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The Hutterites

A Study in Cultural Diversity

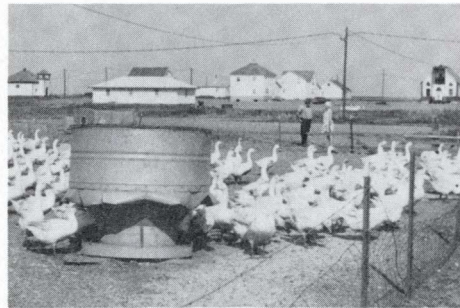
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photo by Waltner, Bonnie Brook, Hurley, S.D.



photo by Waltner, Bonnie Brook, Hurley, S.D.



The Hutterites

A Study in Cultural Diversity

Dr. James Satterlee
Department of Rural Sociology
South Dakota State University

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Acknowledgements

This research signifies an on-going interest in the Hutterite culture represented by more than 30 years of study by staff members of the Department of Rural Sociology at South Dakota State University. This study was conducted through surveys and numerous visits to many of the South Dakota colonies during the summer and fall of 1992. Having been involved in previous department studies of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s, I welcomed the opportunity to return to the field and renew acquaintances with many fine people who seek nothing more than understanding.

I wish to acknowledge LuAnn Burckhardt, Mary Brashier, and Duane Hanson for their work in the preparation of this publication and the South Dakota Agricultural Experiment Station and the Bush Foundation Cultural Diversity Grant for support in publishing.

I also would like to thank the Reverend Sam Wipf Sr. (colony minister) and his son Sam Wipf Jr. (German teacher) for their advice and time in reviewing and commenting on the manuscript.

Last, but not least, I dedicate this publication to "Jake" who made this possible by his mere presence and intermittent reminders of what was most important.

Dr. Jim Satterlee

*

Throughout most of American history, society attempted to blend or assimilate its many ethnic groups, expecting the "melting pot" to provide strength, vitality, and cohesiveness to society. Not until 1970 was this philosophy first challenged (Glazer and Moynihan 1970). Americans then began to realize that we had not all blended, either culturally or racially. The strength and vitality of our nation now appear to lie in its diversity of cultures.

A renewed appreciation for cultural differences gives us an opportunity to examine a truly unique culture, one that has changed little in over four centuries and that has thrived for more than a century in South Dakota. The people of this culture lead a quiet and peaceable life differing significantly from the dominant culture, not only of the larger American society, but also of their rural South Dakota neighbors. These people are the Hutterite Brethren.

The Hutterites are often confused with Mennonites or Amish. While the Hutterites, Mennonites, and Amish all exist as a result of the same Anabaptist rebellion against the Catholic Church during the Reformation of the 1500s, the Hutterites are a very distinctive religious sect. What sets Hutterites apart is their communal way of life.

The communes are, for the most part, agricultural enterprises, highly advanced technologically and highly isolated socially. Spread for the most part throughout north-central United States and the west-central provinces of Canada, the communes seek no converts. High birth rates alone provide the impetus to expand colony numbers. This expansion creates hard feelings among some outsiders.

Neighboring farmers often see the growth in colony numbers as a threat to their own agricultural existence, as price and scarcity of available land become ever more critical

issues in agriculture. Others have typecast Hutterites as foreign speaking and have accused them of plotting to take over agriculture through their expansionist activities.

HISTORY AND ORIGINS

Switzerland-Moravia

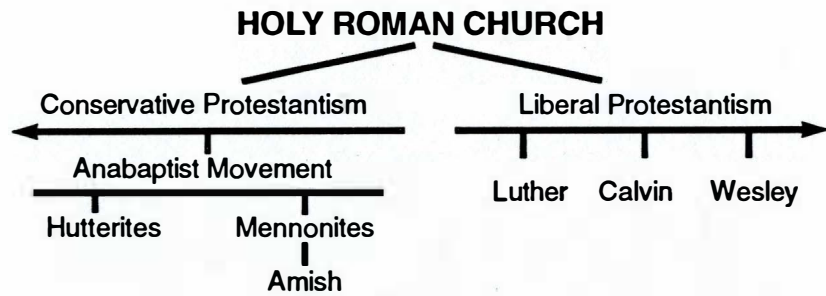
The Hutterite movement in the U.S. traces its origins to the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. Just as division occurred between the Catholic and Protestant churches, so did divisions occur within the new Protestant movement. A Protestant group formed in Switzerland under the leadership of Ulrich Zwingli employed a more conservative interpretation of the Bible, resulting in the Anabaptist movement.

The Anabaptist doctrine sought to follow closely in the footsteps of Jesus and his immediate apostles as described in the New Testament. But even within this Anabaptist movement, further divisiveness occurred, as a more radical wing under the leadership of such men as Grebel, Mantz, and Conrad taught salvation by regeneration and baptism upon confession of faith and only upon the request of the person to be baptized (Miller 1965).

The Protestant groups headed by Luther, Calvin, Wesley, and others were soon recognized by the secular rulers. The Anabaptists, however, were rejected by both the Catholic and the more liberal Protestants. In 1527 the Swiss Anabaptists responded by formalizing the tenets of their beliefs. These were to consist of a belief in adult baptism, separation of Church and State by withdrawal, and a rejection of violence by refusing to bear arms (Pratt 1969).

Because the Holy Roman Church and the newly established and recognized Protestant churches saw them as a threat, the Anabaptists

Figure 1. 16th century Protestant Reformation



were forced to leave Switzerland and find refuge in Moravia (Germany). As the Anabaptist movement grew in numbers, doctrinal disputes led to even further divisions. Those who believed in communal living, the community of goods, and the rejection of military violence (Hutterites) were expelled from the main body of the Swiss Brethren in 1528 (Treece 1967).

Under the leadership of Jacob Wiedenman, this small group of 190 persons established the first communal church which immediately began to grow in numbers. Five years later, Jacob Hutter, a hat maker, joined the group and soon became its new minister. Under his leadership, greater refinement took place in the pattern of communal living, and the group eventually came to be known as the Hutterites. In 1536, Hutter was apprehended by government officials and burned at the stake in Innsbruck, Tyrol (Austria). He died a martyr (Miller 1965).

The Hutterites and other Anabaptist groups such as the Mennonites organized under the leadership of Menno Simons flourished for a while. By 1578, 50 Hutterite colonies contained an estimated 16,000 members.

Yet, intensified persecution by both the Catholic Church and various governments forced Hutterites and other Anabaptists to move from one country to another. Unwilling to fight back, an estimated 3,000

members were put to death by authorities. In some cases entire colonies vanished.

Russian Migration

A century of persecution continued throughout Europe. In 1760 the Empress of Austria ordered the demise of the Hutterites—jailing their leaders, baptizing their children, burning their colonies, and compelling survivors to attend Catholic Mass. The Hutterites, reduced to small wandering groups, migrated to Wallachia (now Rumania).

