

# UC Davis Teenagers Project

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## A Message from Su Yeong Kim, Chief Researcher

We are very pleased to share with you the following additional findings from the UC Davis Teenagers Project. There are particularly interesting results on students' partner selection and translating activities for parents.

We are planning a follow-up study in the future and ask for your continued participation. If your address or phone number changes, please update us by leaving a message at (415) 271-0390, 1-866-7-FAMILY (toll-free), or by writing us at [kimsu@hawaii.edu](mailto:kimsu@hawaii.edu). You can also update your information on the web at <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kimsu/ucdavis/>.

We hope that you find the newsletter informative and useful. We sincerely appreciate your participation in the project!

\*\*P.S. I have now moved to the University of Hawaii. Please note that future correspondence regarding the Project will come from the University of Hawaii.\*\*



## Cultural Adjustment

Balancing two cultures can be a very difficult task. Nevertheless, this is a task that new immigrants must face everyday.

Because a majority of the parents immigrated to the US as adults, while most of the teenagers were born here, we expected them to report differences in their abilities to balance Chinese and American cultures. However, survey results show that there is only a very small difference between the teenagers' and the parents' responses, with the teenagers finding it only slightly easier than their parents to balance the two cultures.

The overall picture seems to suggest that teenagers and parents are on common ground when it comes to striking a balance between Chinese and American cultures – both groups feel it is “sometimes” difficult to achieve the right balance. It appears that the parents in the project are just as flexible as the teenagers when it comes to balancing the two cultures.

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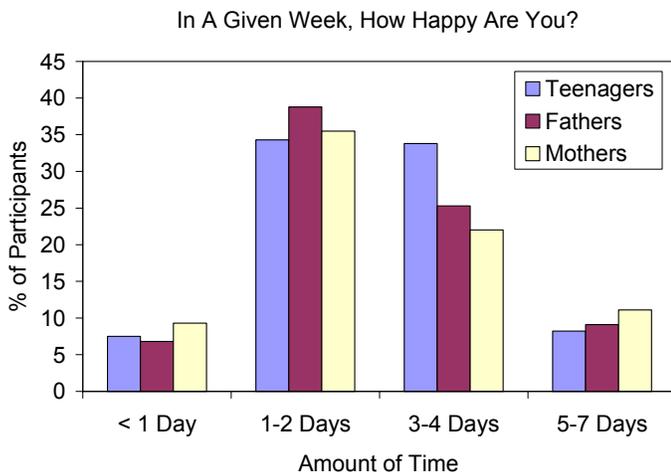
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## The General Well-Being of Participants

A positive attitude is often the key to achieving success, whether at home, school, or at work. In general, the participants in the project are happy and have positive outlooks on their lives. About 42% of the teenagers tell us that “a lot of the time” to “most of the time” they “feel just as good as other people, feel hopeful, and enjoy life.”

Consistent with the responses provided by the teenagers, 41% of fathers and 45% of mothers report that their teenagers are in general happy “a lot of the time” to “most of the time.” The similarity in the parent and teenager responses suggests that most of the parents in the study are caring and observant parents, who are very conscious of the emotional well-being of their teenagers. Keep on smiling!



## A Better Life in America

When asked to reflect on their jobs and lives in the US, parents in the project agree that their lives are, in general, better in the US than in the country they left behind. Most parents answer “neutral” when we ask whether their jobs “get more respect” or “are better” in the US. However, when we ask if they feel their lives and economic status are better in the US, most answer “agree.” Overall, our findings indicate that, after migrating to the US, both mothers and fathers feel that their lives and economic status are more likely to improve than are their jobs.

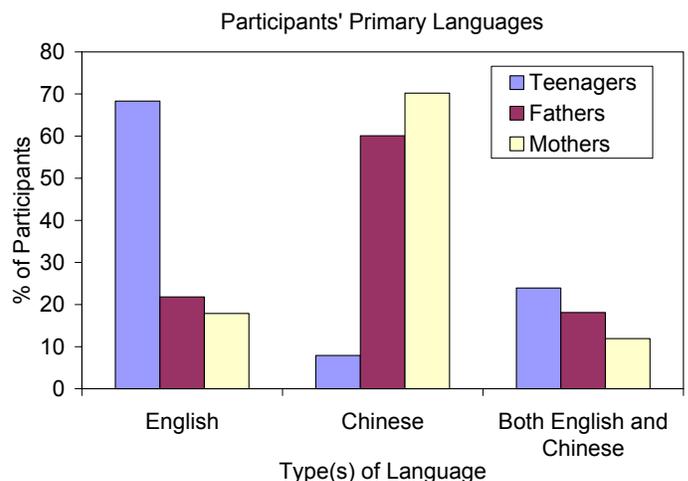
## Language Choice and Perceptions of Discrimination

One’s language choice is sometimes a factor contributing to their sense of discrimination from others. However, according to participants in the project, their primary language does not seem to be an important factor contributing to their sense of discrimination.

Survey results indicate that 68% of teenagers use English, and 8% use Chinese as their primary language, while another 24% say their English language ability is just as strong as their Chinese. All teenagers, regardless of their language preference, say that they “almost never” experience discrimination.

