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Support to Aging Parents and Grown Children in Black and White Families

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Purpose: Black and White middle-aged adults typically are in a pivot position of providing support to generations above and below. Racial differences in support to each generation in the family remain unclear, however. Different factors may account for racial differences in support of grown children versus aging parents. ***Design and Methods:*** Middle-aged adults (aged 40–60 years; 35%, *n* = 216 Black and 65%, *n* = 397 White) rated social support they provided each aging parent and grown child. Participants reported background characteristics representing their resources and measures of needs for each family member. Interviews also assessed beliefs about obligation to support parents and grown children and rewards from helping. ***Results:*** Multilevel models revealed White middle-aged adults provided more support to grown children than Black middle-aged adults. Demands from offspring, beliefs about support, and rewards from helping explained these racial differences. Black middle-aged adults provided more support to parents than White middle-aged adults. Beliefs about support and feelings of personal reward from providing support explained this difference but resources and demands did not. ***Implications:*** Racial differences varied by generation (parent or offspring). The prolonged transitions common for White young adults explained racial differences in support of offspring. Middle-aged adults may treat support of parents as more discretionary, with cultural ideas about obligation and personal rewards guiding behaviors.

Key Words: Intergenerational transfers, Family, Parents, Grown children, Social support, Family diversity, African American, Black family

In Western countries, middle-aged adults typically are often in a pivot position of providing support to generations above and below (Attias-Donfut & Wolff, 2000; Fingerman et al., 2010; Grundy & Henretta, 2006). Prior research addresses racial differences in the support middle-aged adults and aging parents exchange in Black and White families (e.g., Laditka & Laditka, 2001; Silverstein & Waite, 1993; Suitor, Sechrist, & Pillemer, 2007) but has rarely considered grown children in these support exchanges (e.g., White-Means & Rubin, 2008).

Here, we examined racial differences in support middle-aged adults provide younger and older generations (i.e., to each grown child and to each aging parent). We extend the literature regarding racial disparities in family support (Chatters, Taylor, Lincoln, & Schroepfer, 2002; Stack, 1974), by considering factors that evoke support to family members in each generation.

Conceptual Framework: Resources and Demands, Beliefs and Rewards

Elsewhere, we have proposed a theoretical model integrating structural factors and intrapsychic factors to explain family support

(Fingerman & Birditt, in press). This model builds on contingency theory, which predicts that individuals will respond to family members' urgent needs (Eggebeen & Davey, 1998; Schoeni, 1997). We have extended the theory to consider a variety of perceived needs: (1) emerging crises, (2) ongoing problems, (3) everyday needs, and (4) support for future success. Our prior research suggests that middle-aged adults respond to this full range of needs but provide different types of support (i.e., financial vs. advice) in reaction to different needs (Fingerman, Miller, Birditt, & Zarit, 2009). Each generation may experience different types of needs, and these distinctions, in turn, may translate into different patterns of racial differences in support to grown children as opposed to aging parents.

Our model also included a distinct facet of contingency theory, namely constraints on resources. The amount of support an individual provides family members is limited by resources (e.g., income, time) and combined demands for those resources (family members' needs; Grundy & Henretta, 2006). By considering multiple family members, we examine how individuals of different races make decisions about trade-offs in helping each family member.

Finally, intrapsychic factors such as cultural ideas about obligations and feelings about family also motivate provision of support (Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006). Elsewhere, researchers have debated whether structural factors versus cultural factors explain racial differences in family support (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). But cultural factors (e.g., beliefs about obligation, appraisals of rewards or stress) may lead to different reactions to structural limits (i.e., whether people choose to expand resources or reduce support; Fingerman & Birditt, in press). Here, we apply this model to examine racial differences in support to each generation.

Support to Grown Children

In American families, the flow of intergenerational support is typically downstream; parents provide more support to their grown children than the reverse (Giarrusso, Feng, & Bengtson, 2005; Shapiro, 2004). Yet, the majority of studies of support to grown children have relied on White samples. As such, we do not have a full portrait of the range of support that Black families provide grown children or how that compares with White families.

The limited research on racial differences in support of grown children has focused mainly on economic exchanges and has found that parents in Black families provide less help to children than in White families (Berry, 2006; Lee & Aytac, 1998). Resources may partially explain these findings: Black adults typically have less wealth and poorer health than White adults (Swartz, 2009), which accounts for lower parental financial transfers (Berry, 2006).

