# The Crisis of Culturally Inappropriate Epigenetic Principles: A Model for Teaching Social Theory Using Rearward Analysis

Mark E. Woods
University of Akron - Wayne

**Abstract**

Teaching and assessing learning of social and behavioral science theory can prove difficult as many theories are so well established that they are approached as fact. Yet, students appear to be increasingly challenging broad acceptance of such theories. As technology has assisted society and students to be more accepting of diversity, it has also provided students with adequate, albeit potentially unfounded and biased, sources of quarrel with traditional theories. A risk is that of falling into an approach to teaching where students are asked to submit to the idea that when theories were developed diversity was less important, expected or relevant. The approach demonstrated here is a template for student assignments that embraces their increasing resistance to theory acquiescence through a process of concurrent literature review – using one set of experts to debunk another. This is demonstrated in a hands-on manner so that instructors may see how such an approach will appear in completed form. In that manner, an established theory of human development is debunked as applied to the unique ethnoreligious community of the Amish.

## Introduction

It is common to assert that social/behavioral health students develop an expertise, or at least familiarity, with a particular theory of human growth and development as the primary "lens" by which social data is viewed. To this end, the behavioral health realm is crowded with clinicians implementing cognitive behavioral therapy, as an example. Moreover, while many would report this single lens approach is effective, nearly simultaneous contentions recommend that such individuals should possess the ability to employ multiple "lenses" due to the impracticability of some within selected situations or in application amid particular individuals. Neither of these arguments is fundamentally opposed here. Instead, these claims are sustained, but through an ostensibly rearward tactic.

The approach demonstrated herein provides a tool for student research that forces the linking of expert literature to disprove, rather than

prove, a theoretical approach. Generally, arguments are made by proposing methods that are likely to work, explain or influence within given parameters of particular proceedings. Instead, the approach modeled herein is to depict portions of a popular mode (Erikson's psychosocial stages of development theory) which are unsatisfactory in their explanation of self-development, inside a special parameter. It should be noted, that this hopeful debunking will not address every developmental axiom, but will instead focus on the apparent most popularly employed theory.

A further cautionary note is that the crux of this model is a display of the core of the traditional theory with the benefit of much added evidence. This exercise provides for dialogue about the merits of the traditional theory in the time and place when it was developed and where augmentation is necessary for utility in modern application. The risk is that of incriminating the original theorist of errors or weaknesses that are only be fully appreciated because of the benefit of years of subsequent data and study. Therefore, the focus should be on discovering the core thinking behind the traditional theory or theories and not so much on the inherent problems. In identifying the problems for applying a given theory in today's society, the student is able to identify the root of the theoretical stance, which likely holds truth that explains its maintenance in the academic discourse.

In addition, the implications for teaching within the social sciences and behavioral health fields, then, is an approach to theoretical presentation and analysis that may prove opportune when unique situations (i.e. geography or moment in time) provide exemplars that disprove rather than prove a given theory. This article provides a first-hand demonstration of this method through a unique ethnoreligious group common in Ohio. This approach, implemented into student assignments, takes advantage of the natural student reaction seemingly more prevalent in a technology-driven society than ever before – that of questioning and challenging theoretical arguments rather than acceptance and adoption.

**Parameters and Methods**

The special boundary for this exposition is the development of self through the cultural interface of the Amish. Specifically, the quarrel within is to reveal limitations and chinks of and in the perceived armor of Erikson's psychosocial, stage-based model of development (a widely ascribed-to theory of human growth and development), through the veil of the ethos of the Amish. Erikson's theoretical approach is arguably, if not agreeably, the

most prevalent approach taught in social science and behavioral health curricula. This pronounced popularity is the primary basis for selection of this theory for analysis within. Erikson should be lauded for the effort to explain human development across the lifespan and cultural divide. Application of the model of analysis provided herein should prompt students to not simply identify ways in which Erikson's (or any other theory) approach is flawed for a particular diverse population, but also which of the central tenets of the original work are maintained. As demonstrated, Erikson's original work may not align well with the unique community of the Amish, but the theory misses only on sequence and not on existence of developmental crises; and is therefore continually useful despite a growing sense among students that traditional theories are infinitely faulty and disputable. Identifying those ways in which traditional theories still effectively describe or explain human behavior is the sort of critical analysis to be expected. Many a student will ignore traditional theories because of their relative failure to fully explain modern behavior, but the astute scholar will be able to identify both those areas of weakness and strength in the original and add to, rather than detract from in this tossing away, the knowledge base.

