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## Behavioral and Academic Adjustment of Remotely Acculturating Adolescents in Urban Jamaica

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### Abstract

*Remote acculturation (RA) is a modern form of non-migrant acculturation toward distant cultures prompted by indirect/intermittent globalization-related cultural exposure. RA theory holds that not only are global cultures now pouring into local neighborhoods, but many youth are also internalizing these remote cultures. How well do they fare? Prior studies in Jamaica and elsewhere have reported that U.S./Western-oriented adolescents exhibit poorer health habits. However, no studies have yet investigated adolescents' behavioral or academic adjustment in the context of RA, whether in Jamaica or elsewhere. Therefore, 245 adolescents and their mothers from high schools in Kingston, Jamaica ( $M_{\text{adolescent\_age}} = 13.3$ ;  $M_{\text{mother\_age}} = 40.2$ ) completed questionnaires assessing their RA in terms of behaviors and values, as well as the adolescents' behavioral resilience and grades. SEM analyses revealed that RA was, indeed, linked to adolescent behavioral and academic adjustment in Jamaica. Overall, Jamaican orientation was associated with better adaptation whereas European American orientation was associated with worse. © 2019 Wiley Periodicals, Inc.*

**R**emote acculturation (RA) is a modern form of non-migrant acculturation toward distant cultures prompted by indirect and/or intermittent globalization-related cultural contact (Ferguson, 2013). Trade,

tourism, technology, and transnationalism between the United States and Jamaica have brought about remote acculturation in the Caribbean island of Jamaica. As a result, it has been estimated that 30–40% of adolescents and 11% of mothers in the capital city, Kingston, can be considered “Americanized Jamaicans,<sup>1</sup>” meaning that they have added aspects of mainstream American behaviors, family values, and even a part-American identity to their Jamaican cultural identity (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012, 2015). One teenager in Kingston described his experience of remote acculturation using a poignant word picture: “My culture I don’t know. My body is in Jamaica but my mind is in America” (Ferguson, 2018). RA has also been documented among youth far beyond the Caribbean – across Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America, and Oceania (see Ferguson, Tran, Mendez, & van de Vijver, 2017; Giray & Ferguson, 2018). Adolescence and emerging adulthood are likely to be sensitive periods for RA given the prominence of identity construction (Jensen, Arnett, & McKenzie, 2011; Phinney, 1990) and access/use of global media and technology (Arnett, 2002) during these development periods.

Given the compelling evidence for the existence of RA among youth across the globe, the million-dollar question for developmental science is now “what are the implications of RA for adolescent development and adjustment?” That is, how are remotely acculturating youth faring in their local environments? So far, the answer to this question has been discouraging in terms of adolescent physical health but mixed for other domains of development and adjustment including emotional health, family communication, and humanitarian values. For example, Americanized Jamaican adolescents and mothers have poorer communication and eating habits than do their culturally traditional Jamaican peers (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012, 2015), and adolescents in Mexico with stronger U.S.<sup>2</sup> orientation have higher smoking susceptibility (Lorenzo-Blanco, Arillo-Santillán, Unger, & Thrasher, 2018). On the other hand, Malawian adolescents who are more strongly affiliated with U.K. and U.S. culture than their local Malawian culture report greater autonomy support from their parents (K. T. Ferguson, Y. L. Ferguson, & G. F. Ferguson, 2017), and emerging adults across 11 countries remotely acculturating to Jamaican culture espouse stronger values of openness to change and benevolence (Ferguson & Boer 2016).

No studies have yet objectively investigated remotely acculturating adolescents’ behavioral or academic well-being in relation to their affinity for local culture and/or remote culture(s). To fill this gap, our chapter will explore whether and how the RA of adolescents and their mothers is associated with adolescent behavioral and academic adjustment in a sample of families in urban Jamaica. The remainder of this chapter will: 1) explain RA theory and situate it in relation to other globalization-related conceptualizations in the developmental literature; 2) summarize mixed-methods research findings on RA in Jamaica, where RA research began; 3) detail the current state of our knowledge regarding RA and youth adjustment; 4)

present new evidence from a sample of remotely acculturating adolescents and their mothers in Jamaica; and 5) discuss implications for future research and applications in this area.

## Remote Acculturation

Acculturation is the process of cultural change that follows contact with a different cultural group (Sam & Berry, 2016). Psychological acculturation focuses on psychological changes at the individual level within this process, and emphasizes the variation in individual pathways among those undergoing acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2016). In particular, Berry (1997) articulated a theoretical framework whereby the psychological experience of one's heritage culture (cultural dimension 1) is relatively distinct from one's psychological experience of a new culture (cultural dimension 2). Consideration of these two cultural dimensions reveals four potential pathways for acculturating immigrants based on their choice and how welcoming the new culture is toward immigrants: separation (strong cultural retention in dimension 1 but weak cultural adoption in dimension 2), assimilation (weak dimension 1 but strong dimension 2), integration (strong across both dimensions), and marginalization (weak across both dimensions). This bidimensional model of acculturation, which expands to tridimensional and multidimensional formulations depending on the acculturating individual/group (see Ferguson, Bornstein, & Pottinger, 2012), has been used to study the acculturation of immigrant adolescents and adults within societies (see Sam & Berry, 2016), and across societies (see the 13-country International Comparative Study of Ethnocultural Youth: Berry, Phinney, Sam, & Vedder, 2006).

