

THE IMAGE OF THE OLD ORDER AMISH: GENERAL AND SOCIOLINGUISTIC STEREOTYPES¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper describes the image of the Old Order Amish in both popular and academic work and addresses the question of how stereotypes about them are formed. Two kinds of stereotype are examined--the first pertaining to the Amish lifestyle in general, and the second dealing more specifically with their verbal behavior, in particular their relationship with the English language. In both areas, the tendency to over-exoticize and "over-distance" the Amish from the social mainstream is evident. However, the reality of Amish society, and the key to its overall success, is its ability to strike a balance between preservation of tradition and adaptation to the changing world which both surrounds and inextricably includes them. Central to a balanced view of Amish society and culture is a proper understanding of the degree to which, socially, technologically and linguistically, they assimilate as a minority group with the rest of North American society.

INTRODUCTION

The focus of this paper is a minority group within North American society which, despite its relatively small size, is quite well known, yet almost equally widely misunderstood. Specifically, the group referred to is the Old Order Amish, who today number approximately 125,000 to 150,000 in the United States and Canada. The extent to which attention has been focussed on the Amish is evident in a number of areas, ranging from popular literature (e.g. Yoder (1987) and Olsen (1991)), to the media, both print and visual, the most notable example of which being the movie

¹Thanks to Don Kraybill and two anonymous reviewers for their comments on an earlier draft of this paper.

Witness, produced and directed by Peter Weir.² Beyond the popular domain, there have also been a number of academic studies on the Amish in such diverse fields as sociology, medicine, law, linguistics, theology and the fine arts. Although it will not come as a surprise that the level of accuracy with which the Amish are depicted in academic studies far exceeds that which we find in non-scholarly enterprises such as Witness, even what can be generally considered rigorous scholarship on the Amish has not been immune from subtle distorting influences. These derive from a number of popular stereotypes about the Amish which, as is frequently the case with stereotypes, contain a kernel of truth within a hull of falsehood.

A central focus of this paper will be the degree to which popular stereotypes have distorted one specific aspect of the image of the Amish in both academic and non-academic work, namely their verbal behavior. To begin, the image of Amish society in general is analyzed, in particular its relationship with technology and mainstream society. What is found here is the tendency for many observers to over-exoticize certain aspects of the Amish lifestyle to the point of inaccuracy, often in a nearly dehumanizing way. In brief, the Amish are frequently viewed in largely negative terms, as completely rejecting the world that surrounds them. The Amish are believed to want nothing to do with 'the outside world' and to view material symbols of that world, such as the automobile and telephone, as inherently sinful.

Beyond the stereotypes of Amish society overall, similar patterns of over-exoticization can be found in the way in which the sociolinguistic image of the Amish is constructed. Parallel to the popular view of the Amish as rejecting the material and technological aspects of the world that surrounds them, the sociolinguistic image of the Amish depicts them as rejecting the primary linguistic characteristic of that society, the English language. According to the stereotype, since the Amish are perceived as wanting nothing to do with the social mainstream, and given the reality that they do in fact speak a language other than English as their first language, Pennsylvania German, the conclusion that is frequently drawn is that the role of English in their society is negligible.

²For a discussion of the controversy over the ethics of this film, cf. Hostetter and Kraybill (1988).

In both areas of stereotypes, pertaining to Amish society in general, and their sociolinguistic situation in particular, the analysis presented here is based on representative written data from both scholarly and popular sources, supported by ongoing participant observation fieldwork carried out by the author since 1985 in Amish settlements throughout the country.³ In the latter category of written sources special attention is paid to the image of the Amish in tourist literature, a powerful medium in the construction and propagation of stereotypes in general. The discussion of Amish stereotypes is concluded by clarifying the nature of how the Amish relate to the society which surrounds them and by specifically describing some of the major parameters which define the many and varied functions of English within Amish society. In reality, what one finds in Amish society are not so much patterns of *rejection* of things such as cars, telephones and the English language, but rather *selective interaction* with the social mainstream.

GENERAL STEREOTYPES OF THE AMISH

One of the most recent book-length treatments of the Amish, Längin (1990) already by the second page of text has characterized them as comprising "America's most backward society".⁴ Indeed, this view of the Amish as, at the one extreme, 'backward' or 'primitive', or merely 'simple' or quaint', at the other, is the dominant one held by outsiders which defines the popular image of the Amish.⁵ This general image is of a 'wrinkle-in-time', self-contained world within American society which is profoundly isolated from that larger society. The Amish thus represent to many a society based on *ignorance*, which can be interpreted in two ways, either positively or negatively. On the one hand, the Amish are viewed by many in a positive way as living in a bucolic, child-like state of innocence, blissfully ignorant of the somewhat dirty,

³All fieldwork is carried out in Pennsylvania German, which the author speaks with near-native fluency. Plain garb is normally worn on these occasions.

⁴"Amerikas rückständigste Gesellschaft," Längin (1990:10).

⁵Cf. also Buck's (1979:5) brief references to Lancaster County Amish in Kriebel (1910) as "quaint, primitive, unique."

complicated, yet technologically advanced larger world which surrounds them. This contrast of the blissfully ignorant, isolated Amish versus the seamier, yet more familiar outside world is most aptly portrayed in the movie Witness. On the other hand, the assumed Amish ignorance of the social mainstream is often seen negatively by outsiders, who view the Amish as stubborn, narrow-minded and abnormally restrictive.

The subtly critical view of Amish society as stiflingly restrictive in its 'rejection' of the rest of American society is exemplified in the following passage from Shoemaker, Yoder et al. (1955) which contains an entire section dealing exclusively with the Amish.

There are two kinds of Pennsylvania Dutch: the 'gay' Dutch (numerically the stronger) and the 'plain' Dutch. It is the latter who wear a distinctive dress. The Amish (pronounced *Um-ish*) are the most conservative of all the 'plain' groups--and hence of the greatest interest to the tourist.

