



The Big Difference a Small Island Can Make: How Jamaican Adolescents Are Advancing Acculturation Science

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ABSTRACT—*New research with Jamaican adolescents has brought acculturation science into closer accord with two 21st-century cultural realities: (a) multicultural destination societies for immigrant families and (b) intercultural contact among nonimmigrant families via modern globalization mechanisms. In this article, I review two theoretical expansions to the traditional conceptualization of acculturation (i.e., tridimensional acculturation and remote acculturation) along with supporting empirical evidence among Jamaican adolescents in the United States and on the Caribbean island. First, bidimensional acculturation lenses are exchanged for tridimensional ones to capture the acculturation of immigrant youth for whom three cultural dimensions are relevant. Second, acculturation pathways are expanded to include modern indirect and/or intermittent intercultural contact for non-immigrant youth. Tridimensional and remote acculturation may be modern mechanisms by which today's and tomorrow's adolescents produce their own development. These advances reveal new avenues to investigate adolescent acculturation and adaptation in their increasingly complex cultural neighborhoods.*

KEYWORDS—*tridimensional acculturation; remote acculturation; 3D acculturation; segmented assimilation; Caribbean/West Indian; Black immigrant*

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It is an exciting time for acculturation science; not only are families on the move across land and sea but so are cultural products and ideas. We live in increasingly multicultural societies in which global has become local. Today's youth are on the front lines of this cultural transformation: Both migrant and nonmigrant adolescents are coming of age in a more complex cultural neighborhood than did their parents. As a result, adolescents now have a wide array of choices as they construct their cultural identities, values, and behavioral styles, and acculturation science must keep up. New research with Jamaican adolescents, both on the Caribbean island and in the United States, has unearthed two modern forms of acculturation linked to modern forms of globalization: (a) *tridimensional (3D) acculturation* of minority immigrants in multicultural societies (Ferguson, Bornstein, & Pottinger, 2012) and (b) *remote acculturation* of nonimmigrants to distant cultures (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012a). This is the story of the big difference a small island can make.

ACCULTURATION IS REDEFINED BY GLOBALIZATION

Acculturation has long been understood as referring to “those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into *continuous first-hand contact*, with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of *either or both groups* [emphasis added]” (Redfield, Linton, & Herskovitz, 1936; p. 149). Originally conceptualized at the group level, acculturation is now often studied (and described here) at the individual/psychological level to capture within-group variation in psychological and interpersonal processes as resulting phenomena (Cuéllar, Arnold, & Maldonado, 1995; Graves, 1967). Intercultural contact used to occur almost exclusively between two directly interacting cultural groups or individuals in real time and real space over an extended period. Intercultural contact now also occurs among multiple cultural groups and individuals simultaneously within multicultural societies, and culture no longer requires people to travel from one place to another given modern globalization mechanisms (e.g., goods,

media). Acculturation can now be defined as what happens when groups or individuals of different cultures come into contact—whether continuous or intermittent, firsthand or indirect—with subsequent changes in the original culture patterns of one or more parties.

JAMAICA: ISLAND AND DIASPORA

Jamaica is the third-largest Caribbean island and its population, nearly 3 million, is predominantly Black. Jamaica's primary industry has shifted from agriculture to tourism and almost two thirds of its 2 million annual visitors come from the United States (Caribbean Tourism Organization, 2012). The average Jamaican adolescent has at least one brief interaction with a U.S. tourist in his or her lifetime, and voraciously consumes U.S. cable television and social media (Dunn, 2008; Forbes, 2012).

The United States has, in turn, been an especially attractive destination for Jamaican emigrants since the 1960s when new immigration policy opened U.S. borders to skilled professional workers. The largest Jamaican population outside the island now resides in the United States, followed by Canada and the United Kingdom (Thomas-Hope, 2002). More than half of U.S. foreign-born Blacks are of Caribbean descent, most from Jamaica (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). Many Jamaican adolescents on the island have at least one U.S.-based relative, sometimes a parent. Modern cell phone and Internet technology allow such diasporic families to keep close ties. Some Jamaican youth—usually those who are from middle- or upper-class families—move with their families to the United States during childhood or launch out on their own for college, whereas others—those from working-class families—migrate during adolescence to reunite with a parent who went years earlier to establish financial footing. Still others are born to Jamaican parents in the United States and parented in traditional Jamaican ways (Thomas-Hope, 2002). Thus, many Jamaican adolescents have steady intercultural contact with the United States—both the traditional, direct, continuous kind experienced by those living in the United States, and the modern, indirect, and/or intermittent kind experienced by those still on the island.

