

Children of immigrants more apt than natives to live with both parents

March 15 2011

(PhysOrg.com) -- Children of immigrants are more likely to live in households headed by two married parents than children of natives in their respective ethnic groups, according to Penn State sociologists.

This intact family structure may offer [immigrant children](#) economic and social advantages that help them adapt to their new country, according to Nancy Landale, professor, sociology and demography.

"An intact family is a positive family arrangement because it maximizes the resources available to children," said Landale. "The family is the main source of children's economic resources, as well as their protection and support."

The researchers, who published their findings in the current issue of *The Future of Children*, examined the data on family living arrangements for Mexican, southeast Asian and black immigrant families using the Current Population Survey, a survey of about 50,000 households conducted by the [Census Bureau](#) for the Bureau of Labor Statistics, from 2005 to 2009. In each group, children of immigrants were more likely to live in households with two parents than the children of natives.

According to Landale, who also serves as the director of Penn State's Population Research Institute, 52 percent of [Hispanic children](#) of immigrants in the survey live with married parents, compared to 44 percent of the children of Hispanic natives. A total of 65 percent of children of Asian immigrants live with married parents, compared to 50

percent of Asian natives.

Approximately 44 percent of non-Hispanic black children of immigrants live with married parents, compared to 24 percent of native non-Hispanic black children of natives. A total of 63 percent of non-Hispanic white children of immigrants live with married parents, while 58 percent of non-Hispanic white children of natives live in households with married parents.

Raising children in intact families can help immigrants adjust socially and economically to the challenges they face adapting to life in a new country. Single-parent households have higher child poverty rates than families led by married [parents](#), according to Landale, who worked with Kevin Thomas, assistant professor, African and African American studies, sociology and demography, and Jennifer Van Hook, professor, sociology and [demography](#). Living arrangements can also influence family stress, the amount of parental attention and the quality of parenting, Landale said.

"Across generations, the pattern does change," said Landale. "The family structure begins to match that of the native population, in part due to changes in cultural norms."

Landale said the growing size of the immigrant population makes the study of immigrant family structure important. Children of immigrants represent more than 75 percent of the growth in the U.S. child population, according to Landale.

"Children of immigrants are a growing share of the child population in the United States and most children of immigrants are U.S. citizens," said Landale. "These children are an important part of the future adult population of the United States and understanding the circumstances in which they grow up is important."

The study could also help U.S. immigration officials shape policy. While U.S. immigration policy has, in principle, sought to reunite immigrant families, long waits for family members seeking to rejoin their families legally can interfere with this positive dynamic.

Provided by Pennsylvania State University

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