THE COMPLEXITY OF LABOR EXCHANGE AMONG AMISH FARM HOUSEHOLDS IN HOLMES COUNTY, OHIO

DISSERTATION

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By

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ABSTRACT

Economic success for the Amish is due, in part, to labor exchange practices and other similar communal sharing practices. While the topic of labor exchange has been given a fair amount of attention by social scientists in many settings, there have been no labor exchange studies on the Old Order Amish from an anthropological perspective.

Specifically, this research project considers aspects of labor exchange and its relationship to farm production from an empirical analysis of two Old Order Amish church districts in Clark Township in the southeast portion of Holmes County, Ohio. The unit of analysis is the Amish farm “household” consisting of a family of three or four generations engaging in an intensive type of agriculture as defined by Netting (1993:28-29). Although the data collected represents farm labor inputs of individual households within the two separate church districts, the focus of this dissertation is both an examination of how Amish farm families share labor at the household level and an examination of how labor is shared among member households of the community. The latter includes organized and seasonal labor exchange, such as grain threshing or silo-filling; informal and occasional labor exchange, such as “frolics” or work gatherings by collateral family and neighbors; mutual aid, multi-community labor exchange, such as a barn raising; and labor exchange outside of agriculture yet vital to the farming community, such as schoolhouse cleaning by family members in a parochial district.
The main hypothesis of this dissertation proposes that Amish farmers engage in labor exchange activity in order to pool human capital so that the combined work output is greater than the amount of labor that each farmer could accomplish individually. The second hypothesis contends that the traditional dichotomy between labor sharing and commodification of labor in Amish society is moving toward greater commodification of labor along with farm intensification, population pressure, and local economic expansion. The methodology for this ethnographic research uses both quantitative and qualitative data collection of labor exchange among farmers in two Amish church districts from July 1998 through June 1999. The quantitative portion employs a survey instrument using interview techniques for gathering specific details regarding labor exchange practices. Key informant interviews and participant observation make up the qualitative data collection with the goal of obtaining cultural arrangements of labor exchange practices. Secondary data of household census material from the Ohio Amish Directory serves the purpose of obtaining broader demographics as a baseline of Amish families. Sahlins’ domestic mode of production will be used as a basis of comparison for labor exchange between and among households (1972: 91-135). Further, Netting’s concept of reciprocity is examined in terms of labor flow (1993:194-197), which can be both flexible and subject to variation in scheduling (Wilk & Netting 1984: 5-9).
Dedicated to my wife Cynthia for her unyielding support, and to my son Casey and daughter Olivia for their own brand of inspiration. Also dedicated to my father Donald E. Long for his encouragement of academic pursuits and helping initiate my interest in research.
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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

This research considers aspects of labor exchange and its relationship to traditional farm production and community. Various arrangements of household and community labor exchange among the Amish are examined from structured labor-sharing rings to informal group participation for accomplishing work. The Amish practice a traditional, horse-drawn form of intensive agriculture that is closely tied to ascetic religious beliefs and stems from centuries-old European persecution. Members of the Amish faith self-identify as Christians, while also being Protestant and Anabaptist (C. Miller 1998).

The main point of investigation for this research is to explore the complex relationships that Amish subsistence farmers maintain within social networks of family kinship, church membership, and neighborhoods in order to pool human capital so that combined work output is greater than the labor accomplished by individual farm households. Work is at the foundation of human culture since a group’s material culture depends upon labor; human work is communal in that it carries social obligations (including reciprocity and exchange) to family, kinship group, and to the community; human work depends upon a system of time allocation; human work requires organization by division of labor; finally, human work involves some level of interaction with nature and is spatially situated (Applebaum 1987:386-95).
Understanding the complexity of labor exchange in Old Order Amish society provides insight into the question of how Amish farmers negotiate the often opposing goals of maintaining a sufficient farm income while also retaining traditional religious values (known as Weltanschauung or worldview) in an ethnic community. The Amish manage this somewhat awkward challenge by forging a continual revision of the church Ordnung (unwritten rules), with each church district being self-determinate in the adoption of technological change. Thus, rather than having very rigid cultural traditions from generation to generation, the Amish social structure is flexible and demonstrates how structure and function of a group are interwoven. In deciding upon selection of one technology or another, the elders and bishop of an Amish church district hold special meetings to carefully consider how a particular technological innovation might affect social relationships within the community first, before assessing how individual farmers might benefit (B. Raber 1999). It is the adoption of new technology by Amish farmers that impacts the formation or dissolution of labor exchange arrangements, depending on whether a particular innovation is conducive to communal work activity.

Further, this research focuses on the dichotomy between labor sharing and commodification of labor in that Amish farmers are becoming less involved with labor sharing while moving toward greater commodification of labor given the population pressure and local economic expansion. Population growth among the Amish in the Holmes County, Ohio, settlement region continues unabated with an average of more than six children per family (Donnermeyer et al. 1999:162, Kraybill 1995:8), which contributes to an increased cost for acquiring farmland and an exodus of some Amish
farm families to other settlements such as Indiana or Wisconsin where farmland is more affordable. This research examines farm intensification practices among Amish farmers in an era of decreasing diversification in their overall farm operation. Given the higher percentage of Old Order Amish men engaged in non-farm occupations, labor itself has become more valued and costly to hire. The changing occupational structure has also created new patterns of labor sharing among Amish farms, which comprise 36 percent of Old Order Amish households in the Holmes County settlement area (Kraybill 1994:57). Thus, management of household labor on the farm is crucial where both income and subsistence must be derived (Netting 1993:74-78). The Amish make use of several strategies for balancing labor cycles of the household, farm and community that this project investigates at length within an anthropological framework.

1.1 A brief history of the Amish

The Anabaptist religious group in Europe became martyrs of conscience for the hundreds of believers persecuted by other Protestant Christians in the 16th and 17th century (Klein 1946:7). It is because of their history of persecution, belief in long suffering and poverty, adherence to simplicity and humility that the Amish continue a strict adherence to piety. Two publications have survived for hundreds of years to remind the Amish of Anabaptist martyrdom. One is the hymnal used by the Amish, or Ausbund, that has pages marked with the names of martyred authors (Bainton 1952:105); the second is the Martyr’s Mirror, a detailed account of Anabaptist persecution in Europe, symbolizing the “battle between the carnal and spiritual world” (Hostetler 1968:11).
Such an awareness of past disharmony with the world has helped shape an insular society among Old Order Amish that persists today. The plain clothing is the most overt “symbol of separation” from the world among plain people that include Amish, Brethren, Hutterite and Mennonite (Ruth 1985:4). What distinguishes the Amish from these other religious groups is their emphasis on living simply and their highly selective use of technology.

Most Amish and Mennonite felt unwelcome wherever they lived in Europe and beginning in 1727 sought refuge in North America (Hostetler 1968:71). Having settled in southeast Pennsylvania, life in the “promised land” for the Amish came with the hardship of adjusting as immigrants to the New World. Their numbers remained static for 50 years with only about 40 percent of the first generation remaining Amish (Nolt 1992:74).

The federal government opened the Northwest Territory with the Land Ordinance of 1785 and authorized sale of 640-acre sections with the Land Act of 1796 (Havighurst 1976:22-29). The Troyer family was among the first Amish in Ohio, having moved from Canada to Holmes County in 1815 (Nolt 1992:95). The Amish in Pennsylvania moved several families to north-central Ohio by 1830, taking advantage of the Land Law of 1820, which discontinued credit purchase, allowed an 80-acre minimum, and reduced the price per acre from $2.00 to $1.25. Avoiding credit debt has always been part of the Amish religious doctrine, and by this time land was becoming crowded around Lancaster, Pennsylvania.
During the late 18th century, an interesting turn of events took place in southern Germany (where previously the most fervent persecution of Anabaptists occurred); the Duke of Bavaria invited the Amish to settle there because of their reputation as highly skilled farmers, although few would become land owners (Nolt 1992:47-49). In this situation the Amish became better farmers than their contemporaries due to the great need for community cooperation in the midst of conflict, as well as the cohesion formed within each Gemeinde (Amish congregation or church district) that brought about an increased sharing of both farming equipment and knowledge until the group’s aggregate cultural and agricultural attributes filtered out less suitable technology and methods.

1.2 Amish ethnography

As a distinct and separate religious group living and working in the New World, the Amish comprise a highly diverse population. There are more than 220 settlements in the United States and Canada with additional settlements in Central and South America. Of the estimated 160,000 Amish that live in the United States (Donnermeyer et al. 1999:15), nearly one in six live in the Holmes County settlement, now the largest.

The main group of Ohio Amish began using the “Old Order” designation about 1860 when some of the more liberal groups broke away, eventually joining the Mennonites (Kraybill 1994:55). The Old Order Amish in Ohio experienced a schism in 1913 after a disagreement about meidung or shunning, an issue similar to the dispute that had divided Mennonites and Amish centuries earlier.

A more conservative group emerged from the Ohio Amish split that later became known as the Swartzentruber church (Kraybill 1994). This ultra conservative group,
geographically centered in southeastern Wayne County near the Holmes County border, has changed little since 1913 compared to other Old Order Amish groups. Few things ornate appear in or around the typical Swartzentruber house where a wood-fired stove is used for cooking and running water is not permitted, thus putting into practice the plain and simple aspects of their beliefs. Shunning among the Swartzentrubers is stricter in application and enforcement.

Another group split from the settlement’s main body in 1967, becoming the New Order Amish. Kraybill (1994:57) suggests that the schism resulted mainly from beliefs of the emerging group that religious practices of the Old Order did not provide a personal enough experience and lacked assurance of salvation. There was also a disagreement over courting practices and behavior in general among Old Order youth as being too permissive according to Kraybill and Donnermeyer et al. (1999:152).

Some New Order members describe an opposition to overly strict uses of technology, such as the prohibition of using tractors for fieldwork, as an important motivational factor for breaking away from the Old Order and have adopted a more benign view of modern technological conveniences. In southern Wayne County and Holmes County west of Benton, a separate group of New Order Amish church districts maintain Sunday church at individual homes, wear traditional clothing, and use the horse and buggy for travel; yet, the members drive tractors to plow and plant (since 1965 or so), have a telephone in the home (since 1983), and use electricity in the house, the latter of which is neither sanctioned nor prohibited by the church district (Gingerich 1998). The number of Amish households in the settlement that have begun using such
conveniences is quite small with perhaps a few dozen households among several thousand.

Another obvious visual characteristic that sets the Amish person apart from the larger society is use of the horse and buggy for transportation, which also serves as a symbol of separation from others in the world (Kreps et al. 1997). This ritualized behavior is prefaced upon the New Testament Romans 12:2, “Be not ye conformed to this world,” and II Corinthians 6:14-18, “Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship hath righteousness with unrighteousness ...come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord.” The symbolic use of separation and nonconformity together with Amish notions of humility, self-denial, and pacifism relate to Gelassenheit, or the yielding of oneself to higher spiritual authorities. Kraybill (1994:7) suggests it is Gelassenheit that encourages Amish to place group goals over individual goals, forming the cornerstone of the Amish worldview. Individual and group labor among the Amish are essentially overt symbols of “yieldedness” as expressed in acts of work that characterize selfless giving to the family and community (Cronk 1981:9). Given the importance of community to church doctrine, Amish farmers maintain such a worldview by observing church-set guidelines on technological usage, which helps limit farm size and production, enabling Amish communities to remain geographically compact.

Community participation in collective action ranks high among the criteria for identification within a group. Massey (1994) defines community strength as having shared beliefs and values, reciprocity, and direct, nonmediated relations with one another.
Amish farmers in this study have demonstrated a similar set of values with regard to an overall work ethic—one that strives for quality of living rather than quantity of income.

Park and Burgess (1921) emphasize the importance of communication as a means of participation in social activity, with the reservation that shared language has greater meaning where there is a shared culture. This common language and common culture enable a geographical collection of people to experience and participate in the whole community. Thus, the notion of a sense of community among the Amish can be defined as having vital social, communicative, and religious aspects.

As a matter of Ordnung-driven social convention, the Amish voluntarily limit both farm size at 80 to 100 acres and the size of each church district from 25 to 40 families. Sale (1980:187) cites the many advantages of a smaller scale economy, one of which is the ability of people to better manage factors beneficial to the community, primarily because a smaller community can be more aware of its resources and limitations.

1.3 The Holmes County settlement region

The first Amish in Ohio arrived 1808 from Somerset County, Pennsylvania, and settled in the South Fork region of Sugarcreek in northwestern Tuscarawas County. Amish pioneers settled the area around Walnut Creek in southeastern Holmes County the following year (Nolt 1992:93, Jeschke 1994:5). The two church districts identified in this study are located primarily along the tributaries of South Fork within Clark Township in Holmes County, a few miles to the west and south of the earliest Ohio settlements (see Fig. 1.1). Thus the Amish farming region for this research was chosen, in part, because it represents the core area of Old-Order Amish settlements in Ohio. (See also section 1.4).
Figure 1.1: Map of Walnut Creek and South Fork indicating initial Ohio Amish settlement region and research study area.
By the 1950s, some publications reported that the Amish in Ohio had become the most populous settlement (Smith 1961:28). The southeastern Pennsylvania Amish settlement has maintained the distinction of being the most familiar Old Order group, in part, because it was established 50 years before the Holmes County settlement, and also because large numbers of tourists are drawn to the region from nearby Philadelphia and New York City. The Guidebook to Amish Communities & Business Directory (Garrett 1996:32) lists 154 church districts in the Holmes County settlement area, compared to 115 southeastern Pennsylvania church districts. The Ohio figure does not include approximately 30 church districts belonging to the ultra-conservative Swartzentruber Amish.

Smith (1961:29) suggests that the Old Order (or Conservative) Mennonite population of the region is nearly as numerous, with larger numbers of Mennonites living in villages and towns compared to Amish. Mennonites often coexist with well-established Amish communities, because it is the closest faith among the family of Anabaptist religions and the Pennsylvania Dutch lingual group that an Amish defector would likely join.

### 1.3.1 Land tenure and settlement pattern

The Amish system of land tenure is based on the pattern of preindustrial Europe rather than the American custom of equal-heir inheritance. Amish farmers in the Holmes County settlement practice patrilineal descent and single-heir inheritance. Succession of land held by Amish farmers is most often transferred from father to son, next followed by
father to son-in-law (or father to daughter), with a much smaller percentage of farms going to nephews. Hostetler (1961:28) notes that ownership of most goods is held in common between an Amish man and his wife, although decisions regarding transactions for purchase and transfer of land remain patriarchal.

The extended family arrangement on Amish farms, usually with the elder generation living in an adjacent “daudy” house, further accommodates single-heir inheritance given the group’s adherence to limiting farm size to an average of about 80 acres, while also maintaining a minimum functional size of at least 60 acres or so.

Following the migration of several Pennsylvania Amish families into Walnut Creek Valley, others arrived in eastern Holmes County as direct immigrants from Europe during the early 19th century, and a third group of Amish came south from Ontario, Canada (Nolt 1992:94-95). Much of the growth in Amish land acquisition occurred during the 50 year period after 1910, and by 1960 the Amish held 82 percent of the farms in the core settlement area centered in eastern Holmes County. Through the 1990s rural habitation and an agricultural-based economy continued to persist in the core settlement region where the Amish now own more than 90 percent of the farms.

The Holmes County settlement is made up of parts of five other counties in rural northeast Ohio including Ashland, Coshocton, Stark, Tuscarawas, and Wayne (Kent and Neugebauer 1990:429). The bulk of Amish church districts in the settlement are located in the eastern half of Holmes County and southeast Wayne County (Ohio Amish Directory 1997, Kent and Neugebauer 1990:436). Spatial arrangements of Old Order Amish church districts in the region tend toward a geographically irregular pattern,
limited in breadth of territory by horse and buggy traveling distance. As recently as 1960, the Old Order church district lines were drawn according to county and township boundary lines, and along roadways, with numerous districts intersecting village centers (Ohio Amish Directory 1997). Rapid population growth has forced many church districts to divide given the Amish belief that 25 to 40 families is the optimum size for a church community, which also approximates the maximum number of persons that a member's home can accommodate for a church service (Good 1985:49). With little change in the total number of farms in the Holmes County settlement since 1973, population pressure has also contributed to the trend of many Amish males engaging in nonfarm occupations (Kreps et al. 1994:713). Thus, the division lines defining newer church districts are more often drawn along property lines than physical boundaries and may contain many households with three or fewer acres. Ben Raber's (1999) observation that the Flat Ridge church district in 1970 had since subdivided into four Old Order church districts reflects the increase in population density.

The average Amish farm size of less than 100 acres has changed little over the last 20 years in the Holmes County settlement with farmers in some instances ceding two or three acres of frontage property to a son or daughter not likely to engage in full-time farming. In general, the high relief of the land does not lend itself to 500-acre grain farms, which is average for non-Amish farms in Ohio. Rather, eastern Holmes County is more suited to the diversified type of agriculture that the Amish prefer. The longevity of Amish farm production in the settlement region, moderate farm size, and availability of heirs contribute to a stable land tenure system.
In part, the duration of land tenure among Amish can be attributed to their highly reverent attitude toward the farming occupation, as prescribed by their religious beliefs. Such an affinity with working the soil is no accident. Hostetler (1968:66) and others (Foster 1980:333; Bender 1991:63; Moore et al. 2000:2) observed that the Amish have a biblical connection to farming in equating closeness to nature to closeness to God. They also believe that their success as farmers is the result of divine intervention. At least part of their devotion to agriculture is because it represents the opposite of urbanism and its secular ills (Hostetler 1968:66-67).

The anthropologist looks at reasons why humans stake out and defend territories to sustain some type of land tenure. Cashdan (1989) suggests that land is held because of predictable and abundant resources. With traditional groups in New Guinea, Rappaport (1984:143-45) found that occupation of a territory is tied to ecology, religion and ritual, specifically citing the Kundagai retreat from Tsembaga lands after a battle as directed by local custom and respect for ancestors. In other cases such as the Maring peoples of New Guinea, especially when nearing full carrying capacity, land may often be taken by nearby groups with at least some of the original inhabitants returning, according to Rappaport.

The large Amish population in the Holmes County settlement region supports a steady demand for goods and services, many of which are provided by more than 700 Amish-owned rural enterprises and shops that also supply alternative nonfarm employment (Olshan 1994:11). Greater diversification of the local economy and an
Figure 1.2: Map of landholding farmers in two selected Old Order Amish church districts, Clark Township, Holmes County, Ohio from the Holmes County 1996 Plat Directory, Millersburg Area Chamber of Commerce. (Shaded area represents Flat Ridge Church District; crosshatched area is Farmerstown South Church District.)
emphasis on rural living in the settlement helps solidify the agricultural base, given that farming remains the preferred occupation among the Amish.

Historically, the Amish have chosen regions known to have excellent soil and growing conditions, such as Lancaster County in southeastern Pennsylvania where innovative skills of crop rotation and the use of clover for improved fertility were brought from Europe and perfected (Hostetler 1989:56, Stinner et al. 1992).

1.4 Church districts in this study

Two church districts were chosen from the core area of the Old Order Amish settlement in Holmes County, Ohio (see Fig. 1.2). Amish households in a more central proximity to the overall settlement have fewer opportunities for contact with mainstream society compared to households in peripherally located church districts. The centers of both church districts are several miles from any of the tourist towns in the region. Flat Ridge Church District is located south of Charm and has 70 members and 52 non-members; Farmerstown South Church District is located southwest of Farmerstown having 63 members and 95 non-members (Ohio Amish Directory 1997:xxvi).

Both church districts in the study approximate the average congregation size of 150 individuals as established by Kraybill (1995:14). The Flat Ridge church district has 27 households with separate addresses that consolidate into 15 extended families or clans, each sharing the same or adjacent property, 12 of which include a farm household. Similarly, 13 of the 18 clans in the Farmerstown South church district are situated on or adjacent to a farm household of close kinship, among the congregation’s 30 separate households. Member families of each congregation often have siblings and first cousins
in another household within the same church district, resulting in perhaps 6 or 7 clans in each congregation that are more distantly related than first cousins. During the past 30 years there have been five marriages between second cousins in the two church districts, the most recent in 1993.

This degree of closeness in kinship has forced the Amish practice of endogamy to include the entire settlement region and sometimes beyond to other Amish settlements, rather than the more traditional mating custom defined within a geographic area of a maximum of 8 to 12 miles round-trip in a buggy. This change in recent years is most evident in the settlement-wide “exchange” event or singles party that young people of marriageable age attend in the Holmes County settlement area (M. Raber 1999). Sunday evening “singings” have been a very popular event for young Amish men and women to meet a prospective mate (Hostetler 1968:158), and remain an important social event today, but with less emphasis on courtship. Other neighborhood social activities include softball and volleyball, the latter being inclusive of males and females. Auctions attract participants from a wider area and therefore function as important social gathering where Amish have the opportunity to interact outside their immediate community. The mainstay of present-day courtship among the Amish rests on the tradition of the Saturday evening ritual where young men in groups of three to five ride in a buggy with the purpose of arriving at various Amish houses in other church districts where similar size groupings of young ladies might be present (Erb 1998). Many decades ago, the husking bee was the most likely place for an eligible Amish bachelor to meet an available girl (B. Raber 1998).
1.5 Labor exchange types

There are two major categories of labor exchange among Amish farmers, structured group labor and informal group labor. Structured group labor includes associations for completing the harvest known as threshing rings, silo-filling rings, and husker rings; sharing of labor associated with the parochial school, especially the annual school cleaning; work directly tied to the church such as fund raising activity; and finally the well-known mutual-aid labor of barn building or aiding a farmer who might be ill or injured.

Informal group labor includes ad hoc pooling of work resources in the neighborhood, especially frolics for special projects; exchanges of livestock care while away; householder labor such as milking, plowing, and small grain shocking; sharing of labor organized by kinship network such as haying, bride service, summer help, and hunting or gathering of wild foods; and also labor exchange involving women such as quilting, applesauce making, gardening, canning, and childcare. Formal group labor is highly organized and usually planned well in advance or simply makes up part of the annual cycle of work that must be accomplished on the farm.

Labor exchange practices among Amish farm households are based, in part, on their traditional religious beliefs; however, origins of many Amish labor-sharing customs are historically founded upon common practices of 18th and 19th century mainstream American agriculturalists. When the threshing process became mechanized in America during the mid-19th century, many threshing rings were organized to pool labor resources.
and during this period “Amish farming practices did not differ significantly from those of their non-Amish neighbors” (Nolt 1992:194).

Relative to farm household production, there is a clear division of labor according to gender, although less well defined according to age. Basically, the Amish husband’s domain is in the barn and in the field, whereas the domain of the Amish wife includes the house and yard, although it is usually the case that the woman will help her husband in the barn and the field much more than the reverse (Hostetler 1989:150). An Amish woman does a great deal of dairy work, especially as a younger wife until children get older. Women also engage in a limited amount of fieldwork, especially during harvest season with such tasks as shocking oats and barley, bringing in the hay, or driving a wagon to help transport corn fodder to the barn.

The gender ratio among the children in the family helps determine if girls will do field work and how often boys will milk cows (Smith 1958:148). Amish youth begin helping in the field at about the age of 10, while children as young as six help with milking and learn to feed a calf at an even younger age. There is plenty of labor-intensive work in and around the Amish house for women and older girls who not only do the household chores, but also take care of the lawn and garden in producing household vegetables. This project provides a quantitative study of labor exchange in the two church districts, which includes division of labor and total farm household production.

Diversified farming that the Amish practice is based on a solid work ethic. Kline (1990:xxii) notes that Amish farmers spread the work cycle throughout the entire
growing and harvest season, unless weather fails to cooperate. This varied work
schedule produces a kind of subsistence farming, allowing each family to supply most of
its own food needs in a given year.

Stoltzfus (1973:312) describes the adaptive nature of Amish agriculture in their
ability to work with the “opportunities and demands of market agriculture” and maintain
a rewarding occupation, which the author claims can be seen in the aesthetic quality of
their fields. During the past 40 years virtually all North American farmers except the
Amish have abandoned diversified farming, a type of food production system that not
only maximizes energy efficiency by recapturing much of the energy through nutrient
cycling, but also preserves the family farm and strength in the local community and local
economy. Before sustainable agriculture became a maxim of conservationists, Aldo
Leopold described land as part of a “sustained circuit” including not just the soil, but also
the water and all of the life forms upon the land (1968:216). Farming systems are part of
this organic energy circuit and thrive on diversity of biota (Leopold 1968:217). High-
yield, high input mainstream farming has done just the opposite by forcing farms to
become much larger in acreage thereby taking more families off the land and reducing
the practical need for local economies. Stinner et al. (1989:85-89) suggest that the Amish
are exemplary land stewards based on a holistic set of farming practices that are highly
energy efficient, respectful of nature, and able to reinforce social bonds.

In addition, the Amish system of belief or Weltanschauung is most evident in the
Amish work ethic of quality in workmanship balanced with economic practicality. This
work ethic also exists among the Amish community outside of the agrarian lifestyle.
Heiberger (1994:121) observed that Amish not living on farms might perform a variety of labor including landscape gardening, office cleaning, or even volunteer work at the hospital. The common denominator is the honor in doing work, whatever the work might be for an Amish adult or young person. Moreover, the value of such labor multiplies when Amish families and neighborhoods share cooperative work arrangements within an agrarian economic base and rural setting.
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Social scientific study of Old Order Amish farmers in 20th century North America has provided numerous descriptive accounts of Amish farm life. John Hostetler’s *Amish Society*, first published in 1963, represents one of the more comprehensive volumes on Amish culture, religion, and social change among the well-known southeastern Pennsylvania Amish. His work tends toward an emic perspective as described by Kenneth Pike (1954) and Clifford Geertz (1983) in that Hostetler depicts everyday life in a society of which he is a former member. Sociologist Elmer Smith compiled two volumes primarily on the lifestyle of the Pennsylvania Amish, *The Amish People* (1958) and *The Amish Today* (1961). The latter work also examines closely the social changes, problems, and challenges associated with technological adoption that has become the focal point of much recent literature on the Amish. Victor Stoltzfus (1973) takes a broad perspective in considering the Amish alternative to economics and collateral favorable ecological position in an article about Amish agriculture and community.

Energy conservation, the zeitgeist of the mid-1970s, became the focus of several studies on the Amish including Johnson, Stoltzfus, and Craumer’s (1977) treatment of energy usage in Amish farm production. Their input-output analysis indicates that lower consumption patterns and willingness to use labor-intensive technology enables a degree
of economic success on Amish farms with respect to energy costs. The authors cite a significant amount of variation among the Iowa, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania groups studied, claiming that longitudinal data is needed for explanatory details. D. Paul Miller of Illinois Wesleyan presented a paper at the Illinois Sociological Association Annual Meeting (1978) entitled, “Amish Technology,” in which he used participant observation to observe efficiency in technological usage of Amish farmers and cottage industry workers in Illinois. Miller states the problem as one of comparing quality-of-life benefits to the process, given technological choices; the issues of how Amish meet the challenges of new technology are also explored. Further, he considers social changes in Amish society resulting from recent growth in non-farm roles among Amish men and describes how complexity in Amish social organization increases from the many new occupational roles.

Sandra Cronk focuses on religious aspects of Amish and Mennonite groups in her dissertation (1977) and subsequent publications such as the article, “Gelassenheit: The Rites of the Redemptive Process in Old Order Amish and Old Order Mennonite Communities” (1981). Cronk defines important aspects of Anabaptist religion, resistance to modernity, rituals of a redemptive community, and specifically the concept of yielding to others and God as a primal force in the Amish and Mennonite belief systems. Historian George De Vries (1980) suggests that a Christian heritage is the underlying common theme that most mainstream American Christians may apply in order to better understand the Amish as an alternative culture. The author also places an emphasis on quality-of-life issues relevant to Amish spiritual communities.
Bender (1989) draws from her experience living with an Amish family for several months as an “English” person in Plain and Simple: A Woman's Journey to the Amish. Her book focuses on division of labor and the woman's role in household production, and how religious beliefs are carried through daily life. An example is Bender's insight on the typically well-kept garden of an Amish woman, as well as the simple beauty of an Amish quilt, the latter she observes as having similar symbolic meaning as the patchwork mosaic of a planted field. Bender also makes the profound observation that Amish women make beautiful quilts and dolls in a society where practically every woman engages in such activities more for utility than aesthetics, and thus no one stands out as an artist. Indeed, the Amish concept of art or “being artistic” is different, but not absent.

