

# Daily Family Assistance and the Psychological Well-Being of Adolescents From Latin American, Asian, and European Backgrounds

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The daily diary method was used to examine the implications of adolescents' daily assistance behaviors for both positive and negative aspects of psychological well-being among an ethnically diverse sample of 752 adolescents of ages 14 to 15 years. Results indicated that, contrary to the expectations of some observers, providing daily assistance to the family generally was not stressful for adolescents. Rather, assisting the family was associated with higher levels of happiness due, in large part, to the sense of role fulfillment it provided the adolescents. Few individual or group differences were observed in the association between family assistance and psychological well-being. These results suggest that family assistance serves as a meaningful activity in adolescents' lives by creating a sense of connection to the family.

*Keywords:* family assistance, adolescence, psychological well-being, ethnicity, family obligation

A growing body of research has documented that adolescents from Latin American and Asian backgrounds often have a stronger sense of obligation to support and assist their family members than do their peers from European backgrounds. Although research has suggested that family obligation and assistance have important implications for adolescents' educational adjustment, less is known about the impact on teenagers' psychological well-being. Prior research and theory regarding youths' support of the household offer seemingly different hypotheses about whether family assistance is detrimental or beneficial for their psychological health. In the current study, we tested these different hypotheses by using the daily diary method to closely examine the implications of the daily assistance behaviors of adolescents from Latin American, Asian, and European backgrounds for both positive and negative aspects of psychological well-being.

## Family Obligation and Assistance

Families from Mexican and other Latin American backgrounds have a strong sense of family connection and support, often referred to as *familism* (García Coll & Vázquez García, 1995; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Likewise, Chinese and other Asian families traditionally emphasize the importance of

family membership, respect, and solidarity (Chao & Tseng, 2002; Ho, 1981). These values are referred to as *family obligation*, the psychological sense that one should help, respect, and contribute to the family. Adolescents from Latin American and Asian backgrounds typically place a stronger emphasis on family obligation than do their peers from European backgrounds, suggesting that a sense of family obligation is a particularly important aspect of family relationships among immigrant and ethnic minority families (Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Orellana, 2001; Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). These differences generally have been found to be consistent across generation, gender, family composition, and socioeconomic backgrounds (Fuligni et al., 1999). Family obligation values are related to family assistance behaviors, which consist of concrete behaviors to help one's family, including caring for siblings, cleaning the home, and cooking meals. Adolescents from Asian and Latin American backgrounds not only value family obligation more, but they also tend to spend more time helping and assisting their families than do adolescents from European backgrounds (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006).

It remains unclear how obligations to the family may affect adolescents' psychological well-being. In contrast to research focusing on academic outcomes, little work has examined how family assistance relates to adolescents' emotional well-being, and competing hypotheses predict both negative and positive outcomes. On the one hand, family assistance behaviors may be felt as a burden and may lead to poorer well-being. On the other hand, assisting the family may serve an adaptive function by helping adolescents feel needed and appreciated by their parents and siblings and by providing a sense of meaning and purpose.

## *Family Assistance as Negative*

One body of research on family assistance has suggested negative outcomes as a result of assisting the family. Researchers have studied the effects of "parentification," in which adolescents take on household duties and adult responsibilities in the face of diffi-

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cult home environments (Godsall, Jurkovic, Emshoff, Anderson, & Stanwyck, 2004; Jurkovic, 1997). For example, Burton (2007) has shown that adolescents among economically disadvantaged families who shoulder the burden of excessive household assistance often have more difficult adjustment. Similar negative outcomes have been found when family assistance is provided by youths because their parents suffer from mental or physical distress, such as alcoholism, cancer, or depression (Chase, 1999; Godsall et al., 2004; Jurkovic, 1997). This research suggests that such youths are prematurely and inappropriately exposed to adult knowledge and take on extensive adult roles (Early & Cushway, 2002). Youths who have been overburdened with household responsibility often miss school and have a diminished attachment to school (Burton, 2007), tend to have a lower self-concept (Godsall et al., 2004), and frequently have somatic problems (Johnston, 1990).

### *Family Assistance as Positive*

Other perspectives posit that family obligation and assistance can be positive aspects in adolescents' lives (Burton, 2007; Burton & Sorensen, 1993; Fuligni, 2001; Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002; García Coll et al., 1996). Cross-cultural work suggests that children in non-Westernized societies often take on adult responsibilities within their families and that these responsibilities are considered normative and important for the child's development (Orellana, 2001; Weisner & Gallimore, 1977). Family assistance may provide a sense of purpose and belonging for children, and this sense of meaning may help them cope with the potential challenges of providing assistance to the family (Fuligni, Alvarez, Bachman, & Ruble, 2005). Likewise, a social identity perspective suggests that family assistance can be beneficial for youths' well-being (Fuligni & Flook, 2005). The family is the first and primary social group to which children belong. According to social identity theory, identifying with a social group enhances one's willingness to support and assist that group, especially if one feels valued and accepted by the group (Hogg, 2003). Feeling like a valued member of a group has been associated with better emotional well-being (Hogg, 2003). Thus, assisting the family may increase one's sense of connection to the family, which can provide adolescents with a sense of support and structure to help them deal with the challenges associated with being a teenager in U.S. society (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006).

### *The Present Study*

The present study used a daily diary method to examine whether family assistance is associated with positive or negative well-being among an ethnically diverse sample of adolescents from Latin American, Asian, and European backgrounds. Specifically, we sought to answer three key questions in the current study: (a) How does family assistance relate to psychological well-being? (b) Do the links between family assistance and well-being differ among adolescents from different ethnic backgrounds, generations, genders, and family contexts? and (c) Are any observed links between family assistance and psychological well-being mediated by either a sense of role fulfillment or a perception of excessive family demands? We separately assessed both positive (i.e., happiness) and negative (i.e., distress) psychological well-being to allow for

the possibility that both may simultaneously be related to family assistance.

### *Hypotheses*

In order to explore the possibility that the link to well-being would be more positive among adolescents from groups who place more importance on family assistance, such as those from Asian and Latin American backgrounds, we examined whether the strength of the association differed by the adolescents' ethnic background. We also examined whether the association differed according to adolescents' generational status or gender, given that greater emphasis is sometimes placed on family assistance among those from immigrant families and among females (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006).

Given prior findings on the negative implications of family assistance for adolescents in difficult life circumstances (Burton, 2007; Godsall et al., 2004; Johnston, 1990), we also tested whether greater family assistance was associated with negative well-being for certain adolescents in two different ways. First, we examined whether there was a curvilinear association between family assistance and psychological well-being, as has been found for educational outcomes (Fuligni et al., 1999). Whereas moderate levels of assistance may be beneficial by enabling adolescents to feel as though they are fulfilling their roles as good family members, higher levels of assistance and long hours spent helping the family may create a sense of burden and pressure that overwhelms adolescents and creates feelings of distress.

