Practicality and Identity as Functions of Education in Old Order Mennonite and Hutterite Communities

Janelle M. Zimmerman[1]
Student
Associate Degree Nursing Program
Reading Area Community College

Abstract

This study is an exploration of common structures, theories, and practices among the educational systems of selected Anabaptist communities, focusing on a Midwestern Schmiedeleut Hutterite community and the Groffdale Conference (Old Order) Mennonites in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. Building on ideas of utopian communities, this research suggests two key foci of education as practiced in Hutterite and Old Order Mennonite communities. The first is identity, both of the *community*—as manifested by a common purpose and identity—and of the *individual*—as manifested by a belief in free will. The second is practicality, both in the *physical* (pragmatic) and *metaphysical* (idealistic) realm. Anabaptist communities tend to perceive education as highly important to the continued meaningful existence of the community because education serves as a means of socializing children and youth into community norms, standards, and beliefs.

Keywords

Groffdale Mennonite Conference; Schmiedeleut Hutterite; Education; Socialization; One-room schools

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Note

The author approaches this study from the unique perspective of a former student in a one-room Mennonite school, and a current member of an Old Order Mennonite community. This research study is an extension of a project about Amish and Mennonite schools completed in a sociology honors contract under Professor Nancy Lambert.

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Introduction

The schooling of their children has been of special importance to Anabaptist parents since the beginnings of the movement in the sixteenth century (Stoll 1975, 21; van Braght 1660, 775). A basic education is crucial to the functioning of the community, so that the members may read and understand the documents related to their faith and also that the children may be socialized into the beliefs and values of the community and may thus become productive adult members of the church (Fishman 1988). Children are the future of the community and they must be taught the ways and the values of the community in order that the community may continue. This article attempts to uncover the commonalities in educational systems between the Groffdale Conference Old Order Mennonites in Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, and a Midwestern Schmiedeleut Hutterite (Group 2) community, and to reveal the functions that education serves in these communities. Understanding these commonalities and the functions they serve lead us to a better understanding of education's significance within plain Anabaptist communities.

Two distinct intentional communities—that is, deliberately created communities designed as an alternative to mainstream culture—are included in this study of educational practices in Anabaptist utopian communities. The Old Order Mennonite and Hutterite communities were selected because they represent two distinct examples of contemporary Anabaptist communitarian life. Such a comparative study controls for the cultural peculiarities of each group and permits identification of commonalities that more generally define plain Anabaptist education. As intentional communities, both are characterized by a deliberate focus on communal life as the means to developing an ideal life. No universal standard of community exists (Smith 1999, 127), and the communities in this study vary significantly (Kraybill and Bowman 2001). However, they share a belief in the efficacy of community for achieving a better life and the importance of education as a means of preparing individuals for participation in this life. The connections between an individual and a community, or a community and a larger society, are many and complex (Berry 1983, 65-79). The formal and informal education of the young plays a large part among the many intricate factors that shape the development and maintenance of a distinctive community. This research note serves as an exploratory investigation of the philosophies, attitudes, and values that inform the education system, educational methodology, and education as a means of promoting group identity in intentional Anabaptist communities.

Both the Old Order Mennonites and Hutterites originate within the Anabaptist movement in the wake of the Protestant Reformation. The original members of the Anabaptist group became impatient with the Reformers' slow and incomplete reformation of the Catholic Church. In 1525, in Zurich, Switzerland, a group of adult converts baptized each other in direct defiance of state and religious authorities. They formed an independent church composed of believing adults, who were baptized on the confession of their faith, thus earning the label "Anabaptist" or re-baptizer (Roosen 1769; van Braght 1660). The Hutterites—named for early leader Jacob Hutter—branched off from the main Anabaptist group in 1528. Communal property "became their

distinctive trademark" (Kraybill and Bowman 2001, 4). Facing severe persecution for their faith, many members of the Anabaptist groups immigrated to North America in the seventeenth, eighteenth, and nineteenth centuries. Although many assimilated into mainstream American culture, others built and maintained communities that are distinctive for their strong religious faith and their adherence to traditional religious and cultural practices (Anderson 2013).

The Groffdale Old Order Mennonites and Schooling

The Groffdale Conference Old Order Mennonites, often informally referred to as Wenger Mennonites after an early bishop, are among the more conservative of the many Mennonite groups. They date their official beginning from1927, when a schism developed within the Old Order over the ownership of automobiles (Scott 1996; Kraybill and Bowman 2001, 65). The Weaverland Conference—also known as the Horning Mennonites—chose to permit the ownership of automobiles, while a group under the leadership of Joseph Wenger chose to eschew the ownership of automobiles in an effort to keep families and communities closer together. This group became known as the Groffdale Conference, or Wenger group.

The Wenger Mennonite child's education begins in the home, in the hands of loving but firm parents, usually supplemented by older siblings, cousins, and aunts and uncles. Until they are old enough to fight back or to know what a comb is for—usually around six months of age—children are presumed to be utterly innocent, but are expected to be able to remain relatively quiet while sitting on their mother's lap during a two-hour church service. This carefully enforced obedience forms the basis of the training of an individual who is well-prepared to take a place within the community as an adult, as with the Amish (Hostetler 1993, 173). Until the age of six or seven, children's education is primarily the parent's responsibility. When they enter the first grade in school, children are expected to be able to obey promptly and without resistance, to tie their shoes, to count to ten, and to write their own name.

