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A Double-Edged Sword: Race, Daily Family Support Exchanges, and Daily Well-Being

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Abstract

This study contributes to research on race and family ties by exploring racial differences in the direct effects of family support exchanges on daily well-being and the extent to which family support buffers/exacerbates stressor reactivity. African Americans and European Americans aged 34 to 84 (N = 1,931) from the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE) reported on family support exchanges (i.e., support received/support provided), daily stressors, and negative affect during 8 days of telephone interviews. On a daily basis, receiving family support was not associated with well-being, whereas providing family support was associated with compromised well-being among African Americans. As expected, receiving family support buffered reactivity to daily tensions for both races, whereas providing emotional support to family exacerbated African Americans' reactivity to daily tensions. Together, our findings suggest that even after considering the benefits of receiving family support, providing family support takes an emotional toll on African Americans.

Extensive family networks may act as a double-edged sword, where the same family members who provide support also make their own demands. The dual nature of social support may be particularly significant for African Americans, who may simultaneously be the recipients and providers of family support (Chatters, Taylor, Lincoln, & Schroepfer, 2002; Lincoln, Chatters, & Taylor, 2003). Although previous research emphasizes the benefits of African Americans' extensive family networks (Peek, Coward, & Peek, 2000; Taylor, Seaton, & Dominguez, 2008), a growing body of work has begun to explore the costs associated with African Americans' family ties (Belle & Doucet, 2003; Taylor, Budescu, & McGill, 2011).

Receiving social support is hypothesized to contribute to well-being through two processes: a) the buffering model, where support is related to well-being only because it protects a person from the negative influence of stressful experiences (Rook, 2003; Schuster, Kessler, & Aseline, 1990), and b) the direct effects model, where support is beneficial irrespective of whether an individual is exposed to stressors (Cohen & Willis, 1985). Providing support to family may also elicit negative feelings, such as sadness or concern (Durden, Hill, & Angel,

2007; Taylor et al., 2011) and providing support may exacerbate stressor reactivity by draining the emotional resources available to cope with stressful events.

The strong, extensive support networks that characterize African American families are believed to enhance African Americans' ability to both provide and receive informal support (Peek et al., 2000; Taylor & Chatters, 1991). Previous research, however, suggests that negative relational experiences often have a greater effect on well-being than positive social exchanges (Horwitz, McLaughlin, & White, 1998; Rook, 2001). Therefore, providing support to family may be associated with compromised well-being among African Americans, even after considering the potential benefits of receiving family support.

Moreover, daily conflicts and social support exchanges are common, everyday occurrences among family (Rook & Ituarte, 1999). Previous research suggests that these daily experiences are likely to have immediate effects on well-being on the day that they occur (Almeida, 2005; Gleason, Iida, Shrout, & Bolger, 2008) and by accumulating over time to have lasting consequences for health and well-being (Bolger, Davis, & Rafaeli, 2003). Arguably, the emotional toll of family demands may contribute to the lower levels of psychological well-being observed among African Americans relative to European Americans (Hughes & Thomas, 1998; Williams & Harris-Reid, 1999). The current study expands upon prior research by using a daily diary approach to examine racial differences in both the emotional benefits and costs associated with daily family support exchanges. For the purposes of this study, well-being is defined as negative affect, which encompasses negative emotions indicative of psychological distress.

Notably, the daily diary design of the current study provides the opportunity to simultaneously examine between-person or individual differences in the direct effects of family support exchanges as well as within-person or day-to-day variations in associations between family support exchanges and daily well-being (Bolger et al., 2003). Daily assessments alleviate memory distortions, improve accuracy of recall, and capture naturally occurring family support exchanges that take place in individuals' daily lives (Bolger et al., 2003).

Race, Family Support Exchanges, and Daily Well-Being

In general, people who more frequently engage in family support exchanges may fair better than those who do not give or receive family support. Availability of social support appears to benefit health and well-being (Cohen, 2004), where more frequent family support exchanges represent higher levels of social integration (Cohen & Willis, 1985). At the individual differences level, engaging in more frequent family support exchanges may be more beneficial for African Americans than for European Americans due to African Americans' more collectivistic belief system (Pyke & Bengston, 1996; Triandis, 2001). African Americans seem to find social support exchanges more emotionally rewarding than do European Americans (Fingerman, VanderDrift, Dotterer, Birditt, & Zarit, 2011; White, Townsend, & Stephens, 2000), and demonstrate a strong commitment to providing support to family (Coleman, Ganong, & Rothrauff, 2006; Triandis, 2001).

In contrast, when the same person is compared across different contexts, the person's daily well-being may actually seem worse under conditions when support is received or provided compared to in contexts when support is not received or provided. Racial variations in the frequency of family support exchanges and the meaning attributed to these exchanges may also contribute to racial differences in the direct effects of daily family support exchanges on daily well-being at the within-person level. Thus, on a daily basis, African Americans may be advantaged in terms of the emotional benefits of receiving family support, whereas they may be disadvantaged in terms of the emotional costs of providing family support. Daily social support receipt is associated with greater psychological distress (Gleason et al., 2008; Liang, Krause, & Bennett, 2001; Shrout, Herman, & Bolger, 2006). At times, even well-intentioned support, can be inappropriate, unsolicited, or excessive (Coyne, Wortman, & Lehman, 1988; Shrout et al., 2006). Further, even when support is appropriate, the experience of receiving support may lead individuals to question their coping abilities (Gleason et al., 2008). The majority of daily social support research, however, has relied on predominantly European American samples (Gleason et al., 2008; Liang et al., 2011; Shrout et al., 2006), calling into question whether the negative effects of social support receipt also characterize African Americans' experience. African Americans' more favorable perceptions of social support may lead them to view receiving family support as more beneficial than detrimental (Fingerman et al., 2011; White et al., 2000).

