

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta filozofická

Bakalářská práce

The life and culture of the Amish community in America

Natalie Poppová

Plzeň 2020

Západočeská univerzita v Plzni

Fakulta filozofická

Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Studijní program Filologie

Studijní obor Cizí jazyky pro komerční praxi

Kombinace angličtina – francouzština

Bakalářská práce

**The life and culture of the Amish community in
America**

Natalie Poppová

Vedoucí práce:

Mgr. Tomáš Hostýnek

Katedra anglického jazyka a literatury

Fakulta filozofická Západočeské univerzity v Plzni

Plzeň 2020

Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

Plzeň, květen 2020

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Tomáš Hostýnek for support and valuable advice concerning the topic and academic English.

Table of Contents

1	Introduction	1
1. 1	Who are the Amish?	2
2	Historical background	3
2. 1	The Dawn of the Amish.....	3
2. 2	Anabaptists.....	3
2. 3	Exodus to America.....	6
3	Amish Faith	8
4	Amish lifestyle & culture	9
4. 1	Submission as a way of life	9
4. 2	Church.....	10
4. 3	Sunday service	11
4. 4	Church hierarchy.....	12
4. 5	Membership	12
4. 6	Baptism	13
4. 7	Ordnung	14
4. 8	Family	14
4. 9	Children	15
4. 10	Education	16
4. 11	In war with progress	17
4. 12	Farming	19
4. 13	Clothing	20
5	Challenges	22
5. 1	Excommunication	22
5. 2	One big family	23

5.	3 Patriarchal world.....	24
6	Positives.....	24
6.	1 Mutual aid.....	24
6.	2 Self-sustainability.....	25
6.	3 Nature.....	26
7	External view.....	28
7.	1 Popular culture.....	28
7.	1. 1 Literature.....	28
7.	1. 2 Documentaries.....	30
7.	1. 3 TV shows.....	30
7.	1. 4 Movies.....	31
7.	1. 5 Series.....	32
7.	1. 6 Music.....	32
7.	2 Tourism.....	33
8	Conclusion.....	34
9	Bibliography.....	36
9.	1 Print sources.....	36
	2 Other sources.....	38
10	Resumé.....	39
11	Appendices.....	41

1 Introduction

The objective of the Bachelor's thesis is to introduce in details the community of Amish people living in the United States of America. The main aim will be to present their history, beliefs, values, lifestyle, culture and their position in today's American society. This thesis will also provide an outlook into the way Amish people are portrayed in American pop culture.

In the first chapter, we will zoom into the very beginning of several crucial events that laid foundations to Amish faith. Unstable social situation in Europe in the 15th and the 16th century will also be described, as well as religious changes and the birth of new Christian movement – Anabaptism. We will look at the main conviction Anabaptists had that was responsible for setting them apart from Catholic Church and eventually granted them their name. This belief was quite radical for such period of time and people proclaiming it paid a high price with their lives.

Names of two key members of Anabaptism - Menno Simons and Jakob Ammann will also be mentioned and further discussed. This chapter will also present another part of Amish history and that is their exodus to America and Amish first settlements in the New World. As the time progressed, with more Amish families coming, new lifestyle was naturally developed in each area of settlement. These subtle changes were met with displeasure by some members. It eventually led to schism between Amish so called Old Order and New Order. Years went by and the Amish community has experienced and was affected by many different historical events, including the World War I and World War II.

In the next chapter we will focus on Amish fundamental beliefs and doctrine stemming from Bible and Anabaptist historical roots. We will examine the way Amish perceive salvation, why they strive for complete partition from people outside their faith and particular verses from the Scripture that support such idea.

The following chapter will provide you with closer look into Amish lifestyle. This will include detailed analysis of essential aspects that together create imaginary corner stones of the whole community. These aspects are following: Amish approach to life,

values and priorities, church, baptism, set of rules listed in so called *Ordnung*, family life, Amish approach to education and technology, farming and clothing.

Another chapter will be dedicated to some issues, challenges and potential negatives that can appear in such close-knit group of people. Some of them could be for example strict shunning and the impact of excommunication, the presence of diseases due to genetic mutations and the position of women in patriarchal society. On the contrary, we will highlight some of the positive effects of Amish way of life such as their focus on interpersonal relationships, eagerness to help each other, self-sustainability and their gentleness towards environment, together with ecological farming skills.

Finally, last part of this theses will be devoted to the Amish community in today's world. We will analyze different external views of point of this community with the help of their American neighbors. We will examine several ways the Amish are portrayed in popular culture, in movies, series, documentaries, literature and music. Last but not least, the way the Amish deal with unsolicited attention in the form of tourism will also be further explored.

1. 1 Who are the Amish?

The Amish are a unique body of people with common faith, lifestyle, values and rich history. Their strict separation from the modern world is reflected in every aspect of their daily lives. Farming, black horse-ridden buggies, specific style of clothing; banning the use of electricity, those all are Amish's distinguishing marks and many more. The perception of this community by the outside world is surrounded with opinions that may be rather prejudicial and they may not be based on truth. Amish's strict separation from the world only encourages more and more assumptions. But are they relevant?

2 Historical background

2. 1 The Dawn of the Amish

The Amish roots can be found in the 16th century in Switzerland. European social stability was endangered by many issues that had occurred during the last century. Economic problems arose since the worldwide trade brought goods that took the place of local tradesmen. The economy of Western Europe was particularly affected by inflation, increasing taxes, feudal system and initial disruption of the church system.

The discontent with the church and government heralded extensive social changes and ignited the Protestant Reformation. Overall anxiety was spreading like a plaque throughout Europe. People started to question everything they knew about the world until that time, including the understanding of religion and the role of church (Längin 1994, 57).

Back in the time, people were dependent on the Catholic Church and their priests with the study and interpretation of Bible. After the invention of printing press, growing number of people had the opportunity to obtain and read the Scripture. The doctrine of Catholic Church became a matter of doubt. People gained a new independence in the way of studying and interpreting Bible. At this time we can observe the dawn of Protestant Reformation (Kraybill et al 2013, 23).

As a result, in 1517, the catholic priest Martin Luther decided to protest against the Catholic Church and its teachings and he laid the foundations of Protestantism. Protestant thoughts were spreading across Europe and basic theses such as the absolute authority of Scripture, baptism in adulthood and religious freedom resulted in the establishment of a new religious offshoot – Anabaptism (Estep 1991, 17).

2. 2 Anabaptists

Anabaptism was founded in 1525 in Zürich, Switzerland. The name is to be translated as 'to re-baptize', since Anabaptists were strongly opposed to infant baptism, thus they baptized their members again in their adult age. In Catholic Church, baptism used to

have not only religious connotation but also civil because this act served as a demonstration of obtaining citizenship (Kraybill et al 2013, 24).

Anabaptists believed that baptism was to be taken very seriously by the person who was being baptized, as a token of their faith and commitment to leave their 'old self' and follow Jesus Christ. Thus, infant baptism appeared to Anabaptists as unsubstantial and incorrect. Anabaptists felt an intense urge to separate this spiritual act from the presence of state that was represented by Catholic Church. They were strongly opposed to church and state creating one unity. State was viewed as a worldly institution, therefore it was unthinkable to associate it with church, however that is exactly the way Catholic Church was operating (Kraybill 1989, 3).

According to Anabaptists, government was supposed to be an institution responsible for maintaining integrity in society. True church was meant to be strictly separated from the government and composed of members who were sincerely longing for righteousness. With such conviction, the Anabaptists stumbled severely over church and state officials. These authorities found themselves jeopardized; therefore they did everything possible to stop the Anabaptists from undermining their authority (Kraybill et al 2013, 24).

Some of the procedures, meant to prevent Anabaptists from disruption of the church and state order, were criminal punishments, such as imprisonment or even execution: beheading or burning at the stake (see appendix n. 1). State power found justification for resorting to such acts in a law that was issued thousands of years ago by Emperor Justinian. On the basis of this legislation, re-baptizing was recognized as an act of violating the law, thus it deserved death (Längin 1994, 116).

This persecution was responsible for loss of 2,500 lives between the years 1527 to 1614. Despite the years of martyrdoms, Anabaptists did not surrender; on the contrary, they were further strengthened in belief that the world was an evil and sinful place from which complete detachment was necessary. They also remained determined pacifists, refusing any form of violence, even in self-defense (Kraybill et al 2013, 24).

