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Extended Family Support Networks of Caribbean Black Adults in the United States

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Abstract

This paper investigates the extended family social support networks of Caribbean Black adults (Afro Caribbeans). Although there are several ethnographic accounts of familial ties and support exchanges among Black Caribbean immigrants, only a handful of studies utilize quantitative data. This paper utilizes data from the National Survey of American Life, which contains the first national probability sample of Caribbean Blacks in the United States. Age, gender, income, material hardship and immigration status were all associated with at least one of the four indicators of family support networks. Subjective family closeness and frequency of family contact were significantly associated with both giving and receiving informal support. A significant age and parental status interaction for receiving support indicated that older adults without children received assistance from their extended families less frequently than older adults with children. Overall, study findings affirm the importance of extended family networks for Caribbean Black adults.

Social support exchanges among relatives are an important aspect of family relations (Hogan, Eggebean, & Clogg, 1993). For families with immigrant origins, social support is often maintained through kin networks that extend across international boundaries (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; Bashir, 2007; Ho, 1991; Pessar, 1995). This study investigates the informal social support networks of Caribbean Black (Afro-Caribbean) adults in the United States. In particular, it examines the correlates of family interaction, subjective family closeness, and both receiving and providing social support. The study utilizes data from the first national sample of Caribbean Blacks (Afro-Caribbeans) in the United States.

Presently, there are nearly 3 million Afro-Caribbeans residing in the U.S. (American Community Survey, U.S. Census 2012). Historically, substantial levels of migration within

and from the Caribbean Basin have occurred since the mid-1800s as immigrants sought more advantageous employment and educational opportunities. Caribbean immigrants often have informal social support networks that include family members in the United States, Canada, Europe and the Caribbean (Chamberlain, 1999a; Olwig, 2002). Research on Caribbean Black families can potentially provide substantial insights into how immigrant families maintain support networks, despite their dispersion across considerable geographic distance. The literature review is organized in several sections that address the family solidarity model and family support exchanges, theories of immigrant support and exchanges, (i.e., migrant network theory), Caribbean Black extended family networks, kin support and remittances, and studies of diversity among Caribbean Black extended families. The literature review concludes with a discussion of the focus of the present investigation.

Family Solidarity and Migrant Network Theory

The current study draws on two theoretical perspectives that focus on patterns of social support and kinship relations among immigrant families. Family networks and support exchanges have been examined extensively in the family studies literature. The family solidarity model (McChesney & Bengtson, 1988), in particular, views the provision and receipt of assistance within families as a function of members' attitudes concerning the family (e.g., meaning and functions of family), types and level of family interactions, and expressed emotional bonds that exist between family members. The family solidarity model examines the processes and unique characteristics that are inherent to the family (i.e., family beliefs, interaction with members, expressions of emotional closeness) and their role in shaping supportive behaviors (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002).

Considering immigrant families through the lens of the family solidarity model is useful for understanding several features of the migration process discussed in theories of migration (de Haas, 2010; Stark, 1984). Migrant network theory emphasizes the role of social relations in the processes of international migration. Interpersonal and kinship relations, between migrants and non-migrants, helps to facilitate and perpetuate migration streams over time and space by reducing the risks and costs of migration and settlement (Massey 1990a, 1990b; Massey, Arango, Hugo, Kouaouci, Pellegrino, & Taylor, 1993). Used in combination, the family solidarity model and migrant network theories underscore the importance of kinship relations and networks for optimizing social support and the economic benefits of migration (i.e., contact, emotional support, remittances). Further, both theories identify culturally defined families and households as an "appropriate unit of analysis for migration research" (Massey et al., 1993:439).

The cultural backgrounds of many immigrants groups are characterized by close family relations with heightened familial expectations and obligations. Most familiar among U.S. based family studies has been the concept and practice of familism among Latino immigrant families that centers on kinship relations and values that emphasize family obligations and support over the interests of individual members (Sabogal, Marin, Otero-Sabogal, Marin, & Perez-Stable, 1987; Landale & Oropesa, 2007). Among Asian groups, research suggests that Filipinos value large extended families and place significant emphasis on kinship relations and economic support of kin (Becker, Beyene, Newsom & Mayen, 2003). Filipino cultural

traditions emphasize self-sacrifice for the benefit of the family. Reflecting this, Filipino immigrants practice high rates of transnational support and exchanges through remittances and material goods sent to kin in the home country (Becker et al., 2003). Qualitative research indicates that Vietnamese immigrant families demonstrate a family-centered cultural orientation that places collective or family well-being over the individual (Kibria, 1993). Additionally, recent studies notes the importance of family support to elderly Asian Americans and indicates that family interconnectedness and cohesion are important cultural values and beliefs (see review by Taylor, Hernandez, Nicklett, Taylor, & Chatters, 2014). For these and other immigrant groups, strong family connections and obligations that are forged and culturally reinforced in the country of origin are sustained post-migration. Further, these cultural orientations and practices promote the development and maintenance of immigrant kin networks. Ethnographic and other qualitative research indicates that Caribbean Black immigrant families possess a similar cultural emphasis on the importance of kinship relations that encourages economic and emotional family social support (Basch et. al, 1994; Chamberlain, 1999a; Thompson & Bauer, 2000). The current study's survey based examination of family support and exchanges among a cross-section of Caribbean Black families augments the understanding of important family processes for this ethnic group and can also be informative for other immigrant groups who also have substantial cultural expectations of kin support.

