

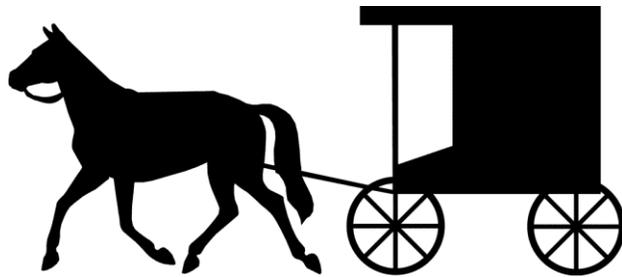
Cultural Awareness Training: Amish and Old Order Mennonites
**Working Together for Child Safety and the
Prevention of Sexual Abuse and Sexual Violence**

Part 1 of 2

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Training Goal: Equip participants with the knowledge and skills to work effectively with the Amish and Old Order Mennonites to keep children safe.



Part 1 (today): Introduction to Amish and Old Order Mennonite faith and culture, history, community/church structure, prevalence, diversity, language, values and beliefs.

Part 2 (next week): Family life; gender roles; mental health; child abuse; micro, meso, and macro strategies for working with the Amish and Old Order Mennonites.

Introduction

The Amish and Old Order Mennonites are part of a larger group of **Anabaptists**, which are Christian faith communities that believe in adult baptism and nonviolence and value community and social justice. The Amish and Old Order Mennonites are also called “**Plain**” people; the Amish call us “**English**.”

History

The Anabaptists came out of the Reformation in the 1500s and were nicknamed “**Mennonites**” after their leader, Menno Simons. In 1693, one Anabaptist leader, Jakob Ammann, sought to renew the church, including sharper separation from the world; his followers became known as the “**Amish**.”

The Amish and Mennonites came to U.S. in the mid-1700s and again in the late 1800s to escape persecution and gain religious freedom.

Structure of a Typical Plain Community

A typical **Amish family** has 5–18 children. A **district** may have 20–40 families (75–150 people). A **settlement** may have 2–12 church districts. An **affiliation** is a cluster of 2 or more districts with at least 20 years of shared history and is named after the last name of a founder, the location of their origin, or what others called them.

Diversity

Amish and Old Order Mennonite communities are very diverse from one another, and it’s important that we pay attention to these differences.

Prevalence

There are over **336,000 Amish in the U.S.**, with two-thirds of them living in Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana.¹ In contrast, there are more than 30,000 Conservative Mennonites and 69,675 Mennonite Church USA members (adults), and even fewer Hutterites (7,122) and members of various German Baptist groups (6,300).²

A leading demographer predicts there will be more than 1 million horse-and-buggy Amish in 30 years (by 2049).³

“New York has witnessed the most dramatic increase in settlements of any state or province in the 21st century.”⁴ In 2009, there were 10,000 Amish in New York. By 2019, the number had more than doubled (20,595)! As of June 2019, there were 57 settlements and 155 districts of Amish in New York.

¹ “Amish Population Change 2010-2019.” Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College. https://groups.etsown.edu/amishstudies/files/2019/07/Population_Change_2010-2019.pdf.

² “Broad Census Counts More Anabaptists.” *Mennonite World Review*, May 2019.

<http://mennoworld.org/2019/05/27/news/broad-census-counts-more-anabaptists>.

³ Personal communication, J. Donnermeyer, 2019-08-01.

⁴ Donnermeyer, 2019-05-13.

Core Elements of Their Faith and Culture

“plain” ≠ “simple”

Values and Beliefs

Every area of life for the Amish and Old Order Mennonites is determined by their church community. They value nonconformity; they don't expect us to conform to their way of life. They also highly value community, humility, obedience, self-denial, nonviolence, and acceptance. They do not want the government or social services to tell them how to live.

The Bible is very important to them, especially Romans 12:2 (“Be not conformed to this world”) and I Corinthians 11 (instructions for women to cover their heads).

They *live* their faith rather than *state* their faith. Verbal expression of their faith would be prideful.