Long years of cruel affliction and endless oppression were recorded in a collection called *Martyr Mirrors*, which contains stories of defenseless Christians, hunted by their

oppressors. This book has a significant place in most Amish households and it is usually read from it during worship services.

Series of hardships caused Anabaptists to leave towns and seek refuge in the countryside (see appendix n. 2). Majority of them were spreading in rural areas of countries which are now known as Switzerland, Netherlands, Austria and Slovakia (Hostetler 1963, 27).

The key person in the history of Amish was Swiss Anabaptist Jakob Ammann, who distinguished himself due to his diverse ideas and opinions. His followers separated from the Anabaptists and began to call themselves Amish. Another important figure is the Swiss preacher Menno Simons, who, like Jakob Ammann, initiated his own religious offshoot and his supporters identified themselves as Mennonites. Jakob Ammann was discontented with the behavior of other Anabaptists; he preferred a complete separation from the world, strict shunning and a general return to the conservative fundamentals of Anabaptism. Mennonites were against and this caused a definite split of Amish and Mennonites in 1693 (Kraybill and Olshan 1994, 2).

2. 3 Exodus to America

Religious persecution made the Amish seek refuge overseas. The year 1737 had entered history as an important milestone for the future American Amish society. First Amish arrived to North America to settle in eastern Pennsylvania. The first Amish settlers experienced a tough start. They were forced to face Native Americans, series of droughts and poor harvests. The Amish were soon known as the Pennsylvania Dutch, coming from the word 'Deutsch' because of their German language. After several years living in a community in Pennsylvania, they developed their own dialect that is spoken there until this day (Längin 1994, 234).

With the growing number of new arrivals, greater differences between Amish commenced to arise. The 'New Order' group of Amish communities was quickly assimilating with other new American settlers. Their progressive approach included major lifestyle changes such as modern clothing, emphasis on education and loosening the practice of shunning. The other group of Amish, 'Old Order', was firmly against all these changes. Therefore this situation resulted into a schism in 1850. Of all the American Amish population, one third of them became officially the Old Order Amish and the rest either formed their own communities or joined the Mennonite Church.¹

Meanwhile in Europe, Amish found themselves struggling with the preservation of their communities. Owing to the fact that large part of them left to America in search of new homes, European Amish gradually vanished away. In addition, there was also a geographical reason for the decline. Since European Amish were tenant farmers, they faced great difficulties in order to maintain stable communities. They were not allowed to become landowners so they were involuntary scattered all over the country and far away from each other. The rest of Amish joined the Mennonites in 1937, ending the history of Amish people in Europe (Längin 1994, 231).

Back in America, the Amish community experienced another important milestone in their history – the World War I. Since the United States had joined the war, all men were needed for the army. This resulted into a propaganda campaign that was not

¹ PETRUZZELLO, Melissa. Amish, North American religious group. britannica.com [online]. [cit. 2020-30-01]. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Amish>

successful in the Amish society. As the Amish are determined pacifists, living by the rule 'turn the other cheek', there was no doubt that they would have refused to fight. As a result, being viewed as unpatriotic, they became victims of series of attacks and persecution from their American neighbors.²

During the World War II, Amish men were given a chance to redeem themselves by providing free labor. Their work for the country consisted of farming, hospital and firefighter work and working in national parks. During this time, young Amish men faced many temptations of the modern world since they were living away from their homes. If they managed to resist, their faith grew even stronger (Kraybill 1989, 218).

² Amish History Is A Story Of Struggle And Faith. exploring-amish-country.com [online]. [cit. 2020-30-01]. Available at: <http://www.exploring-amish-country.com/amish-history.html>

3 Amish Faith

The primary aim of Amish faith is to resemble Jesus in every aspect of their lives as closely as possible and live according to his teachings, to preserve an eternal life. The doctrine can be considered as plain and wholesome as Amish people are. It firmly stands on biblical pillars, such as the teaching of Jesus in the Sermon on mountain in the book of Matthew, chapter five to seven. It is a condensation of vital moral standards and values of every follower of Christ. There are no further additions or different sorts of interpretation since Bible is believed to be the ultimate guide in life (Hostetler 1995, 5), (Längin 1994, 71).

Salvation is believed to be obtained by grace through faith, meaning that it is a gift that no man deserves because of the human sinful nature. Good deeds and well-ordered lifestyle do not serve as a mean of salvation as it can be found in other Christian denominations. These actions merely spring from the fear of Holy God and endeavor to maintain an eternal life. Salvation, in the eyes of Amish, is something no one can gain on his own. Therefore, grace is needed and it is portrayed as God, giving his only son as a precious sacrifice for people.³

They put the verse in Romans 12:2 *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.”* into a full practice by living in complete separation from the outside world. Amish people shun anything associated with worldliness such as pursuit of wealth and possessions, own contentment, superficiality and any kind of immorality (Hostetler 1995, 5).

The Amish are not accustomed to sharing their faith with people outside their community. They do not feel the necessity to convert others and for the most part, they are not judgmental towards other beliefs. This is one of many different points where The Amish and The Mennonites diverge in their opinions. The Mennonites believe in the importance of sharing the gospel and not doing so is perceived as a lack of genuine faith (Hostetler 1983, 7).

³ Mennonite Information Center. Amish Faith and Beliefs. Lancasterpa.com [online]. [cit. 2020-05-02]. Available at: <https://lancasterpa.com/amish/amish-faith>

The Amish do not voice their beliefs to the outside world, they simply live by them. They do not use big words and opulent vocabulary if they decide to talk about their faith. Since they live in a constant hope regarding their salvation, rather than in bold assurance, they prefer to remain humble and reside in a quiet stillness of soul (Hostetler 1963, 8).

4 Amish lifestyle & culture

It might seem that Amish lifestyle has not changed that much since the Anabaptist times of the 16th century. It is true that Amish culture is closely tied with the history of their European German speaking ancestors. In the eyes of an uninitiated outsider, the Amish might appear as an outdated community of people who have willingly frozen in time. Amish nonconformity stands out like their horse ridden buggies on the road, among big American cars. It is true indeed that if we compare the average American and Amish, we find their differences glaring.

However, is such statement too presumptuous? What is the mindset behind Amish approach to life? We will attempt to find correct answers and further explore the way the Amish live and how it differs from their 'non-Amish' neighbors. We will also attempt to comprehend what exactly stands behind what seems to us like a veil of sacred untouchability over the Amish community.

4. 1 Submission as a way of life

To really dive into the study of Amish lifestyle and culture and understand their purpose in life, it is advisable to ask an Amishman himself. One Amish leader said about his community: "*We are not here to have a good time, or to make a lot of money or become famous. Instead we are here to do the will of God, love our fellow men, and prepare for eternity.*" (Kraybill and Olshan 1994, 7).

Although it might seem as a subjective view of point given by an individual, it is apparent that they are driven by their faith in God and the idea of eternity in every aspect of their lives. The will of God plays a crucial role in the life of an Amishman. As it was mentioned before in the chapter Amish faith, Amish doctrine leans on the teachings of Jesus. It is one of his quotes that laid foundation to this idea of surrendering oneself to the will of God. In his last hours before being crucified, Jesus said to God: "*Father, if you are willing, take this cup from me; yet not my will, but yours be done.*" (The Bible, Luke 22:42), (Kraybill 1989, 26).

This abstract concept is contained in a German word *Gelassenheit* and it permeates Amish world from the very core to surface. It describes a state of submission and humility towards higher power where a person completely sacrifices their desires and their life in all areas, to submit and bear a burden of their faith and community. It is about preferring the interests of others, of the whole community, over one's own. It expresses a constant battle of self-denying to erase any thoughts of self-interest. *Gelassenheit* is a complex picture assembled from several particular elements. We can find it in very details such as the way Amish people greet each other and talk to each other, how they dress and what they shun. It is visible in the way they approach their leaders and elderly people, how they tend to serve each other and in case of injustice, in their ability to 'turn the other cheek' (Kraybill 1989, 30).

In Amish world, obedience is required and pride is rejected. Pride is viewed as serious disobedience to the will of God that can lead to eternal separation from him. Another reason why pride is a threat to the Amish community is that it initiates individualism. Individualism is suppressed by many means such as ordained clothing, determined roles of men and women or the threat of excommunication.

