



UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS PRESS

Immigration & Ethnic
History Society

Review: [untitled]

Author(s): Jonathan D. Sarna

Source: *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Fall, 1997), pp. 97-98

Published by: [University of Illinois Press](#) on behalf of the [Immigration & Ethnic History Society](#)

Stable URL: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27502251>

Accessed: 13/03/2011 16:43

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use, available at <http://www.jstor.org/page/info/about/policies/terms.jsp>. JSTOR's Terms and Conditions of Use provides, in part, that unless you have obtained prior permission, you may not download an entire issue of a journal or multiple copies of articles, and you may use content in the JSTOR archive only for your personal, non-commercial use.

Please contact the publisher regarding any further use of this work. Publisher contact information may be obtained at <http://www.jstor.org/action/showPublisher?publisherCode=illinois>.

Each copy of any part of a JSTOR transmission must contain the same copyright notice that appears on the screen or printed page of such transmission.

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.



University of Illinois Press and Immigration & Ethnic History Society are collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *Journal of American Ethnic History*.

<http://www.jstor.org>

tures into prescription—"In the future, ethnic communities need to realize that their subgroups are likely to have very different ways of establishing connections and showing who they are"(p. 85)—and even verges toward advocacy: "the good economic performance of Soviet Jewish refugees serves to demonstrate that further admissions will not be a drain on the U.S. treasury" (p. 49).

Gold's extensive contacts with Soviet Jewish emigrés yielded a wealth of quotations that he uses to good effect, putting a human face upon his book. There is no way of knowing, though, whether the quotations are truly representative or whether they were chosen simply because they were particularly colorful or happened to illustrate some point the author desired to make. Gold identifies his subjects in various ways—by name (using pseudonyms to protect their anonymity), present or past place of residence, and current or former career. One cannot help but wonder whether "Andre," "a former linguist," "an emigré from . . . Odessa," and "a Los Angeles taxi driver" might all be the same individual. Are the "electronic engineer," the "emigré with a Ph.D. in electronic engineering," and the "engineer from Leningrad" different people? They may be, indeed; but if they are not, such stylistic variations can distort perceptions about the number of immigrants being referred to or quoted.

This is a brief, informative book. Given its brevity, though, the dozen or so typographical errors in evidence are too many. And, in one sense, at least, the book is too long. It is rather repetitive: the demographic information on page 31 also appears on pages 22–23 and 49; the point made on page 50 about loss of occupational prestige is also found on page 37; the strategies employed by Jews in the Soviet Union to disguise their ethnicity, listed on page 71, appear as well on page 8. This is a book, in other words, that could have been better.

Dale Steiner
California State University, Chico

Jews and the New American Scene. By Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995. viii + 239 pp. Notes and index. \$22.95.

The well-known collaborative team of Seymour Martin Lipset and Earl Raab, best remembered for *The Politics of Unreason* (1970, 1978), a pathbreaking analysis of right-wing extremism in America, turn their attention here to contemporary American Jewish life, focusing on "the conundrum of individual Jewish success amidst the dissolution of the Jewish community" (p.7). Employing a model that has worked well for them in the past, they analyze contemporary developments within a historical framework, argue that the principal agent of change in American Jewish life is American society itself, and stress American exceptionalism as a key factor in understanding what makes the American Jewish experience similarly unique.

The themes surveyed in *Jews and the New American Scene* are familiar ones: Jewish economic success; the impact of free opportunity and religious equality; assimilation; declining anti-Semitism; the impact of Israel; the endurance of Jewish political liberalism; and concern—given high rates of intermarriage and disaffiliation—for Jewish continuity. Each theme is handled competently, clearly, and with dispatch. Those who keep abreast of American Jewish life, however, will find little here to surprise them. Methodologically, Lipset and Raab do innovate somewhat by reintroducing the theme of “tribalism” to discussions of Jewish life, but it is far from clear how they distinguish tribalism from ethnicity. The tension they posit between “individualism” and “group identity,” for example, would seem to apply in both cases.

Jews and the New American Scene is too brief to do justice to religious and organizational developments or to important regional, generational, and gender differences within the American Jewish community—themes that other scholars have stressed. Nor does it attempt the kind of comparative analysis needed to substantiate fully its exceptionalist claims. The volume can nevertheless be recommended as a readable, intelligent, and up-to-date introduction to central themes in American Jewish life. While far from the last word on any of the subjects it treats, it will reward those looking for an entrée to the field.

Jonathan D. Sarna
Brandeis University

Jewish Agricultural Colonies in New Jersey, 1882–1920. By Ellen Eisenberg. Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 1995. xxiii + 218 pp. Illustrations, tables, notes, glossary, bibliography, and index. \$49.95 (cloth); \$17.95 (paper).

This is a worthy contribution to the history of East European Jewish immigrants’ “back-to-the-soil” movement in America. Farm communities were established in such disparate locations as Utah, Louisiana, Oregon, and the Dakotas, but those in New Jersey were longest lasting. All were intended to provide positive alternatives to urban congestion and to dispel pejorative images of Jews as petty tradesmen. The effort also involved western establishment organizations and individuals as “sponsors” for their newly arrived co-religionists.

What were the human components of this pro-agrarian partnership and sources of conflict? Eisenberg critically analyzes the leadership and goals of the Hebrew Emigrant Aid Society, the Baron de Hirsch Fund, as well as the ideological orientation of the immigrants’ self-help *Am Olam* (Eternal People) movement. But she focuses especially on the pre-emigration regional origins of the agrarian settlers, affirming their distinctiveness from other Jewish newcomers in occupational and cultural orientation. Such characteristics, she claims, also shaped the changing focus of the colonies by the twentieth century.