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Tiger Mother as Ethnopreneur: Amy Chua and the Cultural Politics of Chineseness

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Abstract

Amy Chua catapulted to fame in the United States with the publication of her bestselling World on Fire: How Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability *(2002) and a much-discussed* Wall Street Journal *excerpt from her next book,* Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother *(2011). A wry account of a 'Chinese' mother's efforts, not all successful, to raise her two daughters to be high-achievers,* Tiger Mother *created some controversy owing to its critique of 'Western'-style parenting and its perceived advocacy of a 'Tiger Mother' brand of parenting that drew on the author's own experience of being raised by Chinese-Filipino immigrant parents in America. Not only did* Battle Hymn *generate heated discussion in America about the stereotyping of Asian-Americans as 'model minority'; it also tapped into American anxieties about the waning of U.S. power in the wake of a rising China, while provoking spirited responses from mainland Chinese women looking to raise their children in 'enlightened' ways. This article follows Amy Chua's career as an 'ethnopreneur' who capitalises on her claims of 'Chineseness' and access to 'Chinese culture.' Drawing on localised/provincialised, regional, and family-mediated notions of Chineseness, Chua exemplifies the 'Anglo-Chinese' who exploits – and profits from – national and cultural differences within nations as well as among Southeast Asia, the U.S., and China in order to promote particular forms of hybridised (trans)national identities while eschewing the idea of mainland China as the ultimate cultural arbiter of Chineseness.*

KEYWORDS: Chineseness, cultural entrepreneur, Anglo-Chinese, rise of China, model minority

Introduction

Amy Chua catapulted to fame in the United States of America with the publication of her bestselling *World on Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (2002) and a much-discussed *Wall Street Journal* excerpt from her *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (2011). The first book, which showed how economically dominant minorities could be scapegoated in countries in which free-market democratic systems do not necessarily lead to equitable distribution of wealth, was inspired by her

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Chinese(-Filipino) immigrant family's experience in the Philippines. The second book, a wry account of her efforts – not all successful – as a self-proclaimed 'Chinese mother' to raise her children to be high-achievers, sparked controversy because of its critique of 'Western'-style parenting and its perceived advocacy of a 'Tiger Mother'[1] brand of parenting that drew on the author's own experience of being raised by strict immigrant parents in America.

A short preface in *Battle Hymn* informs the reader that "This *was* supposed to be a story of how Chinese parents are better at raising kids than Western ones. But instead, it's about a bitter clash of cultures, a fleeting taste of glory, and how I was humbled by a thirteen-year-old" (Chua 2011). With its provocative take on parenting, encapsulated in the Tiger Mother's sustained campaign to turn her daughters into classical musical prodigies, and the combination of pride and ambivalence that the author exhibits toward the 'Chinese' mother culture she claims to have inherited from her immigrant family and tries to pass on to her own children, *Battle Hymn* generated heated discussion in America about its reinforcement of the stereotyping of Asian-Americans as a 'model minority', while tapping into American anxieties about the waning of American power in the wake of a rising China. Across the Pacific, it provoked spirited responses from mainland Chinese middle-class mothers looking to raise their children in more 'enlightened' ways.

This article looks closely at Amy Chua's career as an 'ethnopreneur' (to use a term coined by the Comaroffs) who capitalises on her claims of 'Chineseness' and access to 'Chinese culture'. A classic 'Anglo-Chinese' (Hau 2012), Chua practices a form of cultural arbitrage that profits from national and cultural differences within and between nations – in this case, the United States of America and China – in order to promote particular forms of hybridised (trans)national identities which rely on localised/provincialised, regional, and family-mediated notions of 'Chineseness' to speak to and within a non-Chinese nation. Chineseness becomes a cultural resource for propounding visions of national rejuvenation, regional identification and global cosmopolitanism, even as it eschews the idea of mainland China as the ultimate cultural arbiter of Chineseness. This cultural arbitrage partakes of the traffic of signs across the Asia-Pacific region, one in which Southeast Asia (and in particular, the Philippines) figures as a mediating site of 'Chinese' (re)migration and culture, even though this mediation is often rendered invisible by the binaristic logic of China-vs.-West that Chua foregrounds in her memoir.

Although Chua was born in the U.S., she purveys 'Chinese' parenting techniques that she learned from her Chinese(-Filipino) immigrant parents and distilled from her own experience and observations of other upwardly mobile migrant families in America. Her claim derives its rhetorical force from the

[1]Chua was born in 1962, the year of the Tiger. In her book, she describes the Tiger as "the living symbol of strength and power" that "generally inspires fear and respect" (Chua 2011: 1).

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dichotomy it creates between 'Western' and 'Chinese' cultures. Its binaristic logic, however, stands on shifting grounds, allowing 'Chinese' to be conflated with other 'model minorities' and 'American' to be equated with 'Western'.

Most tellingly, the idea of 'Tiger Mother' draws on, yet simultaneously obfuscates, the multiple territorial, political, and cultural senses not only of 'Chinese' and 'Chineseness', but arguably of 'China' itself. A close reading of Chua's memoir reveals a more conflicted stance on 'Chinese culture', and the stories that readers glean from Chua's narrative of her marriage, her family, her career, and her relationship with each of her two children paint a more complex picture that complicates the China/West dualism that the memoir upholds (sometimes tongue-in-cheek).

The context in which the term 'Chinese' acquires new significance is a transnational one involving a dense, multi-sited traffic of signs. It was the late-twentieth-century economic rise and dynamism of East (that is, Northeast and Southeast) Asia in general and China in particular that endowed the word 'Chinese' with a new potency. In fact, the revaluation of 'Chineseness' assumed its most dramatic form in Southeast Asia, the region with the largest population of ethnic Chinese, and entailed a decades-long process that preceded the rise of mainland China as economic powerhouse and regional and global player (Hau 2014; Pasuk and Baker 1996).

The revival of hitherto devalued, occluded, or repressed 'Chineseness', and more generally the increasing visibility, acceptability, and self-assertiveness of ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia and elsewhere marked a significant departure from an era in which 'China' had served as a model for the localisation of socialism and propagation of socialist revolution in parts of Southeast Asia in the 1950s and 1960s, and Southeast Asian 'Chinese' were viewed and treated as economically dominant, culturally different, and politically disloyal Others to be 'de-Sinicized' through nation-building discourses and policies.

While Japan's explosive growth in the 1960s and 1970s was an important factor in the so-called 'Asian Miracle', and while South Korean and Southeast Asian companies have similarly performed well in national, regional and global markets, it is 'Chinese' entrepreneurship in its multi-sited forms (Taiwanese, Hong Kong, Singaporean, overseas Chinese Southeast Asian, and later mainland Chinese) that has come to be held up as the exemplary engine of regional capitalism (Ong 1999; Ong and Nonini 1997).