Sociologist Jerry Savells (1988) looks at economic and social acculturation of Old Order Amish from a structural-functionalist view. Outside pressures for social change are analyzed by Savells, who accurately depicts the inevitability of the Old Order group’s acceptance of some modernization by choice. The key is the “planned” change in which Amish exercise, according to Savells, and that separates the Amish from a folk society. Another social scientist, James Landing (1969) considers the Old Order Amish from a geographic and spatial pattern and concludes that there are no general models for settlement pattern. In particular, he opposes the concept that social isolation is related to physical isolation among the Amish, noting that the core area of a settlement is no more likely to be insulated from the outside world than a peripheral area. After analyzing diffusion of innovations within various Amish settlements, Landing identifies three zones of adoption behavior in any given settlement: tradition, acceptance, and innovation,
although the geographic layout of such zones varies widely. Both approaches to social change offer perspectives that are complementary, and support the logical construct that specific areas within Amish settlements are historically conditioned to be somewhat unique from other areas in the same settlement. Amish populations in many settlements have successfully held off the twin frontal attack of tourism and modernization, but the most vulnerable congregations have succumbed to encroaching urbanization. Given the nature of Amish rural-based culture, the Amish religious and social form in all of its institutional variety has not yet incubated an urban model.

2.1 Published work on Amish in Ohio

Literature specifically focused on Amish in the Holmes County, Ohio, settlement have been few until fairly recently. Huntington’s (1957) dissertation is a comprehensive community study of the settlement. A German language professor at Wooster College, William Schreiber (1962) provides a general description of the Amish people in the settlement area. Having traveled and lectured also in Europe, he found the Amish folk in circa 1950s Ohio to be more representative of the German peasantry than the German bauers (farmers) themselves. Betty Jeschke (1994) provides an account of the first Amish to migrate to the Holmes County settlement region near the village of Walnut Creek (then New Carlisle). The waters of Walnut Creek Valley flow into Sugar Creek, making up an area that represents the core of the Old Order Amish settlement in Ohio.

Since 1990 several studies have focused on the Ohio Amish. Kent and Neugebauer (1990) analyze settlement patterns among Amish and Mennonites in Ohio from a rural
sociology perspective. Sommers and Napier (1993) compare Ohio Amish farmers versus non-Amish farmers using quantitative analysis to look at environmental attitudes of both groups and suggest a collective environmental action for improving ground water in particular. One of the few published studies to question the ecological soundness of the low-input Amish farming system, Sommers and Napier expose some of the problems that may result with some traditional farm practices. Lee Zook contrasts conventional farm methods to Amish agriculture in, “The Amish Farm and Alternative Agriculture: A Comparison” (1994), emphasizing the Amish religious conviction of caring for the soil. Zook also observes the practicality of an ecologically minded Ohio Amish farmer.

Moore et al. (2000) consider sustainability and elements of Amish traditional knowledge, with an emphasis on the holistic approach to the ecosystem as a community of interactive parts that Amish farmers have learned to appreciate. David Kline is a New Order Amish farmer who has written two books on Amish, agriculture, and the natural surroundings. Great Possessions (1990) is a detailed narrative of how Amish farming strategies used in horse-drawn agriculture routinely benefit the birds and other wildlife, the soil, and the local environment from the author’s own farming experience.

Kreps et al. (1997) emphasize the slower pace of Amish life, centering on farming as the main occupation underlying the rural existence of all Amish. It is this latter point that the authors refer to as the agrarian base that helps perpetuate mutualism and community solidarity among members of the Amish community, with specific references to Holmes County. In the book, Lessons for Living: A Practical Approach to Daily Life from the Amish Community, Donnermeyer et al. (1999) focus on the meaning behind
Amish virtues and folkways from a rural sociological perspective. The authors describe cooperative labor among the Amish as having social bonds that help maintain community and reduce the drudgery involved with labor-intensive work, using examples of the traditional barn-raising and the quilting circle to illustrate these concepts, but does not specifically address labor exchange (1999:93-102). Moreover, as described by Donnermeyer et al., cooperation among Amish is more important than competition and

Figure 2.1: Amish school children in southeastern Holmes County play softball during recess with an adult male farmer from the community taking time out of his workday to pitch. Softball is a game also played by Amish men with teams set up according to neighborhoods. (Photo by Scot Long)
similar community values are evident in the manner that Amish play softball, with a “limited amount of individualism” in that the joy of playing the game and teamwork are placed above individual talent (1999:105). One Flat Ridge farmer and member of the men’s softball team for the village of Charm said that while standings are not kept in the league, players are aware of whether they have a winning record and the play “can get fairly competitive” (M. Raber 1999).

2.2 Literature specific to labor exchange

While labor exchange is a common area of study for social scientists in many settings, there have been few studies on labor exchange among the Old Order Amish from an anthropological perspective.

Marcel Mauss (1967) was the first to describe economic exchange from an anthropological perspective in his book, The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies, originally published 1925 as Essai sur le don, forme archaïque de l'échange. Using an overview of several ethnically distinct groups, Mauss employed comparative method to analyze various exchange systems and found, in general, that many forms of giving carry obligations such as a return gift and often have greater political implications. Mauss viewed preindustrial societies in local geographic regions as segmentary, a characteristic that leads to negotiation of exchanges, which serves to promote better relations between opposing groups. Similar preindustrial societies also engage in redistribution and exchange within the group, activities that contribute to social solidarity of the group (Mauss 1967:79-80).
Reciprocity as it pertains to social relations was first detailed in Polanyi’s work, The Great Transformation (1957). He considered the work of Malinowski and Kula trade and found that symmetry is necessary for reciprocity to be functional in an economic system just as centricity is essential to redistribution (1957:48-49). Further, Polanyi argued that reciprocity usually occurs over the long-term and economic systems are therefore more dependent upon group participation in barter and other exchange forms compared to individual transactions (1957:61). The latter point is central to this research project in that the Amish not only practice labor exchange in small groups and across church districts, but also among families of differing sizes at any given time period, so that the family with small children contributing less labor will likely contribute a fair share over the long-term as children become more productive young adults.

Sahlins (1972:191-96) classifies various types of exchange behavior into three main categories of reciprocity: generalized, balanced, and negative. Labor exchange may fall into the category of generalized reciprocity if individual participation tends to be oriented toward long-term sharing of resources, while being less concerned with the notion of obligation. Balanced reciprocity implies a more direct exchange and includes structured labor-sharing rings, especially threshing and silo-filling rings. Negative reciprocity is associated with market exchange principles in cases where there is an attempt of one party to maximize personal gain over a second party. The Amish practice both generalized and balanced reciprocity in everyday transactions on the farm, although labor exchanged is more often generalized—primarily because the informal type of labor that is shared, including frolics and gatherings, occurs on a much more frequent basis.
Berdan (1989:83-85) suggests the Amish, however, are economically successful as a group because they practice reciprocity and labor-sharing pools, both of which are forms of nonmarket exchange. Group action is necessarily tied to the strength of local economy, and interrelationships within a community influence decision-making, such as church-district level selection of technology (e.g. automatic corn picker) and its impact upon existing forms of labor exchange practices.

Labor exchange specific to agricultural production has been discussed in numerous publications, most notably Rikoon's (1988) treatment of threshing and labor collectives in the Midwest from 1820 to 1940. He analyzed the cooperative structure of labor-sharing rings that were used to thresh wheat and other small grains among mainstream farmers. From Rikoon’s analysis of threshing rings in Ohio and Indiana, structural changes in labor collectives began as early as 1890; by 1920 mainstream farmers were clearly more formalized compared to contemporary Amish labor-sharing rings (1988:96).


Mark Olshan combined interests in labor and social change in Amish folk society in his dissertation at Cornell (1980) and continued along this line of logic with the article, “The Opening of Amish Society: Cottage Industry as Trojan Horse” (1991). The central theme of the article argues that Amish separatism has been mitigated by economic
necessity. Olshan believes that the economic change runs concurrent to the occupational migration out of agriculture, which recently has accounted for more than half of Amish males of working age (see also Kreps et al. 1994). This trend increases participation of Amish people in the market economy and reduces their self-sufficiency (Olshan 1991:379). In response to problems associated with wage labor, in particular the father's absence from the family on a daily basis, Olshan contends that many Amish have turned to cottage industries. This research project attempts to answer some of the questions regarding how nonfarm Amish families continue to participate in labor-exchange activities including frolics, gatherings, and mutual aid.

Meyers (1994:177) argues that the cooperative bonds of community have receded with the advent of widespread wage labor in Amish society, citing the loss of such labor exchange activities as participation in a threshing ring. The author fails to recognize the continued prevalence of frequent and varied group labor activities that persist within and among nearly all Amish households.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

Fieldwork among the Amish in farming communities of the Holmes County settlement region was conducted for a period of 36 months from April 1997 through March 2000. This is not a particularly lengthy period considering that fieldwork was not continuous; rather, visits to the field site averaged three days per week during the height of the research effort. The study amounts to about one year of traditional on-site fieldwork, which according to Ellen (1984:198) is suitable in duration for dissertation research of this type. Ellen also suggests that the ethnographer should observe the research community at minimum an entire calendar year of activity. Data collection specific to labor exchange in two selected church districts was conducted during the span of one year from July 1998 to June 1999 in order to observe the full range of labor exchange during each phase of plowing, planting, and harvesting seasons.

The Holmes County settlement was chosen for pragmatic reasons, mainly due to the reasonable proximity to Ohio State University and because of its accessibility for performing fieldwork. Given that the Amish population in the Holmes County region is well established and the largest Amish settlement in the world, people living there are accustomed to frequent outside contact. During initial stages of field site selection, individuals contacted from other, smaller Amish settlements in Ohio of about equal commuting distance expressed reservations about becoming involved in a study, a few of
whom suggested that Holmes County would be more appropriate. Upon making contact with the first few members of each of the two selected Amish church districts, the people there were found to be genuinely accessible.

Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:38) state the case for pragmatic concerns as paramount in the decision process for field site selection. The initial design of this research project focused on the topics of labor exchange practice and commodification of labor from the theoretical perspective of cultural ecology. Ellen (1984:193) proposes that the ethnographer match the choice of a field research site to the topical matter and theoretical considerations at hand. Similarly, Hammersley and Atkinson (1995:36-37) suggest that the ethnographer begin with a list of topics and general research problems and, after spending some time in the field setting, refine the research questions with respect to the unanticipated findings in the early field experience. Given the objective of studying labor exchange from the theoretical perspective of cultural ecology, the Old Order denomination was chosen because they represent the majority of Amish churches and tend to be somewhat moderate compared to the New Order Amish church (liberal in some respects) or Andy Weaver and Swartzentruber Amish churches (ultra-conservative). It follows that the demographics of the selected Amish farm communities should be somewhat typical, or at least on the surface.

Literature regarding comparative analysis of Old Order Amish communities (see, for example, Kraybill and Olshan 1994) points to a wide variance of church Ordnung among congregations in the Holmes County settlement region as well as marked differences in cultural norms, in particular adoption behavior with regard to new
technology. Thus, there may not be a “typical” Amish community per se, although demographic data might suggest a numerically average church district size.

3.1 Farm household as a unit of analysis

Netting (1993:58) contends that because smallholders may also be defined as householders and because householders work and live together, the household is useful as a unit of analysis in understanding production modes of intensive agriculture. The Amish engage in a form of intensive farming as a function of horse-drawn agriculture while also limiting production as a matter of church policy. Limitations of space and natural resources on a small farm, as well as the amount of available labor and how it is organized, form the basis of decision making in a household. The interaction between management of labor resources and form of social organization in order to maintain agricultural subsistence is a primary concern of ecological anthropology (Netting 1993:61). This research examines the Amish use of labor exchange within the farm family household and among household units in the community of neighbors and church district.

Narotzky (1997:115) views the household more nearly as a consumption unit that shares kinship and core space. It is the consumption aspect that Narotzky contends to be the function of the household as a unit of analysis. Both Netting and Narotzky suggest that the household is by no means a static unit; rather, transformation of the household occurs over time. The Amish household is seldom static. Given that six children per family are the norm and the goal of each farmer is to pass the farm down to the next
generation, the extended family household serves to accommodate future and present needs. In the course of an Amish nuclear family life cycle, the small children are at first unproductive, then are somewhat helpful in minor chores starting about age six. From age 10 until marriage, Amish youth are increasingly important to the productive capacity of the household. The family life cycle also has a vital role in the labor sharing function of an Amish community, which self-identifies as a brotherhood where members of a neighborhood often help one another in times of need or during a busy schedule (see chapter 6).

The survey instrument (see Appendix A) was designed to gather both qualitative and quantitative data for the purpose of a detailed enumeration and description of each labor exchange activity using the household as the unit of analysis. All members of the household were included in the survey so that a division of labor could be established as well as contributions of children living on the farm. Moreover, the survey instrument provides essential data relevant to how formal labor exchange is organized and balanced. The data includes notes on informal labor exchange behavior in order to focus on everyday household and neighborhood activity that comprises a majority of shared labor in the lives of Amish farm families.

3.2 Participant observation of labor exchange activity

It is the methodology of long-term participant observation that distinguishes cultural anthropology from the other social sciences (Ellen 1984:14). Since the purpose of this research is to learn specifically about labor exchange and Amish households, the
focus has been on observing and participating in Amish farm activity during “productive work hours” rather than trying to conduct long-term research while living in an Amish community.

The structured labor exchange events for the Amish primarily occur during the harvest season with such activities as bringing in the hay, shocking oats, threshing, and silo filling. In order to conduct participant observation of structured labor exchange, it was essential to get permission in advance to help in the production effort of an activity that often involved multiple families. The advance notice also provided an opportunity for the host farmer to inform other members of the labor-sharing ring to expect a guest helper. Synchronic analysis of the farm and immediate Amish community was conducted while performing often-strenuous labor, such as loading corn shocks on a wagon. During these work activities notes were taken when feasible and unobtrusive.

The participant observation exercises for this research include four hours as a helper loading square bales of hay baled by diesel power and pulled by a team of four draft horses; two hours shocking oats on a 10-acre field; six hours helping load and unload corn shocks for silage as part of a silo-filling labor-exchange ring; and a total of three hours on two occasions helping haul milk and feed cows during milking. On several other visits, participant observation involved assisting with such chores as fence mending or inspecting fields (see Figure 3.1). Another research encounter turned into an all-day event escorting an Amish farmer to an estate auction held in a neighboring Amish church district.

Some of the labor exchange activities the Amish practice are done within the family such as milking, others employ an extended family, and the labor-sharing ring
uses several farmers from separate households. Thus, intensive participant observation conducted for this research surveyed the full range of scheduled labor exchange.

In this research project other labor sharing activities were observed at length without engaging in full participation. These include threshing, quilting, school cleaning, manure-hauling (frolic), “team” plowing, mini-ring corn harvesting, fruit picking, garden planting, and potato digging. Other observed work activities are a frolic held for church preparation, various fund raising activities, and spontaneous mutual aid.
Similarly, most interviews with Amish farmers were conducted in a participant observation setting with many other activities happening around the farm. Hammersley and Atkinson (1993:139) refer to interviews that are spontaneous and informal as an interview technique that also employs elements of participant observation. Doing participant observation has the advantage of “learning by doing” so that any description of work activity could be detailed and accurate. Close work with the Amish in bringing in the hay enabled first-hand observation of the cultural “symbols of separation” such as the use of horses and the wearing of traditional Amish clothing in work situations; for example, Emily wore jeans beneath her Amish dress for protection against the rough edges of the hay bales. During the haying activity, Emily mentioned she was taking correspondence courses in science and hinted that she was wondering about a career choice if she could not be a farmer. No specific advice was offered because a career choice should be entirely her decision and not subject to the input of an “anthropologist.” This goes along with the notion that the participant observer should remain unobtrusive (Brim and Spain 1974:103-108).

Another concern was the matter of gender separation within the Amish society. There can be no assumption regarding the amount of mixing the Amish folks would find acceptable, thus the mode of ethnographic inquiry was slanted toward males. Exceptions to this generality were interviews conducted with female family members of key informants, which provided useful information about women’s labor sharing. Details about quilting, canning, gardening and church preparation were particularly forthcoming in such sessions. In terms of visible labor-sharing activity, some evidence indicates that Old Order Amish are more divided by gender than New Order.
3.3 Key informant interviews

Contact was successfully established with key informants in each of two church districts within the core area of the Holmes County settlement region, which eased entry onto Amish farms for data collection purposes. Three key informants were established prior to the start of conducting field surveys of individual farm households. The key informant most often interviewed for this research is an elder in the Flat Ridge church district who is well known among the Amish, having done committee work on behalf of the Old Order Amish at the national level. The elder’s grandson and full-time farmer is the second key informant, who occasionally attends agricultural extension seminars and has successfully tried some of the recommended agricultural practices. The third key informant, a member of the Farmerstown South church district and former Amish schoolteacher, has been working as a farmer for 10 years and is also a part-time seed salesman.

Upon first meeting, each of the informants appeared to be open to outsiders, offering insightful remarks and in general seemed able to talk candidly compared to most others within the Amish community. Hammersley and Atkinson (1993:137) observe that ethnographers should target key people that may be knowledgeable and willing to share information with the interviewer. The key informants in each church district served as a litmus test on how the survey instrument might be received by other members of the congregation and also agreed to explain to other members of pending visits for an interview at each farm. During the process of data collection, one additional informant was developed from each church district including a farmer who also operates a home-building business and relies on his 18-year-old son for much of the farm work. The other
added informant, one of two ministers in the Flat Ridge Church District, brought a deeper spiritual perspective into the study. Each of the informants was contacted on several occasions throughout the duration of the study.

3.4 Use of maps

The two selected church districts, Flat Ridge Church District and Farmerstown South Church District, were chosen in consideration of the location near the heart of the original Amish settlement along Walnut Creek in Holmes County and because both congregations have experienced limited exposure to tourism.

Foucault (1980:74) notes that a map may be used as an “instrument of examination” or inquiry. A regional map for tourists who visit Holmes County advertises commercial attractions related to Amish culture. Of the 16 towns and villages in the Holmes County settlement, five may be considered tourist towns: Berlin, Wilmot, Shreve, Walnut Creek and Kidron (Ohio’s Amish Country Visitor’s Guide & Map 1997).

Examining the map in detail provides necessary data for locating several villages in the region that either lack tourist sites or have few tourist attractions and are actual operating Amish towns, including Fredericksburg, Winesburg, Becks Mills, New Bedford and Farmerstown, the latter three of which are nearby the two church districts in this study. Villages such as New Bedford and other smaller towns in the settlement area function primarily as trade centers for the Amish to purchase groceries, maintain a cheese cooperative, obtain blacksmith services, or buy and sell livestock. Farmerstown, Mt. Hope, and Kidron each hold livestock auctions on separate days of the week.

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In addition, the two church districts in this research project are geographically landlocked by other Amish church districts, which may filter exposure to the larger American society. Some of the less successful Amish church districts in the settlement are located on the periphery and in the vicinity of the region’s largest tourist town of Sugarcreek (Ohio Amish Directory 1996).

Immediately to the north of Farmerstown South church district, the village of Farmerstown has no intentional tourist attractions, although the casual observer might find a blacksmith shop, a general store that sells coffee for 25 cents, a livestock auction barn, and a farmers’ cheese co-op on the western edge of town. Thus, Farmerstown approaches the authentic character of an Amish village with few non-Amish working or living in the vicinity.

The small town of Charm, located northwest of Flat Ridge church district, offers only a few amenities for the tourist including Miller Dry Goods store, an ice cream and cheese shop, and a restaurant with home-cooked cuisine with each employing Amish women and older teenage Amish girls; thus, the town retains the essence of Amish culture and community. Keim Lumber is the largest business in the village, providing full-time employment for dozens of Amish men.

3.5 Photography as a method

Ellen (1984) warns that anthropologists should be aware of the possible outcomes for the research participants from publishing after fieldwork is completed. This is especially true with Amish and photography. Even if permission to take a photo is
granted by an Amish person, it follows that permission should also be obtained before publication of such photographs because of the Amish taboo on photography in general. The Amish person willing to allow a photograph for the researcher’s personal use may not be willing to have the photo used for a book, magazine, or newspaper. Care was taken for this research study to not photograph members of an Amish community from a distance where a person’s face can be clearly seen.

The alternative format to defining a society’s culture visually is to focus on artifacts (Collier and Collier 1986). Each material object on an Amish farm has a distinct set of traits and different appearances at different times of the day and different seasons of the year, all of which varies according to the weather. For example, an Amish corncrib can be a fairly mundane subject to photograph, yet when capturing the image of the full crib just after harvest in the horizontal evening light when the sky is a deep blue, it exhibits the stark contrast of dark yellow ears of corn in the tall, rectangular crib. A photo of the same corncrib in mid-winter displays the bare wire of the empty upper portion with the snow surrounding the bottom of the storage unit. The first photograph clearly represents the beauty of the bountiful harvest while the second photograph connotes the absence of the corn and nearness of the spring.

Whenever possible action should be part of photographing for ethnographic purposes according to Collier and Collier (1986). If a machine is running, the product of the work becomes the focal point, such as the tied bundles of oat stalks dropping off the binder webbing as the horse-drawn implement is pulled through the field. Livestock that are photographed in groups indicate the relationship among animals, such as a mare and
her foal while nursing or a herd of cows headed for the barn at milking time, not just a lone cow in the middle of the field (see Figure 3.2).

On one Amish farm near Becks Mill, every cow in the Holstein herd was photographed in a separate picture. When the photos were shown to the family’s oldest son (age 9) and grandfather, both knew each of the cow’s names, which were generally "open for discussion" among family members.

Figure 3.2: During a summer afternoon Holstein cows congregate around the entrance to the dairy barn on an Old Order Amish farm in southeastern Holmes County. (Photo by Scot Long)
English names such as “Bob” or “Toots.” This implies that the dairy on an Amish farm is not just an interest of the head of household, but of many persons in the family. A few miles distant on other Amish farms with a dairy, the farmers did not give names to the cows, with one farmer explaining that if he were to name the cows he might become too attached to the cows and therefore would not be able to properly cull the herd. It may be that this trend is a step toward greater intensification of dairy herds.

The Amish limit both their farm size to an average of 80 to 100 acres, and church district size at 25 to 40 families per district. Sale (1980) cites the many advantages of a smaller scale economy, one of which is the ability of people to better manage factors beneficial to the community. This is a tenuous relationship since there is some evidence of urban hegemony over rural lands and resources, and seldom does the rural community derive full benefit (Golding 1974). The Amish, however, are economically successful as a group because they practice reciprocity and labor-sharing pools, both of which are forms of nonmarket exchange (Berdan 1989:83-85). Group action is necessarily tied to the strength of local economy, and interrelationships within a community influence decision-making and outcomes of conflicts. Ethnographic detail can provide a better understanding of these complex interactions of cooperation and scale of community among the Old Order Amish and, as such, a case study of each of the two church districts is an appropriate methodology using key informants, a survey instrument, and participant observation (Ellen 1984:237-41).

Aldo Leopold (1949) asks the question whether a still higher standard of living is worth the cost of lowered populations and fewer species of wildlife. His belief holds that a community of the land should include concern for soils, water, plants and animals.
Leopold further defined an ecosystem community as having many interdependent parts, requiring a holistic approach. Many Amish farmers who practice diversified agriculture of several crop and livestock species share this concept of the land, and often incorporate the needs of wildlife into their farming plan. Part of the methodological framework considers various techniques of inquiry and observation in learning how Amish view themselves as caretakers of the soil. One example is an Amish farmer who takes notice of environmental indicators such as heaving of the soil during winter months. Participant observation, in particular, allows for a greater insight into such areas (Ellen 1984:220).

It is during group labor-sharing events, such as silo filling, that Amish farmers manage to escape the routine aspects of everyday life, which Victor Turner (1986:39-40) suggests anthropologists usually study—toward a sort of social drama. On occasions when misunderstandings occur as part of the social drama, the Amish follow moral and ethical church guidelines for dealing with conflict in order to minimize societal fragmentation that otherwise may result in a schism or split. Thus, to fully experience a distinct cultural group is to observe “recurrent forms of social experience” through a group’s ritual, verbal and nonverbal phenomena (Turner 1986:43).

With data analysis it has become a concern of how to combine secondary data with primary research. For example, lower levels of out-migration patterns of Amish women to men (see Table 4.1) can be linked to the theoretical position that Amish women are the “holders” of the culture (Weiner 1976:227). This has led to the expectation that conversations with Amish women about their role on the farm should be an asset to understanding Amish culture.
Ben Raber, 75 years old, retired from farming in 1970 and has operated a small Amish bookstore since then. His only son Aden took over the 125-acre farm and has since passed it down to his son Myron. Ben’s other child, a daughter, also inherited farmland from the Raber family that has held land since before 1875 to include at least six generations. Both of Ben’s children were able to stay “on the farm.” The usual case for an Amish man is to farm for 20 or 25 years, then pass the farm to the next generation and retire to another occupation, which is the case with both Aden and his father Benjamin.

Farming among the Amish has changed significantly in the last 50 years, but not nearly as much as mainstream American farming. As Ben describes it, the major changes are fewer as a percent of Amish in farming and less diversification on the farm. One example he gave of changing technology is an implement called a “self rake” that was on his farm during the 1940s that has not been used by the Amish since the 1960s. He mentioned that it would have been nice to keep one of the rakes around as a sort of museum piece or curiosity. In this manner Ben Raber is a wealth of information and serves as an excellent key informant.

Because of a tendency to believe most of what Amish folks say, based in part on the group’s strong adherence to the Christian faith, there exists a possible research bias. In this study questions were asked primarily about farming practices and how labor is shared. Some farmers were openly skeptical about the purpose of the study, questioning whether it foreshadowed more state regulations in the future. Emerson et al. (1995:134) contend that virtually all ethnographers value local and specific knowledge and therefore data collection in the field should be focused on daily life.
Further, it is beneficial to view associations in terms of multiple classifications rather than place individuals or certain behaviors in simple categories (Emerson et al. 1995:127). Thus, fieldnotes and subsequent qualitative data become richer in context of where, when, how and with whom a particular trait is associated. By cross referencing fieldnotes according to various backgrounds of the Amish farmers and associated forms of labor exchange, the value of the fieldnotes increased markedly.

In addition, careful notes taken during participant observation yielded a greater accuracy in organizing the data collected using the survey as well as how to better interpret much of the commentary recorded during key-informant interviews with Amish farmers.
CHAPTER 4

THEORETICAL GROUNDING

This project considers both productive and social aspects of labor exchange among Old Order Amish using the farm household as the unit of analysis with respect to crops and acreage, technological tools, labor sharing practices, and allocation of labor. Applebaum (1987:388-90) describes the concept of work in virtually all societies as having a culturally defined social environment where forms of reciprocity are determined by social structure, regulatory mechanisms, time allocation, and use of technology. Strong community bonds and an extended family kinship are key components of the Old Order Amish social structure that enable frequent and flexible cooperative labor arrangements to be accomplished on the farm.

Religious values for the Amish serve to regulate the means of agricultural production, often through restriction of some technological farm tools and acceptance of others, such as horse-drawn agriculture. Kraybill (1994) and Cronk (1981) contend that the religious value of Gelassenheit or yieldedness places communal needs above that of the individual, which also promotes a sense of brotherhood in helping others in the family, neighborhood, and community.

A synthesis of social structure and religious values guides the Amish in the allocation of time and resources for accomplishing group labor. Maintaining and
strengthening community bonds through cooperative labor arrangements and within the framework of generalized reciprocity help define Amish core values.