Second, we explored whether the implications of family assistance may be negative when such assistance takes place within difficult family contexts, such as those characterized by low socioeconomic status or low family cohesion or when adolescents do not believe in the value of family obligation. For example, Burton (2007) found that adolescents among economically disadvantaged families who bear heavy household responsibilities have more difficult adjustment and may suffer from anxiety, depression, and stress. In terms of family cohesion, adolescents who experience high levels of family assistance but who do not feel close to their family may feel an increased perception of burden and psychological distress when they assist their family. Indeed, family environments that are supportive and cohesive have been shown to relate to better psychological functioning among immigrant adolescents who provide assistance to their family (Walsh, Shulman, Bar-On, & Tsur, 2006). Finally, adolescents' attitudes regarding family assistance may affect whether high levels of assistance are felt as a burden. If youths do not endorse family obligations, this could be an indicator of "cultural conflict" with parents, which could create discord and distress (Zhou, 1997).

Lastly, we expected that family assistance would be associated with positive well-being for most adolescents because it can provide a sense of purpose, meaning, and social connection to the family. By helping their family, adolescents may feel as though they are fulfilling their role as a good son or daughter, and, as suggested by social identity theory, feeling connected to and valued by a group relates to better well-being (Fuligni & Flook, 2005; Hogg, 2003). In addition, participating in a daily routine that is meaningful with respect to group goals and values leads to enhanced well-being and builds confidence (Weisner, Matheson,

Coots, & Bernheimer, 2005; Zeldin, 2004). Further, community engagement has been associated with positive youth development (Zeldin, Camino, & Calvert, 2007), and youths who are involved in family decision making at home show increased self-esteem (Eccles et al., 1993). Thus, assisting their family may provide adolescents with a sense of meaning and connection to the family, thereby helping them cope with challenges associated with their family assistance.

### *The Daily Diary Method*

The ability of the daily diary method to provide insights into adolescents' family assistance behaviors and psychological well-being renders it a useful method for examining questions such as those posed in this study. Daily reporting results in more accurate responses than retrospective questions because it captures life as it is lived (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). Having youths report their activities, behaviors, and feelings on a daily basis provides more reliable and valid estimates than collecting traditional retrospective accounts from a single survey. This method also allows researchers to examine whether specific events, behaviors, and feelings co-occur with one another on a daily basis. For example, do adolescents experience more feelings of distress on days during which they help their family more? In addition, researchers are able to examine individual and group differences in the co-occurrence of daily-level associations. For example, is the association between distress and family assistance the same for adolescents from Latin American, Asian, and European backgrounds?

The daily diary method allowed us to examine associations between family assistance and psychological well-being at both the individual and the daily level. At the individual level, reports were averaged across days to examine whether adolescents who differed in their mean levels of family assistance also differed in their mean levels of psychological well-being. At the daily level, analyses examined whether the daily experience of helping the family more or less was associated with the daily occurrence of psychological well-being within adolescents. The daily analyses allowed us to confirm whether the associations found at the individual level were also found at the daily level. Associations found at both levels provide evidence that family assistance itself is associated with psychological well-being. However, associations found at only the individual level suggest that unmeasured characteristics of the individual adolescents, and not family assistance itself, may account for well-being. Thus, daily-level analyses offer greater confidence that associations found at the individual level are not due to unmeasured individual differences. Using the analytical advantages afforded by the daily diary method, we addressed our three key research questions at both the individual and the daily levels, thereby enhancing confidence in any links observed between family assistance and psychological well-being.

### Method

#### *Sample*

Ninth-grade students ( $M_{\text{age}} = 14.88$  years,  $SD = 0.39$  years, age range = 13.83–16.77 years) were recruited from three public high schools in the Los Angeles, California, metropolitan area. The ethnic composition, overall level of achievement, and socioeco-

nomie backgrounds of the participants reflected those of the communities from which the students were drawn. The first of the three schools was attended by students of predominantly Latin American and Asian backgrounds from lower middle to middle-class families. Over 50% of students received free and reduced meals, and more than 10% were eligible for California Work Opportunities and Responsibility to Kids (CalWORKs), a welfare program in California that provides cash aid and services to eligible families (California Department of Education, 2006). The second of the three schools enrolled students of predominantly Latin American and European backgrounds from lower middle to middle-class families. Fewer than 20% of the students qualified for free or reduced-priced meals, and fewer than 5% qualified for CalWORKs. Finally, the third school enrolled students from mostly Asian and European backgrounds whose families tended to be middle- to upper-middle class. Fewer than 10% of the students qualified for free or reduced-priced meals, and fewer than 1% qualified for CalWORKs. In terms of achievement, the first school tended to be in the lower middle to middle range of the achievement distribution of schools in California, whereas the second and third schools tended to be average and somewhat above average, respectively. None of the schools were dominated by a single ethnic group. Rather, the two most common ethnic groups comprised approximately 30–50% of the total population of each school.

Across the three schools, 65% of those invited to participate took part in the study, with a total sample of 783 ninth-grade students who came from diverse ethnic, socioeconomic, and immigrant backgrounds. A total of 752 students provided sufficient information regarding their family assistance behaviors, and the analyses presented in this article focused on these students.

Students were from diverse ethnic backgrounds. The three largest groups were from Mexican ( $n = 232$ ), Chinese ( $n = 171$ ), and European backgrounds ( $n = 168$ ). The remaining students were from other Latin American backgrounds ( $n = 33$ ), other Asian backgrounds ( $n = 79$ ), and other backgrounds such as Middle Eastern and African American ( $n = 55$ ). Ethnic background could not be determined for 14 students. Most of the students from Mexican and Chinese backgrounds were from immigrant families, being of either the first generation (18.1% and 31.0%, respectively; youths were born outside of the United States) or second generation (55.6% and 64.3%; youths were born in the United States, but at least one parent was foreign born). Those from European backgrounds were predominantly of the third generation or greater (71.4%; youths and both of their parents were born in the United States). Adolescents from Chinese backgrounds primarily spoke a language other than English in their homes (63.7%; Cantonese, Mandarin, or Chinese unspecified), nearly half of the adolescents from Mexican backgrounds (42.6%) spoke Spanish in their homes, and most of the adolescents from European backgrounds (91.5%) spoke primarily English in their homes. Nevertheless, the adolescents in the Chinese and Mexican groups rated themselves as having good proficiency in English:  $M = 4.78$  for Mexican;  $M = 4.53$  for Chinese, rated on a scale ranging from 1 (*does not speak English very well*) to 5 (*speaks English very well*). Adolescent boys (49%) and girls (51%) were equally represented in the sample.

