

# The Crime Experiences of the Amish<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** There is little published research in peer-reviewed journals about Amish experiences with crime, with the exception of work by Byers and colleagues (Byers, 2008; Byers & Crider, 2002; Byers et al., 1999). The purpose of this article is to explore the crime experiences of the Amish, based on reports by scribes found under “Community Notes” in *The Diary*, one of several periodicals devoted to reporting news and events from Amish communities. Two hundred forty narratives of Amish crime experiences from 13 years’ worth of *The Diary* (January 2010 through December 2022) were collected and organized by crime type. Based on these narratives, there are two important findings. First, crime is not infrequent, with a diversity of crime experiences, ranging from burglary to armed robbery. Second, the most frequently described incidents in these narratives were property crimes, such as burglary/attempted burglary, larceny/attempted larceny, scams/attempted scams, and vandalism. The article concludes with recommendations for future research about crime and the Amish, suggestions for culturally appropriate educational materials for crime prevention in Amish homes and businesses, and suggestions for more effective cooperation between the Amish and the criminal justice system.

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Among the persistent stereotypes about the Amish (Umble & Weaver-Zercher, 2008, pp. 245, 248; Trollinger, 2012) is the notion that because they reside in rural places that supposedly have less crime than cities and because they live in tight-knit communities, only rarely do they experience a crime.<sup>2</sup> When an Amish person is the victim of a crime, especially of a heinous crime,

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<sup>2</sup> There are two myths in this sentence. One is about the Amish and crime and the other is about rural areas and crime. This article addresses the former. In reference to the latter, rural areas do not have less crime than urban places; they simply have a different crime profile. There may not be many street robberies in rural communities, for example, but there can be as much if not more violence (homicide, domestic violence), drug production and trafficking, substance misuse, and burglary/theft, especially of farm buildings (Donnermeyer, 2016).



it becomes fodder for local, national, and even international news outlets. The recent abduction and murder of Linda Stoltzfoos in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, is a case in point. It was a crime drama that played out in the media over many months, during searches for her body and for her killer, and the killer's subsequent apprehension, trial, and sentencing (Nepkin, 2021). In October 2006, five Amish girls were fatally shot and five were wounded at the Nickel Mines Amish parochial school in Lancaster County by a disturbed man who routinely drove his milk truck past the school (Kraybill et al., 2007). Stories of the Nickel Mines school shooting, the funerals, the forgiveness the Amish extended to the family of the shooter, and their transfer of some of the funds raised for the victims' families to the shooter's family were steady news for a number of weeks (Umble & Weaver-Zercher, 2008, pp. 243–258).

This research explores the crime experiences described in the monthly periodical *The Diary*. The goal of this article is to document and categorize the crimes experienced by the Amish, few of which ever become newsworthy. They are ordinary crimes, not the extraordinary crimes that occasionally make headline news. To achieve this goal, the article documents the crime experiences of the Amish in as close to their own words as possible; that is, in the words of the scribes in *The Diary*, who routinely report on events in their communities, ranging from weather to school activities to accidents, births, deaths, and marriages. Given that these crime experiences are described by scribes who are members of the community but not necessarily those who experienced the crime directly, most of the accounts are not firsthand. In this sense, it is an emic approach that utilizes how members inside a faith-based community “talk” about crime (Pytlarz & Bowden, 2019, p. 140). This article also adopts an etic approach because the actual experiences are organized into specific categories that reflect long-held crime types used by such agencies as the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) and within criminological and criminal justice research (Duffee et al., 2000; Bachman & Schutt, 2023).<sup>3</sup>

There is very little literature about the crime experiences of the Amish. Generally, it is believed that the Amish are infrequent victims of crime. For example, there is scant mention of Amish as crime victims in prominent treatises on Amish society by Hostetler (1993), Hurst and McConnell (2010), and Kraybill et al. (2013). An article written by Wittmer (1971) over a half century ago discussed what he called “cultural violence” against the Amish. His examples included harassment of Amish when they drive with their horse and buggy on public roads, noting that the “harassments become particularly intense during time of war” (p. 152). The incidents described by Wittmer ranged from name-calling to lighting firecrackers in front of horses and throwing eggs and stones at buggies. He also mentioned a story from a well-known newspaper, *The Budget* (which also includes reports by scribes from numerous Amish communities), of homes being burglarized and

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<sup>3</sup> *Emic* and *etic* are two terms often used to describe differing approaches to the study of culture and society, and of subcultures and other special groups within (Bachman & Schutt, 2023). An emic approach attempts to advance understanding using an insider's view of beliefs, values, and behaviors. An etic approach attempts to advance understanding of these same beliefs, values, and behaviors by applying theories and conceptual frameworks that are external to the group under study.

Amish people being robbed in their homes because it is known that the “Amishman pays his bills in cash” (p. 152).

Most prominent in the literature on crime and the Amish is the work of Byers and associates (Byers et al., 1999; Byers & Crider, 2002; Byers, 2008). Byers (2008, p. 233) notes:

Some argue that the Amish are rarely the victims of crime (Kraybill, 1989), but such a position is difficult to establish for at least two reasons. When one examines the larger population, victimization occurs at different rates for different social and demographic groups of people....A second reason such a stance is difficult to establish is the simple fact that so much Amish victimization is unknown.

In this quote, Byers (2008) makes two important points. The first is to raise the question that even if all crimes experienced by the Amish were known, with whom would the crime rate be compared—the general U.S. population, the rural U.S. population only, or perhaps some other subgroup within U.S. society? The second is that for most crimes in U.S. society, especially property crimes and even many violent crimes, victims simply do not report to the police what happened to them (Duffee et al., 2000; Ceccato, 2016). Nonreporting is referred to as the “dark figure” of crime (Godfrey, 2019, p 48). In many cases, both Amish and non-Amish people assume that not much can be done by the police and the criminal justice system, and unless insurance recovery requires submission of a report, the police might never know about the crime. Hence, statistical comparisons, even if possible, would be problematic to interpret.

Byers (2008) reprises the observations of Wittmer (1971) and then focuses much of his commentary on victimization from harassment of the Amish by others (non-Amish persons) in the area. He describes a 1979 case that made national news in the Jay-Adams County settlement, which is a Swiss Amish group. Four non-Amish youth in a red pickup truck passed a buggy and threw pieces of broken clay field tiles at it. (Swiss buggies are open.) One piece hit the head of the family’s eight-month-old baby girl, a baby who was being held in the arms of her mother. She died from its impact. To again quote Byers (p. 236): “When arrested the youth stated that they were out to get some ‘Clapes’—a derogatory term for the Amish in the area.” The youth were given suspended sentences and fines to help with the medical expenses of the family whose child had died. Part of the reason for the sentences rested with the impassioned pleas for leniency, given the forgiveness expressed toward the perpetrators by the victim’s family. Subsequently, the incident was portrayed in a made-for-television movie, *A Stoning in Fulham County* (Elikann, 1988).

