of influence is conspicuous in Figure 1. From the top ten list and this graph, we may speak of “The Big Two,” literally. Others in Figure 1 are in the background—e.g. Zimmerman Umble’s “Holding the Line” (“zim1996hol”) and Wasao & Donnermeyer’s analysis of parity (“was1996ana”) but these—and dots even larger—are but motes in comparison to The Big Two. (Remember, Appendix B provides a full list of references, so individual items visualized in Figure 1 can be identified by author, year, and title.)

Moving from references to authors, the most frequently cited author, whose name appears five times in the one per cent list, is Kraybill. Taking all of his first-authored publications together, Kraybill claims 10.4% (746) of all citations—10.8% if including non-first authorship. This is not too shabby, for only arriving on the publishing scene 44 years into the 75. Now, taken from 1987 to present—the year after his first Amish publication in 1986—21.3% of every last Amish-related citation in authors’ bibliographies are to a Kraybill work. Stated another way,
were you to glance across a random author’s bibliography since 1987—a book, a book chapter, a journal article—on average, slightly more than one of every five Amish studies citations in the bibliography would be to a Kraybill work.

Kraybill aside, the strong influence of others in the core is also apparent. Hostetler, Nolt, and Huntington each occupy two slots. With Kraybill, the four of them can be taken together; the fact that Kraybill-Nolt and Hostetler-Huntington frequently co-authored and that all four authors frequently cite full rounds of each other’s works further suggests a very narrow core of authors and ideas dominating Amish studies. These four occupy 11 of the 15 author slots in the one percent list. Kollmorgen, Hurst, McConnell, and Olshan are single-instance authors in Table 1.

Simple in-degree as a measure can be deceiving, because it fails to account for the overall network structure, a problem the hub and authority measures address. Table 1 includes scores for hubs and authorities. The authority scores closely follow the ranking of in-degrees. The top hub scores—which are time-sensitive given that early pieces cannot cite later authorities—including six of the top pieces. Those pieces among the top ten hubs but not in Table 1 include additional works by Kraybill and Nolt, as well as Johnson-Weiner.
All-in-all, in Table 1, six pieces—over half—are in the one per cent for in-degree, hub, AND authority; *Riddle of Amish Culture* is second place for all three. This demonstrates that a small network of scholars—namely, Kraybill, Hostetler, Nolt, and Huntington, in that order—dominate the field, and the core is self-reinforcing: not only do others cite their works but their own publications are stacked with core-internal citations.

But how much does this small troop dominate? What is the disparity between scores on their work vs. others? Let us turn to the Gini coefficient and Lorenz curves, which measure unequal spreads of a resource, in this case, citations. To avoid an unrepresentative glut of yet-to-be acknowledged recent references, the period considered incorporated a five-year hold, so calculations are for references up to 2012. Sample points of the population were taken at 10%, 25%, 50%, 75%, 97%, 98%, and 99% of the population.

**Figure 2: Lorenz Curve of Amish Studies References**

The Gini coefficient is 0.635 (mean square error 24.99). Figure 2 illustrates this disparity with a Lorenz curve. The $y$ axis represents the cumulative percent of the population, while the $x$ axis represents the cumulative percent of a resource owned, so that, for example, in this illustration, 60% of the population can claim 10% of all citations. The linear line represents an even distribution of citations (e.g. 30% of the population claims 30% of the resource), while the Lorenz curve represents disparity. Amish studies’ inequality ranks alongside countries with the greatest income inequalities, namely, South Africa and Haiti. While my use of the Gini coefficient and Lorenz curve is not arguing that citations *should* be evenly distributed, we can marvel at the sheer percent of references basically forgotten—60% cited 10% of the time—in contrast to the omnipresence of the top citations—1% cited nearly 20% of the time.
Figure 3, continued

With <0.045 traversal weights, but on the main path’s end:
- nol2001mov
- kra2013ami
- cro2014con
- and2015wha
- don2016mid
- cro2016dai / col2017rev (two sinks)
What sense can be made out of the Amish studies core? In the network graph, peering behind the curtain of Hostetler (1963) and Kraybill (1989), a very large cluster of other works hover around the center (Figure 1). A main path analysis draws attention to references along the research backbone. Figure 3 presents the main path analysis (bold lines) and links with traversal weights greater than or equal to 0.045. We can observe several trends in the main path analysis.

First, and without surprise by now, the works of several familiar authors occupy “choke points” along the main path: Hostetler’s *Annotated Bibliography* (1951) and *Amish Society* (1963), Kraybill’s *Riddle* (1989), Nolt’s *History of the Amish* (1992), Kraybill and Nolt’s *Amish Enterprises* (1995), Kraybill and Bowman’s *Backroad* (2001), and Nolt and Meyer’s *Plain Diversity*. Some surprises choke points include Mook’s (1956) chronicle of extinct Amish communities and Kephart’s (1976) chapter about the Amish in *Extraordinary Groups*.

Second, Amish music research constitutes the foundation of cumulative knowledge in Amish studies, not Kollmorgen’s (1942, 1943) more highly cited publications, which follow a separate path, and not Bachman’s study (1942), which does not appear in the main path analysis. Not too much should be read Kollmorgen’s exclusion, since Umble (1939) was the only Amish studies publication Kollmorgen (1942) cited, thus narrowly eliminating Kollmorgen’s qualification as a source reference in the main path analysis.

Third, settlement history, spatial patterns, and migration play pivotal roles in Amish studies from the 1950s to 1970s. Maurice Mook’s work on Amish extant and extinct settlements, particularly those in Pennsylvania, is on the main path leading up to Hostetler’s *Amish Society* (as is, ironically, a book by Elmer Lewis Smith, Hostetler’s purported antagonist). In the 1970s, James Landing’s geographic work in the Midwest is along the main path.

Fourth, social science-based Amish education research in the years sandwiching the 1972 Supreme Court *Yoder* decision has highly valued links, but, despite its conspicuity during that era, is not the main path but a parallel.

Fifth, the main path through the 1980s and 1990s double dips back and forth between two subareas: theoretical perspectives about Amish social change and adaptation (e.g. works of Marc Olshan, Thomas Foster, Stephen Scott, and Thomas Meyers), and Amish history (e.g. works of Theron Schlabach, Paton Yoder, Beulah Hostetler, and Steven Reschly).

Finally, while the weakest links of the main path are after 2010—as an expected mathematical by-product given the formula’s handling of recent scholarship—a strong, parallel path reaches three years closer than the main path and primarily consists of population and settlement scholarship of Joseph Donnermeyer and co-authors Elizabeth Cooksey, David Luthy, and me.

