

Family, Food, and Culture: Mothers' Perspectives on Americanization in Jamaica

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Abstract

This study explored Jamaican mothers' perspectives on parenting and modern family life in the context of remote acculturation on the island. Seven mothers (29-41 years old) participated in focus group interviews and thematic analysis was done by a team of three coders. Results revealed four major themes: 1) cultural influences, 2) acculturation and enculturation, 3) parenting, and 4) food. Mothers saw media, festivities, and peer/non-parental associations as prominent cultural influences for learning both local Jamaican culture (enculturation) and American culture (acculturation) on the island. Findings revealed a range of reactions to Americanization in Jamaican society including resistance and selective adoption, both of which were evident in the types of parenting approaches and food practices mothers described. Overall, findings support prior quantitative research on remote acculturation in Jamaica and vividly illustrate the lived experience of remote acculturation among this sample of mothers in Jamaica.

Key words: Remote Acculturation, Americanization, Enculturation, Caribbean Parenting, Fashion, Family Structure

Received July 2015

Accepted December 2015

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Families in the Majority World (i.e., in developing countries), the Caribbean included, are experiencing rapid changes in lifestyle and culture in the 21st Century owing to modernization and cultural globalization (the exchange of ideas and values across cultures) (Karraker, 2013). The Majority World has a faster rate of urbanization (i.e.,

migration to cities) and new mobile phone subscriptions than the rest of the world, and it is now home to two in every three internet users (United Nations, 2014a; 2014b). In the Caribbean in particular, the urban population grew by 50% between 1990 and 2014, and at least 80% of the population in the Caribbean and Latin America now lives in urban areas (United Nations, 2014a). Cultural globalization is also rapidly advancing in the Majority World as countries export and import consumer goods that communicate the symbols and philosophies of the nations from which they originate (i.e., core cultural goods, Karraker, 2013). The United States is the second highest exporter of core cultural goods worldwide (UNESCO, 2005), and the Caribbean is its third largest export market (Export.gov, 2014).

Some Caribbean families are responding to these major social changes by internalizing North American behaviours and values through a process called *remote acculturation* (Ferguson, 2013a). There is evidence from research among families in the Caribbean that remote acculturation is associated with larger parent-adolescent gaps in cultural identity and family values, and these gaps are linked to higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). A fuller appreciation of the strategies parents and their adolescents use to adapt to Americanization in Caribbean societies (i.e., presence of U.S. culture and products in the Caribbean) is needed; however, remote acculturation research in the Caribbean has placed more emphasis on youth perspectives to date (see Ferguson, 2015 and Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013). It is equally important to understand how parents are responding to Americanization given that they too are affected, whether directly, or indirectly through their youngsters. Therefore, this paper uses focus group interviews to explore Jamaican mothers' perspectives regarding parenting and modern family life in the context of remote acculturation in Jamaica.

Theoretical Perspectives on the Impact of Cultural Globalization

A few complementary theoretical perspectives are relevant in explaining how Majority World families are dealing with modernization and cultural globalization. Some of these perspectives address this issue at the societal level highlighting overall changes in social norms, whereas other perspectives focus on the individual level by highlighting various strategies that individuals use to navigate modern cultural globalization.

Societal level responses to cultural globalization. The theory of social change (Greenfield, 2015) holds that major sociodemographic changes including urbanization, economic improvements, and political changes (such as the installation of a communist regime in the former Soviet Union) have brought about overall changes in societal norms such as more individualistic language, and even changes in cognitive styles such as more abstract thinking. Chen's (2015) "pluralist-constructivist" notion expands Greenfield's theory by emphasizing that rather than adopting these social changes wholesale, individuals mix diverse practices and values gained from their exposure to local and global cultures. Chen argues that a modern developmental task for individuals, especially young people, is to learn new norms, values, and behavioural styles related to their new globalized environment in order to best adapt to its demands and to capitalize on its opportunities. It is increasingly clear that an adaptive style for the 21st Century is one characterized by flexibility and cultural competence (Larson, Wilson, Brown, Furstenburg, & Suman, 2002).

Majority World parents are taking notice of the changing global environment and have begun to adjust their socialization goals to help their children and adolescents

develop these competencies for their future success (Chen, 2015). For example, in the last twenty years Chinese parents have placed more emphasis on fostering initiative-taking and autonomy in their children, intertwined with a focus on traditional values of connectedness to family and the group (Chen & Chen, 2010). This finding is highly consistent with Kağıtçıbaşı's (2007) theory of family change, which focuses specifically on the development of an autonomous-related self as the most adaptive response to modernization in urban centers of the Majority World. Autonomous young people are better able to raise their hands in the classroom, make self-directed decisions for their future, and will be better equipped to exercise leadership in professional settings of the fast-paced urban environments they inhabit.

Individual level responses to cultural globalization. Whereas social change focuses more on group-level changes resulting from political and economic shifts, remote acculturation focuses more on individual differences stemming from globalization-related cultural exchanges. At the individual level, remote acculturation theory holds that not every individual reacts to cultural globalization in the same way; rather there are individual differences in responses to foreign cultural influences (Ferguson, 2013a). Remote acculturation refers to the process by which non-migrants acculturate towards a geographically and historically distant/remote culture to which they are exposed indirectly and/or intermittently. Specifically, the current paper focuses on how Jamaicans acculturate to American culture.

Remote acculturation was demonstrated empirically in the initial quantitative phase of a mixed-methods study in Jamaica, the Culture and Family Life Study (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). Altogether, 295 adolescents (164 boys) and their mothers in Kingston completed questionnaires reporting their orientation to their local Jamaican culture and U.S. cultures, as well as reporting how strongly they held certain family beliefs, and how well they got along with each other in the family. Results of cluster analyses revealed that 33% of adolescents and 11% of mothers fell into what was termed an "Americanized Jamaican" cluster characterized due to their moderate orientation to European American (i.e., White American) culture combined with a strong orientation to local Jamaican culture. Americanized Jamaicans, both adolescents and mothers, were less likely to endorse traditional family beliefs regarding adolescent obligations to parents, had larger parent-adolescent discrepancies in beliefs regarding adolescents' obligations to the family, and reported greater parent-adolescent conflict compared to culturally "Traditional Jamaicans".