The family solidarity model's focus on family beliefs or paradigms can be used to understand both Caribbean Black families' and other immigrant groups' collective views of the purpose(s) of immigration for the family as a whole and the perceived role of family in supporting the migration and settlement process. Caribbean Black families define family as extending across national borders (i.e., transnational families) (Ho, 1993; Chamberlain, 1999a, 1999b; Olwig, 2002, 2007). Remittances and family and home care practices represent shared strategies to support and maintain connections to the extended family in the home country (Basch et. al 1994; Thompson & Bauer, 2000). In addition, the family solidarity model states that qualitative (e.g., emotional closeness) and interactional (e.g., types and levels of contact) features are positively associated with one another and that both are positively associated with family support exchanges. Thus, the family solidarity model views the family supportive behaviors of Caribbean Black immigrant families as ongoing and shared strategies that incorporate broader cultural and structural factors impacting the family. In addition, family supportive behaviors incorporate the unique characteristics, beliefs and patterns operating within individual families.

Caribbean Black Extended Family Networks

As discussed above, the concept of family connectedness is a prominent cultural feature in Caribbean Black families (Basch et al., 1994; Thompson & Bauer, 2000). In the context of immigration, the importance of extended families is reflected in clustered patterns of migration settlement. Migrating relatives often reside in the same neighborhood or even the same apartment building in order to provide family support such as sharing meals and child care responsibilities (Ho, 1999). Prior patterns of family support observed in the Caribbean region have been extended and adapted to a cross-national family context as would be suggested by the family solidarity model. The resulting transnational kinship networks both

recreate traditional family relationships, as well as emergent patterns that are the results of migration. Afro-Caribbean families use kin networks as an adaptive family economic strategy that provides both material and non-material social support to family members and distributes risks and resources across several households in multiple locations (Bashi, 2007; Basch et al., 1994; Ho, 1999). Afro-Caribbean immigrant families utilize kin beyond the immediate family such as lateral or horizontal (e.g., brother, sister, aunt, uncle) kinship affiliations, as well as vertical, intergenerational relations (e.g., grandparents) in creating kin networks that provide social support and assist with migratory transitions (Chamberlain, 1999a, 1999b).

Kin networks in the Caribbean region also demonstrate demographic variation in terms of factors such as social class position (Douglass, 1992; Gussler, 1998; Roberts & Sinclair, 1978). Gussler's study (1998) of adaptive household strategies and social networks among women in St. Kitts, found that social class influences the breadth and depth of social networks. Middle class women tended to have narrower, yet more reliable, social support networks, while working class women had broader networks that offered more varied support, although these ties also appeared to be weaker.

Thompson and Bauer (2000) identify several general forms of kin assistance operating in Afro-Caribbean kin networks. Child shifting, child minding, or child fostering, which provides temporary care of children by other family members in the absence of the parents, has historically been a household economic strategy throughout the Caribbean. Child shifting allows young mothers to work or migrate and send financial assistance to relatives (Thompson & Bauer, 2000). Relatives within the family network who are members of households that are the most economically secure and stable are most often asked to foster children (Smith, 1996).

The role of gender is of special interest in relation to the immigration experiences of Caribbean Blacks. In general, throughout both the Anglophone and Spanish-speaking Caribbean, gender roles are traditional and patriarchal with men and women assigned to separate spheres in the male/breadwinner-female/homemaker construction (Smith, 1986; Pessar, 1995). This idealized gender role pattern predominates in spite of high rates of women's labor force participation (Foner, 1979; Safa, 1995). Researchers note that women's employment post-migration tends to alter gender role patterns, resulting in a relatively more egalitarian distribution of domestic tasks within immigrant families of various ethnic backgrounds [i.e., Jamaican (Foner, 1979), Mexican (Hondagneu-Sotelo 1992, 1994), Dominican (Pessar, 1995)].

For Caribbean Black men, domestic activities are often viewed as being incompatible with conceptions of masculinity (Smith 1994). Historically, the lack of male support within the home has led to extra and burdensome workloads for women and an increased reliance on female relatives and female-based support networks (Ho, 1991, 1993). In addition to a reliance on female kin and networks, family formation patterns that include high rates of out-of-wedlock births and visiting and common law unions, has resulted in a somewhat matrifocal household organization (Smith 1986). This is evident in the migration experience where Caribbean Black women tend to be the central actors in cultivating transnational

kinship and support (e.g., the exchange of goods, services, and relatives) that is coordinated through sustained communication and travel (Sutton, 1992; Ho, 1993, 1999; Plaza, 2000; Thompson and Bauer, 2000). For Afro-Caribbean women, these transnational activities are not wholly new challenges but a continuation of established patterns of large extended family support networks that are being adapted in for post-modern global setting (Ho, 1999).