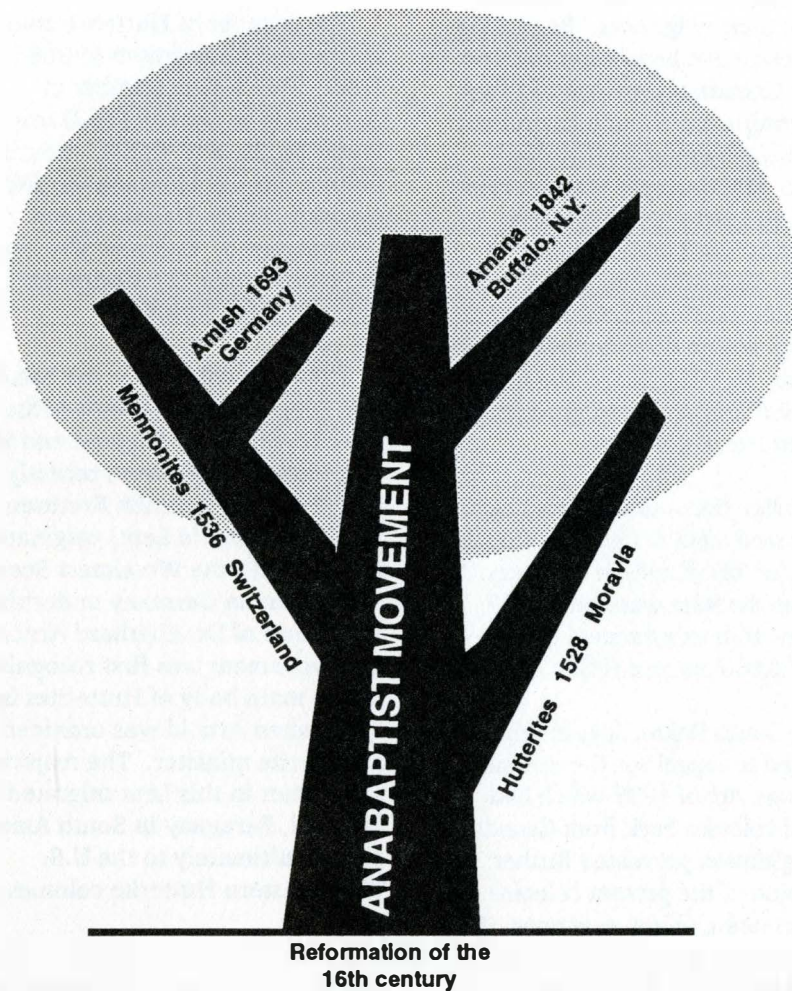
With a promise of exemption from military service and religious freedom by the Czaress of Russia (Catherine The Great), the Hutterites and other Anabaptist groups entered Russia in 1770, remaining there until the 1870s.

In the 1870s, and under the reign of Czar Nicolas, the military exemption was revoked. Again the Anabaptists (Hutterites and Mennonites) were forced to seek a new homeland.

Migration to America

An understanding between the U.S. government and Governor Jayne of the Dakota Territory assured a Hutterite delegation to the U.S. of religious freedom and freedom from military duty, and from the need to assist in war in any way (Westhorpe' 1919).

Figure 2. Anabaptist movement.



The Hutterite migration from three Crimean (Ukraine) villages began in 1874 when a group of Hutterites under the leadership of Mike Waldner, a blacksmith, arrived in America and purchased land and an old trading post near the capital of the Dakota Territory, Yankton (South Dakota). The colony site was named Bon Homme after the nearby town and was settled by Waldner's people who came to be known as the Schmieden Leut (the blacksmith's people). This was followed by the migration of a second group led by Darius Walter. These people (Darius Leut) settled near Freeman, S.D., in what was to be named Wolf Creek Colony. A third group under the leadership of a teacher, Jacob Wipf, arrived in 1877 and established a colony (Elm Springs) near Parkston, S.D. These

people became known as the Lehrer Leut (teacher's people).

Upon arrival in the U.S., the 1,200 Hutterite migrants were given a choice by their leaders of establishing themselves in communes or settling on private, individual family farmsteads. Those 800 that chose to separate from the colonies came to be known as "prairieleuts." Many of these people later joined with their Anabaptist neighbors, the Mennonites.

The Hutterites and Mennonites were not the only migrants to South Dakota at this time. Many German-Russians also came from Russia, some enticed by the advertisements extolling the "opening of the West" to agricultural settlement. They, too, were fleeing the "Russification"

and military conscription in their homeland. South Dakota attracted large numbers of these non-Hutterite Russian-Germans, and they became the dominant ethnic group in the state (Luebke 1977).

The period between Hutterite settlement in the 1870s and World War I saw a rapid increase in the number of colonies in South Dakota. Colony construction followed the James River as it was a source of wood supply and building materials. By 1913 the "mother" colony, Bon Homme (Schmieden Leut), had given birth to three daughter colonies (Milltown, Maxwell, and Huron) which had in turn given birth to two additional colonies (Rosedale and James Valley). Wolf Creek Colony (Darius Leut) had produced four daughter colonies (Jamesville, Tschetter, Spink, and Byron) and one grand-daughter colony (Richards). Elm Springs (Lehrer Leut) had produced three (Rockport, New Elm Springs, and Melford) (Riley 1970).

WW I

World War I brought another round of persecution. The Hutterites would not give willingly to the war effort and, therefore, were considered "enemies" of the U.S. Their refusal to purchase U.S. War Bonds and to send their young men to war brought down the wrath of their neighbors.

In one incident, three young Hutterite men were drafted into the military. Their refusal to participate in the war effort resulted in imprisonment where one died under suspicious circumstances. This incident and the feeling that the earlier pledge by Governor Jayne had been broken (the state of South Dakota cancelled their corporation status) prompted the colonists to begin a search for a new homeland. Enticed by Canada, 16 of the 17 colonies sold their land and livestock in 1918 and began their move northward to

Manitoba. By 1934 only the mother colony, Bon Homme, remained in South Dakota.

In 1935 the South Dakota Legislature, faced with an enormous number of farm foreclosures, passed legislation designed to encourage the colonies to return to South Dakota. This legislation granted privileges to communally owned farms similar to that of corporate farms. This would again allow the colonies to incorporate.

These inducements, plus new and more restrictive legislation in Manitoba, brought seven of the 16 colonies back from Canada (Hostetler 1974). Along with the one remaining mother colony (Bon Homme), they were all of the Schmeiden Leut. The Darius Leut and Lehrer Leut colonies remained in Canada and never returned (Riley 1970).

WW II

The Schmeiden Leut colonies which reestablished themselves in South Dakota enjoyed a degree of prosperity. As WW II began, attitudes toward conscientious objectors were less hostile as the U.S. government had adopted more humane policies to handle religious objection. Hutterite men were allowed to fulfill their obligation by "work of national importance" under civilian direction in the Civilian Public Service. Many were assigned to the Red Cross, church camps, and the U.S. Forest Service. Hutterite men continued to participate in these alternative programs until the end of the military draft in the 1970s (Hostetler 1974).

Colony contributions to war relief efforts also produced a less threatening environment during this war.

Following World War II, colonies in both Canada and the U.S. pros-

pered, as did most other farmers. But colony growth raised concern among their neighbors. Beginning with restrictive legislation in 1944 by the Canadian province of Alberta, attempts were made to prohibit the sale or lease of land to Hutterites. The outcome was the Communal Property Act enacted in Alberta in 1947 which restricted colonies to 6,400 acres in size and prevented establishment of new colonies within 40 miles of an existing one. In 1954, Manitoba also proposed limitations to growth in the number of colonies.

In 1955, the South Dakota Legislature passed a bill designed to stop the expansion of colonies in the state. At the time the state was home to 17 colonies with an estimated population of 1,650 persons (Riley 1966).

The South Dakota legislation was designed to repeal the Communal Corporate Act of 1935 which had enticed colonies back from Canada. The legislation prevented further expansion of the present colonies and formation of any new ones. The bill was appealed and found to be invalid by a State circuit court. However, the South Dakota Supreme Court upheld the law in a 1958 ruling which permitted the state to prohibit further expansion by allowing no new colonies to be established as corporations. The court ruled as invalid those portions of the bill which prohibited the expansion of already existing colonies.

In effect, the legislation did little to restrict the number of new colonies, as the Hutterites established new colonies as "associations."