Church

“Church” and “community” are the same for them. The Amish meet for worship in homes every other Sunday, and the Mennonites meet in “meetinghouses” (church buildings) every Sunday. Their children learn about their faith at home.

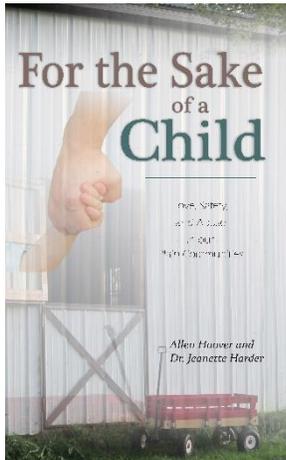
The ***Ordnung***, German word for “discipline” or “rules and order,” provides the unwritten expectations for every area of their daily living. More than just a set of rules, the *Ordnung* is what holds the community together and protects the community from disruption. It relieves members from having to figure out how to navigate life on their own, especially new technologies. The *Ordnung* is different in each district, in response to leadership and circumstances. Each district rules itself; there is no national bureaucracy or centralized ecclesiastical authority.

Communities are typically led by a bishop, two ministers, and a deacon. Church leaders are men chosen by lot out of a pool of nominees who are married and in good standing in the community. They serve for life and receive no formal training or pay. The **bishop** is the spiritual head of the church; he interprets and enforces the *Ordnung*. The **minister** preaches and has other leadership responsibilities. The **deacon** assists the bishop and cares for special medical or financial needs of the members.

The Amish are more congregation-centered, and the Mennonites are more conference-centered. So where the Amish may have one bishop for every 40 families, the Old Order Mennonites may have one bishop for every 400 families.

Baptism is a voluntary vow of obedience—a vow to yield one's individual desires to the church and unchanging truth as revealed in scripture and interpreted by the *Ordnung*. Young adults typically make the decision to be baptized in their early 20s. Once baptized, adults are expected to conform and to follow rules; individualism is no longer tolerated. After baptism, the church has the authority to enforce collective guidelines for conduct. If a member commits a significant sin, s/he is expected to publicly confess before the church. If the sin is forgiven by the church, it cannot be spoken of again.

Recommended Reading



***For the Sake of a Child:
Love, Safety, and Abuse in our Plain Communities***

**by Allen Hoover and Dr. Jeanette Harder
Ridgeway Publishing**

Intended audience: Amish and Old Order Mennonites

COMING SOON!

Working with Amish Families on Child Abuse and Neglect: Amish children face special abuse & neglect risks. We can help.

by Jeanette Harder, Ph.D. and Lisa Fontes, Ph.D.

Posted May 18, 2019, on <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/invisible-chains/201905/working-amish-families-child-abuse-and-neglect>

Also:

- *The Amish: Why They Enchant Us*, by Donald B. Kraybill
- *Serving the Amish: A Cultural Guide for Professionals*, by James A. Cates
- *New York Amish: Life in the Plain Communities of the Empire State*, by Karen M. Johnson-Weiner
- *Holding Out Hope: Mental Health for the Plain Communities*, by Dr. Tony Byler, Rachel Stauffer, and David Byler

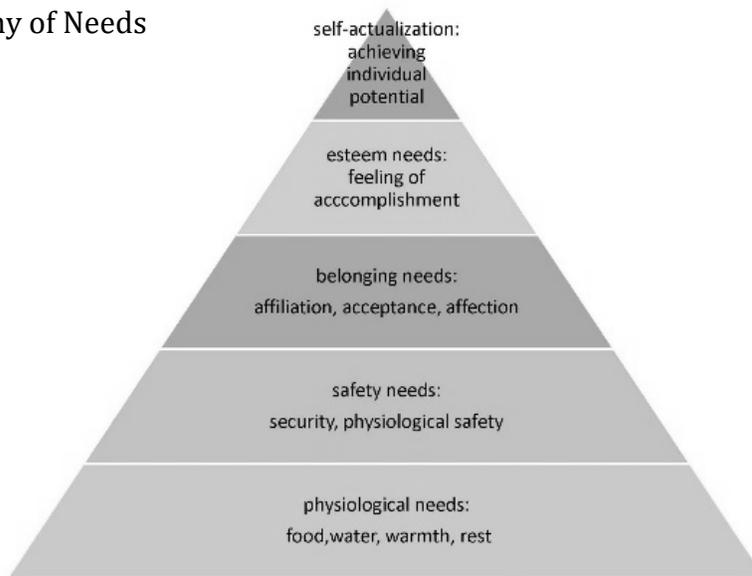
Dove's Nest provides additional resources relating to keeping children and youth safe in their homes, churches, and communities.

