

# UC Davis Teenagers Project

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## A Message from Su Yeong Kim, Chief Researcher

Last spring, your family participated in the UC Davis Teenagers Project. We are very pleased to share with you some of the results from the project. There are particularly interesting results on students' motivation for school and language use in the home, as reported on the following pages.

We are planning a follow-up study in the future and ask for your continued participation. If you have not done so already, please complete the enclosed **Contact Information Form** and return it to us using the postage-paid envelope. 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.

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

\*\*P.S. I will be working at the University of Hawaii starting next year. Please note that future correspondence regarding the Project will come from the University of Hawaii.\*\*

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## Demographics

There are 455 teenagers along with 422 mothers and 392 fathers who participated in the study. Tables 1 and 2 present the demographic characteristics of the teenagers and the parents.

Most of the foreign-born participants came from China, Hong Kong, or Taiwan. However, places from which the participants came are as wide-ranging as countries in Southeast Asia (e.g., Cambodia, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Malaysia), Japan in East Asia, and Venezuela in South America.

Furthermore, we see that most of the families in the study consist of 4 to 5 people households. However, there are also families with as few as 2 people or as many as 9 people to a household.

There are very few only-children in the study (less than 12%). It is also rare for a teenager to have more than 2 siblings. A majority of the teenagers (77%) have between 1 to 2 siblings. Over half of the teenagers (53%) have only 1 sibling, and 23% have 2 siblings.

Table 1. Characteristics of Teenagers

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Teenagers</u>
<b>Gender</b>	
Male	46.0%
Female	54.0%
<b>Place of Birth</b>	
US	75.3%
Foreign	24.7%
<b>Average Age</b>	
	13 yrs.
<b>Grade</b>	
7th	47.5%
8th	52.5%
<b>Number of Siblings</b>	
None	11.7%
One to Three	84.0%
Three and Above	4.4%

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## Teenagers' Language Choices and Cultural Identifications

The country in which a person is born is considered an important factor in the development of that person's identity. However, while teenagers who were born outside the US are more likely to choose Chinese as their primary language, they are just as likely as their US-born counterparts to identify with the American culture.

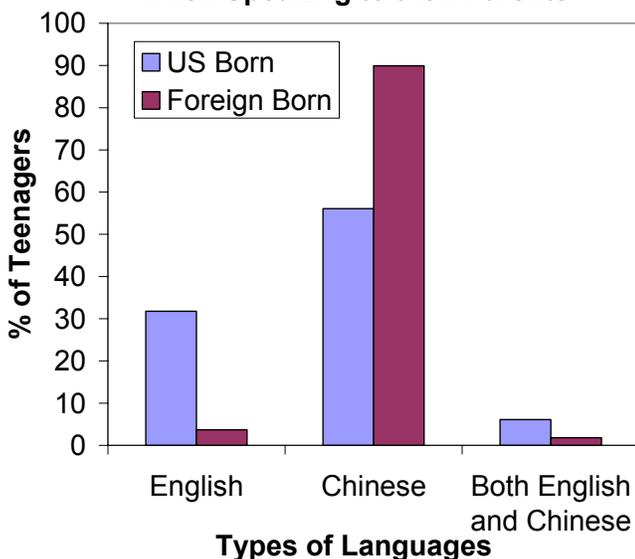
In understanding teenagers' use of Chinese in their households, it is important to consider whether they were born in the US. For teenagers who were born in the US, 34% say that Chinese is "always" used in their households. By contrast, for those born outside the US, 64% report that Chinese is "always" used.

Where teenagers were born also seems to determine the language they use to speak with their parents. Whereas only 56% of US-born teenagers say that they use Chinese when

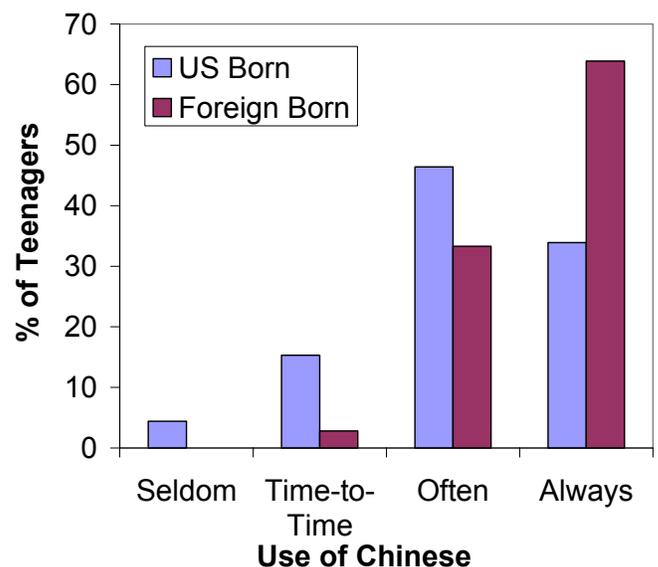
speaking to their parents, as many as 90% of the teenagers who were born outside the US indicate that they use Chinese with their parents. This may be because these teenagers (especially the newly arrived) are still in the process of acquiring the English language. Another factor to consider is the need for these teenagers to accommodate their parents, including those who do not speak English or those who may prefer Chinese to English.

