

MAINTENANCE OF THE OLD ORDER AMISH TRADITION

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by

Beth A. Kurtzweig

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Master of Science of Education

Youngstown State University, 1982

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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consciously Master of Science in Education

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YOUNGSTOWN STATE UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

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For over 200 years the Old Order Amish have consciously attempted to maintain an ideology which includes a preference for a plain, non-worldly life style. Their attempts have proven to be extremely successful. In this study, the author has examined the stages of development through which a member of the Old Order Amish passes as well as the important events which mark the transition from one stage to another. This was done in order to determine contributing elements which result in the successful maintenance of the Old Order Amish culture. Through examination of the stages of development it has been shown that the stability of traditions through consistent childrearing practices has been the major element in the maintenance of this culture.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

I have always enjoyed reading about other people and their cultures, and the Amish have always been one group which has intrigued me. My interest in this group has developed not only from reading materials concerning it, but also from visiting several Amish communities located very close to my home. However, it was not until I became involved in a Teacher Corps project that I really began to understand the various aspects of an ethnic group such as the Amish. During my involvement in this project, I was exposed to the concept of education that is multicultural. The focus of education that is multicultural is "an awareness and appreciation of cultural differences. An affirmation of those differences and the existence of a pluralistic American society is the goal of such an education."<sup>1</sup> According to Schwartz (1977), education that is multicultural is an education which:

1. requires and provides competence in the mainstream culture
2. demands and fosters mutual appreciation and understanding of each subculture by every other culture

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<sup>1</sup>Proposal for Teacher Corps Continuation Grant (Program '78), Submitted to the U.S. Department of Education, p. 75.



- 3. guarantees to each subculture the freedom to practice its culture and socialize its children in that culture, and
- 4. guarantees to each subculture the rights to share in economic and political reward system.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to exposure to the concept of multicultural education, I have been given the opportunity to study various ethnic groups and to work with members of such groups. I have become more knowledgeable as well as more sensitive to some of the crucial elements which make each ethnic group unique. This has led me to begin to question who the Amish people are, where they come from, and what the future holds for them. My exposure to the concept of education that is multicultural has given me a desire to seek answers to some of the questions I have had concerning the Old Order Amish.

For over 200 years the Old Order Amish in the Western Hemisphere have consciously attempted to maintain an ideology which includes the preference for a plain, non-worldly lifestyle. Due to the success of their endeavor the Old Order Amish have become the subject of much discussion. Various newspapers, magazines, and journal articles have been written about the Amish. Entire books have also been dedicated to the discussion of these people.

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<sup>2</sup>Henrietta Schwartz, "Anthropology and Administration: A Multicultural Graduate Program for Education Decision Makers" paper delivered at National Institute on Multicultural Teacher Education Standards, Washington, D.C., p. 2.

The Old Order Amish are a visible group especially in the states of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana. While driving through Amish country, one notices the lack of electrical lines running to the houses. Buggies can be seen almost everywhere, and if by chance one meets a member of the Amish community one will not only see a different manner of dress, but may also hear Pennsylvania Dutch as well as English being spoken.

The Amish are a European Protestant religious group which developed from the Mennonites between 1693 and 1697. The group was named for Jacob Ammann, a Swiss Mennonite leader. They came to America with the Mennonites in large numbers after 1740, but these two groups differ in dress and manner of worship. The Amish not only have communities in Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana, but also can be found in Canada and in various Central and South American countries.

Approximately 200 years have passed from the time the Amish first arrived in America. During these 200 years a large number of people from a variety of countries have immigrated to the United States. Upon their arrival, many began to assimilate, discarding their language and culture and accepting the American way; however, the Amish did not choose to assimilate. The Amish attempted to maintain their language as well as their culture and have been successful to a far greater extent than most ethnic groups.

This may be due to the desire of other ethnic groups to assimilate or to their unsuccessful efforts to avoid assimilation. The question of how the Amish have been able to maintain their culture is still unanswered.

Through examining the Old Order Amish, one will gain better insight into the aspects of Amish life which have contributed to the maintenance of their culture. One will also gain a better understanding of and hopefully an appreciation for the Amish and their culture. This information can be used to discover ways in which other groups may retain or regain aspects of their respective cultures should they desire to do so.

The focus of this study is the Old Order Amish. It should be noted that the Amish originated from the Mennonites and that there are other sects of Amish, e.g. New Order Amish and Beachy Amish. However, due to availability of material and accessibility to a given Amish community, I have chosen to deal specifically with the Old Order Amish in Ohio and Pennsylvania.

## CHAPTER II

## REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Most of the available information dealing with the Old Order Amish in the United States is descriptive. Examples of such works include Our Amish Neighbors by William I. Schreiber and Amish Life by John A. Hostetler. These sources as well as most others discuss cultural aspects typical of the Old Order Amish of the past and present. Cultural aspects are extremely important when one is attempting to gain an understanding of these people. But equally important is the manner in which many aspects of the Amish culture have been maintained.

Through examination of the maintenance process one can begin to understand how a group is able to resist change to the extent and the degree displayed by the Old Order Amish. The maintenance process used by the Amish can then be applied to other groups which desire to maintain or regain aspects of their cultural heritage, e.g. language,

papers or with certain "English" newspapers. One of the best known Amish newspapers is "The Budget".

John A. Hostetler, Amish Society (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1963), pp. 354-55

## CHAPTER III

## METHODS AND MATERIALS

After completion of a literature search for this study the information gathered was reviewed. A clear pattern of cross referencing appears in the literature. The most frequently cited author is John A. Hostetler, a Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at Temple University and a long-time student of Amish affairs.<sup>3</sup> Hostetler appears to be one of the most highly respected authors of descriptive literature concerning the Old Order Amish. The value of Hostetler's work is recognized by many scholars including those who teach in the Sociology and Anthropology Department at Youngstown State University.

Hostetler and the majority of other people who have studied and/or written about the Old Order Amish are "English", a term used by the Amish to refer to the non-Amish people. The only Amish writers whose works are cited are those who write in cooperation with Amish newspapers or with certain "English" newspapers. One of the best known Amish newspaper is "The Budget".

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<sup>3</sup>John A. Hostetler, Amish Society (Baltimore: The John Hopkins Press, 1963), pp. 358-59.

"The Budget" is a weekly newspaper published in Sugarcreek, Ohio. It is the most widely read of the weekly Amish newspapers and is published by George Smith, a non-Amish small town editor who has been with the paper since 1924. This newspaper was established in 1890 and circulates in more than 30 states in North and Central America. "The Budget" has a staff of 12 and is made up of stories written by some 300 Amish correspondents who usually send handwritten letters to the newspaper.<sup>4</sup>

A typical correspondent's report in "The Budget" begins with the date it was written and a report of the weather at the time. The writer then describes the breaking news of the day -- who was born, who died, who was visiting whom, where church services were held, and similar topics.<sup>5</sup> Because the Amish have a great concern for health, issues also include pieces concerning who is ill, who was kicked by a horse, and who fell down the cellar steps.<sup>6</sup> At times economic problems such as scarcity of land are also mentioned.

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<sup>4</sup>"Popular Amish Weekly Avoids Sensationalism and Comics," Youngstown Vindicator, April 24, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 6.

<sup>6</sup>John A. Hostetler, Amish Life (Scottsdale, Pa.: Herald Press, 1959), p. 12.



According to Smith, the readers of "The Budget" love the old-fashioned format. This paper is significant in the lives of the Amish for throughout the year it keeps family and community ties strong by reporting ordinary events as well as special happenings.<sup>7</sup>

The circulation of "The Budget" is steadily increasing. Even though both the Amish and the Mennonites continue to move south to Mexico, Paraguay, and other countries, they continue to keep in touch with their relatives through maintaining their subscriptions to "The Budget".