Providing emotional support to family may also elicit negative feelings, such as sadness, concern, or anxiety about meeting the recipient's needs (Durden et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2011). The provider may empathize with the recipient, such that they come to experience the same negative emotions shared by the distressed family member (Devoldre, Davis, Verhofstadt, & Buysse, 2010). In terms of providing support, however, extensive family support networks may increase the social demands placed on African Americans (Chatters et al., 2002; Taylor & Chatters, 1991), and these frequent support exchanges may deplete African Americans' ability to manage the negative feelings associated with providing emotional support to family.

Race, Daily Family Support Exchanges, and Stressor Reactivity

Family support exchanges, however, may have the greatest implications for daily well-being when support exchanges co-occur with other daily stressors, such as an argument with a spouse or a work deadline. Findings, however, remain equivocal concerning the extent to which receiving social support buffers individuals from stressors. Prior work suggests supportive networks can dampen emotional reactivity to negative exchanges by providing support and companionship (Rook, 2003; Schuster et al., 1990), whereas other studies find no such effects (Cranford, 2004; Manne, Taylor, Dougherty, & Kemeney, 1997). Receiving social support appears to be particularly beneficial for African Americans facing chronic stressors (Dilworth-Anderson, Williams, & Gibson, 2002), although less is known about how social support interacts with race to attenuate the negative effects of daily stressors.

In contrast, African Americans may be particularly vulnerable to the stress-exacerbating effects of providing family support. Frequent contact with extended family may require African Americans to provide emotional support to multiple family members (Chatters et

al., 2002; Peek et al., 2000). Research suggests that the negative feelings associated with providing support may be amplified when many friends and family members rely on an individual to listen to their problems (Durden et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2011).

In summary, the current study expands upon previous research by using a daily diary design to simultaneously explore racial differences in the effects of family support receipt and provision. Specifically, the current study tests the following hypotheses:

H1a: Compared to European Americans, African Americans who provide more frequent family support will report lower levels of negative affect.

H1b: Compared to European Americans, African Americans who receive family support more frequently will report lower levels of negative affect.

H2a: Negative affect will be higher on days respondents receive family support vs. days they do not receive support and this effect will be greater for European Americans than for African Americans.

H2b: Negative affect will be higher on days respondents provide family support vs. days they do not provide support and this effect will be greater for African Americans than for European Americans.

H3a: African Americans will be less reactive to daily stressors on days they receive family support vs. days they do not receive family support (i.e., within-person variation).

H3b: African Americans who receive more frequent family support will be less reactive to stressors compared to those who receive less frequent support (i.e., between-person variation).

H4a: African Americans' stressor reactivity will be exacerbated on days they provide family support (i.e., within-person variation) vs. days they do not provide support

H4b: Reactivity will be exacerbated for African Americans who provide more frequent support to family (i.e., between-person variation) compared to those who provide less frequent support.

Method

Participants

The sample includes African American (n = 228) and European American adults (n = 1, 703) aged 35 to 84 from the second wave of the National Study of Daily Experiences (NSDE II; Cichy, Stawski, & Almeida, 2012), the daily diary sub-study from Midlife in the United States (MIDUS II). African American respondents were recruited from Milwaukee, WI due to the city's high rates of racial segregation (Massey & Denton 1993; Farley & Frey 1994). Areas of Milwaukee were stratified according to the proportion of the population that was African American using data from the 2000 United States Census.

Table 1 provides sample characteristics separately by race. African Americans were younger, were less likely to have completed 2 or more years of college, and were less likely to be married compared to European Americans.

Procedures

After completing telephone interviews and self-administered questionnaires as part of MIDUS II, a random sample of respondents were recruited into NSDE II. NSDE II respondents participated in 8 consecutive days of nightly telephone interviews, where at the end of each day, they reported on their daily exchanges of social support, daily stressful events, and daily affect. The response rates were 76% for European Americans and 71% for African Americans.

Measures

Demographic covariates—Respondents reported on their age, gender (1 = male, 0 = female), race (1 = European American, 0 = African American), marital status (1 = married, 0 = never married/separated/divorced/widowed), education (1 = less than high school, 2 = high school diploma/some college, 3 = college degree, and 4 = graduate/professional degree), and income (i.e., wages, pensions, Social Security, government assistance, etc.; 0 = $0–$10,000, 1 = $10,001–$20,000, 2 = $20,001–$35,000, 3 = $35,001–$50,000, 4 = $50,001–$75,000, 5 = $75,001–$100,000, 6 = $100,001–$150,000, and 6 = more than $150,000).

Psychosocial covariates—Perceived family support (e.g., item: *How much can you rely on family for help when you have a serious problem?*) and family strain (e.g., item: *How often do members of your family make too many demands on you?*) were assessed via 4-items with the response scale of 1 (*a lot*) to 4 (*not at all*; Schuster et al., 1990; Whalen & Lachman, 2000). Responses were recoded; higher scores reflect higher support (α = .82) and strain (α = .80).

Daily family support exchanges—Each day, respondents were asked: “Did you spend any time *giving emotional support* to anyone, like listening to their problems, giving advice, or comforting them, since we spoke yesterday?” and “Did you *receive any emotional support* from anyone?”. Consistent with previous research (Gleason et al., 2008; Iida, Seidman, Shrout, Fujita, & Bolger, 2008), family support receipt and provision were coded 1 = yes support was received (provided) and 0 = no support was received (provided). Family support refers to support exchanges with a parent, spouse/partner, child, grandchild, and other relatives (e.g., siblings).

