Candidate 4 evidence

The Effects of Asian Familial Pressure on Children

In a lot of Asian families, parents' expectations for their children could commonly be summed up by one single ambition: "success". The word "success" has a few aspects in an Asian parent's point of view - To be successful academically, get good grades, go to a well-known university - To be successful in the future, have a secure, respectable, well-paying job, climb up the social ladder, get rich - To have manners, live up to "family name". Most Asian parents would do anything for the mere thought of the chance that their children might succeed in the future, micro-managing their children's life to how they see fit for the sake of the "success" they want for their children. However, these "selfless" acts often, unintentionally, inflict immense pressure, emotional distress, such as self-abasement and depression, on the children, significantly impacting the emotional wellbeing of their children during their childhood, and even until adulthood.

In the 2023 Hong Kong Cantonese film 《年少日記》, Time Still Turns The Pages, explores elements such as familial pressure, favouritism, self-abasement, childhood trauma. The story surrounds a pair of brothers, Yau-kit and Yau-chun, and the different treatment by their parents due to their academic performance. Yau-kit, the older brother, is an academically challenged schoolboy who often scores poorly in his classes and struggles with playing the piano. Oppositely, his younger brother, Yau-chun, excels academically, always scoring high scores, and musically, performing piano pieces that are considered difficult even for adults. Yau-chun being the prodigy of the family, always gets praised and flaunted by their parents. When Yau-kit trying his best, wanted to perform for his dad, made mistakes and played rustily, which led to his dad yelling「你學琴這麼多年，連一個音都彈不對？」This created the idea of conditional self-esteem, where Yau-kit could only feel worthy of his parents' love when he met their standards, losing all sense of self in the process.

Desperate to appease his parents and improve his grades, Yau-kit starts a diary after hearing it could improve language learning. Despite his efforts, Yau-kit's grades remain the same, frustrating his dad who blames his poor grades on his lack of determination and his manga reading, which his dad made him personally throw out to the bin before locking him out of the house. The manga is very precious to Yau-kit, in one of the scenes, we could see that the manga showed「總有一天你會長大，成為你想成為的大人，你要加油！」This gave Yau-kit the will to live, the love he never got from his dad, the encouragement his parents never gave. His dad making Yau-kit throw out his manga symbolizes the loss of his only hope and support in life.

Despite the loss of his motivation in life, he promises his dad that he'll improve to the top 15 in his class so that he could also join the California trip to Disneyland with the rest of the family. During his exams, Yau-kit got sick, puking on the floor, rendering him unable to continue his exam. When his mum was called to the school, instead of worrying about Yau-kit's health, she demanded that Yau-kit continue partaking in the exam, showing the lack of empathy by his parents toward Yau-kit. On the way home, Yau-kit brought up that he was finding it hard to sleep, telling his mum that he was only getting 5 hours of sleep, wanting her to bring him to a psychiatrist. However, his mum retorted by saying「精神科是給精神有問題，瘋子去看的。你是不是瘋子？」Not only did his mum's statement overlook Yau-kit's mental issues and push his concerns and feelings aside, it also diminishes Yau-kit's confidence to seek help from his parents again.

Unsurprisingly, Yau-kit's grades worsen, scoring second to last in class, forcing him to repeat the grade. His dad, furious, repeatedly beats Yau-kit while Yau-chun ignores Yau-kit's cries for help, quietly studying on the side. This creates tension between Yau-kit and Yau-chun because of their dad's constant attempts to "push" Yau-kit out of the family circle. His dad even went as far as calling Yau-kit 「垃圾」、「廢物」to insult Yau-kit. Degrading children would only cause damage to their self-esteem which is apparent in Yau-kit's dairy where we could see that the main focus of his dairy was how he described himself as「我不是什麼重要的人」highlighting that long term effects of his dad's insults, degradings, internal oppression have done to Yau-kit's mental wellbeing.

Wanting to cheer Yau-kit up, Yau-chun paid for toys and played with them on the rooftop Yau-kit frequented. During that, Yau-kit shouted「我是一件垃圾」which, again, shows the self-abasement Yau-kit faces. However, they were quickly caught by a security guard. Their mum scolded Yau-kit, only worrying about the safety of Yau-chun, which made Yau-kit's exclusion from the family more apparent. The frequent appearance of the rooftop linked to Yau-kit also suggests Yau-kit's mental state. Just as the rooftop, there's no exit, Yau-kit's pressure is also piling up at the bottle neck, ready to overflow any second, with nowhere for it to go, foreshadowing Yau-kit's tragic ending relating to that very rooftop.

After his mum's scolding, Yau-kit was expecting another scolding and beating from his dad. Yau-kit even brought a stick to his dad so that his dad could teach him a lesson. Instead, Yau-kit was only met with his dad's cold, hard words informing Yau-kit that he (his dad) wouldn't be wasting more effort on him anymore, which Yau-kit only replies which countless 「對不起」showing his guilt, self-abasement towards the situation. Later the scene switches to Yau-kit writing in his diary, Yau-kit mentioned that 「如果有一天，我離開了這個家爸爸媽媽就不會離婚，他們就能跟弟弟一家三口快快樂樂」this vividly depicted that Yau-kit thinks his family would be better off and happier without him due to all that has happened, once again showing his self-abasement and the alienation from his parents. Realizing that his presence only brought worry and countless headaches for his parents, Yau-kit decided to end his life, jumping off the rooftop, during the California trip Yau-kit's not allowed to go to anymore. Even facing the choice of ending his own life, in his diary, Yau-kit chose to say goodbye to his diary and left his last words「對不起」apologizing, reflecting that he doesn't have anyone else or anything else in his life to say goodbye to, not his family, not his maid, that he is all alone in despair.

This movie was very successful in depicting the very real-life issue of the effects of Asian familial pressure on the mental state of children. Just as in the movie, many Asian parents hold the same standards or discipline towards their children, like Yau-kit and Yau-chun's parents, in real life, comparing their children with other kids or even their own siblings, and favouriting the more well-performing child and brushing the needs of the less well-performing child away. In extensive research, it is found that 52.7% of students agree with the statement 「為免學業成績比他人差，父母會鼓勵，甚至為我安排補習」continuing the harmful and toxic cycle of constant comparison with other kids bases on academic performance. 42.5% of students has expressed that they feel like「我而家要花好多時間做既嘢（讀書）唔係我意願，有得揀我唔想做」suggesting that they feel lost in life and they're only studying because their parents wanted them to. In the same research, almost 50% of people rated their mental stress above 7 out of 10, highlighting the mental hardships children/students face during their academic career. And in addition, 41.7 % of students feel like 「我有時覺得自己是一無是處」highlighting the helplessness of "unsuccessful" children towards their parents and their high expectations. When the students were asked what their parents say that upset them when

comparing them to others, most students replied with「人地和你做同一樣的東西點解你比他們差」、「你睇下人地，人地做得咁好，點解你唔可以？」、「好心你學下人，你揀呢科出到嚟乞食」、「點解人地可以做到你做唔到，點解唔可以勤力點？」This shows that what seems like small, light-hearted comments, comparisons made by parents could actually affect their children deeply, and be stuck with them mentally their whole lives.

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