A series of victimizations showing the same modus operandi (M.O.) occurred in 1996 in the large northern Indiana settlement of Elkhart-LaGrange. Byers (2008) describes over a dozen known cases of Amish men robbed in the same way. The men were riding their bicycles when the robbers would drive up behind them, hit them with a club or tire iron, and then rob them of their cash, especially on the days they were paid. Byers also reports that the Amish in the area, including

the victims themselves, were reluctant to report their crime experiences and did not want to participate in prosecution of the assailants once they were apprehended.<sup>4</sup>

In another article, Byers and Crider (2002) focused on claping as a form of hate crime. Claping can be verbal (such as insults and slurs), acts of vandalism, and actual assaults, all of which the authors described as direct predatory crime. They provided a long list of claping examples, such as injuring or killing Amish-owned animals, spinning tires to throw dirt and gravel at a buggy they passed on the road, throwing firecrackers or water balloons at the Amish, tipping over outhouses, damaging mailboxes, throwing bags of flour at buggies and their occupants, and many more. The researchers interviewed eight participants in claping activities, ascertaining the motivations for their actions and the context in which they engaged in various claping activities. The interviewees were all in their late teens and early twenties. Motivations were found to be typical for how these sorts of behaviors are rationalized (i.e., neutralized) by the harassers (Sykes & Matza, 1957; Byers et al., 1999; Lilly et al., 2015, pp. 107–109).

Pioneered by Sykes and Matza (1957), techniques of neutralization refer to a diversity of ways that offenders rationalize their behaviors as essentially harmless and resulting in little chance of being caught, arrested, and punished. In the Byers and Crider (2002) research, the excuses for harassment included these: the Amish are different; the Amish are inferior to the non-Amish; claping is something to do out of boredom; the Amish are deserving victims because of the way they look and the way they live; the Amish are easy targets in part because they live in open-country areas where the chance of being observed while in the act of claping is low; and there is little likelihood of being caught because of a belief that the Amish would never report such incidents to the police. Finally, Byers and Crider noted that there was a certain “acceptance” of claping among the non-Amish in the area where the participants in the study lived.

The aim of this article is to advance the study of Amish and crime by collecting and organizing types of crime experiences based on descriptions by scribes from various settlements who report on community events in the monthly periodical *The Diary*. Two hundred forty incidents were identified in scribe reports over the 13-year period from January 2010 through December 2022, including both direct victimizations (such as vandalism, burglary, etc.) and incidents that occurred on or near the properties of Amish persons but in which they themselves were not the victims. The rationale for including such incidents—the search for an escaped convict who may be hiding on Amish property or a drug bust at a non-Amish neighbor’s residence, for example—is that they can be as fear-provoking and worrisome for the community as a direct victimization. This article

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<sup>4</sup> I was a keynote speaker at an annual Indiana D.A.R.E. Officers’ Association meeting about a year after these robberies. The meeting was held at a conference center in South Bend, Indiana, which is to the immediate west of the Elkhart-LaGrange settlement. While there, I spoke with one of the arresting officers in the case described by Byers (2008), which involved staking out the area along the county road where the robberies were occurring. From the officer’s point of view, the robbers knew that many of the Amish working in R.V. factories were paid in cash on payday and frequently rode bicycles home on the flat terrain of the area when the weather was good, making them easy targets. The robbers persisted in committing their offenses mostly on the same stretch of road, which made it easy for the police to stake out the area and eventually arrest the culprits.

excludes accidents associated with buggies and motor vehicles, which most often are examples of negligence, unless it is obvious from the narrative provided by the scribe that it is a crime experience.

## Methodology

*The Diary of the Old Order Churches* is the full name of *The Diary*. It was founded in 1968, and 2023 marked its 55th volume. The subtitle in *The Diary*'s masthead states that it is a "contribution of the church for the church by the church in the interest of collecting and preserving its historical virtues." Scribes from various Amish communities (of which there are about 615 in the United States at the time of writing) submit news about weddings, births, deaths, accidents, weather, visitors, and other significant occurrences, including occasional stories about crimes that happened directly to the Amish or occurred in the area where Amish families live. Each issue contains numerous submissions; the July 2023 issue, for example, includes 386 scribe reports. There may be more than one scribe submission from larger Amish communities, but that is relatively infrequent. Scribes might not submit a community report every month, but over the course of a year, almost all settlements are represented in *Diary* submissions.

As mentioned, the narratives are the words of the scribes, and in this sense, using them to describe the crime experiences of the Amish is a type of emic approach (Bachman & Schutt, 2023). Here is an example of a crime experience from the October 2022 edition of *The Diary*, submitted by a scribe from central Pennsylvania:

Someone with large fingers...has been checking some mailboxes lately as we got notified from our bank that check came through suspicious....It was altered with another zero which made the check \$315.00 more than what it should've been. Just found out this morning another check was taken from the mailbox. That one was for \$100. So another zero was added which made it \$1,000.

To maintain the anonymity of scribes in this article, their names are not included nor is the specific settlement identified. In addition, the volume, issue, and page numbers locating the narrative in *The Diary* are not used, which adds another layer of confidentiality. Settlement locations are described in broad geographic terms, not by the name of the county or other indicator of place. Phrases such as "[name of family]" or "[name of road]" substitute for the actual names. Sometimes a first name is included in the narrative to aid readability, but it is a pseudonym, not the original name. For men, the pseudonyms are "Marcus" or "Wayne," for women, they are "Ruth" or "Ruby," and for children and teenagers, they are "Richard" or "Adam" and "Polly" or "Elaine."

*The Diary* also includes a section on accidents, many of which are about buggies on public roads. However, it is difficult to discern from most of the reports in this section which can be considered crime experiences, even when the motor vehicle driver was known to be under the

influence of alcohol or some other substance. Therefore, a decision was made to restrict crime experience narratives to those found in the section of *The Diary* titled “Community Notes.”

The etic (Bachman & Schutt, 2023) dimension of this paper is the imposition of traditional crime categories—such as larceny, robbery, burglary, fraud, and arson—onto the narratives. These categories are used by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020) in the production of their annual report on crime titled the *Uniform Crime Report* (UCR). The UCR is based on monthly reports submitted by over 18,000 police agencies throughout the country. UCR offenses are divided into two types. Part I offenses are used to calculate rates of crime, and rates for seven of the 11 Part I crime types can be found in UCR reports extending back many decades. These are known as index crimes and are used to describe temporal patterns in crime. Part II offenses include a potpourri of other crimes, ranging from weapons violations to sex and drug offenses.

Crime narratives from *The Diary* were transcribed, beginning with the January 2010 issue and continuing through the December 2022 issue. Altogether, 240 crime narratives were found through scanning thousands of scribe reports.<sup>5</sup> There was no attempt to correct spelling and grammar, or to improve the clarity of the sentences in the narratives used in this article. The narrative quotations appear exactly as they were reported except for the substitution of place name indicators and the use of pseudonyms for the names of persons and businesses, as mentioned above.

