The Maintenance of the Hutterite Way
the Family and Childhood Life-cycle
in the Communal Context

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The Hutterites represent one of the few cases in which an intentional religious
group has survived as a long-term, multi-generational society. Strict communitarianism
in the context of an agrarian colony (Bruderhof) is the central focus of the Hutterite
pattern of living. The key factors in the successful preservation of the Hutterite Way
have been the supportive commitment of the family unit to communal life and a deep,
abiding sense of obligation to the religious principles upon which the foundation of a
common ownership of goods and property (Guetergemeinschaft) is based. The family
is the central unit in this arrangement. The family is reinforced in its communal
commitment through a network of intense and powerful mechanisms of socialization
within the colony. this socialization process takes place within the context of a series
of strictly controlled and monitored phases (cycles) of maturation from early infancy
to adulthood. In this paper, I will discuss the interplay between the family and the five
general phases of maturation within the overall context of colony life. Contemporary
forces which are presenting challenges to the Hutterite Way forcing basic reassessment
and redefinition of the role of the family in the community also will be discussed.

The Hutterian Brethren are a well established, rapidly-growing group who, along
with their more widely known spiritual-ideological "cousins," the Mennonites and Amish,
have their own foundation in the radical Anabaptist movement of the Protestant
Reformation era of sixteenth century central Europe. They practice strict
communitarianism which they have successfully fostered (with the exception of a
generation-long span in the mid-nineteenth century) since 1528, when they were
impressed to form a community of goods as a result of an interpretation a scriptural
passage in the New Testament:

And all that believed were together, and had all things common; And sold their
possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need. (Acts
2:44, 45)

This action, based on deep religious convictions (Great Chronicle of the Hutterian
Brethren, 1987), has become the center focus of the Hutterian way-of-life and permeates

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all aspects of their society. The Hutterite Way is promoted in a set of over 799 sermons, commentaries, hymns, and discourses which were written by early Hutterian scholars and theologians in the first century of their movement (Friedmann, 1956, 1959; Great Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, 1987). These documents, some totaling over fifty hand-written pages in length, are read to an assemblage of older children and able-bodied adults in evening religious services. Each sermon is read exactly in its original form without further commentary or discussion. The topic of each service varies, but the general context relates most often to the first three gospels of the New Testament and to the book of Acts (Bender, 1955). Five basic themes permeate these discussions: a) adult baptism of those who understand the teachings of the gospel; b) unity of all believers through a common communion expressed in the partaking of bread and wine as a *symbolic* representation of the body and blood of Jesus Christ; c) full yielding and surrender to God's will (*Gelassenheit*) and a firm commitment to Christian brotherhood through renouncing personal gain and profit by strict adherence to communalism (*Gütergemeinschaft* or "community of goods"); d) a recognition of the right of established rulers to administer and enforce the law of the land but holding to the strict position that true Christians may not administer worldly law, may not wage war, or may not use physical force or coercion against another person; and e) the supreme sanctity of marriage, the importance of marriage only to fellow believers and an absolute injunction against divorce (Great Chronicle of the Hutterian Brethren, 1987).

In the 1870s, the Hutterites, who at the time, were living in the Ukraine in Imperial Russia, moved to the United States and settled in South Dakota. Their original three settlements became the "mother" colonies of the three separate branches of the Hutterites today. the Schmiedeleut, now located in the states of South Dakota, North Dakota, and Minnesota, and the adjacent province of Manitoba, stem from the Bon Homme Colony which is still occupied. The second Group, Dariusleut, trace their origin to the Wolf Creek Colony. The Dariusleut abandoned this colony in 1930 and moved to the province of Alberta, Canada, to join other Dariusleut communities which already had been established there and now have colonies in provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia as well as the states of Montana and Washington. The third group, Lehrerleut, established their colony at Elmspring. In 1918, they moved to southern Alberta. Today the Lehrerleut are found in Alberta and Saskatchewan as well as the state of Montana. The historical migration and subsequent development of the traditional Hutterian Brethren colonies has been outlined in great detail in other works (Bennett, 1967; Flint, 1975; Gross, 1965; Hofer, 1982; Hostetler, 1974; Peters, 1965).

In the course of more than a century, the three groups--all stemming from common roots in Russia--have emerged as separate entities with subtle differences in their respective identity and manners. To outsiders, the differences in dress, architecture, idioms, and social practices seem minimal-to the point that many non-Hutterians who have lived their whole lives in the close proximity of both Dariusleut and Lehrerleut settlements are not aware that they are different groups among the Hutterites and express surprise (or, in some cases, refusal of belief) when informed thereof. These differences, however, have been sufficient to preclude inter-Leut marriage and have retarded intense interaction between colonies of different Leut affiliation.

