# The Amish[[1]](#footnote-1)

“Amish communities are not relics of a bygone era. Rather, they are demonstrations of a different form of modernity.”

(John Hostetler, *Amish Society*)

The Amish are a protestant sect that split off from the Swiss Anabaptists in the late seventeenth century; starting in the mid-eighteenth century, many of them settled in America. Over the years since their population has expanded rapidly, due to the combination of a high birth rate, modern medicine, and a high retention rate; there were about 5000 Amish in 1920 and about 249,000 in 2010.[[2]](#footnote-2) They are notable for plain dress and their selective rejection of many of the devices of modern technology, such as automobiles and telephones. Their view is not that modern technology is wicked but that some specific technologies are likely to disrupt their social system and should be rejected on that account. Thus Amish use battery powered devices but refuse to connect to the power grid, permit (in some affiliations) tractors but only if they have metal rather than rubber wheels and so are not suitable for on road transportation, in some cases use power hay bailers pulled through the fields on horse drawn wagons.

While subject, with a few narrow exceptions, to U.S. and Canadian law,[[3]](#footnote-3) the Amish have succeeded in maintaining their own system of rules (*Ordnung*) and enforcing it on their members, ultimately by the threat of excommunication and shunning (*Meidung*). The details of what technologies may be used in what way depend on the o*rdnung* of the particular congregation.

## The Congregation

The basic unit of an Amish community is the congregation, typically of twenty-five to forty households; there is no higher level with authority over the individual congregation. Since the Amish are unwilling to build churches or meeting houses, the number of households in a congregation is limited to the number that will fit in a large farmhouse or barn.[[4]](#footnote-4) Each congregation has its own version of the *Ordnung*, some stricter and some less strict than others. Congregations whose *Ordnungen* are about equally strict may be in fellowship with each other, making them part of a single affiliation. Potential marriage partners are largely, but not entirely, from the same affiliation. A member excommunicated from one congregation is unlikely to be accepted by another of the same affiliation, while a member excommunicated from a particularly strict (“low”) congregation for violating their *Ordnung* may be acceptable to a less strict (“higher”) congregation.[[5]](#footnote-5) A settlement, a group of congregations in the same geographical area, may consist of a single affiliation or of several different affiliations[[6]](#footnote-6); an affiliation may be limited to one settlement or scattered across several.[[7]](#footnote-7)

The typical congregation has a bishop,[[8]](#footnote-8) two ministers, and a deacon, all of whom normally serve for life and none of whom have any formal training. They are unpaid. Ministers and deacons are selected by lot out of a group of men nominated by the congregation; church members whisper a candidate’s name to the deacon. Nomination requires two (in some districts three) votes.[[9]](#footnote-9) The bishop is selected by lot from among the ministers.[[10]](#footnote-10)

When a congregation becomes too large to fit in a house it splits, often along some convenient boundary such as a road or stream.

## The *Ordnung*

The *Ordnung* specifies the rules that members of the congregation are required to abide by. Typically they include prohibitions on activities such as filing a law suit, serving on a jury or joining a political organization, along with the use of those modern technologies viewed as likely to disrupt the Amish social system;[[11]](#footnote-11) the details of what is prohibited and how strictly vary from one congregation to another.

Thus, for example, the Ordnung of an Old Order Amish congregation will forbid members from owning or driving automobiles or having a telephone in the house. Both rules encourage an inward focused social structure, with people interacting primarily with those close to them. For a smaller scale example of the same approach:

“A young woman explained why the church frowns on central heating systems: ‘A space heater in the kitchen keeps the family together. Heating all the rooms would lead to everyone going off to their own rooms.’”[[12]](#footnote-12)

One can argue that the existence of such rules makes the Amish more modern than the rest of us, not less, since they are making deliberate decisions about what modern technologies do or do not fit into their social structure.