Kin Support, Migration, and Remittances

Family and kin support among immigrants often centers on patterns of remittances or economic/financial assistance provided by immigrants to family remaining in the country of origin (e.g., Bashi, 2007). Extant structural conditions, such as limited economic growth and employment opportunities in the Caribbean, have historically precipitated much of the Caribbean Black migration to mainland North America, Europe and elsewhere.

Contemporary migration differences between the Caribbean nations are likely related to specific structural differences. For example, in the 1970s economic reforms and extensive borrowing from the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank was implemented in Jamaica to hopes of bolstering its stagnating economy. However, the result was a devaluing of their currency and the continuation of limited employment (Bolles 1981). In contrast to Jamaica's sluggish economy that has created few employment opportunities for its large population, Trinidad and Tobago experienced substantial economic growth in the 1970s and 1980s due to its petrochemical and liquefied natural gas industries followed by a recent oil boom in the early 2000s. Political conflict has been a significant factor in the various waves of Haitian migration to the U.S. since the 1960s (Stepick, 1998). More recently, inadequate economic growth in Haiti has likely been an important secondary factor in these migration streams. Changes in U.S. immigration policies in 1965 enabled many Caribbean Blacks with marketable skills to consider migration to the U.S. as a viable alternative to limited employment at home. Some governments in the region have encouraged migration by arranging labor agreements with U.S. companies, effectively utilizing migration as a safety valve for excess population (Palmer 1995).

Simultaneous to the constrained economies of the Caribbean, labor recruitment by industries and institutions has historically also drawn Caribbean immigrants to the U.S. and Britain. Long-standing Caribbean immigrant labor patterns in the U.S. are intimately linked to remittances sent to countries of origin. For example, Caribbean Black adults have participated in U.S. industrial and agricultural labor recruitment programs, particularly during World War II (Griffith, 1986; Portes & Grosfoguel, 1994). More recently, they have been recruited for employment as nurses, health care aides, and hotel domestic workers (Portes & Grosfoguel, 1994). Remittance behaviors have been encouraged, and in some cases required, by both the U.S. and Caribbean governments under negotiated temporary labor agreements (Palmer, 1995).

Overall, family support through remittances and the familial communication necessary to execute remittance exchanges are integral to Caribbean migratory transitions, particularly among working class families (Gussler, 1998). For Caribbean Black immigrants, patterns of remittance behaviors (for both male and female migrants) tend to support the maternal household and underscore the importance of the mother-child relationship (Gussler, 1998;

Smith, 1996). Further, women often feel obligated to send money to their mother which is viewed as reciprocation for the financing of the daughter's migration, particularly among working class and low income Caribbean families (Gussler, 1998; Thomas-Hope, 1992).

Remittances from relatives residing abroad enable families to achieve middle class social positions that would not have been accessible given the economic conditions in the nations of origin (Basch, 2001; Basch et al., 1994). Common anecdotal accounts involve immigrants sending barrels to relatives in the Caribbean that are packed with hard to acquire material and consumer goods that represent another form of non-monetary social support provided through kin networks (Bashi, 2007). Remittances are also used to finance the construction of "middle-class housing" usually defined as a brick or concrete house with multiple rooms, kitchen and modern utilities (Basch et al., 1994). House furnishings in the form of appliances, electronics, linens and other consumer goods are shipped to relatives in the Caribbean by freighter in 50 gallon plastic barrels. Immigrant gateway cities with substantial Caribbean immigrant enclaves, such as New York City and Miami have shipping services that deliver empty barrels to immigrant residences and then return later to retrieve and ship the filled barrels which are usually delivered in less than 10 days (Bashi, 2007: 185–186). These services facilitate remittances sent to non-migrating relatives in the home country which supplements their livelihoods and enhances standards of living within the limited island economies in the Caribbean. The family solidarity model helps in understanding the cultural norms for family obligations which reinforce expectations of remittance behaviors, social support, and kin relations among Caribbean Black families.

Diversity among Caribbean Black Extended Families

One of the major limitations of the Afro-Caribbean family literature is that the majority of existing research is based on ethnographic studies of distinct and geographically limited immigrant communities (Bashi, 2007; Foner, 1998; Waters, 1999). Consequently, little information exists on family support networks and kinship exchanges within the broad cross-section of Caribbean Blacks in the United States. Two recent studies investigate these issues and explore within-group diversity in family networks and assistance patterns in the Afro-Caribbean population. Lincoln et al. (2012) investigated the correlates of emotional support and negative interaction (i.e., criticism, arguments) among African American and Caribbean Black families. No significant differences emerged between African Americans and Caribbean Blacks in terms of frequency of emotional support or negative interaction. Among Caribbean Blacks, however, women received more emotional support than men, age was negatively associated with receiving emotional support from family members and income was positively associated with receiving emotional support. Additionally, this study found that frequency of contact with family members was not associated with emotional support among Caribbean Blacks, in contrast to findings for African American and non-Hispanic White families (Lincoln et al., 2012). Taylor et al. (2013) found that Afro-Caribbeans reported less frequent interactions with family members than African Americans, likely due to the high levels of geographic dispersion among many Caribbean Black extended families (Basch, 2001; Foner, 2005). However, the study also found that despite less frequent interaction among Caribbean Black families, they were no different than African Americans with respect to giving or receiving family support.