During the twentieth century, two other groups have emerged to add themselves to the community of Hutterian Brethren. One group, founded in Germany in the 1920s by a young theologian named Eberhard Arnold, now consists of seven colonies: two each in the states of New York and Pennsylvania, and one colony each in Connecticut, southeastern England, and West Germany.
The other group, The New Hutterian Brethren Church of Owa (Japan), is a group of about thirty souls living in a single colony in the central portion of Honshu, about 120 miles northeast of Tokyo. The colony was established in 1972 by Reverend Isomi Izeki (Hofer, 1980), and has led to close ties and mutual visits with the Dariusleut in Alberta in order to bring their practices into strict conformity with the traditional Hutterian pattern of life. There are differences in the five styles of Hutterian living, but for the sake of brevity and clarity, a general Hutterian pattern of custom will be presented below unless the inter-Lieut practices are of sufficient variety to warrant discussion.

The material presented in this article is drawn from a number of published sources supplemented by anthropological research techniques of on-site visits, directed interviews, and participant observation by the author. Unless otherwise cited, the information contained herein is derived from the personal notes and experiences of the author.

THE COMMUNITARIAN CONTEXT OF HUTTERIAN FAMILY LIFE

Without question, the colony, or Bruderhof--its German name--is the all-encompassing center of the social life of the Hutterites. Communal living is the primary force of the Hutterian way-of-life, and it is within the context of the colony that the life of a Hutterite is played out. The young Hutterite is introduced into colony life a few days after being born. (Nearly all births take place today in a local non-Hutterite hospital). From infancy on, the young person grows up in a world filled with Hutterites. One's peers, kin, co-workers, playmates, and associates are, in most cases, exclusively from within the bounds of the colony or with members of other colonies. When Hutterites leave the colony and venture into the non-Hutterite world, it is nearly always in the company of other members of the brotherhood. Hutterites are involved in a wide network of social relations outside the colony, but, with the exception of economic (shopping, delivering produce, day-labor in near-by farms) and medical purposes, these "outside" excursions are nearly always to other Hutterite colonies (Boldt, 1978, 1985; Everitt, 1980; Hostetler & Huntington, 1968; Stanton & Walter, 1986). Because of this near "total immersion" into Hutterite culture, the colony serves as the primary force of a person's life.

The communal aspect of Hutterite society is all pervasive to a member of the colony. All property within the colony, even the dwelling in which each family lives is held in common. All farm equipment, livestock, vehicles, buildings, all real estate--even the drinking water--is communal property. Most of the labor is performed in groups and even all meals are eaten in a communal dining hall.

From the age of three onwards, children are divided into age-groups for purposes of schooling, chores, recreation, eating, and during the day for young children, even sleeping. However, such intense communal activities have not supplanted the paramount importance of the Hutterian nuclear family.

The family is the primary unit of socialization within the Hutterite colony. The function of the family is to provide the intrinsic aspects of production of life, maintenance of health, concern for the welfare and well-being of its constituent members, close affective relationships, and a sense of identity within the community. The monogamous nuclear family of the Hutterites provides a specific set of parents and assemblage of siblings who develop strong, life-long bonds. However, Hutterite parents view their children not only as their own, but through obedience to their strict communitarian principles, they see them as a gift from God to the entire colony and to the Hutterite world in general (Gross, 1965; Hostetler, 1974).
Because of the intense communal experience of the Hutterite child as he or she progresses through various cycles of childhood, some authors either have ignored or underestimated the strength and vitality of the Hutterian nuclear family. Indeed, as the child matures and becomes progressively self-reliant and mobile, the communal nature of every-day life tends to occupy an ever-increasing degree of primary time in the life of this person. The family remains, however, the principal focus and support-group in the life of the child and adult alike (Gross, 1965).

The responsibility of rearing the children is placed squarely upon the shoulders of the parents within the context of the privacy of the home.

Today parental control over children is strong. While the influence of the numerous playmates and the kindergarten is also strong, it does not supersede the influence of the home. When a number of teachers in public schools assigned the composition topic, "What I Would Like to Be When I Grow Up," almost all the Hutterian youngsters indicated in their essays that their ideals were their fathers and mothers and their respective occupations. This parental attachment is carried on through life, and when one of the parents dies, the survivor will usually move into the home of one of the children. (Peters, 1965, pp. 97-98)

The long-term mission of the Hutterian family is designed to ensure the proper socialization of a child into a communal and religious environment which permeates every aspect of a person's life (Hostetler, 1974; Huntington, 1981). The family is not, of course, alone and isolated in the socialization process. The colony, consisting of roughly 100 individuals (but occasionally as few as 50, rarely over 140 people), provides the firm back-up support unit. This communal socialization process can be so pervasive that even some Hutterites assert that it effectively disposes with the need for individual family ties (Peter, 1987). The communal influence is so strong that there are some non-Hutterites who feel that it is a dangerous influence and deprives the individual within the colony of the ability to think and act independently. As reported by Howard Palmer, a resolution was proposed at the 1962 provincial Progressive Conservative leadership convention of Alberta calling for the "... breaking up of existing Hutterite colonies and forcing them to live on individual farms ... so that they can enjoy the freedom of the country" (1972, pp. 47-48).