Daily stressors—Daily stressors were assessed using the Daily Inventory of Stressful Events (DISE; Almeida, Wethington, & Kessler, 2002). The current study focuses on three stressor types: interpersonal tensions (i.e., arguments/arguments respondents let pass to avoid a disagreement), overloads (i.e., work and home-related events), and network events (i.e., events that occurred to a close friend or relative, e.g., a sister’s marital problem) coded 1 = stressor occurred and 0 = no stressor occurred.

Daily affect—Daily negative affect was averaged across 14 negative emotions (e.g., sad, angry, lonely) from both the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS; Watson, Clark, & Tellegen, 1988) and the Non-Specific Psychological Distress Scale (Kessler, Andrews, Colpe, Hiripi, Mroczek, Normand et al., 2002; Mroczek & Kolarz, 1998). Respondents indicated on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 (*none of the time*) to 3 (*all the time*) how often during the past day they experienced different negative emotions (α =.91).

Analytic Strategy

Direct effects model for daily family support—We examined associations between daily family support receipt (provision) and daily well-being using a two-level multilevel model. Multilevel models include a within-person (Level 1) and a between person (Level 2) model (Raudenbush & Bryk, 2002). This direct effects model can be expressed as:

$$\text{Level1:WELL}-\text{BEING}_{di}=\beta_{0i}+\beta_{1i}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{di})+e_{di} \quad (1)$$

$$\text{Level2:}\beta_{0i}=\delta_{00}+\delta_{01}(\text{RACE})+\delta_{02}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{.i})+U_{0i} \quad (2)$$

$$\beta_{1i}=\delta_{10}+\delta_{11}(\text{RACE}_i)+U_{0i} \quad (3)$$

Well-Being$_{di}$ is the reported well-being (i.e., daily affect) on Day$_d$ of Person$_i$, Family Support$_{di}$ indicates whether family support was received (provided) by Person$_i$ on Day$_d$, β_{0i} is the intercept indicating Person$_i$'s level of well-being on days when Family Support = 0, β_{1i} is the change in affect associated with receiving (giving) family support for Person$_i$. e_{di} is the residual variance. Equations 2 and 3 model racial differences in Level 1 (Equation 1) intercepts and slopes. Of particular interest here is Equation 3 which tests whether the changes in affect associated with receiving (giving) family support (β_{1i}) vary by race. δ_{00} and δ_{10} are the average within-person intercept and the daily family support effect (i.e., the fixed effects), and U_{0i} is the person-specific deviations from the intercept (i.e., random effect). δ_{01} and δ_{11} are the Level 2 effects and reflect racial differences in the average levels of affect and the within-person daily family support effects.

Buffering effects model for daily family support—We examined the extent to which family support receipt (provision) moderates reactivity to daily stressors using two-level multilevel models. Each buffering model includes the within-person and between-person effects for family support and each type of stressor (i.e. tension, overload, or network event) and the interactions between family support and stressors. The buffering effect model follows the same logic as the direct effects model; these models added the direct effects and the interactions between family support and stressors, as shown below in equations 4–8).

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Level1:WELL}-\text{BEING}_{di}=&\beta_{0i}+\beta_{1i}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{di})\\&+\beta_{2i}(\text{STRESSOR}_{di})\\&+\beta_{3i}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{di}{}^{*}\text{STRESSOR}_{di})+e_{di}\end{aligned} \quad (4)$$

$$\begin{aligned}\text{Level2:}\beta_{0i}&=\delta_{00}+\delta_{01}(\text{RACE})\\&+\delta_{02}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{.i})+\delta_{03}(\text{STRESSOR}_{.i})\\&+\delta_{03}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{.i}{}^{*}\text{STRESSOR}_{.i})+U_{01}\end{aligned} \quad (5)$$

$$\beta_{1i}=\delta_{10}+\delta_{11}(\text{RACE}_i)+U_{1i} \quad (6)$$

$$\beta_{2i}=\delta_{20}+\delta_{21}(\text{RACE}_i)+\delta_{22}(\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{.i})+\delta_{23}(\text{RACE}_i{}^{*}\text{FAMILY SUPPORT}_{.i})+U_{2i} \quad (7)$$

$$\beta_{3i}=\delta_{30}+\delta_{31}(\text{RACE}_i)+U_{3i} \quad (8)$$

Equation 4 indicates that at Level 1, β_{0i} is the well-being on day *d* for individual *i*, when no family support or stressors were present. β_{1i} and β_{2i} reflect the change in affect associated with family support and the occurrence of stressors, respectively, while β_{3i} is the interaction between daily family support and the occurrence of stressors on well-being. At Level 2, Equation 5 indicates that the sample average well-being on non-support, non-stressor days (δ_{00}), varies as a function of race (δ_{01}), individual differences in family support and occurrence of daily stressors, and their 2-way interaction (δ_{02}, δ_{03} and δ_{04}, respectively). Equation 6 indicates that the sample average effect of daily family support (Level 1; δ_{10}), differs by race (δ_{11}). Equation 7 indicates that the sample average effect of daily stressors on affect (i.e., stressor reactivity; δ_{20}) varies as a function of race (δ_{21}), individual differences in the frequency of family support (δ_{22}), and their interaction (δ_{23}). It is this later parameter that serves as one of the critical 3-way interactions, examining race differences in the moderating effect of individual differences in family support (Level 2) on stressor reactivity. Equation 8 indicates that the sample average interaction between daily family support and the occurrence of daily stressors (δ_{30}) differs by race (δ_{31}). This parameter serves as the other critical 3-way interaction examining race differences in the moderating effect of daily experiences of family support (Level 1) on stressor reactivity.