The Amish are also recognized in "The Globe", a newspaper which serves the community of New Wilmington, Pennsylvania, and the surrounding area. This weekly newspaper contains a column entitled "Amish Notes". This column includes the same type of information as is included in "The Budget". A typical excerpt is cited below. Errors in grammar and punctuation are reproduced to maintain the style of writing in its original form.

Has been a wet, rainy week, so it kept the men folks out of their fields, so they had time to go to frolics and the raisin. The barn of Chris E Hostetler, burned to the ground by spontaneous combustion, caused by over heated shredded corn fodder, on April 20, and is already about rebuild. He is the oldest son of Eli C Hostetlers of here. They got 20 head of dairy cows out but still 18 other animal including a

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<sup>7</sup>Ibid., p. 6.



registered bull were destroyed by the fire. A corn husker and a wagon also burned.

Our last reports from Youngstown hospital, is a slight improvement which was a few days ago. But their son Mose, is still going through a lot of pains with his back, is a place, reports are 6" by 8"; and pains almost unbearable wish them both a speedy recovery. Is always the last thing my mind is on in eve before I go to sleep, and the first in the morn.

My husband Jacob D Mast Sr. seems to stay the same in bed all day except about 2 hours in eve, when he is put on his wheel chair, but seems he can't stand it longer than 2 hours, our callers this week were Chris E Bylers, and 3 children, Eli L Bylers, and 2 children, and Sarah J Mast, on Sun, on Mon, Tue, the visiting nurse Jackie Swartz, then on Fri. Eli J Masts of Fayette, and Eli Y Byler, and 2<sup>8</sup> daughters Barbara, and Mary were here to call.

Outside of contributions to various newspapers, it is very rare for an Amish person to share personal information which is available to the "English". In fact, the only significant contact the Amish have with the "English" is in business activities since the Amish tend to keep to themselves. One of the few exceptions to the separatist ideology is Jonas Troyer, a thirty-five year old Amish preacher. Troyer was paraphrased as saying he "wouldn't want the neighbors to see his discussing the church with an outsider."<sup>9</sup> Although he did not want to violate the Amish exclusiveness and privacy, Troyer belived that if anything was to be written about the

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<sup>8</sup> Martha Mast, "Amish Notes," The Globe, May 6, 1981, p. 6.

<sup>9</sup> Bob Trebilcock and Jim Flick, "The Amish Struggle," Ohio, (May, 1981), p. 36.

Amish it should be correct.<sup>10</sup> I, too, believe the best means of gaining accurate information is from primary sources. It would seem that individuals who are directly involved in and are subjects of whatever is being studied should have the most accurate information. However, very few Amish, especially those of the Old Order, are receptive to sharing any information about their culture with persons outside of their community.

Due to the lack of access to primary sources, it has been necessary for me to rely predominately on information gathered and recorded by other people who have had access to primary sources of information. Therefore, the majority of information included in this study has been obtained through the reading of articles and books by "English" authors who have studied about, worked with and/or lived with the Old Order Amish.

The methods of interviewing and direct observation have also been used to gain information for this study. An interview was conducted with a woman who has had an opportunity to interact with various members of the Old Order Amish in Ohio and Pennsylvania. The woman interviewed has been invited into several Amish homes and corresponds quite frequently with an Amish family who has just moved to an Amish community in Canada. In fact, she

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<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 36.

has received invitations to visit the family. In spite of this, she still has not been able to acquire some of the vital information that other authors and researchers have reported. This is not to say that her information is not worthy of noting. In fact, it has helped me to form an overall understanding of and an appreciation for the Old Order Amish.

Direct observation was made by visiting an Amish community in New Wilmington, Pennsylvania. Through observing and talking to members of an Amish community, one begins to feel the warmth of the Amish people. One is also exposed to some of the external characteristics of this ethnic group which may be unfamiliar to the reader.

A method of organization for the presentation of acquired information must be determined. There are several methods or vehicles through which one can organize cultural information, e.g. viewing a culture through a religious perspective. For the purpose of this study, the Old Order Amish will be analyzed through the use of the stages of childhood. Over the past ten to fifteen years there has been an increased interest in the study of child-rearing practices as well as in the area of childhood itself. This interest is focused on the stages of development through which a child progresses. Prior to the present time, children were not viewed as a vital subject for cultural analysis. They were included in the analysis predominantly

when there was an interest in determining how children were depicted in art work. If games and toys were to be included in the study, reference to children would also be considered. This has changed and presently the stages of childhood are being used as vehicles to gain information about cultural and historical groups.

Phillipe Aires is one of several researchers and authors who have studied and written extensively on childhood. In his book, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life, Aires deals specifically with the development of childhood throughout history. The method of cultural analysis through stages of childhood permits the study of the Old Order Amish by focusing on the acculturation of children within the culture. It is the author's expectation that this analysis will lead to greater insight regarding the elements which have contributed to the maintenance of the traditions of this particular ethnic group.

<sup>11</sup>William C. Lindholm, "The Amish Case: A Struggle for Control of Values," Controversies in Education, ed. by Dwight W. Allen and Jeffrey V. Reicht (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1974), p. 486.

## CHAPTER IV

## ANALYSIS OF THE MAINTENANCE OF PROCEDURE

Before beginning an analysis of the maintenance procedure in the Old Order Amish society, it is necessary to become familiar with the history of the Amish people. The history of this ethnic group began during the Protestant Reformation. In Switzerland, Huldreich Zwingli started a reformation movement similar to that of Martin Luther. The former faction became known as the Anabaptist Movement; in 1525 the Mennonites became a part of the Anabaptist segment of the Protestant Reformation.<sup>11</sup>

The Mennonites were one of several diverse groups which shared a general set of beliefs: the separation of church and state; believer's baptism rather than infant baptism; strict discipline by excommunication of those who broke the moral law; and the doctrine of passive resistance, which includes refusal to take an oath, hold office, or bear arms. Mennonites also believed in immediate inspiration, and they attempted to practice in their daily lives the beliefs and customs of Christianity

<sup>12</sup>Elmer Lewis Smith, *The Amish People* (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), p. 15.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 110.

<sup>11</sup>William C. Lindholm, "The Amish Case: A Struggle for Control of Values," *Controversies in Education*, ed. by Dwight W. Allen and Jeffery C. Hecht (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1974), p. 488.

as they understood them to be prescribed in the Scriptures.<sup>12</sup> Mennonites attempted to extend the work of the reformers by literal interpretations of the Scriptures. They were soon plagued by internal dissension over church policy and doctrine.<sup>13</sup> Jacob Ammann, a young Swiss Mennonite bishop who represented the "epitome of conservatism",<sup>14</sup> viewed the Mennonites as becoming extremely lax in their discipline. A controversy arose concerning the interpretation of Meidung (shunning), "the strictness with which the brotherhood should deal with careless or obdurate members."<sup>15</sup> Meidung occurs when an Amish member breaks his or her baptismal vow. The member is then excommunicated and placed under a ban or shunned. Other members are not permitted to eat at the same table or transact business with the individual. The practice of the ban or shunning is based on the Scripture passage in 1 Corinthians 5:11.

But now I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolator, or a railer, or a

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<sup>12</sup>Elmer Lewis Smith, The Amish People (New York: Exposition Press, 1958), p. 18.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid., p. 110.

<sup>14</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 5.

<sup>15</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 353.



drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no<sup>16</sup>  
not to eat.

In the Mennonite church an individual who is excommunicated is banned from sharing at the communion table. But because this was not sufficient for Jacob Ammann, he decided to extend the shunning of excommunicated members to include exclusion from social and domestic relations until the sinner repented.<sup>17</sup> In both Mennonite and Amish practices the church expects the ban to encourage the backslider to repent and return to a position of fellowship among the believers.

