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Common Ground: An Examination of Rural Planning and the Growing Amish Presence in Missouri

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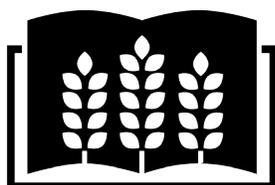
Planning

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Abstract: How do rural communities in Missouri balance the potentially conflicting land use and economic planning needs between incoming and growing Amish populations and non-Amish populations? This qualitative research addresses a gap in the literature by examining the growing Amish population in rural America through the lens of community planning. A comparative case study was conducted in three Amish communities in Missouri and included interviews with public officials who engage in planning and planning-related tasks and an Amish leader at each case site. This project finds that Amish growth and expansion is resulting in both community conflicts and collaborative efforts in rural areas. The project culminates in the development of implications that planners might consider in order to actualize better outcomes for rural communities in the midst of the growth of this ethnoreligious group. [Abstract by author.]

Keywords: Amish landscape; Rural land use change; Rural planning; Seymour, MO; Jamesport, MO; Clark, MO



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INTRODUCTION

While much of the rural United States has experienced population loss over the last several decades (Johnson and Lichter 2019), Amish populations in rural America are growing (Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013). The Amish culture is centered on an agrarian lifestyle; however, much of their way of life runs counter to that of the rural American majority. They have their own belief systems, customs, language, technologies, style of dress, and systems of governance, and often dissociate from their non-Amish neighbors (Gerlach 1976).

This project finds that the unique characteristics of Amish culture and customs paired with the expanding Amish population is resulting in community and land use conflicts within the rural areas where they locate. However, it also finds that rural communities develop strategies to manage this relationship, sometimes resulting in mutual benefit from rural economic development initiated by the Amish.

Numerous studies examined the demographics, culture, religious practices, and traditions of the Amish, but planning has been almost completely absent in these investigations. This study aims to address that gap in the literature. The American Planning Association (2021) explains that the objective of planning is “to maximize the health, safety, and economic well-being of all people living in our communities.” Reaching these objectives “involves thinking about how we can move around our community, how we can attract and retain thriving businesses, where we want to live, and opportunities for recreation.” Planners aim to achieve these goals by considering the needs of all interest groups within a community, “A planner’s job is to work with residents and elected officials to guide the layout of an entire community or region.... One of the greatest challenges for planners is to imagine what can and should happen to a community: how it should grow and change, and what it should offer residents 10, 15, or even 20 years into the future.” But what do planners do when a rural community is split between two very different cultures?

The primary goal of this project is to develop an understanding of the impact that the growth of Amish populations has on the rural areas in which they live. A secondary goal is to elucidate how

planning entities perceive this subculture and how they address the community change and land use issues that arise from their growth and in-migration. Exploring how different rural communities in Missouri are affected by Amish growth and how they have adjusted illustrates the challenges facing such communities and the larger rural areas where they reside.

AMISH PURSUIT OF THE RURAL

Demographic research indicates that the Amish population is rapidly expanding in much of rural America (Shea 2009; Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013; Donnermeyer, and Luthy 2013). It is predicted that their current numbers of 251,000, will rise to 1 million by 2050 (Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013). However, even in the most populous Amish regions of the country, the Amish represent a minority in every county in which they have a presence (Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013, 100). The quick growth of this ethnoreligious group can be attributed to both demographic and cultural factors. The Amish have high fertility rates and short population doubling times (Anderson and Kenda 2015). Furthermore, the Amish are an ethnoreligious group that value traditional social patterns. Amish customs prescribe that once communities reach a certain size, they must separate and begin a new community or “church district” (Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013). Once land becomes scarce, due to a plethora of Amish, a church district(s) may move further on and start a new settlement elsewhere. Religious schisms, which also divide settlements, are due to differing perspectives on topics such as dress, public education, external beautification of the home, mechanized farming, and the use of electricity (Gerlach 1976; Donnermeyer and Anderson 2015; Petrovich 2017).

Land Use Restrictions

Academic research in the field of planning that examines the interplay between Amish settlements and land use regulations is limited. One Canadian study found that land use regulations that restrict horses and stables, and those that encourage industrial, rather than small-scale farming, created barriers for an Amish community in Ontario

(Bennett 2003). Issues concerning land use conflict have been reported by local newspapers and popular media. An article in *Al Jazeera* (Williams 2015) discusses how zoning and building code restrictions in several states, including Wisconsin and Minnesota, pose threats to the Amish way of life. Amish settlements have wound up in legal disputes as some groups believe building permits and building inspections violate their faith by “yoking” them to the ways of the non-Amish, who are referred to as “English” (Hesselberg 2007a; Hesselberg 2007b). In Pennsylvania, an area experiencing urbanization passed a zoning ordinance prohibiting livestock. Amish people who had practiced animal husbandry in the area for decades refused to comply and found themselves in court (Nissley 2004). Amish in Minnesota have lost court cases when they asserted that the requirement to develop grey water and septic systems violated their faith (the final outcome is still pending as of this writing). The court judgments contend that faith does not allow for the violation of land use regulations that aim to protect the country’s waterways (Louwagie 2014; Cutts 2019). Such land use conflicts may push Amish to seek new places such as rural Missouri, where there are few land use regulations for new settlements.

Rural Community Collaboration

The study is also interested in how the Amish and non-Amish have worked together in rural communities to address issues that generally fall under the purview of planning and governance. One study examined a group of Amish in Ohio that refused to comply with state regulations requiring slow-moving vehicle emblems on their horse-drawn buggies (Anderson 2014). Non-compliance was associated with several automobile/buggy crashes, some of which were fatal. In this instance, a partnership between the Amish and a professional engineering society resulted in the successful formulation and adoption of several safety measures, including the slow-moving vehicle emblem, that ultimately benefited both the Amish and non-Amish in terms of improved road safety (Jepsen and Mann 2015). Research in Ontario found that though a community of Amish asserted they did not participate in matters of the state, elders held meetings with senior bureaucrats to let their political wishes concerning land

use regulation be known (Bennett 2003, 162). Furthermore, the group used conflict mediators to appeal legal rulings that inhibited their rural ways of living.

