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Intergenerational Support and the Emotional Well-being of Older Jews and Arabs in Israel

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Abstract

This investigation examined the cultural context of intergenerational support among older Jewish and Arab parents living in Israel. The authors hypothesized that support from adult children would be more positively consequential for the psychological well-being of Arab parents than of Jewish parents. The data derived from 375 adults age 65 and older living in Israel. Psychological wellbeing was measured with positive and negative affect subscales of the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule. Overall, positive affect was highest when filial expectations for support were congruent with whether or not instrumental support was received. Findings by cultural background revealed that, among older Jews, receiving instrumental support raised positive affect and stronger filial expectations lowered it. Among older Arabs, receiving financial support raised positive affect and receiving instrumental support functions are expected and accepted means of serving the everyday needs of older parents.

Keywords

Arabs; culture; emotional well-being; intergenerational support; Israel; Jews; older parents

It has long been noted that children form the backbone of the informal support system of older adults (Roberto & Jarrott, 2008; Szinovacz & Davey, 2007; Wolff & Kasper, 2006). In almost all societies, older adults expect to rely on their adult children as critical sources of

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support and care should they become frail and experience age-related deficits (Albertini, Kohli, & Vogel, 2007; Lowenstein, Katz, & Gur-Yaish, 2008). Increasingly investigated are the wider contexts—national, social, and cultural – within which support from adult children is triggered, remains dormant, or is substituted for by other means. A variety of research on multinational samples has shown significant differences between societies in this regard, with more advanced welfare regimes sometimes replacing and sometimes enhancing intergenerational support for older adults (Brandt, Haberkern, & Szydlik, 2009; Lowenstein & Daatland, 2006).

There is still much to learn, though, from studying single societies that have substantial cultural heterogeneity within their borders (Dilworth-Anderson & Cohen, 2009). These types of investigation are also important because they highlight how cultural membership—both in terms of filial values and social position within the society—influence the way older individuals and their families appraise support needs, establish preferences for support, and consider alternatives to family support within a common welfare regime.

Cultural background shapes the goals to which people aspire, the attainment of which may be a source of solace, and the failure to attain a possible source of distress (Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999). Family transactions are particularly rooted in cultural values and beliefs that frame expectations of family members and infuse family behaviors (and their absence) with meaning (Goodenough, 1981). Research shows that intergenerational flows of support vary—both in their prevalence and their consequences—across ethnic groups (Goodman & Silverstein, 2002) as well as across societies with different cultural regimes (Torres-Gil, 2005).

In this study, we examined intergenerational support for the aged in Israel, a society with strong social democratic policies and a developed social service system but that comprises highly familistic cultures among its various religious and ethnic groups, reinforced by a legal mandate that children provide support to their older parents in need (Katz, Gur-Yaish, & Lowenstein, 2010).

Specifically, we investigated the consequences of regular intergenerational support for the psychological well-being of older Jews and older Arabs. Although the challenges faced by elders and their families are similar in the two groups, the solutions to those challenges vary considerably, with greater reliance on family in the Arab community and greater reliance on the formal service system in the Jewish community (e.g., Lowenstein & Katz, 2000; Shmotkin & Hadari, 1996). Thus, in this culturally diverse nation ethnicity is an important factor for understanding how the public – family divide in support for the aged is negotiated, whether or not family support is welcomed by older adults, and the degree to which support form adult children influences the psychological well-being of older parents.

The Context of Jewish and Arab Families in Israel

Societal trends in Israel indicate that both Jewish and Arab families are being pulled by opposing social forces: The first prods the family to adopt Western ideals of individual freedom, whereas the other acts to strengthen traditional values. Although modernization

trends are reflected in various aspects of life—such as technological and educational developments, urbanization, and the growth of the welfare state—the role of the family in caring for dependent relatives is still significant in both Jewish and Arab traditions (Lavee & Katz, 2003). Yet there are notable differences between the two cultural groups with regard to family life, which we discuss below.

Jewish values, religious laws, traditions, and ethics place great emphasis on social responsibility toward the aged (Lowenstein, 1998); however, ongoing waves of immigration to Israel have enhanced the cultural, ethnic, and religious diversity of the Jewish population (Lewin & Stier, 2003), the effect of which has been to fragment opinions about the responsibility of families versus that of the state in caring for elderly persons. The legitimation of formal systems of care has to some degree devalued the primacy of families as sole providers of care for older people (Litwin, 1994).