In sum, the backbone of central scholarship beyond the core authors focuses on Amish migration and settlement patterns, Amish history, social change, and, in the early years, music.
Beyond the Backbone: Are There “Limbs” of Amish Studies Research?

However the pie is cut, the top references mentioned in the previous section appear again and again when conducting analysis on the citation network. I attempted a principal components analysis, factor analysis (on the network), and faction analysis, to name a few, and was not able to get past the core references to meaningful subgroupings. Is it even possible to drill beneath the surface and see if there are pockets of other activity?

VOSViewer is a program designed specifically to identify subgroups among references, so if subgroupings were to be found, VOSViewer should find them. The first run produced a network with The Big Two in the middle, enveloping the network in sheer size (e.g. in Figure 1). These, plus the third-ranking *History of the Amish* (1992), were eliminated as a first step in uncovering research subareas. The new network is represented as a heat map in Figure 4. Even

**Figure 4: Heat Map of Amish Studies in VOSViewer, Top Three In-Degree References Excluded**
with the top three eliminated, the network is still relatively round, suggesting a single dominant core-periphery structure of works rather than subareas. Nevertheless, two distinct subareas come into sharper view.

The upper right is populated with works about language studies and consists of two sub-cores (see Figure 4a for a zoomed view). The outer sub-core consists of technical language studies (e.g. studies by Enninger, Raith, Huffines, Keiser, Louden, and Van Ness) while the inner sub-core consists of more socially derived language studies (e.g. language use in school) and spin-off topics, including dress and music. This branch in Amish studies is well established, although now low on fuel, as most studies date from the late 1970s through 1990s.

The lower left is populated with works about health, genetics, safety, population, and demography (see Figure 4b for a zoomed view). Focused health studies are in the center of the heat map (e.g. Miller, et al.’s 2007 study of women’s health practices and Bassett’s 2004 study of physical activity), demography studies edging toward the network’s center, and safety studies
bulging at the bottom. Health studies have exploded since the 1990s, especially with the introduction of Madeline Leininger’s culturally competent health care paradigm that Anna Francis Wenger applied to Amish studies—see especially Wenger (1991), “The Cultural Care Theory…” Technical genetic studies aside, health care for and health practices among the Amish constitute the single largest subarea of study. A biannual Amish Health Care conference sponsored by the Center for Appalachia Research in Cancer Education—established in 2015 and convened again in 2017—evidences this topic’s strong and growing presence.

Two other topic clusters are vaguely discernible along the edges of the network’s center. These are agriculture (e.g. works by John Cross, Deborah Steiner / Richard Moore, Caroline Brock, Mary Jackson, and Martin Bender) and Amish school conflict research (e.g. works by Shawn Peters, Robert Casad, Joe Wittmer, and chapters from the Albert Keim volume).
Eyeballing a network configuration has its place, although with the overwhelming amount of citations—nearly 1,000 with over 7,000 ties—it has limits. A key player analysis helps identify subareas that may not have gelled yet by eliminating a reference that cites disparate other references. The analysis identifies Hostetler (1963), Kraybill (1989), and Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt (2013) as the top three key players—no surprise, yet none of their other works come up in the top references, suggesting redundancy in citations thereafter. Once these are removed, we can get a better sense of references that string together weakly acknowledged topical areas, areas where little cross-citing may occur beyond a key player node. The key player analysis, unlike the “hub” measure, rewards studies for acknowledging and being acknowledged by many fairly disconnected pieces. Capping the number of key players at 11—to mimic the top one per cent list—the eight remaining key players in chronological order are:

- Casad’s (1968) analysis of the pre-Yoder school conflicts cites eight references and is cited six times; its key player position—with so few citations—attests to how education-legal pieces are not speaking to one another.
- Nagata’s (1968 / 1989) community study of Arthur, IL.
- Rechlin’s (1976) community study of Nappanee, IN.
- Fishman’s (1988) Amish Literacy receives 25 citations from a diverse set of publications concerned with public images of the Amish, education, and, of course, literary work. Despite its strong theoretical lens and compelling ethnography, the book is not cited by the top scholarship, yet serves as a cornerstone to several topically honed references since then, including Weaver-Zercher’s (2001) Amish in the American Imagination and Pratt’s (2004) study of Shipshewana.
- Reschly (2000) employs Bourdieu’s habitus and field in a cross-generational study of Amish social patterns; Reschly cites numerous peripheral history studies and, as with Fishman’s work, is cited by some theory-hungry scholars outside the core.
- Enninger’s (2002) annotated bibliography of language studies is a key player in that it ties together numerous works in language that have limited acknowledgement of one another.
- Anderson and Kenda’s (2015) analysis of Amish migration and settlement patterns includes an exhaustive literature review of closely related yet diffuse pieces that make proposals about migration motivation and community.
- Jolly’s (2017) review of Amish health and care literature—forthcoming in the second issue of this special JAPAS volume—synthesizes numerous health pieces about birth. Jolly’s work suggests the possible emergence of sub-sub-topics within the sub-topic of health.

**Amish Studies, Chronologically**

Chronology is essential to citation analysis, and we turn now to citation patterns across the 75-year period. As an initial analysis, I aggregated references into per-year totals. References per year (Figure 5) averaged below five during the first 25 years and then grew to a high of just a little over 30 references in the mid-1990s, then again in the early 2000s. Amish studies is
Figure 5: Amish Studies References Per Year, 1942 to 2017

Averaging the given, prior, and following year to smooth trendline

sustaining between 15 and 30 references per year since the mid-1980s, with no observable trends
up or down, yet with much fluctuation within that range from year-to-year.

Citation patterns in Amish studies suggest unevenness, which by this point in the results,
is not surprising. In Hargens’ (2000) categorization of reference-network graph patterns, he
identified two basic ways authors “use the literature.” First, over-citation of foundational papers
occurs when agreement about the importance of a topic among topics competing for attention is
not established, and authors must convince readers that their paradigm has been discussed
elsewhere, often in founding works. Hence, the citations tend not to address the specific findings
or content of a given reference but rather cite it as representative of a research prerogative. In
foundation-emphasizing reference-network graphs, citations crowd the y axis. Second, over-
citation of recent references assumes readers grasp the topic’s importance and context. Such
citations refer to the specific results provided in the reference. In the reference-network graph,
citation blocks crowd the diagonal line. Hargens also mentions a residual structure, one that
over-cites neither frontal nor foundational works; such fields are characterized as low-citation.