Economic Development

Economic development, a core planning topic, may be the best way to achieve mutually beneficial partnerships between the Amish and non-Amish. Globalization, modernization, and urbanization (Woods 2004) threaten both small town America and the Amish way of life. As the world becomes increasingly urbanized and globalized, an agrarian lifestyle is simply not possible for all Amish to achieve. There is an increasing necessity of Amish to pursue off-farm or “outside” employment in sectors such as construction, woodworking, food processing and manufacturing (Gerlach 1986; Hawley and Hamilton 1996; Lowery and Noble 2000; Mariola and McConnell 2013). Though rural and small-town living is economically difficult for both the Amish and non-Amish alike, cooperation may offer possibilities to meet these challenges. For example, the Amish method of small-scale production of commercial goods may lead to greater economic sustainability in small towns (Lapping 1997). “Amish tourism,” which is not necessarily condoned by the Amish, has resulted in communities where both the Amish and non-Amish have fiscally benefited (Trollinger 2012).

Minorities and Planning

Many studies exist that examine community planning efforts and minority communities other than the Amish, though the lack of such research in non-urban settings is notable. The growing presence of minority immigrant communities in several small rural Midwestern towns presents planners with challenges such as integrating multicultural perspectives into planning decisions rather than adhering to the traditions of the dominant demographic group (Miraftab and McConnell 2008). Rapid demographic change (primarily from Hispanic growth) and the resulting land use in suburban California has led to planning conflicts (Harwood 2005). Though there may be parallels and implications to be drawn from this literature, the variables associated with minority communi-

ties are many and do not necessarily apply to those with an Amish presence. For example, Latino farm workers represent a growing segment of the rural American population, however, this group is often transitory and issues surrounding citizenship status are pertinent.

Though there are numerous other minority populations whose needs ought to be considered in rural planning efforts, the focus of this study is the Amish sub-population. This research remedies a gap in the literature by examining the relationship between rural planning entities and the Amish.

METHODS

Research Setting

Researchers used data from the *2010 U.S. Religion Census* (Grammich, et al. 2012) paired with 2012 updates collected from the *Amish Settlements Across America* series to suggest that the Amish are moving to rural states in which they have not previously settled, such as South Dakota, and Wyoming (Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey. 2013, 72-109; Donnermeyer and Luthy 2013). Their numbers are growing rapidly in some areas where Amish settlements have been founded during the past 22 years, primarily in Missouri, Kentucky and Wisconsin (Shea 2009; Donnermeyer and Luthy 2013; Donnermeyer, Anderson, and Cooksey 2013). A previous study hypothesized that new Amish settlements prioritize places where the landscape is conducive to small-scale farming, land is affordable, horse and buggy travel is safe, and where land use regulations do not hinder their traditional ways of life (Anderson and Kenda 2015). Of particular interest to that study was the finding that land use regulations may serve as a hindrance or attracting force for Amish settlements (Anderson and Kenda 2015).

Amish are relative newcomers to rural Missouri; in the earliest cases, arriving in the 1950s (Gerlach 1976). They left behind places such as Pennsylvania, where urbanization is continually encroaching on the countryside, and established settlements in Missouri due to its vast rural expanses that accommodate their preference for agrarian lifestyles (Gerlach 1986). It is hy-

pothesized that the growing numbers of Amish in Missouri may be due in part to the minimal land use regulations found throughout the majority of rural counties in the state. Though each group has its differences, the Amish collectively represent a distinct rural and cultural landscape in Missouri (Gerlach 1976). Through the lens of community planning, this research examines three different communities with significant Amish populations and three different Amish affiliations: Old Order-mainline (Jamesport, MO), Andy Weaver (Clark, MO), and an independent group (Seymour, MO) (Petrovich 2017).

Of the approximately 38 Amish settlements in Missouri, the three case site locations are the largest Amish communities in the state (Donnermeyer and Luthy 2013) (Figure 1). These case site locations were chosen because the large Amish communities have been around for many decades, and it was presumed that there is significant awareness of the planning-related issues involving Amish growth in these areas. Initially, this study included a fourth case site with a more recent Amish presence. Rocky Comfort, Missouri, was chosen in order to gain perspective about issues that may arise from the in-migration of a new settlement group. However, numerous outreach efforts to planning officials were unmet and resulted in only one interview. Planning officials stated that though they were aware that Amish had recently moved into the area, they had had no contact or interactions with them, and thus had nothing to add to the interviews. Similarly, all outreach attempts to interview an Amish bishop in the area were unsuccessful.

Qualitative Case Study Design

This research was guided by a comparative case study design. Interviews were conducted with public officials who engage in planning and planning-related tasks at three case site locations in rural Missouri where the Amish have an established and significant presence and/or the Amish population is expanding. In addition, at each case site, an Amish leader, or bishop, was interviewed. Information attained from these bishop interviews was minimal, most likely because the researcher was a stranger in the Amish communities and a woman. It quickly became apparent that long-term and trusted connections were needed in order to

connect with a bishop and to attain adequate and relevant information. Only one of the three bishops interviewed offered much information, and that bishop wished to remain anonymous. Furthermore, Amish culture is patriarchal, with distinct roles for men and women, and regards “men as the head of women,” or the gender responsible for leadership and community governance (Strikwerda 2020). This research did not involve the longevity and relationship-building necessary to develop a genuine dialogue with Amish leadership; therefore this is a limitation of the research.

