

7 The Contributions of Youth to Immigrant Families

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Introduction

The settlement of the foreign born to a new country often is a collective process that involves the participation of multiple family members. Children play an active role in the adaptation of many immigrant families because of cultural traditions and situational imperatives. Culturally, many immigrants to North America and Europe come from societies that emphasize the role of children in supporting and maintaining the household. For example, immigrants from Asian and Latin American countries may bring with them traditions in which children are expected to participate in sibling care, meal preparation, home cleaning, and financial support of other family members (Fuligni, 1998; Tseng, 2004). Sometimes referred to as “filial piety” or “familism,” these expectations are common and defining features of what it means to be a good son or daughter in the native cultures of many immigrants.

At the same time, the act of settling in a new and different society creates imperatives for the active contribution of younger family members. Foreign-born parents often do not possess the skills, knowledge, and social capital to quickly integrate into the host society. They may lack sufficient facility with the dominant language and need to work long hours in unstable jobs with irregular work schedules (Zhou, 1997). Parents must interact with institutions such as schools and governmental agencies with little prior knowledge about the norms and expectations of such interactions. By default, children contribute to the management of the household by virtue of their availability, language ability, and relative comfort with engaging with social institutions in the new society.

Adolescents play a particularly significant role in the adaptation and adjustment of immigrant families. More so than younger children, they have developed the skills, abilities, and maturity to take on responsibilities in the home. Adolescents can assist with the care and support of younger children in the household. They have accumulated experience with the schools of the host society that enables them to advise on educational decisions for themselves and their younger siblings. Teenagers may be seen by official agencies as possessing enough maturity to broker interactions between agency personnel and foreign-born parents. Finally, older adolescents have reached the legal age at which they can work in most societies, thereby adding a potential additional source of needed income to immigrant families.

This chapter reviews the contributions made by youth to the adaptation and adjustment of immigrant families. We do so in order to achieve two goals. The first is to highlight these adolescents as valuable assets to their families and countries of settlement, the latter of which often struggle with finding ways to facilitate the societal integration of immigrants. The second goal is to draw attention to a significant and dominant feature of the lives of youth from immigrant families, a feature that tends to be overlooked in traditional models of child and adolescent development that pay little attention to the instrumental contributions of children to the household. Due to the historical shift in developed societies from viewing children as being useful to viewing them as precious, developmental research has traditionally focused on what parents and families do for children rather than on what children can do for their families (Fuligni, 2001a). Yet numerous examples abound of how children in different societies and social conditions engage in high levels of family assistance. Children and adolescents in regions such as Africa, Latin America, and Asia have long played significant roles in household maintenance and support (e.g., Weisner, 1982). Even in developed societies, families in certain regions (e.g., farm families in the American Midwest; Elder & Conger, 2000) and economic locations (e.g., poor rural families; Burton, 2007) rely upon their teenagers to support and assist the family. As described in these studies, playing such a significant role in the maintenance of the household can both promote and impede adolescents' development in complex ways, and this chapter attempts to identify the conditions under which family assistance can be positive or negative for the adjustment of teenagers from immigrant families.

We review findings from our own research and that of others as appropriate. Our findings are based upon two longitudinal studies of adolescents from Latin American, Asian, and European backgrounds. The Bay Area Study of Youth from Immigrant Families took place in a medium-sized

school district in the San Francisco Bay area of California. Approximately 1,000 students from Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds completed biennial surveys from the beginning of middle school through the end of high school. After high school, approximately 75% of them participated in two in-depth telephone interviews. The second study was a longitudinal study of approximately 750 high school students in the Los Angeles area entitled the UCLA Study of Adolescents' Daily Lives. Students from Asian, Latin American, and European backgrounds completed questionnaires each year of high school. After completing the questionnaires, the students were given a packet of 14 daily diary checklists in which they were to check off the occurrence of a specified set of activities and experiences each night before they went to bed. In each of these studies, official school record information was collected and a subset of participants took part in in-depth personal interviews.

The chapter is organized into two primary sections. The first describes the contributions made by youth to immigrant families and includes a discussion of variability in these contributions by adolescents' national origin, economic resources, and gender. The second section focuses on the effects that these different types of family contributions can have on the adolescents' educational adjustment and psychological well-being. Finally, the chapter concludes with a brief discussion of the implications of these findings for efforts to facilitate the adjustment and development of this unique population of youth.

Types of Family Contributions

Daily Household Management

Immigrant children play a central role in the daily lives of their families by actively contributing to household management. Due to economic and cultural challenges, these children often must rise to the forefront of household management. Aware of their parents' personal sacrifices and employment in low-status jobs with irregular work hours that often require them to be away from their family for long hours, children from immigrant families often spend significant time meeting their families' daily demands.