The Amish are not a homogeneous group. This perception persists because of exceedingly similar customs across Amish groups. Yet, the Amish present variations as extensive as the rest of the "melting pot." Four major church groups operate relatively independently with minimal commingling in religious practices and lifestyles. The *Swartzentruber* are the most conservative and least acculturated, while the *Beachy* and the *New Order Amish* are the most progressive and most acculturated. Most "familiar" and commonly portrayed are the *Old Order Amish*. Within these groups, families are geographically organized into *gemeinde* (districts), which are overseen by a bishop. This spiritual leader determines the *Ordnung*, or rules of living, for that church district. Therefore, a particular practice, behavior, lifestyle, etc. may be customary in one district and deplorable in another. The Amish developed out of the Anabaptist movement and separation of the followers of Menno Simmons (Mennonite) and Jacob Amman (Amish) on the grounds of adult baptism. Later Anabaptist separation led to the development of Hutterite and Brethren groups and churches. The Anabaptist movement was a separation from the perceived "slowness" of changes promoted by Martin Luther's Protestant Reformation. The

Anabaptist separation came out of the argument of Biblical truth as guidance for living rather than tradition and custom. (Kraybill, 2001)

The Amish differ in many outwardly observable means from even their neighbors in rural Ohio, Indiana, Pennsylvania, Iowa, Wisconsin and other Mid- and Western states. Over the last decade or so, this has been demonstrated in documentary films, news and educational television programming and recent "reality" programming. While differences in clothing, transportation and the use of household amenities such as indoor plumbing and electricity exist, the crux here is that the Amish also develop (as individuals, families and groups) dissimilarly to the Anglo-Saxon, middle-income men against which most "traditional" theories of development have been normed. Within this argument, the specific differences between Amish groups, even between neighboring church districts and families, will be ignored in favor of the use of generalities about the Amish promoted by professional research on the assemblage and personal experience in working within this extraordinary group.

Traditional stage-based theories of development focus too exclusively on human behavior and not enough on the social environment. (Schriver, 2004) However, achievement and diversity are incorporated into such traditional theories – utilizing developmental milestones as attainment goals and thereby judging in the context of rate of achievement and number of achievements, ignorant of differences that may exist in the individuals being judged on how capable they are of these goals and level of desire for accomplishment of these goals. This attainment and achievement typology of Erikson's and other traditional theories of development appears generally absurd, and especially so when dealing with the Amish. Without being privy to added time and research, additional absurdity is promulgated by the fundamental assumption made by many traditional theories – that every person, group or culture operates through nearly identical developmental conduits: that the stages are in the same order, span the same period and commence and conclude with the same stages. Erikson, it is demonstrated herein, is incorrect about this, though his principle ideas are not necessarily incorrect.

Schludermann and Schludermann (1978) use the argument that because stimulus and response patterns arise through cultural definition and social construction then "an understanding of culture

may be necessary … in understanding what these patterns are and thus knowing what a person is doing and why." (170) What Erikson seems to have missed is now commonplace – variances in life stages across different cultures. Thus, if the stages and characteristics of the states (time span for completion, order, etc.) differ between each culture, so then does the path the individual travels to personality development.

Erikson's ego-identity, stage-based model sees development as more affected by external social agents (family, teachers, spouses) than Freud's analytic, psychosexual stage developmental theory. (Acocella, Alloy & Bootzin, 1996) However, when attempting application to the Amish, Erikson's theory is too ego-centered. Erikson's theory greatly converges on the development of identity, an individual awareness of "who we are." After the first stage, which intrinsically engages the relationship of another (caregiver), the next four crises are partisan toward individual identity.