A subsequent study replicated these findings in a second cohort of Jamaican adolescents, categorizing nearly 40% ($n = 222$) of the sample as Americanized Jamaicans (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015). This replication study also provided evidence that media, food, and transnationalism were associated with remote acculturation. Specifically, watching more U.S. television and less local television increased adolescents' odds of being in the Americanized Jamaican cluster, and European American Orientation was positively correlated with eating more U.S. fast food and having more frequent contact with relatives/friends in the United States.

In the qualitative phase of the Culture and Family Life Study, qualitative focus groups were conducted with a small subset of 15 high school boys drawn from the quantitative phase. Focus group interviews explored boys' perceptions of American and Jamaican cultures to better understand the quantitative findings (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013). Boys indicated that they view European American culture as the prototypical

American culture. Thematic analysis revealed differences between their construals of Jamaican and American cultures in terms of parenting style. Jamaican parenting was described as over-protective and controlling (e.g., monitoring teenager's social interactions) even though adolescents believed that this restrictiveness had declined compared to previous generations. For example, one boy stated that "I think probably back then the parents were like strict, more strict" (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013, p. 73). Jamaican youth were seen as being fashion-obsessed based on the influence of both local and international celebrities. In contrast, boys construed American parenting as permissive and as contributing to spoiled and crazy teen behaviour because U.S. teens "get away with it [i.e., bad behaviour] more than us Jamaicans..." (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013, p. 75). Boys also perceived similarities across teenagers in both cultures based on fundamentals of adolescent development including normative strivings for autonomy and sensation-seeking.

Current Study

Caribbean parenting is characterized by fairly high parental expectations for behaviour and firm discipline (Evans & Davies, 1997). Although older Caribbean scholarship has noted an authoritarian approach to be prominent among Afro-Caribbean groups, referring to high parental control in the absence of parental warmth (Roopnarine, Bynoe, & Singh, 2004), a recent study across four predominantly Black Caribbean nations including Jamaica found different results (Lipps et al., 2012). Lipps and colleagues surveyed parenting styles experienced by nearly 2,000 Caribbean adolescents and found that authoritative parenting, referring to strict parental standards for behaviour intertwined with a high degree of parental warmth, was the most common. This apparent cohort difference in the favored parenting style may reflect an evolution of parenting among Caribbean parents. First-person accounts of parenting from Caribbean parents are important to understand because they sometimes differ from adolescents' perceptions of parenting (see Ferguson, 2013b); yet parents' perspectives on parenting are rarely documented in the empirical research literature. Parents continue to play a central and influential role in the lives of Jamaican adolescents based on developmental theory (see Brown, Mounts, Lamborn & Steinberg, 1993) and based on the adolescents' own self-reports (Ferguson, 2007). In a sample of over 250 male and female high school students in Kingston, Ferguson (2007) found that parents were the #1 role model students listed in response to an open-ended question querying the person they most admired

Parents have received relatively less attention in Caribbean scholarship focusing on cultural globalization and deserve more focused study because they are raising the youth who are embedded in the new globalized environment. There is evidence that Caribbean emigrant parents living in the United States tend to perceive American society as 'too lax', meaning that adults do not discipline youth with enough urgency or seriousness (Roopnarine et al., 2004). However, little is known about whether Caribbean parents still living on the islands react similarly or differently to Americanization in their society and in their families. The purpose of the current study, was to explore Jamaican mothers' perspectives on Americanization on the island more deeply using focus groups. This study is drawn from the qualitative phase of the Culture and Family Life Study, which used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design (see Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011) to investigate remote acculturation in Jamaica.

Hypotheses. According to the theory of family change (Kağitçibaşı, 2007), modern Caribbean parenting is expected to emphasize developing autonomy while maintaining a traditional sense of relatedness (e.g., respect for and closeness to parents). Berry's (2008) perspective on acculturation and globalization suggests that there might be a variety of responses to American influences on the island, ranging from rejection of American culture to incorporation of American practices and values into aspects of daily life. Quantitative findings on remote acculturation in Jamaica indicate that the vast majority of urban mothers have a culturally traditional Jamaican profile with very low orientation to European American culture, a small percentage have a remotely bicultural profile, and no mothers are fully assimilated into the U.S. culture to the exclusion of Jamaican culture (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). Therefore, we expected there to be strong support for traditional Jamaican cultural practices and values as well as some biculturalism, but we did not expect to find the exclusive adoption of American culture in place of Jamaican culture.

Method

Participants

Participants were drawn from one of the two original schools participating in the Culture and Family Life Study of remote acculturation which was approved by an Institutional Review Board; this was based on the school's agreement to participate in the current wave of qualitative data collection. Jamaican society is considered matrifocal (Leo-Rhynie, 1993), therefore, the larger study focused only on mothers. In addition, only mothers of boys are represented in the current study because the participating school was a socioeconomically diverse all-boys traditional high school in Kingston. Mothers at this school who met the eligibility requirement of having participated in all prior aspects of the quantitative data collection ($n = 33$) were invited to participate in the qualitative data collection. Five such mothers consented and two mothers were newly enrolled in the study at this wave of data collection after learning about the study by word-of-mouth and contacting the principal investigator¹. All participating mothers were born in Jamaica and their ages ranged from 29 - 41 years (age $M = 34.80$, $SD = 4.76$). Of the mothers who reported their education, ($n = 5$) three had attended university and two had graduated from high school. All the mothers reported that they were currently employed. All mothers consented to participate in an hour-long focus group interview based on their availability—there were two group interviews containing two and four mothers, respectively, and a third interview with one mother². Participants were offered beverages during the interview and were each given a movie voucher afterwards for their participation.

