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Young children as intercultural mediators: Mandarin-speaking Chinese families in Britain. Zhiyan Guo. Bristol, England & Tonawanda, NY: Multilingual Matters, 2014. xvii + 193pp, (hardcopy), £99.95 & \$159.95, ISBN:978-1-78309-213-0.

As a native Chinese person living overseas and a sociologist of education studying Chinese diaspora, I opened this book with great interest. After reading the first few pages I quickly became absorbed in Guo's work. It deviates from the bulk of literature about intercultural practices within the family milieu of Chinese immigrants. Much extant work interrogates the intergenerational reproduction of Chinese heritage in a diasporic context, where *Chineseness* is transmitted from older generations to younger generations, through a trajectory full of potholes and distractions, coupled with opportunities and benefits. Guo's work differs, however, in its contemplation of the culture flow in a reverse direction: How Chinese children help acculturate and socialize their immigrant parents in Britain.

The first chapter frames the sociological domain of the book through a penetrating revisit of some key notions: migration, acculturation, and cultural codes. Building on this conceptual foundation, Guo argues the indispensable role that children play in the acculturation of immigrant parents, a phenomenon largely overlooked in research and often invisible to immigrant families. Hence, Guo reconceptualizes "childhood" and debates children's cultural mediation in Chapters Two and Three respectively.

Chapter Two adopts an emergent sociological paradigm. Problematizing Piaget's developmental psychology that tends to stress children's biological immaturity, social dependency, and epistemological incompetency, Guo considers children to be active agents, engaged actors, smart negotiators, and decision makers within variable contexts. This gives rise to Chapter Three's discussion of children's cultural mediation in explicit and implicit forms, with different levels of visibility in family life, different levels of self-awareness of, and challenges for, being child mediators, as well as the various changes in child-parent power relationships.

The next four chapters examine empirical data collected from six Chinese immigrant families. Vignettes and dynamics of these families are provided in

Chapter Four. This lays a basis for subsequent chapters to illustrate three inter-nested and progressive levels of children's cultural mediation: the assimilative, the appropriative, and the accommodative. Chapter Five scrutinizes the assimilative process. The spontaneous, ephemeral, and frequent intercourse of everyday life helped parents gain factual, contextual, and cultural knowledge from their children (e.g., British history and sports). Chapter Six elucidates the appropriative process. The ongoing, challenging "uncertainties," "confusions," "tensions," and "ambivalences" enabled parents to make due changes in their social life (e.g., parent-child relationships and dietary habits). Chapter Seven analyses the accommodative process. This gradual transformation occurred over a period of time, usually from parents' cultural discomfort, observed as "tension, unease, and stress," through their voluntary and noticeable adjustments to social practices, to qualitative changes in their schema. Guo depicts a vivid picture of parents' engagement in children's making of greeting cards and participation and hosting of birthday parties. These activities facilitated human relationships and social development, and eventually came to shape parenting style and ritual socialization.

Guo concludes the book with the demystification of children's cultural mediation. Different from language brokering—a visible, explicit form of cultural mediation, Guo highlights the largely invisible, hence implicit, forms of cultural mediation—a continuum that entangles assimilation, appropriation, and accommodation. The book conceptualizes children's position within the family, recasting traditional subordinators and dependents into social agents, whose cultural mediation functions as the intermediary between parents and their new society, constantly shaping parents' cultural codes, and eventually contributing to personal and family wellbeing.

Upon the completion of my reading, I found Guo's book conceptually deep, methodologically sound, culturally rich, and contextually informative. This piece has a strong potential to address a diverse readership of Chinese immigrant parents; sociologists of childhood, families, and immigrants; ethnographers and anthropologists of cultural studies; as well as research students with relevant scholarly interests. Despite these attributes, readers should be mindful of the qualitative nature of Guo's work. The patterns and dynamics of children's cultural mediation emerging from Guo's ethnographic study are highly contextualized within six Chinese immigrant families in Britain. It is dangerous

to take for granted that knowledge built and lessons learned here are omnipresent in all British contexts. That said, Guo's work provides a powerful framework for any future quantitative, longitudinal investigation that aims to make generalizable claims. I also wonder whether Guo's work can be transferred into other linguistically and culturally diverse contexts, such as the US, Canada, and Australia, where there are increasing populations of well-educated, highly skilled, culturally competent, and socially adaptable new immigrants. Hence, it may be less useful to over emphasize children's cultural mediation in these contexts. I would also consider an ethnomethodological approach to be a possible complement to Guo's ethnographical work. In this way, the minutiae and dynamics performed through the mundaneness of children's cultural mediation may be better excavated.

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Civil examinations and meritocracy in late Imperial China. Benjamin A. Elman. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2013. 416 pp., (hardcover), \$45, ISBN: 978-067-472-495-2.

Civil Examinations and Meritocracy in Late Imperial China is Benjamin Elman's latest monograph. It reveals his broad sociological understanding of Chinese civil examination and imperial politics. Since Elman began to explore the history of Chinese education and culture, he has been fascinated by the vast hierarchical structure of the ancient Chinese state which staffed around 25 thousand offices during the late imperial period, from 1400 to 1900. Selected by the nation-wide civil examination system based on the body of Confucian learning and classical literary writing and tested by the eight-legged essay, the best and the brightest students had the chance to enter the state political arena in which they could