

# Racial/ethnic variation in family support: African Americans, Black Caribbeans, and non-Latino Whites

Robert Joseph Taylor<sup>1</sup>  | Antonius D. Skipper<sup>2</sup>  |  
Christina J. Cross<sup>3</sup>  | Harry Owen Taylor<sup>4</sup>  | Linda M. Chatters<sup>5</sup> 

<sup>1</sup>School of Social Work, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA

<sup>2</sup>The Gerontology Institute, Georgia State University, Atlanta, Georgia, USA

<sup>3</sup>Department of Sociology, Center for Population and Development Studies, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA

<sup>4</sup>Factor-Inwentash School of Social Work, University of Toronto, Toronto, Ontario, Canada

<sup>5</sup>School of Public Health, School of Social Work, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan

## Correspondence

Robert Joseph Taylor, School of Social Work, Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, Michigan, USA.  
Email: [rjtaylor@umich.edu](mailto:rjtaylor@umich.edu)

## Funding information

National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases, Grant/Award Number: P30 DK 092926; National Institute on Aging, Grant/Award Numbers: P30 AG 059298, P30 AG015281

## Abstract

**Objective:** This study examined racial and ethnic differences in the receipt and provision of instrumental family support.

**Background:** Extended families provide significant levels of emotional and instrumental support across the life course. Despite their importance, extended family relationships and the assistance they provide are largely neglected in the literature. Further, questions remain concerning cultural variation in family support relationships and inconsistent findings on racial differences in family support in prior investigations.

**Method:** This study relied on data from the National Survey of American Life-Reinterview ( $n = 3483$ ) to investigate the provision and receipt of instrumental support from extended family among African Americans, Black Caribbeans, and non-Latino Whites and within high- and low-income categories for each group. Eight key measures of instrumental family support are examined: receiving and providing transportation, help with chores, financial assistance, and help during an illness.

**Results:** African Americans and Black Caribbeans share similar profiles of providing and receiving instrumental family support. Both populations receive and provide assistance more frequently than do non-Latino Whites. Similarly, analyses stratified by income indicated that for low-income and high-income groups, African American and Black Caribbeans are similar to one another, and at each income category, both groups received and provided support more frequently than non-Latino Whites.

**Conclusion:** Study findings are discussed in relation to conceptual and methodological differences in assessing Black–White differences across studies of family support. Attention to these issues and the specific contexts for receiving/

providing family support (emergency vs. routine; inter-generational vs. extended) will help clarify inconsistent findings across studies.

#### KEYWORDS

ethnicity, family diversity, interpersonal relationships, kinship, race, social network, social support

## INTRODUCTION

Extended families are a mainstay of society and provide emotional and instrumental support (e.g., transportation, money, chores, and help during illness) across the life course (Chatters et al., 2018; Cross, Taylor, & Chatters, 2018; Taylor et al., 2003). For instance, in addition to routine chores (Stack, 1974) and childcare (Dow, 2016a), extended family members provide and receive financial assistance (Jayakody, 1998) and extended caregiving during illness (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2002). Despite the importance of informal social support networks, kinship, and family support exchanges, several studies (e.g., Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004), including a recent review of this literature (Furstenberg, 2020), argue that extended family relationships are a neglected area in family studies.

The present study uses data from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL) to investigate differences between African Americans, Black Caribbeans, and non-Latino Whites in the provision and receipt of instrumental support (i.e., transportation, help with chores, financial assistance, help during an illness) from extended family members. Although definitions of extended family differ, for the sake of parsimony, we use the term “extended family” to refer to individuals related to a person through blood relation or marriage including parents, children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, in-laws and other relatives, but not spouses. We use the terms African American, Black Caribbean, and Black American in this study to refer to distinct groups. African American refers to persons of African descent who are native to the U.S., while Black Caribbean refers to persons of African descent whose parents or grandparents were born in the Caribbean region. Although often used in research, the general term “Black American” does not differentiate between African Americans and Black Caribbeans who comprise this group. However, we retain the term Black American if it was used in the original research. We begin the literature review with research on Black–White differences in family support, followed by research on family support relationships among Black Caribbeans. Then we discuss literature exploring the role of income in research on African American and Black Caribbean family supports. Next, social exchange theory and the family solidarity model are discussed as theoretical frameworks for this study. This section concludes with a discussion of the focus of the study.

## BLACK–WHITE DIFFERENCES IN FAMILY SUPPORT

Research on Black–White differences in family support has produced inconsistent results. Although some research indicates that Black families have more supportive networks (e.g., Benin & Keith, 1995; Gerstel & Gallagher, 1994), other work finds that White families have more supportive networks (e.g., Hogan et al., 1993; Jayakody, 1998), while other studies report mixed findings (e.g., Fingerman et al., 2011; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). For example, Fingerman et al. (2011) found that among middle-aged adults, Whites provided more support to adult children than Blacks, but Blacks provided more support to parents than their White counterparts.

The research team of Sarkisian and Gerstel has produced several notable articles in this area. Collectively, they find that African Americans are more likely than Whites to co-reside with relatives, to reside within two miles of relatives, to visit relatives more frequently, and are more likely to exchange instrumental social support including household work, childcare and running errands (Gerstel, 2011). They also find that although African American men interact with their families more frequently, White men are more likely to provide and receive large-scale financial support (Gerstel, 2011). In one of their most cited studies, Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004) found that Black and White Americans have different patterns of social support exchanges. In particular, they found that Black Americans are more involved in childcare, chores, and transportation, whereas Whites are more involved with financial and emotional assistance.

Taylor et al. (2013) did not find any differences between African Americans and non-Latino Whites in receiving overall family support and emotional support and the size of the family support network. However, African Americans were more likely to report more frequent contact with family members and to provide assistance to family members more frequently. Sarkisian and Gerstel's (2004) findings that African Americans were more likely than Whites to provide childcare, chores, and transportation may be accounted for by their more frequent contact with extended family members (i.e., daily contact), as these activities are more likely to occur when individuals are involved in ongoing interactions. Based upon these findings we expect that African Americans will receive and provide instrumental support more frequently than non-Latino Whites (Hypothesis 1).

## BLACK CARIBBEAN FAMILY SUPPORT

An emerging body of research examines family support among Black Caribbeans in the U.S. This research is important in several respects. Black Caribbeans represent a significant proportion of the Black populations in the Northeast U.S. (New York/New Jersey) and Florida (Logan, 2007; Zong & Batalova, 2019). Despite their numbers and differences in countries of origin and descent, cultural traditions, and sometimes language, Black Caribbean populations are not typically recognized as a distinct ethnic group within the Black U.S. population (Waters, 1999). Finally, studies of the migration of Black Caribbeans to the U.S. indicate that extended family networks are intimately involved in providing instrumental and other supports in the pre- and postmigration process (Bashi, 2007). Given the growing Black Caribbean population, it has become increasingly important to study this group and investigate differences and similarities with the larger African American population.

This body of research generally finds that Black Caribbeans are highly involved with their extended family networks and are members of transnational families with relatives residing in countries including the United States, England, Canada, and various Caribbean countries. For example, Bashi's (2007) research indicates that the migration of Black Caribbeans to new locations in the U.S. (New York) and U.K. (London) is supported by extended family members who are involved in migration decisions (e.g., who migrates and the timing of migration), as well as providing extensive social support in the form of financial resources and in-kind goods and services (clothing, room/board) during the migration process. Extended family members also provide transnational kinship care for children who remain behind when parents migrate, as well as for children that are sent ahead of parents to reside with extended family in the receiving country. Chamberlain's research (2003) on Black Caribbean families in Britain similarly underscores how extended family networks care for children during the migration process. Grandmothers, in particular, are involved in the practice of child-shifting, in which they assume caretaker responsibilities for minor children (e.g., grandchildren, nephews/nieces) when a parent migrates. Chamberlain's research indicates that child shifting arrangements reflect

long-standing patterns of support reciprocity within extended families that are based in strong cultural beliefs about the importance of family lineage and responsibility for the nurturing and care of children.

