Twitter Thread by Steven Vogel

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Thanks to everyone who posted tributes to my father. I thought I might honor him with a not-too-serious thread on some of his major works, from the admittedly warped perspective of one of his offspring. 1/13

Let's start with Japan's New Middle Class 1963, hands-down my favorite. I am biased, of course, since my parents conducted the research together, and I know many in the cast of characters. 2/13
https://t.co/D5C2AiIBEI

My parents immersed themselves in the lives of 6 families in a Tokyo suburb. The book is a testament to the payoff from intensive ethnographic research. It offers the reader a vivid portrait of everyday life in 1950s Japan. 3/13

Canton Under Communism 1969, the only one I had to read in college. That ruined it for me. But it was pretty impressive that he could write such a rich book about a country he had never been to. He interviewed refugees from the mainland in Hong Kong. 4/13
https://t.co/MsJLqge5Zy

Japan as Number One 1979, Japan's all-time top-selling non-fiction work by a non-Japanese author – I think. Some claimed it was not truly a work of scholarship, or it did not treat Japan's strengths and weaknesses evenly. But that was the point. 5/13
https://t.co/9aZm8J814e

The subtitle was Lessons for America. From my vantage point as a recent graduate of a Japanese high school, the portrayal of the education system did seem a tad too rosy. What about the meaningless memorization? Ridiculous rules? Bullying? 6/13

Next: One Step Ahead in China 1989. I got to partake in some of the early research in the summer of 1980 at Zhongshan University in Guangzhou. Dad spoke Mandarin and Charlotte spoke Cantonese. I just went along for the ride. 7/13
https://t.co/t2eYsSQ2Ib

That was quite the moment to experience communist China right before the transformation. Mao suits, escorts and spies - and some surprisingly mediocre Chinese food. Only two drink choices at restaurants – beer and orange soda. And the servers would mix the two at will. 8/13

The Four Little Dragons 1991. Not really a research project, but rather my father's popular Industrializing East Asia course in book form. Add four more countries/regions to the list. 9/13
https://t.co/RBUXTQupcu

Don Oberdorfer, a veteran journalist, advised my father to write a biography of Deng - one of the most influential leaders of the 20th century, who changed the course of a nation and reshaped the global order. So he became a historian. 10/13
https://t.co/PJ5EJDUHof

China and Japan: Facing History 2019. Not sure I can take credit, but I urged my father to turn to Sino-Japanese relations in his later years. He had credibility and personal networks on both sides. Who better to prod these two nations to get along? 11/13
https://t.co/3soh314HWV

So there you have it: utter disregard for disciplinary boundaries, scant attention to grand theory, no respect for methodological orthodoxy. He checked every single box on the dissertation adviser’s list of WHAT NOT TO DO. 12/13

Yet it all worked out pretty well. The only common thread: work hard, talk to people, listen carefully, get the story right. Scanning through the Twitter chat over the past 24 hours, I see no clear winner for best book. It really depends on what you are looking for. 13/13