
EXTENDED FAMILY HOUSEHOLDS AMONG BLACK AMERICANS

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Families are a major resource in assisting individuals in coping with life problems and during times of need. This is particularly evident among black families who have historically been instrumental in helping members cope with adverse life conditions such as racial discrimination, poverty, and chronic unemployment. Black extended families provide various forms of support to adolescent mothers (Burton & Dilworth-Anderson, 1991; Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-de Vries, 1995), help elderly adults with health problems (Dilworth-Anderson, Williams & Cooper, 1999), provide aid to those confronting a serious personal problem (Chatters, Taylor & Neighbors, 1989; Neighbors & Jackson, 1984; Taylor, Hardison & Chatters, 1996) and assist family members who are seeking employment (Taylor & Sellers, 1997).

Certainly, one of the most important and noteworthy forms of aid that black families provide to their members is housing. A tradition of research documents the nature and circumstances of extended household living arrangements in black communities. In some instances, housing is extended to individuals who are coping with a serious personal problem, which has put housing in jeopardy. Several authors have suggested that extended household living arrangements reflect specific cultural characteristics operating within black communities that transcend economic circumstances. Although extended household arrangements typically involve family members, in some cases close friends become members of the household.

This brief research note examines the variety of responses given for why individuals leave their own home and reside within the household of a family member or friend. The literature review for this paper draws on three bodies of research. The first area examines research on black-white differences in household composition, with a specific focus on co-residency and extended households. Next, research on the practice of informal adoption, as a means by which families assume guardianship and childcare responsibilities of youth without involving the legal system, is discussed. Finally, research on housing availability and household composition is presented.

Black-White Differences in Co-Residency and Extended Family Households

Research from a variety of sources has consistently documented that extended family

households are more prevalent among blacks than whites. Extended family households are defined as those in which, in addition to the household head, spouse/partner, and minor children, there are other individuals (related by blood/marriage or unrelated) who reside in the household. These individuals could be adult children and adult and minor grandchildren of the household head and spouse, as well as other relatives (siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles) and unrelated persons.

Acquino (1990), using data from the National Survey of Families and Households, found that 40% of black parents, as compared to 28% of white parents, reported living with at least one adult child. Cross-sectional estimates indicate that among both male- and female-headed families, blacks were more likely than whites to live in extended family households (Angel & Tienda, 1982; Tienda & Angel, 1982). Observed black-white differences in extended family households are more pronounced among female-headed households.

Research on the living arrangements of black children and black elderly indicates that both groups are more likely to reside in extended family households than their white counterparts. Analysis of Census data from 1940 to the present, indicates that black children are more likely to live in the home of their grandparents than either white or Hispanic children (Hernandez, 1993; U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993). In 1992, 12% of black children lived with their grandparents, compared with 4% of white and 6% of Hispanic children (U.S. Bureau of the Census, 1993).

Older blacks are also more likely than older whites to reside in extended family households involving kin and non-kin (Himes, Hogan & Eggebeen, 1996). The higher incidence of extended households among black elderly (i.e., children and grandchildren live in the elder's home or the elder moves in with family) is one reason why older blacks are less likely than older whites to enter a nursing home (Angel & Angel, 1997; Cagney & Agree, 1999).

Much of the debate concerning the circumstances of and black-white differences in extended family households has revolved around the issue of whether this household form represents a cultural preference or is the result of economic and social necessity. Acquino (1990) argues that the greater tendency among blacks to have adult children living in their households is merely explained by the marital status of the children. Specifically, due to lower rates of marriage among blacks, adult children are more likely to reside with their parents, and this phenomenon, rather than a cultural preference for extended family households, explains the black-white difference in this household form. In contrast, Singh et al. (1998), finds support for a distinct cultural preference for residing in extended family households. In their study, blacks were more likely than whites to agree with the sentiment that parents sharing their home with adult children was a desirable arrangement. These findings

are of particular importance for understanding the cultural preference versus economic need argument. They suggest that inquiring directly about individual preferences and reasons for extended living arrangements is a more proximal and effective method for exploring the circumstances of extended household patterns and potential black-white differences.