Results

Table 2 presents the direct effects model (Model 1) and the buffering model (Model 2). Both models were estimated using Full Information Maximum Likelihood (FIML) to minimize the influence of missing data. Each model includes age, gender, income, education, marital status, perceived family support, and perceived family strain as covariates.

In Model 1, we test racial differences in the direct effects of family support exchanges on well-being by including the following main effects: race, within- and between-person daily family support receipt effects, and within- and between-person daily family support provision effects, and the interactions between race and family support exchanges (Table 2). Throughout the Results section, within-person will be referred to as WP, between-person will be referred to as BP, and negative affect will be referred to as NA. Estimates presented in the text abbreviated “est.” are the simple slopes for each racial group.

We also estimated models with the interactions between the covariates and daily family support effects (e.g., family support receipt × income) in order to control for potential demographic influences on the direct effects of daily family support. The pattern of results was consistent across models, so for simplicity, Table 2 only includes the significant effects that remained after including the covariate interactions.

Hypothesis 1a: Race, Between-Person Family Support Receipt, and Daily Well-Being

First, we examined the between-person (BP) effects of family support receipt and the race × BP family support receipt interaction (Table 2; Model 1). Results revealed racial differences in the *BP family support receipt effect* such that BP family support receipt was associated with significantly higher negative affect (NA) for European Americans (*est.* = 0.20, $p < .001$), but not for African Americas (*est.* = −0.13, *ns*).

Hypothesis 1b: Race, Between-Person Family Support Provision, and Daily Well-Being

We also examined the BP effects of family support provision and the race × BP family support provision interaction (Model 1). Contrary to our expectations, the *BP family support provision effect* was not associated with daily NA and there were no racial differences.

Hypothesis 2a: Race, Within-Person Family Support Receipt, and Daily Well-Being

Next, we examined the within-person (WP) effect of family support receipt and the interaction with race (Model 1). Contrary to our expectations, the *WP family support receipt effect* was not associated with daily NA and there were no racial differences in the effect.

Hypothesis 2b: Race, Within-Person Family Support Provision, and Daily Well-Being

As expected, there were racial differences in the *WP family support provision effect* (Table 2; Model 1). Respondents exhibited increased NA on days they provided family support compared to days they did not provide family support, and this effect was larger for African Americans (*est.* = 0.10, $p < .001$) than for European Americans (*est.* = 0.03, $p < .001$).

Hypotheses 3a and 3b: Race, Family Support Receipt, and Stressor Reactivity

Next, we estimated a second model that included the direct effects of family support and the daily stressor effects to examine the extent to which family support receipt (provision) buffered (or exacerbated) emotional reactivity to daily stressors (Table 2; Model 2). Model 2 also included the interactions between race and family support, interactions between race and daily stressors, and 3-way interactions between race, family support, and daily stressors. Interactions between WP family support and WP stressors test the extent to which family support receipt (provision) buffers (exacerbates) stressor reactivity, whereas the BP family support and WP family stressors tests the extent to which individual differences in family support receipt (provision) buffer (exacerbate) stressor reactivity. The 3-way race interactions test whether the buffering (exacerbating) effects of support exchanges vary by race.

Prior to describing whether family support receipt moderated emotional reactivity, we first describe the main effects of the daily stressors and whether the stressor effects varied by

race (Table 2, Model 2). The *WP tension effect* was significant, indicating that NA was higher on days respondents reported experiencing tensions compared to days without these events. The BP tension effect was moderated by race, where African Americans who reported more tensions reported higher NA (*est.* = 0.51, p < .001) compared to European Americans who reported more tensions (*est.* = 0.32, *p* < .001). The *WP family support receipt effect* moderated the WP effect of tensions and this interaction was qualified by a significant 3-way interaction with race. Figure 1 shows that receiving family support buffers reactivity to tensions for both races, although the buffering effect is greater for European Americans than for African Americans.

The *WP overload effect* was also significant, indicating that NA was higher on days respondents reported experiencing overloads compared to days without these events. The BP overload effect was moderated by race, where African Americans who reported more overloads reported higher levels of NA (*est.* = 0.45, *p* < .001) compared to European Americans who reported more overloads (*est.* = 0.18, *p* < .001). Family support receipt did not buffer reactivity to overload stressors.

The *BP family support receipt effect* moderated the WP effect of network events and this interaction was qualified by a significant 3-way interaction with race. Figure 2 shows that receiving more frequent family support buffers African Americans' reactivity to network events, whereas receiving more frequent family support is associated with greater reactivity to network events among European Americans.

Hypotheses 4a and 4b: Race, Family Support Provision, and Reactivity to Daily Stressors

We also examined the extent to which providing family support exacerbates emotional reactivity to daily stressors. As anticipated, the *WP family support provision effect* moderated the WP effect of tensions and this interaction was qualified by a significant 3-way interaction with race. Figure 3 shows that African Americans' reactivity to tensions is exacerbated on days they provide family support vs. days they do not provide family support, whereas European Americans' reactivity is reduced on days they provide family support.

Discussion

The current study explored racial differences in the direct effects of daily family support exchanges on daily well-being and the extent to which family support buffers or exacerbates stressor reactivity. On a daily basis, receiving family support was not associated with well-being, whereas providing family support was associated with compromised well-being among African Americans. Receiving family support buffered reactivity to daily tensions for both races, whereas providing emotional support to family exacerbated African Americans' reactivity to daily tensions. Together, our findings suggest that even after considering the benefits of receiving family support, providing family support takes an emotional toll on African Americans.