Procedure and Measures

The questions for the mother interviews were designed to elicit deeper explanations of findings which emerged from the quantitative data in the first phase of the study reported in Ferguson and Bornstein (2012). Participants were first asked to describe modern Jamaican and American families. Then they were told the major quantitative study finding regarding the existence of Americanized Jamaicans in Kingston, and asked to describe any such individuals/families they knew, as well as any advantages/

disadvantages of Americanization in these families. Finally, participants described future expectations for their adolescents. The interview questions were phrased in such a way as to focus on typical families in each culture – this was in order to make the topic more concrete for mothers by inviting them to reflect on their experiences and observations as parents in Jamaica. The interviewer asked the interview questions and probed participants for clarification of their responses. Interviews were audiotaped and transcribed verbatim, and the interviewer took brief supplementary notes during the interview. Interviews were conducted on the high-school campus after regular school hours by the first author, who had built a rapport with most participants across the prior quantitative phase of the study. Interview questions were generally posed in English; however, mothers' responses and ensuing discussion between the interviewer and participants often contained a mixture of English and Jamaican Patois. English translations of quotes spoken primarily in Patois are provided in square brackets following each quote.

Coding and Analysis

Three coders, including the interviewer, (one Jamaican living in Jamaica, one Jamaican living in the United States, and one Latina American living in the United States) used thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006) to analyze the data. Thematic analysis is used “for identifying, analyzing and reporting patterns (themes) within data” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79) and is used in many other forms of qualitative methods (e.g., grounded theory). Coders began their thematic analysis by reviewing the corpus of data, then coders reviewed interview transcripts in their entirety. Once familiar with the corpus of data, coders identified initial codes for the data (i.e., phrases or statements that demarcated specific features of the data). These codes were collapsed to represent themes of the data that the coders identified after several iterations with the data; coders engaged in this step independently of each other. Coders met on multiple occasions to review their codes and themes and to agree upon and resolve any discrepancies between the categories and themes to establish consensus between them (Hill et al., 2005). Coders then developed a thematic map to highlight connections across codes and themes (Figure 1).

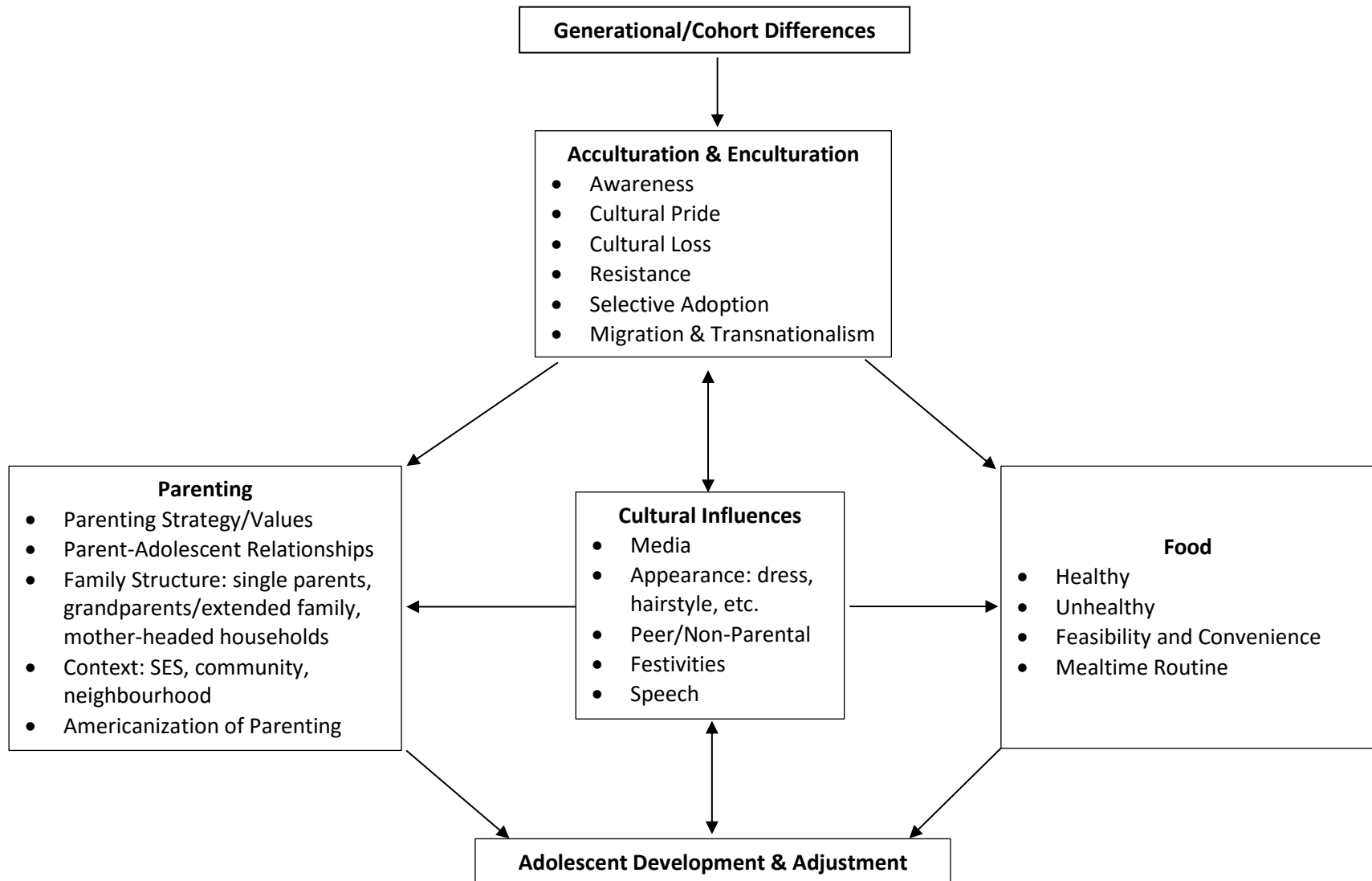
Results

As depicted in Figure 1, results are organized into four topics that reflect mothers' views on Americanization on the island: *cultural influences*, *acculturation* (into U.S. culture) and *enculturation* (into Jamaican culture), *parenting*, and *food*. All participants were given a pseudonym for use throughout the current paper.