Research Questions

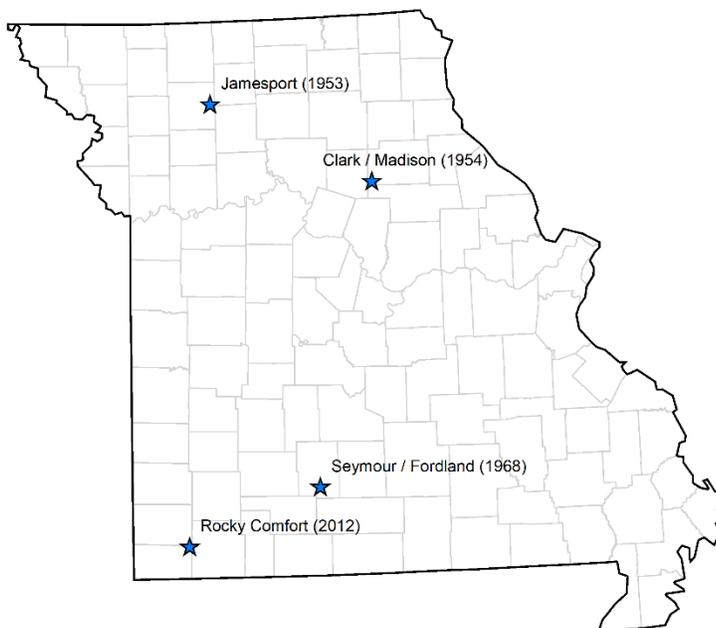
Planning officials and Amish bishops were chosen for qualitative examination because these individuals are aware of community issues and concerns due to their work and/or leadership roles. However, their responses do not necessarily reflect the sentiment of the people which they represent. The semi-structured interviews asked the following questions: How is the growing Amish population perceived by the non-Amish (English) populace? How do rural communities in Missouri balance the potentially conflicting needs of growing and/or incoming Amish populations and current residents in their community and land use planning efforts? What types of land use conflicts arise between the minority-Amish subculture and the majority population in rural communities? How are planning entities addressing potential land use or community conflicts that arise in the presence of Amish settlement?

Interviews

Fourteen interviews were conducted between February 26 and May 24, 2021. At three of the four case sites, a regional, county, and community planner or public official who engages in planning and/or planning-related tasks (to include planners, city managers, and city council members) was interviewed, in addition to an Amish leader (Table 1). The exploratory and semi-structured interviews examined perceptions of planning and land use challenges associated with growing Amish

FIGURE 1. AMISH SETTLEMENT CASE SITES

Name	Established	Counties Impacted
Jamesport	1953	Davies
Clark/Madison	1954	Audrain, Monroe & Randolph
Seymour/Fordland	1968	Webster
<i>Rocky Comfort*</i>	2012	<i>McDonald</i>



* Rocky Comfort was dropped due to little participation and knowledge of the phenomena under study by leadership, resulting in three case sites.

enclaves, of possible community conflict between the Amish and non-Amish rural populations, and of efforts to accommodate or possibly hinder the Amish community. The interviews were conducted face-to-face and recorded.

Analysis

Interviews were transcribed and coded/analyzed using MAXQDA qualitative software. The interviews were first coded inductively, as the research is exploratory in nature and there is little academic literature on the relationship between public planning policies/practice and the Amish. The inductive coding process was done prior to the deductive coding in order to introduce less bias into the analysis. Next the interviews were coded deductively based on the theoretical framework

TABLE 1: THE INTERVIEWEES AND AFFILIATIONS

INTERVIEWEE	ROLE OR AFFILIATION	AMISH SETTLEMENT
Dan Wehmer	Owner of the local newspaper, <i>Webster County Citizen</i> , Seymour Alderman	Seymour/ Fordland
Paul Ipock	Webster County Commissioner	Seymour/ Fordland
Brandon Jenson	Associate Planner, Southwest Missouri Council of Governments	Seymour/ Fordland
Sammy J.S. Schwartz "Big Sam"	Amish Bishop	Seymour/ Fordland
David Cox	Commissioner for the City of Jamesport	Jamesport
Lance Rains	City Manager for Gallatin	Jamesport
Jackie Soptic	Assistant Director of Green Hills Regional Planning Commission	Jamesport
Wishes to remain anonymous	Amish bishop	Jamesport
Steve Crosswhite	Alderman for the City of Sturgeon	Clark/ Madison
John Truesdell	Commissioner for Randolph County	Clark/ Madison
Jamie Dougherty	Mayor of Clark	Clark/Madison
Cindy Hultz	Executive Director of Mark Twain Regional Council of Governments	Clark/ Madison
Moses Gingerich	Amish Bishop	Clark/ Madison
Gerritt Brinks	Acting Director/ Community Planner for the Harry S. Truman Coordinating Council	Rocky Comfort (case site removed due to lack of data)

for the study. This inductive/deductive approach is designed to identify emerging subjects in community planning and land use conflicts between Amish and non-Amish peoples in the near-absence of guiding frameworks from the very limited existing research.

A cross-case synthesis method was used to analyze the data; it involves the examination and comparison of evidence from each case site location then develops patterns or themes to anchor the analysis (Yin 2009). The analyses of the qualitative data in this research have resulted in the development of four themes, and three implications for planners (Table 2). These themes and implications provide an encompassing understanding of the planning-related issues, challenges, benefits, and strategies that have arisen in rural Missouri as a result of the growing Amish sub-population. These themes are further developed in the following subsections.

RESULTS

Theme One: The larger non-Amish rural population has mixed perceptions of the growing Amish population. In general, the Amish are viewed negatively in terms of perceptions of increasing land prices and positively in terms of creating economic opportunities for communities.