Youth from immigrant families assist their households in diverse ways including engaging in chores around the house, taking care of siblings, and running errands for the family. In Valenzuela's (1999) qualitative work with Mexican families, one main theme of assistance was youths' role as surrogate parents. Children contributed to the household by cooking, dressing,

bathing, transporting, babysitting, caring for, and providing for younger siblings. Parents would often consult with their older children about disciplinary matters for younger siblings.

In our Daily Lives Study, we examined what children do to help their families by employing a daily diary method. Each evening for two weeks, adolescents indicated whether they had engaged in any of the following seven activities: helped clean the apartment or house, ran an errand for the family, helped to cook a meal for the family, took care of siblings, helped siblings with their schoolwork, helped parents with official business (for example, translating letters, completing government forms), and helped parents at their work. The first three activities represent assisting in the maintenance of the *household*, the next two represent assisting *siblings*, and the latter two represent assisting *parents*. We examined the proportion of days adolescents did each type of assistance behavior. Participants also indicated how much total time they assisted their families in any of the activities that day, and we examined the average amount of time youth assisted their families each day.

Virtually all ninth graders (98%) helped their families on at least one 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 the study days. Helping siblings by taking care of them and assisting them with their homework was the next most frequent type of activity, occurring on 27% of the study days. Helping parents with official business and at their work occurred on only 8% of days. Overall, adolescents engaged in 1.43 types of assistance behaviors per day and spent nearly an hour on average helping their families each day (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009a).

We have found consistent ethnic and generational differences in youths' family assistance behaviors. Youth from Latin American backgrounds tend to assist their families more than do youth from Asian backgrounds, who in turn assist their families more than do youth from European backgrounds. For example, ninth graders from Mexican backgrounds spent 1.30 hours on average helping their families each day compared to 0.87 hours among youth from Chinese backgrounds and 0.64 hours among youth from European backgrounds (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009a). For youth from Mexican backgrounds, those from immigrant families usually report spending more days assisting their families than their third-generation peers who tend to fall between those from Mexican immigrant and European nonimmigrant families (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006). These ethnic differences remain across the high school years and are generally consistent even after controlling for socioeconomic differences and family structure, such as grandparents

living in residence, residing in a two-parent household, and having more siblings (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009b).

Family structure seems to only minimally affect youths' support of the household. Although 25% of adolescents lived in single-parent households, the youth did not differ from their peers living in dual-parent households in their family assistance behaviors. Having grandparents living in the household did not affect the amount of time youth assisted their families (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009a). However, youth whose parents have less education tended to assist their families more (Hardway & Fuligni, 2006). Finally, there are no clear gender differences in youths' support of the household, with some studies reporting that females assist their families more (Fuligni, Yip, & Tseng, 2002; Telzer & Fuligni, 2009b; Valenzuela, 1999), whereas others do not find gender differences (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009a).

Language and Cultural Brokering

Language and cultural brokering refers to adolescents' role in translating for their parents and mediating cultural differences between the families and the host societies. Much of the research in this area has tended to be qualitative with smaller samples, providing rich descriptions of the complex nature of brokering, but not necessarily providing many statistical estimates of rates and frequencies. Children from many different cultures and linguistic backgrounds perform a variety of tasks and often act as mediators and decision makers for their families (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Orellana, Dorner, & Pulido, 2003). Ethnographic studies have suggested that brokering occurs in schools, banks, stores, restaurants, and doctors' offices, and children translate for parents, siblings, peers, teachers, and administrators. Immigrant youth are not merely translating words; they are interpreting scenarios and taking action in order to accomplish goals for their families (Orellana et al., 2003). As Orellana et al. (2003) describe, "children do much more than move words and ideas between speakers" (517); they actively participate in conversations, often acting as mediators, asking and answering questions, and keeping their families' best interests in mind. These children intervene, mediate, or advocate on behalf of their parents, often acting as the primary decision maker for the family (Valenzuela, 1999). Even when translators are available, parents often use their children because they trust a family member more than an unknown translator (Valdes, Chavez, & Angelelli, 2003). Brokering often occurs within seven domains: educational, commercial, medical/health, cultural, legal/state, financial, and housing/residential.

