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Church-Based Social Support Among Caribbean Blacks in the United States

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Abstract

An emerging body of research notes the importance of church-based social support networks in the daily lives of Americans. However, few studies examine church-based support, and especially among ethnic subgroups within the U.S. Black population, such as Caribbean Blacks. This study uses data from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL) to examine demographic and religious participation (e.g., attendance, interaction) correlates of church-based social support (e.g., receipt of emotional support, receipt of general support, provision of support to others, and negative interaction) among Caribbean Blacks residing in the U.S. Multiple regression analyses indicated that religious participation was associated with all four dependent variables. Church attendance was positively associated with receiving emotional support, general social support, and providing support to others, but was not associated with negative interaction. Frequency of interaction with fellow congregants was positively associated with receiving emotional support, receiving general support, providing support to others and negative interaction. Demographic findings indicated that women provided more support to church members and experienced more negative interactions with members than did men. Education was positively associated with frequency of support; household income was negatively associated with receiving emotional support and providing social support to others. Findings are discussed in relation to the role of church-based support networks in the lives of Caribbean Black immigrants and communities.

Keywords

Caribbean Black; informal support network; non-kin social support; religion

Despite extensive research on secular social support and its relationship to social and health outcomes (Berkman and Glass 2000; Cohen and Wills 1985), comparatively less attention has focused on social support occurring within religious contexts (Taylor et al. 2004; Nguyen et al. 2013). However, a growing body of work examines church-based informal social support (i.e., assistance provided by congregants to one another), within Black elderly and non-elderly samples of the population (Chatters et al. 2002; Chatters et al. 2011; Krause 2002a; Krause and Bastida 2011). This research confirms the importance of church-based social support for Black Americans. However, much remains to be studied with respect to church-based social support within important subgroups of the Black population such as Caribbean Blacks.

Caribbean Blacks, who are ethnically distinct from African Americans (comprising 13.6% of the U.S. population; Rastogi, Johnson, Hoeffel and Drewery, 2011), constitute a sizeable proportion of the immigrant population in the U.S. (Acosta and de la Cruz 2011). Black immigrants from the Caribbean region constitute 18% of the foreign-born population and 1.2% of the total U.S. population, while Black immigrants from African countries constitute 0.5% of the total U.S. population (Acosta and de la Cruz 2011). Further, more than half of foreign-born Blacks are of Caribbean origin (U. S. Census Bureau 2010). In terms of countries of origin, the majority of Caribbean Black immigrants are from Jamaica (37%), Haiti (32%), and Trinidad and Tobago (11%) (U. S. Census Bureau 2010). Caribbean Black immigrants reside largely in the Northeast region of the U.S. and make up sizable portions of the immigrant populations in New York (49%), Rhode Island (45%), and Massachusetts (43%) (Acosta and de la Cruz 2011).

This study examines the sociodemographic and religious participation correlates of church-based social support among Caribbean Blacks and represents the first study to examine these relationships within a nationally representative sample of Caribbean Blacks. Our study's focus on Caribbean Blacks reflects an interest in understanding the nature and correlates of church-based support networks within a population subgroup that is typically subsumed within the U.S. Black population. Although Caribbean Blacks share an identity as persons of African descent, they are ethnically and culturally distinct from native born African Americans in several important ways that are pertinent for religious behaviors and involvement (e.g., denominational profiles). Further, as immigrants to the U.S., Caribbean Blacks experience unique life circumstances and identities that are consequential for neighborhood and community development (e.g., ethnic enclaves) and their investment and participation in community resources and organizations such as religious institutions.

The literature review is organized in three sections and provides information relevant for exploring church-based social support within this group. The first section presents a religious involvement profile for Caribbean Blacks in the U.S. This section is followed by a discussion of studies that describe the roles and functions of churches within immigrant populations. The last section reviews available research on church-based social networks, the types of support exchanged among congregants, social and demographic correlates of assistance, and information on negative interaction within church networks.

Religious Involvement of Caribbean Black in the U.S

Research examining religious involvement among Caribbean Blacks in the U.S. indicates fairly high levels of organizational involvement (e.g., church attendance), private devotional behaviors (e.g., private prayer and religious media use), religious coping, spirituality and subjective religious identification and close relations with congregation networks (Chatters et al. 2008b; Taylor and Chatters 2011; Taylor et al. 2007a; Taylor et al. 2013; Taylor et al. 2010). Although, Caribbean Blacks are similar to African Americans in demonstrating high levels of religious involvement, differences exist with respect to denominational profiles and patterns of demographic correlates. In terms of denominational affiliation, Caribbean Blacks are more likely than African Americans to identify as Catholic and are less likely to identify as Baptist. Among Caribbean Blacks, denominational differences in religious involvement are mixed, but findings suggest that those who are Catholic have lower levels of organizational involvement and religious media use than Baptists, while Pentecostals had higher levels of non-organizational activities and religious media (e.g., radio, television) use (Taylor et al. 2007b). Further, Pentecostals and Methodists are more likely than Baptists to endorse religious coping methods when dealing with problems (Chatters et al. 2008b).

Immigration history factors emerge as important correlates of religious involvement, although findings are somewhat equivocal. Among older Caribbean Blacks, those who immigrated to the U.S. had higher levels of church attendance and non-organizational participation than persons of Caribbean descent who were born (2nd and subsequent generations) in the U.S. (Taylor et al. 2007b). Regarding country of origin differences, Jamaicans engage in congregational activities at higher rates than Caribbean Blacks from other Anglophone countries (Taylor et al. 2007b), whereas Haitians are more likely than Jamaicans to endorse the use of prayer in stressful situations (Chatters et al. 2008b).

