

Spring 5-19-2017

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Recommended Citation

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The Amish Rule of Order: Conformity and Deviance Among Amish Youth

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April 29, 2017

Abstract

While there has been a good deal of publicity given to the Amish communities in the United State as a tourist attraction, little attention if any, focuses on the social problems they face as a community. Just like other subcultures, the Amish experience social problems being youth deviance as the most common among them. By answering my research question, I planned to support how some Amish practices like Rumspringa and shunning have a significant negative effect on the Amish youth. Criminological theory could help explain the nature of conformity and deviance among the Amish youth. The evidence suggest the Rumspringa period provides the perfect setting for the Amish youth to engage in unprotected sex, drink alcohol, and in most of the cases, consume illegal substances. The Rumspringa period and the contemplation of shunning during this period produces high levels of anxiety and depression, and feeling of isolation; which could lead to suicide. Qualitative, historical and geographical evidence previously gathered is used trough out this paper to develop a socio-cultural critique supporting the argument some Amish Rule of Order practices such as the Rumspringa and shunning have a significant negative effect on the Amish youth.

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Around ten million of Americans each year visit the Amish enclaves. “A county survey in Lancaster found that tourist to the Amish there spend about \$1.3 billion a year, and perhaps \$4 to \$5 billion countrywide in Amish homelands” (Shachtman 2006: 26). While there has been a good deal of attention given to the tourism of Amish communities in the United States due to the economic profit it generates, little attention, if any, focuses on the social problems they face as a community. Just like other subcultures, the Amish experience social problems with youth deviance being the most common among them. Research suggests the Rumspringa period provides the perfect setting for the Amish youth to drink alcohol and, in most cases, consume illegal substances like marijuana and cocaine (Devil’s Playground 2002). Rumspringa is a period that begins at age sixteen and ends with the promise of baptism, during this period young Amish are exposed to the outside world. Another problem the Amish community faces during the Rumspringa period is unexpected pregnancy. This is most likely due to the lack of sexual education prior to the Rumspringa period. This exposure to freedom contributes to the use of controlled substances, unprotected sexual behavior, and in some cases high levels of anxiety and depression during this period. The contemplation of shunning during Rumspringa leads the Amish youth to feelings of isolation and the loss of self-identity. In these worst cases, suicide can be the ultimate consequence of such isolation.

As social control theory predicts, in a community where social control is the norm, deviance becomes part of the human experience. In other words, the technique of social control used by the Amish allows the label of deviant to be used on those who step outside the social norms; at the same time, this allows the deviant behavior to take place among those who have been labeled (Akers 2000). Qualitative, historical and geographical evidence previously gathered is used

throughout this paper to develop a socio-cultural critique supporting the argument some Amish Rule of Order practices such as the Rumspringa and shunning have a significant negative effect on the Amish youth.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Amish Cultural Base

The Amish are a Christian subculture, descendants of an Anabaptist group that arose in Switzerland as consequence of a religious social movement throughout Europe. Anabaptist groups are defined as Christians who believe in adult baptism. “The Anabaptists also rejected infant baptism, arguing that baptism should signify a voluntary adult decision to follow Jesus” (Amish Studies 2016). Their goal [Anabaptists] is to follow Jesus’ way of life. Amish Christianity can be described as highly expressive of faith and extremely demanding. As Weaver-Zercher (2001) concludes in his study, *The Amish in the American Imagination*, the Amish are devout Christians who demonstrate their intense Christianity by following rules of behavior expressed in the Bible. They are required to embrace all aspects of their daily life in name of their faith, and at the same time, to manifest that faith in every action. Their everyday purpose is to be faithful and adhere to the way of Jesus in this world. “Following instructions in the Bible, they give their lives to following Christ in every detail; they deny themselves many ‘worldly’ pleasures and live a deliberately simple life...” (Shachtman 2004: 122). Therefore, they believe the Bible holds more importance than the government, which made them one of the first advocates for the separation of church and state in Europe and United States. Indeed, the Amish view the government with a suspicious eye. Although they support and respect civil authorities, they also maintain a healthy distance from them. “To them, big cities, big government, big religion and new technology represented nothing but threat and danger, and

they and their followers would carry this suspicion of modern life for centuries to come. They wanted to worship in their own way and mainly to be left alone” (Stoltzfus 2015: 14). Meaning the government characterizes the worldly culture and the use of force. According to Byers (2008), is extremely important to comprehend the Anabaptist history to understand the Old Order Amish Culture of today. This cultural foundation will overlap with some of the arguments made in this paper.

The principle reason for large splits within the Amish church was the desire among some members of the community to adapt their life to modern technologies. Today, there are four subgroups of Amish: Beachy Amish, Amish Mennonites, New Order Amish and Old Order Amish. The focus of this research is on the Old Order Amish, but it is important to recognize the differences among subgroups. The first two subgroups are open to the “English” world (non-Amish) and technology; for example, they own automobiles, electricity, and telephones and encourage Bible study. The New Order Amish allow a controlled use of technology and have strict rules for their youth. The last group, the Old Order Amish, is the strictest group. The Beachy Amish share many core religious values, beliefs and practices with the Old Order Amish but they differ on one, Rumspringa (which will be explained below). Regardless the subgroups, all Amish members are strictly conservative. All four subgroups are against abortion, birth control, sexual education, divorce, homosexuality, governmental welfare programs and the teaching of scientific evolution. In general, they have also rejected the idea of Women’s empowerment and gender equality. The rules of the Amish Rule of Order promote the control of women. Women’s domesticity and submission, and male dominance are the core of all Amish group moral consensus and identity. Anne Marie Pederson pointed out that women’s sexuality and women’s voice within the Amish community must be denied to keep the traditional social

order. “In all these attitudes, they do more than pay lip service-they practice what they preach” (Shachtman 2004: 204).

Even though these groups migrated primarily from Europe to Pennsylvania, today there are 509 Amish settlements in 2,259 different districts in 31 of the 50 states of the nation (Amish Population Change 2011-2016). Lancaster County, Pennsylvania has remained the epicenter for Amish life, even although Holmes County, Ohio, has a slightly larger Amish population (Stoltzfus 2015:89). “Today there are an estimated 200,000 Amish individuals, of whom about half are under the age of eighteen” (Shachtman 2006:25). Their numbers are increasing rapidly; indeed, they have doubled their population in the last two decades. Each district has a bishop who is responsible for applying the Amish Rule or Order, or Ordnung. The Amish districts, also known as church districts, are important because they serve as the social and religious center of the Amish community.

The Amish Rule of Order

Each of the following practices that were advocated by the early Anabaptists are reportedly still in place today: adult baptism; no assimilation with the dominant culture; in-group conformity; endogamy; no proselytization; nonparticipation in military service; high, unrestrained fertility; a disciplined lifestyle; conformity in dress and hairstyle; a prohibition against alcohol and drug use by adults; strong proscriptions against modernization and technology-based living; and strong prescriptions for reciprocity. Hostetler, 1993; Huntington, 1988; Nolt, 1992.