The tourist who has a look at Amish life always begins by seeing only the negative: NO cars, NO electricity, NO modern conveniences. And he can't for the life of him see how such a socio-religious society can exist, not to mention the more important matter: how it can perpetuate itself.

Well, how can it? Simply because of one factor--*discipline*, exercised by the church... (Shoemaker, Yoder et al. 1955:7)

In this same publication, the authors point out the fact that the popular view of the Amish as out of step with the rest of American society due to their imagined absolute lack of "modern conveniences" is central in defining the image of the greater Pennsylvania Dutch (German) culture.⁶

⁶The term Pennsylvania Dutch is popularly used to describe the descendants of colonial era speakers of German who originally settled in southeastern Pennsylvania. Though the Amish are frequently assumed to comprise the bulk of the Pennsylvania German-speaking population, historically this was not the case. Until recently (1945+), the majority of the dialect speakers were non-sectarians ("Fancy Dutch") who have had no more significant contact with their "Plain Dutch" fellow dialect speakers than any other outsiders.

The words *Pennsylvania Dutch* ordinarily conjure up four pictures in the tourist's mind: quaint, sombre-clad Amish who paint their gates blue to show there is a marriageable daughter in the household; high calibre farmers who paint *hex signs* on their barns to keep away the witches; a bell-don't-make bump, hind-end-foremost English; and, above all, the cookingest folk in all of America who serve seven sweets and seven sours three times a day, seven times a week.

Whether one likes it or not, this picture--though far from being factual--has become an integral part of our American folklore. And nothing is likely ever to change any part of it. (Shoemaker, Yoder et al. 1955:5)

Though in many ways tourist literature has only reflected commonly-held stereotypes of minority groups such as the Amish, it nonetheless can be argued that in this instance it has played a major role in strengthening and perpetuating the myths and misinterpretations of Amish society (cf. also Buck 1979).

The exotic image of the Amish as radically different from the 'normal' American mainstream is not restricted to popular depictions such as those found in tourist literature. As mentioned above, even more academic publications have not been immune to the tendency to characterize the Amish in largely negative terms of rejection of the non-Amish world. An example of this is the following passage taken from Kephart (1976), a general text focussing on the "sociology of unconventional life-styles" in the United States and which includes a chapter on the Amish. The section cited begins with the subtitle "...A Peculiar People".⁷

In his ancient attire and his horse and buggy, the Amishman appears to be someone driving out of yesterday. Actually, however, he is much more than simply old-fashioned. Conservatism is part of his religion, and as such it dominates his entire life.

The Old Order Amish believe in a literal translation of the Bible, and rely heavily on the statement, 'But ye are a

⁷Cf. also Kraybill's (1988) review of Kephart's treatment of the Amish.

chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people...' (1 Pet. 2:9) Since they have been specifically chosen by God, therefore, the Amish take great pains to stay 'apart' from the world at large. They do this not only by living apart, but *by rejecting virtually all the components of modern civilization* (emphasis added): automobiles, television, higher education, political involvement, jewelry, indoor toilets, electric lights, tractors, rubber tires, pictures, wrist watches, life insurance, musical instruments--the list goes on and on. Pressures come and pressures go--and when they come they may be severe--but the Amish simply will not conform to worldly ways. (Kephart 1976:8)

The image of the Amish described here not only reinforces the stereotype of Amish society as a stubbornly unchanging one, it goes further to imply that the biblical doctrine of separation from the world, which in reality does underlie the Amish lifestyle, leads the Amish to (selfishly) view themselves as 'God's chosen people', i.e. better or holier than the rest of the world, which is incorrect. Again we perceive a certain fascination on the part of the observer that the Amish, in the face of social pressures to conform to such "worldly ways" as indoor toilets and wrist watches, are able to remain "much more than simply old-fashioned," but rather *profoundly* old-fashioned, i.e. out of touch with the realities of modern society, in that their old-fashionedness is religiously institutionalized.⁸

The general image of the Amish that is reflected in writings such as those cited above is one of a fundamentally *static* society which has as little to do with the the rest of the world as possible. This separation is enforced through the institution of the church, whose function is seen as basically *restrictive* through its *rejection* of certain material aspects of the larger society. The question that now arises is to what degree the popular stereotype of the Amish lifestyle is accurate, if at all. Below, we will briefly consider facts about Amish society which point to a more balanced picture of their relationship with the social mainstream.

⁸Buck (1979:10) underscores Amish over-exoticization by observers through his metaphor of a "tourist *Ordnung*," an extreme and mythical standard according to which the Amish are assumed to live.

AMISH INTERACTION WITH MAINSTREAM SOCIETY

To begin with, the key to understanding the survival and indeed success of Amish society is to recognize the Amish not as ignorant of what goes on around them in the rest of American society, but rather as profoundly aware of their position vis-à-vis other social groups. This relationship, the essence of which is awareness, rather than ignorance, between the Amish and mainstream society has been most effectively characterized by Hostetler (1980:372 ff.) as a "discourse with survival" or a "dialogue with modernity," as Kraybill (1989:250 ff.) puts it. Central to this more objective, dialogic view of Amish interaction with non-Amish society is the recognition that this relationship involves not so much the rejection of certain aspects of the modern world, such as the automobile, but rather on the limited acceptance of these and other less tangible aspects of non-Amish culture. In Kraybill's words, the Amish continually "strike bargains with modernity" in a way that is often ingenious and not atypical of the way in which many other Americans grapple with changes brought on by progress.⁹

Let us now consider a few examples of Amish compromises with mainstream society, namely the telephone, automobile, formal education and medical care.¹⁰ In all four of these areas, the popular stereotype of Amish rejection, rather than limited acceptance, is common; namely, it is widely believed that the Amish 'forbid' the telephone and the automobile and are 'against' formal education and going to the doctor. This is not the case. All of these aspects of mainstream American culture play a part in the functioning of Amish society, albeit under circumstances which are particular to the Amish.

