

**From “kyôiku mama” to “taiga mother”:
Stereotypes of education practice in Japan and China and
its effect on New Zealand**

Dr Elena Kolesova
Department of Communication Studies
Unitec Institute of Technology

In place of argument

The media have played an important role in constructing consensus about the different models of parenting/education practices including “kyôiku mama”, “taiga mother” as well as “monster parents”, “helicopter parent” etc.

These constructions often reflect the general feeling about a particular country/culture at the time and do not reflect cultural, philosophical and socio-economic context of these countries.

In a globalised world the education practices and models of parenting typical for one particular country/region have a certain influence/effect on other countries as a result of immigration or presence of international students, or establishing overseas educational institutions.

Definitions

教育ママ “kyôiku mama” -
“education mother” (since mid 1960s)

モンスターペアレント – monster
parents (since 2007)



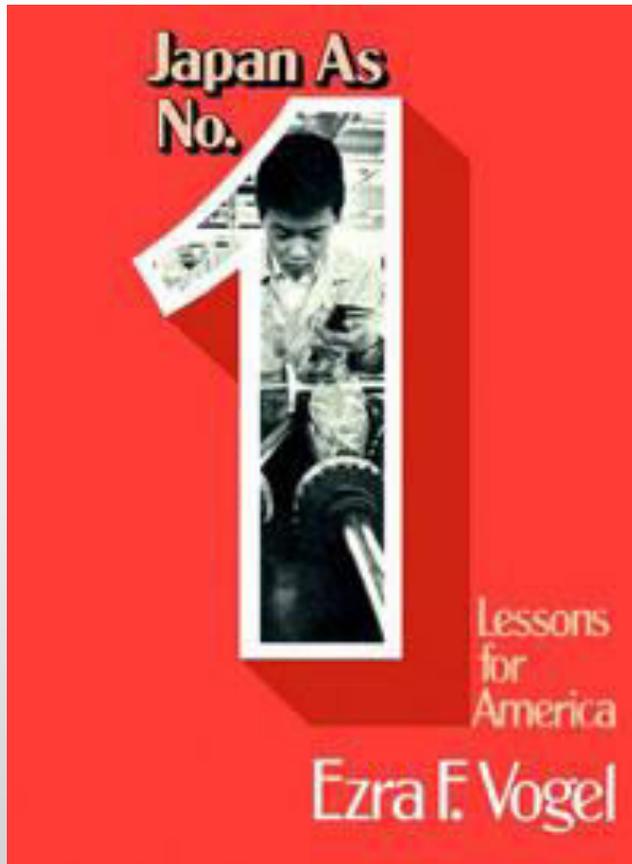
虎媽/虎妈 “Tiger Mother”
(since 2011)

Tiger Mom Cat Dad 虎妈猫爸
(2015)

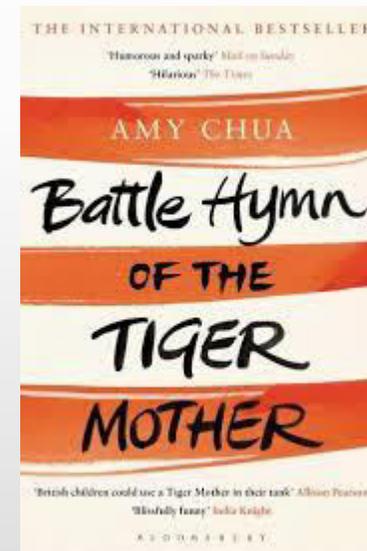


Japanese story/Chinese story

Ezra F. Vogel (1979) *Japan as No. 1: Lessons for America*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press



Amy Chua (2011) *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother*, London: Bloomsbury



Japan as No. 1...

“This controversial book, a best seller in its Japanese translation, explains how Japan developed into the world’s most competitive industrial power, and at the same time solved internal problems that now plague the United States. Isn’t it about time, asks Ezra F. Vogel, that the U.S. learned something from the competitor overtaking it?”

