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Review Essay

Advances in Hutterian Scholarship

Review of: **Janzen, Rod, and Max Stanton. 2010. *The Hutterites in North America*. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.**

Review of: **Katz, Yossi, and John Lehr. 2014[2012] *Inside the Ark: The Hutterites in Canada and the United States* [2nd ed.]. Regina, SK: University of Regina Press.**

By William L. Smith, *Sociology, Georgia Southern University*

Certain elements of Hutterite life have changed significantly since the publication of *Hutterian Brethren: The Agricultural Economy and Social Organization of a Communal People* by John W. Bennett, *Hutterite Society* by John A. Hostetler, *The Dynamics of Hutterite Society* by Karl A. Peter, and *The Hutterites in North America* by John Hostetler and Gertrude Enders Huntington. These classics are widely cited by scholars and it has been a long time since any new scholarly books have been written on the Hutterites. Peter identified the Hutterites, “as an ongoing sociocultural entity constantly adapting to environmental, political, and social circumstances” (xiii). Rod Janzen’s and Max Stanton’s book *The Hutterites in North America* and Yossi Katz’s and John Lehr’s book *Inside the Ark: The Hutterites in Canada and the United States* provide a much needed discussion and updating on contemporary Hutterites and their encounter with and adaptation to the twenty-first century.

Janzen, a historian, and Stanton, an anthropologist, spent twenty-five years visiting Hutterite colonies in the United States and Canada, witnessing firsthand the changes to Hutterite life. The authors provide readers with an exceptional historical-social-cultural analysis of the everyday lives of Hutterites. The Hutterites are a communal group and an intentional community who share a common set of Christian / Anabaptist religious beliefs. One of the most important points, if not the most important point, made by the authors is that the Hutterites are a diverse group and there is often a great degree of variation between Hutterite colonies and even within colonies. They are divided into four distinct branches or *Leut* (German for people): Lehrerleut, Dariusleut, Schmiedeleut One, and Schmiedeleut Two. The Lehrerleut are the most conservative and the least diverse, the Dariusleut are moderates and the most diverse, and the Schmiedeleut are the most liberal, although the Schmiedeleut One are the most liberal regarding cultural and religious issues while the Schmiedeleut Two are more conservative and aligned with the Dariusleut, sharing what might be called the middle ground among the various *Leut*. The Dariusleut have the most colonies (159), followed by the Lehrerleut (139), Schmiedeleut Two (118), and Schmiedeleut One (61).

To further support their point on Hutterian diversity, the authors compared two colonies one from Montana and the other from Manitoba. The Montana colony farms and manages

livestock and fosters social isolation. Children rarely complete high school and community cell phones are to be used only in cases of emergency and for business purposes. They have never had Internet access, although they use computers to help manage their farming operations, but these computers are not being replaced and will eventually be discarded. Church services are conducted in German. Musical instruments, photographs, and radios are not allowed and women wear traditional full head coverings. Their residences are very simple and minimalist in design and furnishings. The Manitoba colony relies primarily on manufacturing enterprises to generate income. Most children complete high school and several have graduated from college. The Internet is readily accessible to colony members and their manufacturing enterprises are computerized. Church services are conducted in English when the colony is hosting visitors. They have a choir, and colony youth can take piano lessons. The colony is involved in mission activities often with non-Hutterites, and members play volleyball, paint, and ski cross-country.

The authors devote a chapter to the four Hutterite branches highlighting how religious and cultural practices vary among them and how the Schmiedeleut divided into two camps, One and Two. Other chapters discuss Hutterite origins and history; immigration and settlement patterns; beliefs and practices; family life and rites of passage; identity, tradition, and folk beliefs; education; colony structure, work patterns, governance, gender and the role of women; population and demographic considerations such as birth, retention rates, and the process of starting new colonies (branching); management of technology and social change; interactions with non-Hutterites or those known as the English; and the future of Hutterite society. There is an appendix listing all of the Hutterite colonies in North America as of 2009. Colonies are grouped by *Leut* and information is provided for each colony regarding year founded, location, province or state, and the name of the parent colony.

Aspects of Hutterite life that have changed in recent decades, according to Janzen and Stanton, include: smaller family size; more defections; the addition of choirs among the Schmiedeleut and Dariusleut (historically Hutterites have not had choirs); iPod use among young Schmiedeleut; male-female population imbalance (fewer male runaways return, thus reducing the marriage pool, especially for Lehrerleut women); increased dieting and exercise among women; more healthful foods consumed; support of education in Dariusleut and Schmiedeleut colonies beyond the eighth grade, even for college, albeit only for those majoring in education returning to teach in colony schools; facilities (space) in some colonies designated just for worship; the increase of manufacturing enterprises, though agriculture is still their primary economic pursuit; the increased Hutterite standard of living; the impact of evangelical Christianity on individual Hutterites and their decision to leave the colony; growing concern over the impact of technology (cell phones, iPods, the Internet) and the mass media on their lifestyle; and a belief shared by some that there is less unity among Hutterites in comparison to the past.