Considering material compromises first, the Amish "bargain with modernity" is evident with the telephone and the automobile. Casual observers of Amish society are often struck by what appears to be a

⁹An interesting parallel case of the Amish "bargain" with the social mainstream is the process of "choice-taking" among Romani (Gypsy)-Americans described by Gropper (1975:190ff.)

¹⁰The pervasiveness of popular stereotypes about the Amish in these four areas is attested to their specific refutation in Good and Good (1979) and Kraybill (1990).

contradiction regarding these two material items, which is part of the larger "riddle of Amish culture," as Kraybill aptly terms it. The apparent contradictions stem from the fact that despite what are assumed to be prohibitions against telephones and automobiles, most Amish make frequent use of both. For example, in many Amish settlements there are so-called 'phone shanties' which house public telephones for community use, or phones located in barns or businesses which serve similar purposes. Regarding automobiles, it is quite commonplace in many settlements for Amish to hire drivers to take them places out of horse-and-buggy range, sometimes even on a regular basis, as in commuting to work, for example. The apparent contradictions here disappear, however, when the stereotype of Amish rejection is clarified. Specifically, the Amish forbid neither the phone nor the car entirely, rather they simply set certain limits on their use to maintain what they see as the integrity of home and community life. Telephones are generally prohibited from being located inside homes, largely for the fact that they provide a major source of disruption of interaction within the family (as any other American parent of a teenager, for example, is well aware). The very real utilitarian advantages of having a telephone are preserved, however, by still locating it within reasonable access, as for example at the end of the lane.¹¹ Likewise, limiting the use of the automobile by making it somewhat inconvenient helps promote interaction with family and neighbors, while not losing its benefits as a tool; hence, the Amish prohibition of only ownership and operation of automobiles.¹²

Amish patterns of selective interaction with more institutional aspects of non-Amish culture are clear in the areas of formal education and medical care, as well. Rather than being 'against education,' the Amish make partial use of formal education by limiting it to eight grades, whereupon learning, rather than ceasing, is expected to accelerate as the child matures toward adulthood as an Amishman. The Amish commitment to quality education based on a sound mastery of the basic 'three R's' is undeniable when one considers the rigorous curriculum in Amish parochial schools, supported by a number of publications dedicated to teaching children

¹¹For a more complete discussion of the "telephone riddle", see Kraybill (1989:143-150).

¹²Cf. Kraybill (1990:42-47).

effectively,¹³ and annual regional teachers' meetings where ideas and advice are exchanged. The idea behind limiting formal education to eight grades is that no more is necessary for becoming a successful Amish adult. The potential dangers of curricula which might bring Amish moral values into question, as well as the overall low quality of many American high schools today, only serve to reinforce the Amish compromise with formal education.¹⁴

Concerning medical care, the common stereotype holds that the Amish avoid modern medicine and will not go to the doctor.¹⁵ In fact, no formal prohibitions against medical care exist and what limitations there are are generally of a practical nature. For example, a pregnant Amish woman may make limited use of formal prenatal care because it is simply not necessary, and may choose a licensed midwife over an obstetrician for reasons of cost and personal attention. What is lacking in formal preventive care, as for example regular physical examinations among the Amish, is made up for through a rich collective cultural wisdom about good health, which incorporates widespread knowledge about the virtues of a balanced diet, vitamins and folk medicine, including herbs and natural

¹³E.g., *The Black Board Bulletin*, published by Pathway Publishers, an Amish press in Aylmer, Ontario.

¹⁴A brief explanation of the Amish approach to formal education is given in Good and Good (1979:34-37), where the authors respond directly to the common question, "Why are they against education?" A fuller treatment of Amish education and child development can be found in Hostetler and Huntington (1971).

¹⁵This stereotype about the Amish is likely to be influenced by their association with other minority Christian faiths, such as Christian Scientists and Jehovah's Witnesses, who do avoid certain aspects of mainstream medical care for religious reasons. The popular association of the Amish with other religious groups is further underscored by outsiders referring to them as "pilgrims," "Quakers" and "Mormons." Stemming from the association of the Amish with the latter group is the widespread myth that the Amish consume no alcohol. As an example of this, the following incident was recently reported to the author. On a bus traveling through the Midwest which had some Amish passengers, a group of people asked the driver if they could stop for a beer, to which the driver laughingly responded by saying that it was all right with him, but he "wasn't sure about the 'Mormons' in the back." (Gerald Waldecker, personal communication).

medicines. Yet in cases where more formal medical care is absolutely necessary, most Amish will not hesitate to seek it out.¹⁶

Thus when we consider some of the realities of Amish society, we see that the situation is less simple, and also less exotic, than the stereotypes and popular views would suggest. In general, the Amish do not strive for total independence from the rest of American society, but realize that in fact their very existence depends on a healthy relationship with the world that surrounds them.¹⁷ But lack of total isolation does not imply assimilation and the Amish have successfully found a middle ground between the two extremes; in this way, their interaction with the social mainstream shares the same kind of dynamic with other minority cultures within American society. Below we will examine Amish interaction with mainstream society in the area of language, where again Kraybill's bargain metaphor is applicable.

SOCIOLINGUISTIC STEREOTYPES OF THE AMISH

Before proceeding directly to discuss some of the specific aspects of the sociolinguistic situation within Amish society, let us first consider some of the popular stereotypes surrounding Amish verbal behavior, specifically their relationship with English. Not surprisingly, we find in sociolinguistic stereotypes of the Amish the same tendency, as in more general stereotypes, toward over-exoticization. Specifically, it is assumed that Pennsylvania German, the language they acquire first, plays such a dominant role in their linguistic identity that for them English is effectively a foreign language, used only on exceptional occasions of interaction with non-Amish and spoken 'imperfectly' as 'Dutchified English,' the

¹⁶Cf. Hostetler (1980:313-332).