4.1 Cultural ecology and Amish labor exchange

The cultural ecology perspectives of Steward, Rappaport and Netting are central to this research project since there are significant aspects of Amish labor exchange practices that are partly an adaptation to the environment. Steward (1973:40) notes that a group’s degree of environmental interaction depends upon technological usage, in that more complex tools often reduce the need for immediate and regular contact with the soil. By using horse-drawn farm implements, managing greater crop and livestock diversity, and participating outdoors with various labor-intensive activities, the Amish maintain a strong tactile familiarity with the natural elements of their land.

Probably the most effective approach from an anthropological perspective for interdisciplinary problem solving is Rappaport's (1979:98-101) concept of goal ranges. This strategy considers reference values for system equilibrium in the context of goal ranges for sustainability that often correspond, but not always. Rappaport refers to the latter situation as maladaptation. It is this mismatch of reference values and goal ranges that a broad-based approach is best suited in identifying critical areas of environmental stress and possible solutions.

Rappaport's (1984) theory of correction presupposes that social problems are anomalies of adaptation or adaptive structure. Taken a step further, correction refers to theoretical actions that might be taken to restore adaptiveness to social systems from an ecological point of view. The antithesis of adaptation is maladaptation or structural
disorder of social systems. Such disorder is usually the result of cybernetics in that a degree of government and corporate controlling mechanisms are automated, according to Rappaport. Thus, institutionalized maladaptation may result from self-perpetuating systems that serve as regulators for a small interest group, and not necessarily the greater good. A more concrete example of institutionalized maladaptation is the use of lands in Third World nations to grow large tracts of bananas or coffee. These types of monocultures degrade biodiversity of a region while reducing self-sufficiency and autonomy of the local population.

In this sense, the Amish are more adaptive than maladaptive given their land tenure system, diversified farm operation, as well as flexibility in both cropping patterns and labor sharing methods. Because the Amish prefer to settle in fertile environs with gently sloping fields, primarily in the northern wet-temperate zones and away from urban areas, their land management plan starts with the best available natural resources and maintains those resources. Moreover, the Amish way of farming is adaptive in that they are fairly self-sufficient as a community and as a group they contribute to the greater economy, while their methods of crop rotation add to biodiversity (Moore et al. 2000).

One problem with maladaptation, according to Rappaport, is that the farming system is exposed to perturbations. The flexible manner in which the Amish farm is managed allows for somewhat less vulnerability to environmental perturbations, given that the hay crop will likely do well in years when the corn or oats may have problems and vice-versa. Recent specialization in dairy production has nearly doubled herd sizes over the past decade within Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts resulting in maladaptation, in that the farming system cannot absorb the incremental runoff. Thus,
the high levels of pollutants in the region’s South Fork of Sugar Creek are the byproduct of disturbed system equilibrium.

Rappaport's (1979:151) concept of an ecosystem that is ritually regulated can be extended to Amish communities, especially over the long-term in reference to land tenure and stewardship. Religious rituals of weddings and of youth formally joining the church are both held on the farm, which engenders an attachment to the land that goes far beyond its agricultural usage. Oral traditions and family heritage on an Amish farm often represent several generations, so the land is cared for in the manner of a family heirloom.

Similarly, Berry (1977:43-45) describes a skilled farmer as one who possesses accumulated knowledge from generations of experience on the same land while also helping sustain the community. The transmission of knowledge to the next generation is an important aspect of work and is essential to the development of cultural identity because human work is a conscious effort and because traditional knowledge is cumulative (Applebaum 1987:386-87).

Vayda (1969:112-13) states that behavior may be linked to the cultural environment by indicating how specific cultural practices function as parts of systems that also include environmental factors. Thus, part of the accumulated knowledge about farming practices and various cultural practices, such as sharing labor in a threshing ring, are associated with ways in which the Amish interact with the local environment. Most Amish farmers also grew up on a farm and began doing farm chores at a very early age. It is not unexpected then, that a very high frequency of Amish farms are transferred from parent to child, 92.6 percent (n=41) for the sample in this study, with 73.2 percent of the transfers directly from father to son, and 19.5 percent going to a daughter and son-in-law.
Thus, descent and land tenure customs among Amish farm households indicate that succession of the farm to a daughter and son-in-law is not an uncommon practice.

Women may hold a much higher status in Amish society than is readily apparent. Not only do half as many females defect from Amish groups compared to males, women are the social fabric of the Amish given their role in organizing frolics or gatherings for completing a work project on the farm. Amish women also form other labor-sharing activities when men do not, such as gardening, canning or quilting. Women handle much of the activity associated with fund-raising for charity often involving cooperation of several Amish church districts. A fair amount of communal organization takes place during these events and the women are always involved. Even during threshing or silo-filling events, women invite other women to help with cooking. When elders meet to discuss items, the concerns of wives and daughters matter to a significant degree (B. Raber 1999). Thus, reverence for elders includes both men and women in Amish society, and as Hostetler (1968:163-64) contends, it is the presence of the older generation on the farm that influences the behavior of the younger generation in an advisory capacity.

Since elders are important to virtually every phase of Amish culture, it is evident that the Amish live in a gerontocratic society. Ostensibly patriarchal as a group, Amish elders are always male, yet it is the men who describe decision-making processes as a shared experience with their wives. Elders tend to be recognized at about the age when full-time involvement with the farm is handed down to the next generation or when an Amish man is age 50 or so. Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts each have approximately 10 elders who meet periodically in order to discuss issues relevant to the community and the *Ordnung.*
C.W.M. Hart et al. (1988) describe the Tiwi as a gerontocratic society, with some notable cultural aspects being quite polar in viewing the Amish in comparison: the Tiwi seek power, the Amish resist power; yet, both place elders in esteemed and privileged positions. Similarly, social control among the Amish is a matter of deference to the aged rather than elders wishing to exercise power, both in the institutions of family and the church. Further, the Amish not only revere elders within the local community but the hierarchy among church leaders also gives greater authority to older bishops and ministers (Hostetler 1968:162-63).

4.1.1 Netting and smallholder perspective

Netting (1993:142) includes the Amish in Pennsylvania and Wisconsin as thriving examples among many intensive-production smallholders he describes around the globe. Amish farmers, according to Netting, practice a system of self-sufficiency, low inputs and energy conservation based on religious ethics that is likely to promote a more sustainable agriculture for present and future generations, and also contribute to greater efficiency compared to conventional neighboring farms. Similarly, Hostetler (1989:9) observes that historically Amish have practiced diversified livestock production and “intensive cultivation,” while also combining the labor contributions of the entire household. Landis (1947:254) refers to Amish and Mennonite farming methods in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, as “the first intensive agriculture in America.” Thus, recent dairy intensification among Amish farmers is far from new; rather, it is an extension of an intensive farming system that has existed for hundreds of years.

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1 Smallholders as defined by Netting (1993:2) refer to “rural cultivators practicing intensive, permanent, diversified agriculture on relatively small farms in areas of dense population.”
Agricultural intensification, as explained by Boserup (1965:43-44) and Netting (1993:133), describes Amish agriculture in its basic form although population pressure is only one of several factors contributing to intensification of dairy production on Amish farms. Based on a unique set of religious values, Amish smallholders engage in a maintenance strategy that has substituted one type of agricultural production for another. At the same time that many Amish farmers have increased their dairy herd by as much as 100 percent during the last 10 years, most of these same farmers have become less diversified in other livestock areas, often eliminating market production of hogs or chickens largely due to lower profit incentives.

For Amish farmers the loss of income from other livestock areas cannot be overemphasized—hog production in particular was the main income for many Amish farms as recently as the early 1990s in the Holmes County settlement, and as one farmer describes, “It took an entire milk check just to keep the hogs fed.” At hog marketing time the payoff was substantial enough that several Amish farmers recall the term “mortgage lifters” in describing their hog enterprise before mega-farms producing pork put most small hog farmers out of business.² Amish farmers report a similar loss of income opportunity during the 1980s in the poultry industry (A. Raber, J. Erb 1998).

The loss of income from hogs brought a necessary adoption of mechanical milkers and bulk tanks among Old Order Amish church districts first proposed in the summer of 1992 (Kraybill 1994:47). Initially there was great resistance among church leaders, but many Old Order Amish in the Holmes County settlement began to adopt one or both of

²The hog mega-farms in the Midwest and North Carolina are often vertically integrated as subsidiaries of meatpacking or feed conglomerates similar to the poultry industry in the South. Based on market-driven economies-of-scale, this type of industrial farming has been widely linked to air and water pollution.
the dairy technologies by the mid-1990s. Thus, the careful selection of technology allowed Amish farmers to continue making a living. Kraybill (1994:46) notes that Amish elders look at long-term impacts of any proposed technology in terms of social impact on community, including the problem of concentrating wealth associated with a larger-scale operation or “bigness.” Several farmers in Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts use the term “bigness” in describing the threat to community solidarity of farmers getting too concerned with profit (B. Raber 1999, D. Yoder 1998). Such socially sanctioned views among the Amish also mediate agricultural intensification.

A major thesis in this investigation does, however, support Netting’s argument denying the inevitable march of smallholders toward modernization or a farming system that is more narrowly specialized, more industrialized and larger scale (1993:320). While specialization has taken place in dairy production, Amish farmers have largely resisted the considerable market forces of the greater economy to expand in other areas of agricultural production.

Regarding population pressure, a few acres are sometimes carved from the existing farm to provide a home for the family of a nonfarming son or son-in-law, but this has not been a trend in Farmerstown South or Flat Ridge church districts. Old Order Amish farm communities in the Holmes County settlement have experienced a decline in percentage of full-time farmers from 65.3 percent in 1965 to 33.6 percent in 1988 (Kreps et al. 1994:713), although there has been a recent boom in Amish on-farm cottage industries to counter this development (J. Erb 1998).
Amish farmers who continue to work the land succeed largely due to their ability to employ careful stewardship of the land, efficiently manage labor within the household, and maintain extended land tenure, thereby describing social behavior that mirrors what Netting refers to as the small householder role (Netting 1993:13).

Although Netting makes reference to communal sharing that redistributes resources in a community as well as labor sharing within the household, a theoretical departure in this study begins with an emphasis on labor exchange within the community in addition to the importance of household labor as a major element of successful smallholder agriculture. While Amish farmers are largely resisting the lure of higher income, the effect of wage labor on nonfarm households has raised the standard of living for Amish in general. Amish farmers have incorporated milking machines and bulk tanks into the dairy operation and any incremental gains of income compared to earlier generations have been offset by the purchase of more goods previously made on the farm (soap, candles, butter), as well as the higher cost of health care and other incidentals (B. Raber 1999).

Further, as a corollary to the Amish brand of limited intensification, Amish farms have become increasingly commodified as outside influences continue to impact Amish culture and agriculture, especially given the increase in off-farm occupations due to population pressure. This commodification process has been slow, but steady since the early 19th century according to Cronk (1981) and strongly correlated to the Ordnung of a particular congregation.
4.2 Visual neighborhood concept

One observation from this study is that Amish farm households flourish under ideal conditions of labor exchange that includes an extensive visual and spatial orientation to other farm households. Such a concept is termed herein as “visual neighborhood” and has some historic basis in the old grid system used by various Amish church districts.

The archaic design of laying out church districts in grids has advantages of promoting community solidarity given the dual roles of being both a neighbor and member of the same church district. The ultra-conservative Swartzentruber Amish of Holmes and Wayne counties subscribe to the grid system. Also the Amish settlements of northern Indiana have church districts organized using the grid.

In comparing the two church districts surveyed for this study, Flat Ridge has farms scattered along several township and county roads often with hills and forested areas separating many of the farms. Farmerstown South church district is set in a broad, spacious valley, known locally as Meadow Valley, that contains seven Amish farms and a schoolhouse near the center (see Fig. 4.1). South Fork of Sugar Creek runs through its low point surrounded by fertile bottomland. Each of the seven farms has a view of most of the other six farms, as well as other farms on their respective borders.

Of the seven farms central to Meadow Valley, there are several connecting footpaths where there are no township roads connecting the farms. The opportunities for interaction and labor sharing are maximized, in part, from the physical geography of such a landholder layout.
Amish farmers sharing a line of sight with several other farms can benefit from giving and receiving help in cases of unexpected weather and the need to bring a hay crop in quickly or any other chore that requires extra help. A secondary benefit is the associated camaraderie that occurs when farmers see one another out working and stop to socialize, while also promoting mutual reinforcement of timely farming operations (Kline 1999).
It is the position of this thesis that within a well-defined visual neighborhood greater opportunities exist for farmers to help one another as well as interact socially, both of which are factors contributing to social stability of an Amish community. As a quantitative measure of social stability, there are fewer sons and daughters leaving the Amish group in Farmerstown South church district compared to Flat Ridge church district and several other church districts in the region (see Table 4.1).

The Flat Ridge church district has smaller geographical groupings of farms, with each group of one or two farms stuck in a small valley, except for maybe a glimpse of another farm’s “back 40” acreage. Because Amish farming is so labor intensive, all aspects of labor sharing are vital to the success and continuation of the farm; where more farmers encounter one another on a daily basis, there is greater likelihood of shared labor.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flat Ridge CD</th>
<th>Farmerstown South CD</th>
<th>*SE Holmes Region</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Y  %</td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Y  %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male defections</td>
<td>6 14.0</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>3  6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female defections</td>
<td>3  7.7</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>1  1.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Youth</td>
<td>9  9.8</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>4  3.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Y – Youth of at least age 16 that have moved from parental home and no longer practice the Amish faith.
* Statistics from youth in six neighboring church districts.

Table 4.1: Youth defection rates comparing two selected Amish church districts: Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South.
Thus, the visual neighborhood is also the immediate community that a farmer would
draw labor support in times of need.

In examining Japanese farming neighborhoods, John Cornell (1963:115) establishes that farm households informally and cooperatively utilize machinery in exchange for labor or other machinery with neighbors living nearby, which helps promote local group stability in neighborhoods. Further, Cornell observes that within the farming neighborhoods, “spatially close usually also means socially close” (1963:125). Thus, similar to what Cornell posits as local group stability based on territorial and historical contexts, so have Amish farmers established proximal neighborhood relations over multiple generations of farm families. Many of the respondents in the survey report being in the same threshing ring as their fathers and grandfathers (E. Barkman 1998, M. Raber 1999).

Informal labor exchange among Amish farmers include frolics and gatherings conducted primarily with neighbors in the immediate geographical area, either between bordering farmers or other farmers within sight of one another. Nearly as often, informal frolics involve relatives that may or may not be neighbors.

There is no accident of community among those of the Amish faith in Holmes County. The Amish in the region act as their own bankers, insurance agents, maintain organized softball and volleyball teams, engage in frequent social events from frolics for a building project to a gathering of family and neighbors that is used as an excuse to work and play together. Where no town center exists, there is a distinct community in the idyllic valley with a center that is unique to each farmer. Further, each farm family has
social commitments to the church and school, to fund raising events, and to labor-sharing rings that assist one another with threshing, silo-filling and other planned activities.

4.3 Kinship, descent and land tenure

Since the Amish are basically self-governed, there is the opportunity to study an entire political system within the larger political contexts of the township, county, state and federal jurisdictions. Their leadership is highly decentralized with no real leader of all the Amish, although the office of bishop serves as leader of a church district that numbers from 25 to 40 families in each congregation. There are lay representatives (not holding a church office) to the U.S. federal government for the entire population of Old Order Amish, known as the Old Order Amish Steering Committee, with three positions held by Amish elders and appointed by a collective vote of the bishops. Ben Raber travels to Washington, DC, each year along with the other two elders (from Indiana and Pennsylvania) to meet with the appropriate White House cabinet members who help make policy.

However, Raber’s work on the national level is not nearly as important to this research as the meetings of elders within each of the two church districts. It is in these local church-elder meetings that Amish perpetuate the details necessary to continue acting as their own bankers and insurance agents, the latter by paying a small amount into an Amish operated fire insurance plan, while also working en-masse to rebuild losses. By establishing a noncommercial community bank, financial assistance can be offered to a farmer in trouble as many as two or three times. Such help is usually given along with advice on how to improve the fiscal situation (Erb 1999). These are among the few
group behaviors that operate beyond the immediate Amish neighborhood and church
district; others include fund raising, farmers’ cooperatives, auctions, and more recently a
spatial expansion in courtship behavior. Thus, labor-sharing practices on the farm are
closely linked to the commitment level of each member in a system of cooperative
behavior involved with supporting the Amish local economy.

Since church leadership is chosen “by lot” from nominated Amish men in a given
church district, such a system reinforces the religious concept that members become
deacons, ministers and bishops by the will of God as described in Acts 1:23-26. Women
are among fellowship members who nominate potential church leaders. Nominees then
select a bible with each containing a slip of paper, one of which indicates the new leader.
Such a system usually avoids problems associated with nepotism or maintaining power
within a family, although it is not uncommon for members of successive generations to
hold a church leadership position (see Figure 4.2).

Moreover, the manner in which Amish view kinship is a departure from the larger
American culture. Only the closest relatives (first cousins and nearer) are considered kin
and yet, fictive kinship bonds commonly occur among unrelated neighbors, especially if a
neighbor exchanges labor on a frequent basis or serves as unpaid, temporary help, usually
domestic chores.

From genealogical study of the two church districts it was found that 100 percent
of families are related to the same major pioneering family, Jacob Raber, who moved to
Ohio in 1837 and now living are 5th, 6th, 7th and 8th generation descendants. The
pioneer Jacob and his wife Catherine Egly had seven children (two married a brother and
sister of another family), 46 grandchildren, and 286 great-grandchildren.
* R. Yoder’s second eldest son operates the family farm (J. Yoder is fifth son). Other family members are also engaged in the on-farm cottage industry that manufactures, sells and installs fencing.

Figure 4.2: Selected kinship among five descent groups and members of the Flat Ridge church district in Holmes County, Ohio.
Ben Raber is a great-great grandchild or 5th generation direct descendant of this pioneering couple. As shown on the kinship chart (Figure 4.2), active farming is being done by 7th generation descendents. A few 6th generation descendents continue to farm in the study area, with some of these being part-time.

In the Flat Ridge church district, there have been two fairly recent marriages between second cousins (same great-grandparents) with a total of five second-cousin marriages among currently married couples in both church districts. One of the second-cousin marriages involved the bishop’s son, as shown in Figure 4.2, with the elder having performed the marriage in 1993.

Third- and fourth-cousin marriages are somewhat more frequent. The number of families that are closely related to other families in the two church districts is very high. Among the adult population in Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South there are 11 sibling pairs from different households and 24 first cousin pairs from different households. With so many people being close kin including siblings, first cousins, aunts and uncles, nephews and nieces, the “second cousin” is outside the realm of marriage taboo by Amish standards.

The couple noted above that married in 1993 are son and daughter of parallel cousins born of sisters (daughters of Moses Raber, born in 1874). Moses is also an ancestor to four of the other second cousin marriages, also of parallel cousins’ offspring--Moses and his brother Samuel are both grandfathers to Fannie (Moses) and Eli (Samuel) that married in 1950. Old Moses Raber and his wife Denah were married in 1896, had two sons and six daughters; and are ancestors to about half the families in the Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts (see Figure 4.2).
Youth socials (AKA singings intended to encourage courtship) are practiced among a large number of church districts, perhaps 30 or so with 250 Amish youth in attendance, compared to one or two church districts in the recent past. Given the fact that Amish practice endogamy within the type of intercommuning church, it follows that the recent expansion of courtship territory would include the entire settlement area and other Amish settlements as well. Such a social trend is especially significant in light of the more recent trend of exogamy within the same church district, but also considering the fact that both the church district and the rural Amish neighborhood have such close kinship relations.

Many farms in this study have been in the same family for two or three generations and some for as long as five generations or more, an indicator of residential permanence. Netting (1993:169) states that land use, especially diversification and intensification, is closely associated with a strong land tenure system. Old Order Amish invest a spiritual way-of-life in the land along with labor techniques that improve the soil and land.

Kinship and descent practices within Old Order Amish communities strongly influence their land tenure pattern. It has been shown in this research that the Amish represent a gerontocracy and observe a form of ambilineal descent. Ownership of farms is primarily a male domain, while the patriarchal elements of Amish society are centered on church leadership. Moreover, land is most often passed down from either the father or father-in-law, although other land transfer arrangements such as uncle to nephew are occasionally made (see Table 4.2).
### Table 4.2: Old Order Amish descent pattern for land transfer in Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts and selected additional farms in the Holmes County settlement region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><em>(n=44)</em></th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Percent</th>
<th>Cumulative Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Father</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
<td>68.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father-in-law</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>86.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Purchase from outside family</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6.8</td>
<td>93.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uncle</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>97.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brother-in-law</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Additional farms from other parts of the Holmes County settlement region were included in the model, which are part of ongoing research that includes several Amish farms from the Apple Creek Watershed Survey.

### 4.4 Economics and labor exchange

Considering labor exchange from the perspective of economic anthropology can enable the scholar to look past the market orientation of exchange. Such an analysis of labor exchange is useful for understanding Amish culture and agriculture. Each of the Amish farmers in this study could probably maintain a living without exchanging labor in the structured sense. There are, for example, Amish farmers in the survey who do not participate in silo-filling rings, and one other farmer in the survey who does not participate in a threshing ring (the farmer owns his own small threshing machine).

Rather, Amish farmers are intuitively aware of the importance of sharing the burden of agricultural tasks that are often tedious. Chayanov (1966:81-82) refers to drudgery of labor as “disutility” and inversely associated with productivity. Moreover, Chayanov describes marginal utility as having a natural limit to production at the point when a
balance is reached between increasing drudgery of labor and the decreasing marginal
utility of goods produced (Durrenberger 1984:41-45).

Amish participate in labor exchange both informally with “work frolics” and
formally as part of labor-sharing rings, in part because a group effort in accomplishing
large tasks tends to reduce the drudgery while also creating the associated social benefits.
Most farmers in the survey emphasize the value of social interaction during labor sharing
activities, although each farmer claims there is also labor-saving value in the threshing
rings as well as the other rings (see also Chapter 7). Thus, the various labor-exchange
activities function as the fabric holding the Amish farm community together as an
interactive group dedicated to minimizing drudgery and maximizing social opportunity.

For the Amish, material gain is of secondary importance to the objective of
building the local community. In pre-industrial groups, work is associated with social
organization and community building, while leisure time fulfills the basic need for
creativity (Dimen-Schein 1977:180-184). The human dimension is central to the
anthropological perspective, which includes the basic tenet of Thomas Carlyle (1843) that
there exists a strong link between humans and nature in the creation of a product’s shape,
beauty and function. Amish labor is both creative in the sense of farmers and artisans
and religiously directed toward supporting a “brotherhood of love” (Cronk 1981:8).

The creative aspect of Amish work is rather subtle, but none-the-less present; for
example, many farmers lay out fields in a manner that is functional first, aesthetic second,
and finally as a display of knowledge and separation.³ Most Amish farmers become
involved in an enterprise that in some way preserves an art, a tradition, or a heritage of

³ Farming methods are among several Amish symbols of separation, given the use of horse-drawn power
versus the tractor; thus, layout of fields must accommodate the turn at the end of each field where a farmer
rotates the horse and implement around. Shocks stacked by hand are also symbols of separation.
some type. Making furniture in small shops, one piece at a time is an example; growing an heirloom variety of fruit, vegetable or non-hybrid seed corn (or other non-certified, reusable seed stock); breeding an old European stock of work horse such as the Belgian and Haflinger; shocking of corn and small grains in the field; multi-farm group labor for threshing, silo-filling, corn harvesting, ice-cutting for an ice house (still being done in northern Indiana), quilting and applesauce making among women. All of these activities promote interaction among Amish farmers and contribute to strength of community.

Further, values of nonresistance and yielding to others (and sacrifice of self-will) is exactly why Amish value spiritual over material. There is a paradox of power in the powerlessness that the Amish practice, according to Cronk. Such yielding to others (and each other) is the mortar of building a redemptive community, akin to a strengthening in the face of adversity, parallel to the martyrdom that Anabaptists suffered 400 years ago, and still observed in hymns and sermons during church meetings. A symbol of Amish nonresistance is visible in the following story:

A local “English” man came by to tell an Amish elder that he did not have the money for the two hunting shotguns that the elder had given him for later payment, nor did he have the guns and claimed that some other man who had the guns was the party that actually owed the sum of over $1,000.

After the man left the bookstore, Ben had no unkind words for him and just said, “Somebody owes the money.” He then calmly added that the person who had just left “needs some help.” When asked what he would do, he smiled and said that the problem was not his to worry about; that things like this happen. His nonverbal reactions were of concern rather than anger, compassion rather than contempt, serenity rather than anxiety.
4.4.1 Traditional agriculture and underproduction

Sahlins contends that societies practicing traditional agriculture, or preindustrial economies, are underproductive given that “labor-power is underused, technological means are not fully engaged, natural resources are left untapped” (1972:41). The Amish farmers in this study have demonstrated a voluntary limitation on production, both in the size of farm and number of livestock as well as a cropping system that seeks to maximize utility rather than profitability.

Contrary to the idea that traditional societies exceed the carrying capacity of the locale or exceed the point of diminishing returns, Sahlins asserts that carrying capacity is seldom met or exceeded, nor do tribal populations sufficiently utilize available resources to reach a point of diminishing returns. Further, Sahlins defines Domestic Mode of Production I (DMP) as the “production of use values” based on “limited economic goals” thereby placing a qualitative lifestyle over quantitative objectives (1972:86).

Sahlins begins with the household as the basic economic unit and describes how labor, technology, raw materials, and other resources are under-utilized in preindustrial economies in what he refers to as the “original affluent society.”4 Both the concepts of critical carrying capacity and diminishing returns address the issue of low productive capacity of traditional economies.

In further assessing the concept of empirically measuring traditional agricultural economies, Sahlins uses “critical carrying capacity” or the theoretical limit of the population without degrading the land or compromising the future of agricultural productivity (1972:43). This measurement of critical carrying capacity is the population

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4 Sahlins (1972:2-9) described the "original affluent society" as one where material needs are easily met, most readily in a hunter-gatherer group. Thus, Sahlins maintains, the percentage of each day allotted for leisure time is greater than in so-called more advanced civilization.
maximum that can be sustained by existing means of production. Sahlinis contends that existing populations in traditional agricultural economies usually fall below the calculable maximum and tend to under utilize labor-power.

On Amish farms in this study corn is shocked so that it can be handled for processing into fodder and bedding later in the fall, after the rest of the harvest is completed. In relating to the family farm and underproduction as Chayanov did in Russia, Chayanov’s rule is helpful in understanding some of the concepts of DMP. Chayanov found that there was a lot of variation among households in labor time compared to the ratio of workers/consumers in the family. Thus, the definition that Sahlinis gives, “productive intensity is inversely related to productive capacity” (1972:91), is explanatory in terms of labor being available in times of need.

The other concept usually applied to traditional agricultural economies is the notion of “exceeding the point of diminishing returns” or the limit to which resources can be used, and beyond that point declining returns is experienced. Considering the over-use phenomenon, exceeding the point of diminishing returns emphasizes the notion of resource scarcity, which lends itself to over-utilization and therefore underproduction from resource use. In a traditional society when land or other resources in a locality are exhausted, a type of diminishing return occurs causing the group to relocate to new territories. Because the Amish, as a matter of spiritual practice, do not overburden the soil to the point of noticeable diminishing returns, they are not forced to relocate and again exploit other land (DeVries 1980:223). Rather, it is population pressure and, less often, church schisms that cause Amish families to relocate to other areas and seek new settlements.
Traditional agricultural economies also practice withholding labor-power from production; however, most traditional societies “dispose” of a sizable portion of the available labor through various methods, labor that might otherwise increase production. The work process is also subject to competition for time from other activities such as rituals and ceremonies, or the suspension of work for weather reasons. Amish society has both regularly scheduled rituals—biweekly church meetings and singings, along with frolics that are primarily social events.

Such a diminishing return might also occur among the Amish when farms become too small (e.g. 30 acres or less) to fully support a farm family even if intensification is attempted. Among the 41 farms in this research project, four farms were found to be too small to provide a full-time income and the farmer depended on additional income from either a cottage industry or off-farm employment. On two of the smaller landholdings, one farmer diversified into turkey production, while another farmer began breeding Belgian draft horses to sell to other farmers. None of the part-time farmers in the survey were engaged in intensive vegetable production, although a few of the full-time farmers reported production of sweet corn or potatoes as a sideline.