At the age of six, the child is typically enrolled in first grade at the closest one-room plain community-based school. These schools are often shared with members of other plain groups, including Old Order Amish, Weaverland Conference Old Order Mennonite, Stauffer Mennonite, Brethren, and Reidenbach Mennonite (Fishman 1988; Johnson-Weiner 2007, 168). The curriculum focuses on the academic basics—reading, 'riting, and 'rithmetic—supplemented by penmanship practice, memorization of Bible verses, and the study of history, geography, and sometimes health. The sciences are noticeable for their absence. This curriculum typically extends through the eighth grade. State law required Pennsylvania residents to attend school until their fifteenth birthday. Through negotiation with state officials, Old Order children who have finished the eighth grade are permitted to attend school for three hours per week, with the remainder of their hours spent at home learning the manual skills that are crucial to productive work within the community (Stoll 1975; Johnson-Weiner 2007, 114, 204).

The very existence of the Old Order schools hinges on a landmark Supreme Court

decision in 1972 which upheld the right of Old Order Amish parents to remove their children from school at the end of eighth grade, and to instead provide them the traditional vocational education (*Wisconsin v. Yoder, et al.* 1972). This leniency has typically extended to other Old Order groups, including the Old Order Mennonites. Writing the opinion of the court for *Wisconsin vs. Yoder*, Chief Justice Burger perceptively noted, "Amish society emphasizes informal learning-through-doing; a life of 'goodness,' rather than a life of intellect; wisdom, rather than technical knowledge; community welfare, rather than competition; and separation from, rather than integration with, contemporary worldly society" (Burger 1972). This mode of learning still typifies Old Order education with its emphasis on community, tradition, and faith-based living.

The Schmiedeleut Hutterites and Schooling

The Hutterites are a tradition-based people, whose mode of living is in many respects very similar to that of their ancestors in Germany, Romania, and Russia. The majority of Hutterites in the United States and Canada live in self-contained communities, practice a community of goods, maintain traditional dress and customs, and attempt to replicate the ideal of the early Christian communities (Hofer 2004). Within this communal mode of living, education plays a key role in socialization (Katz and Lehr 2014, 121). In preparing children for the responsibilities of adult members of the community, "only a systematic and strict religious education [can] prepare the young generation for a life of faith and commitment" (Katz and Lehr 2014, 122). The current Hutterian education program "has existed for over three centuries" and is based on the sixteenth century teaching of the influential minister Peter Riedeman, whose principles guide the upbringing of Hutterite children (Hofer 2004, 74).

A Hutterite child's education begins at birth, under the parents' loving hands, where the babies are expected to cooperate with the ritual and rhythm of life in community. At age three, the child enters the *kleine Schul*, or kindergarten, where s/he is taught prayers, hymns, cooperation, and the basics of communal living and respect for authority (Hofer 2004, 75). During regular school hours, school age children attend the English school, which may be a public school or a private school especially established to teach the subjects that would be covered in public school. Although the majority of colonies have public schools on or near colony grounds, some have moved toward private schools, which they administer and staff (Katz and Lehr 2014, 135). The community that is the subject of this study is among those who administer their own English school. Regardless of whether their children receive a portion of their education from state-supplied teachers, in all Hutterite communities the school age children attend German school before and after their regular classroom hours. In this school, which is taught by a respected community leader, the children learn to read and write the German language, study Hutterite history and ritual, and learn self-discipline (Hofer 2004, 76; Katz and Lehr 2014, 129). The German school is the principle socialization tool for preparing youth for participation in the adult life of the community. The German teacher is a man with authority, being charged with the discipline and religious instruction of all unbaptized youth over the age of

five (Hofer 2004, 76-77; Hostetler 1974, 215-23; Katz and Lehr 2014, 121-35). For the purposes of this study, the researcher primarily explored community members' perceptions of practices and purposes of the English school, although the German school and schoolteacher inevitably came up during interviews.

Summary

These unique communities—with their distinct ways of life—provide an intriguing glimpse of contemporary communitarian Anabaptist life and the role of education in maintaining a successful community. This study explores the similarities in educational practices and attitudes across these communities, using reviews of literature and interviews with members.

Old Order Mennonites and Hutterites as Utopian / Intentional Communities

Scholars use many terms when describing groups of people who share a common ideology and practice (and often property as well). Lyman T. Sargent has listed several "concepts that are used with some regularity by scholars to describe communal living" (Smith 1999, 24). His list includes intentional community, communal society, experimental community, collective settlement, and utopian society (cited in Smith 1999, 24). I have chosen to use "utopian communities" and "intentional communities" as two terms that best capture the vision of the Anabaptist communities studied here. The members of these communities act intentionally to bring such a community into being and to sustain it. This contention follows the work of Marc Olshan (1981), who argued that plain people like the Amish exercise intentional control over their decisions in order to achieve a desired outcome. Additionally, although the two communities studied vary in some significant ways, they share many common factors, including a belief that it is possible to live in communities that avoid some of the failings—apathy, disrespect, narcissism, among others—of the wider society around them. In this sense, they are utopian communities. It is important to note that members of these communities do not see themselves as having *achieved* utopia, nor do they believe that they are likely to do so. However, they work toward the building and maintenance of the best possible community and thus still qualify as utopian communities.