¹⁷The Hutterites provide an interesting contrast to the Amish in this regard for the fact that although they share many similarities with the Amish (e.g. Anabaptist faith, maintenance of German, plain dress), the one major difference is that the Hutterites are a truly communal society, which the Amish are not. Cf. Hostetler (1974).

result of interference from Pennsylvania German.¹⁸ To the author's knowledge, the earliest reference to Amish verbal behavior which reflects these stereotypes is found in the first tourist pamphlet dealing specifically with the Amish, Steinfeldt (1937). Cf. the excerpt below:

While the children are taught English at school, the language commonly spoken by the Amish is Pennsylvania Dutch. This is a corruption of the low German they spoke when they came to America so many years ago. The pure German is retained for their church services, weddings and funerals.

Their great familiarity with German (i.e. High (Standard) German, MLL) and their 'Dutch' tend to give the English spoken by the Amish a picturesque flavor. They speak with an almost inimitable sing-song, with an invariable up-inflection at the end of each sentence. Moreover, their phrases and expressions are uniquely local. For example: — "outen the light"—to turn out the light. "Penesick child"—sickly child. "The paper wants three killed in that accident"—the paper says three were killed in that accident. "The paper wants rain"—the paper predicts rain. "Spritz the lawn"—sprinkle the lawn. (Steinfeldt 1937:23-24)

As is clear in this passage, the assumption is made that the English spoken by the Amish is dutchified, the "bell-don't-make bump, hind-end-foremost English" that Shoemaker, Yoder et al. (1955) referred to above. This association of the Amish with the nearly mythical Dutchified English has persisted in sociolinguistic stereotypes to this day, particularly in popular literature, but, as mentioned above, to subtle degrees in academic work, as well.

¹⁸'Dutchified English' is the popular term used to describe the English spoken by native speakers of Pennsylvania German who impose certain features of their native language onto English. These features are largely phonological, prosodic (resulting in a 'Dutch accent') and lexical. The existence of Dutchified English, though observable to a limited degree mainly in the speech of some non-sectarian Pennsylvania Germans, has been grossly exaggerated for comic effect in the popular media, the latest example of which is Gates (1987). A more balanced view of the English spoken by Pennsylvania Germans is given in Huffines (1984).

Below follows a lengthier description of patterns which are assumed to be typical of Amish linguistic behavior by Smith (1958) whose book, *The Amish People*, was for many years cited as a major reference work, albeit a popular one, on the subject. It is interesting to note Smith's references to "stories" and "stereotypes" about the Amish and Dutchified English, making it quite plausible that he is only repeating what he has gleaned from popular (and largely inaccurate) stereotypes.

In their daily conversation at home and in the neighborhood the Amish always speak 'Pennsylvania Dutch.' As a result, the Amish child usually can speak and understand only this hybrid dialect, and seldom encounters any systematic use of English until he enters public school. This early linguistic conditioning is seldom forgotten, and later in life, when the Amish person attempts to communicate in English he often has difficulty and will revert to his everyday language. One older Amishman, who was attempting to explain a farm procedure to a non-Amish person in English, said, "I could tell it easier speaking 'my way' than trying to tell it your way."

Pennsylvania Dutch is used on all common everyday occasions, in conversations between members of the family, with friends in the neighborhood and to both Amish and non-Amish alike at affairs in the community. English is used when they visit the city, go to public school or deal with a non-Amish person who cannot understand the dialect.

At market the Amishman will tell customers who ask for a product which he has already sold out, "I'm sorry they're all."

...And there is the story of the Amishman who couldn't seem to explain what he had in mind to an outsider who couldn't speak the dialect. Finally the Amishman's patience wore thin and he said to the outsider in an annoyed tone, "What's the matter, can't you understand United States?"

...This dialect gives many people the impression that the Amish and Pennsylvania Germans are ignorant. Not long ago one of the major stereotypes of the Pennsylvania Dutch was the 'dumb Dutch.' The story is told of a teen-aged Amish boy and his first horse; he didn't know how to get the

animal to stand still and he asked a bystander, "How do you learn it to stood still?" Smith (1958:103-104)

Finally, to more graphically illustrate the degree to which the Amish have been perceived as lacking facility in English, we can consider an illustration taken from a pamphlet entitled *Ferhoodled English* (Anonymous 1964). This pamphlet is dedicated to the "curious and amusing Pennsylvania Dutch Talk," which is defined as "a combination of broken-English, bad grammar and grotesque construction that accounts for most of the humor in their speech," (see illustration on following page).

The image of the Amish as speakers of Dutchified English has found its way into academic work, the most notable example of which is the well-known article by J. William Frey on Amish verbal behavior, "Amish 'Triple-Talk'" (Frey 1945). In it, Frey makes two now familiar claims about the position of English within Amish society, first that it is largely a foreign language to the Amish, and second that their English is subject to major interference from Pennsylvania German, i.e. dutchified.

...The English used by the Amish--this language being employed only on 'forced' occasions such as talking with non-Amish in towns and cities, or in the public schools--has all the earmarks of the type of speech found among any other Pennsylvania Dutch group. It can be briefly described as American English built on a framework of Pennsylvania Dutch phonemic patterns and interjected continually with whole or part loan-translations from the dialect. (Frey 1945:85-86)

Although more recent linguistic work has successfully refuted Frey's claims about English among the Amish (cf. the following section), even in the most highly respected single source on the Amish, Hostetler (1980), English is still somewhat misleadingly portrayed as performing exclusively out-group functions in Amish



Ferhoodled English

A collection of quaintly amusing expressions
heard among the Pennsylvania Dutch Folks



'COMES THE LITTLE RED BOX AND THE TRAIN IS ALL.'

society, though Hostetler does implicitly downplay the stereotype of Amish English as dutchified.

English is used when speaking with non-Amish persons in town, at school, or when talking to an 'English' visitor or salesman. Thus Amishmen employ the English language on 'forced' occasions. An Amish person may shift his conversation from the dialect to English or from English to the dialect, whichever he finds most appropriate for the situation...The Amish use of English is influenced to some degree by their native Pennsylvania German patterns, but in general, they experience little difficulty in speaking English correctly.