The first theme concerns how the non-Amish population perceives the growth of Amish communities at the case site locations. Examining these perceptions is important in order to best understand sources of conflict and areas where the development of a supportive community framework is needed. The interviews indicate that perceptions of the Amish are mixed and polarized. The negative perceptions targeting the Amish community at the case sites suggest that the growing Amish population is driving up land prices, thereby mak-

TABLE 2. THE THEMES AND INTEGRATION STRATEGIES DEVELOPED THROUGH ANALYSIS OF INTERVIEWS

Research Themes	Three Resulting Planning Strategies
1. The larger non-Amish rural population has mixed perceptions of the growing Amish population. In general, the Amish are viewed negatively in terms of perceptions of increasing land prices and positively in terms of creating economic opportunities for communities.	1. Standard land-use regulations (aka zoning) will be unpopular in rural areas that are experiencing rapid Amish growth and/or in-migration.
2. Amish seek rural places where there are few land use regulations and the cost of land is comparatively affordable	2. Planners must consider cultural norms and indirect methods of community input to involve the Amish in the community planning process.
3. Amish/non-Amish interaction is increasing as a cloistered agrarian lifestyle is no longer possible for all Amish to attain, necessitating a transition to other occupations.	3. The development and establishment of clear lines of communication between Planning entities and the Amish is critical to mitigate potential conflicts.
4. Amish participate indirectly in community planning and governance processes	

ing it increasingly difficult for non-Amish to buy rural land. The non-Amish feel as if the Amish are “taking over” the community. A Seymour alderman summarized the issue:

It should be noted in this area there is very, very little available rural land. The Amish have bought it all. The Amish have brought the price up..... it would be safe to say that the land that is in the Seymour area, at least 2/3 of it is owned by the Amish... When the Amish first came there were roughly twenty (20) families. So, you are probably looking at 150 people. That population now per census records in the Seymour zip code is approaching 4,000. So, you have an infinite amount of square mileage, and you have gone from 150 people over the last 50 years to 4,000.... what has happened is, many of the locals as generations have gone on, the older residents have sold their farms, they put their farms on the market. Well, nine times out of ten that farm is bought by an Amish, because they are willing to pay the price. Although these people have sold their family farms to the Amish, they are bitter, because they know that it is probably going to stay in Amish hands ‘til the rest of time.... They [the Amish] now surround Seymour, almost any time a piece of land 40 acres or larger comes up for sale the Amish are players. Let’s say the piece of land is advertised at \$4,000 an acre, the Amish will go to the owner and say, ‘I will give you five [thousand]’. Which is great for the seller but makes locals very bitter. (Dan Wehmer, Seymour Alderman, interview by author, March 28, 2021)

Similar sentiments were relayed by planning officials at the other case sites. They stated that the Amish are skilled at saving money and have a lot of it because they don’t pay for things that the non-Amish typically do such as insurance, cars, and retirement funds. Furthermore, they have the money to buy rural land at exorbitant prices because of the ability to pool funds from their extensive families and the Amish community at large. Several interviewees were of the same opinion:

If you go into a public auction and the bidding war starts [on a piece of land], you know they [the Amish] are not going to stop until they get it. If they want it, they are going to get it. They will borrow up [money from] every one of their brothers and sisters to come up with the money to get it. (Lance Rains, Gallatin City Manager interview by author, May 18, 2021)

They are competition in my area [for rural land], and it seems like they have no limits [to what they can spend]. They pay whatever they want for land. They can go as high as they want. (Cindy Hultz, Executive Director of Mark Twain Regional Council of Governments, interview by author, May 21, 2021)

They will jack it up [the price of the land], if they are putting a bid on 50 acres to have a family. It may not come up but once in a lifetime [a parcel of land], so they are going to pay for it. (John

Truesdell, Randolph County Commissioner, interview by author, May 20, 2021)

One Amish bishop, who wished to remain anonymous, confirmed that growth in the Amish community is leading to increased competition for land:

As far as telling you about the growth, it is mostly coming from within [the Amish community]. From young people being married and looking for homes of their own. In the next five years, we will see a lot of growth... It has started to be an issue [competition for land]. We don't have the ability to expand out 20 or 40 miles. Everybody wants to be able to drive to town, with their horse and buggy. It's put an artificial market in the 10-mile radius of Jamesport, anything within ten miles will have Amish people trying to buy it. I can see that causing hard dealings with other people [non-Amish]. I guess it is worth more to us than it is to them, that is very likely why we will outbid them. We will pay more for it than what they think it is worth. I can see that causing a conflict. (Anonymous Jamesport Bishop, interview by author, May 18, 2021)

Land to support an agrarian lifestyle is at a premium at the case site locations. Due to the perceptions revealed in this study, future research that examines the relationship between changing land prices in places in rural Missouri with a significant Amish presence and ownership regime is warranted. Such research would confirm whether "rural gentrification," the process by which a group of relative newcomers move in and displace or push out existing residents by making an area unaffordable (Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008), is real or perceived at the case site locations, and if so, if it is in fact being driven by Amish growth, or other factors, such as the counter urbanization of retirees or the purchasing of land by large-scale agriculture corporations. Developing a thorough understanding of property ownership regimes and change at the case site locations may aid planning and governing officials in addressing potential conflict that may arise as a result.