Race, Daily Family Support Exchanges, and Daily Well-Being

A strength of the current study was the ability to disentangle the effects of between-person or individual differences in family support from the within-person or daily variations in family support exchanges. Although there were no daily effects of receiving family support on well-being, our findings revealed racial differences in the between-person effect of family support on daily negative affect. Only European Americans who received more frequent family support than others reported higher levels of negative affect. Racial differences in the effect of family support receipt may reflect cultural differences in the meaning attributed to receiving family support. The more individualistic beliefs of European Americans may lead European Americans to view frequent family support receipt as problematic or as an indication of their failure to effectively cope (Coleman et al., 2006; Gleason et al., 2008).

The current study also adds to the social support literature by exploring the direct effects of family support provision on daily well-being. As expected, providing family support was associated with compromised well-being among African Americans. Providing support to family may provoke negative feelings, such as anxiety over meeting recipients' needs, and these negative feelings may be amplified for African Americans due to the competing demands generated by extensive family networks (Durden et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2011).

Race, Daily Family Support Exchanges, and Reactivity to Daily Stressors

Consistent with previous social support research (Rook, 2003; Schuster et al., 1990), family support receipt buffered emotional reactivity to daily interpersonal tensions for both races. The buffering effect was, however, greater for European Americans than for African Americans. African Americans' tensions may be more resistant to the dampening effects of support because tensions are likely to occur in the context of other chronic stressors, such as racism and discrimination (Williams & Mohammed, 2009). Future research is needed to elucidate linkages between race and the buffering effects of support for those facing chronic and daily stressors.

In contrast, family support receipt did not buffer emotional reactivity to overload stressors (e.g., work deadline). In the case of overload stressors, emotional support may be inconsistent with the recipient's needs. For example, emotional support may have little effect on well-being when the recipient is struggling to pay for car repairs or facing a work deadline. Further, at the daily level, family support receipt did not buffer reactivity to network events, suggesting that reactivity to other people's problems may also be resistant to the dampening effect of social support. Both social support exchanges and social strains are an inevitable byproduct of social relationships (Rook & Ituarte, 1999). Therefore, it is possible that the same family member who provided emotional support could also be the source of the recipient's social strain. Under these circumstances, receipt of daily family support may be less effective at reducing the negative feelings elicited by concern over someone else's problem.

In comparison, at the individual differences level emotional reactivity to network events is reduced for African Americans who receive more frequent family support, whereas

European Americans who receive more frequent support from family actually reported increases in negative affect on days they reported experiencing family network events. The more collectivistic beliefs of African Americans may lead African Americans to view receiving frequent family support more favorably (Pyke & Bengston, 1996; Triandis, 2001), whereas the more individualistic beliefs of European Americans may lead European Americans to interpret receiving family support more negatively. European Americans may attribute frequent family support receipt to their inability to cope with network stressors, thus increasing their distress (Gleason et al., 2008).

As anticipated, our results did reveal racial differences in the stress-exacerbating effects of family support provision. African Americans' reactivity to tensions was exacerbated on days when they provided family support. Listening to other family members' problems elicits feelings of sadness and concern (Durden et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2011), and these negative feelings may then color other interactions, such as arguments. Providing emotional support to family may undermine African Americans' daily well-being by exhausting the resources available to cope with other stressors, such as interpersonal tensions (Almeida, 2005). African Americans may be particularly vulnerable to stress-exacerbation because of the competing social demands placed on them by multiple family members (Chatters et al., 2002; Durden et al., 2007; Taylor et al., 2011).

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Although the current study adds to the literature on social support, it is not without limitations. First, future research is needed to replicate our findings in a larger, more diverse sample of African Americans. Also, in an effort to reduce participant burden, respondents provided limited information on their social support exchanges. We assessed whether emotional support was received or provided and the source of the support, whereas we did not assess the nature of the support received/provided. Prior research suggests that even well-intentioned support can be inappropriate or excessive (Coyne et al., 1988; Shrout et al., 2006). Emotional support that offers unsolicited advice or that is perceived as unresponsive to the recipient's needs may be less beneficial (Maisel & Gable, 2009). Future studies should consider if these characteristics contribute to the extent to which social support receipt buffers stressor reactivity.

Moreover, in the present study we do not know if the support received/provided is tied to the experience of a specific stressor. Support could be provided outside the context of a stressful situation as a natural part of intimate relationships and still provide benefits (Gleason et al., 2008). Additional research is needed to distinguish between support provided in response to a particular stressor as opposed to the effects of support received that is not in response to a particular stressor. Further, consistent with prior work, our measure of reactivity is an approximation that assumes end of the day reports are influenced by experiences that occurred throughout the day (Sliwinski, Almeida, Smyth, & Stawski, 2009). We acknowledge that the study design precludes us from being sure of the direction of our effects, such that negative feelings could also lead to family support exchanges and/or stressful experiences.

Conclusion

Our findings contribute to research on race and family ties by suggesting that social support exchanges hold different implications for African Americans' and European Americans' daily well-being. Our findings also emphasize how support in a specific context operates differently than individual differences in cumulative support. On a daily basis, receiving family support did not compromise daily well-being, whereas receiving more frequent family support did appear detrimental to European Americans' well-being. Family support receipt buffered emotional reactivity to interpersonal tensions for both races, whereas family support provision exacerbated African Americans' emotional reactivity to daily interpersonal tensions. In particular, our findings add to the burgeoning literature emphasizing the costs of African Americans' family ties by revealing how providing family support takes an emotional toll on African Americans, even after considering the benefits of support receipt.