**Application of the Model**

In the first stage, *Trust v. Mistrust*, Erikson holds that the "ego's most important function… is to develop and maintain a sense of identity" (Burger, 1993, 155) through consistent love and care from a caregiver. However, among the Amish, it is normal for "bab[ies to] receive… solicitous care from persons of all ages" (Hostetler, 1993, 172), caregiver or not, family or not. Like the Hutterites and conservative Mennonites who spring from the same Anabaptist tradition as the Amish, relatively communal child rearing is common among the Amish. Basic trust, in an Amish youth, is gained on a much more communal level than Erikson seems to be postulating. "The infant is secure within the home and the Amish community, and this equips him to trust himself and those around him." (Ibid.) In Amish communities, new children are the responsibility of the entire district, not just the primary family (which is nonetheless much larger than a "typical" American family). Even at this very young chronological age, Amish children have a specific space and role within the major operating fabric of the culture – community. "[T]he child 'knows exactly who he is and where he is going to fit when he grows up." (Ibid., 188)

A concrete example of this disparity is feeding. In an Amish home, babies are "rarely fed on a strict schedule but are fed when hungry." (Ibid., 172) In a "typical American" home, babies, even the most newborn, are fed according to the opinion of doctors, nurses and nutritionists, varying from every 2 – 4 hours, regardless of hunger exhibition. In the Amish home, these children are already fulfilling a fundamental tenant to Amish life – personal responsibility in the success of the community. It is the child's responsibility to let someone know when they are hungry. When they do so, they are fed. In the "typical American" home, children are sometimes awakened from sleep to eat because the "correct" amount of time has passed since they last ate. Eating is an important social activity among the Amish and the entire family unit (which is often intergenerational) sits together at the family table during mealtime.

*Autonomy v. Shame and Doubt*, Erikson's second stage, presents children that are struggling with parental limits, compared to their exercise of independence. Erikson holds here that "parents who can support the child in autonomy enable the development of self-reliance in later life." (Schriver, 2004, 197) However, in Amish communities, children even this young start to engage in the work of the family and community, even if this means the simplicity of following mother or sibling to the henhouse to gather eggs. These children are wrapped in the communal fabric and it is teamwork and coexistence that are developmentally paramount, rather than autonomy. "The preschool child learns to … enjoy work and perform it pleasantly." (Hostetler, 1993, 173) Regarding preschool children, Hostetler advises that "[w]ork is viewed as helping others, and children are trained to help one another rather than to be independent…. Children are not thanked for carrying out responsibilities expected of them." (Ibid.) Erikson's suggestion is that children at this stage are busy dealing with the crisis of going out on their own and experiencing their world. While there are times and places for this engagement, Amish children are expected to commence role positioning within the social constitution, and to succeed. The tenet presented by Erikson – exploration and experimentation – comes into play much later in life for the Amish individual.

According to Erikson, "[t]he next few years of life, are crucial in the development of the child's sense of initiative…. Initiative directs the sense of autonomy that children bring from the previous stage." (Burger, 1993, 127) Schriver (2004) implies that Erikson's holding in the *Initiative v. Guilt* stage is the underlying function of development of purpose. (197) Erikson seems here to be suggesting that the developmentally vigorous child is creating and exploring, both physically and meta-physically. Within the Amish community, physical world creativity such as building a toy or painting a birdhouse are encouraged and "[i]nstead of asking how or why, the child learns to observe and imitate on a behavioral level" (Hostetler, 1993, 173) the physical world around them. Independent creativity is not bred as much as appreciation for the natural environment surrounding Amish children. Intellectual questioning is closely directed and Amish youth learn to be quiet, observant and patient. Erikson contends that by the completion of this stage (without hindrance) children develop a conviction about what they can and will be. So, too, do Amish youth at this time, but their purpose is not carried in what they themselves will become or do, but in what ways they will participate in the communal society. For Amish children, "[l]earning is directed toward conformity with what is right, not toward discovering new knowledge." (Ibid., 188) It is in this stage of *Initiative v. Guilt* where Erikson's theory and Amish development are most closely matched – where the developing pattern of Erikson's theory being nearly backward when applied to the Amish becomes first clear. The epigenesis appears to hold, but not in the relatively rigid manner in which first theorized.

Erikson's fourth stage, *Industry v. Inferiority*, sees elementary school-aged youth as competitive with other children, "[i]nevitably … compar[ing] their achievements with those of others their age." (Burger, 1993, 129) One can think about competition as pyramidal with the inherent characteristic that the number of participants decreases while the competency increases. Paradoxically, in the Amish community competition of an individualistic nature is evaded. "The Amish value such traits as obedience, modesty and submission, rather than mobility [, upward or literally,] and competitiveness." (Kephart & Zellner, 2001, 10) "[Amish] children are motivated primarily by concern for other people." (Hostetler, 1993, 174) Further, within the Amish culture, it

is more important to do what is "morally right" for the entire community than to gain commendation, status, assets or even personal corporeal survival.