Cultural Influences

Mothers discussed several methods by which Jamaican and American cultures influence their adolescents and themselves. They explained that *media* both from the United States and Jamaica had an impact on adolescents. Both cultures had an impact on youth *appearance*, from how they dressed to their hairstyles, to the latest trends. Natalya described Jamaican youth as wanting to stay up to date with latest trends and events: “Deh just want to...into everything...that's going on...yu nuh...everything! Deh wah deh a di latest parties, deh want to have the latest phones,...” [They just want to be into everything that's

Figure 1. Thematic Map of Jamaican Mothers' Perspectives on Americanization in Jamaica



going on, you know, everything! They want to be at the latest parties, they want to have the latest phones...] She specifically discussed with the Interviewer how U.S. fashion is being adopted by some adolescents and mothers on the island:

Natalya: Because a lot a dem really adopting the American culture

Interviewer: In what ways? What are they adopting?

Sonia: S-fashion

Karen also discussed with Natalya and the Interviewer that some Jamaican mothers are equally motivated by fashion trends, but that she would not let the foreign influences on fashion impact what she would purchase for her son to wear to school (thus, remaining traditional about her views on fashion and school).

Karen: ...a co-worker and I were, we and another co-worker, three of us were actually debating basically what type of bag, shoe and...

Interviewer: Oh!

Karen: ...things to buy our children to...

Interviewer: Okay

Karen: ...come back...One particular co-worker said that her child not wearing nothing less than name brand...whatever is in ...

Natalya: Yes

Karen: ...style

Natalya: Hmm!

Karen: ...that is what her child ...

Natalya: {inaudible}

Karen:... so I said that is not what I am sending my child to school for...

Interviewer: Right

Karen: ... He's not on a fashion show...

Interviewer: Right

Karen:...he's there to learn, the most intricate thing is that the shoes not falling off his feet...

Natalya: TRUE

Karen: ...the bag has no hole and its DURABLE...

Natalya: {Interjects} And it chrang [strong]

Karen:... 'to carry his books' ...

In addition to parents, *peers and nonparental figures* also influence youth during the developmental period of adolescence because they account for a large proportion of youths' daily interactions such as at school or in community spaces. Sonia explained that the influence of her son's peers at school is linked to a loss of the Jamaican cultural value of respect; "deh seh im don't talk with no respect...sometimes deh seh 'a because im a come a [school name] dem 'mongst peer boys das why ee- ee react dat way" [They say he doesn't talk with respect...sometimes they say it is because he attends (school name), he is around peer boys and that's why he reacts that way]. Sonia also discussed the influence of peers in prompting adolescents to request certain privileges including allowance: "Deh talking so...eventually im tell im dat ee get allowance ahn den im start to seh 'mommy ow much you would give me for my allowance?' [They (he and a peer) were talking so eventually he told him that he gets allowance and then he started to say 'Mommy, how much would you give me for my allowance?].

Renee underscored this idea of peer and nonparental influences on youth by saying “... you’re not di only person growing dem because once deh go out on the street...deh come back home wit something totally different” [...you are not the only person raising them because once they go out in public, they come back with something total different].

There was also a discussion of American *festivities* now celebrated on the island, and their influence on youth and families. One of these festivities is Halloween. While some of the mothers did not view this as a problem, Sonia reported that she heard that some people consider it demonic and unsafe:

...base off a work...when I was- yu know we’re talking ahn deh seh ‘no it’s demonic’... .. ‘ahn it a filta in a Jamaica’ ahn dem- ahm wah dem a seh? ‘some a dem a go tek weh di children dem when dem go trick a treating’, ahn oo fa door dem going to knock ahn, ahn mi seh ‘yeh right’ so a seh ‘don’t di parents dem’ - yu know- yu afi go a long wid dem cuz I’m not- Naresh is fourteen ahn I’m still not going to mek im go tricka treat yu know ahn- so {pause} a think dat is di next ting dat a see filter in... [Based off work, when I was, you know, we were talking and they said ‘no, its demonic’ ...‘and it is filtering into Jamaica’ and they, ahm, what were they saying? ‘some of them are going to abduct the children when they go trick-or-treating’ and whose door they are going to knock on. And I said ‘yeah, right’. So, I said ‘don’t the parents’ - you know, you have to go along with them because I’m not - Naresh is fourteen and I’m still not going to allow him to go trick-or-treating you know and so {pause} I think that is the next thing that I see filtering in.]

Also influenced by other cultures is Jamaican youths’ *speech*. Justene explained the advantage of American media, “... I see advantage in ahm in speaking standard English...” Karen also discussed the change in speech she saw in her son related to consuming U.S. media “...so that is another as- aspect that that ahm {pause} the adults are taking too...for my four year [old] also...if you hear him speak you’d probli think that he’s an American child...” Natalya added that Jamaican children also learn foreign languages from U.S. Cartoons such as Dora the Explorer: “A was going to say ahm, there was this- there was this little girl before she even started talking you know what - she’s a Jamaican {inaudible} - you know what she started talking? Not Patwa [Patois], not English {pause} Spanish!”