Remittances of both goods and money to relatives in their country of origin (Bashi, 2007) are another important aspect of extended family support networks of Black Caribbeans. Items such as clothes, toys, books, and food are sent in cardboard shipping “barrels” (Basch, 2001). Large 50-gallon shipping barrels that contain appliances, electronic items and other items are shipped by freighter to relatives in the Caribbean (Bashi, 2007). Remittances of this type and financial assistance help relatives in home countries finance the construction of “middle-class housing” as well as, in some cases, achieve middle class status (Basch, 2001). An analysis of immigrants in New York City found that 34% of first-generation West Indians regularly sent money to relatives in their home country (Kasinitz et al., 2002). Similarly, two out of three immigrants from St. Vincent and Grenada sent money to relatives in their home country at least once a year, and over half sent goods at least once a year (Basch, 2001).

Meschede et al. (2015) conducted an analysis of racial and ethnicity differences in family support in Boston. This is one of the few analyses of financial support that compares Black Caribbeans and African Americans. They found that one of four Black Caribbeans (25%) send money to family members who live abroad. Similarly, one of five African Americans (20%) and Black Caribbeans (18%) send money to other relatives who live in the United States. Black Caribbeans were more likely to provide any financial contribution to support higher education than African Americans, but African Americans were more likely to receive financial help towards the down payment for a new home (Meschede et al., 2015).

The majority of research on Black Caribbean families is either based on ethnographic studies or surveys of distinct migrant communities in the U.S (e.g., West Indians in New York City). Only with the advent of the NSAL are we beginning to see studies based on national data that reflect a broader cross-section of Caribbean respondents. Lincoln et al. (2013) did not find any significant differences between African Americans and Black Caribbeans in the frequency of receiving emotional support from extended family. Taylor and colleagues (Taylor et al., 2013) found that there were no differences between African Americans and Black Caribbeans in providing or receiving overall support and the degree of subjective family closeness. Based upon this research, we expect that there will be no significant differences in the types of social support given and received between African American and Black Caribbeans (Hypothesis 2).

At present, there is extremely little research and no definitive literature regarding differences between Black Caribbeans and non-Latino Whites for types of support from family. Given this, the hypotheses that we present must necessarily remain speculative. Consequently, we expect that that like African Americans, Black Caribbeans will receive and provide instrumental support more frequently than non-Latino Whites (Hypothesis 3).

## RACE, INCOME, AND FAMILY SUPPORT

Studies that address the role of income in research on African American and Black Caribbean family supports can be categorized into three main categories. Several studies explore within group differences among African Americans (e.g., Chatters et al., 2002; Cross, 2021) and Black Caribbeans (Lincoln et al., 2013) where income is either not a specific focus or it is one of several demographic factors examined. Other studies focus on poor and impoverished groups that heavily rely on the assistance of extended family members as a means of resource sharing to meet daily needs (Stack, 1974). Finally, studies of familial support among middle-class and high-income families include within-group analysis of African Americans (Hill, 2022; McAdoo, 1978) and between group analysis of differences among middle class Blacks and whites (Chiteji & Hamilton, 2002; O’Brien, 2012).

Studies show that economically disadvantaged Black families engage in ongoing exchanges of emotional, and instrumental support with extended relatives that is often life sustaining and related to their economic circumstances (Stack, 1974). One important aspect of research on middle-class and high-income African Americans concerns the degree to which financial and other forms of family support are important for achieving upward mobility (Dow, 2016a; McAdoo, 1978; St. Vil et al., 2018). Alternatively, other research examines the degree to which middle-class and high-income families provide financial supports to less well-off family members and the degree to which that may hinder upward mobility and the accumulation of wealth (Chiteji & Hamilton, 2002; McKinley & Brown, 2020).

Black Americans' economic situations span the entirety of the income distribution, and it is important to assess whether race/ethnic differences in family support are found among low-income and high-income adults. As a matter of fact, one of the issues in this literature is that research on the support networks of poor African Americans is contrasted with research on non-Latino whites in general (Furstenberg, 2020). Very few analyses of Black–White differences in social support either stratify by income or examine race by income interactions (O'Brien, 2012 is a notable exception). Consequently, to address this gap in the literature, we divide our sample into low- and high-income groups and investigate whether extended family support exchanges vary across racial groups that are in similar economic positions. We expect that African Americans and Black Caribbeans with both high and low incomes will receive and provide instrumental support more frequently than non-Latino Whites (Hypothesis 4).

## THEORETICAL MODELS

We utilize social exchange theory and the family solidarity model as theoretical frameworks that guide our analysis. Because familial support involves exchanges among individuals, social exchange theory is a relevant framework for our analysis (Wan & Antonucci, 2016). Exchange theorists argue that individuals are more likely to engage in relationships that are rewarding while minimizing relationships that are negative (Blau, 1986; Homans, 1961). Although exchange theory is utilized extensively in research in business and economics, its utilization in the context of familial relationships has a different focus. Business and economic exchanges involve participants who have weak interpersonal ties that are short term in duration (Blau, 1986). Exchanges among family members, in contrast, involves individuals who have strong interpersonal ties and exchanges that are long-term. The enduring nature of familial connections allows opportunities for contact and the development of emotional closeness that support mutually satisfying and cohesive relationships. Family relationships are further reinforced by shared family events and experiences that celebrate and reinforce kinship bonds such as weddings, funerals, birthdays, anniversaries, and family reunions.

The family solidarity model, based on the work of Bengtson and associates (Bengtson et al., 2002; McChesney & Bengtson, 1988), has been extensively used in research on extended family and intergenerational social support. The family solidarity model has also been used with research on African Americans (Taylor et al., 2021), Black Caribbeans (Taylor et al., 2017) and non-Latino whites (Huo et al., 2019). The concept of family cohesion is a central tenant of family solidarity theory. Family cohesion is conceptualized as the degree of emotional closeness of family members and their level of contact with one another. Family members that are both emotionally close and in frequent contact with one another will both receive and provide assistance on a more frequent basis. In other words, family members are more likely to receive and provide support to family members that they like and have stronger bonds and more contact with.

Prior work confirms that frequency of family contact and degree of family closeness are positively associated with frequency of receiving and providing overall support (Taylor et al., 2017).

This is found among African Americans (Taylor et al., 2021) and Black Caribbeans (Taylor et al., 2017), as well as Jamaicans in the U.S., and in Kingston, Jamaica (Forsythe-Brown et al., 2017). Further, the magnitude of standardized coefficients for subjective family closeness and family contact tend to be larger than those for demographic variables like gender, age, income and education (Taylor et al., 2017), suggesting that they have a larger overall effect.

One of the strengths of the present analysis is that we examine racial and ethnic differences in instrumental support both with and without controls for measures of subjective family closeness and the frequency of family contact. Thus, we are able to ascertain whether racial/ethnic differences in instrumental support are eliminated when accounting for these family variables. This represents a useful contribution to the literature, as the majority of research on Black–White differences in family social support does not examine the impact of subjective family closeness and/or contact.

## FOCUS OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The present study investigates racial and ethnic differences in instrumental support using data from the National Survey of American Life Re-Interview. To our knowledge, it is the first study that compares instrumental support from extended family members for Black Caribbean, African American, and Non-Latino White adults. This analysis builds on previous research on Black–White differences in social support, as well as research on African American families and makes several contributions to research in this field. First, it includes comparisons of African Americans and Black Caribbeans in the United States. Distinguishing between Black Caribbeans and African Americans is consistent with calls by researchers to acknowledge and examine ethnic diversity of the Black population in the U.S. (Batson et al., 2006; Waters, 1999). Second, it examines racial and ethnic differences in both frequency of receiving and providing instrumental support to family, in response to research in this field that notes the limited amount of research on support provision (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). Third, this study addresses recent calls to investigate the contributions of extended family members, in addition to work on intergenerational ties and kinship research that focuses on a small number of family ties (Daw et al., 2016; Furstenberg, 2020). Fourth, this study examines racial/ethnic differences in support among low-income as well as high-income adults. Lastly, we present analyses that control for frequency of family contact and subjective family closeness which are known correlates of instrumental support (Cross, Nguyen, et al., 2018). The focus on racial and ethnic variability provides a unique opportunity to explore possible differences between three populations in the frequency of receiving and providing four forms of instrumental support from extended family members—transportation, household chores, financial assistance, and help with illness.