**Remote Acculturation Theory.** Jensen et al. (2011) applied the bidimensional acculturation framework to conceptualizing different acculturation pathways for non-migrant youth encountering "global culture." They suggested that assimilated global youth would swap traditional values for global ones; integrated global youth would keep one foot in global culture and another in local culture; marginalized global youth would reject both local (undesirable) and global cultures (unattainable); and separated global youth would resist global culture while retaining or reviving traditional customs (Jensen et al., 2011). In accordance with this suggestion, Ferguson and Bornstein (2012) introduced RA as a clearly defined (prompted by indirect and/or intermittent cultural contact versus direct and continuous cultural contact entailed in classic acculturation: Sam & Berry, 2016), more refined (stronger alignment with acculturation literature such that specific remote culture(s) were identified rather than broad "global" culture), and empirically supported expansion of the bidimensional acculturation framework (Jensen et al., 2011 did not test their suggestion empirically).

RA upholds the understanding within polycultural psychology that cultural affiliations are both partial and plural (Morris, Chiu, & Liu, 2015).

Partiality communicates that individuals typically adopt some, but not all, elements of a given culture and plurality acknowledges that multiple simultaneous cultural affiliations are possible and even common. According to the partiality principle, RA can be “shallow” (primarily behavioral: Ferguson & Adams, 2016) or “deep” (observable in identity and values: Y. L. Ferguson, K. T. Ferguson, & G. F. Ferguson, 2017). And according to the plurality principle, RA can be multidimensional (“Westernized multicultural Malawian” youth in Malawi were strongly oriented toward U.S., U.K., and South African cultures in addition to their own Malawian culture: K. T. Ferguson et al., 2017). Finally, RA can serve as an antecedent or consequence of transnationalism (family connections spanning across country borders) and cosmopolitanism or identification with all humanity (having a broad sense of connection to all people and cultures) (see Ferguson, 2016; McFarland, Brown, & Webb, 2013).

Psychological acculturation is a particularly interesting process for adolescents because it intersects with, and is embedded within, the process of adolescent development that is underway. In particular, adolescents are constructing identities, including cultural identities, and are more open than adults to influences from outside their locales (Arnett, 2002). Adolescents are also more engaged with media than are adults in general, which is a potential antecedent and consequence of RA (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015; Ferguson, Muzaffar, Iturbide, Chu, & Meeks Gardner, 2018). When occurring in a rapidly globalizing context, these normative developmental experiences facilitate RA. And of course, adolescent development does not occur in isolation. Rather, most adolescents develop in the context of family relationships, and parents continue to exert considerable influence over their lives directly, such as by monitoring activities and time usage (e.g., with peers, screen time), and indirectly through transmission of values, both cultural and otherwise (Barni, Ranieri, Scabini, & Rosnati, 2011; Smetana, Daddis, & Chuang, 2003). Indeed, prior studies show that both adolescents and their parents can internalize remote cultures, and RA influences parenting approaches (Ferguson, 2018).

**Remote Acculturation in the Jamaican Context.** Jamaica is the birthplace of RA theory and research (Ferguson, 2013, 2018). Nestled in the Caribbean region between North and South America, Jamaica is the largest English-Speaking island in the Caribbean and is interconnected with the United States due to tourism, trade, transnationalism, and technology, although the two countries have no historical/political or colonial connections (see Ferguson, 2016 for review). In brief, U.S. tourists comprise the largest proportion of visitors to the island, U.S. media and products are pervasive on the island, and most Jamaicans have at least one family member or friend living in the United States (Ferguson, 2016). This context provides fertile ground for RA to thrive, which is precisely what Ferguson et al. found in a multimethod and longitudinal study called the Culture and Family Life

Study (CFLS: 2009–2011; see Ferguson, 2016 for more details on the cultural context of RA in Jamaica).

The research team for the CFLS comprised personnel in Jamaica and the United States with a bicultural principal investigator (PI) to represent both emic (within) and etic (outside) perspectives. The PI (first author) was a Jamaica-born researcher living and working in the United States, who had been conducting research with children and adolescents in Kingston for 10 years, and had built relationships with partner schools. For the CFLS, the PI collaborated with one faculty member at the University of the West Indies in Jamaica and another at the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development in the United States, and was assisted in data collection/entry by a small team of undergraduate research assistants enrolled at the PI's U.S. institution (one of whom was an international student from Jamaica) and at the institution of the Jamaican collaborator. This international configuration of research personnel was ideal for the research questions because it allowed the CFLS to be firmly grounded in the local context in which the research was taking place (Jamaica) as well as in the remote culture being studied (the United States).