Focus of the Present Investigation

The focus of the current study is on the family support networks of Caribbean Black adults in the U.S. As described previously, the framework for our examination of Afro-Caribbean immigrant extended family support networks is derived from the the family solidarity model and migrant network theories which both emphasize family relations and social support as central to international migration processes. In particular, we examine the sociodemographic and immigration status correlates of subjective family closeness, family interaction and frequency of receiving support from and giving support to family members. Given the focus on support exchanges, we also examine the impact of family closeness and family contact on receiving and giving family support.

There were several expectations for findings of this research given the above discussion of the family solidary model, migrant network theory, the cultural focus on family and kin support, women's involvement in kin networks, and transnational kinship relations among Caribbean Blacks:

1. Caribbean Blacks should have high rates of contact with their extended families correlated with high rates of social support which is necessary to meet culturally-based family obligations of emotional and economic kin assistance. This is consistent with both the family solidarity model and migrant network theory.
2. Similar to the patterns of female-centered kinship relations and transnational kin networks as found in the ethnographic studies discussed above, Caribbean Black women should have higher participation in kinship contact and support than Caribbean Black men.
3. Socioeconomic status should be positively associated with both kin contact and support in keeping with family assistance expectations and remittances behaviors among migrating relatives.
4. Based on the family solidarity model and notions of family relations and obligations among Caribbean Blacks, family closeness, and frequency of contact should be positively associated with the receipt and provision of support.

This investigation builds on a long line of scholarship in the field of family studies on kinship relations and family networks and research on family immigration. The study utilizes the Caribbean Black sub-sample of the National Survey of American Life which represents the first major probability sample ever conducted on this population and permits generalizations to Caribbean Blacks in the U.S.

METHODS

Sample

The National Survey of American Life: Coping with Stress in the 21st Century (NSAL) was collected by the Program for Research on Black Americans at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The NSAL sample has a national multi-stage probability design. The field work for the study was completed by the Institute of Social Research's

Survey Research Center, in cooperation with the Program for Research on Black Americans. A total of 6,082 face-to-face interviews were conducted with persons aged 18 or older, including 3,570 African Americans, 891 non-Hispanic whites, and 1,621 Caribbean Black adults. This paper utilizes the Caribbean Black sub-sample (n=1,621).

The NSAL includes the first major probability sample of Caribbean Blacks. For the purposes of this study, Caribbean Blacks are defined as persons who trace their ethnic heritage to a Caribbean country, but who now reside in the United States, are racially classified as black, and who are English-speaking (but may also speak another language). The overall response rate was 72.3%. Response rates for individual subgroups were 70.7% for African Americans, 77.7% for Caribbean Blacks, and 69.7% for non-Hispanic Whites. This response rate is excellent considering that African Americans (especially lower income African Americans) and Caribbean Blacks are more likely to reside in major urban areas where it is more difficult and much more expensive to collect interviews. Final response rates for the NSAL two-phase sample designs were computed using the American Association of Public Opinion Research (AAPOR) guidelines (for Response Rate 3) (AAPOR, 2006).

In both the African American and Afro-Caribbean samples, it was necessary for respondents to self-identify their race as black. Those self-identifying as black were included in the Caribbean Black sample if they: 1) answered affirmatively when asked if they were of West Indian or Caribbean descent, b) said they were from a country included on a list of Caribbean area countries presented by the interviewers, or c) indicated that their parents or grandparents were born in a Caribbean area country (see Jackson et al., 2004 for a more detailed discussion of the NSAL sample). This study is based on interviews with respondents who self-identified as Caribbean Blacks. The interviews were face-to-face and conducted within respondents' homes. Respondents were compensated for their time. The data collection was conducted from 2001 to 2003.

Family Variables—Several measures of family support are examined including frequency of receiving support: “How often do people in your family -- including children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws and so on -- help you out? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?” When asked this question, 6.79% volunteered that they did not need help from their family members help from family members. Previous analyses indicate that persons who volunteer that they did not need to receive assistance from family members are conceptually and empirically distinct from respondents who either received assistance or those that did not receive help (Taylor, 1990; Taylor & Chatters, 1988). Consequently, persons who volunteered that they do not need help from extended family members were excluded from the present analysis.

Frequency of giving support is measured by the question: “How often do you help out people in your family -- including children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws and so on? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?” Overall, one percent (1.13%) of respondents volunteered that they did not need to give help to their families (these respondents were excluded from the present analysis). Frequency of interaction 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 everyday,

at least once a week, a few times a month, at least once a month, a few times a year, hardly ever or never?” Finally, degree of subjective family closeness is measured by the question: “How close do you feel towards your family members? Would you say very close, fairly close, not too close or not close at all?”

