

Moving Forward or Backward?: Changing Identities of Amish Women

By: Kayla Kromer

Methods

- Amish Tour July 24, 2008
 - Personal observations
- Library research
- Goal:
 - Look at Amish women's roles and how they are changing with the increase of tourism and enterprise among Amish communities.



Figure 1

Amish Culture

- Isolated culture
- Emigration from Europe
- 3 central values
 - Religion
 - Agrarian lifestyle
 - Cohesive community
- 8th grade education

Amish Women

- Mother and homemaker
 - Children
 - Domestic duties
- Teachers
- Plain dress



Figure 2

Gender Roles

- Gelassenheit
 - Banned from church positions
- Husband-wife partnership
- Accepted roles
 - Work valued

Tourism

- Public interest – 20th Century
- Tours
 - Organized (bus/van tours)
- Church opposition



Figure 3



Tourism and Enterprise

- Decrease in available farmland
- Small businesses
 - Preserve traditional culture and values
- Works hand-in-hand with tourism
 - Majority of customers

Figure 9

Amish Business

- Men = woodworking/furniture
- Women = domestic products
- Authenticity/craftsmanship
- Accepting modern practices
 - Fewer children
 - New technologies
 - Non-Amish workers/working outside the community

Women Entrepreneurs

- Economic independence
- Still must submit to patriarchy
- Usually single women
 - Married women: role conflicts

Figure 10

Changing Roles

- Dependent on husband (breadwinner)
- Destroys partnership and family unit
- More defined gender roles between the two spheres
 - Greater gender inequality

Conclusion

- Changing gender roles
 - Decreasing women's value within the community
- Modernization = shift backwards for women
- Future: possible loss of unique culture of Amish to modernization

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Picture References

- Figure 1: Hostetler, *Amish Life* (1959)
- Figure 2-3: Hostetler, *Amish Society* (1980)
- Figures 4-8: Kromer, Amish Tours, Harmony, MN (2008)
- Figure 9: Kraybill and Nolt, *Amish Enterprise: From Plows to Profits* (1995)
- Figure 10: Kraybill and Olshan, *The Amish Struggle with Modernity* (1994)