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Mr. Greco

English 3

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Den of the Tiger-cubs

Under the scorching noon-day sun was a routine hustling and bustling of traffic. Bicycles zipped up and down the road, while pedestrians stopped to the mouth-watering smell of food stands lining the sidewalks. From the school house, seas of children poured from the building, chatting about the day's happenings. It was 1970's China, and a little girl headed home with high spirits. Finally, *finally*, she thought she might impress her mother. She had ranked 3rd in her class, 5th in her grade. A scolding was the last thing she expected. Her mother berated her for not performing to her ability, for anything below the top of the class was unacceptable. This was the reality QingJun came home to for much of her childhood: the ever-looming pressure of academics paired with the sky-high expectations of her parents.

The classic example of the now infamous "tiger-mom" of Asian cultures. For Asians all around the world, immigrant or not, overperformance in academics has become a trademark of the population, yet the origins and effects of this tradition is often overlooked. The term "tiger-mother" almost always carries a negative connotation. However, strict parenting is under no circumstances an inherently bad thing, as it nurtures values of responsibility and respect. The problem arises when "tiger-parenting" is paired with an intense stigma around mental health and illness found in Asian cultures, and a relationship built on fear and control. As a result, the equal balance of discipline and love is not provided to the youth, and they will suffer in what should be

the most joyful years. Expectations derived from cultural beliefs also play a large part in this tradition. For Asians of second generation immigrants—people born in the US with immigrant parents—a notion called “family decline” is a cause for stern parenting. For those in their native countries, deeply-rooted beliefs tied to shame and educational traditions contribute to the phenomenon.

There’s a popular saying in China, loosely translated, “the dumb bird flies first (笨鸟先飞)”, and another, “laying an egg and making the egg fly.” While the first asserts working hard to make up for one’s shortcomings, the second implies that parents would push unto their children goals they haven’t achieved in hopes that their children would. This mentality of hard-work and independence pervades many aspects of Asian cultures, though it has taken on a particularly ugly form throughout the decades, and negatively impacts both parties. The belief of “Family decline” complies with this mentality. “Family decline” entails that, “immigrant parents arrive in America and work tireless lives of sacrifice to open up every educational opportunity to their children, who repay their debt to their parents by becoming high-achieving attorneys and physicians and engineers. But the next generation of kids grow up spoiled by Western notions of self-actualization, and throw away generations of hard work to become idealistic artists, and organizers, and reporters” (Hing). Such beliefs encourage parenting with no room for self-expression and hobbies. For example, QingJun explains that while she loves art, her mother was against it: “She believed STEM subjects and good rankings were the most important, and everything else was useless.” Qingjun’s childhood is far from being an isolated case, Amy Chua, the author of *Battle Hymn of the Tiger-mother*, found that, “In one study of 50 Western American mothers and 48 Chinese immigrant mothers, almost 70% of the Western mothers said either that

“stressing academic success is not good for children” or that “parents need to foster the idea that learning is fun.” By contrast, roughly 0% of the Chinese mothers felt the same way. Instead, the vast majority of the Chinese mothers said that they believe their children can be “the best” students, that “academic achievement reflects successful parenting,” and that if children did not excel at school then there was “a problem” and parents “were not doing their job.” Parenting with preconceived expectations of academic achievements generally sets the parent up for disappointment, and the child up for a long and grueling childhood.

While “family decline” plays an integral part in immigrant families, many of these immigrant parents were likely influenced by the educational systems in their native countries. Asian countries have long been known to incorporate systems of ranking to schools. QingJun described her childhood, and by extension provided examples of her coworker’s children experiencing the same thing nowadays. Chinese teachers, in particular, would encourage students to look down upon and ostracize peers who had bad grades. Students also had their academic competence displayed as arm bands with bars: “If you had three bars, you were the leader of the entire grade. two bars was a leader of the class...maybe 6-7 people can have 1 bar.”(QingJun) This public display of one’s achievements also acts as a powerful tool of shame. It established a culture of competition not only between students, but between parents. It is not a stretch to imagine that this learned behavior extended to immigrant parents. Sarah Teng, a student at Mountain View High School explains, “They just talk about colleges with me a lot, ‘you should go to Stanford, you should go to UC Berkeley,’ and they talk about my friend’s siblings who are going to these good colleges,” Therefore the pride of getting a good SAT or ACT score and

gaining admission to a good college extended beyond the child and to the parent. Anything less was an insult.