Chua's counterpoising of 'Chinese' values to 'Western' ones belies the complex history of modern China in its manifold discursive, territorial, and regime manifestations. The "problem [of] clarifying what 'China' is" (Young 1999: 63) has long posed challenges to scholars, and underscores the lack of an easy or necessary fit between territory, nation, state, culture, and civilisation when it comes to defining what 'Chinese' means and who can claim to be 'Chinese' (Chow 2009: x). In the twentieth century, both the Taiwanese and mainland Chinese states claimed themselves as legitimate 'Chinas' and competed

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for the loyalty of overseas Chinese, even as colonialism and nation-states in Southeast Asia, the U.S., and other countries played a part in the construction of 'Chinese(ness)' in their attempts to define and regulate their 'alien' population. Modern 'Chinese' culture was constitutively hybrid and decisively shaped by flows of Japanese and English (both British and American) languages and overseas-Chinese topolects, ideas, technology, people, capital, and goods.

Triumphalist arguments in favour of a regional 'Chinese capitalism' founded on the culture of Chinese business – particularly family business – have been subject to stringent critique (Gomez and Hsiao 2004; Hodder 1996), most notably for treating 'Chinese' and its correlate 'Chineseness' as a unitary entity and phenomenon (Dirlik 1997: 308) at the expense of nuanced understanding of the differences among 'Chinese' engendered by their particular social and geopolitical location. Moreover, the relationship between 'Chinese' culture and business can be fraught with its own set of internal power relations, particularly in terms of gender and the family (see Yao 2002 for a nuanced discussion). The romance of the successful (Chinese family) business in fact entails the differential treatment of women and other ethnic groups. Aihwa Ong (1999: 143) cogently shows how images and discourses of family order help to structure the evolving political imaginaries of developmental states in the throes of global capitalist change, with important implications for how people conceive of the relationship between individuals and the state, between different ethnic groups, and between men and women. Critiques of 'Chinese capitalism' have, in particular, highlighted the capacity of Chinese business culture to discipline and exploit women's bodies and labour (Greenhalgh 1985). Ong's pioneering study considers how working-class women in China empower themselves as "modern women" by learning about self-reliance, mobility, wealth and a "metropolitan future" in the soap operas they watch, but observes how this identification with male autonomy and success simultaneously empowers them and renders them vulnerable to sexual and class exploitation (1999: 156).

Anglo-Chinese Ethnopreneurship Across Asia-Pacific

While the culture of Chinese business is a staple in current scholarship on East Asian, overseas-Chinese, and mainland Chinese entrepreneurship, the business of Chinese culture has remained a relatively unexplored topic.[2] And yet, the past decade has seen the emergence of a form of entrepreneurship with roots in the Anglophone Asia-Pacific region in which ethnic identity has become the preeminent determinant and qualification for the marketing not only of cultural products, but of beliefs and practices that are coded as 'Chinese'. Along with the restructuring of space, perspective, and lifestyles by ethnic-themed restaurants,

[2]There is a body of scholarship on female entrepreneurship in Asia (see Chu 2004; Grijns *et al.* 1994; Licuanan 1992, 1995; Teo 1996).

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grocery stores, interior design, heritage tourism, and spirituality (see for example Huggan 2001; Picard and Wood 2007; Lin 1998; Mannur 2005; Xie 2011), the marketing of 'ethnic' selves as purveyors of authentic 'mother' cultures in Asia – 'Chinese', for example – has acquired visibility and achieved success in unprecedented ways.

"Ethnopreneurship" – to use a term coined by John and Jean Comaroff (2009) – involves the specific triangulation of culture, identity and market (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 20). Here, ethnic identity becomes crucial to the marketing of culture as a commodity. One needs to *be* 'Chinese' in order to lay claim to *one's* culture. To *be* Chinese, then, is not just chic, but profitable, as 'culture' and 'heritage' move out of the census, map and museum and into the marketplace. This ethnic subject is, however, not simply 'Chinese', but an historically specific sort of urban-based, upwardly mobile, cosmopolitan 'Anglo-Chinese' hybrid that flourished in Southeast Asia, China (particularly its port cities), and sites of Chinese immigration such as North America and Australia that were geopolitically and culturally shaped by colonialism and the collective informal empire of the British and Americans for over the past hundred and fifty years (see Duus *et al.* 1989; Hau 2012). The Anglo-Chinese ethnopreneur capitalises on the fact that geopolitical, economic and political transformations occurring in the region have led to a revaluing of Chineseness.[3] Whereas Chineseness had once been stigmatised as alien and Other, it has become both object of desire and emulation, and for that reason, eminently alienable, 'objectifiable', and consumable, not just by the 'Chinese' themselves, but by anyone with the wherewithal to buy 'Chinese' cultural products and learn 'Chinese' practices.

That some of the most successful and visible ethnopreneurs happen to be women also calls for explanation. The conditions for the emergence of female cultural entrepreneurship have something to do with what Donald Nonini (2005: 193) calls the "modernization of women's occupations", as rapid economic development in the region (women's increasing participation in the labour force having occurred much earlier in America in the early twentieth century [see Chafe 1975]), coupled with the circulation of media images and gender discourses particularly from America and from within the region itself, has engendered sizeable middle classes and rendered respectable certain 'appropriate' (i.e., professional) jobs for the young, 'modern', middle- and upper-class 'Chinese' women from petty capitalist families, even as unremunerated or poorly remunerated jobs are passed on to either illiterate, so-called 'unskilled' Chinese women or immigrants or non-Chinese (Nonini 2005: 194).

[3]Ethnopreneurship is not a mere offshoot of economic and political development, but can have direct links with development itself as discourse and policy: the embodying of "local knowledge and morality" by the ethnic entrepreneur as an agent of development is discussed by DeHart (2010) in the context of Latin America. On the marketing of 'Latinos' as a 'people', see Davila (2001).

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The mercantile and professional orientation of 'Chinese', particularly in Southeast Asia and to some extent America, has hitherto favoured careers in business, law, medicine, accounting, and business administration, but there are also 'Chinese' male and female professionals who have enjoyed notable international successes as writers, fashion designers, chefs, interior designers, geomancy (*feng shui*) experts, and others. In particular, China-born female writers such as Wei Hui, Yiyun Li, Jun Chang, along with Asian Americans like Amy Tan and Gish Jen and their Southeast Asian Chinese counterparts Catherine Lim and Shirley Geok-lin Lim, have drawn on their experiences as 'Chinese' to write best-selling books on China and Southeast Asia. Written in or translated into English and published in America and the United Kingdom before being translated into other languages, their memoirs and autobiographical fiction are part of a boom in personal narratives by female 'ethnic' immigrants that peaked in the 1990s (Newton 2005: 167).