FROM BIDIMENSIONAL TO TRIDIMENSIONAL ACCULTURATION

Acculturation in 2D: Bidimensional Acculturation

Those who work in the field of acculturation science have before revised the conceptualization of acculturation. More than three decades ago, they shifted from viewing acculturation in a unidimensional (1D) manner and largely adopted a bidimensional (2D) view (Berry, 1980). Rather than seeing acculturating individuals as choosing between two competing cultural affiliations along a single continuum, their orientations toward culture A and culture B were recast as relatively independent. The 2D framework was a paradigm shift for acculturation psychology

because donning 2D lenses brought into view four acculturation statuses instead of two. In addition to Separated (primarily orientated toward culture A) and Assimilated (primarily orientated toward culture B), two new possibilities became evident: Integrated (highly orientated toward both cultures) and Marginalized (low orientation toward both). Prominent non-North American frameworks of acculturation also affirm a 2D perspective (e.g., Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006). Integration (i.e., biculturalism) has since emerged across multiple studies and methods as the most prevalent acculturation status for immigrant youth, and often the most advantageous (Berry, 2006; Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008). Moreover, biculturalism research has now blossomed into a subfield in its own right (see the work of Benet-Martínez and colleagues) and is taking hold in the popular U.S. psyche (for more information, see http://www.nytimes.com/2012/11/16/us/16iht-letter16.html?_r=0).

Nonetheless, 2D lenses on acculturation are limited. One problem is that the verdict is still out on the nature of marginalization: Is it a theoretical artifact given its negligible presence in studies using data-driven empirical clustering (Schwartz & Zamboanga, 2008)? Is it self-selected or imposed by societal discrimination (Rudmin, 2006)?

A second, more important problem is that focusing on only two cultural dimensions may be limiting given today's multicultural sending societies (e.g., ethnically Jewish Russians who are bicultural before emigrating to the United States; Birman, Per-sky, & Chan, 2010) and multicultural receiving societies (e.g., the United States as a destination for Black immigrants; Ferguson et al., 2012). In regard to the latter, more diverse acculturation conditions (i.e., minority immigrant, multicultural destination) should produce more diverse acculturation orientations in the receiving society (e.g., to majority culture, minority culture, and one's ethnic culture; Arends-Tóth & van de Vijver, 2006). Although sociologists recognize African American culture as a destination culture for some U.S. immigrant youth including Black Caribbean immigrants (Portes & Zhou, 1993; Waters, 1999), like psychologists, they have not fully considered the possibility that *both* majority (e.g., European American) and minority (e.g., African American) cultures could be simultaneous destinations.

Acculturation in 3D: Tridimensional Acculturation

Current multicultural societies require that researchers consider acculturation in three dimensions. For example, Figure 1 illustrates a prototypical Jamaican immigrant adolescent acculturating along the dimensions of ethnic Jamaican culture, African American culture, and European American culture. To empirically investigate 3D acculturation patterns and associated adolescent adjustment, my colleagues and I conducted the Culture and Family Life Study, a cross-cultural study that sampled Jamaican adolescent-mother dyads on the island and compared them with Jamaican immigrant dyads in the United States (37% first-generation Jamaican-born adolescents), European American,

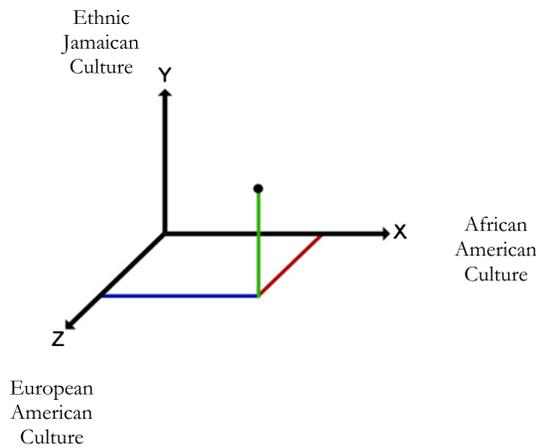


Figure 1. Prototypical Jamaican immigrant adolescent in the United States acculturating tridimensionally in 3D cultural space. The immigrant represented by the dot is moderately oriented to his or her Jamaican culture and to both U.S. destination cultures. This figure was reprinted from the Ferguson and Bornstein’s chapter entitled “Tridimensional (3D) Acculturation: Culture and Adaptation of Black Caribbean Immigrants in the USA” in *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families* with kind permission from the copyright holder, Springer Science + Business Media B. V., New York.