All Amish baptized members are required to know the Amish Rule of Order. The Ordnung is an unwritten set of rules members of the Amish community are expected to follow with hopes of achieving their social goals and the continuance of their church. “The body of rules and traditions which govern behavior are rarely specified in writing; they are essentially a body of sentiments and taboos intimately shared among the members” (Hostetler 1964:187). These set of rules are what have enabled the Amish community for centuries to imitate the life of Jesus. The Rule of Order has evolved over centuries, governing everything from the proper

appearance to permitted and forbidden technologies used in homes, on farms and in businesses. The Ordnung is generally formulated by the church elders of the district, and is approved twice a year by all members of the community. “Though each semiannual review some changes to the Ordnung may be made, an unwillingness to alter the Ordnung too radically gives the Amish the latitude to make unhurried evaluations of technological innovations...” (Shachtman 2006: 47). The Amish Rule of Order needs to be constantly reviewed as a response to the changing norms of the outside world and the pressure it creates within the community. For these reasons, the Ordnung varies from area to area, and from district to district. Still, the differences among Old Order Amish districts are minor and the similarities are what make the contrasting Amish settlements ‘seem cut’ from the same physical appearance and behavioral practice.

Today, according to Ordnung, the personality of every Amish member must be reserved, calm, modest, simple, humble, and obedient. Parts of their rules are used to project this idea of personality. For example, the Amish wear plain homemade clothing, and wear their hair covered; they also are prohibited from shaving, getting a haircut, using cosmetics, wearing jewelry and taking photographs. They believe such activities will link them too closely to the ‘outside world’.

Old Order Amish dress and travel as they do, reject the use of electricity from the common grid, worship in their homes rather than in church building, end their children’s formal school after the eighth grade, and engage in many other nonmainstream behaviors because these activities are mandated by and in congruence with their religious beliefs. (Shachtman 2006: 27).

Almost all Amish practices are based on their “separation from the world” doctrine. Their main principle is to give themselves entirely to the church. The Amish are charged with the task of being in the world, but not being part of it. Enforcing this separation requires a constant battle against the mainstream culture, and it is their beliefs that sustain them during this battle. In practice, this extends to marriage with English people (non-Amish), starting any kind of non-

Amish business, and having any type of relationship with someone from the outside world. By separating from the world and giving themselves to the church, they maintain the community's wellbeing, which is considered more important than the individual's rights and life decisions. "...they constantly warned us to cast our gaze away from the temptations of the modern. That was fool's gold, they told us, shiny but worthless. Those fancy baubles would lead us all down terrible paths" (Stoltzfus 2015:37). For the Amish, the outside world represents their greatest danger, because, there is a constant threat of conforming to the 'worldliness' of the mainstream culture, and any step in this direction must be prevented.

Their agrarian based economy is also an example of the separation from the world doctrine. "All family heads are required to limit their occupation to farming or to closely related activities..." (Hostetler 1964:187). Still, the most controversial derivation of this doctrine is the prohibition of high school attendance or fulfilling another type of higher education. According to the Amish, children must leave school at the age of 14 because the courses offered in high school 'might warp their minds beyond retrieval' (Shachtman 2004). "My peers entered high school after graduation, but I willingly gave up all thoughts of doing so, for good Amish parents did not send their children to high school" (Hostler 2004:12). Until the 1940s, most Amish youth attended to regular public schools, but when schools near Amish community began to emerge, the Amish felt the need to establish their own schools. Through the next ten years, Amish parents were taken to court, fined, and even sent to jail for refusing to send their children to school after the age of 16. They faced the same punishments if their children were attending to parochial (Amish) schools since the teachers were not certificated by the state, and the educational and safety standards were considered inadequate. The case *Wisconsin v. Yoder et al.* issued the decree that underline Amish schooling today. "The Amish asserted that the state statute requiring

them to send children to school until the age of sixteen violated their right to exercise their religious beliefs, among which was the belief that children should not receive formal schooling past the age of fourteen” (Shachtman 2004: 103). Their argument was based on their opposition towards the youth learning science and civics, and being exposed to high school social life experiences. In 1972, the U.S. Supreme Court extended free exercise of religious belief to the matter of school attendance since this was a right granted by the First and Fourteenth Amendments of the Constitution. “With that decision, the court ended for the foreseeable future any prospect of Amish doctors, Amish lawyers or Amish college professors” (Stoltzfus 2015:12). At present, over 800 parochial schools provide education to approximately 25,000 Amish children. This decree has helped the Amish community maintain their moral values and boundaries, monitor most of the youth social interactions and isolate them for ‘alien views’. In a way, the freedom on education has contributed to their success in preserving their culture and separation from the world. Nevertheless, some outcomes of this practice have a negative effect on the youth, especially during those going through the Rumspringa period. This will be discussed later on this paper.

My focus in this research is on two specific Amish Rule of Order practices: Rumspringa and Shunning. “Several unique culture dynamics found among the Amish make them a valuable research population” (Reiling 2002:147). The Rumspringa, also called the “simmie period”, is reached by Amish youth once they turn sixteen. Rumspringa exists because of the need to keep Amish communities separate from the mainstream world. Amish believe that by allowing their youth members to get a taste of the English culture, they will awake a desire of adherence to the Amish faith. This is the only time at which members of an Amish community experience freedom and exposure to the outside world. “Rumspringa is the time during which the young

person accumulates the knowledge to make the informed, adult, and repentant baptismal decision” (Shachtman 2006: 28). During this period, they are no longer under the control of parents or the authority of the church. However, the practice of Rumspringa varies from district to district. Some districts have rules for the Amish youth during the Rumspringa period while others do not. The purpose of this practice is for the Amish youth to begin making mature decisions, and eventually decide whether or not to be baptized and join the church permanently. Some argue the absence of this period could lead the youth to believe they weren’t aware of the things they were giving up and regret their decision of joining the Church. This decision leads to the second practice I discuss in this paper: Shunning.

...the Ordnung, the code of conduct that all Amish people are expected to live by. Despite my solid Amish upbringing and my strong Amish roots, I had an eye-opening Rumspringa, the period when Amish teens get their first taste of real-world freedom. And I ultimately chose not to get baptized in the Old Order Amish church. (Stoltzfus 2015:7).

