

Breton, Raymond J. et al. *Ethnic Identity and Equality: Varieties of Experience in a Canadian City.* Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 342. Maps. \$50.00 (cloth); \$22.50 (paper)

John de Vries

Volume 20, numéro 1, june 1991

URI : <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1017564ar>

DOI : <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017564ar>

[Aller au sommaire du numéro](#)

Éditeur(s)

Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine

ISSN

0703-0428 (imprimé)

1918-5138 (numérique)

[Découvrir la revue](#)

Citer ce compte rendu

de Vries, J. (1991). Compte rendu de [Breton, Raymond J. et al. *Ethnic Identity and Equality: Varieties of Experience in a Canadian City.* Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 342. Maps. \$50.00 (cloth); \$22.50 (paper)]. *Urban History Review / Revue d'histoire urbaine*, 20(1), 48–49. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1017564ar>

Breton, Raymond J. et al. *Ethnic Identity and Equality: Varieties of Experience in a Canadian City*. Toronto/Buffalo/London: University of Toronto Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 342. Maps. \$50.00 (cloth); \$22.50 (paper).

This is a multi-faceted study of ethnic identity and diversity in Toronto, one of Canada's most heterogeneous metropolitan areas. Although the book does not contain much history (developments between 1793 and 1971 are summarized in six pages in the introductory chapter), it covers material which is important for anyone with an interest in Canadian cities.

The analysis is conducted in four substantive chapters, preceded by an Introduction and followed by a concluding chapter. The first and last chapters appear to have been written collectively, while the substantive chapters are all single-authored. The authors are all professors of sociology at the University of Toronto with strong records in research and publications.

The *Introduction* not only states what the authors are planning to do in the rest of the book, it also gives us "basic facts" about immigration to Canada and its effect on Toronto's ethnic diversity. In addition, there is a brief discussion of data sources. The major one is a survey conducted in 1979 in the Toronto Metropolitan Area (*Ethnic Pluralism in an Urban Setting*), while two chapters also make use of population census data. The discussion of the survey data is clear, although I would advise readers to consult Appendix A (which contains Technical notes on the design of the survey).

Chapter two, on *Ethnic Identity Retention*, was written by Isajiw. It begins with a

detailed discussion of the nature of ethnic identity and ethnicity. Isajiw advances the notion that "ethnic identity can be conceived as a social-psychological phenomenon that derives from membership in an ethnic group ... " This is a somewhat peculiar approach, since it begs the question about the nature and definition of an ethnic group. Since he does not give us a definition of the ethnic group, but only refers to an article published in 1974, we are left in the dark. It would have made more sense to provide self-contained definitions of ethnic origin, ethnicity and identity (that is, definitions *not* based on other, undefined, concepts), and to use those definitions to specify what we mean by an "ethnic group."

Following these conceptual analyses, there is an extensive review of North American research on ethnic identity. There is a puzzling lack of coverage of the Western European literature on this topic (e.g. Giles, Liebkind, Weinreich). The "generational" aspect of ethnic identity is analyzed in detail, to set the scene for the remainder of the chapter. Here, Isajiw discusses the survey findings on ethnic identity, on the basis of many behavioural and attitudinal questions. The data shows, not surprisingly, that ethnic identity retention (an odd term, incidentally: can one retain something one never had?) varies across ethnic groups and generations. What we do not learn is how these observed differences between individuals are related to the characteristics of the ethnic *groups* to which they belong. Given Isajiw's suggestion of the primacy of the group, such explanations would have been expected.

This chapter suffers, aside from the fuzzy conceptual approach, from rather poor data handling. Frequencies in many tables are inconsistent with the basic in-

formation on the survey, as given in Appendix A.

Chapter three, on *Ethnic Residential Segregation*, was written by Kalbach. After having established measures of ethnic segregation and concentration, based on census data for 1971, 1976, and 1981, Kalbach uses the survey data to analyze variations in "ethnic" behaviour. This is a rather interesting attempt to combine ecological "macro" data with survey data to study individual behaviour. Indeed, the most interesting finding was that a relatively simple segregation index (based on census data) was the best predictor of the "ethnic connectedness" of the respondents. The residential *proximity* of group members played a stronger role than the individual's *perception* of neighbourhood characteristics.