Demographic Controls—Several demographic factors are included in this analysis as control variables. This analysis includes age (in years), gender, marital status (in first marriage, remarried, cohabiting/partner, divorced, widowed, separated, never married), parental status (have living children), education (in years), region (reside in the Northeast, reside in the South, Midwest and Western regions of the U.S.) material hardship and family income (in dollars). In the regression analysis the logarithm of income is used. Material hardship is a summary score comprised of 7 items assessing whether or not respondents could meet basic expenses, pay full rent or mortgage, pay full utilities, had utilities disconnected, had telephone disconnected, were evicted for non-payment, and couldn’t afford leisure activities in the past 12 months. A higher score on this item indicates higher levels of economic hardship (Cronbach’s Alpha = .76).

Additionally, two variables that are particularly relevant to the Caribbean Black population in the United States are included in this analysis (country of origin and immigration history). Respondents identified over 25 different countries of origin. Country of Origin was recoded into five categories: Jamaica, Trinidad-Tobago, Other English-speaking country (e.g., Barbados), Spanish-speaking country (e.g., Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic) and Haiti. Immigration status has five categories corresponding to respondents who were: 1) born in the United States, 2) immigrated to the United States 0 to 5 years ago, 3) immigrated to the United States 6–10 years ago, 4) immigrated to the United States 11–20 years ago, and 5) immigrated to the United States more than 20 years ago. Descriptive information for all of the variables utilized in this analysis is presented in Table 1.

Analysis Strategy

To obtain results that are generalizable to the Caribbean Black population all of the analyses utilize analytic weights. Weights in the NSAL data account for unequal probabilities of selection, non-response, and post-stratification such that respondents are weighted to their numbers and proportions in the full population (Herrington et al., 2004). All of the analyses were conducted in SAS and use the Taylor expansion technique for calculating the complex-design based estimates of variance. This corrects standard error estimates in analysis using complex sample designs (i.e., clustering and stratification).

Analyses examine the impact of sociodemographic and immigration factors on family closeness, and family contact; family closeness is also examined as a correlate of family contact. Following this, specific analyses for receiving and giving family support includes sociodemographic and immigration factors, as well as family closeness and family contact. Finally, based upon findings from previous research (Taylor, 1986) an age and parental status interaction was tested for each of the regression equations. This interaction was only included in those final equations where it achieved significance.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents the regression analysis of the four family network variables. The regression analysis for degree of subjective family closeness is presented in Equation 1. Age and material hardship had a significant association with this dependent variable. Older Afro-Caribbeans reported higher levels of subjective family closeness than their younger counterparts. Also, persons with higher levels of material hardship indicated lower levels of subjective family closeness. The regression analysis of frequency of family contact is presented in Equation 2. Gender, income, material hardship, family closeness, country of origin, and immigration status were significantly associated with frequency of family contact. Women reported more frequent contact with extended family members than men. Income was positively associated and material hardship was inversely related to frequency of contact. For the country of origin variables, persons from Trinidad-Tobago and those from other English countries reported lower levels of contact with extended family than persons from Jamaica. Afro-Caribbeans who had immigrated to the United States 0–5 years ago, 11–20 years ago or more than 21 years ago indicated having less frequent interactions with their extended family members than those who were born in the U.S. Finally, higher levels of subjective family closeness were associated with more frequent contact with extended family members.

The regression coefficients for the correlates of giving support to extended family are provided in Equation 3. Income, marital status, immigration status, frequency of family contact, and family closeness were all significantly related to frequency of giving support. Those with higher incomes reported giving support more frequently than their counterparts. Respondents who were remarried reported giving support more frequently than those in their first marriages. Greater subjective closeness to their family members and more frequent contact with family members were associated with giving support to family members. Lastly, immigration status was significantly related to giving help to extended family members. Respondents who had immigrated to the United States in the last five years reported giving support to their extended family members more frequently than those who were born in the United States.

Several significant relationships were found for frequency of receiving support (Table 2, Equation 4). Age, education, income, marital status, subjective family closeness, frequency of family contact, parental status and the interaction between age and parental status were significant. Respondents with fewer years of formal education and those with higher incomes indicated that they received support from their families more frequently than their counterparts. Separated and widowed respondents reported receiving support more frequently than married persons. Subjective family closeness and frequency of family contact were both positively associated with receiving assistance from extended family. Finally, there was a significant interaction between age and parental status for receiving assistance. An examination of this interaction reveals that among parents, age and receiving support were unrelated, but among non-parents there was a negative relationship between age and receiving support. An examination of means revealed that this difference was particularly pronounced among respondents 75 years and older where those without children had a mean for receiving support of 2.16 (range 4–1), whereas parents had a mean of 2.97.

DISCUSSION

This analysis provided an initial examination of extended family social support networks of Caribbean Blacks in the United States. Study benefits included the use of a national probability sample of Caribbean Blacks and investigation of diverse indicators of family social support networks. Study findings revealed that both immigrant and U.S.-born Afro-Caribbeans maintain strong ties with their extended families which is consistent with the study's expectations based on the family solidarity model, migrant network theory, and the large body of ethnographic research noting the importance of kinship relations to Caribbean Black families (e.g., Bashi, 2007). The remainder of the discussion focuses on the demographic, familial and immigration status differences in the informal support networks of Afro-Caribbeans.

