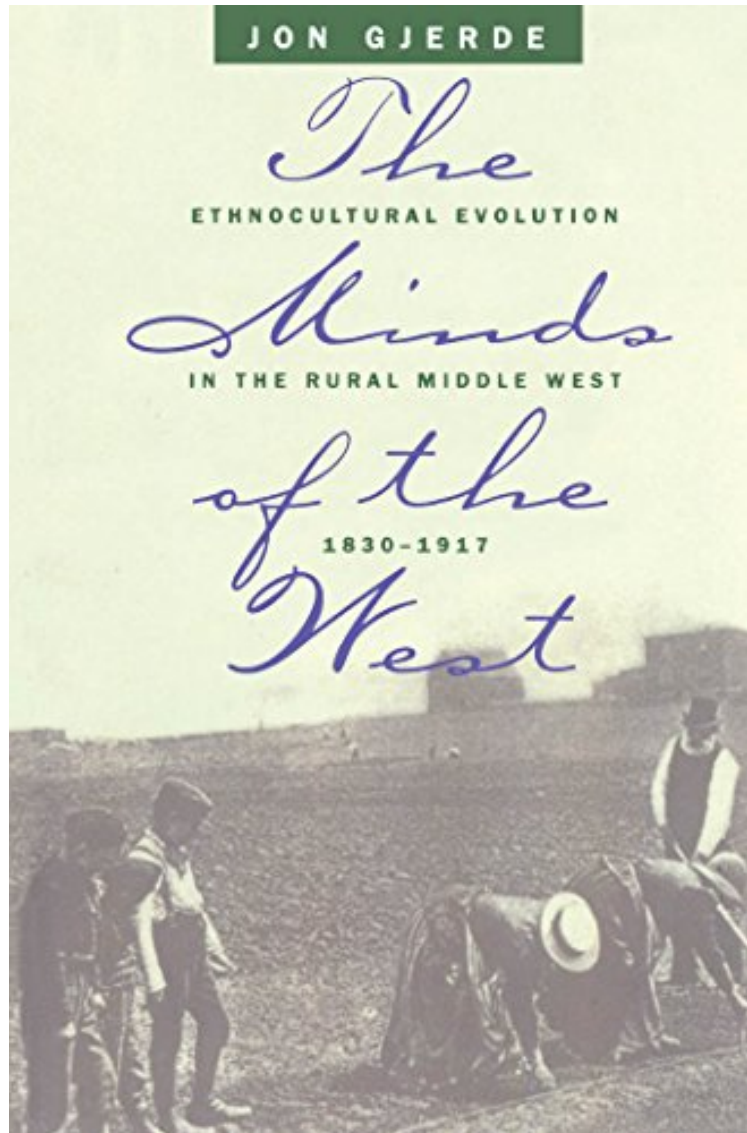


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The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917

Von Jon Gjerde

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Von Jon Gjerde : The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917 before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Minds of the West: Ethnocultural Evolution in the Rural Middle West, 1830-1917:

Kundenrezensionen Hilfreichste Kundenrezensionen 0 von 0 Kunden fanden die folgende Rezension hilfreich. A Useful Book on Middle West Settlement Von Ken Meyer Gjerde has written a useful book for understanding the conflict

immigrants experienced while trying to recreate their native cultures in the American Middle West amid the materialism and individualism they encountered in the process. Gjerde terms it "complementary identity": the immigrants (German, Irish, and Norwegian are who Gjerde focuses on) viewed themselves as Americans enjoying traditional republican freedoms while practicing their native traditions and rituals. The tension resulted in large part because there was no way the immigrants could keep American commercial values from invading their communities, no matter how isolated they were. The main weakness of the book is its structure. The chapters start out dense and abstract and end the same way with hard to grasp conclusions. The guts of the chapters, though, are easy to read and contain enjoyable examples from diaries, letters, and newspapers. Another weakness is that Gjerde paints a picture of the American migrants as being materialist nativists of all one mind set, which is simplifying the situation too much. Having limited knowledge of the subject matter, I found the book enjoyable if at times difficult to read.

Kurzbeschreibung
In the century preceding World War I, the American Middle West drew thousands of migrants both from Europe and from the northeastern United States. In the American mind, the region represented a place where social differences could be muted and a distinctly American culture created. Many of the European groups, however, viewed the Midwest as an area of opportunity because it allowed them to retain cultural and religious traditions from their homelands. Jon Gjerde examines the cultural patterns, or "minds," that those settling the Middle West carried with them. He argues that such cultural transplantation could occur because patterns of migration tended to reunite people of similar pasts and because the rural Midwest was a vast region where cultural groups could sequester themselves in tight-knit settlements built around familial and community institutions. Gjerde compares patterns of development and acculturation across immigrant groups, exploring the frictions and fissures experienced within and between communities. Finally, he examines the means by which individual ethnic groups built themselves a representative voice, joining the political and social debate on both a regional and national level.

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