There is no way of knowing how many crime experiences were unreported by scribes. Perhaps some scribes believe that these experiences are not appropriate for a community report, or that the victims would be displeased to have their experiences described in *The Diary*.

Crime experiences were categorized into the following types: burglary/attempted burglary, larceny/attempted larceny, robbery/attempted robbery, harassment/incivility, vandalism, trespassing, scams/attempted scams, arson, kidnapping/attempted kidnapping, and assault.<sup>6</sup> Two other kinds of crime experiences were included that are not found in the FBI definitions. Both are more indirect experiences—that is, Amish persons were not victims per se—but they are incidents that provoke apprehension about safety and security. The first type was police action in the area, and the second type was crime in the area or close by. The former mostly involved police chases and searches for escapees from prison that occurred along roads or fields and wooded areas where the Amish live, and the latter largely involved crimes occurring to non-Amish neighbors who, for the most part, lived next to or nearby an Amish family.

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<sup>5</sup> Assuming an average of 275 scribe reports per month, for the 13-year period, over 42,000 reports were quickly read to identify the 240 crime narratives. However, it would be invalid to calculate a crime rate from these numbers.

<sup>6</sup> There were two narratives about Amish persons as homicide victims, other than scribe commentaries about the Linda Stoltzfoos case. It was decided not to include the narratives about either case, because even with pseudonyms, the victims are readily identifiable, and in the case of one of the homicides, the details in one of the narratives are rather gruesome.

## Findings

### *Burglary/Attempted Burglary*

Burglary is the unlawful entry into a house or other structure, usually for the purposes of a theft. A burglary does not necessarily require force; it is simply an unlawful entry. Attempted burglary is a burglary that was not completed (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). Often, an attempted burglary is one that was detected by someone, or the burglar was deterred in some other way, perhaps by setting off an alarm or even a barking dog.

The most frequent type of crime experience mentioned by scribes in *The Diary* was a burglary/attempted burglary. In total, there were 46 narratives about burglaries, some of which, like the following from a settlement in Tennessee, described a series of burglaries in the same community on the same day (Table 1):

Now this last Sunday while the [name of family] were in the funeral at [name of family where the visitation took place], they broke into 4 of their houses. Breaking the glass in the door. They made a big mess dumping drawers, pulling mattresses on the floor for whatever they could find, including letters and a large amount of money, they took a couple hundred dollars and 3 high powered rifles at [name of family].

This narrative describes two attractive targets for burglaries—money and guns used for hunting. It also suggests that the burglars were aware of the times when the Amish would be away from their dwellings for the visitation. Similarly, burglars taking advantage of Amish attending Sunday service to commit home break-ins is an oft-reported narrative in *The Diary*. Here, a scribe reports from a settlement in west-central Michigan.

We've had an intruder in the community who has been watching for people who are gone to church. Several families come home to find things quite upside down and misplaced and also some things missing that were of value. One lady's silverware chest was found empty with the lid torn off and in a roadside ditch. This happened on three different Sundays in at least five homes. Sad when they take this route to seek for earthly treasures.

However, it is not only Amish homes that are burglarized. The following is a scribe from central Pennsylvania reporting on a series of break-ins at Amish-owned businesses.

A few weeks ago robbers were in the [name of the area]. They took \$100 at the [Name] Bulk Food Store. Taking out a screen going in the window. They also broke in down the road from there at the [Name] Shop and took 4 pairs boots and shoes. A while earlier they also broke in at [Name] Salvage Store. They took all the lighters at her store.

Then, there is this somewhat unusual case from southcentral Ohio.

A few weeks ago the [name of family] were almost at home from church when they notice the driver of an oncoming truck was strange, nervous actions, which especially caught Marcus's eye. Then he saw shop tools in the truck bed and said, "There goes my radial arm saw!" So, yes, when they arrived home and his cabinet shop was checked out, they found about \$3500.00 worth of missing tools stolen. Since then, when he was going somewhere with a driver through a local small town, and he noticed this same truck...so they stopped and Marcus talked to him about it. Both stayed cool, but I don't think he admitted to it and Marcus told him he'd pay him to bring them back, but they are probably gone already.

These narratives show that the routine activities (Andresen & Ha, 2017, pp. 536–539) of the Amish create many opportunities for victimization, such as burglaries. Previously, Byers and Crider, (2002) had made the same observation. Routine activities theory in criminology posits that three elements are necessary for a crime to occur: a motivated offender, an attractive target, and a lack of guardianship. Hence, individuals motivated to commit acts of burglary are attracted to appealing targets found in Amish homes, such as cash, guns, and various items, and to tools and machinery found at Amish businesses. Amish routines, ranging from visitations at the home of a deceased person to attendance at Sunday services, usually involve all members of the family, hence creating a lack of guardianship.

**Table 1**  
*Crime Narratives by Type of Crime Experience*

Type of crime experience	<i>f</i>	%
Burglary/attempted burglary	46	19.17
Larceny/attempted larceny	43	17.92
Robbery/attempted robbery	14	5.83
Harassment/incivility	23	9.58
Vandalism	9	3.75
Trespassing	8	3.33
Scams/attempted scams	33	13.75
Arson	2	0.83
Kidnapping/attempted kidnapping	6	2.50
Assault	2	0.83
Police actions in the area	29	12.08
Close-by crime incidents	25	10.42
Total	240	100.00



### *Larceny/Attempted Larceny*

“Robbery” is often used in everyday parlance to describe a larceny. For example, if a thief steals a bicycle from someone’s front yard, they are likely to exclaim, “I’ve been robbed.” In fact, the theft or attempted theft of property from the yard is a larceny, whereas if force is used against a person to steal something, it is classified as a robbery/attempted robbery. If there is entry into a house, barn, or other type of structure for the purposes of stealing, it is considered a burglary/attempted burglary (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020).<sup>7</sup>

There were nearly as many descriptions of larceny/attempted larceny by scribes as there were burglaries/attempted burglaries. Some larcenies were related to agricultural commodities, such as in the following example from southern Ohio, in which the scribe was the victim.

Ginseng season opens Sept 1 which is a nice and profitable hobby for oldies like me....Five or six years ago I planted a nice patch of ginseng and nursed along all this time and it takes that long and longer to grow a good root. The other day I took a walk out in the woods to check on my patch and it was dug up and stolen. I was aware that it could happen as ginseng poachers are quite common in this area....Some people call it green gold. The last few years dry root has sold for six to eight hundred dollars per pound. It takes about 3½ lbs to make one pound of dry root and you can walk quite a while climbing hills and hollers to find that amount.

This crime experience also shows the combination of motivated offender, attractive target, and lack of guardianship that together describe many crime incidents, especially property crime. However, some property that is stolen or vandalized may not have much of a monetary value to the offender but has social or cultural value to the victim and is more costly, psychologically speaking, than a sum of money. Here are two examples of larceny associated with rural living and Amish lifestyles. The first is from one of the newer settlements in Colorado, and the second is from central Missouri and includes the loss of a circle letter.