4. 2 Church

Family functions as a basic building block of Amish church and a main social unit. Church system is divided into many smaller districts and its volume varies according to the number of families. The district is rather small, it is composed of around thirty families and together they create a 'congregation'. It is important to realize that Amish communities do not form their own villages or towns. They are scattered in the countryside, around rural towns of their non-Amish neighbors. Amish districts are small

because they are limited by distance that can be covered only by a horse-ridden buggy (Hostetler 1995, 9).

4. 3 Sunday service

There are no church buildings in Amish world as one would expect regarding Christian faith. Therefore, every congregation organizes its own church service in the home of one of its families (see appendix n. 3). Church service is held every other Sunday inside the house or in a barn (Hostetler 1963, 12). Hosting family is expected to not only open their home to others and welcome them but also to prepare refreshments in the form of Sunday lunch called *Liebesmahl* (love meal) for all to gather and eat together after the service. For the host family, this usually means that they have Saturday full of preparation and hard work. All women and girls in the household join to prepare enough food for everybody and men make sure that their house is in a proper state to hold a sacred worship service. To seat everybody, long backless benches are brought in the house or barn (Hostetler 1995, 9). Families take turns in this role of hosting. Such preparation might be financially demanding, thus households of newlyweds are usually pardoned from hosting church services at least for a year or two (Längin 1994, 130).

The service lasts about three to four hours and everybody is expected to be present. Only sick people are allowed to stay home. Church meeting consists of singing songs from hymnals, such as the *Ausband* that was written by Amish ancestors, the Anabaptists, in their captivity back in Europe. After singing, a sermon or two take place by chosen preachers. After that, prayers are read or prayed silently. The preachers also share several testimonies about their walk with Christ (Hostetler 1995, p.11). Amish humility is strongly present even there. Before preachers begin to speak, they express their thoughts on how inadequate they feel to preach. In addition, they could not finish their speech without a note to other leaders to correct any contradiction in their preaching (Kraybill et al 2010, 35).

Since everybody is expected to attend, children learn from a very young age to sit quietly with their parents during the whole meeting. They may be entertained by a quiet play with handkerchiefs or a little snack. When the ceremony ends, the gathering moves to the tables with lovingly prepared meal to eat and enjoy their fellowship. On other

Sundays, when the service is not held, families stay at home and rest or use this time to go visit their extended family or friends from different Amish district (Hostetler 1995, 12).

4. 4 Church hierarchy

We need to remember that the Amish community is not centralized. Consequently, each church district has its own authority in decision-making. In every district, there are officials that are responsible for their area. There are three kinds of officials in every district: bishop, preacher and deacon.

The bishop is considered as the main leader with the most responsibility. He is ordained to baptize new church members, to observe the communion and to unite marriages of the church members. He is also in charge of drawing lots for the selection of new ministers, of punishing disobedience by shunning or accepting the sinners back to the church after their repentance. The bishop also preaches at Sunday church service (Hostetler 1963, 86).

Preachers are authorized to read and teach the word of God. They need to be able to preach from their heart without any support of notes. They can visit other districts and preach somewhere else from time to time. They also help bishops, for example during ceremonies, such as the communion (Hostetler 1963, 86).

The deacon reads from the Bible at Sunday services and his work is mainly focused on preparation before the service or ceremony. He is an assistant to the bishop during baptisms; he makes sure that there is everything needed at its place. Deacon's position is not easy because one of his other duties is to inform the bishop about any violators of church orders. He also informs the violators about their excommunication (Hostetler 1963, 86).

4. 5 Membership

Church membership is obtained through baptism. As it was discussed before, Amish forebears, the Anabaptists had a strong conviction against infant baptism. For that reason, the choice to become a member of Amish church is made by teenagers who are mature enough to decide on their own, according to their consideration. Although

Amish children are expected to choose baptism, the decision is solely voluntary. The children grow up following patterns of Amish lifestyle even though they are not official members yet. They are not formally obligated to follow church rules; however, they need to obey their Amish parents (Kraybill et al 2010, 48).

To give the teenagers enough time and space to consider baptism but also taste the outside world, they are given special period of time called *Rumspringa*. During this time, they gain more independency and they are allowed to begin a courtship within the community. Although it might seem that Amish teenagers experience a joyful and carefree time during *Rumspringa*, they face the most difficult dilemma in their lives. If they choose to stay and be baptized into Amish church, they vow to follow the rules and remain faithful to the community for the rest of their lives. If they choose the other path, they will not be allowed to stay within the community. They would not be shunned by the family completely, since they did not violate the church rules because they did not possess an official membership (Kraybill 1989, 99).

4. 6 Baptism

Baptism is regarded as not only religious ceremony but also social act. It is to be taken very seriously by participants. The usual age for baptism varies from late teenage years to early twenties (Hostetler 1983, 26). When the applicant expresses his request to officially become an Amish member, he is prepared in advance through series of religious lessons five months prior the ceremony. The candidates are asked whether they are willing to deny themselves, the world and the devil and to submit themselves to God and the church. They are also asked if they choose to follow Christ, walk in faith and stay loyal to church until the rest of their lives. The last thing they are inquired is if they are willing to confess Jesus to be the Son of God. When the candidates agree upon all that was said, the bishop pours water on their heads and from this moment on, they enter a new chapter of their lives. Thenceforth, Amish teenagers evolve into Amish adult church members with a set of rights but also responsibilities (Kraybill 1989, 100).

4. 7 Ordnung

The German word *Ordnung* signifies a set of rules and orders; it is an outline that gives vision of proper Amish lifestyle. It is given to church members as a guideline so they are able to remain in the will of God and untouched by the sinful world and its danger. *Ordnung* is edited and approved every six months by the church officials. It is not intended to take the authoritative position of the Bible; it rather stems from biblical principles and it further develops Christian attributes and conventions (Kraybill et al 2010, 53). Nonetheless, some might find it difficult to see any connection between specific rules and the Scripture. By following these rules, members practice the approach of *Gelassenheit*, their deeds show respect to the community and suppress any indication of arrogance (Kraybill et al 2010, 57).

Every church district has its own *Ordnung* so there could be some slight differences among them. Some bishops might be more tolerant than others. Since *Ordnung* illustrates the right way of Amish life, it is learnt by children simply by growing within an Amish family and obeying and observing parents. It is not a written collection of rules that the children would have to remember by heart (Kraybill 1989, 95).

What are some of the guidelines given by *Ordnung*? Regarding physical appearance, men are prescribed to have their hair cut short with bangs; sideburns and moustache are forbidden because it symbolizes the look of a soldier. Women wear long uncut hair (Kraybill 1989, 54). It is also defined what color and style of clothing they can wear. Bright and bold colors such as orange, yellow or red are prohibited. When it comes to daily life, the Amish are prohibited to use tractors for their field work, to join military, to pursue high school education, travel by plane and many more. The impact of such rules is that the community works as one body, there is a sense of closeness and belonging (Kraybill 1989, 98).

4. 8 Family

As mentioned before, family is a crucial foundation of Amish society. Family life is one of the main pillars of Amish values. Amish families are large, with six or seven children on average (see appendix n. 4). Since birth control is prohibited, children are expected and welcomed. They are happily accepted as blessings from God. With a gradual

implement of worldly health care, infant mortality has decreased over the years. Therefore, Amish families thrive and the number of church members increases (Kraybill and Olshan 1994, 10).

The aim of Amish family is to bring children and raise them according to the Bible, in the spirit of *Gelassenheit* so that by their actions they bear fruits and remain in the will of God. The roles of both parents are firmly established. Husband is the head of the family and his wife is submitted to him. Together with God they create a cord of three that is not quickly broken. (The Bible, Ecclesiastes 4:12) Thus, divorce is not an option in Amish world (Hostetler 1983, 19).

The role of the woman is to take care of everything regarding household. Her territory is the house and she is in full charge with every household chore such as cooking, cleaning, washing, sewing clothes and gardening. Men are responsible for farming, so everything regarding the farm and farm animals is in their control. Man also deals with finances of the family although money is used by the husband and wife equally because the farm usually belongs to both (Hostetler 1983, 19).

In marriage, the couple is very cautious about the way they treat each other because they believe that they set an example for their children. They view each other not only as spouses but also as members of the church so they treat each other with respect. Respect is a strong foundation of Amish marriage. To dishonor a spouse would not only mean to hurt them but also to disturb standards of the community (Hostetler 1963, 152).