The Amish studies reference-network graph (Figure 6) fits neither of Hargens’ two
categories nor his residual category. Amish studies is more of a leap-frog citation pattern, where
older research is gradually dropped, with the exception of several very visible punctuations,
references cited across time and habitually. In this sense, Amish studies follows a foundational
works pattern, if the foundational works are permitted to stretch across 75 years. This suggests
that authors cite a small handful of well-known works time and again to legitimate Amish
research as worthwhile, yet take little note of others’ findings. Several locations evidence citation concentrations, which are marked with letters along the graph’s diagonal. What follows is a qualitative discussion of activity during these periods.

**Area “a”: The Birth and Infancy of Amish Studies, 1942**

No year can claim the birthright of Amish studies like 1942. Prior, small stirrings appeared in Mennonite-based publications, as with topical histories by John Umble and Harold Bender. In 1942, two monumental works introduced the Amish to researchers: Walter Kollmorgen’s *Culture of a Contemporary Rural Community: The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County, Pennsylvania* and Calvin George Bachman’s *The Old Order Amish of Lancaster County*. 
American culture was fast assimilating the eastern and southern European immigrants of the 1890s to 1920s while simultaneously blending rural and urban through transportation and communications innovations; “Amish studies” was born into this context, with two questions. The first is captured in Kollmorgen’s study: why and how have the Amish survived as a distinctive group and will they continue to survive? He explained Amish viability as attributable to their rural location (ensured by an agricultural emphasis), Biblical literalism, a mentality of tension with the host society, and an embrace of a past-/tradition-minded orientation. Members experienced interdependence and stability in relationships with their similar life experiences and goals. Their social organization and rejection of societal patterns, especially in their mandate to remain agricultural and rural, was a means to achieve an end: their religious objectives as interpreted in the Bible. The primary threat to Amish community stability is external pressures, and Kollmorgen describes some of these, including consolidated schools, youth culture, dependence on agricultural markets and specialized farming, and, perhaps above all others, increasing land values making farm acquisition for offspring difficult.

The second question was the essence of Bachman’s monograph: Who and what are the Amish? Bachman answered this question by describing Amish practices, much as biologists document newly discovered species. His conception of Amish goes deeper than a tabulation of practices, somewhat reminiscent to me of Reschly’s (2000) case for a community habitus. For example, in a chapter on transportation, Bachman predicts that, “When the restriction concerning automobiles is lifted; which, when it occurs, will be after a terrific struggle in the church…” (emphasis added) (Bachman 1942), and though his prediction has—as of 2017—not yet come to pass, he does interestingly assume Amishness will continue beyond this otherwise taken-for-granted quintessential token of Amishness. His answer to “who and what” is hardly a shallow tally of practices.

Both Kollmorgen and Bachman were precedent setting: premiere Amish research concerned questions about Amish persistence and descriptions of their practices, was set in books, and used data from first-hand contact and conversations with Amish. Two Mennonite Quarterly Review book reviews praised the references in a manner to become archetypal of Amish research; language including “sympathetic”, “authoritative” / “accurate”; and “complete” / “comprehensive”—as well as an “insider” (Mennonite) / “outsider” (non-Anabaptist) researcher dichotomy—would be repeated often in reviews over the subsequent 75 years, the unquestioningly positive review of the definitive-sympathetic-authoritative-comprehensive study.5

Area “b”: The Adolescence of Amish Studies

Neither Kollmorgen nor Bachman produced additional studies; in essence, the founding fathers forsook their protégée. Into this abyss stepped six scholars during the 1950s and early 1960s: Loomis, Mook, Hostetler, Huntington, Smith, and Schreiber, which Donnermeyer (2017) will discuss in the second issue of this JAPAS volume. Everyone except Mook explained Amish
persistence or described the essence of Amishness at a grand scale. Loomis theorized the sundry functions of the Amish social system and its evolution, Huntington described in great detail the practices and theological changes of a Holmes County district, Smith argued that the Amish defend and adapt their practices in response to both external and internal change, and Schreiber proposed that the essence of Amish practices is rooted in their particular flavor of German ethnicity. Hostetler’s *Amish Society*, the last in the group to be published (1963), emerged as the definitive-sympathetic-authoritative-comprehensive study of an insider. The work’s impact straight up to the doormat of 2017 is clear in Figure 6, while other scholarship of that era was cited but for a short time thereafter. Hostetler had ready Mennonite institutional support for book promotion due to his “insider” status, so many other scholars were quick to offer his book accolades, especially as the first “insider” to write about the Amish. The grand and area-specific studies of this period were fairly diffuse, with no clear center (Figure 7), but this changed after Hostetler’s *Amish Society*. If Amish studies was going to a be a field where treatments attempted to be all-encompassing rather than diffused among sub-networks of specialists, then a single, monolithic scholar would be best fitted.

**Figure 7: Heat Map of Amish Studies Citation Network, 1942-1962**
Area “c”: A Research-Front Moment

After Amish Society, and especially through the school conflicts leading up to the 1972 Supreme Court Yoder case, Hostetler’s work was at the field’s center. Yet, an Amish studies research front occurred around 1978 to 1982, and on through the 1980s, suggesting a possible future of specialized subareas. Works, such as those by Buck (1978), Cronk (1978 / 1981), Crowley (1978), Ericksen and Ericksen (1978 and 1979), Enninger (1979), Huffines (1980), and Olshan (1981), rolled out of journals such as Rural Sociology, Population Studies, Annals of the Association of American Geographers, German Quarterly, and, of course, Mennonite Quarterly Review. During this spurt and through the 1980s, studies from this cycle were cited vigorously, suggesting a transition to a research front pattern of publications: current theories being debated among current scholars with new data. Research narrowed in on specific topics: tourism / popular images, language, agricultural / occupational changes, population trends, and modernity, among others. Efforts of note include Werner Enninger’s Essen-Delaware research team in Dover, DE, Olshan’s debate-opening critique of Hostetler’s folk society application, and the development of Pathway’s Amish library in Aylmer, ON, curated by David Luthy. Yet, this new research front failed to build upon itself, as by the end of the decade, citations defaulted to Hostetler’s work, which remained at the center (Figure 8). A few branches outward evidence some of the 1980s research fronts, including language and health / population.

Figure 8: Heat Map of Amish Studies Citation Network, 1942-1988
“The Throne”: Three Decades of the Young Center and Kraybill (Area “d”)

In the opening of this article, I suggested that a field reflection must be data-driven. In previous sections, the data point and point and point to several scholars at the center of Amish studies, and these citation data are demanding an examination and assessment. With that in mind, I offer an analysis of what has become—to quote what I have heard several times called colloquially—“The Throne” of Amish studies, the seat first occupied by Hostetler and then Kraybill.