We had a rather strange and I guess I could say unnerving thief in our community Thursday. This guy stops out on the road walks in toward the house. I had a few shed antlers laying beside the house and he just picks them up and takes off. Later we found out he pulled into Marcus’s driveway, gets out and starts loading up his shed antlers. Marcus’s wife stepped out of the house and hollered at him so he jumps in the truck and takes off down to Wayne’s and pulls in and starts loading

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<sup>7</sup> When I lectured on crime for an introduction to rural sociology course, I would distinguish the three types of crime in the following way: “I am in my garden with my hoe. I put it down to go inside for a drink of water. When I return, the hoe is gone. That is a larceny. If I put that same hoe in my garage, and someone opens the garage door or breaks it down, and steals the hoe, that is a burglary. If I am in my garden with my hoe and someone sticks a gun in my back and threatens me with the words, “Your hoe or your life,” that is a robbery.

up there. Last report I heard he got caught by the law. But kind of made her a little nervous as she was home by herself and the two little ones. Just thankful that's all he was after.

It caused some excitement in the neighborhood one day when a vehicle stopped at several different mailboxes and helped himself to the contents, before the mailman went. Several checks and a circle letter were among the stolen pieces. The bank was called and stopped payment on the checks but I have not heard if more has been seen or heard of the guy or what happened to the stolen mail.

Circle letters are described by Kraybill et al. (2013, pp. 237–238) as written communication among a group of persons at different addresses who share something in common. The first person writes about a subject and then sends it to the second person in the circle. The second person writes a letter (or adds to the first one) and sends both letters to a third person, and so on, until the accumulated letters are returned to the first person in the circle. The first person then takes out her/his letter and adds a new one, sending it back to the second person in the circle, who then takes out her/his letter and substitutes another. Circle letter groups form around a commonality—for example, they share the same birthday, are former students from the same school, parents of twins, parents of a child with a disability, parents who have lost a child, or they have experienced the death of a spouse. Some groups have exchanged correspondence for many years.

### ***Robbery/Attempted Robbery***

Robbery is the theft of something with the threat or actual use of force (Federal Bureau of Investigation, 2020). Fourteen incidents of robbery/attempted robbery were described by scribes in *The Diary*. Here is one example, from a central Kentucky settlement.

Marcus and Ruth were on their way home after dark. They were on [name of road] when a truck coming from behind swerved right in front of them, hitting the horse a little. The man quickly came back to them, wanting their money, putting Marcus under gun-point. Marcus took his time and got one bill at a time out of his jacket pocket, knowing he had a hundred-dollar bill, he thought he slipped that one under his arm, but gave him the rest, then the guy turned to Ruth, wanting hers. She waved her hands and told him she didn't have any. Then, Marcus found that he had saved a \$20 bill instead of \$100 bill that he thought.

Even though Marcus was, to use a colloquialism, “a cool customer,” he did not execute his strategy successfully, and his actions to save a few dollars may have resulted in more serious consequences. Here is a second narrative of a robbery/attempted robbery. Like the first, it illustrates how a motivated offender takes advantage of a lack of guardianship, using a weapon and threats to acquire cash from an Amish person. This one is from northern Indiana. The victim

was obviously startled, disbelieving that an armed robbery could happen in a rural setting, and at an auction barn nonetheless.

Marcus and a sale barn worker had a scare one Wed. morn after sale day on Tues. Marcus came back to start clean up, was still there, he unhitched the horse and put him in the barn, then went out to buggy to get his coffee mug, when a man met him at buggy with a ski mask on and gun in hand. He said, "Empty your wallet." Marcus thought...probably someone just pulling a prank off. He said 3 times, "Are you serious?" The man said, "Do what I told you and you won't get hurt. I meant what I said." Marcus saw it's his move. He took all his money plus a check and threw it on the ground. The man said now step back 3 steps. He took all the cash but left the check and took off. They have some leads but haven't gotten him yet. Scary!

### *Harassment/Incivility*

Harassment/incivility are not defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation. However, harassment was examined in depth by Byers and associates (Byers et al., 1999; Byers & Crider, 2002; Byers, 2008), and there are theories in criminology that rely on civility (i.e., civic community theory; Lee, 2008) and its opposite, incivility (i.e., broken windows theory; Millington, 2017), to explain both rates of crime and people's perceptions of safety and security. Civic community theory examines how crime and feelings of safety vary based on positive characteristics of localities, such as percentage of home ownership, church membership, and other similar factors. Statistically speaking, crime and fear are negatively correlated with indicators of civility. Broken windows theory examines how crime and perceptions of safety vary based on negative physical characteristics of localities, such as trash that is never picked up and graffiti on the sides of buildings.

There were 23 narratives about harassment/incivility. The following example is of a drive-by shooting that occurred in a settlement in west Tennessee.

The community was sort of shaken when word came around that a vehicle was driving through the Amish settlement on [name of road] without lights on the evening of the 16th. They passed by several homes that they shot at. When they passed Marcus's, they shot and hit the block-built house close to a window, where a girl was standing inside. Thankfully nobody was hurt. I don't know that they got caught.

Often with a drive-by shooting, the target is a window, not an individual, but there is always the possibility of injury to a person. Further, as the scribe's narrative of the crime experience states, the incident affected everyone, as word about what happened circulated through the community. That is also the case with the following, which is more an example of incivility, not harassment. This one comes from a scribe in central New York.

We were very nearly hit by two wild Mennonites last night, driving extremely fast and dangerous, which has been happening more lately. Even drag racing side by side around curves, also at a high rate of speed, with complete disregard for other people's safety. We could smell rubber a while after they'd passed us. They flew up [name of road], I would guess in excess of 100 mph, in an area where a local butcher's beefs cows are roaming in the cornfields. Kept listening for an awful boom. Marcus's were also nearly hit...a little earlier. They nearly skidded off the road around [name of road]'s curves, leaving burnt rubber hanging in the air....These people must've been drunk or drugged.

Even though there can be doubts about the scribe's identification of the individuals speeding on the roads as "wild Mennonites," this narrative does illustrate that the incivility was the product of behaviors by local individuals, not people from outside the community. As is also the case with many examples of incivility, such as drag racing, it is a series of incidents over a period of time that provokes anxiety within citizens who live in the area.

### *Vandalism*

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020) defines vandalism as the willful and malicious destruction of property. Vandalism has long been identified as a crime that is frequently committed in rural localities, and one that can be considered a type of violence against property and can also be quite fear-provoking (Donnermeyer & Phillips, 1984; Ceccato, 2016). Sometimes, distinguishing an incident of vandalism from harassment and incivility is difficult, and many times an incident can be both. The examples here serve to establish its distinctiveness.