For the Amish, joining the church means giving up all the bad and evil things with which one was involved in during the Rumspringa period. A member of the Amish youth defined it as “living a different life- a life that’s worthier of God”. (Colossians 1:10) Members of the community who are baptized and decide to leave the church face shunning, a practice normally followed by excommunication from the church and the community in general. “The ban is the harshest punishment that the sect can mete out, among other reason because it forbids members from having certain kinds of contact with the former church member, even if the shunned person is in the immediate family” (Shachtman 2006:28). The purpose of shunning is to remind the now non-Amish of their sin of leaving the church. “Shunning is a technique of keeping the fellowship ‘clean’ or purged from habitual transgressors” (Hostetler 1964:187). This practice is considered the most drastic of all Amish church sanctions. Shunning can be defined as social avoidance not only from the part of the Amish community, but from the family as well for ostracizing an

individual. “At baptism, church members make an absolute promise, referred to as ‘the given word’, that is considered more binding than any writing contract; it is a compact with God, witnessed by the congregation, who are thereafter equally responsible for the member’s adherence to the compact...” (Shachtman 2006: 153). When an Amish member is baptized, and retracts his decision and chooses to leave the community, the Church’s shunning is the ultimate price to pay. They have a short window of opportunity, a six-month period, to return to the Amish hold before being permanently shunned. In this sense, shunning is imposed against those members of the community who “abandon its collective ideas to the free choice of the individual...” (Durkheim 1915).

Amish shunning is nearly as stressful for family members as it is for the individuals who are being punished. Once shunned, the family nucleus changes for ever. “Family members may not eat at the same table with the ex-member; the banned person is not even permitted to serve himself or herself food from the common dish used by the other family members” (Shachtman 2006: 160). The purpose of this punishment is to thrust the deviant behavior towards the ‘enlightenment’ of faith by making the individual want to come back to its family. “Shunning is the Amish version of tough love” (Shachtman 2006: 160). Decades can pass, and the ex-Amish member is not able to restructure broken family bonds because of Shunning. Loretta Mae and Velda B, Amish youth members interviewed by Shachtman during his study, said they still suffer the heartbreaking consequences of this practice. Velda B can keep in touch with her family but she says, “The ban is a huge wall between my family and me, preventing us from reaching each other” (Shachtman 2004: 228). For Loretta is being more than five decades; “More than fifty years and they still have me in the ban!” (Shachtman 2004: 152).

It is important to know those who leave the Amish community before baptism do not face this formal sanction. Shunning is not applied to those members of the youth who exit the community for their Rumspringa period and never return. As with Rumspringa and other Amish practices, shunning changes according to the districts, communities, and families. Sometimes communication is not completely stopped, but there is a restriction on contact. The emotional and psychological consequences of this practice will be discussed in detail in the argument section of this paper. Still, it is important to acknowledge what it means to be Amish within the Amish culture and why both practices are so crucial for the youth.

To be Amish means to accept a faith and a way of life that has made the Amish the principal naysayers of American civilization, refusing to use an electricity and telephone based modern technologies on which most American depend; refusing to be entertained while living within the borders of a nation increasingly defined by being over entertained; refusing to permit children to be formally educated past the eighth grade in a country increasingly participating in an 'knowledge based' economy... and refusing to encourage individual achievement-artistry, acquisitiveness, learning, science, politics- despite mainstream culture's idolization of all matters individual. (Shachtman 2006: 46).

THEORY

From Social Control to the Simmie Label

As Durkheim argued in his social control theory, deviance is the key to maintain social order in every society, and to do so "moral boundaries" are implemented to define which acts are socially approved and which are not. For the Amish, these concepts set out a vision of Christianity as a kind of discipleship. As part of this discipleship the Amish members are expected to be submissive and willing to conform towards the higher authority. In the case of the Amish, strong boundary maintenance practices that define deviance within their culture are used as a mechanism of social control. Every essence of the Amish life: beards, marriage, divorce, shunning, pacifism, avoidance of technology resides somewhere in the Ordnung.

Dennis, a member of the Amish community admits; "We don't obey the Ordnung because we fear the consequences of not obeying the rule but because we think they are correct". In his view, this

internalize sense of what is right and wrong must underline the justice and governmental structure of any good society; as he believes it certainly does with the Amish. (Shachtman 2004: 78).

“All highly religious-base communities find that rigid sets of rules, accompanied by strategies for ridding themselves of people who do not follow those rules, are necessary” (Durkheim 1915). It is no secret the structures of normative behavior among the Amish are rigid, and several rules must be followed. Even the name, Rule of Order, expresses an unquestionable social control of the community and its members. According to the fourth tenet of this set of rules, “everything which has not been united with our God in Christ is nothing but an abomination” (Shachtman 2004: 29). The church must be kept pure and free from transgression. Like an article in *Family Life* explains; if a sin is winked at, it will not only contaminate the church by its presence, but it will spread and increase. Therefore, in a community where social control is the norm, deviance becomes part of human nature. Durkheim concludes behavior is controlled by some form of social reaction. In the case of the Amish, this social reaction can be better understood as labeling. All the Amish members who step outside this Rules of Order are viewed and labeled as outsiders. Becker, has a similar conclusion;

Social groups create deviance by making the rules whose infraction constitutes deviance, and by applying those rules to particular people and labeling them outsider. From this point of view, deviance is not a quality of the act the person commits, but rather a consequence of the application by others of rules and sanctions to an offender. The deviant behavior is one to whom that label has successfully been applied; deviant behavior is behavior that people so label. (Becker, 1963:9).

Just as Tannenbaum (1938) establishes in his book *Crime and the Community*, labeling is the method communities and societies use to express the dramatization of evil. This “dramatization of evil” separates an individual from the rest of the group and puts him in a different world. Within the Amish community, those young members who are no longer under the Amish social control, as part of the Rumspringa period, are labeled as “simmie”. This label

has been constructed to describe the immature and deviant behavior in which Amish youth engage. “As explained, the label of ‘simmie’ is applied to the Amish youth to signify that they are ‘foolish in the head’ (Reiling 2002:153). The purpose of giving this label is simple; it is a cultural effort to show Amish youth the importance of sticking to their cultural beliefs by feeling dishonor and indignity over their deviant period and immature behavior. In these sense, the Amish are constantly restricting each other’s behavior to fit within the bounds of the Rule of Oder and thereby avoid criticism from the members of the community. Those who don’t seek for the community’s approval are stigmatized and label as “simmie”. “The label of simmie came to be understood as a ‘black sheep’ label” (Marques 1986).

Labeling theory states the application of this stigmatizing label is based on the Amish social characteristics and beliefs. Deviance in this context must be seen with cultural perspective and in the eyes of the members of this community since they have a different perception of what is right and what is wrong. For example, because of their [the Amish] strict norms and standards of behavior, what constitutes deviance during this period could be being irresponsible, hurting another member feeling, telling lies, excluding another “simmie” from a group or an activity, and acting unwisely and recklessly. Also, participation in the “English world” is seen as deviance; this includes the use of technology, having non-Amish friends and wearing makeup, and non-traditional clothing.