As the result of the reaction of Ammann concerning Meidung, a split from the Mennonites occurred, and Ammann's followers eventually became known as the Amish. As time passed, internal divisions of the Amish have resulted from polarization over strict and moderate interpretations of Meidung. In fact, newly formed or more liberalized groups have emerged from the Old Order Amish almost every generation. In spite of the fact that these groups carry different names, they generally conform to a type of "new" order.

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<sup>16</sup>1 Corinthians 5:11.

<sup>17</sup>John A. Hostetler, "Old Order Amish Survival," The Mennonite Quarterly Review, (1977), p. 353.



When the congregations have associated with the Mennonites they have generally been called "Amish Mennonites". When they have attempted to remain Amish, they have taken on the name of their bishop as in Beachy Amish or Bunkholder Amish. Affiliations which are neither Beachy nor Mennonite are frequently recognized as "New Order". Revivalist or fundamentalist offshoots tend to lose their Anabaptist identity in such names as "Mellter Fellowship" or "Messiah Fellowship". 18

The Amish sects which exist throughout our country have many similarities and differences. The focus of this study, however, will be limited to the Old Order Amish.

#### Old World vs. New World

The survival patterns of the Amish were adapted to two broad geographical regions: the Old World and the New World. The conditions under which the Amish lived in Europe were very different from those under which they lived during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in America. These differences ranged from religious intolerance to adequate resources for developing a true community life. In America the Amish developed solid communities and a uniqueness which they had never realized in Europe.<sup>19</sup>

During the 1500's the Amish suffered severe persecution for their stand against their incorporation into the state churches of Europe. Then in the sixteenth

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid., p. 353.

and seventeenth centuries they were forced to move from both Switzerland and Germany to other countries, including Russia, where their skills as farmers were desperately needed.<sup>20</sup> Others settled in Bavaria, the Palatinate, Lorraine, Alsace and Holland.

Those who remained in Europe could do so only because they were given protection by noblemen on whose estates they had proven themselves to be industrious and profitable tenants. Nevertheless, they lived with constant persecution prior to their leaving for America. Those Amish who remained in Europe were somewhat excluded from village life; therefore, most of them became tenants on large estates. This provided them with the opportunity to experiment with new farming methods. However, due to their status as heretics in the eyes of the established state religion, they had to work harder and produce more than did non-Amish tenants. This in turn provided them with incentives to adapt new methods.<sup>21</sup> As a result, many of the descendents of the Amish became superior farm managers and today are viewed as "one of the best available sources of information on the farming life of 16th century Germany."<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>20</sup>Warren A. Johnson, "Conservation in Amish Agriculture," *Science*, 198 (October, 1977), 373.

<sup>21</sup>Hostetler, "Survival," p. 353.

<sup>22</sup>Ibid., p. 357.

While in Europe, the Amish did not live in compact settlements. Due to the scarcity of land, the Amish were not able to form communities, and families who fled from authorities either rented or purchased property wherever they were granted asylum. Because of this, the Amish family became an isolated social unit. Communication between Amish families was extremely difficult due to geographic distance. Their worship, which took place in their own farm houses, was held monthly or semimonthly as it is today. However, due to the dispersion of the families, only those who lived within a reasonable distance could attend services. Under such conditions the scattered Amish families associated more with local non-Amish persons than among themselves. As a result, the endogamous marriage pattern changed as structural associations with the non-Amish families increased, and the distinct cultural traits were lost among the European Amish before the advent of the present century.<sup>23</sup>

While many Amish decided to remain in Europe, others chose to emigrate to America, predominantly between 1736 and 1780 and again between 1815 and 1840. When the Amish arrived in the New World, they found conditions favorable for both growth and development. Land was available in unlimited quantities, and they lived adjacent to each other

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<sup>23</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

on family farms in order to maintain relatively self-sufficient and closely knit communities. The Amish developed a community in America which was unlike anything they had experienced in Europe. It was the first time they had sufficient land and were able to live together as well as retain and reinforce their practices in areas of work, discipline, and matrimony. Thus, under the conditions in America, the Amish developed an integrated community and could develop and maintain its identity. In fact, Hostetler stated in 1959, "If the Amish had remained in Europe, they would not have survived as a cultural group."<sup>24</sup>

#### Amish in the United States

The number of Amish who immigrated to America is not definitely known.

A reasonable estimate of the Amish population in America in 1900 is around 8000. In 1905, the total Amish population in America was represented in 43 districts. In 1977 there were 483 districts. The group has grown over tenfold in 70 years. The growth is represented exclusively by new births.<sup>25</sup>

The rationale for this statement stems from the fact that there have been no immigrations since before 1900 and only a trickle of converts.

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<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., p. 353.

At the present time there are approximately 80,000 Amish living in 122 settlements in 20 states in the United States, in the Canadian Province of Ontario, and in several small settlements in Southern and Central America, such as Honduras and Paraguay.<sup>26</sup> "Seventy-five percent of the population is concentrated in three states -- Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Indiana in that order."<sup>27</sup> Wadena, Minnesota, is the northern most settlement; the southern most settlement is in Paraguay; and the western most is Hutchinson, Kansas. The oldest continuously occupied settlement is in Pennsylvania, where the Amish began settling as immigrants from Switzerland.<sup>28</sup>

In 1970 it was reported that the rate of natural increase was 3.02 percent for the Amish. About every 23 years they double their population. Due to defections this rate may not always be realized, but it corresponds quite well with the number of church districts reported annually. "Lancaster, Pennsylvania, for instance, had one district in 1840; the settlement grew to six districts in 1900 and to 60 in 1977."<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 356.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., p. 352.

The table below provides a distribution and an approximate population of the Old Order Amish in 1961. Although the data are outdated, they are included since current statistics are unobtainable. However, these data provide a general idea of areas of concentration of Amish communities throughout the United States

Old Order Amish, 1961<sup>30</sup>

	As Reported in 1962 "Mennonite Yearbook"	Estimate of Members for Missing Data	Total OOA	
District Members				
Ohio	80	6,808	52	6,860
Pennsylvania	39	4,889	--	4,889
Indiana	57	3,027	1,250	4,277
Iowa	11	794	--	794
Illinois	10	779	--	779
Missouri	9	274	160	434
Ontario	8	401	45	446
Kansas	5	177	100	277
Delaware	5	282	51	333
Michigan	5	166	90	256
New York	4	161	130	291
Maryland	3	221	80	301
Wisconsin	3	--	140	140
Virginia	2	131	--	131
Oklahoma	2	52	20	72
Arkansas	2	12	30	42
Tennessee	1	66	--	66
Kentucky	1	18	--	18
Florida	1	--	20	20
Georgia		--	--	--
Totals	268	18,258	2,168	22,426

<sup>30</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 79.



Stages and Events in Amish Life

The Amish family is a very strong social unit and is notable for its stability. An average Amish family consists of seven children, and it is through the rearing of the children that the Old Order Amish culture has been perpetuated. Homes are truly effective teaching agencies, and the meaning of hard work and cooperation is learned early in life.<sup>31</sup> Through analysis of the stages of childhood in the Amish culture one will better understand some of the aspects of Old Order Amish life which have contributed to the maintenance of their culture. In addition, this information may be used to discover ways in which other groups may retain or regain aspects of their respective cultures should they desire to do so.

Each individual, regardless of cultural or ethnic background, passes through developmental stages. In the Amish culture an individual's life consists of five stages. They include infancy, childhood, adolescence, adulthood, and old age. In order for an individual to pass from one stage to another certain events must take place. These events or milestones which mark the exit from one stage and the entrance into another are transitional in nature. This means that one stage need not terminate prior to the beginning of the next. In fact, it suggests that one stage

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<sup>31</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 12.



flows into the next but is marked by an essential event.

