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Submission date: 06-Nov-2018 11:33PM (UTC-0800)

Submission ID: 1034543717

File name: Major_Paper_1.pdf (62.69K)

Word count: 1423

Character count: 7522

John Li

Major Paper #1

In America, there's a notion in which identifies minorities in a wide range of categories. Those categories are ultimately a way of generalizing an entire group – and thus formed stereotypes. Now, is there such a thing as positive stereotypes? The answer you'll receive is of a controversial one, but ultimately, stereotypes have the power to damage, along with granting benefits to individuals. The writing, *Mother Tongue* by Amy Tan and the most recent Harvard lawsuit – discriminating against Asian Americans – both argue that the surrounding Asian stereotypes set an extremely grand expectation. One that's incredibly difficult to meet and maintain. From that, the circumstances from Asian Americans are often times overlooked and are perceived as complete failures. Circumstances ranging from household responsibilities to their identity and language, and wealth.

There isn't much surprise knowing that race and language dictate success in the real world. However, for the longest, there has been a speculation on the idea that language and race dictate success in college admissions, a situation where students should obtain equal chances at receiving acceptance into the school. With the recent Harvard Lawsuit, many confirmations are arising, along with exposing the truth behind college admissions. In the Harvard Lawsuit, it revealed the required benchmark for the SAT test amongst the different races: Caucasian students with 1310 (out of 1600), Black & Hispanics with as low as 1100, and Asians with a staggering 1380 for males, and 1350 for females. All of these reports came from the *New York Times*, a valid

source in reporting global cases and events such as these. Here it clearly describes the discrepancy between the races, and how Asians are held at an incredibly higher standard. Cruelly enough, Asians that meet the benchmark for other races, such as Caucasians – with a 1310 – are neglected, regardless of their circumstance.

Circumstances that seem to interfere with student studies or simply one's extracurricular. The responsibilities that are brought upon them are some that many do not expect. An example of this is in *Mother Tongue* by Amy Tan, where Amy Tan informs us **reader** about her **backstory** and upbringing. Specifically, she talks about the responsibilities that had been burdened to her at such a young age, like at the age of fifteen, she had to call people pretending that she was her mom because she was able to speak proper English. Clearly, responsibilities such as these are often times overlooked by college admissions. Morally, this is unfair because the burden of responsibilities often times fall into the hands of the students where they struggle to balance life and the quality of it. Additionally, depending on your luck, you'll be raised in a wealthy family where concerns and responsibilities such as these don't fall onto your plate, allowing you to focus **in** and provide quality work.

Now as for language, it itself does play a huge role in the application process, where it basically portrays the quality of your work. In the Harvard Lawsuit, it was reported that large applicants were predominantly Asian American, which most likely will result in many immigrant households **with** broken English. Since that broken English resembles the quality of work the applicants produce, it's often times the struggles of immigrating to a foreign country are being ignored in the college admission process.

Although it makes sense from a college viewpoint — to enroll qualified students to their facility — it doesn't seem fair to overlook the struggles that they had to endure. Many of the applicants most likely disliked their broken English, and only hoped to vastly improve like Amy Tan's experience in *Mother Tongue*. Amy Tan describes her experience and emotions whenever she was around her mother when she spoke her broken English. She explicitly described it as humiliating and ashamed of her own mother. Those thoughts and emotions are ones that must occur in those immigrant applicant's mind, where they hope to change through enrolling in the college. Completely ignoring the struggles of not only Asian Americans but all other minorities, will ultimately upset minority communities because it's simply immoral and unfair in their behalf. Among the races, Caucasians have an advantage where they don't endure as many struggles compared to other minorities, including Asians.

In Amy Tan's *Mother Tongue*, and the Harvard Lawsuit articles by The New York Times, both have provided a unique perspective that is crucial in exposing the neglect and unfairness brought upon Asian Americans. The New York Times really used quotes and statistics to reveal the unfairness in the admission process. The statistics showed ranges from the previously stated unfair benchmarks, the various of grading between applicants, and ultimately the whole admission process. Interestingly enough, they stated them in the article as, "Grades, test scores, intended major, personality ratings, ethnicity — all the various factors that can help turn an anonymous high school student into a Harvard man or Harvard woman are being dissected for all to see" (New York Times). The insights and perspective of what the New York Times

provide is one that is factual and professional. They provide a sense of reason and battles out the logic battle through its writing tone and approach. This ultimately is the ethos, where it's able to persuade and argue its point of view using the tool of logic. As for *Mother Tongue*, by Amy Tan, she provides a sense of emotion, which in this case is the pathos. She specifically uses it when she describes her personal anecdotes, such as the previous example of pretending to be her mother on the phone, and also the moment where her mom was urgent and annoyed in receiving the money late, "Then she began to talk more loudly. "What he want, I come to New York tell him front of his boss, you cheating me?" And I was trying to calm her down, make her be quiet, while telling the stockbroker, "I can't tolerate any more excuses. If I don't receive the check immediately, I am going to have to speak to your manager when I'm in New York next week." And sure enough, the following week there we were in front of this astonished stockbroker, and I was sitting there red-faced and quiet, and my mother, the real Mrs. Tan, was shouting at his boss in her impeccable broken English." Here from Amy Tan, she provides the other perspective, which is the emotional aspect — being the pathos. By providing the emotional aspect, she revealed the struggles that she faces on a day to day basis, such as simply receiving a paycheck. Seeing the struggles, along with the factual evidence from the Harvard lawsuit both go hand in hand to ultimately strengthen the argument of Asian's overwhelming responsibilities often times goes unnoticed and are portrayed as failures for not meeting the insane benchmarks. The two perspective strengthens this statement by providing the factual and emotional, where the Harvard admissions display a true example of discrimination along with social judgment, and the

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Amy Tan provides a sense of isolation and burden on one's shoulder. Many people simply overlook the Amy Tan's perspective and often time follow the Harvard Lawsuit perspective — simply being ignorant and failing to comprehend the full story.

Overall, the Harvard Lawsuit and *Mother Tongue* by Amy Tan both had individual claims but together they formed and strengthen a more universal issue. The individual claims from Harvard's Lawsuit are the discrimination and unfairness in the system, such as: setting a higher expectation for certain minorities and overlooking any burdens and circumstances that seem to interfere. As for Amy Tan, the individual claims she states are the struggles that she personally faces, and that many might be able to relate, such as: being the interpreter of the house and being the one that keeps the house functioning. The two articles by themselves obtain a different message and meaning, but together, they both combine to expose an interesting and universal issue that many individuals face.

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