

Popular assumptions versus academic scepticism: How does the 'look after their own' idea play out in a national dataset?

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Abstract:

An idea that occurs repeatedly in the literature on ethnicity and informal support is that minority ethnic groups are more likely than the white majority to provide family support, especially in old age. Where this idea is reported in the literature it is usually treated with a considerable degree of scepticism. However, it is a particularly persistent idea in the public perception.

It is the contention of this paper that there are two reasons for the persistence of the 'look after their own' idea. The first is that UK government statistics reveal socio-economic inequalities between the ethnic groups, and hence a greater need for support. The second reason is the concept sometimes implicit in the literature on ethnicity and informal support of traditional cultures, and hence a greater disposition for support. This presentation will critically discuss both proposed reasons.

Finally, these ideas will be applied to a secondary analysis of the Home Office Citizenship Survey. The analysis explores the effect of ethnicity on the likelihood of informal support transfers in old age. The influence of potential confounding factors, such as need and predisposition for support, will also be examined.