

**Culture Report: Amish Culture**

Macy Clark

Lakeview College of Nursing

N432: Maternal-Newborn Care

June 18, 2024

## **Local Prevalence of the Culture**

Some of the largest Amish communities have grown in Illinois, with one of the largest Amish settlements of around 4,500 people (Bergin, 2024). In Arthur, which is only 46 miles from Champaign County, there are over 2,200 Amish people settled (Bergin, 2024). The prevalence of the Amish culture in our local community is decently high due to the larger Amish communities in Illinois.

## **Religious Beliefs**

The Amish culture keeps strongly to their religious beliefs, respectively, but some of their practiced beliefs lead to barriers when it comes to healthcare. Most Amish will be fluent in English, but German/Dutch will be spoken in the home (Anderson, 2020). Amish do not use technology or really any sort of phone service, therefore leading to a lack of awareness of the services that may be available to them in an emergency (Anderson, 2020). Amish transportation consists of slow-moving wagons pulled by horses and sometimes taxis, which in an emergent situation can be very time-consuming and expensive depending on where the destination is (Anderson, 2020). Amish prefer to be at home when they are at the stage of passing rather than any sort of institution (Anderson, 2020). More alternative medicine is usually practiced in the Amish culture such as non-pharmacological remedies, traveling to Mexican clinics, or just simply going without any medical services. This is all due to the fact that the Amish avoid government programs and insurance (Anderson, 2020). Generally, most Amish will opt out of social security, Medicare, and medical insurance and pay directly for any services (Anderson, 2020). This can be a major struggle when an Amish community member becomes violently or terminally ill and requires high class medical attention because it becomes unaffordable really

fast. That being said, the Amish community will pitch in donations that either directly go towards the medical care or pick up other expenses for the family (Anderson, 2020).

### **Healing Beliefs and Practices**

During any sort of illness, the Amish culture is significantly well about establishing a support system for those that are suffering from an illness or injury. Amish strictly prefer care at home where they can be close to family and their religionists as care is the main core and responsibility of the Amish (Anderson, 2020). The immediate family, extended family, and the church will all be a part of the care and healing process for the ill whether it is through direct interventions or taking over outside tasks that need to be taken care of (Anderson, 2020). The Amish culture may use different techniques for the birth of a child such as hospital services, birthing clinics, or even home birth (Anderson, 2020). During the time of labor, usually only the father, maternal grandmother, and medical staff are present and everyone else will be sent away (Anderson, 2020). The mother will typically be very quiet and controlled during the experience of labor due to the intense pain endurance among the Amish culture (Anderson, 2020).

### **Family Life**

Amish family structure will be larger and consist of a married couple and typically 6-8 up to 15 children (*Amish family life*, 2024). The Amish have set chore rules divided by sexuality where the men work on the farm all day and the wife does all cooking, cleaning, washing, and any other household chores (*Amish family life*, 2024). Most Amish families are extensively extended due to the large family sizes. Elderly in the Amish are not only respected, but they are viewed as very valuable members of the community (*Retirement in the Amish Community*, 2024). They are known to be very wise, and many children and grandchildren will run to the

elderly to learn traditions such as sewing quilts or fixing a proper horse carriage (*Retirement in the Amish Community*, 2024). Amish do not term retiring quite like we do, as they prefer to say they are going to slow down, but still be a helpful piece to the community. Retirement or assisted living is nonexistent in the Amish community as the families will usually just build an extension onto their home for the elderly to live in (*Retirement in the Amish Community*, 2024).

### **Communication**

Amish will mainly rely on either written letters or phone service outside of their households such as a public shelter or a neighbor's home (Anderson, 2020, para. 34). The use of cell phones has begun to rise in the Amish culture, but providers should always provide written information and allow plenty of time for appointment arrangements and communication with the Amish culture (Anderson, 2020). Both the women and men have equal power in making decisions, but as far as communication in public, the man will more than likely do the speaking, but women are not prohibited (Anderson, 2020). Amish will typically use Dutch or German language throughout their household when communicating with one another, and will fluently speak English as their second language when in public (Anderson, 2020). Since there is no common use of technology amongst the culture, written letters are very commonly used as nonverbal communication (Anderson, 2020).

### **Diet**

Amish strictly live off of self-harvested foods year-round and it is important for them to live off of their own land and make their meals from their own material. Many Amish cultures will own restaurants or smaller businesses that sell canned goods or breads as well as other homemade items. Amish take pride in their high value nutrition that they receive from feeding

off of their own land and while there are no certain ritualistic diet plans during labor, I am sure they would prefer to stray away from any artificial foods if possible. This may mean that if an Amish woman is in labor in the hospital, family members may bring in meals for her from the home (Anderson, 2020).

### **Core Values Implications on Childbearing Experience**

Many of the Amish core values may have effects on the process of birthing a child including the refusal of medical care for as long as possible, lack of knowledge of services and lack of transportation, and lack of health insurance (Anderson, 2020). Lack of transportation for emergency situations can be a huge barrier to a safe and effective birth. Amish mothers having such a high pain tolerance and intensity could lead to complications simply because we may not know if there is something going wrong if mom isn't showing expression. One major tip that I would advise for a future student taking care of an Amish patient would be to study and understand some of the non-pharmacological pain relief methods that they commonly use so that we can be helpful and effective in a way that they feel comfortable with. Another tip for future students caring for Amish would be to provide everything that they will need on paper including any resources, phone numbers, appointments, etc. because they most likely will not have access to technology once leaving the hospital. Lastly, I would suggest that they encourage the patient to ask family and friends to bring them meals from home whenever possible so the patient can eat the food that they prefer and to make sure they're adequately keeping up with their nutritional needs.

## References

*Amish family life*. Ohio's Amish Country. (2024).

<https://www.ohiosamishcountry.com/articles/amish-family-life#:~:text=The%20family%20is%20the%20most,cooking%2C%20and%20other%20household%20chores.>

Anderson, C., & Potts, L. (2020). The Amish health culture and culturally sensitive health services: An exhaustive narrative review. *Social Science & Medicine*, 265, 113466. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.socscimed.2020.113466>

Bergin, M. (2024, March 5). *Peace, simplicity and a sense of mystery: Exploring Amish communities across the Midwest*. Chicago Tribune. <https://www.chicagotribune.com/2024/03/06/peace-simplicity-and-a-sense-of-mystery-exploring-amish-communities-across-the-midwest/#:~:text=Illinois%3A%20an%20elevated%20Amish%20profile&text=Seventy%20miles%20east%20of%20Springfield,is%20the%20eighth%20largest%20nationally.>

*Retirement in the Amish Community* . (2024). <https://www.amishquilter.com/retirement-in-the-amish-community/#:~:text=However%2C%20in%20the%20Amish%20community,a%20horse%20drawn%20carriage%20properly.>