## METHODS

### Sample

This analysis is based on data from The National Survey of American Life Adult Re-interview. The field work for the original National Survey of American Life (NSAL) and the NSAL-Re-interview (NSAL-RIW) were completed by the Institute of Social Research's Survey Research Center, in cooperation with the Program for Research on Black Americans at the University of Michigan. Data collection for both surveys were conducted from February 2001 to June 2003. A total of 6082 interviews were conducted with persons aged 18 or older. The overall response rate for the NSAL was 72.3%. Final response rates for the NSAL two-phase sample designs were computed using the American Association of Public Opinion Research guidelines for

Response Rate 3 samples (AAPOR, 2006). All respondents in the original NSAL were invited to complete a self-administered follow-up questionnaire. The NSAL Adult Re-interview (NSAL-RIW) included measures of instrumental family support that were not available in the original NSAL. Of the 6082 NSAL respondents who completed the original interview, a total of 3438 completed the self-administered NSAL-RIW and comprise the sample for the current study.

The NSAL sample has a national multi-stage probability design. The African American sample is the core sample of the NSAL. The African American sample is a nationally representative sample of households located in the 48 coterminous states with at least one Black adult 18 years or over who did not identify ancestral ties in the Caribbean. Both the African American and non-Hispanic White samples were selected exclusively from these targeted geographic segments in proportion to the African American population.

The non-Latino White sample was a stratified, disproportionate sample of non-Latino White adults residing in households located in the 2000 Census tracts and blocks that are at least 10% or greater African American population (Heeringa et al., 2004, p. 230). While the white sample is not optimal for descriptive analysis of the U.S. White population, the sample design and analysis weights for this sample were designed to be optimal for comparative analyses in which residential, environmental, and socio-economic characteristics are controlled in Black–White statistical contrasts (Heeringa et al., 2004). The design of the non-Hispanic White sample was to maximize the geographic and socio-economic overlap with the African American sample. This strategy builds upon the recommendations of a body of research which notes the difficulty of fully controlling for socioeconomic status in Black–White comparisons because the geographical and residential context of the two groups vastly differ (LaVeist & McDonald, 2002; Yu & Williams, 1999).

In both the African American and Black Caribbean samples, it was necessary for respondents to self-identify their race as Black. Those self-identifying as Black were included in the Black Caribbean sample if: (1) they answered affirmatively when asked if they were of West Indian or Caribbean descent, (2) they said they were from a country included on a list of Caribbean area countries presented by the interviewer, or (3) they indicated that their parents or grandparents were born in a Caribbean area country (see Jackson et al., 2004). The Black Caribbean sample was selected from two area probability sample frames: the core NSAL sample and an area probability sample of housing units from geographic areas with a relatively high density of persons of Caribbean descent (more than 10% of the population) (see Heeringa et al., 2004 for a more detailed description of the sample designs and sampling methods used in the development of the NSAL).

## MEASURES

### Dependent variables

Eight dependent variables are used in this analysis; four assess how often respondents received different types of instrumental support from their family members and four assess how frequently respondents provided specific types of support to their family members. With regard to receiving support, respondents were asked “Other than your spouse or partner, how often do your family members do the following things for you? How often do they provide you with transportation? How often do they help you with regular chores, such as shopping, cleaning or yard work? How often do they help you financially? How often do they help when you are sick or ill?” With regard to giving support, respondents were asked about the same four types of instrumental support. In particular, they were asked how often they provided assistance to family members in the form of: transportation, chores, financial help, and help when ill. Response

categories for each of these eight instrumental social support items were very often = 4, fairly often = 3, not too often = 2, and never = 1. Missing cases for the instrumental support variables ranged from 67 cases to 92 cases (see Table 1).

## Independent variables

Several sociodemographic factors were examined (i.e., age, gender, family income, education, working status, marital status, and region). Each of these demographic variables are included as controls to be consistent with previous research in this area and because they have known associations with family relationships and support exchanges. Age and education are coded in years and family income is coded in dollars. The Program for Research on Black Americans staff imputed missing data for the total NSAL sample for household income (773 cases 12.7% of the total NSAL sample) and education 74 cases (1.2% of the total NSAL sample). Marital status is coded as married, cohabiting (partner), separated, divorced, widowed and never married. Employment status differentiates respondents who are employed, unemployed, and out of the labor force (e.g., full time students, disabled, retired). Region is coded as four categories (Northeast, North Central, West and South). There were 12 missing cases for marital status and five missing cases for work status.

Two family network variables that are commonly used in social support research are utilized as independent variables. Frequency of contact with family members is measured by the question: "How often do you see, write or talk on the telephone with family or relatives who do not live with you? Would you say nearly every day (7), at least once a week (6), a few times a month (5), at least once a month (4), a few times a year (3), hardly ever (2) or never (1)?" Degree of subjective family closeness is measured by the question: "How close do you feel towards your family members? Would you say very close (4), fairly close (3), not too close (2) or not close at all (1)?" The variable, family contact had 21 missing cases and family closeness had 22 missing cases (the same 21 missing cases and an additional one). The *n*'s for all study variables are presented Table 1.

## Analysis strategy

Bivariate analyses used complex design-corrected measures of association; the Rao-Scott chi-square for categorical variables and the *F*-test for continuous variables. Linear regression analysis is used for analysis involving the entire sample, as well as for analysis stratified by income. Income was stratified by median splits of the sample (the high-income group is comprised of all the respondents whose family incomes are above the median and the low-income group is comprised of all the respondents whose family incomes are equal to or below the median). Computations for the distribution of the sociodemographic characteristics and linear regression analyses were conducted using SAS 9.1.3, which uses the Taylor expansion approximation technique for calculating the complex design-based estimates of variance. All analyses utilize sampling weights. To obtain results that are generalizable to the U.S. population, all statistical analyses accounted for the complex multistage clustered design of the NSAL sample, unequal probabilities of selection, nonresponse (including the lower response rate of the NSAL-RIW), and poststratification to calculate weighted, nationally representative population estimates and standard errors.

## RESULTS

Table 1 presents the distribution of sample characteristics and the study variables. The average age of the sample is 44 years and respondents have roughly 13 years of education and an



TABLE 1 Demographic characteristics of the sample and distribution of study variables.

	Total		African American		Black Caribbean		Non-Latino Whites		$X^2/F$
	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)	
Family support variables									
Receive assistance									
Transportation	3370	2.03 (1.02)	2102	2.27 (0.90)	674	2.12 (0.33)	594	1.82 (1.63)	30.68***
Chores	3371	1.88 (1.01)	2101	2.04 (0.90)	675	2.01 (0.35)	595	1.75 (1.62)	11.48***
Financial help	3351	1.94 (1.00)	2080	2.16 (0.85)	676	2.04 (0.34)	595	1.76 (1.64)	20.44***
Help when ill	3346	2.57 (1.12)	2089	2.74 (0.92)	665	2.65 (0.38)	592	2.43 (1.93)	10.62***
Provide assistance									
Transportation	3353	2.21 (1.06)	2084	2.38 (0.91)	673	2.30 (0.38)	596	2.08 (1.76)	8.97***
Chores	3359	2.24 (1.05)	2091	2.41 (0.90)	674	2.44 (0.36)	594	2.09 (1.74)	7.19***
Financial help	3360	2.16 (1.00)	2080	2.43 (0.81)	683	2.50 (0.33)	597	1.94 (1.69)	31.26***
Help when ill	3363	2.79 (1.02)	2093	3.01 (0.81)	679	2.83 (0.36)	591	2.60 (1.79)	14.84***
Age	3438	44.79 (17.49)	2137	43.68 (14.15)	695	42.24 (5.93)	606	45.79 (31.35)	1.33
Gender									
Male	1162 (41.88)		693 (40.91)		242 (48.18)		227 (42.39)		2.09
Female	2276 (58.12)		1444 (59.09)		453 (51.82)		379 (57.61)		
Years of education	3438	13.02 (2.82)	2137	12.49 (2.18)	695	13.48 (0.93)	606	13.43 (5.09)	13.26***
Family income	3438	42,386 (43259)	2137	35,281 (32142)	695	52,480 (15107)	606	47,660 (80446)	8.94***
Work status									
Employed	2204 (67.01)		1328 (63.54)		491 (72.10)		385 (69.60)		23.82***
Unemployed	350 (7.77)		248 (11.20)		73 (9.85)		29 (4.89)		
Not in the labor force	8792 (5.22)		560 (25.26)		131 (18.05)		188 (25.51)		
Marital status									
Married	1079 (40.14)		575 (32.67)		240 (40.37)		264 (46.19)		30.30***
Cohabit	235 (7.23)		152 (8.51)		57 (8.46)		26 (6.14)		
Separated	250 (5.29)		175 (7.54)		52 (4.70)		23 (3.49)		

TABLE 1 (Continued)