The *Ordnung* will also specify features of dress, again varying by congregation. Buttons may be forbidden entirely or permitted only on working clothes, bright colors are for the most part forbidden. Male and female hair styles are prescribed (uncut hair for women, hair down to the earlobe, beard and no mustache for married men). Owning a television, attending college, wearing makeup or jewelry, or flying on an airplane, are all likely to be forbidden. The death of relatives requires women to wear black for a length of time depending on the closeness of the relation.[[13]](#footnote-13) The principle offered to justify many of the rules is that individuals ought to be humble, avoiding anything associated with pride, such as fancy clothing. For similar reasons, Amish are usually unwilling to be photographed. One effect of the rules is to create clear boundaries between ingroup and outgroup, since members are distinguished from nonmembers by dress and appearance.

Twice a year, all members of the congregation gather to take communion. Two weeks before, each is asked “whether he is in agreement with the *Ordnung*, whether he is at peace with the brotherhood, and whether anything ‘stands in the way’ of his entering into the communion service.” Communion does not take place until all members agree. This gives the members an opportunity to openly express disagreement with the current *ordnung–*but, as a rule, the members accept the clergy leaders’ position.

The *ordnung* is specific to the congregation, which has no legislature. What changes the *ordnung* is the practice of the members and the response to it by the leadership. If enough push at the boundaries of the existing rules without complaint, they are likely to change. Reaching a consensus may take several years and can be prevented if the leaders disapprove of the change. In some cases the congregation retains a rule, such as a ban on owning freezers or telephones, but reduces the resulting inconvenience by permitting members to use freezers or telephones of their non-Amish neighbors. In some other cases, the leadership may decide that something that had been permitted for several years was a mistake and require members to give it up.

## Enforcement

If the bishop or ministers learn that a member is violating the *ordnung*, their first step is to visit him. If he expresses regret, the offense will be ignored; this is what Kraybill describes as a “level one” punishment.

If violation continues, the ministers hold a meeting at the next Sunday worship service–worship services are held on alternate Sundays–at which the bishop recommends a punishment. That is followed by a public hearing in the presence of the members of the congregation at which the defendant can offer his side of the controversy. He is then asked to step out and, if his defense has not changed the bishop’s conclusion, the bishop proposes the punishment to the congregation, which votes on it.[[14]](#footnote-14) In order for the punishment to be imposed it must be unanimously accepted by the congregation–and it usually is.

“For a small offense–wearing jewelry or joining a public baseball team–a “sitting” confession (level two) can be made. For more serious offenses–such as traveling by airplane or hiring a car on Sundays–the person may be asked to make a “kneeling” confession (level three) in front of the congregation and to promise to abide by the Ordnung in the future.

“The most severe form of punishment (level four) is a six week ban. During this time, the congregation avoids social contact with the wayward person. … At the end of the ban, offenders are invited to make a “kneeling” confession in a members’ meeting. They are asked two questions: Do you believe the punishment was deserved? Do you believe your sins have been forgiven through the blood of Jesus Christ? Those who confess their sin and promise to ‘work with the church’ are reinstated into it. The meeting concludes with some fitting words of comfort.”[[15]](#footnote-15)

If the disobedient member is unwilling to confess his sins and cease violating the rules, the ultimate punishment, after milder sanctions have failed, is excommunication, shunning, *Meidung*. The excommunicated individual is not required to leave the community but is strictly limited in his interaction with other Amish. A young adult can continue to live with his parents and attend church but cannot sit at the dinner table with baptized adults and must eventually leave home in order that his parents can again take communion. The wife of a member who is being shunned must eat at a separate table from her husband and refrain from sexual relations with him; in such cases, the spouse may request excommunication in order that the couple will not have to shun each other. A member who knowingly eats with someone who is shunned is likely to be himself shunned, but not if he did so unknowingly. “Although interaction with expelled people is severely restricted, it is not completely terminated. Limited social conversation is permitted, but church members are advised not to deal directly with the outcasts or accept anything from them. For instance, members will not accept a ride in the car of a former member who joins the Mennonites. Members avoid business dealings with those 'under the ban.' If a member sells something to an outcast, the member does not accept payment directly from the other person's hand. Sometimes a third party will handle a necessary business or social transaction. In other cases, the stigmatized person places the money on a table or counter, after which the church member picks it up.” (Kraybill 1989, p. 116)

An excommunicated member who is willing to confess his sins and repent will normally be readmitted to the congregation, usually within a few weeks.