Attempts continue to be made throughout the states and provinces to limit the expansion of the colonies. In 1992 the South Dakota Legislative Agricultural Committee considered a bill designed to prevent the purchase of land for communal farming. The committee voted 8 to 1 to defeat the bill (Argus Leader 1992).

Present Situation

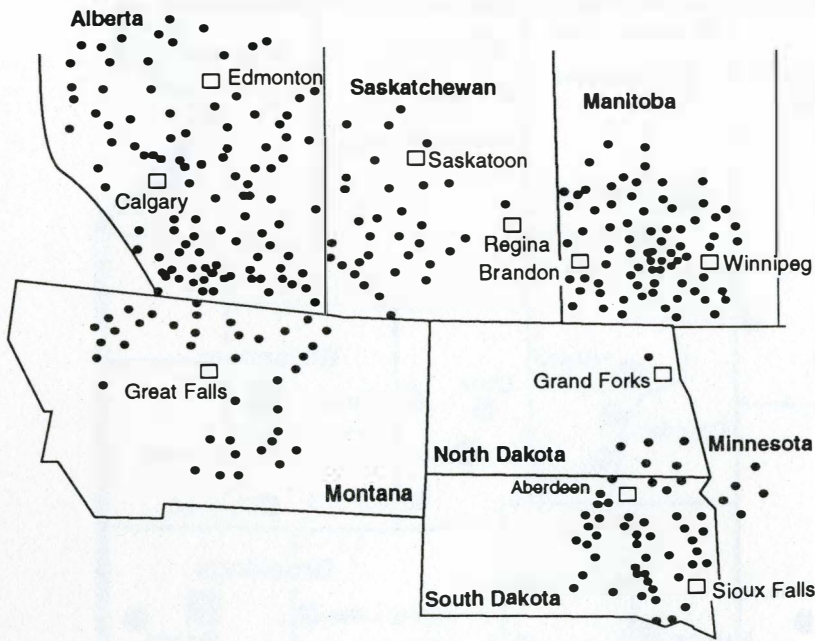
The number of Hutterite colonies in the world has grown to 368 in 1993. The largest number of colonies is in Canada (252) followed by the U.S. (113). South Dakota has 51, Montana 40, Minnesota 5, North Dakota 6, and Washington 5. Colonies also exist in Pennsylvania (2), Connecticut (1), and New York (3).

The eight colonies in the eastern U.S. (Pennsylvania, Connecticut, New York) and in England and Germany are a fourth Leut, recently added to the Hutterian Brethren. This Leut (Arnold Leut) originated in 1920 with the Woodcrest Society of Brothers in Germany under the leadership of Dr. Eberhard Arnold. The movement was first recognized by the main body of Hutterites in 1931 when Arnold was ordained as a Hutterite minister. The majority of colonies in this Leut migrated to England, Paraguay in South America, and ultimately to the U.S. These eastern Hutterite colonies are

Figure 3. Number and distribution of Hutterite colonies, 1992.

World	368
Canada	252
Alberta	116
Manitoba	90
Saskatchewan	45
British Columbia	1
United States	113
South Dakota	51
Montana	40
North Dakota	6
Minnesota	5
Washington	5
New York	3
Pennsylvania	2
Connecticut	1
England	1
Germany	1
Nigeria	1

Map 1. Distribution of the Hutterite colonies—plains states and provinces, 1992.



highly involved in industrial-commercial enterprises, as opposed to the agricultural focus of those in the Upper Great Plains and Canada (Peters 1976).

While for purposes of this publication, the Arnold Leut is considered as one of the four branches of the Hutterite Brethren, there are many ministers among the three traditional Leuts who feel the Arnold Society colonies are but a fringe group and should not be considered as the equivalent of the older Leuts. Many feel their failure to adhere to the basic tenets of the movement violate the original agreement when Eberhard Arnold was ordained as a minister in the Hutterite Church in 1931.

SOCIAL ORGANIZATION

Governing Structure

The Hutterian Brethren Church in North America is organized under a constitution which sets forth the Articles of Association. The church consists of four "conferences" (Darius Leut, Lehrer Leut, Schmeiden Leut, Arnold Leut) which encompass all 365 colonies in North America (Fig

3). The "Church" which is made up of these four conferences is administered by a Board of Managers appointed by each Conference. The Board of Managers in turn elects from its membership a president (senior elder), vice president (assistant senior elder), and a secretary-treasurer for 3-year terms.

Each Conference also sets up its own governing structure (Confer-

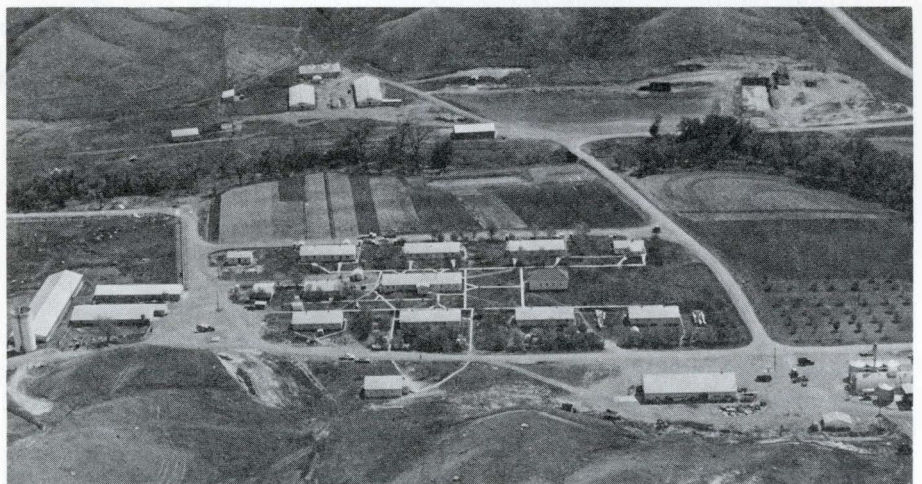
ence Board) which consists of two delegates from each of the colonies comprising the Conference. The delegates elect a three-person executive committee (chairman, vice chairman, and secretary) for a 2-year term. The Church and Conference Boards exercise control over Church dogma and discipline. Each colony, however, has complete control over its own secular affairs (Hutterian Brethren 1950).

Given the domination of Hutterite life by religion, the institutions of family, economics, government, and education serve to reinforce a life of austerity, conformity, and simplicity.

Membership size in a Hutterite community is controlled. Colonies will range in size from 50 to 150 persons. This is considered a viable size for a cohesive, controlled community.

Structural integration is accomplished through the formal organization of the colony. An elected Council of Elders serves at the helm in determining all aspects of the sacred and secular life of the community members (Fig 5).