The feminisation of the immigrant body – the way in which 'Asian' writers, particularly women, come to embody and exemplify their specific ethnic identities in relation to the naturalised 'universal' voice of the 'white' male writer in the Anglophone world – has sometimes provoked backlash from fellow ethnic (male) writers who are concerned with the ways in which these 'feminine' narratives play into Orientalist discourse and exoticise the immigrant experience.[4] In the supposedly (at least according to commonsensical 'Chinese' assumptions) 'non-lucrative' world of publishing, 'Chinese' women (whether born in China, America or to a lesser extent Southeast Asia) have pursued successful careers as writers, but writers whose prestige and success depend in large part on their autobiographical ties and cultural access to the 'Other' worlds and gendered (often domestic) spaces that they describe for their largely Anglophone readers.

These ethnopreneurs are beneficiaries and in some cases passionate advocates of the ideological refashioning of nationalism toward a more pluralist, relatively tolerant vision of "hetero-nationhood" (Comaroff and Comaroff 2009: 47–48). Chinese culture is now viewed and retailed as part of an inter-scalar strategy of claiming to belong to the nation, the region, and the world: as an integral component of (in Chua's case, American) national identity, a means of regional identification with East Asia/Asia Pacific, and a way of engaging (not necessarily uncritically) with a culturally 'Anglobal' world. The claim to Chineseness thus serves not only as internal critique of a once-exclusionary national(ist) identity,

[4]Chin *et al.* (1991: xv) famously castigated Chinese-American women writers like Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan for their failure to provide accounts of 'the real' immigrant experience. More generally, Youngsuk Chae (2008: 14) poses the issue this way: "While ethnic writers of white European descent seemed to have virtually no boundaries to the subject matter of their literary representations, descendants of non-whites such as Asians have actually focused on issues surrounding their ethnicity and related subjects. It also needs to be considered whether Asian American writers have highlighted the ethnic difference for reasons of commercial appeal, or if there was an influence in terms of mainstream publisher's demand for the production of 'ethnic' literature by racial/ethnic minorities."

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but a cultural resource for rejuvenating the nation, which can be America or Thailand or China.

Safely nationalised as Thai, Malaysian, and Chinese(-Filipino-)[5] American, women like 'Tiger Mother' Amy Chua, along with lifestyle guru Chitra Konuntakiet[6] and *fengshui* expert Lillian Too[7], whose books have sold hundreds of thousands of copies (millions in the case of Too), affirm the internal heterogeneity of the nations within which they speak and write, while parlaying cultural differences within their nations into lucrative careers as regional and global ethnopreneurs who mediate or broker 'Chinese culture' for their respective audience of consumers, which may be national, regional and global. While they are themselves quite literally mobile in the sense that they have studied, travelled, and even lived abroad, their acts of cultural arbitrage also depend on their self-conscious positioning and speaking *within* specific national and regional spaces and publics. Moreover, the language in which they peddle their visions and practices of Chineseness may be local or national (in the case of Chitra Konuntakiet, Thai), but their capacity to communicate – and access published works – in English is crucial to their success.

Above all, their family histories and family rituals, practices, and stories are the main basis of their claims to Chineseness and their knowledge of so-called 'Chinese' culture. They call themselves 'Chinese', but they are, in fact, 'Teochiu', 'Hokkien', 'Cantonese', but also Thai, Malaysian, American, and their access to Chinese culture is mediated by the experiences of migrant communities with long histories of settlement in Southeast Asia and the United States.

While they work to reinforce, among certain groups of consumers, a sense of commonality as Chinese, along with the Chineseness of their producers, and the Chineseness of the 'cultural artefacts' that are being consumed, the 'Chineseness' being commodified and peddled here is also emphatically a multi-sited creation that goes beyond the ability of any single state, including the mainland Chinese state, to serve as an ultimate cultural arbiter of things Chinese and Chineseness. In many cases, these 'Chinese cultures' are highly localised and provincialised forms that do not tie in with the trend toward Mandarinization, nor toward codification by the mainland state. They index folk beliefs and immigrant practices that have links, but are not always anchored, to mainland China and its socialist

[5]Filipino is put in parentheses here to call attention to Chua's strategy of glossing over her family's Filipino heritage in favour of asserting a 'pure' Chinese identity. Most of Chua's readers are not aware that Chua is the daughter of Chinese-Filipino immigrants to America.

[6]Born in Thailand to a Teochiu immigrant and his Thai-born wife and educated in the U.S., Chitra has published more than thirty books retailing Chinese history, tradition, beliefs and practices primarily for a Sino-Thai readership. Her books have sold more than 600,000 copies.

[7]Born Kim Lim, Lillian Too obtained an MBA from Harvard and was the first Asian woman to be appointed chief executive officer of a major bank in Asia. At age 45, she retired from banking to pursue a hugely successful career in writing. Too has published more than 60 books, which have been translated into at least 31 languages and have sold more than ten million copies in 38 countries (Kee 2010).

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and post-socialist culture.[8] At the same time, even as they exploit internal differences between their home country's mainstream culture and their minority-ethnic Chinese culture, and even as their visions of Chineseness are rooted in the rich variety of experiences and lifeworlds and distinct patterns of hybridisation among various kinds of Chinese spread across region and world, they simultaneously reinforce a pared-down, homogenised version of Chineseness that can be easily shared and consumed by Chinese and non-Chinese alike. Their acts of cultural arbitrage, in other words, capitalise on existing boundaries defined by national culture and citizenship, the existence of multiple cultural centres of Chineseness (most prominently Hong Kong and Taiwan), and the cultural and economic networks that have knitted nations to regions and regions to the world.

What is at stake is the contest over the right to speak not within 'China' itself, but within non-Chinese *nations* that these ethnopreneurs also claim as their own. As such, the cultural politics of these Anglo-Chinese ethnopreneurs often have little to do with what is actually happening in the mainland and its debates, as well as debates and dissensions among so-called 'overseas Chinese' and the larger 'ethnic Chinese' communities. In addressing audiences who are most like themselves, while also reaching out to an Anglophone readership, they practice forms of cultural arbitrage that capitalise on cultural differences *within* the given nation in which they speak and work, *between* 'their' nation and the 'China' to which they trace their ancestry, and *within* 'China' in its manifold territorial, cultural, and 'civilisational' senses.

Far more than the 'traditional' petty capitalist or big businesses in which 'Chinese' are well-represented, investing in the business of culture entails active involvement in the trafficking of cultural signifiers and that which is signified, that is, the articulation of dreams, desires, and aspirations, the ability to invite identification, stimulate feelings, and shape perception through images and narratives. Commodities in fact serve the purpose of "mak[ing] visible and stable the categories of culture" (Douglas and Isherwood 1979: 59). Moreover, the traffic in signs does not take place in an ideal world of smooth, free flows across the world, but is characterised by patterns and densities of flows that entail forms of cultural arbitrage across an uneven, striated market-terrain (Appadurai 1996).

The careers and life stories of these women ethnopreneurs fit loosely within their own carefully crafted versions of the triumphal narrative of family-powered 'Chinese' capitalism, but they are also, at one and the same time, deeply aware of the pitfalls and perils of capitalist identification. And while they may loosely be said to exemplify mobile and hybrid 'flexible citizens', their intellectual and emotional investments in speaking to their respective 'nations' while simultaneously capitalising on the rise of China and indexing a form of Chinese culture that is not necessarily equated with the actually existing mainland nation-state, all point to the actual potentials as well as limits of transnational flows and

[8]In many cases, these 'Chinese' rituals in Southeast Asia have been re-imported back to China.