In Sahlins’ (1988:369) description of specific and general evolution he makes a conceptual point about a society’s efficiency of energy usage as being meaningless in terms of general progress of that culture. If an introduced innovation doubles labor output for the people in a particular culture, he suggests, then laborers may decide to work half as long, thereby doubling their efficiency, but may not be causal for progressive change. It would depend on what people in a society do with the extra time, although increased leisure time generally frees individuals to take on new challenges--
and has been explanatory in cultural development for Steward (1973), White (1949) and others. The distinction that Sahlins makes is that it is not necessarily causal from added leisure time to derive advances in cultural development. Too much free time may actually reverse the tide of “progress” for a group, similar to the concept of diminishing returns. The Amish believe that leisure is potentially evil and avoid too much of it as a matter of moral principle.

In comparing traditional hunter-gatherer groups to various types of agrarian civilization, Sahlins (1972:35) presents John Stuart Mill’s idea that no labor-saving device actually saves labor, because of the simple truth that agriculture requires more labor. Since the religious doctrine of the Amish honors the work ethic, the amount of labor is of less concern than the amount of time a family and community can spend together when an agrarian lifestyle is maintained.

Sahlins (1972) also points out many advantages of a smaller scale economy due to the ability of humans to better manage factors that may be beneficial to the community, because a small enough community can be aware of its resources and limitations. The concept of “production for livelihood” that Sahlins (1972:82-83) proposes, makes the case that DMP nearly always involves exchange and must also be linked to livelihood or “use values” rather than profit motives. Householding, as a matter of economic behavior, both engages the group in the pooling of labor and resources and solidifies the family unit in collective behavior (Sahlins 1972:94). As such, Sahlins’ DMP provides a strong theoretical foundation for analysis of Old Order Amish labor exchange.
CHAPTER 5

STRUCTURED AMISH GROUP LABOR

Historically, the Amish have reflected the general communal focus of North American rural society: before WWII most farmers participated in threshing rings and/or silo-filling rings. One Amish farmer whose great-great-grandfather converted to the Old Order toward the end of the 19th century claimed that folks were not so different back then (Kuhns 1998).

Participant observation of structured labor-exchange activities among Amish farmers in the Holmes County Settlement in conjunction with interviews of elderly mainstream farmers able to recall organized labor exchange on the farm have revealed many similarities, but also some key differences. Conventional North American farmers operated on a more balanced system of reciprocity within the formal threshing ring using what is known as the “difference system” to even out the labor contributions and the amount of grain threshed for each farm (Rikoon 1988:102-105). In contrast, Amish farmers in threshing rings practice as a more generalized form of balanced reciprocity given that although time worked at each farm is about equal, a difference system is seldom observed. However, most informal labor-exchange activity among the Amish operates on what Sahlins (1972) refers to as a generalized reciprocity.
Thus, Sahlins offers a framework for understanding exchange mechanisms in terms of reciprocity among Amish farmers. Further, he views societies practicing traditional agriculture, or preindustrial economies, as underproductive with labor-power underused, technological means not fully engaged, and natural resources left untapped (Sahlins 1972:41). Contrary to the idea that these societies exceed the carrying capacity of the locale or exceed the point of diminishing returns, Sahlins asserts that carrying capacity is seldom met, let alone exceeded, nor do tribal populations sufficiently utilize available resources to reach a point of diminishing returns. Sahlins supplies data to support his contention that underutilization and underpopulation rather than over-utilization and overpopulation are the main causes of low productivity in preindustrial economies. His label for an anthropological view of traditional economies is Domestic Mode of Production (DMP) for both structure and intensification, of which Sahlins identifies three elements: a small labor force differentiated by sex, simple technology, and finite production objectives.

In his explanation of underproduction, Sahlins begins with the household as the basic economic unit and describes how labor, technology, raw material, and other resources are underutilized in preindustrial economies in what he refers to as the “original affluent society.” Sahlins’ basic tenet argues that the usual approach to traditional agricultural economies is faulty in stating that resources are scarce and human wants are unlimited. Through the “scarcity” economics principle, traditional agricultural people are viewed as struggling to meet their needs in a situation where resources are extremely limited. Sahlins suggests another principle relating to the economy of limited needs can
be quantified, in particular with societies that use of slash and burn agriculture (hunting and herding economies could also apply, but have never been measured).

In further assessing the concept of empirically measuring traditional agricultural economies, Sahlins uses “critical carrying capacity” or the theoretical limit the population could be taken without degrading the land or compromising the future of agricultural productivity (1972:43). This measurement of critical carrying capacity is the population maximum that can be sustained by existing means of production. He provides data, in the absence of long-term data, to indicate that existing populations in traditional agricultural economies usually fall below the calculable maximum. Sahlins emphasizes two extremes: the Chimbu of New Guinea occupy the land at very dense 288 persons per square mile, use 64 percent of their carrying capacity. The sparse Kuikuru population of Brazil, on the other hand, use only seven percent of the calculable maximum population compared to capacity. Sahlins then goes into an interesting and descriptive hypothesis on why production is below maximum, including how labor power is underused.

On Amish farms in this study, corn is shocked so that it can be handled for processing into fodder and bedding later in the fall, after the rest of the harvest is completed. In relating to the family farm and underproduction as Chayanov did in Russia, Chayanov’s rule is helpful in understanding some of the concepts of DMP. Chayanov found that there was a lot of variation among households in labor time compared to the ratio of workers/consumers in the family. Thus, the definition that Sahlins gives, “productive intensity is inversely related to productive capacity,” helps explain why Amish farmers spread out the workload over several months, especially during harvest season (1972:91).
The other concept that is usually applied to traditional agricultural economies is the notion of “exceeding the point of diminishing returns” or the limit to which resources can be used, and beyond that point declining returns is experienced. Considering the overuse phenomenon, exceeding the point of diminishing returns emphasizes the notion of resource scarcity, which lends itself to over-utilization and therefore underproduction from resource use. In a traditional society when land or other resources in a locality are exhausted, a type of diminishing return occurs causing the group to relocate to new territories. Both the critical carrying capacity and diminishing returns address the issue of low productive capacity of traditional economies. Sahlin’s proposed that in traditional economies organized by domestic groups and kinship relations, the possibility of underproduction is a natural part of the local economy.

Sahlin’s summation of the facts about the traditional agricultural economy is that “it is an economy of production for use, for the livelihood of the producers” unable to generate surplus production because of its different perception of what is sufficient and not because of the lack of labor power (1972:68-69). Among Amish farmers in the Holmes County settlement region, productive capacity is restricted as an outcome of their low-input farming strategy, which serves to maintain high soil fertility while also meeting minimum income needs of the farm family (Kline 1999).

Traditional agricultural economies also practice withholding labor power from production, which Sahlin’s measures in terms of working-life span, working-day length, marriage rules, division of labor by sex and age, and leisure times. Rates and extent of labor withholding practices have a cross-cultural differential, such as a 10-hour workday versus a four-hour workday. However, most traditional societies “dispose” of a sizable
portion of the available labor through various methods—labor that might otherwise increase production. The work process is also subject to competition for time from other activities such as rituals and ceremonies, or the suspension of work for weather reasons. Among the Amish activities competing for “productive labor time” include church-related activities, charitable work and gatherings that tend to be much more social than work oriented. In the case of mutual-aid labor, Amish farmers are able to adjust schedules to help another family in times of need (M. Raber 2000).

In Sahlins’ (1988:369) description of specific and general evolution he makes a conceptual point about a society’s efficiency of energy usage as being meaningless in terms of general progress of that culture. If an introduced innovation doubles labor output for the people in a particular culture, he suggests, then laborers may decide to work half as long, thereby doubling their efficiency, but may not be causal for progressive change. It would depend on what people in a society do with the extra time, although increased leisure time generally frees individuals to take on new challenges—and has been explanatory in cultural development for Steward, White and others. Steward and Faron (1959:2) contend that “surplus production enabled a portion of the population to become specialists” in the development of architecture and other material arts¹. The distinction that Sahlins makes is that it is not necessarily causal from added leisure time to derive advances in cultural development. Too much free time may actually reverse the tide of “progress” for a group, similar to the concept of diminishing returns. In general, the Amish believe that leisure is potentially evil and avoid too much of it as a matter of moral principle.

¹ Although not stated directly, Steward and Faron may be referring to incipient as well as continual cultural development.
According to Sahlins the “original affluent society” is one where material needs are easily met and hunter-gatherers are therefore the most affluent in this sense. Sahlins’ DMP maintains that the percentage of each day allotted for leisure time is greater in traditional societies than in so-called more advanced civilization. In comparing agrarian groups to hunter-gatherers, he presents John Stuart Mill’s idea that no labor-saving device actually saves labor because of the simple truth that agriculture requires more labor. Sahlins (1972:10-11) also points out advantages of a smaller scale economy based on known limitations of resources and modest production expectations. Limiting the size of the farm and the size of the community are central tenets to the Amish way-of-life because there is such a great value placed on community and interdependence.

5.1 Farm labor-sharing rings

Rikoon (1988:134) finds similar social functions among mainstream American farmers engaged in threshing rings during the early part of the 20th century. Threshing in that era magnified the similar and mutual goals often tied into a pooling of community resources by farmers much less homogeneous than the Amish.

It is a paradox that a society dedicated to remaining separate from the world followed quite similar labor exchange practices of mainstream farmers of the 19th and early 20th centuries. Yet, by examining the organizational structure of Amish labor rings, a different picture emerges. In a threshing ring, for example, the Amish do not formalize their organized labor pools in the sense of having written bylaws and dues. The primary reason for organizing a formal threshing ring for mainstream farmers was to accomplish a more precise system of accounting to equalize labor and cost of harvesting,
which was known as a “difference” system (Rikoon 1988:121). In most cases the Amish do not keep a written account of hours worked by each member of the ring.

Silo-filling rings with members from Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts “equalize” the amount of shared labor by beginning the workday at 7 a.m. and ending the workday at noon in time for a shared dinner. If one farmer has a larger silo capacity, that farmer must finish filling it on his own time. The Bunker Hill Northwest church district near Berlin does not equalize the labor and each farm’s silo is filled regardless of the time involved (Beachy 1998). Hours are not tabulated because the Amish keep their word about showing up to work or send someone in their place.

Since small grain threshing in groups is still practiced by a great majority of Amish farmers, it remains as the most intact and durable of all organized labor-sharing activities among the Amish (see Figure 5.1). The threshing-ring activity at the farm divides the group into two labor parties, one for gathering small grain shocks (usually oats and barley) from the field and onto a wagon for hauling to the barn, while the second party unloads the wagon and feeds the grain bundles into the threshing machine. Spelt and wheat are also grown by a few of the farmers.

Mose Beachy of Farmerstown South church district belongs to a threshing ring with six other farmers. The threshing machine is owned equally by the group and the maintenance costs for the machine are split equally seven ways. Mose Mast, another farmer in the same ring agrees with Beachy that success in the ring is based on the concept of having no real leader, as well as each member placing value on the social aspects of exchanging labor.
There are some obvious practical advantages of the laborsaving aspects in being part of a threshing ring. Flat Ridge farmer Myron Raber, who belongs to a different threshing ring of seven farmers, believes the threshing work done in a group is much easier compared to threshing with just a few family members. Whenever possible, farmers take advantage of the threshing machine’s many capabilities. For example, Mose
and many other farmers put loose straw in the haymow high in the barn with the blower coming off the threshing machine.

Labor exchanged during the threshing season is the first of four structured labor-sharing activities related to harvesting crops on Amish farms in the Holmes County settlement region (see Table 5.1). Threshing rings have the highest participation level at 97.1 percent of farms surveyed (n=35). Of the two church districts, only one farmer, Christ Yoder of Farmerstown South, was not active in an organized threshing ring. Having recently purchased a small threshing machine from a manufacturer in Canada, Yoder can also count on his older teenage children to assist with such an undertaking.

<table>
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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flat Ridge CD</th>
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<th>Farmerstown South CD</th>
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<th>Holmes Co. Region (n=35)</th>
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<td>66.7%</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>3</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Corn-picker Mini-Ring</td>
<td>0*</td>
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<td>8</td>
<td>66.7%</td>
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* Participation number of Amish farmers in selected type of labor-exchange ring.
* Corn picker not yet adopted in Flat Ridge church district.

Table 5.1: Participation level of structured Amish group labor specifying type of labor-sharing ring in Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts during a calendar year.
Although Yoder likes the independence of threshing when his crops are ready, he does recognize a labor-exchange benefit from participating in a silo-filling ring. The participation level for silo-filling rings is somewhat less compared to threshing, but remains strong in both church districts as well as the larger settlement area (see Table 5.1). Husker-ring and corn-picker mini-ring activity levels are also listed and detailed in the next section.

Because the threshing activity lasts an entire working day and includes a noon meal, there is ample opportunity for social engagement during the threshing season, usually lasting from late July through August. At the close of the season for a typical threshing ring there is an ice-cream social that also functions to finalize the business of settling differences, the latter during a portion of the social known as the threshing meeting.

Of the eight rings identified in Flat Ridge and Farmerstown church districts, only one ring settles the difference in labor time. Beachy’s threshing ring divides the maintenance costs among the members during the threshing meeting. The remainder of the threshing rings maintains a system where members pay a per-bushel fee according to the type of grain harvested usually at the time of harvest. However, these other threshing-ring groups also hold an ice-cream social as a matter of tradition and for planning the next threshing season. In such planning meetings Amish farmers talk about the usual agricultural topics while focusing on any changes in their rotation, in particular small-grain acreage that will need threshing the following year.
5.2 Husker ring—an innovation

Ben Raber’s son Aden participated in a husker ring from the 1960s through the mid-1980s that has since disorganized. Husking bees helped ease the arduous work load during the annual campaign of harvesting corn mostly by hand, as well as serving the function of courtship for young adults. In the Flat Ridge church district, the highly social activity of husking bees ended during the late 1940s giving way to the husker-shredder machine (see Figure 5.2).

Along with the adoption of the “new” machine, husker rings were formed as an organized group of farmers that shared wagons, teams and labor in bringing the corn shocks to the barn area where the husker-shredder machine (or husker machine) would be used to husk the corn and simultaneously make fodder and bedding from the cornstalks. Thus, neighborhood husking bees in the Old Order Amish farming community were replaced by husker rings with an average of 6 to 10 farms in each ring. From a chronological perspective, the husker ring or Boschtel ring was invented relatively recently in the nearly 200-year history of Amish farming in North America.

Unlike most other labor exchange practices among Amish farmers, the husker ring is uniquely Amish. Frank Hennenfent, secretary for the Illinois State Corn Husking Association, said farmers sometimes hired other workers to harvest corn, but did not practice sharing labor during corn harvest. Similarly, Mildred Filbrun of Carriage Hill Living History Farm in west-central Ohio helped her family harvest corn during her youth from the 1920s through the 1940s and remembers that farmers did not join forces for corn harvesting.
Figure 5.2: The husker-shredder machine or “husker machine” was adopted by the Amish more than 50 years ago and spawned an innovative labor-exchange ring known as the husker ring or *Boschtel* ring. (Photo by Scot Long)
Mose Yoder, a minister of the Flat Ridge church district, belongs to a husker ring that consists of four members, with each of the other members from a neighboring church district. The ring is organized so that two farmers drive wagons, one helps load corn shocks onto wagons in the field and another unloads the shocks into the husker-shredder at the barn. A certain advantage of the ring is the shared ownership of the husker-shredder. Mose says he likes the fellowship and friendship aspects of the ring, which may explain why he participates in the maximum available group labor arrangements, including threshing, silo-filling, spontaneous family work gatherings, and the occasional neighborhood frolic at someone’s farm for special projects.

Participation in the husker ring dropped off in the 1980s and 1990s for various reasons, while the corn fodder was largely replaced by an increase in hay production. Other Amish farmers may put up shocks and haul them into the barn just with the family. It is also a chore that can be done by a single farmer according to Mose, by pulling the shock up to the flatbed wagon in the field. Yet the husker ring continues to have a fair amount of interest and participation among Amish farmers, even though the husker ring serves a smaller labor saving function than other structured labor rings, with the primary incentive being the social gathering according to participants (Yoder 1999).

In the wake of the recent introduction of mechanical corn pickers on Old Order Amish farms, nearly 90 years after its commercial availability, farmers belonging to Farmerstown South church district responded with a new labor arrangement in the form of a “corn-picker mini-rings” where two farmers help each other harvest corn, one pulling the corn picker and the other bringing a wagon to haul the corn during picking. In Farmerstown South church district the partnerships typically formed are between farmers
who are geographically adjacent to one another. Thus, by creating single partnerships between two farms, six mini-rings were formed in one church district as a type of organized labor exchange.

Mose Beachy claims the mini-ring is quite practical because the initial cost and continued maintenance of the picker is fairly substantial and thus can be divided between two farmers. Although he downplays the social benefit of the mini-ring, Mose believes such a partnership is beneficial because it is always enjoyable to work with another farmer. The corn-picker mini-rings also help farmers work together in order to solve the mechanical malfunctions, such as jamming of the picker, and also serves to reinforce safety concerns as well (Beachy 1998).

Some Amish farmers still pick corn by hand, although most Old Order church districts have approved the use of the mechanical corn pickers. A few farmers in the congregations that have adopted the machine pickers continue to pick by hand because of personal and spiritual reasons. The widespread use of the corn-picker, however, may also contribute to the end of the husker ring if not enough corn shocks are put out to bother with an organized harvest.

Except for the above two examples of husker rings and corn-picker mini-rings, the Amish generally have not been innovators as much as highly selective adopters of technology that Olshan describes as self-conscious and exhibiting “a keen sensitivity to the varying ramifications associated with the acceptance of different types of innovations” (1994:190). Olshan also reports that the Amish in Plain City, Ohio, adopted the manure spreader and mechanical hay loaders before these items were in general use by non-Amish farmers, primarily because use of the manure spreader and hay loader did
not pose an outside threat to their way of life. Neither did the majority of labor exchange practices threaten their belief of non-conformity to the world, one of the core tenets of Gelassenheit and thus continue to survive. The most visible and communal Amish labor-exchange activity is the barn raising, which is also not an Amish invention.

There is an assumption central to cultural ecology, especially Steward, that states that diffusion of technologies does not necessarily follow the evolution of the new technology; and more importantly, while origin and diffusion serve to establish where technology came from and some patterns of usage, it is the ongoing adaptations to a new form of technology in addition to adoption that are critical to understanding the cultural and ecological functions (1973:36-37).

Although the Amish have been using the corn binder for decades to cut silage, it was not used for field corn until about 1965. Up to that point a farmer used a foot cutter or a knife attached to a “stoneboat,” a type of wooden sled that was very dangerous because the knife blade was about six-inches above the soil as the stoneboat was pulled through the field by horses (A. Raber 1998).

Aden says that silage for the Amish is used as a supplement to get the farmer’s herd through till spring. Cows prefer pasture rather than stored forage food and can graze from about early April until perhaps November. When fed to cows stored silage must be taken out from the top surface inside the silo, which the Amish refer to as rohne mach or “making down” silage. Each feeding at the Raber farm, four inches of silage is shoveled from half of the top so that mold will not form on the portion exposed to air.

Fodder is basic roughage in the diet of livestock. Corn fodder refers to the dried stalk after being put on shocks. Amish farmers also shock to provide cows with bedding,
a corn by-product that Mose Yoder appreciates because it packs lighter and is easier to shovel than straw bedding. The husker-shredder machine makes fodder and separates out the husked ear if the farmer shocked for corn. Swartzentruber farmers put up a lot of corn shocks and after pulling out the ears of corn, three or four large shocks are combined into a huge fodder shock that takes on the dimensions of a long shed.

### 5.3 Mutual aid labor sharing

Many scholars have used the term “mutual aid” to refer to any type of shared labor. As the Amish apply the term, mutual aid actually means helping someone in trouble as written in *Galatians 6:2*, “Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

Huntington (1989:285) poses the possibility that mutual aid and its complementary social interaction would be greatly diminished if the majority of members in an Amish church were not farmers. Further, she believes that Amish culture would manage to remain intact in its basic form because they have been successful in avoiding the mass urban culture, in part, because the Amish are able to make adjustments and change slowly and reflectively.

Contrary to what Huntington suggests, in recent decades labor-sharing practices have retracted only slightly in communities where farming is a minority occupation. There are three major reasons for the continued prevalence of labor sharing among virtually all Amish households. First, many non-farming Amish have two to five acres, horses, and a large garden, all of which contribute to the persistence of Amish culture as a rural-based phenomena, rather than primarily production-agriculture based mutual aid.
Second, Amish women practice mutual aid with many activities related to rural farm arts such as quilting and baking for fund raising activities. When a non-farming Amish household needs a small outbuilding, men gather for a frolic in order to complete the task of constructing the building while the women visit and make applesauce or quilt (Good 1985:99). Finally, Amish farmers practice mutual aid primarily in neighborhoods, across church district lines, and the percentage of farmers in each church district is less relevant.

The barn raising is one of the more visible forms of large-scale mutual aid among the Amish. Similar to threshing and silo-filling rings, the barn raising tradition is not historically unique to the Amish ethnic group. The practice of quickly rebuilding a barn for an unfortunate neighbor who lost the building to a fire or tornado was widely practiced in America prior to 1910, after which many folks had more resources to handle such emergencies within the family (Rikoon 1988:94). This change in mainstream agriculture ran parallel to increased mechanization and the subsequent reduction of laborers needed for harvesting hay and small grains.

Although it is an infrequent event, nearly every farmer in the Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts has participated in at least one barn raising and many have attended several. Most of the Amish farmers surveyed believe that barn raisings are about as common today as in the past. The most recent barn raising on the farms of the two church districts was near Farmerstown where the dairy barn burned after a lightening strike during the dry summer of 1988. There is a wide variance reported on the number of participants for the event, estimated in the range of 300 to 600 men and 150 to 250 women traveling from all over the Holmes County settlement. Another barn raising held
in nearby Coshocton County during 1992 was a smaller affair attracting an estimated 200 men and 50 women.

The large number of women is necessary because much of the food, such as pies, are prepared days in advance in their own kitchens and brought to the event. During mid-morning the women serve refreshments, while some of the younger women have the task of watching children while the mother prepares food. The big meal is served around noon, and may take several sittings of the men beginning with the elders (Tortora 1961:15).

Soon after an Amish barn is destroyed, the deacon of that church district determines the cost of rebuilding, most of which is for lumber and other materials. The bulk of the cost is paid by the Amish Aid Organization, a general fund in which every Old Order Amish household in the settlement contributes the equivalent of one day’s wage each month. In the next few days a dozen volunteers clean up the debris from the old barn, then a foundation is set and the larger beams are cut. The actual raising of the barn is completed in a single day, usually not more than two weeks after the loss of the original barn. From the efficiency and speed that the barn is constructed, one might get the impression that most of the men have a great deal of carpentry skill, when in fact only about 20 men out of several hundred are experienced carpenters.

The most recent barn raising in which any of the respondents participated was in May 1998 near the village of Brinkhaven, northeast Knox County, where a new barn was needed because Amish families had relocated from northwest Holmes County. New barn raisings are less common than years ago, but this was a case of a newly formed church
district where the Amish did not previously own the land. At the Brinkhaven barn raising there were more than 150 Amish men helping with the community event.

In the planning of the barn raising, announcements of the projected building day are made during Sunday service of several area church districts usually within a radius of 10 miles (Tortora 1961:15). Other family members and friends who might live farther away are also invited to participate.

5.4 Economics and Amish mutualism

All Amish practice some form of mutualism, whether it be simple “frolics” for completing small projects or Amish Aid as an insurance arrangement against catastrophic loss. Amish mutualism continues to be a prominent behavior within the church and neighborhood communities with most Amish farmers participating in as many labor-exchange activities as previous generations. Although a few farmers have become more independent, the data shows that an equal number of Amish farmers have resumed participation in labor-sharing rings after dropping out a few years ago.

One form of labor sharing that is relatively recent is the school cleaning activity. Since the landmark 1972 U.S. Supreme Court case Wisconsin v. Yoder unanimously decided in favor of allowing Amish to direct their own educational process, there has been a flurry of Amish parochial school building (Holt 1992:274). Before 1960 a higher percentage of Amish children attended public schools. Some Amish students continue to attend a public school such as many of the children living in Flat Ridge church district, although the curriculum and objectives are much the same as an Amish parochial school.
Most Amish children, however, attend a parochial school such as the Meadow Valley School operated within the Farmerstown South church district.

Families with school-age children contribute the funds required to operate and maintain Amish schools. In order to keep cash contributions to a minimum, member families perform maintenance on the school. Each August, older students and parents take part in a school cleaning where the females wash the desks and interior of the school and the men tidy up the building’s exterior and yard (see Figure 5.3).

Figure 5.3: An Amish labor-sharing activity known as a “school cleaning” takes place during August in preparation for the coming school year in southeastern Holmes County. (Photo by Scot Long)
Mutualism can also be found in the non-traditional banking and finance systems that the Amish use. Most “financing” is arranged through family members, usually between seller and buyer, typically father and son. Amish farmland is generally transferred at a price considerably below market value (see Table 5.2); the majority of farm equipment does not transfer with the land and is more often sold at market value. Land exempted from the personal property aspect of chattel increases the chance of the Amish as a group to hold onto their acreage, given that land ownership is key to their rural culture. Thus, Amish view land somewhat in the sense of a “commons” concept. Payments to elders based on farm transfer probably are not made in large amounts since a 15-cow dairy has a finite amount of income and the size of young farm families continues to be large, each with their own material needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Flat Ridge CD</th>
<th>Farmerstown South CD</th>
<th>Holmes Co. Region (n=39)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$T$</td>
<td>%</td>
<td>$T$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greatly under</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Price*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly under</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40.0%</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Market Price</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* $T$ – Transfer of farm to present owner comparing transfer price to market price.
* Generally reported at 50 percent or greater under market price of farm.

Table 5.2: Farm transfer prices compared to market prices from previous to present owner in Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts during a calendar year.
Some members of the Old Order Amish, centered in Farmerstown South church district, have begun a chartered nonprofit bank for the purpose of financing farms and cottage industries for members of the church. Like the Amish church, the Amish bank does not have an actual building where business is conducted; rather, any transactions and bookkeeping are done in homes of the Amish persons who hold an administrative position. Such positions rotate every few years and pay a nominal salary. The more conservative and traditional group known as “Swartzentruber Amish” regularly act as banks for one another and can enable a farm purchase through a number of low-interest personal loans.

Retired households are not required to host a church service that normally costs $100 to $200 for the host family. Working households can more afford such a cost and each church district rotates the hosting families so that each holds service once or twice a year depending on the size of the church community.

As noted above, most farms in the study have multiple sources of income and likely derive some amount of savings. Given that most farms are passed down to the next generation at market cost or far below market cost, it would seem that an adequate cash reserve is established by retirement age (see Table 5.2 above). Amish elders enjoy a level of comfort and security based on this cash reserve. Cost-of-living expenses per household are lower compared to mainstream Americans since Amish avoid automobile, cable, electric, telephone and Internet bills; however, strong contenders for inheritance money include maintenance of a separate household and payment of medical bills.

Nearly every Amish farmer has either intensified a portion of his agricultural production, usually dairy, during the last five years or has expanded into some type of
cottage industry. Many of the cottage industries, such as a cabinet shop, are operated by the elder generation for a retirement income. Other cottage industries help support the smaller farms some of which are part-time operations. Full-time farmers make up 83.3 percent of the total, while 81.4 percent of income is reported from farming (n=42). Other sources of part-time income include a seed dealership, a bed and breakfast, a beagle kennel, and quilts and quilt products.

It may be also that the core belief of “profit as sin” is becoming less of an issue as economic pressures on the small farmer continue. Some Amish farmers have quit farming full-time and instead are working “out” for wage labor even though the individual owns a farm, citing the problem of too low of an income from farming full-time. Of the 25 farm households from Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts, six farmers or 24 percent are working wage labor, with three of the six wage earners working “out” full-time and renting crop and pasture land to other Amish farmers who have intensified their farms.