HUTTERITE FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

The socialization of the Hutterian youth takes place in the context of the family, as mentioned above, and within the colony in the context of strictly controlled and monitored phases (cycles) of maturation. These phases are: a) house children; b) kindergarten; c) school (both the "English" and German Schools, as well as Sunday School); d) young adulthood; and e) marriage. A sixth category, women and change within the family, will be appended to these categories to discuss the recent adjustments women (and men) within the Hutterian brotherhood have responded to changes in the past five phases of maturation.

The House Child

This phase (infancy to the third birthday) is the most carefree of the Hutterian life-cycle. During this period, the child is given intense love and is the center of attention in the household. The mother is allowed time off from her regular duties to attend to the needs of her new-born infant and to recover from the nine-month pregnancy and childbirth. This "time off" may vary from a few weeks to an extended period of six months or more. Rules and physical care for the young infant are coordinated by the mother as cook, and by other married women.

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months or more, depending on the rules of the specific Leut to which she belongs, the rules and needs of her own colony, the physical condition of the child, as well as her own physical recovery. It is quite common for the mother's female relatives to visit her and care for the more demanding needs of both the new mother and infant (Huntington, 1981). sisters who have reached late adolescence or adulthood, but who have not married yet, are most frequently in attendance.

The frequency, duration, and number of individuals involved with these inter-colony visits have been increasing sharply in the last few decades as a result of better physical communication between colonies (i.e., telephones, improved highways, the use of modern trucks and vans for transportation). Also, the reduction of labor-intensive devices required in productive work of the women has increased their amount of free time. Much of the heavy labor and long hours once required by women in such tasks as cooking, house cleaning, laundry, and painting have been replaced by state-of-the-art modern devices which would be recognizable in any modern facility catering to the collective needs of about a hundred people. Other chores, such as field work and milling, have been fully mechanized and have been assumed completely by men (Peter & Whitaker, 1982). The move away from labor-intensive activities for women and the full-scale adoption of a wide variety of modern labor saving devices both within the home and throughout the colony have given women a far greater latitude to spend more time with their newly-born infants or to visit relatives in other colonies who need their help.

The increased free time of the mother and her female relatives to attend to an infant, the long-standing love and affection that all Hutterites generally exhibit toward young children (Huntington, 1981), and the reduction of the number of children in the colony with which the infant must compete (due to smaller colony population size and a downward trend in the birth rate), all serve to create a secure, loving environment wherein the child's first impressions of life and society are framed. Most adults and older children have an indulgent attitude towards the house child, and physical punishment and verbal reprimand are rare. The child demands substantial care and attention, but he or she is surrounded by a world full of adults and older children who are happy and eager to cater to these demands.

The world of the Hutterite child is not totally license-free. If the house child gets involved in activities which may lead to personal harm or endangers the physical well-being of another child, action is taken to bring such behavior to an end, even if it requires mild physical punishment to do so. The child must learn to be quiet and still during family prayers. The child is expected to learn to share food and, in colonies where such items are allowed, to share toys and play equipment. If a child's behavior does require corporal punishment, such punishment is usually quite light and is never administered in anger. A child who has been reprimanded through physical punishment will be immediately comforted--often by the self same person who administered the punishment (Huntington, 1981).

The late infancy stage is a time for the house child to venture beyond the mother to a greater range of peers and associations within the colony. As the child gets older, the mother usually is reassigned to her full range of tasks within the colony and rarely takes the child to work with her (Huntington, 1981). The whole colony is used to having toddlers around tended by the kindergarten teacher, pre-teen girls, or anyone else convenient to its care. In effect, the colony becomes a large extended family tending to the needs and welfare of the young Hutterite.
The transition from early childhood to the pre-school and kindergarten phase of life (ages three to six) within the colony is the most abrupt and traumatic change in the life of a Hutterite. Carefree, indulgent years, void of strict discipline and only the most minimal of punishment are replaced—virtually from one day to the next—by strict expectations of adults and the rival competition of older children in the child’s peer group. No longer is the child surrounded by indulgent adults providing security and encouragement at every antic and whim. The child is placed under the watchful and concerned care of women who are given the responsibility of teaching the young child how to become a respectful, obedient Hutterian child. Quoting the Hutterites, Huntington writes: Here they (the children) learn to obey, sing, sleep, memorize and pray together. . . . We need the Kindergarten. It helps the children and their mothers know his or her place (1981, p. 39).

The kindergarten (and by extension, as explained below, the German school) is an important supplement to the family in creating a social context in which the child is shaped into the correct mold for one’s future as a Hutterite. "It is by way of the Kindergarten (and the German school) that we prepare the child for the future of the commune" (Gross, 1965, p. 56).

