



Diversity in People: Who Are The Amish and What Do They Believe?

Pennsylvania is the first home of the Amish who began arriving in the United States in the late 1600's. The Amish fled from Europe, many from Switzerland and southern Germany, searching for religious freedom. The first sizable group arrived in Lancaster County in the 1720's or 1730's. Although Lancaster County is still home of the oldest group of Old Order Amish, today there are settlements in 22 states and Ontario, Canada.



The common bonds that hold Amish communities together are their beliefs in religion, the importance of family, and separation from the world. Religious beliefs are very important to the Amish. As Christians, the Amish believe in Jesus Christ. The Old Order Amish population follows a literal interpretation of the Bible. For believers, life has no purpose other than in service to God. Daily life is guided by the Bible and a set of unwritten rules called the *Ordnung*. Amish lifestyle is one of simplicity, self-denial, and self-sufficiency. Members are committed to peace, discipleship and good works.

Hard work is an accepted way of life. The Biblical standard is, "In the sweat of they face shalt thou eat bread." Many Amish men are farmers, using horsedrawn equipment with metal wheels. It is generally felt that working the land brings one closer to God; farmers are considered stewards of God's land. Many others are carpenters and builders of farm-related equipment. Unmarried women who work outside the home may work in the family business, cook and bake for restaurants, or make quilts for sale. Married women do not work outside the home, but often make a valuable contribution to the work of the family farm. The tourist market has resulted in the development of many small businesses in the Amish community. Hand-made furniture is in demand. Amish products are known to be simple, sturdy, of high quality, long-lasting, and sold at a fair price. Businesses are generally successful without the use of government assistance.

Amish communities are close-knit in several ways. One, many

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people in a given Amish community are related to one another. Since the Amish do not actively recruit members to the religion, most marriages occur between members within the community. Second and third cousin marriages are common. As an example, almost 70% of the Amish in Lancaster County carry one of five family names. These names are Stoltzfus, King, Fisher, Beiler, and Lapp. Families generally stay in one location their entire life, creating a great sense of security and belonging.

The Amish community is close knit in another sense. Old Order Amish do not accept social security, welfare, or disaster relief from the government. Instead, the members of the community help each other by working together to contribute labor or finances to those in need. For example, the community may band together to pay a large hospital bill for one of its members; parents may act as a “bank,” loaning funds to their children for the start of a business; and the entire community may pitch in to rebuild a member’s home that is lost in a fire. Additionally, families take care of their elderly or dependent members and are therefore exempt from paying social security taxes. Considering the relatively high birth rate, there are an adequate number of younger people to care for the elderly.

Separation from the world is yet another practice that keeps the Amish communities close-knit. Use of modern conveniences and modern technology is limited. Most Old Order Amish use horse and buggy transportation, do not have electricity in the home, and avoid the use of telephones. Using electricity can be interpreted as connecting with the world and its undesirable temptations. The avoidance of technology allows the Amish to live a slower, simpler, and separate life. The use of technology, however, varies from group to group with each district deciding the acceptable level for use of technology.

Style of dress is another custom that separates the Amish from the world. Dress is distinctive and encourages humility. Women wear plain dresses with long sleeves and full skirts that hang no shorter than half way between the knee and the floor. A prayer cloth is worn on the hair



which is pulled back in a bun. Men wear dark-colored suits, coats with no lapels, solid colored shirts, full pants with suspenders, black socks and shoes, and black or straw broad brimmed hats. After marriage, men wear uncut beards. Women’s dresses are fastened with straight pins or snaps and men’s vests and coats are fastened with hook and eyes.

Life is organized around the family and the local community. Many Amish children are educated in one-room Amish schoolhouses by Amish teachers who were themselves educated in Amish schools. Education beyond the eighth grade is considered unnecessary. Amish are exempt from state compulsory attendance laws beyond the eighth grade. Education focuses on the basic skills of reading, writing, arithmetic, Amish history, and U.S. history. Although most Amish speak a dialect of German, children are taught English in school.