The nature of demands from grown children may also differ for Black and White middle-aged parents. Black young adults are more likely to suffer crises (e.g., crime, unemployment; Furstenberg, 2010), but these crises may be transient and not affect all offspring in the family (Birditt, Fingerman, & Zarit, 2010). By contrast, well-off young adults experience prolonged transitions to adulthood, marked by statuses (e.g., student) that necessitate persistent support (Arnett, 2000). In comparison to Black young adults, if White young adults undergo prolonged transitions and occupy such statuses, they may receive greater financial and practical support.

Cultural beliefs also may contribute to racial disparities in support of grown children. The nature and implications of these beliefs for support of grown children are not clear, however. Researchers have documented that Black Americans endorse strong filial obligation to support aging parents (Becker, Beyene, Newsom, & Mayen, 2003; Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2005), but researchers have not assessed beliefs about obligation to support grown children. White adults may experience a stronger sense of obligation to assist grown offspring due to their prolonged transitions to adulthood (Furstenberg, 2010).

Furthermore, rewards from providing support may favor material and practical support of grown children in White families. Research suggests people sometimes help because it makes them feel good (Dovidio, Piliavin, Schroeder, & Penner, 2006). Parents, in particular, may derive a sense of reward from supporting grown children to reach personal goals (Fingerman et al., 2009; Ryff, Lee, Essex, & Schmutte, 1994). If White young adults have greater opportunity to seek fulfillment of personal goals, White parents may experience a greater sense of reward in supporting them to do so.

Intrapsychic factors also may play a role in the *types* of support individuals of different races offer family members (Becker et al., 2003). Studies

examining practical and financial support by race have tended to aggregate kin support across family members, and findings are inconsistent (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Suitor et al, 2007; White-Means & Rubin, 2008). In this study, we speculated that due to their greater resources, White parents may offer more money and time to their grown children (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004), whereas Black parents may offer nontangible support reflecting both their resources and cultural beliefs. Due to widespread racism, Black parents may seek to provide their children with advice to overcome discrimination. Researchers have noted strong norms of family solidarity in Black families (Hill, 1999; Suitor et al., 2007), which may foster exchanges of emotional support. Thus, Black parents may provide less overall support to grown children than White parents but may provide certain types of support (advice and emotional support) more often.

Support to Elderly Parents

Although contradictory evidence exists, Black Americans seem to provide more support to aging parents than White Americans do (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2005; Taylor, 2000). As with support to grown children, resources and demands might help explain this disparity. Black middle-aged adults may have fewer resources than White middle-aged adults, yet their parents may have greater needs than White parents. These needs may be different than those of offspring, as Black parents are more likely to suffer disability due to factors such as lower socioeconomic status (SES) and discrimination in health care (Kelley-Moore & Ferraro, 2004).

Cultural beliefs also play a role in support of parents. Compared with White Americans, Black Americans endorse more positive beliefs regarding assistance to aging parents (Burr & Mutchler, 1999). Black women experience less burden when caring for disabled parents compared with White women (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2005). Black adults also derive self-fulfillment and find it more rewarding to help their parents than White adults do (White, Townsend, & Stephens, 2000).

Although Black Americans typically have stronger norms regarding family than White Americans (Burr & Mutchler, 1999), these norms may differ by generation. Benjamin (2000) documented cohort differences in Black American's beliefs about family and neighborhood cohesion, showing older generations may feel stronger norms of reciprocity toward one another than the youngest generation alive today. Thus, we expected Black middle-aged adults to report greater support of aging parents in response to such feelings of intergenerational cohesion, sense of obligation, and reward from helping parents.

Other Factors Associated With Support

We included covariates that might explain racial differences in support. For example, Laditka and Laditka (2001) documented the role of gender (as well as race) in support; Black women gave more support to aging parents than White women or men of either race. Family structures may play a role in support, with parents providing less to each child in larger families (Davey, Janke, & Savla, 2005). Black parents tend to have a greater number of children than White parents (Dye, 2008). Likewise, marital status may play a role in parental support. Black women are likely to be single, and the matrilineal family structure may evoke filial support (Taylor, 2000). Conversely, step family ties involve fewer support exchanges (Coleman, Ganong, & Rothrauff, 2006) and Black adults are less likely to have step family ties.

