

Running head: LIBRARIES AND ISOLATED COMMUNITIES

Critique of *Libraries and Isolated Communities:*

*Challenges of Outreach, Communication, Implementation and Culture*

*in Community with the Hutterite Brethren*

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Professor Connie Costantino

Kristin, Glad you 'got it' re: "...perception and evaluation..." I like your "pressure cooker environment" phrase! You probably know you're an excellent debater. You have keen critical thinking skills and the ability to ask important questions. \*Appropriate use of APA on title page, abstract, citations and references: minus 2 points p. 2 - ...undergoing if... [delete comma] p. 3 - ...researchers "...is to honor... p. 3 – Evans..., 2000, [change to comma] p. 80). p. 5, 6, 7 – don't should be: do not [formal writing used in research paper] p. 6 - ...itself" (pp. 480-1). p. 7 – "Librarians today are obsessed with change." – what research is this statement based on? p. 7 – ALA – First time used, therefore, need to spell the words, then (). p. 13 - ...Eisentraut, A., [add comma] and ...manuscript, [change to comma; also in Kerr...] p. 13 – Retrieved November... [Spell months in website entries.] \*Total Points: 38 Final grade: 371/400 = .9275 = B+ Thanks for always sitting in the front of the class. Good luck with your job search. Connie

### Abstract

deLorimier, Eisentraut, and Icaza provide solutions to the problem of providing public library services to communities that live apart from the mainstream society because of differences in history, culture, language, religion, and lifestyle. Hutterites will accept and partake of library materials and services only if their customs and traditions for interacting with the outside world allow it. This affects how a library manager tailors her organization's services for this group. The reviewer argues that stating the library's mission or articulating goals is necessary before initiating outreach services. The reviewer argues that differences in the levels of technology tolerated by Hutterite communities should inform how to make concrete decisions about what are appropriate library services. Will Hutterites be affected by the change that modern libraries are currently undergoing, if they become frequent library users? The reviewer argues that the researchers should consider the pressure cooker of change in the environment of access to information, of the right to know, of living in a democracy, when they plan services for Hutterites.

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deLorimier, Eisentraut, and Icaza (2004) discuss the problem of providing public library services to communities that live apart from the mainstream society because of differences in history, culture, language, religion, and lifestyle. Such communities, one of which is the Hutterites, exist in Canada and the northern United States. The challenge for public libraries in initiating outreach services, according to the researchers, “is to honor their lifestyle and beliefs while also filling their information needs” (deLorimier et al., Statement of the problem section).

The researchers would be wise to state the mission of the public library, if it is going to initiate outreach services to an isolated community. What agency or authority is giving this library the mandate to initiate such action? The researchers should have clearly articulated at the outset their understanding of the role of a public library in this situation, such as establish its mandate to provide library and information services to all within its jurisdiction. Unless the motive or rationale for delivering services is stated, the researchers run the risk of “having an environmentally deterministic point-of-view [which] blurs the distinction between real environmental characteristics and the *perception* and *evaluation* of these characteristics by top management.” (Evans, Layzell Ward, and Rugaas, 2000. p. 80). If not stated explicitly, the right or obligation of the public library defaults to tradition, custom, or common law.

It could be argued that this library is taking it upon itself, or assuming the responsibility, to provide information and services where none is wanted or needed. To say that this library should initiate delivery of services because the Hutterites have information needs may be a perception of management and not a reality. The researchers point out that “the Hutterites

are...capable of identifying their own information needs” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Conclusion section). Should this library wait for Hutterite patrons to communicate their needs for information and services? Or does the library take for granted that their needs exist because information in general is valuable and useful to all people? Unfortunately, this is a socially constructed judgment that might not be shared by the Hutterites. The researchers never confront this issue. They assume that the public library is mandated by law, by custom, or by obligation, to initiate services, that Hutterites have information needs, and that these needs can be fulfilled by library services.

#### Analysis of the impact on the people

deLorimier, Eisentraut, and Icaza (2004) conduct excellent investigative research that thoroughly establishes Hutterites as having a lifestyle and belief system that is different from the general society in which their communities exist (deLorimier et al., 2004, Narration of the problem section). Management is well served to “[c]onduct thorough research into the structure and culture of the community...” (deLorimier et al., Building trust section). Bowen’s position is that “managers ha[ve] an obligation to take into account societal values and objectives, in addition to organizational needs, when carrying out their managerial activities” (as cited in Evans et al., 2000, p. 60).

