

Excerpts: A look inside
Cultures@Silicon Valley

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**Rarely asked and often assumed,
this book addresses the question,**

“What is the difference that culture makes?”

Silicon Valley, the paramount producer of the information revolution, has become the icon for a lifestyle saturated with digital devices. Most books on the region focus on Silicon Valley’s entrepreneurial reputation, but this book is the result of an anthropological expedition into the everyday lives of people living in, and connected to Silicon Valley. These people use technology to create cultural realities and transform their cultural identities into tools. A specialized high-tech economy has drawn people to the region, and created an unparalleled concentration of “techies.” Technology permeates everyday life and the very metaphors of community. The economy has also drawn people from all over the world, creating a complex cultural mix, ranging from Cambodian culinary entrepreneurs to Midwestern process engineers. The region is not only a bellwether of technological research and production, but a laboratory for the creation of a complex society. Within schools, workplaces and homes identities emerge, engage, erode, transform and are recreated to coalesce into a larger community of communities. The two strands of technological saturation and identity complexity intertwine to produce many different choices. These choices play out in how technology is used, work is done, community is made and family is lived. People juggle these choices, often informed by the same pragmatic instrumental reasoning that characterizes high-tech workplaces. The 21st century lifestyle of Silicon Valley—saturated by information technologies, struggling to manifest civic life from deeply diverse identity communities—illustrates the social and cultural dilemmas of the near future.