

Cultural Analysis: Amish Culture vs. Contemporary Urban Culture

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In the exploration of diverse cultural landscapes, understanding the Amish community provides a profound contrast to modern urban cultures, particularly when examining both material and non-material cultural elements. The video segment detailing the Amish rite of passage, "Rumspringa," serves as an invaluable case study to explore these differences.

Material Culture Comparison

Amish Culture

The material culture of the Amish is defined by simplicity and a rejection of contemporary luxuries. This is one of the defining characteristics of the Amish culture. The fact that the majority of their modes of mobility are horse-drawn buggies is indicative of a conscious decision to restrict their ability to engage with technology (ABC News, 2009). It is common for homes to be free of power and electrical devices, which is consistent with their values of simplicity and physical work. A modest, handcrafted, and uniform approach to clothing is taken to discourage vanity and cultivate community equality.

My Own Urban Culture

On the other hand, urban cultures are characterized by the development of contemporary infrastructure and technical breakthroughs. A fast-paced lifestyle and a high emphasis on time efficiency are reflected in the fact that vehicles and public transit systems are considered to be the most popular modes of personal and public transportation. Home and public places are outfitted with cutting-edge technology, and there is a wide range of fashion options available. This provides individuals with the opportunity to show their unique identity and status, which is frequently encouraged.

Comparative Analysis of Non-Material Culture Amish Culture

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Amish Culture

The Amish community has a non-material culture that places a heavy emphasis on religious commitment and community over the individual. Collective norms, rather than individual desires, are frequently the guiding force behind decision-making. The Rumspringa practice itself, even though it appears to be a period of freedom, is ultimately a test of faith and communal relationships. This is because it culminates with the decision to either leave the community or commit to the community more profoundly by getting baptized.

My Own Urban Culture

It is common for urban culture to laud independence and personal accomplishment. My own urban culture encourages these values. Educational and professional accomplishments are frequently given priority, and there is a great emphasis placed on personal choice and independence, even in the absence of a widely held consensus among the community. In general, religion does not govern the lifestyle and decisions of the larger group in the same way that it does in Amish civilization. However, religion does have the ability to impact individuals.

Sociological Theories in Context

Functionalism: From a functionalist perspective, every aspect of Amish culture, from the avoidance of technology to the practice of Rumspringa, has a role in maintaining the social order. These traditions ensure that those who choose to remain in the community are committed and willing to abide by its rules, thus preserving the Amish way of life.

Conflict Theory

Contrastingly, conflict theory would interpret the Amish's restrictive practices as a struggle between power and resistance. Rumspringa offers a brief respite from the community's

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stringent controls, which could be seen as a means to either reinforce conformity or provoke a subtle rebellion against the status quo.

Symbolic Interactionism

This perspective highlights how symbols (like clothing and buggies) in Amish culture communicate a collective identity that starkly contrasts with the diverse and often individualistic symbols evident in urban cultures. The decision-making process during Rumspringa reflects deeply ingrained teachings that guide young Amish in their actions and interactions, contrasting with the more diverse and individual-oriented decision-making processes in urban settings.

Conclusion

The comparison between Amish and contemporary urban culture reveals fundamental differences in how societies prioritize values, from community versus individualism to simplicity versus technological advancement. Such an analysis not only deepens understanding of the Amish culture but also provides a mirror through which to view and assess the complexities of one's cultural norms. This exercise in cultural analysis, therefore, is not just academic but also personal, prompting reflection on the societal values that shape behaviors, relationships, and community dynamics.

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Reference

ABC News (Director). (2009, September 5). *Amish Teens Make Choice of Lives*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5WD1SFk-IBU>