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Book Review

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In *Chinese Senior Migrants and the Globalization of Retirement*, anthropologist Nicole Dejong Newendorp explores how senior migrants who moved from China to Greater Boston at age 60 or older between 1990 and 2010 make sense of their late-life engagement in global mobility practices. The author draws on ethnographic research to show how seniors' memories and experiences of movement within and beyond China in past decades continue to influence their twenty-first-century migration trajectories and aspirations for post-retirement well-being in both China and the United States.

Chapter one introduces the context of the research through the life stories of several senior migrants that the author met as a volunteer English teacher and provides an overview of the book's content. Chapters two through four foreground the complexity of the motivations of Chinese-born senior migrants to migrate. Some of the key motivations for their migration trajectories include their long family histories of emigration and diasporic lifestyles, their nostalgia for the egalitarian values they experienced growing up in socialist China, and the well-developed infrastructure of social support for seniors to retire in the United States. For example, the author notes that Chinese migrants frequently express positive feelings about the U.S. government, particularly its social welfare resources for the elderly. In contrast, the author suggests that principles such as a stable and equitable society now seem to have been abandoned by the current Chinese government and are more easily experienced in the U.S. than in China. The contemporary financial precarity for Chinese seniors contrasts with Chinese ideals regarding collective security for which they worked and sacrificed as young adults in Maoist China. As the author accurately points out, these current inequalities in China are rooted in the social welfare system of the Maoist period, which provided urban Chinese with greater social and economic security than rural Chinese, through access to state-provided housing, food, income, education, and health insurance-security. As these senior migrants moved to the United States, they were able to receive a small social security payment from the U.S. government for having worked and paid taxes as elderly workers for several years there.

In Chapters five through seven, Newendorp moves from the question of motivation to adaptation. She focuses on newly migrated Chinese seniors and their negotiation of networks of support, space, and community in the U.S. Throughout these chapters, the author demonstrates that Chinese-born senior migrants' cultural norms and ways of life are renegotiated as they adjust to life in the United States. She reveals that their integration into American ways of life primarily involves practicing their Chinese culture and family values, by developing a set of routines and rhythms of daily life in Chinatown, and by participating in Chinese cultural performances with other members of the Chinese diaspora in and

around Boston. The performance of cultural identity and the development of community ties instill a resilience in older Chinese migrants in the face of the challenges that come with living at the social and economic margins of American society.

In Chapter five, “Negotiating family values in the United States,” the author discusses older migrants’ adaptation strategies highlighting the meaning of the unpaid childcare they provide for their adult children’s offspring to relieve the burden of paying expensive American childcare programs. Caregiving work makes them valuable for family members and allows them to renegotiate their emotional and economic role within the family system. By providing childcare, they prevent becoming dependent on their adult children, both financially and for their daily needs as they age. This is a successful adaptation strategy because this dependency would only marginalize them even further in U.S. society. Thus, senior migrants’ care work has economic, social, emotional, and cultural value within the family and helps to strengthen their social engagement in the new country. Senior migrants’ social engagement is closely tied to the familiar socio-cultural environment of Chinatown, which allows Chinese seniors to navigate the physical urban space and establish daily routines, such as meeting with friends and participating in organized activities. Chapter six reveals that Chinese seniors’ social embeddedness within the ethnically familiar environments of Boston’s Chinatown and its satellite community in Quincy facilitates senior migrants’ ‘homing’ process. It allows them to ‘age in place’ and thereby contributes to their well-being as it provides a sort of familiarity as they age.

In Chapter seven, the author explores how senior migrants’ participation in performative cultural activities (e.g., ballroom dancing) contributes to their social embeddedness within a larger community of co-ethnics living in the Boston metropolitan area, despite the overwhelming diversity of their life experiences. Seniors’ involvement in dance is not about reliving the past, but about engaging with the past and the present simultaneously. Chapter eight, “Reconfiguring retirement,” concludes this ethnography by emphasizing that the seniors whose stories this ethnography explores did not migrate to the United States as older adults because they needed care, but rather moved here as a strategy to gain access to ways of life as retirees that provide security, interdependence, and new experiences all at the same time.

While in *Chinese Senior Migrants and the Globalization of Retirement*, Newendorp demonstrates the agency and remarkable resilience of this generation of Chinese senior migrants, I think the picture presented in the book is overly optimistic given the social and economic precarity that comes with aging for many older Americans, if they have the chance to retire at all. I read the interpretation of the ethnographic stories with caution and refrain from extrapolating them to the broader population of Chinese senior migrants in other Chinatowns in the U.S. The author also mentions that seniors’ family relationships in the United States do not always work out as they had hoped or expected when they decided to migrate in the latter decades of their lives. I would find it interesting to hear the perspective of elderly migrants whose immigration experience did not meet initial expectations. Was there an unspoken expectation that adult children would eventually take care of their elderly parents in this new setting? The intersection of Chinese migration and aging is an inspiration for exciting future research to understand aging in a transnational context. Scholars and students who are interested in this sub-field should add this book to their reading lists!