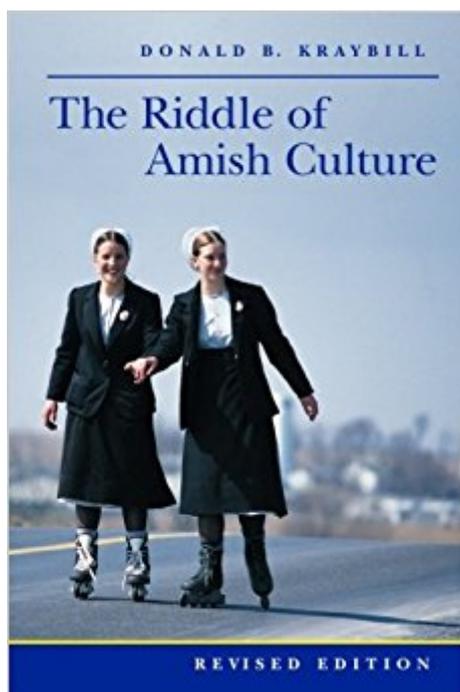


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# The Riddle Of Amish Culture (Center Books In Anabaptist Studies)



## Synopsis

Since its publication in 1989, *The Riddle of Amish Culture* has become recognized as a classic work on one of America's most distinctive religious communities. But many changes have occurred within Amish society over the past decade, from westward migrations and a greater familiarity with technology to the dramatic shift away from farming into small business which is transforming Amish culture. For this revised edition, Donald B. Kraybill has taken these recent changes into account, incorporating new demographic research and new interviews he has conducted among the Amish. In addition, he includes a new chapter describing Amish recreation and social gatherings, and he applies the concept of "social capital" to his sensitive and penetrating interpretation of how the Amish have preserved their social networks and the solidarity of their community.

## Book Information

Series: Center Books in Anabaptist Studies

Paperback: 424 pages

Publisher: Johns Hopkins University Press; Revised edition (September 27, 2001)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 080186772X

ISBN-13: 978-0801867729

Product Dimensions: 6 x 1 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.2 out of 5 stars 36 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #290,409 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #159 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Amish](#) #568 in [Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Social Sciences > Specific Demographics > Minority Studies](#) #1358 in [Books > Christian Books & Bibles > Christian Denominations & Sects > Protestantism](#)

## Customer Reviews

"This book is a perfect tool for introducing undergraduates to sociological analysis. Kraybill skillfully depicts an intriguing world that promotes collectivism against the dominant individualism. We come to understand how Amish life makes sense to those who adhere to it." (Michelle Lamont *Christian Century*) "Beyond the tour buses and stereotypes lies the complex reality of Amish life. In this welcome update of a classic study, Donald B. Kraybill explores with deep insight and solid research the fascinating ways this fast-growing traditional community negotiates its evolving relationship with a modern world of business, tourism, shopping malls, and roller blades. No dry

academic book, this beautifully written work exudes the juices of lived experience and conveys its author's profound respect for, and understanding of, Amish life." (Paul Boyer, Editor-in-Chief, *The Oxford Companion to United States History*) "Carefully crafted, richly nuanced and accessible to both the informed reader and the novice, Donald Kraybill has once again produced a remarkably clear and meticulous study of one of North America's most intriguing religious minorities. *The Riddle of Amish Culture* opens a window into the complex reality of Amish society that crisscrosses the postmodern, modern, and traditional worlds." (Thomas J. Meyers, Ph.D., Professor of Sociology, Goshen College, Goshen Indiana) "Donald Kraybill has written a brilliant exposition of Amish life. A sociological tour de force and must-read for those who wish to understand Amish culture." (Peter Ester, Professor of Sociology, Tilburg University, The Netherlands) "I cannot think of a better way to introduce students to the richness of Amish life. *The Riddle of Amish Culture* takes the reader into the intricacies of Amish life and culture. Kraybill frames his rich narrative description with sophisticated analysis. While thoroughly accessible, Kraybill's book never insults the reader's intelligence. His treatment of Amish life resists stereotypes. In fact, he routinely explodes them." (Stephen C. Ainlay, Vice President for Academic Affairs, Dean of the College, and Professor of Sociology, College of the Holy Cross) "The Riddle of Amish Culture is essential reading for anyone who wants to unlock the 'mystery' of a fascinating people whose simple, community oriented ways have much to teach us. Professor Kraybill's extremely informative book is a valuable resource, every semester in my classes for teachers." (Ed Daniels, Lecturer, Stony Brook University, National Board Certified Teacher) "Kraybill moves seamlessly between the fascinating details of Amish life and the meaning of modernity, illuminating both as he informs and provokes in the best tradition of accessible scholarship. [His] masterful analysis of Amish life provides the perfect springboard for students to explore the meaning of modernity and to question the assumptions of their own culture." (Marc Olshan, Professor of Sociology, Alfred University) "Kraybill's masterful analysis of Amish life provides the perfect springboard for students to explore the meaning of modernity and to question the assumptions of their own culture." (Marc Olshan, Professor of Sociology, Alfred University) "Kraybill's study of the Lancaster Amish community is an excellent introduction to the Old Order world for both students and general readers. He enables us to see the Amish not as leftovers from the past, but as 21st century people whose confrontation with modernity is guided by the same devotion to religious principles that marked their ancestors as radicals. This book helps us solve the riddles of Old Order society." (Karen Johnson-Weiner, Assistant Professor, Department of Anthropology, SUNY Potsdam) "Students of human nature and those baffled by the seeming inconsistencies of Amish culture will find compelling explanation in Donald Kraybill's *The Riddle of*