This project also found that Amish people are generally perceived positively by the larger non-Amish population when they are associated with the creation of economic opportunities that benefit the entire community. The Amish are regarded as hard-working and as having traditional

skillsets at which, by and large, the non-Amish are no longer adroit, such as wood-working and quilting. Marketing these skillsets, often to tourists, is seen as a boon to rural communities that have been struggling with the economic side effects of urbanization and industrialization for decades:

They [Amish] provide a huge economic benefit to the people in the area and throughout the region... I think it is the attraction that the Amish are attracting people from a wide area and they have gotten a name, you can go out on Saturday mornings and go visit the bakeries and make a whole day trip out of it. Kind of like a destination for tourism kind of... I see the commissioners in my area work hard to please the Amish community. To make sure they have what they need because they want to make sure they are happy and they don't go anywhere. Because they buy things, they open new businesses, and bring revenue into the County and visitors... I see that they [the commissioners] are very supportive of that community [the Amish] (Cindy Hultz, Executive Director of Mark Twain Regional Council of Governments, interview by author, May 21, 2021)

For the most part we [the community at large] really like them. For the most part, if we need anything done, we know they [the Amish] will work and we can't get any other people to work. ... they are going to come and they are going to get the work done and it's a good thing... It is good for the local city economy too. (Jackie Soptic, Assistant Director of Green Hills Regional Planning Commission, interview by author, May 17, 2021)

These positive associations suggest that the Amish community plays an important role in the economic well-being of the case site locations. Enhancing the ability for Amish businesses to succeed, for example, by abolishing or not establishing land use regulations that prohibit business ventures at personal residences, may lead to greater economic prosperity in rural communities as a whole. Such economic benefits may outweigh, or at least mitigate, the negative connotation associated with the Amish and increasing land prices. Such economic gain may serve as the "bridge" that both groups need to foster communication and develop relationships for mutual benefit.

Theme Two: Amish seek rural places where there are few land use regulations and the cost of land is comparatively affordable.

The next finding is that the Amish population is growing in rural Missouri due to the fact that there are very few land use regulations and that the cost of rural land is cheaper than in many other places in the country. This finding supports another study that suggests that Amish seek places where small-scale farming is possible, land is affordable, and land use regulations do not hinder their traditional ways of life (Anderson and Kenda 2015). This project finds that Amish people feel land use regulations inhibit their way of life, and therefore seek to avoid them. Amish bishops commented that zoning and land use regulations would be a hindrance to their way of life:

We like to build, I like to build on a hillside, not on a farmland [bottomland]. Maybe planning and zoning wouldn't want you to build on the hillside because, I don't know, just in case our barnyard manure, you know where the horses and stuff are, the water runs downhill into the creek. We respect it [land use regulations] but I am just glad we can build where we want to build. ... Like the zoning and planning, I think there is good in that but there is also stuff like Planning & Zoning [administrators] don't understand our [Amish] ways of living, I don't think some of them [planners] know what we are going through, so we appreciate that we don't have planning and zoning so we have our freedom. (Sammy J.S. Schwartz, Amish Bishop, interview by author, April 23, 2021)

If we want to build a house or whatever, there is no permits needed pulled [*sic.*]. That is huge in this area, that is something that we, if zoning were to come into this county, or a lot of that stuff, that would probably cause an exodus [of Amish]... There was a family or group of people [Amish] that moved from Pennsylvania to here, and they were adamantly opposed to anything like that [land use regulations]. They said that is why they moved out here, was to get away from that. (Anonymous Jamesport Bishop, interview by author, May 18, 2021)

The majority of Missouri counties have no zoning or building codes whatsoever. It is hypothesized that this may be why the Amish population

in Missouri is among the most rapidly growing in the United States (Donnermeyer and Anderson 2015). For instance, the Amish community resides in places that do not prohibitively zone out horses or have building codes that require indoor plumbing and wiring for electricity. The lack of land use regulations including zoning and building codes in rural Missouri serve as an attracting force for the Amish.

This data also revealed that rural Missouri has attracted the Amish because rural land is cheaper than in many other areas of the county, as land constraints are increasingly becoming an issue among the Amish population:

I think mostly [why we moved here] was because the land was cheaper in this area. Up there [Iowa] it was more for rich country. When we first moved down here, people [the Amish in Iowa] were making fun of us, said we would end up being poor and would never make it because the soil [isn't as good], the land was actually kind of downgraded...[but we had to move down here to Missouri] because you get to the point of being land locked, you need to find a place where you can be productive. Now it's coming here [being landlocked because of so many Amish]. (Moses Gingerich, Amish Bishop, interview by author, May 20, 2021)

There is a need within them [the Amish] to grow something, even if it's a garden. And they also want to have a piece of land preferably at least 40 acres. They can survive on a 20-acre track, but that really frustrates them. They would rather have 40 or more... I think they came to Missouri because land prices were cheap and one of the reasons they are departing from Seymour is because the land prices are getting too high [from Amish growth]. They can get more land for their buck in Parsons, Kansas, in Tunis [Missouri], in Collins [Missouri]. So, they are developing communities there. (Dan Wehmer, Seymour Alderman, interview by author, March 28, 2021)

As long as land use regulations such as zoning remain minimal and land purchase is perceived as affordable, it is anticipated that the Amish population will continue to grow in rural Missouri. However, price constraints are an issue where there is a significant Amish presence, which may lead Amish to seek other areas for settlement.

Theme Three: Amish/non-Amish interaction is increasing as a cloistered agrarian lifestyle is no longer possible for all Amish to attain, necessitating a transition to other occupations.