In a similar vein, Kraybill also emphasizes the alien nature of English within Amish culture by describing it as a "trade language" with which "they are never quite at home," versus Pennsylvania German, "the mother tongue" (Kraybill 1989:48). Regarding the use of English in spiritual domains, Kraybill goes even so far as to describe English as "the language of the world, the verbal currency of an evil society" (ibid.).

The overall picture that emerges, then, of the Amish relationship to English is one of distance. As the Amish lifestyle in general is assumed to be radically different from that of the rest of American society, so it follows that English, the primary linguistic symbol of that larger world, is assumed to play no meaningful role within their community. At the very least, English is viewed as a kind of necessary evil for the requisite minimal interactions the Amish are "forced" to have with the rest of society, while at the extreme, it is viewed to be so alien to Amish culture as to be "a grotesque construction" that forms the justification for outright ridicule. As we saw above that the Amish relationship with the social mainstream can be best described in Kraybill's terms of compromise, or limited interaction, rather than complete rejection, we can extend the metaphor of the Amish "bargain" with material and institutional aspects of non-Amish society to linguistic ones, as well. In the following section we consider some important parameters which

define the reality of the Amish sociolinguistic bargain with mainstream English-speaking culture.¹⁹

THE POSITION OF ENGLISH WITHIN AMISH SOCIETY

Central to understanding the actual functions of English in defining Amish sociolinguistic identity is the following. While language is an important indicator of in-group versus out-group status in Amish society, Pennsylvania German being the intra-community, in-group language and English the inter-community, out-group language, English additionally performs a number of substantial and important *intra*-community functions which need to be acknowledged. In other words, rather than Pennsylvania German being dominant over English in the Amish bilingual situation, both languages enjoy a general parity of status relative to one another under circumstances of what I have termed *stable bilingualism* (cf. Loudén 1988).

Stable bilingualism is defined on the basis of three factors which are all present in the Pennsylvania German/English bilingual situation of the Amish. These factors pertain to acquisition of the languages in question, their domains of use and speaker attitudes regarding their use. Cf. (1) below:

¹⁹Undoubtedly related to the popular unwillingness to accept the Amish as reasonably ambilingual speakers of both Pennsylvania German and English is the widespread misconception of bilingualism in general as being an inherent handicap, e.g. the source of 'confusion' for speakers. Though research in the area of bilingualism and cognitive development is far from conclusive in all aspects of the relationship between the two, there is evidence to suggest that bilingual children may enjoy certain cognitive advantages over their monolingual peers. At the very least, it is generally recognized that the view of bilingualism as a handicap to child development is false (cf. Romaine 1989:76-109). The relative infrequency of stable bilingual communities like the Amish in American society reinforces the alien character of long-term, community-wide bilingualism in the mind of most non-Amish and doubtless the disbelief that an individual can master two (or more) languages.

(1) Stable Bilingualism

A. Both languages L1 and L2 are acquired early and fully during childhood such that individual speakers approach near (oral) ambilingualism.

B. Both L1 and L2 enjoy regular use in substantial domains such that both languages are functionally necessary in the speech community.

C. Speaker attitudes toward the use of L1 and L2 are either positive or neutral (i.e. not negative) such that both languages have equivalent prestige.

When we consider the presence of these three factors in Amish verbal behavior, the twofold myth of a) Amish English being Dutchified English and b) English being exclusively an out-group language of the majority culture disappears.

If we begin by considering the first feature of stable bilingualism, full acquisition of both languages in childhood, the stereotype of the Amish as speakers of Dutchified English is easily refuted. Though Pennsylvania German is the first language Amish children acquire and is the dominant language of home life, when they enter school, rigorous formal and informal acquisition of English begins. English is the exclusive medium of instruction in sectarian parochial schools (attended by the great majority of Amish children, the others being in public schools), even to the point that English may be required as the medium of interaction on the playground, as well. Though English is subject to the normative pressures of prescriptively 'good' English by teachers, it would be misleading to think that English is therefore artificial or exclusively formal for Amish children. Counterintuitive as it might seem to outsiders, the use of English in Amish schools is as natural as in any other American school, with a wide range of formal uses (e.g. reading, writing compositions) and informal uses (e.g. passing notes, playing games, chatting with a neighbor). Amish children simply learn that when they are in school, they use English with one another, and when school is over, they revert to Pennsylvania German. Thus, by the end of the first grade, it is safe to claim that every Amish child has roughly the same facility in English as any American first-grader for whom English is the first language.

Given, then, the balanced acquisition patterns of Pennsylvania German and English among Amish children, one would not expect any significant amount of Pennsylvania German influence in the English spoken by the Amish, i.e. Dutchified English. This is indeed the case, as many have noted, including Huffines (1980). The lack of Pennsylvania German-interference in Amish English has been most effectively demonstrated by Raith (1981) who showed that Pennsylvania German-speaking sectarians consistently showed nearly no phonological interference from Pennsylvania German when reading an English text aloud. In general, with very few exceptions, it is safe to say that the English spoken by the Amish differs in no significant way from the English spoken by their English-monolingual neighbors. Frequently, what outsiders regard as 'dutchiness' in the speech of Amish can be ascribed to linguistic features which are generally characteristic of the (often nonstandard) variety of English particular to the region in which they live. For example, Kraybill (1989:47) makes the following observation about Amish use of English:

Words such as *mandated* and *chaperone*, as well as abstract terms, are typically missing from their English vocabulary. A word such as *embalm* may be mispronounced *embam*.

In reality, it would not be surprising to find a number of native speakers of English for whom "mandated" and "chaperone" and "abstract terms" would be unfamiliar, as well as a number of Amish who are in fact familiar with such vocabulary.²⁰ And as any number of native speakers will readily attest, the author being one of them, the 'l-less' pronunciation of 'embalm' is perfectly acceptable.