4. 9 Children

Since babies are expected, they are born into a big family and showered with love and attention from their parents, brothers and sisters, aunts and uncles and grandparents. Children are regarded as innocent and without sin because they are not able to differentiate the good from evil. That is the reason why infant baptism is not necessary in the eyes of Amish because children are simply gifts from God and first they need to grow up to be able to receive baptism in full consciousness. However, they are disciplined by parents from the age of two years and a strict upbringing follows them until late teenage years. Children are raised according to the Bible and the *Ordnung*. They learn about the difference between them and their non-Amish neighbors. By observing parents they learn about Amish lifestyle and because they grow up in the

community, they rarely ask questions about Amish way of life. Amish lifestyle is their standard of what they know best and what they see in the outside world is viewed as odd (Hostetler 1963, 154).

Children also learn to help with household chores and with work around the farm. Boys learn how to take care of farm animals and in general they follow the steps of their father. Girls learn basic cooking skills, they help their mother to clean the house and take care of the needs of the family. In their older age, they are given a farm animal to take care of for a purpose of responsibility (Hostetler 1983, 21).

Another essential thing that Amish children are taught by parents is German, a linguistic heritage from Anabaptists. The whole family gathers every other day to study written German together by reading German Bible. Little children learn by repeating words after parents, memorizing the alphabet and trying to spell the German words by themselves. Children are also exposed to German during Sunday church service and other church ceremonies. Therefore, Amish children are usually bilingual; they master German as well as English (Hostetler 1963, 154).

4. 10 Education

Amish children finish their education in the eighth grade which is in the age of fourteen or fifteen. After completing the last school year, they join their parents in work at home by helping with farm or a family business. Higher education is not encouraged, on the contrary, it is perceived as unnecessary and too precarious. It is associated with feared individualism and pride. More education means more knowledge and knowledge leads to independency and self-awareness that would harm the spirit of yielding (Stevick 2014, 69).

Children do not attend public schools; there are special Amish schools in proximity to every church district. Only the Amish have the ability to take on the role of a teacher and they are not further educated in that matter. Amish schools have officially existed since 1972 after the authorization by the U. S. Supreme Court. Until then, Amish children were obligated to attend American public schools and their parents were not cooperating with such an ordinance. School buses were one of many issues for the parents because bus rides were violating the rules of *Ordnung*. In that period of time, parents who did not send their children to the public school were penalized or even put

into prison. Over time, this incident resulted into a compromise. In order to preserve the freedom of religion, Amish schools were permitted (Stevick 2014, 71).

Amish schools are small, with one or two classrooms and around thirty students. Children learn rather by memorizing and recitation than through critical thinking. Teachers do not give children space in class to seek new information by themselves, to discover the world around them freely where it would be possible for children to ask such questions that would possibly initiate doubts about Amish rules or lifestyle (Stevick 2014, 70).

The course of study is more focused on practical skills instead of solving abstract rational problems. Pupils are taught English, German, geography, mathematics and health. Subjects such as religion or science are missing. Although some time in the morning is devoted to reading from the Bible and prayer. The reason why religion is not taught is that it could defile Amish beliefs by reasoning and analysis (Kraybill 1989, 134).

In regard to such a different approach to education and school system, one could wonder in which position Amish pupils stand compared to non-Amish American pupils. The Iowa Test of Basic Skills taken in 2009 and 2011 revealed that the results of Amish students were better, sometimes even two grades higher than those of American students. Previous tests have shown that English vocabulary was the weakest point in Amish results. It is understandable, since Amish children are bilingual. On the contrary, the Amish excelled in spelling or arithmetic. This study has proven that despite all the differences and unique conception of education, the Amish way is effective (Stevick 2014, 72).

4. 11 In war with progress

As it was mentioned in the chapter Historical background, the Amish have always been determined pacifists, since the time of Anabaptist martyrs in Europe. Thus, the idea of the Amish battling might appear contradictory. Nonetheless, this oxymoron has proven to be relevant in the form of the Amish finding themselves in constant battle with progress and modernity. Where does this determination to resist new technology come from?

To find an explanation, we need to return to the basics. The Amish shun anything that could possibly ignite the flame of sin in the heart of an Amishman. To be more specific, it is arrogance and pride that are feared the most. With the growing number of new technical inventions in the form of all sorts of gadgets and machines, cars, planes, phones, washing machines, tractors, etc., the human race has been leaning on its own understanding more than ever and maybe even started to feel almost invincible. This is what the Amish are afraid of concerning technological progress.

In many aspects, the Amish lifestyle might resemble the lifestyle of the 16th century at first glance. Kerosene lanterns are used for light and gasoline engines, water wheels and windmills generate power. To depend on electricity from power lines would mean to conform to this world. Owing to the fact that the majority of Amish are farmers, horse power is used as substitution for tractors in field work. For traveling, black horse ridden buggies are employed (Hostetler 1983, 14).

It is interesting to observe the extent to which these ordered replacements are applied. In regard to the usage of cars, the Amish are permitted to use them, provided that they do not drive them. Cars together with buses and trains are used sporadically, mainly for the purpose of long distance traveling. Traveling by horse and buggy ensures that the community remains in near contact and that social ties persist also in the future. Despite the fact that the presence of horse driven buggies on highways among fast driving cars is very dangerous, this mean of transport has its place in the world of Amish (Hostetler 1995, 31).

Amish relationship towards phones has always been quite complicated (a landline phone to be more precise, not a cell phone). The usage of phones was never officially forbidden by bishops, however, it is a taboo for a family to own one at home. In case of emergency, phone is borrowed from a non-Amish neighbor or phones are installed away from homes, in a barn for example. There are also special community phone booths in some districts. Someone could wonder what is so sinful about calling a distant friend or a relative to ask how they are. The fact is that the Amish have developed a skill of communicating through silence. They are very attentive to nonverbal language. A modest smile, small gestures, a subtle nod are all messages that no landline phone can convey. Another reason is that by calling a relative for example, a family visit is not so

essential anymore. Family ties are very precious to the Amish and by phone calls; people grow apart in a way (Kraybill 1989, 144).

4. 12 Farming

Amish farming skills are a precious heritage from the persecuted Anabaptists. Since the early Anabaptists were forced to flee towns in attempt to save their lives, they started to settle down in the countryside where they had to rely solely on themselves. Agriculture was the only possible resource in this case. In this period of time, they succeeded in implementing new methods of farming, such as crop rotation and soil fertilizing. Such agrarian skills were brought to the North America by the first Amish settlers all the way from Europe and they have been being used until this day. Relying upon the fruits of soil reflects Amish dependence on God because they live in a constant hope for God to provide for them with a plentiful harvest (Kraybill 1989, 188).

They have very positive relationship towards the land that is in their ownership. They cherish the soil because it is regarded as a life giving gift from God that cannot be taken for granted. Therefore, they avoid using any harsh chemicals or the newest technologies. The old way is the best way according to them (see appendix n. 5). Also when cultivating, they keep the future well-being of their descendants in mind, in order to leave behind a healthy and fertile piece of land (Längin 1994, 352).

Farm production serves merely for the purposes of livelihood, as means of supporting a family. The Amish do not farm in order to grow a business. They are very cautious about the attitude of their heart towards material possessions and money. Since they are very careful not to store up treasures here on Earth (according to Matthew 6:19-21), they avoid any opportunities of self-enrichment. For example, there was a case of Amish family finding oil on their property. In response to it, they sold it and moved away in fear of fortune and in fear of resembling the world (Längin 1994, 352).

Farming is not the only way to provide for an Amish family. This was proven to be true in 1960, when the prices of farm land increased and young married couples were not able to afford a farm, if they did not inherit one from their parents. They were forced to search for work somewhere else. They found employment in many different fields, on positions such as a carpenter or a cabinet maker. Some of them work in Amish shops, trades and services such as engine shops, harness shops, farm equipment shops or even

bookstores. Services such as locksmithing and carriage-making could usually be found on Amish farms (Hostetler 1983, 16).

Over the years, the Amish community has covered a large variety of services. Still there are some services that the community was not able to cover. In case of need, they still have to rely on the non-Amish doctors, dentists, veterinarians or lawyers (Kraybill 1989, 200).

4. 13 Clothing

This last chapter of Amish lifestyle and culture will be dedicated to clothing. The reason why it needs to be mentioned is that clothes create the main element that distinguishes the Amish from non-Amish at the first sight. The way of clothing represents Amish beliefs and values; just a look at Amish clothes conveys a profound message. It is a message of Amish separation, uniqueness, determination, strong faith, submission and also historical cultural heritage. To the Amish, clothing functions as an indicator of what is good and what is bad or rather who belongs to the community and who does not.