Methods

Sample

The sample included Black (n = 216; 108 men and 108 women) and White (n = 397; 184 men and 213 women) adults ages 40–60. Criteria for the study included having at least one child aged older than 18 years and at least one living parent. National data suggest 49.6% of White adults and 46.3% of Black adults aged 40–60 years have a living parent and a grown child (Sweet & Bumpass, 1996).

Participants resided in the Philadelphia Primary Metropolitan Statistical Area (including urban, suburban, and rural areas; Pennsylvania State Data Center, 2001). Recruitment occurred via telephone lists purchased from Genesys Corporation and random digit dialing in regional area codes. Genesys Corporation derived lists from the white pages, automobile registration, driver's licenses, voter registrations, birth records, consumer surveys, coupon redemption information, direct mail, books and merchandize, and other proprietary data sources. Participants who had a listed address received a prenotification letter informing them of the study, followed by a

Table 1. Background Information for Participants and Reports of Their Offspring and Their Parents

	Participants		Parents		Offspring	
	Black (n = 216)	White (n = 397)	Black (n = 279)	White (n = 562)	Black (n = 523)	White (n = 817)
	M (*SD*)					
Age	50.17 (5.36)	50.84 (4.76)	75.05 (6.93)	78.06 (6.43)	23.62 (8.52)	21.68 (6.72)
Years of education	13.69 (1.94)	14.74 (4.81)	11.93 (4.93)	12.73 (5.36)	13.21 (1.92)	14.17 (3.68)
Income[a]	3.54 (1.47)	4.89 (1.18)	—	—	—	—
Rating of health[b]	3.15 (1.11)	3.68 (1.00)	2.70 (0.99)	2.82 (1.13)	3.97 (0.99)	4.42 (0.85)
Number of children	3.10 (1.78)	2.66 (1.24)	4.16 (3.00)	2.75 (1.94)	0.98 (1.35)	0.26 (0.71)
Number of problems	—	—	1.50 (1.18)	1.51 (1.22)	0.91 (1.14)	0.90 (1.22)
Proportions						
Women	.50	.54	.66	.61	.49	.48
Married	.38	.76	.19	.50	.19	.16
Work status						
Employed full time	.58	.69	.05	.04	.56	.48
Employed part time	.08	.12	.07	.07	.15	.20
Homemaker	.03	.06	.06	.11	.01	.02
Student	—	—	—	—	.12	.24
Retired	.08	.02	.71	.73	—	—
Other	.23	.11	.11	.05	.16	.06
Has a disability	.16	.05	.35	.30		
Step relationship			.00	.01	.14	.10
Coreside with participant	—	—	.19	.08	.16	.24

[a]1 = less than $10,000, 2 = $10,000–$25,000, 3 = $25,001–$40,000, 4 = $40,001–$75,000, and 5 = $75,001–$100,000.
[b]1 = poor, 2 = fair, 3 = good, 4 = very good, and 5 = excellent.

phone call. Participants who did not have a listed address were recruited directly by telephone. Screening interviews identified eligible participants. Of 845 potential eligible participants who completed the screening, 634 (75%) were interviewed. Of these participants, 20 individuals identified as Asian American, Native American, or multiracial (not including African American) and were not included in the current study. One participant celebrated his 61st birthday between the screening and the interview, and his data were excluded.

By oversampling in high-density ethnic minority neighborhoods, we recruited a high proportion of African American participants. Data were collected from January through August 2008. In comparison to the general population in the Philadelphia area, participants of both races were better educated and somewhat more likely to be married or employed. Black and White subsamples had comparable income and rates of disability to the general population (U.S. Census Bureau, 2008; see Table 1).

We examined racial differences in background variables. Compared with White participants, Black participants had fewer years of education $t = 3.09$, $p < .05$, lower income $t = 5.22$, $p < .001$, rated their health more poorly $t = 5.00$, $p < .001$, had more children $t = -3.56$, $p < .01$, were less likely to be married $\chi^2 = 96.66$, $p < .001$, and had a greater likelihood of having a disability $\chi^2 = 21.35$, $p < .001$. Black offspring were older $t = -8.47$, $p < .001$, had fewer years of education $t = 5.52$, $p < .001$, were rated in poorer health $t = 8.33$, $p < .001$, more likely to be a stepchild of participant $\chi^2 = 6.07$, $p < .05$, and less likely to reside with the participant $\chi^2 = 10.40$, $p < .01$ than with White offspring. Black parents were younger $t = 3.44$, $p < .001$, had fewer years of education $t = 4.17$, $p < .001$, more children $t = -4.34$, $p < .001$, were less likely to be married $\chi^2 = 123.34$, $p < .001$, and more likely to reside with the participant $\chi^2 = 20.53$, $p < .001$.