Adolescents from the different ethnic groups varied significantly in terms of their socioeconomic backgrounds. Parents of

students with European backgrounds were more likely to have received college degrees than were parents of students with Chinese backgrounds, who, in turn, were more likely to have attended at least college than were the parents of students with Mexican backgrounds,  $F(2, 505) = 87.38, p < .001, \eta^2 = .26$ . Ethnic differences in occupational status followed a similar pattern, with parents of students from European backgrounds being employed in higher level occupations than Chinese parents, who, in turn, worked in higher status occupations than Mexican parents,  $F(2, 471) = 64.14, p < .001, \eta^2 = .21$ . Adolescents also differed in family composition variables, with parents of students from Chinese backgrounds being more likely to be married than parents of students from Mexican or European backgrounds,  $F(2, 519) = 13.99, p < .001, \eta^2 = .05$ . Students from Chinese backgrounds were more likely to have grandparents living in residence than were students from Mexican or European backgrounds,  $F(2, 552) = 9.70, p < .001, \eta^2 = .03$ , and adolescents from Mexican backgrounds lived with more siblings than did adolescents from Chinese backgrounds, who, in turn, lived with more siblings than did adolescents from European backgrounds,  $F(2, 552) = 17.22, p < .001, \eta^2 = .06$ .

### Procedure

Participants were recruited from spring semester classes that all ninth-grade students were required to take regardless of their academic ability (e.g., social studies, physical education). Students who returned parent consent forms and provided their own assent to participate completed an initial questionnaire during class time. The consent forms and all study materials were available in English, Chinese, and Spanish, and 7 participants chose to complete the questionnaire in a language other than English (4 Chinese, 3 Spanish).

After completing the initial questionnaire, the students were given a brief demographic questionnaire to complete at home and a 14-day supply of diary checklists to complete every night before going to bed for the subsequent 2-week period. Each diary checklist was 3 pages long and took 5 to 10 min to complete. Participants were telephoned once per week during the 2-week period to remind them to complete the diary checklists and to provide a resource for answering any questions. To monitor completion of the diary checklists, we administered participants 14 manila envelopes and an electronic time stamper. The time stamper imprinted the current date and time and was programmed with a security code so that the correct date and time could not be altered. Participants were instructed to place their completed daily diary checklist into a sealed envelope each night and to stamp the seal of the envelope with the time stamper. At the end of the 2-week period, participants returned the materials to the school and received \$30 for participating. In addition, the students were told that they would receive two movie passes if inspection of the data indicated that they had completed the diaries correctly and on time. This method of monitoring resulted in a high rate of compliance: 95% of the diaries were completed and 86% were completed on time, either on the same night or before 12:00 noon the following day. Results from analyses including only the diaries completed on time did not differ from those including all completed diaries. Therefore, the findings reported in this article are based on all completed diaries, regardless of when they were completed.

### Measures

#### Daily Diary Measures

*Daily family assistance.* Each evening for 14 days, adolescents indicated whether they had engaged in any of the following eight activities: helped clean the apartment or house, took care of siblings, ran an errand for the family, helped siblings with their schoolwork, helped parents with official business (e.g., translating letters, completing government forms), helped cook a meal for the family, helped parents at their workplace, and other kinds of assistance. On any given day, the number of family assistance behaviors ranged from 0 to 8. Participants then estimated the total amount of time they had spent in all of the activities that day. The list of activities was derived from focus group studies of adolescents and has been used successfully in previous studies with such populations (e.g., Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006).

For the daily-level analyses, the following measures were created from these reports: *assistance day*, which represented whether the adolescent helped their family by participating in any one of the eight family assistance behaviors that day, and *assistance time*, which represented the total time participants helped their family that day. For the between-participants, individual-level analyses, similar indices were created by taking the daily averages over 14 days: *average assistance days*, which represented the proportion of days out of 14 that the participant assisted the family in any one of the eight activities, and *average assistance time*, which represented the average number of hours spent helping the family each day over 14 days.

In addition, indices were created to measure the type of assistance behavior. *Assist household* represented whether the adolescents helped the family by cleaning their apartment or house, cooking a meal for the family, or running an errand for the family; *assist siblings* represented whether the adolescent assisted siblings by taking care of them or helping them with their schoolwork; and *assist parents with work* represented whether the adolescent helped his or her parent(s) with official business or at their workplace. These indices measured the proportion of days adolescents performed each type of assistance behavior. Time estimates were not available for specific assistance behaviors because adolescents provided only an overall time estimate across all assistance behaviors each day.

*Daily psychological well-being.* Each evening during the 2-week period, adolescents' daily mood was assessed with items from the Profile of Mood States (POMS; Lorr & McNair, 1971), a widely used measure in previous daily diary studies of stress and psychological well-being (Bolger & Zuckerman, 1995; Fuligni et al., 2002), and a happiness scale modeled after the POMS, recently developed by Fuligni and colleagues (Kiang, Yip, Gonzales-Backen, Witkow, & Fuligni, 2006). Adolescents used a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely*) to indicate the extent to which they felt distress, which tapped anxious and depressive feelings (items: "sad," "hopeless," "discouraged," "on edge," "unable to concentrate," "uneasy," "nervous"), and happiness (items: "joyful," "happy," "calm"). These measures were used as is for the within-person daily-level analyses, and a daily average was computed for the between-person individual-level analyses. Daily-level and individual-level alpha coefficients indicated that

each multiple-item measure possessed good internal consistency: .76 and .74 for daily-level distress and happiness, respectively; .94 and .94 for individual-level distress and happiness, respectively.

*Daily role fulfillment.* Each evening for 14 days, adolescents reported their feelings of role fulfillment using a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 7 (*extremely*). The participants responded to the following two questions: "How much did you feel like each of the following today?" (a) good son/daughter, (b) good sister/brother. Adolescents' sense of role fulfillment was averaged across the two items each day. This measure was used as is for the within-person daily-level analyses, and a daily average was computed for the between-persons individual-level analyses. Daily-level and individual-level alpha coefficients indicated that the measure had good internal consistency ( $\alpha$ s = .71 and .96, respectively).

*Daily perception of demands.* Participants indicated each evening over the course of 14 days whether the following two demanding events occurred that day: (a) had a lot of work at home and (b) had a lot of demands made by their family. These demands were adapted from previous daily diary research of stress and well-being among adults (e.g. Bolger, DeLongis, Kessler, & Schilling, 1989). An index of daily demands was created by summing the number of demands experienced each day (range = 0–2). This measure was used as is for the within-person daily-level analyses, and a daily average was computed for the between-participants individual-level analyses. Because this measure was a count of events, it was not appropriate to calculate alpha coefficients.