In the quantitative arm of the CFLS, Ferguson et al. administered questionnaires to approximately 250 adolescents and their mothers (or mother figures in the case of a few adolescents) in Kingston secondary schools as well as to a small cohort of comparison dyads living in the United States—Jamaican immigrants as well as African Americans and European Americans. Mothers, but not fathers, were recruited for the CFLS because Jamaica is a matrifocal society. Questionnaires measured individual orientation toward Jamaican culture and U.S. cultures (European American and African American) as well as endorsement of traditional family values and parent–adolescent conflict. Cluster analyses found that 33% of adolescents and 11% of their mothers in Jamaica demonstrated a bicultural Americanized Jamaican profile where they added aspects of European American culture alongside a strong Jamaican identity compared to their island peers who retained a “Traditional Jamaican” profile (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012). That is, Americanized Jamaicans had a stronger orientation to European American culture (but not African American culture), less traditional family values (weaker family obligations: teenagers' obligations to obey, respect, and help parents), larger adolescent–parent discrepancies in these family values, and greater parent–adolescent conflict associated with the acculturation gap.

Interestingly, although there was a moderate orientation to African American culture across both the Americanized and traditional Jamaican clusters, both groups had similar scores. Therefore, it was the higher orientation to European American culture, not African American culture, that distinguished the Americanized Jamaicans from their traditional Jamaican peers. Moreover, these Americanized Jamaicans resembled actual Americans in the sample in multiple ways: They were more similar to European

American peers in the United States in terms of their family values than they were to other Jamaican islanders in the sample, and their affinity for European American culture fell in between culturally traditional island peers and Jamaican immigrants living in the United States. A subsequent replication study with a new cohort of students confirmed these findings (38% Americanized Jamaican adolescents: Ferguson & Bornstein, 2015). Importantly, RA in Jamaica was not explained by socioeconomic status in either study, indicating that it was not an artifact of wealth.

A small subset of boys and mothers from the original CFLS cohort in Jamaica later participated in focus groups and drew identity maps to provide richer descriptions of their remote acculturation experience. Figure 3.1 shows sample identity maps from two Americanized Jamaican adolescents and Figure 3.2 shows two sample maps from two traditional Jamaican peers. As the Figures show, Americanized Jamaican youth tended to explicitly represent both Jamaican and American cultures in their identity maps (e.g., hybrid flag with one half of a Jamaican flag fused with one half of a U.S. flag), whereas traditional Jamaican youth tended to solely reference Jamaican culture (e.g., whole Jamaican flag). To parallel the youth RA exploration, a few mothers also participated in interviews regarding their perceptions of Americanization in Jamaican society. Parenting was a major theme emerging from mothers' interviews with a subtheme on the "Americanization of parenting" (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2015). Specifically, whereas Jamaican parents have traditionally been stern, mothers in Ferguson and Iturbide's study explained that generational change and Americanization have shifted parenting styles to be more democratic, where parents now listen more to their teenagers' opinions and offer them allowance for chores, both of which are viewed as U.S. influences.

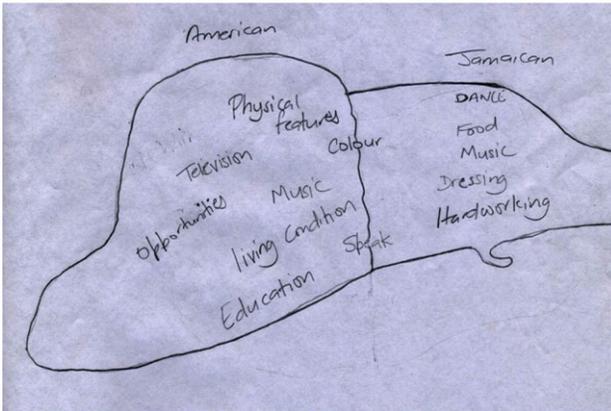
Remote acculturation research on Americanization has since been conducted outside the Caribbean: Southern Africa (e.g., Ferguson & Adams, 2016; Y. L. Ferguson, K. T. Ferguson, & G. F. Ferguson, 2017), Asia (e.g., Ozer, Bertelson, Single, & Schwartz, 2017), and South America (e.g., Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2017; 2018). These studies have confirmed that remote integration (bicultural/multicultural profiles combining remote cultural affiliations with local ones) and remote separation (culturally traditional profiles) are the most common responses to RA, whereas remote assimilation (full abandonment of local culture for the remote) is uncommon, and remote marginalization has never been observed.

**Remote Acculturation and Youth Adjustment.** Now that the empirical literature has established RA as a phenomenon occurring among youth in Jamaica and elsewhere, the next obvious question is how adaptive local versus remote cultural orientations are for these youth. Findings to date have been somewhat mixed with RA linked to maladaptation in terms of physical health, but mixed findings in other adjustment domains.

In several studies across countries, RA has been associated with negative youth adjustment including risky health habits for adolescents.

**Figure 3.1. Identity maps by adolescent boys in Jamaica showing an “Americanized Jamaican” identity.**

a. ID 440



b. ID 474



Note: Figures reprinted from Ferguson (2018) with permission from the Caribbean Journal of Psychology. (b) Top to bottom: “Mixed Group, Souls, Gospel, dancehall, Hip Hop, reggae, R&B.”

