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Family Social Support Networks of African American and Black Caribbean Adolescents

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Introduction

Family social support, the exchange of material and emotional resources among nuclear and extended family members (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004), is an important aspect of daily life for most Americans. Family support networks can serve as protective and/or risk factors for a variety of wellbeing outcomes, including but not limited to psychological, physical, and economic wellbeing. Family support is related to higher levels of life satisfaction, lower mortality risk, and improved individual standard of living (Nguyen, Chatters, Taylor, & Mouzon, 2016; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1991; Swartz, 2009; Taylor, Chae, Lincoln, & Chatters, 2015). However, unreliable or sporadic family support has been shown to reduce a sense of personal autonomy, increase stress, depression, and other psychological problems, and exacerbate interpersonal conflict among family members (Dominguez & Watkins, 2003; Garrett-Peters & Burton, 2016; McDonald & Armstrong, 1995). It is important to note that while considerable research has examined the family support networks of adults and older

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Compliance with Ethical Standards

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Informed Consent: Prior to conducting the interview, informed consent was obtained from the adolescent's legal guardian and assent was obtained from the adolescent.

Americans, fewer studies focus on adolescents. Research is especially sparse concerning ethnic variation in family support among Black adolescents (we use the general term ‘Black’ to refer to both African Americans born in the United States [U.S.] and Black Caribbeans born in the U.S. or abroad) and how sociodemographic factors are associated with providing and receiving family support among Black youth.

African Americans and Black Caribbeans share many similar life circumstances in the U.S., such as attending the same schools, living in segregated neighborhoods, and experiencing discrimination (Goosby, Caldwell, Bellafore & Jackson, 2012; Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers, & Jackson, 2008; Waters, 1997). Given the predominance of race categorization in the U.S., Black immigrants from the Caribbean region are typically subsumed (along with native-born African Americans) within the larger racial category of ‘Black’ without reference to their distinctive cultures, histories, and countries of origin. Nevertheless, differences associated with their immigrant origins and cultures may contribute to patterns of family support that are distinctive for the two groups. Although detailed understanding of these differences is sparse, recent research has identified sociodemographic and ethnic (i.e., African American and Black Caribbean) variation in family social support within the Black population (e.g., Lincoln, Taylor, & Chatters, 2013; Levine, Taylor, Nguyen, Chatters, & Himle, 2015; Taylor, Chatters, Woodward & Brown, 2013).

Research on African American family support networks focuses primarily on the exchange behaviors of adult relatives. This research indicates that African American families often engage in patterns of giving and receiving emotional and instrumental support (e.g., housework, transportation, childcare, financial assistance) to cope with stressors and meet the demands of daily life. For example, a nationally representative study of racial differences in family support (Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004) found that approximately 70% of African Americans reported offering some form of emotional support to family members and nearly all reported engaging in some form of instrumental support.

Research on Black Caribbean family support networks has been informed by an understanding of their experiences as immigrants in the U.S. Historically, Black immigrants from Caribbean countries have constituted the largest Black immigrant group to the U.S. (Thomas, 2012). Recent estimates indicate that there are approximately 3 million Caribbean Blacks residing in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015a), representing roughly 7% of the Black population overall (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015b). Despite their long history and sizeable numbers in the U.S., only a few studies have focused specifically on Black Caribbean family support exchanges, and these center on the experiences of adult family members. Available research has indicated that the migration and resettlement process and the geographic dispersion of relatives across national boundaries play an important role in shaping the support networks and interactions among family members (Bashi, 2007; Thompson & Bauer, 2000; Waters, 1999). Typically, the immigration process happens sequentially, with family units rarely arriving in the U.S. at the same time (Waters, 1999). Given the sequential nature of family migration, Black Caribbean immigrants use extended family networks to assist with migratory transitions and to maintain ties to family members in the home country. Immigrant networks provide monetary and nonmonetary support to family members (including remittances), home care practices, and child fostering which

involves the temporary rearing of children by other family members in the absence of the parents (Basch, Schiller, & Blanc, 1994; Thompson & Bauer, 2000; Waters, 1999). Similar to African American families, Black Caribbean families use family support networks as an adaptive family economic strategy to redistribute resources and reduce economic risks. Further, family networks operate with informal norms and expectations of reciprocity among members (Barrow, 1999; Basch et al., 1994; Bashi, 2007; Gussler, 1998; Ho, 1991).

Research on the family support networks of African American and Black Caribbean adolescents is fairly limited, which is surprising given the important role of family support for social and emotional adjustment in adolescence (Levitt et al., 2005; Milevsky, 2005) and the development of positive racial/ethnic identities among minority youth (Harrison, Wilson, Pine, Chan, & Buriel, 1990; Taylor, Seaton, & Dominguez, 2008). For instance, recent work has documented the role of social support from family as a moderator of psychological distress (Taylor, 2015), psychological well-being (Taylor, Budescu, & Gabre, 2015) and socioemotional adjustment (Taylor & Budescu, 2014a) among African American adolescents. Very few studies, however, investigate social support as a dependent or outcome variable among adolescents. The few available studies on African American adolescents have shown that family members provide significant levels of intimacy (closeness), reliable affection, self-enhancing assistance, and discipline (Giordano et al., 1993; Pernice-Duca, 2010). Giordano et al. (1993) found that low-income African American adolescents reported higher levels of family intimacy and parental supervision and control than their white peers. In addition to parents, African American youth named grandmothers as their most important family member for providing support (Hirsh, Mickus, & Boerger, 2002; Pernice-Duca, 2010). Further, gender differences in adolescents' appraisals of family social support have indicated that boys attribute greater levels of support from male family members (e.g., fathers or uncles) than girls do (Hirsh et al., 2002; Pernice-Duca 2010; Richardson, 2009).

The even smaller literature on the family support networks of Black Caribbean adolescents has shown that they similarly receive significant amounts of support from family members. Harker (2001) found that first-generation immigrant youth (representing several groups including Black Caribbean youth) reported higher levels of parental supervision and emotional support (from family, friends, and teachers) than second-generation immigrants or their native-born African American peers. Black Caribbean families place a strong emphasis on familial interdependence and the expectation that adolescents contribute to the family system by helping relatives navigate U.S. culture, language, and institutions (Harrison et al., 1990; Waters, 1999; Tseng, 2004). Additionally, adolescents provide support to family members within the home by assisting with childcare and household chores. In many Black Caribbean families, older children care for and supervise younger children, and are responsible for managing the household while their mothers work outside the home (Waters, 1999).