### Questionnaire Measures

*Family cohesion.* Participants completed the Cohesion subscale of the Family Adaptation and Cohesion Evaluation Scales (FACES) II inventory separately for each parent (Olson, Sprenkel, & Russell, 1979). Adolescents used a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*almost never*) to 5 (*almost always*) to indicate how close they felt and how much time they spent with their mother and father. They completed 10 items for each parent, such as "My mother [father] and I feel very close to each other"; "My mother [father] and I are supportive of each other during difficult times"; and "My mother [father] and I do things together." The scale had good internal consistencies ( $\alpha$  = .88 for father;  $\alpha$  = .87 for mother).

*Attitudes toward family obligation.* Adolescents completed three measures using a 5-point scale that assessed their attitudes regarding (a) current assistance to the family, (b) respect for the family, and (c) future support to the family (Fulgini et al., 1999). *Current assistance* measured adolescents' expectations for how often they should assist with household tasks and spend time with the family, such as "help take care of your brothers and sisters," "eat meals with your family," and "spend time with your family on weekends." *Respect for the family* measured adolescents' beliefs about the importance of respecting and following the wishes, desires, and expectations of other family members, such as "follow your parents' advice about what to do after high school," "respect your older brothers and sisters," and "show great respect for your parents." *Future support to the family* measured adolescents' beliefs about their feelings for providing support and being near their families in the future, such as "help your parents financially in the future," "help take care of your brothers and sisters in the future,"

and "live or go to college near your parents." Each subscale had good internal consistency ( $\alpha$ s = .84, .80, and .78 respectively).

*Parental education, occupation, and work hours.* Participants reported their mother's and father's highest educational attainment by responding on a scale spanning "elementary/junior high school," "some high school," "graduated from high school," "some college," "graduated from college," and "law, medical, or graduate school." Adolescents' reports of their parents' occupation were coded on a 5-point scale, used in previous studies with a similar population (Fulgini, 1997, 1998), ranging from 1 (*unskilled level*) to 5 (*professional level*); examples of unskilled worker included such occupations as furniture mover, gas station attendant, food service worker, and housecleaner; examples of semiskilled worker included baker, cashier, landscaper, and security guard; skilled worker professions included appraiser, barber, seamstress, and electrician; semiprofessional worker positions included nurse, librarian, optometrist, and office manager; and professional worker examples included architect, dentist, computer consultant, and physician. If the participant indicated that a parent was unemployed, occupational status was not coded. Finally, adolescents reported the average number of hours their mother and father worked each day.

*Demographics.* Participants indicated their birthplace, their parents' and grandparents' birthplace, and the ethnic label that best describes them. First generation represented youths who were born outside of the United States, second generation represented youths who were born in the United States but had at least one foreign-born parent, and third generation represented youths who were born in the United States whose parents were also born in the United States.

## Results

Two types of analyses were conducted to address the key questions of the study. First, traditional mean differences and regression analyses were conducted to examine overall trends in adolescents' family assistance behaviors and the individual-level associations between adolescents' family assistance, role fulfillment, perception of demands, and psychological well-being. Second, multilevel modeling was used to examine daily-level associations between adolescents' family assistance, role fulfillment, perceived demands, and psychological well-being to determine whether these variables were linked to one another within individual adolescents.

### Individual-Level Analyses

Overall, 98% of adolescents helped on at least 1 day of the study. Helping to clean, cook, and run errands for the family was the most common type of activity reported by adolescents, occurring on 58% of days. Helping siblings by taking care of them and assisting them with their homework was the next most frequent type of activity (27% of days), followed by helping parents with official business and at their workplace (8% of days). Overall, participants engaged in approximately 1.43 ( $SD$  = 1.01) types of assistance acts per day, for an average of 0.97 ( $SD$  = 0.90) hours spent helping the family each day. Adolescents provided some type of assistance to the family on 71% ( $SD$  = 29%) of days. Among the sample, 125 participants were only children. Adolescents with no

siblings did not differ from their peers with siblings in their average assistance time or assistance days,  $t_s(651-727) = 0.78-0.92$ , *ns*. In addition, 25% percent of adolescents lived in single-parent households. These youths did not differ from their peers living in dual-parent households in their average assistance time or assistance days,  $t_s(642-716) = 0.27-0.38$ , *ns*.

### *Ethnic, Generational, and Gender Differences in Family Assistance*

As shown in Table 1, adolescents from Mexican backgrounds reported spending more time helping their family than did those from Chinese or European backgrounds. In addition, adolescents from Mexican backgrounds spent more days helping their family than did adolescents from Chinese backgrounds, who, in turn, spent more days providing family assistance than did adolescents from European backgrounds. There was no main effect of gender for either average assistance time,  $F(1, 502) = 0.30$ , *ns*, or average assistance days,  $F(1, 559) = 0.35$ , *ns*. In addition, there were no significant interactions between gender and ethnicity in predicting adolescents' average assistance time,  $F(2, 502) = 0.82$ , *ns*, or average assistance days,  $F(2, 559) = 0.73$ , *ns*.

There was a significant main effect of generation on family assistance only for adolescents from Mexican backgrounds—average assistance time,  $F(2, 196) = 4.54$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .04$ ; average assistance days,  $F(2, 223) = 7.00$ ,  $p < .01$ ,  $\eta^2 = .06$ —such that first-generation adolescents ( $M = 0.91$ ,  $SD = 0.16$ ) reported spending more days assisting their family than did third-generation adolescents ( $M = 0.72$ ,  $SD = 0.26$ ), whereas second-generation adolescents ( $M = 0.82$ ,  $SD = 0.27$ ) did not differ significantly from first- or third-generation adolescents. In addition, first-generation Mexican adolescents ( $M = 1.72$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ) reported spending more time assisting their family than did second-generation ( $M = 1.24$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) or third-generation ( $M = 1.14$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ) adolescents. There were no significant main effects of generation on family assistance for adolescents from Chinese backgrounds, average assistance time,  $F(2, 152) = 1.40$ , *ns*; average assistance days,  $F(2, 167) = 2.00$ , *ns*, or for those from European backgrounds, average assistance time,  $F(2, 147) = 0.08$ , *ns*; average assistance days,  $F(2, 162) = 1.89$ , *ns*. Ethnic differences in family assistance remained even after controlling for adolescents' generation.

### *Family Assistance and Psychological Well-Being*

We first examined how overall family assistance was associated with psychological well-being. As shown in Table 2, adolescents

who spent more time and more days helping their family typically felt happier. The amount of time and the number of days adolescents spent helping their family were unassociated with feelings of distress. In addition, we examined type of family assistance behaviors. Adolescents who spent more days assisting the household and assisting siblings tended to report more feelings of happiness. Assisting siblings and assisting the household were not associated with distress. In contrast, adolescents who spent more days assisting parents with work tended to report slightly, but significantly, more feelings of distress. Assisting parents with work was not associated with feelings of happiness.