According to their beliefs, clothes are the consequence of the first sin on Earth, when Adam and Eve ate the apple from the forbidden tree. Prior to this moment, they were not able to acknowledge their nudity or even feel ashamed for it. Ever since they had sinned, humankind was predestined to cover themselves, therefore, clothes are seen as something that bears a yoke of shame. People wear clothes to cover shame, for that reason, it is not admissible to decorate it or show any sign of extravagance or attractiveness. The cut and shape of Amish dress are modest and plain and the colors usually vary from white, grey, pale blue, dark blue and black. Zippers and buttons are replaced with pins and hook and eye fasteners because even such practical accessories are believed to have the ability to cause pride (Längin 1994, 126).

Men wear black broadfall trousers and they use suspenders because belts are prohibited according to *Ordnung*. They also wear simple long-sleeved shirt with a vest, coat and a hat (see appendix n. 6). Dress shirts can be in several colors and shades, wine, purple, blue or even green. The wide-brimmed hat is worn every time an Amishman goes

outside of the house. For summer, there is a lighter version in form of a straw hat. For hairstyle, hair is cut above ears with bangs over forehead and married men are expected to grow a beard with no moustache (Kraybill 1989, 55).

Women wear long dresses with sleeves, usually in purple, wine, blue and green with black stockings (see appendix n. 7). The length of the dress can be various, some dresses end below knees or they can also touch the heels. A white apron is worn over the dress. An essential part of women's clothes is a cap or a bonnet that covers hair (see appendix n. 8). Color of the head covering is mostly white but girls between thirteen until marriage wear a black one (Kraybill 1989, 52).

It may seem that in Amish dress code, there is a complete lack of freedom and self-expression. It is true that the uniformity of Amish clothes leaves no space to express an individual style and taste. Amish style of clothing is designed to eliminate individualism. However, there is a freedom in uniformity too. They are not enslaved to the newest modern looks and outfits and there is no need to compare with each other. The Amish do not spend hours in front of a mirror only to figure out what to wear for a Sunday service (Kraybill 1989, 60).

5 Challenges

In order to retain an objective point of view towards this community, it is wise to look at the picture from different angles. To remain objective, we need to consider some negative aspects as well as the positive. This chapter will present several issues and potential matters that can be found within the community.

5. 1 Excommunication

Firstly, we will examine the way the Amish deal with transgressors of the *Ordnung*. With a complete excommunication being the last step of the process, there are different layers and levels of punishment. First level begins when a deacon visits the violator because either he was a witness of the act of sin or he was told that somebody had sinned. In this case, the violator is convicted in private and if the matter is not serious and the sinner shows a sincere regret, he is forgiven. Second and third levels involve public confession of the sin. During the second level, the transgressor only sits before a congregation and confesses his sins but during the third, he is kneeling. Both processes finish by the sinner promising to obey the *Ordnung*. The fourth level means a restriction that lasts six weeks. This time is intended for the sinner to contemplate about his sins and the gravity that is hidden behind. He is shunned by the community during this time. If he repents and confesses at the end, he is accepted back into the community (Kraybill 1989, 112).

The excommunication does not have to be only six weeks long, it can last until the moment the transgressor repents and admits his actions. In this case, an approach of shunning (*Meidung*) is applied. The person is excluded from family and church activities. He is avoided by members of his family, he is not permitted to sit with them at one table or have a conversation. Contact is avoided under all circumstances to a bare minimum. The aim is that this person has time to think about the consequences of his wrongdoing and that he feels ashamed and regrets it. Church members are obligated to favor church matters before family matters, therefore, it is common that husbands and wives shun each other or that parents are required to avoid their child (Kraybill 1989, 117).

There are also cases of church members who willingly decide to be excommunicated completely and leave the community. It is usually the young adults who choose not to

conform to the rules and leave, although the percentage is relatively low, about ten to fifteen percent. They are excommunicated either for constantly challenging the boundaries or they are attracted by (figuratively speaking) the lawn that seems to be greener on the other side. Some of the reasons for the latter would be if they decide to seek the truth in different kinds of religions or if they seek an assurance of salvation in different forms of Christianity. Such teachings of a certain salvation are too prideful to the Amish, thus this person is not allowed to stay in the community. No matter what the transgression is, the result of excommunication is broken family relations that cannot be restored, provided that the transgressor is not willing to repent and obey the orders (Hostetler 1983, 40).

5. 2 One big family

The Amish community is a closed society, excluded from the outside world. The most common way for the community to gain new members is through childbirth. New members generally do not come from the outside since marriage is allowed only within the community among members. Since the Amish are all descendants from one group of Anabaptist settlers who fled Europe to find freedom in the North America, there has not been too much space for genetic diversity over the years. These circumstances manifest in a form of genetic mutations and diseases. Throughout the Amish community, there are several types of diseases to be found that affect Amish babies.

Some babies are born with all kinds of dwarfism or syndromes such as microcephaly, mental retardation, deafness, muscular dystrophy and neurologic conditions. Amish parents approach such children with a special kind of tenderness. These children are viewed as God's special children who were created the way they were supposed to be. Parents yield to God even in such a difficult situation and they see a divine purpose behind their struggle. Older children and adults with disabilities are engaged in the ordinary life as much as possible. They help with chores and work around the house. There are also Amish schools for children with special needs where they learn basic skills such as reading and writing (Kraybill et al 2010, 167).

5. 3 Patriarchal world

The role of women in Amish society is strictly predetermined. Their career consists of motherhood, being a housewife and a homemaker. Their occupation includes taking care of children, cooking, cleaning, sewing, gardening, food canning, milking the cows and feeding chickens. Woman's responsibility is to achieve a certain standard of living for her family. She lives in submission to her husband and she serves him and their community. In church, she is not allowed to preach but she possesses a right to vote during congregation meetings. Since further education is discouraged, she is not allowed to pursue any vocation that requires further knowledge (Hostetler 1963, 18).

The Amish regard gender equality from their own point of view. They believe that men and women were created equal by God but with a different calling for their life. These different roles are not incompatible with gender equality. Therefore, men are called to do the hard men's work and women are called to take care of the home. According to the Bible, a man is supposed to be the head of a woman and woman is called to respect her husband (Kraybill and Olshan 1994, 220).

6 Positives

6. 1 Mutual aid

To observe the community from the other side, we will focus on some of its strong sides. One of them is solidarity and eagerness to help each other. Children learn to help their parents with work at home from very young age. They learn to help also by witnessing acts of kindness every day in the community. These patterns acquired in childhood follow them throughout the life. For example, when young couple is newly married, their parents support them by preparing home for the new family. They might have expanded their farm with an additional building or even buy a new farm. In return, the parents are taken care of when they reach an older age and cannot work on the farm

anymore. In general, the older generation is approached with respect and provided with products from the farm by their children (Hostetler 1983, 30).

The bonds and sense of solidarity are very strong. Within the church district, everybody knows each other by name, everybody is related to someone and the family lines are twisted and tangled together like the roots of a tree. The Amish do not know what anonymity is. Since the relationships are so close, everybody depends on the help of other members in case of need or emergency. One of the most common ways of aid is an event called barn raising (see appendix n. 9). The whole church district comes together and in one or two days, they build a new barn for one of their members who is in need. Everybody is present, men do the hard work, women prepare food and drinks for the workers and children watch or help pass the tools. They all work for free and everyone physically able to work is expected to join. There are also other opportunities for mutual help such as weddings, work around the house and on fields or preparation for Sunday church service. The Amish do not rely on worldly social system with insurance, thus, in case of a tragedy or accident, other members come and support the affected family. Young farmers who lack enough capital to establish the farm are lent money without interest. Therefore, the Amish live with a feeling of security with no fear of the future (Hostetler 1963, 145).

6. 2 Self-sustainability

Another strong side of the community is a complete self-sustainability. The separation enabled them to find ways of independence towards the state. The reason for that goes back to the Anabaptist times when they were forced to cut any ties connecting them to government due to severe persecution. The Amish inherited this ability of self-sustainability in every aspect of life. In Amish home, food is homemade, prepared from ingredients grown on farm. Clothing is sewn at home by skillful hands of a housewife. Children are taught by other church members in small one-room schools. Power is obtained by gasoline engines and light by kerosene lamps. Horses are used for hard work and traveling. In case of need, help from other members is always available.

