**Grandparents, Adolescents, and Parents:**

**Intergenerational Relations of Taiwanese Youth**

**Abstract** / This paper examines intergenerational relations in Taiwan with a major focus on how the relations between second and third generations may be affected by prior family experiences between first, second and third generations. As a typical patriarchal family system, lineage differences regarding the effects of three-generation households on intergenerational relations are explored. Panel data from the Taiwan Youth Project of 2500 7th graders in 2000 in northern Taiwan show that half of teenagers were raised in a co-residence living arrangement with grandparents. Results confirm that relations between grandparents and parents as well as between grandparents and grandchildren do affect parent-teenager relations. Notably, the early family experience of being cared for by paternal grandparents produces significant positive effects on adolescent-parent relations, and negative adolescent-father relations if cared for by maternal grandparents. It is suggested that the impact of an earlier family process on subsequent family relations is worth further investigation.

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**Research Background**

Taiwan is a typical Chinese society with the multi-generational patrilocal household as a shared cultural ideal. Previous research documents that this familialistic residence pattern is actualized whenever the family situation permits. Hence, an average Taiwanese child should have a relatively high likelihood of exposure to intergenerational family experiences. However, since most studies in Taiwan tend to follow the Western theoretical framework, and thus, do not take into account the existing complex family context, an attempt is made to explore teenagers’ intergenerational relations from the perspective of possible lineage differences as well as of possible co-residence effects during childhood. In addition, most literature on intergenerational relations, East and West, seems to focus on the support and exchanges between adult children and elderly parents as well as on the interaction between parents and teenage children or between grandparents and grandchildren. Much less studies are reported regarding the dynamic process among three generations. Therefore, it will be interesting to examine the interaction among grandparents, parents and adolescents and the possible effect from earlier family experiences on present generational relations. In other words, we argue that because of being socialized in a paternal society where co-residence with paternal grandparents is in accord with the cultural norm, this particular cultural setting needs to be considered for its possible consequences on intergenerational relations.

**Research Objectives**

This study has three main objectives:

1. To analyze the intergenerational relations across three generations. The family process
that occurred among grandparents and parents (G1-G2) and among grandparents and adolescents (G1-G3) will be related to the present parents-adolescents (G2-G3) relations.

2. To examine the impact of early family experiences on subsequent family relations. In particular, co-residence and child care by grandparents are expected to influence both the present emotional closeness to grandparents as well as the relationship quality with the adolescent's own parents.

3. To specify gender and lineage differences in the intergenerational relations. Patrilineral generations are compared to matrilineral generations in order to delineate possible effects from adolescents’ different lineage experiences from early childhood. Relations with mothers and fathers are also differentiated.

**Data and Sample**

Data are taken from the Taiwan Youth Project (TYP) which is a longitudinal panel study began in 2000. Sponsored by Academia Sinica and the Institute of Sociology, the project has conducted annual surveys on two-cohorts of students: first year and third year of junior high in northern Taiwan. In addition, one of an adolescent’s parents and the designated class teacher are also interviewed. The major goal is to study the growth trajectory of Taiwanese youth from early adolescence to young adulthood. Family, school and community as well as the interplay between them are assumed to account for the various developmental patterns found. The present study utilizes the Junior 1 sample which is comprised of 2696 students and one of their parents in the first survey. TYP adopts a school-based, stratified sampling design with junior high schools in Taipei City, Taiwan County and Yilan County as the population. The current study used Wave 1 to Wave 3 student and parent data. After listwise deletions of missing data on statistical procedures, 1184 pairs of paternal samples and 1241 pairs of maternal samples are analyzed.
Research Results

The results generally support our research model. Intergenerational relations of Taiwanese youth are shown to be accounted for by relations with the older generation as well as by early childhood family experiences. Gender differences in lineage are specified, and findings document the paternal advantage of generational bonds, particularly in relation to paternal co-residence and child care experiences.

To highlight major findings, the analysis points out that co-residence with grandparents before age 3 and at present as well as being cared for by grandparents before age 3 contribute to positive emotional feelings toward grandparents of both lineages. Frequent contact between parents and grandparents, and adolescents’ filial values also produce similar results. With regard to the final outcome—the relations between adolescents and parents, all these early family experiences and the exposure to contact opportunities among generations are mediated through the affection perceived between grandparents and adolescents, except for the child care variables. A direct effect from early child care by grandparents to present parent-adolescent relations is ascertained. However, opposite findings indicate that while the positive effect on the paternal side coincides with the research hypothesis, the negative effect on the maternal side regarding the relations with fathers requires further study.

The finding on early child care arrangement among adolescent samples points out that 48.4% co-resided with paternal grandparents and 6.3% with maternal grandparents before age 3, a clear paternal dominance. Nevertheless, with 55% of adolescents living in three-generational households, only a minority of co-residing grandparents assumed a major child care role: 24% of paternal and 47.4% of maternal co-residing grandparents were identified as the major carer. It is clear that since co-residence with a married daughter is often regarded as less conventional, those who practice this type of living arrangement may be justified by the realistic child care needs from daughters. However, if the family
deviates from the paternal cultural norm by using maternal co-residence to meet the childcare demands, our findings imply that it may undermine the father-adolescent relations afterwards.

In brief, this study investigates intergenerational relations of Taiwanese youth by analyzing possible effects from an early family process as well as by incorporating three generational interactions. The significant finding verifies research hypotheses and suggests the importance of taking into account different generational pairs as well as lineage differentials in future studies.

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