This reviewer will attempt to decipher the researchers’ enigmatic thesis argument, which, if she is not mistaken, pertains to how the culture and traditions of isolated groups affect library services. “Sustainability with library services in isolated communities will be possible via continuation of awareness and understanding of culture and community, as relates to the “outside world,” which will affect services such as access—bookmobiles, websites, libraries—and collection development and materials available” (deLorimier et al., Solutions section).

My understanding of this statement is as follows: Sustainable library services in isolated communities, such as the Hutterite colonies, will be possible only through library managers' continuous awareness and understanding of these people's customs and traditions for interacting with the mainstream society. In other words, Hutterites will accept and partake of library materials and services, whether it be bookmobile, website, or the collection, only if their customs and traditions for interacting with the outside world allow it. And this in turn should affect how the library manager tailors her organization's services for this group.

This second very enigmatic statement is attributed to Strouse and James. "Knowledge of doctrine and *ordnung* of Anabaptist groups allows services which affect and may be applied to the context of the members' daily lives" (as cited in deLorimier et al., Solutions section). My understanding is as follows: Library managers who have knowledge of Anabaptist doctrines and *ordnung* tailor their organization's services to those that are applicable to and useful in the members daily lives. This is, of course, what any good library manager would do for her clientele. While both these statements provide philosophical support, they don't supply any concrete actions or objectives upon which to base services.

#### Analysis of the impact on technology

The level of technology involved in providing services to Hutterites is impacted by a particular community's acceptance of multimedia technology. The researchers stress the need for library managers to be continuously aware of a "community's attitude toward technology" and that presenters to the community must respect what might appear as a low-tech approach (deLorimier et al., 2004, Knowing the community section).

Evans et al. (2000) warn about an over focus on technology. "Some ...think that technology is the driving force in the field today and should be the primary focus of

interest...Libraries...have a long history of operating without computers...[Library] history developed a body of principles and practices which are technology independent...[T]echnology is a tool for managers, not an end in itself.” (pp. 480-1).

To what degree do Hutterites embrace technology? The researchers found Hutterites are “willing to embrace technology if it can benefit them economically or educationally. .. [F]armers ...track crop prices using computers... [But use] does not extend to...personal gain or enjoyment” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Strictures on the use of technology section). “Use of technology and library materials is common in Hutterite schools.... [C]omputers are common equipment in colony classrooms.” (deLorimier et al., Education section). Unfortunately, the researchers don’t relate these strictures on technology to their solution.

Because there are such differences in the levels of technology tolerated by the different Hutterite communities, the solution should include discussion of how to make concrete decisions about what technology is appropriate based on the group’s tolerance level. The researchers cite Ingoldsby as providing a “good guideline from which to work when taking into account the resources to which Hutterite people already have access,” but the guideline isn’t clear from the Ingoldsby citation (deLorimier et al., 2004, Building trust section). Ingoldsby describes “leaders [who] ...work hard to keep modern and/or corrupting influences out of colony schools,” and colony classrooms [that] have computers and [other colonies] have [computers] in their homes” (deLorimier et al., Building trust section). Is the guideline that some colonies have access to information resources like the Internet and some actively fight against information resources? Is it that “each branch expresses [their] religious beliefs to varying degrees” (deLorimier et al., Building trust section)?

Analysis of the impact on processes

Change greatly affects libraries today; any discussion about libraries can hardly avoid discussing change. Librarians today are obsessed with change. Warnken (2004) warns that “[l]ibraries exist in dynamic environments that are often chaotic..., [that] [c]hange by its very nature is disruptive and upsetting, but it is a force that we reckon with constantly” (p. 324). Clark says “...change is ongoing, constant, and is occurring at an unprecedented rate. “...change is not an event but a process...” (as cited in Warnken, 2004, p 325). Warnken (2004) also claims change is a process, “[I]n order for the change process to be successful, attitudes and [sic] well as behaviors must change” (p 325).