This study's findings aligns with previous studies that found a significant number of Amish are transitioning to occupations other than agriculture (Lowery and Noble 2000; Mariola and McConnell 2013; Moledina, et al. 2014). This change is necessitated due to a limitation on the availability of land to pursue an agrarian lifestyle, as stated by the following planner:

One thing that I am noticing now, as the Amish community grows, they have less and less land to live off of. Then they work out [have to work outside the farm], you know when they first came, they have 80 or 100 acres, or 120 acres and they can make a living. Now they are buying 20-acre tracks. (Paul Ippock, Webster County Commissioner, interview by author, March 26, 2021)

An Amish bishop also remarked on how the lack of land is leading to a need to transition to other types of work:

The Amish community has changed a lot. When we moved here, everybody had cows, had a dairy and a farm. As of today, I think there is [only] three dairies in the community. It has changed a lot too, there is a lot of construction. It is probably the biggest employer [for the Amish], would be construction. And a lot more of the country stores and the lumber yard, that type of stuff. Right, the family farm, I guess that would still be a lot of peoples, kind of the way they [the Amish] would like to do it, but economically it got to where it wasn't possible... (Anonymous Jamesport Bishop, interview by author, May 18, 2021)

Though cultural norms dictate that the Amish remain distinct from larger society, economic realities necessitate alternative ways of making a living. As the Amish pursue occupations other than farming, increased interaction with the non-Amish results:

There is more and more of an English influence in the Amish community because really to make their living you can't just farm, even if it is just

gardens and raising your own food, it doesn't work anymore. They have to work out [off the farm]. Society hasn't forgotten the Amish and the Amish are now feeling as a community a great deal of pressure from the outside world and technology. Their young people are increasingly being exposed to our world. More and more so every day, because they have to work out [off the farm] to make a living they have to be among us. (Dan Wehmer, Seymour Alderman, interview by author, March 28, 2021)

What remains to be examined is how this economic transitioning, and thereby, increased interaction among the two groups, will impact rural communities' cultures and economies. One Amish scholar stated, "The survival of the Amish as a distinct group is much less problematic than their ability to perpetuate the values of an agrarian society once agriculture is no longer the foundation of economic life" (Olshan 1991, 378). In other words, will the economic transitioning of the Amish people result in a change to their social values and culture? Furthermore, will increased interaction among the Amish and non-Amish result in greater conflict or cooperation? Land constraints are necessitating the Amish to transition from agriculture to occupations that involve increased interactions with the non-Amish. Planning professionals might capitalize on this economic reality to facilitate communication between the two groups for mutual benefit.

Theme Four: Amish participate indirectly in community planning and governance processes.

Perhaps the finding of greatest significance to planners is that the Amish do in fact participate in planning and governing processes; however, they generally do so indirectly. While the Amish believe in social separation from institutions of government (Bennett 2003), this research finds that in order to protect their way of life, Amish do participate in planning and governing related processes at some level.

This study finds that the Amish influence planning and governing decisions through the development of relationships with non-Amish males involved in governing and leadership processes. This finding coincides with a study conducted in Canada that found that the Amish had their voices

indirectly expressed on issues of governance (Bennett 2003). In this project, planners at each of the three largest Amish communities in Missouri shared ways in which Amish let their preferences on policy be known. In the City of Seymour, an effort was made to pass an ordinance which would require Amish to “diaper” their horses to avoid manure on city streets. The Amish community was adamantly opposed. A public hearing was held, and though no Amish attended, a city alderman stated:

They [the Amish] made it very clear to me, as an Alderman, how they felt about the issue [horse being required to wear diapers]. I had Elders and Bishops come visit with me on the issue. As a matter of fact, because of the fact that they do so much business in our local economy, we have tried to help them by [not passing the ordinance]. (Dan Wehmer, Seymour Alderman, interview by author, March 28, 2021)

Safety issues between automobiles and Amish buggies led to the development of an ordinance requiring electrified lanterns to be hung from buggies in the Clark/ Madison region. A county commissioner described the process of developing the ordinance without Amish attending public meetings:

It [developing the ordinance] was done a little different than normal procedures at the Commission. The reason why is the Amish they don't want to be involved in that, they don't want to have to be called up to come in and testify in front of a commission or committee. Were the Amish involved in it [the ordinance], absolutely. There is no two bits about it. ... I was over there [with the Amish], I was talking to a lot of different people and hearing their concerns. So when we [the Commission] were sitting down trying to figure out what to do to solve the problem, we did not want to do anything that stepped on our friends and neighbors who had different beliefs and different ideas. So, a lot of thought went into this on how we were going to do it, how we were going to write this ordinance. (John Truesdell, Randolph County Commissioner, interview by author, May 20, 2021)

However, it should be noted that this research found that such relationships were only between males in the Amish and non-Amish community. In no instance was a female member of the Amish

community involved in building relationships with rural planning/governance entities, nor was a female planner privy to such discussions/relationships. However, this is not to state that Amish women don't have their voices heard indirectly through private conversations with their husbands, fathers and so forth. How Amish women may indirectly impact planning and governance is beyond the scope of this specific study and an area of future research. In this study however, a woman planner commented on gender communication issues impacting planning.

Getting that bishop [to communicate], which usually needs to be a man to talk to him, because they are not going to talk to us [as women] probably. Most men in [Amish] leadership roles are not going to visit with us. So, you have got to have that gender thing in mind when you approach or try to work with them. (Jackie Soptic, Assistant Director of Green Hills Regional Planning Commission interview by author, May 17, 2021)

The gender finding in this study presents a challenging implication for planners. As the field of planning is highly equity-oriented (American Planning Association 2022) the development of “male only” leadership relationships may not be deemed just. However, the Amish are a patriarchal people, and the finding of the significance of these relationships is important to the field of rural planning/governance. Planners in communities with an Amish presence should have an individual who can talk the language of the both the Amish and non-Amish.