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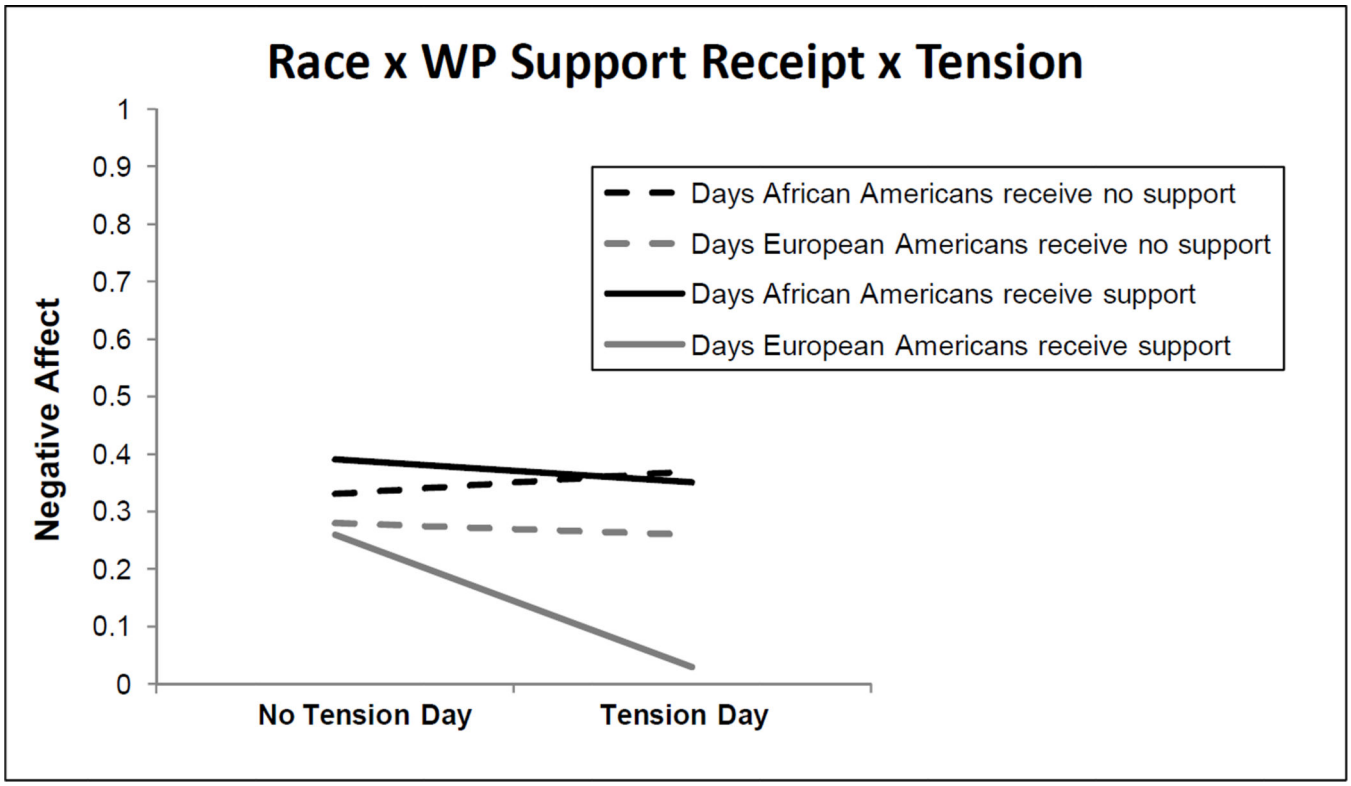

Figure 1.

Race × Within-person family support receipt × Within-person tension interaction indicates that receiving family support buffers reactivity to tensions for both races and this buffering effect is greater for European Americans than for African Americans.