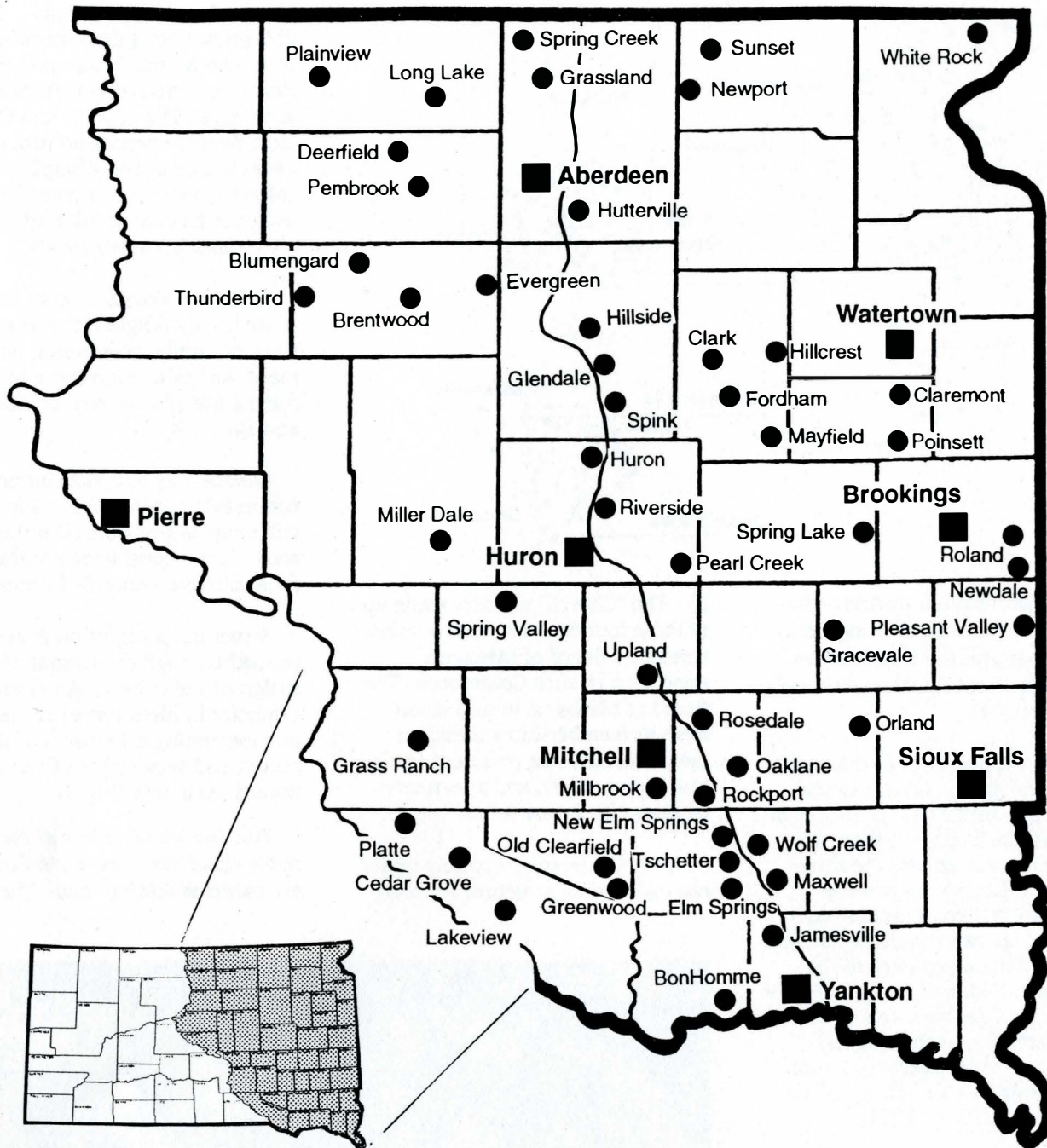
The Council of Elders is usually made up of five to seven males who are baptized and married. The min-



Hutterite communes are, for the most part, agricultural enterprises, highly advanced technologically and highly isolated socially. A Hutterite colony is a tightly knit, closely controlled community of no more than 150 persons. When a colony gets too large, it is divided, with half the population moving to the newly formed daughter colony.

(Photo by Dr. L. Anderson, Dept. of Geography, Mankato State University, Mankato, Minn.)

Map 2. Distribution of Hutterite colonies—South Dakota, 1993.



ister, assistant minister, and farm boss are automatically Council members, with the remaining membership elected for life by the voting members of the congregation (males who are baptized and married).

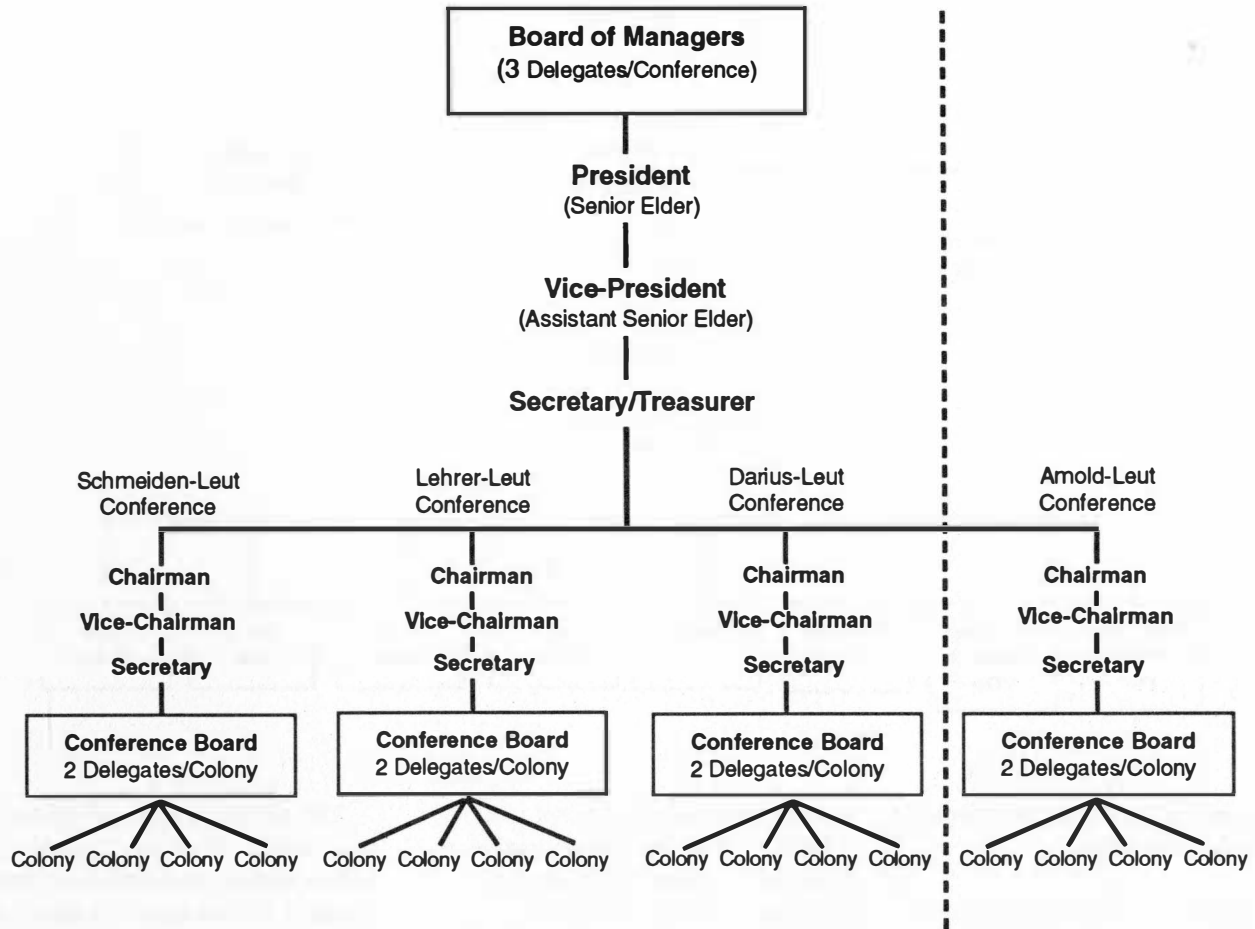
The Council of Elders makes all basic decisions which then are brought before the congregation for approval. The colony minister serves

as the actual day-to-day head and spokesman for the Council and community as he ministers to the spiritual needs of the members. The farm boss (steward), also elected by the voting members, is delegated responsibility for economic aspects of the colony. He assigns jobs and duties, purchases goods and services for the colony, and oversees the economic well-being of the community.