Shunning can be used not only against violations of the terms of the *Ordnung* but also, as with the Vlach Rom, against a community member who refuses to accept the congregation’s settlement of a dispute with another member.[[16]](#footnote-16)

## Youth

Amish children are expected to help the rest of the family with chores within their ability–babysitting younger siblings, weeding, milking–from an early age. They go to school, but only through eighth grade, the Amish having successfully persuaded first state authorities and then the Supreme Court to give them a partial exemption from compulsory schooling laws. After eighth grade they are, in effect, apprenticed to adults in the community, most commonly their parents, learning how to run a farm and a household and, in some cases, learning a trade.

The *ordnung* only becomes accepted by, and binding on, members of the congregation when, as adults, they are baptized. There is thus a period from about sixteen until twenty or so when a young adult is, to some degree depending on the congregation, free to act in ways normally forbidden, a period referred to as *Rumspringa*. That may include going to town to see a movie, party, work in town at jobs that would otherwise be seen as inappropriate, even (covertly) get a driver’s license and drive a car.[[17]](#footnote-17) Tthis provides an opportunity for youth to compare life outside the Amish community with life inside before making their final decision. For the most part, Amish youth on *Rumspringa* are interacting with other Amish youth, not with local non-Amish youth, however.

That final decision is whether to accept baptism and submit to the *ordnung*. Prior to the ceremony, ministers offer the young adult the opportunity to back out, telling him that “it is better not to make a vow than to make a vow and later break it . . . .” A large majority, by one estimate four out of five, choose to take the vow.

The period of *rumspringa* is also the time of life during which the young Amish are courting their future mates. The process is accepted but nominally secret. The young man will drive to the group social gathering with his sister in daylight, back with his girlfriend at night, and refers to her as “she” rather than by name; the fact of who he is courting only becomes public knowledge when they are about to marry. In order to marry within the Amish community, the couple must have first been baptized, which may be the incentive to finally decide on that commitment. Intermarriage is permitted among congregations that are in fellowship with each other; an individual from a less strict group can marry into a more strict group only if the couple is willing to adopt the latter group’s rules.

## Democracy or Competitive Dictatorship?

Decisions made by the congregation, considered as a miniature state, are the decision to punish and the decision on the contents of the *Ordnung.* Control over those decisions implies control over the membership of the polity and the content of its legal system. In most congregations–the exceptions are some of the most extreme (“lowest”) groups,[[18]](#footnote-18) in which the power is in the hands of the bishop–both decisions require the unanimous assent of the members, so one might view the congregation as a very small democracy. Alternatively, observing that the members almost always support the decision of the bishop, one might describe the congregation as a de facto dictatorship, with a dictator chosen in part by chance and ruling for life.

If it is a dictatorship, it is a competitive dictatorship. A member who is sufficiently unhappy with the *ordnung* of his congregation as interpreted by its clergy is free to shift to a nearby congregation better suited to his tastes. Some congregations are, in effect, territorial sovereigns, so that changing congregations requires a geographical move. In other communities, especially where there are congregations with substantially differing *Ordnungen* near each other, it may be possible to shift allegiance with no shift of residence.[[19]](#footnote-19) A bishop whose interpretation of his congregation’s *ordnungen* is at odds with what the members want is not subject to impeachment or a recall election but could conceivably find himself with no membership.

In the case of a major split within the Amish, such as occurred in the Lancaster settlement in 1910 and again in 1966, the initial members of the more liberal (“higher”) group are not subject to excommunication and shunning by the more traditional (“lower”). But if the higher group accepts members who are under ban and have not confessed, anyone who thereafter joins it will be banned.[[20]](#footnote-20)

Such a system can be viewed as a competitive market for legal rules, constrained, like other competitive markets, to produce the product that the customers want.[[21]](#footnote-21) Competitive dictatorship is the mechanism we routinely use to control hotels and restaurants; the customers have no vote on what color the walls are painted or what is on the menu but an absolute vote on which one they patronize.