With respect to sociodemographic factors, gender was significant only in relation to family contact—Caribbean Black women reported interacting with extended family networks more frequently than their male counterparts. This finding is consistent with studies among African Americans (Taylor & Chatters, 1991) and non-Hispanic whites (Antonucci, 1994) that highlight the role of women in maintaining contact with family members. This is also consistent with ethnographic research on Caribbean Black families noting women's predominant roles in cultivating kin networks (Plaza, 2000; Ho, 1999, 1993; Sutton, 1992). Women's roles in the organization and maintenance of global Caribbean kinship networks includes active interaction and communication with relatives within the network, managing reciprocal social support through the exchange of goods and services, and coordinating travel for migratory transitions and visitation. For instance, Plaza (2000) found that family connections and relationships within Caribbean kin networks were often sustained by retired women (mostly grandmothers) who traveled between family members and fictive kin in the U.S., Canada, and Britain.

Our expectations for gender differences were partially supported—women had higher kinship contact than men, but were similar in terms of giving and receiving support. Prior research indicates that contact and interaction with kin is positively associated with giving and receiving support. Given that women in our study reported more contact with family, it was expected that they would also report receiving and giving more support. However, the absence of gender differences for giving and receiving support is likely due to the fact that our analyses controlled for level of family contact. In essence, gender differences in receiving and giving support are likely accounted for by women's higher levels of contact with family members. Similar to research among other groups such as Chinese, Columbian, Dominican, and Salvadoran immigrants (Itzigsohn & Giorgali-Saucedo, 2005; Landolt & Da, 2005), Caribbean Black women's social network participation is an effective method for acquiring and distributing necessary resources and support within the family. Gendered patterns of kin contact, support and remittances associated with managing child shifting arrangements and transnational parenting are also found among Guatemalan, Mexican, and Salvadoran immigrant families (Dreby, 2006; Menjivar & Abrego, 2009). As mentioned previously, Caribbean Black women's obligations for maternal support and child shifting are linked to their patterns of kin support and family contact. The gender findings from this study support the ethnographic studies (Ho, 1993, 1999; Basch et al., 1994) that have

emphasized that Caribbean Black womens' family roles as mothers, daughters and wives are important factors for their participation in family support networks.

Socio-economic status differences indicated that material hardship was associated with both subjective family closeness and family contact. Persons experiencing material hardship reported decreased levels of subjective family closeness and less frequent contact with extended family. Given lower levels of closeness to and contact with extended family, they may not be able and/or willing to draw on family support resources for assistance. In contrast, income was positively associated with frequency of contact and both giving and receiving support which is consistent with study expectations. This is consistent with research on immigrant families which finds that family income is positively correlated with providing financial support or remittances to kin residing abroad (Menjivar, DaVano, Greenwell, & Valdez, 1998). Also, Lincoln et al., (2012) found that income was positively associated with receiving emotional support among Caribbean Black adults. Research on other ethnic immigrant groups, such as Columbians, Dominicans, Guatemalans, and Salvadorans (Itzigsohn and Giorgali-Saucedo, 2005; Menjivar & Abrego, 2009) indicates that increased immigrant incomes have a positive influence on transnational participation in family networks and support provision. Caribbean Black families' traditional functions as the primary source of social and economic assistance for members, is associated with significant expectations for support reciprocity (Bauer & Thompson, 2006; Basch, 2001; Gussler, 1998; Smith, 1996; Ho, 1991). In fact, Caribbean Black family support networks have been characterized as reflecting a "culture of reciprocity" (Bashi, 2007), which specifies norms for both giving and receiving assistance. More affluent family members commonly provide financial assistance to economically challenged relatives (Olwig, 2007; Bauer & Thompson, 2006). Further, the obligation to assist family members regardless of their geographic location (home or host nation) is enhanced for socioeconomically advantaged kin, often those family members who have benefited most from migration. As the present findings suggest, the advantageous economic position of higher incomes may result in high levels of both providing and receiving support.

The few marital status differences indicated that persons who had remarried gave support more frequently than their married counterparts. Due to remarriage, their kin networks may be larger and involve obligations to children from a previous marriage as well as former in-laws. Research on the impact of remarriage on remittances among immigrant families indicates that remarried female immigrants increase remittances to dependent children in the country of origin, whereas remarried males tend to limit or discontinue remittance to children left at home (Menjivar & Abrego, 2005). Additionally, we found that widowed and separated respondents reported receiving more assistance than their married counterparts. Family members may consider these two groups as particularly vulnerable and thus mobilize to provide more frequent assistance to them.