Intentional communities are deliberate, planned communities, which did not just happen. Members have a substantial investment in the community. According to Kinkade (1994),

> [t]he essential element in any intentional community […] is that people who want to live in it have to join, be accepted by those who already live there, and go by its rules and norms, which may in some ways differ from those in society at large (1).

Naturally, the rules and norms do vary among communities. We commonly think of intentional communities as referring to a commune, or a community that holds property in common, but this assumption is not necessarily true. Rather, intentional communities are a deliberate coming-together in pursuit of a common goal, whether that goal is spiritual,

ideological, or practical in nature. This deliberate coming-together includes a distinct aspect of humility and a sense of needing community in order to grow and develop to one's fullest potential. As philosopher Wendell Berry (1983) aptly puts it, there is "a sense of the impossibility of acting or living alone or solely in one's own behalf," with "the understanding that one lives within an order of dependence and obligation superior to oneself" (111).

Although the Hutterite and Old Order Mennonite communities are strongly tradition based, each new generation faces their own set of challenges for maintaining the community traditions and mores, while adapting to the changing world around them. The Old Order Mennonites and the Hutterites originated prior to the American Revolution in 1776, and survive to the present. Intentionally and self-consciously distinctive from the general society surrounding them, the Old Order Mennonites and Hutterites have remained intact over a longer time than almost any other groups in communitarian history (Lee 2013).

Method

Through this study, the researcher sought to find and articulate commonalities in education within these intentional communities. I explored members' sense of the purpose of their educational systems, their perceptions of the practical outcomes of schooling, and their perceptions of the role of the study of history. In the following sections, I discuss the responses to these questions. The first section details the participants, methodology, and results of interviews with community members. The discussion section, which follows, integrates the interview data with the historical accounts and proposes a theoretical framework for understanding plain Anabaptist education.

Participants

The target population included all adults involved in the school systems within the communities included in this study, targeting three types of roles: parents with children in community-based schools, teachers within these schools, and members of local and district school governance boards. Some respondents held multiple roles. For example, several were both parents and board members, while others were parents and teachers. The researcher used a convenience sample combined with individuals referred by other participants.

The participants are relatively evenly distributed among categories, with ten identifying as teachers (three teachers were also parents) with the remaining eight being parents, six of whom were also members of the school board in some capacity. However, participants were not equally distributed across communities, with only four participants (two teachers, two parents) from the Hutterite community. Of the remainder, the majority are members of the Groffdale Conference (Wenger) Mennonite community, although two are members of the Stauffer Old Order Mennonite community and one a member of the Old Order Amish. These three individuals teach in schools having students from the Wenger Mennonite community, in addition to students from other plain communities; their inclusion is thus justified.

Design

Interview questions were open-ended and intended to promote somewhat discursive responses in order to capture the respondents' understanding of their community, values, and practices (Converse and Presser 1986, 33), and do so as much as possible without introducing researcher bias. The interview consisted of ten discrete questions and was estimated to take approximately half an hour to complete.

Procedure

Following Institutional Review Board approval, the researcher contacted twenty-five Old Order Mennonite and Hutterite individuals for interviews; sixteen consented to participate. The majority of the participants requested that they be allowed to respond to the questions in writing rather than in an oral interview format. These requests were granted to facilitate interviewee responses and ensure their comfort with participation. No time estimate is available for these written interviews. Four individuals participated in oral interviews via telephone, while two interviews were conducted face-to-face. These interviews each took approximately thirty minutes to complete, including a brief orientation at the beginning of the interview and a short recapitulation at the conclusion. Although participants occasionally expressed concern that they were not responding "correctly" to the questions, all appeared to be comfortable with the interview process. The participant's hesitation appeared to stem from cultural factors relating to appropriateness of expressing individual opinion (Hostetler 1993, 186, 247). On reassurance that there were no wrong answers, all participants responded to questions without apparent discomfort.

Interviews were assigned an alphanumeric identifier. Notes from oral interviews were transcribed promptly to ensure accuracy. All individually identifying information—names and other personal information—was removed from the record. Transcripts of their responses were analyzed using conventional content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005). Due to the relatively small sample size, standard statistical analysis was not appropriate. I chose to use the content analysis technique because it is suitable for systematic analysis of qualitative data such as that generated by interviews (Evans and Rooney 2011). Conventional content analysis is a rigorous research methodology, providing an in-depth analysis of qualitative data. Krippendorff (1989) notes that "content analyses have shed light on the kinds of values expressed and attitudes held" by individuals within a group (405). Content analysis is also content-sensitive and flexible, permitting researchers to draw inferences directly from data in context (Elo and Kyngäs 2007, 107).

The process began with quantitative analysis for key words and phrases using QDA Miner™ and WordStat™ software .This process yielded a rough indication of the themes and concepts that interviewees considered most important. However, due to the intrinsic limitations of quantitative methods for understanding text data (Hsieh and Shannon 2005), I followed this

preliminary quantitative analysis with a qualitative analysis using conventional content analysis (Krippendorf 1989). The interview text was coded by means of computer-assisted coding using the Coding Analysis Toolkit (CAT) from the University of Massachusetts (Shulman 2010). Following standard procedure for conventional content analysis (Hsieh and Shannon 2005; Saldaña 2009), the responses and the codes were then categorized, with induction of themes and patterns that are common across the communities.