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Values			
VALUES	Not at all important to me	Sort of important to me	Very important to me
Accepting how things are			
Challenging (improving) how things are			
Critical thinking			
Embracing diversity			
Being similar to others			
Welcoming progress (change)			
Embracing technology			
Prioritizing community needs			
Making individual choices			
Having freedom			
Obeying authorities			
Self-denial (giving up what I need for the sake of others)			
Showing humility (living and acting humbly)			

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs





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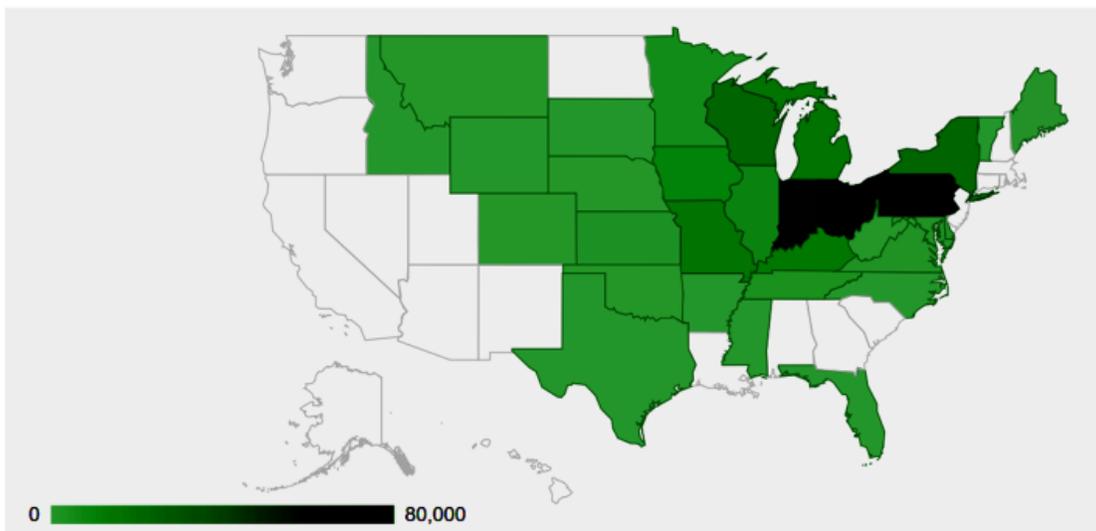
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336,000 (horse and buggy) Amish residing in 31 U.S. states, 4 Canadian provinces, and 2 South American countries. Estimate there will be 1 million in 30 years.

In contrast: 69,675 Mennonite Church USA members (adults); >30,000 Conservative and Old Order Mennonites.



<https://groups.etaown.edu/amishstudies/statistics/population-2019/>

In 2019 ...

State/ Province	# of Settlements	# of Districts	Estimated Population
Pennsylvania	58	537	79,200
Ohio	65	593	76,195
Indiana	25	405	57,430
Wisconsin	56	162	22,020
New York	57	155	20,595

Followed by Michigan, Missouri, Kentucky, Iowa, Illinois, Ontario, Minnesota, and 25 other states, provinces, and countries (South America).

Amish Population Change 2010-2019. Young Center for Anabaptist and Pietist Studies, Elizabethtown College.
https://groups.etown.edu/amishstudies/files/2019/07/Population_Change_2010-2019.pdf

Amish and Old Order Mennonites in New York