Israel has a sizable Arab minority, comprising 20% of the total population (numbering around 1.5 million people; Central Bureau of Statistics, 2009). The proportion of older adults age 65+ in the Arab population is, at 3.5%, less than one third of that in the Jewish population (11.3%). The number of Arab elderly individuals, however, is increasing at almost four times the rate of Jewish elderly, a trend that is increasing public awareness of this group. A second trend of concern to policymakers is that the prevalence of disability among Arab elderly (30%) is about twice that of the Jewish elderly (16%; Brodsky, Shnoor, & Be'er, 2009), provoking concern about how their elevated needs can be best served.

Arab society in Israel is predominantly rural, patrilineal in structure, and strongly familistic. The extended family functions as the basic social and economic unit for older individuals in either shared or adjoining homes. As a consequence, the informal support network in the Arab sector is quite active and extensive: Sixty-eight percent of elderly Arabs live with their family (as compared to 18% of the Jewish elderly), mostly with their children (Brodsky et al., 2009). Although this pattern is undergoing a transformation due to urbanization and other modernizing influences (Azaiza, Lowenstein, & Brodsky, 1999; Katz & Lowenstein, 2002; Litwin, 2006; Lowenstein & Katz, 2000), filial obligation to elders is still relatively strong, and traditional kinship structures are largely intact in Arab society (Azaiza & Brodsky, 1998; Katz & Lowenstein, 2002). The question of whether older Arabs are adequately served by family members is of concern, however, given their projected growth and their documented risk of poor health.

Social Support and Well-Being

Conceptual formulations of social support often differentiate between tangible and intangible support as a strategy to parsimoniously and inclusively represent the support functions of social and family networks (e.g., Fiori & Denckla, 2012; House & Kahn, 1985; Ingersoll-Dayton, & Antonucci, 1988; Seeman & Berkman, 1988). Although specific measures vary in the above formulation, the most common operational definitions include instrumental support or hands-on forms of assistance, representing the tangible dimension, and emotional support and other forms of symbolic assistance, representing the intangible dimension. In the present research we also considered financial support as an indirect form

of tangible assistance and one with an imperative based on a unique combination of filial piety and exigent need (see Silverstein, 2005). Unlike in most Western countries, it is common for adult children in more traditional societies and cultures to provide financial assistance to their older parents, something observed within Arab Israeli families as well (Katz, 2009).

Research conducted across a variety of national and cultural contexts has demonstrated a strong relationship between support and health and various forms of well-being throughout the life span (e.g., Chalise, Saito, Takahashi, & Kai, 2007; Sarason, Sarason, & Gurung, 2001). This extends to later life, when receiving social support from adult children is particularly important for psychological well-being and quality of life (Antonucci, Birditt, & Akiyama, 2009).

Some studies, though, have found that support either confers no benefit or produces a negative impact on older adults, presumably because of the induced and unwanted dependency that receiving support sometimes implies (Reinhardt, Boerner, & Horowitz, 2006; Whitbeck, Hoyt, & Tyler, 2001). Depending on the strength of filial expectations and the timing of the intervention, intergenerational support can have a neutral or harmful influence on the emotional well-being of older parents (Lang & Schütze, 2002). That the negative impact of instrumental support is stronger when delivered by kin whose support is less than welcome suggests that expectations matter (Merz & Huxhold, 2010). Equivocal findings regarding the impact of instrumental support suggest that the desire to maintain autonomy and avoid dependence on certain family members-preferences rooted in cultural values that variously emphasize individualism or collectivism-may be key factors in determining how much support is welcomed and tolerated by older adults (Pyke & Bengtson, 1996; Silverstein, Chen, & Heller, 1996). Because older Arab Israelis are more likely than older Jewish Israelis to rely on kin to satisfy their basic needs and the latter are more likely to favor the use of formal services (Litwin, 1994), we entertained the possibility that support may in part have different and perhaps opposite effects for older adults in Arab and Jewish communities.