Amish Culture. In the new research on youth groups, Kraybill explains how a time of testing the limits and tasting the fruits of worldliness in adolescence has a 'redeeming function.'." (D. R. Elder, Professor of Humanities, The Ohio State University-ATI)"The well documented book is an excellent field trip. It includes informative chapters, excellent notes, thorough bibliography all presented with clarity and correctness." (Richard Rouillard, Professor of English, Oklahoma City Community College)

The bestselling book that unravels the mystery of one of America's most puzzling communities --This text refers to an alternate Paperback edition.

If you're trying to make sense of a complex culture, especially if you expected it to be plain and simple, this is the book to read. I've bought (and read) many books related to the Amish, but nothing else matches this book for a thorough and in-depth picture of what makes them like us... and very different, too.

This is an extensive treatment of many questions relating to Amish culture by one of this country's foremost experts. It places the Amish in the historical context of the Anabaptist movement in Europe and covers differences in Mennonite and Amish communities in this country, although it focuses on the Lancaster Amish with whom Kraybill has worked most extensively. Kraybill uses sociological principles to explain practices that might seem inconsistent or contradictory; thus, he makes sense of the apparent riddles. I live in Amish country and found that this very informative book answered the questions I had developed over the years. The book would be especially interesting to those already interested in the Amish culture, but most Americans would benefit from some consideration of the value of living apart from the world with a focus on family, faith, and community as opposed to our obsession with materialism and individualism. Although it is more work to read a scholarly book like this, I think it is much more balanced and informative than some of the popular memoirs written by a single individual who has left the Amish community. Note that this book has photographs and several diagrams and tables that are hard to view on the original Kindle. On the other hand, reading it on a Kindle makes it easy to search for important terms and historical facts presented earlier--important in an long book if you read it over several weeks, as I did.

good

Good reference book, with a lot of facts. It appears that it was written in 2001 and since then.....like it or not the Amish way of life is changing. No doubt in my mind they are adapting to more modern ways. The book was well written and I've not finished it yet but find it interesting. I have been a visitor to Lancaster County for the last 50 years and they are changing! Jim Crean Hamburg, NY

Kraybill's treatment is an necessary extension of the work Hostetler began. Kraybill's book analyzes more specific examples of what "Moderns" see as hypocritical behavior among the Amish and provides the historical and doctrinal framework for understanding the rationale. There are no arbitrary decisions made regarding the prescriptions and proscriptions. As he concludes, the Amish are actually more advanced in their thinking than Moderns give them credit for. I would have rated this 5 stars, however, I think there are some points where Kraybill restates the same points needlessly; i.e. he will make a point, and then restate it in 2-3 different ways. Then, revisit that point again later in the book within a different context, and restate it again, 2-3 different ways.

I was inspired to read this book after a 7 day bicycle trip in and around Lancaster, PA. Certainly any cultural group which resists the juggernaut and onslaught of American consumer culture bears study, and this book must be the definitive look at this group. How do you keep people interested in looking different, in downplaying their individuality in favor of the group's needs; in foregoing creature comforts like cars and electricity? And what is even more amazing is that there are many more Amish today than there were 50 years ago; unlike the Shakers, this sect is thriving. I recommend this book highly. RH

Even as a Lanaster Native and being of Pennsylvania German descent, there was a lot that I learned from this book about Amish Culture - great read!

Got a new understanding of the reasons believe as they do and of the difficulties they faced because of their beliefs.

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