Informal Adoption

Robert Hill's pioneering research efforts (1977, 1997) were among the first to explore the practice of incorporating non-related children into one's household without involving official adoption channels (i.e., informal adoption). Hill (1977:9) argues that informal adoption is, "the process by which dependent children are informally reared by adults who are not their natural or formally adoptive parents." Informal adoption is often seen among grandparents who raise their grandchildren, as well as among church members and fictive kin who rear the children of close friends.

Both historical and ethnographic research provides numerous accounts of informal adoption of children in black families. A chapter entitled "Child Keeping" in Carol Stack's book *All My Kin* (1972), provides numerous examples of informal adoption. E. Franklin Frazier relates the story of a 77-year-old former slave who raised orphaned children:

The two little orphan children. I raised them here with me. These little orphan children mother dead and father dead too. I'm they great aunt. Me being the oldest one and me bine they mother's auntie and the oldest head, that's how I come by them. So me and my husband raised them children from little bit a things. (As cited in Hill, 1977:47)

One of the more common reasons for taking in a child is if the mother was not married and was very young and immature. Sandven and Resnick (1990) found that among the adolescent mothers in their sample, those with no parental responsibilities and whose babies were being raised exclusively by someone else (maternal or paternal grandparents) had the youngest average age (15.2 years) and had the highest incidence of school behavior problems. Stack's (1974) research also indicates that informal adoption was likely when the mother was too young to be an effective parent and raise a child:

Lily Proctor ran away from home in Mississippi when she was fourteen. She ran off to Chicago and then went to The Flats. The friends of kin from the South who took her in had two sons. She gave birth to the oldest boy's baby, but Lily recalls, "I was in no

way ready for a baby. The baby's grandmother (father's mother) wanted the baby, so I gave my baby to her and she adopted her as her own." (Stack, 1974:66)

Informal adoption may also come about because an individual had become emotionally attached to a child and wanted to raise them. Stack (1972) provides this example:

Children are sometimes given to non-kin who express love, concern, and a desire to keep a child. Oliver Lucas, a thirty-year-old Flats resident lives with his mother and his sister and her children. Oliver and his kin have been raising his girl friend's child since she was a baby. "My girl friend had six children when I started going with her, but her baby daughter was really something else. I got so attached to that baby over about two years that when my girl friend and I quit, I asked if she would give the baby to me. She said fine, and my 'daughter' has been living with me, my mother, my grandmother, my sisters and brothers ever since. My daughter is ten years old now. She sees her mother now and then, and her father take her to church with him sometimes, but our family is really the only family she's every had." (Stack, 1974:66)

There is no statistical information available about the prevalence of this type of informal adoption, either in the past or presently. It is likely that the practice was more common in the past when larger families were more normative, including very large families (10 or more children) and when the poverty levels among black families were much higher. Oftentimes, informal adoption is a temporary measure that is used to help the mother during a time of crisis or geographic transition or as a means of social mobility. For instance, it was not uncommon during the great migration for young mothers to leave children in the South for one or more years while they established themselves in the North.

With regard to informal adoption due to a crisis, it is not unusual for relatives to take in the children of a single mother who has a drug problem or who is incarcerated. Informal adoptions of this type were particularly evident throughout the decades of the 1980s and 1990s, as a result of the rise in single family households and the crack cocaine epidemic (Burton, Dilworth-Anderson & Merriwether-de Vries, 1995; Minkler & Roe, 1993). Crack cocaine has been equally devastating to both men and women and has resulted in disproportionate high levels of incarceration for black men and women. The impact of the crack cocaine epidemic is mirrored in the life of popular comedian Bernie Mack whose experiences raising his sister's three children because of her crack cocaine addiction are depicted in the situation-comedy bearing his

name. Black parents who live in neighborhoods that are dominated by gang activity often send their children to live with relatives in other cities or regions of the country (e.g., the South) where there is less of a gang presence.

In many cases, a temporary informal adoption may become permanent. Length of time that a child resides with the surrogate parent and the biological parent's financial contributions and emotional investment to the child are all factors which help determine if a temporary arrangement becomes permanent. Finally, although the practice of informal adoption absorbs a number of children, a disproportionate number of black children still live in institutions and group homes and with foster families (Taylor, Chatters, Tucker & Jayakody, 1997).