Librarians don't have a choice about embracing change if they want libraries to continue to exist. “Our future success will depend upon how well we can manage and anticipate change at all levels of the organization” (Warnken p. 326). “[C]hange is necessary for libraries and their user constituencies to take full advantage of their new digital environments and the opportunities for expanded roles and partnerships” (Warnken, p. 323). Stoffle, Renaud, and Veldof argue that “...librarians must live in the future and not in today.... [T]hey must be willing to invest in the future and choose the future over today if a choice be made (as cited in Evans, 2000, p. 324-5).

Change, then, is a necessary part of the successful library, the assumption being that library users always want to “keep up” with change, in technology, in society, in the world in general. Warnken (2004) claims “[w]e need to consider our users and their transforming needs” (p. 324). Taken to the extreme, change exists for its own sake, and is always good.

Change is necessary in a capitalist society where progress is tied to information. Access to information is necessary in a democracy. Schuman (1994), past president of ALA, claims that “[librarians] are often considered society's gatekeepers, but librarians are actually the gateways. We are the one profession dedicated to ensuring the right to know. “(Libraries and the ideal of

democracy section, ¶ 4). The success of our democracy is interwoven with access to information. “[W]hen library services are threatened, . . . then the very basis of our democracy is endangered. Without open and equitable access to information, America's right to know is at risk” (¶ 3). Will Hutterites be affected by the change that modern libraries are currently undergoing, if they become frequent library users? The researchers would be wise to consider this pressure cooker environment of access to information, of the right to know, of living in a democracy, when they plan services for Hutterites. Should library managers stipulate more a traditional library in their service objectives?

#### Analysis of the solution/alternative solutions

The researchers discuss the fact that “Hutterites are providing themselves with their own brand of reading and information materials . . . [through] their own publishing houses” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Hutterite publishing section). The researchers suggest that the public libraries acquire these Hutterite-published books and materials as part of their collections. Two positive outcomes would be enabling non-Hutterites to learn about their Hutterite neighbors and encouraging Hutterites to use the library more often (deLorimier et al., Hutterite publishing section). The researchers here are assuming that the Hutterite books are in English, but they may also be in German. The researchers say that the materials are “used in many colony [English] classrooms” (deLorimier et al., Hutterite publishing section). But also that they are used in the community’s Hutterite schools, for teaching Hutterite history and religion, in which case they must be in German, the Hutterite’s daily language. “. . . the majority of written communication in Hutterite communities occurs in German” (deLorimier et al., Hutterian identity symbols section).

The idea of the public library expanding their services to the Hutterite community by including in their collection books and materials in German is mentioned briefly but is not built

into a comprehensive solution. The researchers acknowledge, “offering materials in [the daily] language is a good supporting attribute of library outreach programs” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Hutterian identity symbols section). This and the possibility of including Hutterite-published books in German and/or English should be explored in the solution.

Beyond explaining that Hutterites speak three languages, a German dialect, High German, and English, language does not enter into the discussion of providing library services to this community. Is this community entirely bilingual? Should the library consider expanding their collection to include German reference, non-fiction, and fiction books and resources? If the books and information resources the libraries provide are only in English, the Hutterites can't help but see the library as a possible threat to their cultural and religious identity, which is interlocked with their German language background. In this sense, this group should be treated as any other second language group. The community is first concerned with maintaining their native language, which is interlocked with maintaining their cultural and religious identity in the face of the mainstream English speaking society.

The researchers consulted experts in the field to determine strategies for providing library services, one being the coordinator of a county library literacy service. Unfortunately they don't say whether this county library serviced Hutterites. The suggestions are excellent: a careful approach that is based on establishing trust and practices flexibility, on the part of the library offering the services, such that the services are always seen by the target community as augmenting, and not supplanting, their culture. The receiving population is to “direct the approach and implementation of the services, not the service agency” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Building trust section). But at the same time the libraries must “go out to serve the group, not wait for the group to come...to [them]... (deLorimier et al., Building trust section). The

researchers suggest using “resourcefulness...to define the logistic avenue of approach,” the point being that the process is negotiated step by step and may take “a protracted length of time” (deLorimier et al., Building trust section). Unfortunately nothing more concrete is offered.

