

Multiculturalism and counselling

[Art & Culture](#)



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Culture is referred to as being 'the way of the life' for a society. It usually includes sharing the same traditions, values, and beliefs. Groups of people with the same culture will usually live together in a community and will live their lives according to their culture, following their society rules. The Amish community is a culture very different from others, their lifestyles are simple and plain, they live off the bare essentials. They also have strong beliefs in their religion and in the way they live.

The Amish culture is mainly based in parts of the USA, most commonly in parts of Pennsylvania and Ohio. We also have quite a few smaller communities here in Wisconsin which is where I chose to visit in Cashton, Wisconsin near LaCrosse. The Amish culture consists of many unique beliefs that make their ways unlike any other culture. Amish believe that God is pleased when people work in harmony with nature, and care for animals and plants. The Amish lifestyle is dictated by the Ordnung (Nolt, 1992). The Ordnung is a set of rules that govern the community.

The elders, (older men) make the rules and the decisions for the community. The rules are guidelines for living, covering aspects of the Amish life, including clothing, leisure, activities, work and worship. They lead a life of simplicity but still have harsh ways of doing things. The children are expected to work at a young age, and they stop going to school at the age of 14. They are mainly a farming community, so most of their work is based on farming. However the Amish don't farm like others do, because they don't use the modern technology that we use.

This is because they believe that all modern technology such as cars, buses, trains, TV, mobile phones, computers, telephones and electricity etc, all undermine their principles. On the farms they use simple machinery, milk cows by hand, water wheels are used to pump water and skills like carpentry are highly regarded. They use horses for transport and farm work. But it is common for Amish communities to allow the use of telephones, but not in the home. Even when women make the food they do not use electrical appliances. They also use bells as a form of communication. One of the things very central to an Amish life is their religion.

The highest value for the Amish is eternal life. Like evangelical Protestants, the Amish believe in the supremacy of the bible. But unlike most Protestants, they feel that they need to be separate from 'worldliness' to gain this eternal life" (Nolt, 1992). Worldliness is considered to be the love of money, fashionable dress and education beyond what is needed. (The bible teaches 'be not conformed with the world'). Amish people have Christian beliefs and believe that living how God wants them to essential. This way of life is called *Gelassenheit*. This is basically when they submit to god's guidance and serve others.

They believe in adult baptism. Amish are referred to as pacifists, they are against all types of violence war, fighting, conflict and gun use, and they feel that it is wrong to take life as they believe only God can take life. They also believe that having luxuries is against the will of God, and believe that you should be humble; not proud and should live simple lives to focus on what God has given. Amish feel that they should remain separate from rest of society and believe that people should be excommunicated if they cannot

<https://assignbuster.com/multiculturalism-counselling/>

follow the rules. This shows that most of their beliefs are linked to God because they want to do well by him.

The Amish usually have church services in their own homes. They are very religious people, religion is the main reason they chose to have plain and simple lives, as they feel they it is important to live simple lives and focus on what God wants. They also believe that only adults should get baptized, this is mainly because they feel that when the children are older they should be allowed to chose whether they want to follow their parents and make a permanent commitment to God and the community, or whether they want to leave and join the outside world. Another importance in the Amish culture is that the men and women have their own set roles.

For example the women make the food and clothes where as the men do farm work and woodcraft. This separation of the jobs the men and women do is an old fashioned idea and shows how the Amish live very much out of 21st century life, where gender roles are not longer set for specific jobs. The Amish believe that living separately from our mainstream culture is essential for salvation. In the Amish culture rejection to violence is a norm. They believe that strife and jealousy have no place in their lives and people that don't commit to their ways are often warned privately first then shunned (forced to leave) from the Amish community.

The clothes they wear also reflect on their plain and simple ways. There clothing styles are encouraged to separate them from the world. Clothing is made at home from plain fabric. Women and girls wear dresses with long sleeves from one solid colour and a bonnet. All skirts have to be halfway

between the knee and floor. Married women wear black bonnets and single women wear white ones. Amish women are not permitted to wear clothing with patterns or jewellery. They never cut their hair, and wear it tied up in a bun.

The role of women is very traditional; they are expected to take care of the home and children. Amish men wear dark trousers and shirts. They always have to wear hats. Married men cannot shave their beard after they get married. Amish try to look as plain as possible, so they avoid buttons, patterns, jewellery etc as they believe that they are a sign of pride and showing off. Amish teenagers are given a chance to interact with the outside world. They can experience life outside the community for a year to decide whether they wish to become full baptized members of the community.

This is called Rumspringa. During their time they get to live like 'English' teenagers, having freedom and can experience modern technology and even smoking and drinking. At the end of their Rumspringa they choose whether to come back and stay Amish or leave and join the outside world" (Stevick, 2007). Some choose to leave the Amish culture, as they get influenced by the things that they are missing out, but usually the majority returns to the community, and chooses to be baptized as Amish, this is mainly because they are used to the way they live and don't feel they fit in with the world outside Amish. The Amish speak a form of German mixed with English.

Every Amish person speaks three distinctive languages: Pennsylvania German/Dutch, English and High German. This is different from modern society where people speak lots of different multicultural languages. They

have very little to do with anyone outside the Amish faith. Those who are not in the Amish community are referred to as 'English'. Music and dancing are not allowed as they believe they're not plain and simple, they are considered suggestive and not pure. The Amish usually have around six children per family and about 80 percent decide to stay within the church after they've had their Rumspringa.