According to different social theorists, the most important aspect of this labeling process are the agents of social control involved. These agents usually act on behalf of society to enforce social norms and place labels on those less powerful, in this case the youth. In the case of the Amish youth, they are taught by the church, families and schools specific patterns of behavior through which they must conceptualize their level of engagement in the world, and their

relationship with the people around them. As Stoltzfus said in his book *Amish Confidential* (2015); parents make all the decision for the Amish youth, under the strong influence of the church and the local bishop. In the Amish community, the bishop is that control agent who, according to the Rule of Order, decides what behavior will be banned and labeled as deviant. “My father was not a morally bad person... but father was dogged with one complaint after another from the bishop from exceeding the boundaries” (Hostetler 2004:7). Religious leaders of the Amish community can make their decisions in private and then ask the congregation to support the decision. Each local bishop gets to decide how the Ordnung applies to the issues affecting his congregation. He also decides which rules might need to be modified, and when these rules must change. The bishop is responsible for deciding which individuals should be shunned and/or excommunicated. “It’s an awful lot of power in the hands of one individual” (Stoltzfus 2015:19). This practice ensures power and control over the church and the community. For Yoder, an Amish youth member interviewed by Shachtman as part of his study, “a minister’s authority places him so far above the laity that the laity is cheated out of privilege of due consideration on many issues” (Shachtman 2004: 157). In regard to the Amish schools, they are considered an agent of social control because they are a vehicle used to teach children those norms and values that distinguish them from the mainstream culture. In other words, education is used to facilitate the process of conforming.

While, the bishop determines deviant acts during the Rumspringa period, there is another control agent involved: the parents of those going through the Rumspringa period or who were shunned. According to the Amish tradition, a well-functioning family must have a disciplined environment. In this sense, the family structure itself is an agent of social control because they are expected by the church and the rest of the community to set their children limits and rules

that holds truth to their morals and values. These rules are the way of teaching the youth what is right and what is wrong under the Amish collective consciousness. As one Amish member stated they “should help adolescents not to cross the line” (Shachtman 2004: 84). In his book *Rumspringa: To Be or Not to Be Amish*, Shachtman explain how the Amish parents are one agent of social control.

The desire not to hurt one’s parents by a refusal is a significant factor in the sustainability of many cultures, according to Daniel Offer and his associates, who studied patterns of teenage behavior in ten cultures around the globe. The Offer research shows that most young adults in these cultures have no wish to injure their parents by leaving the surround in which they spend their childhoods but that this motivation has a powerful deterrent effect on the children of close-knit, highly religious families, where it is reinforced by threat of church sanctions against those who leave. (Shachtman 2004: 256).

During some Amish practices, all agents act towards the purpose of reinforcing the collective consciousness that distinguish them as a community. For example, fulfilling any higher education is against the Amish collective consciousness. “The mere thought that their children would aspire to higher education would be a threat to any Amish parents” (Shachtman 2004:111). Having too much knowledge represents a threat to the Amish community in general because it could lead to questioning ‘the truth’, and from there, rejection of the Amish way of life. In the case of one Amish youth, Emma, she wanted to go on to high school, but her parents refused to send her. To pursue higher education, Emma threatened to move in with another family and attend high school. In response, her parents warned her that if she took up residence elsewhere they would send the police since she was still a minor. Since for the Amish ‘knowledge is power and power is evil’ striving for a higher education should be controlled not only by the parents, but by all agents of social control within the community. Those who refuse to conform and insist on obtaining a higher education can end up leaving the church. “Marlys understands that by joining the church she will be putting herself under its authority...”

(Shachtman 2004: 222). If one is not able to cohere with the moral boundaries of the Amish Church, leaving the community during or after the Rumspringa period is the only way to go.

Instead of engaging in contact with the Amish youth during the Rumspringa period, both agents of social control began the application of the label as an initial step to boost deception (leaving the Church and the community) during this period. One would expect for both agents of social control to create a climate of communication where they could explain to the Amish youth the implications of any deviant behavior, but this is not the case. Another technique used by the Amish because of the nature of the Rumspringa period where all agents of social control are expected to 'let go' the youth in most aspects. This technique is simple; they use defection as a social control agent itself. Defection is seen as sinful because it dishonors the parent's teachings of joining the church to live a sinless life, and this is considered a violation to the 5th Commandment. Defection is usually followed by shunning and excommunication from their families. "Lydia knows that her rejection of the Amish church is difficult for her parents; she has seen what happened to other families when their children left the faith- the parent's shame, the intimations from neighbors to the parents have not brought the children up properly" (Shachtman 2004: 133). It is evident that giving a label to the youth during the Rumspringa period is based on the expectations the community has, rather than on the 'deviant behavior' in which the youth have engaged. "As one simmie youth stated, "It's like we have to go through this period of feeling what it would be like to suffer our parents' disappointment and rejection, so that we live right to avoid this pain" (Reiling 2002:156).

The labeling process does not end there for the Amish youth. As the symbolic interactionist theory establishes, the identity and values of an individual are seen in the context of social interaction with others. In other words, what others think of a person is partially expressed

by the application of a label. In some cases, the Amish youth have some type of interaction with the English youth in the school setting. According to Reiling 2002, the youth do not want to be associated with “simmies” because of the high level of stigmatization applied to them during this period. In fact, this group has created another label to identify the individuals going through this period. The slang term “jerked over” is applied to the Amish youth because they [English youth] believe they are attempting to jerk-over to the other side.

The labeling process the Amish youth experience is consequence of social control and also explained through symbolic interactionism. A problem this theory suggests about this stigmatization is individuals who are labeled as deviant are likely to take on a deviant self-identity and become more, rather than less, deviant. Also, during this process self-concept is formed and reformed constantly as part of an interactive process in which the individual is self-reflexive, role-playing, and negotiating his/her on self-identity. In this case, every participant in Reiling’s (2002) study reported the 16th birthday was anticipated because they [the youth] were finally freed from the role of the child. “For example, ... and they were free to more fully develop relationships and to explore their social world” (Reiling 2002:157). The emancipation from parental control during this period and the stigmatizing label opens the door to the youth for an experimental stage and experiences they may not be ready to embrace. Indeed, since now they have the opportunity to explore the outside world in all its forms, the individual may internalize the label and this could lead to the acceptance of a deviant self-concept. Lydia, a youth member of the Amish community, described it as a period in which she had two different personalities, one that behaved according to the Amish world, another when she interacted with everything she encountered in the outside world (Shachtman 2004: 54). Literature suggests almost every participant of this period has engaged in some serious form of deviance or activities viewed as

morally wrong practices within the Amish Community, such as drinking alcohol and having premarital sex. This can be followed by premarital pregnancy, as well as criminal behavior in the English world, such as selling and consuming drugs. In fact, reports from the Amish Drug Task Force show the use of alcohol and drugs is an integral part of the Amish youth experience during the Rumspringa period.

In addition, Lemert's (2000) establishes that because everyone is unique, the individual response to the societal reaction, labeling, will vary according to how sensitive and vulnerable the individual is at that time. Up until this point the Amish youth is taught to put aside any individual feeling or self-analysis since all their practices and life lessons are oriented towards a group synthesis and coherence. Instead, for the first time in their life they are expected to decide and deal with the consequences of their action on their own and the truth is they don't have any idea on how to do that. These personal factors will determine if the internalization and acceptance of the deviant role occurs later. The Amish youth experience social isolation, depression and anxiety during this period which categorizes them into the vulnerable population Lemert (2000) describes.