Janzen and Stanton conclude that Hutterite society is prospering even though vocal critics continue to prophesy their demise. The authors state, "The Hutterites are the most successful communal society in modern history, and Hutterite cultural and spiritual health is unquestionably

vibrant in the 2000s” (302). Some scholars and communalists might quibble with the authors about their position and argue that possibly the Israeli kibbutzim are the most successful communal society in modern history. To support their point, the authors note that Hutterites are still strongly committed to communal Anabaptism and that their numbers have tripled in the last sixty years.

Both Katz and Lehr are geographers who are interested in analyzing and explaining the impact technology has had on the lives of colony members, the various strategies Hutterite leaders use to control the complex boundaries that separate Hutterites from non-Hutterites, the differences between colonies and the future of Hutterian society. This list of concerns is not exhaustive. The authors attempt to provide the reader with a comprehensive account of the “story of the Hutterites” (xix) but acknowledge that the story they are telling is primarily about the Schmiedeleut.

The book is organized into two parts, with the first part containing 12 chapters that deal with following issues: the origins of Hutterianism in the sixteenth century; the history of the group until the late nineteenth century; the organization and legal structure of the community; the spatial organization of colonies; religion and tradition; the economics of colony life and the role of technology; education; leisure time; relationships with non-Hutterites; women and their role in colony life; runaways / defectors (*Weglaufen*); and the impact of globalization and social change. The second part of the book is divided into five appendices, the largest one containing the ordinances and conference letters of the Schmiedeleut from 1762 to 2012. Another one of the appendices is a listing of all Hutterite colonies in North America as of 2014. Colonies are grouped together by province or state, and information is provided for each colony regarding parent colony, year founded, and *Leut*. The appendices comprise approximately half of the book.

Katz and Lehr note that among the Schmiedeleut “manufacturing is the rule, not the exception” (103) and it is more likely to be found among the Dariusleut but not the Lehrerleut. Unlike their Amish cousins, the Hutterites look more favorably on technology and technological change when it benefits the community, particularly in their farming operations and manufacturing enterprises. A latent or unintended function of the introduction and expansion of manufacturing enterprises on Hutterite colonies is that, “the acquisition of industrial skills gives young people a chance to acquire trades and skills that enable them to find work in urban areas without difficulty” (185). Hutterites also are known to be good farmers, and they are knowledgeable about farm equipment and agricultural practices. The possession of these particular skill sets have contributed to increased defection rates among young Hutterite men, many of whom do not return to the colony. On many colonies, the defection rate exceeds the birth rate. Some colonies do not allow defectors to visit or interact with their family and friends. Another threat to the stability of colony life is one posed by evangelical Christianity, which “offers personal salvation through a direct relationship with Christ, salvation that comes without communal living or removal from the world” (183).

The authors believe the greatest change experienced by Hutterites within the past twenty-five years has been the schism among the Schmiedeleut. This schism was largely the result of different strategies used to cope with the ever increasing presence and influence of the outside world on Hutterite life. There was a dispute over the ownership (design and patent rights) of some farm equipment between two of the Schmiedeleut colonies that led to a series of law suits. A prominent Hutterite minister was accused of financial malfeasance and with interfering in the affairs of other colonies. Another key factor causing this schism was the Hutterites' on-again, off-again relationship with the Bruderhof people (a New York State communal religious group) who live a more modern lifestyle than the Hutterites. Katz and Lehr note that it is unlikely that the two Schmiedeleut factions will resolve their differences in the near future.

The authors believe the Hutterite way of life is under siege by the forces of modernity and the secular world. The values of the modern world—including individualism, liberalism, and egalitarianism—are infiltrating the colonies, undercutting the conservative, authoritarian, and collective foundations of Hutterite society. Technology, especially the use of cell phones with Internet access, opens the colony to the world and its many temptations. Katz and Lehr conclude that church authority and the salience of Hutterian religious beliefs and practices have weakened during the past twenty years, but they expect the Hutterites to continue to adapt and remain a presence on the communal scene.

Appendix five contains the ordinances and letters of the Schmiedeleut from 1762 to 2012. There are entries for specific years during this time frame that highlight the duties and obligations of those who occupy certain positions in the colony, such as minister, manager, farm boss, and cook. The entries also discuss regulations and rules including: the wearing of beards, whether cousins should marry, hunting, clothing, pocket watches, runaways, use of alcohol, smoking, travel to funerals, and shunning. It was common for the rules to change back and forth during these years. For example, early on only the farm boss could have a pocket watch, but later on, those working in the fields or at night could possess one.