Those who decided to leave the community must try to make a living on an eighth-grade education, unless they are able to find resources to attain a GED. Shunning is when you get ignored from the culture; they cannot sit and eat at the same table as you or talk to you. Those who leave the Amish culture marry an outside or break the rules, get shunned. This shows that Amish are very strict with their rules, and want people in their culture to respect the rules and follow the lifestyle set by the rules. The Amish community has both advantages and disadvantages.

Advantages could be as follows; they have a simpler lifestyle, and a lot of community spirit. They have a more active, healthier lifestyle and there is a lot less pressure on their lifestyle. There is also a lot less pollution. The Amish also have a clear code of conduct and morality, and there is no confusion between right and wrong. Obviously, there are disadvantages to the Amish lifestyle which include; often being persecuted and made fun of by outsiders. They have a lack of privacy and are shunned if they break the very strict rules set by the elders of the Amish community.

It can also be said that these rules might be even too strict-no tolerance of non-conformists and no room for individualism. Lastly, their quality of life as

a whole might be a disadvantage with little formal education and not a lot of freethinking or initiative. However, having said all that, I personally could not live the Amish way of life. I am too used to the conveniences of the modern world. I would find it hard to fit into the back to basic lifestyle of the Amish. I would soon get bored, and miss the luxuries of the modern world.

As well as this, there are a few other things in the Amish lifestyle that aren't as good as modern society. The fact that children leave school at age 14, they miss out on social skills. Also, I think that they have a prejudiced view on the modern world, and not seeing the good points to it as well as the bad. There is also a lack of individuality somewhat, as people have to conform to rules and dress code, or be shunned. I learned quite a bit from visiting the Amish in Cahston, I too went in with the stereotypical thoughts of what these people would be like thinking they'd be completely uncultured and cultish.

As we entered their community I tried to keep an open mind and remain as unbiased as possible. I was taken aback by how friendly and welcoming these people were. I don't know if I would have been able to be that personable if a group of tourists came into my home and observed me like an animal in a cage at the zoo. They were more than welcoming and always willing to share whether it was a meal and showing us the process of how they cook without any electricity or helping us gain knowledge about their rules and belief system.

When we first got near Cashton we stopped at Down A Country Road; a little set of shops that sells Amish goods and furniture and there is also a restaurant with food and desserts brought in by some of the Amish

community members. We headed into the restaurant where we had to options to choose from. The first option was a huge variety of food that included Amish appetizers, a main course, and dessert or the second which was just off the menu. We opted for the second choice after seeing how much food was on the other tables around us and knew we would have been there for days if we attempted ordering that feast.

We decided on the Amish's traditional Thanksgiving style meal of fried chicken, mashed potato, dried sweet corn, and coleslaw. We felt like we just had dinner and it was only 11: 30 in the morning. After the feast, we decided to go on a buggy tour followed by an Amish house tour. Daniel, a new order Amish teen, was our buggy driver; he was no more than eighteen years old. He wore jeans, boots, and a long sleeved shirt and shared a little bit of his life with us.

He informed us that he has a strained relationship with his family; who still believe in the Old Order Amish rules (limitations on the use of electricity, telephones and automobiles and clothing regulations), because of his decision to no longer be Amish. Daniel's decision was based on the fact that he wanted to continue his education and have a career; which is not allowed in the Amish community, as children only attend school until eighth grade. During our tour, Daniel shared lots of information about the Amish's remarkable history, from the religious prosecution of 16th century Europe to the establishment of life in the New World.

Not many people know much about the Amish, their lifestyle and what is most important to them their long-established values and traditions. The

house tour gave us a behind the scenes look at the Amish way of living, from their farm life; to their one-room schools where all Amish children aged six-thirteen are taught. They even invited us into their living room and showed us first-hand how this close-knit community live their lives on a day to day basis, they were extremely welcoming which was not something I had expected because of how they have been portrayed in the media; they always seemed to be very private and keep to themselves.

Watching people who seem to distance themselves from the rest of the world is what sparked my curiosity to learn more about them. Like several others, I had a narrow minded view of the Amish lifestyle and could never imagine seeing people in this country living without something that the rest of us rely as heavily on as we do with electricity. Although I've only spent a day with the Amish, I really feel like I was able to fully immerse myself in their non reliance on technology and electricity way of life and have realized just how much I depend on these materialistic things.

I really became aware of this when I was grabbing for my cell phone in my purse a few times which I had intentionally not brought with me in order to take in the full Amish experience of not having these luxuries; it was a real culture shock for me. Following my visit to Cashton and the Amish country, I've now gotten a feel for their simplistic lifestyle, their strong work ethic, and never ending devotion to their family and community.

It made me wonder, with our society's interest in restoring family values, would it be that crazy to learn a few things from the Amish way of life? I came to Cashton intrigued by the ways of the Amish, and I left with a greater

appreciation and understanding of the beliefs that motivate their lifestyle. They have a strong sense of identity, community and self-sufficiency. One of the surprising things I learned is that anyone can join the Amish community and church; people don't have to be born Amish to become part of this culture.

I had always thought this was a generational thing and outsiders were not brought in. I believe this experience has definitely opened my eyes to other cultures and communities out there other than my own sheltered view of Green Bay. It really made me appreciate the simplicity life has to offer and realize I get too caught up in the mainstream ideals of life sometimes I need to enjoy the simple things, quiet times, friends, family.

I believe that although I may not ever counsel any Amish community members, it's given me a better sense of diversity in opening my eyes to what else is out there. I've learned I need to adapt to change and get out of my comfort zone. This experience has shown me you really have to adapt your practice and your professional understanding of all your client's cultures to suit the needs of their particular community and form a, mental health work ethic that really thinks outside the box as far as your approach on counseling people different from yourself.