The daily routine of the kindergartner is rather dull and monotonous. The child must learn to be quiet in the presence of authority, memorize routine prayers and hymns in High German (having only a vague idea of what they mean). Throughout this whole ritualized six-day-a-week program, the children are separated from the rest of the colony, including parents and siblings, from early in the morning to mid or late afternoon. The children sing together, memorize together, eat together, and even take their mid-morning and mid-afternoon naps together.

At an age when the child in North American society is developing individuality and a concept of self, the Hutterite child is placed in a setting that minimizes self-assertion and self-esteem, and maximizes identity as a member of a group. Of all the age groups within the colony, the Kindergartners experience the most regimented, the least varied program. Physically, the children spend virtually the whole day in one little building and small enclosed yard; they are cared for throughout the day by only one adult. There are no vacations during the school year except for half-day sessions on weekends and church holidays. The children learn to tolerate a restricted environment. They are rewarded for cooperative, docile, passive responses to correction or frustration. . . . [A]dults rarely play with them. . . . [B]ut even though they have fallen from the "Garden of Eden" status of House Children, they have started the steady, rewarding ascent that leads to full, responsible membership in the colony. (Huntington, 1981, p.40)

As might be expected, with some 350 colonies in three traditional "Leut" and the two new "Leut," the strict—almost draconian regimen described above—varies to some considerable extent from colony to colony. The size of the kindergarten group, disposition of the group overseer, and even informal tradition within the colony or group of related "mother-daughter" colonies, as well as other social and physical factors all can be quite influential in how absolutely the rules and expectations of the kindergarten are followed and enforced.

With the rapidly changing and expanding roles open to mothers of children in this age bracket, it could be expected that some mothers might not be fully ready to see their
child limited to the restrictive confines of the kindergarten when she has relatively more free, unrestricted time on her hands.

A few colonies have discontinued the "little school" usually under the pretext that they had too few children to maintain it. But even if these colonies grow larger they may fail to reinstitute this form of socialization. As a result children continue to live in their families up to age six. This changes the rule of women drastically because family child care will become a major occupation leaving less time for women to participate in communal work. Within an extensive work load of child socialization at home, women tend to minimize the time spent in community endeavors (sic) in order to catch up with duties in the home. There is, therefore, a devaluation of community patterns in favor of family patterns. (Peter, 1987, p. 65)

Because of the traditional pattern of socialization during these crucial years of personality formation and individual self-awareness, it will be interesting to see what future effect this relaxation of tradition will have on full communal commitment of the child reared in this more individual-oriented environment.

School

This ten-year period (ages six to sixteen) is a time of intensive preparation for the young Hutterite to prepare to fully embrace the Hutterian way-of-living. It is also a time of ever-increasing exposure to the general world-at-large. It is also an extremely busy time. The peer group becomes an intense focal point of one's interests and energies. Close friends are an important source of satisfaction and support. Life-long, deep friendships tend to emerge from the socialization experience of the Hutterian child (Peters, 1965). The child also remains firmly committed to the particular needs and activities of the family. After supper and church services, the evening is a time of concentrated involvement with one's parents and siblings within the context of the family. A child may visit and socialize with other children, but it is usually in the company of the rest of the family.

The outside, non-Hutterian influence which has the most profound and lasting effect on the typical child of the Hutterite colony is the English teacher. No other outsider has such a long-term, formalized and intense contact with the children of the colony. The Hutterites have accomplished a successful arrangement in every state and province wherein they are located allowing their children to remain within the confines of the colony to receive the basic education required by public law. The English teacher visits the colony each regular public school day and teaches the required curriculum for the state or province.

The instruction takes place in a one-room classroom with children from the first to the tenth grade in attendance. The specific laws vary between the states and provinces, but the general rule is that a student must remain in school until the end of the school year in which his or her sixteenth birthday takes place. When there are a large number of children in a colony, the school sometimes is divided into two classes: one for the older children, and one for the younger, although it is now quite rare for a colony to grow to a large enough size to warrant two classrooms.

The English teacher generally shows respect for the unique Hutterian order of living (Mann, 1974). The majority of the teachers work hard to place the public curriculum in a context which will be genuinely beneficial to the Hutterite child and the future of the colony (Mann, 1974). Teachers who have positive experiences in the colony
outside of the immediate context of teaching (e.g., gifts of food, participation in weddings, getting along well with the German school teacher), tend to have strong, positive attitudes toward their teaching experience, while those who have negative overall experiences in the colony tend to be far more critical of the Hutterian English school arrangement.

The influence of the "outside world" follows the English teacher into the colony. A common statement given by Hutterites who have spent some of their early adult years outside the colony was that the English school and English school teacher had "put the idea in their head" that life outside of the colony would be good for them.