African American, and non-Jamaican U.S. immigrant dyads (Ferguson et al., 2012). Adolescents ($M_{age} = 14$ years) and mothers (473 dyads) completed parallel questionnaires containing a 3D acculturation measure—the Acculturation Rating Scale for Jamaican Americans (ARSJA; Ferguson, Bornstein, &

Pottinger, 2012) adapted from the ARSMA-II (Cuéllar et al., 1995)—and reported on positive behavior, grades, and family obligations beliefs. The ARSJA contains three subscales to assess cultural orientation to Jamaican, European American, and African American cultures separately in terms of entertainment preferences, social contacts, and cultural self-identification.

The study of 3D acculturation yielded four major findings (see Ferguson & Bornstein, in press; Ferguson et al., 2012). First, integration (~ 70% of immigrant adolescents), and triculturalism in particular (> 50% of integrated adolescents), is prominent among Jamaican and perhaps other minority immigrant adolescents in the United States (see Figure 2). The predominance of biculturalism and triculturalism may partially reflect the relative support for cultural diversity in the United States (e.g., vs. Germany or France; Berry, 2006) and smaller cultural distances between these two Western cultures. Given these adolescents’ proclivity for multiple cultural attachments, it is not surprising that marginalization had a negligible presence, based on multiple analytic approaches (Ferguson & Bornstein, in press).

Second, triculturalism was associated with more positive behavior for Jamaican immigrant youth (e.g., behavioral control, helping around the house, taking initiative and responsibility, social skills). That said, triculturalism was also associated with lower grades for boys, but not girls, probably due to anti-education aspects of inner-city African American youth culture for male students but not for female students (see Ferguson & Bornstein, in press; Kasinitz, Battle, & Miyares, 2001; Portes & Zhou, 1993). In a follow-up study of Jamaican immigrant adults

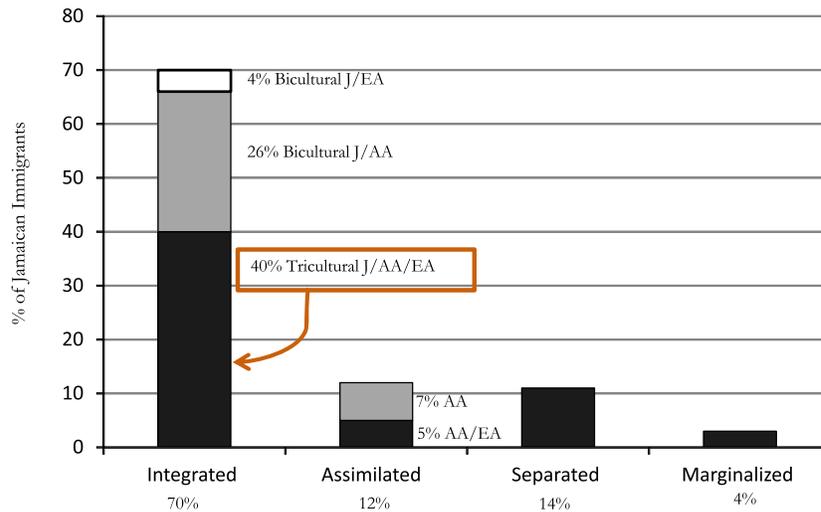


Figure 2. Tridimensional acculturation patterns among Jamaican immigrant adolescents and mothers in the United States based on cross-tabulation of high scores on the Jamaican, European American, and African American Orientation Scales. J = above scale midpoint on Jamaican Orientation Score; EA = above scale midpoint on Jamaican European American Orientation Score; AA = above scale midpoint on European American Orientation Score; Integrated, Assimilated, Separated, Marginalized = superordinate acculturation statuses based on Berry’s typology (see Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006). Adolescents and mothers differed only in that more adolescents than mothers were assimilated. Data from Ferguson, Bornstein, and Pottinger (2012). This figure was reprinted from the Ferguson and Bornstein’s chapter entitled “Tridimensional (3D) Acculturation: Culture and Adaptation of Black Caribbean Immigrants in the USA” in *Global Perspectives on Well-Being in Immigrant Families* with kind permission from the copyright holder, Springer Science + Business Media B. V., New York.

in the United States, tricultural integration was also the most common (46%), and was associated with both psychological benefits (life satisfaction) and liabilities (distress; Ferguson & Gordon, 2012).