The Immigrant Church

Religious institutions occupy a prominent role in Caribbean Black communities by providing social supports for individuals and families and assisting in the migration and resettlement process of recent arrivals (McAlister 1998; Maynard-Reid 2000; Waters 1999). Religious organizations serve many important roles for immigrants by: 1) facilitating immigrants' transition to a new context and culture via linkages to established social networks in the U.S., 2) providing opportunities to meet and interact with other immigrants who have established residency in the United States, and 3) promoting assimilation by encouraging community and civic participation and political mobilization (Cadge and Howard Ecklund 2007; Ecklund and Park 2005, 2007; Hagan and Ebaugh 2003). In addition to tangible assistance with material needs, integration into existing immigrant networks offers newer migrants the ability to enhance social capital through such things as access to jobs and housing, information about American customs and social practices, and opportunities for mentoring and sponsorship (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003; Ley 2008). Churches provide formal and informal general social services, such as food pantries, clothes closets, financial assistance, and employment search, as well as services particular to immigrants, such as English classes, assistance with citizenship applications, and tutoring for the citizenship exam (Cadge and Howard Ecklund 2007; Hirschman 2004). Given these multiple

roles, the immigrant church has been compared to an extended or surrogate family (Cadge and Howard Ecklund 2007; Ley 2008).

The immigrant church is also a place where immigrants' home cultures and religious practices are reproduced (Hagan and Ebaugh 2003; Hirschman 2004). Church-based networks enhance social relationships and connections with other immigrants and reinforce a sense of ethnic identity and provide immigrants with emotional support which maintains an emotional connection to the homeland (Waters 1999). Emotional support is particularly critical given immigrants' experiences of relocation and traumatic loss often associated with migration. In sum, by virtue of the social, emotional and tangible assistance provided, the church and its congregation often play a major role in immigrants' settlement and longer-term emotional and social adjustment to life in the U.S.

Church-Based Social Support

Church-based social support networks operate within a context of long-standing interpersonal relationships and shared beliefs and norms for receiving and giving aid and, as a consequence, they are uniquely suited and effective in providing assistance to their members (Taylor et al. 2004). Although available research on church-based social support networks focuses primarily on African Americans and non-Hispanic Whites, a growing body of work examines church-based networks among Caribbean Blacks. Racial and ethnic minorities, particularly African Americans and Hispanics, are especially invested in church-based social networks and receive significant amounts of assistance (Krause 2008b; Taylor et al. 2004). Among African Americans, Black churches have historically been a significant source of both institutional and informal support (Lincoln and Mamiya 1990; Billingsley 1999), with congregant networks constituting a major source of assistance including help during sickness, companionship, prayer and spiritual support, and advice and encouragement (Taylor and Chatters 1986; Taylor et al. 2004).

Demographic characteristics are important correlates of church-based support. Prior work indicates that married persons are more likely to receive support from congregants than single and divorced persons (Chatters et al. 1999; Chatters et al. 2002; Taylor and Chatters 1988). Findings for age and church-based social support are mixed—some studies indicate that elderly congregants receive less support than younger congregants (Taylor and Chatters 1988; Taylor et al. 2004). This is surprising given that older adults have higher levels of religious involvement and service attendance (Levin and Taylor 1993; Taylor et al. 2004) and higher levels of apparent need for assistance relative to younger persons, which might be expected to result in their receiving more assistance. However, other analyses indicate that older persons who have adult children receive support from church members at higher rates than their older childless counterparts (Taylor and Chatters 1986). In essence, adult children, especially those who reside near their parents, may function as advocates and conduits of assistance for their elderly parents by connecting them to other congregants and social support. Findings for gender and church-based social support are somewhat mixed as well. Krause (2004) found that African American women received more support from church members than their male counterparts, likely due to women's higher levels of religious involvement (Chatters and Taylor 1994; Chatters et al. 1999; Levin and Taylor 1993).

However, Taylor and Chatters (1988) found the opposite pattern in which African American men received more support from co-religionists than women. In explanation of this finding, they suggested that despite women's higher religious involvement overall, men who are involved in the church are more likely to hold positions of high status and visibility (e.g., deacon, board of trustee member) that may garner higher levels of support from the congregation.

In terms of race and ethnic comparisons for church-based support, African Americans are more likely than non-Hispanic Whites to give and receive social support from fellow congregants, to anticipate receiving more support from church members, and to experience the health benefits of church support (Krause 2002a, 2008a, 2008b; Krause and Bastida 2011). This pattern of higher rates of church-based social support among African Americans is likely due to their higher levels of religious involvement and service attendance and stronger cultural and historical connections to church-based support networks (Krause 2002b, 2008b; Taylor et al. 1996). Further, a study of African Americans, Caribbean Blacks and non-Hispanic Whites found that, compared to African Americans, Whites interacted less frequently with their church-based network and Caribbean Blacks received emotional support from congregation members less frequently (Taylor et al. 2013). Additionally, both African Americans and Caribbean Blacks reported feeling subjectively closer to church members than did non-Hispanic Whites, and African Americans gave assistance to church members more frequently than either non-Hispanic Whites or Caribbean Blacks.