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movements, suggesting that money can be made not only by business transcending borders by going global or transnational, but by the existing fact of semi-globalisation (Ghemawat 2011) in all its unevenness and asymmetries, which enable entrepreneurs to capitalise on existing 'differences' within and among specific locality, nation, and regions.

To some extent, all successful transnational businesses strive to cater to local markets, and are sensitive to the demands and exigencies of existing cultural heterogeneity. However, the business of culture described in this article points to strategies of 'cultural arbitrage' that profit from targeting specific local, national and regional *markets*, and their bounded systems of supply-and-demand for 'Chinese' culture that make the translation of 'Chinese' culture necessary while also rendering that culture eminently alienable and 'commodifiable', capable of being consumed across culturally specific boundaries.

'Chinese' Parenting and its (Dis)Contents

Born in America to Hokkien(Minnanhua)-speaking Chinese-Filipino immigrant parents, Amy Chua (Cai Mei-er, 蔡美儿) graduated *magna cum laude* with a degree in Economics from Harvard College and *cum laude* from Harvard Law School (where she was editor of the *Law Review*), and is now John M. Duff, Jr. Professor of Law at Yale University's School of Law. A *Wall Street Journal* excerpt from her book, *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mother* (Chua 2011), created a furore when it was published, generating an unprecedented number of online responses from readers (more than 5000 within the first week of posting [Zernike 2011]). The book, which spent eleven weeks on the New York Times bestseller list (Szalai 2014), recounts her efforts, not all successful, as a "Chinese mother", to raise her children to be high-achievers, "polite, interesting, and well-spoken" (Chua 2011: 56), good in maths and classical music: "In short, they were just like Chinese kids" (Chua 2011: 56). The book charts her own path toward being more "accepting and open-minded": "I'm still in the fight, albeit with some significant modifications to my strategy" (Chua 2011: 221).

Chua uses the term 'Chinese mother' loosely: "I know some Korean, Indian, Jamaican, Irish and Ghanian parents who qualify, too. Conversely, I know some mothers of Chinese heritage, almost always born in the West, who are *not* Chinese mothers, by choice or otherwise" (Chua 2011: 2). On the parenting model she discusses, Chua writes: "I think of it as Chinese, but I know a lot of non-Chinese parents – usually from Korea, India or Pakistan – who have a very similar mind-set, so it may be an immigrant thing. Or maybe it's a combination of being an immigrant and being from certain cultures" (Chua 2011: 54).[9]

[9]Amy Chua and husband Jed Rubenfeld would go on to collaborate on a book, *The Triple Package* (2014), purporting to explain the "disproportionate achievement" of ethnic and religious minorities in America such as Jews, Indians, Chinese, Iranians, Lebanese, Cubans, Mormons, and Nigerians

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Conceptually loose 'Chinese mother' may be, but Chua is emphatic about what it is *not*: 'Western'. What distinguishes 'Chinese' mothers from their 'Western' counterparts is that Chinese mothers have "higher dreams for their children" and a "higher regard for their children in the sense of knowing how much they can take" (Chua 2011: 8). "Western" (here equated with 'liberal') parents are "weak-willed and indulgent when it comes to parenting" (Chua 2011: 27), while "Chinese parents understand that nothing is fun until you are good at it" (Chua 2011: 29). "Chinese parents believe their kids owe them everything. The reason for this is unclear, but it's probably a combination of Confucian filial piety and the fact that parents have sacrificed and done so much for their children" (Chua 2011: 53). One reviewer pointed out that *Battle Hymn* was Chua's way of "twitting the sensitive helicopter parents who can't bear the idea that their wonderful child is stressed or criticized in any way whatsoever" (Murray 2011).

The motivating force for this strict upbringing is the fraught issue of family inheritance. Chua's obsession with spurring her children to become high achievers is rooted in her fear of "family decline" (Chua 2011: 21). Chua offers an American twist to the Chinese proverb 富不过三代 (*fu bu guo san dai*), 'wealth does not pass three generations'. The way she puts it, first-generation immigrant-parents work hard, rising from straitened circumstances to become successful professionals. The second generation is high-achieving, able to obtain an Ivy League education and become successful professionals. However, the second generation also tends to be less frugal, likely to marry white men, and less strict with its children compared to that generation's parents (Chua 2011: 21–22). The third generation, Chua claims, has all the advantages of upper-middle-class comforts, "expect[s] expensive brand names," enjoys "individual rights guaranteed by the US Constitution and therefore [is] more likely to disobey parents and ignore career advice: all factors point to this generation being headed straight for decline" (Chua 2011: 22).

Chua's American version of the Chinese proverb puts emphasis on discipline, proper training, and the right values as *sine qua non* of success in life. The children's future must be secured, not by mere transmission of material wealth (since this can easily be dissipated) or even power or influence, but by moral cultivation of the self. Indeed, building character through education and training, more than building fortune, is the best 'inheritance' that a parent can pass on to a child.

Just as important, it is not only the children's future, but also family honour, that is at stake here. For Chua, family decline is a curse that can only be overcome by near-superhuman will and vigilance. A second-generation 'Chinese', the Tiger Mother must strive to steer her own children away from the wayward path so that they can bring glory to the family and preserve its vitality across time. Proud of

by identifying three qualities that these groups have in common: a superiority complex; insecurity; and impulse control.

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her parents' achievements, the Tiger Mother wants to ensure that her children, in inheriting the family genes, do not bring shame to the family name and do their share of maintaining the family fortune.

This obsession finds expression in Chua's determination to turn her two daughters into musical prodigies. Chua makes her two daughters study the piano and violin, reasoning that the rigor, discipline, and focus of classical music training offer antidotes to the lax overindulgence of "liberal" upbringing: "Classical music was the opposite of decline, the opposite of laziness, vulgarity, and spoiledness" (Chua 2011: 22).

To reinforce her argument, Chua invokes genealogy by claiming that classical music "was also a tie-in to the high cultural tradition of my ancient ancestors" (Chua 2011: 23). In establishing an analogy between the "high tradition" of her Chinese ancestors and the "high tradition" of Western classical music, Chua requires her daughters Sophia and Lulu to be fluent in mandarin Chinese and to be straight-A students (Chua 2011: 23). Furthermore, Chua traces her genealogy to south China's Fujian Province, "which is famous for producing scholars and scientists." An ancestor was a royal astronomer, philosopher and poet, Wu Neng, who served as chief of military staff under the Ming in 1644 (Chua 2011: 14).[10]

In fact, classical music has a strong link with the upsurge in Chinese migration to Southeast Asia and America in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Gulangyu Island off the coast of Xiamen, the port of embarkation for majority of the Fujianese migrants bound for the Philippines, Southeast Asia, and other parts of the world, is often called the "Island of Music"(音乐之島 *yinyue zhi dao*) and Piano Island or Piano Town (鋼琴之乡 *gangqin zhi xiang*), a reference to the fact that the island boasts the highest per capita ownership of pianos in China, and has its own Piano Museum. The mansions and villas that dot the landscape, many of them constructed by migrant Chinese who made their fortunes abroad, bear testament to the area's history and the treaty-port-based, migrant-mediated Chinese modernity in which the 'bourgeois' upbringing of scions – particularly women and girls – of well-to-do Chinese merchants and capitalists often involves learning to play the piano.