Why a “throne”? The metaphor is apt and fitting, given the data considered so far: Amish studies consists of a core—like a king—and a few close advisors. Beyond the throne are semi-chartered hinterlands more-or-less within the throne’s sphere of influence, scholars and publications with varying proximity to the monarch’s seat and influence. Those closer have more power, are more visible. With the throne analogy in mind, we can say that Hostetler’s influence by 1988 was colossal, even as a few sub-area branches had emerged. A throne model was established, excepting some outlying topics introduced by the research front.

In 1989, Kraybill opened his public career in Amish studies with a tome. Though not claiming to be in the same all-encompassing lineage of Amish Society—and actually rebuffing as much in the preface (“not comprehensive,” p. viii)—Riddle of Amish Culture nevertheless took on its specs: definitive-sympathetic-authoritative-comprehensive and by a mainstream Mennonite insider, as well as cognizant of what drives people’s popular curiosities in the Amish—descriptive accounts and Amish survival. The build-up to this work was a National Endowment for the Humanities grant that funded a comparative analysis of the Amish, Mennonites, and Brethren in Lancaster County, PA, caught in “The Quandary of Modernity.” The comparative analysis appears as a serendipitous pathway to an Amish book, Riddle, that received Amish Society-sized attention, a limelight to occupy more than Mennonites and Brethren could offer. Even before Hostetler’s final Amish Society edition in 1993, Kraybill seemed poised to succeed him on The Throne.

Kraybill’s leap into Amish studies was not a given. Prior to Riddle, Kraybill was focused on the Mennonites and Brethren. He was ordained in the Lancaster Mennonite Conference, where he was a change agent during the Conference’s transition to the mainstream, from his theological writings to his refusal to wear the plain suit coat at church, the first minister in the area to do so (Ruth 2001, 1103-04). By the time Riddle was published, Kraybill had attained full professorship at Elizabethtown College and had written several books about ethics, theology, and Mennonite education, so his career was well advanced prior to entering Amish studies.

Across the six years after Riddle’s publication, Kraybill became cemented at the center of Amish activity. He pulled together several scholars of social change for the compiled book The Amish Struggle with Modernity, brought legal and socio-political scholars into The Amish and the State, and had co-authored Amish Enterprise with Steven Nolt, who in 1992, and in his early
20s, had authored *History of the Amish*, which had made good use of David Luthy’s Amish library and history articles in *Family Life*. These works are cited frequently and are visible as stacks in the area just beyond the *Riddle of Amish Culture* (area “d” in Figure 6).

The involvement of Marc Olshan as co-editor in *Modernity* may be easily forgotten but was paramount. During the research front, Olshan was the most successful scholar, having published in three reputable journals—*Rural Sociology*, *Human Organization*, and *Social Forces*. In co-editing *Modernity*, Olshan reprinted these three theoretical pieces and in so doing placed the debates he had opened during the research front within Kraybill’s auspices. Kraybill and Olshan each contributed five chapters to *Modernity*, and though each engaged in co-authorships, the two did not together co-author. Were their perspectives not compatible? They were not, and their publishing outlets suggest as much. Olshan’s contributions were to specific debates. He used honed theory with persuasive evidence to make arguments in journal-level articles. Kraybill, aside from a *Journal of Rural Studies* piece he was third of fourth author on, has never published in a major journal. His canon of highly cited research is published as monographs through Johns Hopkins University Press.

Furthermore, what debates Kraybill has taken up, or how his work is related to past work, be it the research front around 1980 or the folk society / rationality debate between Olshan and Hostetler, is not clear. At times when reading Kraybill, he appears to be taking up the tradition of Olshan; other times, he reads much like Hostetler. I have concluded it is a somewhat futile exercise: Kraybill did not take up sociological debates like Olshan, even as he peppered his writing with sociological terms, notably his ongoing minimally theoretically contextualized use of “modernity.” His preface to *Riddle* notes that, in relation to his “writing style” that “as much as possible, [he has] dispensed with technical jargon,” and the term “moderns” means “those of us living on the modern side of the cultural gap,” an explanation that fails not only to ground and apply a particular theory of modernity—or modernization, Kraybill uses the terms interchangeably—but is a circular definition. “Theoretical and technical” explanations are endnoted (Kraybill 1989, ix), although the endnotes have little more than shout-outs to a few sociologists, e.g. Peter Berger, but no explanation as to what their theories are and how they are employed.

With *Riddle*, Kraybill gravitated toward The Throne Hostetler was vacating: the insider (Mennonite) scholar writing definitive-sympathetic-authoritative-comprehensive studies about the Amish. *Riddle*, like *Amish Society*, found its largest audience among popular readers, and it was written with such ones in mind, ones who were not looking for scholarship but a more thorough treatment of the Amish than a tourist booklet. (And for the booklet-inclined, Kraybill also provided a scaled-down version of *Riddle, The Puzzles of Amish Life.*) While the 1980s research front may have been moving away from The Throne model toward more specific questions, especially with Hostetler aging and scholars diversifying, Kraybill’s 1989 to 1995 production of co-authored and compiled volumes consolidated much research activity back into The Throne.
Kraybill, already at Elizabethtown College, was possibly involved in Hostetler’s move there under the auspices of a new Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, established in 1986. Hostetler started out as director and eventually moved to an honored scholar in residence position; Kraybill took the director role in 1989. The Center was envisioned to be a sort of “Mecca” for Amish Studies. Kraybill transferred to Messiah College in 1996 as provost before returning to the Center in 2002, shortly after Hostetler’s passing in 2001.

Any rookie observer of Amish studies browsing the literature will soon notice these two epochs, one of Hostetler, one of Kraybill. An inconspicuous but fascinating intersection between the new king (Kraybill) and the old (Hostetler) is found in a pair of papers from a 1996 European compilation, *The Amish: Origin and Characteristics*. Both Hostetler and Kraybill have side-by-side chapters in which they address the nagging question of Amish persistence. In typical straight-forward prose, Hostetler names four “secrets of [Amish] survival”: the maintenance of a redemptive community, restraint in technology use, clear social roles and socialization of children, and non-verbal discourse. Kraybill’s goal is similar, although worded in his trademark turn-of-a-phrase. He wishes to explain why the “Amish are not merely surviving but are actually flourishing in the midst of modernity,” and he names “at least eight factors” that “unravel the riddle”: family growth, retention of youth, symbols of separation, social control, technological accommodation, occupational flexibility, outside political tolerance, and Amish revered status as cultural icons. Both authors address the same question, both take for granted that this is the question needing answered, both approach the question as the definitive-sympathetic-authoritative-comprehensive treatment of a Mennonite insider, and both develop answers that are just as different as they are the same.