	Total		African American		Black Caribbean		Non-Latino Whites		X <sup>2</sup> /F
	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)	N (%)	M (SD)	
Divorced	521 (13.85)		336 (12.74)		78 (11.35)		107 (14.86)		
Widowed	334 (8.43)		227 (8.54)		30 (4.11)		77 (8.53)		
Never married	1007 (25.06)		668 (30.01)		234 (31.02)		105 (20.79)		
Region									
Northeast	819 (20.29)		243 (14.88)		497 (55.92)		79 (23.07)		36.67***
North central	451 (12.68)		388 (19.98)		7 (5.92)		56 (7.11)		
South	1968 (54.09)		1382 (56.89)		181 (22.80)		405 (53.23)		
West	200 (12.93)		124 (8.25)		10 (15.36)		66 (16.60)		
Frequency of family contact	3417	6.05 (1.28)	2126	6.07 (1.16)	691	5.81 (0.50)	600	6.04 (2.06)	1.38
Subjective family closeness	3416	3.64 (0.68)	2125	3.65 (0.57)	691	3.69 (0.21)	600	3.63 (1.17)	0.56

Note: Percents and N's are presented for categorical variables; means and SDs are presented for continuous variables. Rao-Scott  $\chi^2$  is used with categorical variables and F test is used with continuous variables. Percents are weighted; frequencies are unweighted. \**p* < .05; \*\**p* < .01; \*\*\**p* < .001.

average annual income of \$42,000. Women comprise 58% of the sample and 47% of respondents are married/cohabiting, 25% are never married, while roughly a quarter of the sample are either separated, divorced or widowed. Regionally, more than half of respondents reside in the South, 20% in the Northeast, and roughly 13% reside in both the North Central and West regions. Half of the sample are non-Latino Whites (54%), 43% are African American, and 2% are Black Caribbean (all percentages are weighted). Mean levels of receiving assistance in the four areas (transportation, chores, finances, and illness) range from 2.43 (illness) to 3.12 (chores). Mean levels for providing assistance range from 2.21 (illness) to 2.84 (finances). The average level of family contact is 6.04 (at least once a week) and subjective family closeness is 3.64 (fairly close). Comparisons by race and ethnicity reveal that non-Latino Whites and Black Caribbeans have more years of formal education and are also more likely to be currently married than African Americans. Black Caribbeans had the highest average income (\$52,480) and African Americans had the lowest (\$35,281). There were no racial/ethnic differences in family contact or subjective family closeness, but African American and Black Caribbeans received and provided support more frequently than non-Latino whites.

Table 2 presents the regression analysis by race and ethnicity for receipt and provision of our four measures of instrumental support. For the sake of parsimony, the results are presented across all of the dependent variables in each table. Race/ethnicity is represented by a dummy variable with African Americans as the comparison category in the left and center panels; Black Caribbeans is designated as the comparison category instead of African Americans in the right panel. Additionally, in Table 2, baseline models and full models are presented. The baseline models control for demographic variables and full models control for frequency of family contact and subjective family closeness, in addition to the demographic variables.

An examination of the baseline models in Table 2 reveals that in all of the eight dependent variables, non-Hispanic Whites received and provided instrumental support significantly less frequently than both African Americans and Black Caribbeans. These relationships remained significant when controlling for family contact and family closeness in the full models. These results indicate that both African Americans and Black Caribbeans received and provided transportation, household chores, financial assistance, and help during illness more frequently than their non-Latino White counterparts. On the other hand, there were no significant differences between African Americans and Black Caribbeans in the frequency of receiving or providing instrumental support. The only significant income difference was for the frequency of receiving financial help. Individuals who had lower incomes indicated receiving financial assistance more often (analysis not shown).

Table 3 presents the regression coefficients for racial and ethnic differences in instrumental support exclusively among respondents who have high incomes. Like Table 2, this table presents comparisons with African Americans in the left and center panels and comparisons with Black Caribbeans in the right panel. With regard to comparisons with African Americans, this analysis shows that in seven of the eight dependent variables non-Latino Whites reported less frequent receipt and provision of instrumental support. The only non-significant finding was for providing household chores, where the coefficient bordered significance ( $p = .08$ ). Six of the eight possible relationships between Black Caribbeans and non-Latino Whites were significant (Table 3). In each case, Black Caribbeans exchanged instrumental support more frequently than non-Latino Whites. There were no significant differences between high income Black Caribbeans and non-Latino Whites with regard to frequency of providing chores and receiving help with an illness. Lastly, there were no significant differences among high income African Americans and Black Caribbeans.

Table 4 presents the regression coefficients for race and ethnic differences in instrumental support among respondents with low incomes. Among low-income respondents, non-Latino Whites received and provided instrumental support less frequently than African Americans. All 16 coefficients (baseline and full models) examining differences between African Americans and non-Latino Whites were significant. There were no significant differences between African

TABLE 2 Regression coefficients for racial/ethnicity differences in the frequency of receiving and providing instrumental support with extended family members.

Dependent variables	Panel A: Black Caribbeans vs. African Americans (reference category)		Panel B: White Americans vs. African Americans (reference category)		Panel C: White Americans vs. Black Caribbeans (reference category)	
	Baseline model <sup>a</sup>	Full model <sup>b</sup>	Baseline model <sup>a</sup>	Full model <sup>b</sup>	Baseline model <sup>a</sup>	Full model <sup>b</sup>
	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>c</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>d</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>e</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>d</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>e</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>d</sup>
Receive support <sup>e</sup>						
Receive transportation	0.00/0.00 (0.08)	0.00/0.01 (0.07)	-0.17/-0.32 (0.05)***	-0.16/-0.31 (0.06)***	-0.17/-0.33 (0.09)***	-0.16/-0.32 (0.09)***
Receive chores help	0.02/0.12 (0.09)	0.02/0.12 (0.09)	-0.10/-0.20 (0.06)***	-0.10/-0.19 (0.06)**	-0.17/-0.32 (0.10)**	-0.16/-0.30 (0.10)**
Receive financial assistance	-0.01/-0.04 (0.06)	-0.01/-0.03 (0.05)	-0.14/-0.27 (0.05)***	-0.14/-0.26 (0.05)***	-0.12/-0.23 (0.07)**	-0.12/-0.23 (0.08)**
Receive help with illness	0.01/0.07 (0.11)	0.01/0.09 (0.10)	-0.09/-0.20 (0.06)**	-0.08/-0.18 (0.05)**	-0.13/-0.28 (0.12)*	-0.12/-0.26 (0.10)*
Provide support <sup>e</sup>						
Provide transportation	-0.01/-0.04 (0.10)	-0.01/-0.03 (0.11)	-0.15/-0.30 (0.06)***	-0.14/-0.29 (0.06)***	-0.13/-0.26 (0.11)*	-0.13/-0.26 (0.12)*
Provide chores help	0.01/0.08 (0.08)	0.01/0.09 (0.08)	-0.12/-0.24 (0.07)**	-0.11/-0.23 (0.07)**	-0.16/-0.32 (0.11)**	-0.16/-0.32 (0.12)**
Provide financial assistance	0.02/0.11 (0.09)	0.02/0.12 (0.09)	-0.25/-0.48 (0.06)***	-0.25/-0.47 (0.06)***	-0.31/-0.59 (0.10)***	-0.32/-0.60 (0.10)***
Provide help with illness	-0.00/-0.01 (0.10)	-0.00/-0.00 (0.09)	-0.18/-0.34 (0.06)***	-0.17/-0.33 (0.06)***	-0.17/-0.33 (0.12)**	-0.17/-0.33 (0.11)**

Note:  $\beta$ , standardized coefficient; b, unstandardized coefficient. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup>Baseline models: Multivariate analyses control for the effects of age, gender, marital status, education, imputed family income, work status and region.

<sup>b</sup>Full models: Multivariate analyses control for the effects of age, gender, marital status, education, imputed family income, work status, region, frequency of family contact and subjective family closeness.

<sup>c</sup> $n$ 's range from 3359 to 3334.

<sup>d</sup> $n$ 's range from 3343 to 3319.

<sup>e</sup>Values for all receive and provide support variables range from 4 = very often to 1 = never.

**TABLE 3** Regression coefficients for racial/ethnicity differences in the frequency of receiving and providing instrumental support with extended family members among respondents with higher incomes.