Results

Several dominant themes emerged from the conventional data analysis of the interviews. Although caution must be taken when interpreting the results of mixed oral and written interviews, especially in light of the limited number of interviews and the relatively low level of time invested in acquiring responses, the majority of the interviewees' responses appear to relate to identity and practicality. The following section considers each in detail.

Separate and Unique

All respondents identified the purpose of schools and educational systems as providing a means of separation from the larger society and/or providing a full, well-rounded education for their children—which would enable them to function as productive members of their community and in the larger society around them.

Respondents stated that having schools separated from general society serves to shelter children from unwanted influences. This separation is particularly important during the formative years, because it is during these first years that children form beliefs and make choices that will shape their entire future lives. For this reason, most respondents said that removing children from a public school environment was a strong factor in the decision to create community-based schools. One respondent said, "[W]e have our own schools because our community/church members before us were not satisfied with the type of education and the environment in the public school system." Private schools based in the church-community address the dilemma of appropriate schooling for the younger generation.

Although many respondents noted the importance of removal from the public school system, separation is only one factor in the perceived purpose of the schools. Character development is also a strong component. A teacher and parent explained, "From our perspective the purpose of schools and the educational system is to help children develop into whole, well-rounded, caring, and believing people. Each child is unique, created by God, and the educator's task is to help the child develop into the person God intends." Several Mennonite respondents quoted a speaker at a school board meeting: "The purpose of our schools is to teach children to be honest, self-supporting, law-abiding citizens." A Hutterite teacher said that the purpose of education is twofold, with religious values being somewhat more important than academic skills, although those skills are also valued.

Separation from the public school system tended to be seen not only as a negative act of removal from an undesirable environment, but also as a positive act of placing children into a desirable environment. Community members treat the school experience as an extension of the rest of the community and teach and model the same values in both spaces. For these communities, this ideal means an explicitly Christian environment with corresponding values. Several respondents stated that they consider a Christian environment one of the essential prerequisites for providing a quality education to their children.

Many respondents emphasized that their schools do, in fact, provide an adequate education by national and state standards. The adequacy of their education is particularly important to the Old Order Mennonite community members in light of the considerable legal difficulties surrounding the beginnings of their community-administered schools. Memories of the battle persist in community memory, and many youthful parents will mention their gratefulness toward the state officials for their cooperation. A Mennonite board member noted that, "We […] feel grateful to those before us who took the steps they did a generation ago to establish this system." A teacher added, "We are thankful to have schools where we are permitted to teach a sound, Biblically-based curriculum […]" As alternatives to the public school system, these community schools provide a good foundation in the basic academic skills, while also socializing the younger members of the community into the norms and values of their society. Skills and ideals are both important outcomes of the educational system.

If the first purpose of education is to provide a safe space for children to learn and grow, the second is to provide children with the means to develop a good character and to develop basic academic skills. A strong foundation in academic basics is interwoven into the concept of a quality education and is an important, though secondary, purpose of the schools.

Practical Values

Utilitarian values resulting from education included "the ability to make your own living through what is learned in the schools," a strong work ethic, industriousness, honesty, purity, obedience, respect, service, teamwork, and leadership. Since these communities are built on basic principles of the Christian faith, respondents tended to see all practical outcomes as subservient to the basic tenet of being an "education in the discipleship of Christ." The ultimate practical value of education is to prepare children to be citizens of the Kingdom of Heaven.

On a more pragmatic and immediate level, many respondents emphasized the importance of teaching basic academic skills, including the ability to read (regarded as very important, because "it is necessary […] to be able to read God's Word"), the ability to write, and the ability to perform basic arithmetical calculations. These skills serve as practical preparation "to hold down a job or manage a business later." As one teacher said, "We are teaching future farmers, carpenters, businessmen, and teachers […] the more they learn when they're young, the better they'll be able to use it." A Hutterite teacher emphasized that he wants his students to become "a

useful person, someone people can go to for answers, even for how to do a math problem. I want others to come to them to write a letter for them and not have to go to someone else to have the letter written." As these responses demonstrate, answers to the question on utilitarian values tended to be future-oriented, focusing predominantly on the benefits to prospective adults—the future members of the community.

Another practical benefit, which several interviewees pointed out, is the development of interpersonal skills. "Getting along with others, being a friend to man […] should be our earthly goals." These interpersonal skills include learning social norms for communicating with peers; respecting one's self, others, teachers, and adults; working in groups; learning interdependence; and experiencing socialization into the norms both of the community and the general society. Several respondents noted that the multi-grade classrooms are a decided asset, since "[t]here is a lot of informal learning going on because of the multi-grade classrooms." Younger children learn by listening in on the older children's lessons, and the older ones learn by occasionally serving as teachers for the younger students. One teacher said that the more time he spends in the classroom, the more he realizes how much of the learning is occurring between students on an informal, unplanned basis. The community ethos of mutual help thus extends to classroom practice.

Although a wide variety of skills and values are taught in the schools, several respondents said moral and religious lessons should first be taught in the home and then reinforced in the schools. "The parents should teach these things first and then the schools can kind of build on them," according to a Hutterite teacher. Sex education is the only kind of teaching that was explicitly mentioned as being unsuited for presentation in a classroom setting.