Even though Chua celebrates the "high cultural tradition" of her "ancient ancestors" and links it with the "high tradition" of Western classical music, she also states, in a passage that manages to both celebrate and denigrate "traditional" Chinese cultural achievement, that "The Chinese never achieved the heights

[10]Two things are omitted from this account stressing education. Fujian is equally if not more famous for producing merchant-traders whose maritime ventures led to immigration to Southeast Asia, where a number of them acquired massive fortunes – a topic whose implications she covered in an earlier, bestselling book, *World on Fire*. Chua's father in fact comes from a socially prominent and wealthy clan. It is often the case that well-to-do merchants hire tutors to prepare their children for the examinations. A second omission is that the Ming lost out to the Qing in the same year, 1644, that her ancestor served as military chief of staff.

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of Western classical music – there is no equivalent of Beethoven's Ninth Symphony – but high traditional music is deeply entwined with Chinese civilisation. The seven-stringed *qin*, often associated with Confucius, has been around for at least 2500 years. It was immortalised by the great Tang poets, revered as the instrument of the sages" (Chua 2011: 208). The violin, according to her, "symbolized control. Over generational decline. Over birth order. Over one's destiny. Over one's children. Why should the grandchildren of immigrants only be able to play the guitar or drums?" (Chua 2011: 208)

Chua's sense of hierarchy – the fetish she makes of "difficulty and accomplishment" – not only prejudices her against the guitar and drums, but against Southeast Asian gamelan music, which her Jewish mother-in-law likes. In yet another double move that affirms and negates non-'Western' cultural forms, Chua writes: "Gamelan music is mesmerizing because it is so simple, unstructured, and repetitious. By contrast, Debussy's brilliant compositions reflect complexity, ambition, ingenuity, design, conscious harmonic exploration – and yes, gamelan influences, at least in some of his works. It's like the difference between a bamboo hut, which has its charms, and the Palace of Versailles" (Chua 2011: 41). A bamboo hut may have "its own charms", but Chua's analogy also risks conjuring up the colonial discourse of primitive, backward Southeast Asia and the hierarchy of cultures it presupposes.[11]

While Chua is ambivalent about her "mother" culture(s), she finds strength and inspiration in her own strict upbringing by her parents. Chua recounts being "drilled" to do her maths and piano, not being allowed sleepovers, being made to speak only Chinese at home, and bringing home perfect report cards. In particular, her father, Leon O. Chua, whom she had "always idolized" (Chua 2011: 138), a professor at Berkeley and, according to Wikipedia, the "father of nonlinear circuit theory and cellular neural networks"[12], stands out vividly in the book. Chua claims to have inherited her "tendency to show off and overdo things" (behaviour she thinks is "not characteristic of most Chinese mothers"), along with her "loud voice and my love of big parties and the color red", from her father (Chua 2011: 138); her mother, by contrast, is very muted and modest and figures less in her memoir. A daily ritual in her youth consisted of her taking off her father's shoes and socks and bringing him his slippers. When she came in second in the Kiwanis prize for best all-around student, her father told her: "Never, never disgrace me like that again" (Chua 2011: 16-17). When

[11]Chua's hierarchy of cultures extends to the Philippines, which appears to have left little mark on her, except in the accent she works so hard to Americanize. In calling herself 'Chinese', she renders invisible her parents' Philippine background – it is, after all, to the Philippines that her clan owed its fortune – and downplays its role in informing her sense of herself as 'Chinese'. The way in which her name is pronounced in America (Chu-a) actually follows the Philippine pronunciation, rather than the monosyllabic pronunciation in Hokkien.

[12]Wikipedia. Leon Chua. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Leon_O._Chua (accessed on 28 April 2011).

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she was disrespectful to her mother, her father called her "garbage" (Chua 2011: 50).[13]

Ironically, Leon Chua's own life story as a risk-taking and rebellious "black sheep", uninterested in the family business in the Philippines, disfavoured and treated unfairly by his mother, clearly underscores the value of the 'Western clichés' of respect for choices, valuing individualism, and concern for self-esteem (Chua 2011: 212). Chua reports that the consequences of strict parenting on her father were quite traumatic, destroying her father's relationship with his own family:

> "What my father's story illustrates is something I supposed I never wanted to think about. When Chinese parenting succeeds, there's nothing like it. But it doesn't always succeed. For my father it hadn't. He barely spoke to his mother and never thought about her except in anger. By the end of her life, my father's family was almost dead to him." (Chua 2011: 212)

Rather than being alienated by her strict upbringing, Chua flourished, arguing that she "found strength and confidence" in her "peculiar" family. More, this kind of immigrant-'Chinese' upbringing appears to have primed her for success, setting her on the path to Americanization: "We started off as outsiders together, and we discovered America together, becoming Americans in the process" (Chua 2011: 17). For this, Chua works hard to shed her "Chinese accent", and records the "proud momentous day" when her parents were naturalised (Chua 2011: 17). Despite her father's avowals against her marrying a non-Chinese, both he and Chua's mother like the man she eventually marries. (Chua 2011: 18)

Chua's efforts to stave off family decline and secure her daughters' inheritance bear fruit with her eldest, Sophia, who becomes an accomplished pianist and performs at Carnegie Hall. In 2011, Sophia was accepted by Harvard University. However, Chua comes up against younger daughter Lulu, who, although talented, rebels against her mother's efforts to get her to master the violin. Chua's mother admonishes her: "You can't do what Daddy and I did. Things are different now. Lulu's not you – and she's not Sophia. She's a different personality, and you can't force her" (Chua 2011: 170). Chua, however, insists: "I'm sticking to the Chinese way. It works better", and then accuses her mother of being "brainwashed" by "Western friends" (Chua 2011: 170).

A further irony in the book is the counter-example supplied by Chua's husband Jed Rubenfeld, who on one occasion is angered by Chua's propensity to generalise about "Westerners" and "Chinese people" (Chua 2011: 171). Rubenfeld was, according to Chua, raised by a mother who "believed childhood

[13]Chua drily notes that with their own granddaughters, her parents "acted ridiculously unstrict in a way completely inconsistent with the way they'd raised me" (Chua 2011: 87).