Thus at an individual level, virtually all Amish have native-like competence in English and any differences between their speech and that of non-Amish are largely stylistic (e.g. lexical) in nature. Looking beyond the individual speaker to the speech community, let us now address larger question of the function of English within Amish society, which involves the two remaining factors of stable bilingualism pertaining to domains of use and prestige. What one

²⁰For that matter, it would be perfectly reasonable to imagine that an Amishman giving an English-monolingual a tour of his barn and shop would likely use (English) terms which are unfamiliar to a non-farmer.

finds here is that the second element of the stereotype of Amish verbal behavior, the overall foreignness of English to their speech community, is clearly refutable. Rather than being an exclusively out-group language employed only on formal occasions, English shares Pennsylvania German's range of levels of formality of use and in-group status. This is shown in (2), where the more stereotype-influenced view of the distribution of functions of Pennsylvania German and English shared by Frey (1945) and others in (2a) is contrasted with the more accurate view in (2b).

(2) Functions of Pennsylvania German and English in Amish Society

a) 'Traditional' View (cf. Frey 1945)

<u>variety</u>	<u>formality</u>	<u>ingroup/ outgroup</u>
PG	informal	ingroup
'High German'	formal	ingroup
English	formal	outgroup

b) Alternate View

<u>variety</u>	<u>formality</u>	<u>ingroup/ outgroup</u>
PG ²¹	informal/formal	ingroup ²²
English	informal/formal	ingroup/outgroup

²¹It should be pointed out that an additional misunderstanding about Amish verbal behavior is the role of Standard (High) German variety in Amish society. On the one hand, it is correctly pointed out that effectively no sectarians have productive, active knowledge of Standard German, rather at best sufficient ability to read the Bible, hymnals and other religious texts in German. On the other hand, it has been widely claimed that Amish church sermons are preached in a variety of High German, which is incorrect. Concomitant with this stereotype of the function of Standard German in Amish society is the criticism that the Amish lack any deep understanding of their own faith which is criticized as overly ritualistic. Sermons are preached in Pennsylvania German with occasional lexical borrowings from Standard German and are fully comprehensible to congregations.

²²The unifying functions of Pennsylvania German as a marker of in-group status are not to be overlooked. Language is frequently cited by scholars as one of the three primary symbols of Amish identity, along with distinctive dress and transportation. Non-Amish, even those who were at one time Amish, are routinely referred to in Pennsylvania German as "Englisch," and children frequently identify Pennsylvania German as "Amisch," rather than "Deutsch"

In general, the significant intra-community role of English in Amish society sketched in (2b) above is due to its status as a *covertly prestigious* variety, demonstrable both language-externally in its domains of use relative to those for Pennsylvania German, and language-internally on the evidence of definite patterns of lexical borrowing from English into Pennsylvania German cf. Louden (1991).

First, as stated above in (2b), *both* English and Pennsylvania German function formally *and* informally in a number of significant domains, some of which are sketched in (3) below. If we focus on the domains which are most relevant to our discussion here, the informal domains in which English is used both within and outside the Amish speech community, the claim that English is appropriate only on "forced" occasions becomes less tenable. For example, aside from its function as the primary medium of literacy and interaction in school, English also serves important functions as the medium of interaction between Amish and their non-Amish relatives. It is safe to say that the majority of Amish families has at least one close relative (e.g. grandchild, cousin, uncle/aunt, or sibling) who is no longer Amish and with whom, by choice or necessity, use of English is appropriate. This situation is evident in areas which have been settled by Amish for a number of generations, such as Lancaster County, PA, or Holmes County, OH, where the incidence of Amish living near non-Amish relatives is high.

('German'). These identifying functions of Pennsylvania German lend it *overt* prestige in the Amish sociolinguistic situation, cf. Louden (1991).

(3) Domains of Use for Pennsylvania German and English

a) Pennsylvania German domains

informal: home/family; with friends and other members of the community

formal: church sermons; 'council church' (Attningsmee), formal church business (e.g. getting 'visited' by clergy); school board/parents meetings

b) English domains

informal: home (e.g. telling jokes, stories heard in English, with some handicapped children, among some siblings, as parents' secret language); with nonplain extended family members; with nonplain friends/neighbors (incl. among themselves when non-PG speakers present); Tupperware/Home Interior parties; community parochial schools (incl. chats with siblings/friends, games, passing notes); nearly all reading/writing (incl. ingroup newspapers/magazines, letters, diaries, messages, recipes, poetry/literature, e.g. Kline 1990).

formal: any formal dealing with a nonplain person (e.g. business transactions, volunteer fire company meeting); medium of instruction in school; sometimes in church when non-PG speakers present (e.g. weddings)

Aside from the external evidence of domains of use, the importance of English within Amish society is also clearly demonstrated on the basis of lexical borrowings from English into their varieties of Pennsylvania German.²³ In situations of language

²³The Pennsylvania German dialect is not entirely uniform in its structure across all subgroups of Pennsylvania German society; clear patterns of sociolinguistic variation are apparent. The most general distinction which can be made is between the varieties spoken by sectarians, and non-sectarians. For a discussion of variation within the dialect, see Louden (in press). Therefore, throughout this article, the term 'Plain Pennsylvania German' is used to refer to the variet(ies) spoken by the Amish and other similar sects, such as the Old Order Mennonites,

contact, it is widely accepted that lexical borrowing from one language to another frequently occurs for one of two reasons, either linguistic/functional need (when a language lacks a native equivalent to express a certain concept), or some form of prestige. Below we will consider a number of examples of lexical borrowing from English into Pennsylvania German which cannot be accounted for by lack of native vocabulary in a specific register of Pennsylvania German, namely the speech of mothers with their children known as *motherese* (cf. also the term *matrilect*).