A Living Heritage

In all of the schools represented in the interviews, teachers include history in the curriculum. However, responses indicated a wide variation in how important they perceive the study of history to be. Some respondents apparently see it as an extra subject to be stuck into the corners of the school day, far down the hierarchy from the more important subjects—reading, writing, and arithmetic. The majority believes that history "helps to anchor a person in many ways […] History should be living, it should be a heritage that informs our actions / direction / thought today."

The teachers present history in the context of the present time. A teacher in a Mennonite school indicated that she helps her students "compare [an historical event] with how we live today or how it changed our way of working." A Hutterite teacher repeatedly stated the importance of surrounding his students with history. The study of history becomes an integral part of the curriculum, not limited to a specific time or place in the school day.

Teachers in these communities use a wide variety of history textbooks, most of which are written and published by explicitly Christian publishing houses, including Christian Light,

Apologia, A Beka, and Rod and Staff. These publishing houses are dedicated to providing high-quality textbooks and other resources as a God-honoring ministry serving Christian teachers, parents, and students. However, several teachers and parents expressed dissatisfaction with the history textbooks currently in use, saying that they are sometimes dated, limited in scope, and misaligned with the values of the community. Teachers often said that they work around these limitations by bringing in other books and encyclopedias, and using interactive projects to make the lesson relevant to the students. Examples of these projects included posters, research papers, craft projects, and oral storytelling. The Hutterite teachers in particular emphasized the importance of storytelling as a mode of teaching history, both in and out of the classroom. Among those teachers who view history as an important part of the curriculum, there is an attitude of considerable interaction and flexibility in teaching history.

While some teachers felt that some of their textbooks are dated and ineffective, other teachers and some parents observed that newer and better textbooks are presenting a historical narrative that is aligned with community values, broader in scope, and "not just dull facts, but also interesting stories." A Mennonite school-board member—also the author of a series of history textbooks explicitly written for use in Anabaptist schools—said that history should be taught in a manner compatible with the traditional ideology "of Christians being a separate and peculiar people living as pilgrims and strangers in a hostile world," rather than having a militaristic and patriotic focus that glorifies military achievements. This ideology includes a significant emphasis on following and understanding the history of individuals and groups in the community's past. As one parent said, "We need to know where we are coming from and where we are going." Although each group includes a common core of study of the history of Christianity and the Anabaptist movement, each will often include a more in-depth study of the history of their own group, thus anchoring the children in a sense of their place in the historical narrative.

In all of these responses, there was an underlying humility and awareness of fallibility, which one respondent specifically addressed. "We are normal, imperfect people, not some utopia! But with parents and teachers working together, much is possible." One of the achievements that has proven possible is the creation of schools and educational systems that meet national standards for education, meet the needs of the communities, and provide a quality education for their students.

Discussion: Theorizing the Community-Supporting Function of Plain Anabaptist Education

This section relates the limited data from the interviews to findings from the literature, providing an overview of the communities' ideologies and educational practices in the context of the broader communitarian praxis, especially in the light of the traditional Anabaptist *Weltanschauung* or worldview. Interview responses fall into two broad categories: concerns about identity, either communal or individual, and concerns about practicality, whether pragmatic

or idealistic. The following discussion will consider each of these concerns in the framework of the communal ethos.

Identity

In a fundamental way, intentional community is about identity. I found that community members saw education as assisting to establish both individual and community identity. This is consistent with Fishman's (1988) findings of a joint Old Order Mennonite / Amish school in Pennsylvania (see especially chapters four and seven): education serves to both allow individuals to build affiliation with the community and express self-identity within certain bounds. These two levels of identity will be addressed in turn.

Community identity

Communal identity is crucial for the members of intentional communities. In well-established communities, such as those whose members I interviewed for this study, the communal identity has solidified and become almost subconscious. This common identity informs and shapes every aspect of community life, especially education.

Members of these communities identify themselves as members of educational communities. Education is a community duty, and teachers and parents accepted their responsibility for the education of the community's children.[2] Further, some degree of separation from general society is a foundational tenet of intentional communities (Brown 2002, 3). The interviewees' concerns about their children's environment are an integral part of the communal ethos (Dewalt and Troxell 1989).

The individual in community

In the preservation of religious and social values, there is a paradoxical emphasis on the importance of the individual as the best means to assure the survival of the group. This paradox accords with McKanan's (2003) experience that "life in community helps kids develop a heightened sense of individual identity" (141). The individual is highly valued as a member of the community. As Good (2000) noted, "Individual achievement is not cultivated or sought after, although every woman, man, and child is regarded as a contributing member of the community" (37). Schooling, or education, is key to shaping individuals who will form the future community.

These communities have a strong expectation that the children will continue as members of the community in adulthood. This expectation is sometimes seen to contradict the concept of free will (Cheng 2012; Cohen 2014; Mazie 2005; Raley 2011). This view has some merit. Nonetheless, members of these communities argue that children are not automatically considered members of the community, despite being an integral part of daily life within the community. They do not become members of the church unless and until they make an individual choice to do so. Although there may be strong pressure for the individual to stay in the group, in most

cases there are few sanctions for children of community who choose to leave before having made a formal commitment to the community (Faulkner and Dinger 2014; Hostetler 1993, 78, 82; Jany 2013, 39; Spielhagen and Cooper 2007, 78). In all communities, those who relinquish membership—or choose not to become members—also relinquish the benefits of membership. This consideration may be a strong reason for children to stay in the community as adults (Stoltzfus 1977). However, community elders do not want *geswungende glieder*, members coerced into applying for membership through social pressure.[3] Because of this aversion to coercion, socialization into the community is carefully balanced by an explicit option for uncommitted youth to leave with minimal consequences.