Acculturation and Enculturation

Mothers discussed how exposure to U.S. culture in Jamaica increased youths’ *awareness* of that culture, which may promote positive adaptation in the event of their emigration for future education. For example, Natalya said: “...you know deh kind a have a little...familiarity [with American culture] ...deh doh really feel left out ar you know” [...you know they kind of have a little familiarity [with American culture]. They don’t really feel that left out or, you know]. *Cultural pride* was often expressed by the mothers. For example Renee explained that Jamaicans are multitalented and survivors: “...cause we are multitalented we always try stuff, we’re neva the kind a person who if we’re not - I mean employed - we cannot survive, because we’re always doing stuff...” Mothers also expressed cultural pride regarding Jamaican cuisine as illustrated by Natalya’s comment: “I love our food and to me it’s the best food in the world.”

Along with cultural pride mothers discussed a sense of *cultural loss*. Karen expressed a desire to have children experience their traditional local culture afresh: “...so I’d like to see where we can get our children to go back to those cultural days...and I know

those days were more fun...". Karen later went on to describe how cultural loss is a disadvantage of Americanization:

...disadvantage is that our culture is being pushed behind, we're no longer unique, we're, we're no...longer unique in certain aspects, just maybe in our language dat ow we speak...and stuff, but in terms of how we behave and how we see ourself...we're no longer unique in that light...

Cultural loss was also described as a departure from traditional Jamaican foods; Natalya stated "One time...I mean when mi did likkle a grow up...pasta? No! wi a get some yam and banana..." [In the past...I mean when I was little and growing up...pasta? No! We were getting some yam and banana].

Some of the mothers discussed how they refused to integrate American culture into their lives (*resistance*) despite its heavy flow into the island. For example, Shereece described how she deals with the influx of American culture "Let me tell yu, a don't see any identity with the American culture...I would like to stay as far away from it as possible...but we have so much coming in..." Similarly, when asked if she or other mothers she knows feel somewhat American, Sonia affirmed a strong Jamaican and non-American identity "What I identify with...born bred Jamaican used to know what is right... from what is wrong...what is acceptable in my culture...yes...I doh- I- I'm not American..."

On the other hand, other mothers stated that there were aspects of American culture that they would incorporate into their lives (i.e., *selective adoption*). For example Karen described adopting general positive aspects of other cultures:

... you can go to other countries and see other things because they are good in other countries just as well as there're bad...why is that we can't adopt the good...from these countries...and implement them in our system in comparison to the bad things or the things that are more - dat need more working on or have some deficiencies?

Despite Sonia's cultural identification as Jamaican and non-American, she commented on selectively adopting certain mealtime practices in her household due to her son's desire to emulate U.S. TV shows, "Yeh certain likkle aspeck if yu see ahn seh 'yeh dat can work fine'...he seh 'wi fi set up di food ahn set it like ow deh do it in di show'...set di table ahn...a doh ave a problem wid dat... [Yes, certain little aspects you see and say 'yes, that can work well'...[for example] he said 'we should set up the food and set it like how they do it on the show'...set the table and...I don't have a problem with that"]

Mothers also discussed moving to the United States and communications with family and friends who had already moved (*migration* and *transnationalism*) in relation to their own acculturation and enculturation. For example, when discussing future expectations for her son, Carlene discussed that she would accept her son moving to the United States for his career:

Interviewer: So you see him going to, say, UWI or UTech or

Carlene: Hmmhm [mhm]

Interviewer: Okay

Carlene: Or may overseas... [Or maybe overseas]

Interviewer: Okay

Carlene: Whicheva one [Whichever one]

Interviewer: Awright what would determine whether he stays or goes?

Carlene: Awm it di path...his career path [Ahm, it will be the path...his career path]

Some mothers discussed the negative effects of migration, explaining that Jamaican youth living in the United States learn or develop negative habits such as lack of respect because of their time in the United States. For example:

Shereece:...but when they went up [to the U.S.] they changed!

Interviewer: Tell me what happened

Shereece: The discipline they had out here...the discipl[in]e and respect shown here...when they got to the America and got to the different...calling the police and whatever...the different rights that they have...the children have changed...

Interviewer: I see

Shereece:...so wh-what the person I know did when deh – ‘a going call the cops on you’, she took up di phone and seh ‘call dem, but when you go the things you’re accustomed to – the ice-cream and the freedom – would be taken when you go there’...

Interviewer: Yes

Shereece:...‘you’ll be the state’s property’...so deh come back down and put di phone down and remember where dier coming from [...‘you’ll be the state’s property,’ so they come back down and put down the phone and remember where they’re coming from].

Parenting

Various *parenting strategies/values* were discussed amongst the mothers. For example, Justene explained that being a stern parent led to an obedient child:

Exactly! I- I had a girlfriend who came by my house on Saturday and I was like talking to Jonathan, was like ‘didn’t you hear a seh to do di dishes dat dis ahn dis an’ and he was like...; a said ‘don’t give me dat - don’t give me dat body language! Why are you looking at me in dat tone of vice! Don’t look at it mi like that’ And she was like ‘Justene, yu know dat is di way I should’ve grown my son!’ cuz she said her son now want to fight her! Physically fight her! Cuz she seh because ow she used to grow im shi neva used to be stern... [Exactly! I had a girlfriend who came by my house on Saturday and I was like talking to Jonathan, was like ‘didn’t you hear I said to do the dishes that this and this and’, and he was like...; I said ‘don’t give me that, don’t give me that body language! Why are you looking at me in that tone of voice? Don’t look at me like that’. And she was like ‘Justene, you know that is the way I should have raised my son! Because she said her son now wants to fight her! Physically fight her! Because of how she used to raise him, she never used to be stern.]

In addition to being stern parents, mothers explained that withdrawal of privileges (e.g., taking away games or toys) for inappropriate behaviour was a useful parenting strategy. However, some of the mothers explained that this strategy worked for some youth, but not all.

Mothers discussed different aspects of relationships with their children (*parent-adolescent relationships*) and multiple factors which influence those relationships. For example, Justene explained that adolescents’ exposure to certain types of media influences parent-adolescent communication such that youth feel more open to discuss topics that they would normally shy away from “... even relating themself more...like opening themselves [to] ask questions, maybe deh would shy away fram certain questions...”.