Finally, notwithstanding the positive aspects of church-based support, involvement in church networks is also associated with negative social interactions (Ellison and Levin 1998; Taylor et al. 2004; Krause 2008a). Negative social interactions in religious settings (i.e., criticism and interpersonal conflicts with congregants, excessive demands, misdirected support and failures to provide needed assistance) are distinct from social support and have especially harmful impacts on overall well-being and mental health (Ellison et al. 2009; Krause 2008a; Lincoln et al. 2003). Negative interactions occur across race and ethnic groups, but may vary in frequency. Krause and Bastida's study (2011) found that elderly African Americans were more likely to encounter negative interaction with clergy and other congregants than older Whites and Mexican Americans. Similarly, Taylor et al. (2013) found that African Americans were more likely than Whites and Caribbean Blacks to report negative interactions with congregation members.

Focus of the Study

The reviewed body of research on religious involvement among Caribbean Blacks is an important starting point for examining the demographic, immigration status and religious involvement correlates of church-based social support. This present study examines four aspects of church-based support networks—receipt of emotional support, receipt of general social support, provision of social support, and negative interactions—among Caribbean Blacks (operational definitions presented in Methods section). Based on prior findings, we predict that several of the demographic correlates of church-based social support will be consistent with findings from previous studies. Namely, being older, married and female will be associated with higher levels of receiving emotional support and general support, and

providing support to others. Education and household income will be positively associated with providing support to others, but negatively associated with receiving emotional support and general support from others. Given the lack of prior work within this population group, no specific predictions are offered for demographic factors as correlates of negative interaction or for country of origin and immigration status in relation to church-based support and negative interaction. Lastly, we anticipate that religious involvement factors (e.g., service attendance, interaction with church members) will be positively associated with receiving and providing social support. Prior research on family networks indicates that greater involvement with network members (e.g., interaction) is positively associated with reporting negative interactions with family members (Lincoln et al. 2012). Given this, we anticipate that church attendance and interaction with church members will similarly be associated with reports of negative interaction with church members. Finally, given previous research on denominational differences in religious involvement, we anticipate that Catholics will demonstrate lower and Pentecostals higher levels of church-based support as compared to Baptists; no predictions regarding negative interaction are offered.

Methods

Data

This study uses data from the National Survey of American Life: Coping with Stress in the 21st Century (NSAL). The NSAL data were collected by the Program for Research on Black Americans at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (Jackson et al. 2004). A total of 6,082 interviews were conducted with respondents aged 18 and older from 2001 to 2003, of which 86% were conducted in respondents' homes and the remaining 14 % were conducted by telephone. This survey employed a national multi-stage probability sampling design. The African American sample was the core sample of this dataset, which included 64 primary sampling units. Fifty-six of these primary areas overlap substantially with existing Survey Research Center's National Sample primary areas. The remaining eight primary areas were chosen from the South in order for the sample to represent African Americans in the proportion in which they are distributed nationally. The Caribbean Black sample was selected from two area probability sampling 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. Respondents were considered Caribbean Black if they indicated that they were Black and answered affirmatively when asked if they were of West Indian or Caribbean descent, said they were from a country included on a list of Caribbean area countries presented by the interviewers, or stated that their parents or grandparents were born in a Caribbean country. Interviews were conducted in English, so an additional selection criteria was that respondents must speak English (although they might also speak another language such as Spanish or Haitian Creole). A total of 1,621 interviews were obtained, with a response rate of 77.7%. Final response rates were computed using the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) guidelines (for Response Rate 3 samples) (AAPOR 2006) (see Jackson et al. 2004 for a more detailed discussion of the NSAL sample). After listwise deletion of cases the analytic sample includes 1,288 Caribbean Blacks.

Measures

Church-based social support—Four measures of church-based social support were assessed: receipt of emotional support, receipt of general social support, provision of general social support, and negative interaction. Church-based social support items were asked only of respondents who indicated that they attended religious services a few times a year or more (persons who attended religious services less than once a year or who never attended services were not asked about their church-based support networks, and thus they are excluded from analyses).

Receipt of emotional support from church members was assessed using a three-item Likert type scale, with response categories ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Respondents were asked “How often do your church members: 1) make you feel loved and cared for, 2) listen to you talk about your private problems and concerns, and 3) express interest and concern in your well-being?” ($\alpha = .71$). *Receipt of general social support* from church members was measured by the question, “How often do people in your church help you out? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?” *Provision of social support* to church members was measured by the question, “How often do you help out people in your church? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?”

Negative interaction with church members was assessed by a three-item Likert-type scale, with responses ranging from 1 (*never*) to 4 (*very often*). Respondents were asked “how often do your church members: 1) make too many demands on you? 2) criticize you and the things you do? and 3) try to take advantage of you?” ($\alpha = .72$).

Religious involvement—*Religious service attendance* was measured by the question, “How often do you usually attend religious services? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, or less than once a year?” Although “never” was not provided as a response category, some respondents volunteered “never” in response to this question, which was coded as the lowest level of religious service attendance. *Frequency of interaction* with church members was measured by the question, “How often do you see, write, or talk on the telephone with members of your church? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, at least once a month, a few times a year or never?” *Denomination* was measured by the question: “What is your current religion?” More than 35 different denominations were mentioned by this sample of Caribbean Blacks. This variable was recoded into nine categories: Baptist, Methodist, Catholic, Pentecostal, Episcopalian, Seventh Day Adventist, Other Protestant (e.g., Lutheran, Presbyterian), Other Religion (e.g., Buddhist, Muslim), and None.