Intentional communities emphasize the importance of membership in—and participation in the shaping of—the community. Members of intentional communities often see themselves as a vital part in an ongoing history (Kanter 1972, 52; Zablocki 1971, 44). The belief in the ability of individuals—and groups of individuals bound by common purpose—to shape their world, to "remake their institutions through 'reasoned choice'" (Fogarty 1972, ix) is central to communal ideology. Intentional / utopian communities by definition have remade the institution of their immediate community, and have therefore changed the narrative of their common history.

This common history provides a rootedness, a knowing from whence they came and to where they are going, avoiding "individualism that is really isolation from community" (Kagan 2013, para. 30). Students who are thoroughly rooted in their own history avoid this isolation and become individuals rooted in—but not trapped by—traditional understandings of the world. Educators Bauer and Wise (2009) present history as a linear process with a timeline stretching from the beginning of the world, while simultaneously being the messy narrative of interrelationships, competing forces, and distant influences (270-72). As the study of interrelationships, history is important to the current generation of community inhabitants. "[T]he communitarian tradition […] emphasizes a fellowship of souls that both binds an individual to his fellow man and enables him to transcend the material world" (Fogarty 1972, 103).

The crucial point is the individual's relationship to the community—it is a conscious choice to become a member, to see "the group [as] an extension of himself and [himself as] an extension of the group" (Kanter 1972, 66). Most intentional communities see the person both as an autonomous unit and as a component unit of the larger community. As Kanter notes, this dual identity increases the commitment to the community and to the communal narrative. The schools and the educational system play a crucial role in developing and maintaining this individual and group identity.

Practicality

Education in intentional communities is practical. It involves both working toward a concrete, pragmatic goal (in this case providing children with manual, academic, and social

skills) and working toward an idealistic goal (in this case preparing for the future, whether an earthly, physical future or a spiritual future beyond this world). These physical and metaphysical practicalities are both future oriented: preparing children to be members of the future community. However, they differ in that the physical practicality is relatively concrete and business-like while the metaphysical practicality is aimed at the long future, at life beyond the present world.

Because these communities do not actively seek new adult members, they must prepare for the future by addressing the education of offspring, on whose retention the community's survival depends. This overarching goal of community continuation influences what is taught, by whom, and how. They integrate education into the daily life of the community, and make formal academic teaching—or intellectual learning—subservient to the community's greater ideals and values.

Pragmatic practicality

Education in these communities is always seen as intensely practical and connected to the world of work (Leopold 2011, 632; Hostetler and Huntington 1971, 25).[4] Members of all communities expect that education will help students to learn skills and gain knowledge that will be useful in future careers, serving to prepare students for practical work. The importance of practical application leads to an emphasis on teaching academic basics. All schools in this study stress the importance of learning to read, write, and do basic numerical calculations. These are the fundamental skills required to succeed—not only in business, but also in the equally critical work of knowing and understanding the surrounding world (Hostetler 1993, 177, 182; Hostetler 1974, 218-19; Oyabu, Ido, and Sugihara 2002). Schools within intentional communities thus encourage children to grow and develop as individuals firmly rooted in the social values of the community.

Many interviewees mentioned that formal education can develop interpersonal skills. This function is an outgrowth of communal living, which tends to wear off the "individual angularities" of an individual's personality (Codman 1894, 24). Although few of the schools included in this study incorporated social skills as a formal part of the curriculum, all saw enriched social skills as one of the positive outcomes of their mode of education.

Part of living as a productive adult member of the community involves learning appropriate patterns of interaction with the larger society. According to McKanan (2003), "The children of intentional community […] are intentional individuals who live with one foot in the community movement and one foot in the larger society" (130). The schools serve as the crucial arena in which children first learn how to be a member of their community and then learn how to navigate safely in the unfamiliar waters of the larger society. In the author's experience in Old Order Mennonite and Hutterite culture, members assume that "our way" is best, but there is a guarded openness to new experiences. Teaching by example in safe environments, adults thus teach children and youth to function appropriately in the larger society. Teaching in the home

does not take precedence over the teaching received at school, but rather the ideology and practices of the two are aligned. The community integrates both school and home as parts of a larger whole.

Metaphysical practicality

While the overt routines of the educational systems reflect physical, pragmatic practicality, there is an underlying metaphysical or idealistic practicality in which immediate and earthly gain is insignificant in the light of the future. In this larger sense, education serves to further the values and ideals of the community, as also argued by Johnson-Weiner (2007). Ultimately, the schools are meant to prepare individuals for a life beyond this life. Hostetler and Huntington (1971) stated that, "Ideally the curriculum of the Amish elementary school helps the child to live his Christianity and thus eventually to reach not historical or earthly acclaim, but eternal rewards" (35). In a similar way, these communities strive to have their curriculum reflect their ultimate goals, and thus serve a heavenly utility as well as a physical utility.