Because of this labeling process, not only the Amish youth are isolated from their Amish community, but they are isolated from the English youth (English-that's what the Amish call anyone who isn't Amish) as well. This can contribute to the adoption of a secondary deviance which sometimes includes more serious practices. Secondary deviance takes place when the individual labeled as deviant engages in additional deviant behavior, in which they would not have engaged if they had not been labeled as deviants. In the case of the Amish youth, the Rumspringa period provides the perfect setting for alcohol and substance abuse to occur. Law

enforcement records demonstrate the use of marijuana and cocaine during the youth gatherings, “Amish sings”.

In a sense, then, secondary deviance is gained through a trading back and forth until the labeled person finally accepts the label as a reality. This often results in the person’s joining a deviant subculture with further deviance being the product of the subcultural lifestyle. That is, future forms of deviant behavior are a product of the new role itself. Deviance in its secondary form is quite literally created by the labeling process. Williams and McShane, 2010:116.

The practice of Rumspringa in the Amish communities is an example of how social control leads to labeling and labeling leads to deviance. Rumspringa could be seen as a technique of neutralization because it allows the youth to neutralize and temporarily suspend their commitment to church and social values. Thus, it provides at the same time a space and the freedom to engage in not only deviant but also criminal behavior.

What tremendous risk these Amish parents and communities take in permitting their adolescents a Rumspringa! The threat is that children, once let loose, may never return; but the gamble must be changed by the community because its members sense that the threat of not permitting the children a Rumspringa is even greater. Absent a Rumspringa process, there would be a higher probability of loss, of many more Amish youth succumbing to the lure of the forbidden, perhaps even after marriage and baptism, with the resultant defections from the sect and havoc within it. The Amish count on the Rumspringa process to inoculate youth against the strong pull of the forbidden by dosing them with the vaccine of a little worldly experience. Shachtman 2006:

The problem with using this neutralization technique is the label is still applied as an effect of the social control and bond to the moral order that was previously enforced.

Consequently, this process creates a state of limbo or drift within the Amish youth. In fact, Reiling (2002) suggests almost every participant in her research described the Rumspringa period as one of limbo. This sustains my hypothesis; this technique of social control use by the Amish will allow the labeling or any other variable to pull the individual out of that drift or state of limbo, thereby enhancing the likelihood of the deviant behavior to take place.

A question that arises; why would the Amish community continue to follow these practices if they have significant negative effect for their youth? The answer is simple; they serve their purpose. The sociologist Laurence R. Iannacone (1994) found the stricter the church is, the

greater their likelihood to survive through time and increase its members. According to Iannacone, the key to survival is the strict churches' ability to punish and prohibit their members from engaging in activities that would make them drop out. "The more severe the rules and the potential sanction, the greater the likelihood of the church retaining its members" (Shachtman 2004:53). In fact, regardless the deviant acts that take place during the Rumspringa period, the Amish communities have high retention rates, but still, regardless those retention rates they must deal with the aftermath of the Rumspringa period.

Yoder comes near to written apoplexy in discussing the Old Order's approach to Rumspringa period, which, he charges produces "wild drinking parties, smoking, dope, fornication, and shameful courtship practices. (Shachtman 2006:138).

ARGUMENT

Deviance among the Amish Youth

During Shachtman study (2006), at age 16, Marlyss said she has decided to leave her parent's home, a place she found 'claustrophobic', because she was ready for rebelling 'big time'. "Rumspringa was never supposed to be what it eventually became, a big, rule-breaking blowout for the young and Amish" (Stoltzfus 2015:52). "...in the space between the two extremes of Amish living, is where many real Amish people are today, the younger generation especially. Pulled between the ancient and the modern, a foot in either world, new on... The children are harder to control" (Stoltzfus 2015:6). Today, the Rumspringa period involves experimentation with drugs and/or alcohol, to a point where is considered an integral part of the Amish youth experience. This was the case of one of the Amish members interviewed by Shachtman (2006) as part of his study. Joan stated she tried to meet her parent's expectations halfway, agreeing one weekend to attend a party but not to drink; she manages the feat, but admits the experience was not enjoyable. "Smoking and drinking to excess are wrong, Joann

knows...” (Shachtman 2006: 85). The problem with this picture is the reported excessive consumption of not only alcohol, but also illicit drugs.

First, it is important to remember the trajectory of alcohol and drug use among the Amish youth tends to begin at the age of sixteen, an earlier age than most countries, which makes this a markedly different experience compared to other subculture and cultures. Even though this behavior might not seem different from the behavior a normal teenager in America, one must keep in mind Amish youth are not normal teenagers. Up until this point the Amish youth have been subject to many rules that keep them distant from the mainstream culture as part of the community’s social control. For example, education is used by the Amish as a tool of social control which enables the youth members to have a complete understanding on what they can encounter outside of their communities. This reality illustrates the second point of my argument; it is significant to remember how the lack of education regarding alcohol and drugs play an important role in the Amish community during the Rumspringa. Until their sixteen birthdays, Amish children attend to either public or parochial (Amish) school. This means the window for them to learn about alcohol, drugs and sex, and the potential effects of engaging in those types of behaviors is extremely limited and basically depends on the Rumspringa period. In the cases of the parochial schools, the possibility of receiving this education is barely possible because of the taboos held within the Amish culture. These factors make the Amish youth a perfect population to target. For example, drug dealers surrounding Amish communities are aware that the Amish youth carry high sums of money, are widely known for paying everything in cash and have absolutely no education about drugs.

The Rumspringa period could last in some settlements one or two years, but in more liberal settlements it could extend for four years or even more. The problem with the length of

this period is the length of time it allows for alcohol and substance use, and the possible excessive consumption mentioned previously. In the case of one member of the Amish youth named Tobias, his Rumspringa period lasted nearly a decade. After spending half of his teens and twenties, and trying everything during his time on ‘the fast lane’, Tobias decided it was time to end his Rumspringa period and got baptized.

Literature suggests the Amish “sings” or gatherings usually take place Friday, and Saturday nights as well as all day Sunday. “Adolescents who have never experienced alcohol or drug use may binge drink the weekend after their sixteenth birthday and engage in such behaviors on a routine basis until (or after) they join the Amish church” (Cates and Weber 2012:194). The number of attendees to these sings may vary according to settlement, but average from 20 people to as many as 500 (including English youth). It has been reported by law enforcement that English youth generally are the ones who supply the alcohol, marijuana and cocaine during these gatherings.

There was alcohol, of course. And drugs, too. I can’t deny it. Cocaine and marijuana mostly. I’ve heard people mention even harder stuff... I heard a girl my age overdose in Ohio... Our parties were all about lots of young people who needed to have a great time. Big crowds turned out—two hundred, three hundred, five hundred people on a Saturday night. Male and female, people from near and far, every age of unmarried. Amish from sixteen to about thirty years old. (Stoltzfus 2015:55).