The previous generation of Amish farmers did not have the choice to work “out” and they were usually successful with the land and limited equipment that was available. Approximately 71 percent farm operators in Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts (n=24) recall that more Amish farmers shared their equipment 20 years ago, yet many current and retired farmers report that farm income was better then. One plausible explanation for this incongruity is that farmers have intensified to the point that they can no longer wait for the neighbor to finish with the equipment before they need to use it. Further evidence indicates that farmers continue to share equipment that is used only occasionally such as a liquid manure tank.
By looking at Sahlins’ DMP, Boserup for intensification, Chayanov and Polanyi for an economic model, and Netting for his smallholder or household perspective, an Amish model of intensive agriculture begins to emerge. The departure from the above theorists begins with the recognition of a unique Amish intensification practice and the concept of self-limiting production; for example, a typical silo holds enough rations for 15 dairy cows for 10 months (assuming no heifers are fed silage, and using the USDA ration of one cubic foot of silage per day per cow).

The concept of “substantive economy” fits well with the Amish farm management system in that reciprocity, market exchange, and to a lesser extent redistribution are practiced (Polanyi et al. 1957). Yet, because the Amish are also functioning as part of the larger free-market economy, in particular milk sales as a high percentage of overall income, farm households are forced to economize when milk prices are low. Such economizing is not necessarily individuals maximizing behavior as in the microeconomics model characteristic of the formal paradigm; rather, the need for economizing strengthens and helps perpetuate reciprocity and labor-exchange relationships that the Amish practice. Halperin (1988:54) suggests that it is on institutional grounds that different meanings arise for such terms as capital or class, and thus the Amish sense of exchange and economizing is likely to be different than that of mainstream society.

As such there is evidence of a non-market emphasis on exchange and reciprocity among Amish farm households, from the supportive manner in which dairy producers

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2 Both Polanyi and Marx contributed greatly to the institutional paradigm of economic anthropology, closely associated with models that take institutions as the primary mechanisms for analyzing production, distribution and consumption processes.
organize and maintain milk cooperatives to the mutualism expressed in assisting an injured farmer by working together to haul manure out of the barn in January. Similarly, non-monetary exchange in terms of barter remains an important element of the Amish community (see Table 5.3). Although the data indicates that Amish farmers in Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts slightly favor a market economy versus a barter system, they detail numerous instances of trading goods and services without involving money. Amish women frequently trade childcare services with one another. Other examples of barter include trading the use of equipment such as a corn binder for the use of a hay rake or exchanging grazing time of heifers on pasture for help in repairing a fence.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Market Economy</th>
<th>Barter System</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amish farmers in Holmes County Region (n=30)</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* – Likert scale based on several survey questions related to exchange of labor and services or barter with other farmers.

Table 5.3: Amish head-of-household view of participation in market economy versus barter system from farmers in the Holmes County settlement region.
Other economic considerations among Amish farmers within their unique, limited DMP relate to dairy intensification. Several of Mose Beachy’s children enjoy playing with the farm’s three-month-old, blue heeler puppy, which is bred for rounding up livestock. He began using intensive grazing during the 1999 growing season, following the example of a few neighbors who had recently adopted the foraging strategy. Advantages of using intensive grazing include a better quality forage for the cows and the ability to get more forage out of the pasture since each portion of the pasture is given time to recover between grazing periods.

Hog prices got so bad that Mose decided to quit the pig farrowing business. He plans on adding four dairy cows to his herd noting that the switch would mean less feed than required for 16 sows. The hogs went the way of the broilers, says Mose, in that only the large producers survive. Mose will have to begin milking in shifts since his parlor only has enough stalls for his present herd size.

Intensification refers to achieving more production from the same land. For the Amish, however, the doubling of the dairy herd size in the last 10 years is more a matter of replacing diversification in hogs, chickens and other farm products with an increased milk output. Amish farmers that have not significantly increased their dairy herd have gone to an alternative enterprise for income such as woodworking or some other cottage industry. For the larger dairy operations, those farmers had to change the overall farming strategy to accommodate the increased pressure on pastureland, such as intensive grazing noted above. In some cases farmers lease grazing land from dormant neighbor farms. Many Amish farmers have increased hay acreage in order to improve winter stocks of stored feed in response to larger herd sizes (M. Raber 1999).
A few of the farmers that got out of silo-filling rings decided to get back in when dairy production increased. Corn silage serves as a quality, low-cost winter season feed. Threshing remains important for the farmers that increased their dairy herd size, if not more so, since barley and oats are fed to increase milk production and quality. On the other hand, an intensified dairy contributed to the reduced participation in the husker ring due to the lesser importance of corn as fodder and especially with the increased production of hay and straw, corn fodder was no longer needed for livestock bedding. For many Amish farmers an intensified dairy also meant a greater need for corn, and thus some Old Order Church Districts began adopting the mechanical corn picker, which becomes another factor that reduced the need to shock for corn. Given that about half of the Amish farmers continue to participate in the husker ring on at least an occasional basis, such a phenomenon reinforces the concept that the social benefit of the activity as well as the traditional aspects of the husker ring are highly valued. After all, the concept of labor-sharing rings has roots in mutual aid and helping one another in times of need.3

During the late 19th century a “corn husking” meant that the friends and neighbors of an ill or injured Amish farmer would gather at his farm to husk corn by hand (Fisher 1989:236).

Formal group labor has traditionally provided opportunities for young Amish men and women to meet. Hall (1980:79) notes that during the 1950s threshings were the major group work activity where young people could meet one another. At least a portion of this tradition continues with the end-of-season threshing party.

3 In Nolt’s (1992:96-97) account of Amish history, the “roots” of Amish Christian mutual aid in North America are traced as far back as helping other immigrants including Mennonites as early as 1817.
Youth who belong to Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts have found more dating opportunities from regional “exchanges” and Saturday evening buggy excursions. The exchanges are actually an elaborate arrangement of about 200 youths from all over the settlement to meet at an adult-sanctioned gathering. The informant described the new courtship arrangement as too large of a setting to accommodate the kind of social interaction to which the Amish are accustomed and that it may take some time for the larger venue of the youth social to operate optimally (M. Raber 1999). The more frequent practice of local courtship occurs on Saturday evenings when eligible young men over the age of 16 ride out in groups of three or four and arrive at a farmhouse where a similar group of young ladies might be visiting together.
CHAPTER 6

INFORMAL AMISH GROUP LABOR

Availability and use of labor from the extended family and neighborhood is vital to the Amish farm production schedule, especially during the busy haying and threshing season. Informal Amish group labor includes the unpaid help of neighbors and extended family members to accomplish tasks such as oat shocking, childcare, repair of fences, quilting and haying. The extra help is readily accepted during times of threatening rain when cut and raked hay is still out in the field. Neighbors who help one another may or may not be members of the same church district, although social bonds are generally strengthened during such events.

The Amish are gregarious as a cultural group, yet retain the integrity of a nuclear and extended family. Work is accomplished at the household level on a daily basis and thus becomes routinized, especially milking duties that remain fairly constant throughout the calendar year. Labor demands are also modified as rations for cows change in the winter with hay and silage becoming the mainstay; then in springtime, the weather permits pasturing again. A great deal of organized family labor is required to keep this 365-day, morning and evening, laborious chore on schedule. When most or all of the family members need to be away, there is an arrangement with the neighbors or other relatives to take care of the milking duties.
From the survey instrument for this study, 57 percent of farmers in the two church districts have arrangements for an unpaid exchange with neighbors for milking duty (n=21), whereas many of the farmers also use extended family members when available. Such exchanges tend to be reciprocal, but not always, and repayment of the favor may take place several months later, indicating a generalized reciprocity in the exchange of milking duties. Among Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South farmers, 19 percent have found it necessary to hire outside help on at least an occasional basis.

An informal get-together for the purpose of accomplishing a particular task among the Amish is known as a frolic or *Frölich*. Many of the frolics are organized around a specific goal, such as building a shed or putting on a new roof, and hosted by the farmer who needs the work accomplished. Women tend to hold a frolic usually for a charity function such as baking “fry pies” for a fund-raiser. During the summer of 1999, nine women belonging to Flat Ridge church district baked 500 fry pies to sell during a public event, with the funds going to a charitable cause.

Gatherings, on the other hand, tend to be regulated by the calendar, and thus become monthly or semi-annual meetings of collateral family groups such as married siblings and their families. Amish women might quilt or do canning while the men usually make firewood, haul manure, build a small barn or shock corn. The Amish plan events under the rubric of a particular work activity and still manage time for plenty of social interaction. Some of the more traditional events for Amish women, such as an apple-peeling party or *Schnitzen* are held in the manner of a gathering, with perhaps six to a dozen family members and neighbors invited.
6.1 Neighborhood labor exchange

Neighbors and relatives often congregate on a single Amish farm for an informal gathering that is ostensibly task-oriented in serving the purpose of accomplishing labor while also addressing social needs and strengthening family and community bonds. Table 6.1 shows the frequencies of the two types of informal labor exchange within the neighborhood—frolics and gatherings. Frolics are more often one-of-a-kind events for a special purpose and happen less frequently compared to gatherings.

In Farmerstown South there is a higher occurrence of both informal types of labor exchange, in particular frolics with a nearly two to one margin over Flat Ridge church district. Frolics include such projects as building a machinery shed, putting a roof on a straw shed, erecting a fence, and nailing new siding on a barn.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(two-year period)*</th>
<th>Farmerstown South CD</th>
<th>Flat Ridge CD</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Frolics (n=18)</td>
<td>3.2</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>2.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gatherings (n=21)</td>
<td>9.1</td>
<td>8.2</td>
<td>8.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Average number of events held on farms by church district members or a similar event attended on another farm.

Table 6.1: Average number of informal labor-sharing events per household in a two-year period reported by men and women of two selected Old Order Amish church districts in Holmes County.
Respondents from both church districts describe frolics as occurring less often than in the past, while the frequency of gatherings has stayed about the same. The drop-off in occurrences of frolics is not a recent phenomenon; rather, it is part of a trend that Smith (1958:177) observed during the mid-20th century as the era of husking bees was coming to a close in southeastern Pennsylvania. Yet, contrary to Smith’s observation, the Amish persist in maintaining most small-group labor practices, albeit on a smaller scale compared to earlier in the 20th century.

Two farmers in Flat Ridge church district reported trading the construction of a new fence for help in putting up hay, with each event involving several helpers. Respondents estimate attendance for some frolics to be as many as 50 people, while average levels of participation are considerably less.

Informal group labor known as gatherings may include haying, shocking of small grains, odd chores around the house and farm, quilting, canning, and preparation for hosting church. It is the invited presence of neighbors and extended family members that qualifies the event as a gathering, where relatives often travel from other church districts. Table 6.1 shows similar levels of participation between the two church districts with regard to gatherings.

An unexpected outcome of this research project is a paradigm shift toward the greater importance of informal group labor to the Amish farm economy. Structured labor-exchange rings, such as threshing, and mutual aid labor sharing, such as a barn raising, are the more overt group labor practices among Amish farmers and thus the research agenda presupposed a greater participation level and significance than the data suggests. A clearer picture emerges upon examining Amish farmers’ own story—that
informal group labor centered on the Amish farm household has been more enduring as well as being the mainstay of Amish farm labor exchange. Informal group labor, comprised primarily of extended family members (although less frequently neighbors) who participate in frolics, gatherings and family group labor, accounts for one-third of crop production labor on an Amish farm (see Figure 6.1).

Figure 6.1: Average hours worked on farm for crop production comparing individual farmer labor (58.8%) to time spent working in family labor (34.7%) and time spent in labor-sharing rings (6.5%) in two selected Old Order Amish church districts (n=21).
While there is a subtle distinction between family group labor and gatherings in that the former mobilizes available on-farm labor and the latter necessarily involves outside help of relatives and neighbors, both labor arrangements require cooperation while reinforcing social and familial bonds.

Cooperation is emphasized over competition by members of the Amish faith in the day-to-day completion of tasks, which is particularly evident in projects that involve several helpers (Donnermeyer et al. 1999:111). Examples of informal, cooperative labor include extended family labor to complete such daily chores as milking chores or seasonal chores such as shocking of small grains. Informal, cooperative labor also includes neighbors helping one another with childcare or preparation for hosting church. Cooperative activity of this type is at the heart of labor sharing among the Amish and reaffirms commitments toward helping one another. Cronk (1981) refers to cooperation and commitment as being in harmony with Amish core values of Gelassenheit or yielding to a higher authority.

Thus, the Amish practice Gelassenheit on a daily basis and express this yielding as a brotherhood of love by giving to others the fruits of one’s own labor (Geubert 1994:56, StoltzfuS 1973:310); it may be making a quilt for a charity auction, or the sewing of clothes for a husband or daughter, or the building of porch furniture for the family by the husband. Gelassenheit is neither an economic nor a religious institution as Mauss (1967:36) describes in the potlatch behavior of the Kwakiutl; rather, Gelassenheit is a religious set of values among the Amish that promotes and regulates such activities as shared labor and mutual aid. Mauss does provide a useful analysis of exchange that fits well with the Amish economic paradigm in that labor sharing as a type of “gift” carries
the personality of each participant and also serves to reinforce associations of individuals and the group through rituals and ceremonies (1967:33). Thus, one basic function of exchange is to promote social solidarity within the spiritual context.

As this research project demonstrates, the greater part of motivation for labor sharing among the Amish is governed by social interaction needs that are based on religious beliefs. Amish living as Christians express their spirituality by helping others selflessly (Miller 1999). The cooperative behavior of a family shocking oats in the field by hand or stacking square bales of hay on a horse-drawn wagon may appear as drudgery, but a closer look reveals the pleasant interaction and demeanor of the family members involved. The pace is robust, yet relaxed enough so that workers can pause to reflect on the natural surroundings or carry on a conversation.

This finding is somewhat in opposition to Netting’s (1993:194) concept of labor exchange in that smallholders are not acting in an altruistic manner in performing labor for others, but expect an equal return at least in the form of an obligation in the not-so-distant future, so that reciprocity may be balanced among households. The type of cooperative labor that the Amish practice among households more accurately fits into the model of generalized reciprocity as described by Service (1979:16-17).

An Amish farmer near the age of retirement describes labor sharing and mutual aid as being similar in that one does not keep track of time spent helping other farmers since families with young children or grown children will need more help and families with older children living at home have extra workers; so, in the long run the shared work load tends to balance out (Hostetler 1998). Thus, members of an Amish household will assist
a neighbor in need regardless of that person’s ability or willingness to offer their own labor in return at a future date (see Figure 6.2).

Considering that the shared labor may never actually become balanced from one family to the next, especially given that demographics of each family is different, it is clear that the Amish practice a generalized reciprocity over the course of a farm family's life cycle, in part, because the Amish view themselves as one large brotherhood in Christ.

Figure 6.2: Small-grain shocks put up by hand are an example of informal group labor accomplished by Amish family members and an occasional neighbor or other helper. (Photo by Scot Long)
As such, shared labor practices for the Amish might be labeled “very generalized” given that some farm families have all daughters who normally do not assist other farmers in such tasks as hauling manure or haying. These daughters do however assist other Amish families in preparing for church and weddings, quilting, childcare, and other group activities such as fund raising. Thus, the female component of labor is highly regarded among members of Amish society.

Frolics held for a building project occur less frequently since Amish dairy production intensified with the addition of electric milking machines and bulk tanks. Respondents in both church districts report that many Amish are turning to professional carpentry crews to get the larger projects done, although many of the smaller building tasks continue to be organized through local frolics with an average of 15 or so participants.

6.2 Householder labor organization

Since members of the extended-family household accomplish the majority of work on an Amish farm, an examination of how labor is organized within the farm family provides a benchmark for analyzing the complexity of Amish labor.

Informal group labor among the Amish, held mostly with farm household members and sometimes a neighbor or other relative, has changed little in frequency or character since the increase in dairy output. As noted in section 6.1, a majority of Amish group labor involves family members living on the farm to accomplish crop production and dairy labor on a regular basis. When gatherings occur, usually on weekends, such events
are primarily a social function and usually involve both sides of the family with the women doing quilting, sewing, canning or cooking and the men hauling manure, fixing a fence, or going deer hunting. Some gatherings function to get the farm ready to host church, where a lot of cleaning must be done in and around the house as well as the barn. Many respondents in the research project reported neighbors helping one another in preparing food for approximately 150 guests on Gmeesundig or church Sunday.

Figure 6.3: Informal Amish group labor among farm family members of Flat Ridge and Farmerstown South church districts over the course of a calendar year, using the household as the unit of analysis.
Many Amish farms are dairy operations that require a steady stream of available workers, twice each day and 365 days each year. By rotating duties of milking and feeding the cows among several members of the family, some of the drudgery of dairying is reduced. Still, it is a chore that demands lots of attention to the details of cleanliness, keeping current with artificial insemination charts, maintaining proper rations, and understanding the peculiarities of each cow.

Further, Amish dairy farmers intensify milk production at different rates and adoption strategies (see Table 6.2). In comparing the Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts, 94 percent of dairy farmers have adopted milking machines since elders in both church districts approved the technology during the early to mid-1990s.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Average Herd Size</th>
<th>Increase since adopting bulk tank</th>
<th>Increase since adopting milking machine</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmerstown South*</td>
<td>19.7</td>
<td>n/a</td>
<td>5.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flat Ridge</td>
<td>17.7</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Settlement area (n=36)†</td>
<td>16.1</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>4.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Farmerstown South church district has not yet adopted the technology of using bulk tanks in dairy operations.
† Includes both church districts and other Amish dairy operations from the Holmes County settlement area.

Table 6.2: Intensification measured by increase in herd sized based on adoption of bulk tank and electric milking machine in two selected Old Order Amish church districts during the period 1995-1999.
While Farmerstown South had not yet approved the use of bulk tanks in favor of continuing with the traditional milk cans, 57 percent of dairy farmers in Flat Ridge church district have begun using bulk tanks, approved by church elders in 1997. Most farmers reported an increase in herd size as a result of one or both modernization measures. A third type of dairy improvement, artificial insemination (AI), has been adopted by 83 percent of dairy farmers in the two church districts. In part, because of the difficulty in administering AI to maintain a high rate of fertilization, the majority of dairy operations continue to use a bull in conjunction with AI. Other reasons cited for using a bull is the local knowledge about the genetics, especially when the bull comes from high producing cow at a neighbor’s farm (Troyer 1999).

Just as 80 acres approaches the maximum size for horse-drawn agriculture by a single Amish family (Kline 1999), the limit for hand milking for one family appears to be about 15 cows. Of the dairy farms in this study, 28 percent milk by hand with an average herd size of 10.8 cows among full-time farmers (n=36). Amish farmers in the study have increased dairy herd size by an average of 4.3 cows after adopting milking machines (see Table 6.2).

The ultra-conservative Swartzentruber Amish continue to resist the use of milking machines in favor of milk cans. Milk stored in cans for pickup or delivery are coming under increased scrutiny by state regulatory agencies that require a cooling tank to be purchased and maintained so that milk will remain at a more constant temperature prior to delivery. As a group the Swartzentruber elders are challenging the state’s proposal to eliminate milk cans.
In addition, the state regulates that milk stored and sold in cans may only be used in cheese making and not for fresh milk (see Figure 6.4). Given the situation of having fewer choices of how milk is sold, cheese cooperatives serve the purpose of allowing Amish dairy farmers to negotiate a better market price.

Since Old Order Amish church leaders have been forced into the decision of approving cooling tanks for keeping milk in cans cool rather than a natural spring or approving the purchase of stainless steel bulk tanks, many church districts began adopting the bulk tank by the late 1990s.
6.3 Kinship network labor exchange

There are several work activities on an Amish farm that involve the entire family or even the extended family. Putting up fence, harvesting fruit, and especially haying time require extra labor that may come from a son-in-law or a nephew spending the summer on the farm. Grandfather may step out of the shop to help out or a brother may take a day off from his job at the sawmill.

Haying time is the informal group labor event on an Amish farm that likely brings in the most kinfolk since so many hands are needed to harvest the forage crop. It is not shared labor in the manner of an organized frolic because nearly every farmer must do haying at about the same time, given that Mother Nature ripens the hayfields in an area during a similar time frame. This is why Amish farmers almost never borrow haying equipment, because his neighbor is likely to need the implement at the same time.

Hay for the Amish is usually a mix of alfalfa hay, timothy, and red clover. This crop diversity also includes some volunteer plants that are not harmful as forage, such as wild daisy. The hay comes up tall and by late spring is an excellent habitat for prairie birds and butterflies. Some Amish farmers wait as long as early July before the first cutting, which allows for complete nesting of some prairie bird species such as bobolinks and eastern meadowlarks (Kline 1998). A somewhat less visible benefit occurs below the soil line where root nodules release nitrogen, a natural fertilizer, into the soil.

The spring of 1998 was different, however, since the early warm weather caused the hay to grow much faster and the first cutting is being done in late May. All fields were cut except for one large hayfield that happens to be at the spatial center of the farm’s breeding bird population. The first cutting of hay has more fiber than second and
third cuttings, which have more protein. Each type has a different feeding plan: early hay is more commonly fed to horses and the higher protein hay goes to the cows. If hay does not dry down properly, it also loses some quality and will likely be fed to horses. In order to get higher quality milk, which is higher in butterfat and protein, purchased additives are included in the cows’ diet such as soybean meal, salt, and soda ash.

Tim Kline and his father operate two farms with a total of 54 acres in hay for 1998, probably a little more than they need. It is better to buy $3,000 in protein and sell $50,000 in milk than the other way around, because a shortfall of hay means purchasing

Figure 6.5: Hayfields can be found as alternate parts of strip and contour farming on land considered highly erodible by the Holmes County Soil Conservation Service. (Photo by Scot Long)
bales from other farmers, explains Tim, adding that some milk producers have more dairy animals than that farm’s acreage can support.

Haying is among several family labor events or gatherings that make up more than half of the total labor accomplished on Amish farms in the two church districts when comparing family labor to individual and structured work arrangements (see Figure 6.6). Thus, collective family labor on an Amish farm is important in serving both a practical and a social need.

Figure 6.6: Average hours worked on whole farm operation comparing individual farmer labor (42.7%) to time spent working with family and gatherings (53.3%) and time spent in labor-sharing rings (4.0%) in two selected Old Order Amish church districts (n=21).
6.3.1 Participant Observation: The hay harvest

The harvesting of hay on an Amish farm is a three-phase process from cutting and drying to raking to baling, hauling, and storing. Each of these steps is accomplished using draft-horse power and hand labor except for making square bales, which is done with a diesel-powered baling implement also pulled by Belgian drafts.

Amish farmers consider the prospect of dry weather for a good portion of the coming week before deciding on when to make a cutting. A horse-drawn cutter-bar implement is used to mow the hay. After drying in the field for a few days the hay is raked into windrows using a draft-horse powered circular rake. One person and a team of Belgians can accomplish both tasks of cutting and raking. Baling is done with a minimum of two persons and preferably three, and the chore of getting hay to the barn also takes two or three workers. If enough people are available, one crew loads bales while a second crew hauls hay to the barn and unloads. Many of the New Order Amish church districts allow the use of a tractor for hauling baled hay to the barn for storage. Thus only one team of horses is used, able to pull the diesel-baling implement and the hay wagon through the hayfield.

With Anne driving the team of Belgians, her younger brother Michael demonstrated the proper way to stack square bales on the wagon, placing bales three across the width of the flatbed with the center bale’s length running parallel to the direction of the wagon. In this manner bales are stacked four tiers high with a two-bale cap on top. When filling the horse barn, hay on the wagons are stacked one less tier due to the height of the barn door. Michael also explained that dad always taught them to place the cut side of the bale facing backwards so that women will not get cut by the
sharp ends of the hay. By standing to the left of the conveyor as the bales are expelled, the stacker can automatically swing the bale to the right placing the cut end away. Anne’s sister Emily came prepared by wearing Levi jeans beneath her traditional Amish pleated dress and protective gloves on her hands. She tied the bottom of her dress on one side for ease of movement. After each row Anne turns the horses and sometimes misses part of the windrow with the baler. Rather than waste the forage, one person jumps off the wagon and throws the errant hay in front of the baler. This task, along with catching approximately three bales per minute from the conveyor, requires vigilance and endurance in addition to the need for maintaining balance on a wagon that jostles and lurches from an uneven field.

About the time the wagon is fully loaded Tim brings an empty wagon to the field, then unhitches and hitches each wagon, hauling away the full load by tractor. After two loads, Tim’s wife Katie drives the tractor hauling hay to the barn. She has had a lot of practice since she grew up Mennonite, an Anabaptist denomination that does not shun modernity. When putting hay “up” in the barn Michael positions each bale so that hay can easily be removed without collapsing the entire pile, stacking the bales with the cut end down.

Emily speaks about haying as hard work, yet enjoyable because she always derives a sense of accomplishment when the hay is stocked away in the barns and the fields are growing anew with forage. She says that dad keeps the baler adjusted to crank out moderate-size bales because he does not think women should get too bulky from lifting a lot of weight. It was ultimately the weight of the bales made too heavy from evening
mist gathering on the hay, not the fading twilight that stopped the work after five wagonloads of hay had been baled, hauled, and stored in the horse barn.

Haying time is also a social event, especially when family and friends help. Often, folks will trade places to switch chores and also to share conversation with others. For example, if two people work together on the baling wagon there is ample time to chat while taking turns stacking bales. When the full wagon is driven to the barn, friendly conversation and laughter are commonplace during the leisurely drive back and forth.

David and his wife Elsie are away in Utah via Amtrak. Both Emily and Tim expressed hope that the haying would be finished so that their parents could rest upon returning. Emily is also pleased to get a lot of the haying done because she worries about her father breathing in too much of the dust, especially when putting hay up in the barn. Each of David’s children shows concern and respect for parents and reflects many of the traditional values handed down.

As an illustration of “passing down” of traditional values, Tim also follows a low-input strategy on his dairy farm. His father continues to demonstrate the low-input philosophy (as many Amish farmers practice) on the farm and uses commercial fertilizer on the soil when the crop really needs it, and then in sparing amounts. Many Amish believe that keeping horses on the farm is a vital component in animal and crop biodiversity, since horses require oats to be grown in the farm’s rotation and also return fertilizer to the soil (Kline 1999). Moreover, the large number of horses per capita employs many Amish folks in cottage industries that manufacture harnesses, wagon wheels and buggy parts.
6.4 Women and labor exchange

Growing up as an Amish youth in Holmes County, Barbara Yoder Hall (1980:84) recalls that a maude or hired girl, who was actually a teenage cousin, would spend several weeks helping with household chores while the new mother recovered from childbirth. This would be the custom until the older female children in the family could keep house. Because a neat household appearance is important to Amish women, a great effort is made to clean the house before hosting church where all the women of the congregation will gather and observe the inside of the home (Hall 1980:63).

In Hostetler’s (1989:100) collection of Amish Folklore, an Amish hired girl wrote about her experience with a family to whom she was not related. A fictive kinship was established as the small children in the family addressed her as an aunt. However, research for this study shows that most hired girls are relatives, usually a cousin or sister or niece.

A New Order Amish wife and mother, Christine received the help of two sisters, a sister-in-law, and her husband Nathan in preparing their farm for hosting church service on Sunday. This activity includes tidying up the house and barn and preparing food for the 30 or so families expected to attend church and enjoy a light meal after the formal service. Getting ready for a church service by the women of the family is an important social engagement in itself.

In a conservative Old Order Amish church district, Ella and her daughter Fannie were working on a plain Amish quilt with a design that is called Feathers and Roses. The quilt is a simple, yet elegant design using a single, off-white hue that Ella said was the
color of natural white. There is no piecework to the quilt, yet its plain pattern of curves and shapes takes on a much more elaborate yet graceful character. Other designs Amish women in the region use for plain quilts include Pansy Basket, White Doves, and several Rose designs (see Figure 6.7).