The family solidarity model (later revised as the family solidarity-conflict model) is a useful and established framework for understanding how family relationships are associated with the exchange of social support among family members (Bengtson, Giarrusso, Mabry, & Silverstein, 2002; Lowenstein, 2007). This model asserts that the provision and receipt of support within the family is contingent upon family members' sentiments (e.g., feelings of

closeness) and behaviors (e.g., types and levels of contact) (McChesney & Bengtson, 1988; Taylor, Forsythe-Brown, Lincoln, & Chatters, 2017). That is, family members who like each other and frequently interact with one another have a higher likelihood of exchanging support. The family solidarity model emphasizes the importance of cohesion as a key component of family relations (Silverstein and Bengtson, 1991). However, the model also acknowledges that conflict is a normal aspect of family life that affects the way family members perceive one another and their willingness to assist each other (Clarke, Preston, Raskin, & Bengtson, 1999; Lowenstein, 2007; Parrott & Bengtson, 1999). Thus, dimensions of family relations such as expressions of emotional closeness and interactions with members are influential in shaping family support behaviors (Bengtson et al., 2002; Taylor et al. 2017). The family solidarity model has proven to be a useful framework for understanding diverse types of family outcomes. Rather than viewing giving and receiving support as separate activities, they are represented in the model as comparable aspects of a unified family process (i.e., “two sides of the same coin”) of family support exchanges.

Although useful and informative, current research on African American and Black Caribbean adolescents and family support networks, is limited in several respects. The vast majority of these studies have relied on small samples of low-income, inner-city Black youth (for an exception see Giordano et al. 1993), making it difficult to ascertain whether observed findings for family support reflect the broader Black adolescent population, or if they are in part a consequence of the socioeconomic and other structural disadvantages that characterize this group. In a similar vein, prior work has traditionally overlooked ethnic heterogeneity among Black adolescents, either by subsuming African American youth with other Black ethnic groups (e.g., Black Africans or Black Caribbeans), or excluding other Black ethnic groups altogether. Given that various Black ethnic groups have distinct patterns of family support involvement (for an example see Taylor et al. 2017), it is important not to conflate these differences. Finally, previous studies have focused primarily on support that adolescents receive from family, overlooking the agency that they have themselves and the support that they potentially offer to family members. Given that both giving and receiving support likely have independent influences on youth and family wellbeing, it is crucial that we examine both aspects of family support exchanges.

The present study addresses these limitations by using nationally representative data to examine the family support networks of African American and Black Caribbean adolescents. In particular, we examine instrumental and emotional support that adolescents offer to and receive from family members and how often these exchanges occur. Instrumental support refers to tangible assistance such as helping with transportation, household chores, and financial assistance (Jayakody, Chatters, & Taylor, 1993; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). Emotional support involves the provision of advice, concern, encouragement, and companionship (Lincoln, Chatters, & Taylor, 2013; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004). Our analysis investigates both ethnic differences (African American and Black Caribbean) and possible sociodemographic (e.g., age, gender) within group differences in receiving and providing family assistance. For Black Caribbean adolescents, we also examine country of origin differences in social support exchanges. Further, we explore how frequency of contact with family members and subjective family closeness are related to adolescents’ reports of providing and receiving family support. Given that family support has been linked with

African American adolescent psychological well-being, educational achievement, and externalizing behaviors (Sanders, 1998; Taylor, 2010; Taylor & Roberts 1996), understanding the factors that precipitate this support can provide important information about aspects of family networks that facilitate adolescent adjustment.

Method

Participants

This analysis is based on quantitative data from the National Survey of American Life Adolescent sample (NSAL-A), a supplemental study of adolescents who were attached to adult households from the National Survey of American Life (NSAL). The participants of the NSAL-A include 810 African American and 360 Black Caribbean adolescents for a total of 1,170 adolescent respondents. Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics for sample participants and study variables. For both African American and Black Caribbean adolescents, respondent average age was 15 years (SD=1.64 and SD=0.60, respectively). The African American sample was evenly split between male and female participants, while females made up a slight majority (55%) within the Black Caribbean sample. Average family incomes were slightly lower for African American than Black Caribbean households, with annual reported incomes of $38, 292 (SD=53,230.76) and $38,830 (SD=12,922.85), respectively. Black Caribbean adolescents were slightly more likely to have a job (18.69%) than African Americans (14.24%). The majority of African American youth resided in the South (61.8%), 13.4% in the Northeast, 15.7% in the North Central, and 9.1% in the West. Among Black Caribbeans, 63.9% resided in the Northeast and 36.1% resided in other regions (33.3% in the South and only 2.8% in the North Central and West regions). This regional distribution is consistent with census data (Logan, 2007). Lastly, more than 25 countries of origin were identified for Caribbean adolescents. The majority were from Jamaica (27.46%) followed by Haiti (12.94%), Trinidad-Tobago (12.82%), Spanish speaking countries (e.g., Dominican Republic, Cuba) (17.97%), and other countries (28.82%) (e.g., Bahamas, Barbados, St. Lucia, Martinique).

In some instances, the standard deviations for demographic factors in the African American sample were larger than those of the Black Caribbean sample (e.g., income). By way of explanation, Black Caribbeans (and immigrant populations in general) tend to be more similar to one another on key demographic characteristics (e.g., age, income, and education) than African Americans (Hamilton, 2014; Jasso, Massey, Rosenzweig, & Smith, 2004; Waters, 1999). Less heterogeneity among sample members translates into smaller variances, and thus lower standard deviations from the mean values. This issue of less variation on demographic characteristics for Black Caribbeans is related to the issue of immigrant selection. Because U.S. immigration policy establishes certain criteria for admission into the country (e.g., skill set), immigrants to the U.S. tend to be more similar to one another such that they do not comprise random samples of the residents of their home countries (Hamilton, 2014). Thus, the larger standard deviations for African Americans likely reflect greater heterogeneity within this population, compared to the Black Caribbean population. This may lead to more conservative estimates for African Americans in our multivariate analysis because higher standard deviations lead to the calculation of smaller test statistics,

making it more difficult to reject the null hypotheses and observe statistically significant findings.

