

## Extended Kin, Acculturation, and Asian Adolescent Well-Being

Holly E. Heard  
Adrienne Frech  
Rachel Tolbert Kimbro

Rice University

### *Introduction*

Residence with extended kin is often seen as a positive resource for children, with the assumption that children will benefit from additional economic, human, and social capital that non-parental kin can provide. However, some researchers find evidence that residence with extended kin is associated with lower well-being among children and adolescents (see McLoyd 2000). In addition, previous studies have not fully considered impact of residence with extended kin within particular racial and ethnic contexts. Specifically, Asians are more likely than whites to reside with extended kin (Blair, Blair, and Madamba 1999; Glick, Bean, and Van Hook 1997). This is in part due to immigration, as immigrants are more likely to live with extended kin and to believe that kin provide resources which help the acculturation process (Blair, Blair, and Madamba 1999; Glick et al. 1997). In this study, we examine the impacts of residence with extended kin and immigrant acculturation on well-being among Asian adolescents. We also examine additional explanations for the relationship between residence with kin and adolescent well-being, such as ethnic group, social ties to family, and peer attachment. This research is important given the paucity of studies on the effects of extended kin on adolescent and child well-being, and the relatively high incidence of coresidence among Asian-American households.

### *Relationships with family and adolescent well-being*

In order to understand the potential effects of residence with extended kin on adolescent well-being, it is necessary to first consider the role of ties to kin in the lives of Asian adolescents. There is some evidence that these ties are a source of strain, due to both scarce resources in larger households and a lack of acculturation among older family members in immigrant families. Given this, it may make sense that as family ties increase, well-being declines. For example, Blair et al. (1999) find that, among Asian families, living with more siblings is negatively associated with adolescents' academic performance (in line with a resource model), but find no association between extended kin and academic performance. Conflict between older generations and youth in immigrant families may also compromise well-being. Older generations of relatives are likely to be less acculturated than adolescents, and conflicts may result as an adolescent develops a stronger orientation to peers, and more individualistic, rather than family-centric values (Rumbaut 1994). In a study of immigrant youth (including Filipino, Vietnamese, Cambodian, and Laotian adolescents), Rumbaut (1994) finds that adolescents who experience high levels of parent-child conflict – especially conflict related to issues of acculturation, such as preferred language – report reduced self-esteem and higher depression relative to peers who reported low parent-child conflict. Some second-generation Asian youth adopt alternative support systems within the community to cope with family stress. Cao (2005) describes processes through which churches become a source of guidance and acculturation for Chinese youth, who are able to practice English, develop a strong peer network, and receive guidance

from trusted adults.

Living with extended kin may have a negative impact even if adolescents retain a family-centric orientation. Although Asian American youth feel a stronger sense of obligation to family than non-Hispanic white peers (Fuligni 1997), it is not clear that this orientation improves well-being. In college, for example, Asian youth (especially those from immigrant families) are more likely to work full-time to contribute financially to families and to remain living at home (Fuligni and Witkow 2004). Although Asian adolescents remain more likely to attend college than white peers, to persist in college upon enrollment, and to complete a four-year degree, youth who work full-time during college are less likely to graduate (Fuligni and Witkow 2004). Thus, heterogeneity among Asian youth suggests that those with stronger family commitments may be less likely to achieve some of the educational goals achieved by many of their peers. If living with extended kin overextends scarce family resources, it may place a greater financial and time burden on adolescents as they seek to establish independence from families of origin. In sum, the combination of a high sense of family obligation along with the strains presented by living with extended kin may undermine Asian adolescents' well-being.

### *Data, Measures, and Methods*

Add Health is a nationally representative, multiwave study of adolescents that uses a multistage, stratified, school-based, cluster sampling design (Harris et al. 2003).<sup>1</sup> An in-school questionnaire was administered to every student in one of a pair of schools (high school and junior high/middle school) in each of 80 communities in 1994 and 1995 ( $N = 90,118$ ), sampled with unequal probability of selection. A random sample of adolescents was selected for in-home interviews in 1995 ( $n = 20,745$ ), along with a resident parent, usually the mother. A number of special racial/ethnic oversamples were selected using screeners from the in-school questionnaires, including Chinese adolescents. Analyses are weighted to adjust for oversamples. Our analytic sample includes all who self-identified as Asian race, lived with a parent, and provided a valid sample weight ( $N = 1,380$ ). The sample includes those reporting Chinese ( $n = 296$ ), Filipino ( $n = 574$ ), and some other ethnicity ( $n = 510$ ).