Shereece went on to explain that this aspect of parent-adolescent communication has changed across generations of parents:

Shereece: I think they're more - the parenting is different from what I - experienced...

Interviewer: Okay

Shereece: ... as a child...

Interviewer: Okay

Shereece: ...we're...I would say we're more open to discussion with our children?

Interviewer: Okay

Shereece: ...so as oppose to our parents saying 'do this' and we're not questioning what the parents said at dat time but our par- our children now tend to want to find out 'why?'...

Interviewer: Ahhh

Shereece: ...deh don't just accept what you say they want to find out

Interviewer: I see...and it sounds like you cooperate with that...

Shereece: Yes

Interviewer: You think it's legitimate?

Shereece: I think so

Interviewer: Okay

Another aspect of parenting that emerged in the discussion was *family structure* (e.g., single parents, grandparents/extended family, mother-headed households). Many mothers discussed what it was like to be a single mother and how to parent in a divorced family, as well as the involvement of extended family in parenting their sons. For example, Justene described the central role grandparents play:

Justene: You mosely find togeddaness like in extended family where you find the grandmotha... [You mostly find togetherness like in the extended family where you find the grandmother...]

Interviewer: Okay okay

Justene: ...the grandfatha... [...the grandfather...]

Interviewer: Mhm?

Justene: ...certain things can be passed on there...

Interviewer: Mhm

Justene:...you can seh 'you know my grandmotha did so-un' suh'... [...you can say 'you know my grandmother did so-and-so...']

Interviewer: Yes

Justene: ...grandmotha, grandmotha will find more time...

Interviewer: Yes

Justene: ...if the mother is even out or the father is even out grandmotha or grandfatha is always at home...

Interviewer: Yes

Justene: ...So things can be passed on to the grandchildren...

Interviewer: Yes

Justene: ...through the grandparents

Interviewer: I see, I see.

In some cases, extended family members critiqued the mother's parenting such as was the case with Sonia. She explained that her mother did not approve of how she

communicated with her son: "...my mother...she seh 'Why yu let im talk to yu like DAT?' ...yu understand? But I doh see anyting wrong wid it but SHE ave a problem wid it..." [...my mother...she said 'Why do you allow him to talk to you like THAT?' ...you understand? But I don't see anything wrong with it, but SHE has a problem with it...]

Adolescent behaviour varied by *context* (e.g., SES, community, neighbourhood) in mothers' perspectives. For example, Renee compared her son's behaviour inside and outside the home:

But my son ave a different behaviour from when ee's home from when ee's on di road, because when ee's on di road ee know not to tek a step on me because I'll slap im right dere and den...but when ee's home... is like im gi mi all a di little 'Mommy'...when im want something im will come 'Mommy, can I have dis?' ahn I'm like I'll say 'no' and den ee'll call me 'motha'...afta dat" [But my son has different behaviour when he's at home from when he's out in public, because when he's out in public he knows not to be fresh with me because I'll slap him right there and then...but when he's home...it's like he gives me all of the little 'Mommy'...when he wants something he will come 'Mommy, can I have this?' and I'm like I'll say 'no' and then he will call me 'Mother' after that.]

The *Americanization of parenting* was also discussed among the mothers. For example, a group of mothers explained that providing youths with an allowance is an aspect of American parenting. The exchange between these three mothers went as follows:

Justene: We pay allowance...

Natalya:Dats American culture becaw we neva used to do dat when we were growing up [That's American culture because we never used to do that when we were growing up.]

Karen: We neva use to make those... [We never used to make those...]

Natalya: ...but dats a American culture [...but that's American culture]

Karen saw allowing teenagers the chance to voice their opinions as representing an Americanization of parenting. However, she stressed that it is still important for youth to speak to parents in an acceptable manner "...but for me I seh I will allow you to talk, you have your rights yes to speak, but you have to be careful and be mindful the words that you use...the tone that you use and your body language while you're speaking, because it's not the words that you say, for one, it's the tone..." Similarly, Sherece suggested that the open communication style is an advantage of Americanized parenting: "and like di open door where yu doh bash what deh saying.....take what deh say ahn- ahn value itahn put into policy if it can be applied and so on" [and like the open door where you don't bash what they are saying...take what they say and value it...and put it into policy if it can be applied and so on]. Karen also discussed the Americanization of parenting at the national level in the form of recent governmental policy regarding child abuse protection. Another mom, Sonia, discussed the negative aspects of American parenting: "I think they give their teenagers too much freedom... Freedom in the sense dat deh, di partying, di shopping, deh just - well a don't know if it really appen but watching the television ..." [I think they give their teenagers too much freedom...freedom in the sense that they, the party, the shopping, they just - well, I don't know if is really happens, but watching the television...]

Food

Mothers had clear views on what foods they considered *healthy* and *unhealthy*. *Healthy* food were described most often as those foods that are part of the traditional Jamaican diet such as boiled banana and mackerel. *Unhealthy* food was associated with American fare such as fast food. Carlene explained "Di fast food tingy to...A think fast food its...its taking a toll on dem as if they're Americanized" [The fast food thing also...I think fast food its...its taking a toll on them as if they are Americanized]. However, American food was also associated with *feasibility and convenience*. Parents consider certain American food as quick and easy to prepare, which is especially important when one is a busy mom. Karen explains:

...so in terms of attracting him I have to go like the Tyson chicken tender...and those- and those- and then because of how hectic your day is...you need something that is simple and easy ...to prepare...

The preparation and consumption of food were tasks that supported family communication and adolescent autonomy. *Mealtime routine* was most often described as a time where parents and adolescents interact and converse with one another. Sonia's description of her family's mealtime demonstrates that during this time she and her son work together and also talk to each other:

...set di table ahn...Yes man...yes we talk. Ahn trus mi dats where I know everything that {inaudible}... Sometime a hafi seh 'shh'... [...set the table and...yes man...yes we talk. And trust me, that's where I get to know everything [{inaudible}]...sometimes I have to say 'shh'..]