Study Hypotheses

We suggest that intergenerational support has consequences for the emotional well-being of older adults by virtue of the perceived meaning of support that in itself is formed by prevailing cultural expectations as well as its prevalence and the level of need within the cultural group in question. In predicting which support function will be more or less beneficial, we take as a point of departure the modal practices of adult children in each of the two ethnic groups studied with the assumption that deviations from the modal pattern will be viewed as problematic if viewed as being under- or overserved. With regard to instrumental and financial support from adult children, we note that these support functions are more prevalent in Arab families than in Jewish families. Research has shown that in Israel older Arabs express a stronger preference for instrumental family care than do older Jews, who more strongly endorse the use of formal services (Halperin, 2012; Pines & Zaidman, 2003). Therefore, we anticipated that instrumental support and financial support will be more positively associated with emotional well-being among Arab elders than among

Jewish elders. Similarly, filial expectations for practical help, as an expression of the desire for intergenerational autonomy (or dependency), will likely have a more powerful positive influence on the well-being of Arab elders than of Jewish elders. There were few reasons to expect emotional support to have a different effect in each ethnic group. Although Pines and Zaidman (2003) found that Israeli Arabs were less likely than Israeli Jews to discuss emotional problems with others, their study did not specifically target older adults.

To summarize, on the basis of cultural theories of family interdependence, we hypothesized that instrumental and financial support and normative expectations for support will be more strongly tied to psychological well-being among older Arabs than among older Jews. We expected, however, that emotional support, because it is less tied to issues of autonomy – dependency, to be similarly associated with well-being in each ethnic group.

We also anticipated that filial expectations play a role in conditioning the way instrumental support is interpreted, regardless of ethnic group. Evidence shows that filial norms of older parents are not strongly related to the actual receipt of instrumental support from their adult children (Peek, Coward, Peek, & Lee, 1998). This suggests that some parents may expect more or less assistance from children than they receive, potentially leading to disappointment or strained family relations (Lee, Peek, & Coward, 1998; Lowenstein, Katz, & Gur-Yaish, 2007). Therefore, we expected parents with stronger filial expectations to be more adversely affected by the lack of instrumental support and more benefited by the presence of support compared to parents with weaker expectations.

There are several reasons why we expected filial expectations to interact with instrumental support but not with emotional or financial support. Instrumental support, insofar as it involves adult children intervening within a parent's personal space and household environment, is presumed to be particularly sensitive as to whether the parent views such support as a welcome fulfillment of need and demonstration of filial concern or as an intrusive threat to personal autonomy. Furthermore, the types of support referred to in the items measuring filial expectations are consistent with practical, hands-on forms of help. Confirming our speculations, we found no significant interactions between filial expectations and the other two forms of support and, to avoid oversaturating the empirical model, do not report them.

Finally, we expected positive emotions to be more responsive to intergenerational support than negative emotions, based on literature showing that contentment is more sensitive to situational and social environmental factors, whereas distress has a stronger basis in dispositional characteristics (Baker, Cesa, Gatz, & Mellins, 1992; Diener, 1994).

Sociodemographic factors of gender, health, and economic status were also considered as control variables because they are known correlates of family support and subjective wellbeing (e.g., Ferraro & Su, 1999; Silverstein, Gans, & Yang, 2006).

Method

Sample

The sample for our investigation derived from a 2007 – 2008 study of intergenerational relationships in Israel funded by the Bi-National Science Foundation. The study consisted of subsamples of older noninstitutionalized Jews and Arabs age 65 and over. Although each group was surveyed at the same time, they were recruited through different methods. The Arab subsample consisted of 200 elderly Arab Israelis recruited on the basis of area probability sampling using geographic information from Israel's Central Bureau of Statistics (2006). The response rate of this subsample was 72%. Although there were Christians and Druze in the Arab subsample, their numbers were too small to conduct meaningful analyses, so they were grouped with Muslim Arabs.

The initial Jewish subsample consisted of Israeli Jews who participated in a 2000 - 2001 survey that was representative of the urban Jewish Israeli population (response rate of 71%). Of respondents in this earlier survey, 555 were in the targeted age range of 65 and older, including an oversample of the 75-and-older population (see Lowenstein & Ogg, 2003). Among these respondents, 393 were not surveyed in 2007 - 2008 because they died (n = 53), could not be located (n = 111), refused to participate (n = 70), had a serious = physical illness (n = 43), were too mentally or cognitively impaired (n = 51), or had moved to a residential care setting (n = 65). The resulting subsample totaled 162 older adults.

To replenish the follow-up Jewish sample, an additional 40 elderly (age 65+) Jews from urban areas were randomly selected using the same area probability sampling procedure that was used to select the 2000 - 2001 sample. Comparing these newly added older adults to the original participants revealed no compositional differences in their gender, age, level of education, and marital status.