Demographic and immigration factors—The demographic variables include gender, education, age, household income, and marital status. Gender was coded as male = 1 and female = 2. Education (i.e. number of years of schooling), age, and household income were assessed as continuous variables. Missing data for household income and education were imputed using an iterative regression-based multiple imputation approach incorporating information about age, sex, region, race, employment status, marital status, home ownership, and nativity of household residents. Marital status was represented by five categories:

married or partnered (i.e., cohabiting), divorced, widowed, separated, and never married. Immigration factors were country of origin and immigration status. Country of origin consisted of the following categories: Spanish Caribbean, Haiti, Jamaica, Trinidad and Tobago, and Other; Jamaica was the reference category in analyses. Immigration status was assessed by the number of years the respondent has resided in the United States; U.S. born (2nd and subsequent generation immigrant) was the reference category in analyses.

Analysis Strategy

OLS regression analyses were performed in a series of three models for each dependent variable (i.e., receipt of emotional support, receipt of general support, provision of support, and negative interaction). Model 1 tested the influence of demographic variables, Model 2 included the addition of church attendance, and Model 3 included frequency of interaction with church members. Regression coefficients and standard errors are presented. The regression coefficients and standard errors took into account the complex multistage clustered design of the NSAL sample, unequal probabilities of selection, nonresponse, and poststratification.

Results

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of the sample and distribution of the study variables; percentages presented in Table 1 are weighted. About half of the sample was male (48.6%), the average educational attainment level was one year of college, the average age of respondents was 41 years, and the mean household income was approximately \$45,000. About half the sample (49%) was married or had a common-law partner and about another third had never married. One in three respondents was of Jamaican origin and roughly a third of the sample was either born in the United States (34%) or has lived in the United States for 21 or more years (31%). Baptist (22%), Catholic (20%) and other Protestant groups (26%) were the most frequently mentioned religious denominations. Respondents in this sample were fairly regular church service attendees, who on average attended service a few times a month. The average level of interaction with congregation members was 3.27 ($SD = 0.33$). Respondents reported receiving more emotional support ($M = 8.18$, $SD = 0.89$) than negative interactions ($M = 4.23$, $SD = 0.64$) with church members. Respondents reported comparable levels for receiving general social support from church members ($M = 2.25$, $SD = 0.39$) and providing support to church members ($M = 2.44$, $SD = 0.37$). Table 2 shows that the four church-based social support and negative interaction variables are significantly intercorrelated.

Receipt of Emotional Support

Table 3 shows three multiple regression models for emotional support from coreligionists; Model 1 used demographic variables only, Model 2 added service attendance, and Model 3 added frequency of interaction with church members. Model 1 shows that older Caribbean Blacks received more emotional support from church members than younger Caribbean Blacks; those with higher family incomes received less emotional support than their lower income counterparts; and separated persons received less social support than persons who are currently married. Respondents who immigrated to the country in the past 5 years and

between 6 and 10 years ago received less emotional support than U.S. born Caribbean Blacks. With regards to denomination, Pentecostals received more emotional support than Baptists. Adding service attendance to the model (Model 2) rendered marital status and denomination insignificant, while effects for age, household income, and immigration status were maintained. Additionally, service attendance was positively associated with receiving emotional support from fellow congregants; that is, more frequent service attendance was associated with more emotional support from other congregants. With the addition of 'interaction with church members' in Model 3, household income and immigration status (immigrated to the U.S. 0–5 years ago) retained significance, however, age and immigrating 6–10 years ago did not maintain significance. Further, after adding 'interaction with church members', the denomination category 'other religion' emerged as significant, while the previous significant effect for service attendance was eliminated in this final model. Finally, more frequent interaction with fellow congregants was associated with receiving more emotional support.

Receipt of General Social Support

Table 4 presents the multiple regression analyses for frequency of receiving general social support. For Model 1, education was positively associated with frequency of receiving support from church members, and Haitians were more likely to receive support from church members than Jamaicans. Several denominational differences were evident with Catholics and persons indicating 'no religion' receiving support less frequently than Baptists; Seventh-Day Adventists reported receiving support more frequently than Baptists. With the addition of church attendance (Model 2), education and Seventh Day Adventist retained their significance. Church attendance was positively associated with receiving social support from church members more frequently. When frequency of interaction with church members was accounted for (Model 3), education and Seventh Day Adventist affiliation retained their general patterns of influence on frequency of support. In Model 3, the effect of frequent church attendance on receiving support was attenuated but still significant, and interaction with fellow congregants was positively associated with receiving social support.

Provision of Social Support

Model 1 (Table 5) indicates that older persons and women were more likely than their counterparts to provide social support to church members. Widowed persons were less likely to provide support compared to those who were married. Haitians were more likely to provide support to church members than Jamaicans, and respondents who had immigrated to the country 21 or more years ago provided less support than U.S. born Caribbean Blacks. Denominational differences indicate that Catholics and Episcopalians provided less support than Baptists. When church attendance was added in Model 2, age, gender, and marital status (widowed) retained their significant effects for providing social support. Household income was negatively associated with providing support. Country of origin (Haiti) and denomination effects for Catholic and Episcopalian were no longer significant, but persons in the category other Protestant provided support less frequently than did Baptists. Further, effects for those who immigrated to the U.S. 6–10 years ago and those who immigrated 21 or more years ago remained significant indicating that they provided social support to co-religionists less frequently as compared to U.S.-born Caribbean Blacks. Finally, service

attendance was positively associated with providing social support. Findings for Model 3, which included frequency of interaction with fellow congregants, indicate that gender, immigration status (immigrated 6–10 years ago) other Protestant, and church attendance all retained significance. Caribbean Blacks who reported frequent interaction with other congregants were more likely to provide social support.