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should be full of spontaneity, freedom, discovery and experience" (Chua 2011: 97). Unlike his wife, who confesses to not be "good at enjoying life" (Chua 2011: 97), Jed "hates authority and believes that most 'experts' are charlatans" (Chua 2011: 123). It is Jed, however, who appears to have attained success quickly and effortlessly (an impression that rests in fact on Rubenfeld's hard work and determination [Szalai 2014]), Jed who graduates *summa cum laude* from Princeton and *magna cum laude* from Harvard Law School, dabbles in theatre, and gets "the dream job" of a chaired professorship at Yale Law School, and who then proceeds to tell his friends on the Yale faculty that his wife "was thinking about being a professor" (Chua 2011: 32). While Amy Chua dreams of becoming the next Amy Tan by writing an "epic novel about mother-daughter relationships spanning several generations, loosely based on my own family's story" (Chua 2011: 30), only to realise she has "no talent for novel writing", it is Jed who fulfils his dream of becoming a bestselling fiction writer by publishing *The Interpretation of Murder* in 2006. Chua notes, however, that her husband "adores his parents, but wished somebody had forced him to learn an instrument and speak a second language" (Kingston 2011).

Chua consciously embraces and embodies the 'stereotypical' notion of immigrant success, and has built her career on insights and experiences that she thinks of as 'Chinese' and presents to the world as 'Chinese'. This ability to draw from the wellspring of personal experience to craft 'new' perspectives was first put to good use in her decision to combine her "law degree with my own family's background," and write about law and ethnicity in the developing world, thereby finding her own niche: "Law and development, which very few people were studying at the time, would be my specialty" (Chua 2011: 33). This produced her first bestselling book, *World On Fire: How Exporting Free Market Democracy Breeds Ethnic Hatred and Global Instability* (2002), which was a *New York Times* bestseller, an *Economist* Best Book of 2003, and *Guardian* Top Political Read of 2003.

Here, she argued that attempts at pursuing free-market democracy in countries with market-dominant ethnic minorities run the risk of generating backlash against both democratic institutions and the market-dominant ethnic minorities themselves (Chua 2002: 6–7). Among the case studies that anchor the book is Chua's account of the Chinese in Southeast Asia. Given the historical conflation between 'Chinese' and capital in Southeast Asia, with the Philippines as a specific reference point, an extreme form of the backlash may involve ethnic violence or even genocide directed against the market-dominant minorities. Chua's 'family background' that includes immediate relatives who are or were part of "market-dominant"[14] Chinese minority in the Philippines sensitises her to the

[14]Not only has Chua tended to exaggerate the extent of Chinese 'market dominance', thereby glossing over the class differences among ethnic Chinese in Southeast Asia, but her crudely drawn account of the class-cum-racial antagonism between Filipinos and Philippine Chinese allows

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vulnerability and plight of the 'Chinese' and other ethnic minorities. *World on Fire* begins with a dramatic personal anecdote that inspires her to work on the subject: her father's wealthy twin sister, Leona, was murdered by her Filipino chauffeur in 1994, but neither the family driver nor the two domestic helpers who had knowledge of the murder plan were brought to justice.

Unlike advocates of Chinese capitalism, Chua is careful not to link entrepreneurial dynamism with any single culture nor to any "genetic source" (Chua 2011: 42). Here, she cites her own family history as proof: "My own maternal grandfather was a poor schoolteacher who had an aversion to commerce. A given group can be entrepreneurial and market-dominant in one setting, but not in another" (Chua 2011: 42). This critical stance is, however, muted by *Battle Hymn of a Tiger Mother*'s references to Chinese horoscopes and confident assertions of the 'Chinese' (conflated with immigrant) way of parenting, and its often uncritical dichotomies between 'Western' and 'Chinese' attitudes and values (Kingston 2011; Nelson 2011; Zernike 2011) notwithstanding the author's own Anglo-Chinese Southeast Asian background.

Chua is well aware of differences even within and among 'Chinese'. She hires a Mandarin-speaking nanny to teach her daughters *putonghua*, rather than the Hokkien she spoke at home with her parents.[15] After a trip to mainland China, Chua calls her first daughter 'Chinese', and Sophia responds: "I'm not Chinese." When she insists, Sophia says: "No, Mommy, you're the only one in America who thinks I'm Chinese." To which Chua responds: "Well, they're all wrong. You are Chinese". Her other daughter Lulu then remarks to a friend "I don't really have time for anything fun, because I'm Chinese" (Chua 2011: 57).

The reception of the book and its ideas in America and China is telling, not least for the ways in which it reveals the conceptual slipperiness of the term 'Chinese'. Chua, an American citizen, received hate mail from irate Americans telling her to "go back to China" (Laurence 2011). The response among Asian Americans was equally negative, with Frank Chi (2011) criticising Chua for perpetuating the stereotype of the "model minority", and cynically "glorify[ing] the childhood trauma of so many Asian-Americans" to mount a "brilliant book marketing campaign."

little space for considering the complex history of entanglement and negotiation between Chinese and Filipinos in the Philippines. The distancing strategy that Chua adopts in *World on Fire* is a way to create a dichotomy between the ethnic Chinese (as one group among a number of economically visible minorities under study) and the 'native' populations among whom they live. Other than the Spanish-initiated massacres of the sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries, and unlike the case in Indonesia, there has been no major outbreak of ethnic violence against the Chinese in the Philippines for the past 150 years.

[15]In an interview, Chua has stated: "I wanted my daughters to learn from native Mandarin speakers, because my own native Chinese dialect is Fujianese [Hokkien], and my Mandarin accent is terrible" (Review Ideas Market 2011).

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Chua's privileging of 'Chinese' parenting as superior clearly struck a nerve in America, where anxieties about the waning of American hegemony in the wake of the rise of China as an economic and geopolitical power (Chi 2011) neatly dovetail with largely middle- and upper-class parental anxieties about raising children to be successful (Wang 2011). Such parental anxieties feed the billion-dollar "parenting industry" and USD 1.7 trillion-dollar "mom market" (Paul 2008: 10; Wang 2011). New York Times columnist David Brooks (2011) wrote:

> "Ms. Chua plays into America's fear of national decline. Here's a Chinese parent working really hard (and, by the way, there are a billion more of her) and her kids are going to crush ours. Furthermore (and this Ms. Chua doesn't appreciate), she is not really rebelling against American-style parenting; she is the logical extension of the prevailing elite practices. She does everything over-pressuring upper-middle-class parents are doing. She's just hardcore."

A feature article in the Taiwanese website WantChina Times (2011) analyses the book thus: "Indeed, what has really made American parents feel uneasy is that Chua's ideas challenge their basic beliefs in liberty and freedom. Chua's high-profile praise of the Chinese style of parenting might reinforce the image of China's rise and so herald the wane of the United States."