The most common type of brokering occurs within the educational domain (Orellana et al., 2003; Tse, 1996). Immigrant youth often interpret report cards, notes from teachers, and calls from school staff; decide how to contact teachers regarding concerns; and translate at parent–teacher conferences (Orellana et al., 2003). In addition, immigrant children often become closely involved in their younger siblings' education. They accompany their families to check out schools for their siblings, call schools to report their siblings' absences, and play an important role in their siblings' school success (Valenzuela, 1999).

Within the commercial domain, immigrant youth shop for or with parents, fill out credit applications, register complaints about merchandise, and interpret receipts and ads. Everyday necessities are usually located outside of the home, and unlike other brokering, the commercial domain often involves sending children out on their own to make inquiries or to complete transactions independently. In fact, some parents have never completed an errand on their own due to language and cultural barriers (Orellana et al., 2003).

Youth from immigrant families help in the medical domain by filling out/giving insurance information, translating at a doctor's appointment, and interpreting instructions for medications (Orellana et al., 2003). Immigrant youth do not just translate between parents and doctors; they help make health-related decisions by asking and answering questions (Orellana et al., 2003). In contrast to other types of brokering, immigrant youth sometimes find medical brokering to be more difficult (Valenzuela, 1999). For example, translating their parents' complicated medical ailments to doctors and then explaining the doctors' responses back to parents can be awkward and sometimes embarrassing for children (Valenzuela, 1999). Despite the difficulty with this type of brokering, it is quite common among immigrant families (Orellana et al., 2003), suggesting that it is seen as particularly important, perhaps because of the sensitivity involved.

In terms of cultural brokering, immigrant youth translate TV shows, movies, and the radio, read and translate letters or emails, and interpret song lyrics. These instances most often take place in the home (Orellana et al., 2003). In addition, children often act as teachers, introducing their families to American holidays, cultural traditions, and values. In this way, immigrant children take on the role as socializing agents by conveying important cultural information to their families.

Immigrant youth broker in the legal/state domain by helping their parents study for citizenship exams, filling out applications for welfare, and helping to renew parents' green cards. Often, brokering in the legal realm involves

interactions that may have very important and negative consequences for the families. For example, youth may have to negotiate for citizenship and legal residence, welfare, Women, Infant, and Children (WIC), and social security benefits. Thus, brokering in the legal/state domain is characterized not only by children helping their parents to access information but also by withholding information and access from others. Such children assert their power to reduce authorities from scrutinizing their family by presenting their family in a positive light (Orellana et al., 2003; Valdes et al., 2003).

Immigrant children often play a central role in their families' finances. They open bank accounts, write checks, help to pay bills, decide which bills to pay and how money will be spent, review bank statements, and mediate transactions with the bank. Thus, immigrant children who broker in the financial domain are well aware of their families' finances (Orellana et al., 2003).

Finally, in the housing/residential domain, immigrant youth broker by translating between their parents and landlords, helping to settle rental disputes, and communicating with neighbors (Orellana et al., 2003). If something is broken and needs repairing, children often communicate with landlords in order to make arrangements for repairs. According to Valenzuela's qualitative work, a 16-year-old Mexican female took it upon herself to help her family refinance their home. She completed all the paperwork and made phone calls to different banks in order to help her family save money through a lower interest rate (Valenzuela, 1999).

The limited research on immigrant child brokering suggests that it is a common activity that occurs in everyday ways (Orellana et al., 2003). Several studies examining brokering among Mexican and Asian youth report that most brokering occurs at home (70%–86%), in stores (57%–80%), or in school (47%–80%) (Orellana et al., 2003; Tse, 1995, 1996). Over 60% of immigrant youth translate words for their parents, 53% translate and interpret letters, and 51% make and answer phone calls. Fewer children broker in more difficult situations such as translating legal documents (14%), bank statements (20%), report cards (29%), or parent–child conferences (30%) (Orellana et al., 2003). Although it is a difficult task, brokering within the medical domain appears to be common. Among Mexican youth, 40% reported brokering for their parents in regard to medical issues, and among 45 immigrant parents, nearly all reported that their children had assisted them in various ways related to health services (Orellana et al., 2003; Valenzuela, 1999).

Although no studies have directly compared cultural brokering across ethnic groups, research suggests that brokering is a common activity for

youth from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Tse (1995) found that among U.S. and foreign-born Latin American youth, 100% reported brokering for their families regardless of their place of birth or age of arrival. Among Vietnamese youth, 97% reported engaging in brokering for their families. In addition, 90% of Chinese and Vietnamese high school students reported brokering for their families, and those who did not report personally brokering had an older sibling who did broker (Tse, 1996). Finally, in a qualitative study of immigrant adults from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (Cambodian, Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, and Mexican), all adults reported acting as the primary decision maker for their families when they were children by conveying important cultural information about school, governmental, and business procedures and acting as translators among teachers, neighbors, friends, parents, siblings, and other relatives (McQuillan & Tse, 1995).