Both sets of authors disagree with some of the conclusions reached by other scholars about the Hutterites. For example, Hostetler (1974) found that the Hutterite *Leuts* accepted the differences among them, but Janzen and Stanton note that while that may have been true years ago, it is not true today. Janzen and Stanton challenge Hostetler (1974) and Hostetler and Huntington (1996) about their claims that Hutterite women are overly critical, especially of men. Janzen and Stanton claim that since no evidence was given comparing Hutterite women with non-Hutterite women, that conclusion is meaningless. The authors also disagree with Stephenson (1985) who concluded that the work of Hutterite women is valued less than that of Hutterite men, thus contributing to a loss of status and an earlier death than one would expect among women. Janzen and Stanton claim that the status of Hutterite women—like men—increases with age, and that they provide much informal advice and guidance to others in the colony. Katz and Lehr disagree with Rozen regarding her explanation for why Hutterite women are marrying later than before. Rozen (1987) claims mechanization has reduced the amount of work available to

young men, and they thus delay marriage. Another contributing factor to delayed marriage is that Hutterite young women do not want to leave their colony and friends (since Hutterite women move to their husband's colony) for a man who does not yet have a position in the colony. Katz and Lehr found that this is not true and that Hutterite women do not agree with Rozen's conclusions. Since more Hutterite young people are finishing high school, this probably more than anything else delays marriage. Katz and Lehr also report that Hutterites dispute Hostetler's (1974) position that young women from wealthier colonies postpone marriage with men from less affluent colonies. Both sets of authors acknowledge that religious motives now are the primary reason influencing most runaways / defections, but surprisingly, Janzen and Stanton found survey data that indicated that runaways were more likely to mention other reasons for leaving—e.g. disagreements with colony leaders and lack of satisfaction with colony work—than religious reasons for leaving.

Janzen's and Stanton's book is in-depth and more comprehensive in scope and coverage than Katz's and Lehr's book. Katz's and Lehr's decision to focus on the Schmiedeleut has both positive and negative repercussions. They provide more discussion about the Schmiedeleut than do Janzen and Stanton but at the cost of paying less attention to the other two branches. This a significant difference between the two books, especially when one considers that the Hutterites are not monolithic. Janzen and Stanton are also more optimistic in their assessment than are Katz and Lehr about the future of Hutterite society.

I recommend both of these books. They are a welcome addition to the field of Hutterite studies. Additional, in-depth and comprehensive studies of the Hutterites are needed on a variety of levels including Hutterite society as a whole, the four branches or *Leuts*, and individual colonies. Scholars need to address more specifically the impact that boundary maintenance mechanisms have on the survival and cultural identity of the Hutterites (see Smith 1996).

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Book Reviews

Review of **Stevick, Richard. 2014[2007]. *Growing Up Amish: The Rumspringa Years* [2nd edition]. Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.**

By Denise Reiling, *Sociology, Anthropology, and Criminology, Eastern Michigan University*

The first thing that should have caught my attention when I received my copy of Richard Stevick's second edition of *Growing Up Amish* was that he had changed the cover image from one of a male and female adolescent riding in an open-top buggy—the picture of traditional conformity—to an image of a single male, walking down the road in a blatantly cocky fashion, under his own power rather than being conveyed, staring unabashed, straight into the camera. His black vest is flapping open, and his white shirt is partially untucked, loose, and gaping around the collar, so big as to be ill-fitting. He is taking a long, cool drag on a cigarette. A decade ago, I would have honed-in right off on this image as rather inappropriate for a jacket cover of a book about the generalities of Amish youth culture. Apparently it has become far too commonplace to see images of Amish deviance for me to have noticed. This is what Stevick brings new to his second edition: what has changed seemingly so quickly.

What did catch my attention first was that Stevick had changed the subtitle, which struck me as not a common thing to do. *The Teenage Years* had become *The Rumspringa Years*. Perhaps it seems a small thing to notice, but as a sociologist from the symbolic-interactionist perspective, I noticed. Language is culture's primary conveyor of meaning, so I entered the text searching for the bigger changes that I assumed would support this seemingly small one. Was Stevick attempting to communicate that the teenage years are now dominated more so by the deviance that can occur during Rumspringa (for hasn't Rumspringa come to be synonymous with deviance?) than by other aspects of this coming-of-age period?

Stevick allows Mose Gingerich, one of the first reality TV stars (*Amish in the City*), to have the opening words in the book, which cleverly reflect the question that lingers at the end of the book about the future of Amish culture, although Gingerich speaks it as a statement: "If they