Negative Interaction

Model 1 (Table 6) shows that only gender and household income were associated with negative interaction with other congregants. Women and respondents with lower incomes had more frequent negative interactions with church members. In Model 2, with the addition of religious service attendance, the effects of gender and household income retained significance. Church attendance, however, was not associated with negative interaction. In Model 3, with the addition of frequency of interaction with fellow congregants, gender remained significant (but household income did not). Finally, Caribbean Blacks who interacted more frequently with other church members were more likely to experience negative interactions.

Discussion

This study explored demographic, immigration status and religious participation correlates of church-based social support and negative interaction among Caribbean Blacks. Four church-based social support factors were examined—receipt of emotional support, receipt of general social support, provision of social support, and negative interaction. Frequent interaction with other congregants was positively related to both receiving and providing general social support and emotional support, as well as higher levels of negative interaction. The seemingly paradoxical findings are consistent with literature on secular and church-based social support (Taylor et al. 2014; Taylor et al. 2005). Specifically, social interactions lead to greater integration within a support network and opportunities to receive and give assistance and greater levels of social support. However, increased levels of interaction with one's social support network are also accompanied by an increased likelihood of experiencing negative interactions which, while infrequent, are likely features of all social interactions (Akiyama et al. 2003).

Religious service attendance findings converged with previous evidence on other racial and ethnic groups in indicating that frequent church attendees were more likely to receive frequent social support from other congregants and are also more likely to provide social support to fellow members. Within the context of the faith community, high levels of organized religious participation (e.g., church attendance) foster greater social embeddedness within church support networks. Accordingly, attending services provides opportunities for Caribbean Blacks to become more socially embedded within church support networks, to build and strengthen relationships with fellow congregants, and to communicate their needs for assistance. Several studies verify that religious service attendance and involvement, particularly at the organizational level, are associated with higher rates of contact with and receiving support from co-religionists (Taylor et al. 2005; Krause 2004; Krause et al. 2001; Nooney and Woodrum 2002).

In the case of emotional support, the addition of frequency of interaction with church members (in Model 3), eliminated the previously significant and positive impact of church attendance on emotional support. This suggests that actual interaction with congregants has a stronger effect on receiving emotional support than does merely attending services. In contrast, both attending church and interacting with church members were positive correlates of receiving general support and providing assistance to others. The reasons why church involvement factors operate differently for these forms of church-based support (i.e., general support exchanges vs. specifically emotional support) are unclear. Interaction with church members is likely of greater significance than service attendance because interaction captures the interpersonal features of these associations that are represented in the measure of emotional support (e.g., feeling loved and cared for, expressing interest and concern) in ways that mere service attendance does not. Giving and receiving assistance, in contrast, are more general measures of social support exchanges and, as such, both service attendance and interaction emerged as independent correlates of these aspects of support. Finally, with respect to negative interaction, church attendance was not associated with reporting these occurrences, but interaction with church members was.

Several unanticipated findings were reported for the demographic correlates of church-based support. We anticipated that Caribbean Black women's more extensive religious participation (Chatters et al. 2008a; Taylor et al. 2007b, 2007a; Chatters et al. 2008b; Taylor et al. 2010) would be reflected in consistent gender differences for all four dependent variables. Contrary to expectations, Caribbean Black men and women were no different in terms of receiving emotional or general support. However, women were more likely to provide social support to co-religionists, which is consistent with conventional notions of gender socialization practices that encourage girls to be caring, nurturing, and communal, which shapes women as caregivers and support providers (Beal 1994; Eagly and Crowley 1986). Further, as women were also more likely to frequently interact with other congregants, they were more likely to experience negative interactions with other congregants.

With respect to findings for other demographic factors, respondents with higher levels of education received general support from church members more frequently than less educated respondents. It may be the case that higher education confers higher status within the church which includes receiving support from other congregants more frequently. Immigrants who are highly educated may have previously had higher SES backgrounds in their homelands, and the social benefits of that status may be reproduced upon arrival in the United States. Further, higher education may confer skills and knowledge that help immigrants in accessing and capitalizing on resources that are available within the church.

In contrast, Caribbean Blacks with higher household incomes received emotional support less frequently than those with lower household incomes (they also provided general support less frequently, but only in Model 2). This pattern for emotional support suggests that Caribbean Blacks with higher household incomes may have fewer apparent needs for emotional support (e.g., less stress given their advantaged financial situation) compared to those with lower family incomes. However, the finding that they were less likely to provide assistance to others in the church network was unexpected. Finally, higher income

respondents were less likely to report negative interaction with church members. It is important to note that the impact of higher income for both reduced levels of negative interaction and providing support to others was not significant when controlling for interaction with congregation members (Model 3).

With respect to marital status, separated Caribbean Blacks were less likely to receive emotional support (Model 1) from their fellow congregants relative to those who were married. This finding is consistent with previous research, indicating that unmarried persons, particularly divorced and separated persons, are less likely than married persons to receive social support from congregants, as well as from friends and relatives (Chatters et al. 2002; Lincoln et al. 2012; Chatters et al. 1999). Unmarried status, specifically separated and divorced, are stigmatized statuses within churches that are at odds with church values (Taylor and Chatters 1988). Consequently, other congregants may withhold support from these individuals as a form of social sanction for not adhering to their religious values and expectations. Alternatively, in the case of separated spouses who attend the same church, this finding may reflect the fact that congregants are attempting to remain neutral in the couple's separation. That is, congregants may perceive providing support to a separated spouse may signify that they are favoring that individual over the other separated spouse. In this analysis, the effect for being separated was eliminated when controls for service attendance and congregation interaction were introduced suggesting that being separated is associated with less frequent attendance and interaction, which may curtail receiving emotional support. The only other marital status effect involved widowed respondents who were less likely than married persons to provide support to others. Controlling for congregation interaction rendered the association insignificant, suggesting that it may be the case that widowhood is associated with less frequent interaction with church members which limits their ability to provide aid to others.