In terms of generational differences, Orellana and colleagues (2003) and Tse (1995) found that all Mexican children, regardless of their generation, reported brokering for their families. In fact, even third- and fourth-generation children brokered (Orellana et al., 2003). Although youth from all generations broker, the longer families are in the United States, the less brokering their children do (Jones & Trickett, 2005; Trickett & Jones, 2007). For instance, 92% of second-generation youth reported brokering for their parents compared to 98% of first-generation youth (Trickett & Jones, 2007). Despite the lower frequency, it is apparent that even later generation youth broker at high rates.

Many studies have found that brokering is more frequent among females than males (Buriel et al., 1998; Valenzuela, 1999; Weisskirch, 2005), although some studies have not found gender differences (Love & Buriel, 2007; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). In addition, brokering is more common among the eldest children, and there is a positive correlation between family size and brokering (Valdes et al., 2003; Weisskirch & Alva, 2002). Brokering often begins soon after arriving in the United States and often as early as 8 or 9 years of age (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1996). Youth from families with higher parental education tend to broker less (Buriel et al., 1998; Jones & Trickett, 2005).

Work and Financial Assistance

Children of immigrant parents play an important role in their families' financial stability. Rather than being solely dependents who require economic assistance from their parents, immigrant youth often actively participate in their families' economic well-being. Immigrant youth contribute to the

financial well-being of their households in three ways: (1) as financial contributors, (2) working for the family business, or (3) assisting their parents with their employment.

Older children of immigrant families often gain employment to help their families financially. As teenagers, they often work one or two part-time jobs in order to provide financial assistance (Valenzuela, 1999). For instance, many Mexican youth reported giving their families half their paycheck, paying any outstanding bills, and buying groceries or other items that their families needed (Valenzuela, 1999). In many immigrant families, parents do not explicitly ask their children to contribute. Rather, out of a sense of family obligation, immigrant youth take it upon themselves to ensure that bills are paid on time and groceries and other necessities can be afforded (Song, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999). These adolescents have a deep sense of commitment to their families' financial well-being.

Family-run businesses are increasingly common among immigrant families in the United States (Park, 2002). Although the family plays a central role in immigrant entrepreneurial life, children have remained relatively invisible in research examining family businesses. Sociological work has begun to unpack immigrant children's roles in their families' businesses and has shown that unpaid family labor is essential to the survival of family businesses (Park, 2002). At a young age, many youth from immigrant families adopt a role of authority in the business and feel a deep sense of responsibility for the family business, often because it is a way to bring and hold the family together (Park, 2002). Children can begin working for family business as early as 7 years of age (Song, 2001). As young children, they watch and learn from older siblings and family members and gradually take on more responsibilities until they become integral workers in the business (Song, 2001). Children assist family businesses in diverse ways, such as organizing, supervising others, ringing up checks, managing employees and customers, taking orders, and acting as a cultural bridge between their parents and customers (Park, 2002). In addition to assisting with everyday things, immigrant children often act as the mediator or problem solver, particularly during difficult times (Park, 2002). They act as cultural interpreters, helping their parents do things that are in sync with the new society's values, making decisions on their own, and defining what is and is not a concern. Many youth feel that their parents are dependent on them for the well-being of the family business and that it is their obligation to assist (Park, 2002; Song, 2001).

In addition, immigrant children often help their families financially by helping their parents with employment issues. They fill out job applications,

make phone calls about employment possibilities, accompany parents to work to act as an interpreter, and mediate complex financial situations such as filling out income taxes (Orellana et al., 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Additionally, immigrant children play an important role in their parents' employment stability by informing their parents of workers' rights, taxes, benefits, and other issues related to their jobs (Valenzuela, 1999). By contributing financially to their families, working for family businesses, and assisting with their parents' employment, immigrant youth reduce frustration associated with integration, facilitate permanent settlement in their new culture, and help with the successful social and economic adaptation of their families (Song, 2001; Valenzuela, 1999).

Because so little research has examined children's roles as active financial contributors to their families, it is not clear how often or how much immigrant youth contribute to their families. Park's (2002) sociological work with Chinese and Korean families found that youth often worked for family businesses full time on the weekends and during the summer (Park, 2002). Their lives were often structured around the hours of the business (Song, 2001). Additionally, whenever there was an emergency or difficult situation, children were usually the first to be contacted to resolve the problem (Park, 2002). In our Daily Lives Study, we have found that assisting parents at their workplace is not a frequent type of assistance, occurring on only 8% of days (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009a). Despite its low frequency across individuals as a whole, Park's qualitative work with 43 Chinese and Korean American adolescents whose families owned small businesses found that within these families, nearly all youth reported helping their parents with their businesses (Park, 2002).