Procedure

The NSAL-A was conducted in conjunction with the National Survey of American Life (NSAL). The NSAL dataset is a stratified, multistage area probability sample of African American, Black Caribbean, and non-Hispanic White adults and was collected (February 2001 to June 2003) by the Program for Research on Black Americans at the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research. The NSAL contains a total of 6,082 interviews with persons aged 18 or older (3,570 African Americans, 891 non-Hispanic whites, and 1,621 Black Caribbeans). The NSAL includes the first national probability sample of Black Caribbeans. Black Caribbeans were defined as persons who traced their ethnic heritage to a Caribbean country, but who resided in the U.S., were racially classified as Black, and who were English-speaking (but may have also spoken another language). In both the African American and Black Caribbean samples, it was necessary for respondents to self-identify their race as Black. Those self-identifying as Black were included in the Caribbean Black sample if they: a) 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. African Americans were defined as persons who self-identified as Black but who did not identify ancestral ties to the Caribbean (Seaton, Caldwell, Sellers & Jackson, 2008).

The adolescent sample of the 2001–2003 NSAL was drawn only from the African American and Black Caribbean households. Every household that included an adult participant in the NSAL was screened for an eligible adolescent living in the household and adolescents were selected using a randomized procedure. If more than one adolescent in the household was eligible, up to two adolescents were selected for the study, and if possible, the second adolescent was of a different gender (Seaton et al., 2008). This resulted in non-independence in some households. Consequently, the NSAL-A was weighted to adjust for non-independence in selection probabilities within households, as well as non-response rates across households and individuals. The weighted data were post-stratified to approximate the national population distributions for gender (males and females) and age (13, 14, 15, 16, and 17) subgroups among African American and Caribbean Black youth. The weighting process allows us to make accurate inferences about the national population of African American and Black Caribbean youth (Seaton et al., 2008).

The majority of the adolescent interviews were conducted face to face using a computer-assisted instrument in their homes, but about 18% were conducted either entirely or partially by telephone. The overall response rate was 80.6% (80.4% for African Americans and 83.5% for Black Caribbeans). Respondents were compensated for their time. Data collection for the NSAL Adolescent Supplement was approved by the University of Michigan Institutional Review Board. The NSAL-A is available through the Inter-University Consortium of Political and Social Research at the University of Michigan (see Jackson et

al., 2004, for more detailed information about the NSAL and see Seaton et al., 2008 for a more detailed information about the NSAL-A).

Measures

Six dependent variables were used in this analysis, 3 of which assessed how often respondents receive instrumental and emotional support from their family members and 3 of which assessed how often respondents provided these types of support to their family members. It should be noted that prior to answering questions in the family section of the survey, participants were prompted to think about the provision and receipt of support from both nuclear and extended family members, including parents, siblings, grandparents, aunts, uncles, and cousins.

Receiving support—Adolescents were asked how often their family members provide transportation, assist them financially, and help them emotionally. Specific items were: How often do your family members provide you with transportation and How often do your family members help you financially? Response formats for these questions used a 4-point Likert scale with a response range of never =1 to very often = 4 [Would you say very often (4), fairly often (3), not too often (2), or never (1)?]. Higher values indicated receiving support from family more frequently. Emotional support from family was assessed with 3 items which comprised an index of emotional support. These items were: How often do your family members make you feel loved and cared for? How often do your family members listen to you talk about your private problems and concerns? and How often do your family members express interest and concern in your wellbeing? Each question used the same response format [Would you say very often (4), fairly often (3), not too often (2), or never (1)?]. Values for the 3 questions were summed resulting in a range of index scores from 3 to 12; higher values represent more frequent emotional support received from family. Cronbach's alpha for the three-item index indicating receipt of emotional support was .67 for African American and .56 for Black Caribbean adolescents.

Providing support—Adolescents were asked how often they provide help to family members in the form of chores, financial assistance, and emotional support. We use help with chores as an indicator of the provision of instrumental support as it is more developmentally appropriate than transportation assistance. Although chores can be used as a form of punishment, research indicates that youth often help with chores to positively contribute to the well-being of their families and to reinforce their sense of belonging and identity within their families (Burton, 2007; Goodnow, 1988; Weisner 2001). A preliminary statement was read to adolescents: How about the things you do for your immediate and extended family members? This was followed by individual questions for chores, financial assistance and emotional support. The question for chores was worded: How often do you help them with regular chores such as shopping, cleaning or yard work? The question for providing financial assistance to family was worded: How often do you give them financial assistance? As before, three questions were used to assess frequency of emotional support that adolescents provided to family members. Adolescents were asked, How often do you make your family feel loved and cared for? How often do you listen to them about their private problems and concerns? How often do you express interest and concern in their

wellbeing? Values for the three questions were summed resulting in a range of index scores from 3 to 12; higher values representing more frequent emotional support that adolescents provided to their family. Cronbach's alpha for the three-item index for providing emotional support to family was .68 for African American adolescents and .64 for Black Caribbean adolescents. It should be noted that although the three-item index for receiving emotional support for Black Caribbean adolescents indicates moderate internal consistency, this same scale has been used in other work using the NSAL adult sample (e.g., Taylor et al., 2015). Additionally, our use of items for the emotional support index, as well as those for instrumental support is consistent with prior research assessing family support exchanges (e.g., Lincoln et al., 2003, 2012; Sarkisian & Gerstel, 2004; Taylor et al., 2014).

Sociodemographic and family correlates—Several sociodemographic factors (i.e., ethnicity, age, gender, family income level, employment status, and region), which have known associations with family relationships and support exchanges, were included. Ethnicity was a dichotomous variable specifying whether the respondent is African American or Black Caribbean. Age was coded in years and gender was a dichotomous variable indicating whether the respondent was male or female. Family income was a continuous variable coded in dollars. Employment status indicated whether adolescents had a current job. The categories of region were tailored to the demographic distribution of the African American and Black Caribbean populations. There were four categories of region for African Americans (Northeast, North Central, South, West) and two categories for Black Caribbeans (Northeast, Other). These region categories reflected the geographic distribution of these two populations, with Black Caribbeans being highly concentrated in the Northeast (e.g., New York, Connecticut, Washington, D.C.) and only a few in the North Central and West regions (2.8%). The analyses for Black Caribbeans included a Caribbean-specific variable for country of origin. Black Caribbean respondents reported over 25 different countries of origin. This variable, country of origin, was recoded into five categories: Jamaica, Spanish-speaking country (e.g., Dominican Republic, Cuba), Haiti, Trinidad & Tobago, and other English-speaking country (e.g., Barbados).