This is made clear by the changing structure of Amish work. Until recently, Amish work was largely, and nearly completely, agricultural in nature. With falling prices on agricultural products, especially milk and corn, many Amish are turning toward small businesses, particularly related to lumber, for employ. What have developed are carefully planned and constructed networks of trades. It is very common to find a networking structure in which the jobs of timberwork, for example, are divided out among a large number of smaller jobs, from felling the trees to refining the lumber to transporting the timber and to production of goods, then sales. The extrapolation continues to branch out to finishers, carpenters, retailers, etc., but is usually wholly contained within the local Amish society.

Here, Erikson's stages are at the height of ego-strengthening activity, with developmental crises focusing only on the individual. Conversely, Amish children begin to take notice of the development of others, especially adults and the children participate in a very mixed group, including teachers, older youth and their own families. While Erikson postulates that children at this stage are working at building their own competent skill set for use in implementing their initiative autonomously, Amish youth are honing practical skills for efforts to build-up and preserve the Amish community and to possess the ability to stay apart from the world at large. (Kephart & Zellner, 2001, 7). Amish children at this age must learn about the secular world in order to make the decision to join the Amish church and therefore reject the secular world. "By outside standards Amish culture provides an environment that is limiting and restrictive. To the Amish child it provides reasonable fulfillment and a knowledge of what is expected of the individual." (Hostetler, 1993, 188) Strikingly, where the last stage finds general agreement with Amish cultural development and Erikson's crisis-based theory, this stage finds the least concurrence.

The teenage years, according to Erikson, are wrought with calamity vis-à-vis *Identity v. Role Confusion*, or of answer seeking to "who am I?" Erikson suggests, "the young person seeks to establish himself or herself as a separate individual while at the same time

maintaining some connection with the meaningful elements of the past and accepting the values of a group." (Berger, 1988, 363) In this stage, adolescents are granted a moratorium; they are not treated like children anymore, but are not either expected to make the decisions of an adult yet. Under Erikson's theory, the individual is dealing with the height of ego identity development, at this point needing to make decisions about whom and what they are, independent from their environment, before "going out into the world."

In Amish culture, between the ages of 15 and 17, a youth's *rumspringa*, or "running around years," begins. It is at this point in the developing individual that Amish persons are encouraged to be most autonomous. While under Erikson's theory youth at this age are supposed to be discovering who their intrinsic and independent selves are; narrowing down from all they have experienced to this point, the Amish are presented with paramount freedom and opportunity for exploration, of themselves, their environment and others (and their environments). Amish can take their *rumspringa* whenever they wish after the age restriction (determined by particular *Ordnung*) and are granted as much time as they need. Time is necessary because the fundamental question that *rumspringa* attempts to answer is that of joining the church formally; agreeing to follow the *Ordnung* and essentially permanently become part of the Amish community, or choosing a life away from the Amish, which may include erasure of familial, social and communal ties, permanently.

A major problem with Erikson's theory in application here is the time component. By the very structure of Erikson's theory, assumptions are made that all eight stages are relatively the same in length, and do not vary extensively from person to person. However, the experiences of *rumspringa* can vary significantly from one Amish youth to another, and even between different orders, communities or districts with regard to when the period begins, what common trends are for decision length and verdict as well as the nature of the experiences themselves. *Rumpsringa* continues until youth 1) make official pronouncement to not be baptized in the Amish church or 2) are married, generally between nineteen and twenty-two years old. Another major disparity with Erikson's theory in application during *rumpsringa* is that the vices a "typical

American" adolescent often lead to identity adoption prior to completion of this crisis stage. However, Amish *rumspringa* youth are encouraged to try these vices (which not only include typical teen vices of drinking, smoking and other drug use, but owning and using automobiles, televisions and video game systems) discreetly, so that they can most accurately and precisely choose which life path they wish to follow.