Differences by country of origin, denomination, immigration status, and age were more limited. In terms of country of origin, it is not clear why Haitians (as compared to Jamaicans) reported more frequent provision and receipt of general social support. As compared to Baptists, Catholics and Episcopalians had less frequent exchanges of general social support that may reflect differences in congregational climate and interaction levels characterizing Catholic and Episcopal churches (Pargament et al. 1983). In fact, in later models, these effects were eliminated after controlling for church attendance and interaction with church members, characteristics that are reflective of congregational climate and interaction patterns. Seventh Day Adventists, however, even after controlling for attendance and interaction reported receiving more general support than Baptists. Conservative Protestant groups are particularly effective in generating group norms for high rates of religious involvement (Newport 2006) that may, in turn, encourage social support. Further, Seventh Day Adventists' health and lifestyle practices (e.g., dietary, socializing with one another) may constitute an especially cohesive social setting that encourages support provision. Caribbean Black immigrants (not born in the U.S.) reported less frequent provision of general support to others in their church and less receipt of emotional support from church members than did the comparison group of U.S. born respondents. Finally, initial positive age effects for receiving more emotional support and providing more general

support to church members were not maintained once interaction with congregation members was taken into account.

Limitations of this study should be noted. Immigrant respondents' acculturation level can influence the amount and frequency of support an immigrant receives from church members. Less acculturated immigrants may require more assistance in navigating American culture and institutions. Future research should include indicators of level of acculturation, as it can reveal a more complete picture of church-based social support among immigrants. Additionally, the results of this study are limited in generalizability by the lack of language diversity in the sample; the NSAL does not include respondents who do not speak English. Consequently, the results of this study can only be generalized to Caribbean Blacks who speak English. Additionally, the analyses were conducted on data collected in 2001–2003, which may also limit the generalizability of the findings. However, associations between church-based support and demographic and religious participation factors are relatively stable over time, and the NSAL includes the most comprehensive collection of survey items on church-based relationships among a nationally representative sample of Caribbean Blacks. Despite these limitations, our analysis demonstrated demographic and church involvement differences in church-based social support. One of the study's strengths is the use of multiple measures of church support that permits for a more in-depth understanding of church support and how demographic variables are differentially associated with various aspects of church support.

In conclusion, developing research on the church among immigrants groups indicates that it is a pivotal social institution and cultural resource that assists the transition to life in America. This study is the first to examine the relationship between church-based social support and demographic and religious participation factors in the Caribbean Black population using a nationally representative sample of Caribbean Blacks who speak English. Moreover, study findings indicated both similar and divergent patterns of church-based social support as compared to previous studies on other populations (e.g., African American and White populations) and the need for further investigation of the role of church support networks for Caribbean Blacks in the U.S. Additionally, future studies should examine the influence of chain migration on church-based social support among Caribbean Blacks. Chain migration is a process of migration in which one migrant who has already settled in the host country assists another migrant, often a relative, relocate to the same location (Bashi 2007). The second migrant then assists another migrant to relocate to their location, thus creating a migration chain. Given that migrants within a migration chain are likely to reside near each other, it is also likely that some of these migrants attend the same church. These prior personal relationships and networks developed through chain migration may shape supportive exchanges between congregants. Additionally, in light of the fact that many Caribbean Black families are transnational in nature (e.g., family members residing in the U.S., Canada and home countries), prospective research should also explore whether the presence or absence of support from extended family influences church-based support.

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Table 1

Percentages and Mean of Key Variables (N = 1288)

	%	N	Mean	S.D.	Range
Gender					
Male	48.6	455			
Female	51.3	833			
Education			12.85	1.065	0–17
Age			41.11	5.82	18–94
Household Income			45,207	12686.8	0–320,000
Marital Status					
Married/Partnered	49.33	565			
Divorced	5.72	108			
Widowed	10.2	152			
Separated	4.6	67			
Never Married	30.11	393			
Country of Origin					
Spanish Caribbean	15.55	134			
Haiti	11.53	253			
Jamaica	34.11	415			
Trinidad & Tobago	7.14	114			
Other	31.65	354			
Immigration Status					
U.S. Born	34.10	319			
Immigrated < 6 Yrs Ago	7.05	91			
Immigrated 6–10 Yrs Ago	8.82	137			
Immigrated 11–20 Yrs Ago	19.35	288			
Immigrated 21+ Yrs Ago	30.66	438			
Religious Denomination					
Baptist	21.88	235			
Methodist	3.86	63			

	%	N	Mean	S.D.	Range
Pentecostal	9.88	138			
Catholic	19.85	307			
Episcopal	3.46	69			
Seventh Day Adventist	4.76	79			
Other Protestant	25.55	274			
None	7.35	84			
Other Religion	3.36	35			
Church Attendance			4.16	0.334	3–6
Interaction with Congregation Members			3.27	0.658	1–6
Receipt of Emotional Support			8.18	0.888	2–12
Negative Interaction			4.23	0.641	2–12
Receipt of General Social Support			2.25	0.391	1–4
Provision of Social Support			2.44	0.374	1–4

Note: Percentages and N are presented for categorical variables and Means, Standard Deviations, and Ranges are presented for continuous and ordinal variables. Percentages are weighted and frequencies are unweighted.