Although where the teenagers were born has a strong influence on their language choice, we find that teenagers born outside of the US are just as likely to participate in American culture as those born in the US. In fact, in response to statements such as, "I enjoy typical American jokes and humor," and "I believe in mainstream American values," 50% of all the teenagers in the project answer "neutral" to "agree" and 45% answer "agree" to "strongly agree." Overall, it appears that the countries in which teenagers were born is a stronger indicator on their choices of primary language than on their cultural identifications.

**Teenagers' Choice of Language When Speaking to their Parents**



**Household Chinese Use**



## **Teenagers' Primary Language Use: Influence on Teenagers' Cultural Ties**

According to teenagers' responses, using Chinese in the home reinforces their ties to the Chinese culture and community. Compared to teenagers who do not use any Chinese at home, those who use exclusively Chinese or both Chinese and English, show higher interest in the Chinese community. In general, Chinese speakers are more willing to participate in the Chinese community and attend a Chinese language school than English speakers.

Overall, it seems that steady use of the Chinese language is an important factor that keeps teenagers tied to their culture.

## **Teenagers' Academic Performance**

Education plays a crucial role in today's society. A good education gives students the immense power of knowledge and allows them to pursue satisfying careers.

It appears that grades are very important to the teenagers in this project. When asked if they "keep up with their schoolwork even when there are other interesting things to do", the teenagers' overall answers are "agree." Aside from their willingness to give schoolwork priority over other things, the teenagers are also willing to put a lot of time into their schoolwork. Survey results indicate that the average time that the teenagers spend studying in a typical weekday is 3-4 hours.

When we look at the average GPA of the teenagers, we find that hard work pays off. In general, the teenagers in the project are very

good students. On a 4-point scale, the teenagers' self-reported GPA have an average of 3.5. Way to go, guys!

## **Who Are the Teenagers' Primary Caretakers?**

Every teenager in the project is well cared-for. Both fathers and mothers are active in providing care for their teenager, regardless of their employment status. However, there seems to be different trends for fathers and mothers.

We find that for fathers who are employed full-time and for those who are presently unemployed but looking for a job, 9% are nominated as their teenagers' primary caretakers. By contrast, only 5% of the fathers who are employed part-time fit that description.

For mothers, the number of hours spent working outside the home directly affects whether they will be nominated as the teenagers' primary caretakers. According to teenager responses, the likelihood of mothers being the primary caretakers increases when the mothers' work hours decrease. Stay-at-home mothers get the highest number of votes from their teenagers as their primary caretakers (83%). While working mothers still play a very significant role in providing care for their teenagers, their chances of being the primary caretakers decrease. According to teenager responses, only 66% of mothers who are part-time workers, and 54% of mothers with full-time jobs, are selected as their teenagers' primary caretakers.

continued from page 1 (**Demographics**)

In terms of living arrangements of the teenagers, most (86%) live with both the mother and the father in the same household. Less than 10% live with only one parent.

The employment rate of the parents appears to be high. Survey results show that about 80% of both fathers and mothers are employed in full- or part-time jobs.

**Table 2. Characteristics of Parents**

<u>Characteristics</u>	<u>Mothers</u>	<u>Fathers</u>
<u>Parent</u>	398	355
<u>Place of Birth</u>		
US	10.6%	13.8%
Foreign	89.4%	86.2%
<u>Average Age</u>	44 yrs.	48 yrs.
<u>Average Age of Arrival to the US (for foreign- borns)</u>	28 yrs.	30 yrs.
<u>Average Years of Marriage</u>	18 yrs.	18 yrs.
<u>Employment Status</u>		
Full Time	54.7%	76.5%
Part Time	20.7%	6.0%

## 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.

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)

The Chief Researcher of the project, Su Yeong Kim, is moving to Hawaii. Please remember that future correspondence regarding the project will be from the University of Hawaii.

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