Americanized Jamaican adolescents and mothers tend to eat more unhealthy foods (Ferguson, Muzaffar, Iturbide, Chu, & Meeks Gardner, 2018). Similarly, globalizing adolescents also report shifts from traditional to Westernized diets in India (“Junk food is new!” Rao et al., 2013, p. 15) and urban Thailand (eating at American fast food restaurants boosted coolness and social capital: McKenzie, 2018). Nutrition is not the only adolescent health domain that has been linked to RA: adolescents in Mexico

**Figure 3.2. Identity maps by adolescent boys in Jamaica showing a traditional Jamaican identity.**

a. ID 500



b. ID 503

I see myself as a beautiful Jamaica  
 I also see cultural active. Like the  
 way I dance, type of music I listen and  
 the sport I played. I view my Jamaica  
 culture as the best culture in the  
 world.



Note: Figures reprinted from Ferguson (2018) with permission from the *Caribbean Journal of Psychology*. (b) Top bubbles L–R: “Jamaican people are the best,” “We are the hyppest people,” and “We are very happy.” Bottom bubbles L–R: “We are proud of our country (sport),” and “We are the most religious country (Christian).”

with stronger U.S. orientation have higher smoking susceptibility (Lorenzo-Blanco et al., 2018). In terms of psychological adjustment, orientation toward a U.S. or Western remote culture (e.g., independent self-construals) has also been associated with lower subjective well-being among adolescents in Zambia (Y. L. Ferguson, K. T. Ferguson, & G. M. Ferguson, 2017) and India (Rao et al., 2013), possibly due to the fact that their locals contexts

or financial means do not always allow them to achieve their Western ideals. Family communication changes have also been reported in association with RA: Americanized Jamaican adolescents have been found to have higher levels of parent-adolescent conflict (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012, 2015) than do their traditional Jamaican peers.

On the other hand, RA has also been associated with positive youth adjustment in other studies. Jamaican adolescents in CFLS focus groups perceived academic benefits to speaking standard English (Ferguson, Iturbide, & Raffaelli, 2019), as did northern Himalayan Indian adolescents (Ozer, Bertelsen, Singla, & Schwartz, 2017). Similarly, in her qualitative interviews with urban Thai adolescents, McKenzie (2018) found that they engaged in speaking English to promote their current and future school performance. However, the veracity of these adolescents' perceptions has not yet been studied, so it is unknown whether this association is perceived versus actual. In terms of psychological and subjective well-being, South African emerging adults who are strongly identified with European American culture report higher life satisfaction and lower psychological distress than their peers who are either culturally traditional or identified with African American culture (Ferguson & Adams, 2016). In addition, Malawian adolescents with a stronger affinity for U.K. and U.S. culture than their local Malawian culture report higher levels of autonomy support from their parents, which is generally thought to support positive youth development (K. T. Ferguson, Y. L. Ferguson, & G. M. Ferguson, 2017). Finally, although there is much less research on the development and well-being of youth remotely acculturating to non-Western cultures, the findings of one large cross-cultural study also paint a positive picture. Ferguson et al. (2016) studied RA toward Jamaican cultural values through listening to Jamaican reggae music among emerging adults across 11 countries in Europe, South America, Africa, and Asia. They found that the love of reggae among non-Jamaican youth was positively correlated with valuing openness to change, which is a value strongly held by Jamaicans, as well as (in half the countries sampled) higher levels of benevolence and self-transcendence (Ferguson et al., 2016).

Adolescent RA has not yet been directly studied in relation to academic or behavioral adjustment; however, sister literatures of immigrant acculturation and globalization-based acculturation provide some clues. First, maintaining an orientation toward Jamaican culture has been linked to positive behavioral and academic adaptation of acculturating Jamaican immigrant youth in the United States. In the small comparison sample of Jamaican immigrant youth and mothers in the United States within the CFLS, Ferguson and Bornstein (2014) found that the Jamaican orientation scores of mothers positively predicted adolescent-reported grades, and that the traditional family obligations of these adolescents and mothers positively predicted adolescents' behavioral resilience (e.g., good decision-making, social skills, and healthy habits). Quantitative research on

acculturation to local and Western cultures in colonial contexts also sheds light on the RA-adjustment association. Cheung-Blunden and Juang (2008) found that the Chinese orientation of adolescents in Hong Kong predicted higher GPA whereas Western orientation (U.K. culture primarily) predicted lower GPA.<sup>3</sup>

## The Current Study

Our hypotheses were three-fold in examining our primary research question of “How is the remote acculturation of adolescents and their parents in Jamaica associated with those adolescents’ behavioral and academic adjustment?” First, patterned on findings among acculturating Jamaican immigrant youth in the United States, we hypothesized that family obligations would be associated with positive adolescent behavioral adjustment. Second, we expected local Jamaican orientation to be associated with better adolescent academic adjustment based on findings that Chinese orientation of adolescents in Hong Kong was associated with higher adolescent GPA. Third, based on the prior research findings that U.S./Western orientation is associated with lower adolescent GPA (Hong Kong), we hypothesized that European American orientation would also be associated with worse adolescent academic adjustment in Jamaica.

**Methods.** Data used to examine these novel hypotheses came from previously unused portions of cross-sectional questionnaires completed by the original cohort of families in the CFLS. Altogether, 245 mostly Black adolescents and their mothers were recruited from traditional secondary schools in Kingston and St. Andrew, Jamaica ( $M_{\text{adolescent\_age}} = 13.3$  years,  $SD_{\text{age}} = 2.1$ , 40% girls;  $M_{\text{mother\_age}} = 40.2$ ,  $SD = 6.2$ ) and they completed questionnaires either at home or at school (see Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012 for more details).