In addition to these sociodemographic characteristics, two family correlates that are commonly used in social support research were included as independent variables: frequency of contact and subjective family closeness. Frequency of contact with family members was measured by the question: "How often do you see, write, or talk on the telephone with family or relatives who do not live with you? Would you say nearly every day (7), at least once a week (6), a few times a month (5), at least once a month (4), a few times a year (3), hardly ever (2) or never (1)?" Degree of subjective family closeness was measured by the question: "How close do you feel towards your family members? Would you say very close (4), fairly close (3), not too close (2) or not close at all (1)?"

Data Analyses

Descriptive analyses were conducted to assess levels and types of support that adolescents give to and receive from family members and to provide the distribution of demographic characteristics and family correlates in the total sample. Bivariate associations were tested using the Rao-Scott χ^2, which is a complex design-corrected measure of association. The

percentages represent weighted proportions to approximate the national population distributions of African American and Black Caribbean adolescents. Linear regression analyses examined the impact of sociodemographic and family factors on the receipt and provision of family support. For all analyses, we computed the variance inflation factor (VIF) to check for multicollinearity between the independent variables. The largest VIF was less than 2 which is far below both the threshold of 10 and the more stringent threshold of 4, which many researchers regard as a sign of severe or serious multicollinearity (O'Brien, 2007). All analyses were conducted using SAS 9.1.3, which uses the Taylor expansion approximation technique for calculating the complex design-based estimates of variance. All analyses utilized sampling weights to adjust for non-independence in selection probabilities within households, as well as non-response rates across households and individuals. Analyses also took into account the complex design of the NSAL-A sample to produce nationally representative population estimates and standard errors that are generalizable to the African American and Black Caribbean adolescent population.

Results

Percentage distributions for the 3 variables assessing receipt of support from family members (Table 1) indicated that both African American and Black Caribbean respondents reported receiving similarly high levels of instrumental, and emotional support (Rao-Scott chi-square analyses and t-tests were conducted when appropriate to determine statistically significant differences between groups; results are shown in text). Combining response categories for very often and fairly often, 87.2% of African American youth reported receiving transportation help, compared to 82.6% of Black Caribbean youth, X^2 (1, N = 1160) = 1.09, p > .05. Eighty-six percent of African American adolescents reported receiving financial assistance very or fairly often, relative to 85.3% of Black Caribbean adolescents, X^2 (1, N = 1151) = .048, p > .05. Additionally, both African Americans and Black Caribbeans indicated receiving high levels of emotional support from family members $t(1) = 1.02$, p > .05.

With the exception of financial assistance, percentage distributions for support provided to family members were similar to percentages for receiving assistance. Among African Americans adolescents, the average level of emotional support respondents reported providing to relatives is 10.0, compared to 9.7 for Black Caribbean adolescents, $t(1) = 1.59$, p > .05. Likewise, 85.4% of African Americans reported helping with chores, compared to 87.4% of Black Caribbeans, X^2 (1, N = 1163) = .083, p > .05. Both groups provided smaller, but non-negligible amounts of financial support to family members, with Black Caribbean youth being less likely than African American youth to do so. Roughly half (44%) of African American adolescents reported offering financial assistance to relatives either very or fairly often, compared to nearly 3 out of 10 (29%) of their Black Caribbean peers, X^2 (1, N = 1084) = 30.20, p< .001.

Table 2 presents coefficients from regression analyses on ethnic differences in the receipt and provision of various types of family support. Ethnicity was represented by a dummy variable with Black Caribbean adolescents as the excluded (reference) category. For each dependent variable, the regression models assessed their association with ethnicity, while

controlling for the effects of all sociodemographic (i.e., age, gender, family income, region, and nativity) and family factors. Overall, after taking into account the sociodemographic factors and family correlates, African American and Black Caribbean adolescents received and gave similar levels of family support. Specifically, we observed no statistically significant differences in the levels of transportation or financial assistance received by African American or Black Caribbean youth, the frequency of help with chores that they provided, or the levels of emotional support that they received or provided. Consistent with results from the percentage distributions, one significant ethnic difference for provision of financial assistance indicated that, on average, African American adolescents reported providing financial help to family members with greater frequency than their Black Caribbean counterparts ($b = .50$, $p < .001$).

Tables 3 and 4 display regression coefficients for receiving and giving family support for African American and Black Caribbean adolescents, respectively. We begin by discussing regression analyses for the receipt of support among African American youth, followed by a discussion of support provision by this group. We then turn our attention to the models for receiving support for Black Caribbean adolescents, followed by support provision by this group. Both age and family closeness were associated with frequency of receiving transportation assistance among African American adolescents (Table 3). Younger, as compared to older, adolescents received transportation assistance more frequently ($b = -.08$, $p < .001$), and family closeness was positively associated with this outcome ($b = .33$, $p < .001$). Family income, region, and family closeness were all related to frequency of receiving financial assistance. Adolescents in higher income families received more financial assistance than those in lower income families ($b = .01$, $p < .01$). Youth living in the North Central ($b = -.20$, $p < .05$) and Northeast regions ($b = -.12$, $p < .05$) received less financial help than their peers living in the South. Further, adolescents who reported higher levels of family closeness received more financial help ($b = .27$, $p < .001$). With regard to receiving emotional support, only family closeness was (positively) related to this outcome ($b = 1.20$, $p < .001$).