The oldest major settlement, in Lancaster County, has developed a semi-formal level of government above the congregation level, a biannual meeting of bishops to discuss issues such as changes in the *ordnung*. While the meeting has no formal authority over the individual congregations, the opinions of the senior bishops carry considerable weight, so that a decision to (for example) forbid some controversial practice is likely to be implemented by most congregations. Similar meetings of bishops and other clergy occur on an annual basis in some other settlements.[[22]](#footnote-22) One might view that as a first step in the direction of creating a level of government above the congregation.

## Relations with the “English”[[23]](#footnote-23)

In some ways, such as the maintenance of their own rules and enforcement by the threat of shunning, the Amish resemble the Romani described in the previous chapter. One difference is their relation with non-members. Romani in most places have been subject to hostility from outsiders and themselves regarded outsiders as ignorant and unclean. The Amish, in contrast, appear to get along with their neighbors in both directions. Non-Amish may view them as quaint but for the most part without hostility and even with some admiration.

Perhaps for that reason, the Amish have done surprisingly well in their relations with the U.S. government. In 1955 Social Security became mandatory for self-employed persons, which most Amish were. The Amish objected to participating, in part on the basis that they believed they were religiously obligated to take care of each other and should not be transferring that obligation to the state, in part on the grounds that insurance programs, which Social Security at least purported to be (“Old Age and Survivors' Insurance”), are “gambling ventures that seek to plan and protect one's fortune rather than yielding it to God's will.”[[24]](#footnote-24) Many refused to pay Social Security taxes, with the result that the IRS eventually began filing liens on farm animals and other assets. The conflict was only ended in 1965, when federal legislation exempted self-employed Amish from having to pay Social Security taxes.[[25]](#footnote-25)

The Amish, who are pacifists,[[26]](#footnote-26) have usually been granted conscientious objector status by the Selective Service System. As such, they were required to engage in civilian service, such as emptying bedpans in urban hospitals. That meant spending two years outside the Amish culture, rooming with non-Amish roommates, possibly dating, even marrying, non-Amish nurses, with the result that only about half of them chose to return to their communities when their service was done and not all of those chose to join the church.[[27]](#footnote-27)

“Many boys go with good intentions but by having so much idle time, become involved with amusements, with the nurses or in other ways are led astray to the extent that when they could return home and become church members there are so many that no longer prefer to, or are in a position where they find they can hardly do so, with maybe a nurse of a different faith for a wife or similar circumstances.”[[28]](#footnote-28)

Part of the Amish response was the National Amish Steering Committee, whose primary function was to negotiate with the U.S. government over issues where its rules clash with requirements of the Amish religion.[[29]](#footnote-29) The Committee’s negotiations with the Selective Service System resulted in putting many Amish conscientious objectors on farms run by Amish or Mennonites, growing food as their war work.[[30]](#footnote-30)

Another conflict was over schooling. In the nineteenth century most Amish attended rural public schools, typically one-room schoolhouses; many of the students were themselves Amish, the rest from rural families not too different in their culture and attitudes. Children normally attended school only through eighth grade, thereafter assisting their parents.

In the course of the twentieth century, the age of required schooling was raised by state law and school districts were consolidated, replacing rural one-room schoolhouses with much larger urban schools to which children had to be bussed. The result was one that most Amish saw as intolerable, both because their children were to be kept off the farm too long and because they would be attending schools dominated by cultural attitudes very different from those of their parents.

“The paramount fear lurking beneath all the other concerns was that modern education would lead Amish youth away from farm and faith, and undermine the church. The wisdom of the world, said Amish sages, 'makes you restless, wanting to leap and jump, and not knowing where you will land.'“[[31]](#footnote-31)

Many Amish parents refused to send their children to large, consolidated schools or to any school past eighth grade. Some went to jail as a result. In Pennsylvania, where the Lancaster County settlement was located, the conflict began in 1937 and was finally settled in 1955 by a reinterpretation of the school code.