The practice of holding church services in the homes of members developed in Europe during the time when the Amish were persecuted for practicing their religion. Today, church services are held in the private home of a church member every other Sunday. Lengthy services, three to three and a half hours long, are followed by a large communal meal. The remainder of the day is generally spent visiting with family. While church services include singing, they do not include the use of musical instruments. Playing of musical instruments is considered “worldly.”

While it is possible for an outsider to convert to the Amish religion, it is something that seldom happens. Acceptance of the Amish religion

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Diversity Activity: Portrait Pluralism

This activity provides an experience for youth to give a positive value to differences while getting a real boost for their self-concept at the same time.

Either have youth draw self-portraits, help each other make silhouettes, or if time and money permits, photograph each person. Or, you may use the yearly school pictures taken in most schools. Mount each picture on a three-foot sheet of butcher paper and hang up around the room. Explain to the students that at any time they may write something *true* and *good* about someone in the class on that person's picture paper. They may or may not choose to sign their names.

Stress the point that everyone has good qualities and they are to discover as many of those qualities about their club-mates as possible. To avoid a newcomer to the group or a less popular youth getting little written under his or her picture, tell students that before they write a comment about a friend they must write at least one positive comment about someone they do not know as well. The leader should also feel free to add comments. Encourage youth to read the comments written on the sheet of their club-mates.

At the end of the session (or the day, the week, etc.) ask youth to discuss the comments written about them. Discuss the following points:

Did you begin to feel any differently towards others when you were really concentrating on their good qualities?

Were you surprised by the good qualities you discovered in people you had not known well?

Why do you think you never noticed their good qualities? (Stress reasons that reflect stereotypes of how certain people are "supposed" to be.)

Do you feel a closer bond to the group now than before? Why do you think that is?

Allow each youth to take his or her sheet home. Parents are generally pleased to see their children are supported and appreciated for their good points. You may repeat this activity whenever you feel the group needs a boost in appreciating the differences among themselves.

Adapted from an exercise by: Lorretta Green, Teacher, Wharton Elementary.



Diversity in the Workplace: Managing Diversity

Today, many managers are facing an increasingly diverse workplace. Women, minorities, and immigrants are becoming a larger percentage of the workforce. In addition to race, gender, and other “people” categories, managers are faced with diversity in other intangible areas such as ideas, procedures, functions, and operational philosophies. It is no wonder that “managing diversity” has become such a popular topic today. In fact, there are a fair number of books on the market with “managing diversity” either as the title, or within the title.

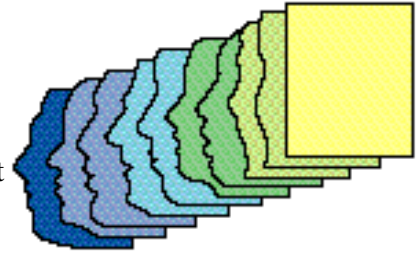
Just how do managers manage diversity? R. Roosevelt Jr., consultant and respected authority on diversity issues, provides a foundation for answering this question. He proposes a Diversity Paradigm. In his book, *Redefining Diversity*, Thomas describes eight options, or basic responses, that are available to managers as they address diversity issues.

Include/Exclude: The goal of Include is to increase the number of target-group members in the organization at all hierarchical levels. This option is the basis for most affirmative action efforts. Unfortunately, many people equate “Include” with the very essence or meaning of diversity. The goal of “Exclude” is to minimize diversity by not allowing diverse elements into the organization.

Deny: In this option, the existence of differences is denied. People with differences are told that the organization does not notice differences; for example, the organization is colorblind. Or, managers claim to see nothing new in proposals for change, thus eliminating the need to consider new approaches.

Assimilate: Assimilation has been the traditional approach to diversity. Differences in people or approaches are expected

to adjust or change to become like the dominant group or approach.