Both adolescents and mothers individually self-reported their personal RA first in terms of their *cultural orientations in identity and in behaviors* such as language/food/media preferences, and friendships (16-item Jamaican Orientation Scale,<sup>4</sup>  $\alpha = .68_{\text{adolescents}}$  &  $.67_{\text{mothers}}$ , and 9-item European American Orientation Scale,  $\alpha = .75_{\text{adolescents}}$  &  $.79_{\text{mothers}}$  from the Acculturation Rating Scale for Jamaican Americans; Ferguson et al., 2012). Sample cultural orientation items were “I enjoy listening to Jamaican music,” “I like to identify myself as White/European American,” and “My friends now are of Jamaican origin,” and they were rated on a 5-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (“None or not at all”) to 5 (“Very much or always”). RA was also reported in terms of traditional *family values* such as respecting and helping parents without compensation (10-item Family Obligations Scale from the Family Values Scale,  $\alpha = .73_{\text{adolescents}}$  &  $.72_{\text{mothers}}$ ; Berry et al., 2006). Sample family obligations items were “Children should obey their parents” and “It is the child’s responsibility to look after the parents when

**Table 3.1. Means, Standard Deviations, and Intercorrelations**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Adolescent Jamaican orientation	–							
2. Adolescent European American orientation	–.07	–						
3. Adolescent family obligations	.29***	–.21***	–					
4. Mother Jamaican orientation	.36***	–.01	.25*	–				
5. Mother European American orientation	.06	.42***	–.06	.18**	–			
6. Mother family obligations	.25***	–.12+	.27***	.24***	–.13*	–		
7. Adolescent behavioral resilience	.31***	–.05	.43***	.15*	–.03	.12+	–	
8. Adolescent grades	.05	–.09	.19**	.12+	–.19**	.06	.34***	
Mean	3.81	2.53	3.84	3.84	2.33	3.99	2.53	4.82
Possible Range	1–5	1–5	1–5	1–5	1–5	1–5	1–3	1–6
SD	0.45	0.68	0.64	0.39	0.66	0.58	0.29	1.22

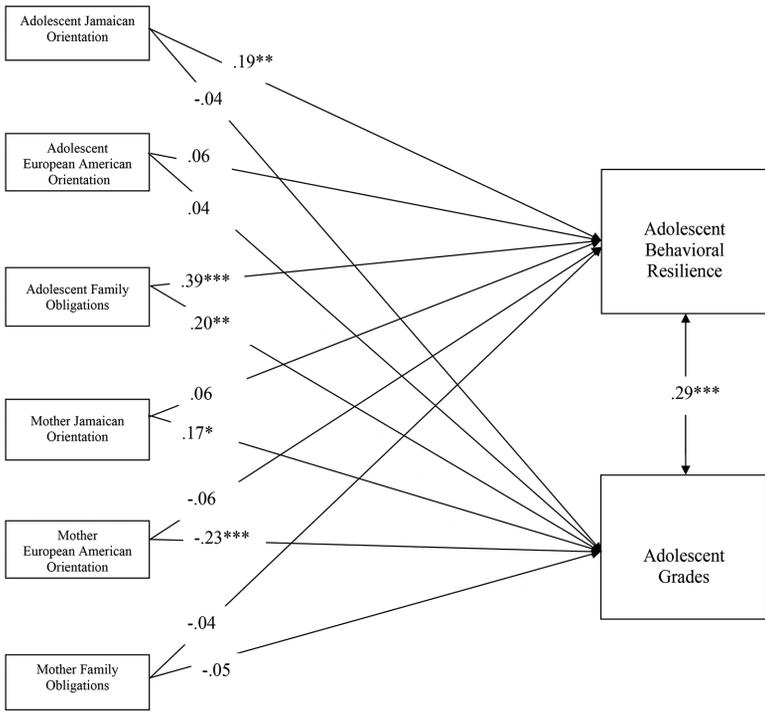
Note: +  $p \leq .10$ , \*  $p \leq .05$ , \*\*  $p \leq .01$ , \*\*\*  $p \leq .001$ .

they need help,” and ratings ranged from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) on a Likert-type scale.

Additionally, adolescents reported their *behavioral resilience* using the Resilience Scale of the Behavioral Assessment for Children of African Heritage (BACAH, which has 28 items for adolescents and 37 for parents). The BACAH measures global behavioral strengths such as in social relations (e.g., “Get along with younger children”), decision-making (e.g., “Have good reasoning skills”), and commitment to a healthy lifestyle (e.g., “Involved in exercise and fitness”) on a 3-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (not true) to 3 (very true or always true) (Lambert et al., 2005;  $\alpha = .87_{\text{adolescents}} \& .92_{\text{mothers}}$ ). Finally, adolescents also reported their most recent cumulative grade average (0–100%) using a 6-point ordinal scale ranging from 1 (“90–100%”) to 6 (“below 50%,” meaning failing given that 50% was the minimum passing grade). Mean scores were computed for multi-item measures.