For the Amish youth, there are two locations to party every weekend: one where the partygoers are interested in doing hard drugs and those where the Amish youth prefer to drink beer and do soft drugs like marijuana. Shachtman’s book (2006), *To be or not to be Amish; Rumspringa* (2006) and the documentary *The Devil’s Playground* demonstrate how common the use of marijuana, cocaine, crystal meth and anhydrous ammonia (a gaseous fertilizer use on the Amish farms) are during the Rumspringa period. “A handful of the partygoers are seriously addicted, while others are trying drugs for the first time” (Shachtman 2006:32). As mentioned

previously, it is no secret the Rumspringa period provides a perfect setting for the Amish youth to engage in deviant behavior like excessive consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs. “Drugs are the greatest evil... drugs are the worst, because you become addicted and don’t get rid of them easily-maybe never” (Shachtman 2006: 235). The following testimonies of different Amish youth members during Shachtman’s study support the use of substances during the Rumspringa period.

This is the case of Gerald Y who described cocaine as ‘awesome’ because it makes him feel like ‘he tackled the world and won’. When he initially tried drugs, he had no idea of what he was getting into. Faron Y offered him some, and he quickly became addicted. All his income went for his car loan payment and his cocaine. “On a Sunday afternoon eighteen-year-old Gerald Y awakes from a drug-induced daze to find himself in his rented trailer-home... with the smell of beer all about, and other guys, some he hardly knows but has probably met at the back-acres part...” “When coming down from his cocaine high, Gerald had ‘thought about dying,’ ... Right now, living the way he is-unbaptized, outside the church, addicted to drugs-he is afraid that if he dies tomorrow he’ll go straight to Hell.” (Shachtman 2006:20)

Johnny on the other hand, attended to unsupervised parties, drank enough beer to knock him out, and had revealed to him a ‘whole new world’ of grunge rock and sexual titillation... After Johnny turned eighteen he easily ‘scored’ pot and cocaine. “Don’t know how we got back home without getting killed or busted,” he recalls. After that, “I tried all kinds of things.” (Shachtman 2006: 39)

Eighteen-year-old, Eli K cannot get out of his mind that he is in a ‘whole heap of trouble’. With two of his Rumspringa buddies, had started drinking vodka and beer early Saturday night, and they were ‘all a little drunk’ when he climbed into his car... he didn’t properly gauge part of a curve on the two lanes, brushed a car opposite that was going south, and ‘everybody ended up off the road’. The guys in the car received only scraped and bruises, but the couple in the other car were more seriously injured, the man with a broken leg and the women with cuts and worse from the impact, seat belts, and air bags... The Ohio State Police charged him with DUI, speeding and reckless endangerment. (Shachtman 2006:61-62)

Velda described Rumspringa as a period where they are allowed to “do all the things we were so much denied to do... We’d get into a lot of trouble. We’d go out and drink and that was a period of time when to us it was just like being, it was like being unleashed. Being drunk every weekend kind of dulled some of the pain that I wasn’t even aware of, and relieved the confusion for a little bit, but it didn’t help solve the problem.” (Shachtman 2006:96)

By age nineteen, Faron had left his family behind and was a sometime RV factory worker, a drug addict, and a seller of drugs. Though lacking high school diploma, he had taken some college courses and done well in them when he was interested in the subjects... Still rain thin and highly verbal, he developed charisma and an obscene rant that attracted many Amish in Rumspringa to come to his side-and to buy his drugs. Later he shared, “I stole a thousand dollars’ worth of CDs from Walmart and have no regrets about it either”. He has been caught with drugs many times- is on probation in three counties but he’s still mixed up with drugs and still free. (Shachtman 2006:121,122,243)

The consequences of using alcohol and drugs during these sings are numerous; they range from property damage and DUIs to the development of an alcohol and/or drug addiction.

In some settlements, most parents make no attempt to stop or even control this behavior since they consider the period as a “temptation test”. Another problem the Amish youth face is the lack of programs to help them overcome substance abuse. There are no Amish community programs offering to help or the necessary tools for an addict to work on his issues. For example, in the case of Gerald Y and his brother, the only thing they had to fight their symptoms and craving after deciding to hold on to sobriety was their father’s strength and resilience.

On the other hand, even though law enforcement has created an “Amish Drug Task Force” to work on such cases, because of the decree made in 1972 and the freedom of religion, it has become almost impossible to address this behavior. In 2013 during a meeting held in Trumbull County, Ohio, the police asked the Amish community for their cooperation to let them help correct several problems, some of them criminal, which were taking place in their community. Law enforcement officials stressed to the Amish community they needed to stop ‘taking care’ of this actions within the church, with no further punishment, and let professional address the issue. The church committee constantly turns the law enforcement down and stress on the idea that there is no drug problem in their communities, suggesting drug education or drug treatment programs are not needed. Tom Coolman, the Adams County sheriff stressed on how difficult it is for the officials to enforce the law and provide the Amish community help when they are not aware of what is happening on the settlement. New laws must be made to define Amish privacy until a certain point, which enables the legal system to work on those cases in which criminal and deviant behavior is taking place.

Other Physical and Mental Consequences

Amish youth in Rumspringa know that what awaits those who choose to return and join the church is the expectation that they will thereafter live within the tough tense of the Schleithem [Amish Rule of Order] ... And they have a strong sense of what shape their lives will have if they return-

that they are likely to marry between the ages of twenty and twenty-two; that more than half will have their first child during their first year of marriage; and that by the age of thirty...the women, housewives and mothers, and as couples they will have become parents of four or five children.... But they also know that the safety net of community can be a confining mesh for those unwilling to live within the rules. All the more reason then, while unleashed, to drink the cup of experience to the dregs and ready themselves for the most important decision they will ever face: to be or not to be Amish. (Shachtman 2006: 31).

The effects of this Rumspringa period do not end with drug use for the Amish youth. Some other physical and mental consequences are associated with this cultural practice, and they usually have a strong connection with the practice of shunning. Unexpected pregnancy is one of the most common physical consequences of the Rumspringa period. "Aside from drugs, the major threat is premarital sex, which can result not only in our of wedlock pregnancy but also in cases of AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases" (Shachtman 2006: 235).

