Hello,

I am here to talk about Hutterites and their notions of health

So In my paper I will tackle how the Hutterite’s unique religious beliefs created a unique set health notions in the years 1940 to 1990, in addition I will be using the Hutterites to show how health is a social construction. I will compare Hutterite notions of health to Canadian ideals in order to illuminate the differences that social climates can have on popular culture health norms.

**Slide 2**

This picture shows the diffusion of Hutterites throughout Canada and the North of the United States.

In the 2016 Census, there was roughly 35000 Hutterites living in Canada

**Slide 3**

So many of you are unfamiliar or know very little about Hutterites, so I will give you some background knowledge on their culture, religious beliefs and everyday lives.

Hutterites are Ana-Baptists by faith, who grew out of the 16th century Protestant Reformation, along with the Mennonites and Amish. After facing persecution in Western Europe, the Hutterites immigrated to Canada in the early 1900’s.

Hutterites live in collective dwellings or better known as colonies. They are agrarian, as they try to live self-sufficiently by being involved in grain farming and raising livestock.

Unlike their Ana-Baptist friends, the Amish, the Hutterites do take on many of the advancements of technology but only when they do not add to the temptation of greed.

Within this culture there highly prescriptive gender roles in the workforce, as women are to tend to gardens, bake and make clothing. Whereas the men are more involved in the day to day work of large scale farming, tending to livestock, and running large machinery.

This is a picture of the Holden Colony, South of Edmonton.

Describe picture

See the closed in nature of Hutterite life, as everything they need is in one place

**Slide 4**

Now what guides these people’s lives?

Well everything in their lives comes from the cultural and religious beliefs that are all based on the Ana-Baptist teachings, which are rooted in:

The Holy Bible as the Inherent Word of God, where everything in the Bible is true and they take a word for word translation of the Holy Bible.

And they are Fundamentalist Christians, where every biblical teaching is lived out and related to their daily lives

Now what does that religious teaching look like in everyday life?

Three major characteristics of a Hutterite lifestyle which are rooted in these teachings

1. They live communally, where Hutterites share ownership of all goods, money and land. This society is not based on individualism but the opposite, as the orientation of the Hutterite thinking and life is towards the group and its total welfare
2. Anti-materialism and simplicity are foundations to their lives, as they do not accumulate goods to be safe from temptation.
3. Cultural and geographical separation from society is another major part of Hutterite belief, as they strive to be as self-sufficient as possible in order to be non-reliant on mainstream society to avoid acculturation. They intentionally live and farm in the rural areas of Canada to get away from city life and the evils of society. Even their clothing ad language are manifestations of separation.

“In the end all these beliefs and the adherence to a strict lifestyle, is to overcome temptations and never stray from the path of righteousness. The regulations are intended to combat selfishness, individualism, greed and the will to earn more.”

**Slide 4**

Now that you have the general background on the Hutterites. I can dive into Hutterite health starting with medicalization

Before the movement towards medicalization by Hutterite communities, women acted as the primary medical professionals in the community. Many folk remedies, medical teas, herbs, creams and dietary adaptions were made better the health of the community.

However into the 1960’s these folk remedies became less important and less used, as one scholar states in 1967, that they fully accept medical science; some of them read popular medical literature, and they all consult doctors when the occasions arises. All Hutterite women in South-West Saskatchewan go to hospitals to have their babies.

The move towards medicalization was based on becoming healthier as a community, as they saw using new technologies as a way to increase and better their health. The goal was to reach a state of communal healthiness.

Another reason tied into this healthier colony idea, was that if they weren’t healthy they couldn’t work. And in the Hutterite belief system if they weren’t working they couldn’t be fully honoring God, then Satan would be at work. In addition not working would disrespect the communal system in place, as each person’s work was an integral part of the structure of the Hutterite colony.

This contrasts Canadian society, as the rise of healthism in the 1970’s in Western Society was based on health being embodied as an individual responsibility. Whereas Hutterites viewed health as a communal ideal stemming from their religious belief of communalism.