Success requires a “blending in” or adaptation to the “tried and true” formulas.

Suppress: While managers indeed recognize and acknowledge differences, they discourage the expression of these differences. This is done for the good of the organization.

People with differences are expected to “stop whining” and “pay their dues.”

Isolate: The people or ideas that are different are set off to the side, while the dominant system does not change. People who are different are given separate time, space and resources to “do their thing.” New ideas are treated as “pilot projects.” The “different” group is given more decision-making authority and allowed to operate separately from the main organization.

Tolerate: Roosevelt refers to this as the “live-and-let-live” option. Differences are included and the right to exist is acknowledged, but the differences are neither understood nor valued. While people who are different are included, they never really feel accepted.

Build Relationships: Managers make deliberate efforts to foster relationships between different groups. The goal is to foster acceptance and understanding of differences. Sometimes, however, managers focus on the similarities, hoping to ignore the differences.

Foster Mutual Adaptation: Both managers and employees accept and understand differences and diversity. There is also a recognition that adaptation and change may be necessary by everyone - those who are

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Diversity Resource: Heart Healthy Educational Materials Designed Especially for the Latino Community

The following healthy heart educational materials are available from The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute Information Center.

From Heart to Heart: A Bilingual Group Discussion Guide (includes videotape)

Written in English and Spanish, this guide explains how to organize and conduct two one-hour educational sessions on heart health targeting the Latino community. The guide comes with two educational videos in Spanish. Each group discussion includes a video presentation, followed by a guided discussion and question-and-answer period. The guide contains a master copy of handouts and ideas for optional activities. The video "*For the Love of Your Heart*" focuses on the prevention of the risk factors for heart disease, and the video "*Cooking With Your Heart in Mind*" takes viewers on a heart-healthy food shopping tour, and shows them ways to prepare delicious heart-healthy Latino dishes. The cost of this package is \$8.00.

Delicious Heart-Healthy Latino Recipes

This bilingual cookbook contains 23 tested recipes that cut down on fat, especially saturated fat, cholesterol, and sodium but not on taste. Recipes help Latinos learn to cook traditional Latino dishes in a heart-healthy way. The cost of this book is \$2.50.

Package of Eight Easy-To-Read Booklets on Preventing Heart Disease

Written especially for Latino families, these bilingual booklets explain steps people can take to reduce their risk of having a heart attack or stroke. Factual information is provided in a friendly style to help the reader dispel some common myths. The set includes the following titles: *Take Steps - Prevent High Blood Pressure*; *Cut Down on Salt and Sodium*; *Learn Your Cholesterol Number*; *Protect Your Heart - Lower Your Blood Cholesterol*; *Watch Your Weight*; *Cut Down on Fat - Not Taste*; *Stay Active and Feel Better*; and *Kick the Smoking Habit*. The cost of this package is \$3.00.

Heart healthy educational materials designed especially for the African American community are also available. Titles include: *African American Heart-Healthy Recipes*; *Improving Cardiovascular Health in African Americans - Package of Seven Easy-To-Read Booklets*; *Management and Therapy of Sickle Cell Disease*; and *Facts About Sickle Cell Anemia*.

Orders may be placed by calling (301) 592-8573. Visit the web site at www.nhlbi.nih.gov



The National Heart, Lung, and Blood Institute

Diversity Around The State: Joining Forces To Remove Barriers

In the summer of 1996, Lackawanna County Cooperative Extension convened a meeting of several agencies working in the Hispanic community to discuss forming a coalition dedicated to addressing problems faced by Hispanic families. The idea to form a coalition resulted from Extension's involvement in the Hispanic community; an EFNEP NEA working with the minority population saw individuals and families facing barriers to access services due to language and lack of transportation.

The Lackawanna County Diversity Coalition held its first meeting in November 1996 with 15 organizations represented. The group appointed a steering committee and agreed to meet monthly. They also decided that the coalition needed to broaden its scope to include a number of diversity issues and audiences.