“Under the vocational program, an Amish teacher held classes, three hours per week, for a dozen or so fourteen-year-olds in an Amish home. The youth submitted diaries of their work activities around the farm and home and studied English, math, spelling, and vocational subjects. … in essence, the children were under the guidance of their parents for most of the week … .” [[32]](#footnote-32)

Finally, in 1972, the Supreme Court, in *Wisconsin v. Yoder*, ruled in favor of the Amish right to have their children leave school after eighth grade.

The Amish dealt with the problem created by school consolidation by building and staffing their own local schools. Problems with state regulation of private schools and teachers–the schools were typically one-room schoolhouses without central heating or running water, most of the Amish teachers had only an eighth-grade education–arose but were for the most part eventually worked out.

Conflicts between the Amish and the state over Social Security, schooling and conscription were eventually dealt with in a fashion acceptable to the Amish.[[33]](#footnote-33) In part, this may have been due to the tendency of non-Amish to view the Amish in a favorable light–as a remnant of idealized 19th century rural virtue surviving into the twentieth century.

The relationship is friendly in the other direction as well. Amish frequently have non-Amish friends and often engage in business transactions with non-Amish. Some non-Amish operate “Amish taxi services,” providing automobile or van transportation for Amish when they need to go farther than horse and buggy can conveniently carry them. Amish in some affiliations routinely use the telephones of non-Amish neighbors when there is urgent need for communication.

In an earlier chapter, I suggested that in North America toleration might eventually destroy the status of the Romani as self-governing communities by making it too easy for unhappy or ostracized members to defect into the surrounding community. Along similar lines, it is arguable that the emancipation of European Jews, starting in the late eighteenth century, was responsible for the decline of the Jewish communities as effectively self-ruling polities. Yet the Amish have maintained their identity, culture, and *ordnung,* enforcing the latter by the threat of ostracism, despite the lack of any clear barrier to prevent unhappy or excommunicated members from deserting. Such desertion is made easier by the existence of Mennonite communities, similar to the Amish but less strict, which Amish defectors can and sometimes do join.

A critic of the Amish might argue that their upbringing, with schooling ending at eighth grade, leaves potential defectors unqualified for life in the modern world. The obvious response is that there are a lot of jobs in the modern world for which the willingness to work and the training produced by an apprenticeship starting at age fourteen are better qualifications than a high school diploma. As some evidence of the adequacy of Amish education, Amish seem to do quite well at starting and running their own small-scale businesses.[[34]](#footnote-34)

One might more plausibly suggest that a social system in which courting your future mate may start as early as fourteen leaves many young people locked into a future marriage well before the point at which they have to decide whether or not to accept the *Ordnung* and commit themselves to the Amish lifestyle–and it is a future marriage with a spouse raised Amish. It would be interesting to know whether, when Amish do choose to leave prior to baptism, they usually do it one by one or in couples.

One could also argue that the close bonds of Amish families create a form of lock-in. Shunning applies only to those who have sworn to obey the *Ordnung* and been baptized but then fail to live up to their commitment but, given how much of the life of the Amish is determined by their religion and culture, refusing to commit must create a substantial barrier. The barrier is higher still for those who have been baptized and so would face shunning if they left the church.[[35]](#footnote-35)

Finally, one might interpret the low defection rate as evidence of successful indoctrination into the negative view held by the Amish of the lives lived by non-Amish.[[36]](#footnote-36) Reading books on the Amish, all positive, all written by sympathizers,[[37]](#footnote-37) one is struck by how dark their picture of the outside world is. It is a world where people spend most of their efforts in competitive endeavor and display, in keeping up with the Joneses, where lives are divided among the almost wholly separate circles of work, family, and church, where little meaningful happens or can happen, a world of boredom and alienation.[[38]](#footnote-38)

There is, of course, one other possibility. Perhaps the Amish are correct in believing that they have a superior lifestyle, as judged by most of those who have lived it and observed the alternative–albeit superior only for those who have had the good fortune to be brought up in it.