The first step in the negotiation is for the library leaders to learn about the community they aim to serve, such as building relationships with individuals. “Once you...know some...folks, ask them questions and follow their advice about how to proceed with introducing a new program” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Knowing the community section). Warnken (2004) points out the importance of “...look[ing] at our priorities in the context of our external and internal environments” (p. 324). This reviewer would suggest setting up meetings between library administrators and community leaders to set goals for the library that were acceptable to all. One goal would be for the library to assess the information needs of the community. Another goal for the community to identify the resources they desire. The researchers suggest that a gap exists between the library’s observations of actual needs and the community leaders’ beliefs of what their members “should” desire. “Recommendations from [community] sources stress the appropriateness of non-fiction books...[while] it was found that...books checked out...were fiction titles” (deLorimier et al., Knowing the community section). Library administrators need to account for this discrepancy when developing the collection.

#### Analysis of additional solutions

Based on email responses of English teachers there seems to be a general blending of school library and public library in the use patterns of Hutterites, which the researchers could have made more use of in planning outreach services to this community. For example: Mr. C, principal of two Hutterite schools in BC, Canada, at Dariusleut Peacehof Colony, mentions a total library budget of \$27,000 for a school of 28 students! He mentions the school purchasing

children and adult books for Colony members to read. “The school does purchase books from Christian book stores for adult use. One of the married males asked about some of the books in the adult section of the library” (deLorimier et al., Email interviews and responses section).

It is unclear if the researchers see the solution to providing outreach library services as coming through the English teachers or the public librarians. Because they interviewed only the English teachers and no public librarians, it sounds like they’ve focused on the school teachers as being the agents or liaisons for bring expanded library resources into the community. They say, “any teacher involved with the Hutterites would like to provide materials to the best of their ability. Ms. E. is able to act as a liaison for the Lohof colony because people there want reading materials. [Based] on the experiences and actions of these two teachers, we can see teachers and librarians are resources for the Hutterite community...” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Email interviews and responses section). In the Email interviews and responses section, the researchers establish that the schoolteachers have “taken a [similar] approach to meeting the information needs of their Hutterite students...[by] maintaining a library of materials on site...[and] encourage[ing] use of the local public library... (deLorimier et al., 2004). This indicates that a blending of the two would be advantageous.

The researchers should develop the idea a shared use library that combines public and school library resources to create expanded services. This would be advantageous because the schoolteachers have already become trusted members of the Hutterite community, as mentioned by Mr. C, “I have established a good relationship with all colony families and they trust my judgment” (deLorimier et at., Email interviews and responses section). Kerr, Loomis, O’Neill, and Russell (2004) researched one such joint use school and public library.

While the researchers ably discuss successful strategies for providing library services to

other isolated communities, such as the need to know the community and build its trust, they fail to transfer these strategies to their target population, the Hutterite communities. None of their discussion of solutions focuses on, or even mentions, the Hutterites, their subject group. Instead they discuss possible solutions in terms of other comparable groups, such as Old Order Amish, the Mennonites, and Anabaptists (deLorimier et al., 2004, Solutions section). Only very briefly in the conclusion do the researchers apply the concepts arrived at earlier to the Hutterites, but then fail to develop these ideas into a comprehensive solution.

The researchers suggest “funneling library services through accepted outsiders, such as colony teachers” (deLorimier et al., 2004, Conclusion section). However, without an official policy of a joint school and public library, this suggestion may go against the Agreement between a Divisional School Board and Colony, Alberta (deLorimier et al., Appendix B). They did not consider the possibility of a joint school/public library, when much evidence points to this as a possible solution. Their second solution, “willingness to work with colony leaders to guide appropriate collection development,” is a behavior, not a concrete solution (deLorimier et al., Conclusion section). The same idea is better expressed in the Library use section: “Libraries can support their outreach programs by communicating with colony leaders and English teachers to develop a list of acceptable reading materials” (deLorimier et al.). Their third solution, that “successful...programs must begin and end with a respectful attitude toward the culture and values of the people they would engage” (deLorimier et al., Conclusion section), addresses the essential problem: “the Hutterite attitude of seeing personal relationships with outsiders as a threat to the colony’s social unity limits the degree to which library outreach programs can penetrate the community” (deLorimier et al., Hutterite background section), but does not supply any concrete solution, as attitudes are behaviors and not actions.

## References

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