History 4250 Research Paper Outline

Hutterites and their Notions of Health

Derek Walde

T00531657

History 4250

Dr. Tracy Penny Light

January 30, 2018

Essay Outline

I intend to explore the communal and isolated religious sect of people called the Hutterites. Considering their different world view and religious practices, I want to understand how religion, communalism and isolation play a part in notions of health. Particularly looking at the 1940’s to 1980’s, I want to understand the ways they view health, what kinds of treatments or medical practices they partake in, and how those ideas have been adapted over time. Throughout this essay I will compare the notions of health of Hutterites to mainstream Canadians. Finally, I would like to compare the Hutterites to other Anabaptist religious groups such as the Mennonites and the Amish and their notions of health.

In the beginning of the essay I will tackle how Hutterites define health and discuss the ways in which Hutterites use medical services and their notions of healthiness. Using *Born Hutterite*, *Health Promotion in the Hutterite Community and the Ethnocentricity of Empowerment*, *Hutterian Brethren,* *Hutterite Society, I am Hutterite*, *The Hutterites in North America* and *We Rise Out of the Cradle into the Grave* as foundational texts in understanding Hutterite health. Not only will these texts give a general understanding but will aid in many other topics within Hutterite health.

After the basis of Hutterite health is established and I have illuminated the differences from popular Canadian health beliefs, I will dive into Hutterites and mental health. There has been significant studies and research done on this isolated sect of people, with a focus on mental health. Interest has been drawn on how the intersections of communalism and non-modernity have created a mentally healthy community. Using the original case studies and primary sources; *Personality in a Communal Society, The Hutterites and Saskatchewan*, and *The Lord Will Take Care of Us* to interpret mental health in the communities of Hutterites during the 1950’s. Then *Low prevalence of psychoses among the Hutterites* reviews those old case studies in light of today’s medical practices, eventually leading to using *Mental Health and Canadian Society* to compare to Canadian mental health ideas.

Next topic will be birth control and fertility rates, this topic is interesting as the Hutterites, an isolated religious sect, were using birth control at a time when the Catholic faith had banned “the pill.” Ingoldsby, Laing, and White all review the decline in fertility rates, and population growth and attribute it to the increased use of birth control. I will use *The* *Bedroom and the State* as a comparative text and a general starting point for this topic.

Finally the last major topic I will explore is comparing Hutterite practices to other Anabaptist groups like the Mennonites and the Amish, who share similar beliefs, however all live much different lives. Drawing from; *Health and Illness Beliefs Among the Southern Alberta Kanadier Mennonite Immigrants*, *Mennonites, Healthcare Institutions, Modernity*, *Moving Beyond Stark Options,* and *On the Backroad to Heaven* will all contribute a general understanding of other Anabaptist health. Then finishing with some concluding thoughts.

Process Statement

The religious sect of Hutterites has always been an area of historical research that has interested me. Growing up in Saskatchewan surrounded by more than 6 colonies within 30 miles of my home, I have always had a fascination with their culture and their lives ever since I was young. Doing business with many Hutterite men, buying baking and goods from Hutterite women has been a staple in my life. Visiting a Hutterite colony near my home a handful times through a grade seven field trip to play baseball with the Hutterite kids and went to visit the Hutterites with my grandfather a handful of times. Seeing and interacting with runaway Hutterites is a normal occurrence in my hometown; our family farm once hired a runaway Hutterite for a short period, I have played recreational hockey with them, and interacted with many at social events around my hometown. Hearing about their lives and being so normalized to their ways of life is part of my life experience. The way in which they dress and act in one of the most secular societies in the world is surprising, as they seem to turn the clock backwards. Being a Mennonite, where both Hutterites and Mennonites originate from a similar strain of thinking through the Anabaptist movement, it intrigues me how our lives only 300 years later are much different despite our close origins.

Finding sources started with going to BX 8129 section in the TRU library where there are over 20 books on Hutterites alone. Having done another project on Hutterites before I had an idea on what books would be helpful to my research project. One of the books *The Sociology of Canadian Mennonites, Hutterites and Amish*, is an annotated bibliography where many of my older primary source journal articles came from. After finding some books and some primary sources, I typed in more specific ideas into the TRU library search bar such as “birth control and Hutterites” or “mental health Hutterites.” The topics of fertility and birth control and mental health are highly researched topics and I found many of these topics by looking through the books at the library.

Coming into this research I have many preconceived notions of Hutterites due to my previous research and life experience. As I explained before this will be my second essay on Hutterites however a different topic overall. Last semester I wrote an essay on Hutterites and their interaction with mainstream Canadians, which gives me a head start on my topic as I have a general background knowledge of their culture and some of the major historical works on Hutterites, which gives me some reusable sources. However the topics are very different and this essay needs a new theoretical framework. The other preconceived notions are from my life experiences. I have meet and talked with many Hutterites that gives me firsthand accounts of their lives and how they view the world and life, however I also get caught up in the gossip and hearsay about Hutterites as well. Grand tales and lies are often told about the Hutterite practices or lives, however to say that these are not engrained into my mind is not true. So I will need to wary of my previous experience when doing research, and always fact check with sources before making claims. Finding the balance between what I know and what is said in the research will be vital. Having dealt with their business behaviors and the manners in which they talk tells a much different story then that of a religious perfect, utopian lifestyle. This aspect is rarely elaborated or explained by Hutterite works, as many times they are put in a box where they have no external contact which is not true. The struggle between my experience and the Hutterite history of health will be a struggle, but possible.

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