The language trend is reversed on the parents’ side; results show that 70% of mothers and 60% of fathers use Chinese as their primary language. In addition, 12% of mothers and 18% of fathers say their English language ability is just as strong as their Chinese. Similar to the responses given by the teenagers, the levels of discrimination perceived are about the same for both English- and Chinese-speaking parents.

Overall, for the participants in the project, there does not seem to be a link between someone’s language choice and their sense of discrimination from others.



## Family Time: A Priority in Parents' Lives

It seems that all of the parents in the project enjoy having their teenagers at home and during meals. Both mothers and fathers report that it is “important” to them that their teenagers spend time at home and be present during family meals. For fathers, it appears that their view on the importance of having their teenagers at home does not change with the amount of time they work outside the home. Both part-time and full-time fathers say that their teenagers’ presence is meaningful to them.

However, the amount of time that mothers spend away from home seems to influence how they feel about their teenagers’ presence at home. Stay-at-home mothers are, on average, more likely than working mothers to emphasize the importance of the presence of their teenagers at home and during meals.

In general, however, both mothers and fathers value the time their teenagers spend at home.

## Close Teenager-Parent Relationships

The quality of the teenager-parent relationships for the families in the project is overall very high. The majority of the parents in the project report close supervision of their teenagers by knowing where their teenagers are and what they are doing. Teenagers also feel closely supervised and say that their parents either “almost always” or “always” know where they are and what they are doing.

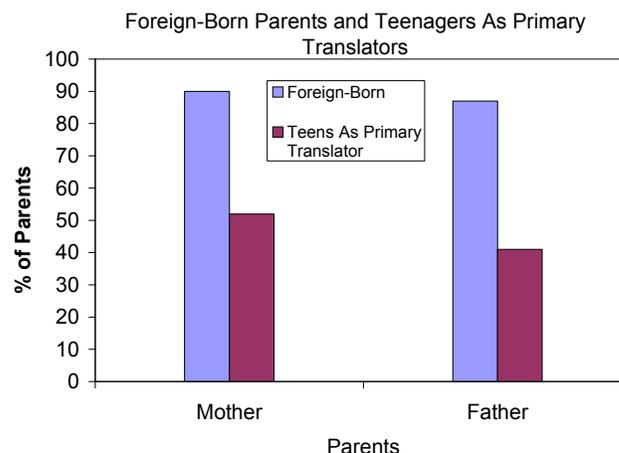
Warmth and caring between parents and teenagers are also very high. Most teenagers report feelings of warmth and caring from both their parents between “fairly often” to “almost always.”

From questions such as, “during the past week I/my teenager felt sad,” and “during the past week I/my teenager was happy,” we see that parents who show more warmth and concern for their teenagers are better aware of how their teenagers are feeling. Indeed, parental caring and warmth are very important for a close relationship between parents and their teenagers.

## Translating

### How common is it?

For the families in the project, it appears that foreign-born parents (about 88%) often ask their teenagers to translate for them. In the project, 78% of adolescents report to have translated for their parents. The age at which most teenagers say they started to translate is about 10, which is the fourth or fifth grade. Of the teenagers who translate, 52% say they are the primary translators for their mothers and most say that they translate for them “a few times a week.” By contrast, fewer teenagers (41%) are primary translators for their fathers. Of those who do translate for their fathers, most only do so “a few times a month.” It appears that teenagers are more likely to translate for their mothers than for their fathers.



### What are the effects?

We find that translating has a positive effect on teenagers’ interest in Chinese culture and community. Compared to teenagers who do not translate, translating teenagers are more likely to enjoy Chinese jokes/humor, entertainment, and tradition. In addition, teenagers who translate are more eager to participate in the Chinese community and to attend a Chinese language school.

In general, teenagers appear willing and open to translate for their parents. Almost 50% of the translating teenagers report feeling helpful when they can assist their parents by translating, and 55% “strongly disagree” that translating harms the teenager-parent relationship. It appears that translating is an important activity for teenagers to help them stay interested and involved in the Chinese culture and community.

## Teenagers' Partner Selection

Although over 75% of teenagers in the survey were born in America, their willingness to marry a Chinese person is still very high, especially for boys. When we ask the teenagers if they are willing to marry a Chinese person, most boys (98%) answer "agree" to "strongly agree." Girls, on the other hand, reply "neutral" to "agree." When we ask teenagers if they are willing to marry an American person, 97% of both boys and girls say they are between "neutral" and "agree." It seems that while girls are less concerned with marrying a Chinese or American person, boys have a much stronger preference for Chinese. It may be that, in general, boys are counted on more to upkeep Chinese marriage traditions than are girls.

UC Davis Teenagers Project

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### ARE YOU MOVING?

Please update your address and phone number with us! We would like to keep in touch with you for a follow-up project in the near future. Each time we receive an update of your new contact information, you will have a chance to win \$25!

Updating your information is easy:

By Phone: (415) 271-0390

By Phone: (866) 7-FAMILY (This is a toll-free number.)

By E-mail: [kimsu@hawaii.edu](mailto:kimsu@hawaii.edu)

By Web: <http://www2.hawaii.edu/~kimsu/ucdavis/>

Please remember that future correspondence regarding the project will be from the University of Hawaii.

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