
Many in North America think of globalization as the relocation of manufacturing from old industrial cities to developing countries. Some observers, especially in Europe, may also recognize that globalization involves the migration of unskilled Third World workers to core nations, especially in service work. But globalization also includes the rise of Silicon Valley as the world's leading IT district. IT is an essential part of globalization, but the rise of Silicon Valley has depended on the immigration of highly educated engineers from developing Asian countries, particularly Taiwan, India and China. Furthermore, as The Chinese in Silicon Valley makes clear, part of Silicon Valley's success is related to transnational ties with other manufacturing centers in Asia. Engineers with years of experience in California have turned entrepreneurs and started businesses in Taiwan, Shenzhen and elsewhere in China, either in manufacturing or trading, and furthering the development of Silicon Valley.

The Chinese in Silicon Valley is based on interviews with 100 residents, including some in Taiwan, Hong Kong, and mainland China. Thus, the book takes a broader perspective than a local study, following some informants across the Pacific and addressing itself directly to the mobility and international links of the Silicon Valley Chinese. It focuses on a dispersed but self-conscious community, and thus has the advantages of traditional ethnography, but also keeps this community in the context of the nation and of transnational flows of people and products. Asians make up 11 percent of California's population, but 19 percent of the population of the nine counties of the Bay Area (p. 3). Asians are especially concentrated in the Silicon Valley workforce, with 31 percent of the white collar workers and 57 percent of the blue collar (technician) employees being Asian.

The book could have used some editing to eliminate repetition. Shortening the book would have made it more accessible and useful as a course text. There are numerous errors in Romanization.

The book has three main arguments. First, it argues that globalization has transformed the world in ways that previous world systems theory cannot explain. Globalization is not eliminating informal and personal relations, but is being facilitated by informal relations such as the alumni and professional ties of Chinese engineers on both sides of the Pacific. The book shows how the global economy is affecting the Chinese in Silicon Valley, and how the Chinese use their social capital to take advantage of the global economy.

Second, the book describes how Chinese residents are linked by social networks. Silicon Valley Chinese are not residentially segregated, but are linked
through ties of work, professional associations, alumni associations, and social and political groups. The Silicon Valley Chinese are very different from Chinese in enclaves like Chinatowns, where everyone speaks Chinese and businesses hire only other Chinese. An aspect of this theme is the pressures on the family as members travel or live apart from spouses and children, and suffer from isolation and loneliness.

Third, the book seeks to show that immigrants are becoming Americans, and that though some may keep multiple passports and thus be “flexible citizens,” the vast majority are committed to Silicon Valley and to their new country. It seeks to counter any accusations that the Chinese have a “divided loyalty” (p. 106); one chapter is entitled “Establishing Roots in America,” which argues that Chinese immigrants have the goal of “establishing roots in a desirable land” (p. 7). It gives examples of immigrants who re-emigrate back to their native country, but keep their Silicon Valley homes (renting them out, thus providing another occupational niche for Chinese estate agents) and plan to return to Silicon Valley either in a few years or upon retirement; achieving the American Dream may require leaving the US and returning to Asia (p. 44, also pp. 155, 233). The evidence for this is weak, however, because the research is based primarily on fieldwork in California, and as such, could have missed those returning to Asia to stay. The book in fact offers contradictory evidence when it says that a newspaper in 1993 “estimated that 30 percent of the Taiwanese immigrant engineers who formerly worked in Silicon Valley had returned to Taiwan in search of better opportunities” and “My informants estimated that during this time at least a fourth of the valley’s Hong Kong immigrant professionals returned to their land of origin as well” (p. 105). In addition, a newspaper poll of Chinese engineers found that most intended to return to China, and only 19 percent said they did not (p. 111). Still, the book makes the important point that both the US and China benefit from these bicultural brokers. Many who re-migrate to China do so to assist US companies and thus help the US economy. Even so, the argument that these immigrants are “loyal” is less than convincing, because the concept of “loyalty” is shifting with globalization. Loyalty to one discrete group is something from the pre-global nationalist era, and even then was often problematic among scientists, who cooperated across national boundaries.

One issue that is hardly addressed in the book is “what is Chinese?” The book assumes that immigrants from Taiwan, Hong Kong and the mainland, as well as the ABC, are all Chinese, but it is not clear if they all agree on that, or that it means the same thing to people in each of these groups. The first half of the book often assumes “Chinese” are foreign born, while in fact many are not. The census categorizes people based on “race” and thus includes many who do not speak Chinese. The book notes that there is social distance between the different language groups and that they rarely interact outside of work (p. 141). If so, and