The party setting mentioned before and the "bedding" practice (when a young Amish couple can sleep in the same bed) gives the Amish youth a perfect environment for further sexual exploration without adequate preparation for this behavior. Because of a lack of sexual education, and the perception of sex as a taboo in the Amish community, the Amish youth are not aware of the possible consequences of having unprotected sex. This behavior is even more alarming than the use of alcohol; it was reported a significant number of Amish girls lose their virginity during Rumspringa. Indeed, this behavior is usually evidenced by premarital pregnancy. "About 12 percent of first births among the Amish will be born before her marriage is nine months old" (Shachtman 2006:35). The problem with unexpected pregnancy is it forces the Amish youth to become baptized, join the church and get married without being prepared or even sure of the decision they are making. While Rumspringa is also called the decision-making period that process is abruptly interrupted when premarital pregnancy happens. "Emma's possibilities began to change when her older siblings entered Rumspringa... Running around

with boys, non-Amish boys, cars, parties, forbidden delights. Her older sister became pregnant and was married soon after to an Amish man” (Shachtman 2006:45). After the young couple joins the church, if one or both regrets the decision and choose to leave the Amish community, it is almost guaranteed they will face shunning and possibly excommunication.

Marlys is glad we had our break up when we were still single, because there would have been terrible consequences had the split occurred after they we were married. Some in Ruth T’s age group among the Amish, she points out, now say that they have married and joined the Church too soon. Their misgivings focus on what she characterizes as the arbitrary nature of the church’s rules and discipline. These members cannot leave the church now, because they do not want to be shunned. (Shachtman 2006:22, 164, 195).

Another alarming consequence of unprotected sex is sexually transmitted infections. Due to a lack of literature, there are low rates when it comes to reports of sexually transmitted diseases yet, researchers believed it to be an alarming reality within Amish youth. Regardless the threat this represents, no effort has been made to provide the Amish youth some type of sexual education than could help them prevent or at least manage these physical consequences during their Rumspringa period. In fact, all their efforts are concentrated in preventing the youth from receiving sexual education. Stoltzfus (2015) describes how sexual education is not a topic discussed on Amish homes. “The only sex education I go, one female friend said, was watching a litter of kittens be born... my mother wasn’t happy when she heard I’d seen that...but actually, that taught me a lot about where babies came from” (Stoltzfus 2015:67). Lydia, an Amish teenager interviewed during Shachtman has a similar experience.

Their casual comments have convinced Lydia that they know virtually nothing about sex. She had basic sex ed in public school, somewhat to her mother’s chagrin-her mother forbids talk in the house about women being pregnant, even if they are visible. Now Lydia’s age-mates in the Amish school have found a chapter on sex ed in the public high school ‘health’ text... Lydia starts to chime on, to assert that it’s really important-basic information that everyone, especially every girl, ought to know in order not to inadvertently become pregnant- but the teacher interrupts. ‘Oh, no, we’re not reading that. That’s nothing for you guys to know about’. (Shachtman 2006:91-92).

Another negative effect of Rumspringa and Shunning are the mental consequences. This is one concern that arises when it comes to the youth and the Rumspringa period. The years between thirteen and eighteen are crucial for the mental development of a child, and during most of those years the Amish youth spend their time out of school and isolated from their peers and families. During this period, one must learn to declare the sense of being an individual, aside from the various groups to which he belongs. Erik Erikson, an American developmental psychologist, stated that, because of the nature of this period the Amish youth may never reach full emotion maturity to embrace what waits for them. According to a Harvard professional, the danger they face is significant because they may never be able to plan properly for their future. “Because of a decided disbelief in the possibility that time may bring change, and yet also a violent fear that it might” (Shachtman 2006: 114). In other words, without reaching the full emotional maturity they need, the Amish youth are vulnerable to the strong influences that are acting upon them, in this case to those social control agents mentioned previously.

Getting baptize is one big decision an Amish teenager get to make. “Officially, it’s your choice, but choice is not something the Amish kids have a lot of experience with” (Stoltzfus 2015:43). The Amish youth have very few options at the moment where they have to make the most important decision of their lives, a decision that will define their rest of their lives. For the first time, they were allowed to experience freedom and the mainstream world, only to reenter to their culture knowing how difficult it will be if they decide to leave again, and how harsh the consequences would be after doing so. The psychiatrist Orvin (1995) states in his text *Amish* adolescents are usually scared of the expectations some social control agents have for them during this period. He described this period of life as frightening and anxiety-ridden.

When it comes to mental consequences of Rumspringa isolation, self-identity issues, depression and anxiety are the most common effects of this “limbo period”. Just like pregnancy, these consequences also have a direct connection with the cultural practice of Rumspringa and shunning. Identity for the Amish youth during the Rumspringa period could be described as ambiguous. Reiling (2002) suggests participants of this practice were not able to identify themselves as Amish or English. Most of the times, this loss of self-identity leads the Amish youth to experience isolation. Because they are culturally mandated to explore their identity and experience freedom, they have little guidance during this process. For the Amish, the sixteenth birthday represents the passage where the youth can deliberate their identities. For this reason, its necessary emotional distance from the parents and the community is essential so they can fully explore the outside world and the English identity. Since the Amish youth are entitled to leave school when they turn 16, they become socially isolated from the English youth as well. Ironically, during this period they are isolated from both worlds at a time when they are trying to deliberate which identity they will adopt and embrace. The problem is that during this phase, the youth is expected to lean their own identity, to reason abstractly, and to decide to which set of rules they are willing to adhere; but the circumstances make the phase mentally harder for the Amish youth.

Reiling (2002) learned after a ten-year period of studying the Rumspringa period generated high levels of anxiety and depression. She traced the feelings back to the consideration of leaving the church and the lack of support during the process. Studies suggest the decision to join the church is usually made in relative isolation without discussion or guidance from others (Reiling 2002:156). Most of the Amish families do not communicate their feelings effectively. The Amish do not encourage or teach emotional expression. They constantly develop an

emotional enclosed environment. Usually, there is very little sense of their own emotions and how to convey them become a main issue and a painful lack during this period. “Joann knows... she can no longer avoid the same understanding of her own actions; she begins to feel guilty ... but she does not discuss it with any one...” “Kathryn notices her son feeling very alone and isolated...” (Shachtman 2006: 86,156). What bother many Amish teens like Joann are those matters of identity, belongingness, and meaning. This is believed to generate high levels of depression and anxiety among the Amish youth. Orvin (1995) for example, connected those high levels of anxiety to the ‘teenagers’ needs to complete important emotional and mental developmental decisions that are considered key for them to become well-functioning and mature adults.

The biggest challenge is for the Amish teens that remain in the decision-making period for a long time and eventually defect. “And indeed, approximately 20% to 25% of youths within this settlement do eventually defect from the Amish. Most youth remain in this decision-making period for only 2 to 3 years, whereas others do not make their decision for as much as 8 to 10 years” (Reiling 2002:153). During those years of decision making, some cases of suicide have been reported and linked to the anxiety of being shunned. In most of the cases, the victim was a male under the age of 22. Even though the rates of suicide among the Amish community could be considered statistically low, they reveal an alarming reality about the negative effects some Amish practices have among the Amish youth.

She informs her parents of her doubts about proceeding with the wedding and remaining within the Church. They take it as a ‘slap in the face’. Her parents feel they have raised her correctly, so her willingness to leave the community is ‘like saying to them that I don’t believe that the way you brought me up is right’. The confusion of being in the outside world combines with the harsh treatment from her family and former community, provokes Velda to attempt suicide. Survives her suicide attempt but falls into a deep depression and tries with the help of a counselor to understand its roots. (Shachtman 2006: 150,151,227).