Age, region, and family closeness were associated with frequency of providing help with chores among African American adolescents. Younger adolescents reported helping with chores more often than older adolescents ($b = -.06$, $p < .001$). Youth living in the Northeast region provided less help with chores than those living in the South ($b = -.20$, $p < .01$). Adolescents who reported greater family closeness provided more assistance with chores than those who experienced less family closeness ($b = .16$, $p < .01$). For financial assistance, age, family income, region, and family closeness were all related to the provision of this type of support. Older adolescents ($b = .05$, $p < .05$) and those with lower family incomes ($b = -.02$, $p < .05$) reported offering financial help more frequently than younger adolescents and those with higher family incomes. Youth living in the West ($b = -.41$, $p < .001$) provided financial assistance less often than those living in the South. Further, family closeness was positively related to frequency of providing financial assistance ($b = .15$, $p < .05$). Finally, in terms of providing emotional support, we found that gender, family contact, and family closeness were associated with this outcome. Girls ($b = .45$, $p < .001$) reported offering higher levels of emotional support than boys and both family contact ($b = .12$, $p < .01$) and family closeness ($b = .99$, $p < .001$) were positively related to providing emotional support.

Results for the receipt of support among Black Caribbean adolescents (Table 4), indicated that age, region, and family contact were all associated with frequency of receiving transportation help. Younger adolescents received transportation assistance more often than older adolescents ($b = -.14$, $p < .01$), as well as adolescents living in the Northeast region, compared to those living in other U.S. regions ($b = .23$, $p < .05$). Respondents who reported having more frequent family contact ($b = .06$, $p < .01$) were more likely to receive transportation assistance. Gender and family closeness were related to frequency of receiving financial assistance. Adolescent girls received more financial help than adolescent boys ($b = .32$, $p < .05$), as did youth who reported greater family closeness ($b = .35$, $p < .01$). In terms of emotional support, only family closeness was (positively) associated with the receiving this form of support ($b = 1.41$, $p < .001$).

Country of origin and family closeness were both related to frequency of providing help with chores. Youth from Trinidad-Tobago ($b = -.47$, $p < .05$) were less likely to provide chores assistance than those from Jamaica. Family closeness was positively associated with helping with chores ($b = .33$, $p < .001$). In terms of financial support, gender, region, country of origin, and family closeness were associated with providing this type of support. Adolescent girls provided financial assistance less frequently than adolescents boys ($b = -.40$, $p < .05$). Black Caribbean adolescents from the Northeast region provided financial help more frequently than those living in other U.S. regions ($b = .39$, $p < .01$). Similarly, adolescents who trace their heritage to the Spanish Caribbean ($b = .46$, $p < .001$) or Haiti ($b = .27$, $p < .05$), provided financial help more frequently compared to youth from Jamaica. Youth who reported greater feelings of family closeness also provided financial assistance more frequently ($b = .22$, $p < .01$). Gender, income, country of origin, and family closeness were related to the provision of emotional support. Adolescent girls provided emotional support more frequently than adolescent boys, ($b = .34$ $p < .05$), as did youth from higher income families ($b = .04$ $p < .05$), those with a Spanish Caribbean country of origin ($b = .29$ $p < .05$), and those with higher levels of subjective family closeness ($b = .81$, $p < .001$).

As noted earlier, the Cronbach's Alpha for the receipt of emotional support was low among Black Caribbean adolescents. Auxiliary analysis (not shown) of the 3 emotional support items (i.e., felt loved/cared for, family listens to private concerns, family interested in their well-being) separately indicated several differences. Black Caribbean adolescents in the Northeast were less likely than those in other regions to say that they felt loved and cared for ($b = -.05$, $p < .05$). Age was significant for two of the three indicators of the receipt of emotional support. Younger Black Caribbean adolescents reported feeling loved and cared for ($b = -.11$, $p < .05$) and that their families expressed interest in their well-being ($b = -.05$, $p < .05$) more frequently than their older counterparts. Findings for country of origin differences indicated that Haitians ($b = -.34$, $p < .05$) were less likely than Jamaicans to indicate that their families listened to their private concerns. Adolescents from both the Spanish Caribbean and Trinidad-Tobago were less likely than Jamaicans to indicate that their families expressed interest in their well-being ($b = -.36$, $p < .05$ for Spanish Caribbean and $b = -.21$, $p < .05$ for Trinidad-Tobago), but were more likely to indicate that their families listened to their private concerns ($b = .24$, $p < .05$ for Spanish Caribbean and $b = .35$, $p < .05$ for Trinidad-Tobago). The same set of separate analyses for the 3 receipt of emotional support items were conducted for African Americans. We did not find any

differences in the analysis of the receipt of emotional support index and the items analyzed separately.

Discussion

This study investigated American African and Black Caribbean adolescents' reports of instrumental and emotional support exchanges with their family members, and the sociodemographic and family relationship correlates of those exchanges. This study builds upon prior research on the social support networks of Black families in several key ways. First, unlike other studies that typically focus on adults or older adults, we center the experiences of adolescents. Second, instead of studying adolescents as only recipients of support, we examined their role in providing support to their family networks. Third, rather than conflate the family support networks of African American and Black Caribbean adolescents, we compare differences among these two ethnic groups that are usually treated as a single group. Our findings indicate that both groups of adolescents provide and receive a significant amount of support from their family members and sociodemographic and family correlates are associated with differences in support exchanges.

Age was inversely related to receiving instrumental support for both African American and Black Caribbean youth. Younger adolescents received transportation assistance more often than older youth, a likely reflection of their inability to drive and dependency on family members for transportation. Further, among African Americans, younger adolescents were more likely to provide help with chores, while older youth provided more financial help. These age differences are consistent with social norms regarding age appropriate household responsibilities. While younger children spend more time at home and are often expected to assist with household chores, older adolescents spend more time outside the home. Further, developing cognitive, physical, and emotional maturity among older adolescents may make them more aware of the increased social expectations for them to assist with household finances (Chase-Lansdale et al., 2011; Conger, Conger, Glen, Elder, & Lorenz, 1992, Phillips & Sandrom, 1990; Taylor & Budescu, 2014b).

Among Black Caribbeans, younger adolescents, in contrast to older adolescents, reported that their families expressed interest in their well-being and that their family was more likely to make them feel loved and cared for. Developmentally, one could argue that it would be expected that younger adolescents need and receive more emotional support from family than their older counterparts. Interestingly, however, there were no significant age differences for these items for African Americans. The reasons behind the noted ethnicity differences in these relationships are unclear and deserve additional study.