Procedures

Computer Assisted Telephone Interview software allowed random order of administration of sections of the survey pertaining to parents and offspring. Participants reported on each child older than age 18 years (n = 669 for Black participants and n = 1,056 for White participants) and each parent (n = 432 for Black participants and n = 794 for White participants).

Table 2. Frequency of Support Participants Provide to Grown Children and Parents

	Offspring		Parents	
Type of support	Black (n = 523)	White (n = 817)	Black (n = 279)	White (n = 562)
Listening to talk about daily events	5.20 (2.34)	6.04 (1.79)	5.62 (2.28)	5.66 (1.82)
Emotional support	5.14 (2.37)	5.61 (2.02)	5.47 (2.39)	5.01 (2.07)
Advice	4.85 (2.21)	5.09 (1.76)	4.31 (2.37)	3.93 (1.89)
Socializing	4.06 (2.22)	4.49 (1.66)	4.41 (2.16)	4.09 (1.69)
Instrumental support	3.41 (2.35)	4.01 (2.04)	4.26 (2.48)	3.70 (2.01)
Financial support	3.42 (2.02)	3.99 (2.25)	2.89 (1.96)	1.72 (1.32)
Average total support	4.35 (1.84)	4.87 (1.53)	4.49 (1.83)	4.02 (1.42)

Note: Scale for support rating is 1 = *less than once a year or not at all*, 2 = *once a year*, 3 = *a few times a year*, 4 = *monthly*, 5 = *a few times a month*, 6 = *weekly*, 7 = *a few times a week*, and 8 = *daily*.

Measures

Background Variables and Resources.—P*articipant characteristics and resources.* Participants reported their age, gender, and marital status (0 = *not married*, 1 = *married*). We assessed resources as health and SES. Subjective health was rated on a 5-point scale from 1 (*poor*) to 5 (*excellent*). We included two indicators of SES: education (i.e., years of education) and household income in 2007, 1 (*less than $10,000*), 2 (*$10,001–$25,000*), 3 (*$25,001–$40,000*), 4 (*$40,001–75,000*), 5 (*$75,001–$100,000*), and 6 (*more than $100,000*) (McGarry & Schoeni, 1997).

Parent and offspring characteristics. Participants reported age, gender, and background information for each grown child (664 daughters and 720 sons) and living parent (543 mothers and 325 fathers; see Table 1). They also indicated marital status, whether the parent or grown child resided with them and how they were related (i.e., biological/adopted or step family tie).

Support Exchanges.—We used the multidimensional Intergenerational Support Scale (ISS; Fingerman et al, 2009) to assess tangible and nontangible support to each parent and each grown child. The scale assesses frequency of emotional, practical, companionship, advice, financial support, and lending an attentive ear to the other, using a scale from 1 (*less than once a year or not at all*) to 8 (*daily*). Consistent with prior studies, we computed the mean of the six items for each child and each parent. Coefficient alphas were high (α = .87 White parents to α = .90 Black offspring). Table 2 presents descriptive information for each type of support to parents and offspring.

Explanatory Variables: Needs.—We included measures that serve as proxy variables for parental and offspring needs, which by extension represent demands for support within the family.

Problems. As one measure of need, participants completed the Life Problems Scale (Fingerman et al., 2009). Participants reported whether each child or parent had experienced the following problems in the past two years: severe health problem or injury, emotional or psychological problem, victim of a crime, alcohol or drug problem, financial issues or unemployment, problems with the law, divorce or serious relationship problem, and widowed. We created a sum score of problems for each family member.

Student status. Student status is associated with increased parental support (Lee & Aytac, 1998). We measured this variable dichotomously (1 = *student*, 0 = *not student*).

Disability. Participants completed five items from the Community Disability Scale for each parent (Bassett & Folstein, 1991). Participants indicated 35% of Black and 30% of White parents had at least one functional disability. Disability among children was minimal and thus not included in analyses.