The questions and explanations in these two articles seem trite and endless, but the two approaches come from the same single Throne approach to Amish studies. This is not the place for a deeper analysis of theory—elsewhere in this issue, both Billig & Zook (2017) and Reschly (2017) have opened the way for critical analyses—it is enough to note the continuity between Hostetler’s and Kraybill’s career to account for continuity in The Throne. We see in Figures 9 and 10 that Kraybill and Hostetler—and Nolt to a lesser degree—dominate the field at two different points, one on the occasion of Hostetler’s death and Kraybill’s second edition of *Riddle* (2001) and one about five years ago, on the eve of the Kraybill-led *The Amish*.

In Figure 6, several additional concentrations post-Kraybill’s rise in the early 1990s are worth mentioning. “e” represents 2001’s publications, including two Kraybill books (*Anabaptist World USA* and *Backroad*) and Weaver-Zercher’s *Amish in the American Imagination*. “f” represents 2007’s publications, notably the Kraybill-led *Amish Grace*, the Nolt-led *Plain Diversity*, and Stevick’s *Growing Up Amish*. “g” represents Hurst and McConnell’s *Amish Paradox* and also two insider works, the Kraybill-led *The Amish Way* and Johnson-Weiner’s *New York Amish*. “h” is Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt’s *The Amish*. All of these publications are either by Kraybill and an inner circle or are published under the Kraybill-edited Johns Hopkins series.
Figure 9: Heat Map of Amish Studies Citation Network, 1942-2001

Figure 10: Heat Map of Amish Studies Citation Network, 1942-2012
Reconceptualizing the Nature of Amish Studies Scholarship

Why do we cite a certain narrow body of references with such habit? Are there theories in them that we are testing? Are we responding to their proposals? Or are methods employed that we wish to utilize? Has a proposition been opened by these references that commands attention, debates, and critical tests? The answer is, of course, no, no, no, no.

The most probable answer is Hargens’ explanation of foundation-emphasizing research, publications that cite a handful of established references not to discuss the specific findings of these works but to legitimate the current study at hand as worth attention. If the founding works have rapport, then citations can juice a little of that same rapport. Many actually desire a Throne in Amish studies, one whose name can be invoked to bless a publishing quest. Accordingly, the throne’s name often includes honorific prefaces that emphasize the legitimacy of the throne’s blessing: “the distinguished scholar […]”, “the dean of Amish studies […]”, the “nationally-recognized Amish expert,” the “noted expert on the Amish,” “the authoritative work of the noted scholar […]”, and even “[…], an authority on the Amish and very sympathetic to their views.” When honorary prefaces are offered, it is as if the scholarship’s merits are self-evident and above scrutiny, and the problem is that it preempts the lively debates fields need to make advances.

Even with these honorific prefaces, and even in spite of Hostetler’s, Kraybill’s, Nolt’s, and others’ names appearing with routine, these authors’ actual ideas—their theories, models, research questions, and case studies—are seldom mentioned. The Throne is most often cited merely as an Amish authority or for descriptive information. I have rarely seen serious attempts to employ these scholars’ theoretical frameworks—Parker (2013) is one recent exception, McConnell’s (2013) conference paper another. Instead, citations are something like this: “Footnote 1: For an overview of Amish culture and history, see The Throne.” If the ideas are picked up, they are seldom the proposals but rather a vocabulary, not surprising given Kraybill’s talent for turning a phrase.8 In sum, the most meaningful reason to cite a work is not why these works are so often cited.

Why—with a few exceptions—has Amish research remained out of major academic journals and major university presses, Johns Hopkins aside? (This is a verdict against us we must take seriously!) The answer, I believe, is the same as to the question, why do we cite certain reputable works with such frequency? Because we have not established research questions, let alone questions that scholars outside Amish studies care about. This is why works in Amish studies are rarely published in important sources, this is why we feel we need to cite reputable references to legitimate our work. Because we have not clarified the research questions, we do not know how to respond to each other’s work, or even how to measure the contributions (findings, methods, arguments) of others. So, we don’t—or rarely—respond to each other’s work, we don’t build strong literature reviews before offering our own study, and we too often don’t take an interest in digging up works in Amish studies beyond the ones dangling like shiny objects.9

My suggested remedies are twofold. First, we must hone our theorizing, our topical-focus, and our research questions at specific levels, particularly at the mid-range and micro. Macro-level, grand, comprehensive accounts occasionally have a place, but they cannot produce the nuanced, specific findings desired in the social science’s evidence-based research. Amish studies has too often worked backwards, from grand theories of Amish society to an area of momentary interest—which becomes an appendage of The Throne if working with him—rather than the occasional meta-analysis assessing interconnectedness, contradictions, gaps, and new paths across a body of semi-autonomous, focused research. Such a meta-analysis in turn spurs further focused research.

Honing our work will help subareas develop. As long as our research question is only a vague, large scale one—Amish survival, and descriptions as data—subtopics will have difficulty achieving autonomy. The subtopics of health practices and language use are the only two strong examples of mid-range work that has developed reasonable autonomy. Developing distinctive subtopics also clarifies the chronology of knowledge accumulation, whereas in The Throne model, subtopics are assigned to sub-experts, who seek a similar authoritative standing on the subtopic. Once the book is written on the topic, it is considered exhausted, and we accept a frame of mind that anyone else writing on that topic is threatening the author of the definitive account.

Second, we should better understand scholarship structures. If we are to begin habitually citing works for their distinct, unique contributions, rather than as a mere legitimizer of studying the Amish, we need a sense of how the scholarship pieces fit together and how we expect the pieces to contribute to future knowledge building. I propose the following as the primary categories of Amish research:

*Empirical work that uses the Amish case to interrogate broader theory or propositions.* Such work has the greatest potential to contribute to larger theories. Bailey and Collins (2011), for example, used the Amish case to control for household innovation explanations of the mid-century baby boom, finding that the Amish also experienced a parallel increase in birth rates, thus providing evidence against causative explanations pointing to household technology. The Amish are a potentially useful case to other larger theories, given the socially based empirical controls built into Amish life.

*Empirical work that uses the insights of broader theory to understand a social problem observed among the Amish.* This is characteristic of denominational studies (e.g. Jewish Studies, Catholic Studies, or Islamic Studies), where questions asked and answers sought are influenced by an interest in the religion in and of itself. While it is the most tempting platform from which to work, prolonged work in denominational studies creates isolation from other disciplines.

*Research in the humanities,* especially history, literature, religious studies, and theology, which make specific, focused arguments based on the human experience or idealist reasoning.
Assessments of methodology. Methodology has not been given appropriate attention in Amish studies, not in deliberate work on method, not in thorough methodological explanations at the onset of a research essay. Without an explicit methodology, other researchers cannot replicate our procedures and validate our studies. Even in heavily qualitative-type research, a strong sense of empirical legitimacy should still pervade. Strengthening methods will strengthen the field’s scientific credibility, and pieces that deliberately reflect on methodology can help our scholastic production.