The provision and receipt of support is also patterned by gender norms for both groups of adolescents. African American girls provided emotional support more often than did boys, while Black Caribbean girls received more emotional support and financial help, but provided less financial assistance than did boys. These findings likely reflect family gender-role socialization efforts that are geared to socialize boys and girls to fulfill distinct roles in their families--boys as breadwinners and girls as emotional resources within their families. Research confirms that parents often encourage their children to engage in gender specific

activities and interaction styles whereby girls, in particular, are expected to be more emotionally expressive (Adams, Kuebli, Boyle, & Fivush, 1995; Lytton & Romney, 1991; Siegel & Silverstein, 1994).

Family financial resources were also related to family support exchanges among adolescents. African American youth from higher income households received financial help more frequently than those from lower income households, while youth from lower income households provided financial assistance to their family more frequently. This suggests that African American families with higher incomes are in a better economic position to provide financial assistance to adolescents and require less financial help from them. In contrast to this pattern, Black Caribbean adolescents from more affluent backgrounds received less financial help than those from less advantaged backgrounds and provided less help with household chores. While seemingly counter-intuitive, the findings for financial support to adolescents may reflect differences in how and where resources are distributed in Black Caribbean families. That is, more well-off households may channel resources to relatives residing in the home country as remittances that help improve their standard of living and/or to fund immigration to the U.S. Several studies find that more financially stable Black Caribbean immigrant families regularly send monetary support in the form of remittances and consumer goods to less financially secure relatives (Bashi, 2007; Thompson & Bauer, 2000; Waters, 1999). With regard to help with chores, Black Caribbean youth from higher income families may also provide less help with chores if they have an immigrant relative temporarily living in their household who may assist with chores as an exchange for lodging and form of reciprocity (Bashi, 2007; Waters, 1999). For instance, Bashi (2007) describes living arrangements whereby recently arrived Black Caribbean immigrants (termed “spokes”) reside in a sponsor’s (termed “hubs”) home for a period of time. Bashi (2007) indicates that spokes are not expected to pay rent enabling them to save money to establish their own households. However, they are expected to contribute to household maintenance by doing chores and occasionally buying groceries. Hubs, on the other hand, generally have higher incomes and high status occupations (Bashi, 2007: 83). Consequently, adolescents (who are the sponsor’s children) residing in these households may have fewer chores because of the negotiated household responsibilities assigned to temporary household residents.

Region was also related to receiving and providing support. African American youth living in the Northeast and North Central regions received financial help less frequently than those residing in the South. Adolescents in the North Central region also provided help with chores less frequently, and those in the West provided financial assistance less often than their peers in the South. In general, regional differences are not examined in research on adolescent social support networks. However, a limited amount of research on African American adults finds either few regional differences (Lincoln et al., 2013) or that African Americans in the South have a support advantage. For instance, older African Americans who reside in the South have larger helper networks than residents of other regions (Chatters et al., 1985, 1986). Similarly, African American adolescents in the South have a support advantage with regards to receiving financial assistance and, in addition, are more involved as providers of financial assistance and helping with household chores.

Significant region differences among Black Caribbeans indicated that youth who reside in the Northeast received transportation assistance more frequently and provided financial assistance more frequently than their counterparts in other regions. Research based on the NSAL adult sample and using the same coding scheme failed to identify any regional differences for frequency of receiving emotional support (Lincoln et al., 2013) nor in receiving or providing overall support (Taylor et. al., 2017). Overall, extremely little research focuses on regional differences in family support networks among both adolescents and adults. Admittedly, relatively fewer studies are national in scope; however, regional differences are typically not examined even in studies that are based on a national sample. With growing geographic dispersion of immigrant groups in the U.S. (Ogunwole, Battle, & Cohen, 2017), there is clearly a need for more research of this type among Black Caribbeans and other populations.

Significant country of origin differences indicated that, as compared to their Jamaican counterparts, youth from Haiti provided financial assistance to family members more frequently. Similarly, adolescents from Spanish speaking Caribbean countries provided financial assistance and emotional support to family members on a more frequent basis. The reasons associated with these differences are not clear. However, we note that Jamaicans represent roughly one-third of all Black Caribbean immigrants, comprise the largest Black Caribbean ethnic group in the U.S., and have high rates of naturalization (Ogunwole et al., 2017). As such, the larger numbers of Jamaicans and their status as native English language speakers, may confer social and economic advantages that mitigate the need for youth to be involved in providing frequent family support (money and emotional support). In contrast, smaller numbers of immigrants from Spanish speaking countries and Haiti, coupled with lower English proficiency (Ogunwole et al., 2017) and potential language barriers that they may encounter in the U.S. in various social sectors (health care, employment), may mean that youth are more likely to serve as ‘language brokers’ (Martinez, McClure & Eddy, 2009) and provide financial and emotional support to their family members. In contrast, youth from Trinidad-Tobago indicated that they provided help with chores on a less frequent basis than their Jamaican counterparts. We have no clear explanation for this finding and suggest that it deserves further study.

Black Caribbean adolescents from both the Spanish Caribbean and Trinidad-Tobago were more likely than Jamaicans to indicate that their families listened to their private concerns. However, they were less likely to indicate that their families expressed interest in their well-being. The current state of the literature on Black Caribbeans adolescents is underdeveloped and provides no insight into this extremely nuanced finding. The vast majority of the literature on this population is ethnographic, focuses on immigrants from a single country (Jamaica, Haiti) or from West Indian countries, and is mostly on adults and the process of assimilation into American life (e.g., Waters, 1999). Clearly this is an issue where both survey and qualitative research is needed.

As anticipated by the family solidarity model, features of family relationships (i.e., frequency of contact and subjective closeness) were related to both providing and receiving instrumental and emotional support for both African American and Black Caribbean youth (McChesney & Bengtson, 1988; Taylor, et al., 2017). Family sentiments (i.e., feelings of

closeness) were positively related to family support exchanges, such that African American youth who reported higher levels of subjective family closeness received and provided instrumental, financial, and emotional support more often than those who reported lower levels of subjective family closeness. For Black Caribbean youth, family closeness was positively associated with giving and providing all forms of support, with the exception of transportation assistance. Taken together, these findings are consistent with prior work with adult samples indicating that closeness is positively related to social support (Hatchett & Jackson, 1993; Lincoln et al., 2013; Taylor et al., 2017) and confirm family solidarity model assertions that affective characteristics of family relationships (i.e., family cohesion) are associated with levels of support exchanged between family members (McChesney & Bengtson, 1988).