Dependent variables	Panel A: Black Caribbeans vs. African Americans (reference category)		Panel B: White Americans vs. African Americans (reference category)		Panel C: White Americans vs. Black Caribbeans (reference category)	
	Baseline model <sup>a</sup> $\beta/b(SE)^c$	Full model <sup>b</sup> $\beta/b(SE)^d$	Baseline model <sup>a</sup> $\beta/b(SE)^c$	Full model <sup>b</sup> $\beta/b(SE)^d$	Baseline model <sup>a</sup> $\beta/b(SE)^c$	Full model <sup>b</sup> $\beta/b(SE)^d$
Receive support <sup>e</sup>						
Receive transportation	-0.01/-0.16 (0.09)	-0.01/-0.07(0.09)	-0.17/-0.30 (0.06)***	-0.16/-0.29 (0.06)***	-0.14/-0.24 (0.09)**	-0.12/-0.22 (0.09)*
Receive chores help	0.03/0.18 (0.11)	0.03/0.16 (0.11)	-0.09/-0.16 (0.07)*	-0.08/-0.16 (0.07)*	-0.18/-0.34 (0.11)**	-0.17/-0.32 (0.11)**
Receive financial assistance	-0.02/-0.10 (0.09)	-0.02/-0.11 (0.09)	-0.20/-0.36 (0.06)***	-0.19/-0.35 (0.06)***	-0.14/-0.26 (0.09)**	-0.13/-0.24 (0.09)*
Receive help with illness	0.01/0.08 (0.15)	0.01/0.07 (0.14)	-0.10/-0.21 (0.09)*	-0.09/-0.18 (0.07)*	-0.14/-0.30 (0.16)	-0.12/-0.25 (0.15)
Provide support <sup>e</sup>						
Provide transportation	0.01/0.06 (0.18)	0.01/0.04 (0.19)	-0.19/-0.37 (0.09)***	-0.18/-0.36 (0.08)***	-0.22/-0.43 (0.19)*	-0.20/-0.39 (0.19)*
Provide chores help	0.01/0.03 (0.13)	0.00/0.01 (0.14)	-0.10/-0.19 (0.10)	-0.09/-0.17 (0.09)	-0.11/-0.22 (0.17)	-0.09/-0.18 (0.17)
Provide financial assistance	0.05/0.27 (0.14)	0.05/0.26 (0.15)	-0.27/-0.53 (0.06)***	-0.27/-0.53 (0.06)***	-0.41/-0.80 (0.15)***	-0.40/-0.79 (0.15)***
Provide help with illness	0.01/0.06 (0.18)	0.01/0.04 (0.18)	-0.20/-0.39 (0.08)***	-0.19/-0.37 (0.08)***	-0.23/-0.45 (0.20)*	-0.21/-0.41 (0.19)*

Note:  $\beta$ : standardized coefficient;  $b$ : unstandardized coefficient. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup>Baseline models: Multivariate analyses control for the effects of age, gender, marital status, education, imputed family income, work status and region.

<sup>b</sup>Full models: Multivariate analyses control for the effects of age, gender, marital status, education, imputed family income, work status, region, frequency of family contact and subjective family closeness.

<sup>c</sup> $n$ 's range from 1330 to 1342.

<sup>d</sup> $n$ 's range from 1325 to 1337.

<sup>e</sup>Values for all receive and provide support variables range from 4 = very often to 1 = never.

Americans and Black Caribbeans for indicators of the receipt or provision of instrumental support.

There were several significant differences between low income Black Caribbeans and non-Latino Whites. For six of the eight dependent variables, low-income Black Caribbeans received and provided support more frequently than their non-Latino White counterparts. In comparisons of the full models, Black Caribbeans received transportation and help with chores and during an illness more frequently than non-Latino Whites. Black Caribbeans also provided assistance with household chores, finances, and during an illness more frequently than non-Latino Whites. Low income Black Caribbeans and non-Latino Whites were indistinguishable with respect to receiving financial assistance and providing transportation.

## DISCUSSION

This study investigated racial and ethnic differences in instrumental support. It has several unique advantages including examining differences between Black Caribbeans and African Americans and non-Latino Whites, as well as focusing on both receipt and provision of support. Our analysis also examined differences between these three populations for those who had low and high incomes. This is useful because some research in this area is restricted to samples of middle-class adults (Dow, 2016b; Hill, 2022; McAdoo, 1978), while other research focuses on lower income individuals (Stack, 1974).

### African Americans and non-Latino Whites

Consistent with our first hypothesis, for every dependent variable, African Americans received and provided support more frequently than their non-Latino White counterparts (Table 2). Further, the significant differences are also evident among both high income and low-income respondents (Hypothesis 4). These findings are consistent with the research of Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004) who also found that Black Americans were generally more likely to be involved with transportation and chores than non-Latino Whites. As some of the early work on support networks was exclusively among poor families, there was an assumption that the support networks of African Americans were based on economic necessity and survival. The present findings, in conjunction with previous research on the support behaviors of middle-class African Americans (Hill, 2022; McAdoo, 1978), indicates that African Americans frequently provide family support regardless of income or social class.

The financial assistance findings are particularly interesting because, given their lower overall incomes, and more importantly, significantly less wealth than Whites, one might expect African Americans to be less involved with transfers of money. However, it is important to understand our finding in relation to conceptualizations of financial support measures. Our measure asks for the frequency of financial assistance, not the receipt of a specific lump sum amount (e.g., \$200). Research indicates that there are differences among African Americans in exchanges of financial support. Relatively poor (Stack, 1974) and middle-class African Americans (Hill, 2022; McAdoo, 1978; O'Brien, 2012) both give and receive financial assistance to family members. However, research measuring financial assistance as a lump sum (which includes loans) of \$200 (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004) and \$100 (in 1987) (Jayakody, 1998) finds that non-Latino Whites were more likely to receive financial assistance and the amounts they received were larger (Jayakody, 1998; Shapiro et al., 2014).

Our findings, as well as those of Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004) and Jayakody (1998) are not inconsistent. Due to the vast (more than 10 to 1) Black-White wealth differentials, non-Latino Whites provide a higher amount of financial assistance than African Americans. This is

**TABLE 4** Regression coefficients for racial/ethnicity differences in the frequency of receiving and providing instrumental support with extended family members among respondents with lower incomes.

Dependent variables	Panel A: Black Caribbeans vs. African Americans (reference category)		Panel B: White Americans vs. African Americans (reference category)		Panel C: White Americans vs. Black Caribbeans (reference category)	
	Baseline model <sup>a</sup>	Full model <sup>b</sup>	Baseline model <sup>a</sup>	Full model <sup>b</sup>	Baseline model <sup>a</sup>	Full model <sup>b</sup>
	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>c</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>d</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>c</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>d</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>c</sup>	$\beta/b$ (SE) <sup>d</sup>
Receive support <sup>e</sup>						
Receive transportation	0.01/0.10 (0.16)	0.02/0.13 (0.14)	-0.17/-0.35 (0.07)***	-0.16/-0.33 (0.07)***	-0.21/-0.45 (0.17)**	-0.22/-0.46 (0.15)**
Receive chores help	0.01/0.09 (0.14)	0.02/0.13 (0.13)	-0.12/-0.25 (0.06)***	-0.12/-0.23 (0.07)***	-0.17/-0.34 (0.14)*	-0.18/-0.36 (0.13)**
Receive financial assistance	0.01/0.04 (0.10)	0.01/0.06 (0.09)	-0.10/-0.20 (0.08)*	-0.09/-0.19 (0.08)*	-0.12/-0.23 (0.13)	-0.12/-0.25 (0.13)
Receive help with illness	0.01/0.07 (0.17)	0.02/0.14 (0.14)	-0.10/-0.21 (0.06)**	-0.08/-0.18 (0.05)***	-0.13/-0.28 (0.17)	-0.15/-0.32 (0.13)*
Provide support <sup>e</sup>						
Provide transportation	-0.02/-0.16 (0.11)	-0.02/-0.14 (0.12)	-0.12/-0.25 (0.07)***	-0.12/-0.24 (0.07)***	-0.04/-0.08 (0.12)	-0.05/-0.11 (0.13)
Provide chores help	0.02/0.17 (0.09)	0.03/0.21 (0.10)*	-0.13/-0.26 (0.07)***	-0.13/-0.26 (0.07)***	-0.21/-0.43 (0.09)***	-0.23/-0.47 (0.10)***
Provide financial assistance	-0.01/-0.07 (0.09)	-0.00/-0.03 (0.10)	-0.24/-0.45 (0.08)***	-0.24/-0.45 (0.08)***	-0.20/-0.38 (0.13)**	-0.22/-0.42 (0.13)**
Provide help with illness	-0.01/-0.09 (0.08)	-0.01/-0.03 (0.08)	-0.15/-0.29 (0.07)***	-0.15/-0.29 (0.07)***	-0.11/-0.20 (0.08)*	-0.13/-0.25 (0.08)**

Note:  $\beta$ : standardized coefficient;  $b$ : unstandardized coefficient. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

<sup>a</sup>Baseline models: Multivariate analyses control for the effects of age, gender, marital status, education, imputed family income, work status and region.