Third, the presence of two destination cultures within a multicultural/multiracial society produces 3D acculturation. Adolescent immigrants in a predominantly White society differentiate majority from minority cultures in their acculturation experiences: European American and African American orientation were moderately independent in the cross-cultural sample, and there were differences in strength of orientation to these two cultures. For Black U.S. immigrants, African American orientation exceeded European American orientation, whereas the reverse pattern was evident for non-Black immigrants.

Fourth, findings concerning adolescent adaptation were consistent with the literature in documenting positive immigrant adjustment (see Berry et al., 2006, for data from a 13-country study). Regardless of acculturation profile, immigrant adolescents were at least as well adjusted in terms of grades and behavior as nonimmigrant U.S. and Jamaican peers. However, assimilated immigrant youth were less well adjusted than peers with other acculturation profiles, which supports the predictions of segmented assimilation regarding downward assimilation (i.e., different youth assimilate into different sectors of society) that some minority immigrant youth adopt the negative behaviors and attitudes of maladjusted nonimmigrant youth (Portes & Zhou, 1993). As found with other groups (Tseng, 2004), maintaining a strong connection to Jamaican culture (i.e., cultural maintenance) and a sense of obligation to help and respect parents (i.e., family obligations) were linked to better adolescent adjustment. However, these effects were moderated by gender and immigrant generation. Cultural maintenance was linked to grades for boys but not girls, and family obligations were linked to behavior in second-generation adolescents but not first-generation adolescents. In sum, acculturation occurs in three dimensions for some immigrant youth in multicultural societies, giving rise to triculturalism, which may be linked to positive and/or negative adaptation depending on the domain (e.g., behavioral vs. academic) and the immigrant (e.g., gender, generation).

FROM IMMIGRANT TO REMOTE ACCULTURATION

A few scholars (Arnett, 2002; Sam, 2006) have recognized the need for another advance in acculturation science: remote acculturation, which denotes nonmigrant acculturation arising from indirect and/or intermittent intercultural contact with geographically separate culture(s) (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012a). Jensen, Arnett, and McKenzie (2011) applied Berry's (1980) 2D acculturation framework to adolescents' navigation of their local culture and global culture. They proposed that assimilation is demonstrated when young rural Chinese women abandon traditional rural values for global values after moving to cities for work (Chang, 2008, as cited in Jensen et al., 2011). Separation

is demonstrated by revival of traditional Samoan tattooing among adolescent boys as an act of resistance after its near eradication by opposing norms of global culture. Integration is shown by some Indian youths' simultaneous immersion in high-tech global culture and loyalty to traditional arranged marriage (Côté, 1994, and Verma & Saraswathi, 2002, respectively, as cited in Jensen et al., 2011). Finally, these authors suggest that marginalization is evident in some Nepali youth who reject traditional local culture while striving for unrealistic global ideals (Leichty, 1995, as cited in Jensen et al., 2011).

Remote acculturation connects these observations regarding globalization to current acculturation science by measuring acculturation to specific native and nonnative cultures (rather than nonspecific global or Western culture), and assessing individual acculturation patterns. Investigations of 2D acculturation toward Chinese and Western/British cultures among nonmigrant youth in postcolonial Hong Kong (Chen, Benet-Martínez, & Bond, 2008; Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008) foreshadowed this work. However, these were not pure tests of remote acculturation because Great Britain's former colonial presence established enduring features of British culture in Hong Kong (e.g., educational institutions) that promote continuous intercultural contact.

The Culture and Family Life Study assessed the possibility of remote acculturation toward U.S. cultures in Jamaica (no colonial link), using Jamaican islanders as the primary group of interest and Jamaican immigrants in the United States as a comparison group. Among 245 families on the island, empirical clustering of several acculturation indicators (i.e., cultural behaviors, friendships/associations, and identity—ARSJA, family values—obligations and rights, and family interaction patterns—parent—adolescent discrepancies and conflict) revealed integration and separation (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012a). The former cluster had a bicultural Jamaican-American profile (33%) and the latter was culturally traditional (67%). Specifically, compared to culturally traditional youth, bicultural Americanized Jamaicans reported greater European American orientation, fewer family obligations, more discrepancies in intergenerational obligations, and more parent—adolescent conflict associated with the presence of an acculturation gap. Jamaican cultural orientation was moderately high among these bicultural youth, though somewhat lower than for their traditional peers. Moreover, Americanized Jamaican adolescents' European American orientation and family obligations scores resembled those of Jamaican immigrant adolescents living in the United States and fell between those of traditional Jamaicans and U.S.-born European American adolescents. Thus, remote acculturation on the island resembled traditional immigrant acculturation in the United States.