**Slide 5**

Death was often viewed as a tough part of life especially in Western Society. However in the context of Hutterite communities their religious teachings taught them that death was a blessing.

One article stated this, that “death is considered the most important moment in a Hutterite’s life, as it marks the entry into eternal life in Heaven.”

So how does this view of death come about?

In the Hutterite community there are 3 reasons that lead to this unique view point of death, which are once again rooted in religious teachings.

1. Ritualized tradition in funeral services

Funerals in Hutterite communities have been run the same way for hundreds years, which gives the perception of stability and peace, as the family was not drowned with having to plan a funeral, as it was already in place. As well, each part of the funeral was based in religious symbolism. For example the wake was to be 2 days after the death and then the actual funeral should be 3 days after the death, to symbolize the resurrection of the body in Heaven, just as Jesus rose from the dead 3 days later.

These rituals bring peace and are reminders of God’s provision

1. Faith in an afterlife

Similar to the first one, family’s have the re-assurance of an afterlife, which helps the grievers come to terms that the person is in a better place

1. Social cohesion

During the aftermath of the death, the community equally shares the grief, as one historian stated that other mothers will cry as much as the actual mother of the child.

Emphasis was placed on the group identity and social cohesion during the grieving process and funerals, which was rooted in their biblical belief of communalism.

Social cohesion also helped comfort the surviving members of the family and thus made the experience of death more bearable

This unique view of death was much different than that of Canadians, where most people stressed death, as it was seen as bad, repulsive and was feared due to the skepticism in an afterlife. Whereas as Hutterite saw the flip side of death, as a blessing

**Slide 6**

Mental Health

Hutterite colonies have been subject to many mental health studies over the years, and all the studies I have read, conclude the same thing, that the mental health of Hutterites was exceptional. Mental health was seen as a spiritual sickness rather than an actual mental illness in the colonies

Anfechtung is the term used in Hutterite colonies to describe mental health problems, which is classified by guilty feelings, doubt, fear and the inability to work, where they withdrawal from Hutterite society. These symptoms come from a place of spiritual sickness, where the flesh is at war with the earthly desires. Often referred to as a place of spiritual defeat, where the individual feels abandoned by God. Simply put it is a mental/spiritual form of depression.

Seeing mental illness as a spiritual sickness in the Hutterite community, allows them to tackle the problem from a religious perspective, through 2 different ways;

1. It comes back to this religious idea of communalism, where health was a colonies responsibility and not just the individuals. Colony members went to great extents for their people, as the immediate family tended to the person and the colony in an act of solidarity and support, extended their love as a community. They also show the mentally ill person their importance to the colony.
2. They would also fix this spiritual problem, through religious counselling. Ministers often spent time with these people, trying to fix their spiritual brokenness. Asking for forgiveness and realizing their spiritual shortcomings is the first step to redemption. The mental illness was often rooted in a personal conflict and by resolving that conflict, through the help of the minister, they could rid the mental illness. Forgiveness of their disbelief and resolving personal conflict resolved the mental illness.

Hutterites mental health definition are both rooted in Hutterites unique religious beliefs. Whereas mental health in Canada is not seen in the same way, as mental health is more medicalized, where medical professionals and medications are taken to cure the mental health problems, solely focused on either a physical or mental standpoint, absent of any spiritual possibilities

**Slide 7**

Throughout this presentation, I have done my best to try and outline that the Hutterites unique religious beliefs or social climate created a unique set of health notions. And by comparing those to Canadians health norms, it has hopefully become apparent that Canadians and Hutterites had differing ideas on health norms, as each had a unique social environment that impacted their view of health, thus making health a social construction.

Through the areas of medicalization, death and mental health, Hutterites had unique health notions that were rooted in the Hutterites’ religious beliefs.

In the future I hope more historians do more in depth research into Hutterite beliefs in order to better understand the idea of health, not only in Hutterite society, but in Canadian society as well.