Additional analyses examined the curvilinear associations between family assistance and psychological well-being. After controlling for the linear associations, we found no curvilinear association of average assistance days with happiness ( $\beta = .14$ , *ns*) or distress ( $\beta = -.28$ , *ns*) or of average assistance time with happiness ( $\beta = -.17$ , *ns*) or distress ( $\beta = -.10$ , *ns*).

### *Potential Differences in the Associations Between Family Assistance and Well-Being*

Next, we examined whether the association between family assistance and well-being differed by adolescents' ethnicity, gender, or generation by using the tests of equal slopes within analyses of covariance (ANCOVAs), in which ethnicity, gender, and generation were treated as the categorical variables; the measures of family assistance were treated as covariates; and the measures of well-being were treated as dependent variables. Results indicated that there were no ethnic or generational differences in the relationship between family assistance and psychological well-being. The only gender difference to emerge occurred in the association between average assistance days and happiness such that the more days boys spent helping their family, the happier they felt on average ( $B = 0.62$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ ,  $p < .001$ ), whereas there was little association among girls ( $B = 0.16$ ,  $SE = 0.14$ , *ns*),  $F(1, 736) = 5.54$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $\eta^2 = .01$ .

Finally, we conducted additional moderation analyses to determine whether the association between family assistance and psychological well-being depended on family cohesion; adolescents' attitudes toward family obligation; or parents' education, occupation, or work hours. Given that the potential moderators were ordinal and continuous variables, we computed interaction terms by centering the moderator variables and multiplying them by the centered versions of the family assistance variables. The interaction terms were then entered into multiple-regression analyses, along with the centered moderators and family assistance variables, to predict psychological well-being.

Table 1  
*Family Assistance According to Ethnic Background*

Family assistance measure	Chinese (C)	Mexican (M)	European (E)	<i>F</i> ( <i>dfs</i> )	$\eta^2$	Bonferroni contrasts
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )			
Average assistance days	0.69 (0.29)	0.81 (0.25)	0.61 (0.30)	24.86*** (2, 568)	.08	M > C > E
Average assistance time	0.87 (0.94)	1.30 (0.94)	0.64 (0.64)	26.97*** (2, 508)	.10	M > C,E

*Note.* Figures for average assistance days represent proportion of days helping the family over 14 days. Figures for average assistance time represent average time in hours per day spent helping the family.

\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 2  
Correlations of Family Assistance With Adolescents' Well-Being

Family assistance measure	<i>r</i>	
	Happiness	Distress
Average assistance days	.15***	-.02
Average assistance time	.17***	-.03
Assist household	.15***	.02
Assist siblings	.10***	-.04
Assist parents with work	-.01	.09*

Note. Average assistance days represents the proportion of days adolescents assisted their family; average assistance time represents the average time spent assisting the family each day; assist household represents the proportion of days adolescents spent helping clean their apartment/house, cooking a meal for their family, or running an errand for their family; assist siblings represents the proportion of days adolescents spent helping their siblings by taking care of them or helping them with their homework; and assist parents with work indicates the proportion of days adolescents spent helping their parents with official business and at their work.  
\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Overall, 44 interaction effects were estimated, of which only 4 were significant, suggesting little variation in the association between family assistance and well-being. For these 4 significant moderation effects, the moderator variable was broken into high and low groups by taking a mean split, and separate regressions predicting well-being from the relevant measure of family assistance were conducted. The association between average assistance days and distress were different for those low ( $B = -.08$ ,  $SE = .09$ ) and high ( $B = .08$ ,  $SE = .09$ ) in family respect and for those who reported low ( $B = -.10$ ,  $SE = .10$ ) and high ( $B = .08$ ,  $SE = .08$ ) cohesion with their mother, although the associations for none of the groups were significant. Finally, the association of both average assistance days and time with happiness was positive for adolescents whose fathers worked fewer hours (average assistance days:  $B = .41$ ,  $SE = .16$ ,  $p < .05$ ; average assistance time,  $B = .13$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $p < .05$ ). The same was not true for adolescents whose fathers worked more hours (average assistance days:  $B = .06$ ,  $SE = .18$ ,  $ns$ ; average assistance time:  $B = .03$ ,  $SE = .05$ ,  $ns$ ).

*Mediating the Associations Between Family Assistance and Well-Being With Role Fulfillment and Perceived Demands*

As shown in Table 3, average assistance time and assistance days were associated with increased feelings of role fulfillment and increased experiences of perceived demands. Likewise, assisting the household and assisting siblings were related to greater feelings of role fulfillment and perceived demands. In contrast, assisting parents with work was not associated with role fulfillment but was associated with increased perception of demands. Finally, role fulfillment was associated with increased feelings of happiness ( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and decreased feelings of distress ( $r = -.24$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and perceived demands were associated with increased feelings of distress ( $r = .27$ ,  $p < .001$ ) but not with happiness ( $r = .05$ ,  $ns$ ).

Given that role fulfillment was positively associated with family assistance and happiness, we conducted mediation analyses to determine whether a sense of role fulfillment significantly medi-

ated the association between family assistance and happiness. The mediation analyses were conducted with the procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986), in which the magnitude and the significance of the indirect effects of family assistance on happiness, through role fulfillment, were estimated. The proportion of the association between family assistance behavior and happiness that was accounted for by role fulfillment was determined by dividing the indirect effect of family assistance on happiness through role fulfillment by the total effect of family assistance on happiness. As shown in Table 4 under "Total effect," the more time and more days adolescents spent assisting their family, the happier they felt on average. A higher sense of role fulfillment accounted for significant portions of the tendency for adolescents who spent more time and more days assisting their family to feel happier. A sense of role fulfillment accounted for 96.3% of the effect of average assistance days on happiness and 78.8% of the effect of average assistance time on happiness.

Given that perceived demands were associated with both assisting parents with work and higher levels of distress, we conducted additional similar mediation analyses to determine whether perceived demands mediated the association between assisting parents with work and distress. The initial, total effect of assisting parents with work on distress was significant ( $B = .29$ ,  $p < .05$ ). After including perceived demands in the second step, the effect of assisting parents with work was reduced ( $B = .09$ ,  $ns$ ). The indirect effect of family assistance through perceived demands was significant ( $B = .19$ ,  $p < .001$ ) and represented 66.1% of the total effect of assisting parents with work on distress.