There were nine descriptions of vandalism, as indicated in Table 1. The following comes from a settlement in southern Missouri.

Then, in the 1st part of October we had someone do some vandalism on the logging equipment we use at work. They put bolts in the oil pans of 2 skidders. One of the engines tried to eat a bolt, with very bad results! So, we ended up replacing that engine, and then tore the other one apart, found the bolts, and got them out before they did any damage. We have no idea who did it, so I'm just trying to forgive whoever it was...we did put locks on all the machines now. So, like I said, it was kind of hectic around here, but God is still in control. We still have so much to be thankful for. We received lots of letters and also quite a few sunshine boxes, which we all enjoyed.

In this example, one can readily see how faith can help a victim think beyond a crime experience, even as preventative measures are undertaken. Locks were put on machines. As well, the community and perhaps friends and extended family living in other settlements (the narrative

does not specify) helped by sending “sunshine boxes.” Even though the contents of those boxes were not described, one can imagine they contained items like homemade cookies, letters of support and encouragement, a favorite poem, and other things to cheer up the recipient. The next incident concerns vandalism, not to property, but to an animal.

One night about a month ago, a family in the community experienced a loss without having knowledge of the fact right away. Their sheep was tied at the end of the lane in sight of the building to keep the weeds trimmed. Along came two night prowlers...they would have some fun and put the entire scene on Facebook, where everyone could enjoy their sour humor. One young fellow got out of the truck to video the whole scene. The other mischievous fellow backed up the truck and drove forward. As the story goes, they passed over the ram a 2nd time to put him out of his misery....Because these young boys put their misdeed on Facebook, they only told on themselves. The Human Society and police came to the owner’s home to inform them of the circumstances and to check into things a bit, then he intended to arrest the 2 boys at school.

### ***Trespassing***

The FBI (2020) does not have a definition for trespassing, although it does for vagrancy. Vagrancy is defined as the violation of a law that requires persons not to remain on streets or in other public places and not to travel from place to place without a means of support. Many of the trespassing incidents narrated by scribes are of vagrants and can also be considered forms of harassment/incivility, larceny, or vandalism. In rural areas, the common image of trespassing is illegal hunting, but none of the eight descriptions found in *The Diary* were about hunters being where they were not supposed to be. Two that illustrate trespassing on Amish property are about someone sleeping in a barn (in central Wisconsin) and someone using part of a Amish-owned farm field for growing marijuana (in western New York).

Marcus’s had a scare lately when they came into the barn one morning and saw a man leave the barn a few minutes after they had entered. After gathering his wits together, he followed the guy from a distance and when he had walked down the road a ways he yelled at him so the guy turned around right away and walked back toward Marcus. After quite a few questions they met up with each other and was easily detected that drinking was a problem. It was a cold morning and he had gone in the barn to warm up and fell asleep thus he didn’t make his escape before they entered the barn. The guy then asked for a pair of socks which were brought to him and once received were put on his hands instead of his feet so maybe he still wasn’t quite sober but he claimed he wants to put them on his feet once his hands are warm.

My husband was chopping corn, by hand, of our open pollinated corn patch when he came to this beautiful green plant in near bloom with lavender long buds. The unusualness of it caused him to stop in his tracks. Well, upon looking around, he found 5 more plants of the same kind, all in the same area, along the west side. So the plants would get some sunshine through the corn. Near the east side there is [Name] Creek and some trees. The plants are destroyed and the marijuana owner didn't get to harvest his crop. These kind of weeds get your attention and actually have some good health benefits, so I have heard, but I have also seen what it can do to good people and it is not so pretty.

### *Scams/Attempted Scams*

There were 33 narratives about scams/attempted scams written by scribes in *The Diary*. The majority were of three types: (a) a customer paying for products at an Amish business with counterfeit money or an Amish person receiving counterfeit money back as change for a purchase by the Amish person at a store; (b) a scam artist visiting Amish homes with a so-called hard luck story, asking for assistance; and (c) receipt of a bad check at an Amish business. Before presenting the cases, it should be noted that the increase in Amish businesses and individuals adopting the proper technology to accept credit cards should result in fewer scams/attempted scams involving counterfeit cash or the passing of bad checks. However, this does not seem to be the case.

All three types of scams would fit under the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (2020) definition of fraud: the purposive use of a falsehood to acquire money or property. Counterfeiting is also described as an offense in the FBI reports. However, in the narratives from *The Diary*, the counterfeit money is used to scam or fool an Amish person as a potential victim. It is not known if the offenders using the fake money printed it themselves. Sometimes the victim did not know immediately about the receipt of a counterfeit bill, such as in the following brief account from a settlement in south-central Ohio:

A man went to make a deposit in bank. Then they found a counterfeit \$50 bill. Now Marcus is showing around the \$50 bill. He had no idea who gave it to him.

This victim seems to have considered his loss a unique experience, and perhaps found it humorous. Here is another narrative from the same settlement in Ohio several years later. This one was an attempted scam. It is followed by the narrative of a successful set of scams reported by a scribe in northern Missouri.

Here recently a truck came in at a couple of Amish places and one of the guys said he's got 3 buggies for sale, 2 top buggies & 1 open buggy and he would let them go for \$350, but he's got his truck where they are loaded on, parked somewhere broke down and he needs the money right away so he can get it fixed. Before he bring them out. The one Amish said well I would be interested but I will only give

you \$150 right now and when you bring the buggies I will give you the rest, but he said no. I need all of it right away, but when Marcus wouldn't budge he said well I gotta go and left. It is doubtful that he even had any buggies.

It will soon be a year that a man in a pickup stopped in here one morning with kind of a sob story. He was from Montana (he said) and didn't have any work and was out of money. He said he was on his way to PA to his brother, who had promised him a job. On his way he had some bad luck—the transmission in his truck gave out and he needed money to go on. He was very embarrassed to be asking for money, but it was his only way to get on and he made a person feel bad, if you wouldn't give him some. Later we found out that he was at a few other homes in the community and apparently he got plenty of money to get to PA. We also heard lately that other communities had a visitor going from PA to Montana having about the same kind of problems. We guess it to be the same man. We also heard he was through this community again lately, but went to different homes. I guess if he comes to your house you'll have to decide whether to give him some or not.

Here is an example of the successful passing of a bad check that appears to be one of a series of incidents in a southern Wisconsin community. Like the narratives about a hard luck story, this example is also about a group of travelers who attempt their scams from community to community.

The term daylight robbery took on a new meaning several weeks ago when a number of our bulk food, bent and dent and fabric shops, bakery, cheese house, lost merchandise to some strangers traveling thru. One man and three women in a minivan visited these stores, carried out huge amounts and paid all with one check, asking if they could make out the check for \$20 more as they need cash. Most then gave \$20. At Marcus and Ruth's they took four quilts and some smaller items. None of the checks were any good. The police were alerted and they will help but they can do nothing unless the store owners further press charges. This is a warning to be on your guard folks and you have the right to demand cash for such large amounts if it is someone you don't trust.