Objectives established by the coalition were:

- * to educate members about culturally diverse issues.
- * to co-sponsor and coordinate cultural training workshops within the community.
- * to facilitate agencies and educators to promote projects concerning direct service needs of culturally diverse populations.
- * to promote communication and exchange of ideas among members.

Since its inception, membership in the coalition has grown to include hospitals, human service



providers, churches, retailers, and others. To reach the coalition's goal of promoting cultural understanding and awareness, it has planned and implemented a number of projects including co-sponsoring educational workshops on the Latino and African-American cultures, hosting a program on hate crimes, conducting diversity programs for Headstart children, and co-sponsoring a diversity training for human service providers.

The diversity coalition has been a successful vehicle allowing community organizations to work together to reach common goals. Through education and collaborative outreach efforts, the coalition has made steps to erode barriers and improve the quality of life of Lackawanna County's diverse community.

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Diverse Issues is available on the Web

Web Address:

<http://www.cas.psu.edu/docs/casdept/familyliving/pi/pimenu.html>

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requires a strict and genuine commitment to the religion and lifestyle. Even Amish children are not required to make the commitment until they are older teens. During their adolescent years, they are granted more freedom to partake in worldly activities. The young men and women understand that making the vow to the religion is a very serious and important act. Many Amish would consider it preferable to never make the commitment than to do so and then later break the vow. When it is time to decide, however, almost 90% of Old Order Amish teens take the vow. Furthermore, only between 10% and 15% ever break away from the church. Many who do leave join the Mennonite Church which holds similar but less restrictive beliefs.

A Few Points To Remember:

- The Amish are in many ways just like anyone else. They have chosen to live a simpler lifestyle than that of many others. Respect these choices. Avoid thinking of the Amish as strange beings.
- Avoid use of audio-visual equipment when working with the Old Order Amish. The use of such modern equipment violates their commitment to remain separate from the world.
- Refrain from taking photographs of Old Order Amish. Photographs are believed to violate the second commandment of the Bible, “Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of anything that is in heaven above, or in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth.”

Sources:

Huntington, G. E. (1988). *The Amish Family*. In Mindel, C.H, Habenstein, R. W., & Wright, R. (Eds.). *Ethnic Families in America: Patterns and Variations* (pp. 367 – 399). New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc.

Frequently Asked “Ask The Amish Questions!” (1999). Action Video, Inc. <http://www.800padutch.com/atafaq.html#join>

The Amish, The Mennonites, and “The Plain People.” (1999). Action Video, Inc. <http://www.800padutch.com/amish.html>

The Multicultural Peoples of North American Video Series, The Amish. (1993). Schuessinger Video Productions.

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different and those who are not different – to accommodate diversity and achieve maximum viability of the organization.

While mutual adaptation may seem an unnecessary effort, especially for successful organizations, managers should consider that organizational formulas that work well today might not work well in the changing environment of tomorrow. Roosevelt suggests that mutual adaptation permits the greatest accommodation of diversity and enhances an organization’s ability to deal with overwhelming complexity.

It is important to note here that none of the action options is inherently good or bad in itself. Roosevelt stresses the importance of context. All options are legitimate and any of the options can be used positively or negatively. The appropriateness of any choice may vary with the circumstances. However, only one of the eight option choices, foster mutual adaptation, unequivocally endorses diversity.

For in-depth reading on this topic, the reader is directed to the following source:
Thomas, R. R. Jr. (1996). *Redefining diversity*. New York, N.Y.: AMACOM.

Check Out These Links to Other Diversity Resources

Appreciating Other Cultures

Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet HYG-5202-96

<http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5202.html>

Growing Up in Multicultural Families

Ohio State University Extension Fact Sheet HYG-5222-96

<http://ohioline.ag.ohio-state.edu/hyg-fact/5000/5222.html>

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