<sup>b</sup>Full models: Multivariate analyses control for the effects of age, gender, marital status, education, imputed family income, work status, region, frequency of family contact and subjective family closeness.

<sup>c</sup> $n$ 's range from 2000 to 2017.

<sup>d</sup> $n$ 's range from 1900 to 2007.

<sup>e</sup>Values for all receive and provide support variables range from 4 = very often to 1 = never.

particularly the case with regard to transfers of financial assistance to adult children for cars, home repairs, weddings, house down payments, and tuition. We also believe that the present findings indicating more frequent financial assistance among African Americans is correct. This is based on previous research which also finds a higher likelihood of African Americans providing and receiving financial support. For instance, Park's (2018) analysis of adult children's financial assistance to their mothers finds that Black mothers were more likely than non-Latino White mothers to receive financial assistance from both coresident and non-resident children. However, the amount that Black mothers received was much lower (Park, 2018). Similarly, a PEW foundation report (2016) found that Black households were more likely to both give (35% vs. 25%) and receive (18% vs. 11%) money than non-Latino White households. However, the median amount of money received and given by non-Latino White households was double that of Black households.

Although not the focus of our paper, a related body of research examines the impact that financial assistance to extended family members has on wealth accumulation (see the classic research of Chiteji & Hamilton, 2002; Heflin & Pattillo, 2002). In general, this research finds that because extended family members of Black Americans are poorer, providing financial assistance to kinship networks jeopardizes the accumulation of wealth. Providing and receiving financial assistance is helpful in responding to relatives' needs such as college tuition and emergent needs (e.g., home eviction, food security, and potential funeral expenses). However, doing so places long-term wealth accumulation at risk.

Overall, our findings indicate that African Americans both receive and provide instrumental support more frequently than non-Latino Whites. This finding is consistent with some studies including the work of Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004), but inconsistent with others (Hogan et al., 1993). The issue for this area of research is ascertaining what accounts for the inconsistent findings. In some cases, it could be differences in measures used in various studies. However, the measures for instrumental support like transportation and helping with chores are fairly robust. As noted earlier, various measures of financial assistance can produce different results in terms of receiving and providing money. It bears repeating (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Taylor et al., 2013) that there are numerous other quite legitimate reasons why the results in this area are inconsistent.

As originally noted by Sarkisian and Gerstel (2004) and later by Taylor et al. (2013), discrepant findings for Black–White differences in the exchange of familial social support could be due to several factors. This includes differences in: (1) the life circumstances of the study population (e.g., middle class, poverty, single mothers, and employed women), (2) the specific familial relationships investigated (e.g., adult children, parents, siblings, and all relatives), (3) the age of the study sample (e.g., older adults, emerging adults, middle-aged adults, and adults across the entire age range), (4) the type of support examined (e.g., emotional, instrumental, and advice), (5) whether support was provided for a chronic (e.g., cancer, dementia) versus acute (e.g., emergency surgery) health problem, and (6) whether support was provided/received in response to an emergency (family member is close to eviction) versus day-to-day life needs. Given this, we cannot state that our findings prove that these patterns of giving and receiving instrument support are indicators that African Americans have stronger informal social support networks than non-Latino Whites. Instead, we argue that based on our findings and other research, the exchange of instrumental social support varies by a host of factors and in some situations, Black Americans exchange more support, in other situations non-Latino Whites exchange more support and, in still other instances, there are no differences. Consistent with Allen's (1978) cultural variant perspective we acknowledge group differences in support networks without suggesting that one group's pattern of exchanges is stronger or better.



## Black Caribbeans, African Americans, and non-Latino Whites

As noted in the literature review, there is a limited amount of research on Black Caribbean family social support networks. This is especially true with regards to quantitative research. Our findings indicate that overall, both Black Caribbeans and African Americans received and provided instrumental support significantly more frequently than non-Latino Whites (Hypothesis 3) and that there were no differences between Black Caribbeans and African Americans for any of the measures of the receipt and provision of instrumental support (Hypothesis 2) (Table 2). Even when comparing instrumental support among low- and high-income respondents, there was only one significant difference between African Americans and Black Caribbeans. This similarity between African Americans and Black Caribbeans is consistent with previous literature in this area. As noted earlier, there were no significant differences in the frequency of overall support received, the frequency of emotional support received and the frequency of overall support provided to family members (Taylor et al., 2013). Taylor et al. (2013) further found that there were no differences between these two populations in their relationships with other primary groups including fictive kin, friends, and church members. Other work on religious participation also finds no differences in religious participation (attendance, prayer, self-rated religiosity, religious coping, and self-rated spirituality) between African Americans and Black Caribbeans, however, both groups had higher levels of religious participation than non-Latino whites (Chatters et al., 2008, 2009). Collectively, the current findings in conjunction with previous research indicate that racial differences (African American-non-Latino White; Black Caribbean-non-Latino White) in family and friendship social support networks are more prominent than ethnic differences (African American-Black Caribbean). Further, these differences were robust and not attenuated by controls for demographic factors, degree of family contact, or emotional closeness to family.

### Future directions for research

Several directions for future research are suggested by both the present findings and previous studies. First, future research on Black-White differences in financial assistance should give special attention to conceptual and measurement issues, identifying dependent variables that reflect a middle-class bias. For example, when kin support is conceptualized and measured exclusively in terms of cash transfers, it embodies a class advantage that favors White and middle to upper income families. Support transactions involving monetary sums even as low as \$200 are problematic in this regard. Given documented differentials in wealth (e.g., home ownership, accumulated savings) across the U.S. population (Shapiro et al., 2014) Blacks and Latinos will be less able to provide this type and level of assistance to network members. Furthermore, given that family assets and wealth are typically not measured in studies of kin support, multivariate controls for socioeconomic status (e.g., family income) in analyses of financial assistance to kin fail to adequately address this measurement limitation.

Accordingly, preferred methods of providing assistance to members of the family support network will vary by income and poverty status. Stack's early work (1974) demonstrated that support exchanges among poor blacks involved numerous small daily exchanges of assistance such as purchasing and preparing meals together. Network members may provide assistance to others in increments of \$10 and \$20 and, over time, this may total to more than \$200 (Jayakody, 1998). However, within the interview context and depending on question format and wording, respondents may not report that they have received monetary gifts of that amount from network members. Careful consideration should be given to potential conceptual and methodological biases inherent in the measurement of social support across diverse populations and whether specific aspects of the construct of social support lack conceptual equivalency

across groups (see Lincoln et al., 2005). Further, keenly nuanced interpretations of race and other status differences in kin support should seek to contextualize these findings in relation to the relevant life conditions, circumstances, and opportunities that characterize different population groups (see Jayakody, 1998 and Chatters & Jayakody, 1995 for a more detailed discussion of this and other methodological issues in research on family support).

For example, one of the documented differences between Black and White informal networks is that Blacks are more likely to reside in extended households (Cross, 2018; Reyes et al., 2020). Research using the National Survey of Black Americans also found that Black families provide transitional housing for relatives and friends who live with them for at least a month due to reasons such as marital stress, family conflict, alleviating homeless and geographic relocations (Taylor et al., 2003). Although household extension is generally not considered in social support research as a way of providing or receiving assistance, it is one of the most valuable types of support that family networks can provide. Census information remains an important source of data for investigating family structure and the composition of extended households. Other methods and approaches, however, are needed to explore why households absorb extended kin and non-kin for periods of a few months or a few years (see Reyes, 2020). Future research should also examine the impact of household size and family structure on family support networks.