The first or infancy stage begins at the time of birth and lasts until the infant has been toilet trained. Upon successful toilet training the infant enters the childhood stage. This stage lasts until the child enters school. It is at this time that the child is considered as having entered the adolescent stage, a stage in which he or she will remain until the time of baptism. Once baptism has taken place, the individual is considered an adult. Thus, the individual has entered that stage of adulthood. The milestone between the adulthood stage and the old age stage is slightly different from those between the other stages. The transition from one stage to another up until this point is dependent upon the occurrence of a specific event which the individual has experienced or accomplished, e.g. toilet training. However, this is not the case in the transition from adulthood to old age. Instead one must recognize the involvement of another individual, usually the eldest married son. When the son has the ability to take the full responsibility of caring for the family and his parents are ready to retire, the father gives the son the position of head of the family. It is at this point that the parents enter the old age stage, the stage in which they will remain until they die.

For the purpose of this study, the aforementioned stages of development are used as a vehicle to gain a better understanding of Old Order Amish. At the same time various cultural aspects will be examined in an attempt to discover a reason for the success of the Old Order Amish in maintaining their culture. The cultural elements to be considered include dress, language, schooling, sex roles, religion, courtship and marriage practices, and respect for the elderly.

### Dress

The Amish have retained dress styles which were common in the communities in Europe during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Gradual changes in dress have taken place among the Amish and have resulted in a variety in dress between regions. In spite of these changes the Amish have not adopted the styles and fashions of American society.

In the infancy stage both Amish boys and girls wear little dresses and bonnets. They wear this dress until they are toilet trained. It is only at this point that the children start to acquire sexual identity and begin wearing the typical sex role adornments. The children are now seen as miniature replicas of their parents.

Amish boys and men wear essentially the same garb. The only difference is the size of the clothing. They wear

blue, black, or grey work clothes. Their Sunday suits consist of trousers and coats without lapels and are either black or blue. Hooks and eyes are used instead of buttons, and these distinguish the men's clothing from modern styles. Undergarments, childrens' dresses, and trousers have button closings and the "broad-full" or "barn-door" flap instead of a vertical or zippered opening. The broad-full trousers, which look very much like sailor pants, are homemade as are many of the Amish garments.<sup>32</sup>

Since belts are prohibited in Amish communities, cloth suspenders are used. The Amish tolerate rubber in overshoes and galoshes but for some unknown reason rubber suspenders are forbidden.<sup>33</sup>

The summer attire for boys and men often includes sleeveless black vests and store-purchased white and blue shirts with collars. One can recognize a homemade shirt by its lack of a collar, its greater length, and its sewed-up front. Another forbidden article of clothing is the necktie. "The men wear a silver or a nickle pocket watch on a cloth or leather band -- their only extravagance; wrist watches and other jewelry are simply not seen."<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>32</sup>Ibid., p. 28.

<sup>33</sup>William I. Schreiber, Our Amish Neighbors (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1962), p. 61.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid., p. 61.

Amish boys and men wear their hair in a Dutch boy style trimmed by the bowl method. A beard is required of all male members of the church at the time of baptism and, if possible, side burns must be grown at the time of marriage. Men must also shave their upper and lower lips for mustaches are taboo. Depending on the ruling of their particular congregation, they may also be required to shave their cheeks.<sup>35</sup>

Young girls have long hair braided and twisted into a bun. As soon as the girls are baptized, they cease braiding their hair. As women, they begin wearing their hair parted in the middle, then brushed back and rolled in a knot on the back of the head.

All women, even infants, wear what is called a Kapp, a head cap. According to the Ordnung, the rules of the church, women must never appear without their heads covered; in the home this may be a simple piece of cloth. Girls from about age twelve to marriage wear a black cap for Sunday dress and a white one at home. However, after marriage a white cap is always worn.<sup>36</sup> During the Sunday meetings many women wear prayer caps with two ribbons which

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<sup>35</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-62.

<sup>36</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 136.

may be tied under the chin. Young girls and women may also wear black bonnets for outer protection.<sup>37</sup>

Amish girls and women wear solid color dresses whose styles in cut, length, and numbers of pleats have been determined by the district. They also wear an apron, white for district meetings and the same color as the dress for weekdays. The Sunday apron is a more formal part of the culture. Its upper half begins with a point in the middle of the back, ascends in a V-shape over the shoulders, is tucked into the high neckline of the dress, and falls doubled across the chest into the band of the lower apron. Straight pins are used to hold the full-length lower portion of the apron in place. Small children often wear an apron which is a full-dress style, extending from the neck to the ankle and forearm, but open in the back with the upper parts closed with four buttons. The women's dresses are either closed with clasps or simple straight pins rather than buttons for buttoned closings are used only on young children's garments.<sup>38</sup>

While buttoned shoes were always worn by the Amish women in the past, this is no longer the case. Since buttoned shoes have disappeared from the manufacturers' inventories and are no longer available, women were

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<sup>37</sup>Schreiber, pp. 63-64.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., pp. 63-64.

forced to find a substitute style. Women now wear black oxfords with medium size heels. The shoes are a good example of a forced adaptation by the Amish.<sup>39</sup>

### Language

Language acquisition is another important element in the development of an individual. Prior to the age of two, the Amish children have had the opportunity to hear at least three languages spoken: English, Pennsylvania Dutch, and High German. However, it is during the childhood stage that children are actually taught the languages. The Pennsylvania Dutch dialect is taught to the children by their parents for use within their homes as well as throughout their community. When the children are old enough to begin attending school, it is essential that they learn to speak English. The English language is used specifically for communication when the Amish go into an "English" community. In other words, they use English when they go into town or talk with a non-Dutch speaking person. The third language Amish children are taught is High German. This language is used solely for worship including Bible reading, preaching, praying, and singing hymns. Although the parents do teach their children a reading knowledge of the Bible, the

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<sup>39</sup>Schreiber, p. 67.



majority of the Amish know High German only passively and can barely converse in it.<sup>40</sup>

### Schooling

"Nothing pleases Amish parents quite as much as their children growing up to be honest, industrious and thrifty."<sup>41</sup> But in addition to this, parents want their children to acquire the basic skills of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Amish schools originated in response to the consolidation of one-room schools in the United States, and most of the 415 schools have been established since 1942.<sup>42</sup>

During the period of time when the population of the United States was predominantly rural and the major occupation was farming, the Amish did not really have any strong objections to public schooling. Some association with the English children was considered desirable. In the rural public schools the Amish child was treated as a member of the group rather than as a unique personality. The methods of teaching were by oral presentation and by adult example. These methods were consistent with the Amish culture, and as long as the schools were small and

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<sup>40</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 18.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

<sup>42</sup>Hostetler, "Survival," p. 358.



near their farm houses, the Amish were able to moderate their children's exposure to foreign values.

When school consolidation became a common phenomenon, the compatibility of conditions changed. The Amish began to struggle to retain the school on a one-to-one basis, adult to child, and as an entity of local control. These values were countered by an organizational approach which emphasized the central location of the schools, the qualification and training of the teacher, the number of years in school, and the content of education.<sup>43</sup> The Amish argued for a school year shorter than nine months and against compulsory attendance to the age of sixteen. In practice, the Amish youngster actually left school on the very day he or she reached the age of sixteen. This surely conflicted with the mainstream formal and institutionalized schooling values.<sup>44</sup>

It was in May, 1972, that Supreme Court Justice Warren E. Burger upheld the rights of the Amish to retain their school system. This meant that the states were restrained from forcing the young Amish to attend school beyond the elementary grades.<sup>45</sup> Furthermore, it was held that, "states undoubtedly have the responsibility of

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid., pp. 358-359.