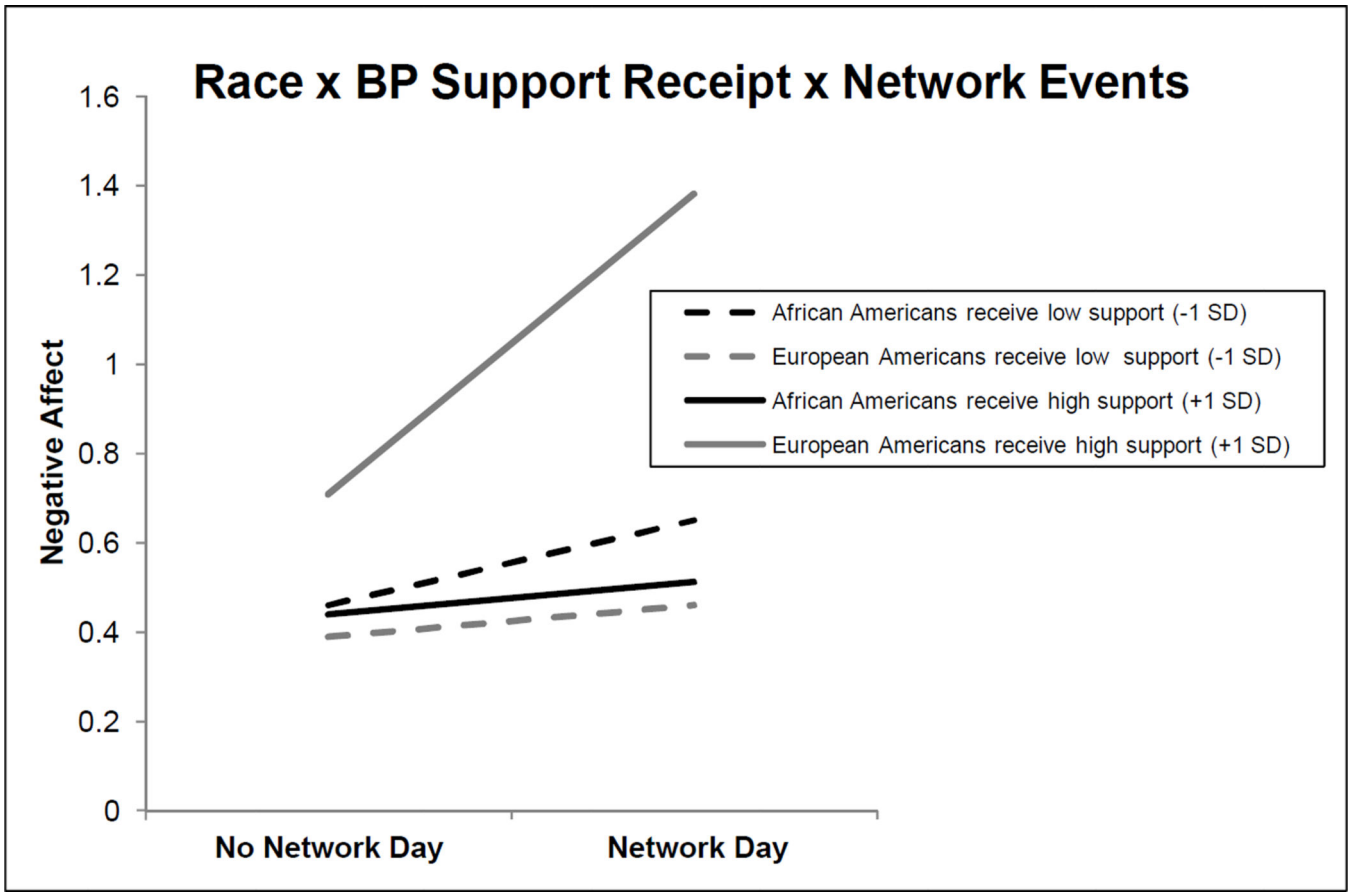

Figure 2.

Race × Between-person family support receipt × Within-person network event interaction indicates that receiving more frequent family support buffers African Americans' reactivity to network events, whereas receiving more frequent family support is associated with greater emotional reactivity to network events among European Americans.

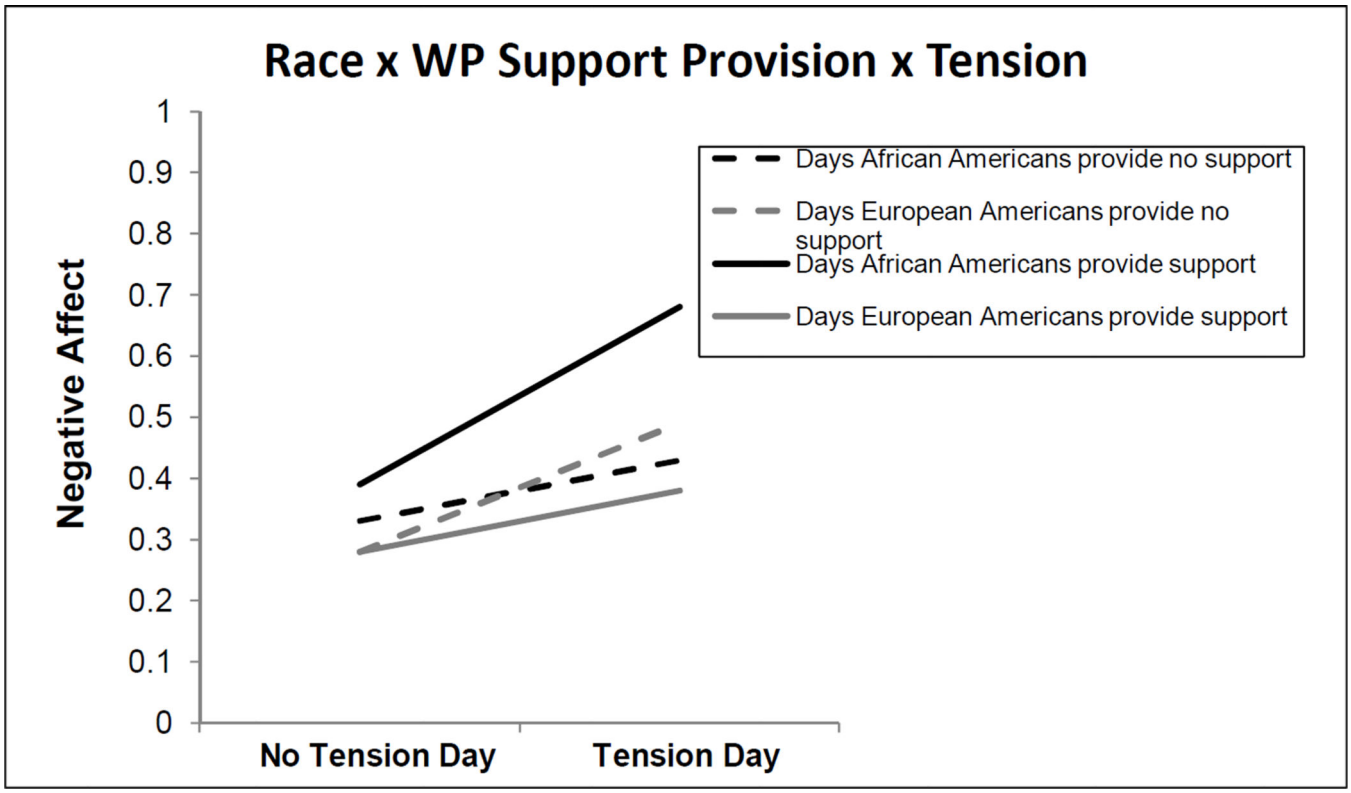

Figure 3.