**Findings.** Table 3.1 displays means, standard deviations, and intercorrelations among major study variables. We tested a model investigating relationships between mothers’ and adolescents’ RA (independent variables) and adolescent well-being in terms of behavioral resilience and grades (dependent variables). A path model using structural equation modeling (SEM) was implemented by means of AMOS (Arbuckle, 2009). We evaluated model fit through the Chi-Square Test ( $\chi^2$ ), the Comparative Fit Index (CFI), and the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA).

**Figure 3.3. Path model of adolescent and mother remote acculturation and adolescent-reported adjustment.**



Note: Model fit was very good,  $\chi^2(245) = 9.46, p = .092, CFI = .982, RMSEA = .060$  [CI = .060–.000]. \* $p < .05$ . \*\* $p < .01$ . \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

Non-significant  $p$  values of  $\chi^2$  indicate good fit supplemented by values of the CFA higher than .90 (acceptable fit) or higher than .95 (excellent fit). Values of the RMSEA below .08 indicate an acceptable fit and values less than .08 represent a very good fit (Byrne, 2009). This SEM method has been used successfully in prior acculturation studies with adolescents and parents (e.g., Dimitrova, Chasiotis, Bender, & van de Vijver, 2014).

We implemented a model with eight observed variables (Jamaican Orientation, European American Orientation, and Family Obligations), mothers’ RA (three parallel mother-reported variables), and their direct associations with adolescent behavioral resilience and adolescent grades. The results indicated that the model tested fitted the data very well,  $\chi^2(245) = 9.46, p = .092, CFI = .982, RMSEA = .060$  (see Figure 3.3 for the standardized path model). As can be seen, adolescents’ Jamaican orientation was significantly and positively associated with their behavioral resilience ( $\beta = .19, p < .01$ ), and their family obligations were significantly and positively associated with both their behavioral resilience ( $\beta = .39, p < .001$ ) and

their grades ( $\beta = .20, p < .01$ ). However, no significant relations emerged between adolescents' European American orientation and their behavioral resilience or grades. As for maternal variables, mothers' Jamaican orientation was positively associated with their adolescents' grades,  $\beta = .17, p < .05$ , whereas mothers' European American orientation was *negatively* associated with their adolescents' grades ( $\beta = -.23, p < .001$ ). Finally, there was a significant positive association between adolescent outcomes of behavioral resilience and grades ( $\beta = .29, p < .001$ ).

In summary, in support of Hypothesis 1, we found that adolescents' behavioral resilience was positively associated with their own Jamaican orientation and family obligations. Also according to expectations, adolescents' grades were positively associated with their mothers' Jamaican orientation and their own family obligations (Hypothesis 2), but negatively associated with their mothers' European American orientation (Hypothesis 3).

## General Discussion

Remote acculturation (RA) is a modern form of acculturation experienced by non-migrants due to rapidly advancing cultural globalization, which exposes adolescents to faraway cultures with much greater ease for each new generation. There is now a growing body of quantitative and qualitative studies documenting the presence of RA among youth in Latin America and the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, Europe, and Oceania (see G. M. Ferguson et al., 2017). Several remote cultures including those from the United States, Jamaica, the United Kingdom, and South Africa have been shown to be associated with youth development in distant locales, leading substantial proportions of adolescents to embrace non-native bi-/tri-/multicultural identities, value sets, and behavioral styles (see G. M. Ferguson et al., 2017). To date, studies have shown that RA toward Western cultures is associated with family communication, nutrition, health behaviors, and psychological/subjective well-being; however, the implications of RA for behavioral and academic adjustment have not been studied before now. Current results support our hypotheses in general, but with nuances. Overall, Jamaican orientation of adolescents and mothers was associated with better youth adaptation across the board whereas European American orientation of mothers (but not youth) was associated with poorer adaptation in one area of well-being (but not the other). The remainder of this section will discuss current findings in Jamaica in view of the larger body of literature on RA and similar globalization-related developmental phenomena, and make suggestions for future research and applications.

**Local Orientation Is Adaptive for Adolescents in Many Globalizing Contexts.** In the context of modern globalization, being oriented to one's local culture and traditional family values—both considered features of cultural maintenance—appear to be beneficial across multiple domains of well-being based on current findings (behavioral and academic) and

prior findings (academic achievement, family communication, and nutrition: Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008; Ferguson et al., 2018; Ferguson & Bornstein, 2012, 2015; Ferguson et al., 2017c; McKenzie, 2018; Rao et al., 2013). There is one notable exception in Malawi where culturally “Traditional Malawian” adolescents reported higher levels of adolescent–parent conflict than did Western-oriented peers (K. T. Ferguson et al., 2017).

What is more, according to current findings, it is not only the adolescents’ cultural maintenance that is positively linked to their well-being, but their mothers’ cultural maintenance is also an asset for them. Findings are consistent with those among Jamaican immigrant adolescents living in the United States, for whom cultural maintenance is also positively associated with behavioral resilience (Ferguson & Bornstein, 2014). This similarity across remote and immigrant (proximal) acculturation suggests a universal in acculturation, at least within the Jamaican diaspora.