After removing 18 respondents who reported having no living children and nine respondents who provided no information on the dependent variable, the operational sample consisted of 375 older parents (185 Jews and 190 Arabs). Characteristics of the sample as a whole and by the two ethnic subsamples are shown in Table 1. The average age of the sample was 75.1 years: 75.9 in the Jewish subsample (range: 65 - 98) and 74.3 in the Arab subsample (range: 66 - 96). Differences in the characteristics of the subsamples are discussed below.

Measures

Data collection was based on face-to-face structured interviews. Interviews were conducted at the respondents' homes in either Hebrew or Arabic, as needed. Comparability of the language-specific interviews was ascertained using back-translation procedures. The study was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Welfare and Health Sciences at the University of Haifa and the institutional review board at the University of Southern California.

Dependent variable—To assess psychological well-being, we used the Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS), developed by Watson, Clark, and Tellegen (1988). The PANAS is a scale of 20 items used to independently measure positive and negative

emotions; we used the 10-item version adapted by Kercher (1992), which has been found to have an appropriate factor structure, high discriminant validity, and reasonable reliability in the older population (Hilleras, Jorm, Herlitz, & Winblad, 1998). Administration of the PANAS begins with the following prompt: "I want to read out some words that describe different feelings and emotions, and I want you to tell me if you have felt like that at all in the last two weeks and [if so] how much?" Pleasurable feelings, or positive affect, included the words *excited, enthusiastic, alert, inspired*, and *determined*. Distressful feelings, or negative affect, included the words *distressed, upset, scared, afraid*, and *worried*. Each item was rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*not at all*) to 5 (*extremely often*).

Factor analysis of the 10 PANAS items demonstrated a two-factor solution discriminating a Positive Affect factor (PA) and a Negative Affect factor (NA); however, two items had factor loadings below 0.5 on both factors. Thus, we omitted the items *excitement* (which may connote either positive or negative emotion) and *worried*. The remaining eight items had acceptable reliability with alphas of .73 and .78 (PA items) and .84 and .82 (NA items) for the Jewish and Arab groups, respectively.

Reducing the PANAS to eight items produced a strong factor structure with good discrimination (see Table 2) and one that was similar across the two ethnic groups (not shown). To operationalize PA and NA dimensions, we used factor scores derived from the aforementioned factor analysis. This solution produced a small but positive interfactor correlation between PA and NA factors of .159 (p < .01). Although most of the literature has found a small negative correlation between PA and NA, there are several reasons to expect that this might not be the case in the cultures we studied in this research. First, cultural variation in how emotions are expressed and recollected is well known (Scollon, Diener, Oishi, & Biswas-Diener, 2004). Because Middle Eastern cultures tend to treat contentiousness as a legitimate and functional emotional style (see Silverstein, Gans, Lowenstein, Giarrusso, & Bengtson, 2010), it is perhaps not surprising to find that positive and negative emotions coexist among Israeli Jews and Arabs. Heightened positive and negative affect has generally been found among individuals with strong expressiveness and a tendency toward anger (Harmon-Jones, Harmon-Jones, Abramson, & Peterson, 2009). Second, sensitivity to arousal has been observed to be a common underlying characteristic of both PA and NA among individuals experiencing high levels of stress (Reich, Zautra, & Davis, 2003). This is particularly noteworthy for the pattern observed because the sample was recruited from a region characterized by chronic intergroup tension, political conflict, and periodic wars (Van Praag, Romanov, & Ferrer-i-Carbonell, 2010).

Independent variables—Recognizing that social support can be measured along various dimensions—perceived adequacy of support, support networks, and supportive behaviors (Wu & Hart, 2002)—we chose to use behavioral support to represent the effortful and culturally expected ways that adult children help their parents (Antonucci et al., 2009). As discussed earlier, such contributions include tangible (instrumental, economic) and nontangible (emotional, normative) forms of support. Respondents were asked whether they had received major help, assistance, or support from each of their adult children during the previous 12 months and, if so, whether they received it *occasionally* or *regularly*. *Instrumental support* referred to receiving help with household chores (e.g., cleaning and

washing clothes, household repair, gardening, transportation, and shopping) or personal care (e.g., nursing, help with bathing and dressing, help when sick). *Emotional support* referred to receiving emotional support or discussing important life decisions. *Economic support* referred to receiving financial assistance. For each of the three types of support, we aggregated a single score by taking the maximum frequency across all possible children (up to eight). These values were then coded as dummy variables that contrasted receipt of regular support from at least one child in each area (= 1) with receipt of only occasional or no support from any child in the area (=0).