Overarching Themes

Throughout the interviews *generational/cohort differences* were noted by mothers. They would reflect upon certain situations, experiences or behaviours demonstrated by their children and they would note that things were different when they were young. In many cases, mothers expressed that their experiences were better when compared to their children's present experiences and this is reflected in their discussion of cultural loss whether it be the lack of appreciation of traditional Jamaican food or the lack of knowledge regarding Jamaican culture. At the same time, there was also a liking of the greater openness that some mothers today have with their children.

Adolescent development and adjustment are impacted by multiple factors related to the four major themes discussed above – and mothers noted that their children were maturing faster than previous generations. This faster rate of maturation was attributed to exposure to more adult topics or simply a shift in development based on changes in biology. For example, Karen and Natalya explained that exposure to certain contexts, including information and communication technologies, result in youth maturing faster today than in their own generation:

Karen: Yeh...or I think it's the environment which they are in...things that are...

Natalya: They are more exposed!

Karen: Exposed...to certain things...

Natalya:...to a lot

Karen: ...so it helps to mature them more faster...than...than they would normally mature

Interviewer: I see...Are there particular things to which they are exposed that-?

Natalya: Internet!

Interviewer: Aright... And what kind of content seems to mature them faster?

Karen : Ahm ...music is one...the games that they play is another... the movie that they watch...

Discussion

The purpose of this study was to explore more deeply Jamaican mothers' perspectives regarding parenting and modern family life in the context of remote acculturation to the U.S. culture on the island. Having a better understanding of mothers' parenting opinions and strategies can be useful to Caribbean educators, clinicians, and families themselves as they navigate the globalized cultural environment in which today's youth are growing up. Results revealed four major themes: 1) cultural influences, 2) acculturation and enculturation, 3) parenting, and 4) food. Each theme will be discussed in detail below in the context of theories pertaining to cultural globalization. Despite the small sample size, results are supportive of remote acculturation theory and quantitative findings from earlier waves of this mixed-methods study.

Cultural Influences

Mothers perceived a variety of cultural influences on the island fueling both acculturation and enculturation, in parenting and food in particular. Media was thought to be the primary factor related to Americanization. This is consistent with quantitative findings among Jamaican adolescents for whom consuming more daily hours of U.S.-produced media was associated with higher odds of Americanization among adolescent girls, and consuming less local media was associated with higher odds of Americanization among all adolescents (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015). Mothers also perceived peer influences and various non-parental adult influences to be significant. They saw significant influence coming from trendsetters in clothing and hairstyle fashions both in Jamaica and in the United States. Mothers' view of media, fashion, and peers as cultural influences on youth behaviour is consistent with adolescents' views of Americanization in Jamaica derived from adolescent focus groups in the larger Culture and Family Life Study (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013). As will be discussed in more detail in the next section, some mothers resisted most/all U.S. cultural influences and others were selective in their adoption of parts they deemed helpful and compatible with the local culture.

Acculturation and Enculturation

Mothers described a number of settings in which Jamaican culture is transmitted to their children: within the primary household unit (e.g., teaching youth respectful communication with adults), within the larger extended family (e.g., grandparents act as culture-bearers who pass down knowledge to younger generations), and outside the family (e.g., peer and community influences on fashion). On the other hand, mothers were all too aware of the spread of American culture on the island, and described Americanization as largely mediated by U.S. media, U.S. food, and transnational communication with relatives living in the United States. Mothers also described different channels of cultural transmission (see Berry, 2014) to their children. Their descriptions included vertical

cultural transmission from Jamaican parents to Jamaican youth (e.g., Jamaican parents require youth to complete household chores), oblique cultural transmission from non-parental Jamaican and American adults to Jamaican youth (e.g., Jamaican entertainers drive popular culture; U.S. government legislates parental discipline), and horizontal cultural transmission from Jamaican and American peers to Jamaican youth (e.g., Jamaican youth learn a particular communication style in interaction with school peers; youth living in the United States tell Jamaican youth about receiving allowance).

Consistent with findings among Jamaican mothers from the quantitative leg of the Culture and Family Life Study (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012), and also consistent with Berry's (2008) outline of possible reactions to globalization, the descriptions of Jamaican mothers in this qualitative leg evidenced two main responses to societal Americanization: resistance and selective adoption. Resistance was prominent and involves rejecting American cultural influences in order to adhere solely to Jamaican cultural values and practices. Therefore, resistance is likely to be employed by culturally traditional Jamaicans on the island, who have very high Jamaican orientation, low European American orientation, and high family obligations according to Ferguson and Bornstein (2012). The perceived encroachment of American culture on local soil seems to fuel resistance efforts. There are particular concerns that American culture is supplanting some aspects of sacred local culture, leading to cultural loss. Alongside this theme of resistance is that of cultural pride in the traditional Jamaican culture (e.g., traditional Jamaican foods) and a desire for a cultural re-invigoration among youth. Cultural maintenance (i.e., a strong identification with Jamaican culture and traditional family values) may be protective of family relationships for Jamaican youth and their parents on the island (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012).

Selective adoption, on the other hand, may be the strategy of choice for Americanized Jamaican mothers as an alternative to the wholesale adoption of all American practices and values. For example, some Jamaican mothers are more open to American pre-breaded chicken tenders but resist American Halloween. This type of biculturalism is consistent with the polycultural perspective in psychology (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015), which holds that individuals can adopt parts of many cultures in an a la carte fashion. Perhaps even more so than immigrant acculturation, remote acculturation is likely to align with this polycultural notion because some aspects of remote cultures (e.g., behaviours depicted on television) will be more accessible to individuals in other countries than other cultural aspects (e.g., nuanced moral values). Selective adoption among Jamaican mothers is also consistent with the domain-differentiated nature of acculturation. That is, immigrants have been found to readily adopt aspects of a new culture in public domains of life (e.g., public behaviours, social interactions), while sometimes preferring to retain ethnic cultural values in private domains (e.g., family life) (see Arends-Tóth, & Van de Vijver, 2006). The theme of selective adoption in this sample of Jamaican mothers is in accord with the theory of family change, which predicts that some aspects of family life of urban families in the developing world will conform to the patterns seen in individualistic Western cultures (e.g., using easy-to-prepare foods to develop adolescent autonomy) whereas other aspects of family life will remain traditional (e.g., assigning chores to foster a traditional sense of relatedness) (Kağıtçıbaşı, 2007).