Holding more tightly to cultural values of proper comportment and educational success may explain the positive assets of cultural maintenance for Jamaican adolescent adjustment. Cultural values such as these are common in Majority World cultures, which tend to emphasize traditional values (e.g., religion, traditional family values, deference to authority) over secular–rational ones ([www.worldvaluessurvey.org](http://www.worldvaluessurvey.org)). For acculturating Jamaican youth, whether acculturating remotely or proximally, having strong Jamaican orientation and/or family obligations is likely to promote greater personal investment in, parental support for, and resulting competence in these culturally endorsed developmental tasks of praiseworthy behavior and academic achievement. Thus, it is not surprising that a stronger sense of obligations to parents was related to earning higher grades because research shows that Jamaican parents strongly value good school grades (Ferguson & Dubow, 2007).

**Remote U.S. Orientation Is Maladaptive For Adolescents in Many Globalizing Contexts.** Current findings from the Caribbean and prior findings in Asia (Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008) show that it is adolescents and parents with stronger affinities for U.S. and other Western cultures who report poorer youth academic performance. In this way, U.S./Western remote culture orientation is an academic risk factor for adolescents’ grades. U.S./Western orientation may confer certain values and behaviors of consequence for adolescent achievement. For example, given that Jamaicans on the island perceive American parents to be more permissive, to monitor adolescents activities less, and to grant them more autonomy (Ferguson & Iturbide, 2013), it is possible that European American-oriented mothers in Jamaica do actually perform less school-related parental monitoring and may grant greater adolescent autonomy, which can compromise grades (See Lopez-Tamayo, Robinson, Lambert, Jason, & Lalongo, 2016). In addition to being less strict in their expectations and demands regarding academic achievement, Jamaican mothers who are more strongly oriented toward European American

culture may prioritize other domains of competence for their teenagers beyond academics (e.g., social and interpersonal development).

Of course, it is also possible that Jamaican mothers of lower performing students are motivated to embrace (their perception of) European American culture as a result of their adolescents' lower grades versus the other way around. Knowing the very strong Jamaican cultural emphasis placed on academic achievement (Ferguson & Dubow, 2007; Hylton, 2018), it may be an act of sensitive parenting for these mothers to adjust their values and expectations in recognition that their teenagers' best strengths lie in areas outside of academic achievement. In this way, acquiring a European American orientation may actually be an adaptive parenting response if such mothers perceive this particular U.S. culture to espouse a different/larger set of values (e.g., being well-rounded vs. solely being intelligent) or to reward a different/larger set of activities (e.g., pursuit of hobbies and strong peer relationships vs. solely academic accolades) that may be more compatible with their adolescents' natural inclinations.

We do note that our current finding that European American orientation is maladaptive departs from findings of a few prior studies. In Malawi, adolescents who are more strongly identified with U.K. and U.S. culture than their local Malawian culture reported that their parents granted them more autonomy in day-to-day life, a parenting approach generally thought to support positive youth development (Ferguson, Ferguson, & Ferguson, 2013b). Additionally, interviews and focus groups with adolescents in India, Thailand, and even Jamaica suggested that English language orientation was perceived to be of can benefit to them academically (Ferguson, Iturbide et al., 2018; McKenzie, 2018; Ozer et al., 2017). This divergence in findings could stem from whether one is assessing the adolescents' own U.S./Western orientation (prior studies) or their parents' (current study).

**Parents' Own Remote Acculturation Matters for Adolescent Adjustment.** Findings from the current study and prior studies on family responses to globalization suggest that parents' own remote acculturation is linked to adolescent adjustment for better and worse depending on the context. That is, as just discussed, the current study in Jamaica demonstrated that mothers' local Jamaican orientation is associated with better adolescent grades whereas their European American orientation has the opposite association. Moreover, it was the European American orientation of mothers, not adolescents, that was linked to adolescents' grades. This finding supports those of a recent RA study in a different cohort of adolescent-mother dyads in Jamaica. In that study, only mothers' and not daughters' U.S. cable TV watching (which was positively associated with mothers' European American orientation) predicted adolescent girls' unhealthy eating (Ferguson, Muzaffar, et al., 2018).

**Limitations, Implications, and Future Research.** The current study had some limitations that suggest directions for future research. First, although we established an association between RA and adolescent

adjustment, the mechanism was not studied. For example, it would be very useful to empirically explore our speculation that lower parental monitoring and earlier autonomy granting may explain why Jamaican mothers' European American orientation was associated with poorer adolescent grades. Similarly, our findings represent cross-sectional associations and longitudinal or experimental research is needed to clarify causality. For example, does mothers' European American orientation predict lower adolescent grades or do low adolescent grades push mothers' to strengthen their European American orientation? Second, the RA and related literatures have focused on adolescent functioning, parent–adolescent communication, and family health. It may be useful to deepen our understanding of remotely acculturating parents' personal adjustment, for example, their psychological and professional functioning. Finally, continued research across contexts is needed to understand the cultural universals versus culture specifics of the RA-adjustment association given that adjustment outcomes in one context are sometimes not shared across others.