Housing Availability and Extended Family Households

A growing body of research examines the impact of housing availability on living arrangements. Mutchler and Krivo (1989) found that measures of housing availability and affordability were significantly associated with household extension among blacks, whites and Hispanics. In particular, household extension was more likely to occur when the local market of available housing was limited and unaffordable. Importantly for family well-being, several studies note that the household strategy of "doubling up" with relatives and friends is an immediate precursor to homelessness among some of the more vulnerable families (Rossi, 1989; Shinn et al., 1991). This body of research recognizes that families may employ household extension as a strategic response to family emergencies or in reaction to excessive housing costs (Kobel & Murray, 1999).

Focus of Present Study

The goal of the present study is to examine household extension among black Americans. In addition to an examination of the correlates of household extension, the study also presents a profile of individuals who join the household of a family member or friend. Additionally, as part of this study, stated reasons for these household transitions are explored.

Methods

The analyses were conducted on the National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA) dataset. This data was collected by the Program for Research on Black Americans, Institute for Social Research (University of Michigan). The NSBA sample is the first nationally representative cross-section of the adult (18 years and older) black population living in the continental United States. The sample was drawn according to a multistage, area probability procedure designed to ensure that every black house-

hold had the same probability for being selected for the study. A total of 76 primary areas were selected for interviewing. Twelve of these areas were selected with certainty because of the large size of the black population (e.g., New York, Chicago, Detroit, Atlanta). The remaining 64 primary areas were randomly selected from standard metropolitan statistical areas within regions of the country (Northeast, South, West, North Central) in inverse proportion to the size of the black population. Census tracts and groups of census tracts within these primary areas were stratified according to racial composition and income. Smaller geographical areas (“clusters”) were randomly chosen within income and racial composition strata. Next, professionally trained interviewers went into each cluster and listed every habitable household.

Since correct identification of eligible respondents was critical, special screening procedures were developed for finding black households. Within each selected black household, one person was randomly chosen to be interviewed. All interviewing was conducted by professional trained black interviewers. These sampling and interviewer procedures resulted in 2,107 completed interviews collected in 1979 and 1980, representing a response rate of nearly 70 percent. About 41 percent of the black population in 1980 were located in urban, central city areas where response rates have been extremely low. The relatively high overall response rate was achieved by intensifying efforts in these areas through repeated call-backs. A more detailed description of the sample is provided by Jackson (1991), and a demographic description of the NSBA sample and comparison with Census data is provided by Taylor (1986).

Dependent Variables

Several measures of household extension are examined in this analysis. Two of the measures ask respondents if a relative or a friend has ever lived with the respondent’s family. The question, “Taken in Relative” is worded as follows: “Since, you’ve been an adult, has your family ever taken in a relative, who was not a regular member of your household, but needed a place to live for at least a month?” The question, “Taken in Friend” is worded as follows: “Since, you’ve been an adult, has your family ever taken in someone who was not related to you, and was not a regular member of your household, but needed a place to live for at least a month?” Several follow up questions ask respondents to identify the relative with respect to age, sex and relationship (e.g. aunt, nephew) and the reason they came to live with their family (i.e., “Why did this person come to live with your family?”).

Independent Variables

Family and Friendship Network Variables. Several family and friendship network variables are used in this analysis. Family interaction is measured by the question, “How often do you see, write or talk on the telephone with family or relatives who do not live with you? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times

a month, a few times a year, or hardly ever?” Family closeness is measured by the question, “Would you say your family members are very close in their feelings to each other, fairly close, not too close, or not close at all?” Two variables assess the relative influence of family versus friends with respect to contact and support. The first question asks: “When you visit people, are you more likely to visit friends or to visit relatives?” The second question asks, “When you think of the people you can count on in life, are they mostly your relatives or your friends?”

Friendship interaction is measured by the question, “How often do you see, write or talk on the telephone with your friends? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, hardly ever or never?” Size of the friendship network is measured by the question, “Think of the friends, not including relatives, that you feel free to talk with about your problems--would you say that you have many, some, a few, or no friends like that?” Finally, having a best friend is measured by the question, “Not counting your spouse, do you have a best friend?”