In spite of the strong, long-term influence of the English school and teacher, the most influential adult in the lives of the Hutterian school children is the "German" school teacher. This is an ecclesiastical position always occupied by a responsible male who is carefully selected for the qualities he possesses to work effectively with children. The German school is held year-round and also on Saturdays. On Sunday, the German school teacher is in charge of the Sunday School instruction for the children. The English teacher may interact with the children for five or six hours each school day, but the German teacher is there before school, after school, on Saturday and Sunday, throughout the year. And, whereas the English school teacher must abide by the persuasive, non-corporeal punishment of disruptive or naughty students, the German school teacher is allowed full use of "strapping" as a means of discipline and to maintain order in the classroom.

The choice of the German teacher as an agent for the socialization of the Hutterian youth is a matter of serious concern for the colony. No other adult in the life of a school child has as much contact and long-term influence as the German teacher.

When the time comes to select the German teacher, much serious thinking is done. The elders may mention the names of one or two suitable candidates for such an authoritative position, men who are highly gifted, possessed of the Holy Spirit, and of a temperament able to contend with children. ... The members are admonished to select a man to whom they can fully entrust the future of the colony and the Christian faith. (Gross, 1965, p. 62)

This strong association between the German teacher and the school-age members of the colony who are in some of the most impressionable years of their growth cycle is profoundly significant. Regardless of the influence of the English teacher, the German teacher has the last word. The parents exert their own special influence, but the German teacher acts as the responsible steward—answerable to the whole colony. He must be sure the children are properly trained according to the expected Hutterian custom. Parents often can over-look the shortcomings of their own children, and perhaps even allow infractions which are not approved, but the German teacher is given the special charge to be fair but firm (Pickering, 1977).

A central task of the German school is to firmly ground the child in the religious traditions which form the core of Hutterite society. The specific meaning and context of the daily sermon is discussed in the German school. The sermons are strongly based on teachings derived directly from the Old and New Testaments and provide specific direction and encouragement to follow the communal life. They have been maintained without change or subsequent commentary since the formative years of the Hutterite movement some four hundred years ago, and they continue down to the present time as the basic "blueprint" for organizing life in the colony. The children also are introduced to the complex rules and directives of the Gemeindeordnungen (Rules of the
Community), Rechenschaft unserer Religion, Leer, und Glaubens (Account of our Religion, Doctrine, and Faith), and Die fünf Artikel des groessten Streits zwischen uns und die Welt (the Five Articles of Faith of the Principle Disputes between Ourselves and the World). These contain the ordinances and regulations also written in early years of the Hutterian brotherhood which provide a religious and moral basis to the pragmatic nature of directing the lives and behavior of the Hutterian Brethren (Friedmann, 1956). Respect for law and order and submission to the needs of the colony are additional important lessons to be taught. Above all, submission to the order and will of God as interpreted in these early religious texts and sermons is emphasized in the German school.

Through this whole process of English school and German school socialization, one must not overlook the very fact that the life of the Hutterian child is filled with heavy demands, but demands that are shared with one's peers. A child is surrounded by peers-close friends and relatives who share the same experiences. Also, the German teacher may be outwardly strict, but he also may be the students' father, uncle, older brother, cousin, or brother-in-law. He is someone who is a self-same member of the colony of approximately 100 members, someone who is intimately familiar with each student, shares an abiding love for the Hutterian style of living, and cares deeply about the welfare and progress of every boy and girl under his tutelage.

The parents of school children firmly support the objectives of the German school and, for the most part, appreciate the need for the English school. They expect their children to respect both teachers. They provide support and encouragement to their children and are expected to act sternly and swiftly if reports of negative behavior or performance come from either school.

By the time the child has reached age fifteen or sixteen and is recognized as an adult within the colony, and can legally leave his or her formal schooling behind, the child has learned the primary rituals of Hutterian life. He or she has learned the ritual of cooperation and submission to the communal will and the needs of the colony "that insures the smooth social functioning of the group in all the details of everyday interaction" (Hostetler & Huntington, 1980, p. 71). This young adult also has internalized "the theological and moral content" (p. 71) which will lead the individual eventually into baptism, marriage, and a full commitment to the Hutterian Brethren Society.

**The Young Adult**

This is the time (age sixteen to baptism and marriage) for the young man or woman in the colony to make final preparations for the full responsibilities of adult life. Compared to the highly structured days of the school child, this is a period of greater personal freedom and fewer specific obligations than any other phase in a Hutterite's life.

...[The young adult occupies an apprentice position before being assigned specific responsibilities, such as taking charge of a small tractor or doing the colony baking. These boys and girls constitute a mobile labor force that can be deployed throughout the colony as needed (in jobs considered suitable for their sex) and may be sent to other colonies to help during a time of need. The boys in this group do most of the colony's hard labor and enjoy the opportunity to demonstrate their strength and stamina.

