Wong, Lindsey. (2018). The Woo-Woo: How I Survived Ice Hockey, Drug Raids, Demons, and my Crazy Chinese Family. Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press.

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Lindsey Wong's book, "The Woo-Woo," is an interesting narrative of personal events that occurred throughout her lifetime. She takes readers through a stream of emotions, making sure to mix in a sense of humor, sadness, and pity throughout its context. Each account of her life is brought forward with so much detail, that envisioning what is happening in your mind is almost effortless. In doing so, Wong allows her audience to absorb as many aspects of life as possible. This is her way of opening up minds to the boundless reality of what makes a family and what it means for family members to endure with one another. Wong does well to incorporate certain points of interest of sociologists about family, parenting, self-esteem, culture, and mental health by depicting her own experiences with them. In turn, these experiences combine to create her memoir of events that helped shape the person she has become today.

This memoir finds its foundation based on family, as Wong describes her parents' methods of raising her. In today's modern era, at least in Western culture, a family consists of people related by blood who are in the best interest of one another and help support each other into becoming model citizens within their society. This basic concept of what a family is supposed to be is quickly discarded at the beginning of the memoir. Wong commences her description of her parents with an argument they had when she was a little girl, where they yelled, screamed, and even threw

plates at each other. She learned at an early age that her family was going to become something different than a regular family. Her acceptance of this is admitted when she claims, “this was normal in our family” (p. 21). Life had something else in mind for her family, which unfortunately meant that she was going to be put through some serious hardships.

Families, or more specifically parents, are supposed to nurture their kids and teach them valuable lessons that are meant to help navigate them through the good and bad discourses that life has to offer. This sort of experience is lacking in her upbringing sadly. For example, Wong’s father represented the exact opposite of an ideal mentor because one of the first lessons he taught her was to never cry in front of people. This created a negative aspect of her life in how she expressed emotion and how she came to explain them. We can see this as Wong says, “as an older teenager and then an adult, I became too scared to cry, convincing myself that I did not suffer from any extraordinary affliction of sadness” (p. 15). Crying allows one to let go of all physical and emotional pain to promote a sense of well being and she missed out on these natural benefits simply because no one informed her about them. It was not until young adulthood when Wong received terrible news about her health that she could not help but to cry. Wong's revelation about crying is best described when she says, "I learned a valuable lesson I never got growing up: it was very relaxing to cry, and I could see why people did it so often" (p. 18).

Every child deserves parents who not only teach them meaningful lessons but who also treat them with kindness and respect. Wong instead receives harsh remarks and indications of disgust from her parents. She was raised constantly being reminded that she was dumb, ugly, fat, and useless, and in the end, it destroyed her on the inside. Readers are shown how this, in turn,

affected her self-esteem as Wong writes, "my upbringing made me feel alone" and continues to say, "as the eldest, my parents' sour-faced guinea pig in childbearing, I was afflicted by my mother's neurosis and father's zealous anti-social tendencies" (p. 38). Yet despite all the negative energy coming her way, Wong was still able to survive the whole ordeal and somehow managed to find the good inside her parents. On a rare occasion her parents would show affection, enough to put her at ease, and enough for her to say things like, "despite screaming profanities at everyone and each other, my parents, teeming with frustration, still only sought to protect their offspring" (p. 305). Wong goes full circle in her expression and demonstrates how and why family, even during conflicts, always have the potential to unite as one.

Another aspect of family that Wong incorporates in her memoir is culture. The idea behind culture involves the shared behaviors and beliefs of a group of people connected with how they also interact with the rest of society. Culture, however, can get in the way of people's better judgment only because they are so used to it since it is an integral part of their being which helped create their characteristics and personality. A hint of Wong's culture is exemplified as she writes:

If my brother or sister and I were to succumb to a sudden fever, we were ordered to strip naked and were rubbed with foul-smelling Chinese herbs. Tylenol was the devil. If we had the common flu, we were just lazy. Viruses were caused by ghosts and exorcised by running laps around our suburban neighborhood (p. 108).

Due to their trust in traditional healings, influenced of course by their culture, Wong's family did not take mental health or any sort of illness seriously. They would misinterpret superstitions for valid explanations of a person's sickness, as Wong claimed that "this was normal in our family, who believed that mental illness, or any psychological disturbance, was caused by

demonic possession” (p. 14). Any kind of medical treatment or advice from doctors was out of the question and was rebuked by her family. These sorts of notions were especially bad for Wong's auntie who did suffer from mental illness. Wong's frustration about her family's neglect towards her auntie is displayed when she says, “I knew that no one would trust an outsider, God forbid a medical professional, to diagnose Auntie Beautiful One, when we all thought willpower and exorcism could rid her of the ghosts” (p. 230). For the most part, Wong grew up questioning every action and ideology that manifested from her family. Although however bad or extreme things got, Wong stayed strong and whatever positive attributions she gained from her family was enough to allow her to persevere in life.

This memoir was Wong's way of illustrating her family and culture to the world. It seems likely that she wrote about her family to fathom and comprehend all the trials and tribulations that occurred throughout her life growing up, to self-heal, and to cope with her past. The only criticism this memoir could receive that is reasonable is that it can get overly repetitive with dark humor that may come off as being insensitive: to mental health, culture, and the craft of writing. To omit some of the dark humor would go a long way into portraying a serious attitude towards such subjects and could thus be appreciated by the large population of people who may have experienced hardships and difficulties similar to Wong's own. Sociologists or anyone interested in the studies of the social world would enjoy this memoir because it provides examples of how immigrant families deal with their own culture in foreign countries. It allows readers to become aware of mental illness through a different perspective apart from their own or anyone else they

know. The memoir has the potential to spark conversations about mental health issues, and this could suggest Wong's true nature of her intentions in writing about her personal life events. This is Wong's contribution to society in hopes that it could ignite initiation or awareness in areas about family, culture, and mental health.