Explanatory Variables: Beliefs and Rewards.—We included measures that assess intrapsychic factors, such as participants' beliefs about support and appraisals of rewards from providing support.

Cultural beliefs about obligation to family. Participants completed a measure of filial obligation to support parents, adapted from prior research (Silverstein et al., 2006). Participants indicated how often adults should provide each of the six types of support in the ISS to their parents (e.g., financial, emotional, practical) from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*), $\alpha = .79$ for Black participants and $\alpha = .80$ for White participants.

Participants also completed a parallel measure regarding obligation to support grown children developed for this study, $\alpha = .72$ for Black participants and $\alpha = .74$ for White participants.

Rewards from providing support. Participants indicated how rewarding they find it to help each child and each parent, rated 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*a great deal*).

Analytic Strategy.—We tested models of racial differences in support to each generation. We hypothesized that the pattern of racial differences would vary for each generation, and different needs would evoke support for aging parents and grown children. Thus, we estimated models separately for support of parents and offspring. The dependent variable was frequency of support to each parent or grown child.

Because participants reported on multiple children and one or two parents, we used the PROC Mixed procedure in SAS (Littell, Milliken, Stroup, & Wolfinger, 1996) to estimate multilevel models, accounting for the nested data (i.e., parents and children nested within participants). The independent variable was race (1 = *Black*, 0 = *White*). First, we estimated models including race as a predictor with covariates. We then included variables assessing resources and demands, followed by a model including cultural beliefs and personal rewards from helping to ascertain whether these variables accounted for racial differences. To compare models, we estimated a model fit statistic by calculating the difference between the –2 log likelihood coefficients from each model. We examined this difference on a chi-square distribution, with the change in the number of parameters as the degrees of freedom (Singer & Willett, 2003). Post hoc tests addressed support of both generations. We also considered different groupings of variables to assure stability of findings.

Results

Racial Differences in Support to Offspring

First, we tested racial differences in support of offspring and explanations for such differences. In these multilevel models, support provided to the average grown child was the outcome and race was the predictor variable. We included participant and offspring gender and marital status, step relationship versus biological relationship, and offspring coresidence with participant as control variables. As can be seen in Table 3, with race as the sole predictor, Black participants reported that they gave less to the average grown child than White participants did.

The next model examined resources and demands on support. Resources included middle-aged participants' income, education, and health. Demands included offspring's student status, age (younger age as a proxy for needs), and offspring problems or crises. When these variables were included, the effect of race was reduced and became nonsignificant (see Table 3). Offspring who were students, who suffered a greater number of problems, or who were younger received more support. As can be seen in Table 3, the model including demands and resources was a better fit than that with only race as a predictor.

Next, we examined cultural beliefs about obligation and rewards from helping, also including resources and demands and covariates in the model. Participants' obligation to help and rewards from helping were associated with more support. Again, we compared –2 log likelihood coefficients, and this model was a better fit.

Note that across models, some covariates were significantly associated with support. Mothers reported giving more to grown children than did fathers. Daughters and children who coresided with parents received more support; married children and stepchildren received less support.

We also asked whether racial differences in support were limited to specific types of support using separate multilevel models with each of type of support (e.g., emotional, advice) as the outcomes and $p < .01$ significance level to account for multiple comparisons. These models each showed a consistent significant racial difference with White parents giving more support in the initial model,

Table 3. Multilevel Models Comparing Black and White Middle-Aged Adults' Support of Grown Offspring

	Racial differences		Model with control variables		Model with resources and demands		Model with cultural beliefs and rewards	
Predictor variables	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Intercept	4.98***	0.07	5.06***	0.13	7.75***	0.45	4.62***	0.61
Race[a]	–0.45***	0.12	–0.25*	0.11	0.11	0.11	0.13	0.11
Resources and demands								
Participant income					0.01	0.05	0.03	0.04
Participant education					–0.03	0.03	–0.01	0.03
Participant health					–0.00	0.05	–0.03	0.05
Offspring # of problems					0.10**	0.03	0.12***	0.03
Offspring student status					0.35**	0.10	0.31**	0.10
Offspring age					–0.09***	0.01	–0.08***	0.01
Cultural beliefs								
Obligation to help							0.31***	0.09
Sense of reward from helping							0.33***	0.04
Control variables								
Participant gender[b]			–0.31**	0.10	–0.37***	0.09	–0.36***	0.09
Offspring gender[b]			–0.39***	0.07	–0.41***	0.07	–0.36***	0.07
Participant marital status[c]			0.17	0.11	0.10	0.12	0.07	0.12
Offspring marital status[c]			0.10	0.12	0.05	0.11	0.02	0.11
Offspring is stepchild			–1.17***	0.12	–0.99***	0.12	–0.78***	0.12
Offspring coresident			1.54***	0.09	1.37***	0.09	1.38***	0.09
Model fit								
–2 Res log likelihood	4989.3		4389.9		3749.5		3615.3	
Chi-square test			599.4***		640.4***		134.2***	