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The in-between years are a period of limited self-realization. A young man may even leave the colony for a few weeks, several months, or sometimes for a couple of years. In most cases, however, he is a "tourist" in the outside world who plans to return to marry, and raise a family within the disciplined community. (Huntington, 1981, p. 44)

During this phase of a person's life, the Hutterian youth is allowed to freely and frequently spend time outside the colony. The constant errands and shopping, which can be expected in a large mechanized communal farm, allow frequent, sometimes daily, time away from the group. Virtually every male, and a growing number of females in this cohort, have driver's licenses and in the vicinity of any colony it is commonplace to see vans, trucks, and other utility vehicles on the road driven by youthful Hutterites en route to town, home, another colony, or to a near-by farm.

Also, it is not uncommon for a young man to leave his colony for a few years in his late adolescent-young adult life. But even this temporary defection is most often done in the company of other adventuresome peers from one's home colony. Only a few hundred Hutterites out of a population of nearly 40,000 have failed to return (Peter, Boldt, Roberts, & Whitaker, 1982).

Nearly all Hutterian boys and girls find ways to generate cash of their own, and the banks in nearby communities hold a large number of private Hutterite accounts. These practices go strongly against the expectation of the renunciation of personal goods basic to the communal commitment of the Hutterites. Portable radios, small cameras, women's slacks, guitars, audio cassette players, and any number of other paraphernalia are commonly in the possession of many young, single Hutterites. These items are regarded by custom, religious interpretation, and tradition as being unsuitable for Hutterites to own or possess. Any form of private ownership of goods of a non-utilitarian nature are considered to be worldly and a luxury, and they are regarded as a threat to the rather austere Hutterian style of living. Unless these items become too blatant or intrusive, however, most colonies tolerate them. The Hutterites recognize the need to "look the other way" in situations which they perceive to be generally of no long-term threat to the person or colony, but will firmly intercede if it is felt that an individual (or group) has exceeded allowable limits (Holzach, 1982; Peter, 1987; Peter & Whitaker, 1981).

This is also a time for young men and women to begin thinking about marriage. Courtship among the Hutterites varies from colony to colony and from Leut to Leut. The selection of one's future spouse is left to the discretion and choice of the young man and woman. All colonies expect the young people to seek out a potential marriage partner in an open, free manner.

There is no doubt that the relaxation of the rules that has taken place in some colonies (Peter, 1987) has led a few of the young people from the colonies into behavior which is unacceptable, even giving rise to intimate premarital problems (Peter, 1987). However, because of the high physical visibility of young Hutterites (their distinctive dress and peculiar Hutterian accent) and because of the watchful, often critical eye, of their neighbors, any failure by Hutterites to conform to the standards of the colony or the society-at-large often is more likely to receive greater attention than such behavior among non-Hutterites would elicit.

The span of time for the "in-between" years has no specific determination. Baptism, which is an overt sign of full commitment to the social order of the Hutterian Brethren, usually occurs in the early twenties (Macdonald, 1985), although it is not uncommon to defer the process to the older. This

Marriage

Mature males who participate in the marriage process are usually from a different Leut or, in some cases, from a different colony. This is considered a desirable practice, since it is thought that a younger from a different Leut or colony will be less inclined to be romantically involved with a girl from her home colony. Any outside courtship is considered to be a legitimate and expected facet of the marriage process.

Marriage choices are, however, often limited by the geographical area surrounding the colony. There are not enough eligible girls for every boy, which can cause problems for southern colonies, where the practice of mail order brides is common.

The marriage party is almost always a family occasion, with the bride and her husband-to-be. In many cases, there may be contributors of time who are not directly related to the bride's family. The ceremony is usually a simple, non-secular, and sold.

(Huntington, 1981, p. 44)

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defer the ordinance until one's mid-twenties or later. It also is an absolute prerequisite to the other primary sign of one's acceptance of adult life in the colony—marriage.

Marriage

Marriage is the terminal event in the various phases of the Hutterian maturation process. With marriage, the more routine, predictable, life-long roles in the colony division of labor are assigned to the young Hutterian adults. Marriage ends the protracted period of youthful socialization; the preparation for responsible adult living is considered to be complete.

Marriage is central to the Hutterian social order and is never viewed as something that a young person should enter into quickly. In order to facilitate the opportunity for a young couple to find suitable potential marriage partners, it is accepted that they, in the company of responsible adults, make frequent inter-colony visits.

Most relations between young Hutterites ... are established at social occasions like weddings, funerals, or the illness of relatives, when the young people have the opportunity to visit other communities. During these visits, which usually last several days or even weeks, the visiting individual must fit into the social organization. Consequently the young girl or boy comes in close contact with his peer group in the host community. (Peter, 1987, pp. 72-73)

As pointed out earlier, it is common for closely related colonies to maintain long-term and intense social and economic relationships through frequent, often long-term, visits. These inter-colony visits play such a major role in the life of the average Hutterite that the other colonies become well-known islands in an otherwise little known (and potentially hostile) world (Everitt, 1980). Only the nearby commercial centers and the road corridors linking the colonies with each other and with the local town appear as familiar, well-known territory in the Hutterian mental map.

