The Complicated Return Home For Boomerang College Graduates

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Background

The term “boomerang” is used to describe individuals who return to their family home after previously moving out, e.g., for employment, college, marriage, etc. Thus, boomerangers experience more instability in their “complete” transition to adulthood (Mitchell, 2007).

Many factors, including increasing levels of student debt and a depressed job market, culminate in the return of boomerangers to the parental home after an initial “launch” (Mitchell, 2007).

Meanwhile, college attendance is seen as an unequivocal good in society. For many, the inevitable debt and possible return home is an investment both for the eventual success of students and for communities receiving the graduates.

Additionally, first-generation college students — students whose parents do not have 4-year college degrees — now constitute a larger proportion of the student bodies at universities and colleges across the nation (Bowen et al., 2005; House & Harvey, 2009).

Prior Research

• Between 2005 and 2014, the fraction of young adults aged 18 to 31 who live with their parents rose 15 percent (Dettling et al., 2014).

• The most important factors explaining the tendency for single adults to move back in with parents are income and attending school (Boyd & Pryor, 1989).

• Non-white young adults are more likely to live with their parents throughout their 20s, more likely to return home after going away to college, and less likely to leave again after returning (Britton, 2013).

• Young adults who reside with parents experience lower affective relationships, but give, receive, and perceive more parental support than nonresident children (White & Rogers, 1997).

• Factors like protection needs, parental happiness, and independence seem to be connected to long-term stays in the parental household, along with more traditional problems such as financial reasons and unemployment (Clemens & Axelson, 1985).

• First-generation college students represent one in six students at four-year universities in the U.S. (Saei et al., 2007).

Research Questions

• What factors predict patterns of coresidence with parents?

• How do patterns of coresidence affect wellbeing outcomes?

• What role does first-generation college status play in the relationship between coresidence and well-being?

Data Source

• National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Add Health)

Wave I (1994-1995) participants 13-21 years old

Wave II (2001-2002) participants 18-26 years old

Wave IV (2008-2009) participants 24-32 years old

• Add Health is a nationally representative sample which began in 1994 studying adolescents in grades 7-12. It has continued to follow these individuals through early adulthood to examine social, behavioral, and psychological dynamics.

Patterns of coresidence with parents:

Always Coresident: Living with parents at Wave I, Wave III, and Wave IV

Boomerangs: Independent at Wave III, return home at Wave IV

Independents: Independent at Waves I and IV

Late Independents: Living with parents at Waves I and III, independent at Wave IV

First-generation college student if:

• Completed a 4-year or graduate level degree AND

• Mother did not graduate from college, but may have taken some college courses AND

• Father did not graduate from college, but may have taken some college courses

Depression (Wave IV):

• Could not shake off the blues, even with help from family and friends (past 7 days)

• Felt sad (past 7 days)

• Felt depressed (past 7 days)

Self-efficacy (Wave IV):

• Felt unable to control the important things in life (past 30 days)

• Felt confident in ability to handle personal problems (past 30 days)

Vicimization (Wave IV):

• Someone pulled a knife or gun on you

• Someone cut or stabbed you

• Took part in a physical fight in which injuries had to be treated by a doctor or nurse (past 12 months)

Descriptive Analysis

Percentage of Sample by Coresidence Category

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Coresidence Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Always Coresident</td>
<td>28.46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boomerang</td>
<td>11.17%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Independent</td>
<td>24.01%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Late Independent</td>
<td>34.35%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Means Across Coresidence Categories

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Always Coresident</th>
<th>Boomerang</th>
<th>Independent</th>
<th>Late Independent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wave 1</td>
<td>2.6017</td>
<td>2.5258</td>
<td>2.7146</td>
<td>2.6710</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 2</td>
<td>2.6931</td>
<td>2.4775</td>
<td>2.3198</td>
<td>2.2620</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 3</td>
<td>2.7952</td>
<td>2.7092</td>
<td>2.8149</td>
<td>2.7806</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wave 4</td>
<td>2.8973</td>
<td>2.6958</td>
<td>2.7372</td>
<td>2.8190</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Key Findings

Living with Parents Wave III

• Women less likely to be living with parents at Wave III

• Men with school less likely to be at home in Wave III

• Men with less than a high school education are less likely to be at home

• Men and women are less likely to live at home if not from two biological parent families

• Women, living at Wave III are more likely to be in school part time compared to males

• Men and women of higher family SES are less likely to be at home in Wave III

Boomerang

• More likely to boomerang than whites

• More likely to boomerang than whites

• More likely to boomerang than black students

• More likely to boomerang than men

• More likely to boomerang than women

• More likely to boomerang than fulltime working parents

Efficacy

• Higher depression for boomerangs

• First-generation students are less depressed

• Second-generation students also more efficacious

Vicimization

• Boomerang females more likely to be vicimized

• Men with education less likely to be vicimized than women with education

Conclusions

Living with parents Wave III

• Women less likely to be living with parents at Wave III

• Men with school less likely to be at home in Wave III

• Men with less than a high school education are less likely to be at home

• Men and women are less likely to live at home if not from two biological parent families

• Women, living at Wave III are more likely to be in school part time compared to males

• Men and women of higher family SES are less likely to be at home in Wave III

Boomerang

• More likely to boomerang than whites

• More likely to boomerang than blacks

• More likely to boomerang than fulltime working parents

• Women significantly less likely to return home if not from a two biological parent family

Depression

• Higher depression for boomerangs

• First-generation students are less depressed

• Second-generation students also more efficacious

Vicimization

• Boomerang females more likely to be vicimized

• Men with education less likely to be vicimized than women with education

Limitations

• Unable to account for:

  • Assessment of Community and cultural norms

  • Pre-existing diagnosis and lifestyles

  • Origins of Depression

  • Who or what is best suited to mediate negative outcomes

  • Small sample of boomerang co-residents

References