<sup>44</sup> Schreiber, p. 54.

<sup>45</sup> Hostetler, "Survival," pp. 358-359.

improving the education of their citizens, but this interest must be measured against legitimate claims of the free exercise of religion."<sup>46</sup>

While the freedom to practice religious and schooling differences has been granted, some Amish children do attend public elementary schools. Some Amish men even serve on boards of education. The Amish contention for ending schooling after the elementary grades is that after completing the elementary grades their children should receive further and more practical learning in homemaking and farming at home rather than in a setting which emphasizes theoretical and technical learning. In the Amish view much of modern education is useless and unessential. They feel "the children do not need to know more than father and grandfather know."<sup>47</sup> One Amish man's feelings concerning higher education included the statement, "Education is all right for some people but not for our kind of people."<sup>48</sup> Another said, "Education does not build muscle like tilling the soil in the open field and sunshine."<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>46</sup>Lindholm, p. 488.

<sup>47</sup>Schreiber, pp. 54-55.

<sup>48</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 31.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 31.

It is essential that Amish children are knowledgeable in the areas of farming and homemaking, for their existence relies on it. However, if an Amish child did continue attending school in order to receive a higher education, this would be potentially dangerous to the maintenance of the Amish community.<sup>50</sup> The Amish believe that children attending modern high schools would be exposed to temptation. They would be exposed to large schools in which competitive athletic sports and activities not directly related to farming are required. Amish fathers are so opposed to high school education that some have actually gone to jail rather than subject their children to the secular influences of modern high schools.<sup>51</sup> And these parents are undoubtedly correct in sensing the potential danger of this exposure to their community life. It is likely that if the Amish children attended high school, they would be exposed to secular ways which would appear to be quite tempting. This in turn might lead young adults to begin to question some of the Amish ways, and some may decide to adapt in ways which are unacceptable Amish behaviors. If this should happen, many young Amish could be forced to leave the community due to inner struggle or to excommunication by the community. Therefore, "the

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<sup>50</sup>Ibid., p. 32

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., p. 32.

Amish induce their children to work from the earliest youth and try to prevent their being weaned away from home."<sup>52</sup> "As integral parts of the farm, Amish boys and girls must grow in harmony with the enterprise,"<sup>53</sup> and it is essential that the Amish at all costs preserve an agricultural way of life which includes traditional values. Thus, "Amish resistance to mainstream education was simply an act of self-preservation, to avoid the devastating influence of the state's technology and secular values on their ethnic, religious, and social patterns."<sup>54</sup>

Presently the Amish are quite comfortable with their schools and the training their children receive.<sup>55</sup> The Amish are taught "slowness of pace, peace, love of hard work, democratic cooperation, and shunning of competition and aggressiveness," and their socialization produces a personality type that is quite-mannered, introverted, friendly, and feeling.<sup>56</sup> The goals of Amish

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<sup>52</sup>Schreiber, p. 54.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 54.

<sup>54</sup>Lindholm, p. 488.

<sup>55</sup>Hostetler, "Survival," p. 359.

<sup>56</sup>Lindholm, p. 489.

schools are to produce Christian's who will be useful, God-fearing, and law-abiding citizens.<sup>57</sup>

In recent years, many Amish have established private schools, not because they wanted to teach religion, but to search for a way to prevent their young people from being absorbed by the secular and urban system. In the State of Pennsylvania a home-study plan has been devised for pupils who are not yet sixteen years old and have finished eighth grade. In Maryland, small country schools are established to maintain high educational standards. However, Ohio has not yet found a happy solution for the Amish school issue.<sup>58</sup>

In spite of the different schooling practices, the Amish are not ignorant of world events. Some Amish vote. However, except where there is a religious tenet at stake, they avoid going to court. Many read farm magazines and religious publications as well as subscribe to a local newspaper.<sup>59</sup>

#### Socialization

At about two years of age and until he or she has reached adolescence, restrictions and exacting disciplines

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 489.

<sup>58</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 32.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., p. 35.

are imposed upon the child. The child must be taught to respect parental authority as well as to respond properly. The child is considered to be sinless since he or she has not yet learned the difference between right and wrong. The parents have the duty as well as the responsibility of teaching the child the difference, so that the child will realize his or her moral inadequacy and choose the right way of the Old Order Amish religion.<sup>60</sup>

The Amish home is an effective socializing agent, directed at making each child a mature person in the Amish culture. Early in life the child learns that Amish are different from other people. Therefore the child must not only learn to understand how to play the role at home and in the Amish system, but also how to conduct himself or herself in relation to the norms of the "English" neighbors.<sup>61</sup>

The Amish child can not have clothes or toys like the "English" child. Instead, the Amish child must learn to imitate his or her parents, to take pride in the difference. Through the imitation of the parents, during this stage of childhood, the child is introduced to sex roles and what it means to be Amish.<sup>62</sup> These roles are

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<sup>60</sup>Hostetler, Society, pp. ;53-159.

<sup>61</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., p. 154.



then reinforced and clarified throughout adolescence, adulthood, and old age.

The Amish boy or girl is raised so carefully within the Amish family and community that he or she never feels secure outside it. The faces of many Amish boys and girls reflect pure intent, a sincere, honest, cordial, and well-bred disposition.<sup>63</sup>

This dispositional development is caused by the social and emotional environment in which Amish children are reared.

"The extraordinary love and discipline they get prepares them well for Amish womanhood and manhood."<sup>64</sup>

Teaching children to work and to accept responsibility is considered of utmost importance. As members of an Amish family the children begin to assist their parents when they are four to five years of age, and at five or six they are given some responsibility. It is at this time that girls and boys begin to be taught what is expected of them as members of the Amish people.

Boys are introduced to farming operations, and they inevitably seem to develop a keen interest in farming. They learn that as men they will make most of the decisions that eventually determine the standard of living of the family; they work in the fields, buy the land, purchase cattle, sell at the market, and often distribute the labor and chores among family members. "Overall authority tends

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<sup>63</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., p. 154.

to belong to the father, with varying degrees of modification and application in specific families."<sup>65</sup>

The extent to which the farmer assists his wife with household tasks is nominal. However, on special occasions he does help with butchering or the cooking of apple butter. He does not, however, assist in the routine preparation of food or the washing of dishes. At weddings men as well as women serve as cooks and table waiters.<sup>66</sup>

Girls, on the other hand, receive instruction in preparation for their duties as wives. These duties include "care of the children, cooking and cleaning, preparation of produce for marketing, making clothes for the family, preserving food, and gardening."<sup>67</sup> Adolescent girls and women often help with the harvest of crops, especially cornhusking. At times older girls may be called upon to manage a team of horses, plow the fields or cultivate the soil, but this is exceptional. Women are generally not asked to help with the heavier jobs in farming. However, it is the woman's responsibility to see that the posts, fences, grape arbors, and trees about the farm buildings are white-washed in the spring. The appearance of the area surrounding the house, including the lawn, is largely

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<sup>65</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>66</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>67</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

the responsibility of the wife, and she feels obligated to keep the outside as well as the inside of the house clean and neat in appearance.<sup>68</sup>

Gardening, except for the initial spading in the spring, is the sole responsibility of the wife. Processing vegetables and fruits in addition to dressing meat consumes a large part of the wife's time. Therefore, Amish women teach their daughters the art of gardening as well as preservation processes of the fruits and vegetables they have grown.