[a]1 = *Black*, 0 = *White*.
[b]1 = *male*, 0 = *female*.
[c]1 = *married*, 0 = *not married*.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

except for advice. The analysis for advice showed no significant racial difference in the absence of control variables, resources and demands, or beliefs and personal rewards. Racial differences for all other types of support became nonsignificant when we entered resources and demands in the models.

Racial Differences in Support to Aging Parents

The analytic strategy regarding racial differences in support to aging parents was similar to that for support to grown children. For control variables, we included participant's and parents' gender, participant's and parents' marital status, step relationship to parent, and whether the parent coresides with the participant. Because number of living parents (one or two) correlated highly with parental marital status ($r = .66$), we did not include number of living parents as a covariate.

As can be seen in Table 4, with race as the sole predictor, Black participants reported that they gave more to the average parent than White participants did. We then estimated a model including resources and demands. For parents, we defined demands as parental disability, problems in the past year, and age (with older age as a proxy for needs). As can be seen in Table 4, the effect for race remained significant, although a greater number of parental problems and older parental age also were significantly associated with more support. The model with demands and resources was a better fit than that with race as the sole predictor.

Finally, we included filial obligation to help parents and rewards from helping the parent. As can be seen in Table 4, the effect for race was no longer significant with these variables. Participants' greater obligation to assist parents and finding it rewarding to help the parent were associated with more support.

Again, covariates were associated with support. Middle-aged women of both races provided more support to parents. Mothers as well as parents who coresided with the participant received more support. Married parents received less support than parents who were not married (i.e., widowed, divorced, or single parents).

Table 4. Black and White Middle-Aged Adults' Support of Parents

Predictor variables	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*	*B*	*SE*
Intercept	4.08***	0.07	4.58***	0.14	2.73***	0.71	–0.28	0.79
Race[a]	0.58***	0.12	0.25*	0.12	0.28*	0.13	0.11	0.12
Resources and demands								
Participant income					–0.10*	0.05	–0.07	0.05
Participant education					–0.01	0.03	0.02	0.03
Participant health					0.07	0.05	0.00	0.05
Parent # of problems					0.12**	0.04	0.10**	0.04
Parental disability					0.19	0.11	0.25**	0.10
Parent age					0.02**	0.01	0.02*	0.01
Cultural beliefs								
Obligation to help parents							0.41***	0.10
Sense of reward from helping							0.39***	0.04
Control variables								
Participant gender[b]			–0.29**	0.10	–0.26**	0.11	–0.60***	0.08
Parent gender[b]			–0.29**	0.10	–0.73***	0.08	–0.26**	0.10
Participant marital status[c]			0.12	0.12	0.23	0.13	0.11	0.12
Parent marital status[c]			–0.61***	0.10	–0.43***	0.11	–0.42***	0.11
Parent is stepparent			–0.17	0.40	–0.20	0.39	0.07	0.36
Parent coresident			1.59***	0.15	1.57***	0.15	1.41***	0.14
Model fit								
–2 Res log likelihood	3089.5		2758.8		2595.2		2469.7	
Chi-square test			330.7***		163.6***		125.5***	

[a]1 = *Black*, 0 = *White*.
[b]1 = *male*, 0 = *female*.
[c]1 = *married*, 0 = *not married*.
*$p < .05$, **$p < .01$, ***$p < .001$.

Next, we asked whether racial differences are limited to specific types of support. We conducted separate multilevel models for each of the type of support (e.g., emotional, advice), adjusting significance level to $p < .01$ to account for multiple comparisons. There was no significant racial difference in frequency with which middle-aged adults listen to their parents talk about daily events, but all other types of support showed a significant difference, with Black adults giving more frequent support to their parents.