A final contention with Erikson's theory regarding *rumspringa* youth is that it is during this time when "both boys and girls gain knowledge of the wider community and the world outside their home." (Hostetler, 1993, 177) As previously noted, with Erikson's stage theory, this is the zenith of individual defining and exploration, yet for Amish youth this period is about learning the truest senses of what the dueling environments around them present, what their role in each social fabric would be and a decision of which community in which they will choose to participate. Erikson is not grossly inaccurate in application to the Amish in this stage, though the focus of individualism presented in the original theory is not quite the same exploration being undertaken by Amish youth. Inaccurately popularized by many media sources in the last decade or so, *rumspringa* is fundamentally fixated on whether the individual can agree to permanently abide by the expectations of the community or not. Erikson seems to be describing something similar to *English* (i.e. "typical" American) youth who are freed from expectations of responsibility by virtually every social institution until early adulthood.

Schriver (2004) contends that a limitation of the sixth stage of Erikson's Psychosocial Stages of Development theory, is that this stage is the culmination of a series of crises that only focus on separateness while adherence to this model will, by its own logic, lead to individuals unprepared for the closeness required of adults. Erikson saw *Intimacy v. Isolation* as the launch of adulthood and described this stage as when "[y]oung men and women begin to seek out a special relationship within which to develop intimacy and grow emotionally." (Burger, 1993, 130) "As Erikson explains, the young adult must 'face the fear of ego loss in situations which call for self-abandon…. The avoidance of such experiences … may lead to a deep sense of isolation and consequent self-absorption.'"

(Berger, 1988, 436) Also at this stage, Erikson proposes, "genitality now gradually comes into play." (Schriver, 2004, 200)

Within the Amish community, *rumpsringa* is usually completed with the advent of marriage. Again, in a timeline sense, Erikson's theory does not seem to marshal according to the actual life events of Amish. In Amish communities, the stage of *Identity v. Role Confusion* would end with marriage, though it appears as though Erikson would say that *Intimacy v. Isolation* concludes with marriage, or some variation thereof which allows for mutual, heterosexual sexual satisfaction and genuine compassion for another. Also of contention is the idea that an individual would, at this point in their life, struggle with the ability to yield their ego impulses to the "higher" good – the relationship. As evidenced previously, the Amish have been graciously non-egoistic since a very young age and Amish of this approximate age do not present internal or outwardly expressed struggles with ego denial at this point in their life. Marriage is entered into rather matter-of-factly, as a patterned norm of *Ordnung* obedience. This is not to assert that there is no pure love or emotion, but this is rarely demonstrated. "[M]arriage in Amish life is not simply a romantic affair…. Marriage is bonded by the community and symbolizes the couple's acceptance of mature values…. The ceremony is elaborate because much is expected in the way of community conformity and responsibility." (Hostetler, 1993, 200)

In Amish society, the loss of ego into a greater fold – community, family, marriage – is a fundamental concept directly affecting day-to-day life from early on in a child's development. Hostetler (1993) uses a mirror analogy to describe the situation, asserting that "the size and prominence of mirrors in a society signal the cultural value attached to the self." (33) The claim is that the Amish have fewer and smaller mirrors than non-Amish for this very reason. Children learn non-selfishness (not necessarily selflessness) in order to become children of God. Erikson holds that until early adulthood, individuals do not have the ego strength to yield the self. Nonetheless, the Amish actively demonstrate this submission, denial and surrender through *uffgewwe* (to give up) and *unnergewwe* (to give under) from nearly birth to death. This is overarching in Amish society and not simply manifested when seeking a spouse or companion.

The seventh stage of Erikson's theory of development is *Generativity v. Stagnation* and occurs during middle adulthood. This stage deals with the supposition that "for [their] self-esteem as adults, [individuals] all need to feel successful at something that makes our lives seem productive and meaningful." (Berger, 1988, 449) This stage is often described as when adults being to "develop a concern for guiding the next generation." (Burger, 1993, 130) Giving back to the next generation is often physically applied through work, or pseudo-work (volunteerism) in the career field they have chosen. According to Erikson, these individuals may begin to share with younger adolescents and adults the "secrets" to a successful life, or simply coach a soccer team. Generativity, according to Erikson, involves the risk of personal investment in individuals outside the immediate family unit.