Family and Church Support Network. Support from family is measured with the question, “How often do people in your family – including children, grandparents, aunts, uncles, in-laws, and so on – help you out? Would you say very often, fairly often, not too often, or never?” Social support from church members was measured by the variable, “How often do people in your church or place of worship help you out? Would you say often, sometimes, hardly ever or never?” These two social support questions required recoding because a portion of respondents volunteered that they never needed assistance from their church members and family members. Approximately 18% of respondents volunteered that they never needed help from church members (Taylor & Chatters, 1988) and 9.7% volunteered that they never needed help from family members (Taylor, 1990). Previous analysis indicated that respondents who volunteer that they never need assistance are conceptually and empirically distinct from both those who receive assistance and those who do not receive help (Taylor & Chatters, 1988; Taylor, 1990). Consequently, these variables have been recoded into three categories: persons who received assistance (support recipients), persons who did not receive assistance (support-deficients) and those who volunteered that they never needed assistance (self-reliants).

Religious Service Attendance. A measure assessing frequency of attending religious services was created by combining two variables. Respondents were first asked, “Other than for weddings and funerals, have you attended services at a church or other place of worship since you were 18 years old?” Respondents who answered affirmatively to this question were next asked, “How often do you usually attend religious services? Would you say nearly everyday, at least once a week, a few times a month, a few times a year, or less than once a year?” Responses for these two variables were combined such that the most frequent attendance category is nearly

everyday and the least frequent attendance categories are less than once a year followed by never attends religious services other than weddings and funerals since the age of 18.

Demographic Variables. Several sociodemographic variables are used in this analysis including age, income, education, gender, marital status, employment status, region, and urbanicity.

Results

A relatively high percentage of respondents indicate that their family has taken in a relative or a friend who did not normally reside with them for at least a month's time. Almost 4 out of 10 respondents (38.7%) indicate that their family had taken in a relative and 29.8% indicated that their family had taken in a friend. The logistic regression analyses of the correlates of whether a family has taken in a relative (Model 1) and a friend (Model 2) are presented in Table 1. Family income, region, urbanicity, and church support are all associated with whether a family took in a relative. Respondents with higher family incomes, who reside in the Western region as opposed to the South, who reside in urban areas, and who receive support from their church members, are more likely to indicate that they or their family had taken in a relative who had lived with them for more than a month. Correlates of whether a family had taken in a friend are somewhat different. Age, urbanicity, frequency of family interaction, and the number of friends are significantly associated with whether a family took in a friend. Younger respondents, those who reside in urban areas, respondents who have more friends that they could talk with about problems, and those who interact with their family members on a frequent basis, are more likely to indicate that their families had taken in a friend to live with them for at least one month.

Table 2 provides information about the relationship status of the co-resident relative to the respondent. Relatives who are taken in are most likely to be a male cousin, followed by the categories of female cousin and brother. There are relatively few mentions of grandchildren or grandparents. It is important to note that the co-resident relative is identified with respect to their relationship to the designated respondent for a given household and not necessarily from the perspective of who is the head of the household. For instance, if an adult daughter of the head of household is the respondent for a given household, then she might report that a niece (her sibling's child) was taken into the household. However, if instead the head of the household was the respondent, then they would indicate that the relative in question was a granddaughter.

Table 3 presents information on the age of the relative taken in by the respondent's

Table 1. Logistic Regressions of the Correlates of Whether a Relative and Whether a Friend has been Taken into the Household

| Correlates | Relative | | Friend | |
|----------------------------|------------|------|------------|------|
| | B | SE | B | SE |
| Gender | | | | |
| Male | -.077 | .108 | -.221 | .116 |
| Age | -.002 | .004 | -.009* | .004 |
| Education | -.015 | .056 | -.111 | .061 |
| Family Income (imputed) | .047** | .014 | .015 | .015 |
| Marital Status | | | | |
| Divorced | .122 | .16 | .142 | .166 |
| Separated | .285 | .172 | .164 | .182 |
| Widowed | -.127 | .177 | -.019 | .188 |
| Never Married | -.154 | .146 | -.246 | .157 |
| Region: | | | | |
| Northeast | -.227 | .138 | -.130 | .148 |
| North Central | -.024 | .127 | .240 | .132 |
| West | .443* | .210 | .332 | .217 |
| Urbanicity | | | | |
| Urban | .461** | .136 | .626* | .152 |
| Family Closeness | -.031 | .074 | .065 | .080 |
| Family Interaction | .073 | .038 | .099* | .041 |
| Family Support | | | | |
| Never Received Help | -.154 | .143 | -.151 | .156 |
| Never Needed Help | -.254 | .181 | -.164 | .193 |
| Number of Friends | .056 | .067 | .161* | .070 |
| Interaction with Friends | .041 | .037 | .048 | .040 |
| Visit Friends or Family | | | | |
| Visit Friends | .056 | .067 | .043 | .114 |
| Visit Both | .041 | .037 | -.230 | .249 |
| Count on Friends or Family | | | | |
| Count on Friends | .190 | .146 | .018 | .156 |
| Count on Both | -.187 | .107 | -.078 | .123 |
| Church Attendance | .054 | .040 | -.009 | .042 |
| Church Support | | | | |
| Never Received Help | -.337* | .144 | -.252 | .156 |
| Never Needed Help | -.293* | .145 | -.069 | .151 |
| Log likelihood | -1273.7302 | | -1159.2416 | |
| N | 1,972 | | 1,984 | |