The measure of normative filial expectations reflected beliefs about the amount of responsibility that adult children should have to support their elderly parents. Although not itself a behavioral manifestation of support, filial responsibility for support has been shown to exhibit strong cultural variation and correspond to behavioral distinctions among cultural groups (Burr & Mutchler, 1999). This construct was measured with a four-statement scale adapted from Lee, Peek, and Coward (1998). Respondents were asked to report how strongly they agreed or disagreed with the following statements: (a) "Adult children should live close to their older parents so that they can help them if needed," (b) "Adult children should be willing to sacrifice some of the things they want for their own children in order to support their aging parents," (c) "Older people should be able to depend on their adult children to help them do the things they need to do," and (d) "Parents are entitled to some return for the sacrifices they have made for their children." Respondents rated their agreement with these statements on a Likert scale that ranged from 1 (*totally disagree*) to 6 (*totally agree*). We computed an additive scale that ranged from 0 to 20, with higher scores indicating stronger filial expectations ($\alpha = .66$).

We note that correlations among the four support variables considered are moderate to weak (see Table 3), with only emotional support showing robust correlations with instrumental support (.46) and financial support (.33). Filial expectations correlate weakly with the other three support indicators (<.20), suggesting that preferences are not in alignment with actual support received.

Sociodemographic factors included ethnicity (Jewish = 1, Arab = 0), gender (male = 1, female = 0), age in years, and years of education. Family structure included marital status (1 = married, 0 = not married), number of children, and coresidence with a child (living with a child = 1, living without children = 0). Health was assessed with the SF12, a shortened version of the SF36, a highly reliable and widely used scale to measure multiple aspects of health status, including physical functioning, role functioning, and perceived health (Ware, Kosinski, & Keller, 1996). A higher score indicates better levels of health. In the current study, the reliability of SF12 items was .67. Financial adequacy was measured as the degree of satisfaction with one's current financial situation as rated on a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (*very dissatisfied*) to 5 (*very satisfied*).

Results

Means of all variables are shown in Table 1 for the entire sample and by cultural subgroup. We conducted t tests to ascertain statistically significant differences between Jews and

Arabs. On all factors except age, receiving emotional support, and NA (raw score), the Arab and Jewish subsamples were significantly different. Older Israeli Arabs tended to be male, were more likely to be married, suffered from worse health, had fewer years of education, and experienced more economic stress than older Israeli Jews. Arabs also had more children and were more likely to live with a child. In terms of support, older Arabs were more likely to receive regular instrumental and financial support from children and had stronger normative expectations of children for support. These differences were in the expected direction, with Arabs possessing fewer health and socioeconomic resources but having wider kin availability and more active tangible support networks. That emotional support was not significantly different between the groups speaks to the ability of individuals in the Jewish group to engage in emotional intimacy at a distance, either over the telephone or through digital communication. Finally, in what may seem a paradoxical finding based on group differences in health and material resources, PA was stronger in the Arab group than in the Jewish group. Correlations among all study variables are found in Table 3.

We next used multiple regressions to investigate the conditions and characteristics that influenced the positive and negative emotional well-being of older parents, with particular focus on the differential influence that each support domain had on these outcomes based on cultural group membership. The number of missing values was not a serious concern in these data (coresidence = 1, education = 26, SF12 health = 24, filial expectations = 4, PANAS PA = 5); various imputation strategies were used and showed similar results. Except for five cases that were missing PA scores (imputed with other mental health variables), we used multiple imputation with propensity score matching to estimate likely values for missing data using SOLAS software (Statistical Solutions Ltd., 2001). Regression coefficients reported are based on average estimates from five imputed data sets with standard errors adjusted to account for variation in the imputed scores (Little & Rubin, 2002).

Regression estimates are presented in Table 4. To partial out the positive correlation between PA and NA that might be due to a shared association with arousal, we controlled for the opposite valence's affect item in each equation. The first model shows only main effects, followed by a second model that includes an Instrumental Support \times Filial Expectations interaction (to detect the impact of fulfilled and unfulfilled expectations), and then a third model that adds a series of Ethnic Group \times Support interactions. Predicted values for significant interactions (holding all other terms constant at their mean values) were plotted to more explicitly illustrate these relationships.