We found that older Caribbean Black adults felt subjectively closer to their family members than younger respondents. This is consistent with previous research on African Americans (Hatchett & Jackson, 1993; Taylor, Chatters, & Jackson, 1993) and non-Hispanic whites (Bengtson, Burton, & Mangen, 1985) in which age is positively associated with subjective family closeness. The concept of *Developmental Stake* described by Bengtson and

colleagues (Bengtson et al., 1985) suggests that older family members, conscious of their own mortality and concerned with the continuation of the family lineage, tend to perceive greater subjective closeness to their family members. Conversely, younger family members who are more likely to seek independence from families tend to perceive themselves as being less close to their families. Further, the finding of a significant age and parental status interaction for receiving support indicated that older adults without children received assistance from their extended families less frequently than older adults with children. This finding is consistent with research on African Americans (Chatters, Taylor, & Jackson, 1985; Taylor, 1986) and the literature on elder caregiving that underscores the critical importance of adult children as primary resources for elderly parents and the significant risk that childless elderly face in terms of receiving support from family.

Turning to the family variables, they were all significantly and positively associated with one another. Subjective family closeness was associated with frequency of contact with extended family members; both subjective family closeness and frequency of contact were related to giving support and receiving support from extended families. Collectively, these findings are consistent with previous research in which closeness and contact are important correlates of social support (Hatchett & Jackson, 1993; Lincoln et al., 2012; Taylor, 1986, 1985) as well as the size of the support network (Chatters et al., 1985). These findings reinforce the notion that feeling subjectively close to and having frequent contact with family members is beneficial for exchanges of social support. Conversely, strained relationships with family members and being socially isolated from family are not conducive to receiving or giving support with extended family (Lincoln et al., 2012). These findings are consistent with family solidarity model and our study expectations that qualitative and interactional features of family (closeness and level of contact) are positively related to one another and both are related to support exchanges (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry & Silverstein, 2002).

Immigration history was significantly associated with frequency of contact with extended family. Overall, the pattern of relationships indicated that Caribbean Black adults who were born in the United States had more frequent contact with extended family members than those who were foreign born. Afro-Caribbeans born in the United States may be more likely to define extended family as persons residing in the United States. Consequently, reported levels of contact with extended family would reflect their comparative geographic proximity and, presumably, accessibility. Conversely, foreign born persons may view their extended family members as residing in the home country, other countries like Canada and Britain, as well as the U.S. Given this more expansive view of their extended family network, foreign born (first generation) Caribbean Blacks may feel that they do not have the desired level of contact with members of their network, particularly those in their home country. Future research is needed on how and in what ways immigration history and nativity are associated with definitions of family.

First generation Caribbean Blacks, who immigrated in the last 5 years, reported giving assistance to their extended family more frequently than Caribbean Blacks born in the United States (second generation). This is consistent with research indicating that recent immigrants, in particular, are more likely to provide remittances and other support for family members remaining in the home country (Soehl & Waldinger, 2010). In general, studies of

remitting behaviors indicate that the primary determinants of immigrant remittances are having children, a mother, siblings, or property ownership in the home country (Soehl & Waldinger, 2010; Menjivar et al., 1998); however, this research has largely focused on Latino and Asian immigrant groups. Further research on the factors that influence frequency or amount of remittances among Caribbean Black immigrants is needed.

Country of origin findings indicated that Jamaicans reported more frequent contact with extended family than persons from Trinidad-Tobago and other English speaking Caribbean countries. The national origin differences in contact could be due to the fact that Jamaican immigrants are the largest Caribbean Black ethnic group comprising about a third of all Afro-Caribbean immigrants in the United States (American Community Survey, U.S. Census 2012). The presence of larger ethnic enclaves of Jamaicans may mean that they have extended family that have also migrated and are therefore, more likely to have contact with them. That is to say, Jamaicans as the largest Afro-Caribbean group, have potentially greater face-to-face contact with extended family living in the U.S

Limitations and Conclusion

Several limitations to this study should be noted. First, one of the eligibility criteria for the NSAL was the ability to complete the interview in English. Consequently, the study findings are not generalizable to Caribbean Blacks who do not speak English. There are other variables that are important with regards to family support networks that are not investigated in this analysis including proximity of extended family members and respondents' household composition. Also, the NSAL is a cross-sectional study and, as such, we cannot make causal inferences about the processes involved in family support exchanges and the likely reciprocal relationships existing among the family variables—closeness, contact, giving support and receiving support. Despite these limitations, this study of family support networks of Caribbean Blacks provides an initial exploration of the sociodemographic, immigration history and family correlates of giving and receiving support from extended family members.

While this study provided initial information about family support networks, future research should focus in greater depth on several of the findings noted in this study. In particular, immigration history (foreign vs. U.S. born, years in U.S.) and socioeconomic status (income and education differences) are especially central to issues of immigration and family support and warrant additional study. Future research should also investigate issues such as: 1) the degree to which Caribbean Blacks are providing or receiving support from relatives in the U.S. or relatives in their home country, 2) the degree to which residing in an ethnic enclave influences support networks, 3) the impact of household composition on family support networks, and 4) within group differences in social support among Caribbean Blacks who have migrated from different countries (i.e., differences among Jamaicans). Further investigations can provide insight on the impact of family role stressors on social support networks and their functioning—for example, the role of social support networks in caregiving for older adults.