The idea of a rising China was further cemented by its spectacular debut in international standardised testing: in the 2009 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) test of reading, mathematics, and science administered by the Organization for Economic Development and Cooperation to fifteen-year-olds in sixty-five countries, Shanghai came out on top (Dillon 2010). Former Assistant Secretary of Education under Ronald Reagan, Chester E. Finn, Jr., was quoted as saying: "Wow, I'm kind of stunned. I'm thinking Sputnik" (Dillon 2010). Finn added: "I've seen how relentless the Chinese are at accomplishing goals, and if they can do this in Shanghai in 2009, they can do it in 10 cities in 2019, and in 50 cities by 2029" (Dillon 2010). Critics may argue over whether scores from Shanghai are representative of China as a whole, but the 'shock' generated by the news served merely to reinforce the idea that East Asian children – not just China, but Hong Kong, Korea, and Japan – perform well not only in PISA tests, but in universities.

Chua's Tiger Mother draws on a gendered division of labour in which women derive their cultural power in the public sphere from their assumed expertise on matters of parenting – in other words, 'mother knows best'. This power to make decisions about how to raise children is, however, riven by deep anxieties – particularly among middle- and upper-classes – about the proper way to bring up children in a highly globalised and competitive world (Wang 2011). Indeed, a booming industry offering products and services to meet the needs of mothers

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with children feeds off – and plays no small part in generating – these very anxieties.[16]

In creating the persona of the Tiger Mother, Chua is intervening not only in the debate on so-called 'helicopter mothering' and the excesses of attentive parenting, but also in a larger debate over 'high-achieving' women who seek to balance their high-profile and demanding careers with careful and loving (if strict) parenting of their children. The Tiger Mother is a model-minority exemplar whose sheer determination enables her to secure a good marriage to a gifted man, a high-paying job at one of the country's top universities, and an army of helpers (from nannies to music teachers) to get her children started on their own paths to success. For the Tiger Mother, the "Lean In" movement (based on Sheryl Sandberg's ideas [2013]), with its call for "real partnership" between men and women in childcare and homemaking and its exhortation to women not to withdraw from the workplace when they decide to have children, is a no-brainer, indeed already a fact of life, but only for upper-class women. The power of the Tiger Mother derives from the example that Chua makes of herself: her children are primed for success because she herself is successful in marrying her career (aided, as her own book suggests, by her husband's support and the system of 'star' hiring that allows powerful spouses – often male – to get their partners hired by the same university) and her responsibilities as a mother.

In this sense, the Tiger Mother is no mere embodiment of the American Dream because her social location and ambitions already exceed the basic promise of the social contract that the American Dream offers to the poor and to the people of colour; rather, the Tiger Mom turns her 'Chineseness' into a cultural resource for generating high-status signs and, just as important, for ensuring that the next generation can be properly equipped, mentally and culturally, to inherit and then transmute this cultural resource into professional achievement, material wealth, and social success for themselves, and perhaps even for their own children.[17] Oliver Wang (2011) has coined the phrase "Fear the Chinese/Be the Chinese" to capture the fascination and resentment engendered among Americans not just by China's "ancient civilisation" and "explosive economy" but by Amy Chua herself as a:

> "…youngish, attractive-ish, affluent, and an Ivy League Professor. Any one of those things can tap into any number of fascinations/resentments people have: with/against the young and successful, with/against 'East Coast elites', with/against Asians, etc. Chua just assembles them into a

[16]In America, cram schools, long popular with Chinese-, Korean-, Russian-, and Japanese parents, have started to attract 'non-Asian parents' hoping to improve their children's test scores (Spencer 2013).

[17]I thank an anonymous reviewer for the insight, and for encouraging me to develop this argument.

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> single, seemingly unrelenting package (like the Michelle Rhee of parenting).” (Wang 2011)

What the book *Tiger Mother*, in short, offered to the American (reading) public was a dream of national rejuvenation through the continuous revitalisation of the family, the possibility that America can be great again, if only its children can be parented the ‘Chinese’/immigrant way. Chua’s parlaying of Chineseness into a formula for upgrading the American Dream through rejuvenation of the American family and nation would find resonance across the Pacific with Chinese leader Xi Jinping’s 2012 slogan, ‘Chinese Dream’, which is similarly premised, but retooled for the “great rejuvenation of the Chinese nation” (Kuhn 2013).[18] The China that Xi envisions would be Strong (in economic, political, scientific, and military terms), Civilized (in terms of equality and justice, morality and culture), Harmonious (socially), and Beautiful (environmentally) (Kuhn 2013). The Chinese Dream of a ‘moderately well-off society’ – the American Dream with Chinese characteristics – is, as one young Chinese explained in an interview (cited in Tatlow 2011), a nationalist project of cultural recovery: rooted in love of family and country, the Chinese Dream seeks a return to “cultural roots, such as Confucius,” to recover “so much [that] was lost in the last 60 years.”

Lulu’s rebellion against the strictures of ‘Chinese’ parenting may amplify the fact that not all children thrive under its regimen, but Sophie’s success in securing a place at Harvard puts ‘Chinese’ parenting on the menu of multicultural options that American parents can now choose from. *The Tiger Mother* lends itself to being read in terms of a ‘clash of civilisation’ that views China as the ambitious and ascendant Other of America, but it also hinges on the American capacity to assimilate ‘foreign’ practices not simply in pursuit of an American Dream that is now exportable to emergent countries and capable of being reformulated to meet the demands of emerging middle classes in countries like China, but in pursuit of high status and making it heritable across generations.

If the Tiger Mother is a polarising figure around which debates about ‘proper’ mothering and the decline of American hegemony have collected, across the Pacific, the Tiger Mother plays on a different set of anxieties in mainland China, where the global (but largely American) ‘parenting industry’ and norms of good parenting had already made inroads.[19] Here, the focal point of discussion concerns what kind of image of the ‘Chinese’ the Tiger Mother is projecting abroad and what kind of ‘Chinese Mother’ mothers are aspiring to be in China. In China, the clash of civilisation between China and the ‘West’ (America) is mapped onto a tradition-versus-modernity dichotomy that

[18]I thank an anonymous reviewer for this insight.

[19]In 2012, Beijing-based Babytree.com surpassed the San Francisco-based Babycenter.com in terms of traffic to become the world’s leading parenting portal in the world. By 2013, with 55 million unique monthly visits, the portal was reaching 80 per cent of online mothers who were pregnant and those with children of up to six years of age (Babytree.com 2013).

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distinguishes China's 'traditional' (backward) culture-bound past from its 'modern', culture-hybridising present and future.