Hutterites forbid marriage to anyone closer in relationship than second cousin. Also, it is required that the new couple reside in the colony of the husband. These two stipulations nearly always mean that the new bride must leave her home colony. There are, however, a few rare cases wherein families within the same colony are distant enough in relationship to allow colony endogamy. The Hutterites practice strict pattern of patrilocal residence. This custom follows the traditional central European model which can be found even today in rural areas of the original homeland (Tirol and southern Germany) of the Hutterites. The Hutterites also claim Biblical precedence for this practice.

There is a tendency for the residents of a closely related set of colonies to choose marriage partners out of a mutual pool, thus the bride usually finds herself in the close company of her sisters, cousins, or lifelong friends from her home colony when she joins her husband's group. Also, chances are very good that she has spent extended periods of time visiting her new home colony before she was married.

The marriage takes place in the groom's colony, but there is also a farewell party and solemn church ceremony in the bride's colony before she departs for her marriage (Flint, 1975). A few days after the bride's celebration, there is another fun-filled party (chivaree) in the groom's colony on the day preceding the wedding. Hutterites from near-by colonies, including those from other Leut, are invited. Persons from non-Hutterite community who happen to have some particular positive association with the family of the bride or groom also are welcome. The chivaree is the one event in

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Hutterian society which allows for a certain degree of openly boisterous (but not overly rowdy or destructive) behavior. Home-made fruit wines made from rhubarb, chokecherries, or other fruit help to enliven the over-all festive atmosphere of celebration.

For Hutterites these chivarees are highlights of social interaction. The intimate atmosphere, the opportunity to participate, the laughter, and the fun-filled time is very appealing to them. (Peter, 1985, p. 76)

The following day, Sunday, is quiet and subdued. The couple is married in the morning church service followed by an afternoon meal in which the newlyweds are seated at the head table in the colony dining hall (Peter, 1985). The afternoon church service also focuses on the new couple, admonishing them to consider carefully the religious and social significance of their new bond. The formal aspect of the wedding concludes with the end of the evening service. After the evening service, more casual visiting takes place between the newlyweds, the guests from other colonies, and the members of the host colony. On the next day, Monday, life in the colony resumes its normal pace.

The colony provides a fully furnished housing unit for the new couple, and after a brief honeymoon, both the husband and wife enter into the full round of colony activities as fully responsible adults. Because of the strict communalist structure of the Hutterite colony, they are free from the financial burdens of debt and low capital intake which so often hamper newlyweds in the outside world.

Women and Change Within the Family

The Hutterites do not live in a social and intellectual vacuum. Both males and females make frequent visits to nearby communities for purposes of shopping, dental, and medical attention, attending to legal affairs (e.g., obtaining or renewing a driver's license, selling produce and hand-make items, etc.). During these excursions, they often buy newspapers or magazines, or engage in conversations with non-Hutterites ranging from serious, in-depth discussions with physicians to casual chats with store clerks. Depending on the frequency, duration, intensity, and priority given by the Hutterites to these contacts, their views and attitudes may change considerably.

One area of family life which apparently has been greatly influenced by outside attitudes is the growing concern women have about their own health and the health of their children in the over-all reproductive process. Whereas a woman a generation or more ago was apt to defer to the decision of her husband and to the “will of God” in the reproductive process, she now is much more prone to listen to the non-Hutterian physician in this matter.

Whether a woman suffering from some sort of gynecological disorder should have more children or should terminate her reproductive capacity, was an issue that, in the past, was unquestionably answered in favor of the former. The shift in the individual perception of women . . . tends to tilt the decision in the direction of giving greater consideration to the woman's health, rather than to her continued reproductive capacity. . . . [In] certain colonies the women who have surgically terminated their reproductive capacity outnumber those who have not. Such a process is concomitant with the acceptance of a doctor-patient relationship in which the advice of the doctor carries greater authority than the traditional religious proscriptions of the community. (Peter & Whitaker, 1982, p. 271).
In a 1985 survey conducted among physicians in southern Alberta, it was found that all conventional types of contraceptive practices, with the exception of vasectomies and abortion, were in common use among the Hutterite colonies. Both men and women were willing to accept sound medical counsel regarding family planning (Ingoldsby & Stanton, 1988).

Another aspect of life in the colony which permits more free time for women to visit and care for the needs of their female relatives with infants is the increasing tendency for women to defer marriage until they are well into their twenties. It is now rare for women to enter marriage before their twenties, and marriages for women who have passed their twenty-fifth birthday is not longer uncommon. Women who have been made free from the labor-intensive activities of the former years, and who have not yet assumed the many domestic responsibilities of wife and mother, have far more free time available. Their absence from the colony to help a sister or friend in another colony does not impose an undue hardship on her home colony.