Assigned to him are department heads in charge of specific aspects of the economic endeavor. Several of these assignments go to women (head chef, head seamstress, and in some colonies head gardener).

Worldly possessions and amusements are considered counter to colony religious rules. Dance, theater, cards, smoking, motion pic-

Figure 4. Hutterite Brethren Church.



tures, television, and radio are generally off-limits. Failure to live up to the rules of the colony will bring “strappings” to children. While parents have major responsibility for children’s discipline, all other adults also correct disobedience. The German teacher is the assigned party most responsible for child discipline outside the home.

Adults who deviate will be publicly admonished, made to stand in church and admit their sins. Continued deviance may bring about a decision by the Elders to “shun” (ostracize) the person whereby colony members will refuse to recognize or interact with the guilty party who may also be excluded from commu-

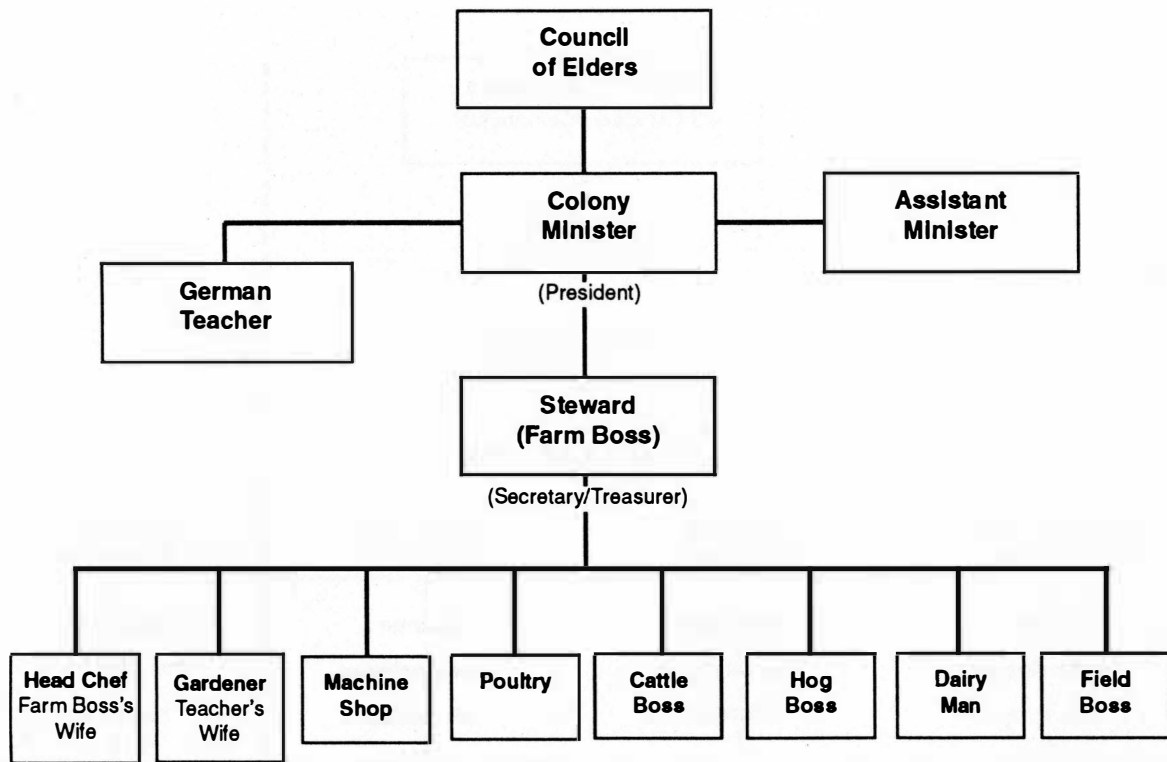


The central difference between the Hutterites and other Anabaptist groups is their beliefs concerning communal living. “What’s mine is thine,” according to the Acts 2:44 and 45, “and all that believed were together and had all things in common.”

nal dining, may not sleep in the family apartment, and will be given isolated work assignments. Even communication between the guilty person and the immediate family may be severed (Khoshkis 1976).

Defections from the colony by members seeking to leave the Brethren are often exaggerated by outsiders. Forty-one South Dakota colony ministers responded to questions concerning the extent to which members have left in the past 5 years. The number ranged from a response of only one to as many as 33. One colony had lost four entire families; another had dissolved its status as a colony because of economic problems and presently operates under the

Figure 5. Colony structure.



management of a number of independent Hutterite families.

The ministers in this study pointed out that approximately 80% of those who have left (usually young men) do return, serving a probationary period upon their return. Most ministers indicated they would accept the defector back with an outside spouse, but only under very strict conditions related to commitment to the faith. No outside spouses to defectors are known to live in the South Dakota colonies.

Not all individuality is set aside in the Hutterite socialization process and for the good of the larger community. Limited opportunity for self-expression and differential prestige does exist, as persons are elected or appointed to positions within the formal organization of the colony.

While some persons do gain prestige because of a position as department boss or even as minister, the

status differentiation is kept to a minimum, for their compensation or personal property rarely changes with rank. All eat, work, are clothed, and are housed in a similar manner. In response to questions of individual compensation, ministers in this study of South Dakota colonies indicate the standard is \$12/year/individual or as needed to cover expenses if a person requires food and lodging for business trips outside the colony.

Another opportunity for gaining high-prestige positions occurs at "branching." The need to divide the colony through branching occurs on average every 14 years, allowing for a complete duplication of all formal positions within the new daughter colony. Given high birth rates (average family size is seven persons), the colony will divide as the population size reaches a maximum of 150 persons. Branching means a regrouping of nuclear families and the formation of a new social organization.

The actual process of colony division begins when the Council of Elders divides the mother colony families into two groups based on the skill levels among the household heads. This assures that the new colony will benefit by a mix of ages and skills. Families have the right to appeal their reassignment based on individual desires, hardship cases, or a desire to remain with a particular minister.

At this point, colony members do not know which group goes and which group stays. The day of the move, lots are drawn by the two ministers. This precludes any conscious or unconscious assignment of the best equipment, etc., by members, for neither group will know in advance which colony site will serve as their home after division.

Religious Beliefs

Basic religious tenets have guided the Hutterites through 418 years of



Hutterite families tend to be large, averaging seven people including parents. At the age of three Hutterite children are placed in the "little school," where they are introduced to concepts of community priority over the individual, total sharing, and strict discipline. As the child becomes older, the immediate family gives up more control of the socialization process to the community system.

existence. The Anabaptist movement as a conservative reaction to the Holy Roman Church in the 16th Century differed from the Catholic Church and the more liberal Protestant movements in the belief that the church should be a group of volunteer adults, baptized upon confession of faith at adulthood.

Mennonites are the best-known of the Anabaptist groups, with over 200,000 members in the U.S. and a half million members worldwide. Ten sub-sects make up this group, ranging from Old Order Mennonites to the more liberal sects which differ little from traditional Protestant churches. Mennonites are encouraged to obtain higher education and are employed in all walks of life.

The Old Order Amish, a 121,000-member splinter group of the Mennonites, is the most orthodox and anti-worldly of all 10 Mennonite groups. Living on individual farms, Amish manifest their differences mainly in adhering to traditional "horse and buggy" customs (Bradley 1992).

While the Mennonites and the Amish uphold the same tenet of volunteer church membership at adulthood, they differ most from the Hutterites in their beliefs concerning communal living. This Hutterite belief was based on a fundamental principle of a community of goods: "What is mine is thine," according to the Acts 2:44 and 45, "and all that believed were together and had all things in common."