This highly stressful environment created under such demanding expectations has taken a toll on millions of Asian youth. Contrary to the method demonstrated by “tiger-parents”, in an article by Ryan Park of the NY Times, he describes a healthy method of parenting as, “a firm hand...paired with a warm embrace.” The “warm embrace” unfortunately is often neglected. Most Asian children lack any mental support from their family. While the importance of mental health can be taught in school, the dynamic that runs Asian families ensures that they are provided no outlet for their feelings. Where a white child might consult with their parents about mental health, Asian individuals have nowhere to go out of the stigma and rampant misconceptions strewn throughout Asian culture. The National Latino and Asian American Study (NLAAS) recently found that Asian Americans are three times less likely to seek out mental health services and help than white Americans. This statistic exemplifies the shame felt by Asian individuals towards needing help for mental illnesses. The lack of education in mental illnesses such as depression and anxiety being more than feeling a little blue, or getting nervous, means that any attempts to reach out to one’s family for help usually results in a pointing of fingers, where members try to pinpoint a cause and usually end up guilt-tripping the one seeking help. Amanda Rosenberg, author of the Vox article, “Hiding my mental illness from my Asian family almost killed me”, writes that “Mental health was rarely discussed, but when it was, it was always in a negative light. At no point did any of my relatives tell me having a mental disorder, theoretically at this point, was unacceptable — I could tell by their hushed tones, and their quick dismissals, that mental illness was not an option.” It is in the quick dismissals and hushed tones that most Asian

individuals outside of American culture end up having little to no knowledge in maintaining a good mental wellbeing.

Being of Asian descent myself, I have been aware that my parents are relatively open-minded and progressive; nevertheless my father is convinced depression and anxiety are myths. It is in these environments that tiger-moms most often reside, where they are unable to see past the surface-level distress of their children, and write it off as laziness and indignance that has to be punished. While a child might grow up and be thankful for the discipline they have learned, worst case scenarios such as the one discussed by Amanda Rosenberg where her bottled up depression led her to making an attempt on her own life are not uncommon.

So what can be done? The success enjoyed by Asian families in academic fields need not be enforced through methods of intimidation; in fact, studies have found that parenting that is “viewed as supportive, with parents granting autonomy and encouraging communication...correlated with positive academic outcomes and increased competence” (Kim, et al.) On the other hand, methods utilized by the typical “tiger-parents,” result in “parenting is viewed as harsh, with parents using fear to elicit behavioral compliance...correlated with increased depressive symptoms and lower self-esteem”(Kim et al.). The discussion should begin with altering the traditions long held by Asian cultures. Luckily, beliefs of “family decline” are increasingly being abandoned by newer generations. Parker points to the fact that “We’re largely abandoning traditional Asian parenting styles in favor of a modern, Western approach focused on developing open and warm relationships with our children.” This method of parenting encourages lifelong healthy relationships that ultimately benefit both parties. Discussions of mental health issues are also on the rise in Asian communities. In 2017, Representative Judy Chu’s bill, Stop

Mental Health Stigma in Our Communities Act (Constante) sought to combat the shame surrounding the topic. The effects of the “tiger-parent” upon the youth is a flawed and nuanced point of conversation. Whether the discussion be a warning for the parents of new generations, or a moment of self-reflection for those who would call themselves “tiger-parents”, the future happiness and prosperity of countless members of the Asian populous lies in the willingness to combat the problems plaguing the toxic culture today.

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DOCUMENTARY PAPER RUBRIC

Please copy and paste this rubric to the end of your YourN-Documentary Paper and follow the self-evaluation procedure by the due date listed on the calendar.