### ***Arson***

There were only two accounts of arson submitted to *The Diary*. As defined by the Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020), arson is the purposive burning or attempted burning of a structure, such as a house, business, or in the case of the Amish, a barn or shop. Here are both narratives. The first is from a settlement in Ontario, and the second is from east-central Wisconsin. The case in the second narrative would fit within the framework of routine activities theory—doors were not locked, a routine of a first (and presumably, second) sleep, and the possibility that a motivated offender selected the place because the house was dark.

The most shocking news for the community was the night two barns beside each other, not even a half a mile apart, burned to the ground. First, Wayne and Ruby's barn was burning around 11:00. It was already a wild blaze when they awoke, firefighters and neighbors fought the fire. It was hopeless and a number of little goats were lost in the fire. While fighting Wayne and Ruby's fire, Marcus and Ruth's barn went up in flames. Some immediately left Wayne and Ruby's fire to go to Marcus and Ruth's but they also lost their barn. Now, the wind was not blowing toward Marcus and Ruth's barn from Wayne and Ruby's fire. Local newspapers state that the fires are suspicious and if anyone saw anything out of the ordinary, they are to contact the police department. So yes, one wonders.

We are going on with very thankful hearts as the evening of February 4th, someone got in my house between the hour of 9:00 and 10:30 and had a real fire started in my kitchen behind the cook stove on the hardwood floor. The two boys came home from skating and saw the flame coming in washhouse by my wall, so they opened my door and the house was going full of smoke and a fire. The floor is all that really burned, but thank God for his protection hand. All would have been in bed in their 1st sleep, so what could have been didn't happen. Now considering some things, someone must have been watching this dark house every evening. The door's usually locked and now will be for sure with also using the dead bolts. Hopefully, we will find out who the person was before it gets done when was intended to happen were ten people here in their first sleep.

### ***Kidnapping/Attempted Kidnapping***

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020) does not provide a definition of kidnapping/attempted kidnapping, but there are many federal and state laws about the abduction of individuals related to such motives as arguments over the custody of children between divorced parents, human trafficking (such as the sex trade), and others. Six cases of kidnapping/attempted kidnapping were reported by scribes in *The Diary*, three of which appear below. The first is from Indiana and can be interpreted as an attempted kidnapping that, if successful, might have ended in a homicide. The second incident, from Ohio, is also an attempted kidnapping that shows how fear-provoking such an incident can be once news of it goes around the settlement. The third incident is from New York and resulted in the arrest of the two kidnapers.

One of Marcus and Ruth's boys, 11 or 12, was out by the mailbox when a car stopped and said the man in the field needs a rope, as there was an Amish man working in a field close by. He got a rope and this person said, "It'll" take him there, but as he opened the car door, he didn't think something looked right as he had a dress on and didn't talk loud. Right then a driver he knew came along and



said he'll go with him and the car took off. A higher power was there and oh how thankful.

The talk is going around that there are some kidnappers living in the town of [name of town]. And it sounds like Adam, age 10, had gone with his dad...to make a phone call but had gone on down to his uncle's place and on coming back a lady came after him. I don't have direct details but a very shaken up boy met his dad and the lady was leaving when Adam came out. So, it put a scare in some of the school children that they would rather go through fields to go to school. And it is a warning to all children to not trust any strangers even if they sound sweet and offer candy.

Yes this area had a shock in the evening of August 13th while the Marcus and Ruth family was milking, someone stopped at their vegetable stand so Polly, 12 years old, and Elaine, now 7 years old, went to wait on them. It was a man and a woman, they had a dog in the back seat of the car and tried to get the girls to pet it. The way I got it Elaine went in then Polly reached in to get her out but the man pushed her in and got in the back seat himself, closed the door and left. None of Marcus and Ruth family saw anything of it, but Wayne who runs the sawmill a little ways down the road, just saw the last of it but not enough to see what they got. He thought maybe they took something from the stand. The girls didn't come back to the barn as soon as expected, so they went to see where they had gone. They were not to be found, so someone went for Marcus and Ruth reported it what appears might have happened. The kidnappers took them to their house in the [name of area], took them upstairs, and put chains on them. I don't want to write in here what all they did to them in a case like this many don't come back again. But the girls kept asking to go home and to go to church and soon to school. The natives also did a lot praying for the return of the girls, so in the evening of the 14th about 26 hours after they were taken, someone brought them back to a thankful family and many friends. The kidnappers took them out and dropped them off and the girls came back to a friendly person's house who brought them home. The praise be to God for their safe return....With the girls' information the law was able to arrest the couple the next day (Friday) that took the girls. More could be written, but I hope this is enough. This is something that won't soon be forgotten.

### ***Assault***

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (2020) list of definitions for crimes includes two for assault. The first is *aggravated assault*, which is defined as inflicting severe or aggravated bodily injury, usually involving the use of a weapon by the assailant. The definition is not clear on what constitutes serious or aggravated injury, however. The second is called *other assault* or *simple assault*, which is defined as verbal coercion without a weapon and without serious injury.

The first example is of aggravated assault of an Amish man walking on the beach in Mexico, where he was visiting a health clinic. The victim was from a community located in western Wisconsin. The second crime experience is a description of a drive-by shooting, which can also be considered a type of harassment. The incident occurred in northeast Ohio.

Marcus had a scary experience down there when he was going down to the ocean. I haven't heard how it all went for sure but he got knocked out by thieves, they gave him a blow with their fist in the back of his head/neck area and he fell down some steps. There was an Amish boy further down, a few Mexicans got their attention to come and help so they got him back up. I heard the doctor checked him out.

According to reports the [name of area] had a scare this month when Wayne was on his way home from [name of town] with horse and buggy. A car was parked along State Route [route number] just where he turned off onto Twp. Road [road number] to get home. The car followed him and at once a shot rang out with the bullet going through the high top part of his buggy. He was not hurt at the time, a lucky man. Later it was reported to the county sheriff, but it is unknown at this point who it could of been or any motive for it.

### ***Police Action in an Amish Area***

Concern about safety and security is certainly one consequence of a direct victimization, but it can also arise from indirect experiences. As Table 1 shows, there were 29 narratives about police actions that happened on Amish-owned property or along a public road that traverses an Amish settlement. Here is a sampling of three incidents. The first one is from central Pennsylvania and describes a police chase after a drug bust. The second one is a compilation of three narratives (by three different scribes) about the searches for escaped prisoners near and within an Amish settlement in northern New York. The third narrative is about a police chase in central Missouri and, similar to the first incident, some of the action occurred on farm fields owned by an Amish person in the community.