The changing attitudes women have regarding the control they now exert over their own lives seem to be accepted by the men. They too are influenced by the trends and movements from beyond the colony. Men participate and cooperate with the women of the colony in decisions to acquire labor-saving devices such as sewing machines and efficient kitchen equipment. Just as modern equipment frees the men from many of the time-consuming, labor-intensive activities in the field, barn, or workshop, they recognize the larger portion of free time their wives have been allotted by modern conveniences. This freedom from toil has given both men and women surplus time to spend with members of their family. Men have more time to interact with their wives and children, and in so doing, a greater measure of understanding and mutual acceptance and support is the frequent outcome of this expanded interaction (Peter & Whitaker, 1982).

Hutterite society will continue to change and adjust to internal and external forces. Hutterites have met challenges in the past (e.g., mechanized farming, electrification, public education, hospitalization for child-birth) and the dynamics of social and technological change will continue to have their impact on the group. With each major innovation or change, there have been the "prophets of doom" who have forecast the demise of Hutterite society. However, Hutterite culture has proven its resilience and the changes in the family promoting the greater autonomy of the nuclear family unit should be seen as just the most recent episode in almost five hundred years of Hutterite history.

CONCLUSION

The story of the Hutterian family cannot be told outside of the over-all context of the colony as a whole. The people within the colony function as a large extended family giving help, support, and admonishment when and where needed. The individual nuclear family is the central pivot upon which the healthy colony turns; but the colony as a whole provides the context in which the family functions. The economic, religious, political, and educational functions are assumed by the colony as an important support unit, but still playing a secondary role to the family.

The long-term success of Hutterite society provides an excellent opportunity for the exploration of the dynamics of strict communitarianism in the context of a highly materialistic greater social milieu. Long-term, successful communal societies are well-known to social scientists but only in the context of traditional, non-Western groups. Successful communal groups in Western society which have persisted over a comparatively equal length of time as the Hutterites are only to be found in monastic
orders which are only appendages to a greater social system from which members are selectively recruited. Also, members of monastic orders exist in an environment of adults who, by specific design and purpose, are free from the complex social encumbrances of inter-spousal, inter-generational, and inter-sibling relationships which face the Hutterites on every side each day. The closest successful social analogy to the Hutterian Bruderhof is the Israeli Kibbutz. The kibbutz has proven itself able to persist into the fourth and fifth generation, but also as an appendage of a larger, supportive social system. Hutterite life, with its dual commitment to a strong nuclear family and full support of the communal needs of the colony, is unique in its successful transformation from intentional utopian Christian communal experiment to an established, thriving, and growing society which best can be described as an ethnic group (Erasmus, 1981; Hostetler, 1980; Peter, 1987).

The Hutterites are under extreme internal and external pressures for change. Labor-saving devices have given considerable free time to both men and women. Efficient first-class highways now link even the most isolated and distant colonies to each other; but they also provide a convenient line to the outside world. Rapidly rising prices in purchasing and operating a modern colony have put a heavy strain on community finances.

There are some Hutterites who have a strong desire to see that their children develop better technical skills. A number of community colleges and technical schools are located within convenient commuting range of many of the colonies, and some Hutterites feel that training in welding, auto mechanics, accounting, and even computer technology would be beneficial. The fact that the Woodcrest Group of Hutterites, located in the eastern part of the United States, allows its children to be trained in technology, business, teaching, and even medicine at nearby colleges, provides more rationale for change.

Perhaps the greatest challenge to sustaining the Hutterian mode of living is, paradoxically, the over-all lack of a real, continuing threat to their way of life. There are still occasional angry anti-Hutterite editorials in the media, and some people show an open dislike for their Hutterian neighbors, but there appears to be no real legal or public threat to their existence. With reduced tensions from the outside world and a genuine growing interest in promoting the positive value of folk and ethnic cultures popular today in the United States and Canada, the attention the Hutterites do generate is most likely to be of a favorable nature. With the reduction of hostility, there is no longer as strong a need to look inward, toward the colony for strength and support. A young Hutterite venturing out into the general public faces a less hostile world than in earlier times. The cautious Hutterite reaction to this more favorable public image may, perhaps, be summed up by a sign at the entrance to a Lehrerleut colony near Magrath, Alberta: "Visitors Welcome! Enter At Your Own Risk!"

It can be assumed that such traditional Hutterite institutions as the German school, daily church services, a distinctive domestic language, the unique clothing style, a preference for small and isolated farming communities, and above all, a deep and abiding love for holding "all things common," will all promote the continuation of the Hutterite Way well into its fifth century of existence. However, the increasing reduction of physical labor, a sustained trend toward fewer children, and a growing recognition of the role of women as partners in an egalitarian relationship between marriage partners in a surrounding non-Hutterite society (and the inevitable influence such an awareness will have on the thinking of the Hutterites themselves) will continue to increase the importance of the nuclear family unit as the primary socialization mechanism in their society. Challenges and changes to the Hutterian Way must be...
resolved within the context of the family. It will be the family which either will stand fast or make appropriate adjustments to meet these challenges, and it will be the family which will determine the success or demise of the Hutterite Way.

REFERENCES