The only situation when the Amish accept and seek for help in the outside world is the case of medical urgency. There are no doctors or nurses among them as a result of prohibition given upon further education. The Amish usually avoid medical help to the

point where it is life threatening situation. Since there is a lack of any commercial insurance, they rely on the congregation with paying the bills if the family does not have enough financial means. Through charity, the community is able to support those in need. To seek security in the world would be perceived as an unfaithful approach towards God and the church (Kraybill et al 2010, 76).

6. 3 Nature

The Amish live in the rhythm of the nature. Their lives are well adapted to the constant change and given patterns of seasons. They are accustomed to plowing, sowing, fertilizing and harvesting at the right time. Everyday life unfolds according to that cycle. The Amish feel a certain responsibility given by God to them to take care of the soil and cultivate it, similar to Adam in the Eden when he was appointed to rule over all creation on earth. It is a divine purpose that they strive to fulfill every day. To connect with nature is to connect with God. Consequently, the Amish cultivate the land with great respect and consideration.

Fields are also protected to be preserved without damage for the next generation. The Amish avoid anything that would interrupt the divine order of nature. There is no chemistry to be found in Amish farming, no artificial chemical fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides or harvest aids. Genetic engineering and biotechnology are also a taboo in the community. Since the 20th century, they have been facing a continuous struggle with balance in the matter of increasing productivity versus maintaining farming the old good way. In contrast to the American way of farming, the Amish way may seem very demanding and complicated. It is true that sometimes, the non-Amish farmers have their fields harvested sooner and the process takes less time. However, there are also situations when the Amish way succeeds. For example, when the fields are too wet in the spring, the tractors cannot be used because the mud would literally incarcerate them. On the contrary, horses are still able to move in the mud, thus, they have less trouble plowing the soil (Längin 1994, 355).

Generally, Amish farms prosper and blossom. Precious wisdom acquired through hundreds years of agricultural experience is passed from father to son, from generation to generation. When observing their work, it might seem that they have almost an inborn aptitude to farming. This talent is very apparent in the state of Pennsylvania,

Lancaster County, in the heart of Amish settlements. Some of the lands that Amish farmers cultivate there used to belong to the founder of the state, William Penn. It is rather a small part of property owned by them, yet the Amish manage to prosper there intensively with the help of their agricultural skills. Nonetheless, the Amish attribute the success not to their abilities but to the blessing of God (Hostetler 1963, 67).

The Amish love spending time in the countryside. Without technologies, Internet and television, there is not many indoor leisure activities that would keep them inside, especially on a warm sunny day. Children learn from a very young age to cherish God's beauty of creation. Parents teach them how to approach nature and animals with good care and responsibility. In addition to pets, children are responsible for feeding smaller farm animals such as chicken and other kinds of poultry. That way, a tender relationship towards the environment is passed on another generation.

7 External view

7. 1 Popular culture

The world is desperate to satisfy its hunger... While they focus on our beards and buggies and bonnets, they miss entirely what our faith is about. – Amish (Umble and Weaver-Zercher 2008, 3)

To gain another perspective upon the Amish community from an external point of view, it is necessary to zoom out and examine the way a modern popular culture portrays it. According to what was mentioned in previous chapters, it is true indeed that Amish ways are very specific and unique because they are built on rock steady pillars of faith. Studying Amish approach to life may be quite an intriguing experience. The difference between the two worlds is so profound that it has been a subject of many novels, movies and TV shows. It is a well-known fact that eccentricity draws attention and sells well. Some media have clothed the community in a cloak of sensation which, for Amish, resulted into an unsolicited attention.

Since there is an abundance of shows and literature with Amish theme, some of them will be chosen and further examined.

7. 1. 1 Literature

Authors inspired by Amish lifestyle write mainly fiction stories or stories influenced by someone's experience with Amish life. In general, with some exceptions, the books could be classified as romance novels, science fiction or crime thrillers. There are also several books with Amish theme devoted to children. One of them is a book called *Plain Girl* (1955), written by an American author Virginia Sorensen (see appendix n. 10).

Plain Girl tells a story about a little Amish girl Esther who is forced to attend a public non-Amish school. She knows that she will have to face the outside world and she is afraid of an eventual collision between the two worlds. Her brother was shunned because he chose living in the sinful world. Esther decides to secretly help her brother and slowly but surely she starts to engage with the outside world behind the back of her parents.

Another book, set in Amish environment, is called *Plain Truth* (2001), written by Jodi Picoult (see appendix n. 11). This story takes place on an Amish farm where there was a dead body of an infant found in a barn. Medical examination proved that the baby was suffocated. An eighteen year old Amish girl called Katie is suspected from this awful crime and her defense attorney is a typical modern business woman Ellie who is obligated to stay on the farm with Katie for some time to study her case. Ellie struggles with a lifestyle that is so distant from everything she knows. Katie finds herself in a stalemate because she is not only accused from a murder but also from adultery, since she was not married. The Amish community is forced to cope with such situation for which there is no precedent.

Another well-known author of Amish fiction is Beverly Lewis. She has written series of romantic fiction stories such as *The Shunning* (1997), *The Betrayal* (2001), *The Covenant* (2002) or *The Preacher's Daughter* (2005). *The Shunning* served as a model for a movie drama of the same name from 2011. This novel tells a story about a girl Katie who was born into the Amish community but struggles to fit in. Her secret desire is to explore the outside world but she is afraid that she would disobey God by her actions. She has a talent for music but her parents try to suppress it because her music success would lead to individualism. One day she finds out about a family secret that had been hidden from her and she begins to question herself and the community even more.

The last book that will be mentioned is a book representing a completely different genre and that is science fiction. An American author Paul Levinson wrote a mysterious science fiction series, one of them is called *The Silk Code* (1999). Phil D'Amato, a forensic detective, is the main character of this novel. His presence pervades three other Levinson's novelettes and two novels. In *The Silk Code*, the detective tries to solve a mysterious riddle of an unknown disease involving biotechnology and genetics of the Neanderthals. It seems like the Amish are well aware of this biotechnology and might know more about the disease. The question is: do they hide a secret remedy for the deadly illness from the world and if so, are they really Amish?

7. 1.2 Documentaries

In 2011, the second channel of the British television channel BBC broadcasted a documentary called *Leaving Amish Paradise*. These series follow a journey of two Amish families who found themselves in the process of leaving the community to start a new life outside, in the modern world. Both of the families had decided to pursue God on their own with the support of an evangelical church which challenged the rules of Amish church. They experienced shunning and excommunication firsthand. The documentary portrays their gradual transformation into modern Americans, from buying their first car, to traveling abroad and finding new home.

Amish: A Secret Life (2012) is the title of another documentary by BBC. It allows viewers to see daily life of a typical Amish family living in Lancaster County. Camera crew comes early in the morning and documents the whole day until the very moment when the family goes to sleep. It provides an intimate view into the Old Order Amish lifestyle. By letting the cameramen to film them, they risk losing everything they know and everyone who is dear to them. They risk excommunication. The family is well aware of the threat they face, yet they feel completely in peace about it because they believe it will serve for good, as a mean of sharing their values with the rest of the world.

7. 1.3 TV shows

Amish: World's Squarest Teenagers (2010) is a TV show released by British television channel called Channel 4. This show aims to portray the differences between modern British youth and Amish youth by following a group of Amish teenagers during their time of *Rumspringa*. Two Amish girls and three Amish boys are sent overseas to Britain, to experience wild life of British teenagers by living with different British families. It is their first time tasting alcohol and street life, hearing rock music and seeing different religions. This cultural exchange leaves the Amish completely perplexed. In comparison with the British teens, the Amish seem more mature and wise. Through their eyes, the viewers gain a new perspective on the modern world and the cultural shock is source of several humorous situations.

TLC, an American television channel, filmed a reality television series called *Breaking Amish* (2012). In this show, a group of young Amish adults decides to go to New York

for some time because they consider leaving the community completely. This journey allows them to learn about the life in the world and about the advantages and disadvantages that come with it. Seasons 3 and 4 present a different group of Amish and locations of shooting also vary since the cast visits Los Angeles in Season 4. The show caused certain controversy among its viewers because the overall behavior of the cast raised some doubts about authenticity of the show. In the show, the cast is presented as Amish but pictures from the past of some of them and their approach to modernity point to the fact that these people might have been excommunicated from the community a long time ago.