The first model predicting PA shows that the Jewish group had lower positive affect than the Arab group and that older adults who received financial support from children had higher PA compared to those who received no such support. As expected, a significant positive coefficient was found for NA. In the second model, the added interaction between instrumental support and filial expectations was statistically significant. Predicted values for this interaction, plotted in Figure 1, show a disordinal pattern whereby stronger expectations increased PA among those who received instrumental support but lowered PA among those who received no instrumental support: The strongest PA was found among individuals whose expectations for support were congruent with what they received.

When interaction terms between cultural group and support were added in the third model, we found three significant interaction terms; that is, the relationships between these three forms of intergenerational support and PA were contingent on whether respondents were Jewish or Arab. The interaction between cultural group and normative filial expectations, plotted in Figure 2, shows a disordinal pattern, with stronger expectations for support associated with increased PA among older Arabs but decreased PA among older Jews.

The interaction between cultural group and receipt of financial support was also statistically significant and predicted values for this relationship are plotted in Figure 3. Among older Arabs, receiving financial support was associated with greater positive affect, but this effect was not observed among older Jews, suggesting the importance of intergenerational economic transfers in the Arab community.

Finally, predicted values from a significant positive interaction between cultural group and receipt of instrumental support are shown in Figure 4. Another disordinal pattern revealed that receipt of regular instrumental support from adult children was associated with higher PA among older Jewish parents but lower PA among older Arab parents.

The last panel in Table 4 shows the equations predicting NA. The first model shows that women had greater NA than men, as did less healthy individuals compared to their healthier counterparts. Neither the support variables nor filial expectations were statistically significant. As before, PA was positively associated with NA. The equations in Model 2 and Model 3 show that none of the interaction terms tested was statistically significant.

Discussion

In this investigation we examined the extent to which different forms of support from adult children influenced the psychological well-being of aging parents within two distinct cultures in Israel: one a minority Arab culture that is predominantly rural and strongly familistic in its elder care preferences and the other a majority Jewish culture that is mostly urban and favors a mix of family and government supports for older persons. Baseline comparisons revealed wide differences in the type of resources on which each group was able to draw. Whereas Jewish elderly were better off in terms of health and human capital resources, Arab elderly were advantaged in terms of kin availability and involvement.

Our multivariate findings suggested that inter-generational support has distinct consequences for emotional well-being and confirmed several of our hypotheses. We demonstrated the beneficial influence of financial support for older Arabs and the conditioning power of normative expectations showing that instrumental support improved well-being when it was consistent with expectations. Nevertheless, we sometimes found anomalous patterns across and within the ethnic groups. Older Jews had better well-being when they received instrumental support but worse well-being when they expressed stronger normative expectations for support.

The inverse relationship between filial expectations and PA among older Jews begs an explanation. We speculate that this finding is a product of unfulfilled expectations in the Jewish group, a culture characterized by greater filial independence and geographic mobility

of adult children. Unfortunately, the sample size precluded the test of a three-way Cultural Group \times Norms \times Support interaction to examine this proposition. We tested it indirectly, however, by examining the extent to which expectations went unfulfilled in each cultural group. A significant Cultural Group \times Norms interaction predicting instrumental support (results not shown) revealed that among older parents whose filial expectations were among the strongest, Jewish parents were about half as likely as Arab parents to receive this type of support. Although older Arabs maintained stronger normative expectations and received more instrumental support than older Jews overall, the mismatch between normative expectations and practical support from adult children was greater in the latter group, suggesting a proneness to disappointment. Confirmation of this explanation awaits future research with larger samples.

Greater PA among older Arabs who received regular economic support from adult children may be related to the strong expectations for such support from children in Arab society based on exigent need and a strong cultural imperative to show deference and accord respect to older adults. In Arab as well in other collectivistic cultures, economic support is a manifestation as well as a demonstration of filial piety (e.g., Sung, 2000) such that those parents who do not receive financial contributions from children may be prone to emotional distress.

Reasons for the anomalous findings of a positive influence of financial support and a negative influence of instrumental support among older Arabs may lie in the intrinsic differences between these two forms of assistance. Although each type of support has a strong basis in cultural expectations and fulfills exigent need, instrumental support, being more personal and interactive than financial support, has the potential to induce conflict when delivered at high levels (Silverstein et al., 1996). Because older Arabs are more likely than older Jews to live in homes adjacent to or near their adult children in tightly knit family-oriented communities (Khalaila & Litwin, 2011), it is possible that instrumental support is delivered with such high frequency and intensity in this ethnic group as to induce relationship strains that contribute to lower well-being. Another explanation may be that the underuse of formal services in this group has produced role overload and imposed excessive stress and burden on support providers to the detriment of their recipients. Although we did not examine the use of formal or state-provided services, it may be that Arab families have less access to such services and/or a greater reluctance to use them.