Marcus and Ruth had an unusual experience of having quite a few cop cars driving by one day and some sitting off and on the road for a while close by. The police were driving back & forth about all afternoon. Marcus and Ruth didn't know what was going on. Suddenly a small car (not police) came driving very fast. Drove in Wayne and Ruby's land and made a quick turn around and took off in the other direction. Soon a police car came by and stopped by the woods close to Wayne and Ruby's. A few police got out and were walking around looking for something like it looked. So finally Marcus walked down to find out what's what. Before he got there the police took off again. But he walked on down and discovered a small bag laying under the bushes. He didn't touch it but let it lay for about 2 days or so. He

finally talked to his work driver about it and one of the driver buddies came by and picked the package up & turned it to the police. It ended up being a bag of stolen jewelry. There had been a drug bust about 2–3 miles from there & guess someone didn't want to be caught and held for stealing yet too. Just a bit too close to home for Marcus and Ruth's and Wayne and Ruby's though I think.

Prisoners are on the loose! That what's on everyone lips in the past three weeks. One of the three prisons surrounding [name of town] is a maximum security facility that boasts a record of never having a convict escape....one prisoner is a former Navy Seal, so he had lots of survival training that allowed them to remain hidden in about a ten mile radius....They tried to locate them with choppers, but their detectors didn't work well with the heavy foliage in the woods....Both were serving life sentences for murder....The lady prison worker...helped sneak some tools in to them and was supposed to pick them up, but she got so nervous that she couldn't follow up and ended up in the emergency room with chest pain....One report said over 800 law enforcement personnel were on duty to find these two men. We see many trooper vehicles daily since we live here on the main road....Several days ago, they detected that something crossed the border line at a certain point, so off went about 15 border patrol cars. When they got there and searched the area with guns ready, they found a happy cow. The two escaped prisoners were caught...after three weeks on the loose. One was shot and killed, the other shot two days later but he survived.

We missed out on some excitement here in the neighborhood on May 4th when a vehicle went through here at a high rate of speed around midnight. The cop wasn't far behind with the siren going. It appears like the car lost control at the corner and made a turn and went over a steel post. Somehow it slipped through the fence and kept on going through the pasture of brother-in-law Wayne and Ruby's. Then it went through another fence and down a hill and came to a creek and stopped and fled the scene. The cops lost track of them at the corner, but knew they had to be in the area. They found the tracks and went after them, but only found a totaled sports car. Wayne and Ruby's were peacefully sleeping until a cop came in their driveway and started flashing around. They were later informed that the tracks led in their woods and warned not to answer any knocks. They got a wrecker out to remove the car yet that night, and one of the cops went back with him and when they came up the cop had 1 of the thieves and had him handcuffed and shackled.

### ***Close-by Crime Incidents***

The concept of vicarious victimization refers to a crime experience that is not direct but can still affect an individual. It may be a televised news story about a heinous crime thousands of miles

from where the viewer lives or an account of crime in the local newspaper. It may also be a description of a crime in an Amish settlement far from where some of the *Diary* subscribers live. All three accounts of close-by crime incidents included here involved homicides, with the first from central Wisconsin, the second from west-central Wisconsin, and the third from central Michigan.

A few weeks ago we had a scary thing happen in our community. Since this virus, the school children don't have school and they do their work via computers, etc. This one family who lived about a mile from us had at least four high school...boys who didn't have jobs, were home alone. The dad and mom working. The (22-year old) up and stabbed his stepbrother and the next boy run to stop him and he up and stabbed him too, killing both. The fourth one called the police. He tried to get away but they caught him close to [name of town].

There was another sad happening in our area when an elder couple was murdered by their grandson. They lived close to Marcus and Ruth and Wayne and Ruby. It seems to be money related issues. By my what a hard heart, to shoot one's grandfather who's sitting in his chair.

There were three more people arrested on January 18 in connection with the murder in [name of town] on November 25. One was the 20 year old son of the women that had been arrested earlier and his two 17 year old friends for helping hide evidence and helping after the fact. According to some locals, the man that actually did the murder lived about 1½ miles from our place! No wonder he knew this area to dump the body across the road from my place.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The 240 narratives collected from *The Diary* show that crime is not an infrequent experience for the Amish. Based on the notion of the “dark figure” of crime (Godfrey, 2019, p. 48)—that is, unreported crime—one might expect the actual number that could have been reported by scribes to exceed 500 cases, assuming that scribes decided to include news about all the crime experiences in their communities of which they had knowledge. Since it is likely, although there is no evidence for this claim, that some scribes decided not to include stories about crime in their community reports, the actual number is probably even higher than 500-plus.

Furthermore, as Byers (2008) also concluded, it is impossible to say with any certainty if the number of crime experiences is lower, about the same, or higher than the number in the general population. One suspects it is lower, but there are three reasons why this supposition may not be accurate. These reasons also point to suggestions to guide future research and a general discussion about the Amish and crime. First, few of the narratives mention if the crime experience was reported to the police. It is easy to jump to the conclusion that Amish people would be more

reluctant to contact the police than non-Amish people. Yet, it is a fact that a majority of crimes are never reported to law enforcement by the non-Amish, except when insurance is involved (generally, a police report is required in that situation) and when the crime is a homicide. Even sexual assault/rape is underreported, despite the increased awareness of girls' and women's experiences with harassment and actual assaults by males (Maier & Bergen, 2019). Underreporting of crime is one reason why victimization surveys were originally developed several decades ago—they allow victims to state—in a survey format—whether the crimes they experienced were reported to the police (Coleman & Moynihan, 1996). Just as victimization surveys provide an alternative to official police data, such as the Federal Bureau of Investigation's *Uniform Crime Report*, narratives in *The Diary* help with understanding the crimes experienced by the Amish, especially those that neither are reported to the police nor make headline news.

Only a few of *The Diary* reports about crime were directly experienced by the reporting scribe. The remainder were some form of hearsay about an incident experienced by someone else living in the community. Nonetheless, in reading *The Diary*, one often finds comments by scribes about the importance of accuracy in their submissions. It is a safe assumption, then, that the crime reports were written by scribes who exhibited the same concern for accuracy.

A second reason why it is not possible to definitely state if the number of Amish crime experiences is comparable to, fewer than, or more than the general population is that it is impossible to make statistically rigorous comparisons given the freedom local law enforcement agencies and their sworn personnel have to make decisions about what counts as a crime. This level of police discretion creates many forms of systematic bias, both with recording crime and with making arrests (Godfrey, 2019). There are issues of discrimination against minorities, which include issues about taking seriously reports of possible crimes by individuals perceived to be less important by the police based on various characteristics of the victim, from age and sex to income and occupation (Godfrey, 2019). Therefore, if an Amish victim does inform the police, would the call be taken more seriously because they are likely perceived by local police to have more credibility as members of a faith-based group, or less seriously because they are different in many ways from the rest of the people living in the area?

The third reason has to do with rural police agencies, which are generally less resourced than urban police (Weisheit et al., 2006). Both routine patrols and routine recordkeeping can be more challenging in small departments, further affecting the stability of calculating statistical rates and making precise comparisons with the general population. Further, since sheriffs are elected officials, political considerations may influence whether crimes against the Amish are recorded properly.