Meta-reviews, not in the sense of a comprehensive work that attempts to explain the many social phenomenon among the Amish and from which subtopical research is but an appendage, but in the sense of synthesizing research and assessing the state of findings, identifying new paths for scholars.

Descriptive studies, in the sense of a cultural anthropologist’s documentation of a culture or a geographer’s profiling of communities. Such work is helpful when little is known about a particular group or place. Some plain Anabaptist groups have few or no descriptive accounts, notably many conservative Mennonites, all of the Apostolic Christian (Froehlich) tradition, and the Old German Baptist groups.

Theoretical work that presents testable propositions about the Amish based on the literature and cases, that identifies and organizes theoretical work, or that critically analyses the use of a theory.

As we develop our research and review the literature, this classification scheme may be useful in understanding the contributions of others and our own contributions, and then how we use (cite) the literature in our work. A key function in knowledge production is building and debating e.g., “While Black (2004) found that […], White’s (2013) results of […] suggests a disagreement in how we understand Amish […]” As we read each other’s work and talk to each other, weighing out what each is proposing, we will create debates that may be of interest to scholars inside and outside Amish studies.

The Problematic Crossroads of Popular Curiosity and Scholastic Inquiry

The Amish are cultural celebrities, much more so than, say, the Hutterites, conservative Mennonites, or Apostolic Christians. This exposure will not only attract curious scholars to Amish studies, but much rapport stands to be gained for those who ally their name with the Amish brand. Consequently, the temptation to straddle the line of scholarship and popular production or scholarship and mediator is great, due to the popular attention it provides.

The scientific community tends to hold grudges against researchers who meet great success writing semi-scholarly works for the masses (e.g. Putnam’s Bowling Alone or Gladwell’s The Tipping Point). Really, though, making the big time is not so problematic for the scholarship in itself; letting popularity push scholars’ work into a public relations campaign is much more
pernicious. As part of this massive literature review, I was committed to reading all scholarly publications, including the many by Hostetler and Kraybill. What I found was much repackaging and few updates along the way. And tellingly, beyond The Riddle of Amish Culture, Kraybill’s books always place “Amish” as one of the first two words, as if the Amish name is a brand: The Amish Struggle with Modernity, The Amish and the State, Amish Enterprises, Amish Grace, The Amish Way, Renegade Amish, and finally, and ultimately, The Amish. The many ways the Amish name is reinvented tells, too, of how the same early ideas have been repackaged. Kraybill is not the only one who has “Amish” near the front of the title but the consistency across so many titles suggests a sort of brand image has developed. When a popular image drives scholarship, the empirical advancement is at risk of slowing.

A second trouble with Amish research as a path to rapport is that popular interests drive research production. Consider Hostetler’s involvement in the Yoder court case and in the Lancaster County filming of Witness—and his scholarship on these subjects—or Kraybill’s representations of the Nickel Mines school shooting and the “barbers” of Bergholz. All of these problems were hot-ticket items, and Hostetler and Kraybill felt obliged to weigh in. Furthermore, both Hostetler and Kraybill were involved in major popular documentaries about the Amish. While motives will not be guessed at, each of these opportunities brought limelight to the scholar, and the scholar permitted this attention to govern what gets written, to whom, and how. The fact that the vast quantity of Hostetler’s and Kraybill’s output straddles the line between popular and scholarly should prompt reflection about the forces driving fence-line scholarship.

And that primary force is popular curiosity about Amish peculiarity. At the foundation, much of our scholarship is focused on responding to the same inquiries and misperceptions of tourists. Researchers, themselves, can engage in scholarly tourism, to get the behind-the-scenes glimpse into Amish life. When I hear scholars dropping the names of “my Amish friends” or conducting similar exercises, I am reminded of a star-struck, first tier tourist. No wonder Amish studies produces and rewards description-heavy research. We want the descriptions and explanations that tourists want, but prefer a Tourist Brochure Intelligentsia that complements our enlightened curiosity over the banal activities of actual tourists, akin to the way NPR flatters the intellect of “cultured” listeners through hype-free reporting, which facilities a sense of distinctiveness against blow-hard news gobbled up by the loutish masses.

At the opening of most Amish articles and books, a throw-away section introduces the Amish in tourist pamphlet fashion. Typically, it reads like Amish trivia: some distant history, theology, and eye-catching practices. But these background sections are unnecessary! What is needful in an introduction is a background limited to just those facts pertaining to the immediate question at hand. Then, where descriptive information is necessary, it can be treated in two ways: descriptive information that is general knowledge needing no citation and specific findings of a given reference. If you are writing an opening description and are hunting for references to support it, you probably do not need a citation, and you may not even need the description. This minimalist approach to a general introduction, favoring a honed introduction on background
necessary for the given study, works; using it as my guide, I prepared three very different, short, honed introductions in articles published in three major sociology journals (Anderson 2016a; Anderson 2016b; Anderson and Kenda 2015).

A third problem with allowing popular curiosity to guide scholarship is that research becomes a platform from which to engage in protect-(or reform-)the-Amish campaigns. Hostetler’s work dumped this spice into Amish research; he inaugurated his career with a desire to provide alternative Amish depictions against the popular tourist booklets of the time, especially Aurand’s, which led to a lifelong management of popular Amish images against that which would harm the Amish (Weaver-Zercher 1999; Weaver-Zercher 2005). He also had a bone to pick with Amish excommunication, no where clearer than in his account of Jakob Amman.

Today, a protective mood persists in Amish studies. It could be explained by the absence of researchers affiliated with the subject. Jewish studies consists of Jews studying themselves, and the same is true in Catholic studies for Catholics. These denominational researchers conduct studies out of interest in the affairs of their own people. In Amish studies, where are the Amish scholars? There are very few: David Luthy, Christopher Petrovich, and Gracia Schlabach all identify as horse-and-buggy Amish and have published in JAPAS, but even then, the first two are converts with post-secondary degrees, adding skills to their contributions Amish will not acquire. Not that Amish researchers do not exist—there are, say, settlement and national meetings of Amish historians and Amish-run Amish libraries in Holmes, Lancaster, and LaGrange Counties—but this activity, from motivating interest to writing style, is not integrated into Amish studies. So then, it is easy for scholars to position themselves as popular depiction gatekeepers, for the “expert” knows the Amish who are not speaking for themselves.

Then, if the gatekeeper stands in the gate facing out, why not occasionally turn and face in? If the expert knows the Amish well enough to interpret the Amish to outsiders, then the expert could also advise “what is good for the Amish.” And if no denominational (Amish) researchers are doing the job, why not others, especially those from the mainstream Mennonites who claim cousin-status by merit of historical trajectory? The protect-the-Amish mentality that Hostetler created also transformed into a protect-the-Amish-from-themselves mentality. I will give two examples, selected due to their recency.