We note that intergenerational support measures were not related to NA, both in their main effects and in their interactions with cultural group. Thus, support from adult children appears to have consequences for experiencing pleasant emotions in later life but has little bearing on experiencing unpleasant ones. This pattern—which was equally true for both Jews and Arabs—is somewhat surprising in these two relatively familistic cultures, but it is consistent with literature demonstrating that happiness is more affected by dynamic environmental factors and unhappiness by stable characteristics such as personality and genetics.

It is important to note several limitations of this research. First, heterogeneity within each cultural group based on religious affiliation and national origin was not tapped in our

analysis. For instance, differences in filial attitudes and support patterns among Russian, Middle Eastern, and Eastern European Jews and between Christian and Muslim Arabs are likely to be wide. Future research should include a wider representation of the various subgroups within the two cultures studied. Second, we compared urban and rural Arabs to urban Jews, perhaps exaggerating the extent to which group differences are based on ethnic culture. A more heterogeneous Jewish sample would allow urban - rural differences to be controlled when assessing cultural patterns in support and well-being. Third, the crosssectional study design restricts our ability to infer causality and identify the mechanisms by which support leads to better or worse psychological well-being. Because there remains the possibility that poor psychological well-being stimulates or inhibits supportive behavior of children, causal inferences should be made with caution. Finally, our summary scores of support from adult children simplify what is likely a complex web of supportive actors in the lives of older adults. To the degree that this is true, our research has considered a much truncated and simpler version of support networks than exist in reality. Future research would do well to more inclusively model support provision and include spouses, neighbors, and friends in its operationalization.

In spite of the aforementioned limitations, our analysis appears to be robust in its ability to tap fundamental differences between two ethnic groups that live under the same national umbrella. Our results regarding the effects of intergenerational support on the positive psychological well-being of older adults were mostly veiled until we examined interactions that treated the effect in each cultural group as unique. We conclude that cultural background serves as a potent contextual force in how families organize their functions and whether older adults consider intergenerational support an optimal means of serving their everyday needs. That the same type of intergenerational support sometimes had opposite effects on the well-being of older parents depending on their cultural background reminds us that family behavior needs to be socially situated in order for its consequences to be fully understood. Cultural values that variously emphasize individual and collective goals, as seen in the orientations of Jewish and Arab groups, charge family action with meaning and have profound implications for subjective well-being in later life.

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Figure 1. Predicted Positive Affect Factor Score by Filial Expectations and Receipt of Instrumental Support.



Figure 2. Predicted Positive Affect Factor Score by Filial Expectations and Ethnic Group.



Figure 3.

Predicted Positive Affect Factor Score by Receipt of Financial Support and Ethnic Group.



Figure 4.

Predicted Positive Affect Factor Score by Receipt of Instrumental Support and Ethnic Group.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics: Total Sample and by Ethnic Group (N = 375)

Variables	Jewish $(n = 185) M (SD)$	Arab $(n = 190) M (SD)$	Group Difference t	Total Sample $(N = 375) M (SD)$	N Missing
Male (0, 1)	.40 (.49)	.62 (.49)	4.38***	.51 (.50)	0
Married (0, 1)	.56 (.50)	.69 (.46)	2.78 **	.63 (.48)	0
Age	75.87 (9.26)	74.33 (6.65)	-1.85	75.09 (8.07)	0
Health (SF12)	60.82 (34.79)	42.19 (31.32)	-5.28	50.90 (34.23)	24
Number of children	2.93 (1.77)	7.23 (2.92)	17.18***	5.11 (3.24)	0
Coresident with child (0, 1)	.13 (.34)	.51 (.50)	8.57 ***	.32 (.47)	1
Education (years)	12.52 (4.56)	4.74 (4.27)	-16.43	8.75 (5.89)	26
Satisfaction with financial situation $(1-5)$	3.49 (1.28)	2.57 (1.10)	-7.44 ***	3.03 (1.28)	0
Instrumental support received (0, 1)	.38 (.49)	.49 (.50)	2.28 *	.44 (.50)	0
Financial support received (0, 1)	.04 (.19)	.11 (.31)	2.70 **	.07 (.26)	0
Emotional support received (0, 1)	.33 (.47)	.40 (.49)	1.41	.37 (.48)	0
Filial expectations (0 – 20)	8.58 (2.94)	9.37 (2.63)	2.73 **	8.98 (2.81)	4
Positive affect (raw score, 0 – 16)	4.13 (3.51)	5.07 (3.15)	2.08	4.61 (3.36)	3
Negative affect (raw score, 0 – 16)	3.85 (3.87)	4.25 (3.38)	1.08	4.05 (3.63)	0
p < .05.					
** <i>p</i> < .01.					
*** <i>p</i> <.001.					