The study also found that Amish will participate in community planning processes, when their unique and specific needs are taken into account, including a preference for indirect involvement in government procedures. At two of the case site locations, planning officials asserted that Amish had in fact attended several public input sessions involving transportation conflicts and planning. Perhaps because buggy transport is of utmost importance to the Amish way of life, the Amish community find it acceptable to participate in planning efforts concerning transportation. Or perhaps the Amish way of life is gradually changing, and increased interaction between the two groups is becoming normalized. Regardless, planning officials in or near the Jamesport community contend that

about 15 Amish attended each of several public meetings involving the Missouri Department of Transportation (MoDOT) and highway planning, while officials in the Seymour area reported that approximately fifty or more Amish attended each of four public meetings held for the adoption of a master transportation plan in the area. The latter Seymour case is of special interest because usually high levels of Amish participation are challenging to attain (Bennett 2003).

Novel Strategy

An interview was conducted with the engineer who led the planning process in the Seymour area because of the significant numbers of Amish who participated. Steve Prange, PE, an engineer from Southwest Missouri, asserted that the community planning effort was successful because of his learned experiences with conducting community inputs events with the Amish with transportation plans in Ohio. From those experiences, he developed several successful strategies to facilitate Amish involvement in planning efforts. First, he stated that there needs to be a relationship between at least one planning/governing official in the area and Amish leadership to foster a conversation and encourage participation. Second, the venue for the community planning event must accommodate horse and buggy transportation and parking. Third, the technology divide between the traditional Amish and more mainstream society must be taken into consideration. For example, Prange recommended that the event be advertised via newspaper and that paper handouts be available at the meeting. Finally, he stated that some type of indirect community input activity should be available in order to garner input from Amish persons that do not want to participate directly or are uncomfortable speaking aloud at input sessions. In this instance, a large map(s) of the plan area was left in the barn/garage of a county commissioner for several days for public comment (Figure 2). The Amish could visit the barn at their convenience and incorporate their input concerning the proposed transportation plan. The county commissioner described the process:

At meetings there were several Amish and they gave input and They really didn't want to come [all of the Amish] and Steve [the engineer leading the planning process] had maps, five or

six different maps of things you could do [to give input]. Anyway, I said you could set it up in my garage if you want to. If you will leave it a few days you could put it up in the barn. So the Amish, I don't know probably 30 or 40 or more Amish came to my house, went right out to the garage and they drew in what would be a help to them. He left it out there for maybe a week. There were four or five drawings or maps out there in the garage and I just left it open. I knew they [the Amish] were there, you could tell where they had been scribbling all over [the maps]. (Paul Ipock, Webster County Commissioner, interview by author, March 26, 2021)

However, this finding pertains solely to Amish males. No females were witnessed participating in any of the described events, though it is possible that women's opinions were voiced indirectly. This observation again demonstrates the gender role separation that is prevalent in Amish culture.

This research found that though the Amish assert that they do not participate in governance, but they do, indirectly. They primarily participate indirectly through the development of male leadership relationships. The successful community input attained at the commissioner's barn site also suggests that the Amish are amenable to participating in community planning activities indirectly. Finally, interviews, primarily from Seymour, suggest that Amish males will directly participate in community planning processes that are particularly important, such as planning involving horse and buggy transport, when Amish needs are accommodated (Figure 3). These findings are significant in that they may allow rural communities to develop strategies to better integrate the Amish community into planning efforts.

IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNERS

This study has identified some of the rural planning issues surrounding Amish growth in rural Missouri. First, Amish are drawn to rural agrarian areas where there are few land use regulations. Next, land constraints are creating community challenges and necessitating changes to the Amish way of life. Finally, there are strategies to involve the Amish in the community planning process. These case study findings have led to the development of planning implications for rural communities experiencing Amish growth. It is hoped

FIGURE 2. INTERACTIVE PLANNING DISPLAY



Input was indirectly obtained from the Amish community through an interactive planning display left in an open barn/garage for approximately a week. (Photo credit: Steve Prange)

that the following implications will aid planners in meeting the needs of both the Amish and larger non-Amish population in rural areas.

1. Standard land use regulations (aka zoning) will be unpopular in rural areas that are experiencing rapid Amish growth and/or in-migration.

Land use regulations, the most common of which is zoning, have developed over the last century for two primary purposes: to safeguard public health and welfare, and to protect private property investments (Fischel 2004). However, research has found that many types of land controls, including zoning, have negative impacts, such as increasing housing unaffordability and inhibiting economic

development (Glaeser 2017) This present study found that Amish are attracted to a region where land use regulation is minimal. This research suggests that if standard land use regulations, such as zoning, were adopted at the case site locations, they would serve as a hindrance to the Amish way of life and perhaps lead to out-migration.

The study also found that the Amish are perceived positively for the economic opportunities they have created. This includes small-scale farm stands and businesses, family-run lumberyards, and at-home enterprises. Such business ventures are generally precluded from one's place of residence in typical zoning regulations. Therefore, the adoption of standard zoning regulations could lead to economic hardship in terms of decreased

economic opportunities for the Amish themselves and the community at large.

At the case site locations, it is evident that the prospect of land use regulations is unpopular among both the Amish and the larger non-Amish communities. According to the American Planning Association's (APA) website, one of the roles of the planner is to acknowledge the views and voices of a community, with a special emphasis on minority groups, and plan for their needs (2021). Therefore, though the development of standard land use regulations is a typical task of the trained planner, it may not be appropriate for the cultural and economic needs and wants of all communities, such as the one explored in this research.

As the last century has revealed that traditional zoning is rife with problems, a movement is underway to create zoning reforms and alternatives, such as ending single-family-only zoning to increase housing affordability in urban contexts across the country (Fischel 2004; Hirt 2007; Garde and Kim 2017; Freemark 2020). Perhaps the search for looser and alternative means of regulating land use to protect the general public welfare and environment is also needed in the rural environment. For example, instead of standard zoning, rural planners might protect the public welfare by enforcing federal and state statutes to ensure water sources are clean and air quality is safe, and that nuisance industries such as slaughterhouses follow federal and state policy. They may also focus on regional planning efforts in order to avoid disjointed landscapes that result in habitat fragmentation and incomplete transportation corridors. However, the promotion and/or development of standard zoning regulations will be both unpopular and prohibitive for minority Amish communities.