*p<.05, **p<.01 (two-tailed tests)

Table 2. Percent Distribution of Category of Relative Taken into Household

| | <i>Frequency</i> | <i>Percent</i> |
|------------------------|------------------|----------------|
| Son | 5 | .6 |
| Daughter | 15 | 1.9 |
| Step-Son | 2 | .3 |
| Step-Daughter | 1 | .1 |
| Foster Child, NA Sex | 1 | .1 |
| Grandson | 6 | .8 |
| Granddaughter | 4 | .5 |
| Grandchild, NA Sex | 1 | .1 |
| Father | 7 | .9 |
| Mother | 12 | 1.5 |
| Brother | 82 | 10.4 |
| Sister | 65 | 8.2 |
| Grandfather | 7 | .9 |
| Grandmother | 9 | 1.1 |
| Great Grandmother | 2 | .3 |
| Nephew | 63 | 8.0 |
| Niece | 66 | 8.3 |
| Uncle | 54 | 6.8 |
| Aunt | 46 | 5.8 |
| Male Cousin | 143 | 18.1 |
| Female Cousin | 95 | 12.0 |
| Cousin, NA Sex | 9 | 1.1 |
| "Relative" Unspecified | 3 | .4 |
| Male Respondent | 1 | .1 |
| Female Respondent | 2 | .3 |
| Husband Of R | 1 | .1 |
| Father-In-Law | 1 | .1 |
| Mother-In-Law | 5 | .6 |
| Daughter-In-Law | 3 | .4 |
| Brother-In-Law | 44 | 5.6 |
| Sister-In-Law | 29 | 3.7 |
| Other In-Laws | 8 | 1.0 |
| Total | 792 | 100.0 |

Table 3. Age of the Relative Taken into the Household

family. The age distribution of the relatives taken in indicate that the majority were young adults, with about 15% being 17 years or younger, while another 15% were 54 and older. With respect to gender, equally half of the relatives taken in were male and female.

Table 4 presents a frequency distribution of the reasons that the relative came to live with the respondent's family. As indicated by this table there are a large variety of reasons why a relative came to live with the respondent. The most frequent category was that the relative simply needed a place to live (16%), followed by moving or relocation (14.8%) and moving because of employment (15.6%). Other notable categories include physical illness (7.2%), the relative being in conflict with members of his previous household (5.7%), and the death of a parent (5.6%).

| Age in Years | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------|
| 1-17 | 29 | 7.21 |
| 18-25 | 117 | 30.44 |
| 26-35 | 156 | 41.61 |
| 36-54 | 100 | 26.32 |
| 55-74 | 67 | 17.68 |
| 75-up | 36 | 9.44 |

This analysis provides important information on the nature and circumstances of extended family households among black Americans. Nearly 4 out of 10 black Americans indicated that, at some point, their family had taken in a relative for at least a month's time. Given the strong tradition of household extension described in the ethnographic and historical literature, this finding was not wholly unanticipated. However, it was surprising that 3 out of 10 black Americans indicated that they had taken a friend (i.e., non-kin) into their household for at least a month's time. As these findings attest, the incorporation of non-kin as members in extended family households is an important topic area that deserves more attention.

