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Asian Immigrant Mothers and Generational Trauma

The Asian immigrant mother, regardless of where she is from and where she ends up, will inevitably find her children subject to generational trauma resulting from the volatile mixture of her intersectional struggles and Asian cultural values. Asian immigrant families often frame their immigration as a sacrifice of the parents for the sake of the children. The mother becomes a lynchpin of stressors as their gender accentuates the hardships experienced by moving to an alien country. This paper addresses representations of motherhood in Ocean Vuong's "On Earth We're Briefly Gorgeous" and "Pachinko", in which the mother's struggles become inflicted upon the family at large, perpetuating generational traumas. These traumas are present in both intercontinental immigration, such as from Asia to the U.S., and intracontinental immigration, moving from one Asian country to another. By focusing on the experiences of Asian immigrant mothers in both texts, one unravels their myriad struggles and the nature of the trauma they inflict on their children.

I am a 4th year English and Computer Science double major. While my entire family consists of Asian immigrants, I always noticed a particular emphasis on the struggles of the mothers in particular. Given my close relationship with my mother, I felt it important to use this opportunity to further explore the intersection between motherhood and the Asian immigrant experience in modern literature.