

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' delinquent behaviors and family values.

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. 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!

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

p1 **Parenting Differences between Fathers and Mothers**

"Despite the different roles parents play, teenagers in our study feel loved and cared for by their parents."

p1 **Are Asian-American Teenagers Delinquent?**

"Teenagers in our study are not the rebels in their communities."

p2 **Financial Difficulties and Family Relationships**

"While some parents do not have a full-time job to support the family, it is uncommon for family members to blame each other or be upset due to the lack of financial resources."

p3 **Changing Family Values**

"Families in our study keep a good balance between traditional and their adopted western values."

p3 **Amicable Marriages among Parents**

"Teenagers in our study are growing up in strong and healthy families, with parents reporting a high level of marital satisfaction."



Parenting Differences between Fathers and Mothers

In our study, about 80% of the parents work at least part-time. Although working may take away the time parents can spend with their children, the majority of teenagers in our study feel appreciated and cared for. However, surveyed teens also report a difference in treatment from their fathers and mothers. Below, we will explore teenagers' feelings about parenting differences.

Teenagers were asked questions about how they feel about their parents, and their answers were based on a seven-point scale ranging from 1 "never," 2 "almost never," 3 "not often," 4 "about half the time," 5 "fairly often," 6 "almost always," to 7 "always". A majority of the teenagers surveyed say that their parents "often" to "almost always" act lovingly and affectionate. Many also agree that parents "often" participate in things that are important to them. These teenagers feel that "most of the time," parents care about, support and understand them.

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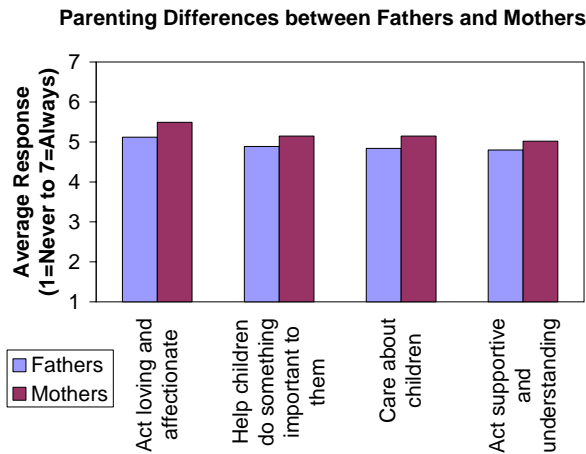
Are Asian-American Teenagers Delinquent?

In the movie, "Better Luck Tomorrow," Asian-American teenagers are portrayed as over-achieving yet delinquent members of society. The main characters maintain model minority images in public, but they are also trouble-makers and outlaws in their own community. The movie suggests that Asian-Americans engage in antisocial activities and violate social norms. In our survey, we examine whether this movie is a dramatized version of reality or whether these behaviors can be observed in teens surveyed.

continued on page 2

According to the teens, parents are able to maintain a good, supportive and caring relationship with them. However, they also feel a slight difference between the way their fathers and mothers treat them. As shown in the graph below, teenagers generally feel that mothers are more nurturing, which could possibly be related to the traditional role of mothers as the primary caregivers and fathers as the bread-earners of the family. As such, mothers may be more devoted to the role of nurturer for their children.

In conclusion, despite the different roles parents play, teenagers in our study feel loved and cared for by their parents.



accompanying table on page 4

After reviewing the results, it appears that surveyed teens are hardly involved in any crime or substance use. About 98% of the teenagers have never damaged public properties intentionally, or committed burglaries. Although a number of teenagers (36%) often group with troubled peers, there is no evidence of involvement with gangs. In fact, over 96% of the surveyed teens have never participated in gang activities. Only 1% of the teens in our study consume alcohol or drugs. Given these results, it seems that teenagers in our study are not the rebels in their communities.

“Better Luck Tomorrow” has revealed the often unknown side of Asian-Americans growing up in suburbs. According to the director, the movie is based on his research of juvenile delinquency among minorities, which makes the movie breathtakingly real. Although the movie has shed light on some harsh realities about Asian teens growing up in America, it is hardly a reflection of Asian-Americans in general. Many Asian-American teens in our study are well disciplined and behaved. In fact, they share many of the positive values and beliefs held by other members of their community.

Financial Difficulties and Family Relationships

Financial resources play an important role in creating and maintaining a high standard of living. As a minority group in the U.S., Chinese-Americans are often subject to fewer opportunities for white-collar jobs than European Americans. While a tight budget and consequently lower standard of living may generate distress among family members, it is not certain that financial difficulties have adverse effects on family relationships. Following, we examine this issue for participants in our study.