Table 2

Rotated Factor Loadings of Positive and Negative Affect Schedule (PANAS) Items From Principal-Components Analysis (N = 375)

	Comp	onents
PANAS item	Negative Affect	Positive Affect
Enthusiastic	122	.822
Alert	.237	.865
Inspired	076	.831
Determined	.010	.684
Distressed	.793	076
Upset	.789	.003
Scared	.859	.051
Afraid	.816	003

Note: Rotation is oblique, with interfactor correlation = .159. More than two thirds (68.4%) of item variance is explained by the two components. Loadings above .7 are in **boldface** type.

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Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	6	10	11	12	13	4	15
1. Jewish group															
2. Male	221 ***														
3. Married	143	.438	I												
4. Age	960.	017	252 ***												
5. Health (SF12)	.269 ***	060.	.225 ***	341 ***											
6. No. children	665	.118*	060.	040	206 ***										
7. Coresident	407 ***	.149 ^{**}	$.108^*$	193 ***	600.	.390 ***									
8. Education	.662 ***	.022	.092	085	.448	531 ***	259 ***								
9. Fin. security	.383 ***	001	.062	.071	.338	317 ***	233 ***	.480 ***							
10. Instr. support	117*	129*	220 ***	.193***	330 ^{***}	.001	.058	158	068						
11. Fin. support	138	027	053	.011	172 **	006	.043	089	091	.261 ***					
12. Emot. support	073	079	147 **	.140**	–.269 ***	087	.033	035	085	.459 ***	.332 ^{***}				
13. Filial expect.	133 *	.021	076	.149 **	109	.102*	.044	153 **	015	.120*	.140 **	.166**			
14. Pos. Affect ^a	134 **	$.126^{*}$	$.130^{*}$	186	620.	.051	.087	.030	.012	065	$.110^{*}$	025	.008		
15. Neg. Affect ^a	056	185 ***	175 **	.029	274 ***	.030	011	.122*	126*	.087	.024	.139**	.081	.162**	
<i>Note</i> :Instr. = instrum	iental; fin. = f	inancial; emo	t. = emotion	al; expect. = ϵ	xpectations;	Pos. = Positi	ive; Neg. = N	egative.							
^a Factor score.															
$_{p < .05.}^{*}$															
p < .01.															
p < .001.															

Table 4

Multiple Regression Estimates Predicting Positive and Negative Affect Schedule Positive Affect and Negative Affect Factor Scores (N = 375)

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	Posit	tive Affect F:	actor	INEGAI	hve Affect F	actor
Independent Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
Jewish (reference = Arab)	421	391	.185	.015	.014	.847*
Male (reference = female)	.176	.192	.167	297 **	298	283*
Married (reference = not married)	.072	.061	.052	165	164	154
Age	013	011	012	009 ***	009	007
Health (SF12)	.002	.002	.001	008	008	008
Number of children	007	007	008	005	005	003
Coresidence with a child	.043	.049	.052	028	029	011
Education	.022	.020	.020	001	001	002
Financial satisfaction	.040	.044	.034	031	031	050
Filial expectations	.001	039	.023	019.	.021	.063
Emotional support	105	121	321	.186	.187	.375*
Financial support	.507*	.477 *	.785 **	309	308	303
Instrumental support	069	724 *	-1.055 **	082	049	.011
Negative Affect factor score	.213 ^{***}	.212 ^{***}	.198 ^{***}			
Positive Affect factor score				.206***	.206 ^{***}	.199 ***
Instrumental Support \times Filial Expectations		.074 *	.078*		004	013
Jewish \times Filial Expectations			098			070
Jewish \times Emotional Support			.400			367
Jewish × Financial Support			925*			188
Jewish \times Instrumental support			.530*			064
Constant	.684	.910	.619	1.298	1.286	.654
R^2	.124	.134	.182	.156	.156	.178

 $^{***}_{p < .001.}$