While there is a considerable body of research among non-Hispanic whites and African Americans on family support networks, very little research addresses issues of family

support among Afro-Caribbeans. Despite the noted limitations of this study, it represents the first detailed analysis of family support networks among a broad segment of an important, but under-studied population and contributes to a growing literature on the social and family characteristics of immigrant families and Afro-Caribbeans in the U.S.

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Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of the Sample and Distribution of Study Variables

	%	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
Age		1621	40.27	5.78	18	94
Gender						
Male	50.87	643				
Female	49.13	978				
Education		1621	12.89	1.02	0	17
Family Income		1621	47044	15190	0	484000
Region						
Northeast	55.69	1135				
Other	44.31	486				
Marital Status						
Married	28.17	440				
Remarried	9.40	119				
Partner/Cohabit	12.58	131				
Divorced	5.37	128				
Widowed	9.29	178				
Separated	4.29	78				
Never Married	30.92	542				
Material Hardship						
		1607	0.812	0.526	0	7
Country of Origin						
Jamaica	31.72	510				
Spanish	14.08	180				
Haiti	12.64	298				
Trinidad-Tobago	9.99	170				
Other English	31.58	440				
Immigration History						
Born in the United States	35.76	440				
0–5 years	7.89	119				
6–10 years	8.25	164				
11–20 years	19.91	364				

	%	N	Mean	S.D.	Min	Max
More than 21 years	28.19	512				
Parental Status						
Parent	76.87	1265				
Non-Parent	23.13	352				
Family Contact		1609	5.87	0.47	1	7
Family Closeness		1608	3.68	0.21	1	4
Give Support		1580	3.25	0.30	1	4
Receive Support		1507	2.80	0.38	1	4

Percents and N are presented for categorical variables and Means and Standard Deviations are presented for continuous variables. Percentages are weighted and frequencies are un-weighted.

Table 2
Regression Coefficients for Demographic, Immigration Status and Family Variables on the Family Network Variables

Predictors/ Frequency of	Subjective Family Closeness		Frequency of Family Contact		Frequency of Giving Support		Frequency of Receiving Support	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Age	0.01**	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.00	0.00	-0.02***	0.00
Gender: Female	0.00	0.04	0.35***	0.08	0.11	0.06	0.11	0.08
Education	0.00	0.01	0.04	0.03	-0.01	0.01	-0.02*	0.01
Household Income	0.01	0.03	0.16***	0.03	0.13**	0.04	0.09**	0.03
Region: North East	-0.03	0.07	0.04	0.13	0.12	0.06	0.13	0.09
Marital Status								
Remarried	0.02	0.06	-0.18	0.37	0.36*	0.13	0.03	0.24
Partner	0.07	0.07	-0.17	0.24	0.26	0.13	0.10	0.21
Divorced	-0.11	0.07	0.32	0.23	-0.02	0.21	0.02	0.15
Widowed	0.07	0.08	-0.38	0.22	0.09	0.13	0.31*	0.15
Separated	-0.08	0.11	0.13	0.30	0.17	0.16	0.55**	0.17
Never Married	-0.04	0.09	-0.15	0.15	0.02	0.07	0.14	0.11
Material Hardship	-0.05**	0.02	-0.15*	0.07	0.04	0.03	0.08	0.04
Country of Origin								
Spanish	-0.17	0.11	-0.08	0.18	0.22	0.12	0.31	0.16
Haiti	0.04	0.06	0.08	0.08	0.10	0.11	0.07	0.16
Trinidad-Tobago	0.06	0.07	-0.29*	0.12	0.13	0.07	0.26	0.15
Other English	-0.03	0.05	-0.35*	0.14	0.04	0.09	0.10	0.13
Immigration History								
0-5 years	0.01	0.10	-0.44**	0.14	0.39*	0.15	0.09	0.28
6-10 years	-0.06	0.08	-0.11	0.13	-0.06	0.11	-0.14	0.11
11-20 years	-0.03	0.08	-0.50**	0.17	0.10	0.09	0.02	0.12
More than 21 years	-0.06	0.08	-0.62**	0.20	-0.16	0.11	-0.20	0.12
Family Contact	-	-	-	-	0.07**	0.02	0.10*	0.04

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Predictors ^I	Subjective Family Closeness		Frequency of Family Contact		Frequency of Giving Support		Frequency of Receiving Support	
	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE	b	SE
Family Closeness	-	-	0.53***	0.06	0.22**	0.07	0.53***	0.05
Parental Status	0.09	0.09	0.09	0.17	0.07	0.09	-0.85**	0.28
Age X Parent Status	-	-	-	-	-	-	0.02*	0.01
Constant	3.33***	0.24	2.20***	0.50	0.47	0.38	0.06	0.45
F	34.93***		526.37***		70.83***		396.18***	
R-squared	0.08		0.20		0.13		0.20	
N	1560		1560		1534		1461	

^I Several independent variables are represented by dummy variables. Gender: 1 = male, 2 = Female; Region: Other Region is the comparison category; Marital Status: First Marriage is the comparison category; Country of Origin: Jamaica is the comparison category; Immigration history: Born in U.S. is the comparison category; Parental Status: 0 = Not parent 1 = Parent.

b=regression coefficient

SE=Standard Error

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