*Daily-Level Analyses*

*Daily Family Assistance and Psychological Well-Being*

The daily-level analyses were conducted with hierarchical linear modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbusch, 1992), which was designed to analyze nested data of the type collected for this study

Table 3  
Correlations of Family Assistance With Adolescents' Sense of Role Fulfillment and Perceived Demands

Family assistance measure	<i>r</i>	
	Role fulfillment	Perception of demands
Average assistance days	.24***	.28***
Average assistance time	.25***	.28***
Assist household	.23***	.30***
Assist siblings	.16***	.22***
Assist parents with work	.04	.24***

Note. Average assistance days represents the proportion of days adolescents assisted their family; average assistance time represents the average time spent assisting the family each day; assist household represents the proportion of days adolescents spent helping to clean their apartment/house, cooking a meal for their family, or running an errand for their family; assist siblings represents the proportion of days adolescents spent helping their siblings by taking care of them or helping them with their homework; and assist parents with work indicates the proportion of days adolescents spent helping their parents with official business and at their work.  
\*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Table 4  
*Mediating Family Assistance Differences in Happiness With Role Fulfillment*

Family assistance measure	Total effect		Indirect effect		Z	Percentage of total effect
	B	SE	B	SE		
Average assistance days	.38***	.10	.36	.06	6.40***	96.3
Average assistance time	.14***	.03	.11	.02	6.20***	78.9

*Note.* B refers to the unstandardized coefficient. Total effect refers to the effects of family assistance behaviors on happiness. Indirect effect refers to the effects of family assistance behaviors on happiness through role fulfillment. Z refers to the tests of the statistical significance of the indirect effects, and the percentage of total effect refers to the proportions of the total effects that were accounted for by the indirect effects.  
 \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

(i.e., daily-level data nested within individuals). Adolescents' daily level of distress and daily level of happiness each was predicted by whether and how much time the adolescents helped their family that day. Identical models were estimated: one involving family assistance time and the other involving family assistance day. The statistical model that was estimated for each mood index was as follows:

$$\text{daily well-being}_{ij} = b_{0j} + b_{1j}(\text{family assistance}) + e_{ij} \tag{1}$$

Well-being on a particular day (*i*) for a particular adolescent (*j*) was modeled as a function of the average well-being of the adolescent across days ( $b_{0j}$ ) and their family assistance ( $b_{1j}$ ).

As shown in Table 5, adolescents experienced more feelings of happiness on days during which they assisted their family and on days during which they spent more time assisting their family.

Table 5  
*Hierarchical Linear Modeling (HLM) Predicting Daily Well-Being by Family Assistance*

Family assistance measure	Happiness	Distress
	<i>b</i> (SE)	<i>b</i> (SE)
Assistance day		
Intercept	3.23 (0.03)***	1.58 (0.02)***
Family assistance	0.08 (0.02)***	-0.02 (0.01)
Standard deviation of assistance day estimate	0.20***	0.14**
Assistance time		
Intercept	3.28 (0.03)***	1.56 (0.02)***
Family assistance	0.01 (0.00)*	0.00 (0.00)
Standard deviation of assistance time estimate	0.00	0.00

*Note.* Four separate HLM models are represented: assistance day predicting happiness; assistance day predicting distress; assistance time predicting happiness; and assistance time predicting distress. Assistance day represents whether the adolescent helped their family that day by engaging in one or more of the eight family assistance behaviors. Assistance time represents the total time adolescents spent helping their family that day. Figures represent the unstandardized estimates of the daily-level associations between family assistance and well-being. Standard deviation of family assistance estimate is an estimate of the degree of individual variability in the estimates of the daily associations between family assistance and well-being.  
 \*  $p < .05$ . \*\*  $p < .05$ . \*\*\*  $p < .001$ .

Assistance time and assistance day were not associated with feelings of distress. Estimates of the degree of individual variability in the daily-level associations between family obligation and well-being are also provided in Table 5. Significant individual variability existed in the impact of assistance day on happiness and distress, suggesting that adolescents differed in the daily implications of whether they helped the family and their psychological well-being. In contrast, the individual variability in the association between assistance time on happiness and distress was nonsignificant, suggesting that the implications of assistance time for psychological well-being were generally similar across adolescents.

*Potential Differences in the Daily Associations Between Family Assistance and Well-Being*

Additional HLM models were analyzed to examine whether the significant variability in the daily-level associations of assistance day with happiness and distress was predicted by adolescents' gender and ethnicity. The models included the same daily-level equation described in Equation 1 but with the inclusion of the following individual level equations:

$$b_{0j}(\text{average daily well-being}) = c_{00} + c_{01}(\text{gender}) + c_{02}(\text{Chinese}) + c_{03}(\text{Mexican}) + u_{0j} \tag{2}$$

$$b_{1j}(\text{daily association of family assistance with well-being}) = c_{10} + c_{11}(\text{gender}) + c_{12}(\text{Chinese}) + c_{13}(\text{Mexican}) + u_{1j} \tag{3}$$

Gender was dummy coded as male = 0, female = 1, and ethnicity was dummy coded as 1 = Chinese or Mexican, respectively, and 0 = not Chinese or not Mexican. The ethnicity coding resulted in adolescents with European backgrounds as the baseline group. Results indicated that ethnicity and gender did not account for the variability in the association between daily family assistance and well-being ( $bs = -.07$  to  $.02$ , *ns*).

Further HLM models were estimated to determine whether family cohesion; adolescents' attitudes toward family obligation; or parental education, occupation, and work hours accounted for the variability found in the association between family assistance day and well-being. These models were identical to those estimated for ethnicity and gender described above, with the appropriate predictors replacing the gender and ethnicity predictors in Equations 2 and 3. Each of these moderators was centered at the mean of the sample.

Out of 44 potential moderation effects, only 3 were significant, suggesting little variation in the daily association between family assistance and well-being. Those that were significant suggested that cohesion with mother, adolescents' attitudes toward family respect, and future support to the family each moderated the daily association between assistance day and feelings of happiness, such that the daily association became more positive for adolescents with higher levels of each (mother cohesion:  $b = .06, p < .05$ ; family respect:  $b = .08, p < .01$ ; future support:  $b = .07, p = .01$ ). That is, adolescents who reported higher levels of mother cohesion, family respect, and future support were likely to feel happy on days during which they provided some type of assistance to the family. There was no moderation of the daily association between assistance day and distress.

### *Mediating the Associations Between Family Assistance and Well-Being With Role Fulfillment*

Given the link between family assistance and happiness at the daily level, we estimated HLM models to determine whether this association was mediated by adolescents' sense of role fulfillment. We first examined whether family assistance and role fulfillment were associated at the daily level. Results indicated that adolescents experienced more feelings of role fulfillment on days during which they assisted their family ( $b = .15, p < .001$ ) and on days during which they spent more time assisting their family ( $b = .06, p < .001$ ).