The extent of the woman's participation in decision making and cooperation between husband and wife prevails in differing degrees, depending somewhat on the make-up of the personalities and their adjustments.<sup>69</sup> Often the wife is consulted when family problems arise, and "she exercises her powers in rearing the children, but her husband's word is regarded as final in domestic matters."<sup>70</sup> This conforms to the Biblical standard, "The head of the woman is the man."<sup>71</sup> "God created woman as a helper for

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<sup>68</sup>Ibid., p. 150.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., p. 148.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>71</sup>Corinthians 11:3.

man, she is her husband's helper not his equal."<sup>72</sup> An Amish woman knows what is expected of her in the home, and her attitude is normally one of willing submission. This is not, however, to suggest that there are no exceptions. Some women do exert influence out of proportion to the usual pattern.<sup>73</sup>

The role of the Amish woman is well-defined, circumscribed by duties involving home and family. The man, as husband and father, is expected to assume the leadership role.<sup>74</sup> Both boys and girls learn this as well as the fact that the family is monogamous and patriarchal in nature. They also learn that divorce is not permitted, and it has been observed that desertion or separation is practically unknown among the Amish.<sup>75</sup>

#### Religion

Religion is one of the greatest values cherished by the Amish people and therefore is taught to all of the children by their families. The belief in a literal interpretation of the Bible provides the basis of

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<sup>72</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 149.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid., p. 149.

<sup>74</sup>Hostetler, Life. p. 14.

<sup>75</sup>Ibid., Life, p. 14.

integration.<sup>76</sup> According to Hostetler,

The highest value and ultimate goal for the Amish is eternal life . . . the Amish believe in supremacy of the Bible . . . the Amish believe they must be separate from the world in order to attain eternal life.<sup>77</sup>

Amish families live within a limited geographical area called a district, and each Amish Gemeinde or congregation contains fifteen to thirty families or about seventy-five baptized members. There is generally one bishop for each district with two or three assisting preachers and a deacon. As an Amish bishop, one has the responsibility of administering the discipline, but major group decisions must be endorsed by "the voice" (vote) of each member.<sup>78</sup> This church hierarchy is chosen by the Amish men from their own lay members by lot for life. The man who is selected receives no specialized training nor does he receive a salary. Each male is prepared for the possibility of being chosen, for one of the questions he is asked prior to being baptized into the church concerns his willingness to serve. Also, he must agree to do so before he is accepted into membership. Women are not considered because, according to Apostel Paul, women are to learn in

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<sup>76</sup>Johnson, "Energy Conservation in Amish Agriculture," p/ 374."

<sup>77</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 5.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

silence with all subjection.<sup>79</sup> In leadership activities the woman is not to "usurp authority over man."<sup>80</sup>

The Older Order Amish hold their religious services once every two weeks. Because they do not believe in church buildings, they hold services in the homes of their members. This practice explains why they are often called House Amish.<sup>81</sup> Sometimes, however, the services are held in the barns. Furthermore, they rotate homes among those living within the district. On alternate Sundays, the family dresses up and either stays at home and rests, or visits other family members -- aunts, uncles, or cousins. By doing this, Amish children learn more about their family for they play, read, rest, hike, and do other things together.<sup>82</sup>

If the preaching is to take place at a certain family's home, that family must make preparations. They must work hard to clean the yard and stables. Furniture must be moved; frequently heating stoves must be polished, and fences must be whitewashed. The meeting benches must also be hauled and put in proper place, which often means

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<sup>79</sup>Ibid., p. 12.

<sup>80</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 151.

<sup>81</sup>Gloria R. Savoldi, Mystery of the Old Dutch Chest (New York: Criterion Books, 1965), p. 53.

<sup>82</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 12.



removing the panel walls and doors between first floor rooms. Male members assist in the moving and the arranging of the benches.<sup>83</sup>

On the Saturday before preaching, a dozen or more women arrive at the home where the preaching will take place in order to bake bread and pies. They also make sure that the supply of pickles, red beets, jams, and coffee is adequate for the meal served after the worship service.<sup>84</sup>

The church service lasts from three to four hours. It begins about 9:00 A.M. and frequently lasts until 1:00 P.M. Everyone, even six-week-old babies, are required to attend. The only community members excused from attending the service are those people who are ill. The men and women are seated separately on long hard benches. They sing the slow tunes of the Ausbund hymnal in unison, two sermons are preached, silent and oral prayers read, and short testimonies (Zeugnisse) are offered by all preachers present. At the end of the service "everyone exchanges a handshake and the preachers greet each other with the holy kiss commanded in the Bible."<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>83</sup> Ibid., pp. 10-11.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid., p. 11.

It is at this time that the women and girls set the tables with what might appear to be a feast, even though it is supposed to be just a piece to hold one over until he or she returns home. For the remainder of the afternoon the entire congregation eats, visits and discusses matters of mutual concern.

Twice a year, in the springtime and in the fall, each Amish district holds a plenary session. This is a longer and more extensive Sunday service than the biweekly meeting. It is preceded by a special day of fasting and meditation. "The plenary session is the most important in the life and perpetuation of these people."<sup>86</sup> It is at this time that each member reaffirms his or her faith and becomes more conscious of the close fellowship among the Amish.

Harmony and peace are vouchsafed in acts of footwashing and the love feast. With only the faithful participating, the celebration of the Lord's Supper is the symbolic attainment of oneness of Old Order Amish religion and life.<sup>87</sup>

The Amish believe in adult baptism because they believe a person should be baptized only after confessing his or her faith. Therefore, children are not really members of the church until they reach the age of about sixteen at which time they are encouraged by their

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<sup>86</sup>Schreiber, p. 124.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 124.

families to join the church and subsequently receive baptism.

Excommunication is the most drastic form of discipline used by the Amish, and it is used only as a last resort. But when the efforts of the community are unable to persuade an errant member to mend his or her ways, there is no other alternative except to place this person under Meidung or shunning. Consequently, the person will be shunned by all of the members of the sect. After a specified period of time the excommunicated person may apply for reinstatement into the church. If the bishop and the preachers are convinced that he or she is penitent and will attempt to live up to his/her vows in the future, the matter will then be brought before the entire congregation, and with the agreement of the group the excommunicated member will be permitted to return. The excommunicated person must acknowledge his or her past guilt, express his or her sorrow and regrets over his or her actions, and finally one must promise to mend his or her ways. All of the above takes place during a church service. While some of the shunned people feel the full impact of practice and immediately seek to change their ways in order to be granted readmittance to the church, others never seek reinstatement and therefore remain outside the group. Those members who have been reinstated usually become both extremely careful in the future and

rather strict conforming members throughout the rest of their lives.<sup>88</sup>

The Old Order Amish do not attempt to convert outsiders.<sup>89</sup> However, in recent years several young men of non-Amish birth were received into membership by baptism. They were all single, formerly loosely affiliated with Protestant churches, of rural backgrounds with a love for farming, and at least two had been graduated from high school. The attraction to the Amish stemmed largely from the plainness and uncompromising position of the Amish in maintaining a simple life.<sup>90</sup>

#### Dating

As Amish children grow older they become more interested in the opposite sex, and the dating process begins. Amish dating is referred to as running around. The usual age for running around begins for the boy at sixteen and for the girl at fourteen to sixteen.<sup>91</sup> At this age Amish young people begin to attend the singings. The singings, held on Sunday evenings usually at the same house where the preachings are held, provide the best

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<sup>88</sup>Smith, pp. 39-42.

<sup>89</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 6.

<sup>90</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 343.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid., p. 159.

contact for young people. They typically take place in the barns, and no chaperones are in attendance. "Amish parents in the area stay to themselves when the young folk have a square dance or a Sunday night 'sing'."<sup>92</sup> The youth from several districts usually gather for the singings. This occasion provides interaction among young people on a much broader base than in the single district.<sup>93</sup> Attendance at such events signals the fact that the young men and women are eligible for dating.<sup>94</sup>

On Sunday evening, after the chores are done, the young people prepare for the singing. The young man wears his best suit and hat and makes sure that his horse and buggy are neat and clean. He has already been given a black open-top bachelor buggy on his sixteenth birthday. This present expands his opportunities for courtship. He will usually take his sister or his sister's friend to the singing, but seldom his own girlfriend. If he does take his girlfriend, he will have made previous arrangements to pick her up about dusk either at her home or at the end of a lane or crossroad. To save some embarrassment the young men often have their first dates arranged by a

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<sup>92</sup>Savoldi, Chest, p. 33.