1. . This chapter was inspired by a paper on the subject by Kelly Baxter, written for my seminar. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. . The figures are for the Old Order Amish, from Wikipedia. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. . The European Amish groups had mostly vanished, largely by merging with local Mennonite groups, by 1900; the last group with some distinctively Amish practices (foot washing and the use of hook and eye fasteners instead of buttons) merged with a Mennonite congregation in 1937. At present, Amish congregations exist only in the U.S. and Canada. (Hostetler 1980 p. 68.) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. . Amish houses are often designed to make it possible to seat a large number of people. (Egenes p. 63). “They meet in a farmhouse, the basement of a newer home, or a shed or barn” (Kraybill 1993 p. 10). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. . "Low” because the Amish regard humility as an important virtue.

One of the issues over which the Schwartzentruber Amish split off was their view that a congregation should not accept someone who was banned by the congregation in which he was baptized until he had first returned to his original congregation and made an appropriate confession. (Kraybill and Olshan, p. 55, chapter by Kraybill). [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. . The Lancaster County settlement, the oldest of the large Amish settlements, consists of only one affiliation of Old Order Amish, although there are also congregations of two splitoff groups, Beachy Amish and New Amish. The exact definition of which groups do or do not count as Amish is arbitrary; for the purposes of this chapter I am not including groups that permit things forbidden by almost all Amish groups. The Beachy Amish, for example, permit ownership of automobiles and for my purposes are classified with the Mennonites and other related-but-not-quite-Amish groups. Chapter 13 of Hostetler 1980 provides a detailed description of the history of splits in one area over a period of about a century, resulting in twelve different Amish and/or Mennonite groups. [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. . Nolt and Meyers 207, p. 7. [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. . In the Lancaster settlement, it is common for one Bishop to preside over two congregations (Kraybill 1989). Elsewhere, that appears to happen only during the transition period for a new congregation that has not yet selected a Bishop or a congregation that has lost its bishop and not yet chosen a replacement. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. . Hostetler 1980, p. 112. Kraybill 1989 p. 110. [↑](#footnote-ref-9)
10. . Hostetler 1980. Pp. 111-113 [↑](#footnote-ref-10)
11. . “Amish choices are thus based on a practical, worldly assessment resembling social engineering more than asceticism. They do not limit the use of automobiles, electricity, telephones, and tractors to seek suffering and redemption through hardship. Rather, decisions about accepting modern conveniences are based on the anticipated effect that a new product might have on the community.” Robert L. Kidder in Kraybill 1993, p. 217. [↑](#footnote-ref-11)
12. Kraybill 1989 p. 92. [↑](#footnote-ref-12)
13. . A year for a death in the immediate family, six months for a grandparent, three months for an uncle or aunt, six weeks for the death of a cousin. Compare the more severe mourning rules, in terms of both length and requirements, under Imperial Chinese law. [↑](#footnote-ref-13)
14. . In some Amish groups, the minister can make the decision without first putting it to the congregation, but that is very much the minority practice. Nolt and Meyers 207, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-14)
15. Kraybill 1989, pp. 112-113. [↑](#footnote-ref-15)
16. . “If conflict arises between Amish members, the community tries to cooperate in finding a peaceful settlement. If the church community takes a position, any member resisting it risks being excommunicated and shunned.” Robert L. Kidder in Kraybill 1993, p. 215. Along similar lines, Yoder (in Kraybill 1993, p. 38) refers to the Prozess, or congregational court, handling a bankruptcy. [↑](#footnote-ref-16)
17. . Kraybill 1989, pp. 137-140, provides a fairly detailed picture of *rumspringa* in the Lancaster County settlement. [↑](#footnote-ref-17)