Additionally, little research has examined group differences in immigrant youths' financial contributions to their families. In our Bay Area Study, youth from immigrant families were more likely to contribute financially to their families than those from American-born families, and youth from Filipino and Latin American backgrounds contributed financially to their families more than youth from East Asian or European backgrounds. In addition, youth from families with lower incomes contributed more financially. Finally, we found that males were more likely than females to provide financial assistance (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004). In contrast, Valenzuela found that females contributed more financially to their families and acted as mediators on financial concerns more often than males (Valenzuela, 1999). These contrasting findings may be due to methodological differences. For example, Valenzuela's (1999) qualitative study included interviews with 44 Mexican immigrant families, whereas our work used quantitative methods

with over 750 adolescents from diverse backgrounds (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004). As researchers become more aware of immigrant children's central role in their families' economic well-being, they will be able to better define and quantify what youth do to assist their families financially, which youth assist their families more (e.g., lower socioeconomic status, lower parental acculturation, gender, ethnic, and generational differences), and how this financial support affects their daily lives.

Implications for Adolescent Development

The contributions of youth play a central role in the process by which immigrant families adapt to a new and different society. Beyond the benefits accrued to the larger family, however, what impact does family assistance have upon the adolescents themselves? Youth presumably receive an indirect return on their assistance through the improved family well-being obtained by enabling parents to work, raising the overall level of family income, and facilitating interactions with schools and official agencies. Yet do the acts of family assistance themselves – sibling care, translating, working in the family business, contributing financially – have direct effects upon the adolescents' adjustment and development?

Two competing hypotheses can be offered. On the one hand, it is possible that such activities create a burden for teenagers who must take on additional responsibilities at a young age. Extensive household duties, the challenge of negotiating complex interactions with official agencies, and the responsibility of contributing to the family's income could become too much for teenagers to manage. It may be particularly difficult when such duties are not the norm for teenagers in the new society and adolescents must balance family responsibilities with other typical adolescent activities such as schoolwork, extracurricular activities, and socialization with peers. Indeed, an existing literature on what has been called "parentification" or "adultification" has suggested that children's well-being can suffer when they are asked to take on excessive responsibilities in the home (Burton, 2007; Jurkovic, 1997).

On the other hand, family assistance may not be so negative and could even be positive for adolescents because it is a productive and meaningful activity. The role of children in maintaining the household is a cultural norm for many immigrant families, and adolescents who provide such support likely feel that they are acting like good sons and daughters. This, in turn, will make them feel that they are valued members of the family. Similarly, helping the family provides youth with a way to be productive members of

their community, an opportunity often seen as lacking in contemporary industrialized societies such as North America and Europe. The ability to be valued and productive should be particularly significant for adolescents from immigrant families who are attempting to develop a sense of purpose in a new and different society in which they frequently encounter experiences that suggest that they are devalued, different, and excluded. In this sense, family assistance can be a source of what has been called “eudaimonic well-being.” *Eudaimonic well-being* refers to a larger sense of purpose, direction, and meaning that one obtains in one’s life (Ryan & Deci, 2001). It has been argued that developing this sense of connection, purpose, and direction is a key developmental task (Ryff, 1989, 1995). Eudaimonic well-being can be stimulated by challenge and difficulty, which is why some have called it a particularly relevant aspect of adjustment and development among minority populations (Ryff, Keyes, & Hughes, 2003).

Research that has systematically examined the developmental implications of adolescents’ contributions to immigrant families has emerged only recently and is limited. The available evidence suggests that both of these hypotheses may be correct – family assistance is both burdensome and meaningful for adolescents from immigrant families. The extent to which the negative effects on adolescents outweigh the positive effects likely depends upon the magnitude of the contributions adolescents are asked to make as well as the larger family context in which those contributions occur.