Teenagers in our study were asked whether family members argued about money at home. Surprisingly, over 80% of them responded that

their parents “never” or “almost never” argued with each other about these issues. Also, 86% of the teenagers “never” or “almost never” argued with parents about not having enough money. It seems that financial problems do not trigger arguments in the family. In fact, about 81% of teenagers said that family members “never” or “almost never” got upset over money, and over 60% of parents “did not worry at all” about not having enough money for family spending.

While some parents (about 34%) do not have a full-time job to support the family, it is uncommon for family members to blame each other or be upset due to the lack of financial resources. It appears that family members are very understanding when it comes to financial difficulties.

Changing Family Values

Hierarchy plays an important role in traditional Chinese families, where the elders are assumed to have more wisdom and therefore given authority over the younger members of the family. With such social norms, Chinese parents often expect their children to obey without questioning. Children are also expected to take care of their parents and make personal sacrifices for the family. Also, children in traditional Chinese families often have little say in family decisions. According to study results, both parents and teenagers consider it “very important” to treat parents with respect. On taking parents’ advice on choosing friends and their future, however, teenagers and parents hold different opinions. While most parents believe that it is “important” for children to follow their advice, teenagers only consider it “somewhat important.” Furthermore, parents and teenagers differ on their views of children’s duties to the family. Surprisingly, teenagers give more importance to making sacrifices for the family than their parents do. Also, while parents think it is only “little” to “somewhat important” for children to help them financially in the future, teenagers believe it is “important” to do so.

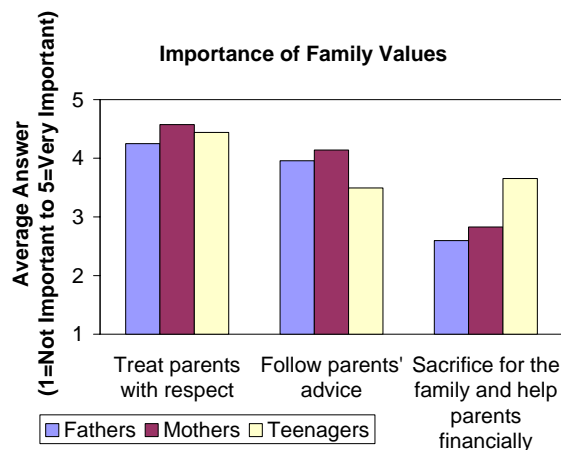
It appears that families in our study keep a good balance between traditional and their adopted western values. On the one hand, both parents and teenagers recognize the authority of parents, and hierarchy is obviously still an important value in the family. On the other hand, however, teenagers also enjoy an elevated level of freedom. Parents are more democratic and allow children to make their own decisions. When it comes to duties, however, parents and teenagers share different opinions. While parents may think it is not necessary for children to make personal sacrifices for the family, teenagers feel obligated to do so. It seems that teenagers in our study are mature and ready to take on family responsibilities.

Amicable Marriages among Parents

A loving marriage is the foundation for any healthy and functional family. When both parents are affectionate toward each other, they create and maintain a warm family atmosphere. Moreover, through effective communication, parents can reach a mutual understanding, thereby strengthening the family’s marital, parent-child, and sibling relationships.

Parents in our study maintain amicable relationships. They pay attention to what their partners think and feel. Concerns and affections are expressed openly and honestly. About 77% of the parents surveyed frequently praise their partners for their ideas and deeds. Before deciding on an important matter, over 83% of parents consult their partners. Oftentimes, when an important task concerning the family is to be accomplished, most (84%) parents help each other. In addition, 81% of parents often share a good laugh with one other. It appears that parents in the study enjoy being together, and are truly supportive, caring and affectionate towards each other.

Teenagers in our study are growing up in strong and healthy families, with parents reporting a high level of marital satisfaction. With such strong bonds between the parents, family members are close to one another, thereby creating a harmonious family atmosphere.



accompanies article from page 1 (*Are Asian-American...*)

Teenagers' Delinquent Behaviors

<u>Delinquent Behaviors</u>	<u>% Teenagers</u>
<i>Setting fires on public properties</i>	
Often True	0.0%
Sometimes	1.8%
Not True	98.2%
<i>Stealing from other places</i>	
Often True	0.7%
Sometimes	2.0%
Not True	97.3%
<i>Hanging around with troubled kids</i>	
Often True	5.3%
Sometimes	29.5%
Not True	65.2%
<i>Being in a gang</i>	
Often True	0.0%
Sometimes	3.1%
Not True	96.9%
<i>Use alcohol or drugs for non-medical purposes</i>	
Often True	0.4%
Sometimes	0.4%
Not True	99.1%

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

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

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