Post Hoc Tests

We conducted analyses to assess stability in findings and to answer remaining questions. First, we considered whether greater support of one generation undermines support available for the other generation. Specifically, we asked whether (1) racial disparities in support to offspring stemmed from greater support Black participants provide their parents and (2) racial disparities in support of parents stemmed from greater support White participants provide offspring.

We estimated a multilevel model with support to the average offspring as the outcome, including total support to parents (i.e., sum of support to each parent) as a family level variable and control variables. The model was identical to that presented in Table 3 (model with control variables), with total support to parents also included as a variable. Racial differences remained, with White participants still reporting more support to the average grown child, $B = -0.44$, $t = -3.84$, $p < .001$.

We also estimated a multilevel model with support to the average parent as the outcome and including total support to offspring (i.e., sum of support to all offspring) and control variables. This model was the same as that presented in Table 4, with the addition of total support to offspring in the model. Again, racial differences in support of parents remained, with Black parents reporting greater support to the average parent, $B = 0.55$, $t = 4.64$, $p < .001$.

Finally, some control variables could be considered demands rather than covariates (i.e., number of children in family, coresiding with participant). We examined those variables in equations with resources and demands, excluding other control variables, and the pattern of findings was the same.

Discussion

This study extends research regarding intergenerational family support in several respects: (1) by comparing racial differences in middle-aged adults' support to parents and to grown children in the same family, (2) by examining racial differences in support to multiple parents and offspring, and (3) by comparing explanatory factors (i.e., resources and demands and cultural beliefs) in observed racial differences for each generation. The findings suggest racial patterns in support differ by generation (i.e., whether the support is given to parents or children), which has implications for how interventions for providing support to families assisting elders are designed.

The results supported our model that family support is accounted for by resources and demands (family members' needs) and intrapsychic factors (cultural beliefs about support and rewards of providing everyday support; Fingerman & Birditt, in press). These findings are consistent with literature showing racial disparities are generated by multiple factors and pathways (e.g., Schulz et al., 2000). These principles operated in this study to explain racial differences in support, but the factors that evoke support differed for each generation. Indeed, findings supporting different sides of the debate regarding explanations for racial differences in family support (e.g., Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004) may partially stem from a focus in the literature on only two generations in any study. When we considered support to parents and offspring in the same family, however, explanations for racial differences varied depending on the generation receiving support.

Racial differences involving middle-aged adults' greater support to grown offspring were explained by differences in everyday demands that offspring face. The prolonged transition to adulthood (represented by student status, younger age, and lack of marital partner) was associated with greater support to offspring. These findings suggest societal structures that offer greater opportunity to White young adults may explain the observed racial differences in support. Under similar opportunity structures, that is, when we controlled for statuses such as being a student, Black, and White parents offered comparable support to offspring.

By contrast, health crises were more evident for parents but did not explain the racial difference of greater support that Black middle-aged adults provided their parents. Black middle-aged adults' greater support of parents remained evident even when we accounted for resources and demands. Only when we included obligation and rewards of helping did the racial differences disappear. These findings are consistent with a well-documented Black American history of support of elderly parents (Burr & Mutchler, 1999; Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2005). Middle-aged Blacks, on average, gave more support to parents and that difference was explained by their stronger endorsement of cultural beliefs about support of parents, as well as personal rewards in providing support.

The findings also provide insights into the primacy of different aspects of our model of support. Our initial model presumed that resources and demands place structural parameters on support. But findings in this study suggest intrapsychic factors (beliefs and rewards) may be of equal or greater importance in support of older generations. Our findings suggest middle-aged adults of both races provide for their children if they have the resources to do so and perceive their children to be in need. By contrast, support of parents may be viewed as more discretionary by White middle-aged adults and thus varied more as a function of beliefs and feelings.

It is possible that unmeasured support to other family members played a role in exchange patterns as well. This study incorporated a greater number of family members than prior studies by assessing support to each living parent and to each grown child, but we did not include support to siblings or to in-laws. White middle-aged adults were more likely to be married than Black middle-aged adults. Thus, support to in-laws may help explain the lower support White middle-aged adults provided their own parents.