Next, we conducted analyses to determine whether the initial effect of family assistance on happiness was reduced and mediated by the inclusion of role fulfillment in Equation 1 as an additional predictor. Results indicated that a higher sense of role fulfillment accounted for notable portions of the tendency for adolescents to feel happier on days during which they assisted their family and on days during which they spent more time assisting their family. The initial effect of assistance day on happiness was significant ( $b = .08, p < .001$ ). After including daily role fulfillment, we found the effect was reduced ( $b = .04, ns$ ), whereas the effect of role fulfillment was significant ( $b = .19, p < .001$ ). Likewise, the initial effect of assistance time on happiness was significant ( $b = .01, p < .05$ ). After including daily role fulfillment, we found that the effect of assistance time was reduced ( $b = .003, ns$ ), whereas the effect of role fulfillment was significant ( $b = .20, p < .001$ ).

## Discussion

Our findings suggest that family assistance is associated with higher levels of happiness as a result of the sense of role fulfillment that it provides to adolescents from Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds. Providing daily assistance to the family generally is not stressful for these adolescents. We did not find ethnic or generational differences in the association between family assistance and psychological well-being. Likewise, the association between family assistance and well-being did not differ substantially as a function of family cohesion, family obligation attitudes, or parental education, occupation, or work hours. The associations between family assistance and psychological well-being were found at both the individual and the daily level, suggesting that the experiences of family assistance have both

chronic and episodic associations with adolescents' positive well-being.

Despite being associated with a greater sense of demands, family assistance was not associated with distress but was significantly, although modestly, associated with positivity. The more time and the more days adolescents spent assisting their family, the happier they felt. This sense of positive well-being was found for virtually all types of family assistance activities, including assisting siblings and the household. Moreover, we found that adolescents who assist their families feel happier at both the individual and daily levels. Therefore, assisting the family is associated with an immediate sense of happiness on days during which adolescents help their family and is associated with an overall sense of happiness over time as adolescents help their family more. Although a causal relationship cannot be determined, the daily-level analyses allowed us to examine how variables vary together across time within individuals. Family assistance and happiness levels tend to rise and fall together, suggesting that there are episodic associations between assistance and happiness.

The lack of an association between family assistance and distress is consistent with prior research on adolescents from Chinese backgrounds (Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002). The current study suggests that this association can be generalized and is found in adolescents from diverse backgrounds, including those from Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds. In contrast, these findings differ from those in the parentification literature, which has often found negative outcomes as a result of family assistance (e.g., Burton, 2007; Chase, 1999; Godsall et al., 2004; Jurkovic, 1997). Our results may differ from these past studies for three reasons. First, the parentification research has examined family assistance within difficult family environments, such as those characterized by extreme economic hardship, parental illness, and the provision of emotional rather than instrumental care by caretakers. We were not able to tap these more difficult home environments in the current study. Second, the parentification literature examines family assistance as a negative activity. Questionnaires that aim to examine family assistance in parentified youths ask respondents whether they help more than they can handle, whether it causes stresses, and whether they help to alleviate parental burden (e.g., Chase, Deming, & Wells, 1998; Godsall & Jurkovic, 1995; Godsall et al., 2004; Jones & Wells, 1996). Our measure does not ask youths to report family assistance as a negative or positive act. Rather, it is a neutral measure that taps the quantitative aspects of family assistance. Finally, *parentification* is a term used to describe youths who take on extensive adult roles. Our study examined normative levels of family assistance within the general population. Perhaps if we had examined more difficult home environments, tapped the more negative aspects of family assistance, and targeted youths who participate in extreme levels of family assistance, we might have found associations between family assistance and distress.

The associations between family assistance and happiness were similar across different groups of adolescents and regardless of the amount of assistance. To examine whether the association between family assistance and well-being depended on the amount of assistance, we conducted analyses to assess whether this association was curvilinear. Following research on academic outcomes (Fuligni et al., 1999), we had predicted that moderate levels of family assistance would relate to positive well-being, whereas

more extreme levels of family assistance would relate to feelings of stress and burden and poorer well-being. We found linear, rather than curvilinear, associations, indicating that the more adolescents assist their family, the happier they feel. Nevertheless, it is possible that the range of amount of family assistance was more truncated in our study than in other studies in which negative effects of high levels of family assistance were found (e.g. Burton, 2007).

In addition, we found similar patterns in the associations between family assistance and happiness across ethnic and generational groups. Adolescents from Asian and Latin American backgrounds, particularly those of first-generation families, tended to place a stronger emphasis on family obligation and to spend more time assisting their family than adolescents from European backgrounds, and these ethnic differences generally remained even after accounting for variations in socioeconomic resources (Fuligni et al., 1999; Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Orellana, 2001; Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Nevertheless, we did not find ethnic or generational differences in the association between family assistance and well-being. In contrast, we did find gender differences. Interestingly, male and female adolescents reported similar patterns of time and days spent assisting their family, despite past research documenting females' larger role in family assistance (Fuligni et al., 2002; McHale et al., 1999) and the cultural emphasis placed on females to help more in the home (Wolf, 1970). Although no gender differences were found for family assistance, boys as compared with girls reported feeling happier when they helped their family on more days. It is possible that the parental expectations and demands that girls should carry more responsibility than boys for the completion of household tasks (Goodnow, 1988) make family assistance less rewarding for girls. Alternatively, girls may feel equally happy to assist their family, regardless of the amount of support they provide. This gender difference was not found at the daily level, suggesting that the chronic experience of assisting the family over more days may be more stressful for female adolescents, whereas daily assistance provides feelings of happiness for both male and female adolescents.

Very few group differences emerged in the association between family assistance and well-being in terms of youths experiencing low family cohesion, low socioeconomic status, and low value for family obligation. Of the many moderation analyses, very few were significant, and none was associated with increased feelings of distress. Thus, it appears that assisting the family is consistently associated with feelings of happiness, even for adolescents who do not feel close to their parents, those who are from families from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and those who do not value family obligations. It is possible, however, that more sensitive measures of economic strain would result in different findings, such as those observed by Burton (2007). In addition, assessing adolescents' family assistance in difficult family contexts, such as families with parental physical and psychological health problems, may yield findings of negative well-being (Jurkovic, 1997).

Nonetheless, we did find a small number of differences between family assistance and adolescent well-being. At the individual level, we found that adolescents with lower levels of cohesion with their mother and less favorable attitudes toward family obligation felt less distress when they assisted their family on more days. The direction of this relationship was opposite that expected, and it is unclear from this study why this may be so. In addition, when

adolescents spent more days and more time assisting their family, those whose fathers worked fewer hours felt happier, whereas those whose fathers worked more hours did not show an association with happiness. Fathers who work more hours may not be available at home as much, possibly making it more necessary for adolescents to assist their family. This may suggest a more challenging family environment, which may explain why such family assistance relates to less happiness.