Educational Adjustment

The impact of family assistance on the educational adjustment of youth from immigrant families is complex, showing different patterns for the adolescents’ sense of obligation to help their families as compared to the actual provision of assistance. Adolescents’ sense of obligation to support and assist their families is generally associated with higher levels of academic motivation. In our own work, we have found that youth who believe in the importance of helping family also endorse the value and utility of education for their future and have higher aspirations to attend college (Fuligni, 2001b). Similar patterns have been observed in ethnographic studies of immigrant families from Vietnam (Caplan, Choy, & Whitmore, 1991; Zhou & Bankston, 1998), India (Gibson & Bhachu, 1991), and Latin America (Suárez-Orozco & Suárez-Orozco, 1995). Adolescents from immigrant families often recognize the sacrifices made by their parents to offer their children a better life and believe that trying hard and doing well in

school is one of the best ways to repay and help their parents in the future. As a 14-year-old boy from a Mexican immigrant family who participated in one of our studies told us:

[T]hey did so much for us, especially my dad. They worked so hard just to get where we are and I really appreciate that. And, I mean ... the way I can pay them back right now is to get good grades. And by doing what I'm supposed to. But, I want to give them more than that when I get older. Like their own house, or I don't know ... a maid or something.

Unfortunately, the very real need to help their families on a daily basis can make it difficult for students from immigrant families to succeed and meet their educational aspirations. In the Daily Lives Study, we examined the association between family assistance and performance in school across the years of high school (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009b). Specifically, we estimated whether changes in family assistance within individual adolescents were associated with simultaneous changes in their academic achievement. Results suggested that the total amount of time students spent helping their families was not necessarily a problem for academic performance. Changes in the amount of time students spent helping their families was not associated with changes in their grade point average across high school. Instead, the manner in which students managed their familial duties made a difference. Increases in the number of days students spent helping their families each week was associated with declines in grade point average among students from Asian and Latin American backgrounds. That is, compared to those who spent the same amount of time helping their families, students who could not limit their family duties to only a couple of days per week were worse off academically than those who could do so.

Our findings highlight the importance of adolescents from immigrant families finding a way to manage their family assistance so that it does not interfere with their schoolwork. The challenge of doing so is exemplified by the following statement by a participant in one of our studies, a ninth grader from a Mexican immigrant family:

[S]ometimes I get irritated and frustrated about the fact that I have to sit late at night. Sometimes during the weekday, they [her parents] would go late at night to Wal-Mart or something, or to the market because they wouldn't have time during the day. So, she [her mother] leaves it up to me to watch my little brother or sister. Sometimes I have a lot of homework so I tell her I have homework and she says, "Oh, you have to watch your brother and sisters." I wind up staying up really late or sometimes I wind up finishing it in class.

It is important to note that this student is trying hard to complete her schoolwork despite the challenges and, according to her report, is getting the work done. But it is not hard to imagine that the repeated need to balance family demands with her schoolwork will take a toll on the student's performance in school over the long term.

Language and cultural brokering could be seen as having a similar effect on academic achievement because it can be as difficult and demanding as more general household assistance. For instance, Umaña-Taylor (2003) suggests that brokering places youth at risk for lower academic outcomes and limits their educational opportunities because they feel it is their responsibility to continue brokering. Yet some observers have suggested that it may have a salutatory effect because the activity itself develops cognitive and linguistic complexity that can enhance academic performance. Consistent with this prediction, Buriel et al. (1998) found that language brokering positively predicted academic achievement and Orellana et al. (2003) observed that children who acted as language brokers for their families scored higher on standardized tests of reading and mathematics. It is difficult, however, to draw strong conclusions about the direction of causality in these findings because other research has suggested that families select their most mature and competent children to act as language brokers in the first place (Valdes et al., 2003; Valenzuela, 1999). Furthermore, these studies do not use longitudinal methods, precluding the ability to infer causality. It also is unclear whether the academic improvements were due to better cognitive abilities as compared to other characteristics such as motivation and maturity. Nevertheless, the possibility that language and cultural brokering provides adolescents from immigrant families with opportunities to improve their cognitive and linguistic skills is intriguing and should be pursued in future research.

Finally, it is not surprising that the need to provide financial support can make it difficult for adolescents from immigrant families to pursue their education beyond the high school years. In the Bay Area study, we found that those who were providing such financial assistance to parents and siblings were less likely to enroll in postsecondary schools (Fuligni & Witkow, 2004). Among those who did enroll, financial support was linked to a lower likelihood of receiving a degree. Family assistance was difficult for all youth regardless of generational status and ethnic background, even though those from immigrant families did it more often than others. Financial assistance becomes a particular issue for youth from immigrant families after the high school years because of their greater employability and the need to help the family can arise at any point. For example, a sense of obligation to the

family helped to fuel the motivation of one of our study participants from a Chinese immigrant family and helped him to attend and receive a degree from a prestigious four-year university (Fuligni, Rivera, & Leininger, 2007). But his desire to pursue graduate education was thwarted by his father suddenly becoming unemployed:

I'm finding myself in a position where I have to possibly just start paying my parents' mortgage, because my father's laid off. . . . I mean I had all these plans to, like go to grad school and study graphic design like abroad. It puts a hamper on things.