Basic studies involving cognitive interviewing techniques are needed to investigate how respondents estimate and report on the level and types of assistance they receive. For instance, a college student with little discretionary income may feel that a cash gift of \$250 each semester from their grandparents is a more significant form of financial assistance than the tuition payments made by their parents. This suggests that other aspects of social support exchanges (e.g., source, saliency, reciprocity, obligation, and relative amount) apart from their monetary value, may be important in assessing these transactions. Further, because dynamic aspects of support transfers may not be fully captured in survey research, ethnographic and focus group studies are needed to complement and expand our current understanding of informal support networks.

Other directions for future research include research on reciprocal support. Currently, there is very little research on this phenomenon, and this is especially true among African Americans and Black Caribbeans. There is also a need for within-group research on instrumental support. Cross, Taylor, & Chatters (2018) investigated within-group differences in instrumental support among African Americans, but within-group research examining differences among Black Caribbeans is sorely needed. Further, given the importance of gender for research on family relationships, future research in Black family research should explicitly investigate the role of gender in family support networks. Lastly, following a suggestion by Krause (2006:195), research should examine specific circumstances or groups in which social support has differential impacts on health and well-being outcomes. For example, he speculates that the relationship between social support and health may be stronger for African Americans than Whites, even given comparable levels of assistance.

This study provided a preliminary picture of differences in the frequency of receiving and providing instrumental support from extended family among three racial/ethnic groups. The availability of a national sample of Black Caribbeans, was a definite advantage of the study. Despite these strengths, the findings are limited by restrictions in the sample. The analyses were based on the NSAL-RIW, which was collected in 2001–2003 and thus may limit the generalizability of the findings to contemporary groups. The Black Caribbean sample excludes individuals who do not speak English (i.e., persons who only speak Spanish, Haitian-French, or Creole dialects). The non-Latino White sample does not reflect the regional distribution of the White population, and instead reflects the regional distribution of the African American population. Consequently, the design of this sample maximizes the overlap in geographic distribution with the African American sample for the purposes of Black–White comparisons, but not

for subgroup analysis of Whites. The non-Latino White sample was taken from geographic areas with at least 10% Black population and thus is representative of Whites who live in these geographical areas and not those who live in areas in which the African American population is 9% or less. Moreover, our findings are only generalizable to non-institutionalized adults. Individuals that are homeless, incarcerated, or living on a military base were excluded from this and most national probability studies. Lastly, like any survey-based research, our analysis cannot fully capture the dynamic and fluid nature of familial support relationships. Nonetheless, the study's advantages (i.e., sample, methods, and analysis) provide a unique opportunity to examine racial/ethnicity differences in extended family instrumental support across these three populations, stratified by income. In doing so, the study brings attention to extended family relationships and instrumental support provision/receipt in low- and high-income families, both of which are topics deserving more consideration in the family literature (e.g., Furstenberg, 2020; McKinley & Brown, 2020).

### FUNDING INFORMATION

The preparation of this article was supported by a grant from the National Institute on Aging to Robert Joseph Taylor, Antonius D. Skipper, and Christina J. Cross (P30 AG015281) to Harry Owen Taylor (P30 AG 059298) and a grant to Linda M. Chatters from the National Institute of Diabetes and Digestive and Kidney Diseases (P30 DK 092926).

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

### ORCID

Robert Joseph Taylor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8173-9074>

Antonius D. Skipper  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7164-7053>

Christina J. Cross  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8858-9125>

Harry Owen Taylor  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1989-189X>

Linda M. Chatters  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4678-2541>

### REFERENCES

- Allen, W. R. (1978). The search for applicable theories of Black family life. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 40, 117–129. <https://doi.org/10.2307/350613>
- American Association for Public Opinion Research (AAPOR). (2006). *Standard definitions: final dispositions of case codes and outcome rates for surveys* (4th ed.). AAPOR.
- Basch, L. (2001). Transnational social relations and the politics of national identity: An eastern Caribbean case study. In N. Foner (Ed.), *Islands in the city: west Indian migration to New York* (pp. 117–141). University of California Press. <https://doi.org/10.1525/9780520935808>
- Bashi, V. F. (2007). *Survival of the knitted: immigrant social networks in a stratified world*. Stanford University Press.
- Batson, C. B., Qian, Z., & Lichter, D. T. (2006). Interracial and intraracial patterns of mate selection among America's diverse Black population. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 68, 658–672. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2006.00281.x>
- Bengtson, V., Giarrusso, R., Mabry, J. B., & Silverstein, M. (2002). Solidarity, conflict, and ambivalence: Complementary or competing perspectives on intergenerational relationships? *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 64, 568–576. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2002.00568.x>
- Benin, M., & Keith, V. M. (1995). The social support of employed Black and Anglo mothers. *Journal of Family Issues*, 16, 275–297. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251395016003003>
- Blau, P. M. (1986). *Exchange and power in social life* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203792643>
- Chamberlain, M. (2003). Rethinking Caribbean families: Extending the links. *Community, Work & Family*, 6, 63–77. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1366880032000063905>
- Chatters, L. M., & Jayakody, R. (1995). *Commentary: intergenerational support within African-American families: concepts and methods* (pp. 97–118). *Effects of Social Change*.

- Chatters, L. M., Nguyen, A. W., Taylor, R. J., & Hope, M. O. (2018). Church and family support networks and depressive symptoms among African Americans: Findings from the National Survey of American life. *Journal of Community Psychology, 46*, 403–417. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.21947>
- Chatters, L. M., Taylor, R. J., Bullard, K. M., & Jackson, J. S. (2009). Race and ethnic differences in religious involvement: African Americans, Caribbean blacks and non-Hispanic whites. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 32*(7), 1143–1163. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01419870802334531>
- Chatters, L. M., Taylor, R. J., Jackson, J. S., & Lincoln, K. D. (2008). Religious coping among African Americans, Caribbean Blacks, and non-Hispanic Whites. *Journal of Community Psychology, 36*, 371–386. <https://doi.org/10.1002/jcop.20202>
- Chatters, L. M., Taylor, R. J., Lincoln, K. D., & Schroepfer, T. (2002). Patterns of informal support from family and church members among African Americans. *Journal of Black Studies, 33*, 66–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/002193470203300104>
- Chiteji, N. S., & Hamilton, D. (2002). Family connections and the Black-White wealth gap among middle-class families. *The Review of Black Political Economy, 30*, 9–28. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF02808169>
- Cross, C. J. (2018). Extended family households among children in the United States: Differences by race/ethnicity and socio-economic status. *Population Studies, 72*(2), 235–251.
- Cross, C. J. (2021). Beyond the binary: Intraracial diversity in Black family organization and Black adolescents' educational performance. *Social Problem*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spab050>
- Cross, C. J., Nguyen, A. W., Chatters, L. M., & Taylor, R. J. (2018). Instrumental social support exchanges in African American extended families. *Journal of Family Issues, 39*, 3535–3563. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X18783805>
- Cross, C. J., Taylor, R. J., & Chatters, L. M. (2018). Ethnic and gender differences in family social support among black adolescents. In *healthcare (Vol. 6, no. 1, p. 20)*. Multidisciplinary digital publishing institute. <https://doi.org/10.3390/healthcare6010020>
- Daw, J., Verdery, A. M., & Margolis, R. (2016). Kin count(s): Educational and racial differences in extended kinship in the United States. *Population and Development Review, 42*(3), 491–517. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1728-4457.2016.00150.x>
- Dilworth-Anderson, P., Williams, I., & Gibson, B. E. (2002). Issues of race, ethnicity, and culture in caregiving research: A 20-year review (1980-2000). *The Gerontologist, 42*, 237–272. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/42.2.237>
- Dow, D. M. (2016a). Caring for them like family: How structure and culture simultaneously influence contemporary African American middle-and upper-middle-class mothers' kin and community child care choices. *Sociology of Race and Ethnicity, 2*(1), 72–86. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2332649215598785>
- Dow, D. M. (2016b). Integrated motherhood: Beyond hegemonic ideologies of motherhood. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 78*(1), 180–196. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12264>
- Fingerman, K. L., Vanderdrift, L. E., Dotterer, A., Birditt, K. S., & Zarit, S. (2011). Support to aging parents and grown children in Black and White families. *The Gerontologist, 51*, 441–452. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnq114>
- Forsythe-Brown, I., Taylor, R. J., Chatters, L. M., Govia, I. O., Matusko, N., & Jackson, J. S. (2017). Kinship support in Jamaican families in the United States and Jamaica. *Journal of African American Studies, 21*, 187–202. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12111-017-9355-7>
- Furstenberg, F. F. (2020). Kinship reconsidered: Research on a neglected topic. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 82*(1), 364–382. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12628>
- Gerstel, N. (2011). Rethinking families and community: The color, class, and centrality of extended kin ties. *Sociological Forum, 26*, 1–20. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1573-7861.2010.01222.x>
- Gerstel, N., & Gallagher, S. (1994). Caring for kith and kin: Gender, employment, and the privatization of care. *Social Problems, 41*, 519–539. <https://doi.org/10.2307/3096987>
- Heeringa, S. G., Wagner, J., Torres, M., Duan, N., Adams, T., & Berglund, P. (2004). Sample designs and sampling methods for the collaborative psychiatric epidemiology studies (CPES). *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research, 13*, 221–240. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.179>
- Heflin, C. M., & Pattillo, M. (2002). Kin effects on Black-White account and home ownership. *Sociological Inquiry, 72*(2), 220–239. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-682X.00014>
- Hill, J. D. (2022). Kin support of the Black middle class: Negotiating need, norms, and class background. *Social Problems, 69*(1), 3–21. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spaa039>
- Hogan, D. P., Eggebeen, D. J., & Clogg, C. C. (1993). The structure of intergenerational exchanges in American families. *American Journal of Sociology, 98*, 1428–1458. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2781826>
- Homans, G. (1961). *Social behavior: its elementary forms*. Harcourt, Brace & Jovanovich.
- Huo, M., Graham, J. L., Kim, K., Birditt, K. S., & Fingerman, K. L. (2019). Aging parents' daily support exchanges with adult children suffering problems. *The Journals of Gerontology: Series B, 74*(3), 449–459. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geronb/gbx079>
- Jackson, J. S., Torres, M., Caldwell, C. H., Neighbors, H. H., Nesse, R., Taylor, R. J., & Williams, D. R. (2004). The National Survey of American life: A study of racial, ethnic and cultural influences on mental disorders and mental health. *International Journal of Methods in Psychiatric Research, 13*, 196–207. <https://doi.org/10.1002/mpr.177>