Table 2

Intercorrelations of Church-Based Social Support Variables

Latent class indicators	1	2	3	4
1. Receipt of Emotional Support				
2. Receipt of General Social Support	0.57 ***			
3. Provision of Social Support	0.52 ***	0.65 ***		
4. Negative Interaction	0.16 ***	0.15 ***	0.30 ***	

***

p < .001

Table 3

Results from Linear Regression Predicting Receipt of Emotional Support

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Age	0.03	0.01***	0.02	0.01*	0.00	0.01
Gender	-0.01	0.31	0.22	0.29	0.32	0.22
Household Income	-0.04	0.02*	-0.05	0.02*	-0.04	0.02*
Education	-0.02	0.04	-0.02	0.03	-0.03	0.04
Marital Status						
Divorced	0.11	0.41	0.29	0.40	0.37	0.29
Widowed	-0.69	0.38	-0.50	0.39	-0.36	0.26
Separated	-0.84	0.36*	-0.96	0.47	-0.65	0.32
Never Married	0.35	0.28	0.39	0.28	0.17	0.26
Country of Origin						
Spanish	0.55	0.43	0.36	0.42	0.64	0.40
Haiti	0.57	0.33	0.02	0.29	0.10	0.34
Trinidad-Tobago	0.13	0.35	-0.06	0.32	0.22	0.25
Other English-speaking	0.37	0.34	0.35	0.32	0.59	0.33
Immigration Status						
Immigrated < 6 Yrs Ago	-0.98	0.45*	-1.30	0.42***	-0.94	0.36*
Immigrated 6-10 Yrs Ago	-0.76	0.36*	-0.93	0.37*	-0.69	0.34
Immigrated 11-20 Yrs Ago	-0.59	0.40	-0.66	0.39	-0.51	0.37
Immigrated 21+ Yrs Ago	-0.48	0.40	-0.48	0.44	-0.18	0.40
Denomination						
Methodist	-0.27	0.26	-0.01	0.29	0.02	0.31
Pentecostal	0.72	0.29*	0.45	0.28	0.56	0.30
Catholic	-0.63	0.32	-0.21	0.34	0.42	0.28
Episcopalian	-1.15	0.56	-0.66	0.61	-0.42	0.62
Seventh Day Adventist	0.64	0.44	0.57	0.44	0.46	0.39

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Other Protestant	0.22	0.22	0.23	0.23	0.18	0.29
None	-0.89	0.46	-0.37	0.47	0.01	0.37
Other Religion	0.64	0.39	0.85	0.49	0.74	0.33 *
Church Attendance	-	-	0.84	0.16 ***	0.19	0.11
Interaction with Congregation Members	-	-	-	-	0.71	0.06 ***
F	1765.57		234.59		79491.7	
R^2	0.10		0.18		0.34	
N	1255		1255		1253	

Note: Gender is represented by a dummy variable; 1=male, 2=female. Reference category for marital status is married/partnered; Baptist is the reference category for denomination; reference category for immigration status is U.S. born; Jamaica is the reference category for country of origin.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$

Table 4

Results from Linear Regression Predicting Receipt of General Social Support

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Age	0.01	0.01	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.00
Gender	0.01	0.11	0.10	0.11	0.16	0.11
Household Income	-0.02	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.02	0.01
Education	0.05	0.02 [*]	0.10	0.11 [*]	0.05	0.02 ^{**}
Marital Status						
Divorced	-0.29	0.21	-0.22	0.17	-0.22	0.18
Widowed	-0.26	0.19	-0.16	0.16	-0.05	0.22
Separated	-0.20	0.35	-0.31	0.25	-0.19	0.28
Never Married	0.19	0.14	0.17	0.13	0.15	0.12
Country of Origin						
Spanish	-0.13	0.23	-0.22	0.27	-0.10	0.25
Haiti	0.28	0.14 [*]	-0.05	0.14	-0.04	0.14
Trinidad-Tobago	0.16	0.21	0.02	0.18	0.12	0.20
Other English-speaking	0.04	0.13	0.07	0.12	0.14	0.12
Immigration Status						
Immigrated < 6 Yrs Ago	0.12	0.34	-0.01	0.33	0.04	0.35
Immigrated 6–10 Yrs Ago	-0.23	0.18	-0.35	0.17	-0.23	0.16
Immigrated 11–20 Yrs Ago	-0.14	0.31	-0.17	0.28	-0.12	0.27
Immigrated 21+ Yrs Ago	-0.12	0.21	-0.11	0.22	0.04	0.21
Denomination						
Methodist	0.04	0.16	0.04	0.17	-0.01	0.17
Pentecostal	0.10	0.27	-0.08	0.28	-0.07	0.28
Catholic	-0.55	0.18 ^{**}	-0.31	0.21	-0.17	0.23
Episcopalian	-0.37	0.21	-0.11	0.20	-0.07	0.21
Seventh Day Adventist	0.66	0.16 ^{***}	0.58	0.18 ^{**}	0.50	0.17 ^{**}

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Other Protestant	0.00	0.16	-0.03	0.17	-0.06	0.16
None	-0.60	0.18**	-0.36	0.21	-0.24	0.23
Other Religion	0.50	0.42	0.61	0.46	0.51	0.45
Church Attendance	-	-	0.44	0.07***	0.23	0.07**
Interaction with Congregation	-	-	-	-	0.22	0.04***
F	147.96		230.07		1348.60	
R ²	0.14		0.24		0.32	
N	948		948		947	

Note: Gender is represented by a dummy variable; 1=male, 2=female. Reference category for marital status is married/partnered; Baptist is the reference category for denomination; reference category for immigration status is U.S. born; Jamaica is the reference category for country of origin.