The analysis in Table 1 indicated that families that have taken in a relative vary with respect to sociodemographic factors. Respondents with higher family incomes, who reside in the West as opposed to the South, who reside in urban areas, and who receive support from their church members, are more likely to indicate that their family had

Table 4. Reason for Relative Being Taken into the Household

| Reason Given |
|---|
| Marital stress (e.g., <i>"She v marital problems"; "He j wife."</i>) |
| Divorce or separation from <i>"She came from Mississipi have any place to stay aft divorce."</i>) |
| Other marital problems: F |
| Person in conflict with pro and household members (<i>get along with his parents was mean to him."</i>) |
| Conflict between other fa (e.g., <i>"Because of the pro Mama & Daddy at home."</i>) |
| Violent or abusive treatm <i>"Beaten up at home."</i>) |
| Rejection or desertion (e.g. <i>had deserted her and she us"; "His mother threw h refused to care for him."</i>) |
| Death of parent or guardia <i>"Didn't have a place to g died."</i>) |
| Death of spouse |
| Death in previous family |
| Non-conflict event/crisis i family (e.g., <i>"House burn"</i>) |
| Other family events or cri |
| Came to help respondent |
| Physical illness (e.g., <i>"Ne because of accident/illnes needed help, oh mying h"</i>) |

Table 4 (cont.). Reason for Relative Being Taken into the Household

| Reason Given | Frequency | Percent |
|--------------|-----------|---------|
|--------------|-----------|---------|

| | | |
|--|-----|-------|
| Relocation Move (e.g., person is judged to be incapable of self-care and is taken to a residential care home for a place"; "The left his mother's city and wanted to get pregnant") (e.g., "Needed help and home") | 184 | 14.8 |
| Money Problems (e.g., "Were evicted; elderly (e.g., "He's a brother who lives alone in a room.") | 26 | 3.4 |
| Helplessness of person (e.g., "He's a brother who lives alone in a room.") | 14 | 1.8 |
| Illness of one person (e.g., "He's a brother who lives alone in a room.") | 89 | 11.6 |
| Mental illness of other person (e.g., "He's a brother who lives alone in a room.") | 1 | .1 |
| Special Education (e.g., "Lived here while in school"; "To attend college.") | 32 | 4.2 |
| Preferred Arrangement (e.g., "We were close"; "Wanted to live together"; "My brother and he were tight"; "Wanted to be with people their own age.") | 37 | 4.8 |
| Needed Place To Live ("Had no where else to go"; "Had to live somewhere.") | 30 | 3.9 |
| Total | 123 | 16.0 |
| Total | 768 | 100.0 |

taken in a relative. The income finding is intriguing and somewhat unexpected. Several scholars have argued that extended family households are a practical response to economic necessity. Consequently, one would expect that poorer families would be more likely to have taken in a relative. The present findings, however, showed just the opposite; families with higher incomes and presumably more resources and larger households were more likely to take in a relative for at least one month's time.

One could speculate that respondents who were relatively well-off would be better positioned to offer housing to relatives. Further, the patterns of household extension may be different dependent upon socioeconomic resources. For example, families with more resources may take in relatives as a short-term (e.g., 2-6 months) solution to a short-lived housing need (e.g., relocation for a job, recuperation after illness). For families with fewer resources, however, household extension may be of longer duration (e.g., 1-2 years) and in response to more long-standing economic difficulties (e.g., income and housing insufficiency, unemployment). These analyses provide some insight into the circumstances that precipitate the formation of extended households. However, more detailed analyses linking information about the reasons for household extension with characteristics of the person joining the household (e.g., their status as a minor, physical and mental health status) would elaborate the dynamics of this process.

Respondents who reside in the West were more likely to have taken in relatives. As a region, the West has the lowest percentage of black Americans and one of the highest rates of growth. The tendency for persons in the West to indicate that they have taken in relatives may reflect relocation patterns (i.e., internal migration) whereby relatives move to the West to maintain physical proximity to other family members, for employment opportunities or other reasons.

It is not clear why respondents who received assistance from their church members were more likely to have taken in a relative. People who receive church support are more likely to be involved in reciprocal support networks operating within their churches in which they exchange assistance with network members. Participation in these reciprocal support relationships may predispose individuals to take others into their homes because of normative expectations that reinforce such behaviors, as well as a belief that having received assistance, it is one's duty to then respond by assisting others. With respect to urbanicity, respondents who lived in urban areas were more likely to take in both relatives (Model 1) and friends (Model 2) than those who resided in rural areas. The urban advantage with respect to household extension is consistent with the fact that 8 out of 10 black Americans live in urban areas and, consequently, movement into and out of extended family households is more likely to occur there.