- Jayakody, R. (1998). Race differences in intergenerational financial assistance: The needs of children and the resources of parents. *Journal of Family Issues, 19*, 508–533. <https://doi.org/10.1177/019251398019005002>
- Kasinitz, P., Waters, M. C., Mollenkopf, J. H., & Anil, M. (2002). Transnationalism and the children of immigrants in contemporary New York. In *The changing face of home: The transnational lives of the second generation* (pp. 96–122). The Russell Sage Foundation.
- Krause, N. (2006). Social relationships in late life. In R. H. Binstock & L. K. George (Eds.), *Handbook of aging and the social sciences* (pp. 181–200). Academic Press.
- LaVeist, T. A., & McDonald, K. B. (2002). Race, gender, and educational advantage in the inner city. *Social Science Quarterly, 83*(3), 832–852. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1540-6237.00117>
- Lincoln, K. D., Chatters, L. M., & Taylor, R. J. (2005). Social support, traumatic events, and depressive symptoms among African Americans. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 67*(3), 754–766. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1741-3737.2005.00167.x>
- Lincoln, K. D., Taylor, R. J., & Chatters, L. M. (2013). Correlates of emotional support and negative interaction among African Americans and Black Caribbeans. *Journal of Family Issues, 34*, 1262–1290. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X12454655>
- Logan, J. R. (2007). Who are the other African Americans? Contemporary African and Caribbean immigrants in the United States. In Y.-S. Taylor & S. A. Tuch (Eds.), *The other African Americans: contemporary African and Caribbean immigrants in the United States* (pp. 49–68). Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.
- McAdoo, H. P. (1978). Factors related to stability in upwardly mobile Black families. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 40*, 761–776. <https://doi.org/10.2307/351197>
- McChesney, K. Y., & Bengtson, V. L. (1988). Solidarity, integration, and cohesion in families: Concepts and theories. In D. J. Mangen, V. L. Bengtson, & P. H. Landry, Jr. (Eds.), *Measurement of intergenerational relations* (pp. 15–30). Sage.
- McKinley, B., & Brown, T. L. (2020). Middle and high income Black families. In *Black families: a systems approach* (pp. 214–232). Cognella Publishing.
- Meschede, T., Darity Jr, W., & Hamilton, D. (2015). Financial resources in kinship and social networks: Flow and relationship to household wealth by race and ethnicity among Boston residents. Federal Reserve Bank of Boston Community Development Discussion Paper, (2015-02). Retrieved from <https://www.bostonfed.org/publications/community-development-discussion-paper/2015/financial-resources-in-kinship-and-social-networks-flow-and-relationship-to-household-wealth-by-race-and-ethnicity-among-boston-residents.aspx>
- O'Brien, R. L. (2012). Depleting capital? Race, wealth and informal financial assistance. *Social Forces, 91*, 375–396. <https://doi.org/10.1093/sf/sos132>
- Park, S. S. (2018). Life events and black–white differences in adult children's financial assistance to mothers. *The Gerontologist, 58*(5), 883–893. <https://doi.org/10.1093/geront/gnx069>
- PEW (2016). Extended family support and household balance sheets: getting by with a little help from friends and relatives. A brief from the PEW Charitable Trusts. Retrieved from <https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/issue-briefs/2016/03/extended-family-support-and-household-balance-sheets>.
- Reyes, A., Schoeni, R. F., & Choi, H. (2020). Race/ethnic differences in spatial distance between adult children and their mothers. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 82*(2), 810–821. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12614>
- Reyes, A. M. (2020). Mitigating poverty through the formation of extended family households: Race and ethnic differences. *Social Problems, 67*(4), 782–799. <https://doi.org/10.1093/socpro/spz046>
- Sarkisian, N., & Gerstel, N. (2004). Kin support among blacks and whites: Race and family organization. *American Sociological Review, 69*, 812–837. <https://doi.org/10.1177/000312240406900604>
- Shapiro, T., Meschede, T., & Osoro, S. (2014). The widening racial wealth gap: Why wealth is not color blind. In R. Cramer & T. Williams Shanks (Eds.), *Assets perspective: the rise of asset building and its impact on social policy* (pp. 99–122). Palgrave Macmillan.
- St. Vil, N. M., McDonald, K. B., & Cross-Barnet, C. (2018). A qualitative study of black married couples' relationships with their extended family networks. *Families in Society, 99*(1), 56–66. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1044389418756847>
- Stack, C. B. (1974). *All our kin: strategies for survival in a black community*. Harper & Row.
- Taylor, R. J., Chatters, L. M., & Celious, A. K. (2003). Extended family households among Black Americans. *African American Research Perspectives, 9*, 133–151.
- Taylor, R. J., Chatters, L. M., & Cross, C. J. (2021). Taking diversity seriously: Within-group heterogeneity in African American extended family support networks. *Journal of Marriage and Family, 83*(5), 1349–1372. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12783>
- Taylor, R. J., Chatters, L. M., Woodward, A. T., & Brown, E. (2013). Racial and ethnic differences in extended family, friendship, fictive kin and congregational informal support networks. *Family Relations, 62*, 609–624. <https://doi.org/10.1111/fare.12030>
- Taylor, R. J., Forsythe-Brown, I., Lincoln, K. D., & Chatters, L. M. (2017). Extended family support networks of Caribbean Black adults in the United States. *Journal of Family Issues, 38*, 522–546. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0192513X15573868>

- Wan, W. H., & Antonucci, T. C. (2016). Social exchange theory and aging. *Encyclopedia of Geropsychology*, 1(1), 1–9. [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-080-3\\_285-1](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-287-080-3_285-1)
- Waters, M. C. (1999). *Black identities: west Indian immigrant dreams and American realities*. Russell Sage Foundation.
- Yu, Y., & Williams, D. R. (1999). Socioeconomic status and mental health. In C. S. Aneshensel & J. C. Phelan (Eds.), *Handbook of the sociology of mental health* (pp. 151–166). Kluwer. [https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36223-1\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1007/0-387-36223-1_8)
- Zong, J. & Batalova, J. (2019). Caribbean immigrants in the United States. Migration Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/caribbean-immigrants-united-states-2017>

**How to cite this article:** Taylor, R. J., Skipper, A. D., Cross, C. J., Taylor, H. O., & Chatters, L. M. (2022). Racial/ethnic variation in family support: African Americans, Black Caribbeans, and non-Latino Whites. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 84(4), 1002–1023. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jomf.12846>