2. Planners must consider cultural norms and indirect methods of community input in order to involve the Amish in the community planning process.

Among the most important tasks of the professional planner is to plan with the input of their respective communities in mind. Although there is a general conception that the Amish do not involve themselves with anything planning or government related, this research suggests otherwise. Amish people do find it important to have their voices heard in terms of community issues and gover-

nance, albeit they generally prefer to do so indirectly. Examples from this study include Amish men contacting and speaking to male planning and governing officials about their concerns, and at the Seymour case site, the many Amish who participated indirectly in a community transportation plan. Furthermore, at the latter case site, Amish did attend and participate in public planning meetings when their particular needs, such as accommodations for horse and buggy, were discussed.

These findings suggest that planners can involve Amish in planning efforts when they incorporate the specific needs and culture of the Amish into the process. Rural planners may want to develop strategies to attain indirect community input through a variety of measures. The interactive display left in the barn at the Seymour case site is one example. Other ideas include officials holding face-to-face office hours to hear citizen input, advertising events in the local newspaper, and mailings postcards for public comment which can be mailed back. Such strategies incorporate post mail, rather than electronic communication, to facilitate Amish participation, as well as offer an indirect means of involvement. When direct input is warranted, planning officials may want to incorporate the strategies that resulted in successful Amish participation at Seymour. This includes locating meetings at places that can accommodate horse and buggy, sending mail-in feedback postcards, and having paper resources available during community input sessions rather than relying on high-technology strategies such as cell-phone polling. This study suggests that by considering Amish cultural norms, rural planners may be able to engage the Amish community in planning processes.

3. The development and establishment of clear lines of communication between planning entities and the Amish community is critical to mitigate potential conflicts.

This study found that non-Amish have mixed perceptions of the Amish community, but that there are indeed issues that have arisen from the growth of this ethnoreligious minority. The study confirmed that land constraints are leading to Amish pursuit of professions outside of agriculture, thereby increasing interaction between both groups. To cope with arising issues and changing

FIGURE 3. PUBLIC INPUT SESSION WITH AMISH IN ATTENDANCE

There was significant Amish participation at public input sessions when the particular needs of the Amish were taken into consideration. (Photo credit: Steve Prange)

ways of life, effective communication between the non-Amish, Amish, and planning entities is paramount. In this research, some planning officials and Amish leadership had developed relationships over the course of their lifetimes in the area. In such cases, clear lines of communication between planning officials and Amish leadership have been established. In other instances, such as with the women planners in this study, communication lines were not established, and therefore, input from the Amish community was not relayed. In one interview, a male planner succinctly stated:

I think they [the Amish] really consider themselves to be operating separately from the rest of the world. Because of that I think it has just led to a breakdown in communication. With that communication, it's sort of like the bedrock of planning. So, if you don't have good com-

munication, you can't plan effectively for that group of people. I think there is a way to help them continue living their lives and help them improve upon if they would like. If that narrative could just happen...I think just like any marginalized group there is going to be a need to meet the people where they are. Adapt your [planning] processes to make them feel comfortable. Identifying a community champion, someone that speaks both planning and Amish way of life and can sort of bridge that gap. That is what it really would take to start that conversation effectively. (Brandon Jenson, personal interview by author, February 26, 2021)

The quoted planner emphasized the importance of communication and of bridging the gap between groups of people. He also asserted that such a bridge can be breached via individuals who understand both the Amish and non-Amish

communities. In communities that lack a planner/Amish leadership connection, planners might work to find that “community champion” to open lines of communication. This is especially important in the case of rural women planners, where male Amish leadership may feel uncomfortable communicating directly due to cultural norms. Rural planners that work to establish effective systems of communication in addition to methods of involving the Amish in community planning processes will move forward as an informed and linked community.

RESEARCH LIMITATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

A significant limitation of the research concerns the study’s involvement with the Amish themselves. Interviews with the Amish were limited in terms of data collection as interviewees expressed fear and distrust towards the researcher, in addition to gender bias. Ethnographic research, which involves the development of in-depth relationships over an extended period would likely result in findings of greater depth and significance. Furthermore, this research provided a broad examination of planning and leadership perceptions related to the growth of the Amish sub-population. It did not isolate specific variables and measure them. Further research that isolates measurable variables, for example, land parcel ownership and price changes over time, may result in a better understanding of the phenomena examined in this study.

Case study research is not necessarily generalizable to other locations. However, this research may help shed light on the issue of rural change and resiliency by highlighting how rural communities respond to in-migration and difference. Findings may be used to broaden the scope of this study beyond Missouri to other rural areas in the U.S. that are experiencing growth in Amish populations or where entirely new Amish settlements are being established. This study may also be expanded to examine rural areas with growing Amish populations that have differing land use regulations, including, but not limited to, those with greater zoning and regulatory authority.

CONCLUSION

Amish growth is occurring in several rural locations in Missouri. This research study found that this is leading to both negative and positive perceptions of the Amish by the larger non-Amish population. It also found that there are challenges associated with growth but that the Amish are and can be involved in community planning processes. It is hypothesized that by building and developing communication between Amish and planning entities, better outcomes will be actualized for all.

A qualitative assessment of perceptions and challenges related to Amish growth has resulted in the development of implications for planners or those involved in planning related tasks. The study addresses a gap in the literature concerning planning, land use regulation, and Amish growth, and contributes to a greater understanding of how rural communities might best plan for the future in the midst of the expansion of this ethno-religious group.

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