7. 1. 4 Movies

First movie to be mentioned is called *Witness* (1985). It is a crime thriller movie starring Harrison Ford, Kelly McGillis, Lukas Haas and directed by Peter Weir. It tells a story of an eight year old Amish boy who involuntarily happens to be a key witness of a murder. An undercover police officer is the victim and his colleague, detective John Book, is responsible for investigation of his case. To solve the case, the detective is forced to approach the community and he eventually disguises himself as an Amish to look more trustworthy and to find answers. As the story unfolds, the investigation puts not only the detective but also the Amish boy in danger.

Another movie with Amish theme is called *Amish Grace* (2010). It is a television movie, directed by Dylan Scharping, starring Kimberly Williams-Paisley, Tammy Blanchard, and Matt Letscher. It is based on a true story of tragic event that took place in West Nickel Mines School, Pennsylvania in 2006. It was a one-room Amish school that became target of shooting during which five Amish girls were killed. This tragedy is associated with an extraordinary response of the community recognized by public and media because they expressed sincere forgiveness towards the gunman. In the movie, parents of the victim also express reconciliation with the killer. However, not everyone is quick to forgive and the movie further reveals difficult journey of mother of the victim who struggles to acknowledge her lost. This event shook with her whole world and at this point, faith becomes crucial on her way to find peace.

For Richer or Poorer is a comedy from 1997, directed by Bryan Spicer and starring Tim Allen and Kirstie Alley. The two main actors play wealthy married couple where

the husband is a businessman; he runs a business in real estate. The couple struggles severely in their marriage and they are very close to divorce. Meanwhile, the man's accountant is involved in tax evasion and the business is endangered. The couple decides to flee the city because authorities start to look for them since they are legally responsible for the evasion. They find their shelter in the Amish community and they gradually learn to blend in. This transition is not easy for wealthy people like them used to the convenience of a modern city. During their involuntary stay in the community, there is a new hope for their marriage to be restored because they suddenly have time for each other to communicate and find what was lost a long time ago due to the busy lifestyle. Unfortunately, this idyllic life in the countryside cannot last forever and soon they will have to be confronted with reality.

7. 1.5 Series

There are several television series where the authors found inspiration in the Amish community and let them appear in one or more episodes. One of such series is the well-known American sitcom *The Simpsons*. The Amish appeared in the story two times, in Season 6, Episode 4 (1994) and in Season 14, Episode 19 (2003). In the Episode 4, the Simpsons go on a family trip and visit Amish Country. Homer challenges Amish forgiveness and pacifism by annoying everybody around and Marge is ashamed of his behavior. In Episode 19, Homer is assigned to build a tree house but he lacks any work ethic so Marge decides to call the Amish to build the house. The Amish come and what follows is a scene that closely resembles the event of barn raising. Both of the Amish appearances in the sitcom illustrate Amish traits, in the first case it is their nonresistance and in the second case it is their diligence and team work.

7. 1.6 Music

The most famous song about the Amish is a parody called *Amish Paradise* (1996) made by an American musical comedian Alfred Matthew Yankovic, known as "Weird Al". It is a parody of a hip hop and rap song *Gangsta's Paradise* (1995) by American rapper Coolio. In *Amish Paradise*, singer describes the simple life of an Amishman, the perks and difficulties of life spent by farming and living in the community. The contrast of plain Amish life and a modern rap song, both combined in a music video, is a source of decent humor.

7. 2 Tourism

Another point of view that is possible to use to examine the community is a view through the eyes of tourists who are drawn to the community due to its peculiar ways. It is an interesting paradox that Amish efforts to separate from the world actually caused the world to come closer to them and be interested in their lifestyle. The community that was once persecuted in the 16th century is now praised and sometimes even admired by the public.

Amish tourism was born in the 20th century with the development of travel industry. Also with technology development, the Amish began to distinguish themselves by not holding on to the progress and they began to slowly but surely distance themselves from the rest of the world even more. Media played a key role in the growth of Amish tourism too. The first signs of tourism can be traced to the late thirties, after the Great Depression. In 1937, the very first Amish tourist booklet was published and attracted many visitors. Another thing that intrigued potential tourists was controversy; in particular, it was the incident of Amish parents who were not willing to send their children to public schools. In 1965, 2 million tourists visited Lancaster County annually. Until 1989, the number grew to 5 million tourists per year (Kraybill 1989, 228).

In towns with large population of the Amish, such as Lancaster County in Pennsylvania, Holmes County in Ohio and Lagrange County in Indiana, there are special tourist sites and shops where people can buy products with Amish theme. Tourist sites and attractions provide enough entertainment for the tourists who are hungry to experience Amish life while maintaining the real Amish life untouched as much as possible (Kraybill 1989, 228).

Another form of tourist site and more authentic one is a stand owned by native Amish. In these stands, the Amish sell Amish food and handmade products. It is a unique opportunity for the tourists to see real Amish in their traditional clothing and buy from them authentic souvenirs. This compromise allows the Amish to control the distance between them and the world while still offering a piece of their world to the tourists, a piece that is plain and simple as they are (Kraybill 1989, 231).

Regardless of the type of tourism, it is true that the interest of outsiders in general is nothing what the Amish would desire. Most of the tourist sights are owned by non-Amish and their business brings a sense of economic and cultural exploitation. The Amish desire to live in peace, without the presence of tour buses and curious outsiders taking pictures of everything around them. Their only wish is to remain separated.

8 Conclusion

This thesis serves as a foundation of essential knowledge that is needed for a deeper understanding of the Amish and their culture. It contains further analysis of particular aspects of Amish life and most importantly, the mindset and hidden meaning behind certain elements that are visible from the outside perspective. It allows the reader to solve the riddles of what, at the first sight, appears as hermetically sealed community entwined with misconceptions.

Amish roots are dipped in the blood of their European forebears. The Amish are descendants of persecuted Anabaptist community that found shelter on American shores in the 18th century and decided to settle down in the land of new found freedom. The cause of the martyrdom they experienced lays within the name of the community. Anabaptist means re-baptized since the members were strongly opposed to infant baptism, common practice of the church. As a sign of disapproval, several people decided to be baptize again and this moment ignited series of difficulties and the birth of the Amish.

Amish beliefs are strictly biblical and there are no additional teachings. The Amish believe in divine Trinity – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They live in a constant attempt to be conformed to the teachings of Jesus and not the world. This desire and hope for salvation is supported by complete separation from the outside world. It also includes a

special kind of approach to life, a certain kind of humility and meekness. Amish submission is reflected in everyday life.

The Amish shun anything that would provoke individualism. Therefore, they wear the same clothes, avoid new technologies, live in close-knit districts and live according to rules, given by Amish officials, called the Ordnung. Families are large and important. Farming is perceived as their calling but it does not have to be the only source of income. The Amish community lives in harmony with nature, it is always ready to help its members and it functions as a body of people that are able to live without the support of modern world. However, it is also community where women are predestined to become housewives, where some babies are born with genetic disorders and where disobedience of church rules is punished.

The Amish are popular topic for media, especially for television and literature because of their diversity and uniqueness. There are many books and movies with Amish theme and generally, the plot includes a certain controversy or romance. Television shows featuring the Amish are powered by controversy to a point where the authenticity is questioned. In conclusion, it is a topic that serves as a bottomless well of fictional stories.

Amish distinctiveness attracts not only authors and directors but also the general public. This interest has developed to such extent that people come from all over the world to see and taste a piece of what they perceive as Amish paradise. It resulted into special 'Amish tourist sites' and the Amish are not at peace with it because they never intended their separation to become a tourist attraction.

Understanding Amish values and beliefs enables the reader to see Amish world objectively, without the curtain of prejudice. Perhaps it can also serve as a mirror for us, modern people, to examine our own values and evaluate our approach to life.

9 Bibliography

9. 1 Print sources

The Bible, New International Version (NIV)

ESTEP, William Roscoe. *Příběh křtěnců: radikálové evropské reformace*. Praha: Evangelické nakladatelství, 1991.

HOSTETLER, John Andrew. *Amish society*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1963.

HOSTETLER, John Andrew. *Amish Life*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1983. ISBN 9780585181943.

HOSTETLER, John Andrew. *The Amish: Revised Edition*. Scottsdale, Pennsylvania: Herald Press, 1995. ISBN 9780585262840.

KRAYBILL, Donald B. *The riddle of Amish culture*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1989. ISBN 0-8018-3681-6.

KRAYBILL, Donald B. and Marc A. OLSHAN. *The Amish Struggle With Modernity*. University Press of New England, 1994. ISBN 9780585269665.