* $p < .05$;
** $p < .01$;
*** $p < .001$

Table 5

Results from Linear Regression Predicting Provision of Social Support

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Age	0.02	0.00***	0.01	0.00**	0.01	0.00
Gender	0.17	0.08*	0.29	0.07***	0.31	0.06***
Household Income	-0.01	0.01	-0.02	0.01*	-0.01	0.01
Education	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.02	0.03	0.01
Marital Status						
Divorced	-0.27	0.21	-0.18	0.18	-0.16	0.15
Widowed	-0.44	0.19*	-0.35	0.17*	-0.32	0.17
Separated	-0.36	0.35	-0.42	0.28	-0.32	0.27
Never Married	0.11	0.11	0.12	0.11	0.05	0.08
Country of Origin						
Spanish	0.07	0.16	-0.04	0.16	0.08	0.15
Haiti	0.39	0.10***	0.09	0.09	0.13	0.11
Trinidad-Tobago	0.10	0.18	-0.01	0.15	0.10	0.18
Other English-speaking	0.04	0.10	0.05	0.10	0.14	0.10
Immigration Status						
Immigrated < 6 Yrs Ago	-0.22	0.27	-0.33	0.28	-0.32	0.29
Immigrated 6–10 Yrs Ago	-0.32	0.17	-0.41	0.16*	-0.31	0.14*
Immigrated 11–20 Yrs Ago	-0.20	0.21	-0.23	0.20	-0.20	0.19
Immigrated 21+ Yrs Ago	-0.37	0.12**	-0.38	0.15*	-0.26	0.14
Denomination						
Methodist	0.02	0.10	0.15	0.11	0.14	0.13
Pentecostal	0.44	0.24	0.29	0.26	0.29	0.25
Catholic	-0.46	0.12***	-0.22	0.15	0.01	0.17
Episcopalian	-0.50	0.17**	-0.22	0.17	-0.17	0.16

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Seventh Day Adventist	0.17	0.27	0.15	0.24	0.11	0.21
Other Protestant	-0.25	0.13	-0.23	0.10 [*]	-0.25	0.09 ^{**}
None	-0.37	0.20	-0.06	0.20	0.07	0.20
Other Religion	0.29	0.24	0.43	0.29	0.34	0.26
Church Attendance	–	–	0.45	0.05 ^{***}	0.21	0.05 ^{***}
Interaction with Congregation Members	–	–	–	–	0.25	0.03 ^{***}
F	793.15		3549.24		1591.2	
R ²	0.15		0.26		0.37	
N	1179		1179		1178	

Note: Gender is represented by a dummy variable; 1=male, 2=female. Reference category for marital status is married/partnered; Baptist is the reference category for denomination; reference category for immigration status is U.S. born; Jamaica is the reference category for country of origin.

* $p < .05$;

** $p < .01$;

*** $p < .001$

Table 6

Results from Linear Regression Predicting Negative Interaction

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Age	0.00	0.01	0.00	0.01	-0.01	0.01
Gender	0.41	0.11 *	0.47	0.10 ***	0.50	0.11 ***
Household Income	-0.02	0.01 *	-0.02	0.01 *	-0.02	0.01
Education	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03	0.04	0.03
Marital Status						
Divorced	-0.36	0.34	-0.31	0.31	-0.28	0.28
Widowed	-0.10	0.24	-0.05	0.25	0.00	0.19
Separated	0.91	0.51	0.87	0.55	1.04	0.51
Never Married	-0.07	0.27	-0.06	0.28	-0.13	0.26
Country of Origin						
Spanish	-0.13	0.15	-0.18	0.16	-0.11	0.14
Haiti	0.27	0.18	0.12	0.21	0.13	0.20
Trinidad-Tobago	0.04	0.24	-0.01	0.22	0.06	0.22
Other English-speaking	0.15	0.11	0.15	0.11	0.22	0.11
Immigration Status						
Immigrated < 6 Yrs Ago	-0.31	0.26	-0.39	0.23	-0.28	0.22
Immigrated 6–10 Yrs Ago	-0.32	0.29	-0.37	0.28	-0.30	0.25
Immigrated 11–20 Yrs Ago	-0.05	0.20	-0.06	0.20	-0.02	0.20
Immigrated 21+ Yrs Ago	-0.18	0.26	-0.18	0.27	-0.08	0.25
Denomination						
Methodist	-0.20	0.35	-0.23	0.30	-0.20	0.35
Pentecostal	0.22	0.28	0.18	0.29	0.22	0.28
Catholic	-0.11	0.21	-0.32	0.23	-0.11	0.21
Episcopalian	-0.41	0.27	-0.49	0.29	-0.41	0.27
Seventh Day Adventist	0.24	0.31	0.27	0.35	0.24	0.31

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	β	SE	β	SE	β	SE
Other Protestant	-0.07	0.18	-0.06	0.16	-0.07	0.18
None	0.42	0.45	0.29	0.43	0.42	0.45
Other Religion	-0.32	0.45	-0.29	0.45	-0.32	0.45
Church Attendance	-	-	0.23	0.12	0.03	0.12
Interaction with Congregation Members	-	-	-	-	0.22	0.06***
F	39.57		243.47		270.42	
R ²	0.06		0.07		0.11	
N	1256		1256		1254	

Note: Gender is represented by a dummy variable; 1=male, 2=female. Reference category for marital status is married/partnered; Baptist is the reference category for denomination; reference category for immigration status is U.S. born; Jamaica is the reference category for country of origin.

* $p < .05$;
** $p < .01$;
*** $p < .001$