<sup>93</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 158.

<sup>94</sup>Hostetler, Life., p. 20.

friend who is already going steady. This procedure is known as getting propped up.<sup>95</sup>

A singing is not considered a devotional meeting, but rather a social event. The young people gather around a long table, boys on one side and girls on the other. The singing is conducted entirely by single people, and only fast tunes are used. Both the girls and the boys announce the different hymns and lead the singing. Between selections there is time for conversation. Following the singing, which usually ends formally around ten o'clock, an hour or more is spent in joking and visiting. Those boys who do not come with a date usually arrange to take a Mädel (girl) home at this time.<sup>96</sup>

Considerable secrecy pervades the entire period of courtship, and courtship activities increase considerably once the young man chooses a steady girlfriend. Usually after three or four dates, the young man asks his girl, "Do you want to go steady or so?"<sup>97</sup>

Besides going to the Sunday night singings they now begin to attend corn huskings, weddings, apple schnitzens (apple-peeling and cutting parties), and frolics. The young couple who is going steady will also

<sup>95</sup> Ibid., p. 20.

<sup>96</sup> Hostetler, Society, p. 159.

<sup>97</sup> Hostetler, Life, p. 20.



see each other every week or two on Saturday nights. Many times the young couple decides to stay at home, but due to the large size of Amish families the practice of staying home requires arrangements that will allow some privacy. Therefore, before entering the home of his girl, the young man makes sure her parents are in bed. He then focuses his flashlight on her window; this announces the arrival of her suitor. The couple then spends several hours together either in the sitting room or in a upstairs bedroom. But in any case, they usually do not leave the house on such occasions.<sup>98</sup>

Bundling has been associated with Amish courtships for a long time. Bundling is a practice in which the young couple sleeps or lies together on the same bed. Some sources say that the young man sleeps on top of the covers while the young woman sleeps underneath them. However, others suggest that a board is placed down the middle of the bed to separate the two.<sup>99</sup> Bundling is an old custom whose roots are to be found in Oriental as well as European cultures. Since the Amish retain a way of life characteristic of two or three centuries ago, it is only natural that they should retain bundling. However, bundling is a controversial issue, and Amish leaders have

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<sup>98</sup>Ibid., p. 22.

<sup>99</sup>Smith, pp. 54-69.

been trying to abolish the practice for over a century. Their efforts have been largely successful.<sup>100</sup>

As mentioned previously, the courting process is secretive suggesting that no previous family discussion has taken place between the parents and the young couple. When the couple does decide to marry the young man goes to the deacon or minister of his district. The minister then visits the girl's parents to obtain their consent. Of course the parents have known the intentions of the couple, and many have even made secretive plans for the wedding. Amish weddings seldom take place if the blessings of the parents is not received. Once the blessing has been received, it is inevitable that the actual wedding will take place. When everything is formally cleared, the announcement of intention to marry is declared in the church one or two Sundays prior to the date set for the wedding. This announcement terminates the secrecy, and the whole district seems to rejoice and share in the anticipated event. Everyone is happy, "for so it is that independence has been won, a new family unit created, and the perpetuation of the community is assured."<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 22.

<sup>101</sup>Schreiber, p. 183.

## Baptism

In order for the marriage to take place it is essential that both the young man and woman have been baptized for "no young person could be married in the Amish church without first being baptized in faith."<sup>102</sup> The ceremony of baptism can be viewed as a rite of passage from youth to adulthood. "The meaning of baptism to the individual and the community reflects ethos."<sup>103</sup> When the baptismal vow has been taken, that individual is admitted to full fellowship in the church. When the young people reach late adolescence, 16-18 years of age, they are urged to become members of the church. Within the framework of their sermons, ministers challenge the young Amish people to join the church. The parents of the young people are concerned about their taking this step, but in most cases they do not overtly urge their children to do so. The reason for this relaxed attitude is the consistency with which the young people follow role expectations and are baptized.

All those wishing to join the church must attend classes of instruction. The applicants meet with the ministers on Sunday morning at worship service in the consultation room where the ordained usually meet. The

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<sup>102</sup>Hostetler, Society, p. 52.

<sup>103</sup>Ibid., p. 51.

ministers acquaint the applicants for baptism with the incidents in the Bible that suggest the right relationship with God. At the same time the rules and order of the Amish are explained to the applicants. After either six or eight periods of instruction, from about May to August, a day is set for the baptismal service. It is also necessary to obtain the consent of the members of the church in order to receive the applicants into fellowship.<sup>104</sup>

A great deal of emphasis is placed upon the difficulty of walking the straight and narrow way. The applicants are all informed that it is better to refrain from making a vow than to make it and then break it. On a Saturday prior to the baptism the applicants are given a final opportunity to turn back if they wish. The young men are also asked at this time to promise that they will accept the duties of minister if they are ever called upon to do so.

Following the four-hour service consisting of prayers and a sermon, the applicants are baptized members of the Amish community. This means that they are now members of the church as well as candidates for marriage.

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<sup>104</sup>Ibid., p. 52.

## Preparation for Marriage

Many young men work other than on their father's farm if enough help is present to run it effectively. Thus, in preparation for marriage, some young Amish men save money from their salaries received as hired hands or day laborers. It is through these other jobs that the young man is able to invest in livestock or farm equipment. Prior to reaching his eighteenth or twentieth birthday, the young man turns all wages received over to his father who in turn assists him by providing the most essential farm equipment, if not a complete farm itself. The young man already has a horse and buggy, but his father further supplies him with one or two draft horses. In addition to this, the young man may also have purchased a plow and harrow at a nearby auction or weekly sale, again with the help of his father. He may borrow any additional machinery from his father until the size of his farm warrants the acquisition of such equipment.<sup>105</sup>

While the young man is trying to save money and acquire necessary farm equipment, his bride to be is making preparations, too. She has begun to accumulate a chest full of household linens including white organdy curtains. One panel of the organdy will be hung at each window and drawn to one side in her new home. If the

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<sup>105</sup>Schreiber, p. 182.

young woman has been employed as a housemaid after the age of twenty-one, she will also have accumulated some money. When she marries her family will provide her with a cow and some chickens and will share their larder with her.<sup>106</sup>

In addition to the preparations mentioned above, there is one other major preparation taking place. This preparation concerns the house in which the newlyweds will live. The groom to be as well as male family members and community members join together to build a house for the newlyweds. The house is located on family property for all Amish men are given land on which to build.

"The domestic needs of the newly married couple in their own home are scant and frugal."<sup>107</sup> As in all Amish homes, the furniture is very simple and functional. The couple may have an iron bedstand, a few chairs, including a rocking chair, a simple wooden kitchen table, which serves as a dining table, a wood or coal burning stove or oven and a cupboard for dishes. Because the colors and styles of the wearing apparel never change, this young couple will not need a closet or a dresser to hold a large variety of clothing. Due to their refusal to use electricity, the Amish must rely on oil lamps to light their homes and iceboxes or springhouses to preserve

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<sup>106</sup> Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., p. 182.



perishable foods. All of the household goods mentioned can easily be secured at an auction or a sale; "style and age are of little consequence."<sup>108</sup>

According to Schreiber the greatest assets that Amish young people have are health and the eagerness to work. Their goal is to save enough money so that eventually they can rent or buy a farm, and move from a small area to perhaps a quarter section of 160 acres, the amount of land considered as the ideal farm establishment.