Race × Within-person family support provision × Within-person tension interaction indicates that providing family support exacerbates African Americans' emotional reactivity to daily tensions, whereas European Americans' reactivity is reduced on days they provide family support.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics on Sociodemographic Characteristics, Daily Stressors, and Outcome Variables (N = 1,931)

Variables	African Americans *n* = 228 % or Mean (*SD*)	European Americans *n* = 1,703 % or Mean (*SD*)
Age, mean (*SD*)**	54.3 (11.6)	56.6 (12.2)
Gender (% female)	56.1	68.0
Education, mean (*SD*)[a]***	2.1 (0.83)	2.5 (0.81)
Income, mean (*SD*)[b]	2.4 (2.0)	3.8 (2.0)
Marital status (% married)[c]***	36.0	73.2
Family support receipt (% of days)	6.2	8.7
Family support provision (% of days)	15.9	19.0
Tensions (% of days)	22.8	21.4
Overloads (% of days)	10.7	16.2
Network events (% of days)	4.8	5.2
Average negative affect[d]	0.29 (0.38)	0.20 (0.25)
Perceived family support[e]	3.4 (0.69)	3.5 (0.58)
Perceived family strain[e]	2.2 (0.75)	2.0 (0.58)

Note. Asterisks indicate significant racial differences.

[a]Education: 1 = *less than high school*, 2 = *high school diploma/some college*, 3 = *college degree*, and 4 = *graduate/professional degree*.

[b]Income: 0 = *$0–$10,000*, 1 = *$10,001–$20, 000*, 2 = *$20,001–$35,000*, 3 = *$35,001–$50,000*, 4 = *$50, 001–$75,000*, 5 = *$75,001–$100,000*, 6 = *$100,001–$150,000*, and 6 = *more than $150,000*.

[c]Marital status: 0 = *separated/divorced/widowed/never married*, 1 = *married*.

[d]Negative affect: 0 = *none of the time*, 1 = *a little of the time*, 2 = *some of the time*, 3 = *most of the time*, and 4 = *all of the time*.

[e]Family support and strain: 1 = *not at all*, 2 = *a little*, 3 = *some*, and 4 = *a lot*.

** $p < .01$,

*** $p < .001$.

Table 2

Multilevel Model Estimates for the Effects of Family Support, Daily Stressors, and Race on Daily Negative Affect

	Model 1: Direct effects only		Model 2: Stressor reactivity	
	Unstandardized coefficient	***S.E.***	**Unstandardized coefficient**	***S.E.***
Intercept	0.52***	0.06	0.33***	0.06
Race[a]	−0.06**	0.02	−0.02	0.03
Family support	−0.07***	0.01	−0.05***	0.01
Family strain	0.06***	0.01	0.04***	0.01
Within-person support receipt	0.05	0.03	0.04	0.03
Between-person support receipt	−0.13	0.12	−0.17	0.11
Within-person support provision	0.10***	0.02	0.06**	0.02
Between-person support provision	0.08	0.09	−0.12	0.08
Race × within-person support receipt	0.01	0.03	0.00	0.03
Race × between-person support receipt	0.32**	0.13	0.33**	0.12
Race × within-person support provision	−0.07**	0.02	−0.04*	0.02
Race × between-person support provision	−0.00	0.09	0.09	0.09
Within-person tension			0.15***	0.02
Between-person tension			0.51***	0.07
Within-person overload			0.15***	0.03
Between-person overload			0.45***	0.10
Within-person network event			0.09	0.06
Between-person network event			0.14	0.16
Race × within-person tension			0.01	0.02
Race × between-person tension			−0.19**	0.08
Race × within-person overload			−0.02	0.04
Race × between-person overload			−0.27**	0.11
Race × within-person network event			−0.03	0.06
Race × between-person network event			0.14	0.17
Within-person receipt × within tension			−0.19*	0.08
Between-person receipt × within tension			−0.15	0.11
Within-person receipt × within overload			0.08	0.11
Between-person receipt × within overload			0.25	0.15
Within-person receipt × within network			0.20	0.19
Between-person receipt × within network			−0.61**	0.22
Within-person provision × within tension			0.14**	0.06
Between-person provision × within tension			0.08	0.10
Within-person provision × within overload			−0.11	0.07

	Model 1: Direct effects only		Model 2: Stressor reactivity	
	Unstandardized coefficient	***S.E.***	**Unstandardized coefficient**	***S.E.***
Between-person provision × within overload			−0.05	0.11
Within-person provision × within network			−0.06	0.09
Between-person provision × within network			0.39	0.23
Race × within receipt × within tension			0.19*	0.08
Race × between receipt × within tension			0.11	0.12
Race × within receipt × within overload			−0.04	0.11
Race × between receipt × within overload			−0.17	0.15
Race × within receipt × within network			−0.20	0.20
Race × between receipt × within network			0.63**	0.23
Race × within provision × within tension			−0.14*	0.06
Race × between provision × within tension			−0.09	0.10
Race × within provision × within overload			0.13	0.07
Race × between provision × within overload			0.00	0.11
Race × within provision × within network			0.03	0.10
Race × between provision × within network			−0.42	0.23

Note. Models also adjust for age, gender, income, education, and marital status.

[a] Race: *African American =0, European American = 1*

* $p < .05$,

** $p < .01$,

*** $p < .001$.