In contrast and somewhat surprisingly, frequency of contact with family had more limited associations. Family contact was only positively associated with providing emotional support for African American adolescents and receiving transportation assistance for Black Caribbean adolescents. In studies of the adult population, frequency of contact is typically strongly and positively related to various indicators of family support including reciprocal family support exchanges (Taylor, Mouzon, Nguyen, & Chatters, 2016), receiving emotional support from family members (Lincoln et al., 2013), and anticipated support (Chatters, Taylor, & Jackson, 1985). Overall, our findings indicate that family contact is not a consistent or strong correlate of support among adolescents, despite its importance for family support for adults. The survey items specifically asked about giving and receiving assistance with both nuclear and extended family members, with the assumption that respondents would take into consideration family members who reside with them, as well as those who reside in separate households. However, many adolescents aged 13–17 years may be considering only those family members who reside within their household. Given this, the lack of a significant finding for family contact may reflect reduced response variability (i.e., ceiling effects) in family contact due to reports of high levels of contact (i.e., daily) with family.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be noted. First, due to the cross-sectional nature of the NSAL Adolescent Supplement, we can make no causal claims about the relationships between the sociodemographic and family correlates and family support. Future studies relying on longitudinal data will permit more meaningful causal inferences. Second, the three-item index for receiving emotional support for Black Caribbean adolescents has moderate internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .56) and analysis of the 3 items separately revealed important differences. This index (same items) had adequate internal consistency for Black Caribbean respondents in the NSAL adult sample (Cronbach's alpha = .72, Lincoln et al., 2013). Future work should investigate the measurement of emotional support among Black Caribbean adolescents using a variety of techniques including focus groups and in-depth interviews. It should also investigate differences between adolescents and adults, as well as differences by the families' country of origin. Similarly, although the measures of instrumental and financial support that are included in this study have been commonly used as indicators of these types of support (e.g.,

Sarkisian and Gerstel 2004, Jayakody et al. 1993), they are not exhaustive. Future research should explore adolescents' provision and receipt of support using additional measures of instrumental and financial support. For instance, measures such as helping older relatives who are ill and helping with hair care for younger siblings are the types of support that many adolescents regularly provide to their families. Third, the use of the term "family social support" in this study includes both nuclear and extended family members. While this provides a more global measure of Black adolescents' family social support networks, it does not allow us to distinguish between support provided by and received from these two distinct sets of family members. Fourth, our analysis does not investigate recent African immigrants to the United States which is a growing population and deserving of more research. Subsequent studies with information on country of origin should examine group differences within this population. Finally, all family support measures were self-reported and are subject to recall and social desirability biases.

Despite these limitations, the study makes several important contributions to the literature on adolescents and family support exchanges. Our findings are consistent with expectations based on the family solidarity model and a growing body of research on the family support networks of African American and Black Caribbean adolescents (e.g., Giordano et al. 1993; Harker, 2001; Pernice-Duca, 2010). This research adds to the family support literature by using a national probability sample of African American and Black Caribbean adolescents to examine within group and across group differences in the levels of instrumental and emotional support that youth give and receive from family members. This study's focus on sociodemographic and family correlates of support provides a more nuanced understanding of how and under what circumstances African American and Black Caribbean adolescents contribute to the exchange of resources within their family systems. African American and Black Caribbean youth were largely similar with respect to support exchanges and their correlates. However, differences between the two groups, as well as noted within group distinctions documents the importance of sociodemographic and family factor variability in patterns of support exchanges. Finally, the special focus on adolescents' involvement in family support exchanges has important implications for advancing research and policy on how support exchanges within the family impact individual and family wellbeing.

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Table 1

Distribution of Demographic and Family Variables[a].

Demographic Variables	African Americans		Black Caribbeans	
	%	N	%	N
Age[b]				
Mean	14.96	810	15.22	360
S.D.	1.64		0.60	
Income				
Mean	38291.76	807	38829.56	357
S.D.	53230.76		12922.85	
Gender				
Male	50.39	398	44.78	165
Female	49.61	412	55.22	195
Adolescent Employment[b]				
Yes	14.24	120	18.69	60
Region[b]				
Northeast	13.35	87	63.89	251
North Central	15.72	101	--	
South	61.82	569	--	
West	9.10	52	--	
Other	--		36.11	106
Families Country of Origin				
Jamaica	--		27.46	100
Spanish	--		17.97	23
Haiti	--		12.94	82
Trinidad-Tobago	--		12.82	45
Other	--		28.82	103
Family Contact				
Mean	5.45	810	5.23	360
S.D.	2.05		0.82	
Subjective Family Closeness				
Mean	3.62	809	3.58	360
S.D.	0.73		0.29	
Frequency of Receiving Transportation				
% Very Often/Fairly Often	87.2	804	82.6	356
Mean	3.50		3.38	
S.D.	0.93		0.38	
Frequency of Receiving Financial Assistance				
% Very Often/Fairly Often	85.7	801	85.3	350
Mean	3.44		3.46	
S.D.	0.95		0.36	
Frequency of Receiving Emotional Support				

Demographic Variables	African Americans		Black Caribbeans	
	%	N	%	N
Mean	10.19	810	10.10	360
S.D.	2.12		0.76	
Frequency of Providing Chores				
% Very Often/Fairly Often	85.4	807	87.4	356
Mean	3.37		3.32	
S.D.	0.94		0.34	
Frequency of Providing Financial Assistance[b]				
% Very Often/Fairly Often	44.0	768	29.0	316
Mean	2.37		1.92	
S.D.	1.16		0.45	
Frequency of Providing Emotional Support				
Mean	9.95	808	9.70	360
S.D.	2.16		0.79	

[a] Percents are weighted; frequencies are unweighted.

[b] Indicates significant differences between African Americans and Black Caribbeans at p<.05.