Figure 6.7: Holmes County Amish quilt using subtle colors of plain material to create a mosaic of beauty in design known as Double Irish Chain. (Photo by Scot Long)
First, the Amish women fastened the quilt backing to the quilt frame and then positioned the batting in place. Next, the marked top is laid over the batting, pinned in place and the quilting is ready to begin where a few or several women are able to sit around the edge of the quilt frame and complete the process. It is during the actual quilting that a group effort is most needed, given that each large quilt will require literally thousands of hand stitches to complete. It is also an opportunity for social time among the family members who participate, which can become an extended family or a regular quilting circle that meets monthly or so.

Other designs of pieced quilts commonly made among Amish women include the Lone Star, Ohio Star, Log Cabin and Irish Chain. Pieced quilts can seem fancy with many colors, yet the fabric is always plain rather than having a pattern. Ella also demonstrated how to make a bow tie on a pieced type of quilting, which is a small, white quilt block framing three pieces of brown fabric in the shape of a bow-tie.

Lena, the next oldest sister, had been a teacher in an Amish schoolhouse for nine years. The last year that Lena taught at a local Amish schoolhouse the student's mothers each embroidered a quilt block with the family name and pretty design on each block. On the top of the medium-blue quilt was the name of the school decorated with butterflies. She called it her prize quilt.

The upstairs balcony of the farmhouse features a panoramic view to the south. The balcony is part of an add-on portion to the house that Ella describes as an alternative to building a separate dawdy house. Two bedrooms were added upstairs since all three adult daughters still live at home. Down below the balcony is a well that was “found” several years ago when Demas tied his horses nearby while tending the strawberry patch.
on the southern exposure of the house. He noticed that the horses were sinking as the animals jumped out of the way in time to avoid disaster. Demas checked the depth and there was a 24-foot drop. The previous owner had covered the well with boards and earth. Demas and his sons built a stone base to the well and topped it with a six-sided slate-covered roof. Next to the well are several fruit trees and an expansive arbor bearing Concord grapes, the aesthetics of which obviously bear a woman’s touch.
CHAPTER 7

EMIC VIEW OF LABOR EXCHANGE

Emic refers to the viewpoints of those observed, whereas the etic represents the viewpoint of the observer (Dimen-Schein 1977:94, 110). Without going into the methodological debate, emic is used in the sense that the Amish likely have a concept of such matters as work, nature, spirituality and ethnic representation that is different than that of mainstream America. As Emerson et al. (1995:10) relate “that in order to fully understand and appreciate action from the perspective of participants, one must get close to and participate in a wide cross-section of their everyday activities over an extended period of time.”

Field observation for this research project was conducted with the goal of gaining insight on labor exchange practices among Amish farm households. It was participant observation in several labor-sharing activities that contributed to a descriptive, emic understanding of the Amish in their rural community. Some success in this endeavor was achieved by asking questions that require detailed answers in addition to standard survey questions that serve the purposes of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Further, care was taken not to stray too far from the survey instrument for ethical reasons related to the stated research objective as shared with the informants who assisted in gaining entry to the field sites.
Note taking for this research was, in part, patterned after the field collection methodology and ethnographic style of Clifford Geertz, often cited as an interpretive anthropologist who uses a strategy of becoming immersed in a particular cultural setting. Geertz (1973:10) tends to focus on semiotics and its often-complex meanings in terms of behavior, rituals and tradition.

At first glance the Amish household does not appear to display a great amount of religiosity. The Amish are, in fact, deep in subtle yet sacred symbols of everyday life such as the plain and neat appearance of blue curtains pulled to one side of each window. Other expressions of spirituality are evident from the singing of hymns while working in the fields to the religious meaning behind the aesthetic manner in which the corn is shocked and the grape arbor is trimmed.

Hostetler (1963:101) refers to the Amish as a “ceremonial community” that holds cyclical rituals and rites of passage. Rituals are closely tied to a belief system in that ritual serves to legitimize the fundamental needs of a society, often in the form of ceremony, according to Durkheim (1915). At an Amish prayer meeting or church Sunday, ritualism occurs virtually every moment.

7.1 Amish view of work

A light rain began falling in Holmes County on a mild mid-February morning. Monday’s wash can be seen hanging beneath the spacious porches of Amish homes, one of the more overt weekly routines where most activity on a rainy day is done in the house, barn or shop. Earning wage labor at a busy lumberyard in Mechanic Township,
Amish men with small-brim hats drive heavy equipment paying close attention to the tasks at hand.

Labor exchange practices among the Amish are cyclical, ceremonial, and often involve a rite of passage. Ben Raber remembers during a roof-building frolic when he was 37 years old in 1960, he was hoisted above the threshing floor on the shoulders of the other men because it was his birthday. In his classic, *The Golden Bough*, first published in 1890, James Frazer describes a harvest ritual along the Atlantic coast of France that a farmer’s wife, representing the corn-spirit, is placed in a sheet and tossed into the air above the threshing floor. In both cases there is a symbolic motion of winnowing grain, which was done by hand until the threshing machine came into wider use (1981:343).

Rituals are also part of the structured Amish group labor that Amish practice, such as silo-filling rings. Upon completing the task of filling the silo at Myron Raber’s farm after some five hours and 20-plus wagonloads, it was slightly past noon and a communal meal was ready to be served by the host farmer's wife and her sister. Each of the men in the silo-filling ring changed shirts, removing the soiled work shirt for a white shirt that had been brought along in a bag. There was also a lengthy silent prayer both before and after the meal. Cleanliness and silent prayer are subtle behaviors yet profoundly spiritual symbols. Silence, for the Amish, is highly valued as a way of showing reverence for God on Sunday and respect for others during the balance of the week. As such, these practices are subtle yet profound spiritual symbols.

Attitudes toward work and money among Amish farmers in this study represent a wide range. The more conservative members reflect on how younger generations of
Amish do not want to farm because the income is relatively low compared to the hard work involved. This type of youth orientation helps explain why nearly 12 percent of Amish farms in this study of the Holmes County settlement region are not operating full-time farming schedules (n=42). Other Old Order Amish enjoy the opportunities to earn income for work (e.g. carpentry subcontracting) outside of farming and a few have commented that working for English clients is preferable to Amish clients.

7.2 Amish and symbolism

As Cronk (1981:6) points out, Amish ritual can be found in the “ordinary spheres of everyday life.” Gelassenheit, or yielding to others and God, is expressed in the rituals and guidelines that members of each church district follow on a daily basis as symbolizing actions that promote community and a brotherhood of love (Cronk 1981:8).

Amish clothing has an additional religious meaning beyond its function as “symbols of separation.” Women's prayer caps are probably the most religious as a sign of reverence for the Lord according to a biblical passage in the New Testament “but every woman that prayeth or prophesieth with her head uncovered dishonereth her head,” (I Corinthians 11:5). Similarly, the absence of symbols can also demonstrate a spiritual conviction: “…that women adorn themselves in modest apparel, with shamefacedness and sobriety; not with broided hair, or gold, or pearls, or costly array,” (I Timothy 2:9).

Amish strive to keep their symbols uniform to denote unity, especially within the church district. The most important consideration of adoption of technology is not the tool itself, but its impact on “peace” within the church and church district, according to
Ben Raber (1998). “Endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace,” (Ephesians 4:3). Thus, both the use of technology and the how Amish represent themselves become symbols of unity concept.

One of the more salient Swartzentruber group’s ritualistic habits is evident in the way that the women set the table for dining. A wide, shallow bowl is used, and placed in the bowl are the silverware forming a cross, but not at a right angle. This behavior seems to be unique among the Amish to Swartzentruber homes. An elderly couple from this group with the same last name of Swartzentruber explained that the practice was intentional, but the original meaning is not known. The wife described how it was their way of setting the table and she remembers her grandmother doing the same when she was a little girl during the 1940s. Lévi-Strauss (1963:83) describes ritual as symbolic representations that take on meaning at a level of unconscious thought1. Thus, the Swartzentruber dinner-table ritual may likely be a tradition that is interpreted symbolically at the unconscious level with a meaning related to the Christian cross and the martyred Amish ancestors in Europe.

Interpreting religious symbolization is important in understanding a group’s belief system with regard to group image and public portrayal of members of the group. Religious expression for the Amish center around “symbols of separation” (Hostetler 1968, Kreps et. al 1997), given that there are few visual indicators of their religious conviction beyond the clothing, the buggy, and the plain living that Amish practice in

1 Lévi-Strauss further details the distinctions of unconscious structured representations in such examples as the meaning of red in a traffic light: if reversed red could mean warmth rather than danger; yet, the inherent, independent value of red cannot be easily switched because of its historical context (1963:94).
order to remain materially and socially distinct from the outside world. Yet, spiritually the Amish are perhaps among the most devoted religious groups in North America. A closer look at the ironic lack of religious symbolism in the Amish society reveals a spiritual side of the group that only insiders normally observe.

In particular, the absence of certain cultural practices and material goods are also a strong indicator of an adherence to faith. In Old Order Amish homes there is no electricity, no television, no radio, and few labor-saving appliances. The ban on the use of electricity is clearly a symbol of separation, while the ban on television and radio is also intended to keep members separate from the outside world. The latter distinction serves as a social control mechanism among the church members as codified in the church Ordnung or rules given that much of what the Amish do in their own homes is not directly observable by non-Amish.

Members of this subgroup refuse to place slow moving vehicle signs on the back of buggies, believing it to be overly prideful. Along the same logic, members of a Swartzentruber household may not plant flowers in the yard because they are believed to be too ostentatious, which is another example of the absence of certain cultural practices also being symbolic, which helps explain the apparent disparity of a high degree of religiosity and relatively few “physical” symbols of their spirituality. For one young Swartzentruber couple on a small farm, the vegetable garden in the front yard had blossoms that could be appreciated while not showing pride.
Figure 7.1: A forage product left behind by the threshing crew, this haystack remains intact well into the late autumn on a Swartzentruber farm in Holmes County, Ohio. (Photo by Scot Long)

The Swartzentruber church among the Amish religious group is among the more conservative in terms of technological usage. They separated from the Old Order Amish in 1913 and have changed little since then, for example, their use of a wood-burning cooking stove. Similarly, threshers still produce haystacks on Swartzentruber farms (see Figure 7.1), a practice that has not been done on most Old Order Amish farms for at least 30 years (B. Raber 1999). In some manner, the presence of the haystack not only serves a necessary forage function and shelter from the wind for the cows, it may also be
considered a symbol of separation from the world, since haystacks have become unique to the Amish. In what may appear as a paradox, the same farmer with the haystack was very interested in the newest hybrid apples and said he had heard positive things about the disease resistance aspects of the new variety.

Other farming practices among the Swartzentruber are also conservative, such as a simpler crop rotation involving three or four crops with fewer alternatives, which dates back to the 19th century. Farmers in most Old Order church districts use a rotation system of four to six crops with a greater measure of flexibility.

The Old Order Amish and the Swartzentruber subgroups both have a strong sense of religious symbolization, with each one remaining distinctive as a religious sect. From inside the dining room of a neatly kept house of an elderly Amish Swartzentruber couple, one can see only the barest essentials of daily living, which makes the impression of being gray, stark, austere, and very plain. The two Amish folks in the room, despite their intent to be plain and humble, were extremely distinctive and full of life--and visually stood out as almost surreal against their cultural backdrop.

Apparently, some Swartzentruber members did not agree on church Ordnung and three of 17 Swartzentruber church districts broke away forming a schism in 1993. The Amish “church” varies according to belief affiliation, such as Old Order, thus the overarching doctrine serves as a guideline for individual church districts, each having their own Ordnung or rules of church discipline.

Another recent schism began in 1998 among the Amish in the Holmes County settlement region. The Andy Weaver church in the Lakeville district experienced the
breaking away of about 27 families over the issue of tobacco use and adoption of various technologies (B. Raber 1999). Within each church district, the elders make decisions regarding technology and other matters of Ordnung after an informal meeting with four or five eldest members including the bishop.

Adoption of technology among the Amish reflects three observations significant to this study: 1) a given church district may be ahead of other church districts with adoption of some technologies, but lag in other technologies; 2) technological improvements do not necessarily lead toward intensification, since the Amish continue to function primarily as a “self-limiting” society; 3) the most important consideration of adopting a new technological use is that it must not violate peace within the church.

As the spiritual leader of the elders within a church district, the bishop has much discussion with the farmers about each issue. At the annual meeting of Old Order Amish bishops in Ohio, the conversation will include adoption of technology “if its a new thing coming in” (B. Raber 1999).

7.3 Folk taxonomy

The German dialect may help explain some of the classificatory systems the Amish use to define the natural and spiritual worlds. Many of the Amish herbal medicines are based on folk tradition, such as nettle and boneset. Nettle or bren assle (or burning mule) is made into a soup for treating flu symptoms and boneset is made into a tea for ailments of the bones and joints. Other wild plants the Amish harvest include “broom tea” for improved circulation, spearmint and peppermint for flavoring tea, and several types of
berries such as elderberries, black raspberries and blackberries used for pies, jams and jellies. Many of these plants are harvested from along creek beds, the edge of pastures or from woodlots on the farm. A few farmers in the Holmes County settlement maintain some wild plant species, such as boneset, through careful harvesting and occasional weeding around the desired plants.

Naming customs among the Amish in Holmes County have gotten complex due to the limited number of surnames and the need for distinguishing one person from another. First names are often traditional names that have been used for the past two hundred years in North America rather than fad names that have become popular only recently. Biblical names are common such as Benjamin, Levi, Jacob, Mose, Ada, Esther and Sarah. It is also not unusual to have two middle names or initials. An Amish farmer in Flat Ridge church district, Mose A.N. Yoder, explained that the mailman was often confused about which Mose A. Yoder on his rural delivery route was the correct party, so Mose added an extra initial to his name.

The Amish use more contemporary American first names and nicknames, however, to name their horses and cows. Lester Hershberger named his Belgian Draft horses as follows: Bob, Fred, Bill, Doc, Missy and Bell, the latter two being the mares. Lester’s cows take on somewhat more endearing and humorous titles akin to a carnival: Jenny, Polly, Sue, Sadie, Tulip and Toots. Lester said that the heifers are not named until they are freshened—since some heifers are sold and others kept for milk cows; thus, it follows that the act of naming occurs with an animal that is maintained in a long-term husbandry.

Pronunciation of place names by the Amish is also indicative of a distinct dialect. In Pennsylvania Dutch and the English translation, Amish pronounce the Holmes County
town of Berlin as rhyming with *Merlin* (as in magician), quite different than the German city that most Americans pronounce.

What was known in early America as trade signs, nearly every Amish home with a business has a simple wooden sign, carved or painted to indicate the location of the shop. Adam Hershberger has a small sign at the nearest intersection and a second at the entrance to the family driveway. A neighbor has a red and white sign by the roadway telling passersby about the tractor repair business, yet the 40- to 50-year-old freshly painted tractors parked next to the road are a much stronger form of advertising.

A visit to a non-tourist Amish store in the Doughty Creek region depicts a society with few material wants and needs, housing in two aisles only the most spartan of goods that an Amish family could use. There are kerosene lanterns and coffee mugs, hand tools and framed pictures of rural scenes, in addition to a small selection of inexpensive toys and candy. On the exterior of the store a small sign, hand-painted in blue and white, calls itself the Curiosity Shop, showing the hours of operation on the entry door, and a black and white sandwich board announcing the price of disposable diapers. It is a throwback to the once commonplace rural community store of which there are skeletal remains scattered here and there along county roads from Alabama to Maine to the far West.

### 7.4 Participant observation: Silo filling

It was early September, not yet 8 a.m. and already four wagonloads of corn silage were in the silo as Myron Raber helped throw bundles of damp, cut cornstalks onto the conveyor of the “silo-filler” machine. There the harvested corn is mechanically chopped and blown to the top of Myron’s silo, all in a matter of seconds. One farmer moves an
empty flatbed wagon ahead while a second farmer drives another full wagonload of bundled cornstalks up near the silo (see Figure 7.2). Three more drivers and their teams with full wagons wait in line. Altogether, six farmers and Myron’s brother Joseph were hauling in the corn silage harvest on the Raber farm, each supplying a wagon and a team of two draft horses.

Figure 7.2: Towering above the barn, an Amish silo is used for storing and providing corn silage through the winter, which supplies important nutritional supplements for a dairy herd in addition to stored hay. (Photo by Scot Long)
Ben Raber purchased the silo-filler machine in the 1960s for $50 and it continues to operate effectively. A 1972 David Brown tractor powers the silo filler from a power-take-off wheel and a belt stretching 25 feet in a manner similar to a belt attached to a steam engine of many decades ago. If cornstalks are loaded on the conveyor too quickly the silo filler tends to jam, which requires the contraption to be turned off and unclogged; yet there is no real sense of urgency, given that each farmer has allotted the entire morning to participate in the labor-sharing ring.

Using a team of two horses pulling a corn binder, Myron and his brother cut silage the day before the silo-filling ring is scheduled to come to his farm. He gauges the amount of corn he needs to cut for silage based on knowledge handed down from his grandfather Ben and his father Aden—when the corn binder uses up two and one-half balls of twine there should be more than enough cornstalks. Myron also knows from past experience that it usually takes 26 or 27 wagonloads to fill his silo, which measures nine feet in diameter by 40 feet in height. The greener and wetter the cornstalks, the tighter it will pack in the silo after shredding.

Myron’s corn got a little browner than he would prefer, in part because a wedding was scheduled on Thursday and Friday of the previous week and silo filling on his farm was postponed for four or five more days. There was also a mild drought during the middle weeks of August. For this reason, Myron’s silo was filling faster than it should and probably would not hold as much. Any extra cut cornstalks are usually shocked in the field, although this year Myron has enough straw put up for bedding, so he will just harvest the ears by hand from the remaining corn in the field.
Scheduling each farm for silo filling is determined by an agreement from the previous season of what order to visit each farm, which may be altered based on the ripeness of the corn for silage. In Myron’s ring some of the farmers planted corn later in order to pasture the same land later in the spring. The last silo filling among members of the ring was finished by mid-September.

The same summer, Myron joined an established silo-filling ring organized with six other farmers including Mose Hershberger, Melvin Miller, Junior Troyer, Jonas Troyer and Menno Yoder. A few years before, Myron belonged to a silo-filling ring with 12 farmers. Myron says that the smaller ring is better because he can finish silo filling in a week or so versus two or three weeks and get to other late summer chores such as husking and shocking corn.

Silo filling with seven farmers is organized so that each farmer loads and unloads his own wagon. At the silo someone usually helps the driver unload the approximately two tons of bundled cornstalks per wagon. With dust and flies in the air, Myron climbs into the silo after a few loads to even out the distribution of the silage. Each farmer hauls three or four loads until the silo is full or the farmers have worked a half-day unless there is some sort of mechanical problem, such as the blower pipe being plugged. Stopping work before noon helps to even out the labor that is exchanged; however, Myron says that in his wife’s community near Sugar Creek, each silo is filled no matter how large.

Silo filling done with the larger number of members in the ring is the more traditional way of organizing the silage harvest. With this method there are two crews of three loaders in the field stacking four or five wagons. Drivers help unload at the silo,
but otherwise keep the wagons moving. This type of labor exchange evens out because those living closest to each farm bring the wagons.

Given the greater amount of labor available in the traditional ring, the silo would fill up in about one hour and 45 minutes with the same machine Myron still uses. The obvious disadvantage is the commitment of a half-day at each of 12 farms versus six or seven half-days with the smaller ring (B. Raber 1998). Yet, there is a greater opportunity for socialization among more farmers using the traditional way. Perhaps the additional demands of dairy intensification along with maintaining other sources of income are pushing farmers to increasingly economize their time.

It is not unusual for Amish farmers who belong to a labor-sharing ring to send someone in their place. The arrangement is made through reciprocal or other type of agreement with a neighbor or relative. During the silo-filling event at the Raber farm, three replacement workers participated including Mose Hershberger’s son; Mose Yoder as a direct trade of silo-filling labor with Myron; and Joseph as a “replacement” for Myron’s usual spot in the ring. On a less frequent basis, a cash payment is involved if someone cannot swap labor. One of the workers sent as a replacement belongs to a ring that fills silos with 12 members, where drivers do not load their own wagons. Myron and his father observed that the wagon that the substitute member left behind after lunch was poorly loaded (and more difficult to unload), because he was not accustomed to loading his own wagon. It was an obvious comment on the substitute’s realm of experience rather than a criticism of his work ethic.

The view is expansive from Myron’s back forty, a rolling semi-sloped arrangement of long, narrow fields contoured to the shape of the hillside with corn at the higher
elevation, then a strip of alfalfa, followed again by corn. Flatbed wagons and steadfast teams of draft horses dotted the lower field of corn, where cornstalks lay horizontal to the earth and diagonal to the length of the field after being cut and bundled for collection.

As the morning dew disappeared in the cornfield, all was peaceful except for Junior Troyer’s team. He yelled at his Percherons to hold steady, yet they kept creeping down the hill causing him to work faster tossing the bundles in order to stay caught up with the wagon. So that each farmer may successfully load his own wagon, a team of horses experienced enough to follow voice commands is necessary. Junior says that his horses could hold the load if they wanted, but they were a little uncooperative at the time.

Although Junior is a bachelor, since becoming a member of the Amish church the elders asked him to grow a beard, which is characteristic of married Amish men. Myron says that he keeps the beard short as sort of an “in-between status” of being a bachelor and also a church member. Most Amish farmers are married and tend to have larger families than their landless Amish counterparts (Ohio Amish Directory 1997). Early and permanent marriages are commonplace in all of Amish society.

Further up the hill Joseph is stacking a wagon for the third time. He does not own a farm and does not expect to be able to purchase one in the near future; so for the present Joseph is content to help his brother Myron on the farm and work with his father in the trenching business. Eventually Joseph will likely buy or build a house on a small piece of land and marry. If he wants to farm full-time, he may succeed in finding an Amish farm in the area that is not operating full-time or move to a different Amish settlement where land is less expensive. In Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts, four
farms or 16 percent operate on a part-time basis with much of the land rented to other farmers (n=25).

The plastic bag that each farmer had tied to his wagon contains a clean shirt that would be used for the noon meal. After changing into a clean shirt, the farmers washed at an outdoor table with large containers of water and towels. Myron’s wife Cindy announced that the food was ready, “Kommen ja!” and the elders entered first followed by the remainder of workers in descending age order.

On the long table the food was laid out in a splendor of color and simplicity of decor with mixed fruit serving as dual centerpieces in clear glass bowls. Two containers of every item of the cuisine were at either end of the table within reach of everyone, including fried chicken, mashed potatoes, lightly creamed sweet corn, egg noodles with mushrooms, and a heavy white bread. Also on the table there was water for drinking, grape jam and butter for the bread, and broccoli with dip, but no salt or pepper.

Nearly all of the serving plates were passed around, always in a counterclockwise direction. Then Myron led a silent prayer that lasted about one minute. Myron’s wife Cindy and her sister did the cooking and remained nearby to be of service during the meal. After some of the men finished second helpings, the women brought out fruit gelatin, tapioca pudding and chocolate cake for dessert with a small pitcher of cream to pour on top. There was a limited amount of quiet conversation during the meal, usually among people sitting near one another, talking about the cooperative weather and the next farm in line for silo filling. Most ate quickly and each had cleaned his plate by scraping it several times and then thanked the cooks in their Pennsylvania Dutch dialect. When it was apparent that everyone had finished eating, Myron again bowed his head for a
closing silent prayer. Even though Myron is among the youngest members of the ring in a gerontocratic society, he takes the lead in prayer as host of the meal.

After the meal many of the farmers left a full wagon behind and walked home with their team of Belgians because the silo was settling slowly. Those farmers would be coming back later in the evening or early the next morning to retrieve the wagon, that would be needed for the next silo-filling job. Meanwhile Myron was in the silo again, evening out the load and punching the silage with his pitchfork to help it settle. As he crawled out of the small opening at the top with debris from the silo adorning his head and clothing, he was asked if jumping up and down helped pack down the silage. Myron replied with a smile, “My 150 pounds wouldn’t make a difference on top of 50 tons of silage.”
CHAPTER 8

AMISH LABOR EXCHANGE AND SUSTAINABILITY

By viewing the Amish in the context of the larger group of Plain people to which they belong, certain underlying cultural elements emerge that help explain the Luddite tendencies of the group, in particular the values placed on cooperation and the religious tenet of yieldedness or *Gelassenheit*. Stinner and Stinner (1992:12-13) suggest that the Amish demonstrate a worldview that is more associated with cooperation than competition. Cronk (1981:7) describes yieldedness as a sacrifice of self-will and self-centered desire as well as a yielding to others in order to build a loving brotherhood among community members.

The ideology of cooperation also implies a sharing of resources, especially human capital. Given that an important goal of the Amish as Christians is submission to God and to others, it follows that resource sharing and material restraint define the overall spirit of the Amish as an ethnic group. The majority of Amish and a few ultra-conservative Mennonite groups practice asceticism that centers on spiritual and symbolic separation from the world. Thus, the materially conservative cultural and agricultural practices of the Amish persist according to their belief system based on yieldedness, cooperation, and separation. Further, these practices are concomitant to a purposeful restraint on income and consumption, which has a direct bearing on the sustainability of Amish farming practices.
The rural landscape in the vicinity of Holmes County has taken its form over a period of about 175 years, although most population growth has been during the last 50 years. Land tenure among the Amish in most cases can be traced from two generations to as many as seven generations in the settlement area. Greider and Garkovich (1994:4) believe the concepts of space and land utilization are socially constructed through the use of symbols. These symbols on Amish farms include fences around fields for dual usage of grazing and cropping, the aesthetic placement of oat shocks in the field, and the neatly kept yard and garden often found around the Amish farmhouse (see Figure 8.1).

Figure 8.1: New Order Amish garden shows the care taken to work with nature to produce a healthful table from canned vegetables from the garden. (Photo by Scot Long)
The “hills and valleys” landscape in north-central Ohio that Amish farmers shape has changed slowly in terms of agricultural usage: from straw stacks and loose hay to horse-drawn balers, from a straight four-crop rotation to planting two or three years of continuous corn on bottomland, from hand picking of corn to mechanical corn pickers, and from 10 cows to a few dozen cows with the adoption of automatic milking machines and bulk tanks. Further, visitors might witness fewer corn shocks standing in the field during late autumn and fewer milk cans by the roadside compared to a decade ago.

At the same time the Amish household has remained dynamic in terms of human activity around the farmsteads and rural homes where many Amish cottage industries are being maintained or newly built. Edgar Anderson (1976:83) contends that man is woven into nature instead of being circumspect with regard to the natural world as unspoiled. The rural landscape within the Holmes County settlement is teeming with humans who are intentionally interacting with nature along with their domesticated animals that directly interact with nature.

Land tenure in the two church districts from a watershed perspective in the study reveals that Amish consider the long-term viability of an agricultural operation. Close inspection of topographical details on plat maps reveals the strategy used in Amish succession practices to divide land so that more farmers equitably share water resources. For example, upon the transfer of property to a son-in-law about 30 years ago, Ben Raber’s property lines were redrawn to allocate surface water so that the two adjacent farms could share a portion of Mill Creek as a nearby and convenient water source for livestock.
Allowing cattle to roam into creek beds has been a practice among Amish and other livestock producers that recently has been discouraged as a source of water pollution. Therefore, effective management of water resources in the study region has become a vital concern. A recent U.S. Environmental Protection Agency report entitled “Sugar Creek Watershed TMDL” (2002:62) examined water resources and sustainability by measuring nutrient loading and sediment deposition in the subwatershed of South Fork. Pollutants in surface water tributaries of Sugar Creek were found to exceed the recommended total maximum daily load (TMDL). Part of the pollution is the result of Amish and other farmers allowing livestock to graze near and wade into the creek beds. Run-off of soils from area farms is also cited in the report as a contributing factor to the pollution problem with sediment loads measured at 8,707 metric tons per year, well above the EPA’s recommended total maximum daily load of 6,095 metric tons per year along with excessive amounts of dissolved nitrogen and phosphorus (Sugar Creek Watershed TMDL 2002:63).