The situation faced by this youth highlights the fact that the need to assist and support the family is a lifelong obligation for many of those from immigrant families, and it can become an acute and pressing need at any point in their development if the family faces a sudden crisis. If such a crisis occurs at a key point of educational transition, it could potentially have a negative long-term impact upon eventual attainment.

Psychological Well-Being

We examined the association between daily family assistance and psychological well-being in the Daily Lives Study (Telzer & Fuligni, 2009a). Each day, adolescents completed a diary in which they reported the amount of time they spent helping their families in a variety of ways, including household chores, sibling care, and helping parents with official business. Participants also indicated the degree to which they felt burdened, happy, anxious, and depressed on a daily basis. Correlation analyses indicated that although those who spent more time helping the family felt a greater sense of burden ($r = .28, p < .001$), they did not indicate higher levels of psychological distress ($r = -.03, ns$). In fact, despite the sense of burden, adolescents who helped their families more reported significantly greater daily happiness ($r = .17, p < .001$). An important source of this happiness was the greater sense of role fulfillment these adolescents derived from helping. Specifically, adolescents who spent more time helping felt more like a good son, daughter, or sibling, and this in turn led to greater feelings of happiness. Role fulfillment accounted for 78.8% of the effect of family assistance on happiness. These associations were observed at the daily level as well. Using multilevel modeling (HLM; Bryk & Raudenbusch, 1992) designed to analyze nested data of the type collected for this study (i.e., daily-level data nested within individuals), we found that youth felt more role fulfillment and happiness on the days they spent more time helping their families. The finding that family assistance is associated with happiness at the individual

level and the daily level suggests that assisting the family is associated with an immediate sense of happiness on days during which adolescents help their families as well as an overall sense of happiness over time as adolescents help their families more. These findings were observed for those from immigrant and nonimmigrant families alike, as well as for those from different ethnic backgrounds. Family assistance, therefore, appeared to have similar psychological correlates across generations despite being more common in immigrant families.

Systematic research on the implications of other forms of family assistance for psychological well-being is quite limited, making it difficult to draw strong conclusions (Morales & Hanson, 2005). But the few studies that have been done suggest similar themes of both burden and role fulfillment. Adolescents who engage in language and cultural brokering for their parents sometimes report the stress and pressure they feel when they need to assist their parents with serious issues, such as financial negotiations or interactions with health care agencies (Valenzuela, 1999). Given the complexity of such matters, language brokering rarely requires simple translation. It also can require adolescents to mediate and negotiate on behalf of their parents and families, putting them in the position of making decisions that have real impact upon the well-being of their families. Language and cultural brokering can also disrupt the power balance in the home, potentially creating frustration on the part of the parents because they cannot conduct official business on their own (Umaña-Taylor, 2003). Although little research has been done on this issue, it is possible that brokering could put strain on family relationships that eventually have a negative impact upon the psychological well-being of the adolescent. For instance, among families with two monolingual Spanish-speaking parents (i.e., parents do not speak English and depend on their English-speaking children), parents reported less parenting effectiveness and greater internalizing problems in their children (Martinez, McClure, & Eddy, 2008). Finally, the extent to which adolescents engage in language brokering can make a difference. Love & Buriel (2007) found that teenagers who brokered for many different people had higher levels of depressive feelings than those for whom their brokering was more limited.

At the same time, some youth report that the ability to help parents and families through cultural and language brokering makes them feel closer to their parents and helps establish more trusting relationships (Buriel et al., 1998; McQuillan & Tse, 1995). In addition, it can enhance feelings of mastery, efficacy, independence, and maturity (McQuillan & Tse, 1995; Tse, 1996; Wu & Kim, 2009). Many youth who broker for their families

feel proud of doing so, enjoy brokering, and feel more connected to their culture of origin (Tse, 1995; Valdes et al., 2003). Similar to other forms of family assistance, therefore, language and cultural brokering makes adolescents from immigrant families feel needed and provides them with a meaningful way to contribute (Orellana et al., 2003).