The usual response of an Amish women to mood swings, depression, excessive flirting, or doubts of anger is working harder at being Amish, and working harder in general. If those ‘cure alls’ are

not effective, the Amish will try homeopathic remedies, faith healers, and in church counseling – not necessarily in that order. (Shachtman 2006:219).

Once again, the lack of professional help represents a problem for those dealing with the mental consequences of the Rumspringa period and the consideration of Shunning. The Amish community has no proper training to deal with the psychological issues the Amish youth faces as part of the period. In fact, when admitting to the church having symptoms of depression, members of the Amish youth are asked to try harder to satisfy their ‘Amish needs’. This was the case of Kathryn, an Amish girl dealing with anxiety and depression. “When she talked about her depression to church officials and to family members, the advice given was to try harder to be Amish” (Shachtman 2006: 75).

A 25-year-old woman who had defected from the Amish only recently gave the following report, which is quite representative of what most other participants who had engaged in this practice reported: “Well for me, once I turned 16, you partied, you drank, you got drunk and you woke up the next morning and you thought, gosh, what did I do last night? You were with him from Saturday night ‘til Sunday night, and crawl into bed with him... (Reiling 2002: 164).

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE STUDIES

There are many ways one can study the negative effects the Amish Rule of Order practices of Rumspringa and shunning have on the Amish youth, and the Amish community in general. Because of time restrictions, my paper was developed as a socio-cultural critique of the phenomenon. To understand better the Rumspringa period, shunning and the effects both practices have on the Amish community other types of qualitative analysis should be conducted among their communities and settlements. Perhaps intense interviews like the one conducted by Shachtman and Reiling will give one a better understanding of the phenomenon. Focus groups are another qualitative approach one could use to study the Amish population. Also, another way to study the use of substances, pre-marital sex, and the levels of anxiety and depression can be

through quantitative analysis. By doing a survey on those topics, data can be collected relatively inexpensively, quickly and efficiently. It is important to keep in mind this will require IRB approval, as well as a significant amount of time within the Amish community. Since the Amish have a close community and a deep separation from the mainstream world it can take time to develop such studies. Those interested in providing a way to address the issue could develop either a program or policy design. By creating a policy design one can discard the conflict the law enforcement and other agencies encounter when it comes to addressing the issue and holding the Amish youth accountable for their actions. On the other hand, a program design is urgently needed. Creating a program that could treat those experiencing alcohol and substance abuse, or those with mental issues represents a viable exist. Because the trajectory of these issues is so different from the larger culture, many of the assumptions on factors and instruments are based are invalid in the context of Amish culture. The success of the program depends on having understanding, empathy, and respect for Amish culture. At the same time, it provides the opportunity to learn, as well as teach, the youth in a culture so different from our own.

DISUCSSION

If the U.S. government finds underage drinking during the college students school experience alarming, why ignore the underage drinking happening in the Amish communities at an even earlier age? The criminal justice system and other agencies related to this issue should take first steps to address the deviant acts that are taking place inside the Amish communities. Even though the United States Supreme Court established in 1972 that the freedom of religion enjoyed by the Amish outweighed state laws, intervention is necessary to ensure the wellbeing of the Amish youth and the community in general. Intervention and education about these topics are fundamental to address the issue and ensure their wellbeing.

While the strength of the Amish is their respect for tradition and their little openness to change, when it comes to the practices of Rumspringa and Shunning, that strength can function as drawback when the community must deal with a rapidly changing world and escalating bad influences. Many factors influence Amish youth's deviant behavior during the Rumspringa period. Studies have shown child rearing practices, as well as birth order and strictness within the church district could create the deviant environment. The truth is it is very complicated to determine the factors that motivate these actions. One can argue a mix of factors influence each experience since they are all unique. Regardless the factors that could begin the deviant behavior, there is one thing of which one can be certain of; evidence demonstrates how the Amish practices of Rumspringa and shunning have negative effect on the Amish youth. "A perhaps more legitimate target for blame, frequently cited by the formerly Amish and by non-Amish neighbors of the sect rather than Amish is the Rumspringa process itself" (Shachtman 2006: 245).

The lack of education the Amish youth have about the "outside world" and the things they could encounter like alcohol, drugs and sex makes them an extremely vulnerable population. At the age of 16, and with no experience or education they are not prepared to be exposed to these forms of deviance. The taboos held among the community certainly makes it harder for them to deal with the consequences of their actions. Also, is important to consider how immature and unprepared the Amish youth are at the age of 16 to make a life changing decision like joining the church, defecting, or facing shunning. Peer pressure, as well as the pressure from the community can push the youth to feel forced to participate in certain activities. Anxiety and depression become immediate consequences of the decision-making period, and in the worst cases suicide is the ultimate consequence.

The solution to drugs and alcohol abuse, and unwanted pregnancy lies in part in substance awareness and sexual education. It is extremely alarming how Amish parents and other members of the community prefer unleashing their children in the outside world rather than providing them the opportunity of getting an education that could help them overcome daily life situations. Programs like the one the Amish implemented to act against sexual abuse within their communities should be implemented to deal with cases of substance abuse, unwanted pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease, anxiety and depression. Perhaps making use of a counseling center could drop the rates of these issues within their communities, just like it did with the incidents of sexual abuse.

Each state and/or county should provide the Amish community with specialists such as counselors and psychologists that can provide the Amish youth and other members of the community the necessary help to overcome the obstacles they face during and after Rumspringa. Both sides need to be willing to recognize the issue and seek the adequate assistance. Evidently, the Amish ways of separating themselves from the mainstream culture are increasing their vulnerability to have such behaviors among them. Perhaps, they should acknowledge some basic aspects and truth about the human nature within them, to accept the existence of a drug problem in their communities and, therefore, address it.

CONCLUSION

If one dares to take the time to criticize other countries and cultures, perhaps one should begin by looking at his own. Regardless the Amish's Separation from the World Doctrine, these communities are still part of this country, and the social problems they face as a community can't be overlooked. Therefore, their issues should be of one's concern too. Alarming behaviors occur among the youth in Amish communities. The Rumspringa period provides the perfect setting for

the Amish youth to engage in unprotected sex, drink alcohol and, in most cases, consume illegal substances like marijuana and cocaine. This behavior represents a threat to the Amish community's wellbeing, but also for the non-Amish communities on the surrounding areas. In other words, intervention during the Rumspringa period is necessary to reduce the negative effects Rumspringa and Shunning have for the Amish youth, the Amish communities, and one's communities too. If the government and the tourist industry cares enough about these communities to make them a tourist destination in the United States, and make billions of dollars each year of profit out of them; then to preserve the Amish communities, this country must stop ignoring the problems they face as a community and start acting towards addressing them.

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