The principle of nonviolence is not unique to the Hutterites as it too is practiced by other groups such as Quakers and Amish. Biblical passages from Luke 2:8-20, Isaiah 2:1-14, Micah 4:1-4, and Romans 12:14-21 support this belief in nonresistance.

In addition to these basic tenets are beliefs in isolation and nonconformity based on Romans 12:2 stating that nonconformity is expected in all situations where standards of the world come into conflict with the Bible. These tenets are further realized in admonitions against pride, patterns of discipline, and

restrictions on apparel and ornamentation (Riley 1970).

The Hutterites believe their way of life is God-sanctioned and God-commanded. They believe that God is the Creator and supreme all-powerful being to whom all should give obedience. All Hutterite behaviors are sanctioned by this infinitely wise Deity who must be obeyed even to martyrdom. These beliefs are revealed through a literal interpretation of the scriptures and are regarded as direct expression of the will of God (Riley 1964).

All baptized members of the colony make up the "Gemein" or church. While women play a role in church activities they are not eligible to vote or hold formal leadership positions in the colony. Five to seven baptized married men are elected to serve on the "Council of Elders." The colony minister, who serves at the pleasure of the Council, is the formal figurehead for the colony, seeking advice on most matters. The minister represents the colony in all religious activities such as funerals, marriages, and baptisms. He often also represents colony interests in affairs between colonies and with the outside. At least twice annually he will join with other ministers of his Leut at meetings under the direction of the Conference Elder who represents the Leut in all church related activities. He may be called upon by the Leut Elder to sit on a Conference Board committee to consider issues pertinent to Leut activities.

The minister receives no formal education prior to his election. He must be conservative in his religious values yet be sufficiently open to change in the economic endeavors of the colony. He has responsibilities to maintain birth, marriage, and death records and travel records. He acts as counselor and arbitrator and oversees the lifelong indoctrination of his people (Hostetler 1974).

Traditionally, religious services were conducted in a colony building (school, dining hall, etc.) not

associated with a formal church structure, for a separate church building was associated with the "outside world" which had persecuted the group. More recently, some colonies have seen fit to construct separate colony churches.

In addition to the usual Sunday services, the ordained minister is responsible for religious services each evening. As in all verbal communication within and between members, service is conducted in a dialect of German. Sermons are drawn from the Great Chronicle, a large hand-written volume which is still preserved in several locations in South Dakota and Canada.

Hutterite society maintains a high rate of population growth without relying on converts from outside. While the practice of sending out missionaries occurred in the early history of the sect, this has been discontinued, eliminating any problems associated with assimilating a large number of outsiders. When ministers in this study were asked if they would accept converts from outside into their colony, 35 of the 51 indicated they would, but with certain stipulations on commitment. Such a practice would appear to be extremely rare today.

Family

Since the entire institutional system within the colony revolves around religion, the family function is to support the church. The family has no real economic basis, as the principle of exchange (work for money for food) is completely absent. The family is dependent upon goods which are distributed by virtue of custom in accordance with religious sentiments.

Just as lines of authority in other spheres of colony life are dominated by males, so is the family. However, because the strong center of authority is in the community (colony), the



Hutterite families live in apartments that are assigned to them according to the number of members of the family. Clothing and furniture in the apartment belong to the family. Everything outside the apartment is communal property and is shared by all members of the colony. All families share a common colony kitchen and dining hall.

individual nuclear family plays a much different role in the socialization process than would be true in more secular societies (Peter 1963). Food purchase, its preparation, and dining are colony functions, as the family members share a common colony kitchen and dining hall. The family is assigned an apartment which may change as the family grows in size. The furniture, clothes, and items within this apartment are the private property of the family; anything outside the apartment is considered communal property owned by all members. The constitution of the Hutterite Church specifically spells out the absence of individual rights to communal property upon defection.

Child rearing. Because of strong opposition to birth control, the size of the Hutterite family averages seven persons including parents. Pregnancy brings no major changes in a women's work role and responsibilities. Traditionally, child birth was attended by colony midwives; however, most colonies today look to neighboring communities for medical services. Child-

birth is followed by a postpartum period of approximately 6 weeks in which the mother is allowed total freedom from work assignments to care for her baby. Following this period, the mother is given a flexible work schedule so she may nurse the baby for at least a year or until she becomes pregnant again.

A mother seldom takes her "house children" (under age 3) with her while she works. Other children, grandparents, and fathers share the care of the small child. At age 3 the child is placed in the "little school" (kindergarten) and remains in this environment until ready for German school at age 5 years. During this 2-year period (age 3-5) the child is socialized to respect authority of all persons in the surroundings, tolerate a very restricted environment, and accept reward for a cooperative, docile, and passive response to correction and frustration (Hostetler and Huntington 1967).

Mothers take turns being responsible for the kindergarten and introduce the children to acceptable Hut-

terite behaviors: the priority of community (group) over the individual, total sharing, and strict discipline regardless of parental presence. The importance of the immediate family lessens in the socialization process as the community comes to play a much stronger role. All adults have both the right and the responsibility to correct deviant behavior. As the child grows older, the family relinquishes even more of its social control to the community system.

At age 5 the child begins "German" school, studying the Bible and learning hymns and the Tyrolean German language. At age 6 the children join the public school (English) on the colony grounds. On their 15th birthdays, youth enter a transitional stage between childhood and adulthood. They are allowed to sit with the adults in the dining hall and be assigned adult work assignments, but they are still treated as children in their religious education and preparation. They are given a catechism and books necessary to prepare for eventual baptism. They are required to attend Sunday School (Sunday afternoon) and memorize assigned religious materials, all under the supervision of the German teacher.

This transitional period allows greater freedom, for they are not attached to specific departments or work details nor bound by school. Travel outside the colony and dating are allowed with the permission of the minister and German teacher.

It is during this transitional period that both young men and women tend to test the system, experimenting with aspects of the outside world. Some may leave, although most of them will return to enter the next stage in the family life cycle—baptism and full adult acceptance and participation.

Baptism is a Hutterite's total submission to God and the community. Young people request baptism



Organically grown produce, such as sweet corn, onions, and potatoes, is a source of income as well as sustenance for many Hutterite colonies. Because Hutterite material needs are minimal, a South Dakota colony needs only about 45 acres of land per person to support its members.

when they feel they are ready, usually at age 19 or 20 for girls and 20 to 26 for boys.

Baptism opens the door to marriage for the young adults. It also marks the change in status of young men from generalists in the agricultural operations to more specialized roles in a specific department. Women's roles change little as they continue to rotate between work assignments in the laundry, kitchens, gardens or kindergarten.

Courtship. Courtship may begin prior to the formal baptism when young adults are given greater traveling rights to visit other colonies on errands, etc. Courtship may last 2 to 5 years.

Marriage within one's colony is limited; potential mates may be too closely related. This is monitored by the colony minister and the immediate family. For this reason, trips to other colonies, most often

initiated by the young men, help in the seeking of eligible mates.

Marriages are conducted only on certain Sundays throughout the year; therefore the ceremony may involve as many as four or five couples. An engagement ceremony at the bride's colony serves as public notice of a couple's intentions.

The actual wedding takes place at the groom's colony. A formal wedding ceremony is conducted by the groom's minister and followed by a wedding meal complete with cake, gifts, and singing. Because there may be several couples involved, visitors from several colonies contribute to a happy affair and renew acquaintances.

Other than being required to grow a beard, the new role and the adjustment of the groom to marriage is minimal. The adjustment for the bride, however, is much more traumatic as she leaves parents and friends to live in the groom's colony. Being a "stranger," she must rely heavily on her husband for information on how things operate in the new colony and for support.

