



Everyday Americans seeking new homes as a journey of self-discovery

Opting for Elsewhere

Lifestyle Migration in the American Middle Class

BRIAN A. HOEY

"Do you get told what the good life is, or do you figure it out for yourself?" This is the central question of *Opting for Elsewhere*, as the reader encounters stories of people who chose relocation as a way of redefining themselves and reordering work, family, and personal priorities. This is a book about the impulse to start over. Whether downshifting from stressful careers or being downsized from jobs lost in a surge of economic restructuring, lifestyle migrants seek refuge in places that seem to resonate with an idealized, potential self. Choosing the "option of elsewhere" and moving as a means of remaking self through sheer force of will are basic facets of American character, forged in

its history as a developing nation of immigrants with a seemingly ever-expanding frontier. Building off years of interviews and research in the Midwest, including areas of Michigan, Brian Hoey provides an evocative illustration of the ways these sweeping changes impact people and the communities where they live and work as well as how both react—devising strategies for either coping with or challenging the status quo. This portrait of starting over in the heartland of America compels the reader to ask where we are going next as an emerging postindustrial society.

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"Hoey emphasizes that although we know a lot about migration patterns from demographers, we know very little about the experiential aspects of lifestyle migration—why and how people make the decision to relocate and how that relocation changes the way they think about themselves and others. Hoey sees the relocation process as quest for meaning, but also as a means to gain personal control over aspects of life that have become chaotic."

—Denise Lawrence-Zuniga, co-editor of *The Anthropology of Space and Place*



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