18. . In particular the Swartzentruber Amish. [↑](#footnote-ref-18)
19. . Based mostly on personal communication with Thomas J. Meyers, who describes the situation in northern Indiana, where there are more than 130 congregations in a common affiliation with nearly identical *ordnungen*, as one where the congregation is, in effect, a territorial sovereign. The same situation seems to exist in the Lancaster Country settlement. But Meyers describes a different community, containing 5 distinct affiliations not in fellowship with each other, with in some cases overlapping church districts. And there may be significant variations of *Ordnung* among districts in the same affiliation. (Nolt and Meyers 207, p. 53) [↑](#footnote-ref-19)
20. According to Kraybill (1989), p. 274 fn 26. [↑](#footnote-ref-20)
21. “Families began to move to other settlements or regroup on the basis of a stricter or milder discipline.” Hostetler 1980, p. 64, describing events in the late eighteenth century. [↑](#footnote-ref-21)
22. Kraybill 1989, pp. 83-85. [↑](#footnote-ref-22)
23. The usual Amish term for non-Amish. [↑](#footnote-ref-23)
24. Kraybill 1989 p. 219. [↑](#footnote-ref-24)
25. The exemption was later extended to Amish employees in Amish owned businesses. [↑](#footnote-ref-25)
26. “Of all Amish young men who were drafted during World War II, only 4 percent went into military service.” Hostetler 1980 p. 293. [↑](#footnote-ref-26)
27. Kraybill 1993, p. 69. [↑](#footnote-ref-27)
28. Old Order Amish Steering Committee 1972:1 [↑](#footnote-ref-28)
29. Formed in 1966-7 to persuade the Selective Service to approve appeals by Amish conscientious objectors who wanted farm work instead of the hospital work to which they were assigned. It went on to argue on behalf of the Amish with various departments of the federal and state governments over a variety of issues. For details, see Olshan 1990. [↑](#footnote-ref-29)
30. . “In some instances, local board decisions were reversed on the same day they were made by quick intervention from national authorities responding to calls from Amish leaders. One leader described several episodes where “a quick call on a public phone to my friend General Hershey,” the Selective Service director, produced same-day results. Robert L. Kidder in Kraybill 1993, pp. 224-5 [↑](#footnote-ref-30)
31. . Kraybill 1989, p. 131 [↑](#footnote-ref-31)
32. . Kraybill 1989 pp. 120-129. Similar compromises were worked out in some other states. [↑](#footnote-ref-32)
33. . Kraybill offers a list of areas where modernity capitulated to the Amish rather than the Amish capitulating to it: Alternatives for conscientious objectors, exemption from high school attendance, waiver of school building requirements, waiver of minimum wage requirements for teachers, Social Security exemption for self-employed, workmen's compensation exemption for self-employed, unemployment insurance exemption for self-employed, waiver of hard hat regulation, alternation of zoning regulations (by townships), horse travel on public roads, avoidance of Sunday milk pickup. (Kraybill 1989 p. 245).

Some of these were concessions at the federal level, some state or local; the last item in the list was a concession by private companies. [↑](#footnote-ref-33)
34. Kraybill and Olshan, Chapter 9 (by Kraybill and Nolt). [↑](#footnote-ref-34)
35. “When asked about the ability of the church to hold its members, one person said: “That's easy to answer, it's the *Meidung*. If it weren't for shunning, many of our people would leave for a more progressive church where they could have electricity and cars.” (Kraybill p. 117) [↑](#footnote-ref-35)
36. “Amish life is fused by informal ties anchored in family networks, common traditions, uniform symbols, and a shared mistrust of the outside world.” Kraybill 1989, p. 93 [↑](#footnote-ref-36)
37. Hostetler, who has written extensively on the Amish, grew up Amish but chose not to join the church as an adult. [↑](#footnote-ref-37)
38. . I asked one author with whom I was corresponding whether this view reflected the fact that the authors were sociologists, with political biases that made them suspicious of modern America. His response was that the actual reason was that they were all Anabaptists and so shared, in a somewhat weaker form, the Amish view of worldly corruption. [↑](#footnote-ref-38)