At the daily level, adolescents who felt closer with their mothers felt happier on days when they assisted their family. This is consistent with the findings of Walsh et al. (2006), who reported that better psychological functioning among immigrant adolescents is related to a family context that combines family obligations with a cohesive and supportive environment. In addition, adolescents who value family obligations felt happier on days when they assisted their family. Adolescents who believe in the importance of family obligation are likely to feel less cultural conflict when they assist their family, in comparison with adolescents who do not value family obligation (Zhou, 1997), leading to increased feelings of happiness. These findings suggest that the benefit of family assistance on well-being increases when adolescents feel closer with their mother and have a stronger value of family obligation.

Mediation analyses showed that family assistance related to increased happiness, in large part due to the sense of role fulfillment it provides. Some researchers have argued that assisting the family may be stressful because of the extra demands it causes, necessitating that adolescents balance their lives among school, friends, and the family (Chase, 1999). In fact, adolescents from immigrant families have expressed a sense of conflict and strain deriving from their family obligations (Suárez-Orozco, & Suárez-Orozco, 1995), and youths in this study who assisted more felt increased family demands. Nevertheless, a sense of purpose and meaning may counteract whatever stress may result from the need to balance family assistance with the demands of school and friends. Indeed, we found that a sense of role fulfillment accounted for a large part of the tendency for adolescents who helped their family to feel happier. Assisting the family may help adolescents feel a sense of connection to and identification with their family. According to social identity theory, group identification provides meaning and purpose for its group members (Hogg, 2003), which have been associated with better psychological well-being (Zika & Chamberlain, 1992). Further, involvement in family decision making at home has been related to increased levels of self-esteem (Eccles et al., 1993). The findings in the current study are consistent with research showing that late-adolescent Japanese American and European American students who perceived that they had fulfilled the expectations of their parents had higher self-esteem than did those with lower levels of perceived role fulfillment (Oishi & Sullivan, 2005). These findings are also consistent with Zeldin et al.'s (2007) work on community involvement, which showed an association between such involvement and positive well-being. Working for a collective purpose builds confidence and a sense of connectedness (Zeldin, 2004).

Despite the general trend toward an absence of negative effects of family assistance on well-being, there were two findings suggesting potential negativity. First, when we examined the different types of family assistance behaviors, assisting parents at their workplace and with official business related to higher feelings of

distress, due in large part to the sense of burden that it created. This effect was very small, however, and assisting parents with their work was the rarest family assistance behavior, occurring on fewer than 10% of days. It is possible that assisting the family by helping parents at their workplace and with official business may be more burdensome for adolescents because such tasks may be experienced as adultlike roles, asynchronous with normative childhood roles (Barnett & Parker, 1998; Burton, 2007), and thus may be associated with less of a sense of purpose. In fact, this type of assistance behavior was the only one not associated with a sense of role fulfillment. Although all types of family assistance examined in this study have a similar general purpose, the behaviors are distinct, and the current findings suggest that the types of activities in which adolescents engage to help their family influences whether assistance is associated with positive or negative well-being.

Second, significant individual variability existed in the daily association between assistance day and well-being, even after controlling for ethnic background and gender. This variability in the daily dynamics of assistance and well-being is an important area of focus for future research. Are there adolescents who experience more distress when they help their family and, if so, why? In order to answer this important question, researchers should extend the daily diary method used in this study to include additional measures of difficult family contextual variables. For example, adolescents who have parents who are ill or who experience extreme economic strain may experience feelings of distress and burden when they assist their families (Burton, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997). In addition, future work should use a stronger measure of economic strain by directly measuring economic need and taking into consideration the unique financial situations of immigrant families who often send money and resources back to family in their home country (Fuligni & Yoshikawa, 2003). Finally, future studies should tap the situational and daily context of family assistance when it happens. Why do some youths feel stressed on days during which they help the family? Perhaps some adolescents are experiencing conflict with other activities, emotional arguments with parents or friends, or difficulty balancing daily routines.

Additionally, it is important to examine how the daily dynamics of family assistance and well-being change over the high school years. Older adolescents often experience greater demands to assist their family (Goodnow, 1988). As these adolescents progress through high school, they are likely to have increased involvement in part-time employment, greater academic demands, and higher stress and involvement in peer relationships. Thus, their overall demands tend to increase, perhaps making family assistance more burdensome later in high school. Future studies should examine the longitudinal effects of family assistance on well-being to examine whether the association becomes negative or less positive over time or whether it remains a positive aspect in the adolescents' lives. In addition, future studies should examine whether certain adolescents begin to experience increased feelings of burden and distress as they assist their family over the high school years, such as youths experiencing economic strain, family conflict, and increased daily demands. Finally, the long-term function of family assistance as it relates to the transition to adulthood should be examined. Engaging in family assistance behaviors in high school could promote a smoother transition to adulthood for

some adolescents because they feel more competent and have opportunities to develop certain social and instrumental skills, but it also could make it more difficult for some adolescents to pursue a college degree (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002).

Finally, future work should look at this type of instrumental support in the context of adolescents who provide emotional support to parents, which has been studied in the parentification literature and which conceivably could have very different implications for well-being. For example, adolescents who must be the advisor and provide emotional support to a distressed parent may experience negative well-being (Godsall et al., 2004; Jurkovic, 1997). Researchers have suggested that children may suffer more from providing emotional support than from providing instrumental support (Jurkovic, Jesse, & Goglia, 1991). In addition, future research should examine adolescents who assist their family outside of the home by working at a job and contributing money to their family. Out-of-home assistance is an important aspect of family assistance, especially among older adolescents (Fuligni & Pedersen, 2002); however, it is not clear how this type of assistance may affect youths' psychological well-being.

Several limitations in the current study should be acknowledged. First, there may be sample biases, as the participation rate in the current study was 65%. Those who did not participate in the study may be youths who come from the most difficult home environments, such as those characterized by economic strain, parental illness, or parents who are absent due to separation or long work hours. Thus, we may be missing an important subgroup of adolescents, those who experience stresses associated with their assistance of the family. Second, socioeconomic status and ethnicity vary across schools, and immigrant status is confounded with ethnicity. Future studies should attempt to rectify this problem. In addition, our measure of socioeconomic status did not tap economic strain, and youths' reports of their parents' educational attainment may not be accurate. Thus, it is unclear from the current study how economic difficulties may affect the association between family assistance and well-being. Future work should measure economic need more directly by asking parents to report on their economic background. Finally, the direction of causality between family assistance and psychological well-being cannot be determined in the current study.

Despite these unanswered questions, however, the results of the current study showed that family assistance is consistently associated with feelings of happiness among ethnically diverse 14- and 15-year-old adolescents. Assisting the family appears to provide adolescents with the assurance that they are fulfilling their role as a good son or daughter, which, in turn, is associated with feelings of happiness and positivity. Family assistance, by itself, generally does not seem to cause a sense of burden and distress. Assisting the family is an important and meaningful activity for adolescents and creates a sense of identity and connection to the family, increasing adolescents' positive well-being.

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