Functionally, though perhaps without explicit realization that they were doing so, the leaders of utopian communities created a humane and holistic method of education for their children. Education in utopian communities is an integral part of the daily life and routine of the community. Learning takes place in many spaces other than within the traditional four walls of the schoolroom (Erickson 1975, 79). School schedules accommodate the ebb and flow of agricultural seasons, and learning is integrated into the context of their lives. In the majority of instances, textbooks, subjects, and teaching methods harmonize with the values of the community (Hostetler and Huntington 1971, 1-2; Senge, et al. 2000, 31-42).

The educational theories of Swiss-born Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi were a major influence on leaders of other communities (Matteson 2007, 34; LeBlanc 2005), and the basic premises are valid for the Mennonite and Hutterite communities, although most members have not read his works. To Pestalozzi, education should not and cannot be confined to a certain period in a child's life, but begins in the cradle and continues throughout a person's lifetime (Heafford 1967, 74-78). This holistic approach to education is common to most intentional communities and certainly applies to the Old Order Mennonite and Hutterite communities, where formal schooling forms only a part of the life-long community-directed education of the individual.

Pestalozzi—whose theory informs the educational practices in many intentional communities—inherited a worldview in which "God was the source of all truth and to comprehend it was to come closer to divinity" (Kagan 2013, para. 3). Pestalozzi attempted to understand truth through systematic study. Heafford (1967) viewed Pestalozzi's mission as such:

> By ordering knowledge and experiences, he hoped to find an ideal way in which to teach children, and methods which would prove universally applicable. At the same time by continually stressing that education was for the child and not the child for education, he

> showed that the needs of the individual child had to be taken into account. Education was to become at the same time more human and more scientific (49).

Pestalozzi saw education as a progressive endeavor, in which the teacher must be content to begin with the very smallest bit of a child's knowledge and gradually build from that fragment into a complete structure of understanding and comprehension. Writing in the 1700s, Pestalozzi anticipated Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget's (1932) theory of chronological cognitive development by more than a century. Pestalozzi stated that a child's capacity for learning developed in chronological order (Heafford 1967, 46). This concept of incremental learning is integral to the practice of many schools in this study. For example, textbooks used in the schools often quote Isaiah 28:10: "For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (*King James Version*). The organization of new information in the texts reflects this view (Bauer and Wise 2009, 14, 21). By organizing the scaffolding of new information onto old information in a way similar to the informal learning that takes place outside the schoolroom, children of community are permitted to integrate their formal education into familiar community routines.

In the world, but not of the world

In many areas and ways, the concern for physical and metaphysical practicality overlaps in educational decisions. Parents and teachers are concerned that education teaches both skills and values—that children are fitted both for earth and for heaven. Choosing textbooks is a prime example of this bimodal concern. Given the importance of developing a unified community ethos coinciding with expediency, selection of textbooks in these communities was and is a matter of both concrete and ideological concerns (Dewalt and Troxell 1989). Old Order Mennonite schools provide an example of the challenges in textbook selection. Following the 1972 Supreme Court ruling that permitted the Amish—and their religious cousins the Mennonites—to continue traditional education practices (*Wisconsin v. Yoder, et al.* 1972), teachers, parents, and board members faced the challenge of finding appropriate textbooks for the growing number of schools. At the first Mennonite schools, textbooks were often the outdated castoffs from the public schools (A. Gehman, personal communication, 2012). Curricula have since been revised and updated to remove outdated information and better reflect the values of the community. For example, the *McGuffey's Readers* were used for many years, but have been replaced by the Pathway series (Johnson-Weiner 2007), which were compiled and edited by an Amish publishing house and teach nonresistance and respect for the government's authority in contrast to more militaristic patriotism. Pathway Publishers, Rod and Staff Publishing, and Schoolaid are all examples of textbook publishers that have created books and curricula explicitly for use in the Old Order setting (Johnson-Weiner 2007, 206-28). This Hutterite community relies on Christian Light Publishing, a conservative Mennonite publishing house that supplies a complete—and explicitly conservative Christian—curriculum through the twelfth grade.

Other physical aspects of the schools show the same concern for physical and

metaphysical practicality. Schoolhouse designs remain simple, even stark, reflecting the community standards of simplicity, plainness, and distinction from the world. Old Order schools usually consist of one or two rooms with an attached cloakroom (Johnson-Weiner 2007, 33). Many have a simple unfinished basement, in which the children can play on rainy or stormy days. Walls are decorated with students' artwork, plants, and educational or inspirational posters. Hutterite schools, similarly, are usually dedicated spaces for schooling purposes (Hostetler 1974, 219). The Schmiedeleut community I interviewed has a dedicated classroom, with individual desks for the students, a small library, and student artwork on the walls. In other aspects as well, the Hutterite classroom is similar to the Old Order classrooms in its furnishings and simplicity. This functional simplicity reflects these communities' dedication to providing their children with an education in accordance with community principles—a temporal building enforcing eternal values.

Playground equipment is sparse by modern standards, often consisting only of a swing set, a modest ball diamond, and volleyball net (Johnson-Weiner 2007). The parents consider this equipment to be sufficient; more importantly, these games emphasize and enforce sharing and cooperation. Austerity is not for its own sake, but for the sake of the lessons students may learn about living in community.