Our findings may have implications for educators and families in Jamaica. This study describes the cultural profile of higher achieving students as those who have strong Jamaican cultural roots as do their mothers, and the profile of lower achieving students as those whose mothers are more fond of mainstream European American culture and lifestyle than the typical Jamaican mother. With the contribution of further research to elucidate pathways, findings may inform promotion, prevention, and intervention efforts in schools. For example, embedding messages of Jamaican cultural pride and reinforcing Jamaican values, including the importance of family and school, may strengthen current efforts to promote higher academic achievement, especially among Americanized Jamaican youth. In addition, if low parental monitoring or early autonomy granting modeled in U.S. television shows do, indeed, help to explain the maternal RA—achievement association in Jamaica, then a media literacy approach may be helpful to educate Jamaican parents about the potential dangers of their (i.e., mothers') Americanization for their teenagers' grades. This approach is central to a new RA-based global health family intervention culturally tailored for Americanized families in Jamaica who have poor diets—the J(amaican) and U(nited) S(tates) Media? Programme (Ferguson, Fiese, Nelson, & Meeks Gardner, 2019). Using two brief workshops and text/SMS reminders, the JUS Media? Programme teaches adolescents and mothers to critically analyze and deconstruct food advertising on U.S. cable as a way to resist unhealthy eating habits. The JUS Media? Programme could be expanded to also target unhelpful messages about parenting on U.S. cable.

## Conclusion

Remote acculturation theory provides a new avenue to understand the psychological implications of twenty-first century globalization for

non-migrant youth around the globe. On balance, this (young) literature currently shows that better adjusted adolescents engage in higher levels of local cultural maintenance, and have parents who do the same, whereas more liabilities than benefits appear to follow adolescents who adopt a strong orientation toward a remote culture such as U.S. culture, or who have mothers who do. Although this may indicate a misfit between these adolescents' Americanized/Westernized cultural style and their local environment, it is important to remember that social change is an ongoing process at the societal level, such that today's misfits may be tomorrow's success stories. That is, theory and research on social change underscore that the predominant direction of social change is from a more traditional family-based rural agrarian "Gemeinschaft" ecology to a more urban technologically savvy "Gessellschaft" ecology characterized by more individualistic values (Greenfield, 2009; Manago, 2014). Therefore, there is a distinct possibility that today's remotely Americanized/Westernized global adolescents may just be ahead of their time; they may well have superior adaptation to their future sociocultural environments relative to their culturally traditional peers. If so, somewhat poorer adjustment during their adolescent years may be a price worth paying for future positive adaptation as adults. Only time will tell. The rapidly evolving nature of modern globalization, which fuels both RA and social change, demands ongoing research using diverse methodologies across diverse contexts. It is important to continue to develop and maintain an accurate yet dynamic understanding of how to best support the positive development of all adolescents in globalizing contexts, including those who are orienting toward remote cultures.

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## Notes

1. We fully acknowledge that both North and South Americans are Americans. However, the term "Americanized" is used colloquially in Jamaica to refer to individuals who take on characteristics common to individuals living in the United States; hence, the RA literature has adopted this local phraseology.

2. For specificity, we use multiple terms to indicate which Western culture we are referring to in a given sentence. We use the term "U.S." when referring specifically to the United States or products from that nation (e.g., U.S. cable television), or when reporting on research that treats the U.S. culture as a singular entity (e.g., "U.S. orientation" was measured by Ferguson, Tran, Mendez, & van de Vijver, 2017 and "U.S. American" orientation was measured by Lorenzo-Blanco, Arillo-Santillán, Unger, & Thrasher, 2018). We

also use the term “U.S./Western” when referring to multiple U.S. subcultures, unspecified U.S. subcultures, and/or non-specific “Western culture” (e.g., Cheung-Blunden & Juang, 2008). Finally, we use the ethnic labels of “European American” and “African American” to refer very specifically White American mainstream culture and the Black American subculture, respectively.

3. There is related research on the acculturation to local and Western cultures in colonial contexts done by scholars of “globalization-based acculturation.” However, note that local culture orientation, which is most often adaptive, is not the same thing as “Ethnic Protection” in the globalization-based acculturation literature, which is maladaptive (Chen et al., 2016). Ethnic protection is a defensive reaction to globalization that includes elements of ethnocentrism, cultural self-segregation, and apprehension regarding intercultural interactions. In addition, Western orientation, which is often maladaptive, is not the same thing as “Multicultural Acquisition” in the globalization-based acculturation literature, which is adaptive for sociocultural competence (Chen et al., 2016). Multicultural acquisition is a proactive reaction to globalization, which includes recognizing and appreciating cultural diversity and efforts to acquire varied new cultures (not specific to Western culture only).

4. Given the modest reliabilities for the Jamaican Orientation Scale (.67–.68), a factor analysis was performed using principal axis factoring and promax rotations, which revealed two factors with an eigen value over 2. First, the Jamaican Language subscale comprised three items pertaining to speaking Jamaican patois, enjoying speaking Jamaican patois, thinking in Jamaican patois,  $\alpha_{\text{adolescent}} = .76$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{mother}} = .76$ ). Second, Jamaican Identity and Contacts subscale comprised seven items pertaining to friendships with Jamaicans now and in childhood, identification of self and parents as Jamaicans, and cooking Jamaican etc.:  $\alpha_{\text{adolescent}} = .72$ ,  $\alpha_{\text{mother}} = .82$ ). These two factors were used in an alternate set of SEM analyses instead of the full scale, and results were similar but the new model had somewhat inferior fit. Therefore, the full scale was used in analyses reported in this chapter.

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