Aging. The Hutterite colony has no set age at which one must retire. The elderly are given high respect, and many look forward to a "deserved rest" from the everyday assigned chores of the colony. They may spend more of their time traveling, going to town, and visiting with friends and neighbors.

To continue work beyond the usual age of 45-50 for women and 50-55 for men is optional. Women are relieved of the rotation assignments and help out whenever they may be needed. Men in higher prestige positions find it more difficult to relinquish their position and so are often moved onto the Council of Elders so that the colony may benefit from the years of wisdom accumulated in such positions. This also allows younger men to move

up within the colony and at the same time allows the older men to remain on the Council until death.

Ministers are allowed to retain their positions until their health or preaching abilities diminish. Research indicates that life expectancy for Hutterites is similar to that of the outside world, except that the men tend to live longer than the women (Hostetler and Huntington 1967).

Old age brings health problems which are treated through the use of outside medical services. When a marriage partner dies, the survivor will move in with their children or occupy an apartment next door to the children. Grandchildren are often given the responsibility of helping the elderly by running errands and bringing meals from the dining hall into their apartments.

Death. Death to a Hutterite, regardless of age, is controlled only by God. This is true whether it be the death of a baby at birth or the death of an elderly person. In fact, those who die in childhood are envied by adults in that they are

presumed to be innocent of sin and therefore are spared a lifelong struggle of self denial from the temptations of life.

A funeral service, much like a birth or marriage, brings friends and relatives from several colonies together for the event. The funeral and burial in the colony cemetery further integrate the colonies at all levels. Friends and relatives renew acquaintances and young people from several colonies look for prospective marital partners (Hostetler and Huntington 1967).

Education

The Constitution of the Hutterite Brethren Church specifically states that every child must have an education in skills and religion. The four levels of formal education are kindergarten, German school, Sunday School, and the English school. The first three are conducted by the colony and the fourth under the rules set up by the state or province in which the colony is located.

Kindergarten. The "kindergarten" concept was invented by



No age is set for retirement in the Hutterite community. After about age 45 for women and 50 for men, Hutterites can reduce their workload as they see fit. The elderly are given high respect, and many look forward to a "deserved rest" from the everyday chores of the colony. Others, such as this broom maker, continue contributing specialized skills long after they are given the opportunity to slow down.

the Hutterites and brought to the new world with the migration of colonies in the 1870s. In the colony, the kindergarten is managed by middle-aged and older Hutterite women. It operates as a day-care center and serves as the first introduction to the Hutterite virtues of respect for authority and group cooperation. Children leave the confines of the family apartment as "house children" at age 3 to be placed in the kindergarten until age 5 when they will enter the German and English schools.

German School. The purpose of the German School is twofold: teaching the German language and the religious tenets of the Hutterite Brethren. This includes learning to write German script, read German, and recite religious hymns, the Books of Psalms, and the New Testament.

In addition the German teacher has responsibility for admonishing



The "community" is central to Hutterite beliefs. Women work and sing together as they husk corn from the colony's gardens. Children play and do their chores in groups. Department heads and apprentices work at tasks together. The entire colony eats meals together in the dining hall. From early childhood on, Hutterites are taught to hold a very different view of the individual than people in the outside world.



Hutterite children attend both German and English schools until age 15. In English school children learn the “basics”—arithmetic, science, reading, and writing in English. In German school, children are taught the German language and the basic tenets of the Hutterite Brethren. The German teacher is also responsible for punishing children for behavior at odds with colony rules.

misbehavior and wrongful beliefs. Discipline is strict, and various degrees of “strapping” serve to bring the child into line with colony rules.

German school is conducted usually before and after English school each day, a half day on Saturdays, and all day during vacations. German school introduces the children to work: girls in the kitchens, laundry, and child care areas; boys in the livestock barns, implement sheds, and fields.

English School. The English school, although mandated by the state or province, is welcomed, for Hutterites place much importance on learning the “basics” (arithmetic, science, and reading and writing in English). Social studies is often seen as “learning the worldly ways” and yet, as it is state mandated, must be taught by the “English” teacher.

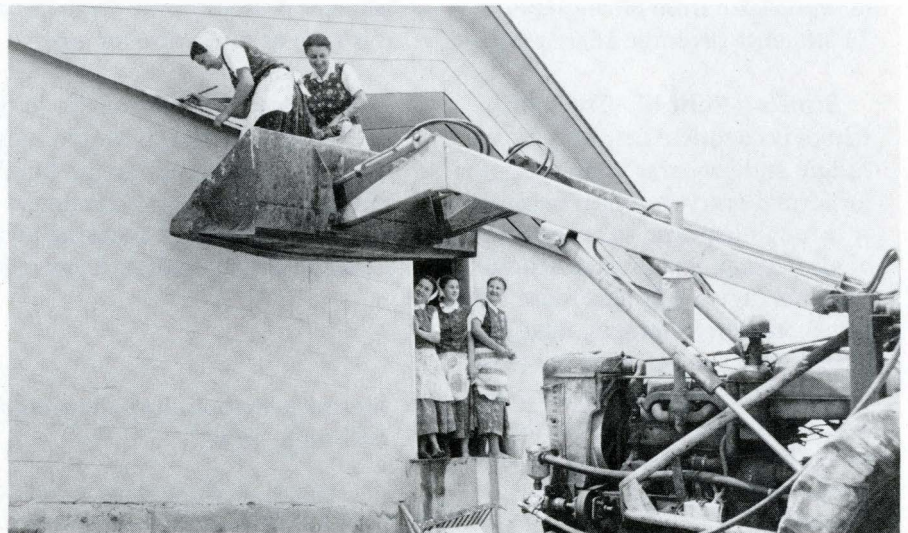
With few exceptions the English school is taught by an outsider. A Hutterite does not have sufficient

education to be certified as an “English” teacher by the state or province. In South Dakota, the state has certified several Hutterite members who have, through self-instruction and attendance at a

local Mennonite College, passed certification requirements. At present only four colonies in South Dakota have their own certified Hutterite “English” teachers.

The status of the Hutterite English school has been the basis for disagreement between the state and local (county) governing officials and the colonies. The Hutterites contend that as taxpayers they have the right to a school subsidized by local government. They say their school is not a “private” school, but rather a quasi-public school. They say that the number of children present in the colony justifies a school on colony grounds. The state and local officials contend that the cost of education has increased to the point that consolidation of such rural schools into larger community schools is a necessity.

Given that the Hutterites want and need the benefits of the “English” school, a number of experiments have been tried and compromises have been made. Experiments in establishing Hutterite high schools and in sending Hutterite children into town to integrated Hutterite/non-Hutterite schools (Doland, S.D. in 1961; Elkton, S.D., in 1993) have not worked out.



After completing German/English school, young girls begin as helpers, cleaning, painting, gardening, preparing food, and laundering. After marriage, they are given more responsible work. Marriage partners are usually from different colonies, and in all cases, the wife will move to her husband’s colony, an event that often means a period of some adjustment as she is separated from family and friends.



Young men, fresh from completing German/English school, run the farm machinery and take on the hard manual labor. Older men hold more responsible, supervisory roles. For some seasonal tasks children are released from German school to help the adults. These early work experiences help prepare children for their adult responsibilities to the community.

Compromises in the form of the local governments providing funding for the outside certified teachers and the colony providing the funding for physical facilities (school building, electricity, heat, etc.) and supplies have been the most workable solution for both parties. All colonies contacted in this study indicated they operated an "English" school. Total enrollments in all colonies amounted to approximately 1,200 students with a range in school size from 50 students to 13 students (average 16/school).