Chua was criticised in China for making 'Chinese Mother' a "notorious" term. In the global cities of Beijing and Shanghai, she was viewed by some as a purveyor of practices from "China's dark past,"[20] even as others confirmed the continuing prevalence of these practices. A columnist for China Daily, Huang Hung (2011), wrote in The Daily Beast: "It is ironic that as young Chinese mothers in Beijing and Shanghai are embracing more enlightened Western ideas about child raising, mothers from Connecticut are sinking deeper into China's darker past in child rearing." Huang, however, admits that "While many confirmed my belief, quite a few of the responses came from young people claiming that they were treated the same way Ms. Chua treats her daughters. All of them claimed to be unhappy as children; none of them expressed any gratitude toward their parents." Huang then offers three explanations for why Chinese mothers "can get away with mother-from-hell behaviour":

> "1. Traditional China values women by the children they raise. *Muyizigui* is an age-old Chinese saying that means a mother is only worth as much as her son. This must have made things even worse back when polygamy was permitted in China, until 1949. One can imagine all the determined wives competing with each other through their children.
>
> 2. The glorification of suffering. This is not unique to Chinese mothers or Chinese culture, but Chinese do believe 'eating bitterness' is necessary and vital in order to achieve success. Passion and enjoyment are irrelevant. Chinese wear their pain as a war veteran wears his medals. As Ms. Chua has made clear, suffering earns one bragging rights. It would be totally pointless if Ms. Chua's daughters actually enjoyed playing the musical instruments she has them practice day in and day out.
>
> 3. The Chinese, as a people, were deprived of individual rights. Since the individual rights of parents are not guaranteed, it is natural that parents would see fit to deprive their children of the same. Success means one can impose one's will on others."

Whereas Chua traces her parenting style to her 'Chinese' immigrant experience, with its high-traditional cultural inheritance, Huang blames bad parenting on the continuing inheritance by present-day mainland Chinese of 'traditional' Chinese culture. Huang berates Chua for resorting to an 'unenlightened' practice that downgrades individual rights, and contrasts Chua to enlightened young local Chinese mothers in Beijing and Shanghai. A Daily Beast article (2011) quotes and discusses a modern Chinese "mom":

[20]A *New York Times* Sunday book review (Loh 2014) quotes mainland China-born professor Quanyu Huang's *The Hybrid Tiger* (2014) critique of Chua ("[Amy Chua's] harsh, anachronistic methods are *out of date* and *far* outside of what is acceptable and encouraged in mainstream China today" (italics added) to argue that Chua "is not even very Chinese."

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> "'I won't be like Amy Chua', says Guo [Jing, a government-office worker based in Beijing] about her kids' upbringing. 'I don't want to pressure them….in the future I'd like them to have their own hobbies, to develop their own abilities. I won't make decisions for them' Guo says she believes her sons love their extracurricular hobbies – such as painting and learning how to play *weiqi* (the Chinese equivalent of chess, also known as 'go') – not because she forces them into it, but precisely because she does not: 'I didn't give them any pressure'. If that isn't a startling admission, here's the clincher: Guo is so convinced that her kids need more than a traditional Chinese education that she's sending them to a private, bilingual international school where kids learn both English and Chinese in a comparatively looser classroom environment. "I try my best to adopt both Chinese and Western educational ways."

The final irony here, of course, is that the Beijing and Shanghai mothers are in fact raising children who are more likely to resemble the Anglo-Chinese Amy Chua: their children will be at least bilingual (with English as one of their major languages); they will receive a western-style education that includes secondary, tertiary or graduate education in America or Britain; they will have some grounding in the school systems in their respective countries and intend to educate their children in the same way; they will be well-versed in 'international' (mainly Anglo-American) business norms and values; and they will rely on their hybrid skills (whether linguistic or cultural) and connections to enter business and work as professionals. Indeed, learning English – now mandatory from Elementary Grade 3 onwards in China – has become big business in China, worth USD 2 billion by 2010, with well-to-do mainland Chinese sending their children abroad – particularly to the U.S. and the U.K. – for English-language education (Thorniley 2010), and increasingly for tertiary and postgraduate studies.

Conclusion

Amy Chua has parlayed her Chinese(-Philippine) immigrant-family experiences into field expertise in developing countries and two bestselling books, one on the fraught relationship between ethnicity and free-market democracy, and the other on the 'Chinese way' of parenting. She offers her life story as proof of the capacity of women to make their own names through successful individual ventures in female and non-'Chinese' occupations that are not normally valorised, let alone recognised as legitimate pursuits, in the male-centred narratives of 'Chinese business'. Her authoritative claim to a 'Chinese' model for parenting – coded as 'traditional' and 'immigrant' – belies the hybrid background that makes her a classic example of the upper-middle class, multilingual, English-educated,

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cosmopolitan 'Anglo-Chinese' whose members are now spread out across the Anglophone Asia-Pacific region, including mainland China.

Gender and family are a crucial dimension, not only in the specific content of Chua's ethnopreneurship – proclaiming a 'Chinese way' of parenting – but in her public narrative of self, as a successful career woman who remains a filial daughter and a good mother, bound by ties of emotion and emulation to her (high-achieving) father and family. With a narrative that combines autobiographical accounts of female aspirations and entrepreneurship with invocations of filial piety alongside active identification with the patriarch of their families, she propounds her own 'modern' narrative of 'Tiger Mothers' who are 'Confucian' in upbringing yet 'thoroughly modern' and affluent 'Asian' (Szanton Blanc 1997) – and, in this case, American. But part of her embrace of Chineseness also entails an awareness of the 'dark' romance of 'Chinese' high-achievement: the vulnerability of being the stereotypical 'rich Chinese' amidst a non-Chinese majority population that bred class resentment and nationalist vengeance and resulted in the murder of a beloved aunt.

Amy Chua and other women culture-brokers play a role in generating highly localised/provincialised beliefs and practices of 'Chineseness', in some cases, stoking ethnic identification among 'fellow' 'Chinese' across the Pacific, but without necessarily abiding by the cultural claims and authority emanating from the mainland. Safely nationalised, they promote hybrid 'Chinese' identities through internal critiques of their nations, while practising forms of cultural arbitrage that capitalise on cultural differences within and between nations to supply their largely personal, immigrant-family-mediated, provincialised versions of Chineseness to a variety of avid publics – offering visions of national rejuvenation, regional identification, and global cosmopolitanism.

A caveat, however, remains. Amy Chua belongs to the upper-classes or at least is upwardly mobile, and by definition her vision and experiences are class-bound. Her kind of cosmopolitan success and her version of Chinese Tiger Mothering – with its renting of hotel ballrooms for piano practice, Mandarin-speaking nannies, and its Carnegie Hall recitals – is not attainable by many, if not most, other 'Chinese' and Southeast Asians. Along with other female ethnopreneurs, Chua's narrative of self-fulfilment, professional success, and self-empowerment is possible only because she is able to benefit from her accumulation of cultural, social, and economic capital. Their visions and experiences are of the sort that makes for gripping and seductive narratives of hurdling obstacles and achieving spectacular success. These visions, too, are coloured by the authors' awareness of ethnic resentment against the Chinese and the reversals of fortune and emotional and familial costs that constitute the dark romance of Chinese capitalist success. However, these visions and experiences owe a great deal to their social locations and their biographical itineraries, and they would have remained just personal and family histories had it not been

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for the fact that these Anglo-Chinese women and their family histories can now make money and career out of 'being Chinese'.

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