Moses Mast, an Amish farmer who operates a dairy farm along the South Fork, remembers the creek was only a few feet deep when he was a youth and more recently he has observed creek regularly flowing at a height above his head (Moore 2002). Increased run-off into South Fork is likely due to Amish farmers planting more hay and corn and rotating fewer acres of pasture as a response to an increase in dairy herd size during the past 10 years (M. Raber 2000).

While the Amish practice lower-input of commercial fertilizers compared to mainstream agriculture, most Amish farmers use considerably more natural fertilizer or manure as a part of the overall soil management plan. Through a participatory approach
of Amish farmers working together with the watershed management team at Ohio Agricultural Research and Development Center in Wooster, best management practices can be evaluated and implemented. The Sugar Creek Watershed TMDL report suggests best management practices include increasing conservation tillage, establishing riparian buffers, and fencing livestock in order to achieve the proposed 30 percent reduction of TMDLs (2002:61-69).

8.1 Specialization within a diversified operation

Amish agriculture has also tended toward an increased specialization of a single income-producing commodity such as milk or beef. At the same time, Amish farmers in the study have also retained horses for draft power and buggy transportation, chickens for family consumption of meat and eggs, and often a fourth species of livestock animal on the farm.

The Amish farmer also practices a form of crop rotation that often utilizes feed crops of alfalfa (and sometimes clover and timothy) for hay, along with corn and oats, spelt and barley. Thus, Amish agriculture has become more specialized and more intensified, without losing the diversity of three or four animal species and four or five crop species grown in rotation. With the recent intensification of dairy production, there is a greater need for high-calorie food crops and fiber; consequently, many Amish farmers are planting a second or third year of continuous corn on productive bottomland only, working more hay into the rotation, and practicing intensive grazing (M. Beachy 1998, M. Raber 1999).
Sustainability in agriculture herein refers to the use of land and its natural resources for food and fiber production in such a manner that may be continued without significant depletion of those resources. In particular, sustainability among Amish farmers may be viewed from an historical perspective in which Holt (1992:193) observes similarities between Amish and other rural Americans in terms of labor and economics during the 19th century. Although not readily apparent, the Amish style of farming has changed a great deal during the past 100 years and continues to demonstrate adaptation in the sense of Rappaport’s concept of self-regulation (1979:147). The most static element of Old Order Amish agriculture is the requirement for horse-drawn farming practices that in effect limits the size of the farm and thus continues to serve a scale of agriculture similar to 100 years ago. Otherwise, the corrective responses of Amish self-regulation are evident in the rather dynamic process of selective adoption of technology, especially farm implements, albeit usually 20 to 50 years later than mainstream farmers.

In the survey for this study, Amish farmers in Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts were asked about how spirituality is related to the soil. A large majority or 82 percent associated being a caretaker of the soil with their religious beliefs (n=22). Typical responses of farmers included the following: “God made the earth and plants and wants us to work the land,” or “Working with the soil is a way of honoring God.” A few farmers related the idea of sustainability in other terminology: “I try to be a steward of the soil that God made (for us) to take care of, not spoil.” A more progressive farmer in the group said there was some spiritual connection, but he “also demonstrates faith in science and self-reliance.”
Thus, the Amish operate a sustainable farming ecosystem that is ritually regulated and less vulnerable to environmental problems given their flexible responses to weather and economic pressures. As noted above, TMDLs in area surface water are higher than EPA guidelines and Amish farmers will again have to adapt new strategies—this time for improving controls of run-off, especially near riparian zones.

Another focus of this research has been the task of locating possible “indicators of sustainable agriculture” that are often embodied in the work done on the farm that purposely benefits the soil and water. In his hayfields, one Amish farmer seeds red clover, timothy and alfalfa to provide a natural setting for prairie birds, which he does not disturb with a first cutting until about mid-July (some six weeks later than most farmers). Consequently, bobolinks, meadowlarks, red-winged blackbirds and grasshopper sparrows show up in large numbers, able to nest and raise a brood of young before he does the first cutting of hay during midsummer. The bobolink and grasshopper sparrow are indicator species that demonstrate a greater biological diversity, which is generally considered to be an element of sustainability (Herkert 1994:462).

How labor is managed is another important aspect of agricultural sustainability for Amish farmers. With several crops grown in rotation on Amish farms, time allocation for each crop becomes critical in balancing other chores, especially milking (see Table 8.1). Moreover, time allocation must be monitored so that the labor for each farmer and others who help on the farm is more evenly spread out over an entire year. Labor sharing on an Amish farm also becomes more manageable with an amount of flexibility built into the production system, which allows for scheduling options in attending to any of several
Table 8.1: Annual time allocated for each of three major crops grown on Old Order Amish farms in Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts.

crops or livestock needs. At the same time, a flexible production schedule also provides an opportunity for Amish farmers to assist in other group-labor efforts including fundraising.

While cooperation is associated with sharing, flexibility, trust, and a generalized reciprocity over time, competition implies material wealth and a balanced reciprocity, the latter usually requiring a method of accounting (Polanyi 1944:48). One method of data
collection known as cultural inventory can be used for an in-depth study of material goods in the home and surrounding environment (Collier & Collier 1986).

### 8.2 Heirloom seed improves feedstock, enhances sustainability

Demas and his father both grew red ears of open-pollinated corn that could be pulled out and saved and replanted the following season. When his two sons helped with a good portion of the farming 10 or 15 years ago, they were not as enthusiastic about the labor involved with pulling out the red ears and the seed stock was lost. Demas noticed the livestock seemed to do better with the more natural corn variety. “There’s something about the natural seed that the animals like better,” he explains. Eight years ago or so, he sent away to an heirloom seed company in Idaho (Blum) for an open-pollinated seed stock. He ordered the seed known as “bloody butcher” that has a deep red color mixed with the usual yellow tint of the kernel. Since then he has planted 40 to 50 percent of his corn crop with the red seed and pulls out seed corn each year. He averages greater than 100 bushels-per-acre corn yields and does not observe a significant yield drop from planting all hybrid seed corn. The savings he manages from saving the seed probably offsets any yield differential.

Since 1962, Demas has used the same spelt seed and gets 65 to 70 bushels-per-acre. He has not purchased certified oat seed since 1965 with a yield of 60 to 65 bushels-per-acre. Demas uses a red clover-alfalfa mix for his hay crop, but does not get any reseeding from the hay.
There is more to reusing seed than just pulling out the red ears. Prior to hybrid technology in the 1920s all corn was self-pollinating and able to reproduce its own seed. The hybrid corn plant, as with many species, cannot regenerate and is known as a sterile variety. When Demas prepares his corn for the planter, he uses a hand-held shaker box that sorts the medium size seeds that he uses for planting from the kernels that are too small and too large. This sorting practice and the practice of selecting the best red ears from the better corn plants has altered the seed from its parent of eight years ago to an offspring more specifically adapted to the growing conditions of north-central Ohio. The term “open-pollinated” (meaning pollinated by nature) was not invented until sterile hybrids were developed, since all seed crops were naturally pollinated and reproduced before then.

On the surface it would appear that the labor involved in working with open-pollinated corn seed is more demanding than growing all hybrid seed. Demas learned that he needed to purchase, haul, and mix fewer feed supplements with the bloody butcher corn as a feed base. He also found that with the open-pollinated corn blended in the planter, the entire field was more robust in growth and less susceptible to disease.

Contrary to Hostetler’s (1968) claim that Old Order Amish have readily adopted the hybrid corn seed while eschewing the more visible strip and contour cropping, fieldwork for this research project found just the opposite. Demas and several other farmers have held onto open-pollinated seed of not only corn, but also spelt and other crops. Not only does replanting a crop’s seed save on input costs, it also produces a reliable crop adapted for the local region after years of success. Demas selects the best seeds and actually improves his stock of seeds year after year.
Strip and contour cropping are practiced among Amish as a way of observing the laws of the land—as of the 1985 U.S. Farm Bill all highly erodible land must either meet conservation measures or be taken out of production. Once the Amish began adopting the practice of strip and contour cropping, it is likely the aesthetic value of the farming method helped gain acceptance among other Amish farmers.

Social interaction is also important to sustainability in Amish farm communities. In addition the various successful labor-sharing opportunities that reinforce social bonds such as labor-exchange rings, frolics and gatherings, Amish also attend large family reunions sometimes involving 300 people from both sides of the family hosting the reunion.

Other social opportunities include farmer auctions, held weekly in Kidron, Mt. Hope and Farmerstown, where farmers go to look more than buy and always find time to talk about the latest news in the community. Estate sales auction household goods and farm equipment prior to a family moving or transferring property, which also serves as a social gathering among Amish participants (see Figure 8.2).

A visit by the veterinarian can be social too, but it usually means aid for an ailing animal or technical assistance with AI. One veterinarian visiting the Hershberger farm provides medical treatment for Patty, a yearling filly that had fallen two days prior and had apparently injured a vertebra in her neck. Lester comforts the Belgian draft as she stands trembling slightly while the doc administers antibiotics from an IV tube and fluid, along with a shot for pain. She will be all right in a few days according to the vet, who thought she looked much better than the day that the accident happened.
Figure 8.2: Amish sale or estate auction held at a farm that is being sold in Holmes County. The farm family living there is moving to Wisconsin where the Amish community is less crowded and land is less expensive. (Photo by Scot Long)
Before leaving the veterinarian fills a syringe of antibiotic medicine and gives it to Lester along with verbal instructions of when to dose the filly, explaining that he will return in three days. Lester carefully places the syringe at eye level in the barn’s storage cabinet and closes the wooden door.

On the same farm, construction work on a greenhouse for tomato hydroponics is nearly finished. What has come together is an amalgamation of energy sources that should enable the Hershbergers to grow tomatoes for most of the calendar year (see Table 8.2). The main power source will be a diesel engine similar to the one now providing power for Adam Hershberger’s furniture shop. The diesel will power an air compressor for filling five cylindrical tanks, each about three feet in diameter and 10 feet in length. The compressed air from the tanks will power the three large fans (one for circulation and two for exhaust) in the greenhouse via pneumatics.

A boiler using natural gas will heat water for circulation through pipes running under the floor in order to warm the building; the same pipes may also carry nutrients and water to hydroponic tomato plants. Three rather antique residential radiators will also be hooked into the boiler for additional air warmth, because ultimately it is the 80-plus degree heat that ripens tomatoes (Hershberger 1998). Passive solar energy should provide most of the heat in the greenhouse when there is sunlight, provided the outside temperature is not too cold. An automotive battery powers a small fan designed to maintain airspace between the two layers of the plastic shell. Finally, a stove will burn coal as an auxiliary heat source.

Early in the afternoon, a truck arrives pulling a flatbed with a load of peat moss stacked on pallets. Adam helps two men unload the plastic bags of peat, while Lester
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FUEL TYPE</th>
<th>CONVERSION</th>
<th>FUNCTION</th>
<th>EXTERNALITIES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Human labor</td>
<td>Mechanical energy</td>
<td>Planting, transplanting and harvesting crop</td>
<td>None</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gravity</td>
<td>Mechanical energy</td>
<td>Return used water back for recycling</td>
<td>Plastic tubing to be replaced every 20 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Geothermal</td>
<td>Removal of heat</td>
<td>Cold storage of ripened tomatoes until sold</td>
<td>Diesel fuel to run equipment during construction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(underground store)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solar</td>
<td>Heat energy</td>
<td>Warming of inside air</td>
<td>Plastic shell to be replaced every 3-5 yrs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(passive)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battery</td>
<td>Mechanical energy</td>
<td>Forces air between layers of plastic shell</td>
<td>Discard of used battery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(stored electricity)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Natural Gas</td>
<td>Heat energy</td>
<td>(1) Boils water to provide warmth for plants</td>
<td>Carbon monoxide (CO)--boiler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(2) Carry nutrients and water to production plants</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerosene</td>
<td>Mechanical energy</td>
<td>Drives fans for air circulation</td>
<td>CO, particulates, oxygen--diesel engine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(pneumatic pressure)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coal</td>
<td>Heat energy</td>
<td>Auxiliary heat on cold, overcast days</td>
<td>CO, particulates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(stove)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: It is not known how the water will circulate, although it is probably from the pressure of the boiler and will use gravity feed back for recycling (or may employ the use of solar panels). Also, this continuum does not consider the inputs of each form of energy, since the externalities are generally reflective of a similar environmental cost of getting the energy to the consumer.

Table 8.2: Energy usage for construction, maintenance and operation of Amish tomato greenhouse in southeastern Holmes County, Ohio.
remains with the ailing filly and the veterinarian. The peat moss will be used to grow starter tomato plants, but not until the contractor finishes the last details in the structural assembly. The Hershbergers are also awaiting results from a water test that Ohio State University is conducting. Adam says that the greenhouse is his daughter Martha’s project, but thus far it has pretty much been a family endeavor in order to get production started. Table 8.2 (above) shows the continuum of energy use within the greenhouse from the least amount of externalities (cost to the environment) to the greatest amount of externalities.

When the water test from OSU is complete, Adam would like to have the results faxed to Martha’s work place, Berlin Pad Company. Many of the innovations found in the greenhouse are technologically advanced, as are many of the forms of communication Adam conveniently uses. More importantly, the Hershbergers have chosen highly efficient energy sources for the greenhouse, as well as a system that should be fairly benign to the environment. Yet, some of the environmentally friendly decision-making is clearly linked to the goal of avoiding the use of electricity, thus eliminating this low-efficiency energy source.
CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

The focus of this dissertation is both an examination of how Amish farm families share labor at the household level and an examination of how labor is shared among member households of the community, the latter of which helps maintain and promote strong community values. In addition, this project is an inquiry into commodification of labor and issues of farm intensification in general, and how each of the above issues is tied to religious beliefs and the Ordnung.

As noted in chapter 4, a synthesis of social structure and religious values in Amish communities generates solidarity and harmony in accomplishing group labor. The social structure is based on unilineal descent where members of an extended family are usually located on the same farm. Social distance among Old Order Amish living in the same neighborhood and belonging to different church districts compares favorably to the close-knit relationships of members within the same church district. At the foundation of Amish religion is Gelassenheit or yieldedness, embodied in everyday giving of one’s labor to family members and others in the community. Further, Amish farmers believe that being a good steward of the land is a way of honoring God (see chapter 8). Both Gelassenheit and land stewardship are symbolic of the manner in which the gregarious Amish treat one another in a communal atmosphere.
Along with an increased commodification of labor, greater assimilation with the larger culture has taken place so that the Amish must continually negotiate the challenges of progress (Kraybill 1994:47). Technological adoption in Amish agricultural production usually offers greater productive capacity and a reduced need for pooling of labor in the community. In spite of the potential ease of working independently, the vast majority of Amish farmers in the study have chosen to remain in cooperative labor arrangements. One example is the informal adoption of corn-picker mini-rings where two farmers work together to harvest the grain coming off a mechanical corn picker (see chapter 5).

Thus, while the main hypothesis of this research, that Amish farmers engage in labor exchange activity in order to pool human capital so that the combined work output is greater than the amount of labor that each farmer could accomplish individually, is supported in the findings; the corollary finding may have greater significance: that Amish participants in this study claim that the social significance of group labor is considered to be more important than its counterpart of labor accomplished. Reasons cited for this sentiment center on the symbolic value of community and the value of sharing knowledge about the business of agriculture.

As outlined in chapter 6, Old Order Amish households frequently engage in informal labor of milking, haying, shocking of small grains, and other tasks around the farm. Somewhat less often, Amish households invite members of other households to participate in frolics and gatherings, both of which are likely more socially based than centered on work. Mose Beachy (1999) describes the activity known as a gathering as “an excuse to get together with friends and family.” Such an alternative emphasis on labor among Old Order Amish points to the conclusion that while labor itself consumes a
major portion of the adult Amish person, the pace and tenor of the workload is far less than what may be described as drudgery. Stinner et al. (1989:86) found that Amish farmers may actually work fewer hours of labor compared to mainstream farmers, a summary statement in which the data of this research project concurs, especially given the multiple work arrangements that also become opportunities for social interaction among Amish farmers and households.

Social capital as defined by Bourdieu (1985:248) relates to the manner in which individuals benefit from constructed social networks that also reinforce solidarity of the community involved. Having access to resources in the community through the use of social capital is central to Amish society, although such a theoretical construction can become a tautological statement. Rather, it is the complex relationships involved with internalized norms associated with Gelassenheit and social reinforcement of giving to others selflessly, including labor, which are documented among the Amish in this study. Thus, the concept of social capital helps explain the strong community values that Old Order Amish maintain as well as the maintenance of an alternative economic behavior to market exchange and commodification. Although some increased involvement of Amish farm households in the larger economy has occurred in recent years, there remains a richly diverse economic tradition rooted in the various forms of reciprocity and labor sharing as illustrated in this project.

Olshan (1989:261) observes that technological resistance by the Amish as early as 1903 was resented by many mainstream rural Americans until the 1970s when goals in American society began to change and perhaps became overtly less materialistic. Values for some mainstream Americans became centered on quality-of-life issues and Amish
people began to be viewed as exemplary models of pastoral serenity instead of backward and archaic.

The Amish are often depicted in both academic literature and the popular press as living in a serene, idyllic or pastoral setting (see Figure 9.1). Words often used to describe the Amish add to the stereotype. The word *pastoral*, for example, portrays an idealized view of country life while also relating to the spiritual care of a congregation (Webster’s 1986). Such a common view of Amish settlements is over idealized, especially since many of the cultural and agricultural practices are not unique to the Amish as a group.

Figure 9.1: Pastoral and scenic, Amish farms are often portrayed as part of an idyllic setting, such as a Belgian draft horse amid contoured fields and autumn colors.
An Amish barn-raising is a good example of popular myth--some of the non-Amish rural communities participated in barn raising activity before 1920. Olshan (1994:188-89) rejects the notion that Amish represent a folk society; rather, he suggests that because members of the Amish faith make conscious choices regarding their use of technology while being aware of many of the likely consequences qualifies as a modern society.

The concept of utilitarianism is central to the formula that Amish are able and willing to limit uses of technology and with positive outcomes for the structure and solidarity of local community. Such a concept can be extended to other social groups in that as the offering of technological choices abounds, it does not follow that societal members are obligated to embrace each of these so-called marvels. The question becomes one of who benefits? John Stuart Mill’s (1859) idea of utilitarianism states that actors are brought together by individual interests held in common while encouraging behavior that benefits the most people. French sociologist Emile Durkheim’s (1961) concept of collective conscience in simple societies contributed in this area.

Durkheim (1961) broke with Mill in stating that social order is the outcome of cultural traditions and is not reducible to individual interests. Mauss (1967) agreed with Durkheim in emphasizing social cohesion over conflict, and was concerned for the collective rather than individual agency; thus, voluntary limits on consumption, wealth, growth, and reasonable use of technology are utilitarian in the Amish sense; moreover such limits promote social cohesion and collective interests as opposed to conflict and individual interests.

Thus, the Old Order Amish community is not an anachronism, but a highly complex society that values community over individual needs; yet, they are a people rich
in individualism as expressed through the personal style of how each farm is managed, as well as being innovative with hands-on farming practices. Similar to what Sahlins states in his Domestic Mode of Production (DMP) model, Amish agriculture is defined by cycles of exchange in an economy that is running below capacity (1972:41). Amish farmers in Farmerstown South and Flat Ridge church districts are clearly increasing production capacity; however, given the portion of intensification that in recent years has typically substituted dairy for other less profitable livestock production, some voluntary limits on production continue to be maintained. Underproduction among Amish farmers allows for more flexibility in helping the neighbor or experimenting with new techniques such as no-till planting of corn or intensive grazing.

Analysis of labor and time allocation for this study borrows the perspective of the farm family household or smallholders as outlined by Netting (1993:58). Both Netting and Sahlins focus on production for consumption at the subsistence level. Netting considers the household as the central social institution organized for production, maintenance of property rights, and highly adapted to intensive farming. Sahlins’ DMP describes limited economic goals and a domestic economy that serves the family organization by emphasizing quality of life rather than material gain (1972:86). Thus, Sahlins’ most important concept for understanding the Amish DMP is that needs are met through exchange and production that “are oriented to livelihood, not profits” (1972:83).

Perhaps Mose Yoder, a minister and farmer in the Flat Ridge church district, offers the simplest yet most profound statement summarizing much of what may be learned from this research project, “We are Amish first and farmers second. That’s why we help each other” (1999).
9.1 Visual neighborhood

Historically and by design of church elders, the limiting range of the buggy has kept the Amish community relatively small. Concepts of space naturally vary according to cultural norms. Edward T. Hall (1966) recognizes human use of space as an important element in providing insight about how things are organized in everyday life. A simple drive through rural Holmes County reveals that Amish people devote a great deal of attention to space. Typically an Amish yard features a grape arbor, a well-tended garden, a porch with chairs, a black buggy in a gravel driveway, a silo, and a windmill for pumping water.

Schafer (1989) contends that the area of audible sound defines acoustic space, and the centrality of the church bell in traditional European communities explains the circular shape of many villages. Lacking the church bell, acoustic space in Amish society consists of a Vorsinger (elder song leader) leading hymns for the Sunday congregation at a member's house, the sound of children playing, the sounds of horse hooves and buggy wheels, and the sounds of nature that often can be heard from inside the house (Kline 1990). The social environment that defines the local Amish neighborhood and larger community can be directly attributed to the way in which their church districts are organized, purposeful and supportive of each member, and also dedicated to interests of the group.

Kent and Neugebauer (1990:425) believe that social and economic behavior of rural groups can be better understood by identifying specific settlement regions. In particular, the authors cite geographic proximity of individuals within an ethnic group and access of members to one another as being important to the affirmation of ethnicity
and group values. Similarly, Robert Smith (1978:202) describes the hamlet in Japan before 1970 as having an available labor pool that could be utilized during part of the crop season when the workload increases. The Japanese household and neighborhood of that era were geographically linked according to distance of the household from the community center, which was near a small bridge connecting both sides of the river (Smith 1978:205-206).

Geographically, the farms of Flat Ridge church district are variously situated on several moderately sloped hillsides with half of the farms located along Charm-New Bedford Road. The majority of Amish farms in Farmerstown South church district traverse the width of a broad valley interconnected by farm roads, county roads, and footpaths.

Amish culture is shaped by the importance of community and religion. The family is considered a vital unit within the community, and both the family and community are more important than the individual. Community participation in collective action ranks high among the criteria for identification within a group and contributes to the value of social capital within the Amish farm community.

Park and Burgess (1921) emphasize the importance of communication as a means of participation in social activity, with the reservation that shared language has greater meaning where there is a shared culture. This common language and common culture enable a geographical collection of people to experience and participate in the whole community.
When a group of Amish folks were visiting his bookstore, Ben Raber (1999) observed from the different dialect of Pennsylvania Dutch that they were from another settlement, which was located in central Pennsylvania. Distinct differences in dialect from one Amish settlement to the next enhance the notion of a sense of community at the local level. The Amish can therefore be defined as belonging to unique linguistic groups in a semi-closed corporate community where vital social, communicative, and religious aspects flourish.

Distinctiveness of community identity along with the creation of social capital lead to the proposal that the impact of a visual neighborhood is significant in promoting quality-of-life factors, which in turn promotes greater solidarity in Amish communities. The term “visual neighborhood” (as noted in chapter 4) refers to a cluster of farms that is enhanced both by geography and through property boundaries so that neighbors may casually observe one another when they are out of doors. These lines of sight enable a farmer to see what his neighbor is working on, if he needs help, and leads to more interactions and exchanges of innovations among those neighbors. The greater stability of Farmerstown South is helped by the fact that the majority of farmers in the church district share a broad and expansive valley, where all but three farmers are in visual contact with one another. The other three have at least one “visual” neighbor. In terms of geographical layout, Farmerstown South resembles more of a square grid. Flat Ridge, on the other hand, is laid out in a zigzag pattern, with some farms completely isolated from others in the congregation, with the other farms usually only having one visual neighbor.

Physically close neighbors in mainstream American rural culture are virtually impossible since the average farm size increased from about 100 acres in 1940 to more
than 500 acres by 1990, which is one of the contributing factors to the loss of community in rural areas. The Amish remain aware that a similar outcome will likely occur with too much economic growth. Given the importance of group interaction for Amish people, they manage to maintain the minimum threshold of population density within a local proximity so that a religiously based, spatially oriented community may function. This objective was achieved when virtually all Amish men were farmers. In most Amish settlements, population density is now higher than in the recent past given the numerous nonfarm families living in rural areas.

Community theorists have been asking difficult questions about the nature of an ideal community such as Roland Warren’s (1970:17-18) probe into the degree of local commitment and desirable level of community participation. The Amish have responded to both questions with the answer of “whatever is needed” and often contribute to causes outside of their own community. Rurality is a condition of the Amish cultural existence and as such, permits their small-scale communities to flourish. Thus, where no town center exists, there is a distinct community in each Amish neighborhood with a center that is unique to each farmer.

Amish work and community life incorporate much sharing among neighbors and members of church. Ben believes that helping one another is important not only in the manner of the Golden Rule, but also as a way of showing Christian love. Ben says that his uncle and minister, Johnny Nisely, had a saying, “Gott ist Liebe, Liebe verlier ist Gott verlier dann Sie Gott losmache,” which means, “God is love, if the love is lost, then God is lost.”
9.2 Controlled intensification

As proposed in chapter 1, Amish agriculture has undergone limited intensification due to several factors including the pressures of population growth. The moderate increase in whole-farm intensification during the past 10 years is primarily a result of technological adoption in dairy production, which has allowed the farm sector in Amish society to keep pace somewhat with the higher standard of living occurring in the nonfarm sector of Amish society, although at a much slower rate than the larger American society.

The increase in dairy production is largely a response to loss of income from other livestock during the past 10 to 15 years, especially income from hogs and chickens (see Chapter 4). Thus, part of the decision to intensify dairy production is based on the economic need to substitute more income from milk production to compensate for a loss of farm income from multiple sources of livestock production, although Amish farms remain highly diversified compared to mainstream agriculture.

Such intensification does not appear to be less sustainable than the majority of agricultural practices the Amish conducted throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. For example, the practice of intensive grazing by some of the members of Flat Ridge Church District has added to the productive capacity of the milk cows, but shows no adverse conditions on the pastures, according to the Amish farmers who participate.

Some of the intensification practices were more or less forced upon the Amish because of state sanitary requirements of grade-A, fluid milk to be stored in bulk tanks instead of milk cans. The bulk tank allowed the herd size to increase by 20 percent or so,
because of less labor required in handling. The extra income helps to pay for the initial cost, fuel, and upkeep of the bulk tank. During the early 1990s Amish dairy farms in the study increased the herd size by a similar percentage as milking machines were adopted. Again, some of the additional income was offset by the cost, fuel, and upkeep of the milking machines; however, a portion of the additional income from both innovations resulted in increased commodification among the Amish. The trade-off consists of a loss of some of the labor exchange practices that previously provided both social interaction and a necessary production of a foodstuff, such as the apple schnitzing or applesauce-making event. On the other hand, increased commodification relieved Amish women of such tedious chores as churning butter.

Intensification is self-evident in that Amish farmers are able to render much more production per acre than most farm families in the larger society, even considering that the Amish must devote a portion of land for forage in order to feed work animals. Yet, Amish farmers continue to practice a controlled, self-limiting growth that perpetuates dual goals of ensuring the continuation of an agricultural economic base while maintaining a small-scale, rural community (Donnermeyer et al. 1999:75).

There is an assumption central to cultural ecology, especially Steward (1973), that states that diffusion of technologies does not necessarily follow the evolution of the new technology; and more importantly, while origin and diffusion serves to establish where technology came from and some patterns of usage, it is the ongoing adaptations to a new technology in addition to adoption as a response to economic needs that are critical to understanding the cultural and ecological functions.
9.3 Limitations of study

This study is limited to the ethnographic understanding of the Amish farming community in the Holmes County settlement area. While the findings and descriptions herein may provide new perspectives of Amish in general, there is limited application for generalizations of the entire ethnic group, given the broad cultural and religious differences found from one Amish settlement to the next as well as the great diversity within settlements.