When we consider Pennsylvania German motherese, the fact that is most striking is the high frequency of lexical borrowings from English in instances where native Pennsylvania German equivalents are still productive. In other words, Amish mothers (in fact, adults in general) use a higher number of English words in speaking Pennsylvania German with small children than they would with other adults. To Amish this pattern is quite natural and unconscious. It is the result of neither any conscious effort on their part to withhold native Pennsylvania German vocabulary nor to encourage use of English, and is effectively restricted to pre-verbal infants. Some examples of 'Baby PPG' are given below with their 'Adult PPG' equivalents.

- | | | |
|-----|------------|--|
| (4) | Baby PPG: | Witt (du) <i>sleep</i> e? |
| | Adult PPG: | Witt (du) schloofe?
'Do you want to sleep?' |
| (5) | Baby PPG: | Welle <i>night-night/bye-bye</i> gehe? |
| | Adult PPG: | Welle ins Bett/fatt gehe?
'Shall we go to bed/away ('night-night'/'bye-bye')?'

' |
| (6) | Baby PPG: | Bis a <i>sleepy</i> boy! |
| | Adult PPG: | Bischt en schleefricher Bu!
'You're a sleepy boy!' |

among whom the patterns of lexical borrowing described here are effectively identical.

- (7) Baby PPG: Zellscht *pretty* sei?
 Adult PPG: Zellscht *schee* sei?
 'Are you going to be nice ('pretty')?'

 (8) Baby PPG: *Paddies* nunner!
 Adult PPG: Hend nunner!
 'Hands ('paddies') down!'

 (9) Baby PPG: *No, no!*
 Adult PPG: Nee, nee!

Again we must remember the fact that lexical borrowing in language contact is normally motivated by circumstances of linguistic/functional need or prestige. The clear lack of linguistic/functional need as an explanation for English borrowings into Plain Pennsylvania German motherese demonstrated by the existence of fully productive native equivalents above strongly supports the claim that English enjoys a form of prestige (here, covert) which would contradict that stereotype of English as only marginally important in Amish verbal behavior.²⁴

There are other areas of the Plain Pennsylvania German lexicon similarly subject to heavy borrowing which attest to the productive role English plays in the intra-community sociolinguistic situation. These semantic fields include numbers, months, familial relations and greetings. On a decreasing scale, lexical items in these areas have productive native equivalents, i.e. English number vocabulary have more equivalents than many greetings, which have nearly none, though it is assumed that at one time such native vocabulary must have existed. Examples of English borrowings with native equivalents are given in the chart below.

²⁴Needless to say, the fact that we find such clear influence from English in so profound an in-group domain as motherese, the speech of mothers with their infants, underscores the covert prestige of English.

(10) English Borrowings Where Native Equivalents Are/Were Productive

- a) **numbers:** normally English with ages, dates and calculations; otherwise PPG equivalents fully productive
- b) **months:** normally all English; three relic forms exist for March, April and May ('Matz', 'Abrill', 'Moi'), but use is sporadic among older speakers
- c) **familial relations:** terms for in-laws, cousins, aunt, uncle, niece, nephew normally English; some relic native equivalents (e.g. 'Schweerdaadi' ('father-in-law'), 'Dochtermann' ('son-in-law')); terms for 'Mom' and 'Dad' borrowed from English, e.g. 'Maem', 'Daed', 'Paep'
- d) **greetings:** most English with no native equivalents, e.g. 'good morning/afternoon/evening/night', 'hi/hello', '(good) bye', 'take care'; exceptions: 'wie geht's/wie bischt?' ('how are you?'), 'mach's gut' ('take care')

It is important to note that the last two lexical categories, familial relations and greetings, pertain to domains of profoundly community-internal social interaction, as was the case above with motherese. Again we see the influence of English on Amish verbal behavior in a far deeper way than simply on occasions of "forced" interaction with non-Amish outsiders.

A final aspect of the profound influence of English within Amish society as a more or less equal partner with Pennsylvania German in their stable bilingual situation is found in an area of verbal behavior which strikes to the core of individual identity, personal names.²⁵ Amish naming patterns reflect quite clearly their dual sociolinguistic identity, as Pennsylvania German-speaking conservative Anabaptist sectarians, on the one hand, and as English-speaking members of American society, on the other. Specifically, the more uniquely *Amish* (in-group) aspect of their identity is expressed in family

²⁵For a discussion of number and frequency of Amish names, as well as nicknaming patterns, see Hostetler (1980:241-244).

names, nearly all of which have two different pronunciations, one subject to native Pennsylvania German phonology, used when speaking in the dialect, and the other subject to English phonology, used when speaking English. Examples are given below.

(11) Common Amish Family Names

Name	PG	English
'King'	[kɪnlɪç]	[kɪŋ]
'Hershberger'	[haʃbaɪə]	[hərʃbɛrgər]
'Fisher'	[fɪʃə]	[fɪʃər]
'Bontrager'	[bɔndrɛə]	[bantregər]
'Yoder'	[jɛdə]	[jodər]

First names, on the other hand, are nearly universally English in their derivation and are frequently pronounced with *only* English phonology.²⁶ This tendency on the part of Amish parents to give their children English names is particularly striking among younger Amish who often favor non-Biblical English given names. Some examples are given below:

(12) Amish Non-Biblical English First Names

- a) **male:** Calvin, Delbert, Ellis, Harley, Leroy, Leon, Marlin, Merle, Merlin, Shawn
- b) **female:** Amanda, Betty, Cindy, Julie, Marilyn, Patricia, Polly, Sharon, Susan, Wilma²⁷

²⁶Two common Amish male first names which have no English or Anglicized equivalent are 'Menno' and 'C(h)rist'.
²⁷Related evidence of Amish assimilation with the North American mainstream can be found in animal (e.g. pet) naming practices. All dog names observed by the author, for example, are English. E.g: Amy, Lady, Missy, Pooch, Queenie, Sport.