Except for the urbanicity finding, the correlates of taking in a friend versus taking in a relative were dissimilar. The finding that younger respondents were more likely to indicate that their family had taken in a friend is consistent with the high levels of geographic mobility and flexible household patterns of young adults. The positive relationship between number of friends with whom to discuss problems and taking in a friend indicates that higher levels of involvement in the friendship network increases the probability of taking in a friend in your household for at least one month. The finding that frequency of family interaction was significantly associated with likelihood of taking in a friend, while frequency of friendship interaction was not, was particularly intriguing. Other research indicates that family interaction is a particularly strong predictor of involvement in social support networks. For instance, Chatters et al. (in press), found that family interaction was associated with receiving support from both family and church members.

One of the more striking aspects of these findings is the range of relatives who were taken into respondents' households. The data in Table 3 showed that individuals across the life span (i.e., infants, children, adolescents, young adults and elderly) were incorporated into respondents' households. Similarly, Table 2 data indicated that individuals representing a wide range of immediate and extended kin relationships (e.g., siblings, cousins, grandparents) were incorporated into households. More than 6 out of 10 relatives were either cousins, aunts, uncles, nieces or nephews, clearly showing the prominence of extended family members in these households.

The present study's findings regarding the reasons for taking a relative in are particularly useful and insightful. The majority of studies on black extended households are based on analysis of household composition from survey or census data. As such, they fail to provide any information concerning what necessitates these household transitions. The information provided in Table 4 showed that there were many reasons why individuals move in with a relative. Some relocations were made to take advantage of employment and educational opportunities. However, family problems, lack of money, physical illness, or simply not having a place to live were also mentioned. The largest category of reasons for taking a relative in involve individuals who are regarded as the "hidden homeless" (Barak, 1991; Kobel & Murray, 1999; Rossi, 1989). That is, persons who want to establish a separate household, but are prohibited from doing so due to a variety of reasons associated with housing costs and housing resources and who "double-up" as a strategy to address these constraints. Collectively, these findings demonstrate that black extended families provide housing assistance for their family members for both economic and educational opportunity, and in times of crises.

It is important to note that there are several limitations to the present analysis. The dependent measure may not fully tap the variety of long-term situations found in

extended family households. For instance, a child who comes into a household at the age of two and has lived there for more than five years may, for all intents and purposes, come to be fully regarded as a member of that household. In essence, there may be instances in which extended household arrangements are under-reported because they are of relatively long-term duration. Respondents in this study might only identify those individuals who resided with their family as a consequence of some temporary emergency situation. Further, there may be household residents who are members of the household due to informal adoption practices. Given their long-standing position within the household, they may come to be regarded as true family members and their status as fairly distant relatives or non-kin may become irrelevant.

This and other analyses of extended households is limited by the fact that it focuses on a single household and does not examine whether multiple households function in a coordinated manner. Consequently, the degree of extendedness present within black families is likely to be underestimated. Ethnographic research has provided examples of several nuclear families residing in the same neighborhood or apartment complex that fully cooperate in the daily tasks of everyday life (e.g., sharing meals, grocery shopping, household chores) (Aschenbrenner, 1975; Stack, 1974). In these instances, household boundaries may be relatively fluid and reflect a sharing of function and identity. In addition, other data from the National Survey of Black Americans reveals that 40% of black Americans report that at least a few of their relatives live in their neighborhood and 6.9% indicate that more than half of their immediate family members live in the same neighborhood. These findings suggest that the issue of extended households should be examined within the context of the proximity of relatives and family members within the immediate neighborhood and community.

This article has shown that extended family households serve a critical function in helping black families provide support for both their kin and non-kin. Although it was expected that the practice of taking in a relative would be fairly common, it was surprising that 3 out of 10 black Americans indicated that they had taken a friend into their household. Respondents indicated that they had co-resided with individuals representing a diversity of both extended and immediate relationships. Additionally, there were a variety of reasons for taking a relative in, including some that allowed individuals to take advantage of employment and educational opportunities, and others that reflected problematic life circumstances (i.e., marital problems, abusive relationships, physical illness, and basic lack of housing). Collectively, these findings provide a more comprehensive understanding of the household extension than what has been possible in previous studies (i.e., census data and survey-based research) and suggest a number of intriguing questions for further study.

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