

= Harvard Girl =

Harvard Girl (full title Harvard Girl Liu Yiting : A Character Training Record ; Chinese : ??????? ? ?????? ; pinyin : H?fó N?hái Liú Yítíng : sùzhì péixùn jìshí) is a book written by Liu Weihua (???) and Zhang Xinwu (???) , which describes how they raised their daughter , Liu Yiting (???) , to be accepted to Harvard University . Published in 2000 in Chinese by the Writers Publishing House , the book details the rigorous lifestyle that Liu led and includes advice from Liu 's parents on how to raise children to gain acceptance to top @-@ tier universities ; it has been described as a " manual " for child @-@ rearing and early education .

The book was a bestseller in mainland China and made both Harvard and Liu Yiting household names among Chinese parents and students . It has since had numerous imitators , spawning an entire genre of how @-@ to books on child @-@ rearing for Chinese parents .

= = Biography of Liu Yiting = =

Liu was raised in Chengdu , the capital of Sichuan province . Liu 's parents , believers in the value of early childhood education , subjected her to a rigorous education since she was just 15 days old . For example , to ensure that someone was always talking to Liu , they invited relatives over to the house . They also had her participate in " character @-@ building " physical exercises such as swimming , jumping rope , and holding ice in her hands for extended periods of time . Liu also acted in a soap opera when she was five years old .

While in high school , Liu participated in a student exchange program and visited America in 1998 . This experience changed her views about life in America , because like many Chinese citizens , most of her impressions about America came from Hollywood , and when she came to the country she was " surprised that [she] didn 't see any street fights or police @-@ car chases " . The program also piqued her interest in American universities , where she realized she would be able to study a variety of subjects .

Although they had been training her to attend a preeminent university , Liu 's parents had not expected that she would attend an American one ; her mother has said that until Liu came back from America , she had not been aware that Chinese students could apply to American universities . At the time , it was unusual for Chinese students to attend American schools as undergraduates , as most only applied to schools abroad for postgraduate education . However , rather than taking the gaokao , China 's national college entrance examination , and attending one of the National Key Universities , Liu applied to American colleges . She was accepted to several schools , including Harvard , Columbia , Wellesley , and Mount Holyoke , from which she ultimately chose to attend Harvard . Not long afterwards , a local newspaper announced her acceptance and the family was " besieged with thousands of phone calls " .

At Harvard , Liu majored in applied mathematics and economics and earned high grades ; she also chaired the Harvard Project for Asian and International Relations , a student organization . She was described as " unassuming " and a " typical student " , to the point that it took her roommate four years to realize Liu was a celebrity in China . In 2003 , Liu graduated and took a job at the Boston Consulting Group in New York City .

= = Synopsis = =

Liu Weihua (Liu 's mother) and Zhang Xinwu (Liu 's stepfather) published Harvard Girl in 2000 , after Liu had matriculated at Harvard . According to Liu , her parents had plans early on to write about their parenting methods , but they waited until 2000 to publish the book , relying on Liu 's perceived success to establish themselves as " experts " . The book primarily consists of research @-@ like notes and diary entries , which Liu and her parents began recording and saving before Liu was in first grade . Liu herself helped edit the book , and wrote several of the later chapters .

One major element of the child @-@ rearing strategy described in the book was treating Liu as an adult and " encourag [ing] her to develop a mature style of thinking " . Liu 's parents never used

baby talk when Liu was a child , and they allowed her to argue with them but required her to present reasoned arguments like an adult . According to education scholar Ben Mardell , the book 's focus on independent thinking and intellectual development was a " break with the past " in China , where both early and higher education often emphasize rote learning .

In addition , the book details the rigorous " character @-@ building exercises " Liu 's parents had her perform . In addition to having her do physical exercises , Liu 's parents controlled her diet . They also frequently took her traveling , both on short trips to nearby rural areas and on longer trips to historical sites such as Xi 'an . Throughout the book , high value is placed on " full development " , and the writers encourage parents to cultivate more than just academic ability in their children .

The book also includes supplementary chapters on topics such as how to select which schools to apply to , and advice for students on filling out applications and taking TOEFL and SAT exams .

= = Impact = =

The book was at the top of China 's bestseller list for 16 months , during which time it sold at least 1 @. @ 5 million copies and the writers were estimated to have earned at least the equivalent of \$ 100 @, @ 000 in royalties . It became a must @-@ have book for middle @-@ class parents in China . The popularity of Harvard Girl made Liu a " national superstar " and an " idol " for Chinese parents , and she frequently received fan mail and drew large crowds at book signings in mainland China . The success of this and similar books (another bestseller in 2001 and 2002 was Robert Kiyosaki 's Rich Dad Poor Dad) in mainland China has been said to reflect a " national obsession " among Chinese parents to get their children into top @-@ ranking American schools .

Harvard Girl was followed by numerous imitations by parents of other successful students , and is said to have spawned an entire genre of education " manuals " for Chinese parents , including similar books on how to get one 's children into schools such as Oxford University , Cambridge University , or Columbia University . This genre includes titles such as Ivy League is Not a Dream , From Andover to Harvard , How We Got Our Child Into Yale , Harvard Family Instruction , The Door of the Elite , Harvard Boy Zhang Zhaomu , Harvard Talents : Children Cultivated by the Karl Weter Educational Law , Tokyo University Boy , Cornell Girl , and Our Dumb Little Boy Goes to Cambridge .

Comparable books have also been published in South Korea , although American undergraduate universities are not " revered " in the same way there as they are in mainland China . In addition to imitators , Liu 's parents have written their own follow @-@ up : Harvard Girl 2 : Liu Yiting 's Studying Methods and Upbringing Details (? ??????? ? ?? ? ?????????????) , which describes Liu 's four years in college , was published in 2004 by Writers Publishing House .

The book also had an impact on applications to Harvard . It made Harvard a household name in China , and books of this genre caused a significant increase in the number of Chinese applicants to top @-@ tier American universities . In 1999 , Liu and 43 other Chinese students applied to Harvard , and by 2008 , 484 Chinese students had .

= = Criticisms = =

The book has been criticized for increasing the pressure many Chinese students already had to succeed in school , and for taking advantage of the widespread belief that admission into leading universities is necessary for success in life . Some critics have called the book " boastful . " A 2001 study by a group of educators claimed that the strategies described in the book would not work for everyone even though they had worked for Liu , and that many families following the book 's advice would be disappointed .

A 2004 book by Xiao Hui (??) , entitled Raising Children Requires Great Wisdom : The Truth About " Harvard Girl Liu Yiting " (????????? ? ? ??????? ? ??) , harshly criticizes Harvard Girl , calling the methods described in the book " false character building " (" ????? ") and claiming that Liu gained entrance into Harvard not because of her comprehensive or well @-@ rounded education , but by exploiting loopholes and defects in Harvard 's admissions policy for Chinese

students or by taking advantage of guanxi , personal relationships and networks .

Many successful Chinese students after Liu have tried to distance themselves from the so @-@ called " Harvard Girl Phenomenon ; " Harvard students Yin Zhongrui and Tang Meijie have both stated they do not want to be compared to " Harvard Girl . " Yin 's mother published a book , From Andover to Harvard , about how her son was accepted by Harvard , but Yin only allowed his full name to appear in the book 's preface . Tang received at least six offers from publishers to have a book written about her , but declined them all . Nevertheless , many of China 's top students are still compared to " Harvard Girl , " and admissions to top overseas universities often make big news in mainland China ; for example , Cheng Wanxin (???) attracted media attention in Sichuan province when she was accepted to Harvard in April 2009 .