* p<.05

** p< .01

*** p<.001.

Table 2

Regression Analysis of Ethnic Differences between African American Adolescents and Black Caribbean Adolescents on the Receipt and Provision of Social Support

Independent Variables	Frequency of Receiving Transportation b(SE)	Frequency of Receiving Financial Assistance b(SE)	Frequency of Receiving Emotional Support b(SE)	Frequency of Providing Chores b(SE)	Frequency of Providing Financial Assistance b(SE)	Frequency of Providing Emotional Support b(SE)
Ethnicity						
African American	0.04(0.13)	−0.08(0.09)	0.04(0.08)	−0.04(0.19)	0.50(0.09)***	0.32(0.33)
Black Caribbean	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
R-Square	0.13	0.08	0.21	0.04	0.06	0.15
F	10.82***	14.07***	19.91***	9.42***	10.54***	18.68***
df	40	40	40	40	40	40
N	1153	1144	1163	1156	1077	1161

*p<.05

**p< .01

***p<.001

b=unstandardized coefficient

SE=standard error

[a]Regressions control for: Gender, age, income, region, adolescent employment, Family Contact, Family Closeness.

[b]Ethnicity: African Americans=1, Black Caribbeans=0

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Table 3

Regression Analysis of the Family Network and Demographic Variables on the Receipt and Provision of Support among African American Adolescents

Independent Variables	Frequency of Receiving Transportation b(SE)	Frequency of Receiving Financial Assistance b(SE)	Frequency of Receiving Emotional Support b(SE)	Frequency of Providing Chores b(SE)	Frequency of Providing Financial Assistance b(SE)	Frequency of Providing Emotional Support b(SE)
Age	−0.08(0.02)***	−0.02(0.02)	−0.05(0.04)	−0.06(0.02)***	0.05(0.02)*	0.00(0.05)
Gender						
Female	0.08(0.05)	0.04(0.07)	−0.02(0.09)	0.03(0.06)	−0.08(0.09)	0.45(0.10)***
Household Income	0.00(0.00)	0.01(0.00)**	0.01(0.01)	0.00(0.00)	−0.02(0.01)*	0.00(0.01)
Region						
North Central	−0.14(0.07)	−0.20(0.07)*	−0.16(0.17)	0.04(0.08)	−0.02(0.07)	0.02(0.21)
Northeast	−0.14(0.07)	−0.12(0.06)*	−0.02(0.12)	−0.20(0.06)**	−0.02(0.09)	0.15(0.20)
West	0.02(0.08)	0.05(0.09)	−0.29(0.34)	−0.17(0.09)	−0.41(0.07)***	−0.39(0.29)
South	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Employment						
Employed	0.01(0.08)	−0.14(0.09)	0.23(0.16)	0.04(0.10)	0.18(0.10)	0.35(0.19)
Family Contact	0.04(0.02)	0.02(0.02)	0.09(0.05)	0.02(0.02)	0.03(0.02)	0.12(0.03)**
Family Closeness	0.33(0.05)***	0.27(0.04)***	1.20(0.12)***	0.16(0.05)**	0.15(0.06)*	0.99(0.14)***
R-Square	0.13	0.08	0.21	0.04	0.05	0.15
F	11.15***	15.53***	19.17***	9.67***	8.52***	20.98***
df	28	28	28	28	28	28
N	800	797	806	803	764	804

*p<.05

**p< .01

***p<.001

b=unstandardized coefficient; SE=standard error

Several independent variables are represented by dummy variables. Gender: 0=male, 1=female; Region: South is the comparison category; Adolescent Employment Status: 0=not employed, 1=employed.

Table 4

Regression Analysis of the Family Network and Demographic Variables on the Receipt and Provision of Support among Black Caribbean Adolescents

Independent Variables	Frequency of Receiving Transportation	Frequency of Receiving Financial Assistance	Frequency of Receiving Emotional Support	Frequency of Providing Chores	Frequency of Providing Financial Assistance	Frequency of Providing Emotional Support
	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)	b(SE)
Age	−0.14(0.05) **	−0.02(0.04)	−0.17(0.09)	−0.05(0.05)	−0.03(0.05)	0.02(0.10)
Gender						
Female	−0.04(0.18)	0.32(0.13) *	0.42(0.22)	−0.04(0.13)	−0.40(0.17) *	0.34(0.15) *
Household Income	0.00(0.02)	−0.01(0.01)	−0.01(0.03)	−0.02(0.01)	−0.01(0.01)	0.04(0.02) *
Region						
Northeast	0.23(0.08) *	−0.06(0.30)	−0.14(0.25)	0.07(0.26)	0.39(0.10) **	0.13(0.44)
Employment						
Employed	−0.09(0.32)	0.11(0.22)	−0.08(0.41)	−0.06(0.10)	0.21(0.34)	−0.66(0.95)
Country of Origin						
Jamaica	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Spanish	0.13(0.15)	−0.05(0.17)	−0.02(0.22)	−0.28(0.16)	0.46(0.08) ***	0.29(0.10) *
Haiti	−0.02(0.13)	−0.09(0.12)	−0.56(0.30)	−0.17(0.16)	0.27(0.10) *	−0.21(0.25)
Trinidad-Tobago	−0.05(0.09)	0.19(0.13)	0.25(0.25)	−0.47(0.21) *	−0.17(0.48)	−0.42(0.43)
Other	−0.18(0.06) *	−0.17(0.20)	−0.16(0.14)	−0.38(0.11) **	0.23(0.22)	−0.47(0.41)
Family Contact	0.06(0.02) **	−0.03(0.03)	−0.05(0.04)	0.03(0.03)	−0.04(0.03)	−0.06(0.10)
Family Closeness	0.19(0.14)	0.35(0.10) **	1.41(0.12) ***	0.33(0.07) ***	0.22(0.07) **	0.81(0.11) ***
R-Square	0.16	0.17	0.32	0.15	0.15	0.14
F	350.64 ***	99.72 ***	88.64 ***	67.87 ***	70.96 ***	62.35 ***
df	14	14	14	14	14	14
N	349	343	353	349	309	353

* p<.05

** p< .01

*** p<.001

b=unstandardized coefficient; SE=standard error

Several independent variables are represented by dummy variables. Gender: 0=male, 1=female; Region: 0=Other, 1=Northeast; Adolescent Employment Status: 0=not employed, 1=employed; Country of Origin: Jamaica is the comparison category.