Amish sociolinguistic identity. The stereotype of Amish identity as being defined largely or exclusively by Pennsylvania German is thus incorrect. As the Amish (contrary to the popular stereotype of their extreme separation from the world) have found a middle ground between total assimilation with and isolation from the social mainstream by making only limited acceptance of the dominant culture, so too have they struck a linguistic balance whereby Pennsylvania German and English function side-by-side, and not in competition, with one another.

CONCLUSIONS

The gap between fiction and reality evident in the stereotypical image(s) of the Amish in American society has implications for more general questions of the relationship between all minority groups and the mainstream majority. Surely, the Amish are not the only minority culture in the United States to be subject to distorting stereotypes; one need only think of larger, more well-known groups such as African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans and Asian-Americans, as well as lesser known groups like Romani (Gypsy)-Americans and the tendency becomes clear. Though the stereotypes surrounding these minority cultures may be either positive, in a romantic sense, for example, or negative, both kinds of stereotype serve to over-exoticize the members of these cultures and disproportionately emphasize their differentness from the social mainstream. As a specific example of a sociolinguistic stereotype, we may cite the common, often unconscious assumption by many that all African-Americans speak Black Vernacular English (BVE), a socially stigmatized variety. This stereotype is so pervasive that many non-blacks are often surprised to hear an African-American speak standard English. In the same way that Amish, for their cultural differentness, are assumed to speak 'bad', or simply different English, the same kind of generalization is applied to black Americans, with the familiar consequences of concluding that such non-standard speech is indicative of lower intelligence.

The answer to the question of why these stereotypes emerge is likely rooted in a general human tendency to define one's self and

in-group by highlighting the differentness of other groups.²⁸ Subsequently, members of these groups labeled as 'other,' such as the Amish and African-Americans, rather than being accepted as simultaneously similar and different, are regarded as more extremely different, and as such are marginalized and effectively hindered from participation in affairs of mainstream life. In the face of this tendency on the part of the mainstream to define itself in contrast to others, minority groups are put in the difficult position between wanting to maintain a distinct cultural identity and being forced to sacrifice that identity for assimilation. For the Amish, the fact of being exoticized and romanticized by the majority culture is of less concern for the fact that they expressly do not desire to participate fully in the public affairs of American society, e.g. politically or educationally. But for other groups such as African-Americans who do strive for more of an active role in all areas of our society, including politics and education, the stigma of differentness symbolized by stereotypes is very real.

Of course, the similarities between the experiences of the Amish and racially defined minority groups such as African-Americans are limited. Perhaps a somewhat closer parallel is the situation of other white ethnic groups, such as Irish- and Italian-Americans, described by Greeley (1971). In his work, Greeley notes the hostility with which white ethnics are regarded by more "assimilated" Americans. At the root of this attitude is the assumption that difference from the mainstream, manifested in an ethnic identity, is basically negative, perhaps for fear that American society will lose its cohesion through disintegration into "tribalism," but more than likely for a general discomfort with cultural differentness. A well-defined ethnic

²⁸In an early popular account of the Amish, A. M. Aurand, Jr. (Aurand 1938:3) cited in Buck 1979:5) speculates on the reasons behind image and stereotype formation for the Amish and other minority groups, somewhat ironically though since his work does little to encourage objective understanding of the Amish.

"Isn't it true that the average person likes to know something odd or curious about the 'other fellow,' while assuming that there is little or nothing odd about himself?

Isn't it true that neither the Red Man, nor the Black, nor any other in America, present social studies isn't as interesting or entertaining as the... so-called Pennsylvania 'Dutch'?

There are perhaps none so quaint or odd, as the so-called 'plain people' of the southern counties of the State (Pennsylvania)."

identity among racially defined minority groups is tolerated, but not among whites, who, according to this view, have no (racial) excuse for maintaining such an identity.

Some Americans become very uneasy when the subject of religious and ethnic diversity is raised. They insist that even to speak about the subject may be wrong since it emphasizes what is different among us instead of what is the same. It is all right for the blacks and the Chicanos and the American Indians to have some sort of ethnic consciousness, but for other American groups ethnic consciousness is, somehow or other, immoral. This unease is manifested, I find, particularly among those who have just left their own ethnic heritage behind, convinced that it represents a benighted past and that they must shed their ethnic identity to become truly a part of American society. I suspect that such people have a feeling of guilt about what has been left behind completely. Rejection of their own ethnic identity has become for them a matter of principle. (Greeley 1971:14)

Although there is much about the popular image of the Amish which can be interpreted as positive,²⁹ in fact in some instances, too positive, the overall suspicion with which the Amish are regarded, particularly by those who live in closest proximity to them, either ethnically³⁰ or geographically, exemplifies the generally negative attitude toward white ethnic consciousness Greeley discusses above. As Buck (1979) aptly notes in his description of the "bloodless

²⁹In regard to the overly positive image of the Amish some outsiders have, Buck (1979:10) cites the following incident:

"A local Amish informant, aware of what she aptly named a 'blown up' picture of the Amish, expressed the wish that writers would 'send us some of the those Amishmen that they talk about. We could use some.'"

³⁰An important question which merits future attention, both from sociologists and linguists, is the sensitive issue of attitudes among more assimilated Anabaptist groups (such as the various non-Old Order Mennonite churches) toward their Old Order cousins. Many Old Order sectarians perceive distinctly negative feelings from so-called 'higher' Mennonites, who in turn are often unsure of how to regard the Old Order groups. Particularly among those who themselves leave the Old Order and join more assimilated churches, the tendency toward rejection and criticism of their roots can emerge.

theatre" of tourism, hostility for reasons of differentness is nothing new to the Amish and their historical endurance of outside persecution has reinforced their group identity and contributed to their survival. Yet the resilience of the Amish in the face of lack of outside understanding exemplified by stereotyping and the construction of over-exoticized images should not detract attention from the very real tension that persists between American minority groups, white and non-white, and the social mainstream. Questions such as those that pertain to the mainstream attitude toward the Amish may yield important insights into the larger question of the tension underlying the present debate over the place of multiculturalism in American society.

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