First, Jantzi (2017) offered very compelling data about Amish Facebook usage—appreciably empirical! His framing of the article, though, follows a protect-the-Amish paradigm. He suggests—if I may paraphrase—that modernity poses an external threat to Amish values, that Amish have an intuition for solving problems that help protect their values, and that Amish responses are always in the best interest of protecting their values. A big threat from modernity now overwhelms their ability to respond (namely, Amish youth internet use on Smartphones—in the past, it has been anything from the loss of agrarian isolation to the filming of Witness in Lancaster County). It is then the role of scholars to shake the Amish to consciousness over the problem. The role of scholar determining what is good for the Amish is in the rhetorical question
of the article’s title: “Amish Youth and Social Media: A Phase or a Fatal Error?” Is it the scholar’s job to meddle with the tough questions of a denomination he has not joined?

Second, *The Amish* (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt 2013) includes a familiar moralistic tone that narrates an imaginary conversation over what is true about the Amish between the expert authors and the straw man assumptions of the “modern observer” (reader)—e.g. “To the modern observer… / …the nebulous structure confounds outsiders… / …may seem like a game of chance to outsiders…” (172-76). Thus, when chapter 11 of *The Amish* “Gender and Family” rolls around, as a case in point, readers are prepared to believe the authors are expert enough to know “what’s good for the Amish.” Several trendy, socio-politically charged pop topics in mainstream America wiggle their way into this chapter, and with little to no supporting data. Homosexuality among the Amish is weighed out in three paragraphs, the same amount dedicated to Pennsylvania Dutch use elsewhere in the book; a paragraph discusses how men are unaware of women’s menstruation (199); and all of this leading up to eight paragraphs about sexual abuse, which cites no data. In insinuating the Amish social system is a failure in dealing with sexual abuse, the section strikes me as, within all of my reading in Amish studies, the epitome of paternalistic tendencies on the part of scholars as to “what’s good for the Amish.” They lay out what the Amish should do on tough and embarrassing topics—using extremely speculative language (italicized), condescending tones (bold), and peremptory gender-based oppression framing (underlined)—without presenting or citing any data:

[…] some youth do not understand inappropriate sexual advances or know what to do if violations occur […] male leaders may not be sensitive to the needs of female victims. Men may minimize the acts of a male perpetrator or blame female victims for the violations. Moreover, female victims may face intimidation and scorn within their family and community […] Furthermore, church leaders […] do not always realize that church discipline is inadequate […] to address serious psychological disorders, which need much more than ‘a prayer and some help from above,’ as one Amish man put it (207).

This is a brief excerpt from several pages carrying the same tone. Who is the audience for this excerpt? If it is outsiders learning from experts about the Amish, it needs data and elimination of vague, speculative terminology and unspecific quantities. If for the Amish, the book needs to be addressed to them, not outsiders. In actuality, it is written to both, and in this excerpt, the outsider serves as jury against the authors’ unilateral accusations. The excerpt echoes feelings psychologist and counselor to the Northern Indiana Amish, James Cates’ holds, who, in his discussion of a range of Amish sexual behaviors, suggests disappointment that gay identities are not available for the Amish, and that “As the fledgling gay movement passed [the Amish] by, so have the solidified gains of that movement […]” Comments such as Cates’ and the quote above, which would like to superimpose trendy social-political ideologies on the Amish, may be part of the change agent role Kraybill seeks when Cates, in his Young Center series book, credits Kraybill’s “effort to increase the role of social justice among the Amish” (Cates 2014, xiii).
The most immediate concern here in the examples is not about the topics in and of themselves—technology and sexual issues, which I selected because of how they are such emotionally charged, public reprimands to the Amish—but the ways scholars use the researcher’s gavel to determine what’s good for the Amish and what’s bad for the Amish, who are the “good Amish” and who are the “bad Amish” (quotes Kraybill colloquially used to describe the Bergholz incident), to interfere with the politics and challenges of a religion not their own—whose values they have not accepted or even empathize with (as Cates abstractly reasons, “respect but not accept” their values)—to push popular socio-political ideals on them. It may use quality data (Jantzi) or may provide none (The Amish), may warn the Amish to stay out of so-called “modernity” (Jantzi) or to get with it (chapter 11 of The Amish). The popular and scholarly audiences being educated now serve as stand-in witnesses to pressure the Amish. Who is responsible for the Amish in our scholarship? Is our work value neutral or activist? While our biases inform what research questions we have interest in, our findings (our science) should stand apart from our opinions. If the Amish find our theories and data helpful in informing their own debates, let them, but to use a scholar’s hat to rebuke or arbitrate conflicts before an audience of curious non-Amish is paternalistic and damaging to Amish studies scholarship.

The Death and Resurrection of Amish Studies

In The Structure of Scientific Revolutions, Thomas Kuhn (1962) argued that the accumulation of knowledge within a paradigm eventually reaches limits, at which point a paradigm’s flaws are exposed and a competing paradigm arises. What are the paradigms in Amish studies? And are we now near the time when a paradigm shift in Amish studies can occur? In this article, I have argued that Amish studies scholarship has been defined by a narrow core of scholars, which has hindered important developments, including honed research questions around sub-topics and lively debates that propose, test, and reformulate theory. Consequently, competing paradigms have not developed, but we may be on the threshold.

No one planned it this way, but May 2013 proved a milestone in Amish Studies for two reasons. First, The Amish was published, and the tome intends to sit in the Amish Society throne once and for all, as made clear in marketing and at the 2013 and 2016 Young Center Amish conferences. Second, the Journal of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies released its first issue. The two arose from two different visions of what Amish Studies means. The concisely titled The Amish is as the The End of Amish studies, the work that has said it all, no modifier or subtitle needed. “Amish are (Kraybill, Johnson-Weiner, and Nolt 2013),” is the direction it is going, a grand legitimizing work that must be cited on mention of the Amish. What is left to do after The Amish? If The Throne model persists another generation, in 20 to 30 years, what will the next definitive treatment of the Amish be called? A glimpse at Merriam-Webster’s synonyms for “definitive” provides the answer: determining, settling; concluding, final, last, terminal, ultimate; closing, completing, ending, finishing, terminating. This is “the death of Amish studies” of the section heading. When we speak of a work as “definitive,” we are saying, “show’s over folks”
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and invite no further debate. Scholars who offer up an extensive study are better acknowledged when said to be “breaking ground” or “opening debate”; The Amish ends.