A second study of a new cohort of adolescents in Jamaica replicated earlier findings and confirmed that remote acculturation was not a socioeconomic artifact (parental education was not related to cluster membership), nor was it due to traditional immigrant acculturation (biculturals had spent no more time

vacationing in the United States than had traditional adolescents; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012b). Moreover, two vehicles of remote acculturation emerged as important to the odds of being an Americanized Jamaican: interaction with U.S. tourists and, for girls only, consumption of U.S. beverages. Different vehicles of remote acculturation may exist in other settings, considering that rural Nepalis who have contact with global and British-based cultures through media exposure, youth club participation, and nonfamily work are less traditional in marriage decisions (Ghimire, Axinn, Yabiku, & Thornton, 2006). In sum, through indirect and/or intermittent intercultural contact, acculturation occurs remotely for some nonimmigrant youth, giving rise to remote biculturalism.

SUMMARY, LIMITATIONS, AND IMPLICATIONS

New theoretical and empirical scholarship with Jamaican adolescents has brought acculturation science into closer accord with two important 21st-century cultural realities: (a) multicultural destinations for immigrants and (b) intercultural contact among nonimmigrants via modern mechanisms of globalization. This work expands the 2D acculturation framework into a 3D one for some immigrants, and expands modes of acculturation to include contemporary avenues of indirect and/or intermittent intercultural contact for some nonimmigrants. These new forms of acculturation may well be modern mechanisms by which adolescents, whether migrants or nonmigrants, produce their own development (Lerner, 1982).

That said, the acculturation research with Jamaican families that I have reviewed is not without limitations—modest immigrant sample sizes, little attention to the immigration process or family separation during migration, focus on urban islanders, examination of U.S. cultures as the remote cultures of influence for distant nonmigrant youth, and of course, methodological and statistical choices. For these reasons, my colleagues and I have pursued replication and diversification of samples and methods.

Certainly, much remains to be learned about acculturation. First, we need to explore 3D acculturation among other immigrant youth who also negotiate three cultural dimensions in multicultural settings (e.g., Sudanese refugee youth and Middle-Eastern immigrant youth in the United States, Turkish Muslim immigrant youth in the Netherlands).

Second, the study of remote acculturation may reinvigorate nonimmigrant youth acculturation research in its own right (including among understudied majority-world adolescents and among European Americans), and as a potential precursor to immigrant acculturation. Research should not ignore the complexities of parents' experiences of their adolescents' remote acculturation given the hypothesis that they may admire youths' preparedness for today's world despite concerns about the acculturation gap (Jensen et al., 2011).

Third, these theoretical advances call for creative quantitative and qualitative measurement to best capture the complexities of

traditional and remote acculturation in three and more dimensions across multiple life domains.

Fourth, findings underscore the sobering reality that assimilation, and even integration (e.g., triculturalism was associated with lower grades for boys) can be a developmental risk for minority immigrant youth in the United States (García Coll & Marks, 2011), particularly at the intersection of race, gender, and socioeconomic status (Spencer & Tinsley, 2008). The promotion of positive outcomes for all minority immigrant youth deserves dedicated research attention, with cultural maintenance and family obligations as promising protective factors (García Coll & Marks, 2011; Tseng, 2004).

ACCULTURATION SCIENCE MARCHES ON

Continued evolution of acculturation theory benefits the field by keeping pace with the increasingly complex cultural lives of today's and tomorrow's adolescents (e.g., multiculturalism; Benet-Martínez, 2012). How will they negotiate the many physical and remote cultural worlds, and what will be the implications for their developing selves and life adjustment? This requires integrative transdisciplinary work among fields pertaining to human development and well-being, culture, science and technology use, and geography. We can build on work within developmental science, including ethnic/cultural/racial identities (Arnett, 2002; Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1990); possible/role-related/bicultural/hyphenated/autonomous-related selves and self-discrepancies (Chen et al., 2008; Harter, 2012; Kagitcibasi, 2007; Oyserman & Fryberg, 2006; Sirin & Fine, 2007); intergenerational values transmission and the acculturation gap (Kagitcibasi, 2007; Schönplflug, 2001); and contextualized positive youth development (Spencer & Tinsley, 2008). This is indeed an exciting time for acculturation science.

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