Likewise, it is notable that when we examined each type of support separately, we found no racial difference with regard to parental advice to grown children. The nature of that advice might differ, however, and warrants follow-up. For example, we did not assess support to deal with discrimination or support to foster racial pride, but Black parents offer such support to their children growing up (Ceballo & McLoyd, 2002; Garcia Coll et al., 1996) and may continue to do so for their young adult offspring.

Implications for Practice

These findings on intergenerational exchanges suggest challenges and opportunities for intervention

when families are confronted with extensive demands in caring for an aging adult or in other family crises. For Black families, interventions could build on the strong feelings of filial obligation, though in doing so, it will be important to monitor if individuals might be taking on more responsibilities than they can manage. Finally, other studies suggest that Black families might draw on other support partners in the church or broader community (Uehara, 1994; Walls & Zarit, 1991).

The findings regarding Black families also have policy implications. In Black families, middle-aged adults derive rewards from helping their parents (White et al., 2000), and policies that support the middle-aged adult's ability to support their own parents are likely to be most useful. In principle, U.S. public policy supports home care, but services and financial supports are inconsistently available and not well coordinated with medical care. Expansion of programs such as paid leave or financial incentives to give family care may be of greater benefit to Black families, facilitating their willingness to serve as full-time or part-time caregivers.

Yet, efforts must be made to assure that Black caregivers to do not suffer burn out or over burden from these tasks. A meta-analysis of studies of caregivers revealed that Black caregivers suffered less depression than caregivers of other races or ethnicity, but poorer health (Pinquart & Sorensen, 2005). Thus, policy and practice should support rewarding aspects of caregiving in Black families while attending to the physical costs such care may entail.

For White families, resources that could be used for care of parents may be limited if the middle-aged parent is also providing assistance to grown children (Fingerman et al., 2010; Grundy & Henretta, 2006). Of course, grown children could potentially be a resource in caregiving, but findings in the current study suggest demands of a prolonged transition to adulthood may direct limited resources away from grandparents. It is also important for gerontologists to recognize that needs of the younger generation are not secondary to those of the aged parents, but rather take a different form (i.e., everyday needs vs. emerging physical crises). Clinicians who work with such families may need to help these middle-aged adults balance their limited resources rather than feeling pressured to expand those resources to cover all family members' needs (Grundy & Henretta, 2006).

Limitations and Future Directions

The study also has several limitations. Participants were all from one region, the Philadelphia Metropolitan Area. The National Survey of Black Americans revealed regional and urban/rural differences, with Black families in the South showing different patterns than urban Black families in the North (Taylor, 2000). As such, findings may be limited in generalizability to northern urban areas.

In addition, the study relied on cross-sectional data. It is not clear whether racial disparities in provision of support to parents may alter as parents' health continues to decline. Indeed, racial disparities may be even greater when parents require intensive hands on care due to White middle-aged adults' greater willingness to place a parent in a nursing home (Dilworth-Anderson et al., 2005).

The study also failed to include forms of support that may be evident in Black families but not in White families. For example, we did not measure spiritual support or ways in which middle-aged adults may help support parent's or offspring's religious involvement. Religion plays a large role in Black family life (Dilworth-Anderson, Boswell, & Cohen, 2007; Hill, 1999).

Moreover, we also note that the influence of social structural factors (e.g., material resources) is not truly distinct from cultural beliefs (e.g., sense of obligation; see Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). For example, Black adults endorse intergenerational coresidence more than White adults do (Berry, 2006; Burr & Mutchler, 1999), but Black adults also face housing discrimination and difficulties obtaining mortgages that may contribute to these beliefs.

Furthermore, families in any given racial group are heterogeneous (Taylor, 2000). Consideration of racial differences here provided insight into how structures (resources and demands) and intrapsychic factors (cultural beliefs and feelings of reward) may contribute to exchanges, but these structures and intrapsychic factors also vary within races.

In sum, Black and White middle-aged adults provided support to generations above and below. Family support appears to vary by race, but this study suggests racial differences differ depending on the generation receiving support (grown child or parent). White middle-aged adults provided greater support to their grown offspring, but Black middle-aged adults provided greater support to parents. Demands from offspring explained racial disparities in support of grown offspring. By contrast, racial differences in

support to parents were not explained by resources and demands but rather by beliefs and rewards from helping. As such, gerontologists should consider generation, resources and demands, and intrapsychic factors such as beliefs and feelings about support to understand racial differences in support.

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