JAPAS works at a small, ground-level scale. It is an outlet for article-length research on plain Anabaptist studies. Published twice a year, JAPAS is a continuously evolving forum, designed to accommodate relatively fast developments via honed research, responses, debates, and comments. Given the article-scaled research contributions, JAPAS is ideal for promoting research with focused questions and findings that help build subfields, accumulating findings and opening debates among a network of researchers. This is the “resurrection of Amish studies,” a deliberate attempt to offer a new body with a different composition for the field.

For a small field, currently, Amish studies is relatively fragmented, the small number of works orbiting The Throne aside. Peer-reviewed articles are scattered across many journals, mostly unknown ones. JAPAS is not a sole outlet for Amish studies, not meant to replace work in other journals; rather, it promotes Amish studies research elsewhere, partly through encouraging bibliographies that account for the full range of scholarship, plugging into others’ research as others plug into what is produced. Other journals are desired; these are our links to mother disciplines. Rural sociology has been one the greatest supporters of Amish studies, especially in publications in the flagship journal Rural Sociology. History, agricultural science, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, religious studies, linguistics, folk studies, and, of course, Mennonite studies, have also supplied support (see Appendix A). These fields invigorate research in Amish studies, as they bring new perspectives in and encourage Amish studies scholars to read around rather than just read in Amish studies. Similarly, JAPAS encourages monograph-level work through book reviews and symposiums, with instructions to reviewers to contextualize work as well as offer critiques and limitations as well as praise. Finally, the recent development of an email listserv and mini-conferences hosted by a larger conference furthers our goal of strengthening the Amish studies through variety and conversation.

JAPAS is not intended as a new throne for Amish studies or even an attempt to “overthrow the throne” as it were, or consider itself like a monarchy in exile waiting for times to change, but rather a marketplace or public forum that is open for business now and long into the future. This vision is built into its design: “JAPAS” cannot be cited as a single entity or as a single title; only the articles by its many authors standing side-by-side can be. The reach of JAPAS is growing, evidence of broader interest. From the Ohio State University Knowledge Bank website, we tally just over 50,000 cumulative article downloads through June 2017. As with any journal, some articles are downloaded more than others, but the total suggests JAPAS is getting around.

The vision I have laid out in this article for Amish studies is one of advancements through pluralism—in venues, in topics, in names and authors, and in methods and theories. It has already been encouraging to see developments in alternative paradigms, research methods, and debates in recent years, right down to contributions in this current volume. If you made it
through this critical reflection, there are many more ideas thrown into the discussion to be found in articles across this and the next issue.

Endnotes

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2 That is, asymmetric, in that citations are not necessarily reciprocal but are directed; adjacent, because the matrix represents what references are “next to” each other.

3 The final bibliography in the appendix includes 1,022 references, which means 39 were excluded due to being uncovered after data were extracted and undergoing analysis. These are all peripheral references that will have very negligible impact on calculations.

4 A polynomial degree of three was used, as it was a stronger fit than a degree of two (Gini coefficient = 0.619 and mean square error of 46.8).

5 Bachman’s study was “the first complete, sympathetic, and authoritative account of the Old Order Amish in America […] His personal acquaintance with many Old Order Amish enabled him to secure firsthand information not only of the external aspects of their culture, their restrictions and practices, but also of their modes of thinking, and their springs of action” (Umble 1943, 207). Of Kollmorgen (and his sister): “Although they were outsiders, their sympathy with the views of these people enabled them to enter into the life of the Amish and to make observations so highly accurate that one marvels at the comprehensive picture Kollmorgen presents” (Gingerich 1943, 173).

6 Luthy is worth special note, as a convert to the Amish who built a remarkable library. He hosted scholars over several decades, whose success relies heavily on Luthy’s quiet organizational work. 1974 also marks the beginning of Luthy’s extensive settlement record-keeping.

7 I was in high school when Hostetler was in his final years; at the time, I was an “outsider” and had minimal knowledge of the Amish. My interest in the plain people started the same year Hostetler died, 2001. And while I have met Kraybill on several occasions, including a Young Center fellowship in 2014 when interaction was nevertheless minimal, I do not feel I really know the man himself. So, I take on this analysis as a witness to Hostetler’s and Kraybill’s scholarship and public activity and not personally.

8 Take as one of many possible examples this quote—by a scholar whose work I otherwise admire but who hit a flop moment:
   For Amish business owners, constant negotiation with technology and modernity occurs because of increased interaction with non-Amish vendors, customers, and tourists. This has resulted in many ingeniously adapted conveniences which meet their business needs while at the same time meet the parameters of the Ordnung. For example, Amish furniture makers have shops that seem surprisingly
modern. These orderly shops have power routers, saws, sanders, and drills; yet they are not powered with electricity but rather compressed air obtained from diesel-powered engines. Sound familiar? Puzzling enough, Kraybill is not even cited in this short piece, yet his terminology saturates this and many other writings, as if taken-for-granted popular knowledge.

Someone may object that we have a research question, indeed the one implicitly written into most every study: “How have the Amish survived?” My complaint is, it is too general to be taken seriously at anything but a meta-analysis level, and its recycling since Kollmorgen suggests it has provided little progress.

References (Not in Appendix B)


### Appendix A: Top Journals for Publications in Amish Studies

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<tr>
<th>Refs</th>
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<tr>
<td>68</td>
<td>Mennonite Quarterly Review&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>J. of Amish and Plain Anabaptist Studies</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Folklife&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>20</td>
<td>Pennsylvania Mennonite Heritage&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>15</td>
<td>J. of Multicultural Nursing &amp; Health&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mennonite Historical Bulletin&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Rural Sociology</td>
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<td>9</td>
<td>Mennonite Family History&lt;sup&gt;b&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>Yearbook of German-American Studies</td>
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<td>6</td>
<td>Multicultural Education J.</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>American J. of Epidemiology</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>Brethren Life and Thought</td>
<td>3</td>
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<td>5</td>
<td>J. of American Culture</td>
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<td>American Studies J. (Germany)&lt;sup&gt;c&lt;/sup&gt;</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>J. of Agricultural Safety &amp; Health</td>
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<td>J. of Transcultural Nursing</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>Population Studies</td>
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<sup>a</sup> For a journal to be included as having at least three references, at least two different sets of authors are required across the three pieces. Journals publishing three or more pieces by an author / author set and are not included, as it suggests an author’s time-specific connection with the journal rather than a journal’s interest in the subject matter.

<sup>b</sup> These journals would be undercounted if a very inclusive tally of articles were used; as is, only those appearing in the bibliography contribute to the tally.

<sup>c</sup> Articles in special issue(s)
Appendix B: An Extensive Bibliography of Amish Studies References


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