We examine outcomes encompassing health, substance use, and educational domains. Overweight includes all adolescents with a BMI over the 85<sup>th</sup> percentile, based on height/weight charts. Binge drinking indicates adolescents who report consuming five or more drinks in a row at least once in the past 12 months. We assess high educational expectations through adolescent reports of their likelihood of going to college (1 = *low*, 5 = *high*). Because more than two-thirds of respondents expressed the highest expectations, responses are dichotomized into the top score of 5 (1 = *yes*) and all others (0 = *no*).

Our key independent variables include indicators of residence with extended kin and immigrant acculturation. Kin residence is a dichotomous indicator that adolescents report living with at least one nonparental relative, based on the household roster.<sup>2</sup> Our indicator of immigrant acculturation is a five-category measure incorporating immigrant generation and whether they speak primarily English at home: first generation, no English at home; first generation, speaks English at home; second generation, no English at home; second generation, speaks English at

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<sup>1</sup> Udry and Chantala (2003) find that using a school-based sample does not significantly bias estimates of risk behaviors by missing school dropouts.

<sup>2</sup> Relatives whom the adolescent reports as acting "like a mother" or "like a father," in the absence of such a parent, are excluded from the measure of kin residence, to avoid confusion with nonparental family structure types.

home; third or higher generation (reference).<sup>3</sup> We also assess competing explanations of the effect of kin residence. We include a measure of ethnic group (Chinese [reference], Filipino, and Other Ethnicity). Family integration is a mean scale of agreement with three statements: my family understands me, my family is fun, and my family pays attention to me (range=1-5,  $\alpha=.79$ ). We include two indicators of relations with peers. To examine relations with school peers, school attachment (Johnson, Crosnoe, and Elder 2001) is a mean scale based on agreement with three items: I feel close to people at my school, I feel like a part of school, I am happy at this school (range=1-5,  $\alpha=.73$ ). To examine support from friends, we also include a single item measure of how much adolescents report that their friends care about them (range=1-5). Finally, we include a host of demographic, socioeconomic, and contextual control variables (see table).

Models will be estimated using “svy” commands in STATA (Statacorp 2003) to adjust for the stratified, school-based sampling design, produce more accurate standard errors, and reduce the chance of false-positive significance tests (Chantala 2006). Analyses are weighted to adjust for oversamples. Missing data are imputed using the “impute” command. We will use logistic regression to model outcomes.

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<sup>3</sup> We tested different specifications of the acculturation variable, including age at migration. The final measure had the benefit of being both parsimonious and most influential on the outcomes.

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Key Explanatory and Control Variables, by Residence with Relatives (Weighted Means and Proportions, Unweighted N).			
	Total	Does Not Live with Relatives	Lives with Relatives
<b>Outcomes</b>			
Overweight	.17	.15	.27***
Binge drinks	.16	.15	.22*
High college expectations	.64	.67	.53**
<b>Immigrant acculturation</b>			
Third+ generation	.14	.15	.11
Second generation, English at home	.29	.27	.38
Second generation, no English at home	.10	.11	.07
First generation, English at home	.17	.17	.17
First generation, no English at home	.30	.31	.27
<b>Ethnic group</b>			
Chinese	.13	.15	.07*
Filipino	.32	.29	.43**
Other ethnicity	.55	.56	.50
Family integration	3.68	3.70	3.60
School peer attachment	3.85	3.85	3.84
Friend support	4.19	4.16	4.28
<b>Family structure</b>			
Two biological parent family	.73	.77	.59***
Stepfamily	.07	.06	.08
Single parent family	.15	.13	.21
Nonparent family	.05	.03	.12***
Age	15.59	15.56	15.72
Female	.48	.47	.52
Birth order	2.20	2.19	2.25
Number of siblings	1.68	1.63	1.84
Sibling under 6 years old	.09	.09	.09
<b>Parental education</b>			
Less than high school	.13	.13	.13
High school graduate	.23	.22	.24
Some college	.17	.18	.16
College graduate	.47	.47	.48
Received public assistance	.09	.08	.09

Key Explanatory and Control Variables, by Residence with Relatives (Weighted Means and Proportions, Unweighted N).

	Total	Does Not Live with Relatives	Lives with Relatives
Mother's work status			
Not employed	.22	.23	.19
Employed full time	.61	.60	.65
Employed part time	.13	.13	.11
No resident mother	.04	.04	.05
Contextual measures (block group)			
Proportion Asian	.21	.20	.26**
Racial dispersion	.48	.46	.54
Proportion foreign born	.20	.19	.24*
Proportion linguistically isolated	.07	.07	.07
Sample N	1380	1007	373

\*p<=.05      \*\*p<=.01      \*\*\*p<=.001