Sunday School. The fourth school is conducted entirely by the colony and prepares young people for formal entry into the community through baptism. It is required of all German and English school students (age 6-15) plus those who have completed German/English school but have yet to be baptized (age 15-20). Sunday school meetings are conducted Sunday afternoons by the German teacher and reinforce the Sunday morning church sermon.

The Sunday school serves the transition period in the lives of young Hutterites by pushing them

toward adulthood and punishing unseemly behavior. Because of increased freedom during the transition to adulthood, older youth are prone to more transgressions. Punishment may take the form of admission of guilt before the Sunday school group, having to stand in the back of the room during evening church services and, for the more severe violations, before the entire congregation at the service on Sunday morning. This more severe punishment is usually only for males as it is seen as too severe for girls.

Such acts as being caught going to a movie or smoking would most likely be handled within the Sunday school. More severe infractions would be defined as sneaking away from the colony without permission

or being arrested by local authorities for some act such as underage drinking, etc.

Socio-Economic Characteristics

Agricultural Operation. Most Hutterites depend upon agricultural enterprises as the main means of colony sustenance. Since their beginning in Europe four centuries ago, agriculture has provided the self-sufficiency and the isolation necessary to allow the religious movement to survive.

The belief in communal ownership extends to all aspects of the agricultural enterprise: all land, equipment, and colony facilities are owned by the colony. The Constitution of the Hutterite Brethren enacted in 1950 states very specifically that neither members nor defectors can place any personal claims on the communally owned property.

Because material needs are minimal, a colony needs between 3,000 and 16,000 acres of land to support its members, depending on whether the colony is located on the grasslands of Montana and Saskatchewan or on the more productive lands bordering the corn belt of Minnesota and South Dakota. South Dakota colonies averaged 4,731 acres in 1992 or approximately 274 acres/family (45 acres/person).

An overview of the demographic and economic characteristics of the 51 colonies in 1992 is given in Figs 6-8.

Figure 6. Population characteristics of South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1992.

Number of colonies	51
Population	4,648
Number of families	838
Average population/colony	91
Average number of families/colony	17.3
Average number of persons/family	6.7

Figure 7. Agricultural characteristics of South Dakota Hutterite colonies, 1992.

Number of colonies	51
Population	4,731
Acres operated	212,889
% of land rental	10.2
% land in cropland	73
Average acres/colony	4,730
Average acres/family	274
Average acres/person	45

All colonies are somewhat diversified, operating both field grain and livestock industries. Specialization in livestock was more common in 1992 than in previous field studies (Fig 8).

Twelve colonies listed enterprises in which they sold products or services to the outside. These amounted to:

Electrical product repair -----	3
Operate lumber yard -----	1
Stainless steel/metal fab. -----	3
Build stock equipment -----	2
Operate feed mill -----	1
Manufacture pipe -----	1
Custom combining -----	1

Colony Division. Approximately every 14 to 15 years, the colony grows in population to an optimum size (150 persons), considered a maximum for maintenance of the primary group. A colony must be productive enough to that it can duplicate itself and establish a daughter colony. This means the accumulation of sufficient wealth to duplicate machinery, physical plant, housing, and livestock.

This need for expansion often raises suspicion and criticism from the outside. Numerous attempts by governments to limit expansion have taken the form of proposals to establish minimum distances between colonies, taking away their corporate status, setting maximum acres/colony,

and setting up government boards to review applications for expansion.

The effect of these numerous attempts to limit expansion both in the U.S. and Canada has been the dispersion of newly formed colonies over a much larger geographic area. While most colonies in South Dakota were aligned along the James River prior to the 1955 legislation, today they are spread throughout eastern South Dakota and into North Dakota and western Minnesota.

Labor. The division of labor in the colony is according to age and sex. Among males, those completing German/English school at age 15 are expected to enter the labor force of young men responsible for running the colony's machinery. Tractors, trucks, and combines are usually operated by young men between 18 and 25 years of age.

By age 35 most men have moved into specialty positions, tapering off from hard manual labor as the younger males take over such duties. Hard work is always recognized and serves as the basis for promotion in the social structure. No age is set for retirement, as men over 50 can reduce their workload at their own choosing.

Young girls upon completion of school begin as kitchen, cleaning, painting, gardening, food preparation and laundry helpers. As they marry (at approximately 18-20



Hutterites believe in self-sufficiency. Each colony attempts to be as independent and self-sustaining as possible by producing most of the goods and services it uses. This practice goes beyond economic motivation--it keeps down contacts with the outside world.

years), they are given more responsible work. By the time they reach 35, most have independent jobs such as kindergarten teacher, kitchen boss, tailoress-seamstress, or gardener. By age 45, a woman usually retires from organized routine work and is left to do work of her choice (Peter 1963).

Figure 8. Livestock and poultry production, 1992.

Livestock/ Poultry	Number in 1992	Colonies reporting	Range in size
Beef	4,680	17	1,000-25
Dairy	3,066	22	500-10
Sheep	1,100	2	600-500
Turkeys	1,141,066	19	140,000-24,000
Hogs	165,525	46	10,000-95
Chickens	142,200	23	80,000-400
Ducks	24,620	28	2,000-10
Geese	14,405	17	10,000-130

Economic decisions are made no differently than any others. Ultimate authority rests with the Council of Elders, through the colony minister and steward (farm boss). All members are required to work according to their ability. Every week the steward makes the work plan and assignments in consultation with the minister and assistant minister, with non-routine jobs assigned on a daily basis. As on any diversified farm, work load varies with the season. In the off-season, labor resources are shifted toward improving or expanding the colony facilities—adding or remodeling buildings, overhauling engines, and maintaining machinery.

The discretion to explore and experiment with new economic activity is left strictly to the colony. There is no need to seek permission from Leut and Church authorities. This differs from the “sacred,” as the overall Hutterian Church has ultimate authority in directing any changes in the religious sphere of colony life.

SUMMARY

The Hutterite Brethren is one of the oldest surviving communal societies known. Hutterite colonies are under authority of a Council of Elders representing four branches (Leuts) in the United States and Canada and

who determine the sacred (religious) aspects of colony life. Each Leut and, in turn, the individual colonies in each Leut practice a democratic form of governance with elected officials. The colony integrates its economic enterprise and its kinship and socialization processes under an overall umbrella of its religious beliefs. It is the community (colony) which carries the responsibility for socialization and the self-sustaining aspects of life designed to meet the needs of all of its members. Authority is centered in baptized males who in turn select elders to represent their sacred and secular interests. From birth the individual is socialized to set aside individuality in favor of the group, to be submissive and obedient to the rules of colony life. Respect for order, authority, hard work, and cooperation are dominant features of the Hutterite personality.

Education is totally within the colony as kindergarten, German and English schools, and Sunday schools dominate the lives of children from age 3 until baptism at approximately 20 years of age. Freedom of courtship and mate selection allows for the exchange of persons between colonies and contributes to long lasting friendship and acquaintances. Work is divided by age and sex as men tend to specialize in various economic endeavors. Women rotate

between various work roles. Both grow into positions of prestige in middle age and are allowed great freedom and veneration with age.

CONCLUSIONS

The Hutterite Church and the culture as a whole serve as a reminder of America's commitment to accept immigrants of all colors, creeds, and religious beliefs. The Hutterites are a people dedicated to a very basic and conservative interpretation of the Christian Bible. Yet their economic enterprises represent the most advanced and up-to-date agricultural technology. Different than their Mennonite and Amish cousins, they have defined a unique way of life, a combination of the sacred and the secular which allows for a religious practice rich in tradition and relatively free from dependence on and intrusion from the outside world.

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