In chapter four, Reitz discusses *Ethnic Concentration in Labour Markets*, another form of ethnic "segregation." Reitz provides a good summary of the main theories about ethnic inequalities in the labour market, then analyzes the survey data on occupational status and labour income. Using multiple regression analysis and multiple classification analysis, he demonstrates the general "equality" of the labour market (after controlling for differences in background, training, experience and the like), as well as the discrimination against visible minorities (in particular, West Indians and Chinese males). Further analyses deal with the *concentration* of various ethnic groups in specific occupations and the detailed inspection of labour force *position* (e.g.: self-employed; employed in a minority business; employed in a mainstream setting). Reitz finds that such ethnic concentrations have not helped the most recent immigrant groups (on the contrary), nor have "ethnic businesses." This form of segregation does not appear

to have benefitted employees with regards to occupational status and labour income, though it did produce some positive economic effects for the employers.

Raymond Breton discusses, in chapter five, the *Ethnic Group as a Political Resource*. The main theoretical concern underlying this chapter is the extent to which ethnic groups differ with regards to incorporation, their perceptions of problems of incorporation and their preferred strategies to deal with such problems. Breton reports the familiar patterns: non-European groups and Jews are most likely to encounter problems of incorporation, while the oldest European groups (Germans, Ukrainians) are least likely to have any problems of this nature. Interestingly, the "self-images" of ethnic respondents are in agreement with the views of "Majority Canadians."

It is regrettable that this chapter deals strictly with the survey data, without providing any information about the organization (formal as well as informal) of the various ethnic groups. Such data would certainly shed some light on some of the patterns in the self-report data.

While the main analytical chapters are overall well-written, there is a disturbing lack of *integration* in the book as a whole. I do not claim to have done a complete search on this, but I have not found any "forward" references in the initial chapters, and very few "backward" references in the final ones. More substantively, there appears to be no connection between Isajiw's classification of respondents by ethnic *identity* and Breton's by *attitudes* towards the ethnic community, or between either of these and Kalbach's approach to residential concentration and segregation.

To summarize: I found this a collection of four good to excellent "papers" in search of a "book."

John de Vries
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
Carleton University

Nadel, Stanley. *Little Germany: Ethnicity, Religion, and Class in New York City, 1845-80*. Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 242. Illustrations, tables, bibliography, index. \$37.50 (U.S.) (cloth).

Little Germany is a commendable addition to the field of ethnic scholarship in North America. Neither filiopietistic nor essentially anecdotal, as an abundance of such works about the Germans in the United States and Canada have been, the study takes parts of four wards of New York City—"the first of the giant urban foreign-language settlements that came to typify American cities"—during a thirty-five-year period of the mid-nineteenth century, and develops from that base a generally interesting and worthwhile social history of a dynamic urban community. As a work of scholarship and also as a well-written, effectively contextualized, methodological case study of urban and community research, *Little Germany* makes important contributions to *what we know* about a city which, after Vienna and Berlin, was for a while the "third capital of the German-speaking world", and also to *how we can learn* about urbanization, community formation, and ethnogenesis.

The book's nine cross-referenced chapters concentrate on the variables of ethnicity, religion, and class. In the first chapter, Nadel describes Germany, the German states and regions, and the socioeconomic and geographical contexts of the Germans who migrated to

New York. His second chapter portrays a correspondingly useful picture of German New York—from step-migration and demography to urban geography and patterns of lifestyles over the thirty-five-year period of this study. The book's subsequent chapters address, in succession: marriage, family, and household; work and business; religion; social life; and politics, classes, and unions.

Nadel questions many of the assumptions which for too long have gone unchallenged in the study of invisible minorities. For most readers, this will be the most valuable aspect of *Little Germany*. Particularly interesting along this line are Nadel's discussions which run through most of the chapters of the different regional folkways of the Germans—practices of subcultural cohesion and endogamy within the larger community of "Little Germany" which the author traces through the first and second generations in family life, business, recreation, politics, and religion. He similarly questions other assumptions, and thereby expands many views of folk categories, social institutions, beliefs, values, tastes, and behaviour which give structure and coherence (albeit dynamic structure and coherence) to an ethnic group. Above all, he proves once again—a point which Canadians should note—that the metaphor of the "melting pot" bears little more semblance to reality than do other nationalistically romantic notions such as the "'natural' order of ethnicity."

Little Germany includes an adequate number of illustrations, graphs and tables to support the book's lucid argument that scholars "need to ... develop a new historical conception of ethnicity, one rooted in careful study of the complex social behaviour of real people and real groups acting in different social set-