Despite the caution that these various factors suggest, some conclusions and recommendations can be made. The narratives of crime experiences written by scribes in *The Diary* show that crimes against the Amish are not infrequent and that they vary greatly, from burglary and larceny to harassment and, occasionally, robbery. One reason for including indirect crime experiences, such as nearby police actions or crimes committed against non-Amish neighbors, is simple. The Amish population is doubling every 20 to 21 years, and so is the number of settlements (Donnermeyer, 2021). There are now many new settlements in areas of Canada and the United States that have no

prior history of an Amish presence. Many of these new areas are places where the Amish can find bargains on land (Donnermeyer & Cooksey, 2010). To assume that these rural places have less crime than big cities would not be correct. Crimes such as violence against women and drug trafficking and misuse are rampant in many rural counties, especially those identified as being in persistent poverty (Benson et al., 2023; Donnermeyer, 2016; Donnermeyer, 2023), with depressed economies and cheaper land prices. Farm equipment and machinery (even those designed for horse farming) are more expensive than in the past and have become attractive targets. Amish-owned businesses bring in many non-Amish customers, a few of whom may find it tempting to return later for reasons unlawful after scouting out the place. As the Amish population and settlements continue to expand, so too will their vulnerability to crime grow, and so too will their experiences with police actions and crimes occurring to their non-Amish neighbors increase.

With these observations, then, what are the recommendations for future scholarship about the Amish and crime? First, there are a host of criminological theories that can be helpful for framing Amish crime experiences, theories that should be applied to future studies of Amish crime experiences, both for the design of research and for the interpretation of the data. Byers and colleagues (2002) used routine activities theory, which is one of many criminological theories that examine crime and place (Lilly et al., 2015). There are other theories about place, such as crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED), situational crime prevention, social disorganization theory, and civic community theory. Both CPTED and situational crime prevention are generally considered micro theories; that is, they focus on why crime may occur disproportionately at particular spots and not others (Lilly et al., 2015). Social disorganization has a broader focus, dealing with the characteristics of areas as large as counties (i.e., unemployment rates, percentage of a population with single-parent households, etc.) and variations on crime. Civic community theory (Lee, 2008) likewise considers characteristics of larger places and variations in crime. Unique about civic community theory is that it was specifically developed for the purpose of explaining crime in rural localities (Donnermeyer, 2019). In addition to criminological theories of place, there are theories such as techniques of neutralization that can help with understanding the motivations of offenders who victimize the Amish (Byers et al., 1999; Sykes & Matza, 1957).

A second avenue for scholarship is to continue to collect narratives about the crime experiences of the Amish, not only from *The Diary*, but from other Amish periodicals as well, such as *The Budget* and *Die Botschaft*. Two hundred forty cases may seem like a lot, but more narratives are needed. Further, narratives should be collected for a longer period of time, perhaps going back to earlier years of *The Diary* and certainly in more recent issues. Perhaps crime experiences have changed over time. Eventually, qualitative data analysis techniques, such as content analysis, can be employed to find themes that represent the commonality of Amish crime experiences and of temporal differences. Further, as difficult and challenging as it may be to do, one-on-one conversations with Amish victims would allow researchers to gain insights that provide more depth to the study of crime and the Amish than can be found in scribes' narratives. Plus, there is the value of talking to police in agencies where the Amish are located. Key informant interviews with

law enforcement officers from agencies whose jurisdictions include Amish settlements would also advance what is known about the crime experiences of the Amish.

Third, what kinds of crime prevention strategies work best for the protection of property at Amish residences and for Amish adults and children in more public places? Whether the residence is a house only, a farm with various buildings in addition to the homestead, or a house where a shop is located nearby, nearly all are on larger plots of land than typically found in the more crowded neighborhoods of suburbs and cities. What does the ecology of these larger acreages suggest for understanding patterns of Amish victimization and for design of crime prevention practices suited to the situation of the Amish?

Even though more research on the crime experiences of the Amish is needed, it is time to develop new educational materials about crime risk and prevention that are customized for Amish communities (including schools) and families, as have been developed for buggy safety (Jepsen & Calip, 2009). Beneficial would be educational materials on crime prevention specifically focused on farms; sawmills; furniture-making shops and stores, and other Amish businesses; and nonfarm residences whose ecology is generally much larger than the close proximity of dwellings in suburban and urban places.

In the 1980s, a series of *Home and Farm Security* educational brochures were developed by what was then known as the National Rural Crime Prevention Center (NRCPC) at Ohio State University. Perhaps it is time to revise these brochures to make them more culturally appropriate for Anabaptist groups, especially those who rely on buggy transportation, such as the Amish. One example of an NRCPC publication that could be updated and rewritten for a Plain Anabaptist audience focuses on “yard and premise security” (Donnermeyer, 1985). It is based on the principles of the theory of crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED; Atlas, 2013). CPTED is concerned with physical and visual cues about property line boundaries and visibility that improves guardianship, one of the three elements that underpin routine activities theory (Andresen & Ha, 2017).

Amish people need criminal justice services from time to time, and positive, proactive communication would help facilitate these interactions. A brief educational publication that presents an overview of the Amish, including their history and their religious beliefs and practices, would be helpful for the police and other criminal justice service providers, particularly in areas where an Amish presence is new. In turn, Amish people need to understand the role of the police, prosecutors, and courts. Discussion among Amish leaders and others about how to effectively communicate with local law enforcement, prosecutors, and judges, both in older communities and in newly established settlements, would be beneficial.

A final recommendation for future scholarship is the study of Amish victimization by other Amish people. Hardly anywhere in the scholarly literature is there an accounting of Amish-on-Amish crimes, with the exception of Byers (2008). There are occasional stories in the media about Amish persons committing crimes such as murder, child sexual abuse, and drug trafficking. Also, there are cases of violence against Amish women and children by husbands and fathers, Ponzi/investment schemes organized by Amish men who victimize other Amish people, and

incidents of vandalism against the property of another member in the community (and of non-Amish neighbors) by Amish teenagers during *Rumspringa* (Byers, 2008).

To study some specific kinds of Amish-on-Amish victimizations, the researcher could start with a collection of news stories to gather understanding of the commonalities in the perpetrators' M.O.s, which could point the way toward other kinds of research, such as ethnographic interviews. The researcher would want to be careful to glean only the facts and avoid the sensationalism in these stories in order to create a level-headed and scientific accounting of the offenses.

Crime will continue to be experienced by the Amish and to potentially impact their lifestyle. As one scribe from Lancaster County wrote after Linda Stoltzfoos's murder several years ago:

We are also able to have our children go to school regularly. Here in our neighborhood an adult walks with them daily, as a precaution to kidnappers. The Linda Stoltzfoos kidnapping over five months ago left a mark on our freedom to take walks by ourselves. We needed the reminder.

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