	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Focus (Angle and Research) and MLA Format	Writer doesn't use interview transcripts and/or there is no indication of secondary research. No indication of research-backed	Writer makes limited use of most but not all of the required interview transcripts and secondary sources, or relies solely on "star" interview transcript. Interview	Writer makes satisfactory use of the required four interview transcripts and five secondary sources, including several database articles, although some interview testimony or	Writer makes intelligent use of the required four interview transcripts and five secondary sources, including several database articles. Effective use of interview testimony prompted by research-based

	<p>d questioning. In-text citations and works cited page are missing.</p> <p>Honors: Nonfiction book source is not used/cited in the text, and/or two academic database sources are missing.</p>	<p>testimony prompted by research-based questions is vague.</p> <p>Not a clear sense of an informed angle, although a view of the subject's character is certainly present. In-text citations and works cited page exist, but they contain many errors or inconsistencies.</p> <p>Honors: Nonfiction book source and two academic database sources are cited in the text, but they do not effectively define or deepen the researchable issue. In-text and/or Works Cited citation has multiple flaws.</p>	<p>secondary source material may be either overused or too limited. Interview testimony prompted by research-based questions is apparent, but could create a clearer sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are close to MLA standards, but there are some errors.</p> <p>Honors: Nonfiction book source and two academic database sources are used to define and/or develop the researchable issue. These sources are cited in the text and in the Works Cited, although there are citation flaws.</p>	<p>questions gives reader a clear sense of an informed angle. In-text citations and works cited page are perfect by MLA standards.</p> <p>Honors: In addition to the basic research requirements above, at least one nonfiction book source and two academic database sources are used compellingly to define and deepen the researchable issue. These sources are cited accurately in the text and in the Works Cited.</p>
Organization and Development	<p>The written sections lack organizational devices, such as paragraphs, sections, chapters, and transitions. Demonstrates little</p>	<p>Organizational devices, such as paragraphs, sections, chapters, and transitions are flawed or lacking. Demonstrates some understanding of the topic, but with</p>	<p>There are some problems with organizational devices, such as paragraphs, sections, chapters, and transitions. Demonstrates a general understanding of the topic. Ideas are generally</p>	<p>Organizational devices, such as paragraphs, sections, chapters, and transitions have been used effectively. Demonstrates in-depth understanding and insight into the issue(s) under discussion, through careful analysis</p>

	<p>understanding of the topic. Ideas are not expressed clearly or supported by anecdotes, examples, reasons, details, and explanations. No interpretation and analysis of the material.</p>	<p>limited analysis and reflection. Ideas are not expressed clearly, and anecdotes, examples, quotes, reasons, details, and explanations are lacking. Examines the issue from a single perspective.</p>	<p>expressed clearly through adequate use of anecdotes, examples, quotes, reasons, details, explanations. Examines the issue from multiple perspectives, but these perspectives could be more balanced.</p>	<p>and reflection. Ideas are developed and expressed fully and clearly, using many appropriate anecdotes, examples, quotes, reasons, details, explanations. Examines the issue from multiple perspectives.</p>
Style	<p>No literary devices or significant details are used. Paper may read like an obituary or a Wikipedia page. Vocabulary is overly simplistic or vague, with no attention to purpose/audience.</p>	<p>Language is fairly plain, with some specific details about the subject, but more/varied details and literary devices needed. Portrait of subject seems incomplete. No visual metaphor present. Vocabulary may reflect a couple instances of specificity or sophistication, but it largely lacks attention to purpose/audience.</p>	<p>Obvious thought has been put into the use of diction, imagery and detail to portray the subject creatively, although the visual metaphor needs to be more clearly developed to communicate writer's angle. Vocabulary occasionally reflects attention to specificity and sophistication, although it could be improved in consideration to purpose/audience.</p>	<p>Obvious thought has been put into the use of diction, imagery and detail. Visual metaphor is well developed, communicating writer's angle. Overall, stylistic choices give the text a fresh and original creative texture. Vocabulary reaches a level of specificity and sophistication that is appropriate for the purpose and audience of this documentary.</p>
Mechanics	<p>Writing cannot be understood due to many errors of spelling,</p>	<p>Writing contains some errors. These errors affect the reader's ability to understand the</p>	<p>Writing may contain a few errors. These errors do not impact reader's ability to comprehend material.</p>	<p>Writing is free from errors of spelling, grammar, and punctuation.</p>

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Grade: C+ B