

Mothering in East Communities: Politics and Practices

Patti Duncan and Gina Wong, eds.
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Mothering in East Asian Communities: Politics and Practices brings together a diverse group of authors who work within varying academic and creative mediums to explore the past and present politics and practices of East Asian mothering in America and Canada. The collection complements the previously released Demeter Press book *South Asian Mothering: Negotiating Culture, Family and Selfhood* (2013), edited by Jasjit K. Sangha and Tahira Gonsalves, and continues the conversation that the previous editors began about the complexities and challenges specific to Asian mothering. The editors of *Mothering in East Asian Communities* recognize the problematic inclusiveness of the term “East Asian,” and write that by using the term “East Asian,” they “hope to make explicit both the specificities of East Asian women’s experiences of mothering and motherhood, and the significant relationships our communities have with other communities of color” (3). The editors approach the concept of East Asian mothering through the theoretical frameworks of motherhood studies, feminism, and the epistemological frameworks of East Asian communities, which the editors claim “recognize the value of lived experience and frequently rely on standpoint theory ... which recognizes that our perspectives are shaped by our social locations” (7).

The three sections of this collection are structured so that readers are introduced to East Asian mothering first through the historical lens of violence, racism, and colonialism through both critical and creative works before exploring challenges and controversies specific to East Asian mothers and mothering. The final section details the social action being taken by East Asian mothers, community activists, and community leaders.

“Remembering/Historicizing” historicizes East Asian mothering as it has been created and transformed by colonialism including the U.S. involvement in the Korean conflict. The section is comprised of personal narratives as well as researched articles to explore areas such as transnational adoption in Korea and the oppressive forces of U.S. militarism on the lives of Korean women who served members of the U.S. military through militarized prostitution and were thereby stigmatized within their communities and families. In addition, this section considers the westernized standards that Korean and Japanese rural women were forcibly placed into during times of colonialism,

and concludes with three creative pieces that look at motherhood from the adult child's perspective in poems and prose, suggesting grief, mourning, and a resistance to the oppressive forces that shaped East Asian mothers during times of occupation and colonialism.

"Negotiating Constructions of (East Asian) Motherhood," "engage[s] specific discourses, debates, and areas of contestation" within East Asian mothering communities (18). The first two chapters address East Asian mothers' responses to Amy Chua's controversial, but popular, memoir *Battle Hymn of the Tiger Mom*, especially as the memoir creates the myth of a model minority. In addition, the section includes chapters written by authors who have performed survey research and ethnographic research to focus on the child's perspective of mothering as well as the "goodness" that East Asian mothers have to negotiate when raising gay sons. The last two chapters explore the challenge of entrepreneurship among East Asian mothers and transnational adoption through the perspective and lens of Korean birth mothers.

"East Asian Mothers Moving Toward Social Justice" focuses on the work being done by East Asian mothers, activists, and community leaders for social justice and change in East Asian mothering communities. The first two chapters look at specific case examples involving reproductive and social justice for marginalized mothers and migrant workers. The next chapter explores four East Asian mothers' experiences raising mixed-race sons in the U.S. The following chapter is an exploration of the prison system and the complications that East Asian mothers face in prison and upon reentry into society. The final chapter explores Chua's Tiger Mom in relation to the contemporary western mother figures of the Femivore and the Radical Homemaker to argue that "mothering becomes a racialized site for competing narratives of sustainability" (279).

Mothering in East Asian Communities: Politics and Practices is an important book for the fields of Motherhood Studies, Asian Studies, and Women's Studies, and should be read by anyone concerned with issues of gender, class, race, and social justice as they relate to the historical contexts that have created and magnified these issues for East Asian mothers and mothering practices. The editors bring together a varied group of authors who explore these issues through narrative, poetry, and academic research and analysis to deliver a heterogeneous perspective on what it means to be, and to be raised by, an East Asian mother in America and Canada.