



# **An Amish Paradox: Diversity and Change in the World's Largest Amish Community (Young Center Books in Anabaptist and Pietist Studies)**

*Charles E. Hurst, David L. McConnell*

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Holmes County, Ohio, is home to the largest and most diverse Amish community in the world. Yet, surprisingly, it remains relatively unknown compared to its famous cousin in Lancaster, Pennsylvania. Charles E. Hurst and David L. McConnell conducted seven years of fieldwork, including interviews with over 200 residents, to understand the dynamism that drives social change and schism within the settlement, where Amish enterprises and nonfarming employment have prospered. The authors contend that the Holmes County Amish are experiencing an unprecedented and complex process of change as their increasing entanglement with the non-Amish market causes them to rethink their religious convictions, family practices, educational choices, occupational shifts, and health care options.

The authors challenge the popular image of the Amish as a homogeneous, static, insulated society, showing how the Amish balance tensions between individual needs and community values. They find that self-made millionaires work alongside struggling dairy farmers; successful female entrepreneurs live next door to stay-at-home mothers; and teenagers both embrace and reject the coming-of-age ritual, rumspringa.

An Amish Paradox captures the complexity and creativity of the Holmes County Amish, dispelling the image of the Amish as a vestige of a bygone era and showing how they reinterpret tradition as modernity encroaches on their distinct way of life.

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