

# The jade peony and the other family



**ASSIGN  
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Academia-Research 3 April 2006 With reference to " The Jade Peony" excerpt and " The Other Family", discuss the issues that parents and children face when they move to a country with a language and culture that is different from their own. Please use at least two direct quotations from each story and provide in-text citations with references.

When parents and children move to a country with a language and culture that is different from their own, they have to face several issues. They are often laughed at or ignored because of their accent and poor knowledge of English. They have to learn to speak English fluently and to behave in a manner that is acceptable in their new homeland. They are made to feel like outsiders, at times and this can be very humiliating. They have to try to forget the language and way of life that they have been used to since their childhood, if they are to adapt to life in their new homeland. This can be a painful experience, because they have to give up something that is very close to their hearts.

It is easier for children and young people to make these changes and to adapt to life in their new homeland. For older people it can be much more difficult to give up a way of life that they have been used to for all their lives. It is even more difficult for parents, who feel rejected, when their children adopt the language and culture of their new homeland.

Bannerji, in *The Other Family* highlights the feeling of insecurity of an immigrant mother, who says to her only daughter " Is this the family you would like to have Don't you want us anymore You want to be a mem sahib, a white girl" (143). She worries that some day her daughter would be ashamed of her and would move out into the world of the residents of their new homeland. She thinks that some day they would be enemies. She is

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afraid that she will lose her child. She feels that the people in her new homeland have the power to crush little people like her anytime. She exposes her fear of rejection to her daughter. At the same time she realizes the contradiction in first bringing her child here and then making her feel guilty for wanting to be like the others. She can see that this is unfair and it makes no sense to the child.

Choy, in *The Jade Peony* speaks of the difficulties faced by immigrant children, due to their different looks, accents and poor knowledge of the English language. They are laughed at and ignored. " On streetcars and in shops where only English was spoken, people ignored you or pretended they didn't hear you or, worse, shouted back, " WHAT WHAT'S THAT YOU SAY CAN'T YOU SPEAK ENGLISH!!" (177). The children have to face this mockery and humiliation in their everyday life, though in Miss Doyle's class they are all treated as equals. Miss Doyle never makes fun of them, or allows anyone to laugh at them in the classroom. She maintains strict discipline and is dedicated to developing their fluency in English. She tells them that they are brave and encourages them to speak with confidence. Along with English language skills, she also builds their self-confidence.

Immigrant parents and children face difficult situations in their new homeland. They have to learn to cope with humiliation and insecurity, while they develop new skills and earn a living. However, there are always kind people like Miss Doyle, who care for them and are willing to help them to adapt to life in their new homeland.

#### Works Cited

Bannerji, H. *The Other Family*. Oxford University Press, 1990.

Choy, W. *The Jade Peony: A novel*. Douglas and McIntyre, 1995.

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