Due to limitations in scope, this project does not include in-depth study of the interactions of farm households and non-farm households within an Amish community. Because non-farm households have become the majority in most Amish settlements, it is important to assess the labor contributions to church and community activity of non-farm households. Friends and relatives belonging to non-farm households often participate in frolics and gatherings as well as hold community positions (M. Yoder 1999). Also, given the greater number of Amish non-farm households, it may be valuable to inquire about the resulting increase in population density in Amish communities from a cultural ecology perspective.

Moreover, the current population growth and pressure on the land prices have not been adequately dealt with in this study; however, some conclusions can be drawn regarding how Amish in the Holmes County settlement are maintaining their current rural lifestyle. In particular, although the farms are accommodating larger clan size with more houses and families, there has been a logical limit on reducing the farm acreage so that farmers can still make a reasonable living. Intensification of dairy has helped
compensate for some of the land loss, but will not be the long-term solution, as greater numbers of milk cows ultimately need more grazing land and forage to produce.

9.4 Future research goals

Smith and Reeves (1989) found that humans develop suborganizations in adapting to temporal-spatial conditions of the environment. It would be useful to investigate how church districts have responded to the very real shortage of available land for farming. Some very useful research can be done by looking at longitudinal data of how social and ritual cycles interrelate with land use and food production cycles in the Amish community. For example, in a five-year crop rotation, how often do farmers deviate from the rotation schedule and for what reasons.

Some in-depth research in land use might achieve a better focus on long-term changes in land tenure among the Amish. One area this paper did not address is the possibility of using census data to analyze how family size relates to land use issues. Smith (1978:204) considers the decline in population of a rural farming community over a period of 25 years and how the hamlet responded in terms of limiting cooperative behavior. The Amish have the opposite problem in that expanding population must somehow be absorbed or radiated into nearby, regional or faraway rural communities; thus, a future study might consider ways in which Amish communities are creating additional rural occupations while also maintaining current land tenure practices, labor exchange practices, and other cooperative social behaviors.
Another focus area is the possibility of concentrating on specific uses of space within each farm and how this compares to non-Amish farms. How does the diversified farming that the Amish practice lend toward the overall biodiversity of a region? Also, with the use of aerial maps, a macro-perspective of how has land use has changed over time could be explained.

The concept of visual neighborhood seems to be a factor in the strength of other Amish communities within the settlement, such as Doughty Creek, and may warrant further study. Also, independent variables of farm size, family size and gender, percentage of farmers in the church district, main production type, and frequency of formal and informal labor exchange activities could be tested along with youth attrition rate in a regression analysis of visual neighborhood to generate a better understanding this geographical relationship.

It would also be useful to do an in-depth study of how church districts respond to divisions as a result of growth. For example, the Old Order Amish church district in the vicinity of Flat Ridge is now divided into 14 separate church districts. The most recent division was in 1986 when Flat Ridge North added Flat Ridge East and Flat Ridge South annexed Flat Ridge West. Previous to that, in 1968 Flat Ridge District divided into Flat Ridge North and Flat Ridge South. In each division, there are decisions about where to draw new lines. Possibly an expansion of the visual neighborhood concept would be useful in gaining a greater understanding of this process.
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Amish and language

In North America, the Amish are trilingual and use two dialects of German along with the English language. Their first language is Pennsylvania Dutch, which is actually an Anglicized version of German that was spoken in the Palatinate area of the Rhineland 300 years ago. The word Deucht, which means German, was Anglicized to become Dutch in the term Pennsylvania Dutch. During church service, the bible and sermon are written and spoken in High German. When Amish interact with people outside of their faith, English is used, which is also taught in Amish schools.

The following is a glossary Pennsylvania Dutch words and phrases commonly used by Amish farmers in the Holmes County settlement region:

(Note that all nouns and proper names in Pennsylvania Dutch are capitalized.)

_Acker_ – field, Amish employ rotation in each field with three or more crops
_Agrar genossenschaft_ – farmers cooperative, frequently a dairy co-op can be found in Amish communities, which is designed to improve marketing of milk
_Alters_ – elder, older citizen or person of seniority; usage helps define revered status of elders in Amish society
_Anfang_ – opening address at an Amish church service
_Armendiener_ – the church position of deacon, or servant of the poor
_Ausbund_ – title of a Swiss hymnal dating to 1564 sung in a slow chant

_Bann_ – ban, disciplinary action in which a member of the Amish church will not eat with nor transact business with the excommunicated member until reinstated
_Bauer_ – farmer or peasant

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bebauen – to farm or to cultivate
Blackboard Bulletin – a newsletter for Amish teachers
bletching – spanking as a form of discipline
Boschtel Ring – husker ring, a labor-sharing group of 4 to 8 farmers that work together to haul corn shocks to the barn area to be husked and shredded; developed by the Amish during the late 1940s
Brauhoch – Amish doctor or “healer with hands” that is similar to a chiropractor; also uses herbs in many cases.
Bren Assle – burning mule, medicinal plant of stinging nettle or catnip
Budget (The) – weekly Amish newspaper serving North America; published in Sugar Creek, Ohio

Confession of Faith – a ritual or expression of belief as a decision made by a responsible adult or older teenager to become a Christian; after which the rite of passage known as Baptism is conferred

Dawdy Haus – house where elder generation lives on an Amish farm; also called grossdaudy house or grandfather house
Demut – humility, a highly valued Amish trait
Dreshden – threshing floor of barn where summer church services are held
du – (versus Sie) informal tense of you denotes close relationship of speakers; common usage among Amish

Ecke – bridal corner of the Amish wedding table
Englisch or Englischer – dates back to Colonial era when people were identified by their linguistic community, first Amish were in America circa 1735; Amish refer to non-Amish with this term
Epiphany – Old Christmas on January 6th that Amish observe
Ernsthafte Christenpflicht – Devoted Christian’s Prayer Book widely used in Amish homes and during church service

Freundschaft – kinfolk or friendship, exceptionally large group with Amish extended family and church family as well as brotherhood of faith
Fröhlich – frolic, labor-sharing group of five to 50 people working together to accomplish a specific task such as building a shed for a fellow farmer; with no particular schedule, any farmer may host a frolic at any time

Garten – garden, primarily a woman’s task in an Amish household; working in the garden is among the family activities considered informal group labor-sharing
Gaul – horse, conservative Swartzentrubers prefer the all-purpose gaul, a cross between a standardbred and a Belgian

Gelassenheit – willingness to yield to a higher authority; members of an Amish community willingly sacrifice individual needs and wants for the good of the group

Gemei – Amish church community; root word of Gemeinschaft or folk society

Gemeinde – Amish church district or congregation usually defined as a geographic area of about 35 families; Old Order Amish in Holmes County settlement are less defined by geographic boundaries compared to Amish in many other regions

Gerste – barley, among the favored feed grains on an Amish farm

Getreidegarbe – corn shock; fewer corn shocks are being put up since the adoption of the mechanical corn picker

glauben – to believe, a strong belief system is characteristic of the average Amish person

Gmeesung – church Sunday, Amish hold church every other week according to schedule suggested by the Almanac; on opposite Sundays Amish may visit other church

Grossgemeie – communion service held twice a year in the Amish faith

Hafer – oats, along with barley is one of two main small-grains on many Amish farms

Haflinger – a lighter weight draft horse of an Austrian breed favored by some Amish

Heu or Haie – hay, usually alfalfa, clover and timothy mix;

Hexerei – witchcraft; contrary to popular belief, the Amish do not have hex signs on their barns to drive away evil; neither do Amish celebrate Halloween

Hochmut – pride, Amish do their best to avoid

Kammerli – consultation room for Amish ministers and applicants for the Baptism

Kapp – cap or head covering, black in color worn by Amish females, except for teenage girls who wear white; also known as a prayer veiling or prayer cap

Käse – cheese, among the value-added products the Amish make from their dairy production in a few small industries throughout the Holmes County settlement; as recently as the 1950s many more cheese manufacturers were in the area, earning the region the nickname “Little Switzerland”

Kinder – children; not members of the church until older teenagers, usually later for males to formally join church although all Amish youth attend church services

Kommen ja – come in (for dinner); used to call men into the house for the communal meal during threshing or silo-filling

Korn – corn, a crop grown in rotation with two to four other crops on an Amish farm

Kornkrippe – corncrib

Kuh – cow; Amish farmers generally use the Holstein, but interest in Jerseys is gaining

Kulva – ears of corn
langsam Weis – slow tune, how Amish church songs are sung
Lebendige Hoffnung – living hope of salvation by having harmony with the church
leiden – to suffer or endure, a concept central to the Amish belief system that believers are long suffering and must “bear the cross”
Liebesmahl – love meal held after church service; grouped according to gender and martial status
Leider Sammlungen – fast songs, small hymnal used for youth singings and weddings

Martyrs Mirror – book originally written in Dutch dating to 1660 that details the history of Anabaptist persecution and contains traditional Mennonite beliefs; did not sell well until the first engravings were published in the 1685 version; first German language edition was in 1780; found in nearly every Amish home
Maud – hired girl in an Amish home who commonly takes on a fictive kinship name such as sister, aunt or cousin
Meidung – the practice of shunning in the Amish community
Mennonite – similar Anabaptist faith as the Amish, although less conservative; broke away over issues of shunning
Milch – milk, low-input milk is produced on most Amish farms; recently there have been more Amish farmers going to organic milk production
Naave hocker – attendants for the bride and groom during an Amish wedding

Ordnung – order, refers to Amish church rules that are distinct for each church district
Overden – haymow

Plain and Fancy – Broadway musical written about the Amish circa 1954

rohne mach – making down, or pitching down silage from the silo to feed cows; chore for boys beginning at about age 7 or 8
roteh Kulva – red ears of corn; open pollinated corn variety grown by some Amish farmers that can be planted with hybrid seed corn and replanted
Rumspringa – running around, Amish teens are permitted to experience the world before committing to joining the church; also called sowing wild oats

Schnitzen – apple peeling and cutting party held by Amish women as a frolic
Schttall mache – doing the chores; a workday may be as lengthy as 16 hours during the busy harvest and planting seasons
Spelz – spelt, covered wheat that is higher in protein than other small grains; a popular alternative grain among Amish farmers
Stille – silence; an Amish virtue is to be soft-spoken and respectful of a time for silence such as a silent prayer
Swiss Brethren – some of the early Anabaptists called themselves Brethren

Täufer – Anabaptists; the larger religious group with which the Amish faith is associated
Top Buggy – a buggy with a covered top common to the Holmes County settlement

verboten – forbidden, a rule prohibiting something by the Amish church
Versprocha – promise, an Amish man’s word or oral agreement for a transaction considered as good as a written contract (from the teachings of Jacob Ammon)
Volliger Deiner – full servant, refers to the bishop in an Amish congregation
Vorsanger – song leader, during church the song leader sings the first word solo for each line of a song

Wechselwirtschaft – crop rotation, important to the fertility and sustainability of an Amish farm
Weltanschaung – Amish worldview of nonresistance
Weddings – traditionally held in late autumn; more recently becoming a year-round event

Zeugniss or Zeigness – witness or testimonial offered by ministers and lay speakers during church ceremonies
Zimmer – carpenter, occupational words may be used in front of a name as a fond nickname such as Zimmer Josie
APPENDIX A

Informal Survey of Amish Farm Practices
Informal Survey of Amish Farm Practices

Please Note: The information collected in this survey will be used in a school related project by Scot Eric Long, graduate research student at Ohio State University and in his affiliation with Ohio Agriculture Research and Development Center, Wooster. The objective of the project is to foster a better understanding among groups of people who practice different farming methods in North America.

1. On your farm, does anyone help with plowing or other fieldwork?
   Regular basis: YES  NO   Occasional basis: YES  NO
   If yes, please give details:
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   How old are boys when they begin helping with fieldwork? ______
   What skills does a boy typically learn first________________________
   Second? ____________________________
   Third? ____________________________

2. Is any of the plowing or planting equipment that you use on the farm owned by more than one person? YES  NO
   If yes, please describe type of ownership:____________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   Have you ever loaned another farmer plowing or planting equipment in exchange for labor or other trade? YES  NO
   Another farmer loaned equipment to you? YES  NO
   If yes, please describe:_______________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   When would you say planting and plowing equipment was more often shared among Amish farmers? RECENT 2 YEARS 5 YEARS AGO
   ALWAYS ABOUT THE SAME 10 YEARS AGO
   20 YEARS AGO

3. When hay is harvested on your farm, how many people help with haying?
   1 - 2   3 - 4   5 - 6   7 or more
   Describe relationship of those who help:__________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   ______________________________________________________
   Does anyone living on your farm help another farmer with haying?
   YES  NO
   If yes, who assists another farmer? SELF  SON  BROTHER
   FATHER  OTHER_____________________
   Is it a reciprocal agreement? YES  NO

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4. Who usually helps with milking chores?

- WIFE
- SON(S)
- DAUGHTER(S)
- FATHER
- BROTHER
- OTHER

How old are children when they begin helping with milking? _______

What milking chores do they learn first? _________________

Second? ___________________________

Third? ___________________________

Do you exchange milking chores with anyone other than people living on your farm (perhaps when you are away on vacation)? YES NO

If yes, please describe:_____________________________________________

Have you ever used hired help for milking on your farm? YES NO

If yes, please describe:_____________________________________________

What describes your dairy operation: HAND MILKING MILKING MACHINES ARTIFICIAL INSEMINATION MILK CANS BULK COOLER

5. How many people typically help you with oat, barley, wheat and/or spelt shocking?

- 1 - 2
- 3 - 4
- 5 - 6
- 7 or more

Who usually helps with shocking? WIFE SON(S) DAUGHTER(S)

- FATHER
- BROTHER
- SON-IN-LAW
- NEPHEW
- OTHER

Do you shock corn on your farm? YES NO

If yes, which family members help shock corn?_____________________________________________

When the corn shocks are brought into the barn, who helps do each task?_____________________________________________

Do you pick corn by hand? YES NO

How is corn husked on your farm? BY HAND HUSKING BEE OTHER

If you have a husking bee, who participates?_____________________________________________

Is there any reciprocal “husking” with neighbors or other families? YES NO

If yes, give details on arrangement:_____________________________________________

6. After a full season, if you have a surplus in small grains or hay, what is usually done with the excess commodity? SELL BARTER FOR GOODS BARTER FOR LABOR

Describe nature of exchange:_____________________________________________
(S.E. Long -- Survey -- p. 3)

7. Who helps with tending horses and other livestock on a daily basis?
   WIFE  SON(S)  DAUGHTER(S)  FATHER
   BROTHER  OTHER

   How old are children when they begin helping tend livestock? _____
   What tending chores do they learn first? ____________________________
   Second? ____________________________
   Third? ____________________________

   Do you exchange livestock tending chores with anyone other than people living on your farm (perhaps when you are away on vacation)?
   YES  NO
   If yes, please describe:_____________________________________________

8. Does your farm produce fruit for selling to the public?
   YES  NO
   If yes, what kind of fruit do you produce?____________________________
   Who helps harvest the fruit?  WIFE  SON(S)  DAUGHTER(S)
   FATHER  BROTHER  OTHER

   Does your farm produce truck crops for selling to the public?
   YES  NO
   If yes, what kind of vegetables do you produce?
   Who helps plant/harvest the vegetables?  WIFE  SON(S)
   DAUGHTER(S)  FATHER  BROTHER
   OTHER

   Does anyone receive payment (or something in trade) for these services?
   YES  NO
   If yes, please describe:_____________________________________________

9. Have you ever traded your labor for grazing time on someone else’s land?
   YES  NO
   If yes, please describe:_____________________________________________

   Have you ever traded grazing time on your land for someone else’s labor?
   YES  NO
   If yes, please describe:_____________________________________________

   When was this type of exchange more common?  5 YEARS AGO
   RECENT 2 YEARS  10 YEARS AGO
   ALWAYS ABOUT THE SAME  20 YEARS AGO
10. Are you currently a member of a threshing ring?  YES  NO
   If yes, who are the other members in your ring?_____________________________________

   Year ring formed _______  Years of participation _______
   If no, were you a member of a threshing ring in the past?  YES  NO
   If you were a former member, why did you drop out?__________________________________
   Years:______

Which crops do you harvest with the threshing ring?
   OATS      BARLEY      WHEAT      SPELT
Which crops are harvested independently?
   OATS      BARLEY      WHEAT      SPELT
Is the threshing machine that you use owned by a group or an individual?
   Please describe:_______________________________________________________

Do you believe that participation in a threshing ring saves you time in labor?
   YES  NO
   If yes, how many hours saved per year? ________
What other reasons do you belong to a threshing ring?_________________________
_____________________________________________________

Community participation in threshing rings more common: 5 YEARS AGO
   RECENT 2 YEARS 10 YEARS AGO
   ALWAYS ABOUT THE SAME 20 YEARS AGO

11. Are you currently a member of a silo-filling ring?  YES  NO
   If yes, who are the other members in your ring?_____________________________________

   Year ring formed _______  Years of participation _______
   If no, were you a member of a silo-filling ring in the past?  YES  NO
   If you were a former member, why did you drop out?________________________________
   Years:______

How is your silo-filling ring organized?
   EACH FARMER LOADS OWN WAGON
   CREWS IN FIELD LOAD WAGON  OTHER
Which type do you prefer? ______________ Please explain:___________________________

Do you believe that participation in a silo-filling ring saves you time in labor?
   YES  NO
   If yes, how many hours saved per year? ________
Community participation in silo-filling rings more common:

- 5 YEARS AGO
- RECENT 2 YEARS
- ALWAYS ABOUT THE SAME

How important is the social benefit versus labor saved of working with other farmers?

- MUCH MORE IMPORTANT
- MORE IMPORTANT
- LESS IMPORTANT
- EQUALLY IMPORTANT
- NOT IMPORTANT

How does participation in labor-sharing rings affect your own farm schedule?

12. Have you ever substituted someone in your place as a member of a threshing or silo-filling ring?  YES  NO
   If yes, how frequently (percentage of days)?
   - < 10%
   - 10% - 25%
   - 25% - 50%
   - > 50%
   What was exchanged with the person that replaced you?

   Was this a reciprocal agreement?  YES  NO

13. Other than threshing or silo-filling, did you ever barter something of value or trade your labor in exchange for someone else’s help on your farm?  YES  NO
   With whom did you trade labor?  BROTHER  BROTHER-IN-LAW
   - COUSIN
   - UNCLE
   - NEIGHBOR
   - OTHER
   What did you barter or exchange?

14. Do you have a son-in-law?  YES  NO
   If yes, how many are farmers?  0  1  2  3  4
   Has your son-in-law ever helped you on the farm?  YES  NO
   If yes, how many days of the year did you receive help?  ________
   What services were provided? ___________________________ for ______ years.
   Did you ever help with farm work on your son-in-law’s farm?  YES  NO
If yes, how many days of the year did you provide help? _________

What services were provided? ________________________________ for ________ years.

Did you in the past or do you now help work on your father-in-law’s farm?

YES  NO

If yes, how many days of the year did you provide help? _________

What services were provided? ________________________________ for ________ years.

How recently? CURRENT  5 YRS AGO

10 YRS AGO  20 YRS AGO

15. Has a nephew, niece or cousin ever worked on the farm for an extended visit?

YES  NO

If yes, for what period of time? ________________________________

Was there any other exchange involved (for example, your child stays on their farm for an extended visit)?  YES  NO

If yes, please describe: ____________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

16. Have you ever helped an ailing neighbor or another church member who is ailing
with planting or harvest?  YES  NO

If yes, was this person a neighbor?  YES  NO  Church member?  YES  NO

About how many people participated? _________ men  _________ women

Number of days? _________

How did it affect your own farm schedule? ___________________________

Describe what this type of mutual aid means to you:________________________

_________________________________________________________________

_________________________________________________________________

17. Has anyone in your family ever participated in a barn (or house) raising?  YES  NO

If yes, who participated? SELF  SON  BROTHER  FATHER

UNCLE  COUSIN  NEIGHBOR

About how many people participated? _________ men  _________ women

Number of days? _________

Why did the barn (or house) need rebuilding? ____________________________

How did it affect your own farm schedule? ____________________________

Describe what this type of mutual aid means to you:________________________

_________________________________________________________________
Would you say barn-raising activity occurred more in the past than now?

MORE IN PAST   ABOUT THE SAME   MORE NOW

18. Do members of your family attend a parochial or public school?

PAROCHIAL   PUBLIC

If parochial school, have members of your family participated in the annual school cleaning during late August or early September?  YES  NO

If yes, please describe how participation is organized:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

For those families that cannot participate in the annual school cleaning, what alternative contribution is typical, if any?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Have you ever participated in building a parochial school?  YES  NO

If yes, please describe how participation is organized:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

For those families that cannot participate in the building of a school, what alternative contribution is typical, if any?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

19. Have members of your family participated in fund raising activities for your local school?

Auction of goods?  YES  NO  Bake sale/lunch counter?  YES  NO

Other fund raising activity (specify): ________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

If yes, in what way did family members contribute?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

20. When church is held at your farm, is there another family that assists in preparation for the services?  YES  NO  Please provide details:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Does your family help another household get ready for church services?  YES  NO  Is it a reciprocal arrangement?  YES  NO

Do members of your church district ever get involved with distribution of surplus farm products?  YES  NO

If yes, how are the farm products distributed?
________________________________________________________________________

When was your church the most active in distributing surplus farm products?
LAST FEW YEARS  10 YEARS AGO  20 YEARS AGO

Does your church group participate in charitable causes?  YES  NO
Please describe event(s):

______________________________________________________________________

21. Have you ever-assisted in preparation for an Amish wedding? YES NO
   How many women typically help? _______ men _______

   Who helped prepare the house and meal for your wedding?
   GROOM’S MOTHER  GROOM’S FATHER  BRIDE’S MOTHER
   BRIDE’S FATHER  GROOM’S AUNT    GROOM’S SISTER
   BRIDE’S AUNT    BRIDE’S SISTER    Which two of the above were
   most helpful in this effort? __________
   Do women in your family ever exchange childcare responsibilities? YES NO
   If yes, give details: _____________________________________________

22. Do female members of your family participate in a quilting circle or group? YES NO
   If yes, how often? _______
   How are the quilters in the group related to the head of household?
   WIFE  MOTHER  SISTER  DAUGHTER
   GRANDMOTHER  NIECE  AUNT  COUSIN
   NEIGHBOR  OTHER ___________
   How many usually participate in the quilting group? ______
   Year group formed ____
   How old is a girl before she begins learning how to quilt? ______
   What quilting skills does she typically learn first? ______________
   Second? ____________________ Third? ______________________
   In your household are there any specific designs used in making quilts?___
   What is done with the quilts when completed?  AUCTION FOR CHARITY
   GIFT  FAMILY USE  OTHER ______________________
   Please give details: _____________________________________________
   If not participating in a quilting group, do any family members quilt? YES NO
   If yes, what is the purpose of the quilting?
   PIECES FOR INCOME  GIFT  FAMILY USE
   OTHER _______________

23. Do members of your family participate in traditional “apple peelings” (schnitzins) or applesauce making?
   If yes, which family members?  WIFE  MOTHER  SISTER
   DAUGHTER  GRANDMOTHER  NIECE  AUNT  COUSIN
   OTHER ___________________________
Are “apple peelings” held at your house? **YES**  **NO**  Another household? **YES**  **NO**

How does the “apple peeling” community activity compare to a making applesauce as a single household? **SAVES TIME**  **SAME**  **CREATES MORE WORK**

Describe what the “apple peeling” event means to your family:

| Which family members plant/harvest the kitchen garden? | WIFE  
| MOTHER  
| SISTER  
| DAUGHTER  
| SON  
| GRANDMOTHER  
| NIECE  
| AUNT  
| COUSIN  
| OTHER  |

Who does the tilling for the garden? **__________**

Do members of your family can fruit, and/or vegetables? **YES**  **NO**

If yes, are fruits and vegetables for canning grown on the farm or purchased? **FARM GROWN**  **PURCHASED**  **BOTH**

Have you ever canned with neighbors or members of your church? **YES**  **NO**

If yes, please give details:

Does anyone in your family gather wild plant products (such as berries, nuts, teas, roots, greens or mushrooms)? **YES**  **NO**

If yes, which family members gather these wild plant products? **WIFE**  **MOTHER**  **GRANDMOTHER**  **NIECE**  **SISTER**  **AUNT**  **SON**  **DAUGHTER**  **COUSIN**  **OTHER  **

Specifically, what is gathered? **__________________________**

For what purpose? **__________________________**

| FAMILY CONSUMPTION  
| SHARE WITH NEIGHBORS  
| SELL FROM FARM  
| SELL AT MARKET  |

At what age do girls begin participating in:

| APPLE PARINGS (*schnitzins*)  
| TENDING THE GARDEN  
| CANNING OF PRODUCE  
| GATHERING BERRIES  |

Is honey produced on your farm? **YES**  **NO**

If yes, do you produce enough to sell or share with others? **YES**  **NO**

Please give details:

When you have extra home-grown produce or canned goods, what is typically done with the surplus?

24. Does anyone in your family hunt turkey or deer? **YES**  **NO**

If yes, when a turkey or deer is brought home, who helps with the dressing of the meat? **BROTHER**  **FATHER**  **COUSIN**  **BROTHER-IN-LAW**  **SON**  **WIFE**  **MOTHER**  **OTHER  **
How is meat shared?______________________________________________
_____________________________________________________________________

When a relative or neighbor gets a turkey or deer, does anyone in your family help with the dressing of the meat? YES NO
If yes, please give details:
_____________________________________________________________________

What is done with the surplus game, if any?______________________________

25. Do you have an income earning activity on your farm other than farming?
   YES NO
   If yes, please describe:_______________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

Have you ever exchanged labor or services in connection with your “side business”? YES NO
   If yes, please give details:__________________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

In recent years, has the alternative income source become more necessary for your family farm? YES NO
   Approximately what percent of family income does farming provide?
   ______%
   How much of your family income is supplied by off-farm jobs?
   ______%
   If you have a side business, what percentage of family income does it provide?
   ______%
Excluding any side business, would you say that overall farm income has been better:
   LAST FEW YEARS       10 YEARS AGO       20 YEARS AGO
How did you acquire your farm?
PURCHASE FROM ENGLISH OWNER
PURCHASE FROM AMISH NON-RELATIVE
TRANSFER FROM FATHER . . . FATHER-IN-LAW
TRANSFER FROM OTHER FAMILY MEMBER ________________________
If the farm was transferred, which of the following arrangements was made?
FATHER AND MOTHER LIVE ON FARM
FATHER AND MOTHER WORK ON FARM
FARM TRANSFERRED AT MARKET PRICE
FARM TRANSFERRED AT SLIGHTLY UNDER MARKET PRICE
FARM TRANSFERRED AT GREATLY UNDER MARKET PRICE
RENTAL ON FARM EQUIPMENT
If the farm was owned by your father or father-in-law, how did he acquire the farm?

PURCHASE FROM ENGLISH OWNER
PURCHASE FROM AMISH NON-RELATIVE
TRANSFER FROM HIS FATHER . . . HIS FATHER-IN-LAW
TRANSFER FROM OTHER FAMILY MEMBER _________________
Farm in family since _____ (year)
What else describes the situation of your farm transfer?_______________

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

General Farm Information

A. Total acres ____    Owned ____    Rented ____
B. Acres tillable ____    Acres pasture ____    Acres woods ____
   Other ____
   Other ____
D. Rotation plan:   4-year: 5-year:________________________
   Alternative rotation: _____________________________
E. Dairy herd size: _____    Now milking _____    Holsteins ____    Jerseys ____
   Other ____
F. Number of Draft horses _____ Breed ________    Number of Standardbreds_____
   _____ Breed ________
   _____ Breed ________
G. Farm family:  wife ____    sons ____    daughters ____    grandchildren ____
   parents ____    grandparents ____    other ____
H. Member of ________________________ Church district for _____ years
   Previously member of ________________________ Church district for _____ years
I. Do you see a connection between working as a farmer and being an Amish Christian?
   YES  NO   If yes, give details:______________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________

J. Is there anything spiritual about being a steward or caretaker of the soil or land?
   YES  NO   If yes, give details:______________________________________
   ___________________________________________________________________