Chapter 7. Japanese Successes. Basic Education: Quality and Equality

Media reports about the high levels of achievement - especially in maths and science – attained by Japanese high school students in international exams at the time, strongly contributed to the idea that the secret of Japan’s economic success must be connected with its education system. Battle Hymn of the Japanese education system.

Battle Hymn...

- “ A lot of people wonder how Chinese parents raise such stereotypically successful kids. They wonder what these parents do to produce so many math whizzes and music prodigies, what it’s like inside the family, and whether they could do it too. Well, I can tell them, because I’ve done it. ...”(p.1)
- “Unlike your typical Western mother, the Chinese mother believes that:
 1. Schoolwork always comes first
 2. An A-minus is a bad grade
 3. The only activities your children should be permitted to do are those in which they can eventually win a medal
 4. That medal must be gold” (back cover)

Amy Chua's images



Educational philosophy/context (Japan)

Meiji era (1868-1912): 良妻賢母 *ryôsai kenbo* – “good wife, wise mother”.

The way of talking, thinking and acting - training disciplined subjects was rather more important than the “content” of education. Teaching to be Japanese, creating Japanese nation.

Post-war Japan (and beyond) - socio-economic conditions, gender roles, nuclear family, middle class mentality, role of education in society,
学歴社会 *gakureki shakai* (“society based on academic credentials”)

Family’s success = education/academic success =
examination results = “examination hell”
kyôiku mama, otaku, school dropouts,
high youth suicide rates, “monster parents”



Educational philosophy/context (China)

Academic success provided the fuel for upward social mobility.

Confucius (551-479 BC): the purpose of education to prepare/train people who served in governments as important scholarly officials/

Learning should make no distinction of classes.

“Diligence reaps rewards, play yields nothing”

“The process of teaching and learning do not have to be enjoyable, or even interesting” (Mellor, 2000, p.105)

Family honour = life success = academic achievements = examination hell = competition → “tiger mother”



Comparisons between Japanese and Chinese education philosophy/practice

- Strong tradition that highly values education as “fuel for social mobility”.
- The educational method based on imitation (memorising power and the repetitive-imitative culture), education is not for enjoyment.
- Role of mothers as driving force behind the education of their child/children (kyôiku mama and tiger mother)
- (Western) Media shows interest in the education success in both countries (sensationalising and usually taking out of historical/cultural/philosophical context of a particular country)

Effect on New Zealand

Japanese presence in NZ: 14,118 people, less than 1%; 6,720 or 47, 6% in Auckland (2013 Census ethnic group profile, NZ Statistics)

- Columbus Academy, 1994-2003
- International Pacific College, Palmerton North, 1990-present
- High schools, (21 HS around Auckland, about 40 % included Japanese dropouts, during 2005-2007)

In 2003, Winston Peters commented that New Zealand was been used as a “dumping ground for Japan’s troubled youth.”

Effect on New Zealand

Chinese presence in NZ: 171,411 people which is 4.3 % of the total population; 118,230 or 69.0% in Auckland (2013 Census ethnic group profile, NZ Statistics)

- Strong presence of Chinese students in schools, “The Asian Five”
(Biology, Chemistry, Physics, Maths and English)
- NZ Media comments on Chinese students and tigers mothers
- Research questions: what do Chinese mothers think about schooling in NZ? What is their educational philosophy? Have it changed since they arrived to NZ?
- Underpinning question: how can we make most of the new multicultural reality where different pedagogical philosophies, parental practices, teaching and learning methods collide in every day practice. It is a time to move from stereotypical images that often can be accurate but still prevent us from the benefits of a better understanding of ‘others’.

In conclusion

Unlike your typical Western mother the Chinese mother believes that:

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Schoolwork always comes first...

[Are Our Kids Tough Enough? Chinese School](#)

Thank you