Parenting

Mothers' description of Jamaican parenting strategies as stern and evolving over generations aligned with prior research on Jamaican youths' perspectives of modern parenting (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013). Mothers' described an evolution of parenting strategies in Jamaica, but indicated that there are differences across context and demographic groups. One aspect of parenting that has been transformed by time and Americanization is the openness of parent-adolescent communications. Mothers described behavioural shifts in both adolescents and in parents: mothers listened and validated teenagers' opinions more frequently, and teenagers shared their opinions more readily. This change in parental communication was attributed to Americanization. A more open parent-adolescent communication style usually creates an opportunity for more parent-adolescent negotiations (as opposed to the parents deciding everything without discussion), which is likely to increase the occurrence of parent-adolescent conflict. This finding sheds some light on the quantitative finding that Americanized Jamaican mothers and youth report higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict relative to cultural traditional families. Another aspect that might promote family conflict is the fact that extended family such as grandparents, are sometimes disapproving of Americanized parenting, which may create ambivalence or inconsistency in parental strategies.

Parents' acceptance of adolescents' increased initiative in parent-adolescent communication, alongside their insistence that this communication remain respectful indicates that modern Jamaican mothers favour parenting styles which foster autonomous-related selves of their adolescents (Kağitçibaşı, 2007). Autonomous young people will be better equipped to get their needs met and to excel in the modern world, from the classroom to the boardroom. Current findings also support Lipps and colleagues' (2012) findings that authoritative parenting was the most common parenting style experienced by adolescents in their Caribbean sample. Mothers communicate warmth and acceptance by listening to their young people, but they also demand high behavioural standards by expecting their adolescents to maintain a respectful interaction style in those discussions. Taken together, it is possible that cultural globalization, Americanization in particular, may help to account for the apparent decline in authoritarian parenting and the apparent increase in authoritative parenting in Afro-Caribbean groups.

Food

Mothers associated Jamaican culture with healthy foods and American culture with unhealthy foods. This is consistent with quantitative findings among Jamaican adolescents in Ferguson and Bornstein's (2015) replication study wherein youth with a stronger European American orientation were more likely to eat U.S.-style fast food such as Kentucky Fried Chicken and Burger King. Mothers perceived food choices to be influenced by feasibility and time considerations such that fast food was being increasingly opted for out of convenience. However, mothers did have concerns that increased consumption of U.S. fast food on the island may have negative implications for health. In addition, given that food preparation and family mealtimes are viewed as good times for family communication, the practice of opting for fast(er) foods may deprive some families of that important family time for social and emotional connections.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study presented interesting findings that add to our theoretical and practical understanding of the remote acculturation process for mothers. However there are some limitations that should be taken into consideration. Given the busy work schedules of most Jamaican mothers, the qualitative methodology which required focus group interviews at the school site (versus at-home questionnaires used in the earlier phase of the mixed-methods study) likely limited the sample size. This in turn may limit generalizability of findings. In addition, findings are most descriptive of urban mothers from the larger remote acculturation study and are, therefore, not representative of all Jamaicans living on the island. Results may differ for fathers and rural parents, and may also differ when describing parenting girls in particular. In addition, study findings are a snapshot of parents' perspectives and causal interpretations cannot be drawn.

There are several potential avenues for future research. This research can be replicated in other tourism-focused regions of Jamaica, where tourism may be a more prominent vehicle of intercultural contact with the U.S. culture compared to media. Future quantitative studies can directly assess the association between remote acculturation and parenting styles including autonomy-supportive parenting. Another important topic for future study is the implications of the Americanization for nutritional health, including the link between remote acculturation and obesity risk.

Conclusion

Families in the Caribbean and other Majority World regions are experiencing rapid changes in lifestyle and culture due to cultural globalization. Results of the qualitative data presented in this paper support prior quantitative research on remote acculturation in Jamaica, and vividly illustrate the lived experience of remote acculturation among some mothers on the island. As hypothesized, there was strong support for traditional Jamaican cultural practices and values (resistance strategies) as well as some biculturalism (selective adoption strategies), but there was no evidence of the exclusive adoption of American culture in place of Jamaican culture. Mothers' resistance and selective adoption in response to Americanization on the island are evident in their parenting style and food practices. Professionals serving Jamaican families such as clinicians, clergy, and educators may find this study informative as they seek to support parents in the modern context.

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Notes

¹The larger mixed methods study from which participants were drawn was conducted across a 3 year period; thus, there was significant attrition over time due to students moving to other schools, students graduating, absences from school during data collection weeks, and decisions by students and mothers to not participate in later waves. Families at this school who met the eligibility requirement of having participated in all prior aspects of the quantitative data collection ($n = 33$) were invited to participate in the qualitative data collection at the school site. In total, 15 boys responded positively with parental consent (i.e., 45% response rate; findings reported in Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013), but only 5 mothers responded positively (15% response rate). This lower response rate for mothers was most likely due to the time commitment for an hour-long in-person interview at the school site compared to the at-home self-administered questionnaire methodology used in the quantitative phase. In addition to these 5 mothers, two mothers in Kingston who were not part of the original study heard about this data collection via word-of-mouth and contacted the investigator with a request to participate. This accounts for the n of 7 in the current study.

²Another mother scheduled for this focus group interview did not show up. The Interviewer proceeded with just one mother in this interview so as not to lose any more data.

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