The error with the *Generativity v. Stagnation* stage as proposed by Erikson, similar to a number of the other stages involves the "blocking-off" of the hopeful behavior manifestation. That is, within the Amish community, generativity is pervasive. One of the clearest examples of this ideological practice is mutual aid. "Intense interaction in the little homogenous community makes members feel responsible for each other's welfare." (Hostetler, 1993, 249) This communal aid is clearly demonstrated by the barn raising, where as many as four or five different districts (with as many as 80 adults) may come together to build or rebuild a necessary structure for one family's survival. Another form of this sharing is community insurance. The Amish do not carry insurance, health or otherwise. When catastrophe strikes and a particular individual or family undergoes economic or physical distress, the entire district or community will participate through economic means or physically in the preparation of meals, assistance of childcare and completion of household/work duties/chores. Erikson's theory suggests that as adults reach middle adulthood they "feel the need" to give back to those around, and usually "under," them.

Within Amish society, mutual aid and basic generativity are constantly occurring, even through young children and adolescents. It is common for young and older adults alike to spend multiple evenings a week serving on local committees addressing social concerns from highway safety to mental retardation and illness to

drug use and abuse. The products of these meetings is a sense among younger Amish individuals of being constantly protected by those ahead of them, while at the same time, creating a near constant scene of give and take from any group of younger persons with any group of older persons. This is verified through examination of adaptation to social change in response to "new" technology. Donald Kraybill (2004) asserts that some of the "riddles" or incongruities within Amish society can be explained somewhat simply when examined in the process they undergo within a given Amish community. Through a back-and-forth series of concessions, the younger and older members of society work out their flat acceptation, rejection, adaptation or creation of technology. Amish have successfully dealt with "new" technology in a process that involves the give and take between the multiple variants of age groups in the society. As previously noted, and ignored by Erikson's stage theory of development, generativity is rampant and pervasive in Amish life, rather than a "mid-life crisis" which boosts the esteem of the older participating generation. This is again an example of Erikson's theory not being wrong, per se, but somewhat out of order and imperfectly weighted when applied to extraordinary groups and cultures.

The final stage of Erikson's model of psychosocial development is *Ego Integrity v. Despair*. Successful completion of this stage provides the individual with satisfaction and pleasure in the accomplishments and events of their life. Faced with inevitable end of life, individuals examine and either accept or reject "that one's life is one's own responsibility." (Burger, 1993, 131) Those who reject this and "wish they could do it all differently will express their despair through disgust and contempt for others." (Ibid.) It is at this point, according to Erikson, that all of the crises, and the subsequent ego strength gained from those or the defense mechanisms resultant from non-success, culminates. If the crises of one's life have been relatively successfully maneuvered and traversed -minimal existence of socially maladaptive defense mechanisms – the individual will be able to pass on with esteem. However, if crises failed, there is not time for opportunity for change and they will leave this world with shame and disappointment. *Ego integrity*, according to Erikson, is similar to the Maslow's idea of self-actualization – the being of a fully functioning

individual. According to Maslow, however, "only a fraction of a percent of [individuals] ultimately attain the state of self-actualization." (Ibid., 334) *Ego Integrity*, in Erikson's view, is the point at which the individual's potential is fully developed. They have gained ego strengths of hope, will, purpose, competence, fidelity, love, care and confidence (Schriver, 2004) and can spend the rest of their lives "truly being".

The ultimate goal, asserted by Erikson, is confidence in the individual – to deal with or have dealt with life successfully and independently. This stands in sharp contrast to the Amish ethnoreligious culture. *Gelassenheit* is the most important and overarching aspect of Amish culture, society and living. Loosely translated from German it "means 'submitting, yielding to a higher authority.'" (Kraybill, 2001, 29) *Gelassenheit* is distinctive from the selfishness of Erikson's confidence in that "the goal of *Gelassenheit* is a subdued, humble person who discovers fulfillment in the service of community." (Ibid.) *Gelassenheit* includes "resignation, calmness of mind, composure, staidness, conquest of selfishness, long-suffering, collectedness, silence of the soul, tranquility, inner surrender, yieldness, equanimity and detachment." (Hostetler, 1993, 306) *Gelassenheit* is the absolute goal of Amish life and is made up of personality, symbolism, structure, ritual and value dimensions. It means respecting others and obeying community consensus and agreement. The difference between *gelassenheit* and *ego integrity* or *self-actualization* is that *gelassenheit* is an active goal of all Amish (at least those who have the cognitive ability to extrapolate the deep meanings of *gelassenheit*) throughout all Amish life. "[T]he principle of *gelassenheit* orders their whole social system." (Kraybill, 2001, 30) *Gelassenheit* further differs from *ego integrity* because it not only considers, but also the absolute being of all the elements of life. The goal is not for individual, ego, strengthening, but for communal prosperity and closeness to the natural environment. *Gelassenheit* could be compared to utter inner peace, through complete outward behavior, thought and being. *Gelassenheit* is much more similar to postulates of higher states of consciousness than *ego integrity* and it is attainable at any age or stage of life.