To the members of these communities, the schools are a practical solution to the problem of appropriate education for their children. However, in meeting this need, they have unconsciously signaled their values and norms. Werner Enninger (1987) states that the school is "purposeful social action organized in accordance with socially significant beliefs and values […], which derive their formal coherence and their meanings from the unitary societal purpose of these activities" (152). Thus, teaching is the "training of norm-conforming behavior" (Enninger 1987, 156), and schools serve as crucial agents of socialization in forming students who are in the world, but not of it.

As the students, parents, and teachers work together, they are able to build and maintain schools which "[help] the child to live his Christianity and thus eventually to reach not historical or earthly acclaim, but eternal rewards" (Hostetler and Huntington 1971, 35). Through their unique practice and steadfast maintenance of traditional values, these communities have successfully built community-based educational institutions which provide a sturdy basic academic education while—more importantly—providing a means for socializing their children into the community norms and values and preparing them to be adult members of the church community. The schools are thus one of the strongest links between past and future, a dynamic tool aimed at preservation and continuation of the community's traditions and values.

Conclusion and Future Directions

This article has explored some of the functions that education serves in the Old Order Mennonite and Hutterite communities. Understanding these commonalities and the functions

they serve lead us to a better understanding of education's significance within all communities, and especially within the plain Anabaptist tradition. Children's education shapes the future. Thus, within intentional communities, education takes on a special significance as a means to ensure the continuation of the community. While the formal and informal education of the younger generation is far from being the only factor affecting continuity and longevity, education is nonetheless a key factor in shaping the future of a community. Although limited by the small number and restricted focus of the interviews, this study nonetheless provides insights into the Groffdale Old Order Mennonite and the Schmiedeleut Hutterite communities' perspectives on education and schooling. Important opportunities remain for expanding and refining this research to provide a more in-depth and nuanced view of these under-studied communities.

There are relatively few studies of education in the Schmiedeleut Hutterite communities (cf Hostetler 1974; Hofer 2004; Katz and Lehr 2014), and even fewer dealing specifically with education in Groffdale Conference Old Order Mennonite communities (cf Dewalt and Troxell 1989; Johnson-Weiner 2007). This article is a preliminary presentation of a theoretical framework for understanding education in these communities and in other plain Anabaptist communities. Ongoing studies will probe the validity of this framework in addition to expanding the data to cover several areas which are covered only briefly or not at all in the current work.

While I explored some aspects of the communities' perceptions of the study of history, many questions remain unanswered. How is the communal narrative of history communicated to the next generations—is it primarily formal or informal, conscious or subconscious? What roles do oral and textual modes play in this transmission? Why do some parents and teachers believe that the study of history in the schools is relatively unimportant? What role does the study of genealogy play in the building of the communal narrative?

Many authors have dealt with textbook and library text selection in passing, particularly as related to Old Order Amish communities (cf. Fishman 1988; Friesen 2000; Oyabu, Ido, and Sugihara 2002; Johnson-Weiner 2007), but there is no comprehensive examination of the ways in which Hutterites, Old Order Mennonites, and other plain Anabaptist communities select texts for inclusion in home and school libraries. Do the modes of this selection also reflect this author's framework of identity and practicality? What explicit and implicit value judgments are employed in the selection of texts for these purposes?

Both Hutterite and Groffdale Mennonite community members utilize distinctive German dialects in everyday conversation. The Hutterites speak *Hutterisch*, a Carinthian German dialect (Katz and Lehr 2014, 23). In common with many of the Old Order Amish and other Old Order Mennonite communities, the Groffdale Mennonites speak a Low German dialect colloquially known as Pennsylvania Dutch, although more properly labeled Pennsylvania German (Enninger 1987; Hostetler 1993; Johnson-Weiner 2007). How does the retention of these dialects serve the functions of identity and practicality? What will be the effect upon the communities if they lose these distinctive languages?

What of the German language? Both communities maintain at least a limited knowledge of American High German in addition to the low dialect spoken in the homes (cf Enninger 1987). Although use of High German takes place almost exclusively in the worship / church setting, the schools serve as the training area for reading and understanding this language. Does the use of High German serve solely to strengthen the community identity? How and to what extent do individual members use and understand this dialect? In the Hutterite communities, the English school has traditionally been a public school maintained on or near colony grounds, with a teacher from without the colony. How have the dynamics of the relationship with the German school changed now that some colonies have their own private English school?

The questions I have outlined above doubtless represent but a small portion of the potential future research. It is the author's hope that continuing studies will validate and expand upon this framework, and that scholars will consider the questions above as they continue to explore this fruitful but understudied field.

Endnotes

[1] Contact information: Janelle Zimmerman, Reading Area Community College; janellezimmerman@zoho.com

[2] Members of the Transcendentalist communal experiment at Brook Farm and the nineteenth century Jewish community of Alliance expressed the same sense of responsibility for the next generation (Codman, 1894, 13; Eisenberg 1995, 145).

[3] In a sermon to youth, including candidates for baptism (and thus for church membership) in 2011, Groffdale Conference bishop Alvin M. Martin stated that the church did not want youth that were *geswunge*, or coerced, into applying for baptism and church membership.

[4] Oxford researcher David Leopold (2011) states, "engaging in productive activity is the main way in which we discover and express who we are" (632).

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