KRAYBILL, Donald B., Steven M. NOLT and David L. WEAVER-ZERCHER. *The Amish Way: Patient Faith in a Perilous World*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2010. ISBN 978-0-470-52069-7.

KRAYBILL, Donald B., Karen JOHNSON-WEINER and Steven M. NOLT. *The Amish*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, c2013. ISBN 978-1-4214-0915-3.

LÄNGIN, Bernd G. *Plain and Amish: An Alternative to Modern Pessimism*. Herald Press, 1994. ISBN 0-8361-3665-9.

LEVINSON, Paul. *The Silk Code*. New York: Tom Doherty Associates, 1999. ISBN 0-312-86823-5.

LEWIS, Beverly. *The Shunning*. Bethany House Publishers, 2008. ISBN 978-0764204630.

PICOULT, Jodi. *Plain Truth: a novel*. New York: Washington Square Press, 2007. ISBN 978-1-4165-4781-5.

SORENSEN, Virginia. *Plain Girl*. New York: Scholastic, 1990. ISBN 0-590-43144-7.

STEVICK, Richard A. *Growing up Amish: the Rumspringa years*. Second edition. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2014. ISBN 978-1-4214-1372-3.

UMBLE, Diane Zimmerman and David L. WEAVER-ZERCHER. *The Amish and the Media*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008. ISBN 978-0-8018-8789-5.

9. 2 Other sources

Amish: A Secret Life [documentary]. Directed by Lynn Alleway. UK, 2012.

Amish Grace [movie]. Directed by Dylan Scharping. USA, 2010.

Amish: World's Squarest Teenagers [television show]. Channel 4. UK, 2010.

Breaking Amish [television show]. TLC. USA, 2012.

For Richer or Poorer [movie]. Directed by Bryan Spicer. USA, 1997.

Leaving Amish Paradise [documentary]. Directed by Andrew Tait. UK, 2011.

The Simpsons [television show]. Created by Matt Groening. USA, 1989.

Witness [movie]. Directed by Peter Weir. USA, 1985.

Internet

PETRUZZELLO, Melissa. *Amish, North American religious group*. britannica.com [online]. [cit. 2020-30-01]. Available at: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Amish>

Amish History Is A Story Of Struggle And Faith. exploring-amish-country.com [online]. [cit. 2020-30-01]. Available at: <http://www.exploring-amish-country.com/amish-history.html>

Mennonite Information Center. *Amish Faith and Beliefs*. Lancasterpa.com [online]. [cit. 2020-05-02]. Available at: <https://lancasterpa.com/amish/amish-faith>

10 Resumé

The Bachelor thesis examines the life and culture of the Amish community in America. It provides closer view on several aspects of Amish lifestyle and it analyzes possible reasons for Amish separation from the outside modern world. To enable the reader to comprehend hidden meanings of Amish behavior, the thesis presents an inside view on Amish mindset and beliefs.

The thesis explores historical background of Amish forbearers, the Anabaptists. It describes the persecution of the Anabaptists in Europe in the 16th century and first Amish settlements in the North America. Other chapters are dedicated to Amish beliefs and values that need to be mentioned in order to further analyze Amish culture. Concerning the culture, topics such as church, Amish rules, family, children, education, life without technologies, farming and clothing are dealt with.

The thesis also provides an external view on the community, through the eyes of popular culture and tourism. It introduces the reader the way popular culture portrays the Amish community in literature, movies, documentaries, television shows, series and music. Finally, it examines the way the Amish approach tourism.

Bakalářská práce zkoumá život a kulturu amišské komunity v Americe. Poskytuje bližší pohled na několik aspektů životního stylu amišů a analyzuje možné důvody pro oddělení amišů od vnějšího moderního světa. Aby byl čtenář schopen pochopit skryté významy chování amišů, předkládá práce vnitřní pohled na amišské smýšlení a jejich víru.

Tato práce zkoumá historické pozadí amišských předků, Anabaptistů. Popisuje pronásledování Anabaptistů v Evropě v 16. století a první amišská osídlení v Severní Americe. Další kapitoly jsou věnovány amišské víře a hodnotám, které je potřeba zmínit pro další analýzu amišské kultury. Co se týče kultury, práce se zabývá tématy jako je církev, amišská pravidla, rodina, děti, vzdělání, život bez technologií, farmaření a odívání.

Tato práce také poskytuje vnější pohled na komunitu, očima populární kultury a turismu. Čtenáře seznamuje se způsoby, jakými populární kultura zobrazuje amišskou komunitu v literatuře, filmech, dokumentárních pořadech, televizních pořadech, seriálech a v hudbě. Na závěr, bakalářská práce zkoumá způsoby, jakými se amišové staví k turismu.

11 Appendices

1. Dutch Anabaptist, Anneken Hendriks, burned at the stake for heresy, 16th century
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at:
<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anabaptism#/media/File:Witch-scene4.JPG>
2. Anabaptist minorities scattered throughout Europe
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at:
<https://pages.uoregon.edu/dluebke/Witches442/442ReferenceMaps.html>
3. Appendix n. 3, Amish horse-ridden buggies that took their owners to Sunday church service
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <https://amishamerica.com/5-facts-about-the-lancaster-county-amish-population/>
4. Appendix n. 4, Amish families are large
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <http://flowerpatchcottage.com/2018/02/why-do-amish-families-stay-together/>
5. Appendix n. 5, traditional Amish plowing
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <https://ohiosamishcountry.com/articles/heritage-brings-a-unique-experience-at-sugarcreek>
6. Appendix n. 6, Amish men's clothing
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <https://guff.com/this-is-what-the-amish-wear-and-why>
7. Appendix n. 7, Amish women's clothing
[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <https://ohiosamishcountry.com/articles/an-amish-womans-role-in-the-family>
8. Appendix n. 8, Amish women's head covering

[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <https://www.quora.com/What-color-are-the-bonnets-Amish-wear>

9. Appendix n. 9, barn raising

[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at: <https://aibd.org/conference-page-under-construction/amish-barn-raising/>

10. Appendix n. 10, children's book with Amish theme Plain Girl

[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at:

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/1008299.Plain_Girl

11. Appendix n. 11, another book with Amish theme *Plain Truth*

[cit. 2020-15-05]. Available at:

<https://www.allenandunwin.com/browse/books/fiction/popular-fiction/Plain-Truth-Jodi-Picoult-9781743318942>

Appendix n. 1, Dutch Anabaptist, Anneken Hendriks, burned at the stake for heresy, 16th century



Appendix n. 2, Anabaptist minorities scattered throughout Europe



Appendix n. 3, Amish horse-ridden buggies that took their owners to Sunday church service



Appendix n. 4, Amish families are large



Appendix n. 5, traditional Amish plowing



Appendix n. 6, Amish men's clothing



Appendix n. 7, Amish women's clothing



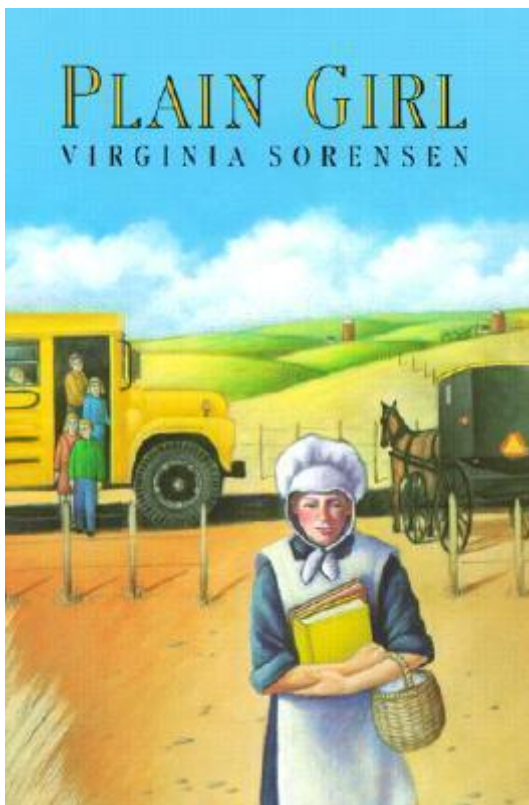
Appendix n. 8, Amish women's head covering



Appendix n. 9, barn raising



Appendix n. 10, children's book with Amish theme *Plain Girl*



Appendix n. 11, another book with Amish theme *Plain Truth*