Ethnographic studies of teenagers who work in the family business or make financial contributions suggest that youth have feelings of being burdened, different, and torn between their family obligations and the very different norms for teenagers in their settlement societies. For example, adolescents and young adults from entrepreneurial Asian immigrant families interviewed by Park (2002) often highlighted their frustrations at having to work for the family while their peers were socializing and participating in the extracurricular activities typical of American teenagers. Park also suggests that working in a family business can give rise to both premature adultification and prolonged childification. That is, adolescents take on mature responsibilities early in life, but those responsibilities never change and youth find it difficult to break into new roles that provide them with independence and adult status. Finally, the lack of boundaries between work and family life in an entrepreneurial immigrant household can create strain as the differences between a supervisor–employee relationship and a parent–child relationship become blurred.

Yet the youth interviewed by Park also discussed how their work experiences with their families brought them more insight into the occupational world of adult society and helped them in their own career decision making. Adolescents working for their families evidenced a sense of achievement that they were able to help their families succeed in American society. Working in the family business, therefore, likely has the same complex effect upon psychological well-being as other types of family contributions such as helping at home, translating, and serving as a cultural broker. It is a challenging and demanding activity that nevertheless has a great deal of meaning for youth and their families.

Conclusion

Youth from immigrant families play a central role in the adaptation of their families to a new society. Their contributions span the range from mundane household tasks to providing financial support to their parents and siblings. Systematic research into the actual prevalence and magnitude of these behaviors is only beginning to emerge, but existing studies suggest that family assistance is a fundamental aspect of the lives of these adolescents

that has complex implications for their adjustment and development. In addition, the extent to which immigrant families rely upon their teenagers suggests that these youth not only help their families but also assist countries in their efforts to facilitate immigrant integration. Host societies often struggle with ways to enhance the economic progress and cultural assimilation of the foreign born, and adolescents from immigrant families work to achieve these goals on a daily basis. The contributions of youth, therefore, go beyond just their families and extend to the larger society in which they are working and developing to become productive members as adults.

Given the lack of a large body of research, it is too early to make specific practice or policy recommendations regarding adolescents' contributions to immigrant families. Nevertheless, we believe the findings reviewed in this chapter have three implications for researchers and those involved with the integration of immigrant families to consider. First, further study of the specific conditions under which family assistance can be either positive or negative for adolescent development is needed. Our own work and that of others suggests that family assistance can be a difficult but highly meaningful activity for those from immigrant families. We need to better understand when the difficulty outweighs the meaningfulness for different activities, individuals, and families. For example, it is not hard to imagine how helping to manage the household would look qualitatively different for adolescents with healthy and gainfully employed parents as compared to those whose parents cannot work because of significant physical or mental health difficulties. Existing research suggests that family assistance in and of itself is not automatically positive or negative for adolescents. The context in which that assistance occurs should make a big difference and research should focus on better understanding how the context shapes the developmental implications of contributing to the family.

Second, efforts to facilitate the adjustment of adolescents from immigrant families need to incorporate an understanding of the significance of family assistance in the lives of these youth. The obligation to care for siblings or prepare meals can make it difficult for adolescents to become involved in after-school programs or scheduled intervention activities. Designing of these programs and activities, therefore, needs to take into account the family demands on the time of these youth. Schools and colleges should be aware of how a family emergency can suddenly command the time and attention of students, especially those from immigrant and low-income families, resulting in absences or late assignments that are not due to a lack of effort or motivation. The difficulty in dealing with such matters, of course, would be to allow flexibility without lowering

expectations and standards. At the same time, efforts to assist immigrant families in figuring out ways to best manage the demands placed upon their adolescents would be important. Many immigrant parents have limited educational experiences of their own and may not understand what is necessary for students to succeed in the new society. The key would be to focus on managing the daily family demands without working to undermine the larger sense of family obligation of these youth, given that a sense of duty to support and assist the family is a critical source of academic motivation in the first place.

Finally, youth from immigrant families represent an important asset for their host societies that should be recognized but not exploited. These adolescents make significant contributions to their families, serving to facilitate their long-term settlement and integration. It would be worthwhile to conduct rigorous economic studies that quantify the amount of that contribution at the societal level and to determine the savings these youth may provide to host societies because of a reduced need for social services and financial support for these families. At the same time, it would be important to examine whether the quality of the assistance provided by adolescents to immigrant families approximates the quality that could be offered by government-run services. For example, the state of California enacted legislation that mandated translation services in health care facilities largely over concerns that the reliance upon child translators resulted in a lower quality of care for immigrants. There was limited evidence that the quality of care actually was lower, but the statute was passed because of larger arguments regarding equality of access to health care for diverse populations. The situation highlights how the contributions of youth to immigrant families have implications at the individual, family, and societal levels. It is a critical feature of the lives of these immigrant youth and their families that merits further appreciation and understanding.

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