So, then, what do you get if there is no "self." The contention is that you have something similar to *gelassenheit.* The

common notion that collective living is not "good for the group" seems inappropriate. Rather, a key to Amish development is that as individuals seek community, they recognize that realization rests in sacrifice, where giving of one's self and receiving from others strengthens communal bonds. Burre (2004) summarizes this concept by suggesting that "false selves" develop in turmoil with fitting into the prominent environment. (3) The Amish demonstrate, generally, an absence of this turmoil. There is no internal struggle because conservatism so permeates the Amish life that obedience to the environment and culture ensues. The Amish develop absolutely within their cultural context, as opposed to next to and separate from their environment, community, family and religion.

Erikson's theory, like much of "typical American" experience, examines life quantitatively, where "the [individual] is viewed as a tool within a machine model, and the [individual's] success or failure is ultimately related to 'bottom line' accountability (counting)." (Eldridge, 1994, 3) This is inappropriate for use with the Amish because "[w]hile Moderns are preoccupied with 'finding themselves,' the Amish are engaged in 'losing themselves.'" (Hostetler, 1993, 33) The Amish place significant emphasis on social, communal and especially individual humility. "Pride, in fact, is considered a cardinal sin." (Kephart & Zellner, 2001, 10) The Amish take profound measures to avoid self-aggrandizement. The most significant flay in Erikson's model may be the idea of attainment or scoring. Scoring is completely individualized and in the context of the Amish, fails to define the "flow state" of ethno-religious communal development. Many traditional behavioral or sociologic theories hold that development is predicated upon struggle and strife, unless you are absolutely well adjusted. *Gelassenheit* presupposes any turmoil and lends it no value. "Personality development [among the Amish] will also depend on the extent to which others facilitate the performance of prescribed roles or hinder their performance." (Schludermann & Schludermann, 1978, 171) Development among the Amish is wholly communal and purposefully avoidant of incarnations of "self."

**Discussion**

This approach to student analysis of established theoretical approaches should be directed at the applicability of other

theorems to particular cultural/ethnoreligious groups, geographic areas and demographic factors – extending the reward approach demonstrated here. Of particular and promising interest is further examination of treatment theories to application in remedying mental illness and social dysfunction within these unique groups and cultures. In essence, this approach employs a model of concurrent literature review – one set a presentation of established theory (similar to a standard theoretical approach term paper) and the other a discussion of established information about a particular group, area, community or set of factors.

The lenses need to be shifted and employed appropriately. This approach hinges on the idea that there are fewer areas for new stories (theories), but certainly new ways of telling old stories. For interest specific to solutions for the Amish communities, Gestalt treatment seems to present applicability that is more viable to the Amish and Maslow's Need Hierarchy reveals opportunity for minimal adaptation for relevance. Rather than a specific map, Erikson's theory proves its utility in identifying developmental structures that can be used to explain human behavior if only by some form of culturally-based realignment. What Erikson saw through his "lens" was not incorrect, but must be applied differently to improve accuracy. As mentioned previously, it appears many students today are swift to point out flaws in "tried and true" theories and thereby reject them as wholly baseless. The approach described seeks the student benefit, then, of learning the ability to discern the components of traditional theories that maintain utility without dismissing the theory in whole – avoiding the proverbial baby and bath water tossing. Eldridge (1994) prompted this analysis by suggesting that sheer adherence to developmental axioms based on tradition and popularity can be exceedingly precarious for individuals gauged by such models. There may not be currently available developmental models for application within these specialized groups, but it is important for the social scientist, behavioral health professional and student of these fields to understand the inappropriateness of common theories and adapt their applied work with their target populations, research participants and consumers.

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