Of work there is no end; the closely knit peasant society tolerates no wasting, and parents will always be ready to help and advise so that the young people will come to success.<sup>109</sup>

#### The Wedding

Weddings, which are the most important social events of the year, are traditionally held on Tuesdays and Thursdays during the wedding season. The Amish consider the wedding season to last from early fall until late winter. However, no weddings take place during leap years. A functional explanation for the wedding season is that during this time of the year farm activities are most slack. It is also suggested that "conditions favorable for the establishment of a new family unit are

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<sup>108</sup>Ibid., p. 182.

<sup>109</sup>Ibid., p. 183.

best estimated at this time because the harvest has been completed and the productivity of the fields and farm as well as the available ready cash are sufficiently known."<sup>110</sup>

In Amish life there is nothing comparable to an engagement, nor is there any type of announcement other than the oral announcement in the church. However, early Monday morning, the groom sets out to personally extend invitations to all of the people who are invited to the wedding. Because he may have to visit distant relatives and friends this may turn out to be an all-day endeavor.<sup>111</sup>

On the day of the wedding, both the bride and groom wear new clothes, but they are made from the same patterns as their Sunday clothes. The color of the bride's dress may vary depending on the district. However, blue is a favorite color. Neither engagement nor wedding rings are used.<sup>112</sup>

In order for a marriage to take place, a church service must be held. The service begins in the morning and lasts until noon. After the service is over, festivities are held at the bride's home to which all of the guests are invited for noon and evening feasts.

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<sup>110</sup>Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>111</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 23.

<sup>112</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

Following the meals the guests sing and visit with each other.<sup>113</sup> One custom in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania requires the groom to be tossed over a fence by the single men while the bride steps over a broom. After this occurs they are then prepared for their new domestic roles.<sup>114</sup>

The wedding night is spent in the bride's home, and the following day is spent cleaning up. The couple honeymoons by spending several weeks visiting their relatives and friends. It is at this time that the newlyweds receive their wedding gifts.

"Marriage unquestionably is the most sacred and stable institution with the Amish and the break-up of a family is practically unknown."<sup>115</sup> As mentioned previously, divorce and dissolution are unheard of among the Amish. For the Amish, a marriage is considered permanent, and only death can terminate it. However, it is an almost invariable rule that widows and widowers seek remarriage especially if unmarried children are involved.

Marriage is the time in an Amish person's life when he or she is given the opportunity to practice the

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<sup>113</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>114</sup>Ibid., p. 24.

<sup>115</sup>Schreiber, p. 181.

knowledge, skills, and traditions that he or she has acquired throughout his or her life. It is also the time during which the Amish culture is perpetuated for soon after the wedding has taken place the young couple begins thinking about starting a family. When a child is born, the entire cycle of stages in Amish life begins again. The child will be exposed to the same experiences as were his or her parents and all other Old Order Amish children. Thus, not only is marriage the phase in an individual's life for which he or she has been preparing, but it is also the time in which the Amish culture is perpetuated. Thereafter, the experiences of Amish adults continue relatively unchanged until they reach old age.

#### Respect for the Elder

From a very early age and throughout their entire lives Amish children are taught to respect and assume responsibility for their elders.<sup>116</sup> The grandfather is respected as a patriarch, and his social status increases as he reaches retirement age. To retire he simply moves into a gross dawdy (grandfather) house, a smaller building on the family homestead.<sup>117</sup> However, he first must make

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<sup>116</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 16.

<sup>117</sup>James E. Landing, "The Failure of Amish Settlements in the Southeastern United States: An Appeal For Inquiry," The Mennonite Quaterly Review, (1970), p. 379.

sure that a member of the younger generation, one of his married sons and usually the eldest, is prepared to assume the role of the head of the household along with all of the responsibilities associated with this role. When this has been assured, the grandfather can retire.

The grandfather would be insulted by old-age-pension checks, and he shuns commercial forms of insurance. In his estimation he already has the best kind of insurance with no premium to pay. He knows that if he becomes ill he will be cared for, and his work will be completed by others. Should he die suddenly, arrangements will be made to have the farm operations continue.<sup>118</sup>

Thus, grandfathers as well as grandmothers have no need to worry about being cared for during their years of dependency, for they will receive necessary assistance from the "kinfolk and community neighbors rather than the services of strangers in an unfamiliar setting."<sup>119</sup>

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<sup>118</sup>Hostetler, Life, p. 14.

<sup>119</sup>Victor Stoltz, "Amish Agriculture: Adaptive Strategies for Economic Survival of Community Life," Rural Sociology, 38 (Summer, 1973), 198.

## SUMMARY

In this study the author has examined the stages through which a member of the Old Order Amish passes as well as the important events which mark the transition from one stage to another. Through the use of this information it has been noted that the consistency of child rearing practices and the stability of traditions have been major elements in the maintenance of these people for over 200 years.

Amish children throughout the years have been and continue to be exposed to the same basic experiences delineated throughout this study. They learn the Amish philosophy which discourages interaction with the English outside of business transactions, and includes mutual aid, and non-competitiveness among their own people. It is the forbidden interaction, the mutual aid, and the non-competitiveness which have proven to be integral factors in the maintenance of this culture throughout the years.

Amish children learn from an early age that their interaction with the "English" is extremely limited. They may attend schools which are attended by English children, and they may become involved in business transactions with the "English". But beyond this, interaction with the non-Amish is discouraged.



The purpose of discouraging interaction with the English is to prevent the members of the Amish community from being exposed to non-Amish ways. If this exposure should occur, it may lead the Amish people to begin questioning facets of their own culture. They may then decide to accept and practice some of the "English" ways. Such practice would lead to their expulsion from the Amish community. This would seriously effect the maintenance and stability of the Amish culture. If this should occur repeatedly, the result would be the erosion or extinction of the culture.

In addition to the limited interaction with the "English," Amish children also learn about mutual aid and non-competitiveness, other integral elements of Amish life. Mutual aid consists of the willingness of each community member to help one another with any problem that may arise. This may include rebuilding a barn damaged by fire or giving food to a family whose crops were destroyed. Everyone is willing and anxious to help those in need, and he or she always knows that if assistance should ever be needed family members as well as community members will be there to assist. If an individual is mentally or physically handicapped, he or she will receive all the assistance and support necessary. In addition, when one reaches retirement age, the individual knows

that he or she will receive support and assistance in all necessary areas.

Non-competitiveness is also an aspect of Amish life. Members of the Old Order Amish never attempt to compete with one another. Instead, they work together in order to achieve success for the entire community. This non-competitiveness as well as the mutual aid and forbidden interaction have sustained the resistance to assimilation and therefore have resulted in the maintenance and stability of the Old Order Amish.

The Old Order Amish has been one of the most successful groups in resisting assimilation. However, it is just one of the many cultural groups which makes up the pluralistic society of the United States. Many of the other groups have not experienced success in avoiding assimilation as have the Amish. Instead, many who have tried to avoid assimilation, have done so with little success. Thus, these groups as well as those who once desired assimilation and now wish to regain some of their ethnic elements should look to the Old Order Amish as an example of a stable ethnic group which has been able to maintain traditional ways and values.

Through additional examination and analysis of the child rearing practices of the Old Order Amish, including the forbidden interaction as well as mutual aid

and non-competitiveness, one may be able to discover ways other groups can regain and/or maintain cultural elements as well as begin the process of stabilization of their respective ethnic group. Multiculturally speaking, through recognition and examination of the Old Order Amish as well as other groups, one will gain not only an understanding of and appreciation for other cultures, but also better insight into his or her ethnic background.

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